POLS404

Written assignment

**Date of delivery - before January 23, 2020**

War and Conflict in the Contemporary World

Dear Colleagues,

I want to propose to you, instead of writing a traditional essay as your written assignment, to answer **five**of the below mentioned ten questions regarding the wars and conflicts in the 21-century. You may select questions according to your interest; they are not directly interrelated,and you do not need to write binding texts.

I expect from you to answer each question in the following format:

* Statement of your opinion (in one para).
* Your arguments, supported with citationand references that prove your thesis.
* Conclusion.
* List of used sources.

There are no specific volume requirements. However, do not forget the grades are between 2 and 6.

If you have any questions, you may ask them during our classes or by e-mail.

I wish you fruitful work,

VR

(20 October 2019)

1. **Why do governments assume that "the more land, the better"?**

There is a constant political struggle for land between two or more nations around the world, where two different countries claiming to own a land area even though another country controls (or "occupy") it. Whenever a region asks for independence, usually the central country refuses.

A non-exhaustive list:

* Serbia claims Kosovo is theirs;
* Pakistan, India and China all three consider the Kashmir region to be theirs;
* Both Argentina and the UK wants the Falkland Islands;
* Spain refuses even to consider a possible Catalan or Basque independence;
* Both Greece and Turkey wants to control Cyprus;
* Both Ukraine and Russia considers Crimea to be their;
* Both Georgia and Russia claim South Ossetia and Abkhazia; and so on.

It seems like pretty much all geopolitics and wars are based on the assumption that "more land is better.” Is this assumption historically proven and contemporary correct? What the benefits of “grabbing” more space (land and water) and what the negatives could be?

1. **Are there benefits to war?**

Probably the most common defence of wars is that they are necessary evils. However, wars are also defended as being in some way beneficial. How does the war affect winners and victims? E.g., polls in the United States through the 2003-2011 war on Iraq found that a majority in the U.S. believed Iraqis were better off as the result of a war that severely damaged Iraq. A majority of Iraqis, in contrast, thoughtthey were worse off. This is a disagreement over facts, not ideology. However, people often choose which facts to become aware of or to accept.

The First World War destroyed empires, created numerous new nation-states, encouraged independence movements in Europe’s colonies, forced the United States to become a world power and led directly to Soviet communism and the rise of Hitler. The Second World War led to a profound change in political thinking about how states should conduct their relations. During the Cold War, many advances in science and technology were made possible because of the arms race. Could be such achievements qualified as benefits of wars?

1. **In which case is separatism considered legitimate?**

What historical background usually gives a nation/minority within another country legal grounds for separatism in the eyes of the international community? In international law, the only principle that can be used is the [Self Determination Right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-determination), which is recognised by the United Nations. Do you think that the definition of "nation" is too loose, as some countries have been authorised to separate according to that principle, while others have had more difficulty? Could you call the separatism “a nation within a nation”? Similarly, a few countries are recognised as such by some others, whereas others refuse to recognise them. Some examples: Taiwan, Israel, Darfur, Palestine, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and others. However, of what kind is such recognition - political orlegal?

1. **Can a country take over another?**

Could a country legally take control over another country? If one country is falling economically and politically, what will happen if one nation takes control and merges the two nations? Are there any widely adopted treaties or agreements that prevent this kind of action? For example, is the Russian annexation of Crimea legal? What types of wars do the [UN Charter](http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/index.html) justifies?

Based on what the countries, members of the United Nations Security Council, vote in cases of authorisation of military actions –respect to the international law, geopolitical self-interests or human values?

1. **Why does Russia try to stop Ukraine from approaching the EU and NATO membership?**

It is widely explained that while the Western capitals see the emergence of a Europe ‘whole, free and at peace’, Moscow views the continent still fragmented, still dominated by bloc mentality (given US influence in European security), and burdened by the ongoing conflict. Where Western capitals see the “open door” policy and the enlargement of organisations such as NATO and the EU contributing to wider European stability, Moscow considersthe expansion of these organisations destabilising European security. Where Western leaders have sought to emphasise partnership with Russia, including attempting to develop strategic partnership and the creation of numerous seats at the diplomatic table, Moscow sees itself increasingly isolated, the mechanisms for interaction failing to provide Moscow with a voice. How do you see the Russia-Ukraine war through these arguments?

1. **What is the impact on world politics of the increasing diversity and complexity of social structures in the most powerful societies of the world?**

It is a platitude that contemporary societies are increasingly complex, a complexity that is magnified by the increasing blurring of lines between societies as transnational relations become denser. Governments themselves are becoming diversified, along with civil society, which has experienced a vast increase at the supranational level of non-governmental organisations and social movements. Traditional gender roles have been changing in many societies, with potential impacts on decision-making and leadership behaviour. How do you see the role of society and its non-profit organisations and media for conflict and war prevention?

1. **How has politics been affected by the expansion of force, through technological change, and its dispersion?**

Scholars have explored in-depth the effects of changes in the technology of force on international relations in the West over periods of centuries. Recent changes in warfare, relying on global positioning systems and electronic technology of all kinds, have created huge gaps between the military power of the United States and that of other countries. Some of those who celebrated American military power, however, may have forgotten that ingenious adversaries can create effective “weapons of the weak,” such as terrorism and that possessing a superior resource may lead states to overuse it, or to attempt to use it for purposes for which it is not well suited. How do you see the impact of asymmetry on contemporary wars and conflicts?

1. **What are the implications of electronic technologies, especially of the Internet, for world politics?**

To exercise influence, sets of individuals with common values or interests need to be able to communicate with each other, to form groups, and to act collectively. Historically, such communication has been very difficult except through formal organisations, including the state; and all but impossible across state boundaries except with the aid of states. This formerly constant reality has been changing with incredible speed during the last two decades, and we have hardly begun to understand the implications of this momentous fact. One implication may be that collective action on a transnational or even global scale, for good or ill, is easier than it has ever been before.How do you see the possible impact of Internet-based social networks and global communications on conflict management, crisis de-escalation and prevention of war?

1. **What modes of action can effectively cope with the unprecedented stress that human beings are imposing on the global climate and environmental change?**

The reality of human-induced climate change has become undeniable, although many uncertainties surround the pace and severity of change and the prospects for relevant technological innovation. The political uncertainties may be even greater, both with respect to the willingness of publics and governments around the world to pay significant costs to mitigate climate change and adapt to it and with respect to the capacity of existing or feasible institutions to implement measures involving global taxes or tradable permit schemes. How do you see the climate and environment changes as sources of future conflicts and wars?

1. **Is there any plausible sense in which progress has taken place in the prevention of conflicts and wars?**

Since the Second World War, both IR scientists and politicians expected economic interdependence to dampen or even prevent wars and sought arbitration and arms limitation treaties to facilitate and institutionalise benign changes. The effects of changes in the ideas in which people believe are by no means necessarily benign, as illustrated by nuclear weapons and the recent militancy of religious fundamentalism. We should expect no simple answer to questions about progress, but they are nevertheless essentialquestions to ask.How do you see, would it be realistic to expect further progress in preventing wars and conflicts due to intellectual or moral advances in human thinking?