

The determinants of confrontation between states in modern world

Детермінанти протистояння держав у сучасному світі

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Purpose: to discuss the most prominent determinants bringing states to confrontation or creating favorable conditions for waging wars on the basis of various theories.

Method: comparative analysis, and synthesis.

Findings: Confrontations often serve as precursors to war, while wars reshape the dynamics of future confrontations. Therefore, confrontation itself in the modern world emerges from a complex interplay of various factors, each intensifying and interacting with the others in unique ways. If not managed effectively, any confrontation can escalate into war. The factors highlighted in the paper interact in complex ways, with economic motives intertwining with ideological ambitions, and technological advances creating new means of confrontation. Understanding these interconnected factors is crucial for developing strategies to prevent or resolve conflicts in today's globalized and interdependent world, which in turn underscores the importance of diplomatic efforts, multilateral alliances, and conflict resolution mechanisms to manage and mitigate the risks of modern warfare.

Theoretical implications: The article enhances our understanding of the determinants of confrontation through the lens of political, economic, and sociocultural theories as states pursue self-interest in an environment lacking a central authority.

Practical implications: The article contributes to the promotion of multilateral approaches and cooperative frameworks for resource sharing by addressing security, economic, technological, ideological, and environmental determinants through targeted strategies in the modern era.

Paper type: theoretical.

Мета: на основі різних теорій обговорити найвидатніші детермінанти, що доводять держави до конфронтації або створюють сприятливі умови для ведення воєн.

Метод дослідження: порівняльний аналіз і синтез.

Результати дослідження: Протистояння часто є попередниками війни, а війни змінюють динаміку майбутніх протистоянь. Тому саме протистояння в сучасному світі виникає внаслідок складної взаємодії різноманітних факторів, кожен з яких посилюється та взаємодіє з іншими унікальним чином. Без ефективного управління будь-яке протистояння може перерости у війну. Фактори, висвітлені в статті, взаємодіють складно: економічні мотиви переплітаються з ідеологічними амбіціями, а технологічний прогрес створює нові засоби протистояння. Розуміння цих взаємопов'язаних факторів має вирішальне значення для розробки стратегій запобігання або вирішення конфліктів у сучасному глобалізованому та взаємозалежному світі, що, у свою чергу, підкреслює важливість дипломатичних зусиль, багатосторонніх альянсів і механізмів вирішення конфліктів для управління та пом'якшення ризиків сучасної війни.

Теоретична цінність дослідження: Стаття покращує наше розуміння детермінант конфронтації через призму політичних, економічних і соціокультурних теорій, оскільки держави переслідують власний інтерес у середовищі, де немає центральної влади.

Практична цінність дослідження: Стаття сприяє просуванню багатосторонніх підходів і спільних структур для спільного використання ресурсів шляхом розгляду безпекових, економічних, технологічних, ідеологічних та екологічних детермінант через цільові стратегії в сучасну епоху.

Тип статті: теоретичний.

Key words: war, confrontation, conflict, technology, military capability, superpower, hostility.

Ключові слова: війна, конфронтація, конфлікт, технології, військовий потенціал, наддержава, ворожість.

Introduction

Technological advancements, shifts in the balance of power in the world, and the blurring boundaries between the military and civilian spheres have all contributed to the considerable evolution of contemporary military threats. Modern wars are rarely the result of a single cause; rather, they are complex, with multiple factors at play. For example, the First and Second World Wars were sparked by specific events – the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Germany's invasion of Poland, respectively – however, each was fueled by an array of broader factors, including nationalism,

imperialism, militarism, and complex alliance systems. Understanding these factors is critical in both preventing conflicts and resolving them when they do arise. A number of factors may foster an environment that is conducive to wage war. It entails a confluence of strategic, political, economic, and social incentives as well as the hope of using force to further national or ideological objectives. Identifying the dangers of tensions and imbalances that could result in military conflict and the collapse of international and civil peace is one of the leaders' most important responsibilities (Feindouno & Wagner, 2020).

Niccolò Machiavelli (1520), in his famous work “The Art of War” mentioned the war as an important tool in the management of state affairs. In his writings, he put forward the opinion that the statesman who was elected by his pragmatic approach to the phenomenon of war, who conducts war, should first of all strive to achieve goals, not to observe moral and ethical principles. Even if Machiavelli did not give a precise definition of war, it was mentioned in his writings that war was an important tool in managing state affairs or achieving goals. In other words, the philosopher states that war serves the interests of the state, the protection of statehood, and thus that it is an important instrument in the work of state administration.

According to Clausewitz (1832), war is the application of violence for the purpose of making the opposing party accept your will. Clausewitz’s definition of war is simple but highly generalized and is remarkable for revealing the true nature of war. Among the thinkers of his time, Clausewitz understood the war in a broader sense and was able to give its correct explanation. If we start from Clausewitz's view of war, the essence of wars is certainly that the warring parties dictate their will to each other through violence. Another popular definition of war by Clausewitz is related to government, which is closer to Machiavelli's ideas. Here, while giving the definition of war, Clausewitz also identified its participants and was able to determine exactly where violence originates from. According to Clausewitz, war is the continuation of state policy by other means. At the root of the war is state policy, political will, which occurs when it is impossible to continue the policy by means other than military force.

General Alexander Andreyevich Svechin (2004), who participated in the Russo-Japanese War and World War I, defined the war as not just a military confrontation, but a struggle on the economic, political and social fronts. In his “Strategy”, which is considered one of the main literatures of the Soviet military school, the general noted that the duty of politicians is to correctly define the goals of the war. According to Svechin, the goals of the war are determined at the political level, and they must necessarily be consistent with the state’s capabilities.

Looking at more modern approaches, we can refer to the concept known as “General or Grand Strategy” in the field of national security and international relations. American professor John Lewis Gaddis (2018), who is considered one of the modern and advanced scientists of the concept, explained the war in his book “Grand Strategy” as a struggle to achieve the country’s goals through military power, which is one of the elements of national power of the state. According to John Lewis, the goals set at this time should reflect the reality based on the capabilities (resources) the country has.

John Mearsheimer’s (2023) book “How States Think” examines the rationality of decisions made by state political circles regarding wars throughout history. The author refutes the idea that states are rational and that historical decisions about war are not at all irrational and often connected to individuals. World Wars I and II, the Empire of Japan's attack on the United States of America, and Gulf Wars I and II occurred as a result of each of the opposing sides having confidence or hope that their national powers could win the war.

Sosso Feindouno Laurent Wagner (2020) highlight the theoretical (Religious or ethnic tensions, political exclusion, economic or geographical inequalities, etc.) and empirical (demographics, population diversity, geography, climate, the presence of natural resources, etc.) determinants of internal conflicts in the world based on structural and non-structural risks. However, the authors do

not touch upon interstate confrontation and conflicts. There is no doubt that some of these determinants can definitely be applied to interstate relations.

Consequently, it can be concluded that the realization of the war, being directly related to the state policy, is caused by the means and national objectives of the countries. In other words, the national power of the country triggers the occurrence of wars. States show political will and decide to take such a serious step only when their national power is sufficient to support the war. Wars occur when the parties (two or more) believe that their national power is at a level that will fulfil their objectives. When we scrutinize the wars that happened in history, we always witness that one of the parties made mistakes in calculating their own or the other party's national power. Thus, we can also suggest that wars happen as a result of mistakes made in such calculations and analyses. If the other party (or any of the parties) did not have such confidence, the state policy carried out would be continued thanks to other elements of national power, and the resulting conflict would be resolved at the expense of certain concessions without massive loss of life, great destruction and extraordinary consumption of state resources. In order to come up with conclusive outcomes, the paper considers the wide range of factors necessitating the outbreak of 35 wars occurred in the XX and XXI centuries. The methods used in developing the paper are theoretical, such as analysis, synthesis and idealization.

Results

Wars as an Intractable part of International Relations

War has been documented since around 5,000 years ago and continues to be a feature of human history. War is still one of the world's most pressing issues, and history demonstrates that no generation or nation is immune to its threat. War is generally viewed as a negative phenomenon that disrupts people's tranquility, degrades living standards, and drastically alters society. Because wars mean fighting, arms, death, suffering and destruction (Hasanov et al., 2024). Analysis has shown that only eight percent of the current human history has been a period of peace (Hedges, 2003). But at different points in time, different factors have contributed to the start of war or armed conflict. Particularly in relation to the post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security framework, the Ukrainian issue has highlighted the fundamental differences between two opposing parties, namely Russian and Western concepts of Euro-Atlantic security (Sadiyev & Iskandarov, 2018).

The war in general is a direct and open form of aggression, involving the military invasion. International relations theorists generally define war as large scale organized violence between political units. Peace, which is analytically distinct from justice, is usually defined as the absence of war (Guner et al., 2022). However, it is not right to associate the war with only aggression and invasion. Aggressive behavior of states refers to actions taken by a country that are forceful, coercive, or threatening, often with the intention of expanding influence, asserting dominance, or achieving certain goals at the expense of other states. This behavior can be political, economic, or military in nature, and it often leads to increased tensions or conflicts. According to the theory of global leadership, as states vie for dominance, influence, and control over international issues, it may result in confrontations and even wars between them. Theorists such as Waltz, Mearsheimer, Huntington, Buzan, and Gilpin offer valuable perspectives on the dynamics of global power struggles, security dilemmas, and disputes arising from competition for leadership in the international system (Iskandarov et al., 2024).

Aggressive behavior by states is a complex phenomenon influenced by security concerns, economic interests, nationalism, ideology, and the desire for power. While aggression can be a tool for achieving national objectives, it often comes with significant risks and consequences that can lead to regional or global instability. Addressing the root causes of aggression – through diplomacy,

economic cooperation, security assurances, and conflict resolution – remains a crucial challenge for the international community. James Fearon's theory of the failure in bargaining offers a compelling explanation for why countries may continue to wage war in spite of its high costs and shows why they may be unable to come to a peaceful agreement even when it would be advantageous for them to avoid the costs of going to war. Fearon provides a framework for understanding the complexities of global conflict and the difficulties in achieving peaceful resolutions by focusing on issues' indivisibilities, confidentiality, and commitment issues (Iskandarov et al., 2024).

According to John Joseph Mearsheimer, an American belonging to the realist school of thought, contemporary political scientist and scholar of international relations, the current system of international relations in the world forces states to act aggressively against each other. In his book "The Tragedy of the Superpowers", he explains the aggressive behavior of states with the influence of three features of the international relations system:

- 1) The existing anarchy in the system of international relations and thus the absence of a ruling force capable of protecting states from each other;
- 2) All states have certain offensive military capabilities;
- 3) Uncertainty about states' intentions.

The features highlighted by Mearsheimer show that security issues are still a priority for states in the world and that potential threats in this area continue to exist. The abovementioned realistic features of the international relations system make it necessary for states to take serious steps in the field of security, which in turn conditions the continuation of tension at the global level.

The determinants of confrontation between states

The fact that all states have certain military capabilities creates tension at the global level. We can identify the factors that necessitate the confrontation based on three main features of the international relations system presented by Mearsheimer and the main theories about state behavior.

1. Continuous rival relationships. States often pursue balance-of-power strategies to prevent any one state from becoming too dominant. This can result in shifting alliances, with states forming coalitions to counterbalance any perceived threat. For instance, NATO was created as a balance to Soviet power, and China's rising influence in Asia has led to similar balancing dynamics. Even though with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, NATO lost its "archenemy", the contradictory developments that the system of international relations and international security environment met after the collapse of the Soviet Union brought the issue of independence and sovereignty into the heart of the debate on the future of the international community and the new world order. The actual transformation of the European security architecture necessitated NATO's engagement in the crises occurred throughout the continent (Sadiyev & Iskandarov, 2018). Now Russian-led CSTO struggles to burnish an image of multifunctional organization, presents different initiatives and pits itself against NATO (Iskandarov & Gawliczek, 2019). According to Anthony C. Lopez and Dominic D.P. Johnson (2020), Russia is becoming more assertive in its bid for dominance and territory in Europe, while China and India are also becoming more powerful militarily and economically. Beyond these noteworthy advancements, the proliferation of nuclear weapons to North Korea, Pakistan, and maybe Iran in the future has resulted in a dramatic shift in the balance of power in the Middle East and Central and East Asia. The balance of power is moving away from the US and Europe due to the rise of the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and other emerging nations. According to realist theories, states are rational, and they are in constant competition with existing rivals for power (Mearsheimer & Rosato, 2023). At the heart of the state's behavior is its struggle for survival. In order to survive, states try to gain an advantage over their rivals by maintaining the balance of power between their rivals or by taking advantage of the opportunities that have arisen. It is important to emphasize that the competition taking place at this time is of a political nature. Thus, although other types of competition are constantly occurring in various fields of human activity, they do not pose a threat from the point of view of national security. Many modern wars arise from

efforts by leaders, political factions, or governments to gain or maintain power. Wars can be driven by clashing ideologies. For example, the Cold War created numerous proxy wars between capitalist and communist states. Nationalist sentiments or historical grievances between ethnic groups can also drive conflict. These tensions often become pronounced in regions with diverse ethnic compositions, where groups seek independence or greater autonomy. When we look at the historical facts, we can see that the main factor that led to the start of World War II was the competition between the Western European states for hegemony in the old continent. Thus, the 3rd Reich, concerned about the strengthening of France on the old continent and ensuring more favorable alliance relations, decided that war was inevitable. Taking advantage of a period of time when France was relatively weaker and failed to establish allied relations with the USSR, it decided to change the balance of power in its favor through military means. As we have seen, from the point of view of national security, the formation of adversarial relations between states is considered undesirable, and the possibility of its escalation into a potential military conflict should always be taken into account. Therefore, the first reason for the occurrence of war or military conflicts is the emergence of competing relations at the political level.

2. The absence of a global ruling authority capable of protecting states from each other.

This concept suggests that because there is no overarching authority to enforce rules or resolve disputes, each state must fend for itself, which in turn creates a condition known as international anarchy. In the absence of any international legal mechanisms or deterrent alliances, the likelihood of waging war between competing states by the militarily stronger one increases. However, the interests of superpowers and regional powers should also be taken into account in this regard. The occurrence of war or military conflict must align with the policies of superpowers and regional powers that have immediate interests in the region. The lack of a power that can act as a judge in the world was tried to be fixed by the end of World War II, however was ineffective. UN resolutions, their acceptance and implementation mechanisms, the fact that global issues are resolved in the Security Council on the basis of the interests of 5 countries indicate that no success has been achieved in solving this problem. Superpower competition is a major factor in modern conflicts. For instance, the U.S., China, and Russia often back opposing sides in global conflicts to protect their interests, maintain influence, and balance each other's power. We can generally call this kind of security situation a geopolitical conjuncture. This term refers to the political situation created by the involvement of various states and international organizations around a certain region. The occurrence of wars can be realized primarily when the geopolitical conjuncture supports military solutions. Thus, the emergence of a geopolitical conjuncture that supports military solutions in the system of international relations is the factor that decides war and military conflicts. In essence, the lack of a global ruling authority leads to a world where states must prioritize their own security and survival, often at the expense of cooperation or trust. This condition of anarchy creates an environment where conflict is more likely, and peace often relies on a delicate balance of power and shared norms.

3. All states have a certain type of offensive military capabilities. The fact that all states possess some form of offensive military capability contributes to what is known as the offensive realism theory in international relations. According to this view, states not only prioritize their security but are also driven by the potential for power gains that come with offensive capabilities. A stringent deterrence means that a state should have an offensive capability if it is attacked (Hasanov et al., 2019). This underlying potential for aggression creates an atmosphere of mistrust and insecurity among nations. In an anarchic international system, each state must rely on its own resources and strategies for security. The lack of a reliable protector or arbitrator means states are constantly wary of others' intentions, leading to a "self-help" approach where they prioritize military capabilities and alliances for their protection. When countries rapidly increase military spending or develop new weapons, it can lead to tensions with neighbors and rival states, creating conditions

for potential conflict. Offensive capabilities can create incentives for states to launch preemptive or preventive wars. In a preemptive strike, a state attacks first if it believes an adversary is about to attack. In a preventive strike, a state attacks to weaken a rival's growing power before it becomes a threat. For instance, Israel's Six-Day War in 1967 began as a preemptive strike due to perceived imminent threats from neighboring Arab states. According to Mearsheimer's observations, the presence of armed forces with certain capabilities determines the aggressiveness of the system of international relations. Thus, a state with any level of military potential is able to take aggressive steps, which directly leads to similar behavior of other states (especially rival states). If we look at the history, we would see that one of the preconditions in the peace treaties signed after the wars was that the defeated state would not regain military capabilities. Victorious states use all means to prevent the defeated opponent from increasing its military capacity. The demilitarization of Germany before the First World War and the demilitarization of Germany and Japan during the Second World War are typical examples of it. Military potential means not only the active military units of the state, but also its mobilization capabilities (human, material, technical), weapon systems and ammunition supply capabilities. Thus, as the third factor determining war and military conflicts, we can mention the presence of the threatening military potential of the rival state or the possibility of obtaining such a potential. Ensuring military capabilities and conducting long-term military operations simultaneously requires serious economic resources. The analysis of modern military conflicts proves this argument. Ukraine's daily expenses in the war are 100 million US dollars (Khalilova, 2023). However, the required financial and other types of resources certainly depend on many factors. The economic resources that can support military operations are assessed on the basis of various factors, such as the intensity of military operations, the applied weapon systems, domestic production or capacity to purchase military equipment and ammunition, etc. At the same time, war is not just about military spending. During military operations difficulties in production, import and export are experienced, which requires preparation of the country's economy for the war period. When assessing the possibility of a rival state starting a war, the analysis of its economic capabilities that can support this phenomenon necessitates serious study and is one of the most important factors. Before the Russia-Ukraine war, Russia's strategic currency reserves, a positive economic balance in the country, dependence on foreign markets and other economic factors were carefully analyzed. Despite the fact that more than two years have elapsed since the war broke out, the introduction of numerous economic sanctions, as well as a serious decrease in Russia's energy exports, the country is still able to continue the war with high intensity. For this reason, economic opportunities should be analyzed in detail when assessing the probability of war. The economic capabilities of the adversary will determine its war strategy. A state with stable economic opportunities will be prepared for a long-term scenario of war, while a relatively weak state will calculate its activities for its faster conclusion. Thus, we may highlight the presence of the economic potential of the rival state as the driving force behind the strategy of war.

4. Uncertainty about states' intentions. The third feature presented by Mearsheimer actually conditions the feature of obtaining military capabilities mentioned in the system of international relations. It is the lack of knowledge about the intentions of the states or the lack of confidence that their intentions will not change in the long term, which makes it necessary for the states to always have a certain military potential. For this reason, in the peace treaties signed after the war, the changes made to the constitutions of the states, the restrictions on the activities of certain political parties were calculated precisely to prevent aggressive intentions. The states are always wary of the aggressive intention of the rival state, and in this field, they carry out various activities in all spheres of state activity. Increased defense capabilities, arms control conventions, various alliance agreements, non-aggression pacts between countries, and other similar measures aim to prevent the emergence of aggressive intentions by states against each other. Sun Tzu also asserted that calculations are essential. The word "calculations" is better translated as "estimates"

especially at operational and strategic levels. If estimates indicate the plan is not workable or too risky, then, the decision maker should not take any of necessary actions before all issues of risks are properly solved out. If not, he will put his force in jeopardy and will ruin his nation (Iskandarov et al., 2022). At the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held in 2023, the Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal to sign a non-aggression pact between member countries of the organization once again proves the relevance of the same trends in the modern era (daryo.uz, 2023). However, it is no secret that sometimes malign ambitions (because of diverse and competing interests of member states) overcome the founding principles of this type of pacts. For instance, apart from the proclivity towards either blocs (Western or Eastern) some members of Non-aligned Movement have even gone to war with one another (for instance, India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq) (Iskandarov et al., 2019). Thus, as another factor causing war or military conflicts, we can mention the presence of the intention of aggression in the political course of the competing state.

Karl Von Clausewitz points out that hostile intent and hostile feelings are the factors that lead people to war. According to Clausewitz, even if war does not happen because of people's hatred towards the other side, it can be realized in the end precisely because of it. Based on these two motives of Clausewitz, it is possible to advance the study of the causes of war. Thus, the existence of feelings of enmity in any society, its suppression, as well as its extension to extremes and at the same time its artificial creation from scratch, result from the presence of animosity at the political level. Observing the mentioned trend in any society is an indication of hostile intent at the political level. Thus, the emergence of hostile intent against another state in any state creates an official basis for the formation of hostile feelings in its society or a sharper form. Enmity feelings instilled in the society at this time only serve to ensure the realization of the hostile intention of the state. In other words, the feeling of enmity serves to cause war, to conduct it, and to ensure its support by society.

5. Hostile intention. The feeling of hostility – often rooted in fear, mistrust, resentment, or perceived injustice—can be a powerful catalyst for war. This emotional component can intensify existing tensions, making it easier for leaders, nations, or groups to justify the escalation to armed conflict. Hostility can stem from longstanding grievances or historical conflicts between nations or ethnic groups. Nationalism, fueled by memories of past injustices or territorial losses, can drive populations to support war as a means of reclaiming perceived lost glory or "righting" historical wrongs. This was notably seen in the lead-up to both World Wars, where nationalistic fervor made populations more willing to support military aggression. Hostility, in this sense, acts as an accelerant to other conflict-causing factors like competition for resources or geopolitical influence. In an atmosphere where hostility is widespread, even minor incidents can spiral into full-scale conflicts, as emotionally charged reactions replace diplomatic restraint and make war feel not just acceptable but necessary. When we analyze modern wars, we can witness that feelings of hostility are controlled by the reason for hostility, and at the same time, one complements the other. The preparation of grand narratives by states for conflicts can be cited as a shining example. In the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2014, the Ukrainian side definitely did not have the first of the mentioned factors. Although the feelings of hostility towards the Russians have historically existed in the Ukrainian society, not enough has been done to raise it to the level of supporting the war. For this reason, the Ukrainian government, whose territorial integrity was violated, lost its sovereignty and at the same time received full support from the western states, could not wage war. H. Kissinger, the former secretary of state of the USA, who conducted research on this topic, predicted that Ukraine is not a foreign country for Russia, and thus the resistance against the Russians in Ukraine will not give the desired results (Kissinger, 2014). Waging war became possible only after six years, after the necessary propaganda measures were taken in the society, and the Ukrainian army without receiving special support from the western countries was able to seriously resist the Russian army, which launched large-scale offensive operations from all sides of the country.

Conclusion

The outbreak of wars in the modern world is rarely the result of a single factor; instead, it is the consequence of multiple interrelated forces. Confrontations often serve as precursors to war, while wars reshape the dynamics of future confrontations. Therefore, confrontation itself in the modern world emerges from a complex interplay of various factors, each intensifying and interacting with the others in unique ways. If not managed effectively, any confrontation can escalate into war. The factors highlighted in the paper interact in complex ways, with economic motives intertwining with ideological ambitions, and technological advances creating new means of confrontation. Understanding these interconnected factors is crucial for developing strategies to prevent or resolve conflicts in today's globalized and interdependent world, which in turn underscores the importance of diplomatic efforts, multilateral alliances, and conflict resolution mechanisms to manage and mitigate the risks of modern warfare

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