

HI126 Lecture One

What is War?

- war is organized violence between groups belonging to different political units
- purpose of war is to **force one side to submit to the other's will**

David Livingstone Smith description of war:

- violence: not just killing
- premeditated: planned, organized,
- sanctioned: legitimate
- inter-communal: social substitutability
- Social substitutability: means that any member of opposing community (family, tribe, nation)

-**“war is a mere continuation of politics by other means”** - Carl von Clausewitz on war

“warfare is an unpopular subject today for understandable reasons. The history of warfare is too often concerned with romantic glorification of individual military leaders and the minute of their martial exploits”- Michael Mallet

The Western Way of War

- a dominant school of interpretation in the academic study of war argues that there is a **“western way of war”** that has over the centuries distinguished the west (Europe/America) from the rest of the world
- Geoffrey Parker, author of our main text belongs to this school
- western way of war is responsible for the west's domination of the world over the last few centuries

Flaws in Davis Hanson euro-centric chauvinism analysis:

- civic militarism** disappeared with the decline of the Roman Republic and reappeared only with the French Revolution
- western reliance on the disciplined infantry committed to a decisive battle came and went over the centuries in fact, western armies have often avoided battle and used deceit and trickery in strategy and tactics
- Hanson displays an **ignorance of contempt for non-western warfare**, as conducted by the sneaky holds

Terms used this term:

- strategy*: overall planning and conduct of military campaigns, including moving and deploying armed forces, and deceiving the enemy
- tactics*: organizing military forces and using weapons in an engagement with the enemy

-*logistics*: providing the army with the equipment and supplies it needs while on campaign- which involves transporting supplies, keeping supply lines open to the source supplies

-*infantry*: foot-soldiers who engage the enemy in face to face combat; often called “the queen of battle”

-*cavalry*: soldiers who mount on horseback

-*artillery*: engines of the war that use mechanical or chemical means to throw projectiles against the enemy (soldiers in artillery are artillerymen)

Why War?

- do humans engage in warfare because it is a fundamental part of nature (is war caused by biology?) *Important quote below*



“If war is just another artifact of civilization, then we can deal with it as easily as we have dealt with slavery and the oppression of women, which is to say, only with very great difficulty and over a long period of time, but it can theoretically be done. However, if it should turn out that warfare [...] extends far back into the pre-civilized and even the pre-human past, then the worrisome possibility arises that war may be an inescapable part of our genetic heritage. That would be a truly discouraging thought.” – Gwynne Dyer (Canadian journalist/writer)

-chimpanzees are our near relatives: our two batches separated only 6 million years ago and our DNA blueprints are 98% identical

-chimps live in hierarchical and cooperative social groups

-they are *xenophobic* and kill outsiders who come into their territory

-they will also launch raids and kill individuals from other groups

-chimps thus:

-protect their own resources

-gain territory and females from rivals

-pre-empt attacks against themselves

The seville statement on violence: *a rejection of the view that war is biologically determined*

-adopted by 20 scientists in Seville, Spain in 1986 called UNESCO

-examples of statements in statement: “it is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war for our animal ancestors”

-but even if we accept that violence is innate to the humans, does that make violence and war inevitable?

-the move from capacity to propensity (**acting on genetic instincts**) isn't biological, but depends on circumstances and culture (**“violence is not primitive urge, instead it is a near inevitable outcome of the dynamics of self interested, rational social organisms”** - Steve Pinker)