The Consequences of War

POSC 3610 - International Conflict

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Goal for Today

The consequences of war seem intuitive, but how would we know? How can we measure them?

MIC of the Day: Paraguayan War (MIC#1590)



Figure 1: Zoom-in of Pedro Américo's (1877) 'Battle of Avaí'

Assorted Consequences of the Paraguayan War

- Paraguay loses ~40% of its pre-war territory.
- Paraguay disappears from state system until 1876.
- Paraguay loses at least half (as much as 69%) of its pre-war population.
- Paraguay's economy shrunk at least 20% (as much as 66%) from its pre-war size.
 - ed. note: my napkin-math simulations.
- Paraguay indebted to Brazil until 1943.
- End of rivalry between Paraguay and neighbors.
- Ascent of Brazilian military as dominant domestic player.
- Widespread domestic revolts in Argentina (incl. three civil wars in 10-year period)

Saddam Hussein With His Elite Republican Guard



Figure 2: Saddam Hussein with his elite republican guard

Churchill's Government Goes Down in Flames



Figure 3: Winston Churchill goes down in flames after WWII

No doubt war has consequences, but how do we assess them? Effects can be:

- Permanent and temporary
- Short-term and long-term
- Direct or indirect
- Positive and negative

Indeed, war can have positive side effects (or "externalities").

Thompson (1993) suggests a framework for evaluating the consequences of war.

- 1. National Consequences
- 2. International Consequences

We can further classify national consequences of war by three factors.

- 1. Economic conditions
- 2. Demographic factors
- 3. Sociopolitical conditions

Intuitively, war destroys stuff.

- Destroys land, labor, and capital
- Siphons labor force toward war effort

However, some effects can be positive.

• Namely: innovations in research, tech, and even medicine.

In fact, it's not even clear there is a discernible negative economic consequence to war.

• Koubi (2005) finds war *increased* economic growth in her sample of countries from 1960-1989.

War does have pervasive effects on demography.

- Increases mortality rates
- Stunts marriage rates and child birth

Should be no surprise this disproportionately targets young men.



War Is Hell on Birth Rates and It Especially Was During World War I

This four-year war saw as high as a 50% decrease in birth rates by the war's end for Italy.

Country - Belgium - - France - Italy - United Kingdom

Data: Human Mortality Database (birth rates) and Correlates of War (total population)

Birth Rates for Select World War II Countries, 1920-1950

The decline of birth rates during WW2 is less pronounced than it was during WW1, and you even see no real effect in the United Kingdom.





Data: Human Mortality Database (birth rates) and Correlates of War (total population)

But again, some effects can be positive.

- WWI empowered suffrage movements
- Vietnam War empowered broader movements of franchise for kids your age.
- WWII further integrated the military and the civilian workforce.

"War makes the state and the state makes war."

- War empowers state capacity
- War increases revenue/extraction/spending.

Some effects might actually be positive in the long-run.

War and Regime Change

By far, most concerns for sociopolitical consequences of war concern regime change.

Don't Initiate a War and Lose It

States that initiate wars and lose it are more likely to experience a violent regime change than other participant-outcome types.



Model 😑 War Onset

Reproduction of Model 2 in Table 1 of Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1992). Note: the reference category is the initiator losing a war.

The Greatest Probability of Violent Regime Change Comes in Losing a War a State Leader Initiated

The lowest probability comes in an initiator winning a war but do note targets winning wars are still 13 times more likely than winning initiators to be violently replaced following the war.



Reproduction of Table 2 in Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1992).

International Consequences of War

We can lump the international consequences of war to these factors.

- 1. Geopolitical situations/orientations
- 2. Territorial changes
- 3. Changes in relative capabilities
- 4. Alignment patterns
- 5. Economic consequences
- 6. Rivalry/recurring conflict (i.e. the next week)

What are the economic effects of major wars? Some arguments:

- "Scissor effect": winners and losers diverge until economic uncertainty brings the winner to the loser.
- "Permanent loss": winners and losers diverge and that stays in the long-run.

Against this, Organski and Kugler (1977, 1980) argue for a "Phoenix Factor."

• i.e. economic consequences of the war are temporary.

The Hypothetical Costs of Major Wars



An Illustration of the 'Phoenix Factor'



What was the economic cost of WW2 for Germany?

German GDP per Capita, 1900-1944

You're seeing the obvious WW1 cost and the post-war hyperinflation episodes, but German GDP per capita was growing about 5% a year from 1932 to 1944.



Maddison historical GDP data (via maddison package in CRAN)

Germany's Forecasted and (pre-1945) Observed GDP per Capita, 1932-1980.

There's not much to go on, but forecasts of GDP per capita from 1932 to 1944 suggest steady growth of about 2% as a counterfactual.



Forecasted

Maddison historical GDP data (via {maddison} package in CRAN), plus simulations in {forecast}.

Germany's Forecasted and (pre-1945) Observed GDP per Capita, 1932-1980.

The difference between forecasted and observed from 1945 to 1963 is the opportunity cost of World War II. The greater-than-expected growth is the 'Phoenix factor.'



- Forecasted - - Observed

Maddison historical GDP data (via {maddison} package in CRAN), plus simulations in {forecast}.

War has consequences, so how do you assess them?

- National/international effects
- Clear negative effects and positive externalities
- The important effect on leader tenure

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