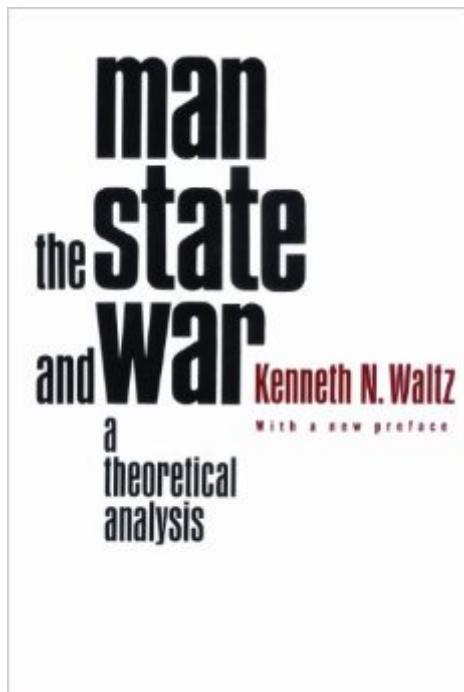


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# Man, The State, And War: A Theoretical Analysis



## **Synopsis**

What are the causes of war? To answer this question, Professor Waltz examines the ideas of major thinkers throughout the history of Western civilization. He explores works both by classic political philosophers, such as St. Augustine, Hobbes, Kant, and Rousseau, and by modern psychologists and anthropologists to discover ideas intended to explain war among states and related prescriptions for peace.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book has legs! I read it first in graduate school in 1969. I was impressed with the argument then, and still appreciate its power now. He identifies a key problem as (page 12) "identifying and achieving the conditions of peace. . ." He notes that, over time, three separate views have dominated discourse on the causes of war (and how to achieve peace): (a) human nature is the root cause; (b) the structure of states is the key factor; (c) the international system itself is the major variable. The book proceeds in a linear fashion. First, he examines the variety of arguments locating the cause of war in human nature. However, he also notes that to link human nature to war is not

easily done (there is, of course, much debate over exactly what human nature is--or even if there is such a given nature), and that political matters must be taken into account. As he considers the contributions of the behavioral sciences, he notes that (page 79) "The more fully behavioral scientists take account of politics, the more sensible and the more modest their efforts to contribute to peace become." The second level of analysis is the structure of states themselves. He notes that some have argued that if the state had a proper structure, then peace would result. He considers, for instance, liberal theorists of the 19th century who made that point. One problem: While trying to create more liberal states, what about those illiberal ones who may engage in conflict? What then? The structure of the state won't prevent self-defense. Indeed, some liberals, like Thomas Paine, wanted to use force to democratize the world. The final level of analysis is the structure of the international system itself. The main point here is that that system can be termed "anarchy.

IR scholars has long debated on which level of analysis is the most appropriate and helpful level in approaching international relations. In his seminal book *Man, the State, and War*, Kenneth N. Waltz becomes the first to analyze the political philosophy behind each level of analysis and their interaction with one another. Unlike his later writings in which he develops a purely structural theory of international relations, in *Man, the State, and War* Waltz offers a more balanced view on the importance of each "images" for the study of world politics: "the 'third image' describes the framework of world politics, but without the first of and second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy," (238). To briefly summarize Waltz's images, the "first image" is about human nature. Human-nature accounts explain war by analyzing the common characteristics (or defects) of human beings. These theories tend to attribute war to an "ultimate cause" that derives from human nature: "the root of all evil is man, and thus he is himself the root of the specific evil, war," (3). Waltz's problem with searching for an "ultimate cause," however, is that ultimate causes frequently turn out to be the cause of everything. Therefore, Waltz criticized theories that explain war through human nature by arguing that human nature is the cause of as many good (and benign) things as evil ones (39). The "second image" is about the characteristics of states: "the idea that defects in states cause wars among them," (83). Waltz analyzes several state-level accounts of war and peace some of which are very fashionable today, such as the peaceful nature of democracies and peaceful impact of free trade.

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