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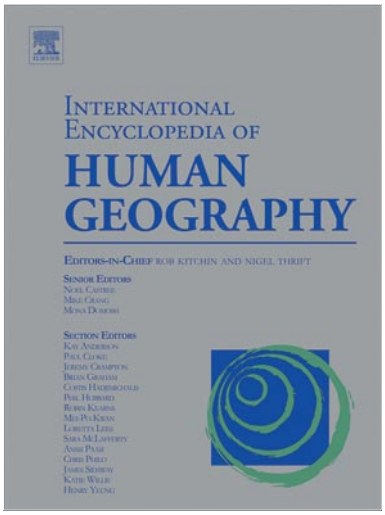

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War

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Glossary

Conflict A competitive or opposing action of political actors, for example, a conflict between two states.
Civil War A war between two groups within the same state (generally with the intention of one group to become a state of its own while the other defends the existing state).
Defensive War A war to defend the own territory and population against foreign aggression.
Interstate War or International War A war between two states.
Just War A war that is seen as just, a war in which international regulations are respected.
Military Of, or related to, war and war-waging institutions, soldiers, and weaponry.
National Liberation War A war to obtain independence from foreign rule.
Peacekeeping The enforcement and supervision of a truce between two conflicting parties (two states or two groups within one state) by an external, generally international force.
Preemptive War A war to prevent an imminent aggression towards the own territory and population.
Resource War A war or conflict around natural resources.
War Open and declared armed conflict between political groups, generally between states.
World War A war in which most states in the world are engaged in.

Historical Shift in the Study of War

Historically geography has long been closely related to the waging of war: geographical knowledge about foreign places and people was often gathered during military campaigns and conquests, while this knowledge was primarily used to conquest new territory and control and rule it after war. Geographers were often part of military or imperial agencies. Nowadays most geographers working on war and related issues tend to distance themselves from these institutions and to promote peace and conflict resolution, rather than to take side in a particular war.

Since the institutionalization of geography as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, the ways geographers consider war have drastically shifted. This shift reflects changing ideas about war waging in (Western) society. In the past, when war was seen as a normal practice of foreign policy, geographers were prone to offer their services and provide knowledge and insights to policymakers and war wagers. 'Geography as an aid to statecraft' was the well-known motto of Sir Halford Mackinder, the first reader in geography at the University of Oxford (1887). Warfare being an important branch of statecraft, it was an important field of applied geography.

The Great War (1914–18), or World War I as we know it now, was a turning point in Western thinking about war. The scale of the war had been profoundly disturbing, both the number of casualties (about one-fourth of the 1891–1895 male cohort in France!) and the number of parties involved, including colonies of European states and states outside Europe, like Japan and later China, Brazil, and the USA. The eventual involvement of the Americans was key to the post-war peace negotiations. President Woodrow Wilson promoted new principles for international relations (enunciated in the so-called *Fourteen points*) that resulted in the establishment of the League of Nations and the prevention of war as a collective project of member states. Geographers played an important role at the peace conference, as advisers for the redrawing of political borders in the states that were established in the defeated multinational empires.

Still, the League failed to prevent the rearmament of Germany and a new world war started in Europe in 1939. After World War II (1939–45) and its devastating impact on civilian populations, the League was replaced by the Organization of the United Nations and war truly became an exceptional, condemnable state behavior, justifiable only in last resort. A symbol of this change is the

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re-naming of most Departments (or Ministries) of War around the world into Departments (or Ministries) of Defence. After World War II geographers took a distant stance towards the analysis of war, its causes and its effects, and when they ambitioned the application of geographical knowledge, they aimed at conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Their moral condemnation of war as social activity brought about intellectual neglect: war has no entry in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* edited by Ron Johnston, Derek Gregory, Geraldine Pratt, and Michael Watts (fourth edition published in 2000).

Still geographers have been engaged with wars in different ways. This article presents three broad groups of geographical perspectives: military geographies of war, human geographies of war, and the military, and political geographies of war and peace. Before proceeding it is necessary to scrutinize the term 'war' in more detail.

Definitions of War

At first sight, every one knows what war is. It is however difficult to define war and to distinguish it from other forms of political violence. When is an armed conflict a war? What are the differences between war, guerrilla, terrorism, occupation, and repression? Neither is peace easily defined as the simple absence of war and the freedom from insecurity.

A war could be defined as a state of open, armed, conflict between political groups. It involves the use of force. Generally war is reserved for conflicts of a certain size, for example, the amount of 1000 casualties is often used as a threshold between a militarized conflict and a full-scale war. The two main categories of wars are interstate wars – wars between states, and civil wars – wars between groups within the same state. Just any use of force in a conflict is not necessarily a war. Policing activities including the 'occupation' of foreign territories or the 'repression' of subversive political movements are generally not seen as war if they are understood as the legitimate intervention of the state. Likewise, 'guerrilla' (from the diminutive of *guerra* – war in Spanish) is used for a conflict in which local paramilitary groups are operating in raids against military or police forces. It points at actors and tactics that differ from a war situation. 'Terrorism' pertains to the use of violence, or the threat of using violence, to intimidate citizens, generally to achieve political goals. Terrorism can not only be used by political groups to pressure states, but also by states against the population of another state or against its own population to prevent political opposition. Accidental civilian deaths during wars are generally not seen as terrorism. A conflict can progress from one type to the other, for example, think of a liberation movement that begins as a guerrilla against the state it sees as illegitimate, uses terrorism to weaken that state, stirs a civil war, and finally obtains independence. The reverse can also be true, as the recent developments in Iraq show: an interstate war can evolve into a civil war when part of the population does not recognize the post-war regime.

Interstate wars are regulated by international laws regarding the declaration of war (*jus ad bellum*) and the conduct of war (*jus in bello*), such as the appropriate (i.e., proportionate) use of violence, the treatment of soldiers, civilians, and prisoners. Among the most important international treaties regulating warfare are the *United Nations Charter* (1945), the *Geneva conventions* (1949) and the additional protocols (1977 and later), and the *International Criminal Court Treaty* (1998). The later court, established in 2002 in The Hague, can prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. However major geopolitical actors, notably the United States, but also Russia, China, India, and Iran, did not sign this treaty. By contrast, civil wars imply that the legitimacy of the state is contested: there are no similar 'rules of war'; and guerrilla and terrorism are defined by the use of unlawful force.

The term 'just war' is used to characterize a war waged according to the rules: that is a war waged for just reasons (righting some wrongs such as the illegal appropriation of territory and violation of human rights) that is, *jus ad bellum*, and conducted properly (discrimination, proportionality, minimum force) that is, *jus in bello*. Recent debates about the ethics of war also proposed rules for the proper ending of war, that is, *jus post bellum*. Whether a state does or does not comply with these rules is often contested.

An important distinction in this context is the distinction between defensive war and preemptive war: the first describes a legitimate reaction against aggression by another state (self-defence according to Article 51 of the UN Charter), while a preemptive war attempts to defeat an imminent offensive or invasion. Some argue that a preemptive war is also self-defence as it aims at gaining a strategic advantage in an imminent war that is believed to be unavoidable. Others see a preemptive war as an act of aggression. Therefore different interpretations coexist regarding, for example, the American war on Saddam Hussein's Iraq in March 2003.

In addition, a number of common terms qualifying war should be explained. These notions generally reflect the scope, the goals, and the specifics of warfare. Local war, regional war, and world or global war, qualify the scale of the war theatre and the actors involved. Protagonists are not always directly involved in the war: a proxy war is a war in which two powerful states are not involved directly, but through third parties. The Cold War was the period of conflict between the USA and the Soviet Union, when direct open conflict between the two superpowers was avoided, despite open hostility. An

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independence war, or national liberation war, is a war to secure independence from foreign rule; a secession war aims at seceding from an existing state. Nowadays less common, are dynastic wars (between proponents of two candidates to the succession of a deceased monarch), colonial wars (between colonial powers to control colonies), and trade wars (in the literary meaning of the world war, such as the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century). Tactics and the military hardware employed are other elements to characterize a war. Warfare can be naval or aerial and conventional or unconventional (implying clandestine, covert operations). Conventional warfare can also mean the use of conventional weapons, as opposed to ABC warfare, that is using atomic (i.e., nuclear), biological, or chemical weapons. For information warfare in the age of the Internet, new terms such as cyberwar and netwar have been coined.

Finally the metaphorical use of the term 'war' needs to be noticed, as it has also been used in foreign policy to strengthen collaborative efforts under US leadership, noticeably in the War on drugs and the War on terror.

Military Geographies of War

As explained above, since World War II academic geographers have avoided being involved in contributing to the application of geographical knowledge to the waging of war. There is of course a lively, if not visible, community of geographers in military circles, especially at military and naval academies. These geographers play an important role in the education of the military personnel across the world. Military geographies of war apply geographical knowledge to wage war at different scales: tactics and knowledge of terrains and climate at the local level (how to win a battle), strategies and logistics at the regional level (how to win a war), and geostrategy and geopolitics at the global scale (how to secure global support).

Military geographies are closely linked to technological developments as both the available and the necessary geographical knowledge change with technologies. The logistics of a naval warfare differ from that of aerial warfare or of terrestrial operations. They also changed with the range of the weaponry and with the energetic autonomy of ships, submarines, and planes. The use of aerial bombing – first in colonial wars by the British in Iraq in the 1920s, by the German *Luftwaffe* for Franco's troops in Gernika/Guernica in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War, and later at a large scale against many European and Japanese cities during World War II – implied a major shift regarding the geographical knowledge needed for that terrain: not anymore the battlefields and their physical components, but rather existing cities and infrastructures, and the people and activities inside them.

The nuclear weaponry used at the end of World War II dramatically changed the scope of warfare as it could bring about mass destruction. The precarious equilibrium between the two superpowers during the Cold War was often explained by the fact that they would not use nuclear weapons because that was synonymous with a 'mutual assured destruction' (for which the acronym was appropriately MAD). The proliferation of nuclear weapons and the number of states holding them, however, reintroduced insecurity, even for MAD believers.

Technological improvements in the field of information and communication technologies also impacted dramatically on military geographies: think in the past of the telegraph, weather broadcast, radar engineering, and aerial photography, and more recently of Geographical Information Systems and Science (GIS), Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) such as Global Positioning System (GPS), and remote sensing.

In the post-Cold War period, the role of the military also dramatically changed. Military operations shifted from conventional operations to defend or invade a specific territory, towards overseas international interventions for peace enforcement, peacekeeping, and more recently reconstruction. The military is deployed overseas, often in an international force, such as UN peace forces. They operate in urban areas, rather than in battlefields and trenches, and they interact mostly with civilians. In the American military jargon such operations are known as 'military operations other than war' (or MOOTW). They include humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and the evacuation of noncombatants, but also support to civil authorities, arms control, enforcement of sanctions, operations in the war on drugs and the war on terrorism, support of insurgency or alternatively counter-insurgency (depending on US interests), strikes, and raids. It goes without saying that geographical knowledge of the places they have to intervene in is of eminent value to the military for the effectiveness of these operations in peacetime.

Human Geographies of War (and the Military)

Diametrically opposed to these military geographies are the approaches of geographers who study the impact of war on human societies. These geographers aim at disclosing the longlasting and devastating effects of war activities. Their work forms a varied body of human geographies of war that has been recently expanded to the military in general, not only the military in war operations.

Human geographies and historical geographies of the landscapes of war have demonstrated the long lasting problems in regions where wars have been waged. Almost

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a century after the Great War, explosives remain a liability for farmers on the lands of the former trenches in the North of France. Prior to major infrastructural works in European cities, remaining bombs regularly have to be dismantled. More recent wars have an even more tragic legacy, especially those in which antipersonnel mines and cluster bombs have been widely used. Landmines and explosive remnants kill and injure thousands of people every year and has considerably slowed down the reconstruction of the affected regions. The UN has supported the Mine Ban Treaty (or *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their Destruction*) signed in Ottawa in 1997 (but then again key geopolitical actors like the USA, Russia, and China are among the nonsignatories) and deploys the UN Mine Action Service to carry out de-mining activities and provide mine-risk education and assistance in affected countries.

Another aspect that geographers studied extensively is the destruction of cities by aerial warfare, especially the bombing of British cities by the German air force and the bombing of German and Japanese cities by the allied air forces. Cities have also been the targets of systematic destruction: snipers in Sarajevo in the 1990s to destroy the multiethnic Bosnian city, Israeli bulldozers in Jenin in the 2000s to destroy Palestinian urbanity. The term 'urbicide' has been coined for this deliberate attack on cities and the pluralism they represent.

Wars generate specific landscapes, but not only landscapes of destruction. These are memorial landscapes with war cemeteries and war monuments, generally located close to the battlefields where the soldiers fell, or near military academies, or in the places of origins of the soldiers. These memorials have been important icons of the sacrifice of veterans for the nation and powerful symbols of national identity. The smallest French village generally has a memorial for those who died for the nation, and ceremonies are held on Remembrance Days. In capital cities, national war monuments like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, or Tombs of the Unknown Soldier attract large flows of visitors. Finally wars' legacy includes museums commemorating specific war episodes. Some places have become memorials regularly visited by veterans and relatives of the fallen. Others became major tourist attraction, such as the tour in Normandy along the beaches and the battles of Operation Overlord (still known as D-Day, that is 6 June 1944). Slightly different but obviously related are the memorials and museums commemorating civilian victims of war, like the Peace Memorial in Caen (in Normandy also) or the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, the Homomonument and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, several concentration and extermination camps that have been preserved for that purpose, and Holocaust memorials and museums, sometimes located far outside Europe.

Other war-generated landscapes are the borderlands resulting from the territorial arrangements agreed on at the end of the conflict, including the effects of civil war on the residential patterns of different groups. Some geographers have been involved in border drawing and territorial arrangements, others have studied how shifting state borders and border fortifications have affected the development of places and their communities in the affected borderlands.

Human geographies of the impact of war have been broadened to consider militarism and the preparation of war, especially to research the impact of military bases, armament production sites, and training sites. Certain local economies depend heavily on defence contracts for their industries or on the military as the single major employer. Changes of military policies (cut backs in military spending, base closures) and war operations overseas have a direct and deep impact on these communities. Training sites have been seriously affected by the ecological consequences of military activities: nuclear tests, bombing exercises, and shooting trainings are important contaminators.

Last but not least, feminist geographies have recently opened new directions in the investigations of the geographies of the militarization of everyday life. The military draft has long been, and still is in many countries, the most direct and obvious connection between citizens and the military ambitions of the state they belong to. Feminist geographers analyze the impact of the military not just on the lives of soldiers, but also on their families and the civilians living and/or working around the military bases.

Political Geographies of War and Peace

The third and last category of geographies of war consists of political geographies of war and peace. These are geographical approaches that try to explain war as a specific type of relations between states. Political geographies of wars consider spatial patterns of war and peace and disclose the factors that might explain these patterns. Some geographers have studied the diffusion of conflict. Are there regional clusters of conflicts? Is a war likely to spread to neighboring states? Is a state with a large number of neighbors more likely to wage war, than a state with fewer borders or a state on an island?

Among other geographical factors that might explain the frequent occurrence of war, resources are probably the most often discussed. The term 'resource wars' has been used to qualify wars revolving around resources such as oil, water, diamonds, and so on. According to Le

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Billon there are three perspectives on resource wars. First, classical geopolitical approaches simply look at the state's level when researching the correlation between the presence of resources and armed conflicts. They frame conflict as scrambles in the competition for resources and neglect other aspects of these wars. Second, political economical approaches underline issues of resource scarcity and dependence. The dependence on resources can weaken a state and makes it vulnerable for conflict; it can motivate conflict between competing parties wanting to control the resources and therefore it increases the risk of war; and it generates opportunities to wage war as resource revenues can be used to finance weapons and manpower for the hostilities. Third, political ecological approaches adopt multiscalar analyses to research the relations between resource access and control, and various forms of violence. They pay more attention to the complex relations between the control of resources and other motives in such conflicts.

Finally a large amount of studies have demonstrated the role of geographical representations and imaginations in the justification of war. Starting as a critique of classical geopolitics and its unquestioned use of geographical knowledge to justify territorial expansion and war, the approach known as critical geopolitics has become an important subdiscipline of political geography. It questions the geographical representations that are used by policymakers, politicians, and statesmen to justify their policies and mobilize popular support. Notions such as geopolitical codes or visions are employed to describe these representations. Another important school of work stems from cultural studies, cultural geographies, and postcolonial studies and questions geographical imaginations (Orientalism, whiteness) behind such geographical representations.

It is not just the elites' views that are important. Critical geopolitics scrutinizes the representations articulated in mass media. Some geographers have studied grassroots initiatives for peace and conflict resolution, whether local, national, or transnational. More recently feminist political geographers have disclosed the connections between geopolitical representations and the everyday life of ordinary people.

Finally, following changes in global politics and in the US foreign policies, political geographers focus less on conventional interstate relations, and more on phenomena such as global governance, humanitarian interventions, transnational terrorism, and counterterrorism.

Challenges and New Directions

Despite the fact that war is certainly no usual topic for geographers, a growing body of geography literature is dealing with it. In this article, three geographical perspectives on war were presented. Military geographies exist wherever there is military training. By contrast, social and political geographies of war are most developed in the Anglo-American geography. This is to be explained partly by the mere size of the US military and the role of the US in the world politics (and to a lesser extent its main ally the UK) and partly by the strength of the political economy and quantitative approaches but also by the feminist and poststructuralist approaches in Anglo-American geography. Despite the seminal critical work of Yves Lacoste on the role of geographical knowledge in war making in the mid-1970s, French geographers did not engage as much with war as their English-speaking counterparts. In addition to this geographical divide, the gap between these three geographical perspectives, especially between military and academic geographies, is huge. This is partly the result of the institutional separation of geography in military circles and geography in academic circles. Unlike other policy domains, the practicalities of defence and security policies have been cautiously ignored by academic geographers since World War II. New developments in warfare, international relations, and global governance underline this gap. The need for mutual engagement is greater than ever. While the new role of the military warrants critical scrutiny from academic geographers, the military also needs more and more human and political geographical knowledge to carry out its new tasks in the most ethical way possible.

See also: Borderlands; Cold War; Critical Geopolitics; Ethnic Conflict; Geopolitics; Geopolitics and Religion; Military and Geography; Military Geographies; Postconflict Geographies; State; Superpower; Territory and Territoriality; War, Historical Geography and.

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