

BOOK REVIEWS

Maoz, Zeev. *Paths to Conflict: International Dispute Initiation, 1816-1976*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982.

Paths to Conflict is an empirical examination of the concept "serious interstate dispute" (SID), utilizing data drawn from the Influential Correlates of War (COW) Project. Originally written as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan, *Paths to Conflict* focuses on the initiation phase of conflict which, the author contends, has not been adequately explored in the literature of international relations. The book addresses two fundamental questions: under what conditions would nations be inclined to initiate serious interstate disputes, and what factors determine victory or defeat in such disputes? Although Professor Maoz candidly admits that his investigation is only a "first cut" through a largely underdeveloped topic, his findings concerning the relationship between a nation's degree of motivation and the outcomes of disputes to which it is a party make this an important book for scholars of conflict analysis.

The author begins by elaborating on his central concept of SID which he defines as "a set of interactions among states involving the explicit, overt, and government-directed threat, display, or use of force in short temporal intervals." The initiation of an SID is viewed not as a single discrete event but rather as a complex interactive process which may occur over a period of weeks or months. Distinctions are drawn between SID and related concepts such as conflict, crisis, and war.

In order to make his model of dispute initiation operational, Maoz assesses several data sets before settling on a subset of COW data developed by J. David Singer and associates to study the category of conflicts-short-of-war. This data set includes some 827 cases spanning the period from the Congress of Vienna in 1816 to the end of 1976. Using these data, Maoz generates some descriptive findings concerning the occurrence of SIDs, including the distribution of such disputes over time, the type of states involved (major or minor powers), and how the disputes started and ended. In an effort to move from the plane of description to that of explanation, Maoz then proceeds to pose three alternative models for the occurrence of SIDs.

The Frustration, Threat, and Power Transition models are developed using ideas about what motivates nations. They are drawn from a number of academic fields, transformed into testable hypotheses, and subjected to a variety of statistical tests. The author begins by conducting bivariate analyses relating dependent and independent variables and proceeds to multivariate analyses using contingency tables and regression analysis. Although he acknowledges a less than perfect fit between any of his three proposed models and the data, Maoz finds at least partial support for the Frustration and Power Transition models. Initiators of SIDs are those states which are dissatisfied with their

international or domestic position and whose relative military capability has, at the same time, increased significantly.

Having proposed at least a preliminary answer to his first research question, the author proceeds to examine the factors which determine the eventual outcome of SIDs. From his first (descriptive) level of data analysis, Moaz found that a state which initiates a dispute usually prevails in such situations (in a ratio of four to one) regardless of the relative size or capability of its target. In order to explore this fascinating result concerning dispute outcomes, Moaz draws a 20 percent sample (164 cases) from the SIDs data set and utilizes it to re-test his three alternative theoretical models. From this, the Frustration model emerges as the most plausible explanation of dispute outcomes. When states are dissatisfied with their place in the international system and perceive an opportunity to improve their circumstances through confrontation, they will be inclined to initiate a SID. The critical factor which appears to determine victory or defeat in such situations is the degree of resolve on the part of the initiator. Initiators of SIDs tend to be victorious not because they are militarily stronger but because they are more highly motivated. This finding is most interesting given the current attempt by a number of states to buy security by dramatically increasing their military expenditures. In any dispute in which the state might find itself, however, victory or defeat would appear to hinge not on military capability alone but on a number of motivational factors as well. Elaborate and expensive weapons systems may simply create a false sense of security if states are unwilling to use them when threatened or if they give their adversaries this impression.

In his concluding chapter the author ponders the moral and policy implications of his findings. Moaz is not unaware that the findings of his effort to understand the etiology of conflict may be used by those supportive of aggressive foreign policy behaviour. He suggests, however, that a better understanding of the nature of conflict will ultimately facilitate conflict management. Although it must be considered only a preliminary investigation of an extraordinarily complex subject, *Paths to Conflict* is a well-researched and thought-provoking analysis. In the best tradition of social-science research, the author enables the reader to follow him step by step as he defines concepts, discusses research problems, tests hypotheses, and evaluates results. Although the book is unfortunately marred by a number of typographical errors and presupposes an understanding of advanced research methodology on the part of the reader, this is an important contribution to the study of war and peace and deserves a wide readership.

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