

States, War, and Conflict Patterns

POSC 3610 – International Conflict

Steven V. Miller

Department of Political Science



Whither War?

Motivating question: what is the future of war after the Cold War?

- May seem quaint, but it was an interesting question at the time.

Is war on the verge of obsolence?

- Period after WWII rather calm, all things considered.
- Cold War only time when two largest countries did not fight each other.
 - True going back to the ancient Greeks.
- Also features concurrent emergence of “the democratic peace.”
- Numerous territorial claims settled through 1980s/90s (e.g. Ecuador-Peru).

Did the end of the Cold War mark the “end of history?”

Whither War?

We might have evidence that war is actually increasing.

- End of Cold War: emergence of “ethnic wars” (e.g. Rwanda, Yugoslavia).
- There might be a new “clash of civilizations.”

What Do We Make of These?

Is war over? Is it increasing?

- Does it depend on how we define war and what data we use?

Maybe, and this motivates the Sarkees et al. (2003) article.

- Defining war is important, and we will do it here.

Making Our Terms Clear

A lot of people are going to define war differently.

- Do massacres count as “war?”
- Was the Cold War a “war?” How about the “Cod (sic) War?”
- Are the Koreas still at war? The North says it is.

We need a hard definition.

- We also need a *classification*.

What is a “State?”

We need to start with a “state” first.

- In lay terms, we call it a “country.”

This actually kind of begs the question though. What is it?

- Is the Vatican a “state?”
- What about Vichy France?

Defining a “State”

Definitions changed throughout the history of the project, but our conceptualization of a state must satisfy five criteria:

1. A state is a “geopolitical entity.” It must occupy territory.
 - For example, the U.N. is not a state by this criterion.
 - South Vietnam after the fall of Hanoi is not either.
2. A state must have a population above 500,000.
 - Entities like Lichtenstein become “microstates” by this criterion.
3. A state must be diplomatically recognized writ large.
 - Before 1919: this was recognition by the U.K. or France.
 - After 1919: League of Nations or, now, the U.N.

Defining a "State"

4. A state must be independent in its own affairs.
 - This criterion sorts out entities like Puerto Rico and Hong Kong.
 - These are subsidiaries of other states.
 - Importantly, they don't have their own foreign policies.
5. A state must have a sovereign political authority.
 - It doesn't have to be democratically elected, but one must exist.
 - This criterion tries to weed out failed states and puppet states.

Examples of States and Non-states

Here are some examples of a state and non-states by this classification.

- Examples come from Sarkees and Wayman (2010).

Entity	Territory	Population	Recognition	Sovereign	Independence	State?
USA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vatican	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Confederacy	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Vichy France	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Ukrainian SSR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

What is a “War?”

We know what a state is, now let's classify wars.

1. Inter-state war

- These are wars between (at least) two states.
- Examples: Franco-Prussian War, World War II

2. Intra-state war

- These are between a state government and domestic group.
- These are typically fought for control of government or secession.
- Examples: American Civil War, Angolan Civil War

3. Extra-state war

- These are wars between a state government and an independent non-state actor or dependent non-state actor.
- Typically known as “imperial war” or “colonial war,” respectively.
- Examples: Opium War (1839-1842), French-Indochina War (1946-1954).

The Threshold

Importantly, we define wars as a *fatality threshold*.

- Any conflict that arises in seriousness to 1,000 battle-related deaths per year is a war.
- We take care to delineate *battle*-deaths from massacres.
 - In other words: we only count troops.
 - via old colleagues at Alabama: you'd be surprised how rare civilian fatalities are.

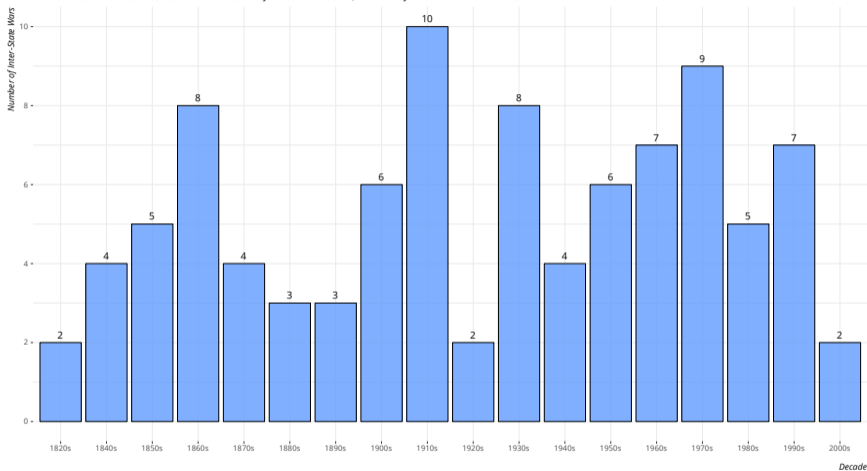
The Threshold

Disputes can conceptually meet this threshold and then drop back to lower levels of seriousness.

- The dispute would still continue.
- In practice, this is rare in the inter-state context. More common in the intra-state context.
- It wouldn't affect the MID data, but it'd affect the war data.

Number of Inter-State War Onsets, by Decade

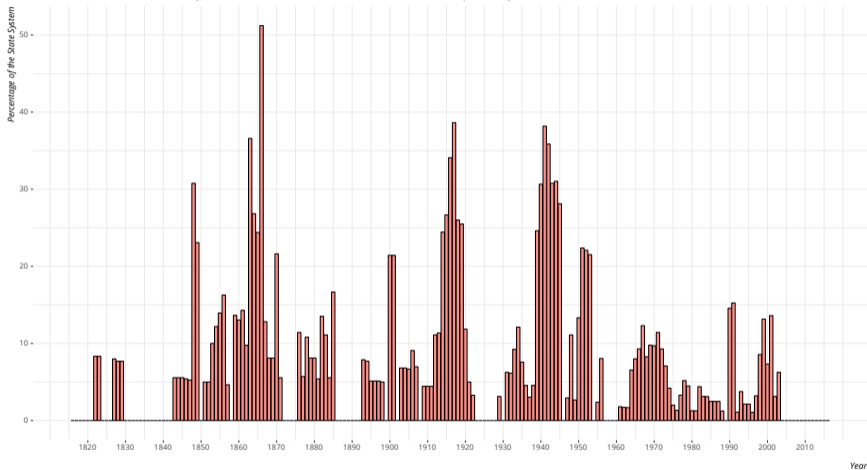
The 1910s saw the most inter-state war onsets of any decade in the data, followed by nine onsets in the 1970s.



Data: *Correlates of War (Inter-State) War Data (v. 4.0)*. Temporal Domain: 1816-2007.

The Percentage of States Involved in Interstate War by Year, 1816-2010

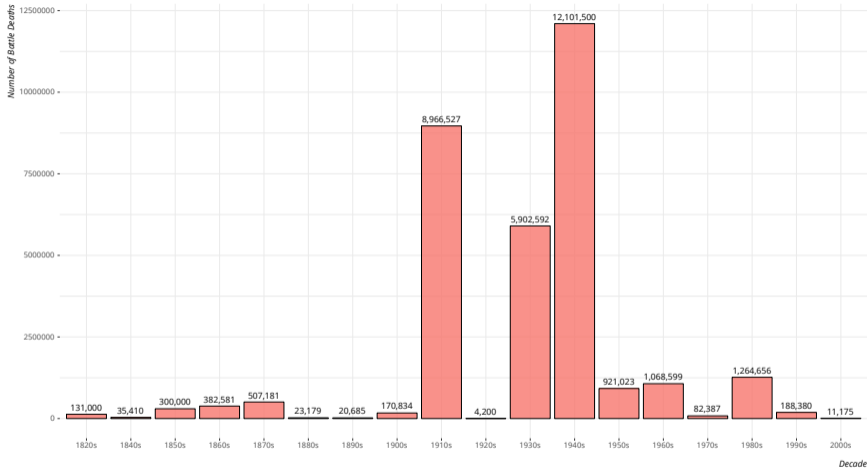
We treat interstate war as (fortunately) a rare event but the 1860s, 1910s, and 1940s stand out as particularly violent decades.



Data: GML MID data (v. 2.02) and Correlates of War State System Membership List.

Number of Inter-State War Battle Deaths, by Decade

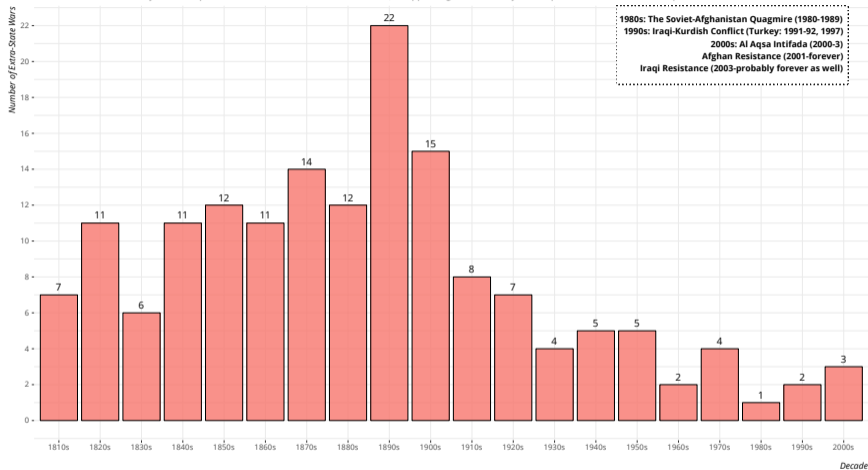
Most wars aren't that violent, per se. World War I and World War II? Those were *really* violent.



Data: Correlates of War (Inter-State) War Data (v. 4.0). Temporal Domain: 1816-2007.

Number of Extra-State War Onsets, by Decade

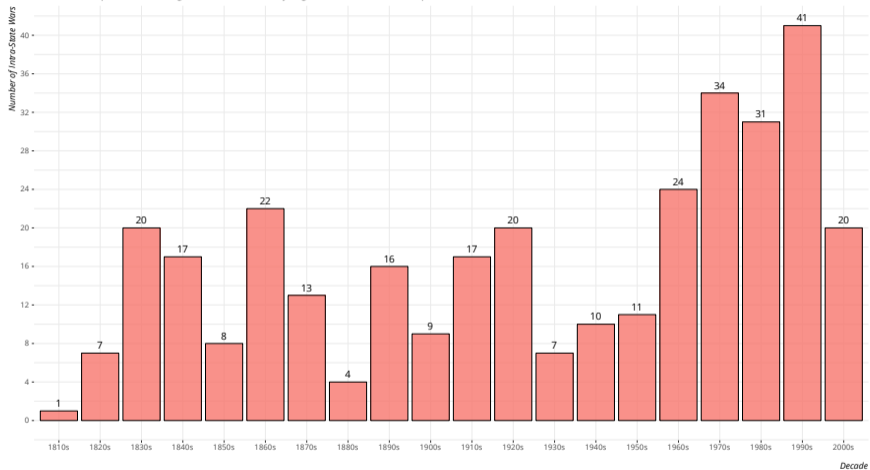
Extra-state wars are mostly historical phenomenon in the Correlates of War data, disappearing as the state system expanded after the end of empires.



Data: Correlates of War (Extra-State) War Data (v. 4.0). Temporal Domain: 1816-2007.

Number of Intra-State War Onsets, by Decade

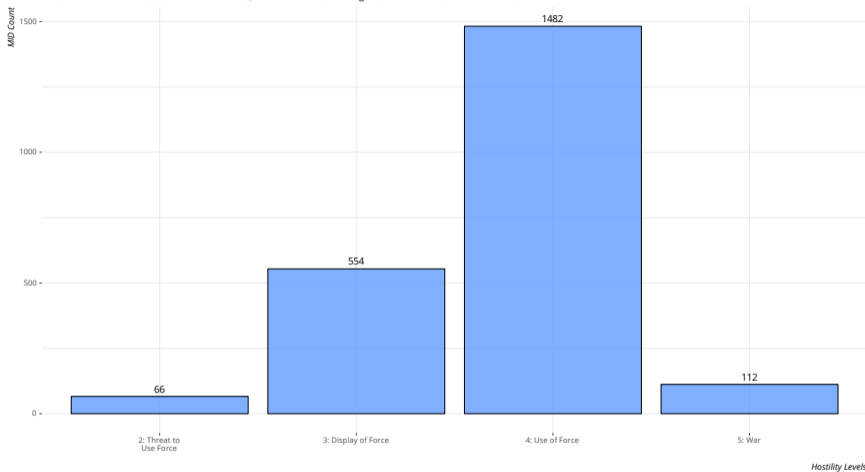
Most of the empirical evidence against the 'End of History' arguments focused on the explosion of civil wars after the Cold War.



Data: *Correlates of War (Intra-State) War Data (v. 4.1)*. Temporal Domain: 1816-2007.

Number of MIDs by Dispute Hostility Level

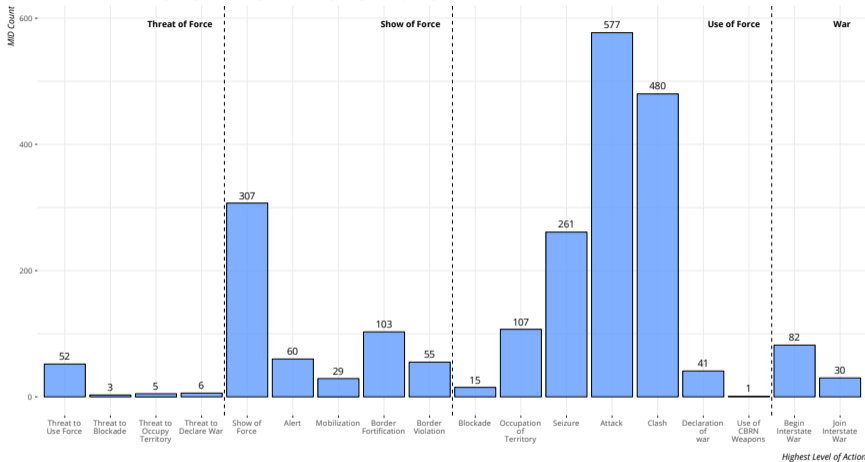
Most MIDs involve at least some of use of force, which constitutes the highest action of 66.89% of the data set.



Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v 2.03), 1816-2010.

Number of MIDs by Highest Action Observed at Dispute-Level

Most common hiacts: Attack (n: 577), Clash (n: 480), Show of Force (n: 307), Seizure (n: 261)

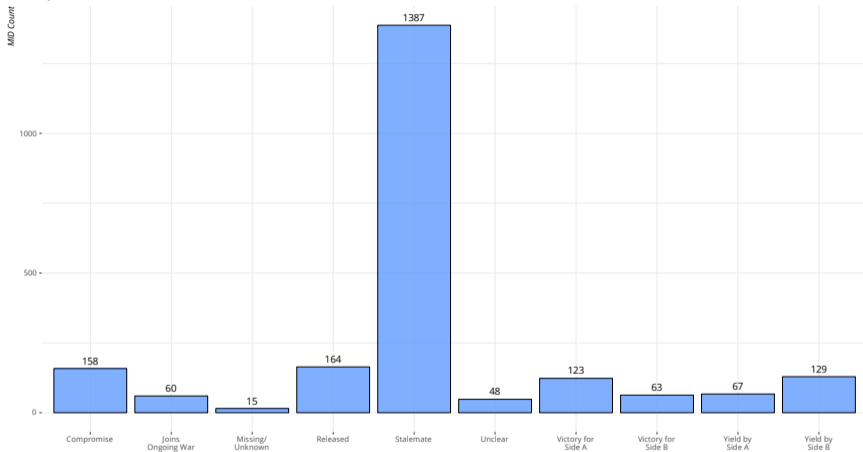


Note: MID#1109 is unique for being the only dispute in the data for which the highest action was the use of CBRN weapons. Other CBRN weapon uses (e.g. World War II, Iran-Iraq War) happen during war itself, a higher hostility level.

Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v. 2.03), 1816-2010.

How MIDs End

By far, most MIDs---around 63%---end in a stalemate.

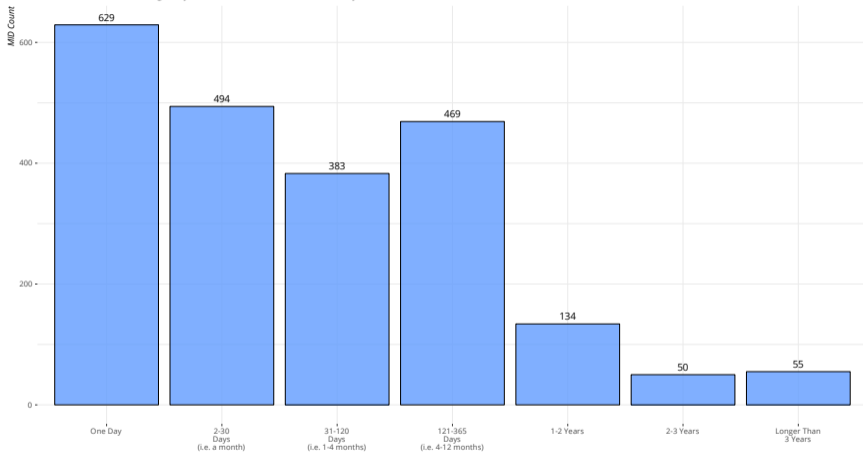


Different Outcomes

Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v 2.03), 1816-2010.

Most MIDs Don't Last That Long

Over 28% of MIDs last a single day. More than half of all MIDs last 30 days or fewer.



Minimum Durations (condensed)

Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v. 2.03), 1816-2010.

Table 2: The Longest MIDs in History (Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v. 2.03), 1816-2010)

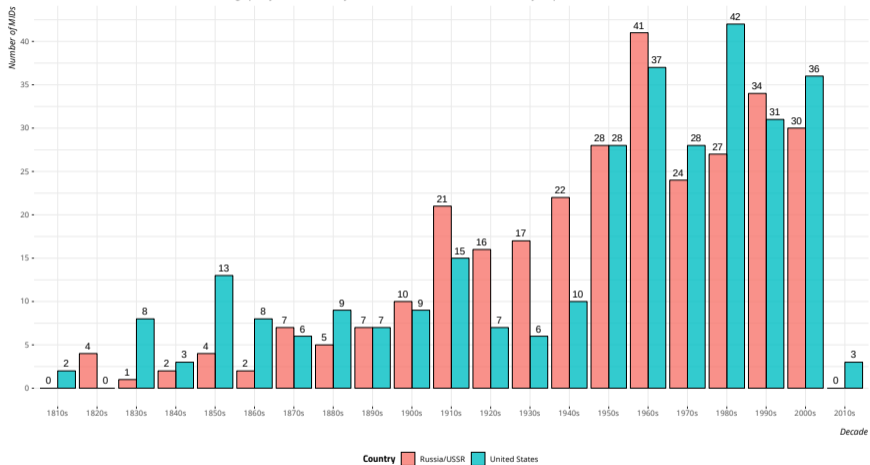
MID #	Start Year	End Year	Duration	Description
4182	1993	2006	4904	Israel v. Lebanon/Syria (re: Hezbollah)
1441	1975	1988	4758	Intervention in Angolan Civil War
1353	1962	1973	4064	Intervention in Laotian Civil War
611	1964	1975	3993	Vietnam War
1232	1976	1987	3980	Cambodian-Vietnamese War
1379	1962	1971	3396	Korean DMZ Conflict
4414	2002	2010	3026	Armenia v. Azerbaijan
2115	1980	1988	2943	Iran-Iraq War
1006	1950	1956	2381	Israel v. Jordan (re: Palestine)
1590	1863	1870	2376	Paraguayan War
258	1939	1945	2335	I'll let you guess this one...

Table 3: All-Time Participation in MIDs (Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MIDs, 1816-2010)

Country	Number of MIDs All-Time
United States	308
Russia	302
United Kingdom	234
China	213
France	165
Turkey	154
Germany	153
Iran	151
Japan	146
Italy	114

U.S. and Russian MID Participation, by Decade

Russia/USSR had a more active/bellicose foreign policy in the interwar years than the U.S. while the U.S. effectively surpassed Russia in MID count in the 1980s.



Data: Gibler-Miller-Little MID Data (v. 2.03), 1816-2010.

Conclusion

War isn't "decreasing" or "increasing."

- It's changing by type.
- Civil wars are more common now than inter-state wars.
- Extra-state wars are mostly things of the past.

MIDs have several interesting patterns as well.

- Most involve the use of force.
- Almost half become clashes or attacks.
- Most MIDs don't last long, and most end in stalemates.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Sarkees et al. (2003)

Whither War?

What is a State?

What is a War?

Patterns in MIDs and War

Conclusion