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Book Review: Understanding Conflict and War, Vol. 4 - War, Power, Peace, by Rudolph Rummel

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Understanding Conflict and War: Vol. 4, *War, Power, Peace*. By R. J. Rummel. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1979. Pp. 447. \$27.50.)

Perhaps the most important point to keep in mind about *War, Power, Peace* is that it is the fourth volume in a five-volume series, and that its purposes and contents draw from the previous works and lead on to the last. R. J. Rummel, in the first chapter, presents his scholarly concerns and outlines how the volumes of this series address those concerns. Simply, the focus has been on *understanding* war. Rummel notes, "This has been my single, superordinate passion, regardless of my change in perspective on truth or in political views" (p. 20). Rummel briefly reviews his notions about "understanding." He sees three paths to understanding, and hopes in this series to merge the three: metaphysics, experience and analytic theory. In seeking to generalize through finding the common elements of conflict and war, social philosophy, analytic theory and empirical science are required to present a "unified picture" of man, the state and war (e.g., see p. 25). This picture, then, is the result of intuition, reason and experience.

Rummel outlines five "distinct but related" lines of inquiry in pursuit of his understanding: formal war in international relations; analytic theory (e.g., systems theory, game theory, the work of Richardson); methods for operationalizing and testing a theory of war; quantitative empirical analyses; and the philosophical understanding of man, society and conflict. Volume 1 of this series, *The Dynamic Psychological Field*, developed the philosophical and psychological components. An attempt to outline a general understanding of conflict was presented in volume 2, *The Conflict Helix*, while competing theories of conflict were discussed in volume 3, *Conflict in Perspective*. The primary purpose of the first two volumes was the "unpacking" of the concepts on which the present volume is based. It is crucial to understand the five lines of inquiry and the concerns of the previous volumes, because *War, Power, Peace* is "the consummation of this work, the integrative (hopefully) volume on the subject of understanding war, the conflict out of which it grows, and peace" (p. 20).

Rummel succeeds admirably in his purpose. This volume summarizes and pulls together the concepts, approaches and ideas set out in the first three volumes, as well as his work in social field theory. It is not an easy read; the book is overloaded with footnotes and appendices. But, if covered closely, these items indicate clearly where and how the ideas presented derive from the ear-

lier volumes. More importantly, this volume not only integrates Rummel's own earlier volumes (to the point where it is probably unnecessary to read them), it synthesizes these materials within a broader context of views and findings found in the literature on international conflict.

Rummel provides a good outline of the book in chapter 1, and a summary of its major propositions and principles in chapters 19 and 20. He has integrated the earlier books through abstracting 23 major principles of man, society and international relations which relate to conflict, war and peace; 8 of the most general propositions on social conflict; and the application of empirical evidence to 54 explicit propositions derived from social field theory. The propositions from social field theory (which is presented very concisely and intelligibly), and the 8 "primary" propositions on social conflict, are evaluated in terms of the results of several hundred empirical studies. In sum, Rummel finds "circumstantial evidence" in support of social field theory, with 80 percent of the evidence either positive or strongly positive, against 13 percent which is negative. The various tables and appendices which categorize and organize the large number of empirical studies cited make this book a most valuable one for the student of international conflict.

The summary of propositions and principles follows the organization of the book into these sections: part 2, International Behavior; part 3, The International Field; part 4, The International Conflict Helix; and part 5, The Balancing of Powers. The book is far too rich in concepts, propositions, arguments and evidence even to begin to summarize the results. In particular, the discussion of the conflict *process*—the conflict helix—in parts 4 and 5, is thoughtful, provocative, and an excellent synthesis of the literature. Rummel's concern with the "balancing" of actors and power, seen primarily as a "bargaining process" (e.g., see p. 175), makes this volume an interesting companion to Snyder and Diesing's *Conflict among Nations*. Additionally, while one might disagree with the views on detente which Rummel presented in the mid-1970s, the issues, processes and findings that led him to *his* conclusions, emerge in this synthesis.

As I have noted, this is not an easy book to read. Some of the figures and diagrams lack clarity. Jargon becomes a problem in some instances. However, Rummel indicates his intention to present a "non-technical" text for undergraduates which will display these ideas in a less complex and cluttered way. The reader will, despite these problems, come away with an understanding of where Rummel has come in this thinking about war, and how he got there (and where he will go in a fifth volume on controlling war, especially nu-

clear war). Given the current state of theory and research, this volume requires close reading by students of international conflict, war and peace.

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The Correlates of War: Vol. 1, *Research Origins and Rationale*; Vol. 2, *Testing Some Realpolitik Models*. Edited by J. David Singer. (New York: Free Press, 1979, 1980. Pp. xix + 405, xxxviii + 328. \$17.95, \$25.00.)

The Correlates of War, Vols. 1 and 2, provide "another interim report" (Vol. 2, p. xxxvii) of the Michigan "COW" Project. Whereas all of the essays in the first volume of *Correlates of War* have been published elsewhere, nine unpublished tests of "some realpolitik models" constitute the second volume, many being reports of Michigan doctoral dissertations. The substantive findings of the empirical work are briefly summarized in a serial fashion by Karl Deutsch in his end essay in the second volume, pronouncing that the studies "mark a well-balanced and far-sighted research effort" (Vol. 2, p. 295). These two volumes have since been complemented by a third collection of some 13 pieces, *Explaining War: Selected Papers from the Correlates of War*, all of which have appeared previously in various SAGE publications (most from the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*).

Although there are many findings extending beyond mere tests of realpolitik models, some of the excitement of the substance in the *Correlates of War* is conveyed in the ways it confirms as well as contradicts the conventional "wisdom." For example, Singer and Small present a critique of the following propositions in various versions of the Nixon-Kissinger "State of the World Message": (1) "Acceptance of War Leads to More War"; (2) "Weakness Leads to War"; and (3) "Alliances Help to Deter War" (Vol. 1, pp. 308-26). The empirical findings are illuminating:

(1) Yes, "Acceptance of War Leads to More War." As Yamamoto and Bremer report, "In the nineteenth century the first power's decision to enter or not to enter produces modest increments in the probabilities that other powers will do likewise. Similarly, in the twentieth century, if the first major power decides *not* to intervene, the resulting increments in the probability that other powers will follow suit are also modest." But, according to the findings from their "two-way conditional choice" analysis, "if the first major power should decide to enter, the expansion of a war to include all major powers becomes very likely. It is in this sense that the 20th century appears to be a great deal more dangerous than the

19th" (Vol. 2, pp. 227-28), yielding "Wider Wars and Restless Nights," as Yamamoto and Bremer entitle their intriguing piece.

(2) No, "Weakness [does not] Lead to War." Bremer's study of "National Capabilities and War Proneness" indicates "it is precisely the nations that have the greatest actual and potential military capability that are disproportionately involved in war" (Vol. 2, p. 81).

(3) No, the nineteenth-century "lesson" that "Alliances Help to Deter War" does not apply in the twentieth century. Singer and Small found, "The observed relationship between alliance aggregation and the onset of war in the nineteenth century, then, is clearly a negative one, and shows a distribution which is diametrically opposed to, and almost as strong as, that found for the twentieth century" (Vol. 1, p. 258).

Yet this critique of Nixon-Kissinger doctrine was rejected for publication by both *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*, before being accepted by *Policy Sciences*. Throughout the COW studies, the "knowledge" of the diplomats is often challenged implicitly. It is sad that the two volumes contain few explicit confrontations of the empirical findings with the maxims of traditional statecraft.

Volume 1, subtitled "Research Origins and Rationale," consists largely of reprints of essays written in a quasi-polemical style by Singer from 1958 through 1974. If Singer's competence in epistemology and his normative views have developed as much as his methodological postures (as revealed in his essay, "The Historical Experiment as a Research Strategy in the Study of World Politics"), then one might feel short-changed by a mere reprinting of those earlier essays. One might have preferred, instead of new "headnotes" of apology and explanation for the early works, an integrated statement of Singer's orientations as they have evolved in the last half of the 1970s. One does, however, gain better understanding of the rationales and rationalizations by reading his "history" and "retort" in Hoole's and Zinnes' *Qualitative International Politics* (Praeger, 1976, pp. 21-42, 128-45) than by perusing the often redundant and incomplete statements of earlier vintage. If the reader is easily irritated by contentiousness, it may be well to read first the mellower introduction to the second volume written by Singer in 1979 before delving into the effervescent initial 10 essays (published from 1963 to 1974) reprinted in volume 1.

Although the three reprinted "test" studies placed at the end of volume 1 and the nine new studies of volume 2, subtitled, "Testing Social Realpolitik Models," are not prefaced by separate abstracts, each is well written, containing a defini-