

'Steps to War' Paper Instructions

POSC 3610 - International Conflict

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Basic Format

The paper you will write in this class will entail a summary of *The War Puzzle* ([Vasquez, 2009](#)) and an evaluation of how well Vasquez' core argument about how disputes become war fits a particular war of your choosing.

I will address the basic formatting concerns first. The research design paper should be *single-spaced* and between 6,000 to 8,000 words. This word count includes title, front-matter, and bibliography. Margins should be one-inch on all sides. This will correspond with a paper that is approximately eight to ten single-spaced pages. Citation and references should be done following APSA style ([American Political Science Association, 2006](#)).

Case Selection

It's also important to belabor upfront the case selection criteria for this paper. The Canvas module for the course contains a list of inter-state wars from 1816 to 2007 that [Sarkees and Wayman \(2010\)](#) include in chapter 3 of their book. Any of these wars are fair game to choose, with one important caveat. You may *not* choose World War I or World War II for the originators/originating participants. In other words, you may choose the decision to join World War I for any participant that is not Austria-Hungary or Serbia. Likewise, you may choose the decision to join World War II for any participant that is not the United Kingdom, France, Germany, or Poland. Do notice what this entails: any paper you write for one of these "joiner" cases into World War I or World War II should not make the July Crisis bargaining between Vienna and Belgrade or the deterrence crisis/invasion of Poland the focal point of the paper (for the respective war). This would result in a bad grade. The student is free to ask for clarification for what I mean.

These cases are first-come-first-served. I will not allow more than one student to cover one particular war, no matter how popular the selection might be. The Canvas module for the site contains an excerpt from [Sarkees and Wayman \(2010\)](#) that briefly describes almost all these entries. Wikipedia is a fine place to start as well if you have never heard of one of these wars. It is not, however, a fine place to end your search.

I will add the caveat here that any paper you write without first clearing your topic with me gets an automatic zero. You must consult with me what case you will do before submission of your paper.

Introduction

The student should introduce the paper to follow in about three or four paragraphs. This is the part of any paper that is easy to neglect, but it is subtly one of the paper's most important parts. This will be an important life lesson for students who do not have a lot of practical writing experience; the introduction is where the reader makes first impressions of the paper and the author. If I, as a reader, do not have a firm idea of what is going to be addressed in the paper after the first few sentences, the fate of the paper is in serious peril.

That said, the nature of this assignment is going to make the introduction rather straightforward and unexciting. Here is a broad template for what the introduction should resemble. Think of each entry in the itemized list to follow as coinciding with the theme of the paragraph in this section.

1. Give me a paragraph synopsis of what the "steps to war" argument is. Sell me at least a little bit on its importance (i.e. why should I care what "steps to war" is?).
2. Transition to the war you will evaluate. Describe the war but also make sure to bridge the previous paragraph to this. In other words, start by asking if this prominent theory of how disputes become war matches the particular case. Do not forget you should also give me some indication why the war is important. In other words, what is important about, say, the Seven Weeks War and why should the reader evaluate this war in the "steps to war" framework?
3. Outline the paper to follow. This will be a cookie-cutter "The paper proceeds in the following fashion. First, I summarize the 'steps to war' argument. Then, I outline how the MID escalated to war." Make it work for what you're doing, and obviously expand on this simple passage I wrote, but make sure the final paragraph of the section outlines the rest of the paper.

I will add one caveat here. Make sure your introduction previews your argument. It's tempting to write a paper like this that tries to "surprise" the reader with some dramatic reveal at the end of the paper that finally mentions the author's argument. Don't do that. Make sure you write this section of the paper *knowing what you intend to argue* (i.e. how well Vasquez' steps to war argument fits the case you will describe).

Reviewing the Steps to War Argument

The student will need to review the "steps to war" argument in this section of the paper, a treatment that will span from roughly six to eight paragraphs.

To be clear, the "review" in this context means summarizing Vasquez' core argument. He contends that certain issues, when state leaders handle them a certain way, create conflict spirals that lead states to major wars they should strive to avoid. This "realist" roadmap to war can have important implications for the size, scope, and severity of the war itself. The student's task in this section of the paper is to condense Vasquez' core argument and findings from across his book into this six-to-eight paragraph summary.

Testing the Steps to War Argument With Your Case

This section will be the meat of your paper. Here, you'll relate Vasquez' general argument to the war you will examine and explain how well Vasquez' "steps to war" model explains the war you chose. Your treatment here will need to be broad in scope but narrowed in detail. In other words, your treatment here will need to focus on the following attributes of the war.

- Was the motivating issue consistent with what Vasquez argues generally leads states to war? Why or why not? Be mindful that Vasquez' primary interest might be what he terms 'territoriality' but his treatment is nebulous enough to include concerns of proximity, contiguity, and rivalry.
- How did the MID start? Please notice that the "coding" field for each war includes (or should include) a corresponding MID number (e.g. MID#0257 for World War I or MID#0375 for the First Schleswig-Holstein War). In other words, this is the start date that corresponds with the first threat, display, or use of force in what *became* a war (c.f. [Jones, Bremer and Singer, 1996](#)). Your treatment here *must sequence the events by which the MID culminated in war* and I will read it carefully to see how thorough you are. This will require you digging through newspaper archives for [Times of London](#) and/or the [New York Times](#) in addition to [other newspaper data sources](#) that [Clemson's library](#) has available. Start doing searches on [Google Books](#) and [Google Scholar](#) as well.
- What were the initial positions of the multiple state leaders and elites with a stake in the issue that ultimately led to war? Who was trying to influence the resolution of the dispute and toward what end? Identify the "hard-liners" and "soft-liners"/"accommodationists" that would interest Vasquez for his "steps to war" model. Your treatment here should identify the major players (e.g. foreign ministers, ministers of war, heads of state, other decision-making elites, even, when appropriate, the general public). It's worth saying you cannot adequately do this part of your analysis without hitting the books. [Google Books](#) and [Google Scholar](#) will be your friend.
- How did the "hard-liners" push for war and ultimately get it? Do notice there's a selection effect in this assignment. You're covering wars, so invariably a set of decision-making elites that wanted war were able to secure policies that escalated the MID to war. You'll need to tell me how the "hard-liners" in the decision-making circle were able to get what they wanted and how they were able to quell the policies proposed by those who wanted some kind of accommodation or peaceful conflict resolution. How did the "soft-liners" acquiesce? Were they simply outnumbered or did they come around and support the policies that ultimately led to war?
- How did the war unfold and was it consistent with Vasquez' chapter on what accounts for the size, scope, and severity of war? Do note there is a wide variation in war and Vasquez' treatment here is almost certainly thinking of "world wars" that may not describe your case. For example, the Battle of Navarino Bay was a multilateral war that was effectively one major battle and other cases, like the Boxer Rebellion and Crimean War, were major conflicts that dragged in multiple actors from around the globe. Some of these cases were simple bilateral fights (e.g. Spanish-Moroccan War). Vasquez' chapter on "world wars" need not describe your case, but it's likely there will be certain features he describes of these wars that partially fit the case you describe. Take care to discuss that here.

- What was the epilogue of the war? Clearly the war ended, but how? What was the nature of the “peace” that followed and how might it conform to Vasquez’ chapter on the nature of peace and its relationship to war?

Conclusion

Take two or three paragraphs at the end of the paper to offer your conclusions. This will be somewhat banal, all things considered. You should have already said your argument and provided the reader the argument and the findings. Still, conclude with what do we know now about this war, Vasquez’ “steps to war” argument, and how well the argument fits the war.

References

- American Political Science Association. 2006. *APSA Style Manual for Political Science*. American Political Science Association Committee on Publications.
URL: <http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>
- Jones, Daniel M., Stuart A. Bremer and J. David Singer. 1996. “Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15(2):163–213.
- Sarkees, Meredith Reid and Frank Wayman. 2010. *Resort to War: 1816 - 2007*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Vasquez, John A. 2009. *The War Puzzle Revisited*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.