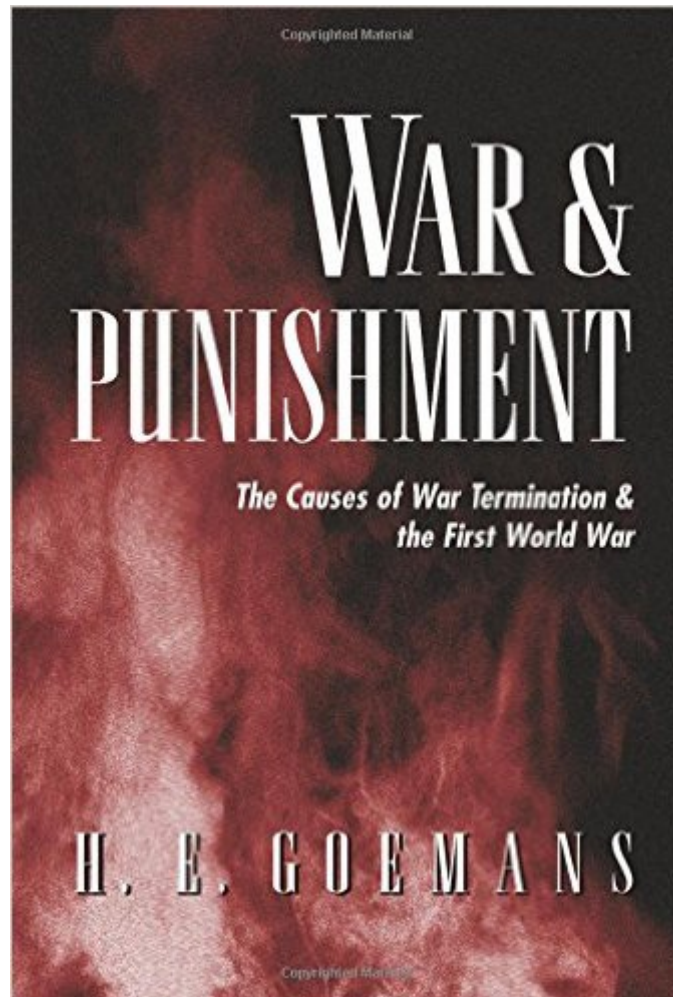


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War And Punishment: The Causes Of War Termination And The First World War



Synopsis

What makes wars drag on and why do they end when they do? Here H. E. Goemans brings theoretical rigor and empirical depth to a long-standing question of securities studies. He explores how various government leaders assess the cost of war in terms of domestic politics and their own postwar fates. Goemans first develops the argument that two sides will wage war until both gain sufficient knowledge of the other's strengths and weaknesses so as to agree on the probable outcome of continued war. Yet the incentives that motivate leaders to then terminate war, Goemans maintains, can vary greatly depending on the type of government they represent. The author looks at democracies, dictatorships, and mixed regimes and compares the willingness among leaders to back out of wars or risk the costs of continued warfare. Democracies, according to Goemans, will prefer to withdraw quickly from a war they are not winning in order to appease the populace. Autocracies will do likewise so as not to be overthrown by their internal enemies. Mixed regimes, which are made up of several competing groups and which exclude a substantial proportion of the people from access to power, will likely see little risk in continuing a losing war in the hope of turning the tide. Goemans explores the conditions and the reasoning behind this "gamble for resurrection" as well as other strategies, using rational choice theory, statistical analysis, and detailed case studies of Germany, Britain, France, and Russia during World War I. In so doing, he offers a new perspective of the Great War that integrates domestic politics, international politics, and battlefield developments.

Book Information

Paperback: 296 pages

Publisher: Princeton University Press (October 15, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0691049440

ISBN-13: 978-0691049441

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #307,891 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #228 in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Russian & Former Soviet Union #443 in Â Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Political History #467 in Â Books > History > Military > World War I

Customer Reviews

According to Clausewitz, an understanding of war cannot be meaningfully divorced from political life. Indeed, he maintains, whenever we attempt to do so, the many links connecting the two phenomena are lost and we are left virtually bereft of understanding. One of the several virtues in this tightly argued and scholarly tome by Stanford professor Hein Goemans is its meticulous and careful consideration of empirical evidence in assessing the interaction and influence of such interrelated factors in what he refers to as "war termination". Using the massive data concerning what specific factors helped to finally bring an end to the First World War to create a fascinating case study, Goemans marshals an articulate and convincing argument regarding the fashion in which these mutually reinforcing factors come to bear on the progress toward cessation of hostilities. Goemans' thesis proceeds from a simple yet provocative premise; that leaders decide to either prosecute or cease fighting at least partly based on how the terms of settlement affect their postwar fate. The author argues that the belligerents make an initial assessment of their chances to succeed in their war aims based on what they learn from their engagements with the enemy, and that such battlefield assessment is a critical factor in determining what is possible in terms of settling the hostilities. He shows how different kinds of regimes blend this assessment with both their understanding of the international structure they are operating within as well as with their own domestic political considerations. According to the author, war settlement is only possible when a situation he refers to as "bargaining space" develops, i.e.

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