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MISTAKEN AND ACCIDENTAL WARS: RATIONALITY, UNCERTAINTY, AND STRATEGIC CHOICE IN THE ONSET OF ARMED CONFLICT

ВІЙНА ЯК РЕЗУЛЬТАТ ПОМИЛКИ ЧИ ВИПАДКУ: РАЦІОНАЛЬНІСТЬ, НЕВИЗНАЧЕНІСТЬ ТА СТРАТЕГІЧНИЙ ВИБІР У ЗБРОЙНИХ КОНФЛІКТАХ

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Abstract. *Wars are frequently characterized as accidents, mistakes, or unintended consequences of miscalculation. Such interpretations are deeply embedded in both popular discourse and classical reflections on war, where armed conflict is often portrayed as a breakdown of diplomacy or rational control. At the same time, much of contemporary international relations theory rests on the assumption that states and their leaders are broadly rational actors who seek to maximize expected utility under constraints. This creates a persistent puzzle: if war is costly, risky, and widely recognized as destructive, why do rational decision-makers repeatedly choose it?*

This article argues that the opposition between "accidental" and "deliberate" war is analytically misleading. Rather than being the product of sheer error or irrationality, most wars emerge from strategic interaction under conditions of uncertainty, incomplete information, and political constraint. What are often described ex post as "mistaken" wars are more accurately understood as high-risk strategies whose unfavourable outcomes materialized de-facto. Conversely, wars that achieve immediate objectives may still constitute strategic errors if decision-makers systematically underestimated costs or overestimated benefits.

The article develops this argument by integrating rationalist bargaining theory with insights from political psychology, escalation theory, and domestic politics. It conceptualizes war as a gamble under uncertainty, where probabilities are endogenous and shaped by interaction with adaptive adversaries. It further distinguishes between mistaken wars and accidental wars, emphasizing escalation dynamics, brinkmanship, and loss of control. Finally, it examines how cognitive biases, group decision-making processes, and domestic political incentives condition leaders' willingness to accept risk. Taken together, the analysis challenges outcome-based judgments of war and offers a more nuanced framework for understanding why wars occur despite their recognized costs.

Key words: *war, rational choice, uncertainty, risk-taking, misperception, groupthink, strategic decision-making, international conflict.*

Анотація. *Війни часто вважають результатом випадку, помилок або ненавмисним наслідком хибних розрахунків. Такі підходи поширені як у публічному дискурсі, так і в класичних роботах про війну, де збройний конфлікт нерідко постає як результат провалу дипломатії або втрати контролю. Водночас значна частина сучасних підходів у теорії міжнародних відносин припускають, що держави та їхні лідери в цілому є раціональними агентами, які прагнуть максимізувати очікувану виграш. Це веде до питання: якщо війна є дорогою, ризикованою та руйнівною, чому раціональні лідери її обирають?*

У цій статті стверджується, що протиставлення «випадкової» та «навмисної» війни є аналітично хибним. Більшість війн не є результатом помилок чи ірраціональних рішень,

натомість вони витікають із стратегічної взаємодії в умовах невизначеності, неповної інформації та політичних обмежень. Те, що постфактум часто характеризується як «помилкова» війна, точніше було б розуміти як результат ризикованої стратегії, несприятливі наслідки якої було реалізовано. Натомість війни, що успішно досягли поставлених цілей, можуть бути стратегічними помилками, якщо політики систематично недооцінювали витрати або переоцінювали виграші.

У статті обгрунтовано цю думку із використанням теорії переговорів в рамках раціоналістичного підходу та політичної психології, теорії ескалації та досліджень внутрішньої політики. Війна сприймається радше як рішення в умовах невизначеності, де співвідношення ймовірностей залежить від взаємодії із суперниками, що здатні змінювати свою поведінку. Також проведено розмежування помилкових та випадкових війн, з акцентом на динаміці ескалації, балансуванні на межі війни та втраті контролю. Нарешті, досліджено як когнітивні викривлення, процеси групового мислення й внутрішньополітичні стимули впливають на готовність лідерів йти на ризик. У сукупності цей аналіз ставить під сумнів оцінки воєн, засновані лише на результатах, і пропонує більш детальну рамку для розуміння того, чому війни виникають попри усвідомлення їхньої високої ціни.

Ключові слова: *війна, раціональний вибір, невизначеність, схильність до ризику, хибні уявлення, групове мислення, стратегічне ухвалення рішень, міжнародний конфлікт.*

Introduction. The onset of wars poses one of the key challenges in security and conflict studies. States systemically initiate military conflicts, even when victory seems too expensive, uncertain or risky – not to mention defeat. There are a number of theories at different levels of analysis, explaining the process. One of the levels deals with decision-making: a war is seen as a result of a chain of decisions taken by (supposedly) rational actors.

A view on war from this perspective implies a deeper understanding of strategic choice political leaders face under uncertainty. They can be mistaken or gambling, but that is not enough to explain why decision to go to war are from time to time made by rational actors. To provide a better explanation, war can be presented as a response, which seems rational under certain conditions, even given its high price.

This article argues that the dichotomy between accidental and intentional war is misleading. Wars rarely emerge from pure chance, but neither are they always the result of straightforward rational calculation. Instead, wars are best understood as outcomes of strategic interaction under uncertainty, where risk, misperception, incomplete information, and institutional or psychological constraints shape decision-making. What may later be labelled a "mistake" is often a rational choice given the information, preferences, and incentives available at the time.

The purpose of this article is to define or expand the concepts of "mistake", "risk", "uncertainty" – key variables impacting decisions to launch a war; and demonstrate how wars are rather resulting from strategic interactions, information asymmetry and political constraints.

Literature Review. The question of the causes of wars is fundamental for international security studies, war studies and international relations theory. Explanations of war span multiple traditions, ranging from classical reflections on human nature and power politics to formal models of strategic interaction and psychological approaches to decision-making under uncertainty.

Classical realism provides an early framework for understanding war as an instrument of policy rather than a diplomatic failure. Hans Morgenthau emphasized that states operate in an anarchic system driven by the pursuit of power and survival, making the use of force a recurrent feature of international politics *(Morgenthau, 2005).* From this perspective, wars may be disastrous, but they are rarely accidental in a meaningful sense; they emerge from conflicting interests and power struggles under conditions of uncertainty.

Structural realism refined this logic by linking war to the distribution of power and systemic constraints rather than to individual errors. Kenneth Waltz argued that the anarchic structure of the international system compels states to rely on self-help, generating security competition that can lead to war even in the absence of malign intentions *(Waltz, 2010).* Structural realism thus shifts attention away from mistakes toward structural pressures that make conflict recurrent. However, structural realism has difficulty explaining variation in war onset and the specific timing of conflicts, leaving

room for agency, perception, and strategic choice.

Rationalist theories of war address this gap by conceptualizing war as a bargaining failure. James Fearon's seminal article argues that if war is costly and leaders are rational, states should prefer negotiated settlements that reflect the balance of power *(Fearon, 1995).* War occurs not because leaders are irrational, but because of specific mechanisms that prevent agreement, including private information with incentives to misrepresent, commitment problems, and issue indivisibilities. In this framework, wars often appear "mistaken" only in hindsight, when private information is revealed through fighting. The rationalist approach thus reframes war as an equilibrium outcome of strategic interaction under uncertainty rather than a deviation from rational behaviour.

Subsequent work has extended and refined bargaining models by incorporating dynamic interaction, learning, and endogenous shifts in power. Scholars such as Robert Powell emphasize commitment problems as a central cause of war, particularly in situations where power is shifting *(Powell, 2006).* From this perspective, preventive and preemptive wars may be rational responses to anticipated future disadvantages, even if they entail high immediate costs. This logic complicates simple judgments about error, as decisions that appear reckless ex post may have been strategically defensible ex ante.

Escalation theory further contributes to understanding how wars can emerge without a clear intention to fight. Thomas Schelling's work on brinkmanship highlights how rational actors may deliberately manipulate risk, creating situations in which outcomes are partially beyond their control *(Schelling, 1981).* In such settings, war can result from a series of rational choices that increase the probability of catastrophe without any single decision constituting a clear mistake. This insight blurs the boundary between accidental and deliberate war, suggesting that loss of control can itself be a strategic instrument.

Political psychology offers a complementary perspective by focusing on how cognitive limitations, biases, and group dynamics shape decision-making. Scholars have documented systematic patterns of overconfidence, motivated reasoning, and misperception that affect leaders' assessments of costs, probabilities, and adversary intentions *(Jervis, 1976; Kahneman, Tversky, 1979).* Irving Janis's concept of groupthink demonstrates how cohesive decision-making groups may suppress dissent, discount warning signals, and converge on flawed strategies *(Janis, 1982).* Psychological approaches do not reject rationality outright, but they highlight how bounded rationality and organizational processes can distort strategic calculations.

More recent work seeks to integrate rationalist and psychological insights rather than treating them as competing explanations *(Davis, McDermott, 2021).* Behavioral IR has expanded significantly in recent years beyond the traditional rational choice versus psychology debate, positioning itself as a platform for examining a broader set of mechanisms, including of war initiation. This implies integrated research agendas that address how individual traits, environmental contexts, and biological factors interact to shape decision-making in international relations.

Main Results of the Research. Wars are often described as "mistakes" or "accidents", i.e. outcomes of miscalculations, uncontrollable escalation, or unfortunate chains of events that no actor truly desired. This intuition is deeply rooted in both popular discourse and classical reflections on war, where armed conflict is associated with fate, chance, or forces beyond deliberate human control. From this perspective, wars appear as failures of diplomacy or reason, deviations from an otherwise preferable peaceful equilibrium.

At the same time, much of contemporary international relations theory rests on a different assumption: states are generally treated as rational actors. Decision-makers, acting on behalf of states, are assumed to pursue strategies that maximize expected utility and minimize costs, however these may be defined *(Fearon 1995; Powell 2006).* If this assumption holds, war becomes less an accident and more a strategic choice, one that is difficult to reconcile with the high and well-documented costs of modern armed conflict.

This tension raises a fundamental puzzle. If war is costly, risky, and often destructive beyond initial expectations, why do rational actors still choose it? And under what conditions can wars meaningfully be described as "mistaken" or "accidental" rather than deliberate strategic decisions?

One of the least disputed claims in the international conflict studies is that war is expensive. Modern wars impose enormous human, economic, political, and reputational costs *(Bilmes, Stiglitz,*

2008). Even victorious states often suffer long-term consequences that exceed initial expectations, including economic strain, political instability, and unintended strategic commitments. This observation underpins much of the rationalist literature on war.

If states are rational and war is costly, then war should be rare. Yet history suggests otherwise. Armed conflicts persist across different times and regions. The rationalist response to this puzzle does not deny rationality but instead reframes the problem: war occurs not despite rationality, but because of it, under specific strategic conditions *(Fearon, 2018).*

From such perspective, war is not necessarily evidence of irrationality or error. Rather, it can represent a rational response to unfavourable alternatives. A state may choose war not because it expects low costs or easy victory, but because the expected costs of peace – or of accepting an opponent's demands – are perceived as even higher. In such cases, war becomes the least bad option among several undesirable alternatives.

Another consideration can also be relevant. Costs of peace, which are often neglected, can become so high that war seems a rational option. Military spendings, imposition of penalties and predation are often mentioned as main sources of peace costs *(Coe, Vaynman, 2020),* which make war attractive. When costly peace mechanisms are in place, there may be *n*o mutually preferable peaceful division of value, because any peace settlement that addresses the core of the dispute would still leave actors worse off relative to the option of conflict.

This logic complicates retrospective judgments about "mistaken" wars. A war that ends in defeat does not automatically imply that the initial decision was irrational. Conversely, a victorious war does not prove that the decision to fight was sound. Outcomes alone cannot validate or invalidate strategic choices; what matters is the information and expectations available at the time of decision-making. This point is often overlooked in historical assessments of war. With the benefit of hindsight, it is tempting to label failed wars as obvious blunders and successful ones as farsighted strategies. Yet such evaluations commit a fundamental analytical error: they substitute ex post outcomes for ex ante reasoning.

Consider two illustrative examples. In the early fifth century BCE, Athens and Sparta rejected ultimatums from the Achaemenid Empire, a power vastly superior in population and material resources. The ensuing Greco-Persian Wars imposed immense costs but ultimately preserved Greek autonomy. Was this an irrational gamble – or a rational refusal to accept a worse alternative?

By contrast, Saddam Hussein's decision to defy US demands in 2003 resulted in regime collapse, occupation, and his eventual execution. In retrospect, the imbalance of power makes this decision appear catastrophically irrational. Yet from the perspective of the Iraqi leadership, surrender carried its own existential risks, including loss of power, internal threats, and uncertain personal survival. These examples underscore a key analytical point: rationality does not guarantee success, and failure does not necessarily imply irrationality.

A more precise way to conceptualize decisions for war is to treat them as choices under uncertainty. Leaders do not know the true probability of victory, the full scale of costs, or the likely reactions of allies, adversaries, and domestic audiences. Instead, they operate with estimates, beliefs, and assumptions that may later prove inaccurate.

In this sense, war resembles a strategic gamble rather than a deterministic calculation. The expected utility of war depends on three variables that are notoriously difficult to assess: the probability of victory, the value of winning or losing, and the costs of fighting.

Unlike games of chance such as lotteries or roulette, where probabilities are fixed and known, war involves strategic interaction with an adaptive opponent. As a result, probabilities are endogenous and constantly shifting. A state's likelihood of success depends not only on its own capabilities but also on the strategies, resolve, and learning capacity of its adversary.

This distinction is crucial. Some decisions are irrational because they have negative expected value regardless of context. Purchasing lottery tickets or playing roulette falls into this category: no sequence of wins can transform such activities into rational strategies over repeated play. By contrast, decisions about war are different. Their expected value cannot be strictly determined in advance.

Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that material power alone is a poor predictor of war outcomes *(Beckley, 2018).* Weaker states frequently resist stronger opponents successfully, either by avoiding defeat, prolonging conflict, or imposing costs that outweigh the benefits of victory

(Arreguín-Toft, 2005). This empirical pattern further undermines simplistic calculations based solely on relative capabilities.

As a result, even wars with low estimated probabilities of success may be rational if the alternatives are sufficiently unattractive. Conversely, wars that appear promising may be strategically misguided if costs are underestimated or political objectives are ill-defined. This logic challenges the notion of "mistaken war" as a category defined by outcomes. A war can be both rational and unsuccessful; it can also be successful and strategically unsound.

The concept of a "mistake" in international politics is also quite complex. In everyday language, a mistake is typically understood as a wrong decision, one that leads to undesirable outcomes. In analytical terms, however, this definition is insufficient. Outcomes alone cannot determine whether a decision was mistaken, because political actors operate under uncertainty and incomplete information. A decision that leads to failure may nonetheless have been rational ex ante, while a successful outcome may result from luck rather than sound judgment.

To avoid retrospective bias, mistakes in international politics must be defined in procedural rather than outcome-based terms. From a rational-choice perspective, a decision can be considered mistaken if it had a negative expected value given the information reasonably available to the decision-maker at the time. This definition aligns with decision theory and allows for analytical consistency across cases *(Levy, 1997).*

This distinction is critical for understanding war. Many wars labelled as "mistaken" are, upon closer inspection, better described as high-risk strategies whose unfavourable outcomes were realized ex post. Conversely, some wars that achieved their immediate objectives may still qualify as strategic errors if decision-makers systematically underestimated costs or overestimated benefits.

Historical interpretation frequently violates this principle. Analysts often project knowledge of subsequent events onto past decision-makers, judging their choices as irrational because they "should have known better." This logic is analytically flawed. Decision-makers cannot observe future contingencies; they can only act on available signals, intelligence, historical analogies, and strategic expectations.

The problem is exacerbated by the asymmetric availability of information. Leaders rarely have full access to reliable intelligence about adversaries' capabilities, intentions, or resolve. Even when such information exists, it may be filtered, distorted, or selectively presented by bureaucracies with their own incentives *(Jervis, 1976).* As a result, decisions that appear obviously flawed in hindsight may have seemed defensible – or even prudent – at the time.

This perspective complicates the moral and analytical evaluation of war initiation. It suggests that identifying "mistaken wars" requires reconstructing the decision-making environment rather than relying on outcomes alone. The analytical task, therefore, is not to ask whether a war was lost or won, but whether the decision to fight systematically violated the decision-maker's own strategic logic.

While many wars result from deliberate strategic choices, others are commonly described as "accidental." In a broad sense, all wars are contingent events shaped by complex interactions and unpredictable developments. In a narrower analytical sense, however, accidental wars can be defined as conflicts that arise without a clear intention to fight at the outset, often through escalation processes that gradually get out of control.

The concept of accidental war gained prominence during the Cold War, particularly in discussions of nuclear deterrence. Strategists worried about scenarios in which technical failures, false alarms, or unauthorized actions could trigger catastrophic escalation *(Schelling, 1981).* These concerns were not merely hypothetical: several incidents involved near-launches of nuclear weapons due to misinterpreted signals or system errors *(Blair, 1993).*

Beyond technical accidents, escalation dynamics represent a more common pathway to unintended war. Political leaders may initially pursue limited objectives, e.g. signalling resolve, or extracting concessions, without intending to initiate full-scale conflict. Yet each incremental step alters the strategic environment, raises stakes, and reduces the credibility of de-escalation.

The July Crisis of 1914 is the famous example. Decisions to issue ultimatums, mobilize forces, and reaffirm alliance commitments were taken incrementally, often defensively, yet collectively produced a situation in which backing down became politically and strategically untenable *(Jervis, 1997).* War emerged not from a single decision but from a sequence of moves that progressively

narrowed the space for compromise.

This logic is central to escalation theory. Each action intended to enhance security or bargaining leverage simultaneously increases the probability of violence. Mobilization, for example, may be defensively motivated but is often indistinguishable from preparation for attack. Once such measures are undertaken, political leaders face audience costs and reputational concerns that make reversal difficult *(Fearon, 1994).*

Importantly, escalation does not necessarily imply loss of control. Leaders may accept increasing risks as part of a coercive strategy. Thomas Schelling famously described this as "the threat that leaves something to chance" *(Schelling, 1960).* By deliberately creating situations where events could spiral beyond control, leaders attempt to signal resolve and shift bargaining outcomes.

From this perspective, accidental wars are rarely pure accidents. They are more accurately understood as byproducts of strategic environments in which risk-taking is incentivized, and where multiple actors simultaneously pursue brinkmanship strategies. War occurs not because leaders fail to act rationally, but because rational risk-taking by multiple actors produces unstable equilibria.

Even when leaders aim to act rationally, their decisions are filtered through cognitive processes that systematically deviate from perfect rationality. A substantial body of research in political psychology demonstrates that decision-makers rely on heuristics, analogies, and simplified mental models, particularly under conditions of stress and uncertainty *(Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Jervis, 1976).*

One of the most repetitive cognitive biases in the context of war is overconfidence. Leaders frequently overestimate their own capabilities and underestimate those of their adversaries. Empirical studies suggest that political leaders are particularly prone to optimism bias when contemplating the use of force, often expecting short wars, limited resistance, and manageable costs *(Johnson, 2004).*

Closely related is the problem of misperception. States may misinterpret defensive actions as offensive preparations, especially in tense strategic environments. Such misperceptions are not random; they are often shaped by prior beliefs and ideological frameworks. Information that confirms existing expectations is more readily accepted than information that challenges them, a phenomenon known as confirmation bias *(Jervis, 1976).*

Historical analogies play a particularly influential role. Leaders frequently justify decisions for war by invoking past successes or failures, e.g. Munich, Vietnam, or the Cold War; yet such analogies are often applied selectively or superficially. While analogical reasoning can simplify complex decisions, it also risks importing inappropriate lessons from fundamentally different contexts *(Khong, 1992).*

These cognitive factors do not operate in isolation. They interact with institutional structures and group dynamics, amplifying their effects. Decision-making bodies that are insulated from external criticism or alternative viewpoints are especially vulnerable to distorted assessments of risk and feasibility. These dynamics are explored in greater detail further below, with an emphasis on group decision-making and the phenomenon of groupthink.

While rationalist models typically treat states as unitary actors, decisions about war are made by individuals operating within small groups. This introduces an additional layer of complexity into the analysis of conflict onset. Even when national interests are clearly defined and information is available, the social dynamics of decision-making bodies can systematically distort strategic assessments. One of the most influential concepts capturing this phenomenon is groupthink.

The concept of groupthink was introduced by Irving Janis to describe a mode of thinking in highly cohesive groups where the desire for unanimity overrides the motivation to appraise alternative courses of action realistically *(Janis, 1982).* Under conditions of groupthink, decision-making groups display a characteristic set of symptoms: illusions of invulnerability, collective rationalization, belief in the inherent morality of the group's position, stereotyped views of the adversary, pressure on dissenters, self-censorship, and an illusion of unanimity.

In the context of international security, these dynamics are particularly dangerous. Decisions about war are often taken under time pressure, high uncertainty, and perceived external threat—precisely the conditions under which groupthink is most likely to emerge. Moreover, national security decision-making is frequently insulated from external criticism, reinforcing informational closure and conformity.

Empirical studies suggest that groupthink has played a role in several major foreign policy failures. Janis's own analysis of the Bay of Pigs invasion demonstrated how the Kennedy administration discounted warning signals, suppressed dissenting views, and overestimated the likelihood of success *(Janis, 1982).* Subsequent scholarship has identified similar dynamics in the escalation of the Vietnam War, the Israeli decision-making prior to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 *(Khong, 1992; Badie, 2010).*

Groupthink does not imply irrationality in a psychological sense. Rather, it reflects bounded rationality operating within social constraints. Individuals may privately harbour doubts yet refrain from voicing them due to career incentives, loyalty norms, or fear of exclusion. As a result, policy outcomes reflect not the aggregation of independent judgments but the reinforcement of a dominant narrative.

Importantly, groupthink interacts with the rationalist mechanisms discussed earlier. It can exacerbate private information problems by filtering intelligence, intensify commitment problems by framing concessions as weakness, and harden perceptions of issue indivisibility. In this sense, group decision-making failures are not an alternative explanation to rationalist theories of war but a complementary one, specifying how rational incentives are processed, or sometimes distorted, within real-world institutions.

A second major departure from unitary rational actor models lies in the domestic political causes of war. Leaders do not merely act of the basis of national interests; they operate within political systems that reward certain decisions and discourage others. These domestic incentives can significantly shape risk preferences and strategic choices *(Renshon, Yarhi-Milo, Kertzer, 2023).*

An influential line of research focuses on political survival. According to selectorate theory, leaders are primarily concerned with maintaining the support of a winning coalition whose size and composition vary across regimes *(Siverson, R., Bueno de Mesquita, B. (2017).* In systems where leaders rely on narrow coalitions, they may be more willing to engage in risky foreign policies, including war, if such actions help maintain elite loyalty or divert attention from domestic problems.

Diversionary war theory similarly posits that leaders facing domestic unrest, economic downturns, or declining legitimacy may use external conflict to rally public support and consolidate power. While empirical evidence for diversionary motives is mixed, there is substantial support for the claim that domestic vulnerability increases leaders' willingness to accept higher levels of risk *(Theiler, 2017).*

Domestic politics also influence perceptions of the costs of backing down. Audience cost theory argues that leaders who make public threats incur domestic political penalties if they fail to follow through, thereby increasing the risk of escalation during crises. Although the empirical robustness of audience costs remains debated, the broader point stands: domestic political constraints shape bargaining behaviour and limit leaders' space for manoeuvre.

Regime type further conditions risk-taking behaviour. Democratic leaders, accountable to broader electorates, may be more cautious about initiating wars but also more selective, choosing conflicts they expect to win. Autocratic leaders, by contrast, may be less constrained by public opinion but more sensitive to elite threats, leading to different patterns of escalation and commitment.

Crucially, domestic incentives can transform objectively unfavourable wars into subjectively rational choices. When personal survival, regime stability, or ideological legitimacy are at stake, leaders may rationally prefer war to negotiated outcomes that threaten their political position. In such cases, what appears as strategic folly from an external perspective may be consistent with the internal logic of political survival.

Conclusions. The persistence of war in an era where its costs are widely recognized remains one of the central puzzles of international relations theory. This article has argued that the puzzle cannot be resolved by attributing war solely to error, irrationality, or chance. Instead, war emerges from the interaction of rational strategic incentives, uncertainty, domestic political constraints, group decision-making dynamics, and structural features of the international system.

Rationalist explanations highlight why bargaining fails even when peaceful settlements exist. Psychological and organizational factors explain how information is filtered and preferences distorted. Domestic politics clarify why leaders may accept risks that appear excessive from a national welfare perspective.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that war is neither an aberration nor an inevitability. It is a contingent outcome produced by identifiable mechanisms operating under specific conditions. Understanding these mechanisms does not eliminate war, but it sharpens our ability to recognize when the risk of conflict is rising, and why seemingly avoidable wars continue to occur.

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