

Shifting Power and Regional Conflict: Explaining Persistent Regional War

Alex Weisiger*

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Abstract

Some regions of the world are beset by endemic violence, while others are relatively peaceful. What explains the repeated wars in these violent regions? And by what process do such regions occasionally transition to peace? In this paper, I argue that in regions of endemic conflict, war begets war through several processes related to shifting power concerns. In particular, war creates windows of opportunity for aggression against actors whose allies are occupied elsewhere, while concerns about the way in which empowered actors would use their new strength produce repeated civil and international wars related to state failure and consolidation. Transitions to regional peace thus require addressing the concerns about shifting power. I evaluate a number of hypotheses about how regional peace might emerge, of which major war and the resolution of a “central” conflict provide the most plausible pathway to stability. I then evaluate these arguments on the case of the Platine subsystem of South America in the nineteenth century, which experienced pervasive violence from independence until about 1880 but was largely peaceful thereafter. Violence in this subsystem was driven primarily by shifting power concerns related to state weakness in Argentina, and ended when the Unitarian/Liberal faction dominant in Buenos Aires triumphed over the Federalists in the interior provinces, a victory that was made possible by the surprisingly destructive war with Paraguay.

*Political Science Department, University of Pennsylvania. e-mail: weisiger@sas.upenn.edu.

1 Introduction

In the modern world, war is rare and peace is the norm; indeed, in many regions of the world conflicts within and between countries are almost unthinkable. This observation obscures important variation, however. While most regions are peaceful, a few experience repeated wars, both overlapping and parallel. Thus, the Middle East today is home to an low-intensity but ongoing internationalized civil war in Iraq (springing from an interstate war), intense interstate rivalries involving Iran that threaten to develop into war, an ongoing and increasingly complex internal conflict in Israel/Palestine, a low-level but long-term internationalized conflict in Lebanon, a low-level civil war in Turkey, intermittent terrorist attacks by groups professing affiliation to al Qaeda, ongoing violent protests against authoritarian regimes in Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, and a number of latent internal conflicts in other countries that could conceivably escalate in the future. Importantly, these conflicts in practice are neither wholly connected nor wholly independent: unlike the World Wars, one cannot easily subsume the various localized conflicts into one overarching narrative, but at the same time to ignore their interconnections would be to miss a significant component of the strategic landscape for the actors involved. Thus, for example, the renewal of PKK violence in Turkey in the middle of the past decade was obviously connected to developments in Iraq, even if the core PKK political demands focus entirely on Turkish domestic politics.

These links between conflicts seem to matter. Turkish involvement complicated attempts to organize a negotiated solution to the Iraq imbroglio, while outside assistance to the Palestinians has facilitated their violent opposition to Israeli occupation. Broadly speaking, it is a reasonable guess that the surrounding violence has both increased the probability that potential conflicts in the region become actual and complicated the ability of participants to bring ongoing fighting to a close. From this perspective, then, the Middle East today might be termed a regional system of violence, in which positive feedback helps to ensure that the region far more closely approximates Europe at the time of the Thirty Years War than Europe today.

As the European example demonstrates, however, high levels of regional violence, while persistent in the short term, do not necessarily endure indefinitely. Central Europe has gone from one of the most violent places in the world to arguably the most peaceful. East Asia experienced

repeated wars in the first half of the twentieth century, but now political relations are, if not entirely harmonious, much less violent. Similarly, as I discuss below, Latin America experienced recurrent and interconnected wars throughout the nineteenth century. While peace is not universal now, the pattern of endemic and overlapping conflict that characterized the earlier period is no longer present.¹

What makes this pattern of regional conflict so persistent? Why, given the high costs of organized violence, do actors repeatedly decide to resort to war? A good answer to this question will help us to understand the violence that is occurring today in places like the Middle East, Central Asia, and Central and East Africa. At the same time, the observation that regional violence does not persist forever raises the extremely important question of how war-torn regions transition to peace. Indeed, a good understanding of why violence persists necessarily should be able to explain when and why it comes to an end.²

In this paper, I argue that concerns about future power shifts, which have been shown to be associated with particularly severe interstate wars and to complicate the resolution of civil wars, also account for the endemic nature of conflict in violent regions. This logic follows two separate pathways: a window of opportunity dynamic in which the existence of one war provides an incentive for another country to mount a new attack, and the necessity of advantaging some actors and disadvantaging others as part of the state-building process. These dynamics together help to explain how war begets war within a regional of endemic violence as well as why it is so hard to escape from persistent warfare. From this theoretical basis, it is possible to evaluate different hypotheses about how regions might escape from endemic violence. I examine a number of hypotheses with at least surface plausibility, highlighting the degree to which they can address the problems that cause violence to persist. Of these hypotheses, I argue that the occurrence of a major war provides the most likely means by which a region of endemic conflict might transition to peace.

¹Drug-related violence—especially in Colombia, Peru, and Mexico—in the past few decades constitutes a potential exception to this claim, and indeed is raising concerns about the possible collapse of some of the weaker states in Central America. See for example “The Drug War Hits Central America,” *The Economist*, April 14, 2011. In the Platine subsystem of South America, on which this paper focuses, this pattern of violence clearly does not exist.

²Blainey (1973) makes an analogous point for the study of individual wars, which rationalist work on bargaining within war (e.g. Goemans 2000, Wagner 2000, Filson & Werner 2002, Powell 2004) has taken to heart.

The remainder of this paper develops this argument and provides some historical evidence based on the Southern Cone of South America to support it. I first clarify what I mean by regions of endemic and overlapping violence and review what insights the existing literature can provide about them. I then develop my theoretical argument, working through the ways in which concerns about shifting power promote interconnected wars. The second part of the theoretical discussion examines the implications of this theoretical argument for different hypotheses about how endemic regional conflict might be unwound, highlighting those that seem plausible given the evidence. The final section of the paper turns to the historical case of the Platine subsystem of South America, which was characterized by extraordinary amounts of violence over a roughly seventy year period following independence before becoming much more peaceful. This case study both provides evidence of the role of shifting power concerns in extending regional conflict and demonstrates the significance of the unusually bloody Paraguayan War in allowing the region to transition to peace.

2 Definitions

Before continuing, I need first to specify more clearly what sort of behavior I am interested in. This process can be facilitated by distinguishing regions of overlapping and endemic conflict from other possible scenarios. One obvious alternative is the absence of violence, as is seen in Western Europe or the Southern Cone of South America today.³ The next step up, so to speak, would be isolated conflict, in which violence occurs but is typically infrequent, and in which interconnections among wars are limited or non-existent. In practice, almost any conflict has a regional component, but in many cases, as for example with the Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia in the 1930s, Russia's recent invasion of Georgia, or the even more recent border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia, the actual fighting remains isolated within a single country or dyad and has relatively limited implications for the region more generally. Regions in which individual wars occur but remain in effect quarantined also fall below the level of violence in which I am interested. By contrast,

³Many scholars distinguish between negative peace, which is simply the absence of violence and is consistent with the possibility of war, and positive peace, in which war ceases to be conceivable, as under Wendt's (1999) Kantian logic of anarchy (e.g. Kacowicz 1998, ch. 1). For my purposes, of course, both negative and positive peace are distinct from regions of endemic violence.

regions of endemic conflict experience a number of wars, which typically are politically connected to at least a limited degree. Thus, for example, the current uprising in Syria has implications for the competing factions in Lebanon, who in turn are watched closely by the Israelis and Palestinians. In regions in which multiple violent conflicts may be going on at any given time, war frequently has at least the appearance (and, I argue below, the reality) of begetting further violence. It is this sort of dynamic in which I am most interested. Note, therefore, that regions of endemic violence typically are not experiencing general or systemic war. Although violence in such regions may escalate up to a single general war that draws in all relevant actors, most of the time regions of endemic violence experience multiple conflicts that do not exhibit complete polarization of actors into competing camps or the subsumption of individual disputes under a central conflict, as was the case, for example, in the World Wars.

How important is this category of conflict? Gartner & Siverson (1996) have noted that most interstate wars in our datasets remain bilateral—apparent evidence that worries about regional effects may be overblown. A closer look gives reason to doubt this inference, however. The practice of dividing wars into three separate categories (interstate, civil, and extrasystemic)—a standard approach in the collection of most datasets of violent conflict—requires that we simply ignore many of the pertinent actors in many conflicts. Thus, for example, the Second Congo War combined elements of interstate and civil war, with eight different national governments and roughly two dozen non-national armies involved, and with elements of all three types of conflict.⁴ Similarly, the apparently bilateral 1982 war between Israel and Syria also involved active participation by non-state actors in Lebanon, most notably the PLO but also Christian Phalangist militias and other participants in the Lebanese civil war.⁵ In both these cases, the apparently bilateral conflict took place in the context of a region of endemic and overlapping war, and indeed without the surrounding context it is very difficult to imagine the war having begun at all or having followed the course that it did. Similarly, we know that different regions of the world exhibit quite different

⁴Initial clashes between the Rwandans and their local allies and Kabila's government had aspects of both an interstate war and a civil war, for example, while fighting between local armies at later stages of the war, if examined in isolation, would be best characterized as falling within COW's new category of non-state wars.

⁵The Plata War discussed in the case study below also provides a useful example of a war that is typically treated as bilateral in statistical analyses but that actually involved at least five clearly distinct participants.

conflict behavior, with some showing both far higher levels of violent conflict and much closer linkages among conflicts (e.g. Faber, Houweling & Siccama 1984, Gleditsch 2002, Lemke 2002). Once we move past the often artificial distinctions among different kinds of wars, we see that this kind of interrelationship among violent conflicts is quite common historically, as well as parts of the world such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and Central and Eastern Africa today.

3 Existing Arguments

Antecedents to this project can be seen in several related literatures. Prior to World War II, the importance of geopolitics for great power competition meant that geography played a critical role in both theorizing and policy prescription (MacKinder 1919, Spykman 1938).⁶ After the war, Boulding's (1962) discussion of loss-of-strength gradients and "zones of viability" helped to formalize the obvious insight that geographical location greatly influences a country's interests and actions; in quantitative studies, subsequent work developed the concept of "politically-relevant dyads" as a way to formally deal with the obstacles to valid inference that might otherwise result from a failure to take into account geographic dispersion.⁷ Further impulse for a focus on geography came from the unsurprising but quite robust finding that shared borders are strongly associated with conflict (Richardson 1960, Bennett & Stam 2004).

One approach to the study of geography and conflict behavior has been to examine variation across pre-defined regions. Simple observation suffices to demonstrate that different regions of the world experience very different political patterns. During the Cold War, for example, it rapidly became apparent that Asia experienced high levels of violent conflict while Europe was almost immune (Kende 1971). This sort of observation contributed to a number of studies that explored regional variations in conflict behavior. This work has found substantial regional variation in the frequency of conflict (Wallensteen & Sollenberg 1998, Lemke 2002), the likelihood that conflict spills over to neighboring countries (Bremer 1982, Faber, Houweling & Siccama 1984, Houweling & Siccama 1985), the prevalence and resilience of democracy (Cederman & Gleditsch 2004), the

⁶See also Spykman's articles in the subsequent three issues of the APSR. Mearsheimer's (2001) discussion of regional hegemony and the stopping power of water is reminiscent of earlier geopolitical arguments.

⁷See Lemke & Reed (2001) for a review and discussion of this approach.

relationship between democracy and peace (Crescenzi & Enterline 1999, Gleditsch & Ward 2000, Gleditsch 2002), and a variety of other variables (e.g. Ross & Homer 1976). Working from these observations, a number of studies have specifically explored apparently anomalous regions, most notably Africa, in greater detail (Jackson & Rosberg 1982, O’Laughlin & Anselin 1991, Lemke 2002).⁸ Qualitative scholars have also evinced a growing interest in regional variation (Kacowicz 1998, Buzan & Waever 2003, Katzenstein 2005).

An alternate approach has focused less on pre-specified regions and instead simply examined the implications of geographic proximity to conflict. A number of studies have found that proximity to violent conflict is associated with a significantly higher risk that new wars will break out (Most & Starr 1980, Siverson & Starr 1991, Gleditsch 2002). Alternately, Houweling & Siccama (1985) found that geographic proximity to conflict was not associated with a higher probability of war onset (distinct from intervention in an ongoing conflict), but that it was associated with a higher probability of war involvement, which could be interpreted as indicating that countries bordering ongoing conflicts have greater difficulty bringing their own wars to an end.⁹ Combined with evidence that war clusters in time, these findings provide strong evidence, if any was needed, that war is far from a randomly distributed event. These findings thus are consistent with a variety of possible mechanisms that would predict the geographic diffusion of war.¹⁰

Thus, there is already a large literature on the influence of geographic context for war and peace. That said, important holes remain. Statistical work has typically been interested more in demonstrating the existence of spatial autocorrelation than in explaining it, with the common

⁸See however Gleditsch (2002) for a contrary view on Africa’s uniqueness. A number of scholars (e.g. McIntyre 1995, Holsti 1996, Kacowicz 1998, Centeno 2002, Martín 2006) engage in a similar exercise with respect to South America.

⁹This interpretation is far from certain, even setting aside the divergent from other studies’ findings on war onset. Most notably, there is good reason to believe that insurgencies, which tend to be quite long, are found disproportionately in poor countries in which the state is weak (Fearon & Laitin 2003); state weakness is also geographically clustered, with African states for example notably weaker than average. This observation thus implies that studies that fail to account for potentially confounding variables that also cluster regionally (as, given limitations on computing power, most early quantitative studies had to do) are open to the challenge that findings of regional diffusion are spurious.

¹⁰It is worth noting that many of these studies have also been interested in temporal diffusion within a given observation; a common analogy to distinguish between spatial heterogeneity and temporal heterogeneity has been the distinction between infection and addiction (Bremer 1982). This issue is obviously pertinent for the study of enduring rivalries (Goertz & Diehl 1993). I am more interested in spatial autocorrelation than I am in temporal, although I certainly cannot ignore either.

analogy to infection a placeholder for a compelling theoretical argument.¹¹ More importantly, these studies do not address the question of how regions of endemic violence transition to peace.

A small number of relatively recent studies do address these concerns by providing a more general theoretical argument that is tested through the qualitative analysis of multiple regions in history (Holsti 1996, Kacowicz 1998, Miller 2007). In particular, Holsti and Miller both usefully highlight the significance of state strength (conceived of somewhat differently in the two studies) in determining levels of regional violence: importantly, they note that increased state strength in some regions historically was associated with a reduction in regional violence. That said, neither study satisfactorily examines the obstacles to state consolidation—in particular the shifting power concerns discussed below—and neither provides a convincing account of *how* weak states in violent regions manage to consolidate.

4 Shifting Power and Regional War

My central theoretical argument is that endemic regional conflict is driven by concerns about shifting power. These concerns take two separate forms, which are unified in the underlying mechanism that produces conflict but differentiated in many of their details. First, conflict in a region can disarm alliances and otherwise forestall balancing behavior that would otherwise be expected, creating windows of opportunity for actors to launch wars that in normal times would unlikely to succeed. Second, a standard feature of regional conflict is the presence of one or more weak or failed states, in which control over the state is contested. Consolidation of authority under a single government is necessary for the state to generate the public goods that citizens desire, but that consolidation inevitably must advantage some domestic actors and disadvantage others. This fact then creates incentives for actors both within and outside the state to intervene.

A well-established literature dating back to Thucydides examines the proposition that shifts in relative power may cause war. A number of broadly Realist scholars have argued that hegemonic wars among the great powers occur when the existing hierarchy is disrupted, either because the

¹¹Exceptions certainly exist, as with Buhaug & Gleditsch (2008) and Kathman (2010), but even these studies tend to advance narrower theoretical arguments focused on specific variables instead of attempts to explain regional diffusion of conflict more generally.

rising power begins a war to remake the political system or, more plausibly, because the declining power sees war as a risky but viable way to prevent its decline from occurring (Organski & Kugler 1980, Gilpin 1981, Kennedy 1987, Levy 1987, Copeland 2000). Indeed, Copeland argues that almost every great power war in the modern era has been driven by shifting power concerns. More recently, Reiter (2009) has identified the difficulties that credible commitment concerns—which most commonly arise because of shifting power—have played in a number of historical interstate conflicts, while Weisiger (2010) has used both quantitative and qualitative evidence to argue that commitment problems produce particularly severe wars. At the same time, scholars starting with Walter (1997, 2002) have observed that difficulties committing credibly, arising because of the shift in relative power inherent to demobilization and the allocation of government offices, are a central obstacle to building negotiated settlements to civil wars (cf. Fearon 2004).

For most recent studies, the central logic connecting shifting power to war is the credible commitment problem.¹² As Fearon (1995) observes, political agreements that would in principle be acceptable to both sides in a dispute may be undermined if the distribution of power is likely to shift in the future, as the side that gains power will be in a position to abrogate the agreement and demand additional concessions. Aware that the rising power cannot commit to not breaking the agreement in the future, the declining power must either risk being taken advantage of or find some way to prevent the decline from occurring. War is, if not the only way, often the most final.

Thus far, this logic has been examined primarily in a dyadic context. I argue, however, that it has important implications for regional politics as well. The interconnections among states (and non-state actors) under anarchy makes it difficult to alter one relationship without altering others, and can produce system-level effects that are more than the sum of actor-level characteristics and behavior (Waltz 1979, Jervis 1997). Because any state is a potential threat, no conflict takes place in a vacuum. Even if country C is entirely indifferent to the substance of a political dispute between

¹²Power transition theorists have at times argued that relative equality (which is not the same thing as shifting power, but which is associated with transitions in which one power passes another) are dangerous because of uncertainty about who would win a war (e.g. Lemke 2002, pg. 26). This argument invokes a separate mechanism, private information with incentives to misrepresent that information. As Powell (1999) notes, however, the observation that both sides might win a war simply implies that each should be willing to make concessions at the bargaining table to avoid a potential loss, implying that the probability of war should be no higher than at other levels of relative power. The relationship between relative power and the probability of war through overoptimism remains debated, but most discussions of shifting power now focus on the role of commitment problems and preventive motivations to fight.

A and B, if the manner in which the dispute is resolved makes either A or B stronger in relative terms, then C must still be concerned that the winner will use its gains to C's detriment in the future. Balance of power theory follows from this observation. C may come to B's aid, as Germany came to the aid of Austria-Hungary in 1914, not because she necessarily believes that B is in the right, but because B's defeat would leave C intolerably vulnerable to exploitation by A. In a well-functioning balance of power system, the knowledge that C would come to B's aid often will deter A from going to war with B, thus providing a degree of stability even in the presence of significant political disputes.¹³

If by deterring aggression alliance ties produce peace, however, then the disruption of those ties may produce war. Such disruption is one central way in which conflict may beget conflict at a regional level. If A is deterred from attacking B by the knowledge that C would come to B's aid, then in the event of a war between C and some other actor, A would be presented with a window of opportunity to use force to revise the relationship with B in his favor. C's commitment elsewhere renders A stronger than before relative to B, but this strength will last only so long as C is occupied. B will of course try to avoid war while her ally is unavailable, but any concessions she might make in the short term are ones on which she might be expected to renege once her ally is again available. A thus may decide that a war that allows him to lock in his temporary advantage is preferable to the presumably temporary concessions B is willing to offer.¹⁴

The acceleration of Japanese expansion in the late 1930s follows this logic. Knowing that Britain and the United States would oppose further Japanese expansion into China, the leadership in Tokyo recognized that the threat posed by Nazi Germany would prevent them from obstructing Japanese moves to the extent that they otherwise would, and thus gambled first on an all-out invasion of China and later on a more general Pacific War (Sagan 1988, pg. 326; Snyder 1991,

¹³As Jervis (1997, ch. 3) points out, IR scholars, notably including Kenneth Waltz, have used "stability" to mean multiple things, including both the absence of war (or of major war) and the persistence of the international system. Here I use stability to refer to the absence of war.

¹⁴This logic goes one step beyond what Schweller (1994) refers to as "jackal bandwagoning," in which actors pile on when a country comes under attack, as with the Italian entry into the war against France in 1940 or the subsequent Thai attack on Vichy France's colonial possessions in Southeast Asia. This sort of behavior is also frequently driven by concerns related to shifting power—an opponent who is already at war is obviously a more attractive target now than she would be once the war is over and she is able to devote all her resources to fighting back—and thus can help explain how wars expand, if not how war in one place produces conflict among apparently uninterested actors elsewhere.

pp. 125-126). During the same period, Stalin started a war with Finland—a German ally—secure in the knowledge that Hitler would not intervene, given his desire to avoid opening another front while already at war with Britain and France (Upton 1974, pp. 25-26; Edwards 2006, pp. 87-88).

Nor was this phenomenon restricted to the World War II period. During the nineteenth century, the British repeatedly intervened to prevent Iran from gaining control over the then-independent Afghan city of Herat, which provided a useful buffer between Russia and British India. In 1856, however, the Iranians took advantage of the Crimean War to invade and conquer Herat (Hunt & Townsend 1858, pg. 180; Walpole 1912, vol. VI, pp. 270-271).¹⁵ A few years later, Napoleon III of France launched a quixotic attempt to install a Hapsburg Emperor on the throne of Mexico; the resulting 1862-1867 Franco-Mexican War would never have occurred had the United States, which would have opposed European intervention in its sphere of influence, not been fully occupied by the American Civil War (Hyde 1946, pp. 158-159; Dabbs 1963, pg. 18; Hannah & Hannah 1971, ch. 6). All of these examples have in common the observation that one side in a dispute was weakened by its ally's involvement in fighting elsewhere, and that that side's opponent took advantage of that situation to launch a war to revise the status quo.¹⁶

The second way in which shifting power concerns produce regional conflict is through weak and failed states. In the absence of strong state authority, local actors—tribal leaders, regional warlords, and the like—step in to provide some degree of order. The sub-state diffusion in the capacity to engage in organized violence does not necessarily have to imply the existence of actual violence. After all, local warlords, just like state leaders, have incentives to avoid paying the costs of war (Fearon 1995). In practice, however, weak and failed states typically experience persistent violence (e.g. Fearon & Laitin 2003). In many cases, of course, war is responsible for state weakness: thus, for example, whatever central authority ever existed in Afghanistan was destroyed by the decade-long war that followed the Soviet invasion in 1979. That said, state weakness also breeds conflict. To cite some more recent examples, the proliferation of warring factions that characterized the

¹⁵As it happened, the Crimean War ended earlier than expected, and the British went to war with Iran, in the little-known Anglo-Iranian War of 1856-1857, to force the Iranians to withdraw.

¹⁶This window of opportunity logic obviously does not constitute a complete explanation for any of these cases—the Japanese, for example, likely would have continued to expand into China whatever the events in Europe, albeit with less urgency—but it did make war more likely, and I would argue was frequently a necessary condition for war to occur.

Second Congo War followed rather than preceded the collapse of the Congolese state, while the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006—undertaken to prevent the hard-line Islamic Courts Union from consolidating power—clearly was a reaction to developments that followed Somalia’s collapse in 1991.

Shifting power concerns are at the core of this violence. As Walter (1997, 2002) observes, the expectation that the state will consolidate fragmented authority carries with it the danger that one’s opponents, should they manage to control the newly-powerful state, will use that greater authority to implement unfavorable policies. Walter thus argues that settlements to end civil wars will be likely to collapse unless an external power guarantees the settlement terms, typically by intervening in a manner sufficient to deter violations. Powell (2009) extends this logic to the general process of state consolidation, observing that the shifting power concerns associated with the development of a strong centralized state can motivate persistent bouts of fighting, as disadvantaged parties go to war to forestall the centralization of authority that will permit their opponents to exclude them from accustomed benefits. It is thus not surprising that failed states experience as much violence as they do.

Moreover, weak and failed states have the potential to export violence, generating conflicts in which they need not even be directly involved. The various local warlords, tribal factions, or otherwise relevant (i.e. militarily capable) actors that emerge in weak and failed states frequently form alliances across state boundaries. Thus, for example, the 19th century Argentine Federalists, who are discussed in the case study below, allied along ideological lines with the Blanco Party in Uruguay and with the Paraguayans, while the Unitarians typically cooperated with the Uruguayan Colorados and, at times, with Brazil. Similarly, Charles Taylor in Liberia assisted the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, while various factions in Congo continue to cooperate with patrons in neighboring governments. The existence of these ties implies that struggles over state consolidation in a weak or failed state concern not only actors in the state in question but also neighboring states, who stand to gain or lose depending on how the process of state consolidation proceeds. This incentive frequently leads to external intervention in weak states, as with the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia mentioned earlier or the competing Pakistani and Indian efforts in

Afghanistan.

Because weak states do not exercise full control over their territory, rebels from neighboring states also can use them as safe havens, allowing them to survive even when an opponent controls the government in their home state. These rebels (and the governments they oppose) then develop a vested interest in whether or not the weak state consolidates. The existence of a weak state thus exports conflict in the region by fostering civil war in neighboring countries, and also encourages actors from those countries to get involved in the weak state's politics. Possibly the clearest example of this dynamic concerns the rivalry between the Rwandan government under Paul Kagame and the *interahamwe* and other genocidal groups affiliated with the previous government, who took refuge in Eastern Congo after 1994. Their existence, and the inability of the Congolese government to control them, led to the First Congo War, in which Rwanda and its local allies overthrew the Congolese government in the hope of installing a more capable and amenable alternative under Laurent Kabila. In the end, these sorts of interventions ultimately produced the extraordinarily complex network of violence that was the Second Congo War.

In sum, then, present weakness combined with an expectation of eventual consolidation creates an environment in which war is likely both within the weak state and involving its neighbors. This pattern of conflict will be difficult to resolve so long as competing groups continue to vie for control over the weak state. Moreover, because state weakness is often a consequence of war—as the Americans and their allies found in Iraq, it is easier to destroy an existing government than to replace it with an equally effective alternative—this logic provides a potent way in which war might beget war in regions of endemic violence.

5 Hypotheses about the Transition from Regional War

If persistent commitment problems related to anticipated shifts in the distribution of power drive endemic regional conflict, what might allow for a transition to greater regional peace? In this section, I raise a number of superficially plausible arguments drawn from existing IR theory and examine the degree to which they can plausibly address shifting power concerns. To facilitate this discussion, I organize these hypotheses into broad theoretical paradigms (Realist, liberal, and

constructivist), although hypotheses within a single paradigm may rely on inconsistent theoretical logic. In the end, I argue that transition to regional peace often require resolving a “central” conflict, and that they are most likely to be resolved through the occurrence of a high-intensity general regional war.

For Realists, international anarchy implies that war is always possible and hence that peace occurs only when successful deterrence convinces all actors that the use of force will be unprofitable. Within a given region, this situation could arise through a well-structured balance of power system, in response to a common external threat, or possibly through the coercion of an international hegemon. Transitions to regional peace thus would require the emergence of the pacifying influence.

It is possible to link these arguments to the shifting power logic discussed above, but doing so highlights several reasons to doubt that they will ultimately prove particularly useful in facilitating transitions to regional peace. As I noted earlier, a well-functioning balance of power system necessarily implies that war in a given dyad will typically create windows of opportunity elsewhere by which new violent conflicts might emerge. Moreover, violent regions almost uniformly have some form of balance of power system already present, as actors who are at war have strong incentives to develop allies elsewhere. The question then would be why a given balance of power system was more or less prone to war. Existing work has not managed to answer this question satisfactorily, however. The best-known argument is, of course, Waltz’s (1964, 1979) contention that bipolar systems are more stable than multipolar ones. This argument, however, rests on a single empirical case (the Cold War) that appears unrepresentative of other historical periods (Hopf 475-493) and on a theoretical argument about the probability of miscalculation in different systems that is internally inconsistent (Jervis 1997, pp. 118-122) and neglects alternate logics of war (Wagner 2007, pp. 19-21). It is of course still worth examining the possibility that some new dynamic in the regional balance of power brought about a transition to peace; as the case study below demonstrates, however, such an argument is implausible at least for the case of Latin America.¹⁷

The emergence of a common threat also could theoretically produce regional peace by forcing regional actors to set aside their internal differences to defend against the greater external threat.

¹⁷A similar problem exists for an argument grounded in the offense-defense balance (Jervis 1978, Van Evera 1998), given the impossibility of developing a satisfactory *ex ante* measurement of that balance (Goddard 1998/1999).

Historical examples such as the cooperation among the Greek city-states in response to the second Persian invasion beginning in 480 BC or the alliance among Western European states against the Soviet threat after World War II (Ripsman 2005) seem pertinent here. Two limitations undercut this pathway to regional peace, however. First, significant shared external threats are rare. Few extraregional powers will have both the capability and the incentive to seriously harm the interests of all of a region's actors, especially compared to the capability and incentive these actors will typically have to harm each other.¹⁸ Moreover, the formation of a general front to balance against a significant external threat requires overcoming both incentives to free ride and any divide-and-conquer strategy used by the external power, who will seek to exacerbate preexisting cleavages to forestall opposition by a unified bloc. In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that most Greek city-states in fact remained neutral or backed the Persians in their invasion (Holland 2005, e.g. pg. 227), while under NATO the United States ended up shouldering the primary defense burden while its allies largely engaged in free-riding (Olson & Zeckhauser 1966).

The role of the United States in NATO is instructive for a third Realist argument, namely that a hegemon will be able to use its outsized influence to ensure cooperation among lesser powers (Gilpin 1981, Wohlforth 1999). If violent conflict is seen as creating a collective bad, for example because of the restrictions violence places on trade or the costs associated with refugee flows, then conflict prevention is a collective good, and by the theory of public goods a hegemon might be expected to pay to provide that public good (Olson 1965), whether through effective mediation, the provision of sticks and carrots, or, in the extreme, through extensive state-building efforts. The emergence of a hegemon might then be expected to be associated with a transition to peace. If violence is driven by shifting power concerns, however, then cheap forms of intervention like mediation typically will not work; instead, intervention will need to be of a relatively intrusive (and hence costly) form (Walter 2002). This point then raises the question of whether the benefits to the hegemon of regional peace are sufficient to offset the costs of the active intervention needed to bring it about. Moreover, to the extent that resolving the commitment problem rests on the

¹⁸Power declines with distance (e.g. Boulding 1962, Bueno de Mesquita 1981), limiting the capacity of even motivated actors to threaten a whole region, while the strong association between contiguity and violence is typically understood as a function of the higher probability of significant political disagreements between adjacent actors (e.g. Walt 1987).

presence of a disinterested outside guarantor, there is the problem that the hegemon frequently will have a vested interest in the outcome of local disputes, as, for example, the United States did in the resolution of internal struggles between Leftist and Rightist movements in Cold War Latin America. A biased intervener then cannot be trusted to protect the interests of the side that it does not support, implying that at least some potential settlements will continue to be incredible. For these reasons, I am skeptical that the presence of a local hegemon will reliably produce pacification.

From a liberal perspective, one might argue that democratic governance, economic interdependence, or international institutions, all of which have been argued to produce peace dyadically (Russett & Oneal 2001), will have a similar effect at the regional level. The problem with liberal hypotheses is that environments of persistent war discourage the emergence of exactly the factors that are needed to produce peace.¹⁹ Moreover, the theoretical logic of liberal arguments has typically relied more heavily on the avoidance of miscalculation than on the resolution of credible commitment concerns. For space reasons, I focus my discussion here on democracy and economic interdependence, which existing work has found to be more robustly related to peace at the dyadic level.

Thus, for example, given the observation of a robust statistical relationship between joint democracy and dyadic peace, one might expect that the spread of democracy in a violent region would produce regional peace. It is certainly true that democracy overlaps with peace at both the dyadic and the regional level (Gleditsch 2002). That said, it is likely that, rather than democracy producing peace, at the regional level peace creates a favorable environment for democracy.²⁰ From the European conflicts of past centuries to the Southern Cone in the nineteenth century to Southeast Asia in the past few decades, while escape from conflict may have permitted an extension of individual liberties, significant democratization simply did not precede the major moves toward peace and thus cannot provide a viable explanation for those moves. Indeed, war frequently leads to autocratization, as leaders can appeal to security demands as an excuse to place limits on civil liberties and

¹⁹It is of course possible that liberal variables might institutionalize a peace that originally arose for unrelated reasons, allowing for a transfer from cold to warm peace (Ripsman 2005).

²⁰For an argument that the democratic peace gets the causal direction wrong at the dyadic level as well, see Thompson (1996).

to consolidate authority in their hands (e.g. Downing 1992, Kadera, Crescenzi & Shannon 2003).²¹ A similar argument holds for economic interdependence, given that businesses will be disinclined to establish trade relations that are likely to be upset by war, with the result that significant levels of economic interdependence typically did not emerge until well after the end of regional violence.

Moreover, even were democracy to emerge, it is unclear whether it would resolve credible commitment problems. With respect to the second (weak state) face of shifting power in regional violence, democracy is unlikely to emerge in the absence of a consolidated state, and even if it did, local warlords would have every incentive to turn to force to subvert unfavorable election results.²² Building democracy has proven particularly difficult in deeply divided societies, in which elites have few opportunities to construct cross-cleavage alliances ***, with the result that winners tend to exclude losers entirely from the benefits associated with rule. As for the first face of shifting power, most arguments about the relationship between democracy and peace have focused on ways in which democratic institutions help (or force) governments to signal their intentions credibly, limiting the potential for miscalculation (e.g. Fearon 1994, Schultz 2001). Accurate signaling is of course irrelevant for wars driven by commitment problems, which can occur in the absence of disagreements about relative capabilities (Powell 2006, Leventoğlu & Slantchev 2007).

Constructivists might point to several alternate arguments. One possibility, following Wendt (1999), is that the intersubjective identities among relevant actors might shift from enemy or rival to friend, with the logical implication that violence would cease to be a legitimate means of resolving disputes. As Wendt emphasizes, however, the intersubjective constitution of these identities makes them very difficult to change. His discussion of the process by which change occurs highlights a number of mostly liberal variables (interdependence, common fate, and democracy) that combine with self-restraint to make change possible. In a condition of endemic violence, however, interactions

²¹A few studies have investigated whether democracy and peace trend together over time, which raises the possibility of an evolution to democracy leading to regional peace (e.g. Gleditsch & Ward 2000, Gleditsch 2002). Findings have been mixed, however, and those positive findings that are reached are consistent with the endogenous relationship noted above. Thus, Gleditsch & Ward (2000, 26) conclude that “[o]ur results suggest that if peace comes first, democratization will tend to reinforce peace. Democratization amidst war, however, may not necessarily entail an end to international conflict.”

²²Thus, for example, Stam and Davenport *** argue that the inevitability of electoral defeat given that Tutsis constitute a minority in Rwanda led the RPF to undermine the Arusha Accords, helping to set the stage for the Rwandan genocide.

will tend to recapitulate non-friend identities, while the master variables that make change possible are, for reasons discussed above, unlikely to be present.²³

Finally, there is the possibility that escalation from endemic but typically low-level violence to a highly destructive regional war might facilitate a transition to regional peace. Whether because of war weariness, a better understanding of relative capabilities, or some other reason, great power wars are frequently followed by periods of unusual peace (Richardson 1960, Jervis 1985). Thus, the experience of the Napoleonic Wars contributed to the construction of the Concert of Europe, while the Second World War was critical in the construction of the institutions, notably the early institutions that ultimately led to the European Union, that helped to bring a stable regional peace to Western Europe.²⁴ In the regional context, there are several reasons why an unusually intense general war might facilitate a transition to peace. First, to the extent that war-weariness leads to a period of regional peace in the aftermath of general war, the mechanisms by which war begets war will be deactivated. Put simply, windows of opportunity created by attacks on an opponent's allies will not be present if no attacks are taking place. Second, and more importantly, major wars often produce decisive victors, who are able to impose their preferred policies on defeated opponents. If preventive wars are undertaken to forestall developments that would arise should one's opponents gain an overweening power advantage, then they cease to be useful tools once the opponent has in fact gained that advantage. This point implies that decisive political outcomes will be more likely to produce peace, a claim for which there is fairly strong empirical support, at least at the dyadic level (Werner & Yuen 2005, Lo, Hashimoto & Reiter 2008, Toft 2010). Moreover, at a domestic level, intense general wars are frequently associated with increased state strength, as leaders are able to convince various groups in society to set aside their individual interests to permit effective defense against a common threat (see for example Downing 1992).²⁵ As a result, national leaders will accrue resources that they can use to bolster their domestic position at the same time that

²³An alternate argument that might be categorized within the broad rubric of constructivism focuses on grievances: if political disagreements can be eliminated, then actors will have nothing over which to fight. This point is true but trivial. Even in the ideal case of Western Europe, significant political disagreements still arise; peace reigns because disagreements are managed diplomatically rather than militarily.

²⁴As Blainey (1973, pp. 6-9) notes, however, evidence for war-weariness is often impressionistic, and skips by examples, such as the relatively short interlude between the World Wars, that do not support the argument.

²⁵State consolidation in these contexts requires a degree of preexisting state legitimacy (Coser 1956).

they fight an external enemy. The result then can be the emergence of a stronger and more stable state as a consequence of the general war; if the state has consolidated, then even the losers from consolidation will not benefit from further fighting.

6 A Case Study of the Southern Cone of South America

6.1 A Brief History of the Southern Cone

The Southern Cone of South America, which comprises the whole continent south of the Brazilian bulge, contains a total of seven countries: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru. These seven countries in turn natural divided into two subsystems: a Platine subsystem organized around the Río de la Plata and containing Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, and a Pacific subsystem west of the Andes that contained Chile, Bolivia and Peru (Burr 1965). These subsystems were of course not hermetic boxes—Argentina interacted repeatedly with Chile, for example, as did Bolivia with both Argentina and Paraguay—and external powers such as Britain, Spain, and the United States also got involved at times throughout the region. That said, subsystem members interacted primarily with each other, and conflict beget conflict more easily within subsystems. Given space constraints, I focus here primarily on the Platine subsystem that contains Brazil and Argentina; that said, the transition from regional conflict to regional peace that I describe here also occurred in the Pacific subsystem, at roughly the same point in history.

The close connections among Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay date back centuries. Colonies of Spain and Portugal, they were pushed toward independence by the Napoleonic Wars, which weakened the metropole. The Spanish Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata broke away around 1810, with Buenos Aires assuming governance of much of the old colony but with Paraguay (and Bolivia) establishing independence. In Brazil, the break with Portugal occurred a bit more slowly, with independence declared only in 1822. The states that emerged were weak, unable to establish a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence in their territory, and moreover unable to agree on where the borders between them lay.

The next half-century was characterized by persistent violence. Brazil and Argentina quickly

came to blows, in the Cisplatine War that ran from 1825 until 1828, over the territory east of the Río de la Plata, which ultimately emerged from the war as the independent country of Uruguay. By the 1830s, the basic actors in the regional system had emerged. The Brazilian state was strong by regional standards but still faced significant challenges to its authority, especially in the southern province of Rio Grande do Sol. In Uruguay, two parties—the Colorados and the Blancos—contested power from their emergence in the 1830s. Argentina was even more divided, with the overweening importance of Buenos Aires (which contained roughly a quarter of the population and controlled the customs revenues, the primary source of income) generating persistent disputes, frequently violent, between Unitarian *porteños* (residents of Buenos Aires) and rural Federalists over the composition and control of the state. Only Paraguay avoided significant internal dissention, in part because of the clear threat from Buenos Aires, which consistently refused to recognize it as independent.

Violence at some level was a pervasive feature of regional politics. Brazil experienced a host of regional revolts in the second half of the 1830s, while Uruguay was in a state of effectively perpetual violence, with a particularly intense civil war running from 1839-1851 surrounded by a number of shorter conflicts. In addition to a number of peripheral conflicts, Argentina experienced important civil wars between Unitarians and Federalists throughout this period, resulting in frequent shifts in the internal distribution of power. Under Juan Manuel de Rosas, who was governor of Buenos Aires and effective dictator of Argentina from 1829, the city gained extensive influence, but his defeat in the La Plata War in 1852 both forced him from power and led to an eight-year period in which Buenos Aires was legally independent from Argentina. Further civil wars in 1859 and 1861 brought Buenos Aires forcibly back into the country and then established a Unitarian/Liberal president, Bartolomé Mitre, in charge of the country. Most notably, the 1864-1870 War of the Triple Alliance (also known as the Paraguayan or López War), which grew out of Brazilian and Argentine meddling in an ongoing Uruguayan civil war, ultimately dragged in all members of the subsystem, pitting Paraguay against Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. Paraguay's defeat in this war killed somewhere in the vicinity of half the Paraguayan population, including an overwhelming percentage of the men.²⁶

²⁶Given the limits of population statistics of the time and the destruction caused by the war, Paraguayan death totals are debated. Most scholars accept the estimates advanced by Whigham & Potthast (1999); see however ? for

The Platine subsystem clearly constituted a system of violence in the terms used here. The La Plata War provides a useful example.²⁷ This conflict—which typically appears in statistical datasets as a bilateral interstate war between Brazil and Argentina—in fact involved a complex set of alliances crossing state boundaries. In 1851, a regional Argentine *caudillo*—Governor Justo José de Urquiza of Entre Ríos Province—rebelled against Rosas. Joined by Corrientes and other interior provinces, Urquiza took most of the standing Argentine army across the border to Uruguay, where his intervention brought an end to a twelve-year civil war (which had included a nine-year siege of Montevideo). With backing from Brazil and from the now-victorious anti-Rosas faction in Uruguay, and secured by defensive alliances with Paraguay and Bolivia, Urquiza then returned to Argentina, defeating Rosas at the Battle of Caseros in February 1852 and forcing him into exile. Thus, what is often treated as a simple bilateral war between Brazil and Argentina in fact was a complex conflict with four separate participants on one side (the anti-Rosas faction in Uruguay, Brazil, Entre Ríos, and Corrientes) and two on the other, and with the active interest of others in the region.

More generally, over the sixty years from 1820 to 1880, the four countries experienced 21 separate wars that met the Correlates of War threshold for inclusion in one of their datasets, as well as a host of smaller conflicts.²⁸ Because many of these conflicts combined elements of interstate and civil wars (as the La Plata case demonstrates), classification of individual conflicts is not easy. That said, a reasonable tabulation would identify three interstate wars (the Cisplatine, La Plata, and Paraguayan conflicts), three civil wars in Brazil, two (quite extended) civil wars in Uruguay, and a remarkable thirteen conflicts that were primarily Argentine civil wars (Sarkees & Wayman 2010). It is thus not surprising that the few scholars of war who have paid much attention to Latin America consistently describe the Southern Cone in the nineteenth century as a persistently violent place (e.g. Holsti 1996, Miller 2007).

That observation, however, comes with an important puzzle: beginning in the 1880s and continuing through the twentieth century, the Southern Cone, including the Platine subsystem, became

an argument that deaths are typically significantly overstated.

²⁷Whigham (2002, pp. 119-121) provides a useful summary of this war. See also Lynch (1981).

²⁸To cite one example, in the mid-1830s, Brazil experienced eighteen separate regional revolts, of which only three are included in the civil wars dataset.

far more peaceful.²⁹ In particular, interstate war has been remarkably rare: the 1932-1935 Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia was the only severe conflict, while Peru and Ecuador experienced much more limited violent clashes in 1941 and 1995.³⁰ The brief and not particularly deadly Falklands War of 1982 similarly only minimally detracts from the overall peacefulness of the region. Civil wars, while not entirely absent, also occurred with far less frequency: according to COW whereas Argentina experienced thirteen civil wars between independence and 1880, only two are recorded for the period from 1881 to the present.³¹ This brief summary raises two obvious questions: why was the region beset by endemic violence for most of the nineteenth century, and how did it manage to transition to a generally stable peace?

6.2 Shifting Power and Regional Conflict

Before examining the transition from violence, it is worth examining the plausibility of the claim that shifting power concerns underlay the persistent post-independence violence. Recall that there were two ways by which a shifting power mechanism would allow conflict to beget conflict within a region of endemic violence: by creating windows of opportunity when someone's ally was unable to come to their aid, and by generating concerns that the consolidation of state authority in a weak or failed state would be antithetical to the interests of some system actors. Of these two pathways, the second is more directly pertinent in this case, but both appear. While a full review of this period is impossible here, a number of examples will help to substantiate this point.

The relatively small number of actors in the Platine subsystem—a consequence of the limits on power projection during this period (Burr 1965)—meant that there were comparatively few opportunities for the window of opportunity logic to play out in its entirety, but several examples

²⁹This point is acknowledged by almost all historians and political scientists who have discussed the region. See for example Holsti (1996), Kacowicz (1998), López-Alves (2000), and Miller (2007); Mares (1997, 2001) constitutes the primary exception, and his position is based more on the continuation of serious political disagreements than on the presence of a comparable level of violence to the earlier period.

³⁰The 1941 conflict is generally acknowledged to have resulted in fewer than 1000 battle deaths, meaning that it is excluded from COW war lists, but several scholars include it in their counts because it had important implications for the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border (Holsti 1996, pp. 154-155; Miller 2007, pg. 327). COW does by contrast include the 1995 dispute as the Cenepa Valley War, but most scholars agree that deaths in this case also were well below 1000.

³¹The first Argentine count includes a number of non-state and extrasystemic wars recorded in the period before Argentina met COW's (rather restrictive) definitions for inclusion as a state system member; most observers would describe these conflicts as civil wars.

nonetheless did arise. In 1838, Brazil was beset by a host of regional rebellions, typically over local issues, in which local actors took advantage of the state's distraction by a significant uprising in Rio Grande do Sul (Bethell & Carvalho 1989). In the same year, Fructuosa Rivera in Uruguay took advantage of a French naval blockade of Buenos Aires (undertaken because of Argentine policy with respect to an ongoing war between Chile and the temporarily unified state of Peru-Bolivia) to launch an attack on Manuel Oribe's Blanco Party, precipitating a transfer of power (MacLean 1995, MacLean 1998). During the Paraguayan War, indigenous tribes in the disputed area in what is now southern Argentina took advantage of Argentine distraction to mount increasingly aggressive raids, in which they killed rural residents and stole cattle that were then driven to Chile for sale (Shumway 1991, pg. 254). In 1879, Argentina retaliated, taking advantage of Chile's distraction by the Pacific War against Peru and Bolivia to mount a near-genocidal campaign—the “Conquest of the Desert”—against the Indian population, which in normal times might well have been able to turn to the Chileans for assistance (Escude 1988, pg. 145). All of these are examples of violence begetting violence through the window of opportunity logic.

That said, state weakness, especially in Argentina, was the principal source of regional violence.³² The long-running conflict pitted the Unitarians (later rechristened as Liberals), who sought to build a centralized state that would predominantly benefit Buenos Aires, against the Federalists, who preferred a looser union in which Buenos Aires would be just one province among many. In this conflict, Buenos Aires was less populous but enjoyed several significant advantages, most importantly control over the customs revenues of its port at the mouth of the Río de la Plata, the primary economic thoroughfare until the construction of inland railways late in the century. By monopolizing customs revenues, residents of the city—so-called *porteños*—controlled the bulk of the country's wealth, while governors of the interior provinces were starved for cash. In the words of Juan Bautista Alberdi, an influential critic of later Unitarian governments, “The Argentine Republic constitutes a singular example of a nation in which three quarters of its inhabitants

³²The Uruguayan state was arguably even weaker, with the result that it spent more time at war than at peace during this period. This violence repeatedly dragged in Uruguay's neighbors and also complicated Brazil's already difficult relations with the province of Rio Grande do Sul, which bordered Uruguay. That said, Uruguay's relative weakness, in contrast to Argentina's potential strength, meant that the weakness of the Argentine state mattered more for the region.

pay contributions so that they can be enjoyed by the other quarter” (quoted in Malamud 2000, pg. 43). The interior governors responded by constructing their own militias, allowing them to operate as populist *caudillos*—effectively regional warlords with significant popular backing—who opposed the efforts of Unitarians in Buenos Aires to impose centralized rule under a *porteño* government. This divide produced a weak Argentine state that allowed Paraguay and Bolivia to establish their independence and permitted several provinces, most notably Corrientes and Entre Ríos, to conduct themselves as largely independent actors, even to the extent of signing treaties with neighboring countries (Escude 1988, pg. 143). Once established, the regional *caudillos* were able to use force to oppose attempts by Buenos Aires to consolidate its control over the country. Unitarian *porteños* hoped to institutionalize the hegemony of Buenos Aires over the rest of Argentina, which would allow them to extract almost all of the country’s gains from trade; Federalist *caudillos* by contrast wished to see Buenos Aires demoted institutionally to just one of Argentina’s many provinces, with the revenues of the port nationalized to take them out of the *porteños* hands.

The divide between *caudillos* and *porteños*, and the basically overlapping divide between Unitarians and Federalists, emerged early and persisted throughout this period, with significant implications for Argentina’s subsequent development (Shumway 1991). The second president of the country, Manuel Dorrego, was overthrown and executed in a coup mounted because of his perceived Federalism. A subsequent civil war allowed Rosas to assume dictatorial power, which he retained for over two decades; he did so in part by awkwardly sidestepping the central cleavage through professed Federalism combined with policies favorable to Buenos Aires and a persistent refusal to institutionalize federalism through a constitution. The general dissatisfaction with this policy ultimately brought about a rare moment of cooperation between Federalists and Unitarians in the La Plata War in which Urquiza overthrew him, but Buenos Aires immediately withdrew cooperation from the resulting Confederation, which as a consequence was consistently starved for cash during its existence. In civil wars in 1859 and 1861, Bartolomé Mitre first failed and then succeeded in undermining the Confederation, allowing Buenos Aires to reestablish control, although several *caudillos* remained to challenge Mitre’s authority. As Mitre and his successors moved to consolidate power, they faced repeated challenges by various *caudillos* who sought to maintain the

independence that they had established.

It is not particularly surprising that competing Argentine factions would be willing to resort to war to prevent their opponents from building an effective state that would put them in a position to impose contentious policies unilaterally. What is more important for my purposes is the way in which these conflicts resonated outside Argentina. Certainly the ideological affinity between the Unitarians in Argentina and the Rosas-aligned faction in Uruguay contributed to conflict spilling across borders, as with Urquiza's decision in the La Plata War to invade Uruguay prior to deposing Rosas. The most striking example, however, comes from the Paraguayan War.³³

Mitre's rise to power in the early 1860s, while in no way eliminating the internal divisions of his country, constituted a major shift from the Federalist-controlled Confederation. The implications of this shift first became apparent when Brazil began to meddle in an ongoing Uruguayan civil war, backing the rebel Colorados, who had ideological similarities to Argentina's Unitarians. Although Brazil and Argentina were traditional rivals, Mitre covertly facilitated the Brazilian intervention, to the extreme distaste of the Federalists in the interior. This policy was also opposed by Francisco Solano López of Paraguay, who saw cooperation between Brazil and Argentina as a mortal threat to Paraguay, a buffer state that had significant territorial disputes with both continental powers, and that had never been accepted as legitimately independent by Buenos Aires. Moreover, the intervention in Uruguay raised the possibility of a blockade of the Plata River system. Given its dependence on European trade, landlocked Paraguay could not countenance such a blockade.

The critical development here was the ascension of Mitre, who undermined the understood balance of power system in the region by facilitating Brazilian influence in Uruguay, a buffer state that owed its independence to the Brazil-Argentina clash in the Cisplatine War. López's interests aligned with the Argentine Federalists, who likewise saw the Paraguayans as kindred spirits rather than enemies (Katra 1996, pg. 257; Whigham 2002, pg. 220). When he went to war with Brazil, therefore, he had two apparent goals: to preserve (and later restore) the Blancos in power in Uruguay, and to undercut Mitre in Argentina.³⁴ To this end, he launched a risky

³³Whigham (2002) and Leuchars (2002) provide the most useful recent histories of the Paraguayan War. The argument here is an abbreviated version of the one advanced in Weisiger (2010, ch. 5).

³⁴The historical record unfortunately contains no explicit statement of López's war aims, so this argument relies on the logical implications of his actions during the war. See Weisiger (2010, ch. 5) for a fuller explication of this

invasion across Corrientes province towards Uruguay. This decision, which brought Argentina into what was originally a bilateral conflict between Paraguay and Brazil (the active intervener in Uruguayan politics), has puzzled commentators ever since: why, when already committed to war with the leading regional power, would you pick a fight with Argentina, Brazil's traditional enemy? López's behavior makes more sense when it is understood that the easiest way to restore Paraguayan security would be to shift the internal Argentine power balance towards the Federalists, who could be counted on to oppose Brazilian expansion at the expense of buffers like Uruguay and Paraguay. Indeed, López had every reason to expect the Federalists to ally themselves to Paraguay militarily; that they did not directly support him surprised contemporaries. Even so, Argentina during the war was a remarkably divided place: by one count, in the six years to 1868 (which includes most of the war with Paraguay), Argentina experienced over one hundred uprisings of various sorts, which had killed thousands, all at the same time that the country was fighting a war to the death with Paraguay (Malamud 2000, pg. 34).³⁵ In short, although the war began (and, given that Mitre eventually had to withdraw all but a token Argentine force to deal with domestic unrest, ended) as a conflict between Paraguay and Brazil, it never would have happened had it not been for the internal divisions in Argentina, which both confronted López with the threat of an Argentine-Brazilian alliance that would slowly strangle Paraguay and presented him with a reasonable opportunity to prevent that scenario from coming to pass.³⁶

6.3 Explaining the Transition to Regional Peace

If concerns about shifting power, especially within Argentine politics, drove the persistent regional violence, what then explains how a region of endemic violence transitioned to peace? To review, a number of different possible hypotheses exist. From a Realist tradition, we might expect that either the emergence of a significant external threat or the coordination provided by a powerful external actor (a hegemon) might facilitate cooperation and thus overcome persistent regional violence. A more institutional perspective would point to either transitions to institutionalized

interpretation of Paraguayan aims.

³⁵See also de la Fuente (2004).

³⁶See also McLynn (1979) for an interpretation of the war that places central emphasis on Argentine domestic politics, indeed to the extent of greatly overstating the degree to which Mitre in fact intended for a war to occur.

democracy, growing economic interdependence, or strengthened international institutions. A cultural or ideational perspective would rely on changing identities or ideas about war, most likely as a consequence of war exhaustion. I predict by contrast that the transition to regional peace occurred as a consequence of major war, specifically the Paraguayan War, which helped to resolve the underlying “central” conflict in the regional pattern of violence. This section evaluates these different hypotheses in the South American case.

6.3.1 Weaknesses of Conventional Arguments

Realist explanations are clearly unconvincing in this case. The recurrence of war was not a function of the absence of a balance of power system, given the unsurprising existence of such a system throughout the post-independence period. The emergence of bipolarity also provides an implausible explanation. While Argentine consolidation and Paraguay’s utter defeat meant that Argentina and Brazil constituted the two obvious poles of the system, there are several limitations to this argument. Within the broader Latin American system (which increasingly became more relevant as transportation grew easier), other countries like Chile—known as the Prussia of South America—were important regional actors, who were courted by both sides in any ongoing dispute (Burr 1965). Moreover, the great powers also exerted an important influence on the region. In this context, it is hard to argue that opportunities for miscalculation were minimized.

As for the possibility of a common threat, the primary extra-regional threat during this period came from the Spanish desire to reestablish its colonial empire. This threat, however, did not affect Brazil, a former Portuguese colony. Moreover, the threat weakened over time, as the plausibility of Spanish attempts to reassert control diminished. Most obviously, the 1865-1866 Chincha Islands War—a naval campaign that pitted Spain against Chile and Peru (who had the backing of other South American countries)—conclusively demonstrated that Spain lacked the capacity to reestablish its former position. That this development occurred shortly before the region’s transition to peace demonstrates the weakness of an explanation grounded in a common external threat.³⁷

³⁷Alternative candidates for the common external threat do of course exist, but all are even less plausible than Spain. While the British maintained an economic interest in the region and intervened to resolve the Cisplatine War, they never attempted to establish a political control, and efforts to attribute great significance (and malign intentions) to them are driven more by Marxist ideology than by historical reality (Bethell 1996). As for the United States, that

An argument grounded in hegemony at least has surface plausibility, as the transition from regional war to regional peace roughly aligns with the emergence of the United States as a regional hegemon.³⁸ From this perspective, American influence might have facilitated cooperation among the South American states and thus allowed them to escape from a mutually unprofitable cycle of violence. The problem with this argument is simply that the United States was not greatly involved in South American politics prior to the Cold War, and in particular the US showed no real initiative in resolving ongoing conflicts (Centeno 2002, pp. 71-73; Martin 2006, ch. 4). While US ambassadors in the region occasionally offered to mediate during major conflicts like the Paraguayan and Chaco Wars, these efforts were not backed by effective sticks or carrots and were quickly abandoned when initiatives were rebuffed (Washburn 1871, vol. 2; Peterson 1932, McIntyre 1995). Similarly, while South American states have resorted to external arbitration, often but not always by the United States, to resolve territorial disputes far more frequently than have states anywhere else in the world, the push for arbitration has come from the disputing parties, not the great powers; indeed, the US has at times tried to evade the responsibility to rule on territorial disagreements (e.g. Wood 1966, ch. 1). Simply put, while the Monroe Doctrine protected South American states from European intervention, it did not imply the sort of active international intervention necessary to redirect the region from war to peace.³⁹

Institutional arguments are also flawed. Although the continent is now predominantly democratic, this state of affairs did not arise for over a century after the transition to regional peace. While elections were common in states like Argentina and Uruguay in the second half of the nineteenth century, they were flawed, and even were they not losers frequently turned to violence rather than acknowledge defeat (Rock 2002); meanwhile, Brazil remained institutionally a monarchic empire until an 1889 coup that ushered in a military dictatorship (Needell 2006). For a variety of reasons, economic interdependence has been consistently quite low by comparison with other regions, with most trade going outside the continent to countries like the United States (Martín 2006,

country's general disengagement from the region—discussed below—meant that it was not seen as a threat at the time.

³⁸On the United States as a regional hegemon, see Mearsheimer (2001) and Elman (2004).

³⁹Additional Realist arguments exist, but none have even surface plausibility. Thus, for example, McIntyre (1995) attributes the lack of interstate war in South America after 1883 to difficult terrain, but the terrain was if anything more of an obstacle during the earlier period when wars were far more common. See also Holsti (1996, pp. 162-165).

ch. 6). Finally, international institutions did not exist in the region during the period in which the transition occurred, and have remained relatively weak through to the present.

Ideational arguments also have significant flaws. Studies of political culture in Latin America consistently describe a common regional political culture derived from a shared colonial experience (e.g. Ebel, Taras & Cochrane 1991). Such a culture, of course, is invariant over the post-independence period, and thus cannot explain a transition from regional war to regional peace. An alternate approach would attribute the transition to the emergence of either a shared belief, presumably arising from the experience of war, that war is unprofitable or a shared intersubjective identity—Wendt’s (1999) Kantian friendship—that makes violence between states unthinkable. The problem here is that, while war has become rare in the Southern Cone, it clearly did not become unthinkable (Mares 1997, Mares 2001). The Chaco and Falklands Wars, which both admittedly occurred on the margins of the Southern Cone subsystem, provide obvious examples. More compelling, however, is the observation that geopolitical thinking focused on balancing against external threats survived well after the region’s last significant war. Thus, for example, while Brazil and Argentina last opposed each other in war over 150 years ago, militaries in both countries (especially Argentina) remained quite concerned about the possibility of war into the 1980s, with military journals filled with geopolitical theorizing about possible future conflicts (Caviedes 1988; Kelly 1997, ch. 3). Moreover, long after the transition to regional peace, the region retained a traditional, if typically implicit, checkerboard alliance pattern, with Brazil and Chile pitted against Argentina and Peru (and with Paraguay and Uruguay buffer states trapped between them) (Child 1985, pg. 100; Kelly 1997). In short, even if war was rare, it clearly was not unthinkable.

Finally, it should be noted that, while wars became much more rare, disagreements did not disappear. The countries of the Platine subsystem continued to advance territorial claims against their neighbors: examining those subsystem members that shared a border (i.e. all but the Paraguay-Uruguay dyad), we find that between 1880 and 1945 there was an active territorial dispute in 60% of all dyad-years.⁴⁰ The Argentines in particular continued to see Brazil as a strategic rival; the two countries ended up backing different opponents in conflicts like the Chaco War and World

⁴⁰I rely here on the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) dataset. For a discussion of the ICOW data, see Hensel (2001).

War II (where Argentina was the most pro-German country in the Western Hemisphere). Thus, while some political disagreements were resolved through the conflicts in the nineteenth century, the relative absence of violence in the twentieth century was not a consequence of the absence of issues over which to fight.

6.3.2 Resolving Shifting Power Concerns

Those few academic studies that have grappled with the puzzle of the transition to peace in the Southern Cone all agree on the importance of state strength in explaining the region's history of conflict.⁴¹ Holsti (1996, ch. 8) and Miller (2007, ch. 7) both see war in the nineteenth century as a consequence of the weakness of Latin American states after independence (although they differ somewhat in their definition of state weakness), and argue that the transition to peace occurred because relevant states became stronger. By contrast, while Centeno (2002) agrees that the state in Latin America has, with some prominent exceptions, been consistently weak, he argues that this phenomenon has persisted over time, and that state weakness is responsible for the overall dearth of interstate violence in the region.⁴²

This argument is quite plausible. In particular, as was already noted, the weakness of the Argentine state was at the heart of most of the region's wars during this period. Scholars agree that the Argentine state was far stronger by the 1880s (see for example Escude 1988; Shumway 1991, pg. xii; Centeno 2002, pg. 111; and Miller 2007, pg. 330), precisely the point at which the region shifted away from endemic violence. It is thus hard to disagree with Holsti and Miller when they argue that the consolidation of the relevant states during this period was essential for the

⁴¹There also exist studies, such as McIntyre (1995), Kacowicz (1998), and Martín (2006), that seek to explain only the dearth of conflict in the twentieth century, without examining the prior period of violence. These studies are less likely to focus on state strength as a central variable, although it does play a role (alongside many other variables) in Kacowicz's argument.

⁴²Centeno is primarily interested in arguing that Latin America constitutes an exception to bellicist theories of the state, associated most strongly with Charles Tilly (e.g. Tilly 1985), that were developed on the basis of the European experience. As such, his central question is why Latin America did not experience the kind of interstate wars that were fought in Europe prior to 1945, and in particular why the region did not experience anything analogous to the World Wars. His argument is that war did not have the same state-strengthening effects in Latin America that it did in Europe, primarily because the Latin American environment was more benign, with conquest effectively off the table. Leaders thus were not forced to build the type of state capacity seen in Europe, with the result that total war was infeasible. I argue below, however, that the Paraguayan War, which of all Latin America's conflicts most nearly approached total war, constitutes an important exception to his broader argument.

transition away from war. At the same time, however, neither of these authors takes the additional step back to explain *how* the state managed to consolidate. Given the inevitable existence of actors opposed to state consolidation under their enemies, this question is far from trivial.

I argue that this increase in strength arise primarily as a consequence of the Paraguayan War, which allowed Mitre (and his successor Domingo Sarmiento) to consolidate power in a way no previous Argentine leader had been able to do. The war had a number of important effects, including proving an economic boondoggle for Buenos Aires, whose merchants profited from the city's role in supplying the front (López-Alves 2000, pg. 190). Two consequences of Argentine involvement, however, were particularly salient: the increased size of the national army, and the opportunity to link the external threat from Paraguay to the internal concerns of *caudillismo*.⁴³

In 1864, a year before the Paraguayan invasion, the Argentine national army consisted of 6,000 effectives, and desertion was such a problem that continual recruitment was necessary to keep the force at that size (Whigham 2002, pg. 172). The National Guard was far larger, with well over 100,000 men, but these were provincial forces and hence could not be counted upon to obey orders from the center. Once the war began, rural peasants were conscripted for service on the front, effectively allowing Mitre's government to use its internal enemies to fight the external ones (Shumway 1991, pg. 238). While conscription provoked unrest throughout the interior provinces (de la Fuente 2004), it also ultimately allowed the central government to build a larger and more effective national force. A larger army of course could be used against domestic opponents as well as international ones; indeed, the army in Latin America has typically been more concerned with internal than with external threats (Martín 2006). As Mitre withdrew forces from the front to deal with internal threats, he was thus left with a significant force that he could throw against rebellious caudillos.

⁴³Centeno (2002, pp. 110-113) is the primary proponent of the contrary position that the war was not responsible for the increase in Argentine state strength. While acknowledging that the "Paraguayan War did provide Mitre and later Domingo Sarmiento with a much stronger instrument with which to crush continued regional revolts" (pp. 110-113), he argues that the war also encouraged local uprisings, notes the existence of a ten-year gap between the end of the war and the end of Argentine internal unrest, and ultimately attributes the consolidation of the Argentine state to the development of national institutions. As I discuss below, however, neither the increase in conflict during the war with Paraguay nor the continuation of internal unrest for an additional decade are inconsistent with the argument that the war was the critical development that brought about the consolidation of the Argentine state. In his broader, and generally convincing, argument that the typical low intensity of Latin American wars hindered state consolidation, I would argue that the undeniably high-intensity Paraguayan War constitutes an important exception.

Perhaps more importantly, the war presented Mitre and the *porteños* with an opportunity to defeat their opponents piecemeal, without the threat of a general uprising like the one that had removed Rosas in 1851. While competing factions disagreed about the form that the Argentine state should take, and although many Federalists in the interior were initially predisposed to favor Paraguay in its initial dispute with Brazil, the Paraguayan invasion rallied most of the country behind Mitre, as even those “who hitherto opposed Mitre now saw him as the only alternative to a Paraguayan victory” (Whigham 2002, pg. 275). The Paraguayans were quite helpful in this regard, as their cackhanded and repressive occupation of Corrientes, long one of the most problematic Argentine provinces from the perspective of Buenos Aires, provided motivation for even committed Federalists to turn to the central government for protection. Mitre then was able to use this opportunity to install a reliable Unitarian in charge of the province (Whigham 1991, pg. 88). Urquiza, the greatest threat to Mitre, resided in Entre Ríos Province, which directly abutted Corrientes, giving him a good reason to stay loyal.⁴⁴

The interior western provinces, which were less directly threatened by the Paraguayan advance, were the site of more pronounced resistance, which ultimately killed more Argentines than died fighting the Paraguayans (Whigham & Kraay 2004, pg. 17). Anger at the forced impressment of large parts of the adult male population and at the installation of detested Unitarians as governors of traditionally Federalist provinces provoked uprisings in La Rioja and Mendoza, among other places, but because many potential allies stood aside these revolts never developed into general uprisings (Rock 2002, pp. 42-49; de la Fuente 2004). Even during the period of Federalist predominance under the Confederation, the *caudillos* had never developed a centralized army, instead each guarding control over his own force (López-Alves 2000, pg. 188); the Federalists were thus consistently plagued by difficulties coordinating their actions. Over time, the defeat of rebels in one province and the installation of a Unitarian governor meant that the list of possible allies for any new insurrectionist steadily shrank. In sum, the war permitted Mitre to “[d]estroy his internal enemies, and thus consolidate Argentine unity, while the war was being waged mostly by the Brazilian[s]”

⁴⁴Mitre also secured a Brazilian promise to intervene in Entre Ríos should Urquiza declare for Paraguay (Rock 2002, pp. 45-46).

(Escude 1988, pg. 144).⁴⁵

By the time the war ended, power had shifted permanently to Mitre's faction. Some resistance continued: in particular, Ricardo López Jordán, reacting to frustration at Urquiza's passivity during the war, took control of Entre Ríos by coup in 1870 and carried out a guerrilla rebellion, which however proved sporadic and ineffectual; its one significant success, the capture of Gualeguaychú in December 1870, provoked a quick and decisive response by the central government that forced López Jordán into exile. His further attempts at rebellion in 1873 and 1876 were defeated in short order, in the second case inside of two weeks (Rock 2002, pp. 58-68). These three revolts, none of which proved more than a nuisance to the central government, mark the final gasps of the *caudillos* and the Federalists, who now had to acknowledge their defeat. The contrast with 1864 is striking: when the war began, Mitre was the elected president of Argentina, but he held that position to a large degree only because Urquiza, for reasons that remain debated today, withdrew his personal army from the critical Battle of Pavón in 1861 without having been defeated, giving the *porteños* a victory that they otherwise might well not have achieved (Shumway 1991, pp. 225-227; Whigham 2002, pp. 130-131). Even after Urquiza agreed to withdraw from national politics in return for being left undisturbed in Entre Ríos, it is easy to imagine either him or another *caudillo* responding to Mitre's ambitious plans by forming the same sort of coalition that overthrew Rosas just over a decade earlier, or that defeated Mitre's first rebellion in 1859. By the time the war was over, however, the installation of loyal *porteños* as governors of the provinces meant that no such coalition could emerge.

The consolidation of the Argentine state allowed the government to provide a range of public goods, such as an extensive railway network and general public education, that had previously held back the country's development; by the early twentieth century, Argentina was widely seen as an advanced economy on par with countries like Germany and France (e.g. della Paolera & Taylor 2003).⁴⁶ At the same time, however, consolidation had important distributional consequences. The

⁴⁵Mitre's success likely would not have been possible absent the broad agreement that the Argentine state was legitimate, which survived the serious disagreements about how that state should be governed (e.g. López-Alves 2000, pg. 163). See Coser (1956) for the argument that war unifies a politically divided public only in cases in which initial divisions are not too severe.

⁴⁶Indeed, many scholars associate the consolidation of the state with these reforms and the subsequent economic development rather than with the turbulent period before that time (López-Alves 2000, ch. 4). As I note here,

freedom of river trade, which benefited provinces like Corrientes but was anathema to the *porteños*, dropped substantially from prewar levels (Whigham 1991, pg. 89). Traditional Federalists like the Barosso network of families, which had held extensive swathes of territory from the time of their conquest from the indigenous population, saw their land confiscated by the state and then sold to their enemies, who used their control of the judicial system to prevent the original owners from gaining redress (Rock 2002, pp. 65-66). The same railways that bound the nation together economically also could redistribute soldiers quickly to nip any insurrection in the bud (Rock 2002, pg. 68). Likewise, the schools taught a bastardized version of Argentine history, drawing heavily on Mitre's historical writings, that rudely denigrated the Federalists and *caudillos* as barbarians while insulating their opponents from any criticism (Shumway 1991, Whigham 2004, pg. 195). Most importantly, the highest levels of political power remained the exclusive prerogative of the *porteños* for decades after their victory.

To summarize, most off-the-shelf explanations for the transition from regional conflict to regional peace in the Platine subsystem are simply implausible, either because they cannot explain one of the two periods or because micro-level evidence is inconsistent with their predictions. The best explanation for both the period of violence and the transition to peace rests on shifting power concerns, particularly within Argentina, where a protracted disagreement between Buenos Aires and the provinces left a weak state in which both sides were both willing and able to oppose any attempt by their opponents to consolidate power. This internal division exported conflict throughout the region, most notably in the case of the Paraguayan War. That war, however, in turn provided Bartolomé Mitre with the opportunity to impose a decisive defeat on his domestic opponents and finally impose a centralized government run by the *porteños* of Buenos Aires. This shift allowed the region of violence that had existed ever since the end of colonial rule to transition into a region of peace.

however, these reforms and the associated development would have been impossible with Buenos Aires's prior victory.

7 Conclusion

This paper examines the regional logic of war. Throughout history, some regions have been characterized by endemic violence, in which overlapping and interconnected conflicts produce persistent and recurrent fighting. Others, by contrast, are much more peaceful. Moreover, regions that were once violent can transition to peace. The goal of this project is to explain both the dynamics of persistent regional violence and the way in which regions of endemic violence can transition to peace.

I argue that shifting power concerns exacerbate and institutionalize regional violence. War can beget more war by generating windows of opportunity against actors whose allies are tied up elsewhere, while state weakness generates incentives to oppose consolidation under one's domestic opponents. These shifting power concerns are endemic to violent regions, and help to explain why it is so difficult to bring that violence to an end. It thus follows that a convincing explanation for the transition from regional war to regional peace must explain how those shifting power concerns are addressed. By this standard, the most likely scenario in which regional peace might emerge is as a consequence of a major regional war, which typically drags in all relevant actors, fully polarizing the system, and creating a situation in which victors will be able to impose their preferred political systems unilaterally.

This paper evaluates this argument through a case study of the Platine subsystem of Latin America in the nineteenth century. After over half a century of almost constant violence after independence, the region transitioned to peace in the 1880s. I argue that violence was both caused and exacerbated by shifting power concerns, with the most significant concern the ongoing struggle over the nature of the Argentine state. The Paraguayan War provides perhaps the quintessential example of this dynamic, as concerns in Paraguay arising from Bartolomé Mitre's rise in Argentina prompted Francisco Solano López to go to war, first against Brazil and then against Argentina, in an effort to ensure Paraguay's continued independence. This war, which was far more brutal than any other interstate war in post-independence Latin America, had the unanticipated (and from López's perspective undesired) effect of allowing Mitre to consolidate the control of his faction over Argentine politics, most notably by allowing him to build a more effective national army and by

creating a situation in which he could install loyal Unitarian governors in traditionally Federalist provinces. With the Argentine state consolidated, shifting power concerns retreated, allowing for a transition to regional peace. No other explanation of regional violence provides as convincing an account of both the period of violence and the subsequent pacification.

Several further implications follow from these findings. First, this project provides further support for the argument that regional dynamics in international conflict can be neglected only at our peril (Gleditsch 2002). If war begets war, then violence is not simply a consequence of local observable variables (Buhaug & Gleditsch 2008). Second, the close links between civil and interstate wars that arise both in theory and in practice point to problems with the standard approach of trying to isolate one type of conflict and ignore the other in our analyses. Thus, for example, the origins of the Paraguayan War cannot be understood without understanding the repeated civil wars in Argentina, while the consolidation of the Argentine state and the end of the long-running civil conflict in turn cannot be understood without reference to the interstate war with Paraguay. This paper also implies that efforts to limit war in current regions potentially will hinder the transition to regional peace, although that cost may be worth paying if the alternative is an unusually bloody regional war.

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Understanding conflict and war: vol. 4: war, power, peace. Chapter 16. Causes And Conditions Of International Conflict And War*. By R.J. Rummel. War arises because of the changing relations of numerous variables--technological, psychic, social, and intellectual. The intervention of regional powers in Yemen's conflict, including Iran and Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia, threatens to draw the country into the broader Sunni-Shia divide. Numerous Iranian weapons shipments to Houthi rebels have been intercepted in the Gulf of Aden by a Saudi naval blockade in place since April 2015. Separate from the ongoing civil war, the United States continues counterterrorism operations in Yemen, relying mainly on airstrikes to target al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and militants associated with the self-proclaimed Islamic State. In 2016, the United States conducted an estimated 35 strikes in Yemen; in 2017, it conducted about 130. The war, though costly and destructive in its methods, was quite traditional in its aims. It was not a war about fundamental change; it was not fought over the social purpose of the international system, to redefine international norms and reshape governance structures. Rather its origins were dramatic shifts in power that opened a widening gap between actual and perceived power to the point where the newly powerful states no longer deemed the international order, defined in old-fashioned geopolitical terms, as legitimate.[2]. The fighting itself, however, with its unprecedented casualties an