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‘A Culture of Prevention:’ The Idea of Preventability and the Construction of War as a Governance Object

Johanna Rodehau-Noack

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others.

I declare that my thesis consists of 97,514 words.

Abstract

War and conflict were seen as inevitable, justifiable and productive for centuries, yet today conflict prevention is a core item on the agendas of major international actors. This thesis grapples with how the notion of war as preventable became dominant in international discourse. I argue that for policy to be oriented towards prevention, war needed to be constructed as a problem of international governance. How problems of international politics are constructed matters because such processes determine what a problem is and how it has to be resolved. Using archival material, I show that war was constructed as a problem in three interlocking processes that rendered it undesirable but calculable and, therefore, ultimately governable.

This thesis documents these three processes of war's construction as a governance problem. Firstly, early Christian pacifists *designated* war as a cataclysmic phenomenon that constitutes the opposite of 'peace' and is knowable through science. Secondly, by *translating* war into statistics, scholars made war comparable across time and space. Thirdly, activists and policy-makers *problematised* war by associating it with existing issues like Christian morality, the civilisational telos, and cost-benefit rationality. From these associations derives the imperative to prevent war because it is both inherently objectionable and has undesirable effects. The representation of war as a governance object is embedded in a broader set of binaries that tied 'war' to barbarism and 'peace' to civilisation. The argument thus shows how the idea of prevention relies on scientific developments of modernity and its cosmological location in European thought.

I close with a speculative discussion of a martial ecological perspective, which abandons the binary conception of war and peace. As it suspends the belief in modernist problem-solving and instead advocates to affirm the world as it is, I argue that this approach makes the concept of prevention obsolete. Considering the ethical stakes, I suggest worlding as an ethical alternative to affirmation.

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I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun.

– Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse Five

Contents

Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APR2P	Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
AU	African Union
CCPDC	Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict
CEIP	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
COW	Correlates of War Project
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECPR	European Consortium for Political Research
EU	European Union
FAST	Frühanalyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung
FEWER	Forum on Early Warning and Early Response
IBC	Iraq Body Count
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICEWS	Integrated Crisis Early Warning System
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty

ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
ICW	International Congress of Women
IFHS	Iraq Family Health Survey
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	International organisation
IR	International Relations
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MPS	Massachusetts Peace Society
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ORCI	Office for Research and the Collection of Information
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PITF	Political Instability Taskforce
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
STS	Science and Technology Studies
UC	University of California
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPF	World Peace Foundation

Prologue

It is 2022 and the COVID-19 pandemic is entering its third year. Although many governments have decided that the pandemic is over by dropping various mandates and guidelines that were in place to curb transmission rates, the virus is still infecting tens of thousands every day, having already killed and debilitated millions. By the time I will have submitted this thesis, COVID-19 will have marked roughly half of my doctoral studies.

Writing a PhD on a topic that is niche to most was already a strange experience in what Dionne Brand calls the *beforetimes*.[1] Writing a PhD during a pandemic is nothing short of bizarre. It is difficult to work around border closures, library closures, school closures and, even more so, to adjust priorities and reshuffle plans as travel for fieldwork and conferences becomes impossible, books and archives become inaccessible and time becomes even scarcer when childcare falls through and family members fall ill. And yet, worries about the PhD progress seem hardly relevant in the face of immense hardship, suffering and death.

At the same time, I saw many parallels to my work in the ways in which the pandemic unfolded. The public discourse on the pandemic has revived a metaphorical connection between disease and war where one presents as the other. This nexus, in which martial vocabularies of war and battle describe disease, cure and prevention, is a recurring motif of public communication from US president Richard Nixon's 'War on Cancer' in the early 1970s to the SARS outbreak between 2002 and 2004, and now during COVID-19.[2] In turn, conflict and war are often equated to disease in key texts and public health interventions feature as metaphors for conflict prevention efforts.[3] However, it is not only on a linguistic level that the topics of preventing war and disease connect.

1. Brand 2020 consciously rejects the label 'normal' for the pre-COVID era. She notes that the calls and yearning for returning to 'normal' omit how racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia, ableism and classicism are all part of this normality. As these continue to exist, this aspect of 'normality' has never ceased. As a result, referring to the time before COVID-19 as 'normal' is only positively connoted for those benefiting from these oppressive systems.
2. Mongoven 2006; Sontag 1978.
3. Rodehau-Noack 2021.

Like the discourse on conflict prevention, the discourse on COVID-19 is infused with the hope that with science and technology, we can resolve problems that are part epidemiological but also part, if not primarily, social and political.[4] Deprived populations are more heavily affected by the disease as isolation is difficult in housing with inadequate space or when staying off work creates financial hardship. Hoarding and developed states' refusal to grant waivers that would increase access to vaccines create vaccine apartheid, with richer countries already administering second booster shots while large populations in many poorer countries have not even received the first dose.

Like the discourse on conflict prevention, the discourse on COVID-19 is marked by abstraction through quantification.[5] Case statistics, incidence markers, probabilities of infection risk, rates of effectiveness and other indicators measure the various aspects of the virus and the policies in response. Like conflict prevention, mitigation policies face the 'prevention dilemma' as the pandemic progresses.[6] As the new virus variant Omicron *O* and its sub-variants cause new surges in many countries, scientists scramble to assess its risks and effects. Preliminary data seems to suggest that it is more contagious and thus drives case numbers more dramatically than previous variants but does not have the same effect on hospitalisations and deaths. However, at the time of writing, it is still unclear whether this is because the virus itself has mutated into a less severe form or whether it is due to increased immunity within populations, be it due to vaccination or prior infection, or both.

Finally, the governance of globe-spanning problems such as COVID-19 and armed conflict revolves around foresight and futurities. Given that global health researchers have long predicted that a zoonotic pandemic will occur, it seems that there is a parallel between wars and epidemics in terms of how they catch people off-guard despite many Cassandras' warnings. As Albert Camus quips in his novel *The Plague*, "[t]here have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise."[7] Once they—wars and diseases—break out, the calls to avoid the subsequent one increase.

It is thus not a coincidence that conflict prevention is often compared to public health policy,[8] as avoiding the problem, be it the outbreak of war or the infection with a new virus, presents as the best approach. At the same time, prevention researchers show that, more often than not, it is not the lack of adequate knowledge but resources and political will that hinder timely and adequate action.[9] Similarly, while much remains unknown about the novel coronavirus, especially around the therapy and cure for its effects after infection, vital

4. See also Chapter 1, Chapter 3 and Chapter 6.
5. See also Chapter 4.
6. See also Chapter 2.
7. Camus 1991, 37.
8. Rodehau-Noack 2021.
9. See also the literature review in Chapter 1.

knowledge about how to prevent infections in the first place has been available fairly early into the pandemic but was not acted on (such as the installation of air filters in workplaces and schools), as those responsible could not or would not muster the attention, funds and will to do so. Instead, economic interests, approval ratings, ideology and other concerns were, and are, prioritised over the safety and well-being of the vulnerable. Thus, while war and global disease are both problems of international governance, the way in which they orient policy decisions goes to show why analyses into the construction of problems, such as the one in this thesis, matter: they reveal *what exactly* it is about them that is rendered problematic and *for whom* they constitute an issue that is worthy of attention and resources.

Introduction

The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict—arguably the "single most important research and policy analysis enterprise that influenced the conflict prevention agenda"[10]—opens its 1997 *Final Report* with three "inescapable observations." Firstly, deadly conflict is not inevitable, secondly, the need to prevent deadly conflict is increasingly urgent and thirdly, preventing deadly conflict is possible.[11] This passage is notable for explicitly stating assumptions that are—more often than not—only implicit. They encapsulate a central pair of related premises about war and armed conflict found in contemporary agendas of international organisations (IOs), commissions, NGOs and development actors: war *can* and *should* be prevented. Today, there is a "broad agreement" among such international actors that war destroys human life and political order and that it is, therefore, "intolerably costly, unwise, futile, and debased."[12] Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a significant expansion in efforts to prevent wars and armed conflict. Indeed, conflict prevention is a core feature of the agendas of major IOs and fora today.[13] At the same time, there are numerous active conflicts in the world, both within and between states.[14] Yet, international actors purport that conflicts are preventable. This is puzzling as there is an abundance of alternative conceptions, ranging from war as preordained by God, to war as an inevitable part of human interaction, or war as inevitable but restrainable in its worst excesses through laws on conduct in war and the use of certain weaponry.[15] The question thus arises, how did the notion of war as preventable become dominant in the discourse of IOs?

10. O'Neil and Tschirgi 2002, 283.
11. CCPDC 1997, xvii, hereinafter referred to as 'Carnegie Report.'
12. Bartelson 2018, 15; Hathaway and Shapiro 2017, 9; Mueller 1989.
13. Lund 2008, 287.
14. Cf. Zartman 2015, 2, who does not see a tension between the belief in prevention (and its effectiveness) and the existence of conflict in the world. Instead, he claims that "literally innumerable conflicts have been prevented from escalating to serious political contention and to violence." However, this is difficult to prove due to the counterfactual problem, see Chapter 2.
15. See, e.g., Best 1980; Ceadel 1996; Coker 2010; Howard 2000; Johnson 1981.

The Question

This thesis traces how war was constituted as an object of governance and how, in further consequence, it enabled the development of the international policy agenda of conflict prevention. How international governance objects emerge matters for International Relations (IR) scholarship as they provide focal points to orient actors and their interactions in international politics.[16] For the purpose of this thesis, I understand governance as an ongoing process of competition for the authority to define what is to be regulated, controlled, managed and ruled, as well as how and why.[17] The way in which such objects are constructed has "real power because it transforms the landscape of reality and the landscape of authority that structures political contestation."[18] Following James Ferguson, the idea of war as a problem is not only a set of abstract "philosophical or scientific propositions," but an "elaborate contraption that *does* something."[19] Put simply, problem construction has concrete policy consequences as it defines what the problem is, and why and how it has to be solved.[20] For example, scholars of climate governance describe how 'the climate' as perhaps "the most prominent among a host of predicted objects that offer new handholds for governance at supranational scales" has transformed from a synonym of 'weather' into a problem that can and should be governed internationally.[21] Its specific designation as an entity that can be measured in abstract units like tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e) orients policy towards the management and control of the geophysics of climate and resulted in the prevalence of economic models for manipulating greenhouse gas emissions.[22] Or, as Jutta Weldes puts it in her work on the construction of the national interest in light of the Cuban Missile Crisis: the Soviet missiles "had to be *made* to mean something" before US state officials could decide what needed to be done about them.[23] In more abstract terms, before policy decisions to resolve a problem can happen, the construction of something *as* a problem has to happen first.

How problems of international politics are constructed already inheres their solution, which, in turn, shapes options for action.[24] For example, where war is conceptualised as an instrument—a means to "compel our opponent to fulfil our will"[25]—then the way to address it is through devising military strategies of harnessing war towards political ends. In contrast, where war is understood to be brutal, destructive and immoral, such as in the

16. Sending 2015, 28.
17. ibid., 4.
18. Allan 2018a, 855.
19. Ferguson 1994, xv, emphasis original.
20. Sending 2015, 4.
21. Jasanoff 2020, 35.
22. Allan 2017; Corry 2014b.
23. Weldes 1999, 2, emphasis original.
24. See also Chapter 1.
25. Clausewitz 1982, 101.

discourses I discuss in this thesis, the solution inherent in this conception is to keep it from occurring in the first place. In this way, the construction of war as a governance problem fundamentally relies on the assumption that war is a malleable phenomenon. This notion of the malleability of war shapes international politics in several ways. Firstly, it suggests that international bodies have not only the intent but also the capacity to get potentially imminent threats to peace and security under control. In this way, it helps to legitimise the need for intervention by framing a certain security situations as "intervenable."[26] Secondly, it lends itself to reductionism, as analyses that comprehensively elucidate the complexity or even intractability of (imminent) conflicts tend not to be the ones that suggest that an issue at hand is easily resolvable.[27] That is, the construction of a problem as manageable or intervenable reinforces the notion of the situation being a case of concern, as "a bad condition does not become a problem until people see it as amenable to human control."[28] Thirdly, it operates on the ontological notion of the normality of global processes to which crises and conflicts are external surges, rather than internal frictions, in an otherwise functioning global order.[29] With the requirement of outputs to enable action, such knowledge is epistemologically restricted to come in the form of indicators and possible pathways for prevention. Especially in contexts where a conflict situation seems particularly complex and intractable, simple narratives and numbers that ostensibly speak for themselves make it possible to "identify salient issues, dictate urgent action, and help determine who is worth supporting and who should be challenged."[30]

Tracing the emergence of governance objects thus sheds light on the underlying conceptions that make some actions appear feasible, intuitive, legitimate and desirable while marginalising others. The construction of war as an international problem orients policy by representing prevention as the ideal response. This specific conception of war as undesirable but preventable exists despite conceptual and empirical tensions with the practice of accepting war in the form of military interventions. As Martha Finnemore notes, actors endeavour to distinguish the use of military force against another actor as 'war.' The label of 'intervention' makes such actions "different from, and usually less than, war, but just what those differences are can be difficult to discern from facts on the ground."[31] This aversion results in the reluctance to declare war, and to declare something to *be* war.[32] Benefitting from this conceptual ambiguity, liberal interventionism has been selective in attributing generative power and moral value to war only in cases of military intervention by Western

26. Jacobsen and Engell 2018, 378.
27. Autesserre 2012, 207; see also Chapter 2.
28. Stone 1989, 299.
29. Calhoun 2008b, 84; see also Chapter 3.
30. Autesserre 2012, 208; see also Chapter 4.
31. Finnemore 2003, 8.
32. Bousquet 2016, 92; Fazal 2012; Finnemore 2003, 8.

or international interveners.[33] This discursive move makes it possible to render wars entirely negative in one policy agenda but still launch military interventions to maintain and restore order in others, such as in places of the world that are deemed 'dysfunctional.'

Furthermore, questioning underlying assumptions in the conception of war within international policy is not only important to understand the enduring colonial legacies in the conception of 'dysfunctional' societies and political orders within which conflict is deemed normal.[34] Such an analysis also makes clear the stakes when those underlying assumptions and their epistemological conditions shift and erode. For example, as I show in Chapter 3, one central assumption about war that the policy field of conflict prevention builds on is the idea that war and peace are binary entities, distinct in substantial, spatial and temporal terms. If this basic premise of war as a clearly demarcated and temporally limited phenomenon is suspended, such as in ecological thought that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, prevention—understood as an intervention in the present to avert an undesirable outcome in the future—becomes impossible as a concept, as the notions of 'before,' 'during' and 'after war' become obsolete where war is imagined as continually becoming.

To be sure, scholarship on pacifism and changes in attitudes towards war abounds.[35] While much of the historical narrative I provide in this thesis might be well known to scholars of Anglo-European peace movements—in fact, I build on much of this scholarship as secondary sources—I leverage it in a novel way through the lens of object constitution. Similarly, although much of the analysis revolves around the efforts of pacifists and organisations to promote and implement conflict prevention, it does not aim at evaluating their success. I do not attempt to rehash these debates around the question of whether war has or has not become obsolete in the 20th and 21st centuries.[36] Instead, I shift the focus from the premise *that* war is a problem for both policy and scholarship to questioning *how* it is rendered a problem that can be addressed by international governance. Further, while I discuss a particular idea of war that underlies the prevention agenda, I do not attempt to evaluate the validity of any particular claim about war with regard to its ontology or function for world politics.[37] Finally, although this thesis focuses on the topic of conflict prevention, it does so by discussing the *idea* of prevention and how it relates to a particular conception of what it is to prevent—war. That is, it does not aim to question or evaluate the *practice* of

33. Zehfuss 2018.
34. See, e.g., Autesserre 2010.
35. See, e.g., Brock 1968; Ceadel 1996; Hathaway and Shapiro 2017; Johnson 1987; Lynch 1999; Mueller 1989; Tyrrell 1978.
36. For accounts arguing that war is on the decline see, e.g., Goldstein 2011; Hathaway and Shapiro 2017; Horgan 2012; Lacina and Gleditsch 2013; Mueller 2009; Pinker 2012. For rebuttals, see, e.g., Braumoeller 2019; Fazal 2014; Gohdes and Price 2013.
37. The literature on these questions is expansive and spans several disciplines and fields, including Political Science, History, Sociology and others. For works within IR from the last 15 years, see, e.g., Barkawi and Brighton 2011; Bartelson 2018; Bousquet, Grove and Shah 2020; Grove 2019; Heuser 2022; Jabri 2007.

conflict prevention. It does not ask whether and under which circumstances prevention is possible in general or in individual cases. Hence, my argument is explicitly *not* to be read as a wholesale critique or even dismissal of prevention efforts.[38] Instead, the central thrust of this thesis is to trace how prevention became possible, and continues to be politically intelligible,[39] as a policy agenda through the construction of a specific idea of war as a problem of international governance. That is, I analyse the conception of war as preventable, how it acquired verisimilitude,[40] and how it enabled the emergence of a particular mode of governing war—the policy agenda of conflict prevention.

Existing Research on Object Constitution

Existing research usually assumes that war and conflict are objects of interest in international politics. As a central objective of the discipline of IR is to understand the occurrence and onset of conflict, there is a vast literature inquiring into the causes of international war, ranging from the global colour line,[41] disturbances in the balance of power,[42] the anarchy of the international system,[43] the 'clash of civilisations,'[44] domestic factors,[45] or the failure of bargaining over acceptable outcomes.[46] The literature on internal conflict is more recent but already equally extensive.[47] It has identified a range of factors said to contribute to conflict, such as overcoming collective action, the greed vs grievances literature, as well as works going beyond greed vs grievance by looking at horizontal inequalities and feasibility,[48] or bargaining failures in internal settings.[49] Building on insights of conflict scholarship with regard to long-term conditions and short-term triggers for the emergence of war and armed conflict, the prevention literature is concerned with the objective of researching how to avert war and its consequences. This literature is specifically focused on the successes and failures

38. See also the Conclusion.
39. This phrasing is borrowed from Ferguson 1994, xv.
40. Bartelson 2018, 29.
41. Du Bois 1915, 1925.
42. E.g. Morgenthau 1949; Organski 1968; Waltz 1959.
43. Most famously, ibid.
44. Huntington 1993 famously predicts that a central cause for conflict will be along cultural and religious lines rather than among states. This argument is widely disputed among scholars due to its essentialism, cultural determinism and inherent justification for interventionism. See, e.g., Fox 2005; Henderson and Tucker 2001; Welch 2007.
45. Such as expressed by the Democratic Peace Theory. See, e.g., Maoz and Russett 1993; Mesquita et al. 1999; cf. Gowa 2011.
46. See, e.g., Fearon 2009; Powell 2002; Reiter 2003.
47. For an overview, see Florea 2018.
48. See, e.g., Cederman, Weidmann and Gleditsch 2011; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Gurr 1974; Olson 1965.
49. See, e.g., Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2011; Goddard 2009; Walter 2009. Cunningham and Lemke 2014 explicitly question whether it makes sense to distinguish between inter- and intra-state conflict when theorising about conflict onset within the bargaining perspective.

of preventive efforts by discussing conflict early warning and forecasting,[50] implementation and institutional design,[51] the "warning-response gap,"[52] and the effectiveness of prevention measures overall.[53] It typically begins with the 1992 report *Agenda for Peace*, which outlined the vision of Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali on how the United Nations should act in response to armed conflict after the Cold War.[54] While some works acknowledge that prevention was not a novel idea in the 20th century, they remain focused on how it entered the international agenda.[55] That is, while the conflict prevention literature to date sheds light on international efforts to avert war, it does not ask how war became a problem to be governed through prevention in the first place, nor does it interrogate the epistemological background against which the assumptions that war *can* and *should* be prevented emerged.

Dominant approaches of broader IR theory are also largely unable to explain how problems of governance are constructed.[56] A number of literatures have discussed how issues come to policymakers' attention and influence world politics, but they usually take the existence of problems as given. Rationalism considers certain issues as affecting state interests that warrant an institutional response. However, it does not examine the stage at which "objective situations" are translated into inter-subjective problems to be addressed by states or international actors.[57]

Constructivist scholarship examines how IOs "help determine the kind of world that is to be governed,"[58] as they constitute and regulate social reality in world politics. This scholarship conceptualises IOs as "epistemic sites of world politics," as they are not only created by state actors to address certain issues but to help to define and delineate these issues in the first place.[59] Thus, this work focuses on discourses of the agents—or "governance-subjects"—doing the governing.[60] In contrast, the objects of this regulation and their origins have not received equal scholarly attention thus far.[61] Others examine how activists and organisations produce knowledge to frame certain problems for the purpose of motivating action or how some issues get chosen over others,[62] or explain how intra-network relations and issue attributes influence issue selection.[63] However, these works begin the inquiry at

50. Ackermann 2003, 342–3; Hegre et al. 2017; Schneider, Gleditsch and Carey 2010.
51. Cockell 2003; Kapur and Rees 2018; Zenko and Friedman 2011.
52. George and Holl 1997; Ivanov and Nyheim 2004; Juncos and Blockmans 2018, 133–4; Lund 1996; Meyer et al. 2010.
53. Ackermann 1996; Talentino 2003; Weller 2008; Zupančič et al. 2017.
54. Carment and Schnabel 2003; Lund 1996; Sharma and Welsh 2015, 6–7; Zartman 2001.
55. Ackermann 2003; Lund 2008.
56. For a more detailed overview, see Allan 2017, 133–6.
57. Wendt 2001, 1023–4.
58. Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 7.
59. Bueger 2015, 2.
60. Corry 2010, 170–1.
61. ibid., 160.
62. Carpenter 2007a, 2007b; Finnemore and Sikkink 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998.
63. Carpenter et al. 2014; Wong 2012.

the point of issue selection or agenda-setting and thus also take the existence of problems for granted.

In contrast, critical and post-structuralist approaches have a long tradition of questioning pre-existing concepts. Focusing on the construction of discourses and imaginaries, these works analyse problems of international governance such as borders,[64] climate change,[65] development,[66] famine,[67] human rights,[68] terrorism,[69] and peacebuilding.[70] In addition, there is a rich literature drawing on post-structuralist thought that examines what war does and how it manifests, is utilised and interpreted.[71] However, none of these works discusses the origins of war as a governance object. This lack of consideration of how war came to be a problem of international governance is striking, not only because it constitutes the foundation of the prevention agenda but also because war is the central academic concern of IR as a discipline.[72]

The Argument in Brief

In my analysis, I trace how conflict prevention emerged as the ideal mode of governing a particular epistemic object—war—against historically specific rationalities and practices of scientific investigation. I argue that the idea of prevention has acquired such a central place on the agenda of international organisations and bodies because a heterogeneous set of actors comprising pacifists, philanthropists, scientists and policymakers constructed 'war' as a problem of international governance against the background of specific conditions of possibility.[73] This process of problem construction produced war as a governance object that is undesirable but knowable and calculable so that the ideal 'solution' to the problem of war within the discourse of IOs became to prevent it from happening in the first place. That is, the notion of preventability, or the idea that war both *can* and *should* be prevented relies on this particular problem construction of war. This conception of war, in turn, is assembled by a confluence of actors, standards of scientific inquiry, practices of knowledge production and

64. Vaughan-Williams 2009.
65. Corry 2013; Jasanoff 2020; Lövbrand, Stripple and Wiman 2009.
66. Allan 2018b, esp. chapters 4 and 5.
67. Edkins 2000.
68. Madsen 2011.
69. Stampnitzky 2013.
70. Sending 2015.
71. See, e.g., Andrä, forthcoming; Bousquet 2009, 2018; Dillon and Reid 2001; Jabri 2007; Zehfuss 2018.
72. Bousquet 2016, 91; Deutsch 1970, 473; Morgenthau 1947, 86. Cf. Barkawi 2011 and 2013, who argues that neither IR nor security studies examine war on its own terms as a set of social relations and processes. Cf. also Carvalho, Leira and Hobson 2011, who debunk the idea that IR was founded as an "idealist attempt to solve the problem of war" as part of the "myth of 1919."
73. I use 'war' and 'conflict' (with its various adjectives including 'armed,' 'violent' and 'deadly') interchangeably as the definitional differences between those are results of the very knowledge production processes I describe.

political circumstances.[74] In this way, my approach follows a "double historicization" of the political as well as academic-scientific construction of governance objects.[75]

International institutions such as the League of Nations, the United Nations or the World Bank are "largely the product of interstate diplomacy dominated by Western great powers" and, the immense work done by non-Western states and people to shape them in more equitable ways notwithstanding, the paradigms that inform them are "the product of purportedly European histories and intellectual trajectories."[76] As a result, the origin story of the prevention idea I provide here is also primarily a Western one. Like existing work, I also focus on those outputs and activities that were taken up by policymakers, organisations, activists and scholars in the construction of war as a governance object. However, this is not to say that the prevention agenda is a product of white male ingenuity or morality. While existing accounts on the outlawry and growing aversion towards war often, if implicitly, present "feel-good stor[ies] in which a few white men saved the world,"[77] I show that the idea of prevention and its underlying understanding of war is rooted in the modernist legacy of Enlightenment in which the telos of progress is imagined as inherently pacific despite the West's empirical record of colonialism, imperialism, and genocide. That is, despite its representation as universal and self-evident, the notion of war as undesirable and preventable, as purported by the contemporary prevention agenda, is instead grounded in provincial ideals of civilisation and progress.

Contribution of the Thesis

Analysing the construction of problems provides insights into how they become and remain meaningful in the absence of a uniform definition and despite inherent contradictions. This thesis thus contributes to existing scholarship in three ways that are relevant to different audiences. Firstly, it expands the recent but growing scholarship on governance that examines how issues become understood as problems of international politics in the first place. Presenting novel empirics that consider war as a governance object, it traces how a policy agenda—conflict prevention—became possible by offering an analysis of the role of scientific advancements and non-state activism in the development of the idea that war is preventable, which is usually taken for granted. The latter constitutes a gap in IR theory, as the bulk of governance scholarship assumes the existence of problems as given and only starts the inquiry at the phase of selection and agenda-setting. Secondly, for security scholars, this thesis provides insight into the origins and intellectual legacy of the—now obvious—claim

74. See also Allan 2017, 137.
75. Madsen 2011, 262.
76. Barkawi and Laffey 2006, 331.
77. Barkawi 2018. Barkawi refers here to the work of Hathaway and Shapiro 2017.

that wars and armed conflicts can and should be prevented, thus interrogating two central assumptions of prevention policy that are usually taken for granted. Thirdly and finally, for peace and conflict scholars more specifically, it presents an intellectual history of the prevention idea by analysing central, yet often implicit, assumptions around 'knowing' war and how they are rooted in epistemic modernism and the legacy of the European Enlightenment. In this way, it expands the existing narrative around conflict prevention that usually starts with the *Agenda for Peace* by establishing its roots in the rationalities around scientific thinking after the Congress of Vienna. In addition, it considers how recent theoretical thrusts towards ecological views on war call the prevention idea into question.

Chapter Overview

This thesis proceeds in six chapters. Chapter 1 begins with presenting the theoretical framework, central concepts as well as the research design. To situate the theoretical approach I pursue in this thesis, I first explain the emergence and significance of the object-centred approach to international politics within scholarship on knowledge production and governance. Noting that the term 'object' is used in various ways within this scholarship, I propose a novel typology of epistemic objects, objects of expertise and governance objects as different, yet related categories that constitute subsets of one another. The chapter then lays out the theoretical scaffolding of the thesis, specifically the work on governance objects by Olaf Corry and Bentley Allan. I centrally rely on a framework by the latter, which conceives object constitution as three interlocking processes of designation (rendering a set of phenomena a distinct entity), translation (making the object portable across contexts) and problematisation (latching the object onto pre-existing interests, identities and imaginaries). In the second half of Chapter 1, I then describe my methodological approach for the data collection and analysis of the empirical part of the thesis. As this study is interested in tracing the construction of war as a governance object and the conditions of possibility of prevention as a policy agenda, it is focused on processes of meaning-making rather than establishing causal chains. Therefore, I follow an interpretive methodology using thematic analysis to examine primary material that includes historical pamphlets, studies, reports, resolutions, speeches as well as a small set of elite interviews.

The focus of this thesis is a specific policy agenda—conflict prevention. Chapter 2 is dedicated to outlining the history and central definitions, actors and flagship documents that make up the conflict prevention agenda. Notwithstanding earlier attempts at averting armed conflict that remained limited and rather *ad hoc*, the consensus within the literature is that the contemporary conflict prevention agenda began to form after the Cold War, as the bloc confrontation that had previously stymied international cooperation broke down. From

the early 1990s onwards, the idea, institutionalisation and integration of prevention picked up the pace, which resulted in the formation of numerous conflict prevention programmes within IOs, NGOs and national governments. In conjunction with the developments in policy, a rich corpus of research around the prevention of war and violent conflict emerged. In a separate section, I thus discuss a range of definitions and types of conflict prevention in scholarship and practice, most of which either rely on distinctions based on timing and temporality or purpose and targets. In addition, I briefly consider ways of distinguishing conflict prevention from atrocity prevention to clarify the scope of the thesis. Specifically, I note that while both agendas are historically related and might identify the same causes of violence and similar measures and tools to avoid it, there are conceptual, legal and practical differences. Chapter 2 closes with connecting the conflict prevention agenda to the role of knowledge production by drawing out two central but mostly implicit epistemological commitments of the prevention agenda. This is, firstly, that war can be rendered knowable through knowledge production architectures such as early warning systems and forecasting efforts and, secondly, that such knowledge can be used to prevent war before it happens.

The following three chapters unfold in detail the central claim of the thesis. I argue that prevention emerged as a dominant way of governing war in IOs as pacifists, philanthropists, scientists and policymakers constructed it as undesirable but calculable, and thus governable, against the background of epistemic modernism and civilisational thinking. I trace this process in Chapters 3 through 5, which constitute the empirical part and the core of this thesis. Each chapter is dedicated to one element of the three-stage framework of object constitution I discuss in Chapter 1. While some of the empirical material, such as newer reports and resolutions by organisations of the UN system, has been analysed extensively in conflict scholarship, I also leverage original data (elite interviews) and documents that have so far not received much attention within IR, such as pacifist pamphlets and reports circulated by peace societies in their early years.

As the first of three empirical units, Chapter 3 is dedicated to *designation*, which is the process of defining a set of phenomena as a distinguishable and recognisable entity through attaching labels, categories and characteristics. As these practices take place against specific historical contexts that determine rationalities, ways of thinking as well as standards of scientific inquiry, I first explain the scientific cosmology of post-Enlightenment Europe that provided the background for the designation of war as a governance object. Specifically, I explain that the development and confluence of certain aspects, which include the development of linear and absolute temporality, cause-and-effect reasoning, the demise of the belief in divine providence, and epistemic modernism—or the idea that science and technology can be used to resolve social and political problems—were necessary for prevention to become thinkable. I then move on to the empirical section of the chapter. Using texts from

early Christian pacifism to the contemporary prevention agenda, I argue that the process of designating war as a governance object that is ideally prevented consists of three central aspects, which concern the binary opposition of war and peace, the conception of war as an evil, and the idea of war as a problem that can be approached with and resolved by scientific research.

In Chapter 4, I then examine the second element of object constitution, *translation*, in detail. Translation is the process that makes an object *international* by porting it from one context to another through isolating and abstracting certain characteristics that are understood to apply to different settings. For the specific case of war, I focus on a mode of abstraction that renders war an international phenomenon: quantification. Throughout peace advocacy, conflict research and prevention policy, war and armed conflict are frequently measured and enumerated for various purposes, including generating knowledge, establishing comparisons and informing policy design. I argue that the abstraction of war and conflict through quantification decontextualises distinct and historically specific events, thus aggregating them into one global phenomenon and, as a result, a genuine issue of international (as opposed to merely local, national or regional) concern. While there are many ways to describe war in statistical terms (for example, Chapter 5 discusses the aspect of the costs of war), in this chapter I zoom in on death counts, which are widely used to delineate 'war' from other forms of violent conflict, represent magnitude and urgency, compare wars across contexts, and emphasise the negative connotation of war as an evil. In this chapter, I argue that the role of abstraction in the process of problem constitution thus goes beyond being a mere vehicle for making an object intelligible across contexts. Rather, I show by the example of death counts that abstraction, and quantification specifically, does political work as it not only makes war comparable but also defines its conceptual boundaries and makes it accessible to prevention advocacy.

The third element of object constitution, *problematisation*, is the focus of Chapter 5. Problematisation is the process that makes an object relevant to policymakers through the association with existing discourses on interests, identities and policy frames. As I argue in this chapter, this association happens according to two moral logics. While deontological arguments purport that war should be prevented because it is inherently wrong and goes against certain norms and rules, consequentialist arguments rest on the idea that war should be prevented because it has undesirable effects such as death, destruction and immense costs. Deontological arguments feature in the discourse of Christian pacifists of the early 19th century, who represented war as problematic because it violates Christian values. This notion of war as immoral, although increasingly based in (pseudo-) scientific beliefs of evolutionism rather than religious authority, continues to reverberate in the Anglo-European pacifism at the turn of the last century. Peace advocates argued that war is inherently objectionable and

should be prevented because it is barbaric and thus an inappropriate way of resolving conflict in 'civilised' societies. Consequentialist reasoning, in turn, is often cited in conjunction with the deontological one, such as in claims about war's cost-ineffectiveness. A frequent argument in prevention advocacy is that prevention is not only less costly than the preparation for, conduct of and reconstruction after war, but that investments in peace have greater positive returns than investments in war in terms of social, economic and cultural development. The recent push to integrate the conflict prevention and development agendas reflects the confluence of deontological and consequentialist reasoning, as war becomes represented as the reversal of development both in the civilisational as well as economic sense. The empirical chapters thus expand the problem constitution framework by drawing out the role of non-state activists who act as a knowledge-based group in constituting war as a governance problem. In addition, Chapter 5 also shows how problematisation can occur not only by latching an object to pre-existing discourses of state interests but also to issues that are already internationalised, such as development.

In Chapter 6, I extend the object constitution framework by considering the implications of the *de-problematisation* of war. While the previous chapters establish certain premises as central for the idea that war can and should be prevented, in this chapter I think through what it would mean if those premises were not present anymore, i.e. if the conditions for turning an epistemic object into an object of governance are no longer met. Centrally, this is the case for the approach of martial ecologies, which abandon the idea of the war-peace binary, the frame of war's exceptionalism, and the belief that war can ultimately be known through scientific research, upon which the concept of prevention rests. I argue that the push for affirmation by ecological approaches makes prevention conceptually obsolete. Instead, affirmative approaches suggest 'becoming with' planetary crises, including war, rather than trying to resolve them. This risks entrenching violent, oppressive and exploitative relations. Instead, I suggest solidarity-building and 'worlding' that draw on Black and Indigenous thought and activism as ethical alternatives. Finally, the Conclusion summarises the central arguments and highlights the implications of the argument, emphasising again the aims and motivation of this study. The thesis closes with some suggestions of avenues for future research developing the topic, framework and empirics further.

1

Tracing the Construction of War as a Governance Problem

1.1 Knowledge Production and Objects in International Politics

In this thesis, I apply an object-centred lens to trace the construction of war as a problem that is to be governed internationally. In a heuristic typology of theoretical approaches to knowledge production and expertise in IR, Christian Bueger distinguishes three 'generations' of research with different focal points.[1] The first 'generation' focuses on experts as a particular actor type that is functionally different from politicians. By sharing normative and causal beliefs, notions of validity, and a common policy enterprise, experts form "epistemic communities."[2] The second strand examines knowledge production by looking at discourses and their constitutive role in creating meaning and expertise in international politics. While the episteme in the literature on epistemic communities is concentrated on 'policy-relevant' knowledge, it is broadened to include knowledge as discourses through which social agents understand, organise, and shape their world in the 'second generation' of scholarship on knowledge production in IR.[3] Finally, the third 'generation' turns to analysing practices of expertise as epistemic performances in international politics by studying how (authoritative) expertise is produced in practice.

However, as Allan notes, while helpful in distinguishing the characteristics of different approaches to investigating the role of knowledge and expertise in international politics, Bueger's typology falls short of explaining the theoretical contribution of more recent work to IR theory. Discourses and practices, albeit not always under these labels, have been present in IR scholarship on knowledge production for some time.[4] Allan suggests that the

1. Bueger 2014a.
2. Haas 1992, 3.
3. Bueger 2014a, 46.
4. Allan 2018a, 843.

novelty of more recent work on governance issues instead lies in shifting the focus from subjects to objects—or from the knowers to what is known. The turn to objects, as Allan argues, reconfigures the role of knowledge in IR. Where it is primarily understood to be the "source of subjective beliefs and purposes" in subject-centred approaches to international politics, it becomes a central element in constituting the objects that "structure the landscape of politics" as targets of governance in object-centred approaches. In this way, object-centred lenses are compatible with Bueger's second and third 'generations' of scholarship on knowledge production in IR. They have in common the focus on discourse and practice in that they rely on the premise that the world and its objects are constituted through discourse and knowledgeable practices. However, they go further insofar that the study of objects "foregrounds how those elements [discourses and practices] are combined into stable configurations that constitute the landscape of problems and issues."[5] According to Allan, the object-centred approach in IR builds explicitly on Michel Foucault's work on the formation of objects. Specifically, it relies on his conception of disease, particularly madness, as an epistemic object in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and the *Lectures at the Collège de France*.[6] As Allan argues, Foucault came to re-evaluate his prior studies in later work and this process increasingly shifted the focus from the "real thing that lay beneath the epistemic objects" towards questioning the "conditions of possibility for the emergence of objects like madness in the first place."[7]

The governance of issues—or problems—in international politics is inherently intertwined with the production of knowledge and expertise about these issues.[8] In the case of conflict prevention, such knowledge includes understanding what war or conflict are, how they can be recognised, their causes and dynamics, and how they are best averted before escalating. That is, the *governance* objects 'war' or 'conflict,' respectively, stand in relation to the *epistemic* objects 'war' and 'conflict.' As the move towards objects in IR is still relatively new and borrows from a range of adjacent literatures including philosophy, the sociology of science as well as Science and Technology Studies (STS), the term 'object' is used differently in recent works. While the New Materialist literature in IR employs the term primarily as a synonym for 'material things,'[9] scholars studying policy and governance use it to denote issues or problems.[10] In both cases, the term 'objects' works as the binary opposite to 'subjects' and thus indicates a shift in focus from actors to the acted-upon. In the following, I present a

5. ibid., 856.
6. ibid., 853; Foucault 1972, 2007, 2008.
7. Allan 2018a, 853; Foucault 1972, 14–5 and 41–2.
8. Sending 2015, 8.
9. See, e.g., Aradau 2010; Bueger 2017; Mac Ginty 2017; Mayer and Acuto 2015; Schouten 2013; Shah 2017. These material objects, however, do not necessarily need to be tangible and can be stretched out in time and space, see, e.g., Morton 2013.
10. See, e.g., Allan 2017; Corry 2013; Lövbrand, Stripple and Wiman 2009; Sending 2015.

theoretical suggestion on the nature of the relationship between epistemic objects, objects of expertise and governance objects.

1.1.1 Distinguishing Objects

Since any entity needs to be rendered knowable before becoming a problem,[11] every governance object is preceded by its form as an epistemic object.[12] I define an epistemic object as any set of phenomena that is rendered knowable through labelling, made recognisable through the attribution of certain characteristics, and set in relation to other entities through categorisation and ordering. In other words, epistemic objects are those objects that are the product of the process of *designation* alone, which I will explain in more detail further below. By drawing together "data, facts, and claims" and making generalisations about how to manipulate them, epistemic practices produce epistemic objects.[13] Epistemic objects can exist simultaneously in multiple forms—such as figurative, mathematical or material.[14] In this sense, epistemic objects in international politics are akin to discursive objects, as outlined by Foucault, who describes the emergence of objects in the psychiatric discourse of the 19th century. In his conception, objects like 'madness' are produced by discursive practices yet depend on material processes.[15] Consequently, they shift in relation to changes in the political environment and scientific developments. Thus, they are always unstable, partial and inadequate. As a result, they require continuous maintenance and reproduction through epistemic processes and practices.[16]

The somewhat counterintuitive corollary of conceiving epistemic objects as ever-unfolding is that they lack "object-ivity" in the sense that they are "never quite themselves," even if they have material instantiations.[17] Indeed, Karin Knorr Cetina argues that "their lack of completeness of being" is a central defining criterion of epistemic objects, as only incomplete objects raise further questions for research, the latter of which is the central driver for scientific inquiry.[18] However, while Knorr Cetina uses 'epistemic object,' 'knowledge object' and 'scientific object' synonymously in her work, following Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's conception of scientific objects as "epistemic things,"[19] in my understanding epistemic objects can but do not need to be scientific objects. The latter are epistemic objects that are "at the center of a research process," produced by scientific standards and embedded in academic

11. Allan 2017.
12. See also Bueger 2021, 1.
13. Bueger 2015, 6.
14. Knorr Cetina 2001, 182.
15. Foucault 1972, 40–9.
16. Knorr Cetina 2001, 185; see also Allan 2018a, 854; Bueger 2015, 7.
17. Knorr Cetina 2001, 181–2.
18. ibid., 176.
19. Rheinberger 1997.

infrastructures.[20] As I will show in Chapter 3 on the designation of war, the knowledge production that contributes to defining the characteristics that make an object recognisable does not need to occur in traditional scientific settings but can occur in other non-state, such as religious and activist, settings.

Objects of expertise are somewhat more established and less open in that there exists authoritative knowledge about them. For this thesis, I understand 'expertise' as the attribute of epistemic and political authority in a particular issue domain, such as conflict prevention.[21] Such authority, in turn, is relational, as it depends on collective recognition. That is, the knowledge that stems from scientific research or professional experience is not expertise *per se,* but only when it is acknowledged as being authoritative with regard to a particular problem.[22] The 'expert' is the person or organisation, which "communicates, represents, packages and conveys relevant knowledge [...] to others who don't have the same conditions for knowing."[23] This definition thus extends beyond the commonplace understanding of expertise as specialised scientific knowledge. Instead, it acknowledges that actors need to be attributed "both the competence to validate and justify knowledge claims ('epistemic authority') and the capability to make these knowledge claims relevant for collectively ordering and evaluating society ('political authority')" to act as experts.[24] Where the epistemic object is indeterminate and generates questions for inquiry in the first instance,[25] the object of expertise establishes it as an issue of interest and implies certain answers.[26] In this sense, objects of expertise work as mediators between epistemic objects and governance objects in that they are "centering and integrating devices for regimes of expertise."[27] Where epistemic or scientific infrastructures are produced and maintained in academic settings or "laboratories,"[28] objects of expertise are also products of authoritative knowledge production in IOs, think tanks and bureaucratic apparatuses.[29]

Finally, governance objects are those entities that can be designated (i.e., that are considered meaningful entities), are malleable (i.e., that can be rendered governable) and politically salient (i.e., that relate to identities and interests).[30] Entities that are not constituted in this way may instead become issues of domestic policy or "nonproblems," i.e. epistemic objects of mere scientific or social interest.[31] For example, the molecule can be understood as an

20. Knorr Cetina 2001, 181.
21. Strassheim 2017.
22. See also Leander and Wæver 2019, 2–3.
23. ibid., 3.
24. Strassheim 2017, 326; see also Sending 2015, 16 for another typology of authority in international politics.
25. Knorr Cetina 1997.
26. Bueger 2021.
27. Knorr Cetina 1997, 9.
28. ibid.; Latour and Woolgar 1986.
29. Bueger 2021.
30. Corry 2013, 87.
31. Allan 2017, 137.

epistemic object and an object of scientific inquiry across a range of disciplines including physics, chemistry, biology, medicine and climate science. It can be defined as a meaningful entity that can be recognised through certain characteristics (a group of two or more atoms combined through a chemical bond) and distinguished from other entities (e.g. molecules are different from ions in that the latter have an electric charge while the former do not). Molecules can also be considered malleable in the sense that their makeup can be manipulated through human intervention in the course of chemical reactions. However, they are not politically salient in the sense that molecules *per se* relate to the identities or interests of political actors. If anything, molecules play a role as a constitutive part of other governance objects such as the climate, where they are part of the geophysical system of the earth and its atmosphere.[32] As a result, molecules can be considered an epistemic object of scientific interest but they are not constituted as a governance object.

1.1.2 Theoretical Framework of Object Constitution

After having situated the object-centred approach within scholarship on knowledge production and expertise in IR and distinguishing different types of objects, I proceed to explain the theoretical framework underpinning the empirical analysis of this thesis in the following section. Scientific and expert knowledge, policies and everyday practices co-produce governance objects in complex interactions.[33] They can be thought of as heterogeneous constellations—or assemblages—that are constituted by "concatenations of knowledges, artifacts, physical phenomena, and practices."[34] Various actors, which can comprise scientists, advocacy groups, international organisations and state institutions, are engaged in processes of fixing and universalising governance objects.[35] These objects can concern a range of issues such as the economy to climate, gender, arms, drugs, terrorism or human rights.[36] That is, governance objects can but do not need to be physical entities or be territorially bounded. Since objects of expertise and epistemic objects precede governance objects, the former is a subset of the latter two. That is, all governance objects are always already epistemic objects, while not all epistemic objects become governance objects. While still unstable and in need of perpetual reproduction and maintenance due to political contestation, governance objects are again less open and more established than epistemic objects, as there is "always some body of knowledge (scientifically produced or not) involved in claims about how to define and act on governance objects."[37] While each is a subset of the other in this conception of objects in

32. Allan 2017.
33. Allan 2018a, 854.
34. ibid., 853; Corry 2013, 87.
35. Sending 2015, 4.
36. See also Allan 2018a, 853.
37. Sending 2015, 8.

international politics, the criterion that unites all is that they are ordering devices—be it as ordering knowledge, discourse or decision-making on policy.[38]

The first to provide an explicit conceptualisation of the role of objects as an ordering principle in international politics is Olaf Corry, who proposes a model of the International System that is determined by the orientation of a multiplicity of actors (or subjects) towards the governance of one or more common governance objects.[39] However, actors organised around an object of governance might still have "differing conceptions and attendant interests about how to define and govern" it.[40] Following Corry's criteria for the formation of governance objects, prevention can only emerge as the ideal mode of governing war when the latter is understood as a distinct entity, controllable through human interference and relevant to the interests of actors with the power to govern. While this conception shifts the focus from the agents of governance to the issue that is to be governed, it does "not explain where objects or problems come from or theorise the conditions under which global objects are likely to emerge."[41] Building on insights from studies on Corry's conception of governance objects, paired with the idea imported from STS that knowledge and political order co-produce each other,[42] Allan provides a framework for the study of objects that captures the construction of entities as objects that takes places before the more commonly researched phases of the governance process that concerns the political selection, agenda-setting, institutionalisation and implementation of issues.[43] This framework foregrounds how physical phenomena, technologies, institutional contexts, knowledge and expertise are "combined into stable configurations that constitute the landscape of problems and issues."[44] It consists of three processes—designation, translation and problematisation—which can be thought of as subsequent stages for heuristic purposes but may occur simultaneously and recurrently.

The definition and meaning of a governance object should "not be assumed to have intrinsic attributes that are subsequently identified and acted on."[45] Instead, governance objects like security, the climate, trade or migration are defined by actors or subjects of governance in a process that Allan calls designation. The latter denotes the distinction of a set of phenomena from other entities through classifying, categorising, labelling and ordering.

38. See also Jasanoff 2004a.
39. Corry 2010, 169 and Corry 2013, 85–7. See also Sending 2015, who formulates a theory of authority in international politics relying on the concept of Bourdieusian fields, which are organised around the construction and management of governance objects.
40. ibid., 22.
41. Allan 2017, 136. However, it should be noted that Corry identified the process of problematisation and the emergence of governance objects in other settings as well as how they relate to international infrastructures as a research agenda for the future. Corry 2013, 202.
42. Jasanoff 2004b, 2020; Miller 2004.
43. Allan 2017.
44. Allan 2018a, 856.
45. Sending 2015, 128.

In constructing a governance object, heterogeneous actors delineate a set of phenomena as a distinct entity.[46] Once the object's boundaries are established, the delineated spaces can be filled with social meaning.[47] Through ascribing certain characteristics, the object then becomes uniquely distinguishable. Following Corry's definition of objects as assemblages, drawing and sharpening boundaries around a set of phenomena to designate them as entities can be likened to territorialisation.[48]

For the case of the governance object 'war,' the designation processes thus define "what war is and what war does and what war is not and what war does not."[49] From the designation of war as a distinct governance object follow distinct possibilities of legitimising it and, as my subsequent analysis shows, preventing it. Different conceptions of war "imply different answers to the basic question of what war *is*" and thus attribute different meanings and purposes to war.[50] From these implicit *a*scriptions of meaning and purpose follow different *pre*scriptions regarding what to do about war. For example, as Jens Bartelson notes, those who understand war as a means of law enforcement view its conduct as legitimate, necessary or inevitable. In contrast, the conception of war as a cataclysm of humans' own making views its conduct as unnecessary, illegitimate and avoidable.[51] However, phenomena classed as entities do not require an exhaustive or unambiguous definition to emerge as governance objects. For example, despite the lack of consensus as to which acts fall under its purview, terrorism is a problem of governance for both national and international security.[52] Indeed, as Mikael Rask Madsen argues with regard to human rights, ambiguous definitions of objects can even be useful where they provide interpretational leeway in their ideational, political or legal manifestation.[53]

The process of designating an object is made possible through "rationalities, technologies, and practices for the investigation, representation, and articulation of physical and social reality."[54] This, in turn, means that it is shaped by and shifts according to transformations of how social and natural phenomena become known. These changes can include advancements in technology or political events, as well as alterations in natural or human-made systems, such as the biosphere or the economy.[55] At the same time, different political backgrounds allow for different (scientific) ways of knowing. As a consequence, the "things to be governed, [...] the instruments that do the work of governing and [...] the polities with stakes in

46. Allan 2017, 137.
47. Abbott 1995, 860.
48. De Landa 2006, 13; see also Bueger 2014b, 63–4.
49. Bartelson 2018, 23.
50. ibid., 184, emphasis original.
51. ibid., 184.
52. Stampnitzky 2013.
53. Madsen 2011, 261.
54. Allan 2017, 137.
55. ibid., 137.

the legitimacy of government" all emerge in the process of co-production of (scientific) knowledge and political order as domestic and international politics steer how certain issues can be researched.[56]

Designation thus depends on a knowledge-based group "to concretize and reliably reproduce the object within a shared discursive frame."[57] It is knowledge-based in the sense that it makes claims grounded in scientific standards, evidence, and evaluation (as opposed to morality and opinion, for example). As epistemic objects are inherently unstable, this knowledge-based group needs to reiterate certain categorisations of an object to establish and maintain its recognisability. The discursive frame shared by this knowledge-based group denotes the array of formulations, texts, practices, and processes that confirm the central characteristics of an object, as well as its governability and relevance to actors' interests.[58] In the case of the international conflict prevention agenda, this knowledge-based group comprises a range of international, intergovernmental, non-governmental and regional organisations, commissions, peace societies, advocacy groups, governments and the scientific community.[59]

This assemblage of actors can be understood as a polity because they constitute a group of units that are oriented towards the governance of a common object—the governance of war and conflict.[60] While there are many studies already outlining relations between actors such as IOs as well as transnational activist networks, the polity model draws attention to relations between subjects and objects. Following Corry's conception of a polity, the knowledge-based group producing and maintaining the idea of war as preventable does not require "common thick values" or affinity between the actors, nor does it need to be an epistemic community.[61] That is, the conflict prevention polity as outlined here is not identical to a society or the international community as such.

Then again, as Allan points out with reference to the work of Foucault on the formation of epistemic objects, the relationship between the subjects (the knowledge-based group) and objects in the process of problem constitution is interdependent, as the "very actors that work to produce objects are constituted as a coherent and authoritative group by virtue of their orientation to and knowledge of the object."[62] As a result, when new objects emerge, they "reconstitute the landscape of subject positions, knowledges, and practices."[63] For example, the governance object 'population' facilitated the development of new techniques

56. ibid., 140; Jasanoff 2004b, 31.
57. Allan 2017, 137.
58. Corry 2013, 87.
59. I discuss the prevention architecture and its numerous organisations in more detail in Chapter 2.
60. Corry 2010, 159.
61. ibid., 160. For the concept of epistemic communities, see Haas 1992.
62. Allan 2017, 138–9. See also Foucault 2007, 76–7.
63. Allan 2018a, 854.

of government as well as new forms of knowledge, as evidenced by the concept of 'political economy,' which, according to Allan, "redefined modern politics."[64]

The main argument of this thesis is that the idea that war can and should be prevented, as it is prevalent in IO discourse, relies on a particular construction of war as a problem. One element of war's problem constitution is its characterisation—or, following Allan's nomenclature, designation—along three central categorisations. Firstly, war is a distinct phenomenon that broadly works as the opposite of 'peace.' Although opinions diverge on how the distinction is to be drawn specifically, the underlying image of war is that it is marked by "large-scale, organised, and reciprocal violence compressed in time and space" with peace being, at minimum, the absence of such violence.[65] War is thus not only temporally limited but also an exceptional event that interrupts the ordinary processes of politics and society. Secondly, war is a cataclysmic event rather than a glorious affair or an instrument of policy. As opposed to the long-standing tradition of fighting wars as a quest for glory and honour, such as in Ancient Greece, the Roman empire or various pagan cultures,[66] pacifists of the 19th century began to reject war as triumphal and instead represented it as brutal and detestable. Against the background of evolutionary theories and colonialism, peace advocates and philanthropists increasingly tied this negative connotation of war to narratives of progress, in which 'barbaric' behaviour such as warfare is to be rejected in the name of civilisation. Thirdly, war was designated as an object of scientific interest within the nascent field of peace science funded by philanthropy. The underlying belief of the philanthropic investments in researching the causes and dynamics of war was that it could be resolved if studied thoroughly.

While epistemic objects can but do not have to manifest physically, they are not necessarily visible or tangible. Thus, objects need to be rendered legible and recognisable across contexts.[67] This occurs in the process of translation, which defines the object as a portable entity.[68] War was conceptualised as a phenomenon that transcends state borders early on. However, to become an *international* problem, pacifists and peace scientists needed to make the object 'war' legible to different policy audiences and publics across state contexts. Compatible modes of abstraction that "remove elements of context to isolate specific properties," enable heterogeneous actor groups to participate in the constitution of the object.[69] Such modes of abstraction include formalised measures, standardised codes, statistics and terminologies that help to reproduce the object in meaningful ways beyond its original context. I argue that a

64. Allan 2018a, 854; Foucault 2007, 67–79 and 106.
65. Barkawi 2016, 201.
66. See, e.g., Heuser 2022, 133–6.
67. Allan 2018b, 164. On the concept and function of legibility, see Scott 1998.
68. Allan 2017, 137 .
69. ibid., 137–8.

central way in which war is translated across contexts is quantification. The expression of war in quantitative terms stems from the idea that methods from the natural sciences can be applied to the scientific inquiry of social and political problems.[70] Numerical markers such as military budgets, casualty counts or war debts enable comparisons of war across historical and geographical contexts.

Quantitative comparisons rely on the conception of an 'essence' of war that is the same across time and space. This idea was famously captured by the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz through the metaphor of the chameleon, according to which war has an eternal *nature* but its *character* changes from conflict to conflict and from era to era.[71] In this way, war becomes an international governance object, as it is understood to be the same problem appearing in different contexts. However, quantification also transforms war from a specific historical event with contextual conditions and complex causes to a general category. The belief that war is preventable depends on this abstracting move, as it defines war in general as preventable, while the case of a specific war might be less amenable to such a claim. Thus, abstraction is not only a vehicle but also a premise for the governability of war. In turn, this tension in war's preventability enables IOs to claim that war is undesirable in general while still launching military interventions in specific cases.

Finally, problematisation is the process of making the object relevant to actors by connecting it to existing discourses of threats, identities, interests and policy frames. To incite a policy response, an object first needs to become a problem in the eyes of policymakers. Before a policy agenda can emerge, experts and activists need to persuade policymakers and publics that the problem at hand deserves their scarce resources and attention.[72] Put simply, while designation constructs the object as a distinct entity and translation renders it legible across contexts, problematisation specifies *what kind* of problem it is *for whom*.

Moreover, as it is futile to raise awareness of something that cannot be altered, the process of problematisation needs to convey the notion that the object is governable, i.e. that the problem at hand can be managed through political action. To become governance objects, "entities must become bound up with knowledgeable practices that constitute those phenomena as problems for policymakers and publics."[73] That is, to be convinced that resources are worth being spent on the management of the problem, state actors and policymakers need to believe that they can indeed do something about the issue.[74] Thus, the object must be "connected to a discourse of management or be situated within a policy

70. Singer 1976, 119; see also Allan 2018b.
71. Clausewitz 1982, 121 and 376–9; Coker 2010, 11. See also Chapter 4.
72. Allan 2017, 138.
73. Allan 2018a, 856; see also Allan 2017.
74. ibid., 138. For conflict research specifically, see Perera 2017, 46–7.

frame that suggests how the object can be governed."[75] Here, the co-productive character of object construction becomes clear: domestic and international politics steer how certain issues can be researched and, in this way, facilitate the emergence of objects in specific ways while suppressing others. Science and expertise, in turn, make certain ways of managing governance objects conceivable through the production of "actionable" knowledge.[76] That is, the process of problem construction in itself already foreshadows its envisioned solution that enables, justifies and legitimises certain types of action while precluding others. It does so by latching onto the interests of states, IOs and publics that rely on pre-existing concerns around identity and security.[77] The production of "actionable" knowledge through expertise produced by practitioners in government departments, IOs, think tanks, NGOs and academic institutions helps to establish and maintain the malleability of the governance object. To persuade policymakers to act, knowledge production outputs such as briefs, reports, memos and others not only need to convey a certain sense of urgency and emergency to make clear the relevance of the governance object. They must simultaneously suggest that the matter at hand can be manipulated in a meaningful way and signpost possible problem solutions.[78]

Problematisation thus emphasises that a problem not only can but also *should* be governed. I argue that the problematisation of war works along two moral logics. According to deontological reasoning, war should be prevented because it is inherently objectionable. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, war becomes undesirable because of its association with barbarism, making it antithetical to the ideal of civilisation, while it becomes undesirable in the latter half of the 20th due to its association with 'underdevelopment.' On the other hand, according to consequentialist reasoning, war should be prevented because of its undesirable effects, which include the direct (material, human) and indirect costs of war (loss of opportunities). Prevention thus emerges not only as feasible but as a discourse of how to best manage war in which the preferred option is to avert it altogether.

Problematisation is not a once-off process, however. As the object becomes politically salient, it also becomes contested and constituted differently. As a result, it needs to be constantly reproduced, and re-attached to policymakers' interests and discourses of identity and security. In the three empirical chapters (3–5), I provide a historical account of the rise of the prevention idea as it presents on the agendas of IOs, development actors and other international bodies today. However, although presented here in a sequential manner, the processes of designation, translation and problematisation take place concurrently and recurrently as each of the central actors ranging from peace activists to scientists and policymakers engage in all three 'stages' of problem construction as they describe, characterise, categorise

75. Allan 2017, 138.
76. Jasanoff 2010, 239; Neumann and Sending 2010, 148.
77. Allan 2017, 138; see also Weldes 1999.
78. Calhoun 2008a, 375; Kosmatopoulos 2014, 605.

and quantify war while latching it onto existing policy problems. All three processes thus take place repeatedly to stabilise the object and are marked by "persistent struggles for power, resources, prestige, and legitimacy."[79]

At this point, a brief segue is in order to clarify the relationship between Allan's framework of object constitution and his understanding of 'problematisation' to the concept of the same name by Foucault. As I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the object-centred approach explicitly builds on Foucault's work on the formation of objects. However, despite using the same term, Allan does not refer to Foucault's concept of problematisation in his framework on object constitution, nor does he cite Foucault's late work in which the concept appears.[80] Although retrospectively, it is fundamental in Foucault's oeuvre, problematisation as a concept is never clearly and unambiguously defined in any of his writings. Instead, it features across a handful of works in a somewhat scattered way.[81] The perhaps most straightforward definition of the term can be found in the lectures he gave under the title *Discourse and Truth* in the autumn of 1983 at the University of California at Berkeley. There, Foucault states that problematisation captures "how and why certain things, conducts, phenomena, processes, become a problem."[82]

Thus, although Allan does not refer to the concept specifically, it can be argued that Foucault's problematisation and Allan's framework for analysing the constitution of governance objects aim at fulfilling the same task of explaining how certain phenomena became to be understood as problems. In this sense, both approaches are committed to the same goal of questioning the 'taken-for-grantedness' of problems. According to Foucault, "problematization is not an effect, it is not a consequence, it is an answer."[83] This means that the formulation of something *as a problem* already presupposes a response, as "a given solution to a given problem is only ever constructed according to how the problem is perceived in the first place."[84] As a result, the critical analysis of any solution—or, when applied to the analysis of politics, a policy proposal—must start at the problem conception itself, as the way in which a problem is constituted defines the realm of possible and preferable options.[85] This is arguably the same motivation behind Allan's framework of object constitution, as he argues

79. Allan 2017, 139.
80. See, e.g., Foucault and Rabinow 1984; Foucault 1990, 2019. Cf. Andrä, forthcoming, who considers Allan's framework of object constitution to be problematisation following Foucault, presumably because both use the same term.
81. Klöppel 2010, 255.
82. Foucault 2019, 224. As Foucault himself notes, problematisation is a common notion in all his work since *Histoire de la folie*, although he admits that he "never isolated this notion sufficiently," Foucault 1988, 257. Taking this statement seriously, Koopman 2013 argues that Foucault's studies using the analytical approaches of archaeology and genealogy can be understood to be problematisation.
83. Foucault 2019, 225.
84. Vaughan-Williams 2006, 517.
85. Klöppel 2010, 255.

that the construction of governance objects also produces corresponding knowledgeable practices, technologies and ways of intervening in that which is constructed as a problem.[86]

As Colin Koopman argues, problematisation has two dimensions in Foucault's work, namely both an "act of critical inquiry (expressed in the verb form as 'to problematize') and a nominal object of inquiry (expressed in the noun form as 'a problematization')."[87] This dual understanding equally applies to Allan's framework. It also aims at problematising in the sense that it questions certain issues of international politics as something given in a reflexive way. At the same time, it also examines problematisation, understood as the process of determining something *as* a problem, as an aspect in the course of object constitution.[88] That is, despite the latter not making any reference to the concept of the former, Foucault and Allan both work towards the same goal when employing the term 'problematisation.' However, as opposed to Foucault's problematisation, Allan's framework presents not only as more structured, in a way that makes it more easily applicable to other contexts. In addition, Allan understands problematisation to be only one element within a broader process of problem construction and specifically develops it as a framework to analyse international politics, which is not within the scope of Foucault's historical analyses of the French context.

As opposed to subject-centred approaches, the object-centred view does not assume that problems arise from a lack of knowledge and that, therefore, new knowledge incites change. As Ole Jacob Sending notes, the bulk of the scholarship on global governance views the relationship of the governing and what is governed as external, where "the identity of governance objects (economy, health, peace, humanitarianism) is exogenous to the analytical framework for understanding the identity, behavior, and authority of governance subjects (epistemic communities, NGOs, advocacy networks, international organizations, or states)."[89] In contrast, an object-centred approach acknowledges that the constitution of objects and the formation of subjects take place in a dynamic interaction in policymaking.[90] That is, an object-centred approach to international politics not only emphasises that problems emanate from specific configurations of knowledge, technologies, rationalities as well as political, social and legal conditions. In addition, as Sending shows, the identity of governance subjects and how they gain and maintain authority directly influences the identity of governance objects, as the definition and meaning of the issues at hand are endogenous to the processes of seeking and recognising authority.[91] As a consequence, the way towards redefining or even de-problematising governance objects is "less to make

86. Allan 2017, 2018b.
87. Koopman 2013, 98. See also Andrä, forthcoming.
88. Allan 2017; Allan 2018a, 859.
89. Sending 2015, 7.
90. Allan 2018a, 859; see also Neumann and Sending 2010.
91. Sending 2015, 7–8.

subjects believe new things" than to change the underlying configuration of knowledge, such as by "mak[ing] new possibilities seem more obvious, or introduc[ing] new forces."[92] If the underlying premises, assumptions and cosmological ideas change, the processes of problem constitution that are embedded in these can also change. For example, as I will explain further in the penultimate chapter, for scholars subscribing to an ecological ontology of the world who reject epistemic modernism, war is no longer designated as the binary opposite of 'peace' and it can no longer be 'solved' with the help of modern science and technology. Where 'war' is understood to be continuously becoming and thus no longer temporally or spatially fixed, the possibility of averting it becomes conceptually impossible.

While my tracing of the construction of war as a governance object relies on Allan's framework, it expands it in several ways, indicating that it is even more widely applicable than originally anticipated. Firstly, in his account of the production of the climate as a governance object, Allan focuses on the interplay between state agencies, scientists and other "professional and expert groups" to outline the co-productive nature of problem constitution, while activists only enter his theoretical model in the problematisation process.[93] However, I show how non-state actors such as pacifists and philanthropists who are not experts or professionals in a scientific sense are not only involved in the formulation of the object as a problem but also in its designation as a distinct and recognisable entity. In this way, the example of war shows that, especially in the case where the object being constructed as a problem can serve state interests, activists can be understood as being part of the knowledge-based group for the purpose of tracing object construction. Secondly, abstraction enters Allan's framework as a vehicle for porting an object from one context to another.[94] However, for the case of war and prevention, I show that abstraction not only makes it comparable across contexts but constructs it as a general category. In this way, abstraction does political work in that it facilitates the idea that the object—war—can be governed *in general,* even if particular instances of military intervention might empirically undermine such claim. Thirdly, Allan argues that to be problematised, an object needs to be linked to "discourses and practices of state interest, national identity, or threat."[95] In this thesis, I show that problematisation does not depend on state interests but can also happen by latching the object onto policies and agendas that are already internationalised, such as development.

Finally, Allan's framework is designed to explain problem constitution, i.e. the processes involved in bringing a governance object into existence and maintaining it. After discussing the framework with the example of war and its prevention, I extend it in Chapter 6 with a speculative account of *de*-problematisation. While I argue in Chapters 3–5, the conditions of

92. Allan 2018a, 859.
93. Allan 2017, 137.
94. ibid., 138.
95. ibid., 133.

making prevention possible as an idea relied on a specific onto-epistemological configuration of European modernity, I discuss conceptions of war in Chapter 6 that abandon the underlying assumptions of its scientific cosmology. In this way, I expand Allan's framework with a tentative theoretical account of how the constitution of problems can become unmade when the conditions for epistemic objects to become governance objects are no longer fulfilled. By example of the prevention of war and conflict, I argue that the seemingly intuitive and ideal response to a governance problem can become conceptually impossible.

1.2 Research Design

In the remainder of this chapter, I explain and justify my chosen methodological approach. Noting that writing down the strategies which have led to a research design "forces us to discuss in a linear fashion what is actually a messy and iterative process," I also document which specific methods I have used to arrive at the claims and conclusions presented in this thesis.[96] In opposition to a deductive approach in which hypotheses are derived from pre-existing theories and subsequently tested empirically, an inductive approach generates theoretical propositions based on empirical material.[97] These theoretical propositions as well as the patterns, themes and categories used to formulate them do not emerge on their own but are rather driven by what the researcher wants to know.[98] This thesis is iterative in the sense that although presented here in a chronological fashion, the processes of data collection and data analysis took place simultaneously and circularly, so that they were informed by each other and fed back into revisions of both preconceptions about the object of study—in this case, the idea of conflict prevention—and the research design.

1.2.1 Methodological Approach

This thesis is concerned with the question of how a particular conception of war as preventable became intuitive in a specific arena of politics. As a result, it follows an interpretive epistemology. Interpretive research focuses on meaning-making and explores how taken-for-granted notions in international politics are constituted and contested.[99] It is particularly suited as an approach for scholarship that investigates the "mechanics of knowledge" by observing how actors represent the object of inquiry.[100] In the case of this thesis, these mechanics of knowledge construct prevention as the ideal option to respond to the problem

96. Lai and Roccu 2019, 77.
97. Bryman 2016, 55.
98. Srivastava and Hopwood 2009, 77.
99. Lamont 2015, 43; see also Doty 1993.
100. Dunn 2008, 80.

of war and conflict preemptively by making an effort to prevent it from occurring in the first place.

However, interpretation is not equal to the mere description of representational practices. Instead, it requires a deeper contextualisation of the structures of meaning and discourses within which these representations are embedded. As Vincent Pouliot argues, to trace the historical processes that enable the constitution of social realities, the researcher needs to build a narrative, which is a "dynamic account that tells the story of a variety of historical processes as they unfold over time."[101] The empirical Chapters 3, 4 and 5 thus narrate the processes of problem construction as taking place against the background of a specific cosmological configuration of European modernity, including its scientific rationalities, origins in colonialism and connection with Christian pacifist thought.

In tracing the conditions of possibility for the idea of prevention as it exists on the agenda of virtually all IOs today, the narrative this thesis provides is constitutive rather than causal.[102] While causal explanations, as understood by positivists, capture the "moving parts" and relations between events, constitutive explanations "speak to the latent dispositions and causal *capacities* of [social] systems."[103] The latter thus do not aim at explaining events or behaviours but at tracing how meanings and social realities, such as the taken-for-granted idea that war is preventable, are made possible through contingent practices and developments.[104] As opposed to causal chains, in constitutive analysis, the two elements of the explanation—that which explains (the *explanans*) and that which is explained (the *explanandum*)—are synchronous. From this perspective, 'causes' are neither extra-social facts to be unveiled nor separate existences but rather "heuristic focal points."[105]

As interpretive research strives for the closest possible approximation of capturing the "complex web of facilitating conditions, localized spheres of influence, and networks of embodied, feeling actors" of the phenomenon or process of interest, it is not primarily concerned with developing a general theory.[106] Indeed, for interpretive work, generalisability is neither an objective nor a concern. Generalising—i.e., abstracting elements of a specific phenomenon, event or relation to make it comparable within a broader class—undermines the central commitment of interpretivism to understand meanings *in context*.[107] Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow argue that, as the central goal of positivist research is to generate theoretical insights for explanation and prediction, the requirement of generalisability places the responsibility to demonstrate how the findings apply in other contexts on

101. Pouliot 2007, 367.
102. See Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 52.
103. Norman 2021, 937, emphasis added. See also Ylikoski 2013.
104. Pouliot 2007, 367.
105. Norman 2021, 939; Pouliot 2007, 367; see also Wendt 1998.
106. Salter 2013, 16.
107. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 47.

the shoulders of the researchers. In contrast, the central aim of interpretive research is to gain a deeper understanding of the "shared meanings that govern discursive practices and social relations situated within a particular time- and space-bound context."[108] Consequently, the task of establishing whether or not findings hold in other settings is, therefore, better understood to be the responsibility of the readers of interpretive scholarship. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow thus suggest that *contextuality* is a more appropriate indicator for measuring the achievements of interpretive research than generalisability.[109] As Bent Flyvberg notes, just because it is not or cannot be formally generalised, this does not mean that the study of a case does not contribute to the accumulation of knowledge in a given field.[110] Similarly, Robert Adcock argues that the key difference between interpretive approaches and positivist analyses lies not centrally in whether they accept or reject the possibility of findings being applicable in general but rather that they differ in the conception of *what kind of knowledge* such generalisation can yield.[111]

1.2.2 Data Collection and Selection

To trace the idea of preventability through the construction of war as an object of international governance, I draw on a range of primary and secondary data. Before discussing my data collection strategy, a brief note on my use of the term 'data' is in order. This thesis is empirical in the sense that it draws on data for its claims. I follow Andrew Neal's suggestion, which stipulates that "discourses are data, documents are data, practices are data."[112]

In interpretive research, the selection of texts, persons of interest or places is not random but purposive.[113] This perspective acknowledges that it is the "theory we bring to the site that turns it into a case of something."[114] As opposed to case *selection*, the logic here is one of case *construction*.[115] This approach flips the positivist case study approach on its head. Instead of following a strategy in which a *case is studied,* it pursues one in which the *study is cased.* Rather than prioritising ontological questions ("Is this really a case of X?"), this approach emphasises epistemological questions by asking what can be learned by treating a particular phenomenon, development or idea *as a case of* something.[116] Casing, according to this conception, occurs when the researcher uses abstract concepts and categories to define aspects of what is being observed. In this sense, casing necessarily happens iteratively as the

108. Ahmed and Sil 2012, 942; see also Adcock 2006; Yanow 2006.
109. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 47–8.
110. Flyvbjerg 2006, 227.
111. Adcock 2006, 52.
112. Neal 2013, 43.
113. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 70.
114. Burawoy 2009, 36.
115. Lai and Roccu 2019, 69–71; see also Soss 2018.
116. ibid., 23.

analysis develops throughout the research process.[117] In the study of international politics, 'cases' are often conceived as country examples.[118] However, for the study of the idea of prevention, selecting conflicts associated with a particular country would preclude me from analysing how war became understood as an *international* problem that is ideally addressed through *international* efforts to prevent conflict. That is, selecting a case on the country level would undermine this endeavour of capturing the genuine internationality of war's problem constitution. Therefore, rather than picking from a universe of cases, I follow the approach of iteratively reconstructing developments, guided by the question of what can be learned by treating war as *a case of* governance problems in world politics.[119]

The archival documents used for this thesis include historical texts such as pamphlets, letters and speeches, as well as contemporary resolutions, treaties and reports produced by conflict prevention actors such as IOs, NGOs and international commissions. Chapter 4 further makes extensive use of primary and secondary sources from conflict research to discuss quantification as a means of translating the concepts of 'war' and 'armed conflict' across different national, historical and temporal contexts. All textual data are publicly available and were collected from online archives such as the United Nations Digital Library, the Internet Archive, Hathi Trust and Google Books.

When describing my corpus of data, I use the term 'archive' not in the sense of denoting a physical space but rather as "a collection of data organized as records." 'Records,' in turn, are not depositories of 'facts' but are better understood as evidence of "how things have been thought of" and, therefore, constitute sites from which imaginaries can be interrogated.[120] Initially, I had planned to visit physical archives in 2020, such as the Jordan Paper Archive at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, the archive of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace at Columbia University and the archive of the London Peace Society at Swarthmore College. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to rely exclusively on digitally available data as safety concerns, travel restrictions and institution closures made research trips impossible.

As I explain further below, interpretive approaches do not follow the positivist dictum that more data yields a richer analysis.[121] Instead, a few texts written by a few individuals or institutions can already be important where they link together assumptions of a discourse and are "supported by moral and institutional resources."[122] In the tradition of interpretive research, it is more important that the selected corpus of texts is relevant to the research

117. ibid., 24.
118. Klotz 2008, 43.
119. Allan 2017, 132; Soss 2018, 23.
120. Lobo-Guerrero 2013, 121.
121. See also Braun and Clarke 2016.
122. Dunn and Neumann 2016, 91.

question rather than representative.[123] I followed the approach of starting with "canonical texts" or "monuments," as suggested by Kevin Dunn and Iver Neumann, and then moved to other materials that are referenced within these texts.[124]

I selected those documents that were described in the secondary literature as influential in peace advocacy and conflict research. As Allan argues, the designation of a governance object depends on a knowledge-based group, which fixes and reproduces the problem discursively.[125] To identify the relevant knowledge-based actors for the construction of war as a governance problem, my data corpus was shaped by selecting texts produced by those actors who were driving the answers to the questions 'What is war?' and 'What should we do about it?.' However, selecting on the recognition of primary material in secondary sources means prioritising the dominant discourse.[126] While this can be a downside where the focus of the research is on marginalised representations, it is the most suitable approach for my research question and scope, which are aimed at investigating the conditions of possibility of a certain idea (war is preventable), as they inquire into the dominant conception within a specific policy arena (conflict prevention).

To avoid being caught in a loop of endless recourse, I had to delimit the timeframe of the study. The sample for this study starts in the 19th century, with the oldest text dating back to 1812. While I hark back briefly to prior centuries when recounting the emergence of the modernist-scientific cosmological order with the help of Allan in Chapter 3, I only consider empirical material from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, as the bulk of the literature agrees that the modern peace idea only emerged around or after the early 1800s.[127]

In addition to archival documents, I draw on a small set of ten elite interviews that I conducted between February and March 2019. As the social relation of status is situationally contingent, there is no clear-cut definition of the term 'elite' in the context of interviewing as a data collection method.[128] I use the term here to signal that I interviewed my respondents in their professional capacity as current and former staff of a range of organisations that are involved in programme and policy design for conflict prevention, including IOs (three interviews), NGOs (five interviews) and government departments (two interviews). My recruitment strategy was a mix of cold emails and pre-existing connections, as well as referrals through personal networks. The study design and consent procedure were approved for self-certification by LSE's Ethics Division prior to interviewing. All respondents agreed to

123. Flick 2014, 124.
124. Dunn and Neumann 2016, 93. This technique of building a corpus of data is akin to the recruitment strategy called 'snowball sampling' in interviewing.
125. Allan 2017, 137.
126. Dunn and Neumann 2016, 93.
127. See, e.g., Confortini 2012; Fried 1905, 215–9; Lynch 1999, 43–4; Mueller 1990; 2010, 323; Tickner and True 2018, 222.
128. Harvey 2011.

speak to me on the condition of anonymity and confidentiality. To not identify interviewees from context, such as their specific job titles, I only use general categories to refer to their professional position (such as 'conflict adviser in governmental department').

These interviews were semi-structured, which means that I prepared an interview guide with relatively open-ended questions. Many of those interviewed as elites, including my respondents, are highly educated professionals and prefer open-ended questions so they can "articulate their views, explaining why they think what they think."[129] While the interview guides varied slightly depending on the interviewee's occupation and professional focus, all were tailored towards generating data on how various experts understand the concept of 'conflict,' how they recognise it and, as a result, arrive at an assessment about a situation as being in imminent danger of turning conflictual, which kind of knowledge they consume to arrive at such assessment, and which kind of knowledge emerges as salient. In line with an interpretive approach, I understand interviewing as a relational undertaking, in which the generation of data takes place dynamically through dialogue and interaction between researcher and interviewee. Hence, I do not construe my 'data' as being a pre-existing reality to be extracted through interrogating participants (which would be the positivist approach), but rather as being "jointly produced through back and forth exchange."[130]

Some of the interviews were conducted in person, while the majority were conducted remotely via telephone or video chat, whenever interviewees were located outside London. Although the literature suggests that telephone interviews yield less detailed responses than face-to-face interviews, elites often prefer this method as it is more flexible than in-person meetings and can accommodate them when they are travelling or in-between meetings. In addition, remote interviewing is often not only preferable but required, as the alternative to a telephone interview might be no interview at all.[131]

Where technically possible and only in the cases where my interviewees gave me their consent to do so, I recorded our conversation and transcribed it afterwards. As both the setting in which an interview takes place, the relationship and rapport between interviewer and interviewee, as well as the transformation of the data into a form digestible for analysis afterwards, involves a range of contingencies and decisions, I consider 'context' and 'data' as inseparable.[132] Thus, following Lee Ann Fujii, I consider transcription the first instance of interpreting the interview material.[133] While note-taking during the interview necessarily involves *ad hoc* decisions regarding which information is relevant, transcribing the spoken

129. Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 674; Fujii 2018, 20.
130. ibid., 1–3; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 78–82. See also D'Ignazio and Klein 2020 on the notions of 'raw' and 'cooked' data.
131. Harvey 2011, 436.
132. Fujii 2018, 73.
133. ibid., 76.

word into written language afterwards is also a selective and purposive process. For example, it involves deciding where to locate the notation style on the spectrum between "naturalised" and "denaturalised" transcription.[134] Pauses, stutters, word repetitions or involuntary noises and utterances can be instructive for analysing certain types of questions and contexts (e.g. when the interviewer has to suspect that the respondent is not or cannot be truthful or straightforward). As a compromise between keeping the transcriptions legible, while 'sanitising' the spoken word as little as possible, I adopted a hybrid and contextual approach to transcription where I have retained colloquia, word repetitions and other 'natural' language to be able to give a true account of what the interviewees said, without noting down every filler word like 'um,' 'er' or 'uh.'

1.2.3 Data Analysis

My method of data analysis was thematic analysis. This is a systematic approach for "reducing large amounts of qualitative data without losing the context."[135] The central analytic technique in thematic analysis is *coding,* which denotes a process of "closely inspecting text to look for recurrent themes, topics, or relationships and marking similar passages with a code or label to categorize them for later retrieval or theory-building."[136] Coding can be undertaken deductively, i.e. with the help of pre-existing categories or theoretical constructs that are the focus of the investigation, or inductively, i.e. without any prior categories so that themes emerge from the data. Since I was interested in meaning-making, specifically in how 'war' and 'prevention' are characterised in the documents, I chose the inductive route. The inductive coding process involves noticing overarching patterns, seeking commonalities, establishing relationships between concepts and texts, revealing underlying theoretical constructs and conceptions of world order, and uncovering implied causal logics.[137] However, what matters for interpretive thematic analysis (see further below) is less the frequency of themes *per se* but rather which patterns emerge and how they occur *across* data items, as this points to meaning-making beyond a single instance.[138]

As Judith Lapadat notes, thematic analysis is not strictly a research method in itself but is better viewed as an "analytic approach and synthesizing strategy" that is often combined with other methods, such as case study research.[139] As a result, thematic analysis is widely

134. Oliver, Serovich and Mason 2005.
135. Lapadat 2010, 926.
136. ibid., 926.
137. ibid., 926; see also Fujii 2018, chapter 5. Causal *logics* are not to be confused with causal *mechanisms.* While the latter are established by the researcher in the process-tracing method to make inferences about how a series of developments caused an outcome of interest, the former are presented by the research participants and constitute the reasoning for why something took place in a certain way, see Bennett and Checkel 2015, 6; Fujii 2018, chapter 5, especially 81.
138. Braun and Clarke 2016, 741.
139. Lapadat 2010, 926.

understood as theoretically independent, flexible and thus compatible with both positivist and interpretive epistemologies.[140] However, many widely cited explanations and 'how-to' guides on thematic analysis presume a particular idea of what a theme is and how it can be recognised. These accounts conceptualise themes as "ontologically real, discrete things, out there in the world (or the data)" and thus place a high emphasis on coding reliability.[141] This conception of discovery is implicitly positivist and thus not compatible with interpretive approaches that, by contrast, view themes as "actively crafted by the researcher, [...] offered to the reader as a compelling and coherent reading of data, rather than (more or less) accurate identification of a decontextualized or pre-existing truth."[142] That is, where interpretive research is focused on analysing the production of meaning, it is meaning-making about meaning—or what Anthony Giddens calls the "double hermeneutic."[143]

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke thus suggest two analogies for these different approaches to thematic analysis, which they call "coding reliability" and "organic."[144] While the idea of themes as pre-existing truths to be revealed can be thought of as looking for and picking up gemstones (themes) on a beach (the entirety of the data), the process of interpretive thematic analysis is more akin to baking. The cake (a theme) "is not waiting to be 'revealed'—it comes into being through activity and engagement, within set parameters."[145] This analogy also works well to capture researcher positionality as having an effect on the analytic process and resulting findings, as several bakers (researchers) can follow the same recipe (research design), yet the baked goods (themes, interpretations) will come out slightly or even vastly different, depending on the circumstances of the baking (analysis)—for example, when the recipe (research design) is slightly altered or the ingredients (such as theoretical background knowledge) vary. A corollary of the conception of theme development as baking—or, in more formalised language, generation rather than discovery—is that it abandons the idea of a 'truth' that can be 'missed.' As a result, interpretive thematic analysis neither requires a very large nor minimum amount of items in the data corpus. Instead, as Braun and Clarke note, "the bigger the sample, the greater the risk of failing to do justice to the complexity and nuance contained within the data."

In the following, I describe the reasoning that guided the thematic analysis. While the coding process was designed to be open and inductive, it was nevertheless informed by prior theoretical knowledge in the sense that I approached the material with a set of guiding

140. Braun and Clarke 2016, 740.
141. ibid., 740. Examples include Boyatzis 1998; Fugard and Potts 2015; Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012.
142. Braun and Clarke 2016, 740. See also Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 78–82.
143. Giddens 1984, 284; see also Jackson 2006; Pouliot 2007, 365.
144. It should be noted that Braun and Clarke use 'qualitative' versus (quasi-) 'quantitative' to describe the underlying logics of the two approaches. However, even the "coding reliability" approach is qualitative, so that the implied distinction they make is more accurately labelled 'positivist' vs 'interpretive.'
145. Braun and Clarke 2016, 740.

questions based on the framework of problem constitution.[146] This coding strategy was geared towards reconstructing the central themes along which the necessity and desirability of averting war are portrayed within prevention discourse. To illustrate how war was and is being constructed as a problem of governance best responded to by preventing it, I needed to show that war is being represented as a distinct entity with specific characteristics, as translatable, manipulable, and politically salient for certain audiences.[147] To do so, I devised five, partly overlapping, sets of guiding questions that directed the coding process loosely.

The first set refers to the *ontology* of war and includes questions such as: What is the understanding of 'war' and 'conflict' in these texts? How is the nature of war or conflict described? This set of questions gauges the characteristics that define war, including implicit negative characteristics where war is defined by what it is not. For example, as I explain in more detail in Chapter 3, it transpired early in the process that war is often defined as *the opposite of* peace. To answer this set of questions, I looked specifically for any direct or indirect mentions of war or armed conflict and how it was described. These descriptions could range from paragraph-long depictions of war experiences to rather technical statements about expenses for war. Most often, however, the implicit or explicit character associated with war in the texts manifested in the adjectives that went along with mentions of war and its synonyms. For example, some attributes appearing with the highest frequency and greatest emphasis included WAR AS DEADLY, WAR AS COSTLY, WAR AS HORROR or WAR AS BARBARIC.

In its objective to reveal how certain ideas, assumptions, phenomena or social realities have come to be taken for granted and how certain actions become possible, thematic analysis can resemble discourse analysis. In the simplest terms, discourses are the "representational practices through which meanings are generated."[148] Following the central conviction that knowledge and language are constitutive of reality, discourses "form the objects of which they speak."[149] This first set of questions concerning representations of the ontology of war thus includes considerations referred to as *predications* within discourse analysis. The study of predicates focuses on the attributes that are attached to subjects (nouns) in the form of verbs, adverbs and adjectives.[150] Predications establish and affirm the central characteristics of the phenomenon at hand, or as Jennifer Milliken puts it, they "construct the thing(s) named as a particular sort of thing."[151] In the case of the conflict prevention discourse, the thing

146. See Allan 2017.
147. ibid.; Corry 2013, 87.
148. Dunn and Neumann 2016, 2. See also Bartelson 1995, 71; Doty 1993, 302; Milliken 1999, 231; Weldes and Saco 1996, 373.
149. Foucault 1972, 49.
150. Doty 1993, 306; Dunn and Neumann 2016, 112–4; Milliken 1999, 231–6.
151. ibid., 232.

'war' is being constructed as undesirable through negative predicates such as deadly, bloody, destructive and inglorious.

Similarly, this set of questions also captures representations of war (and, in further consequence, its prevention) through metaphors and similes. Thus, it might resemble metaphor analysis.[152] Metaphors are discursive vehicles that represent one thing as another to make "unfamiliar, abstract and complex concepts intelligible by establishing ontological similarities between different domains."[153] For example, a frequently recurring pair of metaphors was the one of war as a disease and prevention as a public health intervention, which I have written about in more detail elsewhere.[154]

The second set of questions concerns the *necessity* of prevention and includes questions such as: How is the need for prevention justified? This question follows from the first and, in some ways, overlaps with it. Once it became clear that war is being represented as something abhorrent that is best prevented from happening in the first place, this associated question gauges the reasons for this. As I explain further in Chapter 5 on problematisation, these explicit and implicit justifications can broadly be grouped into two categories, namely deontological and consequentialist moral arguments.

The third set of guiding questions concerns *epistemology*, under which I have grouped questions such as: What is the—implicit or explicit—understanding of how war can be 'known'? What are the means used to 'fix' the definition of war? This set of questions is geared towards capturing the rationalities, technologies and practices of (scientific) investigation that underlie the understanding of war in the texts. For example, as I explain in Chapter 4, war is frequently represented as a *measurable* phenomenon. This question also aims at capturing the elements and mechanisms that make war and conflict legible and portable, such as explicit and implicit modes of abstraction. A central mode through which war is being abstracted and thus made portable within these texts is quantification, which is expressed through indicators, statistics as well as mathematical terminology and models.

The fourth set of guiding questions concerns *causality*, which denotes representations of the reasons for why war occurs. It includes questions such as: How are the causes of war represented? Who is represented as being responsible for causing war? These questions are designed to capture the aspect of malleability. As Allan notes, where a phenomenon is understood as being predetermined, intentional governance and strategic action are unnecessary.[155] Consequently, prevention is only possible where the problem—war—is understood to be something that can be manipulated. That is, where the causes of war are

152. Dunn and Neumann 2016, 114–6; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Milliken 1999, 235–6.
153. Rodehau-Noack 2021, 1023.
154. ibid.
155. Allan 2018b, 87.

represented as inescapable, e.g. as fate or God's will, prevention cannot follow as a governance option. In contrast, where war is the result of human volition and action, prevention becomes possible. These 'causes' of war can appear as root problems or risk factors and describe, among others, war as the result of underdevelopment, the availability of armament, social forces or state weakness. Here, I was less focused on delving deeply into the extent to which this chimes with the academic literature on conflict onset and dynamics but rather on whether these causes, whether implied or made explicit, construe war as something that is governable as a result.

Finally, the fifth set of guiding questions revolves around *invocation and appeal*. It includes questions about the explicit and implicit addressees and referents, such as: Who is invoked as the audience of the texts? On whom do the texts place the responsibility for preventing war? Who is appealed to as actors capable of preventing war? Who is identified as a beneficiary of prevention? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the implied audiences and referents differed according to the genre and historical context of the texts. For example, while pamphlets and speeches from the peace movement of the 19th century spoke to the so-called English-speaking race or Christians, the addressees of texts of the 20th and 21st centuries became more inclusive, including all governments and peoples and humanity. This set of questions is thus related to examining *subject positioning* in discourse analysis. As Roxanne Lynn Doty notes, texts link particular subjects and objects to one another through opposition, identity, similarity, complementarity and other relationships.[156] For example, a central relationship is the opposition towards the object war from subject positions that are 'civilised' or 'developed.'

A helpful starting point to assess the relevance of codes is their *groundedness* and *density*.[157] Firstly, groundedness is the number of quotations associated with a code. That is, groundedness is in a way a numerical approach to text analysis in that it measures *how often* a particular code appears. Then again, the interpretive goal of identifying patterns within a given corpus is also based on counting to a certain extent, as a pattern is, by definition, constituted by more than one instance. However, only counting code occurrences is not sufficient for establishing a pattern, as several passages in one text can be associated with the same code, while that code can be nonexistent in another. Thus, a pattern only exists where the same code appears at least once or more often *in many, if not most or even all,* items of the data corpus. A second element of determining which codes make up relevant themes for the analysis is their relationship. These code relationships include subordination, subsumption, association, causation, concurrence or contradiction. For example, passages that I coded war as an instrument of politics are *part of* the broader theme war as human-made, which, in turn, is a *reason* for war as preventable. A measure that helps to assess the relevance of

156. Doty 1993, 306. See also Dunn and Neumann 2016, 112–4.
157. Friese 2012, 89.

such code-code relationships is code *density,* which provides the number of relationships associated with each code. Here again, the quantitative measure (node count) does not definitively determine which codes emerge as themes that matter for the analysis but rather gives an indication of which ones might be more central than others, as the *nature* of the relationships indicated by code density remains subject to researcher interpretation. With the help of code density and groundedness, I grouped the codes and established relationships between them.The guiding questions informed how I grouped a large number of codes after the initial reading of all textual material. The resulting code groups included, for example, DEFINITION OF WAR, REFERENTS OF CONDITIONS FOR PEACE. Finally, I identified the most relevant themes, which would then inform my argument within the empirical chapters on how war is constructed as a—preventable—problem of international politics.

1.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the theoretical framework and research design. I started the first half by sketching existing works on knowledge production in IR to situate the object-centred approach within the literature. While questions around the production of knowledge and expertise are a staple of IR scholarship, the recent focus on objects constitutes a novel contribution to theorising international politics. However, as these recent works borrow from a range of adjacent disciplines and fields and use the term in different ways, I suggested distinguishing epistemic objects, objects of expertise and governance objects, with the latter being subsets of the former.

I then presented the theoretical framework on which the empirical portion of this thesis rests. Following the work of Corry and Allan, I outlined the three concurrent processes of problem constitution. These are, firstly, designation, which denotes the process of defining an object as a distinct entity. Secondly, translation concerns the process of defining the object as international by rendering it transferable across political and historical contexts. Thirdly, problematisation describes the process of defining the object as a specific issue of international concern by coupling it to existing interests, identities and imaginaries. While these three components *can* and *do* occur simultaneously and concurrently, the latter one—problematisation—centrally distinguishes governance objects from epistemic objects. Finally, I outlined my theoretical contribution by elucidating how my study of prevention expands Allan's framework. Specifically, it does so by including non-state actors such as peace advocates and philanthropists within the knowledge-based group that shares a discursive frame, by emphasising the political role of abstraction in the process of rendering the object 'war' international, by extending it to already-internationalised issues as springboards for

the process of problematisation, and by adding a discussion of the conditions and processes required to de-problematising an object.

In the second half of this chapter, I explained my methodological approach and strategies for data collection and analysis. This thesis is concerned with the question of how an idea—the preventability of war—became intuitive within a specific policy sphere by tracing its conditions of possibility. Thus, it is interested in processes of meaning-making rather than establishing causality. To match this epistemological objective, I pursued an interpretive methodology. This consists of investigating how actors represent 'war' and 'prevention,' and contextualising these representations by carving out historical developments, epistemological underpinnings and political conditions.

To do so, I relied on various primary and secondary sources including historical pamphlets, studies, reports, resolutions, speeches, elite interviews and academic scholarship. I explained that, as opposed to positivist research that strives for the data corpus to be representative and unbiased, the interpretive approach understands it to be influenced by the choices and dispositions of the researcher. To research the idea of prevention, I selected those texts that are represented as canonical, i.e. particularly influential for the development of the prevention agenda, within the secondary literature. Further, I relied on a small number of semi-structured elite interviews, which I conducted with staff of government departments, IOs and NGOs in February and March 2019.

Finally, I discussed my approach of using thematic analysis for investigating the construction of war as an object of international governance and prevention as its ideal policy response. I explained my coding strategy, which was influenced by five sets of guiding questions derived from the theoretical framework. These concerned the representation of war's ontology, necessity, epistemology, causality as well as the addressees and appeals of the texts. Through establishing code relations, I eventually determined central themes upon which I constructed a narrative about how war was defined as a distinct entity with specific characteristics, translated across context with the help of abstracting it through statistics, and problematised by latching it onto the objectives of civilisation and development.

2

The Dog that Didn't Bark: The Prevention Agenda and the Prevention Episteme

"Is there any other point to which you wish to draw my attention?"
"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
"The dog did nothing in the night-time."
"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.
– Arthur Conan Doyle, Silver Blaze

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter serves two central purposes. Before delving into the empirical chapters that trace the 'stages' of designation, translation and problematisation in the process of problem construction, I first take a closer look at the policy arena and discourse that serves both as an entry and focal point for this thesis. The bulk of this chapter is therefore dedicated to laying out in more detail the definition, understandings and actors I am invoking when referring to the (contemporary) conflict prevention agenda. To do so, I first sketch the development of this landscape by drawing out central actors, documents and so-called milestones. I then take stock of this policy landscape by presenting central definitions of the term 'conflict prevention' as they are used in policy documents and the scholarly literature. I also draw a distinction to the adjacent, and often conflated, policy issue of atrocity prevention. Finally, I turn to the role of knowledge production for conflict prevention. Specifically, I discuss two central epistemological commitments of the prevention idea that constitute what I call the *prevention episteme*. The first epistemological commitment is that the entity 'war' can be definitively known. This commitment manifests in a multi-level apparatus of knowledge production. The second commitment concerns the assumption that war and conflict can be prevented on the basis of such knowledge. As knowledge for prevention is necessarily uncertain as it attempts to anticipate future events, these epistemological commitments come with inherent dilemmas, which I point to in this section.

2.2 Charting the Terrain: The Conflict Prevention Landscape

2.2.1 A Brief History of the Conflict Prevention Polity

The idea of conflict prevention as such is not a recent one, as historical efforts to avoid future conflicts have taken place after many major wars. For instance, prevention was a dominant theme in the 1815 Congress of Vienna, which sought to stabilise and pacify Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic and French Revolutionary Wars.[1] After the First World War, US President Woodrow Wilson advocated for an international organisation that should help to prevent war and promote peace in his *Fourteen Points* speech.[2] Almost three decades later, Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations captured exactly this spirit by stating that the first and foremost purpose of the organisation is to "take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace."[3]

Notwithstanding previous ambitions to abolish and prevent war throughout history, the current international prevention agenda and its institutional architecture developed after the Cold War. While most accounts see its beginning in the 1992 *Agenda for Peace* (see further below),[4] some trace it back to earlier efforts of what is now called preventive diplomacy in the 1950s by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.[5] During the Cold War, the understanding prevailed that if regional conflict erupted, it would fall under the purview of the respective defence systems of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Warsaw Pact, respectively, as the East-West divide did not permit international cooperation. Conflict monitoring and early warning thus were primarily a task of the military and the intelligence communities of the respective blocs, aiming at reducing frictions between states and responding to national security threats.[6]

Due to the structure and constitution of the UN and its Security Council, the possibilities for substantive action by the UN in what Hammarskjöld characterised as a "split world" were severely limited during the period of bloc confrontation.[7] As a result, the UN's main field of useful activity in terms of preventing and resolving conflicts was to keep "newly arising conflicts outside the sphere of bloc differences" and restrict conflicts that do enter this sphere to be strictly localised through the use of preventive diplomacy. In the cases that were either

1. Ackermann 2003, 340; Melander and Pigache 2007, 9; Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, 4.
2. Campbell, McKinnon and Stevens 2016, 55.
3. UN 1945.
4. Carment and Schnabel 2003; Lund 1996; Sharma and Welsh 2015, 6–7; Zartman 2001.
5. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 13. For the concept of preventive diplomacy and a more detailed history of its development and practice within the UN, see Hampson 2002.
6. Carment and Garner 1999, 3; Khittel and Pospisil 2010.
7. Hammarskjöld 1975, 130; Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, ix.

the result of, or ran the risk creating, a power vacuum between the main blocs, preventive action was primarily aimed at "filling the vacuum so that it will not provoke action from any of the major parties."[8]

Up until the 1990s, the conflict prevention function within the UN only developed in an "ad hoc fashion," primarily through efforts at preventive diplomacy and the emergence of various sub-organisations focused on social, economic, cultural and humanitarian issues but did not develop into a fully integrated system of conflict prevention.[9] The first "earnest" effort at setting up a conflict prevention system at the UN began under Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar with the Office for Research and Collection of Information (ORCI) in 1987. The ORCI was a small sub-unit within the Offices of the Secretary-General that was tasked with issuing early warnings about "potential trouble spots and critical security situations" to inform preventive diplomacy and for the exercise of his good offices.[10] Using computer modelling and database-building, the ORCI was supposed to develop a research base informing on conflict trends for the UN's security and humanitarian branches. However, this was perceived as building an independent capacity of intelligence-gathering by key states, with Conservatives of the US Congress going as far as calling the effort a "communist conspiracy."[11] In addition, a freeze on new appointments at the time meant that the ORCI had to be staffed by moving personnel from other departments, which encountered resistance and created delays. Eventually, when Boutros Boutros-Ghali took over as Secretary-General, he was faced with having to implement staff cuts demanded by the UN's major donors and shut down the ORCI as a result.[12]

After the Cold War, a new climate emerged that enabled more cooperation between the so-called major powers.[13] In 1992, the UN Security Council met at the level of heads of state and governments to commission a report by Boutros-Ghali on how the UN can better work towards preventing conflicts.[14] The result was the landmark report *Agenda for Peace* on preventive diplomacy in UN activities around peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping. The report defined the role of the UN in conflict prevention as identifying "at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict and to try through diplomacy to remove the sources of danger before violence results," thus following in the footsteps of Hammarskjöld in that the core mechanism for prevention was diplomacy.[15] Preventive diplomacy primarily denotes short and medium-term consultations undertaken by states, a

8. Hammarskjöld 1975, 131; see also Rubin and Jones 2007, 393.
9. Bellamy 2008a, 136; Rubin and Jones 2007, 391.
10. Jonah 1989, 69; Ramcharan 1991, 44–67. The Offices of the Secretary-General were the forerunner of what is today the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs within the UN Secretariat.
11. Bellamy 2009, 110.
12. ibid., 110–1; Boothby and D'Angelo 2004, 252.
13. Björkdahl 1999, 55; Lund 1996, 8.
14. ibid., 4; Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, ix.
15. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 3.

coalition of states or multilateral organisations with the intent to address emerging hostilities and promote de-escalation.[16] In this sense, preventive diplomacy can be understood as a principally operational action in the face of ongoing escalation.[17] The *Agenda for Peace* further laid out a set of specific recommendations to reform the UN towards a more proactive engagement in preventing violent conflict and, in this way, marked the beginning of an attitudinal shift among practitioners from a more short-term response to arising conflict in the interplay between states and institutions to a more structural perspective that emphasised a long-term approach to prevention.[18]

The revival of the concept of conflict prevention after the end of the Cold War with the *Agenda for Peace* emphasised preventive diplomacy. However, by the end of the 1990s, the usefulness of this approach was in question as it was focused on *inter*state relations, while an increasing share of conflicts took place *within* states.[19] David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, therefore, distinguish between horizontal escalation, i.e. such tensions that cross state borders, and vertical prevention, where violence arises "within a political unit without spilling over boundaries to other units."[20] In this sense, the most recent wave of prevention efforts increasingly broadened the scope to also apply to *intra*state situations.[21]

In the wake of the initiative of the UN through the *Agenda for Peace* report, regional organisations and NGOs have increasingly come to play a role in formulating policy recommendations, engaging in preventive diplomacy and institutionalising efforts at researching conflict prevention.[22] In the following years, intergovernmental and regional organisations beyond the UN integrated prevention efforts with designated sub-units and programmes. For example, the OAU (which is the AU today) established its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention in 1993, the OSCE opened its Center for Preventive Action following its 1994 summit, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) set up its conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWARN), focused on pastoral conflicts, in 1995. The World Bank established its Post-Conflict Unit in 1997, which was reframed and renamed to be the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit four years later.[23] Conflict prevention is also a prominent feature in the Security Strategy of the European Union (EU) and its Neighbourhood Policy since 2003.[24] The non-governmental sector has seen similar efforts

16. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 13.
17. Nicolaides 1996.
18. Boutros-Ghali 1992; Carment and Schnabel 2003, 12.
19. Björkdahl 1999, 56; Rubin and Jones 2007.
20. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 23.
21. In these areas, conflict prevention efforts often manifest as peacekeeping operations, such as the ceasefire observer missions in the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria (UNDOF), the Kashmir region between Pakistan and India (UNMOGIP), or the peacekeeping mission in the Abyei border zone between Sudan and South Sudan (UNISFA).
22. Lund 1996.
23. Bellamy 2009, 108; CCPDC 1997, 169–70; Cramer 2006, 2; Engel 2018; Kasaija 2013.
24. Stewart 2011.

in institutionalising research and implementation efforts for conflict prevention, with organisations like the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), International Alert, Conciliation Resources and the International Crisis Group as prominent examples.[25]

A notable non-governmental organisation within this sector is the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, which was established in 1994 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York to "address the looming threats to world peace of intergroup violence and to advance new ideas for the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict."[26] Led by the president of the corporation David Hamburg, the commission consisted of sixteen "international leaders and scholars," including British civil servant Brian Urquhart, who held many posts at the UN in his 40 years within the institution and was significantly involved in its very inception.[27] The commission set out to investigate the causes, conditions and costs of contemporary conflicts and find ways for states and organisations to build a functional system to prevent them. In the five years of its operation, the commission produced a range of outputs that include many edited volumes authored by policymakers and scholars alike, as well as its famous *Final Report*, which was published in December 1997. The work of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict is worth noting not only because it builds on the legacy of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy for peace and prevention, as I explain in more detail in the following chapters,[28] but also because it is a rare example of making explicit the otherwise implicit assumptions about conflict that serve as central ontological commitments for the conflict prevention agenda, and because it significantly influenced UN policy.[29]

Conflict prevention has been a core priority within the UN for all Secretaries-General since the *Agenda for Peace*. In the 2000s, marked by the civil war and genocide in Rwanda in 1994 as formative moments whose legacy deeply influenced UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's tenure,[30] his pleas for prevention in the reports *We the Peoples* and *Prevention of Armed Conflict* reiterated the importance of averting violent conflict.[31] In the latter, Annan put forth his central injunction of moving the UN "from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention."[32] The phrase had been circulating since the mid-1990s[33] and was promoted centrally as a core point in the aforementioned Carnegie Report. The idea behind the term of a 'culture' is what would be dubbed mainstreaming the issue of conflict prevention today.

25. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 13–4; Cramer 2006, 2; O'Neil and Tschirgi 2002.
26. Carnegie Corporation of New York 2021.
27. CCPDC 1997, xi and 182–5.
28. See also ibid., xi.
29. In his report *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, Annan repeatedly references the work of the Carnegie Commission. Indeed, its *Final Report* of 1997 is the only cited source, see Annan 2001.
30. See, e.g., CCPDC 1997, 3.
31. Annan 2000, 2001.
32. Annan 2001, 7; Annan 2006, 4.
33. The first mention of the phrase in relation to conflict prevention I could find is by political scientist and adviser Michael Lund in the mid-1990s, see Lund 1996, 151–5.

It conveys that conflict prevention, to be successful and sustainable, "must be multi-faceted and designed for the long term" and widely thematised across all institutions of society:

> Taught in secular and religious schools, emphasized by the media, pursued vigorously by the UN and other international organizations, the prevention of deadly conflict must become a commonplace of daily life and part of a global cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation. [...] Leaders must focus on generating a broad constituency for prevention. [...] Such efforts are more likely to succeed if leaders can mobilize the media, the business community, and other influential and active groups in civil society.[34]

Annan adopts this stance in his 2001 report *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, where he develops ten principles that should foster the move from reaction to mainstreaming prevention.[35] Annan's successor Ban Ki-moon carries forth the aspiration to put the prevention of conflict front and centre in the activities of the UN system.[36] The most recent flagship report *Pathways for Peace* was published in 2018 in conjunction with the World Bank under the auspices of the incumbent Secretary-General António Guterres.[37] In 2019, Guterres reaffirms conflict prevention as the core task of the organisation, when he notes in an address to the Security Council that conflict prevention and mediation are the two most important tools for "saving lives and reducing suffering—fulfilling the most fundamental mandate of the United Nations."[38]

The landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 further gave rise to calls to integrate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and conflict prevention agendas. The resolution reaffirms "the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts" and stresses "the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution."[39] Indeed, prevention constitutes one of the four pillars of the WPS agenda, in addition to participation, protection, and peacebuilding and recovery.[40] Although the pillars are designed to be implemented in equal measure, the agenda has focused primarily on the issues of the prevention of, and the

34. CCPDC 1997, xlv–xlvi.
35. These are as follows: prevention 1. must be consistent with the Charter of the UN, 2. must have national ownership, 3. is best undertaken under Chapter VI of the Charter (i.e. through peaceful measures), 4. should be initiated at the earliest possible moment, 5. should address the causes of conflict, 6. should encompass both short-term and long-term measures, 7. should go hand in hand with sustainable development, 8. should thus be integrated with the UN's development programmes and activities, 9. depends upon many actors whose roles must be weighed appropriately, and 10. must be supported by the political will and readiness of the UN member states to provide the UN with the appropriate means, see Annan 2001, 37–8.
36. Ban 2009.
37. UN and World Bank 2018.
38. Guterres quoted in Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, xi.
39. UNSC 2000, 1.
40. UN Women 2015, 13. The themes or pillars of the WPS agenda vary across sources. See, e.g., Basu and Confortini 2016, 52; Kirby and Shepherd 2016a, 249; Kirby and Shepherd 2016b, 374.

protection from, violence in the ensuing policy architecture, with protection receiving the most attention.[41]

As Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd note, the objective of prevention within the WPS agenda can be interpreted as referring to both "short-term, conflict-focused work, such as policies to prevent outbreaks of sexual violence in refugee camps through gender-sensitive logistics," as well as to "sustained social change to undo the conditions that produce violent conflict."[42] This latter notion thus encompasses the structural and systemic prevention of conflict.[43] Yet, although open to a broad interpretation, critics note that the meaning of the term 'prevention' has "steadily shifted from a general opposition to war to a limited focus on civilian victimization and war crimes."[44] As a result, prevention has only been operationalised to a limited extent within WPS activity, so that "WPS has become more concerned with making war safe for women than preventing the outbreak of conflict in the first place."[45] As Laura Shepherd argues, this stems from the paradoxical way in which prevention is constituted within the WPS resolutions as "something other than (military) security," while at the same time as something that is "governed by dominant logics of security and militarism."[46] As an alternative, she argues for reconceptualising prevention (in practice) as undoing militarism and security through "queer, feminist, decolonial, and posthuman ways of knowing and encountering the world."[47]

2.2.2 Defining Conflict Prevention

Where conflict denotes a difference in views and positions, it is an inevitable, ubiquitous, but also fruitful and therefore a necessary component of interaction between units—be these individuals, groups, societies or states.[48] Understood in this sense as contestation, conflict can be considered to produce positive outcomes and bring about preferable change.[49] As a result, Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse understand 'conflict prevention' to be somewhat of a misnomer "since it is clearly impossible to prevent conflict from taking place."[50] Preventing conflict-as-contestation *per se* is thus neither productive nor desirable. By contrast, 'conflict prevention,' as the term for the policy agenda of interest for this thesis,

41. ibid., 379–80; O'Reilly 2018, 194.
42. Kirby and Shepherd 2016b, 391.
43. On the distinction between operational, structural and systemic prevention, see the following section.
44. Kirby and Shepherd 2016b, 391. See also Basu and Confortini 2016, 52; Ellerby 2013, 439.
45. Basu and Shepherd 2018, 449; O'Reilly 2018, 196.
46. Shepherd 2020, 316. See also Basu and Confortini 2016, 57.
47. Shepherd 2020, 317. On the notion of knowing and encountering differently to imagine a world without violence, see also Chapter 6.
48. Zartman 2015, 9.
49. Melander and Pigache 2007, 11; Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1999, 96; UN and World Bank 2018, 7; Zartman 2001, 3.
50. Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1999, 96.

describes the set of commitments, policies and actions aimed at averting such conflict from turning violent on a larger scale.[51]

Within policy documents, the definition of conflict prevention most often centres around the temporality of conflict. The *Agenda for Peace* introduces the idea of prevention through the concept of preventive diplomacy, as detailed in the previous section. It encompasses such actions that "prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur."[52] Five years later, the Carnegie Report simultaneously refines and broadens the concept of prevention by defining it as a means to avert the emergence of violent conflict, the spreading of conflicts that are already underway, and the recurrence of violence where it has previously ceased.[53] This understanding of conflict prevention is very similar to the one currently adopted by major IOs such as the UN or the World Bank, as exemplified by the *Pathways for Peace* report of 2018. It defines prevention as a range of activities and commitments to avoid "the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict."[54]

The common denominator of these definitions of conflict prevention as an agenda thus is that it involves a wide range of strategies and actions, which are united by the central and explicit goal of preventing large-scale violent conflict. In this sense, conflict prevention in the broadest sense encompasses three aspects: prevention *stricto sensu*, mitigation and containment.[55] This broad understanding as presented in policy documents is also shared in its academic understanding, which often encompasses both primary prevention as well as secondary prevention, and in some cases also tertiary prevention.[56] While primary prevention or "outbreak prevention" denotes efforts that aim at averting the first onset of a conflict, secondary prevention or "escalation prevention" refers to measures that aim at keeping further escalation from happening once a conflict is already underway.[57] Tertiary prevention or "relapse prevention," then, concerns efforts to avert the recurrence of conflict in its aftermath.[58] In this sense, it also includes measures that are otherwise grouped under peace-making and peacebuilding. This ordering of prevention follows an incremental conception in which the escalation of armed conflict progresses through consecutive periods such as "early stages," "acute phases" and "late stages."[59] Each of these phases or stages offers different

51. Zartman 2015, 8–9.
52. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 5.
53. CCPDC 1997, xviii.
54. UN and World Bank 2018, 77. The definition in the *Pathways for Peace* report is adopted from the twin resolutions UNGA 2016 and UNSC 2016.
55. Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, x.
56. Melander and Pigache 2007, 12.
57. Björkdahl 1999, 57.
58. ibid., 57; Call 2012; Höglund and Orjuela 2011, 22; Melander and Pigache 2007, 12.
59. Annan 2001; Ban 2011, 2 and 8; Boutros-Ghali 1992, 3; CCPDC 1997, 9 and 41.

options for thwarting (further) escalation into violence.[60] However, some argue that the so-called stage of conflict should be the distinctive criterion to ascertain whether measures fall under the prevention or not. For example, Laurence Woocher argues that because preventing the initial onset of large-scale violence poses unique challenges, only those measures used "at the front-end of the conflict curve—that is, the phase when disputes have not yet produced large-scale violence" should qualify as conflict prevention.[61] Consequently, such a definition excludes measures undertaken during ongoing violence and tertiary prevention in post-conflict phases. Similarly, Peter Wallensteen and Frida Möller note that if the definition of conflict prevention is too broad and too loose, it becomes difficult to operationalise.[62] What is notable in all the conceptions mentioned, in academic scholarship and policy outputs alike, is that they primarily focus on technical criteria for the definition of conflict prevention, thus taking for granted that war and armed conflict are problems worth addressing. That is, barely any explicitly thematise conflict prevention as a normative agenda, nor that it is firmly embedded in liberal internationalism.[63] As Wallensteen and Möller suggest, this might be because many of the definitions of conflict prevention presented here primarily serve a *policy purpose* rather than one of providing an accurate delimitation of conflict prevention as a field of academic inquiry.[64]

In terms of scope, conflict prevention is not merely an "ad hoc reaction to emerging and potential problems" but rather "a medium and long-term proactive operational or structural strategy [...] intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment."[65] It thus goes beyond immediate "trouble-shooting" in situations on the verge of escalation.[66] In this sense, conflict prevention serves as an umbrella term for a set of policy recommendations and efforts, as well as "a way of thinking; a state of mind, perhaps even a culture that permeates the activities of all those engaged in the implementation of preventive policy—be they NGOs, states, or regional and global organizations."[67] This idea of conflict prevention not only as a policy programme but as a broader political commitment is most prominently represented in Annan's 2001 landmark report *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, where he pleads for "a culture of prevention," as mentioned above.[68] Conflict prevention thus not only entails avoiding and stopping escalations into armed violence but also creating the conditions for peaceful alternatives

60. The stage model is also a feature of early warning and forecasting for atrocity prevention. See, e.g., Gurr and Davies 1998.
61. Woocher 2009, 2.
62. Wallensteen and Möller 2004, 5–6.
63. Exceptions are Aggestam 2003, 21 and O'Neil and Tschirgi 2002, 277.
64. Wallensteen and Möller 2004, 5–6.
65. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 11.
66. Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, 5.
67. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 12.
68. Annan 2001, 7; Annan 2006, 4.

through proactively addressing underlying impediments.[69] As a result, it combines short-term action and longer-term processes of "reinforcing and steering a society's path toward peace."[70] In the understanding of the UN and the World Bank, the central mechanism in prevention processes is identifying and creating incentives for actors to "make choices that lead to peaceful outcomes."[71] Making such choices, in turn, requires creating enabling conditions for a stable security situation by way of shifting short-term incentives for actors, as well as longer-term attitudinal changes that can concern and be implemented by multiple sectors of society.[72] To steer conflict parties from imminent or ongoing armed hostilities towards a mode of non-violent dispute resolution, both cooperative, such as incentivising, as well as coercive measures, such as raising the cost of conflict, can be employed.[73] Cooperative diplomatic measures are usually the first form of intervention. Only after diplomatic efforts have failed to ease tensions do more coercive measures come into play, with embargoes, sanctions and finally, military interventions as a last resort.[74]

In the UN Charter, the main responsibility to fulfil the organisation's purpose of "tak[ing] effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of the threats to the peace" lies with its Security Council.[75] According to Article 24, UN member states "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" and thereby agree that "in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."[76] The *Agenda for Peace* reaffirms this notion, yet at the same time expands it by noting that in its "broadest sense this responsibility must be shared by the General Assembly and by all the functional elements of the world Organization [sic]," as all of the UN's branches and sub-organisations have "a special and indispensable role to play" to achieve the goals of maintaining peace and creating human security.[77] The report repeats several times that the UNSC bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security but also stresses the importance of regional organisations in aiding preventive efforts.[78]

In light of the increasing relevance of internal conflict after the Cold War, the *Agenda for Peace* also addresses the role of state governments in conflict prevention. By referring

69. CCPDC 1997, xiii and 36; UN and World Bank 2018, 6.
70. ibid., xxv; see also CCPDC 1997, xi.
71. UN and World Bank 2018, 8 and 50.
72. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 11–2; CCPDC 1997, 44.
73. Wolff and Dursun-Özkanca 2012.
74. ibid., 303–4; see also Lund 1996. In contrast, the Carnegie Report argues that the "threat or use of force should not be regarded only as a last resort in desperate circumstances," as earlier "demonstrations of resolve" might be preferable to curb "unacceptable behavior." Such 'demonstrations of resolve' can include preventive deployments of military forces or rising the level of mobilisation to "heightened states of readiness," CCPDC 1997, 62.
75. UN 1945, 3.
76. ibid., 7.
77. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 4.
78. ibid., 17–8.

to the guiding principles annexed to the 1991 UNGA resolution 46/182, the *Agenda for Peace* argues that states should "take care of the victims of emergencies occurring on their territory," although this appears to be limited to humanitarian emergencies (i.e., after the fact) rather than preventive efforts before conflict occurs, as well as to situations within state borders.[79] At the same time, it reaffirms the principle of sovereignty, especially concerning "situations of internal crisis," to ensure that the actions of the UN are in accordance with the understanding of its members in accepting the principles of the organisation's charter.[80]

The understanding of the primary responsibility for preventing conflict changes in the course of the next decade, especially through the work of two non-UN commissions, the Carnegie Commission and International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS),[81] whose work influenced UN agenda design significantly. The Carnegie Commission's *Final Report* states that those closest to the situation and those with the greatest capacity to act—i.e., primarily state governments—have the greatest responsibility to prevent first and further conflict.[82] This is repeated in several places and iterations across the report. According to the commission, it "cannot be emphasized enough that governments bear the greatest responsibility to prevent deadly conflict," while the role of the UN shifts to being "a focal point for marshaling the resources of the international community to help prevent mass violence" rather than a principal bearer of responsibility.[83] Foreshadowing the redefinition of the principle, the Carnegie Commission's *Final Report* also notes that with "the increasing number of conflicts within states, the international community must develop a new concept of the relationship between national sovereignty and international responsibility."[84] This new relationship encompasses a role for the UNSC in which it is tasked with navigating the tension between state sovereignty and the "more moral and ethical imperative to stop slaughter within states."[85]

Annan's 2001 report *Prevention of Armed Conflict* reaffirms the idea of states as the primary bearers of the responsibility for preventing conflict, which remains the consensus in the contemporary prevention discourse.[86] He also understands the role of the UN as one of assistance, noting that the organisation and the international community at large should "support national efforts for conflict prevention and assist in building national capacity in this field."[87] Within this supportive role of the UN system, the UNSC is a key actor in conflict

79. ibid., 8; UNGA 1991.
80. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 8.
81. These two commissions also had some overlap in membership; see also the next section.
82. CCPDC 1997, 105.
83. ibid., 29 and 110.
84. ibid., 31.
85. ibid., 136.
86. Annan 2001, 7; UN and World Bank 2018, xviii.
87. Annan 2001, 37.

prevention as it has the power to investigate disputes and potential situations of conflict to ascertain windows of opportunity for preventive action.[88]

The understanding of states and their governments as the primary implementers of prevention efforts stems from the redefinition of state sovereignty as state *responsibility* in the new political and institutional environment after the end of the bloc confrontation. In this phase in the early 1990s, various non-state actors emerged that "challenged the state's role as the predominant source of authority."[89] In addition, the (perceived) increase of conflict within states gave rise to many efforts at conflict resolution, humanitarian assistance and statebuilding.[90] This new, less confrontational, political climate of the post-Cold War order allowed for more international cooperation for these matters, such as humanitarian intervention as well as increasingly expansive peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.[91] Most prominently, the ICISS, which laid the groundwork for the Responsibility to Protect doctrine,[92] advocated for a "necessary re-characterization [...] from *sovereignty as control* to *sovereignty as responsibility* in both international functions and external duties" within the UN framework.[93]

In its redefined form, sovereignty was no longer a principle of protection from outside interference. Instead, external intervention—including military intervention—can follow logically as an obligation from sovereignty.[94] In fact, as Annan argues in the *Prevention of Armed Conflict* report, preventive action—taken nationally or through international assistance, "as appropriate"—can help to strengthen the national sovereignty of member states by taking early action to alleviate the conditions that can lead to armed conflict.[95] Through the dual responsibility of the state towards its population *as well as* other members of the so-called international society, sovereignty became conditional and "shared."[96] However, while Karin Aggestam argues that IOs have become important players within the arena of prevention policy, and particularly so the UN, as it "generates international legitimacy and symbolizes what is often referred to as the international community," opportunities for actual action are constrained by the state.[97] Regional, international and non-governmental organisations depend on both funding and state consent to act, while individual states or alliances (so-called

88. Annan 2001, 8.
89. Pospisil 2017, 1419.
90. See, e.g., Kaldor 1999.
91. Pospisil 2017, 1419; see also Chandler 2017; Paris 2004; Richmond 2005; Weiss 2016; Wertheim 2010; Wheeler 2000.
92. See also the next section on distinguishing conflict prevention and atrocity prevention.
93. ICISS 2001, 13, emphasis original. See also Deng et al. 2010.
94. Pospisil 2017, 1420; see also MacFarlane, Thielking and Weiss 2004.
95. Annan 2001, 8 and 37; see also UN and World Bank 2018, 6.
96. Pospisil 2017, 1420; Zaum 2007, 4.
97. Aggestam 2003, 15.

"coalitions of the willing") also face constraints when acting unilaterally in a rules-based international order.[98]

Building on the distinction first made in the Carnegie Report, prevention is commonly divided into operational, structural and systemic efforts.[99] Operational, or direct, prevention comprises such measures that are "applicable in the face of impending crisis."[100] These kinds of efforts refer to more immediate and direct actions based on what actors understand as tangible and definite signs that an escalation of violence is imminent. Through measures such as "fact-finding and monitoring missions, negotiation, mediation, the creation of channels for dialogue among contending groups, preventive deployments, and confidence-building measures," operational prevention is focused on creating incentives and pressures that alter the interest-based and cost-benefit calculations of the conflict parties.[101] This type of prevention thus relates and reacts directly to short-term changes in conflict dynamics through coercion, deterrence, persuasion and inducement.[102]

By contrast, structural or "deep" prevention refers to measures that aim at ensuring that crises do not occur (or recur) in the first place.[103] The objective of this type of prevention thus is to address underlying, more indirect and long-term conditions that facilitate the emergence of tensions that might escalate in the future. The measures and policies which are attributed to have preventive effects thus include a broad range such as the facilitation of governance, adherence to human rights, development assistance, economic and political stability, and civil society building.[104] Consequently, structural prevention efforts tend to be aimed at a wider range of issues and actors than operational prevention measures.[105] However, taken together, direct and structural prevention concern a "bewildering range of policies and a potentially vast political and economic commitment."[106] This "dilemma of comprehensiveness," as the former Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the R2P Edward Luck has dubbed it, is one of the main challenges causing the reality of prevention to lag behind its rhetoric.[107]

The original typology of prevention efforts as suggested in the Carnegie Report understands structural prevention as synonymous with peacebuilding—understood as both

98. Wolff 2020, 10–1.
99. CCPDC 1997, 37; Rubin 2002, 131–2. While presented here as distinct, these three approaches to conflict prevention are not mutually exclusive in practice or theory. See also Carment and Schnabel 2003, 14–5.
100. George and Holl 1997; Melander and Pigache 2007, 13.
101. Ackermann 2003, 341; Kydd 2010.
102. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 14.
103. George and Holl 1997; Melander and Pigache 2007, 13.
104. Ackermann 2003, 341; Call and Campbell 2018, 67.
105. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 14; cf. Wolff 2020, 7, who argues that structural prevention is primarily focused on institutions.
106. Bellamy 2008a, 143.
107. Luck 2002, 256.

"international legal systems, dispute resolution mechanisms, and cooperative arrangements; meeting people's basic economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian needs; and rebuilding societies that have been shattered by war or other major crises."[108] A little less than a decade after the Carnegie Report was published, Annan introduced the notion of systemic prevention.[109] While operational and structural prevention are focused on the national and sub-national level, systemic prevention refers to measures that go beyond conflict risk in individual states and are rather seen as addressing the international system itself. The underlying conditions targeted by systemic prevention concern a more diffuse set of actors and issues, such as "[g]lobal-level inequalities, the impact of patriarchal societies and masculinized identities, the legacy of colonialism, the arms trade, transnational criminal networks, and the regional-level militarization of society."[110] As a result, systemic prevention is understood as an inherently collective endeavour, as it can only be implemented through global partnerships and frameworks on an international scale.[111]

While operational prevention is more dynamic and addresses imminent escalations of violence, structural and systemic prevention aim at inducing long-term developments with a preventive effect that is more assumed rather than directly attributable or measurable.[112] However, such long-term actions and programmes are not necessarily termed preventive efforts. In this sense, organisations and security alliances that were founded to reduce the potential of future armed conflict and foster international cooperation can be understood to work as conflict prevention measures. Examples of such measures include the League of Nations and the United Nations system as its successor, the Marshall Plan, the EU, the OSCE and NATO.[113]

In their typology of contemporary preventive diplomacy efforts—thus slightly narrower, as diplomacy denotes a tool of prevention rather than an agenda[114]—Bertrand and Robin Ramcharan suggest four dimensions that cover advocacy, structural, promotional and operational or "trouble-shooting" preventive diplomacy.[115] Firstly, advocacy describes the efforts of "well-meaning leaders" to highlight the importance and value of prevention. Secondly, structural preventive diplomacy includes those actions that aim at building so-called inclusive societies and strong institutions. The latter thus converges with the sixteenth of the Sustainable Development Goals that has the objective to "[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build

108. CCPDC 1997, 69; see also Wolff 2020, 6.
109. Annan 2006.
110. Call and Campbell 2018, 68.
111. Melander and Pigache 2007, 14.
112. Call and Campbell 2018, 68.
113. Lund 2008, 292; Melander and Pigache 2007, 9.
114. See, e.g., Woocher 2009, 12, who classifies public diplomacy, good offices, mediation as well as the threat and use of sanctions as part of the political/diplomatic section of the "Conflict Prevention Toolbox."
115. Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, 5.

effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."[116] Thirdly, promotional preventive diplomacy encompasses those activities of leaders on various levels that "are meant to induce behaviour conducive to the prevention of conflicts or violence."[117] In this sense, the promotional dimension is cross-cutting through all levels from attitudinal changes in individual behaviour to what can be counted under system prevention that aims at longer-term and all-encompassing shifts in societies. Finally, they also include operational preventive diplomacy, which describes *ad hoc* diplomatic intervention to curb imminent crises before they escalate into large-scale violence. This dimension is thus congruent with operational conflict prevention, albeit narrower in scope.

2.2.3 Distinguishing Conflict Prevention and Atrocity Prevention

In the previous sections, I summarised the historical development, contemporary landscape and a variety of definitions and typologies of conflict prevention. The agenda I have referred to above is often dubbed the 'common' prevention agenda, distinguishing it from other related agendas of preventing violence. Alex Bellamy suggests that there are four overlapping prevention agendas: the prevention of armed conflict as presented by Annan and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the prevention of armed conflict as part of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P or RtoP) as presented by the International Commission on State Sovereignty (ICISS), the prevention of genocide as presented by the dedicated UN office for genocide prevention and the Genocide Task Force, as well as the prevention of R2P crimes and violations as presented by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Bellamy's own Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P).[118] Therefore, it is worth disentangling the prevention of armed conflict and the prevention of crimes and human rights violations falling under the purview of the R2P principle.

As outlined in the previous section, conflict prevention can refer to *ad hoc*, mid-term or long-term efforts to avert the outbreak and relapse of armed hostilities in intra- or interstate contexts. In contrast, atrocity prevention usually refers to the prevention of the four grave crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and so-called ethnic cleansing.[119] While the two agendas rely on different policy architectures in the sense that atrocity prevention and conflict prevention are governed through different institutions and norms, they espouse similar measures and are empirically related.[120] Mass atrocities,

116. UN 2015, 18.
117. Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, 5.
118. Bellamy 2011, 4.
119. I am adding the qualifier 'so-called' because 'cleansing' is a euphemism that associates the violent removal of an ethnic group from a geographical area with an action that is usually positively connoted, as freeing something of dirt and impurities.
120. Bellamy 2011, 4; Strauss 2015, 81; Welsh 2015.

especially genocide, often occur during civil war.[121] Furthermore, the factors that are frequently identified as "root causes" of genocide are similar to those associated with causing armed conflict.[122] The strong historical connection means that the measures and goals to prevent might overlap conceptually or that one might be leveraged in place of the other, especially where atrocities are committed during an ongoing civil war.[123] For example, in the Burundian context, rather than specifically targeting the prevention of atrocities, international actors rather concentrated on efforts of conflict prevention that addressed the political roots of the various crises.[124]

The robust statistical correlation of mass atrocities with armed conflict, as well as the reliance of the R2P on a conflict prevention framework as a consistent feature throughout its development and implementation,[125] has resulted in the two agendas often being conflated in the scholarship as well as in various texts by IOs and commissions.[126] The report of the ICISS, which is the document widely understood to have provided the groundwork for the development of the R2P doctrine, refers to conflict prevention rather than atrocity prevention.[127] This is because it drew heavily on the work of the aforementioned Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, particularly its 1997 *Final Report*.[128] Since it recognises prevention as the central aspect of protection, the ICISS report dedicates an entire section to the "Responsibility to Prevent."[129] However, this section centres around the prevention of conflict rather than mass atrocities. This is noteworthy as the report does not discuss violent conflict in relation to other aspects of the R2P.[130] In another place, the report states that conflict prevention is not the focus but at the same time emphasises that it is essential for preventing mass atrocities, as without "a genuine commitment to conflict prevention at all levels [...] the world will continue to witness the needless slaughter of our fellow human beings."[131]

However, the atrocity prevention and conflict prevention agendas are not only historically intertwined owing to their conceptual development. Empirically, the case examples

121. Almost all cases where there is at least some scholarly agreement that a genocide was committed in the 20th century happened against the background of an interstate or intrastate war. Bachman 2020, 1; Krain 1997.
122. See, e.g., Bellamy 2008a; Harff 2003.
123. Straus 2016, 115; see also Reike 2016, 585.
124. Lotze and Martins 2015, 250–1.
125. Sharma and Welsh 2015, 6.
126. Welsh 2016, 223.
127. Woocher 2012, 24.
128. Welsh 2016, 223.
129. ICISS 2001, 19–28.
130. Woocher 2012, 33, fn 11.
131. ICISS 2001, 20 and 27. As Woocher notes, this is insofar not surprising as Gareth Evans, who embraces a similarly expansive notion of the responsibility to prevent, is one of the main architects of the R2P as laid out in the ICISS report. Evans further impersonates the bridge between the atrocity and conflict prevention agendas in that he also was a member of the Carnegie Commission of Preventing Deadly Conflict. Evans 2008. See also Woocher 2012, 34, fn 16.

of Rwanda and Yugoslavia, as civil wars that were also accompanied by atrocity crimes, contributed to the conflation of the two streams of prevention. The failure to respond to the violence in Rwanda and Yugoslavia (sometimes specified as Bosnia or Srebrenica and occasionally grouped with Somalia) often feature in agenda-setting speeches and documents as the spectres that haunt the international community, thus giving momentum to efforts at developing and mainstreaming the prevention of violent conflict.[132] For example, Annan's report *Prevention of Armed Conflict* specifically invokes the characterisation by the Canadian General Romeo Dallaire of Rwanda as a "preventable genocide."[133]

It is thus not surprising that both the ICISS and Annan advocated for integrating the conflict prevention and R2P agendas.[134] In his *Five Point Action Plan*, Annan explicitly refers to the work of the ICISS and identifies conflict prevention as the most important step towards genocide prevention when he states that "[p]eace offers the ultimate prevention of genocide."[135] In 2018, the joint report by the UN and the World Bank *Pathways for Peace* equally conflates the agendas in the description of the evolution of international approaches to conflict prevention. In an infobox, the Security Council Resolution S/RES/2150 is characterised as the "first resolution explicitly on conflict prevention."[136] However, this resolution is not dedicated to conflict, but to atrocity prevention.[137] Indeed, the word 'conflict' does not feature once in this resolution and 'war' only appears as 'war crimes.' The report further states that "[t]his resolution [...] acknowledged that serious abuses and violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, including sexual and gender-based violence, can be an early indication of descent into conflict or escalation of conflict."[138] This, again, is not the case. While early warning is mentioned as a means of detecting signs of impending large-scale human rights abuses, no association is made to conflict risk in the text. Instead, the resolution is exclusively concerned with the central atrocities of the R2P doctrine, which are limited to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

Thus, many reports emphasise conflict prevention as a cornerstone of atrocity prevention policy. However, the latter is not subsumed by the former, as atrocities sometimes occur in (relative) peacetime, such as in the context of elections, state repression, communal violence or post-war retribution.[139] Therefore, Bellamy argues that to be meaningful and effective,

132. See, e.g., Annan 2000, 49; Annan 2001; CCPDC 1997, 3.
133. Annan 2001, 7.
134. Bellamy 2011, 2.
135. Annan 2006, 10.
136. UN and World Bank 2018, 234.
137. UNSC 2014. Although it also emphasises the importance of post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), the Security Council Resolution 1366 already defines conflict prevention as a core task of the UN in 2001, see UNSC 2001.
138. UN and World Bank 2018, 234–5.
139. Bellamy 2011, 2; Reike 2016, 583; Straus 2016, 117. The only one of the four grave crimes that, by

the atrocity prevention agenda requires engagement in targeting atrocities during war and peacetime. That is, while a specific "atrocity lens" of prevention broadens the scope beyond armed conflict, it at the same time remains focused on a specific mandate of preventing only the four grave crimes (see also below).[140]

While the two concepts are related, they are not quite the same. They manifest in agendas that are mostly compatible, but which unfold in separate institutions and norms. In the World Summit's Outcome Document in 2005 that established the Responsibility to Protect as an international doctrine, the commitments to preventing conflict and to the R2P were kept separate, as member states did not want to take on additional commitments or feared that formulating a 'responsibility to prevent' would open a backdoor to hegemonic interventionism.[141] In addition, while strategies to prevent conflict strive to avoid, reduce and eliminate violence and the use of force, military intervention might be *necessary* to prevent atrocity crimes.[142] That it, atrocity prevention and conflict prevention might even pull in different directions in terms of the means required to achieve their objective.

In a direct comparison, Scott Straus lays out three central differences in terms of the definition, intended targets and objectives of both agendas. He argues that while conflict prevention aims at containing or mitigating the outbreak of war, atrocity prevention aims at averting or mitigating violence against non-combatants in *or outside* armed conflict. Thus, the goal of the former is to mediate between armed groups to dissuade them from fighting and encouraging non-violent dispute resolutions through consensus-seeking, while the latter's objective is to dissuade or block (potential) perpetrators from committing atrocities.[143] Particularly within the UN, the principles of impartiality and neutrality have guided conflict prevention and resolution efforts.[144] In contrast, the actions required to dissuade the commission of atrocity crimes often involve choosing sides, which might result in the perception that the actor seeking to prevent atrocities is biased, thus reducing the opportunities for a political settlement.[145] Consequently, conflict prevention strategies might be unsuited to prevent mass atrocities. As the cases of Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan (Darfur) have

definition, requires the presence of an active armed conflict are war crimes. In addition, some of the acts amounting to war crimes as per the Geneva Conventions are not necessarily related to civilian protection but relate to, for example, battlefield conduct. See Reike, Sharma and Welsh 2015, 23. The different scope of war crimes as opposed to the three other crimes is also recognised in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). While Article 8 (war crimes) is specified to apply to situations of "international armed conflict" and "armed conflict not of an international character," Articles 6 (genocide), 7 (crimes against humanity) and 8*bis* (crime of aggression) are not limited to conflict settings, see ICC 2011, 3–8.

140. Bellamy 2011, 2.

141. Bellamy 2008a, 135 and 147; United Nations 2005.

142. Sharma and Welsh 2015, 9.

143. See the table in Straus 2016, 115. See also Bellamy 2011, 8.

144. As conflict prevention aims at fundamentally changing political and social conditions, it is inherently a political venture. Therefore, some scholars note that conflict prevention cannot truly be impartial or neutral. See, e.g., Call and Campbell 2018, 6; Rubin 2002, 131; Sriram and Wermester 2002, 382.

145. Bellamy 2011, 6; Reike, Sharma and Welsh 2015, 26.

shown, the approach of internationally sponsored negotiations in these cases weighed the views of perpetrators and victims equally or were preoccupied with achieving formal peace through settlements, thus deprioritising preventing atrocities and holding perpetrators to account.[146] In turn, prioritising conflict prevention over the prevention of mass atrocities might create perverse incentives as rebel groups might be encouraged to apply pressure and force receiving a negotiating position by harming civilians.[147]

Ruben Reike succinctly summarises the potential points of incompatibility of the conflict prevention agenda with R2P, because

> the prevention of international *crimes* is heavily individual-centric, draws a clear distinction between potential perpetrators (threatened with punishment) and potential victims (promised protection), instrumentalizes international criminal justice mechanisms as tools of coercive diplomacy, can require initiating or escalating an armed conflict to protect individuals at risk, and challenges the long-standing practice of seeking host-state consent for coercive external interference, especially when involving military force.[148]

Further, the goal of preventing wars and armed conflicts can be traced back several centuries and developed into an object of international governance throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, while the atrocities that R2P is concerned with first entered the stage of world politics in the middle of the 20th century as legal concepts.[149] Another crucial difference is the legal status of mass atrocities and war. As Laurence Woocher points out, the "R2P crimes," particularly genocide, were proscribed long before the World Summit's Outcome Document.[150] In contrast, war and armed conflict are not outlawed *per se* but merely regulated by international treaties. Indeed, the use of force by states is permissible and even legitimate in some circumstances.[151]

At the UN level, genocide prevention is now pursued as a distinct and unique effort, which is exemplified by the name of the dedicated office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect as well as the practice of having separate advisory posts for genocide prevention and the R2P.[152] Then again, prevention is only one dimension of the R2P, albeit often deemed the most important.[153] For this reason, proponents of the R2P have sought

146. Bellamy 2011, 8.
147. ibid., 8. See also Autesserre 2012, 217. The moral hazard of creating perverse incentives that put the civilian population at harm at the hands of rebel groups aiming for a seat at the negotiation table is also an issue with the (preventive) deployment of peacekeepers. See, e.g., Hultman 2010.
148. Reike 2016, 583, emphasis original.
149. For a rich narrative account of the origins of the legal concepts of genocide and crimes against humanity, see Sands 2016.
150. Woocher 2012, 27–8. For example, genocide has been outlawed as a crime since the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 (effective since 1951).
151. ibid., 28. As per the UN Charter, this concerns instances of self-defence (Art. 50) and military intervention sanctioned by the Security Council under Chapter VII mandate, see UN 1945.
152. For a comprehensive discussion on the institutional capacities for atrocity prevention at the UN, see Strauss 2015.
153. Bellamy 2008a, 135; ICISS 2001, xi; Sharma and Welsh 2015, 1; Woocher 2012, 22.

to carve out the preventive dimension more clearly as a goal that is distinct from other agendas, and from conflict prevention in particular.[154] For example, a working paper from the so-called Blue Paper series of the International Peace Institute finds the "lack of clarity as to what makes RtoP prevention distinct from conflict prevention [...] troubling."[155] This is not only because conflating the two creates conceptual confusion and policies pulling in different directions but also because it risks eroding support for the R2P doctrine. As Bellamy notes, associating the comprehensive agenda of conflict prevention with the R2P dilutes the principle. For example, if the R2P is also to include various measures and efforts grouped under structural prevention, it is only "a short walk from there to maintaining that R2P includes a 'right to development.'" Broadening the scope makes the principle less likely to mobilise the international support needed to fulfil its purpose due to scepticism by Western supporters beyond the 2005 World Summit consensus and raises doubts of states concerned about the R2P as a backdoor to interference into domestic affairs.[156] To counter these concerns and define the R2P in a way that is not subsumed by the conflict prevention agenda, the UN has taken a "narrow but deep" approach under UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. 'Narrow' refers to the restriction of the R2P to the so-called four grave crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing), while 'deep' refers to the variety of measures available to prevent and mitigate mass violence, with international intervention as only one of many options, and one that should be considered *ultima ratio*.[157]

2.3 The Prevention Episteme: Epistemological Commitments and the Role of Knowledge Production

According to John Ruggie, an episteme is a "dominant way of looking at social reality, a set of shared symbols and references, mutual expectations and a mutual predictability of intention."[158] The assemblage of organisations, knowledges and histories I describe in this thesis gave rise to and sustains what I call the *prevention episteme*, which denotes the unquestioned and seemingly intuitive belief within IOs, development actors, international commissions as well as NGOs that war can and should be prevented on the basis of shared references to war's exceptional character, its abstraction through numbers and its intrinsic and consequential undesirability.[159] Based on this shared discursive frame, a mutual expectation towards governing war arises, namely that it is best kept from happening in the first place.

154. Woocher 2012, 27.
155. International Peace Institute 2009, 9.
156. Bellamy 2009, 100–1.
157. Ban 2009, 8; Bellamy 2009, 101; Woocher 2012, 27.
158. Ruggie 1975, 569–70. See also Foucault 2001.
159. See Chapters 3–5.

Epistemologically, the prevention episteme rests on two central preconditions or commitments. These are, firstly, that war and armed conflict be known, that is, that both conditions for and dynamics of conflict can be identified and associated in causal chains. The second epistemological commitment concerns prevention itself, namely the assumption that these causes and dynamics, once identified, can be mitigated or, in the best case, eradicated altogether. While I discuss the origins of both commitments in the next chapter in relation to the modernist cosmology upon which the idea of prevention builds, in this section, I outline the consequences of these commitments and the requirements and challenges they pose to the contemporary prevention agenda.

The assumption that war can be known requires that there is a knowledge production apparatus that can provide decision-makers with the expertise on the basis of which to make decisions about prevention policy. Knowledge production on conflict prevention is a critical prerequisite for preventive action, as any type of intervention to prevent (further) escalation requires knowledge of what a conflict is and how to recognise it before and in the process of its emergence.[160] Put simply, "one has to know what is coming [...] in order to prevent it from arriving."[161] Going hand in hand with preventive policy, as a result, is the need for and effort to produce knowledge that allows for analysis, assessment and decision-making. As Boutros-Ghali notes in the 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, preventive action "must be based upon timely and accurate knowledge of the facts" and requires an "understanding of developments and global trends, based on sound analysis."[162]

With the current emphasis on conflict prevention, there is an increased need for central actors "to be informed about developments on the ground much earlier and more extensively than has hitherto been the case."[163] Unsurprisingly, numerous instruments for gathering information and analysing potential crises emerged in the course of the latest wave of interest in prevention efforts. These mechanisms are designed to anticipate escalations of large-scale violence and inform decisions on international intervention, humanitarian assistance, foreign policy and aid. In addition to the UN system, various governmental organisations and agencies have since developed knowledge production mechanisms to assess immediate and long-term conflict risk and many organisations have also set up in-house analytical units for conflict monitoring and risk assessment:

> The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has its conflict assessment, the UN Development Program [sic] (UNDP) its early warning assessment, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) its Early Warning System which coordinates with private sector systems, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) its State Failure Task Force, the

160. See also Aggestam 2003, 14.
161. Zartman 2015, 7.
162. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 6.
163. Jacobsen and Engell 2018, 365.

> African Union (AU) its early warning project, SwissPeace's Early Tension and Data Analysis (FAST), Francophonie's early warning and rapid action system, the Fund for Peace its Failed States index, and the UN Charter its art. 99, stipulating that the Secretary-General may serve as an agent for early warning.[164]

This alphabet soup of conflict prevention programmes has been expanded with similar efforts in the non-governmental sector, with a "flurry of think tank and academic initiatives," such as the aforementioned Carnegie Commission, the International Crisis Group (ICG) or the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect as prominent examples.[165] Some of these organisations that provide early warning on potential and imminent political crises, such as ICG and FAST, use a network of researchers around the world to provide qualitative (ICG) or quantitative (FAST) risk assessment in country-specific analyses.[166] Adding to these are academic forecasting efforts such as the University of Maryland's Minorities at Risk programme, the US Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker, the Early Warning Project of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as a range of event- and conflict-tracking databases—such as the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), or the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)—which provide the empirical basis for rankings, watchlists, and a myriad of guidelines and toolkits that stakeholders develop for risk estimation and rapid assessment.[167] As Carment and Schnabel note, the increasing role that academics and NGOs play in producing knowledge for conflict prevention "points to a fundamental change in the way in which potential threats to security are assessed and acted upon," as more and diverse actors produce analyses and recommendations.[168]

Following the above typology of prevention efforts, two broad fields of anticipatory knowledge production fields can be distinguished. On the one hand, operational prevention is associated with early warning, which denotes "the act of alerting a recognized authority (such as the UN Security Council) to a new (or renewed) threat to peace at a sufficiently early stage."[169] Early warning focuses on more immediate and sudden indicators of developments that constitute the tipping points of situations into the next phase of escalation (so-called

164. Zartman 2015, 17. The CIA's State Failure Task Force is now continuing as the Political Instability Task Force (PITF), in a multi-university cooperation of UC Davis, Yale, and the University of Maryland with the (former) involvement of Ted Gurr, Barbara Harff, and Jack Goldstone. Swisspeace's Frühanalyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung (FAST) project was discontinued in 2008. The AU's "early warning project" has developed into a multi-branch agenda on conflict prevention spanning its Peace and Security Council, a standby force, the Panel of the Wise, the Peace Fund and its Continental Early Warning System, see Engel 2018.
165. Call and Campbell 2018, 68. For an overview of conflict early warning programmes and organisations aimed at conflicts in Africa specifically, see Souaré and Handy 2013.
166. Bellamy 2009, 107. For a more detailed typology of early warning initiatives by the target of warning, methodology and type of activity, see Austin 2004.
167. For a more detailed overview of early warning initiatives on the basis of event data coding, see ibid.
168. Carment and Schnabel 2003, 15.
169. Dorn 2004, 317.

triggers).[170] Systemic prevention, on the other hand, is associated with longer-term forecasting techniques and models which look at structural theories of conflict dynamics and onset to assess the likelihood of escalation. Forecasting can be either passive, i.e. about events that are not manipulable through human intervention such as the weather, or active, i.e. about events over which humans have (at least some) control. Risk assessment, in turn, refers to forecasting that is relevant to policy in that it is diagnostic, conditional and prescriptive.[171] In practice, however, these two also occur in combinations, such as in the University of Uppsala's *Violence Early Warning System* (ViEWS), which sets out to anticipate violence outbreaks in a time span from one to 36 months into the future.[172] That is, although the term 'early warning' is often used too loosely and conflated with forecasting or risk assessment, it is a "complementary but distinct mode of analysis" from the latter two.[173]

Underlying all these efforts at acquiring knowledge to anticipate and eventually prevent conflict is an implicit temporality and specifically, the idea that the future can be known probabilistically. As Anjali Dayal and Paul Musgrave put it, "changing the world requires some interpretation of it, but our interpretation of the world requires making claims about the unknowable—how some alternative world would have turned out."[174] Borrowing from scholarship on risk and uncertainty, I understand prevention knowledge as pre-emptive security knowledge which engages in the construction of potential dangerous futures (so-called worst-case scenarios) to avert them.[175] The assumption of the knowability of war and conflict is undermined by the uncertainty inherent in anticipatory knowledge production. As a result, the governance objects 'war' and 'armed conflict' is inherently unstable.

Consequently, knowledge production on future conflict has to strike a balance between imagining the worst possible development in a given situation to recommend or design appropriate prevention measures on one side, and avoiding inflation of conflict risk on the other. In statistical terms, analysts are faced with avoiding errors of omission of unpredicted escalations (or Type I errors) when interpreting evidence, and errors of unfulfilled predictions (or Type II errors) at the same time.[176] While a frequent occurrence of the former might decrease confidence in the analyses, producing too many "false dangers", so the concern, might eventually lead to a 'warning fatigue' in policymakers.[177] As one interviewee put it, if analysts and researchers often overestimate conflict risk and put out too many warnings, "then you have this problem with the boy who cried wolf."[178]

170. Harff and Gurr 1998, 570.
171. Carment and Garner 1999, 7; see also George and Holl 1997.
172. Hegre et al. 2019.
173. Carment and Garner 1999, 7.
174. Dayal and Musgrave 2018, 30.
175. See, e.g., Amoore 2013; Aradau and Munster 2007; de Goede 2008.
176. Zartman 2015, 16.
177. Interview with analyst in NGO, telephone, 18 February 2019.
178. Interview with conflict adviser in government department, telephone, 22 February 2019.

At the same time, the prevention idea assumes a linear way of knowing in which one acquires an increasing amount of knowledge. However, this does away with the unintended effects of making things known, which can result in actors intentionally withholding or concealing certain information. For example, the emergence of evidence on the use of torture in the so-called War on Terror resulted in denials that certain methods, such as "specific interrogation techniques" amount to torture.[179] In light of conflict dynamics that can change rapidly, what is to be known for the sake of preventing further escalation might shift in front of the very eyes of observers because of the effort of making it known. For example, the government of Burundi initially granted access to international organisations (the UN and the AU) to investigate incidents of electoral violence that occurred around the re-election of the incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza for a third term in office. However, once the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published its report that documented human rights violations, it revoked this agreement and shut down further cooperation in this regard. [180] That is, although conflict prevention is seemingly less intrusive or coercive due to its anticipatory nature with the aim of averting robust intervention, "knowledge production inherent in contemporary conflict prevention is interventionary in and of itself."[181]

As Deborah Stone notes, policymakers need factual claims and "causal stories" to delineate the boundaries of policy problems and to devise action.[182] For organisations involved in research, advocacy, and preventive response, the challenge of uncertainty is exacerbated by the accountability to donors, which can incentivise analysts to overstate confidence in their analysis or even adopt pre-existing narratives to produce 'actionable' and attributable outputs. Donors include governments, intergovernmental organisations, other NGOs, private companies, foundations and individuals. Organisations are accountable to them in that they have to justify their expenses. Then again, donors require funds to be spent in accordance with their interests and in an appropriate as well as effective manner, which is established through measurement and evaluation mechanisms.[183] However, this produces a dilemma in the field of conflict prevention. Evaluating the success of prevention efforts can prove elusive, as I explain further below. This tension between the difficulty in anticipating escalations of large-scale violence and accountability mechanisms has major implications for analyses. Even if their particular assessment frameworks lead organisations to conclude they see signs of an impending outbreak of armed conflict, it can prove difficult to use such knowledge effectively if there is no actual violence yet due to the lack of donor and policy

179. Stampnitzky 2020, 603.
180. Jacobsen and Engell 2018.
181. ibid., 376; cf. Sriram and Wermester 2002, 382.
182. Stone 1989.
183. See, e.g., AbouAssi and Trent 2016; Ebrahim 2003; Najam 1996.

mechanisms.[184]

While anticipatory knowledge on crisis escalation is inherently tentative, donors still need some sort of direction and certainty to determine where to send funds or to evaluate whether funds have been spent appropriately. This, in turn, might lead analysts to overstate certainty in their assessments, e.g. by establishing connections between alleged causes and outcomes. The pressure to produce 'actionable' outputs can result in a discrepancy between analyses and policy recommendations, as a special issue of Third World Quarterly has shown by the example of the International Crisis Group.[185] Similarly, one interviewee described the approach the advocacy organisation they were working for as "systems mapping", which is supposed to establish connections between certain causes, such as weak statehood, to so-called conflict paths, to better assess how certain situations of concern might develop so that preventive action can be taken. However, the interviewee expressed serious concerns regarding the rigour of this approach, which they characterised as a "consulting speech" euphemism. To develop a coherent conflict narrative, the interviewee remarked that their organisation was "basically making shit up."[186]

As Roland Paris notes, these causal narratives tend to be repeated in various outputs and might even become important reference points for policy deliberations, which then might lead to tensions when they are becoming established in policy discourse, as they might be difficult to challenge once they gain currency, but the underlying analyses do not necessarily or fully support the confidence conveyed.[187] Then again, this knowledge can only enable action because the field of policymaking predominantly relies on a positivist epistemology in which knowledge is not understood to be constructed but rather uncovered and objectively analysed.[188] Furthermore, to be competitive in the "battlefield of ideas," experts need to produce "actionable" knowledge which can be translated into policy recommendations and prescriptions for (international) action, as also noted in the previous chapter.[189] That is, knowledge producers must provide the grounds for policy recommendations that "should be both user-friendly and directed toward mobilizing political commitment for rapid, comprehensive responses."[190]

In addition to the assumption that war can be known, the second epistemological commitment is that such knowledge can be leveraged to prevent it from happening. However, wars and armed conflicts are notoriously difficult, if not elusive, to 'know.' In addition, there

184. Interview with conflict adviser for international aid organisation, Skype, 18 February 2019.
185. Bliesemann de Guevara 2014; Bøås 2014; Hochmüller and Müller 2014; Simons 2014.
186. Interview with former employee in conflict prevention NGO, Skype, 15 February 2019.
187. Paris 2011, 63.
188. Bliesemann de Guevara 2017.
189. Autesserre 2009; Bliesemann de Guevara 2014; Neumann and Sending 2010, 148.
190. Cockell 1998, 232.

is no one theory on the causation of violent conflict.[191] As I. William Zartman notes, they are frequently over-determined, highly dynamic and often self-perpetuating through the endogenous concatenation of grievances which ultimately "snowball into greater complexity."[192] Due to the contingency of conflict dynamics, it is difficult to attribute such a course of events to prevention efforts, even in the cases where violence does not unfold as expected.[193] This inherent complexity poses an even greater challenge for making robust knowledge claims where wars and conflicts have not occurred yet or are only emerging, particularly where the escalation of a crisis is "merely *possible* rather than *imminent*."[194] Further, structural and system prevention efforts are particularly difficult to evaluate not only because of their long-term character and the multiplicity of factors that play into slow-moving changes but also because these might not even be labelled (exclusively) as 'conflict prevention' in the first place, as mentioned in earlier in this chapter.

Attempts at judging the success of prevention measures are inherently fraught, as what is to be known lies in the future, which means that assessing the impact and effectiveness of such efforts has to be evaluated based on "non-events."[195] The prevention field is therefore continuously faced with the challenge of drawing lessons from "unhistory," which has also been dubbed the "counterfactual problem" by Paris or the "prevention dilemma" by New Zealand's former ambassador to the UN Colin Keating.[196] Even where violence is averted, it is hard to prove that this is because preventive measures were successful or would not have escalated anyway, thus leaving prevention advocates open to the accusation of "wasting precious resources for averting non-existent crises."[197]

As a result, prevention is occasionally compared to the dog that did not bark, which is a reference to the Sherlock Holmes story *Silver Blaze*.[198] The famous detective is hired to investigate the disappearance of the eponymous racehorse and the murder of its trainer John Straker. In his deductions, Holmes points out the "curious incident of the dog in the night-time [sic]" to Colonel Ross, the owner of the missing stallion.[199] As it turns out, the dog that guarded the stables had not barked because it knew the person entering, as it was the trainer himself who kidnapped the horse and got fatally hit in the process. While the dog's silence is usually taken through this reference to Sherlock Holmes as a metaphor for the event that was not—war—in the case of prevention, it also works in an empirical way.

191. Ackermann 2003, 342.
192. Zartman 2015, 15.
193. Interview with conflict adviser in government department, telephone, 22 February 2019; Interview with former UN staffer, Skype, 8 March 2019.
194. Wolff 2020, 16, emphasis added.
195. Menkhaus 2004, 442.
196. Dayal and Musgrave 2018, 24; Keating 2013, 182; Paris 2014, 574.
197. Bellamy 2009, 99.
198. See, e.g., Adebajo 2021; Sucharipa-Behrmann and Franck 1998, 497.
199. Doyle 1894.

As studies from El Salvador and South Sudan have shown, the barking of dogs constitutes a part of how people experience war, in that hearing it can re-traumatise, so that the absence of dogs barking can be understood as an indicator of that they experience peace.[200]

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the historical development, central definitions, conceptual challenges and epistemological tensions of conflict prevention. In the first section, I traced the origins of the current prevention agenda by charting the central actors and documents making up the contemporary international conflict prevention agenda and outlined its emergence. While conflict prevention, as the empirical chapters also show, was not a novel idea in the 20th century, the bloc confrontation of the Cold War hindered international cooperation, so that conflict prevention remained constrained to *ad hoc* efforts at preventive diplomacy to avert conflict among so-called lesser powers under the auspices of UN Secretaries-General. As the conflict landscape changed over the 20th century from interstate to more intra-state conflicts and the end of the Cold War enabled more cooperation on an international level, numerous conflict prevention programmes and units emerged within IOs, governments and NGOs. Among these, a particularly influential initiative was the Carnegie Commission of Preventing Deadly Conflict, whose *Final Report* heavily influenced Annan's push towards a 'culture of prevention' in the early 2000s. Since then, efforts at integrating conflict prevention with other agendas such as sustainable development and women's rights have increased, thus entrenching conflict prevention as a core objective of numerous organisations.

After having provided a brief account of the prevention agenda's recent history, I discussed definitions of conflict prevention. Noting that the bulk of the peace and conflict literature views conflict in the sense of contestation as productive and necessary, I specified that the term 'conflict prevention' is usually used as shorthand for matters relating to the prevention of *violent* conflict. Further, both scholarship and policy often revolve around the temporality and timing of prevention by relying on a cyclical model of conflict, from which follows a distinction of prevention during early or late phases. Another set of definitions relates to the purpose and targets of prevention by distinguishing between operational, structural and systemic prevention, which relate to addressing direct or indirect causes, respectively.

I then discussed the commonalities and differences between conflict prevention and atrocity prevention. This delineation does not only matter conceptually but also in practice, as one is not subsumed by the other. The scope of atrocity prevention is simultaneously broader and narrower than conflict prevention. On the one hand, atrocity prevention

200. Dickson-Gomez 2002, 420–1; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017, 10; Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016.

narrowly refers to curbing the commission of crimes falling under the purview of the R2P principle. On the other hand, it is broader in the sense that it also concerns the commission of such crimes during peacetime, while conflict prevention, by definition, requires the context of conflict. Although both agendas are connected in their development and might refer to the same causes and measures, the policy architectures and norms they rely on, as well as how the objectives they pursue, can differ.

Finally, in the second half of this chapter, I turned to the role of knowledge production for the conflict prevention agenda by discussing two underlying premises—or epistemological commitments. This is, firstly, that war can be rendered knowable. This commitment manifests in a vast architecture of knowledge production consisting of numerous organisations and initiatives aimed at monitoring, anticipating, comparing and quantifying conflict. These efforts can broadly be distinguished into early warning focusing on imminent conflict outbreaks and forecasting that provide longer-term analysis. Secondly, the prevention agenda rests on the assumption that the knowledge generated through this knowledge production architecture can help prevent war and conflict. This resonates in many of the reports, resolutions and programmes that echo the central sentiment of the *Agenda for Peace* that timely and accurate knowledge is a necessary precursor for preventive action. However, since what is to be known—future conflict—has not happened yet, knowledge production aimed at informing prevention is inherently fraught. As it needs to strike a balance between avoiding both omissions and false alarms, it might influence the very context it is informing on, thus running the risk of creating causal stories where there are none to be actionable.

3

From Necessity to Cataclysm: Pacifism, Scienticism and the Designation of War

3.1 Introduction

The central argument of this thesis is that for prevention to become possible as an item on the agenda of IOs, it had to, and has to, be constructed as a problem of international governance. In Chapter 1, I outlined the framework of problem constitution devised by Allan, consisting of the processes of designation, translation and problematisation. In the next three chapters, I use archival documents and interview material to examine each of these processes in turn. However, while I split them up to focus on each of these components individually, it should be noted again that designation, translation and problematisation take place concurrently and repeatedly. That is, while laid out here in a sequential fashion, the historical processes I describe in Chapters 3–5 overlap. Adopting the order as laid out in Allan's framework of problem constitution,[1] I focus on the *designation* of war as a distinct object in this chapter.

To repeat, designation is the process of defining a set of phenomena as a meaningful entity with discernible characteristics, which helps to recognise the object at hand in the absence of a uniform definition. This happens through categorising, labelling and ordering the object and by ascribing certain characteristics that distinguish it from other entities. The designation of a governance object is conditioned and made possible by the underlying rationalities that shape the norms, standards and practices of investigating, representing and articulating physical and social reality. Therefore, before explaining how war was designated a distinct object, I outline prior conceptions of war and sketch out the cosmological changes that enabled the shift in characterisation that the early peace movement could emphasise and mobilise to make the case for peace. I argue that epistemic modernism and the idea of progress that emerged within a larger cosmological shift between the 16th and 19th centuries in Europe constitute the conditions of possibility for 'thinking prevention.'

1. Allan 2017; see also Chapter 1.

After this first section on the enabling cosmological background, I highlight three ways in which war was designated that facilitated its problematisation within the prevention agenda. This is, firstly, putting it in binary opposition with 'peace' through the conceptualisation of war as a temporally delineated and exceptional event or period that resembles the archetypal configuration of European major war. Secondly, this is the negative connotation of war as inglorious and cataclysmic, which undermines the stance prevalent in military-strategic thinking that war is a legitimate, necessary and even honourable means of political conduct. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I turn to the third component of designation, which is the conception of war as an object of scientific inquiry. Coupled with the conviction of epistemic modernism that modern science and technology can be leveraged to resolve major political and social problems, the early peace movement—and particularly the efforts at peace philanthropy in the early 20th century—gave rise to the idea that war needs to be studied in order to be resolved and prevented.

3.2 Setting the Scene: Scientific Cosmology and the Idea of Progress

In the 20th and 21st centuries, a range of scholars across disciplines such as Political Science, IR and History seem to agree that on the plane of international politics, war has gone out of fashion by tracing how it has become to be understood as deadly, costly, destructive, morally abject and, therefore, unwise.[2] Only four years after the end of the Second World War in 1949, Hans Morgenthau notes an attitude towards war itself that reflects "an ever increasing awareness on the part of most statesmen of certain ethical limitations restricting the use of war as an instrument of international politics."[3] According to Anatol Rapoport writing in the 1960s, war has "become an abomination to most of the inhabitants of this planet, and protestations of devotion to peace are on the lips of almost everyone who speaks publicly of international relations in a political context."[4]

Claims that war has gone out of fashion are questionable on empirical grounds as they can be seen as artefacts of war's statistical definition,[5] suffer from Eurocentric bias by ignoring wars in the Global South (including those that involve Western states as conflict parties), or redefining them as criminal and predatory violence[6] or military intervention.[7] Putting aside these debates around whether or not the world has indeed become more peaceful,

2. Bartelson 2018, 15; Hathaway and Shapiro 2017, 9; Mueller 1989.
3. Morgenthau 1949, 180
4. Rapoport 1982, 64.
5. See, e.g., Braumoeller 2019; Fazal 2014; Gohdes and Price 2013.
6. See, e.g., Kaldor 1999; Mueller 1989.
7. Bartelson 2018; Finnemore 2003.

what the quotes at the beginning of this section exemplify is that the professed *desirability* of war has subsided. That is, independent of the empirical reality, scholars agree that in the arena of international politics, the idea of war has shifted towards one where it is no longer a legitimate means of conducting political business but overall undesirable and to be avoided.

For centuries, if not millennia, war was considered an inevitable part of human interaction. As the historian Arnold Toynbee notes, war had been "one of mankind's master institutions" for a "span of five thousand years."[8] Philosophical inquiry "[f]rom Plato onwards" conceptualised war as a permanent feature of the human condition and default state of politics.[9] St Augustine taught in the 5th century that war "had to be accepted as part of the fallen condition of man," and Machiavelli advises in *Il Principe* in the 15th century that the ruler "should have no other object, and no other thought, than waging war or preparing for it."[10] Although philosophers of the Enlightenment critiqued war as perpetuated for profit by despotic governments, many also characterised it as the driver for progress.[11] Even Immanuel Kant, who, in addition to his works on metaphysics, would rise to fame with his sketch *Zum Ewigen Frieden* (Perpetual Peace) that provides the basic principles of what is now known as the Democratic Peace Theory, initially viewed war as an indispensable means for human advancement.[12] The minister and pacifist Noah Worcester notes in his tract *A Solemn Review of War* that war "has so long been fashionable amongst all nations […] that it is usually considered as an evil necessary and unavoidable."[13] In his foreword to Carl von Clausewitz' *On War*, Rapoport states that the idea of war as the normal and perpetual state of affairs dominated European political thought in that all politics were conceived as a variant of war.[14] Indeed, as Beatrice Heuser notes, that "war as an instrument of State politics was perhaps so obvious […] that nobody saw the need to spell it out."[15] Thus, for contemporary prevention efforts to become possible, an understanding of war needed to arise that abandoned the idea of war as a force beyond human intervention for one in which war is controllable and avoidable.

Attempts at pacifying political relations are as old as war itself. As the historian Martin Ceadel notes, the "condemnation of war has a very long tradition," both within and beyond Europe and particularly on the basis of religious and moral arguments, albeit very limited in scope with regard to human agency to act against war.[16] However, as the Austrian writer

8. Toynbee 1969, 214.
9. Ceadel 1996, 1; Coker 2010, 28.
10. ibid., 145; Howard 2000, 9.
11. Bartelson 2018, 59–60; Heuser 2022, 77–8; Howard 2000, 26.
12. Heuser 2022, 77. According to Heuser, Kant's stance towards war changed due to him reading and hearing about the French Revolutionary Wars, which were still ongoing when *Zum Ewigen Frieden* was first published in 1795.
13. Worcester 1904, 4.
14. Rapoport 1982, 29.
15. Heuser 2022, 96.
16. Ceadel 1996, 5–6.

and pacifist Alfred Hermann Fried argues, the pre-modern concept of peace differed from the one advanced by the peace movement in the 19th century, as it was either restricted to certain citizens (such as in Ancient Greece) or more a synonym for strategic alliances (in the Middle Ages).[17] According to the historian Michael Howard, only in the last 200 years has the pursuit of peace evolved into a "practicable or indeed desirable goal" for political leaders.[18] The Congress of Vienna in 1815 is widely understood to have marked the arrival of the modern peace idea in Europe.[19] The previous fatalism "gave way to a similarly widespread assumption that humans could bring international relations at least under partial control," thus replacing the idea of war as the normal state of affairs with it being abnormal, "at least among advanced countries."[20] After 1815, several pacifist societies, including women-only groups, began to form in various countries over the 19th century.[21] As the first one of its kind, the New York Peace Society was founded by the theologian David Low Dodge.[22] One year later, the Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace (also known as London Peace Society) was founded in England.[23]

The European and US-American peace movements developed in parallel lines and soon connected. Their central objective was to win the public for the cause of peace, which they aimed to achieve by disseminating pacifist writings. However, those efforts appealed to neither policymakers nor the public at first. From the 1840s onward, a number of international peace congresses took place in the US and across Europe,[24] but initially went without much public notice and were ridiculed by the press at the time.[25] In the face of the Crimean War in Europe and the American Civil War in the US, peace societies suffered a decline in interest and membership numbers but then experienced another high around 1900 and the first decade of the 20th century.[26] During this "golden age" of the "new internationalism," the peace movement became increasingly connected through a range of conferences on the topics of war and peace.[27] These include the two conferences at the Hague in 1899 and 1907, which—although they did not live up to the hopes of building a

17. Fried 1905, 215–9.
18. Howard 2000, 2. At the time of writing for Howard, this would be from 1800 onwards. See also Heuser 2022, 120; Holsti 1998.
19. While much of the literature on pacifism starts at or centres around 1815, it is worth noting that pacifism has developed slowly over centuries in various parts of the world in various religious as well as philosophical traditions. For accounts of the broader origins of European pacifism, see, e.g., Cady 2018; Fried 1905, 215–9; Johnson 1987. For origin accounts of pacifisms beyond Europe and Christian traditions, see, e.g., Gier 2005; Gittings 2012; Howard and Stark 2018; Hu 2006; Jahanbegloo 2018; Presbey 2018; Sibley 1943.
20. Ceadel 1996, 1. See also Chapter 5.
21. Confortini 2012; Lynch 1999, 43–4; Mueller 1989, 2010; Tickner and True 2018, 222.
22. American Peace Society 1914, 1; Brock 1968, 458; Tryon 1911, 360.
23. Mazower 2013, 32.
24. Tryon 1911, 362..
25. Lynch 1999, 47–8.
26. ibid., 47–9; see also Mazower 2013, 36–7.
27. Weber 2014, 530.

foundation to abolish war but rather made it "more humane"[28]—are commonly characterised as major milestones of the peace movement, and the International Congress of Women (also in The Hague), which brought together 1,500 women in 1915 and constituted the founding moment of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).[29]

Another notable development of the attempt to prevent future wars in the early 20th century was the *General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy* of 1928, which is more commonly known as the Kellogg-Briand pact. Named after its sponsors, the US Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and the Foreign Minister Aristide Briand of France, the treaty was an attempt at outlawing war for the purpose of advancing state interests and a pledge to resolve future conflict exclusively by pacific means.[30] Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro argue that it was a, if not *the*, pivotal moment in the birth of what they call the "New [liberal] World Order."[31] As a "spectacular example" of international law that is "duly signed and ratified" across the international community, the treaty had 64 parties by 1934—"virtually all the countries in the world at the time," including the future aggressors.[32] However, because it lacked an enforcement mechanism, the pact ultimately failed at achieving its core aim when it was unable to prevent World War II.

As I have explained in Chapter 1 using Corry's theoretical framework, to become a governance object, a set of phenomena must fulfil three criteria. Firstly, it must be considered an entity that can be distinguished from others in a meaningful way, it must be considered malleable, and it must be politically salient by relating to actors' identities and interests.[33] When these criteria are met, this set of phenomena can become a governance object through the concurrent 'stages' of designation, translation and problematisation.[34] However, the constitution of governance problems is not a once-off process, which means that to *maintain* this status, a governance object needs to be reaffirmed constantly through these same 'stages' of problem constitution. In this and the following two chapters, I explain both how each of these three processes first took place and how they reaffirmed war's status as a governance object in the present day. As I will argue below, the constitution of war as a governance object started in the 19th century, when *all* of the required criteria as outlined by Corry were first fulfilled.

28. Howard 2000, 54–5; Mazower 2013, 76–82.
29. While the 1915 International Congress of Women is, in retrospect, a significant event in the history of feminist international relations, the meeting was met with condescension and contempt in (men's) public commentary and news reports at the time. Tickner and True 2018, 223.
30. Hathaway and Shapiro 2017; Heuser 2022, 121.
31. Hathaway and Shapiro 2017. Cf. Barkawi 2018.
32. Heuser 2022, 121; Morgenthau 1949, 218; Mueller 1989, 57. It should be noted that Mueller's use of the term 'countries' refers to sovereign states, as large parts of the world were under colonial rule in the 1930s.
33. Corry 2013, 87.
34. Allan 2017.

In this chapter, I describe how the modern peace movement ascribed certain characteristics to 'war' that reverberate in the prevention agenda today, namely that war stands in binary opposition to 'peace' as a state of exception, that it is a cataclysmic rather than a glorious event and that it can be known and explored through modern science. Admittedly, only the last of these three characteristics is new, as both the separation of war from peace as an organising binary and the conception of war as an evil already existed before the 19th century.[35] In this sense, war was *already* designated a meaningful entity by way of distinguishing it from peace and characterising it as cataclysmic. Nevertheless, since both of these assumptions are central to the understanding that war both can and should be prevented, I recount how the early pacifists, as well as the current prevention agenda, reaffirm this understanding.

A novel addition to war's set of characteristics in the 19th century, as I will argue in further detail below, was the designation of war as a *scientific* object, in the sense that it can be known through modern science, and this knowledge, in turn, can be leveraged to resolve and avoid war. In Chapter 4, I describe how, flowing from the assumption that war is an object of scientific inquiry, it becomes an *international* object by abstracting and translating through numbers and statistics. However, these two processes of designation and translation were only possible against historically specific conditions marked by developments in the state of knowledge and political rule.[36] The intellectual premises for the idea of war as preventable rely on a specific epistemic configuration—a scientific cosmology—that developed in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries. This cosmological shift introduced radical changes in ideas of the universe and the role of humanity within the cosmos and culminated in the 19th century with the rise of statistics as a means of governance.[37]

Cosmologies "weave ideas about what counts as knowledge and what exists into broader narratives about the origins and operations of the universe."[38] In other words, they not only make ideas possible but some ideas more appealing and intuitive than others.[39] According to Allan's suggestion, cosmologies are a composition of five metaphysical categories. These are, firstly, ontology or ideas about the "fundamental units of matter, the forces that govern them, and categories of representation."[40] The second element of a cosmology, its episteme, denotes ideas about the modes and procedures through which the universe is knowable and ideas about how reliable and true knowledge is produced. Thirdly, every cosmology comes with a specific understanding of the temporality of the world, i.e. ideas about the nature and the direction of time (e.g. linear, circular, singular, multiple), and as a result,

35. See, e.g., Barkawi 2016, 201; Heuser 2022, 67.
36. Allan 2017, 137
37. Allan 2018b.
38. ibid., 11.
39. ibid., 4.
40. ibid., 11.

ideas about futurities.[41] The fourth element, cosmogony, concerns ideas about the origins of the universe and the fifth element, destiny, concerns the set of ideas about the role and place of humanity in the cosmos. However, cosmologies do not need to be universally accepted or internalised and are not to be understood as totalities. Instead, elements of cosmologies such as the above circulate in discourses.[42] A focus on cosmological shifts that happen through "slow, cumulative changes in discourses [...] between great power wars" helps to understand the role that (scientific) ideas played, and continue to play, in international politics as the underlying cosmology of politics makes some goals, interests or purposes thinkable and legitimate, while others are simultaneously rendered inconceivable and illegitimate.[43]

Three central ideas that resulted from the slow cosmological shift between the 16th and 19th centuries constitute the prerequisites for making prevention imaginable, in the sense of making possible the idea that war is a malleable, governable and, ultimately, avoidable problem. The first concerns the cosmological element of temporality, and specifically the understanding of time as absolute and linear. Theories of natural philosophy from the 17th century on started to reconfigure the cosmological discourse in Europe from a mystified to a mechanical ontology, from an episteme of patterning and analogy to one of representation and symbolism, and from a relative and cyclical concept of time to an absolute and progressive temporality. As Kimberly Hutchings argues, particular conceptions of temporality and assumptions about time structure international politics as they shape how actors judge their options in epistemic and ethical terms.[44] The possibility of intervening in the present to prevent something from happening in the future relies on causal thinking, which only exists in a specific temporal conception in which time moves in a linear rather than cyclical manner.[45] Thus, a linear conception of time is necessary to imagine the distinction between 'before,' 'during' and 'after' war upon which prevention rests.

This cosmological shift also concerned the cosmological element of ontology, and specifically the view that events on earth—including war—are subject to human intervention and control rather than predetermined. The European political discourse of the 16th century was marked by providentialism, which is the belief that all events on earth are determined by an external force beyond the earthly realm. This was primarily a Christian God or celestial forces.[46] The abandonment of providentialism was necessary for the idea of prevention, as in a "world governed by providence, a discourse to govern intentional or strategic action is

41. For the role of time in world politics, see also Chamon 2018; Hom 2018, 2020; Hutchings 2008, 2018d; Solomon 2014; Younis 2018.
42. Allan 2018b, 11.
43. ibid., 3 and 13.
44. Hutchings 2018d, 255.
45. Allan 2018b, 93–5; Hutchings 2008.
46. Allan 2018b, 80–3.

unnecessary and therefore rare."[47] Once the human condition was imagined as not bound by determinism anymore, war could become an intentional instrument of politics rather than a necessity. The idea that resorting to violence in disputes is a choice rather than compulsion is a central, often implicit, premise for the possibility of preventing war.[48] While this cosmological discourse also redefined the human as a being of reason rather than a mere object of divine determinism, it was still compatible with a version of providentialism in which events on earth are not preordained, but steered, by God.[49] This line of thinking can also be found in the writings of early 19th century Christian peace activists like Noah Worcester who writes in 1814 that "God only can produce the necessary change in the state of society and the views of men" towards the stance that the "barbarous [...] custom" of war must be abolished. However, this does not mean that humans "must wait for the millennial day" to see war eradicated from the world. According to Worcester, it was God's will that the British abolished the slave trade and through the perseverance of "benevolent men" doing the persuasive work, that will was fulfilled. Therefore, if it is divine providence that war be abolished (which Worcester proceeds to argue) and if "God works by human agency and human means," then it is up to humans to execute this will.[50] The introduction of concepts such as causes and effects paved the way for problem-centred reasoning, and ultimately, for a new humanist conception of the world in which events on earth are governable by human intervention.[51] Not only could causes and effects now be identified but also be distinguished as desirable or undesirable.

The third idea concerns the cosmological elements of episteme and destiny. New fields of acquiring and organising knowledge such as natural philosophy, medicine, and astronomy began to emerge in the 16th century and the ideal of improvement and progress took hold in Europe in the 19th century. After 1800, developments in mathematical and especially statistical methods gave rise to the idea that the progression of events is not deterministic but probabilistic.[52] By 1815, the belief that humans could harness the power of science and technology to address problems of government had entirely displaced the notion of an international order that is held in balance by mechanistic and deterministic natural laws.[53] Building on James Scott's concept of 'high modernism', Allan calls this idea that

47. Allan 2018b, 87.
48. For a prominent instance of the premise that violence is a choice rather than a necessity, see CCPDC 1997, 3, 25 and 29.
49. Allan 2018b, 95. Allan points out that while his work was used to formulate a natural providentialism by his early followers, Newton himself saw the motion of the earth and celestial bodies as rooted in divine determinism. That is, although he established that the laws of nature determine all events through mechanical causal chains, God as the "perfect, divine designer of a clockwork universe" created these laws in the first place. Thus, in Newton's conception, the world can be explained and analysed by way of natural philosophy but is still determinist and beyond human control.
50. Worcester 1904, 4.
51. Allan 2018b, 22.
52. ibid., 139; see also Hacking 1990.
53. Allan 2018b, 1.

humans can use science and technology to solve complex problems of modern politics "epistemic modernism."[54] The underlying conception of knowledge in epistemic modernism is functionalist-progressive in that it can be leveraged for the 'greater good,' such as for the prevention of disease or violence.[55] Following the Comtean dictum, from such knowledge can come prediction, and from prediction comes control.[56] Once the intellectual premises were laid out by the developments of the post-Enlightenment period, prevention became thinkable.

Finally, the process of problematising war through the association with barbarism and civilisation, as I will argue in Chapter 5, was also only possible against a specific historical configuration in which advancements in the natural sciences, under the influence of the increasing popularity of theories of evolution, merged with Enlightenment histories of human society into a vision of progress in the middle of the 19th century.[57] Building on the linear temporal understanding, the development of beings—including humans—could be imagined as progressing through consecutive stages. Those emerging ideas gave rise to a new state purpose of 'improvement' as the betterment of the lives of the population through government, although at first regarding colonies.[58] Scientific and technological advancements became the markers of superior evolutional status. Entire populations were classified and ranked along stages of civilisation, placing Western societies at the top, while at the same time colonial administrations repressed and eradicated Indigenous knowledge.[59] Early evolutionary developmentalism and emerging anthropological thought initially assumed a linear and automatic progression through these stages. In this view, progress is determinist and irreversible. The progression to 'higher' developmental stages was to be guided by the colonial administration and European trusteeship, but not to be interfered in as it was to happen 'naturally.'[60] However, the resistance of Indigenous peoples against colonial rule at the beginning of the 20th century undermined the belief in the automatism of human progress.[61] As a result, the advancement to 'higher' developmental stages was not determined anymore but became to be understood as probabilistic. Following the principle of epistemic modernism, colonial administrations thus set out to use knowledge to 'educate' colonial peoples, thereby 'lifting' them to the stage of scientific and technological modernity. As I explain in more detail later, colonialism and the 'civilising mission,' at their high points

54. ibid., 165–6; Scott 1998. See also Morgenthau 1947, 11.
55. Bueger 2014a, 51.
56. Krause 2019, 129.
57. Allan 2018b, 147.
58. ibid., 135–7. As Allan notes, this assessment aligns with Foucault's history of governmentality in the mid-1800s in Europe, for which the idea that the population can not only be governed but improved is central. See also Foucault 2007, 67–79.
59. Allan 2018b, 204–5. For the concept and a broader discussion of Western epistemicide of Indigenous knowledge, see, e.g., Dussel 1993; Grosfoguel 2013; Sousa Santos 2014.
60. Allan 2018b, 179.
61. ibid., 202.

in the 19th century, were the epistemic background for the organising binary of 'civilised' versus 'barbaric' peoples, which the early pacifists invoked to define war as a problem.

3.3 Exceptional Times of War: Entrenching the War-Peace Binary

While within military circles, war was considered a strategic instrument of "continu[ing] political commerce,"[62] pacifists of the early 19th century emphasised war as the counterpart to peace by interpreting them as fundamentally different in conception and practice. One component of this distinction is the temporal separation of wartime from peacetime, which follow one another in the course of history but are understood as being clearly demarcated. This view of the relationship between war and time, however, is not novel in the 19th century.[63] Thomas Hobbes famously notes in his 1651 magnum opus *Leviathan* that the state of war consists not only of the act of fighting but "in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of *time*, is to be considered in the natura of war."[64] Just like a state of bad weather does not consist of one or two single rain showers, he proceeds to explain, so does war not only consist of one or two battles but rather in a time period that is marked by the *known disposition* to take up fighting. In contrast, all other time where there are assurances against this disposition (such as through peace treaties or alliances), is peace.

The idea of peace as temporally wrapped around the state of war as a finite and bounded period of time flows from the practice of formally declaring war, which was a long-standing norm dating back millennia.[65] However, Tanisha Fazal argues, both declarations of war and the conclusion of conflicts through peace treaties declined around the middle of the last century due to the increase in codified laws that govern belligerent conduct, which disincentivise states to admit that they are in a state of war.[66] While a decisive victory or the resolution of war through a peace treaty or agreement mark its end, a declaration of war marks its beginning, thus 'bookending' the period in which peace is interrupted as a state of war.[67] In addition, the development of the legal theory of war as a state entrenches this temporal distinction, as public international law tended to be "organised around two contrasting situations: the presence or absence of war."[68] This conception of war as either

62. Clausewitz 1982, 119. While Clausewitz is the most famous proponent of this conception of war, he was neither the first nor the only one, see Heuser 2022, 97–100; Strachan and Herberg-Rothe 2007, 2.
63. Armitage 2017a, 316.
64. Hobbes 1996, 84, emphasis and spelling as per this edition of the text.
65. For a historical overview of war declarations, see Heuser 2022, 112–4.
66. Fazal 2012, 2013. It should be noted that Fazal's argument applies to interstate conflict only.
67. Bousquet 2016, 94.
68. Use of Force Committee of the International Law Association, cited in Heuser 2022, 111.

present or absent disavows any gradual or incomplete status of war or peace, respectively. Reaffirming this notion, early pacifist pamphlets refer to "times of war" that are juxtaposed with "times of peace."[69] The conception of war as bounded makes prevention possible as it constructs a 'before' and 'after' war.[70]

Following the conception of war and peace as temporally distinct, the prevention of war becomes synonymous with the maintenance of peace—or the conservation and perpetuation of the default state of affairs. The League of Nations, founded to "promote international cooperation and [...] achieve international peace and security," uses this phrasing in Article 8, which states that a "reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations" is required for the maintenance of peace.[71] This points to the implicit world view underlying the treaty, according to which peace is the default state that has to be maintained or restored, while war constitutes a temporary disruption. This understanding was then taken forth in the League of Nations' successor organisation, the UN. Article 1 of the *Charter of the United Nations* states that its first and foremost purpose is "to *maintain* international peace and security," which is repeated several times throughout the treaty, while Chapter VII refers to the "restoration" of peace in the face of acts of aggression, threats to or breaches of the peace.[72]

The understanding of war as temporally delimited has carried over to the programmatic discourse after the Cold War, as virtually every core document of the contemporary prevention agenda refers to the "maintenance" or "restoration" of peace.[73] It becomes further entrenched in the post-1990s prevention agenda through the modifier 'durable.' Starting with the *Agenda for Peace*, the goal is not the mere maintenance, or when broken down, restoration of peace. Instead, the shift from conflict resolution to conflict prevention broadens the scope of peace efforts that now requires "sustained, cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems" so that peace can be placed "on a durable foundation."[74] The notion of the durability of peace thus further entrenches the implicit view of peace as the permanent condition of international affairs that is only temporarily, and ideally not at all, interrupted by war. Secretary-General Annan takes up this notion in his report on *The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa* in 1998 that centres on the durability of peace.[75] The durability of peace becomes a common theme after 2000, as it is repeated in, *inter alia*, the UN Council

69. Dodge 1905b; ibid.
70. Heuser 2022, 112; see also Dudziak 2012.
71. League of Nations 1921, 4.
72. UN 1945.
73. Annan 2001; Boutros-Ghali 1992; ICISS 2001; UN 2000; UN and World Bank 2018.
74. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 14–5.
75. Annan 1998.

Resolution founding the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the report of the ICISS that laid the foundation for the R2P doctrine as well as in Secretary-General Ban's report on preventive diplomacy in 2011.[76]

The temporal separation of war and peace is only possible if they are ontologically clearly demarcated from one another. That is, the distinction of wartime from peacetime as I have described is only conceptually possible where 'war' and 'peace' are understood as different things. The organising binary of war and peace underlying early pacifist efforts were informed by the experience of the Western, and especially European, major wars of the 19th century, in which war manifests primarily as battles between the regular armed forces, mostly those of two or more nation-states—or what Heuser calls the "Great Battle Paradigm" of war.[77] This conception of European major war as archetypal reverberates in the distinction between regular and irregular war-fighting that is used to explain the alleged decline of war since the middle of the last century, according to which civil wars in so-called developing countries are predatory violence in the form of "clash[es] of thugs."[78]

Through this distinction, peace becomes the default state of affairs, with wars being rare but impactful disruptions of an otherwise functioning system.[79] That is, war was already seen as distinct from peace, what shifted was the notion of war as the *exception* rather than as a regular means of conflict resolution. As Heuser argues, until the early 20th century, war was "universally recognized … as the regular 'means to resolve an issue of public law' between sovereign States."[80] The implicit understanding of war as exceptional manifests in the framing of war or the threat of war as an "emergency" that warrants immediate attention and action, such as in the *Covenant of the League of Nations*. However, the representation of war as an exceptional event was only possible by defining continuing colonial violence and imperial expansion as something *other* than war. Wars of colonial and imperial expansion against Indigenous peoples were labelled "expeditions against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers."[81] As a result, these 'expeditions' did not qualify as such an emergency nor fall within the purview of rules governing conduct in war, so that "even the most brutal and outlawed methods of warfare seemed to be legitimate" against whoever was deemed racially inferior by Westerners.[82] The qualitative difference between war and peace inherent in this view thus takes major European war as its archetype. Peace, at minimum,

76. Ban 2011, 13; ICISS 2001, 11, 39; UNSC 2000, 1.
77. Barkawi 2016, 199–207; Heuser 2022. See also Bousquet 2016, 91.
78. Mueller 2004, 115. See also Collier and Hoeffler 2000; Kaldor 1999.
79. Bartelson 2018, 16.
80. Heuser 2022, 120
81. Callwell 1914, 21. See also Leroy-Beaulieu 1869, 1, who claims that his study covers "the great wars which have afflicted mankind from 1853 to 1866," yet only compiles findings from European interstate wars of the 19th century and the American Civil War, while labelling the military campaigns of the French imperial expansion "distant expeditions."
82. Schaller and Zimmerer 2008, 192; see also Getachew 2019, 37–70.

then denotes a situation where large-scale battles between national forces are absent, while colonial and imperial expansion do not count as war and therefore need neither be prevented nor constrained. That is, although the problem of war is constructed as universal, the underlying image of war is distinctly provincial.

While the definition of war as different from peace was and is an important component of defining it as a conceptual entity that can be meaningfully distinguished from others (as opposed to the ecological conception of war, see Chapter 6), defining it in relation to its binary counterpart 'peace' is also not a new development in the 19th century. Indeed, as Heuser argues, the tendency to make sense of the world through binaries such as good versus evil, war versus peace, victory versus defeat, major versus small war etc. "may be particular to European culture."[83] In this sense, war was already designated as a specific phenomenon before the peace movement emerged in the early 1800s, while peace advocates merely *emphasised* certain characteristics and added the frame of exceptionality. Nevertheless, I have sketched all three components of the designation of war here as the other processes of problem constitution—translation and problematisation—as well as the de-problematisation of war, rely on and flow from the definition of war as temporally delimited, exceptional and thus distinct from 'peace.' As I explore in further detail in Chapter 4, the translation of war into an international phenomenon that travels across temporal and spatial contexts depends on the conception of being finite to become quantifiable. It can only be measured when it manifests in a way that is amenable to enumeration, such as in battles where combatants, fatalities, wins and losses can be counted and where it is a finite episode with a start and end date that can be translated into, for example, a discrete event within a dataset. In Chapter 5, I explain how the process of problematisation relies on the assumption that war is governable. However, only where war and peace are ontologically different from one another can war be averted. I elaborate on the argument that prevention depends on the war-peace binary in Chapter 6, where I discuss the hypothetical de-problematisation of war. Where the notion of war's exceptionality and its constitution as the binary opposite of peace is suspended in ecological thinking, preventing war becomes conceptually obsolete.

3.4 'The Desolating Scourge:' Reaffirming War as an Evil

While it was, empirically speaking, not the dominant stance, the conception of war as an evil is a recurring theme throughout history. Heuser provides evidence of this view dating back to European antiquity, such as in the writing of Herodotus or Seneca the Younger. In virtually all Christian traditions war is seen as an evil, where it often occurs as a scourge in

83. Heuser 2022, 27, 268, 398.

writing and iconography, brought upon humankind as punishment for its sins.[84] While a 'scourge' is originally a whip used for flogging as (self-)punishment, in its metaphorical use, it describes a great affliction.

The early pacifists of the 19th century reaffirmed this negative connotation of war by using the metaphor of the scourge. In *A Solemn Review of War*, Worcester argues that war violates Christian ideals.[85] He thus concludes that war should be abolished: "it must be desirable to dispel the present darkness and exterminate the desolating scourge."[86] The metaphor of the scourge for war abounds in pacifist writings thereafter. Evan Rees, a businessman and founding member of the London Peace Society, compiles journal entries of the 1812 Napoleonic invasion of Russia, titled *Sketches on the Horrors of War* and also published in the London Peace Society's tract series in 1836, to make clear the "evils which are inflicted on the world by the desolating scourge of war."[87] Similarly, Joseph Gurney, an English Quaker minister working as a preacher in the United States, publishes an essay on war in 1869, which also points out its incompatibility with the principles of Christianity. In the essay, Gurney characterises war as a "tremendous and dreadfully prevalent scourge productive of an incalculable amount of bodily and mental suffering."[88] Finally, the scourge metaphor arrives in the vocabulary of diplomats of the late 19th century, as William Evan Darby, the then-secretary of the London Peace Society, testifies in his report on the first peace conference in the Hague in 1899. Quoting Andrew Dickson White, who attended the conference in his function as the US-American ambassador to France at the time, Darby remarks that the conference constituted the "first stage towards the abolition of the scourge of war."[89]

The representation of war as a scourge famously made it into the founding document of the UN, which states in the very first sentence of the preamble that the peoples of the United Nations have determined to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind."[90] Since its appearance in the UN context in 1945, this expression has featured in numerous official documents that reaffirm the organisation's core objective, as it is reiterated in six resolutions of the Security Council and eighty-four resolutions of the General Assembly alone. While the Christian legacy of the scourge metaphor in texts on conflict prevention is mostly implicit, it occasionally becomes more overt where UN documents define conflict prevention as the organisation's "cardinal

84. Heuser 2022, 67. However, Heuser notes some nuance among Christian denominations, where some (especially Anglican) would see war as universally objectionable while others (such as Catholic and Lutheran) would see it as the *lesser* evil and thus permissible in certain circumstances, see p. 8.
85. See Chapter 5.
86. Worcester 1904, 13–4.
87. Rees 1831, 23.
88. Gurney 1869, 1.
89. White cited in Darby 1899, 50.
90. UN 1945, 2.

mission [...] to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," thus employing clerical vocabulary ('cardinal') as well as invoking the imperative to spread the gospel and convert people to Christianity ('mission'), such as in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report *Prevention of Armed Conflict* of 2001.[91]

Through the association of the term with punishment and fate, the metaphor of the scourge has a passive element. Even where the 'scourge of war' is understood to be the making of humans themselves, it is conceptualised as a "remnant of a 'barbaric' past that ostensibly civilised societies should have long overcome, rather than as being caused by intentional political actions and strategies."[92] In this way, the scourge metaphor mystifies war by decontextualising it from its causes, actors, aims and purposes. Rather than ascribing responsibility or blame to specific perpetrators, the scourge metaphor constructs war as "a catastrophe detached from human agency."[93] This makes it possible to represent the goal to abolish and prevent war a common, even global, cause.[94] In Worcester's appeal, the abolition of war is a common cause for all Christians across all countries, while a century later, the Charter of the United Nations includes all fifty-one founding countries in the collective and inclusive "We the Peoples" that must work together to "save succeeding generations" from succumbing to war again.[95]

The association of war with plight and punishment through the metaphor of the scourge, in turn, undermines the connotation of war with honour and triumph.[96] While the idea of war as a quest for glory and heroism in Europe stretches from antiquity to pagan cultures, the Middle Ages and up to "the Western cult of the knight and the warrior" in the present,[97] the tracts and pamphlets circulated by the peace societies depict the gory reality of battle that comes with war. For example, in *War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ*, Dodge describes the toll war takes on soldiers and civilians in graphic detail:

> There thousands of mangled bodies lie on the cold ground hours, and sometimes days, without a friendly hand to bind up a wound; not a voice is heard except the dying groans of their fellow-sufferers around them. No one can describe the horrors of the scene: here lies one with a fractured skull, there another with a severed limb, and a third with a lacerated body; some fainting with the loss of blood, others distracted, and others again crying for help. [...] Hundreds are parrying the blows; hundreds more are thrusting their bayonets into the bowels of their fellow-mortals, and many, while extricating them, have their own heads cleft asunder by swords and sabers.[98]

91. Annan 2001, 10.
92. Rodehau-Noack 2021, 1029. See also Chapter 5.
93. Heuser 2022, 70.
94. See also Rodehau-Noack 2021, 1029.
95. UN 1945, 2.
96. See also Heuser 2022, 69–70; Mueller 1990, 321.
97. See, e.g., Heuser 2022, 134; Rapoport 1982, 16–7.
98. Dodge 1905b, 15–8.

The picture Dodge paints is one of utter brutality, without any of the glory that military strategists attach to the matter of war. The brutal and cruel reality of war stands in stark contrast to Christian ideals such as piety and compassion.[99] Dodge notes with astonishment that "the generality of mankind" reacts with

> little excitement when they hear of savages—whose religion teaches them revenge—using the tomahawk and scalping knife; but when thousands are torn to pieces with shot and shells and butchered with polished steels, then it becomes a very polite and civil business, and those who perish are contemplated as only reclining on a bed of honor.[100]

Dodge alludes here to the trope of the Native American 'ignoble savage.'[101] In doing so, he positions himself and the readers as the white and civilised subject in opposition to the uncivilised other for whom violent dispute resolution is normal, thus presuming that this behaviour of violent revenge is objectionable rather than a matter of honour.[102] He points to the hypocrisy in which violence by 'savages' is denounced but when ostensibly civilised people kill each other with 'advanced' weapons on an even larger scale in war, it is understood to be a glorious and noble affair. At the turn of the last century, the publisher Edwin Ginn sets up the International School of Peace as the precursor of the WPF to educate the masses on the matter of peace. Part of his plan, as he lays it out in a letter to the editor of the newspaper *The Nation* publicising the foundation of said school, includes the creation of a Bureau of Education that should alter the course content throughout schools and universities, specifically by "eliminating the use of such literature and history [which tends] to inculcate unduly the military spirit and to exaggerate the achievements of war" as too much of that history, according to Ginn, "is now devoted to accounts of battles and to the exploits of war heroes" at the expense of the accounts of those who have strived for peace.[103]

In the aftermath of the First World War, peace activists often had first-hand experience of a large-scale international war with an unprecedented scale of destruction due to advancements in weapons technology.[104] The attrition of trench warfare had taken a huge toll on the major antagonists and the view emerged that war had become a futile exercise.[105] In light of the weariness and suffered losses, the support for principles of international law and restraint grew.[106] Similarly, Morgenthau describes an emerging attitude "on the part of most statesmen" towards war, that first emerged around the turn of the last century and intensified after the Second World War, which acknowledged "certain ethical limitations restricting the

99. See also Chapter 5.
100. Dodge 1905b, 5.
101. See, e.g., Berkhofer 1979; Meek 1976; Williams Jr. 2012.
102. See also Chapter 5 on the aspect of barbarism in the process of problematisation.
103. Ginn 1909, 276.
104. Mueller 1991, 1.
105. Martel 2011, 150.
106. Lynch 1999, 55.

use of war as an instrument of international politics." Therefore, if war occurs, it "must come as a natural catastrophe or as the evil deed of another nation," but not as the calculated plan of one's foreign policy.[107] The negative connotation representing war as destructive and brutal that these scholars observe around the middle of the last century is indeed a characteristic of peace advocacy that continues from early pacifist writing to documents of the current prevention agenda, in which descriptions of war and armed conflict with predicates such as "deadly," "slaughter," "bloody" or "bloodshed," "horror" and as inflicting suffering and loss abound.[108] The language of destruction in this discourse is graphic: societies are "wracked by years of conflict," "shattered by war," "torn by civil war and strife", and even where war does not kill, it "injures combatants and civilians alike and inflicts insidious damage to bodies, minds, and communities."[109] Here again, central documents of the current prevent agenda, including the *Agenda for Peace*, the Carnegie Report and *Pathways for Peace*, use the passive voice thus making war itself the originator of the destruction, loss and suffering. In this way, these documents, rather than dividing by attributing guilt, implicitly attempt to unite by pointing towards the common problem 'war.'

3.5 Epistemic Modernism and Scientific Philanthropy for Peace

In the previous section, I have outlined how early pacifism reaffirmed the connotation of war as evil and inglorious. In addition, the peace advocates of the 19th and early 20th centuries also established another core assumption and central working principle of the contemporary prevention agenda, which is that war can be known, represented and alleviated with the help of modern science. As I have briefly sketched at the beginning of this chapter, the construction of war as a *scientific* object is embedded in a larger development of epistemic modernism that matured in the 19th century. With the development of mathematics and statistics, the view emerged that progress can be achieved by harnessing modern knowledge and technology.[110] This view also applied to international politics and relations among states, as embodied by the League of Nations. Its many organs of technocratic bureaucracy personified "the idea of a world organised and controlled by scientific knowledge," thus marking the "age of the scientific approach to international affairs."[111]

107. Morgenthau 1949, 180–1.
108. Ban 2013; Boutros-Ghali 1992; CCPDC 1997; CEIP 1914; Dodge 1905a, 1905b; ICISS 2001; ICW 1915; Worcester 1904.
109. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 4; CCPDC 1997, 69 and 93; UN and World Bank 2018, 25.
110. Allan 2018b, 165.
111. ibid., 183; Morgenthau 1947, 87; see also Mazower 2013, 141–53.

Grounded in the belief that modern knowledge and technology can not only identify but also eradicate, the causes of war, a "science of peace" developed.[112] Its central scientific concern is not the use to which war can be put, but its prevention. Morgenthau summarises this spirit as follows:

> Territorial claims, sovereignty over national minorities, the distribution of raw materials, the struggle for markets, disarmament, the relation between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots,' peaceful change, and the peaceful organization of the world in general—these are not 'political' problems to be solved temporarily and always precariously on the basis of the respective distribution of power among quarrelling nations and of its possible balance. They are 'technical' problems for which reason will find one, the correct solution, to the exclusion of all others, the incorrect ones.[113]

The tacit assumption that underlies this stance is that, once the conditions conducive to war and peace are understood, war can be approached as a problem similar to other issues such as disease, poverty, or natural disasters.[114] This rationality, coupled with the peace activism that took hold in Europe and the US at the turn of the last century, designated war as an object of scientific interest for peace philanthropy.

The process of industrialisation and the ensuing economic boom after the First World War in the US had produced a few extremely rich people, some of whom felt compelled to return a portion of their wealth to society through "scientific giving" using endowed charitable foundations.[115] The steel magnate Andrew Carnegie played a central role in the professionalisation of the new science by establishing the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) in 1910.[116] Its primary purpose was to "promote a thorough and scientific investigation and study of the causes of war and of the practical methods to prevent and avoid it."[117] To achieve this objective, the initial group of trustees assembled members from political and scientific circles as well as the private sector.[118] The CEIP was not only better funded than other peace organisations with its starting grant of 10 million US dollars,[119] it was also well connected with offices in Berne, New York, Paris and

112. Morgenthau 1947, 84–5; Rapoport 1982, 40.
113. Morgenthau 1947, 84.
114. Rapoport 1982, 40.
115. Sealander 2003, 218; Weber 2014, 533. It is worth noting that the accumulation of such wealth was, and still is, only possible through the exploitation of workers. Business magnates such as Rockefeller Sr. and Carnegie opposed independent unions during their lifetimes and some of the worst workers' strikes at the time occurred at their companies.
116. Rosenberg 2003, 251.
117. CEIP 1927, 6.
118. The initial trustees included businessmen, civil servants, politicians—including two former secretaries of state as well as three sitting and former ambassadors—and members of the scientific community in the form of the president emeritus of Harvard University and the president of Columbia University. The composition of the board of trustees in 1910 was entirely male and would remain so for many years to follow.
119. The amount of 10 million US dollars in 1910 would be equivalent to approx. 28 million US dollars today (2022).

Washington (D.C.), as well as special correspondents located in Berlin, London, Tokyo and Vienna.[120] Only a short time before Carnegie established the CEIP, Edwin Ginn, the owner of a publishing company for school books, founded the International School of Peace in Boston, which was renamed to World Peace Foundation (WPF) in 1911. Its objective was to "educat[e] the people of all nations to a full knowledge of the waste and destructiveness of war and of preparation for war, its evil effects on present social conditions and on the well-being of future generations."[121] That is, in contrast to the CEIP, the WPF was at first more focused on disseminating knowledge on the causes and effects of war rather than producing it, thus fostering opposition to war in the public and policymakers through peace education.

The CEIP set up the *International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, or Balkan Commission, whose work can be understood as one of the first examples of treating war as an object of scientific inquiry.[122] As such, it was driven by the idea that fact-finding, truth-telling and scientific inquiry can help to educate the public on the horrors of war and prevent it from recurring. The Balkan Wars were two consecutive conflicts taking place on the Balkan peninsula. In the First Balkan War from October 1912 to May 1913, an alliance of four states—the so-called Balkan League consisting of Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia—fought against the Ottoman Empire, leading to the defeat of the latter. The Second Balkan War, which took place between June and August 2013, saw Bulgaria pitted against the three other states of the Balkan League as well as the Ottoman Empire and, later in the conflict, Romania. According to the historian Richard Hall, the Balkan Wars set the stage for the geopolitical tensions in the run-up to 1914 and can thus be understood as having been the "prelude to the First World War."[123]

The Balkan Wars generated wide international interest as they were among the first, after the Crimean and Franco-Prussian wars, to be covered by war correspondents and photographers on the ground.[124] Although there had already been calls to act once the First Balkan War had erupted, the CEIP's office did not respond yet as the first of the two wars was understood to be a legitimate war of liberation against the "domination of the sultans of Constantinople."[125] The Second Balkan War, in contrast, was regarded as a war of conquest over the spoils of the First Balkan War. The parties "fought without restraint," with reports of atrocities (referred to as 'outrages' in the nomenclature of the time) in international media such as the *New York Times*.[126] These reports caught the interest of the director of the

120. Trix 2014, 148.
121. See the Agreement of Association of the International School of Peace, later renamed to World Peace Foundation. Available digitally at https://dl.tufts.edu/concern/images/2j62sd90p.
122. Andrä, forthcoming provides a detailed account of the Balkan Commission and the production of the report account using correspondence from the archives of the CEIP.
123. Hall 2000.
124. See, e.g., Michail 2012; Michailidis 2018.
125. CEIP 1914, 1.
126. Trix 2014, 149.

CEIP's Division on Intercourse and Education, Nicholas Butler, who suggested setting up a commission of inquiry to his long-time friend, the US Senator and then-president of the CEIP Elihu Root.[127] To the CEIP, the Balkan wars did not only present a good opportunity for the CEIP to shape public opinion through a commission of inquiry but also to establish itself as a young but important organisation within the plethora of peace initiatives in Europe and the US.[128] With the blessing (and most importantly, funding) from the CEIP, Butler then set out to assemble a team to travel to the Balkans to provide an "impartial examination by an independent authority," inform public opinion, and to "make plain just what is or may be involved in an international war carried on under modern conditions."[129]

The final product of the commission, the *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* is a thorough study of the conditions that led to the war and its impact, especially on the civilian population.[130] Butler characterised this approach as "represent[ing] the first instance in history of a study of the results of war by the laboratory method."[131] The resulting analysis of the causes and effects of the Balkan wars was supported by a rich ethnographic narrative, photographs, maps, a 17-page appendix with descriptive statistics, and what can be called an executive summary of the findings at the end of the document. The report produced a range of new vocabulary to describe the facets of suffering along the lines "systematic extermination," "deportation," "refugee camps" and "violence against women and children," which would later be used to describe the effects of war to emphasise the moral imperative to prevent such suffering.[132] As such, it constitutes a piece of scientific writing that contributed to the designation of war as a distinct problem warranting governance by giving it a specific character through the graphic description of its causes and effects. In so doing, the report put forward a specific understanding of war, namely one in which war is destructive and devastating. As a consequence, war is to be opposed and any characterisation of it as necessary or imperative to be rejected, as the French diplomat, head of the endowment's European bureau in Paris, and chair of the commission Baron Paul d'Estournelles de Constant notes in the introduction to the report:

> The real culprits in this long list of executions, assassinations, drownings, burnings, massacres and atrocities furnished in our report, are [...] those who by interest or

127. Trix 2014, 149. As Akhund notes, Carnegie himself was not consulted on the decision to produce such a report or send a commission of inquiry to the Balkans, Akhund 2012, 3.
128. Trix 2014, 148.
129. Preface the acting director of the CEIP by Nicholas Butler, in CEIP 1914, iii. The commission consisted of eight people from six countries: Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia and the United States. However, not all members were able to travel for the entire period of the field-based work and in some cases not at all. Akhund 2012, 4.
130. CEIP 1914.
131. Butler cited in Akhund 2012, 10.
132. ibid., 5.

> inclination, declaring constantly that war is inevitable, end by making it so, asserting that they are powerless to prevent it.[133]

While the fieldwork lasted only forty days, the writing-up phase afterwards faced several delays and stretched over several months. In the meantime, the commission tried to maintain the interest in its work and the report in the making by publishing a short article in the *Advocate for Peace*, the periodical of the American Peace Society.[134] Nevertheless, by the time the report came out in May (in French) and June (in English) 1914, the interest in the matter had already waned and the First World War would break out only shortly after.[135]

While philanthropic work was a "divine call" for some of the newly wealthy, Carnegie's and Ginn's charitable efforts to promote peace through science and education were rather motivated by a belief that social and political problems could be improved by the same re-ordering processes as those that helped industries grow at the time.[136] For both organisations, the objective was the eradication of war, built on the hope that "if only root causes were explored, a solution to warfare could be found."[137] Indeed, the peace advocate and assistant secretary of the American Peace Society James Libby Tryon argues that the endowment of these two foundations had greater significance for the permanent success of the movement than the numerous peace congresses.[138] The peace philanthropy in the early 20th century thus fully embraced a modernist, entrepreneurial spirit and combined it with a quasi-millenarian faith in a scientific approach to social problems that hoped to "cur[e] evils at their source."[139]

At the same time, it presented problems that can be scientifically approached as ones that can be politically and administratively solved, thus creating deference to scientific expertise for governance. As Tiffany Willoughby-Herard argues, reform-era philanthropic organisations such as the Carnegie Corporation "disciplined elected officials [...] to the need for experts" both by collecting and disseminating abstract data as well as by seeding, founding and funding organisations and institutions.[140] The underlying assumption of such efforts was that once its 'root causes' are fully explored, war can be eradicated.[141] The belief in science as the facilitator of progress and the conviction that humanity is by nature perfectible, in turn, was informed by (social) Darwinist thought that inspired various influential thinkers at the time.[142]

133. CEIP 1914, 19.
134. Anon. 1913.
135. Trix 2014, 148.
136. Sealander 2003, 226–7; Tryon 1911, 362.
137. Sealander 2003, 229; Weber 2014, 536.
138. Tryon 1911, 369.
139. Morgenthau 1947, 86; Sealander 2003.
140. Willoughby-Herard 2015, 13–4.
141. Sealander 2003, 229; Weber 2014, 536.
142. Bell 2020.

Although pre-war efforts to 'solve' war with science were undermined by the outbreak of the First World War, the tendency to approach political issues with scientific propositions continued thereafter. Similarly, the phenomenon of scientific philanthropy for peace originated during the turn of the last century, but it went on after this time period. Not only did both the CEIP as well as the WPF survive the two World Wars and exist to this day, further think tanks emerged in the post-war era and particularly after the end of the Cold War.[143] The scientific interest in war and its cataclysmic connotation intensify in the middle of the 20th century when, in the advent of the nuclear age, prevention became an increasingly urgent objective.[144]

The escalation of war's destructive potential gave rise to another wave of pacifism, this time led by scholars themselves as an increasing number of researchers in the natural sciences began studying war and advocating for peace. Physicists and nuclear scientists published manifestos against war and nuclear armament in the decade following World War II, such as the Stockholm Appeal (1950), the Einstein-Russell Manifesto (1955) or the Göttingen Declaration (1957), which called for the peaceful use of atomic energy and warning of the grave consequences of nuclear war.[145] The Einstein-Russell manifesto is perhaps the most famous one, as it not only drew a lot of attention at the time but also emphasised its politically neutral stance, thus presenting the danger of nuclear war as 'objective fact' rather than a pro- or anti-communist matter.[146] Further, in contrast to the other declarations, it also included a call to action in the form of an international conference of scientists on peace and nuclear disarmament. This call resulted in the first instalment of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, which were soon accredited to the United Nations as a non-governmental organisation and continue to exist to this day.[147] Like prior 'peace science' initiatives, the Pugwash Conferences were also funded through philanthropy, by the Canadian businessman and "amateur scientist" Cyrus Eaton, who offered to host the conferences at his place of birth, Pugwash in Novia Scotia, Canada.[148] That is, while

143. For example, the International Crisis Group, one of the most prominent and influential think tanks working on conflict prevention, was founded in 1995 with seed funding by the billionaire and philanthropist George Soros. It further had ties to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as the foundation was led by Morton Abramowitz, who was president of the CEIP at the time. See the history section of the ICG's web presence at https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.crisisgroup.org/who-we-are/history.
144. CCPDC 1997, 15–9; ICISS 2001, 5.
145. Salvia 2019. The Stockholm declaration was initiated by the French physicist Frédéric Joliot-Curie but was signed by a large number of public figures including historians, philosophers, artists, writers, filmmakers and musicians.
146. ibid., 47–9.
147. The Pugwash Conferences were also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995, jointly with the British-Polish physicist Joseph Rotblat, who worked on the Manhattan Project during World War II but then, realising the risks nuclear armament poses, started to advocate for the elimination of nuclear weapons. He is a signatory of the Einstein-Russell manifesto, a co-founder (with Russell) of the Pugwash Conferences and served as the secretary-general for the first 16 years of their existence.
148. Salvia 2019, 54–6.

pacifists had invoked science for the objective of abolishing war at the beginning of the 20th century, scientists were now working towards the cause of peace in light of the escalation of war's devastating potential. The realisation that scientific progress can not only solve problems but also exacerbate them, such as by advancing weapons technology, stabilises the construction of war as a governance object. The emphasis on its increasingly devastating capacity reaffirms the notion of war as cataclysmic and thus maintains, even intensifies, the imperative to govern it through prevention.

From the 1950s onward, a "blossoming of centers, journals, research projects, and training programs" gave rise to what would soon be called peace research or conflict research in the US, Western Europe, Scandinavia, Japan and India.[149] This emerging field of scholarship defined war as a central problem for the contemporary world and believed that it could be resolved, even prevented altogether, if it were thoroughly studied.[150] This "peace research movement" engaged in efforts to mobilise resources from different disciplines, including mathematical models and statistical methods, for investigating war and peace.[151] Indeed, many of those beginning to research war in the 1950s and 1960s were not trained in nor working in IR but came from different fields such as psychology, economics or mathematics. At the same time, a "new generation" of political scientists focused on foreign policy and IR, such as J. David Singer and Karl Deutsch, and developed an interest in pursuing quantitative and behavioural approaches. These two strands had an "almost symbiotic relationship," which provided "reciprocal stimulation and reciprocal legitimization."[152]

In 1997, when the fields of peace and conflict research, respectively, have already matured, the Carnegie report reaffirms the stance that war can be known through modern science. It identifies the scientific community as one of the "pivotal institutions of civil society" for the prevention of deadly conflict.[153] The scientific community, the report states, "is the closest approximation we now have to a truly international community" due to its common set of interests, values and standards and its "shared quest for understanding" that can "overcome the distorting effects of national boundaries, inherent prejudices, imposed ethnocentrism,

149. Singer 1976. Regarding the nomenclature, it is worth noting that there was a split in the 1960s into what Singer describes as three "warring schools of peace research" as a result of researchers' disagreement over whether and to what extent this emerging field should be normative. As Richmond and Berenskoetter 2016 note, peace was seen as an idealistic endeavour in the Cold War context that is in "close proximity to pacifism, dismissed as an ideological stance lending itself more to activism than scientific research." McCarthyism in the US further contributed to suspicion towards 'peace' so that many scholars trying to steer clear of normative commitments adopted 'conflict' or 'prevention' as labels for their research. See also Gleditsch, Nordkvelle and Strand 2014, 147; Groom 2013, 176.

150. Deutsch 1970, 473; Morgenthau 1947, 86; Singer 1976, 120. Cf. MacKenzie and Wegner 2021, 1, who argue that much of the work on war across subfields "is grounded in an implicit assumption that war is inevitable and a permanent part of global relations."

151. Kelman 1981, 95.

152. ibid., 97–100.

153. CCPDC 1997, xxxvi.

and barriers to the free exchange of information and ideas."[154] As a result, the scientific community, according to the Carnegie Commission, is particularly well-suited to tackle the problem of war they are already internationalised since knowledge knows no bounds—or at least not the ones that feature as hindrances to understanding among conflict parties—and thus has the moral obligation to use its knowledge and tools towards the cause of preventing conflict.[155] The underlying belief of the appeal to mobilise science for prevention subscribes to the paradigm of cause and effect, as it only makes sense to search for and try to understand the causes of things if one believes that they can be manipulated. In this way, the construction and institutionalisation of war as an object of scientific inquiry assumes war to be malleable, thus reaffirming a central condition for it to become a governance object. In contrast to an understanding of war as inevitable and caused by fate or divine providence, the modern conception of war as a scientific phenomenon with causes and effects understands it as human-made and, as a consequence, as susceptible to influence and change. Prevention, in this way, becomes both a political and scientific challenge that involves "understand[ing] the nature and sources of human conflict, and above all [developing] effective ways of resolving conflicts before they turn violent."[156]

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed designation as the first of three components of problem constitution.[157] To repeat, designation is the process of labelling, categorising and ordering a set of phenomena, as well as by attributing certain characteristics that make it distinct from other entities. These practices of designating an object, in turn, are embedded in and made possible by a specific historical context. Underlying rationalities, beliefs and understanding of science and governance constitute the conditions of possibility of problem constitution. Therefore, I trace in the first section of this chapter how the scientific cosmology and the idea of progress that developed slowly in Europe and culminated in the 19th century provided the epistemic background for making the idea that war both can and should be prevented possible. Pointing out that war was considered a fact of political life for several hundred years, I argued that for prevention to be thinkable, certain conditions of the understanding of the ontology of the world as well as human destiny and volition needed to develop first, turning war into a phenomenon that is neither inevitable nor merely exploitable through strategy and tactics, but avoidable altogether.

154. CCPDC 1997, xxxviii.
155. ibid., 119. As examples of scientific research and collaboration at the intersection with activism for peace during the Cold War as an example of such 'science for the common good,' the report invokes the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and the Einstein-Russell manifesto.
156. ibid., 118.
157. 'The first' is to be understood here not as chronological but as indicating that it is the first of three chapters.

The epistemic configuration making prevention thinkable developed as part of a larger cosmological shift in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries. Following Allan, I argued that this shift brought changes to several aspects of the cosmological order, specifically regarding the understanding of temporality, ontology, episteme and destiny. Firstly, the idea of linear and absolute time, which gave way to the cause-and-effect reasoning that underlies prevention. Secondly, the erosion of providentialism towards a more humanist conception gave rise to the idea that events on earth are manipulable through human intervention rather than predetermined by a divine or otherwise external force. Finally, the development of several areas of science including natural philosophy and mathematics fostered the modernist worldview that knowledge, science and technology can be used to address, control and resolve social and political problems. The confluence of these historical developments and shifts in thinking provided the background against which it became possible to conceptualise war as a scientific problem that can be manipulated, governed and even prevented. Further, colonialist expansion, the so-called civilising mission and theories of evolution that peaked in the 19th century provided the epistemic grid for the racist distinction of peoples into and 'civilised' versus 'backwards' and 'barbaric' that pacifists leveraged in their case against war.

After discussing the cosmological changes that created the conditions of possibility for the constitution of war as a governance object, I explain how the early pacifists designated war as the binary opposite of peace, as a cataclysmic event and as a scientific object, dedicating a subsection to each aspect. Noting that the first two are not new in the 19th century, war can be considered to have already been designated as a meaningful entity in itself before the modern pacifist movement. Nevertheless, I discuss all three aspects in detail as they are fundamental to the prevention idea as it is also purported in the contemporary prevention agenda. The first aspect concerns the war-peace binary, in which war is conceptualised as finite so that wartime and peacetime are temporally delimited and mutually exclusive periods. The underlying archetype is the one of European major war so that the absence of violence in the form of battles between organised major forces becomes defined as 'peace,' while colonial violence does not qualify was 'war.' This imagination of war and peace as clearly demarcated is the basis for a pacific worldview according to which 'peace' is the normal state of politics, while 'war' constitutes the disruptive exception.

Further, the pacifists of the 19th and early 20th centuries reaffirmed the portrayal of war as an evil. The understanding of war as undesirable and inglorious manifests in a range of attributes and metaphors, most prominently that of the 'scourge' of war. The scourge metaphor proliferates in early pacifist writings and was taken up again after World War II in the Charter of the United Nations as well as a range of reports, resolutions and other documents that reaffirm the charter in the decades afterwards. Notably, the scourge metaphor deflects responsibility and refocuses it to the phenomenon itself, thus making it

possible for activists and organisations to formulate prevention as a common cause. Finally, in the fourth section of this chapter, I traced how philanthropy for the cause of peace helped to establish war as a scientific problem. I argued that this "science of peace" was motivated by the belief that if only the causes and dynamics of war are sufficiently known through scientific research, ways to resolve and prevent it can be developed.[158] In light of the development of nuclear weapons, natural scientists rallied for the cause of peace and warned against the dangers of nuclear war—efforts which were also aided by philanthropy. During the Cold War, a plethora of research centres and programmes emerged across the world, bringing together scientists from a wide variety of fields. The importance of scientific research to halt and avoid war is a continuing theme in the contemporary prevention agenda, making the prevention of war both a political and scientific problem.

158. Morgenthau 1947, 84–5; Rapoport 1982, 40.

4

In Numbers We Trust: The Rise of Statistics and the Translation of War

Historia zaokrągla szkielety do zera.
Tysiąc i jeden to wciaz jeszcze tysiąc.
—
History rounds off skeletons to zero.
A thousand and one is still only a thousand.
– Wisława Szymborska, Starvation Camp Near Jaslo

So it goes.
– Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse Five

4.1 Introduction

In order to become a problem of *international* governance, epistemic objects need to be rendered legible across different state contexts.[1] The process, dubbed "translation" within Allan's framework of problem construction, makes the object portable.[2] Translation happens by isolating certain characteristics that serve as attributes by which objects can be recognised in different political and social contexts, different areas of the world or different periods in time. As I explain in this chapter, a central way of abstracting war into a border-crossing phenomenon is quantification, which makes war as an object measurable, commensurable, comparable and ultimately malleable.

As part of a broader development in methods from the natural sciences that are applied to the scientific inquiry of social and political issues,[3] quantification and statistical modelling

1. Allan 2018b, 164.
2. Allan 2017, 137–8 .
3. Singer 1976, 119; see also Allan 2018b.

have emerged as prevalent ways of knowing, analysing, representing and communicating war as a governance object in the 20th and 21st centuries. The reliance on scientific, and particularly quantitative, data and their underpinning logics is especially pertinent nowadays in the push towards so-called evidence-based policymaking.[4] On the flip side, as attention and funding are scarce, advocates and activists "are compelled to package their claims as 'facts' [...] by including numbers" to demonstrate the size and significance of a problem.[5] That is, the "demand for verifiable, objective 'facts'" risks omitting the complexity and possible inconsistency of the data taken to form a coherent narrative that identifies so-called root causes and rather linear dynamics of conflict.[6]

Enumerating war, such as in terms of military budgets and war debt, or counting the dead and wounded, simplifies complex knowledge and allows for easy comparison.[7] Numerical "information about violence" feeds into the understanding of armed conflict and war.[8] In this way, it has immediate and indirect policy consequences as practitioners rely on numbers and statistics as scientific evidence for their policy design and evaluation, ranging from peace-building operations, development programmes and advocacy campaigns. Numbers enable the comparison of instances of what is recognised as the phenomenon of 'war' across historical, political, social and geographical contexts in absolute and relative terms. Such comparisons, in turn, do not only serve scientific knowledge production on war but are also frequently leveraged to signal the necessity and urgency of preventive measures within the policy sphere.

In this chapter, I first turn to theoretical approaches from IR, philosophy and the sociology of knowledge to excavate how quantification makes social and political phenomena accessible as problems of governance through abstraction, decontextualisation, aggregation and comparison. I then give a historical overview of the development of efforts at quantifying war, through which scholars and activists made the case that it is best prevented. Before summarising the chapter in the conclusion, I zoom in to a specific indicator that is widely used in both academic and policy settings—death counts—in order to carve out how quantification serves to abstract war into a measurable, calculable and ultimately governable phenomenon. To do so, I draw on archival sources such as reports by IOs, NGOs and commissions as well as secondary academic literature. I complement this data with material from interviews I conducted in February and March 2019 with current and former staff of a range of organisations that use quantitative violence data for their programme design and research, including government departments, IOs and NGOs focused on conflict prevention.

4. Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić 2017, 7; Merry 2016, 4.
5. Greenhill 2010, 132.
6. Perera 2017, 43.
7. See also Merry 2016, 1.
8. Krüger et al. 2013, 247.

4.2 Knowing and Governing through Numbers

Number, as the medium of mathematical formalism, is the "most abstract form of the immediate" (*die abstrakteste Gestalt des Unmittelbaren*).[9] In itself, it gives no indication of the ontology of the thing at hand, its context of emergence, its histories or its meaning; it only indicates *how many of the same* there are. In the course of the rising reliance on science and the associated notion that it constitutes objective, rational and thus legitimate inquiry, number became a central tool in the epistemic framework that makes up modern thinking.[10] Quantitative indicators are particularly appealing to policymakers wanting to evade the accusation of partisanship, as numbers promise to be politically unbiased.[11] As Mary Poovey argues, numbers epitomise the "modern fact" as they have become to be seen as pre- or non-interpretative—that is, objective and value-free—descriptors of particulars. However, even if they might appear as a separate mode of representing knowledge, numbers are in fact also interpretive as they rely on a range of theoretical and practical assumptions on what is to be counted and how the quantification of certain things, relations or circumstances works towards building a systematic understanding of the object of inquiry.[12] In the words of Ian Hacking, counting is "hungry for categories."[13] To enumerate things or people means to determine which things or people are to be counted *as which kinds.* Numbers thus transform the meanings and relations of entities and create new ones. That is, rather than revealing the truth, quantitative indicators create it.[14]

The role of quantification in the production and maintenance of knowledge thus goes far beyond numerical representation. Instead, the way in which numbers are used to constitute and corroborate the "modern fact" points to an underlying epistemological conception in which knowledge is understood as consisting of "both apparently noninterpretive (numerical) descriptions of particulars *and* systematic claims that [are] somehow derived from those particularized descriptions."[15] Where complex phenomena are expressed in numbers and statistics, decisions to simplify and leave out detail necessarily have to be undertaken. However, as James Scott notes, while simplified representations do not describe the actual activity of society, this is also not the underlying intention. The point of representation as abstract depictions and expressions is only the aspect that is of interest to the observer.[16] In this sense, decisions on what to count translate into decisions on *what matters*. Here, the dual meaning of 'to count' unfolds, as it describes both that which is enumerated as well as that which is

9. Horkheimer and Adorno 2006, 33.
10. ibid., 13.
11. Merry 2016, 3–4.
12. Poovey 1998, xii–xiii.
13. Hacking 1982, 280.
14. Merry 2016, 5; Porter 1995, 17.
15. Poovey 1998, xii, emphasis original.
16. Scott 1998, 3.

valued—i.e. considered worthy of being recorded.[17] That is, both the decision about what is to be counted, and how, is inherently political, as are the consequences of such enumeration exercises. In other words, the creation, selection, distribution and use of numbers is squarely "the stuff of politics."[18]

The "narrowing of vision" inherent in processes of abstraction makes the phenomenon of interest legible and, as a result, accessible to measurement and calculation.[19] Putting various societal, political and economic dynamics into terms that could be read by the ruling elite became increasingly necessary as countries transformed into large territorial states and expanded their territories through colonial and imperial conquest. Aside from being a mode of abstraction, quantification is also a "technology of distance" that enables overseeing large populations by aggregating them, thus reducing the need for intimate, contextual knowledge and personal trust.[20] In this way, measurement, aggregation and calculation as the cornerstones of making societies and their activities statistically legible constitute a central component of governance, both in the service of crafting the modern nation-state and overseeing colonial expansion.[21] Once states started to numerically track social dynamics such as marriages, diseases or death, they could design and implement policies to respond to such dynamics and, in further consequence, use statistics to evaluate policy success.[22] By applying methods of mathematics, such numerical records and statistics about society can then be compared and used for deducing patterns. In *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno characterise this approach to comparison and equivalence as central rationalities of the bourgeoisie: citing Francis Bacon's dictum that when adding unequals to equals, the whole will be unequal too, they argue that the bourgeois society is ruled by the notion of the equivalent. According to this notion, the same formulas that describe the exchange of commodities can describe social justice.[23] Statistics became the key to good government "because it was only through quantifiable data and statistical research that one could uncover the laws of progress, in society as well as in nature."[24]

Indeed, many of the social categories used for policymaking are a product of such kind-making that took place in the course of the indicator-driven bureaucratisation of the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe. This period saw the rise of statistics for governance, as quantitative surveys of mortality, marriage or disease made populations legible to rulers and governments.[25] Numerical data and statistical research were believed to unveil underlying

17. Badiou 2008, 2.
18. Andreas and Greenhill 2010b, 2.
19. Scott 1998, 11.
20. Porter 1995, ix.
21. Cohn 1996; Foucault 2007, 67–79; Hacking 1990; Mitchell 2002; Scott 1998.
22. Allan 2018b; Foucault 2007, 67–79; Scott 1998.
23. Horkheimer and Adorno 2006, 13.
24. Mazower 2013, 100.
25. Allan 2018b; Foucault 2007, 67–79; Scott 1998.

laws of natural and societal progress.[26] In this sense, governance through abstraction is a distinctly provincial development associated with European modernity and its scienticism. Today still, perhaps more than ever, does number govern "our conception of the political, with the currency [...] of suffrage, of opinion polls, of the majority."[27] As I edit this chapter two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the ubiquity of numbers for political decision-making is apparent, as possibilities of everyday life are restricted, lifted and renegotiated on the basis of case counts, hospitalisation statistics, excess death rates and the so-called basis reproduction number *R* with its ominous threshold of 1 that indicates epidemiological growth or decrease. However, as Sally Engle Merry notes, while quantification systems are "fundamental to the project of global governance," they typically receive little attention in analyses of the latter as they are underplayed as mere technicalities rather than acknowledged as central mechanisms for producing the knowledge upon which policies are based and public opinion on such policies is shaped.[28]

Enumerating indicators of wars and conflicts, such as in the form of their human and material costs, abstracts them into a comparative category. This abstraction of wars works on the premise that there is an 'essence' of war or, in the Weberian sense, a set of ideal-typical characteristics, that enables the phenomenon at hand to be identified across time and space as belonging to the same kind or category. That is, representations of war in quantitative indicators are technologies of knowledge creation that depend on processes of translation and commensuration in that they create equivalence across different cases.[29] A conception which helps to put this in simpler terms is the aforementioned metaphor of war as a chameleon by Clausewitz, with which he conveys that war possesses an eternal and immutable *nature* while its *character* might change.[30] Just as the chameleon might be brown when sitting on a tree branch but change to green when sitting on grass, war can manifest in various forms in different circumstances but in both cases, it is still a chameleon or a war, respectively. The idea that even if the Tartars waged war differently from the Romans and the monarchies of the Middle Ages, these are expressions of the same phenomenon, makes war a portable concept that can be transferred to other socio-political and historical environments.[31]

26. Mazower 2013, 100.
27. Badiou 2008, 2.
28. Merry 2017, 155.
29. Merry 2016, 27 and 212.
30. Clausewitz 1982, 121 and 376–9; Coker 2010, 11. It is worth noting that Clausewitz writes here that war is *not only* or *more than* a chameleon, see also Barkawi and Brighton 2011.
31. Clausewitz 1982, 376–9.

4.3 The Mathematisation of the Study of War

Against the background of the rise of statistics for governance, early attempts at quantifying war and its effects developed at the "intersection of peace activism and the emergence of modern social science."[32] While the rise of conflict research as a distinct academic field dedicated to the systematic investigation of war and peace is often pinpointed to the 1950s,[33] early efforts at itemising war can be found already in the 19th century, as peace societies disseminated such research to the broader public and occasionally conducted studies on the loss of life through war and military expenditures themselves.[34] Most notably, the Massachusetts Peace Society published reports that drew on various sources to summarise statistics on "the extent of the military establishments of civilized nations in war and peace."[35] These reports were not stand-alone documents but rather accounts focused on the development and activities of the society spanning a couple of pages and were appended to other publications distributed by the organisation, such as speeches, essays or periodicals.

These reports involved itemising the size of the standing armies of the major European power at the time, the costs of maintaining them, as well as the "still more melancholy subject" of human lives lost to war.[36] Noting that the losses are so many, ever-increasing and yet difficult to track, the *First Report of the Committee of Inquiry* of the Massachusetts Peace Society forgoes listing details but instead presents the general estimate that 5,060,000 lives have been "destroyed by a *part* of the wars of the civilized part of the world" between 1800 and 1817.[37] Extrapolating from this number, the report then proceeds to tally *all* battle deaths "since the beginning of the world" and concludes that "the enormous amount of 3,346 millions [sic] of human beings [were] sacrificed on the earth to the idol of war."[38] Given that it is a heuristic estimate based on crude—and, by the state of knowledge in 2022, also inaccurate—assumptions about the size and growth of the world's population as well as about the severity and distribution of wars in time and space, the resulting number appears preposterous. Notwithstanding this somewhat "fantastic" calculation and the various references to God and the Bible in the reports of the Massachusetts Peace Society's Committee of Inquiry, they "nevertheless represent the beginnings of the realistic study of war."[39]

The tendency of the mathematisation of the study of war develops in the 19th century and manifests further in the famous 1867 study *Contemporary Wars (1853–1866): Statistical*

32. Gleditsch, Nordkvelle and Strand 2014, 146.
33. For example, ibid., 146; Kelman 1981, 95.
34. Wiberg 1984, 168.
35. MPS 1818, 22.
36. ibid., 27.
37. ibid., 27, emphasis original. This estimate draws on reports and calculations by a French writer who is only identified as "M. de Guignes."
38. ibid., 28. 3,346 million is 3,346,000,000 or 3.346 billion.
39. Curti 1973, 27.

Researches respecting the Loss of Men and Money Involved in Them by the French economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu. Distinctly published for peace advocacy, it was first distributed in French by the Ligue Internationale de la Paix and later republished in English by the London Peace Society. Here again, the statistical work on war is closely related to colonial interests. A mentee of Adam Smith, Leroy-Beaulieu developed into one of the central thinkers on public administration in France and was a staunch believer in Darwinian selection and the right of 'civilised peoples' to expand into the territories of the 'savages.'[40] Leroy-Beaulieu's study sets out to catalogue the losses, "both of money and men," resulting from the "great wars" of the mid-19th century by providing tables that register deaths resulting from battle, wounding, disease or suicide during war as well as military expenditures for navies and armies.[41] This compilation allows Leroy-Beaulieu to compare the devastation of war across cases. However, numbers and tables not only allow for comparisons of the effects of war among different countries and times by way of casualty counts or expenditures. Leroy-Beaulieu concludes by drawing an overall balance to make a more cumulative argument against war: in the space of fourteen years between 1853 and 1866, "a total of about 1,750,000 men [was] swept off by war from civilised nations," which he compares to "the whole male population of Holland" at the time.[42]

The CEIP's *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, as one of the first empirical studies compiling both qualitative and quantitative evidence on a specific case of war, also attempts to itemise its effects.[43] The authors report on the economic and human costs of the wars with great detail.[44] As it aims to generate public outrage and advance the cause of preventing future wars,[45] the report notes that the "balance sheet of the war must bear at its beginning, in order to characterize it properly, the list of the dead and wounded."[46] Drawing on a variety of sources that include official government publications and correspondence,[47] it provides the wars' "sinister inventory" of the Bulgarian, Greek, Montenegrin, Serbian, Turkish officers and soldiers that were killed, reported missing, wounded or have fallen ill.[48] It also notes that the Balkan Wars did not only claim the lives of belligerents but also those of civilians. However, faced with the lack of adequate reporting, the report's authors are left to wonder what their number must be.[49]

40. Leroy-Beaulieu 1874; see also Gemie 1992; Wessling 1977.
41. Gemie 1992, 346; Leroy-Beaulieu 1869.
42. ibid., 56.
43. For historical background on the report, see Chapter 3.
44. On the economic costs, see also Chapter 5.
45. Andrä, forthcoming, 1.
46. CEIP 1914, 243.
47. However, many of these sources are not explicitly identified.
48. CEIP 1914, 243.
49. ibid., 244.

After the two World Wars, quantitative scholarship of war experienced an upsurge, especially at US universities. The studies by Pitirim Sorokin, Quincy Wright and Lewis Richardson are often named as the founding works of contemporary conflict research.[50] Wright's *Study of War*—also supported by funding from philanthropic organisations such as the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation[51]—compiles a massive amount of data in 44 appendices with tables, graphs and maps for the purpose of controlling and eventually preventing war.[52] In Wright's conception, war is squarely a measurable and translatable phenomenon. From data such as the yield of bombs, the amount of energy supply, public opinion polls or the number of international treaties and organisations, "inferences could be drawn to estimate the speed and scope of processes increasing or decreasing the likelihood of uncontrolled large-scale conflicts and hence the size and power of the forces of making war and peace."[53] However, although the study "demonstrates a diligence in the gathering and generation of data," it barely contains any inferential statistics.[54]

Formal modelling and statistical analyses of war, now commonplace in conflict research, were pioneered by Lewis Richardson in his work on the mathematical psychology of war, the distribution of wars in time and his posthumously published study *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*.[55] The latter is an ambitious project that attempts to record all deaths between 1820 and 1950 caused by a deliberate act of another human.[56] To make such "quarrels" comparable, Richardson uses the method of expressing numbers in magnitudes on a logarithmic scale to the base of ten, which makes it possible to "survey the entire spectrum of human violence on a single scale."[57] His work constitutes one of the first major efforts at using statistical modelling and inference for investigating international politics and illustrates how methods from the natural sciences are applied to social problems.[58] However, although Richardson's methodology was novel for the study of war, it can be seen as a part of a wider trend at the time towards the "mathematization of whole areas of knowledge."[59]

Leroy-Beaulieu's *Contemporary Wars*, Wright's *A Study of War* or Richardson's *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* can be considered early instances of database-building for the purpose of recording violence data that see their successors in today's conflict databases like the Correlates of War (COW) project, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project

50. Deutsch 1970, 474; Geller 2004, 222; Kelman 1981, 95; Singer 1976, 119.
51. Zaidi 2017, 417. On the scientific philanthropy for peace research, see also Chapter 3.
52. Wright 1942.
53. Deutsch 1970, 475.
54. Singer 1976, 119.
55. Richardson 1935, 1945, 1960.
56. Hayes 2002, 11.
57. For example, a murder with a single victim has a magnitude of 0 as $10^0 = 1$, while a war with a million casualties has a magnitude of 6, as $10^6 = 1{,}000{,}000$.
58. Singer 1976, 119; Wiberg 1984, 169.
59. Nicholson 1999, 555–6.

(ACLED) or the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).[60] What unites these efforts at cataloguing war is the shared motivation to enumerate, classify and categorise instances of wars across time and space, to provide numerical data that enable testing causal models to "uncover linkages and explain 'variation' in outcomes" and, ultimately, to produce policy-relevant and 'actionable' knowledge that can be leveraged towards developing policies to mitigate, and ideally prevent, the adverse consequences of war.[61] However, as Tarak Barkawi argues, the "positivist reduction of war to a set of generic observable indicators," as it is done when identifying a limited set of quantitatively measurable variables, "deprives war of its historicity."[62] That is, rather than striving to understand the processes and historical circumstances of specific wars, large-scale databases such as the COW aim at producing portable insights that can be translated and abstracted into broader patterns of war and armed conflict.[63]

4.4 Counting Bodies, Enumerating War

"Why is it wrong to begin a war?" asks Michael Walzer in his book *Just and Unjust Wars*. We all know the answer, he argues—it is because "[p]eople get killed, and often in large numbers."[64] While Walzer is looking here for a way to describe "the crime of war" and its logic, he also points to a way of knowing and representing war that is central to the agenda of prevention, namely quantification. What matters is not only that war is deadly, but that it kills at a large scale. As a result, a common metric to capture the devastation of armed conflict is the number of battle deaths and civilians killed.[65] Death counts serve to "compare the relative horror of different wars" but as quantification necessarily comes with abstraction, they also serve to relativise.[66] As abstraction relies on removing detail and context, 'war' turns from a specific historical event into a general category. Thus, where war is counted as separate incidents such as numbers of deaths, the context, conditions, relations and histories that led to the killings are omitted. As an illustration of this, Merry puts forward the example of counts of domestic violence incidents, which exclude the contexts of kinship networks, gender norms or the history of particular relationships, yet it is exactly these dimensions that determine how the person abstracted as an incident experiences domestic violence.[67] To put

60. Leroy-Beaulieu 1869; Richardson 1960; Wright 1942.
61. Krause 2017, 94.
62. Barkawi 2011, 710.
63. Geller 2004, 223.
64. Walzer 2011, 22.
65. For an overview of methods for (civilian) casualty counting, see Jewell, Spagat and Jewell 2018.
66. Krause 2017, 90.
67. Merry 2016, 27.

it with a well-known epigram that is sometimes ascribed to Joseph Stalin: a single death is a tragedy, but a million is a statistic.[68]

Following Allan, who argues that "expertise and scientific knowledge [...] underwrite the designation, translation, and problematization of objects as distinct entities subject to political interventions," the indeterminate threshold of a certain number of dead bodies as an indicator of escalation—although not necessarily or strictly quantified—contributes to the constitution of conflict outbreaks as governable entities. To measure something quantitatively is to represent its existence as fact and to signal its importance and relevance to policy.[69] That is, in addition to their function for establishing war and conflict as objects of scientific inquiry, numbers also bolster advocacy and help to mobilise resources—to the point that statistics that indicate a decrease of a problem in quantitative terms can be perceived as a threat to efforts tackling said problem.[70] In this way, numbers are political resources in themselves, "valuable to whoever is able to harness them."[71]

While rarely a target of governance themselves, fatality numbers are a crucial component in the way how practitioners and scholars of conflict prevention and resolution think about what war and conflict are and how they unfold.[72] Body counts are frequently employed as "social facts and forms of knowledge that are used to shape and influence policies and practices associated with armed conflict and its public representations."[73] As Tanisha Fazal notes, battle deaths in particular are used widely because "[d]eath is final and corpses are easier to count than the wounded."[74] Then again, as Walzer also adds, "our ideas about war [...] depend very much on how people get killed and who those people are."[75] That is, the moral burden of war weighs heavier where it kills those who are "innocent."[76]

Policy documents also frequently use cumulative fatality counts to drive home one central motivation behind the prevention agenda: war kills. Governments, IOs and NGOs rely on such information for decisions about policy and military action, as well as for bolstering prevention advocacy.[77] The 1992 *Agenda for Peace* report notes that since 1945 "over 100 major conflicts around the world have left some 20 million dead."[78] Five years later, the Carnegie Report sets the death toll at over 100 million people since the beginning of the

68. Ward 2004, 25.
69. Andreas and Greenhill 2010b, 1.
70. Feingold 2010, 51–2.
71. Merry 2017, 157.
72. Krause 2019, 129.
73. Krause 2017, 91.
74. Fazal 2014, 122.
75. Walzer 2011, 22. See also Balibar 2008; Butler 2016.
76. Aronson 2013. The construction of children as innocent victims of violence often comes in conjunction with gendered assumptions of vulnerability, resulting in a compound "womenandchildren" as the primary civilian group worthy of protection, see Carpenter 2006; Elshtain 1995; Enloe 2014, 1–36.
77. Seybolt, Aronson and Fischhoff 2013, 3.
78. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 3.

20th century, four million of which alone in the space of eight years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the publication of the report in 1997.[79]

In 2011, the World Development Report entitled "Conflict, Security, and Development," which is one of a series of reports published annually by the World Bank on aspects of economic development, notes that battle deaths declined from 160,000 per year in the 1980s to fewer than 50,000 twenty years later for both "major" and "minor" civil wars.[80] This differentiation between 'major' and 'minor' conflict here is adopted from the minimum threshold of 25 and 1,000 battle deaths per year, respectively, as used by the UCDP and frequently applied in the quantitative study of armed conflict. As Keith Krause argues, this report was a crucial development on the path towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015, of which goal no. 16—the most controversial and last agreed one—includes the target of "significantly reduc[ing] all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere."[81] Thus, the preventive aspirations of SDG no. 16, which calls for promoting "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development," are measured, *inter alia*, by numbers indicating the count war dead.[82]

Published seven years after the World Bank's *World Development Report* on armed conflict and three years after the SDGs, the 2018 *Pathways for Peace* report updates these trends, noting an increase in wars and "lower-intensity" conflict. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as the *Pathways for Peace* is co-authored by the World Bank and the United Nations, the distinction between (civil) war and low-intensity conflicts is also based on UCDP data and its battle death thresholds of 25 to 999 and more than 1,000 and battle deaths per year for low-intensity conflict and war, respectively.[83] Noting inverse trends compared to the World Bank report of 2011, the *Pathways for Peace* report states that battle deaths in civil wars have almost tripled and risen by 60% in low-intensity conflicts in the decade before the report was compiled.[84] While the latter constitutes the most recent comprehensive document by the UN and the World Bank on the prevention agenda, other organisations such as the conflict analysis and prevention NGO International Crisis Group (ICG) also use fatality counts to emphasise the

79. CCPDC 1997, 11.
80. World Bank 2011, 51–2.
81. Krause 2017, 94–5; UN 2015, 25.
82. Ramcharan and Ramcharan 2020, 7; UN 2015, 18. Specifically, indicator no. 16.1.2 concerns conflict-related deaths per a population of 100,000 by sex, age and cause of death. However, SDG no. 16 also includes targets beyond lethal and physical violence that address abuse, exploitation, unequal access to justice, corruption and many other issues regarding weak or absent institutions. To assess the progress towards its 12 targets (including 16.a and 16.b), it has a total of 24 indicators that include (but are not limited to) quantitative measures per 100,000 people, such as victims of homicide, armed conflict and human trafficking; see UNGA 2017, 20–2. See also on the website of the UN's Department of Economics and Social Affairs, which has a dedicated page for each SDG. It provides an updated list that includes indicator no. 16.3.3, which was not part of the initial set of measures in 2017, https://web.archive.org/web/20220508125151/https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16.
83. UN and World Bank 2018, 13–4.
84. ibid., 13–4.

case for prevention in 2021. The mission statement on the organisations' website states that an "estimated 90,358 people were killed in conflicts in 2017" and that the trend of the past five years has gone towards an increase in wars and fatality numbers. As is the case with the UN and World Bank outputs, the ICG also indicates that it bases this fatality 'estimate' on UCDP data.[85] Such cumulative estimates help to make war legible as a global phenomenon of a significant scale. Aggregate death counts rest on the assumption that events in various places around the world can be formulated as one overarching phenomenon that manifests at different times and in different spaces, but whose outcomes—such as the war dead—can be consolidated into one sum. In other words, such cumulative counts indicate that in the discourse of IOs, NGOs and development actors such as the above, 'war' and 'armed conflict' exist as portable problems that can be translated across contexts through quantification. Since the war dead around the world amount to the same problem, even if its circumstances differ and even if its particular manifestations are intra-state, war becomes a genuinely *global* problem that warrants governing by *international* actors.

4.4.1 What Counts? The Trouble with Thresholds

In the construction of war as an international problem of governance that can be expressed and compared through numbers, researchers—particularly those that create and maintain conflict data sets—play a significant role in shaping the understanding of war and its dynamics that is ultimately used for policymaking and agenda-setting. At each stage of the data collection from investigation to coding, analysis and use, a range of technical and political biases are introduced as each agent in the chain of quantifying the dead has specific procedures, judgements, motivations and constraints.[86] However, once scholars use these data to derive generalised findings on conflict dynamics and policymakers print aggregate casualty counts in their report, the specific circumstances of the data gathering and its situational biases that I discuss below remain largely unaddressed. In other words, although the end result in the form of neat statistics, graphs and curves bestows such numbers with an aura of objectivity, precision and scientific authority, counting the dead is an "inherently political undertaking."[87]

To establish when a war or conflict can be categorised as such in comparative data sets, quantitative scholars commonly apply a casualty threshold.[88] A widely used cut-off for determining a series of clashes as armed conflict or civil war is the threshold of more than 25 battle deaths or 1,000 battle deaths in a year, respectively. Academic studies and

85. ICG, "Who We Are: Preventing War. Shaping Peace" (2021), available at https://web.archive.org/web/20210331153712/https://www.crisisgroup.org/who-we-are.
86. For a typology of biases, see Dawkins 2021, 1100.
87. Aronson 2013, 29; Merry 2016, 1.
88. Bara 2020, 180.

databases operating with battle death thresholds do so as a pragmatic way of classifying conflict with a set cut-off in order to standardise coding schemes. However, when policy reports such as *Pathways for Peace* rely on these outputs, they internalise such thresholds, which then—inadvertently but rarely explicitly—shape what kinds of conflict come to be understood as 'war' or 'low-intensity conflict ' in the policy sphere. In addition, death thresholds also have ethical implications because they set physical and lethal violence as a definitional baseline. As a result, they deprioritise other types of harm and require some amount of suffering before the definitional criteria for something to fall into the categories of 'war' or 'conflict' apply.

The introduction of the criterion of 1,000 battle deaths is widely attributed to J. David Singer and Melvin Small, who popularised it in their volume *The Wages of War* that came out of the COW project in the 1980s.[89] The COW project was founded and led by J. David Singer in 1963 and received its seed funding from the Carnegie Corporation through the Center of Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan, with which Singer was affiliated at the time.[90] It compiled a extensive database logging the frequency, participants, duration and battle deaths of all wars since the end of the Napoleonic era in 1816.[91] While the original authors seem to have abandoned the threshold in later codings, it has since become a frequently used cut-off value in conflict databases and large-N comparisons of (civil) wars.[92] The political scientist John Mueller writes on the basis of a personal conversation with Singer in 2006 that "the 1,000 figure more or less fell out of the analysis [for the COW dataset] when other aspects of what could be considered warfare were assembled."[93] However, as Beatrice Heuser notes, the figure was already used by Wright in his 1942 opus *A Study of War*. Wright, in turn, adopted it from the *Militär-Historisches Kriegs-Lexikon* by the Austrian military historian Gaston Bodart.[94]

The criterion of battle deaths for the categorisation and ordering of conflicts by severity and intensity relies on a set of unspoken assumptions about the nature of armed conflict and how it is to be known and represented.[95] Firstly, quantitative thresholds such as the one

89. Small and Singer 1982, 56, 210. For attributions, see, e.g., Geller 2004, 235, Mueller 2009, 298, Sambanis 2004, 816.
90. Geller 2004, 222.
91. Singer and Small 1972; Small and Singer 1982.
92. Krause 2017, 100; Sambanis 2004, 815–7. However, the practice of counting war dead as an academic exercise has also seen scathing criticism. For example, the then-coordinator of the peace studies programme at the University of Tromsø, Jørgen Johansen, reportedly said in 2003 that counting the number of conflicts (as the UCDP does) "smacks of 'necrophilia,'" quoted in Gleditsch, Nordkvelle and Strand 2014, 148.
93. Mueller 2009, 298.
94. Heuser 2022, 61; Wright 1942, 235. Heuser posits that Wright relies on Richardson for the use of the 1,000 battle death figure, which I was unable to verify because the only two references to Richardson in *A Study of War* do not seem to relate to battle death thresholds.
95. While severity is a direct or absolute measure of lethality as it describes the total number of battle deaths, intensity is a relative measure as it captures the total number of battle deaths in proportion to the pre-war population of combatants, see Braumoeller 2019, 101–2; Small and Singer 1982, 63.

of 1,000-battle deaths require coding decisions on whose death counts and what exactly constitutes a 'battle death.' Above all, the criterion of a certain number of deaths for something to qualify as war or low-intensity conflict, respectively, centrally defines war and conflict as deadly. The corollary of such a threshold is that other types of violence that do not result in battle deaths are not defined as conflict. As Krause notes, this might lead to databases that are based on body counts to have a "significant pro-state or pro-government bias," where instances of oppressive violence, both lethal and non-lethal, are omitted.[96]

Such central, but often unspoken, assumptions are consequential as researchers code their observations into the data in the course of translating them into quantitatively comparable values. Implicit assumptions then influence which patterns the research will yield and which findings they are ultimately able to formulate.[97] In this regard, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative fatality data is somewhat artificial, as quantitative data is always founded on qualitative assumptions.[98] In order to distinguish combatant deaths from civilian deaths, decisions have to be made on who counts as either, which might not be clearly discernible in the reality of conflict, when people switch between these roles in situations of *ad hoc* mobilisation or where categories intersect, such as in the case of child soldiers.[99] This tension is recognised in the more recent prevention agenda as the aforementioned 2018 *Pathways for Peace* report notes that "battle deaths tell only part of the story of the damage inflicted" and that *both* battle and civilian deaths have increased in the last two decades.[100]

Secondly, the 1,000-battle death threshold is ahistorical in the sense that where it is held constant to compare conflicts over time, it disregards the changing character of war-fighting, battlefield technology or military medicine. As Fazal shows, the number of battle deaths in wars and conflicts is influenced by advances in preventive care, battlefield medicine, evacuation processes and body protection.[101] As a result, wars have become less lethal while the occurrence of war wounded has become more likely, so that the value of the "primary measure to count wars" decreases when the threshold for clashes to count as 'war' is held constant.[102] Consequently, fewer conflicts meet the 1,000-battle death criterion and thus qualify as wars, which has led some to conclude that wars are on the decline.[103] This position has been refuted by conflict scholarship of the last decade.[104]

Thirdly, even before the coding can begin, conflict data sets relying on body counts

96. Krause 2017, 102.
97. See, e.g., Barkawi 2011, 709–11; Merry 2016; Sambanis 2004.
98. Krause 2013, 274; Kreuzer 2010; Merry 2016, 20–1.
99. Andreas and Greenhill 2010a, 272–3; Gade 2010; Krause 2013.
100. UN and World Bank 2018, xix–xx.
101. Fazal 2014, 97.
102. ibid., 96; see also Braumoeller 2019.
103. See, e.g., Goldstein 2011; Horgan 2012; Lacina and Gleditsch 2013; Mueller 2009; Pinker 2012.
104. See, e.g., Braumoeller 2019; Fazal 2014; Gohdes and Price 2013.

depend on complete and truthful reporting, none of which is guaranteed in war zones and situations of extreme political contention. Consequently, such data and the resulting numbers of war dead are prone to missingness and bias. Armed conflict is a realm that is difficult to measure and quantify due to practical challenges, as it frequently occurs in terrain that is difficult to access. For example, in the case of the civil war in South Sudan, the government itself was party to the conflict, so that no official counting of the dead took place. In addition, large parts of the country were considered inaccessible for human rights investigators and UN officials. As a result, the fate of "populations beyond airstrips remained a mystery."[105] However, even where parts of a designated conflict zone are more easily accessible, such as larger cities and towns, international personnel usually evacuates once violence escalates and then incident reporting becomes fragmentary.[106] Such challenges make it difficult to ascertain whether a zero in a spreadsheet indicates no conflict fatalities or simply no observations. That is, case numbers reflect reporting patterns rather than patterns of violence.[107]

Fourthly, relevant apparatuses for gathering data on conflict deaths might be inept, internally or externally obstructed or different parties to a conflict might communicate competing numbers, all of which makes the collection of conflict-related statistics fraught with omissions and bias.[108] While data from newswires and media reports remains invaluable for quantitative conflict scholarship,[109] in cases where the data corpus relies primarily (such as in the case of ACLED) or entirely (such as in the case of UCDP) on such sources, a long chain of events has to concatenate so that the story of a person killed in armed conflict as a combatant or civilian gets counted as such. As Sophia Dawkins puts it, behind each such observation is

> a human rights officer or a journalist who arrives once the killing is done, and decides whom to talk to and what to record; a report that bureaucrats or newspaper editors make public; and a researcher who locates the report, and codes it into a dataset.[110]

Only once a death has passed through this process can yet another researcher or bureaucrat sum it up with other deaths to result in a cumulative fatality count, which then indicates the

105. Dawkins 2021, 1106; see also Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić 2017, 7–9.
106. Krause 2017, 100.
107. Krüger et al. 2013, 249.
108. Andreas and Greenhill 2010b, 4–5.
109. However, as Dawkins notes, journalists and human rights investigators involved in recording killings and human rights violations in South Sudan expressed surprise when they learned how scholars use the numbers they publish, as they do not consider themselves to have the mandate to produce accurate fatality counts for research, especially because their reports often rely on quoting someone else who is sufficiently credible such as spokespeople or witness testimony. Dawkins 2021, 1104–5.
110. ibid., 1098. As such, these kinds of data are *per se* convenience samples rather than probability samples, making them unsuitable for drawing statistical conclusions. Gohdes and Price 2013, 1098; Krüger et al. 2013, 250.

severity of the fighting.[111] On the other hand, where data is collected from conflict parties or governments (the latter of which can in some cases be one of the former), it might be subject to political and strategic bias. For example, conflict parties might either exaggerate or understate fatality numbers on their side "to appear strong to the opposition or to minimize international backlash."[112] This is exemplified by the Bosnian case mentioned below, in which political elites frequently reiterated a fabricated number of Bosniak casualties even once more accurate estimates were available, or by the cases of the wars in the Gulf and Iraq, in which a warring party—the US—produced "official ignorance" by way of refusing to count casualties or trying to erode the credibility of existing estimates.[113]

Where casualty data are collected by UN missions and bodies, this is usually only possible on the basis of a strict mandate and invitation by the host state. This reliance on consent puts constraints on the positions that the UN and its various sub-organisations within the host state can take.[114] When organisation-produced accounts, including casualty numbers, do not align with the perceptions and motivations of the government, host states can prohibit IOs from taking preventive actions if these are perceived as too invasive.[115] This is exemplified by the aforementioned case of Burundi,[116] in which the government initially allowed the UN and the AU to carry out investigations and observations around the electoral violence in the run-up of President Pierre Nkurunziza's third term, but ultimately ceased all cooperation with monitoring bodies after the first report of the OHCHR was published, effectively declaring individuals of the commission of inquiry *personae non gratae*.[117]

In addition, setting arbitrary thresholds of body counts as proxies for determining whether a situation or chain of events qualifies as a 'low-intensity conflict' or 'war' has ethical implications for policymaking because there needs to be at least some suffering before this definitional criterion is fulfilled. As Krause puts it, "war and conflicts are deemed to begin only when a certain number of dead bodies appear."[118] Policy documents of the prevention agenda, such as the 2018 *Pathways for Peace* report acknowledge that war is not only lethal but also destroys social and political institutions, infrastructures and production systems.[119] However, in interviews with analysts in government departments, IOs and NGOs, I have found that spectacular, physical—and particularly lethal—violence is understood to be the

111. For a journalistic account of the difficulties of obtaining accurate fatality numbers, see Turse 2016.
112. See the fatality methodology FAQs on the ACLED website: https://web.archive.org/web/20210319170328/https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2020/02/FAQs_-ACLED-Fatality-Methodology_2020.pdf.
113. Aronson 2013, 44–5.
114. Interview with former UN staffer, London, 22 February 2019.
115. Call and Campbell 2018, 71.
116. See also Chapter 2.
117. Jacobsen and Engell 2018. See also Chapter 2.
118. Krause 2017, 102.
119. UN and World Bank 2018, 34.

central characteristic that makes a number of events fall within the category of 'war.' While 'war' or 'armed conflict' lack uniform definitions in both policy and scholarship, a crucial implication of taking physical and lethal violence as the implicit baseline for what is recognised as a war and what is not deprioritises other types of violence that harm populations and might contribute to the escalation of armed conflict.

A particular example from my interviews illustrates how a central characteristic of 'war' or 'conflict' is their deadliness on a large scale: one analyst remarked that one particular country that is being monitored by their organisation is not one of the "typical violence cases" because it is not an active conflict and any fatalities (which occasionally occur in clashes or protests) are "comparatively low in number."[120] While, according to the interviewee, the history of conflict justifies the continued interest, the case is somewhat of an "outlier" in the country portfolio of their organisation. From the viewpoint of relational interviewing,[121] this presents as an almost apologetic justification of the country case as interesting enough, as the interviewee assumed that I—asking about the production of "conflict knowledge"[122]—would be automatically and primarily interested in *deadly* conflicts. The interest in spectacular violence that this analyst expected of me is built into the reporting mechanisms and pressures to 'tell a story' when conflicts drag on over several years and media attention wanes. As a result, 'stories' are prioritised that promise to be relevant and interesting to an international audience, while 'slow' violence such as famine is seen as less attractive for media and advocacy attention.[123]

As the aforementioned NGO analyst put it, there is no clear cut-off for when "something gets bad enough to cover it," although one crucial component of such judgements (across their organisation) usually is that "a fair amount of people got killed."[124] Consequently, the centrality of death counts to define conflicts as well as compare their severity and intensity de-prioritises other types of harm. As none of my interviewees stated that this focus of direct violence is required of them, the frequent taken-for-granted references to such incidents as the ones of interest suggest that it is an epistemological practice stemming from the unquestioned assumption that stakeholders, i.e. potential 'end-users' of knowledge production outputs, are primarily interested in physical violence. After all, the body with the highest authority in terms of deciding on international efforts for conflict prevention, the UN Security Council, is unlikely to mandate substantive action and allocate resources when evidence of significant violence is absent.[125]

120. Interview with NGO analyst, telephone, 18 February 2019.
121. Fujii 2018.
122. Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić 2017.
123. See also Dawkins 2021.
124. Interview with NGO analyst, telephone, 18 February 2019.
125. Call and Campbell 2018, 71.

This is not a new insight, however, and has been voiced by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan already in 2001 in his report *Prevention of Armed Conflict*. In the section on the role of the UN Security Council in preventing deadly conflict, he notes that its focus remains "almost exclusively on crises and emergencies, normally becoming involved only when violence has already occurred on a large scale."[126] Preventive deployment of peacekeeping operations therefore remains rare, as the so-called international community remains reluctant to expend resources "without the clear case for deployment that is made by open conflict."[127] Where conflict expertise depends on violence reaching certain levels of lethality, this omits other preceding manifestations of violence and repression, which might not be deadly but still systematic, wides-spread and a central contributor to the escalation of conflicts. However, setting a certain level of lethal violence as the starting point for knowing war, as illustrated by the above examples, creates a paradox in which analysts produce knowledge to inform prevention policy but begin their inquiry at the occurrence of violence.

4.4.2 Sticky Numbers and Ghost Statistics

While cumulative estimates such as in the examples mentioned above help to represent war and armed conflict as a global problem and thus provide a justification for the involvement of international actors in their prevention and governance, such numbers are constructed on the basis of specific assumptions and categorisations that determine what and who is to be counted. As a result, death numbers do not, as implied by their use in prevention advocacy, provide a veritable and unpolitical representation of the effects of war. Instead, death counts can turn out to be highly controversial, especially where counting casualties is co-opted by political strategising.

The death count of the Yugoslav wars, and particularly the account of Bosnian Muslim casualties, is a famous case of disputes on how many have been killed and how many among those were military or civilians. As victimhood "provided some measure of moral authority to hold power and punish those who were determined to be perpetrators," all parties to the conflict sought to present themselves as the group having suffered greater losses than they caused to others.[128] By 1993, it had become "conventional wisdom" among diplomats, academics, journalists and political elites that 200,000 to 250,000 (sometimes also cited as 200,000 to 350,000) Bosniaks had been killed at the hands of Serbs. This number did not change significantly in the public narrative since it was first released, despite the conflict continuing for another two years.[129] It not only became established through its reiteration

126. Annan 2001, 12–3.
127. ibid., 21.
128. Aronson 2013, 32; Nettelfield 2010.
129. ibid.; Seybolt, Aronson and Fischhoff 2013, 3–4.

in international news media but also as it was bolstered by studies from both within and outside Bosnia, including the Institute of Public Health in Sarajevo, the chairman of the UN Commission of Experts Cherif Bassiouni and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).[130]

However, the Bosnian researcher Mirsad Tokača's internationally funded, non-governmental Research and Document Centre documented 97,207 cases of killed or missing persons (including 39,684 civilians) using multiple sources ranging from media reports to gravesite data in what has been dubbed the *Bosniak Book of the Dead*. An independent evaluation by the quantitative sociologist Patrick Ball of the Human Rights Data Analysis Group and the demographer Ewa Tabeau, a staffer of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at the time, sanctioned these findings as credible. A separate study conducted for the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICTY produced a similar estimate, putting the number of casualties at 102,622 (including 55,261 civilians).[131]

Although *Bosniak Book of the Dead* confirmed the public narrative that Bosniaks constituted the greatest share among victims of lethal violence, Bosniak academics and politicians argued that Tokača's findings were a "disservice to his people and to a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina."[132] The significantly lower casualty count was seen to undermine the claim of disproportionate victimisation, which supported the Bosnian Serb nationalist narrative that the war was not as severe as claimed by the Bosnian government while at the same time allegedly undermining the effort to a unified Bosnia. The finding that the actual casualty count is closer to half of the original estimate should have been welcomed, as it indicates fewer lives lost than widely assumed. However, the Bosnian case turned out very controversial, indicating that accuracy is not always the most important function of such quantification exercises.

Another example of intense controversy around the death toll of armed conflict is the war in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. While the US military claimed—as it had done previously such as in the cases of the Vietnam and Gulf wars—that it was not recording civilian casualties, the WikiLeaks release of the so-called *Iraq War Logs* showed that it merely did not share such information with the public.[133] As a result of the lack of official records until then, various organisations and researchers had taken the initiative to produce counts and estimates. A team of scholars based in the US and Iraq published two studies in the British medical journal *The Lancet* in 2004 in 2006, which estimated 98,000 excess civilian deaths in the first one and a half years of the conflict and 601,027 excess deaths directly caused by violence between

130. Tabeau and Bijak 2005, 193–6.
131. ibid.
132. Aronson 2013, 31–5; Nettelfield 2010, 168 and 173.
133. Aronson 2013, 37.

March 2003 and July 2006, respectively.[134] While the first study received little attention in academic circles nor mainstream media, the second one evoked a flurry of rejoinders, letters to the editors and commentaries. Scientists of various fields, public health advocates and journalists voiced concerns about technical, ethical and methodological issues.[135] The outrage even reached the highest echelons of politics as then-US president George W. Bush publicly denounced the second *Lancet* study during a press conference.[136]

A vocal critic was the Iraq Body Count (IBC) project, which is an NGO based in the UK. Its the objective is to provide "as complete a record as possible of individual Iraqi civilians killed by armed violence since the beginning of the war."[137] Its research has been widely referenced by various organisations, including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the International Criminal Court.[138] Instead of estimating, the IBC project extracts data from sources such as news reports, outputs by NGOs as well as morgue lists to compile a *count* of civilians killed. As of July 2021, the IBC project documents between 185,724 and 208,831 civilian deaths since the beginning of the invasion, thus covering 15 years more than the second *Lancet* study—yet still recording only a third of its estimate. As the IBC project rather counts than estimates, the numbers it provides will always undercount to some degree, which is a limitation that has also drawn criticism.[139] However, although the numbers do not entirely overlap, there is "significant" agreement between the IBC project count and the leaked *Iraq War Logs* as well as a close correlation with the Iraq Family Health Survey (IFHS)—which produced an equally widely cited number of around 151,000—and the Iraq Living Conditions Survey.[140] As Jay Aronson remarks, while neither the US nor Iraqi governments have publicly endorsed any of the above surveys, the lower counts and estimates from the IBC project and IFHS research allowed them to rebuke narratives of the Iraq war as excessively deadly as suggested by the second *Lancet* study. However, as the journalist Megan McArdle notes, even if 'only' 150,000 people have died in the course of the Iraq war, this is still an incomprehensible number of lives lost. In haggling about the right number, those embroiled in the controversy around accuracy have "somehow lost track of the mountain of dead bodies piling up beneath [their] numbers."[141] Indeed, as the cases of Bosnia and particularly Iraq illustrate, the quest for more accurate body counts can derail the discussion and undermine advocacy goals.[142] For those advocating for the resolution and

134. Burnham et al. 2006; Roberts et al. 2004.
135. See, e.g., Spagat 2010; Spagat 2011; von Schreeb, Rosling and Garfield 2007.
136. Aronson 2013, 39.
137. Sloboda et al. 2013, 53.
138. ibid., 61.
139. Aronson 2013, 40.
140. Alkhuzai et al. 2008, 484; Sloboda et al. 2013, 65.
141. McArdle 2008.
142. Greenhill 2010, 133; see also Aronson 2013; Dawkins 2021, 1105.

prevention of war, it does not matter whether the counts and estimates 'got it right,' as war is inherently wrong regardless of how many it kills.[143]

The cases of controversies around cataloguing the war dead in Bosnia and Iraq not only indicate that counting (civilian) casualties is a tricky business. They also illustrate how such numbers symbolise the extent of the devastation of war and can thus become subject to immense politicisation in the public discourse. As Kelly Greenhill notes, politicised conflict statistics "tend to be sticky and resistant to updating, and sometimes even take on a life of their own."[144] One example of such a "ghost statistic" relating to war dead estimates is the widely cited and publicised claim that two million children were killed as a result of armed conflict worldwide in the last decade.[145] This number is significantly smaller than the aggregate global casualty counts cited in the various outputs mentioned above because it narrows down to a subgroup of the world's population—children. However, it also carries a particular heaviness as children are the archetypal 'innocent' victim. This notion of innocence inherent in the stratification of death counts points to an often implicit scale of egregiousness, where killing non-combatants is regarded as worse than killing soldiers, and killing women and children is particularly deplorable.[146]

This two-million count of children killed in conflict was repeated across reports, press releases, websites of organisations (international, intergovernmental and non-governmental alike), speeches by diplomats, academic journals, books and various journalistic outlets, including Amnesty International, the Campaign Against Arms Trade, the former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy, the then-executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Carol Bellamy and others.[147] While such mentions often do not provide a source, if they do, they usually refer to UNICEF. The UNICEF source that first mentions the estimate of two million child casualties of war is the 1996 *The State of the World's Children Report* published in November 1996.[148] While the report itself does not indicate how this estimate was created—the corresponding footnote merely states that "UNICEF has compiled the estimates from a diversity of sources,"—it is understandable that organisations and diplomats consider it a credible source.[149] However, although the

143. See also Chapter 5.
144. Greenhill 2010, 127; see also Feingold 2010, 52–3. The tendency to fixate on the first number (or other data) one is exposed to is referred to as the "anchoring effect" in cognitive psychology, see Tversky and Kahnemann 1974.
145. The term "ghost statistic" is taken from Moeller 2019.
146. Carpenter 2006; Elshtain 1995; Enloe 2014, 1–36.
147. For a more comprehensive list of mentions, see footnotes 2–22 in Greenhill 2010, 128–32.
148. However, Graça Machel's landmark report *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* also already cites this estimate and was submitted to the UN General Assembly three months earlier. Machel 1996, 9; UNICEF 1996, 13.
149. ibid., 74.

original source refers to 1986–1996, the qualifier "in the last decade" has been repeated verbatim in various instances without acknowledging the time window.[150]

Further, the two-million child casualties estimate seems to be extrapolated from the proportion of civilian deaths in conflicts. The 1996 UNICEF report characterises the former as depending on the latter as it states that by the end of the 1980s, the share of civilians as victims of armed conflict amounts to almost 90%.[151] This percentage turns out to be a misrepresentation of the cited source, which arrives at the share of nine out of ten by including those that are "dead and uprooted," i.e. by counting refugees and displaced people as victims of conflict.[152] As a result, the number increasingly became a minimum estimate, so that qualifiers such as "at least" or "more than" were added to sources citing it.[153] The case of the child casualty estimate not only illustrates how body count approximations get widely taken up as a statistical 'hook' to make the case for the resolution and prevention of war but also how numbers can become detached from their original contexts and turn apocryphal. Here again, for child protection advocates, it does not matter so much whether the number cited is an *accurate* or even up-to-date reflection of reality but that it qualifies as *high enough* to warrant action. In turn, this bolsters the imperative to prevent war and armed conflict, as it feeds into the construction of war as a problem that not only kills but one that also kills those deemed the most vulnerable—and so many of them that it can only be expressed in eerily round numbers.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that quantification has emerged as a modern technology of governance that makes social and political phenomena accessible and legible through processes of abstraction, decontextualisation, aggregation and commensuration. War and armed conflict are among these phenomena that are frequently expressed in numerical terms to produce knowledge, provide focal points for advocacy and inform policy design. Its representation in numbers produces and reproduces war as an object of scientific inquiry, in the sense that it can be counted, measured as well as recognised and categorised on the basis of numerical thresholds. This not only bestows statistics about war with scientific authority but also reconnects to the modernist idea that social and political problems can be resolved by harnessing science and technology.[154] The process of abstraction produces commensurability in the sense that distinctive and historically specific events can be aggregated into the same global

150. Greenhill 2010, 130.
151. UNICEF 1996, 13. This figure has equally been widely cited, including in the aforementioned Carnegie Report, CCPDC 1997, 11. See also Roberts 2010.
152. Ahlström and Nordquist 1991, 19.
153. Greenhill 2010, 131–2.
154. See also Chapter 3.

phenomenon, thus making it a genuine problem of international governance best responded to with an international agenda—conflict prevention.

Death counts are a particularly potent way of enumerating war, as they are taken to indicate the severity and extent of conflicts, make them comparable across contexts and help to express the unfathomable loss caused by war and conflict. Using examples from contemporary documents by a range of international actors and organisations, I showed that such death counts are a common way of advocating for the need and urgency of conflict prevention but are prone to taking on their own lives and to being instrumentalised towards strategic ends. In addition, aggregate death counts and estimates are read by publics and policymakers subscribing to the new public management paradigm to be objective, apolitical and 'speaking for themselves.' Yet, in practice, they are often fraught, incomplete and subject to *ad hoc* decision-making by those who record and code them. As a result, death counts and estimates often reflect dynamics of selection, reporting and coding rather than dynamics of conflict.

Abstracting complex social and political processes into neat numbers, comparable indicators and calculable statistics is not a mere scientific or technical exercise. Instead, the removal of context bears deep political consequences. Death counts of combatants and civilians alike not only make the entity 'war' comparable across contexts but also shape the very understanding of what 'war' is. Here, it becomes clear how the 'stages' of problem construction, presented in Chapter 1 as separate phases for heuristic purposes, are difficult to disentangle in practice, as the translation happens in conjunction with designation in that the latter defines a set of phenomena as an entity—or object—of its own and the former makes it portable across (national or state) contexts. The abstraction of war through numbers also works to define its conceptual boundaries, such as through the widely-cited 1,000-battle deaths cut-off criterion or the implicit definition of war as deadly. In this way, it also contributes to establishing a set of characteristics that make an object recognisable.

At the same time, such numbers *problematise* war as they convey its scale, severity and urgency.[155] That is, translation via quantification not only produces commensurability of the concept of 'war' but also makes it accessible to political advocacy. While modes of abstraction such as quantification and mathematical formalisation help to recognise instances as violence throughout time and space as belonging to the same problem category 'war,' the creation of numerical criteria for something to *count as* war defines what it is in the first place. As quantification abstracts and removes context, it at the same time sharpens the definition of the problem 'war' by creating 'numerical sieves,' which either catch certain instances of violence and define them as falling into this problem category, or they fall through and are

155. See also Chapter 5.

thus beyond the purview of the problem definition. Consequently, instances of violence that do not meet certain numerical thresholds are beyond the purview of its ideal mode of governance that is prevention. Thus, to put it with Merry, the quantification of war and armed conflict in the form of death counts has "both a knowledge effect and governance effect,"[156] as it not only shapes the definition of war but, as a consequence, affects which kinds—and especially which extents—of violence are (not) responded to with governance interventions because they (do not) meet said definition.

156. Merry 2016, 4.

5

The Telos of Progress: Civilisation, Development and the Problematisation of War

5.1 Introduction

The third 'stage' of object construction as devised by Allan is *problematisation,* which is the process of turning the object into a problem in the eyes of actors by latching it onto existing discourses of threats, identities, interests and policy frames relevant to them.[1] Problematisation thus defines one or more addressees and determines the type of problem at hand. However, the target audience for the problematisation process not only needs to be convinced that the object of interest is a problem to them and warrants their attention and resources. They also must be persuaded that they can act upon it. In other words, problematisation also defines the object as malleable and governable through political action. That is, this 'stage' of problem construction centrally conveys that it is not only *possible* but also *desirable* to govern the problem at hand. In doing so, problematisation processes already prescribe certain ways of resolving the issue into the problem definition.[2] Priorities, interests and discourses may change over time, so that problem frames of objects need to shift accordingly. As a result, problematisation is not a singular process but takes place continuously, recurrently and in parallel to the other 'stages' of object construction as I have outlined them in previous chapters.

Regarding the case of prevention specifically, the process of problematisation not only defines certain audiences for which war constitutes a problem but also *why* it is a problem for these audiences and what can be done about it. This is, firstly, the deontological moral argument according to which war needs to be prevented because it is objectionable in itself. While early Christian pacifists define war as antithetical to Christian ideals of piety and

1. Allan 2017, 138.
2. ibid., 138; see also Weldes 1999.

compassion, this objection morphs into a broader problem frame in which war becomes associated with barbarism in light of the ideals of modernism and progress, thus making it a problem for those who deem themselves to be the apex of civilisation. In the 20th century, the discourse of IOs increasingly abandons the language of civilisation and shifts towards development. This is where the second moral claim feeding the imperative to prevent, based on consequentialist reasoning, gets foregrounded, as IOs and development actors emphasise the disastrous effects of war in terms of its direct and indirect costs. Here, the inherent moral wrongness of war is paired with the notion that war should be prevented because of its adverse effects, so that prevention emerges as the rational policy option because it is not only morally right to avert war, but also cost-effective. Thus, while the audiences and associated identity and interest discourses shift over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the implied policy prescription of the problem construction remains more or less stable in that the ideal response to war is for it to not happen in the first place. In this way, prevention is and remains the preferred rationality of governing war in all facets of problem construction through time as I describe them below.

5.2 Two Types of Moral Reasoning

In this chapter, I argue that pacifists, scientists and IOs defined war as a problem through moral reasoning that can be distinguished into deontological and consequentialist claims.[3] However, as I will explain further below, I make this distinction only for analytical purposes and do not suggest that these two types of reasoning are mutually exclusive. Instead, both the deontological and consequentialist problematisation of war occur alongside one another or are even fused into one rationalist argument of prevention being both morally right and cost-effective.

Before explaining what deontological and consequentialist reasoning entails below, I first need to address how I will use the terms 'ethical' and 'moral' in this thesis, especially in this and the following chapters. Paul Walker and Terence Lovat suggest that *ethics* refers to actions in people's individual lives "in order to live a good life from the perspective of their own values," while *morals* refer to claims about how people "should act together [based on] their different but necessarily coexisting value perspectives." In this sense, ethics concern individual assessments relating to one's personal character, belief system and convictions about conceptions of right versus wrong. In contrast, morals concern more collective and

3. It is worth noting that Mueller 1989, 7, although framed in a different way to argue that major war has become obsolete, presents a similar taxonomy in that he argues that the idea of war has become virtually unthinkable after WWI due to "two kinds of costs," namely "psychic ones" (war as immoral and uncivilised) and "physical ones" (war as bloody, destructive and expensive). However, Mueller does not explain the broader societal mechanisms of this cultural shift and instead argues that it results from a change in the attitudes and ideas of individuals. See also Kaysen 1990, 43; Mueller 2004.

intersubjective principles within a community or society about what is good, right and just.[4] Or, as Sarah Harper puts it, the "convictions of ethics are self-regarding, whereas the principles of morality are other-regarding."[5]

As most of the texts cited in this chapter refer to the imperative to prevent as an obligation, they mostly refer to what Walker and Lovat or Harper would understand to be morals. In contrast, the approach of emergent strategy that I will explain in further detail in the next chapter is formulated from an individual perspective and would therefore rather fall under ethics. However, the question of whether there is—or even should be—a distinction between ethics and morals, and whether one is embedded within the other, is contested in the literature.[6] Indeed, most often, authors do not make the distinction explicit or use the terms synonymously.[7] As both 'ethical' and 'moral' describe normative relations, I follow Kimberly Hutchings' approach of using these terms interchangeably in this thesis, except when referring to the work of theorists who are committed to the distinction.[8]

The deontological approach is most often associated with Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy.[9] It denotes a way of ethical reasoning in which morality is based on rules and principles that have an "absolute and categorical prescriptive status."[10] These principles are understood to be quasi-universal rather than contingent and contextual, or as legal scholar Thomas Donaldson puts it, they are held "valid for relevantly similar acts under relevantly similar circumstances."[11] Kant famously makes a difference between action undertaken *in accordance* or *for the sake of* an obligation or a rule, with only the latter holding moral worth—in other words, doing the right thing for the wrong reasons does not constitute moral action in Kant's terms.[12] This means that only actions that align with such an obligation are moral, while any action that does not align with it is not. Consequently, deontological ethics emphasises the moral motives behind the behaviour of actors and can thus be considered agent-centred.[13]

Where deontological approaches are based on religious beliefs, these guiding principles might refer to divine authority.[14] As I will explain in further detail in the next section of this chapter, this is the case with early Christian pacifists who invoked principles and virtues laid out in the Bible, especially the New Testament, to make claims that war is inconsistent

4. Walker and Lovat 2016, 437–8 and 442. See also Harper 2009.
5. ibid., 1066. It should be noted here that Harper formulates this contrast as an implied one, which she proceeds to critique in the cited piece.
6. Hutchings 2018b, 25. See also Harper 2009.
7. Hutchings 2018a, 7; Hutchings 2018b, 24–6; Renic 2020, 8.
8. Hutchings 2018b, 25–6.
9. See, e.g., Donaldson 1992; Hutchings 2018b, 82–9.
10. ibid., 82; Mapel and Nardin 1992, 308.
11. Donaldson 1992, 137.
12. ibid., 137; Hutchings 2018b, 82; Mapel and Nardin 1992, 309.
13. Donaldson 1992, 137; Mapel and Nardin 1992, 309.
14. Hutchings 2018b, 83.

with the spirit and the letter of the Christian faith. Further, I argue that the way in which the peace advocates of the 20th century problematised war by declaring it uncivilised can also be considered deontological. The peace advocates in Europe and the US considered themselves civilised, which includes upholding a rule-based order in the form of laws and arbitration procedures. As the pacifist and later Nobel Peace Prize laureate[15] Jane Addams writes in her 1907 monograph *Newer Ideals of Peace*, war "lures young men not to develop, but to exploit [...] and leads them to forget that civilization is the substitution of law for war."[16] In the European and US-American pacifist discourse of the 19th and 20th centuries, civilisation is contrasted with the conduct of animals and 'barbarians' who resolve conflict through violence—i.e., not law but might makes right. The latter is necessarily contextual, as who wins depends on who is the fittest in a conflict. As Carnegie argues, only "wild beasts" can be excused for killing "each other in war like barbarians [...] for the crime of war is inherent, since it decides not in favor of the right, but always of the strong."[17] Thus, in both the Christian and civilisational argumentation for prevention, the implication is that war is inherently wrong and immoral and thus should be avoided.

In the latter half of the chapter, I elucidate the consequentialist aspect in the problematisation of war. Consequentialist ethical approaches purport that the "moral worth of particular ethical values and principles depends on the goodness or badness of the outcomes of adopting those principles."[18] That is, the relevant aspect for assessing whether an action or practice is morally right depends on whether its effects—or consequences—are considered bad or wrong. I argue that this logic underlies arguments for prevention that emphasise the *costs* of war, which make prevention the preferable option. These concern, *inter alia*, material and financial costs arising from expenses for armament and military, mitigating political and economic instability, managing refugee flows, humanitarian and peacekeeping operations as well as post-conflict reconstruction.[19] However, these costs can also concern immaterial, less easily measurable or even counterfactual, aspects such as lives and opportunities lost due to death, injury or the disruption of welfare, education and the progress of developmental goals.

In short, according to deontological reasoning, certain actions are *inherently* wrong on the basis of a certain authority, while according to consequentialist reasoning, actions are wrong when they have bad consequences. Thus, the most fundamental distinction between various moral and ethical traditions in IR, including those I mentioned above, is whether they base the assessment of what is right or wrong on rules or consequences.[20] However,

15. In fact, Addams shared the Nobel Peace prize of 1931 with Nicholas Butler, the then-president of the CEIP.
16. Addams 1907, 219.
17. Carnegie 1927, 1.
18. Hutchings 2018b, 66.
19. Brown and Rosecrance 1999.
20. Mapel and Nardin 1992, 297.

as Donaldson argues, "various contemporary theories of ethics, including most versions of consequentialism and deontology, exhibit normative convergence," so it is not surprising to find both reasonings fused in arguments for preventing war.[21]

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that deontological and consequentialist arguments do not exhaust the spectrum of pacifist positions. Both the deontological and consequentialist perspectives make absolute moral claims, as opposed to "contingent pacifism."[22] The latter approach towards the morality of war is "'contingent' because its acceptance of pacifism is contingent on facts about the contemporary world, such as the nature of modern technologies of war," which may depend on context.[23] According to the contingent pacifist position, "we should reject war in current circumstances but this position is, in principle, revisable," which means that at some point factors might arise that make war an acceptable option.[24] It thus presents itself as the middle ground between 'pure' and 'absolute' pacifist idealism and just war theory. The latter approach of just war ethics, as opposed to the pacifist positions presented in this and the previous two chapters, do not subscribe to the idea that war can be eradicated but purports that there are legitimate reasons for conducting war in specific, restrained ways.

5.3 The Deontological Claim: War as Inherently Objectionable

5.3.1 Satan's Dominion: War in Early Christian Peace Advocacy

When the Anglo-European peace movement first emerged at the beginning of the 19th century, early pacifists formulated war as a deontological problem of Christian ethics. This notion is encapsulated in three key pamphlets of the early peace movement, which were written by the theologian and merchant David Low Dodge and the Unitarian minister Noah Worcester. These works were first published in the US but then republished by peace societies in the UK. Both authors were centrally involved in local pacifist groups. Dodge established the New York Peace Society and Worcester was a founding member of the Massachusetts Peace Society in Boston, both of which merged thirteen years later in 1828 with others to form the American Peace Society.[25] Peace societies set out to educate the masses on peace by publishing periodicals and tracts like Dodge's and Worcester's. They were

21. Donaldson 1992, 152. Indeed, as Williams and Booth 1996, 92–3, argue, even Kant's approach was only "firmly but not absolutely" deontological in the sense that consequences are not irrelevant.
22. See, e.g., Fiala 2014; Hutchings 2018c; May 2015.
23. Hutchings 2018c, 177.
24. ibid., 177.
25. Brock 1968, 461 and 473; Tryon 1911, 360.

especially popular among evangelical, especially Anglican, Christians, who "read the dramatic social and technological changes taking place around them as signs that the millennium was imminent" and saw themselves as fulfilling God's will of abolishing war.[26]

The first of the three treatises was authored by Dodge and, according to the assistant secretary of the American Peace Society James Libby Tryon, constituted the starting point of the (US American) peace movement.[27] A near-death experience with spotted fever made Dodge regret that he had so far failed to speak out publicly against war and prompted him to write a short essay titled *The Mediator's Kingdom Not of This World but Spiritual, Heavenly and Divine*, which was published anonymously in 1809.[28] As Peter Brock notes, the pamphlet "made quite a stir" at the time. Despite its sermonic style that is "overloaded [...] with Biblical quotations and farfetched interpretations of prophetic passages along with its almost apocalyptic tone," it was extraordinarily successful. Its first edition of 1,000 copies was not only sold out within two weeks but also prompted a reply by three critics, also anonymously, and a rejoinder by Dodge, thus instigating a public discussion about the Christian position on war.[29] Taking an interest in the relationship between Christianity and war, Dodge's friends and associates urged him to draft a deeper discussion of the issue, titled *War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ*. This tract is not only longer but also more systematic than *The Mediator's Kingdom* in its presentation of the central argument that war is "inhuman," unwise and criminal according to the scriptures.[30] Although Dodge completed the essay in 1812, he held off its publication for three years, until after the conclusion of the war between the UK and the US with the Treaty of Ghent.[31]

The third tract, *A Solemn Review of the Custom of War*, was written by Worcester and published in 1814. Although it was written after *War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ*, it was distributed before Dodge's second tract. Like Dodge's first pamphlet before, *A Solemn Review* was also incredibly popular, although Worcester initially struggled to find a publisher. With the War of 1812 between the UK and the US still ongoing and no organised peace groups yet to sponsor the endeavour, Worcester paid out of pocket for the treatise to be printed.[32] Within fifteen months after its first publication on Christmas Day in 1814, it had passed through five editions and would be reprinted more than twelve times in the next three decades.[33] The London Peace Society, whose foundation took after the example

26. Mazower 2013, 31; Tyrrell 1978, 83.
27. Tryon 1911, 359.
28. Brock 1968, 451; Curti 1973, 7.
29. Brock 1968, 451–2. The tone and style are not surprising considering that the argumentation is taken in large part from the *Sermon of the Mount* in the Gospel of Matthew (the first book of the New Testament), Curti 1973, 7.
30. Dodge 1905b.
31. Brock 1968, 453.
32. ibid., 470; Curti 1973, 10.
33. ibid., 11.

of Worcester's group in Boston, decided to print 1,000 copies of the treatise even before the organisation was fully set up.[34] The essay not only directly inspired the formation of other local peace societies but also enjoyed high popularity within the pacifist movement so that the historian Merle Curti dubs it an "epoch-making classic in the history of peace literature."[35]

The central argument against war in pacifist pamphlets such as those by Dodge and Worcester was that war is incompatible with the spirit and message of the gospel and thus un-Christian.[36] In *The Mediator's Kingdom*, Dodge mobilises the New Testament to condemn "all kinds of war, revenge, and fighting."[37] The governments (in Dodge's nomenclature, 'kingdoms') that wage war are denounced as being under "Satan's dominion" and whoever engages in the "political contentions and fightings" of those governments "commit[s] spiritual whoredom."[38] While other works such as Dodge's had already advanced the argument that Christianity is incompatible with waging war, Worcester's tract was the first to formulate specific options for Christians to act against war.[39] Alongside the suggestion to establish a "confederacy of nations" and a "high court of equity" for dispute resolution, the most immediately feasible course of action was to organise in the form of peace societies.[40] These pamphlets of the early pacifist movement were specifically tailored towards a Christian audience and appealed to them to engage in peace activism.

Peace societies populated by Christians of various stripes coexisted with nationalist claims at the time. Internationalists in the US and UK resolved this dilemma by "justifying their own country's imperialism in the name of a 'civilising mission' of spreading liberalism and democracy to 'backward' peoples."[41] This colonial, missionary ideology that drives the Christian pacifist argument equates war to barbarism so that the imperative to prevent stems from the representation of war as belonging to a barbaric past rather than a civilised present and future. Building on the premise that war results in suffering on a large scale, early pacifism labels it 'savage' and 'inhuman,' which stands in opposition to the ideal of the civilised and enlightened human. This notion serves as the entry point in Worcester's *Solemn Review*, which opens with:

> We regard with horror the custom of the ancient heathens in offering their children a sacrifice to idols. We are shocked with the customs of the Hindoos in prostrating themselves before the car of an idol to be crushed to death; in burning women alive on

34. ibid., 14.
35. ibid., 10–3. See also Ceadel 1996, 7; Tryon 1911, 359–60.
36. Dodge 1905b; Worcester 1904.
37. Dodge 1905a, 142.
38. ibid., 138 and 160. See also Brock 1968, 452.
39. Curti 1973, 10.
40. Worcester 1904, 7.
41. Lynch 1999, 51.

> the funeral piles of their husbands; in casting their children, a monthly sacrifice, into the Ganges to be drowned. […] But while we look back, with a mixture of wonder, indignation and pity, on many of the customs of former ages, are we careful to inquire whether some customs which we deem honorable are not the effects of popular delusion? Is it not a fact that one of the most horrid customs of savage men is now popular in every nation in Christendom?[42]

Against the background of colonialism, and specifically the expansion of the British East India Company, Worcester decries the hypocrisy of Christians who wage war while denouncing customs of human sacrifice elsewhere. The central premise here is that war is akin to human sacrifice on a large scale, a practice that is viewed as deviant, barbaric and a remnant of the past by those who understand themselves to be civilised. Through the use of 'we,' Worcester establishes a Self that includes the (Christian) reader while opposing it to the barbaric and infidel Other, i.e. the Hindus and 'ancient heathens.'[43] Worcester puts Hinduism on a lower point in human development by way of the temporal marker 'ancient.' As becomes clear later in the text, what he refers to as the 'ancient heathens' are the "Goths and Vandals," who were East Germanic peoples during the late Roman Empire.[44] Not only are Goths and Vandals (along with the Huns, Saxons, and Franks) the 'original barbarians,' but their warfare also lies more than 1,000 years in the past at the time of writing for Worcester in 1814.[45] In this way, Worcester draws an implicit continuity between the barbarity of tribes in Europe's long gone past with colonial India during his present.

Noting that many Christians have taken an interest in the "condition of the Hindoos, on account of their sanguinary customs," Worcester leverages a colonial trope with which missionaries were particularly fascinated in the 19th century.[46] *Sati* (or *suttee* in the phonetic spelling in English texts of the time) refers to the Hindu rite of the (self-)sacrifice of widows by being burned alongside their deceased husbands.[47] Descriptions of the practice travelled to the US and Europe through news reports as well as Christian circulars and journals of missionaries.[48] For example, Worcester consulted the writings of Bishop Reginald Heber, a

42. Worcester 1904, 3, spelling original.
43. Given that he does not mention any other Indian religious or ethnic group, it is possible that 'Hindoos'/'Hindus' in Worcester's writing functions as an umbrella term for all indigenous Indians, regardless of religion.
44. Worcester 1904, 11.
45. See, e.g., Gandhi 1998, 47–8.
46. Worcester 1827, 97.
47. Regarding the colonial tropes in missionary writing, see, e.g., Johnston 2003. As Spivak notes, the British reference to *sati* as the sacrifice of widows by immolation is a misnomer, as *sati* merely means 'good wife,' thus the rite should actually be called 'the burning of the *sati*,' see Spivak 1988, 305–6. It is also worth noting that, as the statistics of incidents and the geographical distribution show, the practice was not universally practised within Hindu communities across East India Company-ruled territory but was rather a fairly localised phenomenon around the administrative district of Calcutta/Kolkata. See the data cited in the Appendix of Worcester 1827, 104. See also Mani 1998, 11–41; Spivak 1988, 297.
48. Mani 1998, 121–58; Johnston 2003.

British missionary who was appointed to Calcutta (now Kolkata) in the 1820s.[49] In these circulars and journals, instances of *sati* were frequently described through the colonial gaze of "sensation-seeking pity and horror."[50] It was widely disseminated through the popular literary trope of the "*sati* rescue," where an Indian widow is saved from her ritual self-sacrifice via immolation by the white, European observer.[51] Over the course of the 19th century, representations of *sati* "become the occasion for appeals for British intervention" that epitomise the gendered incarnation of the civilising mission in which "[w]hite men are saving brown women from brown men."[52]

The comparison between "abominable customs" of the heathen world and war is a continuing motive in Worcester's argument against war throughout his career as a pacifist author. In *The Friend of Peace*, the periodical of the Massachusetts Peace Society that was edited and, for the most part, also written by Worcester himself,[53] he quotes from Bishop Heber's journal to point out the hypocrisy of Christians who are troubled by Hindu rites but unconcerned about war:

> The average number of the *suttees* in all the districts was about 600 annually; equal to one in 83,333 of the whole population every year. Such a number of human sacrifices annually, is indeed lamentable, and Christian philanthropy may well be employed in devising means for abolishing the custom. But when we compare the destruction of females by this custom, with the destruction of males by the custom of war, how shocking the contrast! Select ten years of Napoleon's career, and compare the destruction of life occasioned by his wars, with what occurred by the *suttees* in Bengal; or compare the destruction among the Hindoos by *suttees* with the havoc made by British wars on that people,—and shall we not see far greater reason to deplore the popular custom of the Christians [that is, war], than the superstitious custom of the Hindoos?[54]

As a result, when comparing *sati* and war, taking only into account "the untimely destruction of human life," Worcester argues that "war must appear vastly the more horrible of the two customs."[55] However, in the reasoning of the Christian pacifists, war is not only barbaric because it is deadly on a large scale but also because it encompasses cruelty. That is, war is barbaric both in the sense of 'inhumane' and 'uncivilised.' In contrast, the Christian doctrine is one of mercy, forgiveness, nonresistance and abiding by one's predicament

49. Worcester 1827, 103–4.
50. Fhlathúin 2015, 136.
51. ibid., 134–41. Besides its popularity in British literature in the Victorian era, the perhaps best-known example of the '*sati* rescue' is found in a 19th century French novel—Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*—where the main protagonist Phileas Fogg rescues the Indian princess Aouda from her deceased husband's funeral pyre just as she is about to be sacrificed. For a comprehensive analysis of the colonial perception and management of *sati*, see Mani 1998. For a discussion on its effect on the agency of racialised women and the production of stereotypical subaltern femininity, see Spivak 1988.
52. Fhlathúin 2015, 134–5; Spivak 1988, 296.
53. Ware 1844, 72–2 and 78.
54. Appendix in Worcester 1827, 98, emphasis and spelling original.
55. ibid., 104.

without revenge (turning the other cheek). The precepts of the gospel, Dodge argues, "unequivocally forbid returning evil for evil."[56] War is thus fundamentally opposed to these values, as self-defence and retaliation are the "whole trade of war."[57] Soldiers have to be indifferent towards their enemies' suffering, as only when they "blunt the tender edge of mercy and chill all the sympathising feelings of the human heart" can they kill their opponent.[58] This, Dodge argues, results in the curious disdain for thousands being injured or killed in battle.[59] Similarly, Worcester condemns the "dreadful depravity of feeling" towards suffering and death in war. Such "wanton undervaluing of human life" runs contrary to the sanctity of life in Christendom over which only God should be the judge. Worcester denounces the moral decay that war induces when soldiers "hear of the loss of five hundred or a thousand of their own men with perhaps less feeling than they would hear of the death of a favorite horse or dog" or even feel "joy and exultation" at the news of enemy deaths.[60] Thus, the so-called spirit of war, the "deleterious compound of enthusiastic ardor, ambition, malignity and revenge," constitutes the opposite of Christian ideals of "piety, humanity and justice."[61] Therefore, Dodge concludes that Christians should not only refuse to participate in war in any way but that it is also "wrong for Christians to do anything to promote it, and right to do all in their power to prevent it."[62]

5.3.2 War as the Great Crime of Civilisation

The argumentative line associating war with barbarism invokes dichotomies that are omnipresent, if often implicit, in the colonial discourse on progress. These include maturity versus immaturity, civilisation versus barbarism, developed versus developing, progressive versus primitive, as well as Christians versus 'heathens.' The notion of the human in early developmental narratives originating in the Enlightenment is thus, although ostensibly universal and all-encompassing, in fact, stratified. 'Humanity' in this context is "a function of the way in which man knows things" and therefore contingent on the educational status or cognitive capacities of individuals and entire societies.[63] The association of war with barbarism invokes colonial discourses on progress that draws a conceptual outside of humanity, which enables the categorisation of the racialised Other into "human," "not-quite human" and "non-human" beings.[64] This stratification of what is human makes it possible to associate

56. Dodge 1905b, 56.
57. ibid., 67.
58. ibid., 3–4.
59. ibid., 4–5.
60. Worcester 1904, 10–1.
61. ibid., 3.
62. Dodge 1905b, 47.
63. Gandhi 1998, 29.
64. Weheliye 2014; Wynter 2003.

war with backwardness, while at the same time using ideas of progress as justification for brutality against colonised peoples in the name of the "civilizing mission."[65]

The linkage of war with barbarism continues in the scientific philanthropy for peace at the beginning of the 20th century. As in the Christian pacifist texts discussed above, the association is established through temporal indicators such as 'still' to signal that war is a primitive and animalistic practice, which should have long been abandoned. For example, in a letter to the editor of the newspaper *The Nation*, the founder of the World Peace Foundation Edwin Ginn posits that, within states, relations could be pacified and security brought to societies by establishing police forces, but "between nations the *earlier* conditions *still* prevail."[66] In the absence of such a police force managing relations on the international level, nations "*continue* to act toward each other as barbarians."[67] Taking the same line, Andrew Carnegie writes in a *Letter to the Trustees* of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace that although "we no longer eat our fellowmen or torture prisoners, [...] we *still* kill each other in war like barbarians."[68]

Carnegie's position was influenced by his reading of Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution, which contributed to his conviction that humanity is continuously developing from primitive violence towards a peaceful world order.[69] As a result, he paints war to be the "great crime of civilization, the killing of men by men like wild beasts."[70] Here, Carnegie not only alludes to a linear development of humankind in which 'barbarians' represent a lower stage of civilisation but also discursively puts war outside what is human. According to Carnegie, it is natural for animals—"wild beasts"—to fight, but for those deemed human, it is unnatural and unjustified.[71] Here again, the coupling of war and violence more broadly with barbarism and primordialism renders it 'natural' and 'normal' only for the not-quite-human and racialised Other that has not (yet) attained the highest civilisational state.

Against the modernist episteme that strives for improvement through governance, civilisation increasingly became understood as eliminating violence from the social order by monopolising its administration with the state. It was compatible with the emerging scientificism of the 19th and early 20th centuries, as both assume civilisation to be inherently pacific, despite modernity's violent empirical record.[72] In this way, civilisation and pacification

65. Césaire 2000; Hinton 2002; Lynch 1999, 51.
66. Ginn 1909, 275, emphasis added.
67. ibid., 275, emphasis added.
68. Carnegie 1927, 1, emphasis added.
69. Patterson 1970, 371.
70. Carnegie 1911, 34.
71. It is worth pointing out that the very activity of destroying fellow beings on a large scale and in a systematic manner is, in fact, genuinely and exclusively human: "Animals fight, but they don't wage war. Only man—unique among the primates—practices the large-scale, deliberate and enthusiastic destruction of his fellow creatures," Enzensberger cited in Armitage 2017b, 9; see also Coker 2010, 28.
72. Barkawi and Brighton 2011.

describe the same process of liberation from 'barbarism.'[73] War becomes "the foulest blot upon our civilization."[74] However, through scientific and social progress, so the belief, war can be abandoned. For example, Ginn acknowledges that "man has been obliged to fight his way from the beginning," but once 'man' reaches the highest stage of civilisation, he will make war obsolete as he "has [...] risen in a large measure above the necessity of fighting."[75]

Similarly, Addams notes that "[w]e have come to realize that the great task of pushing forward social justice could be enormously accelerated if primitive methods [such as war] as well as primitive weapons were once for all abolished."[76] As J. Ann Tickner and Jacqui True note, many of the early feminists were not only pragmatists but also evolutionists, and Addams herself was committed to the evolutionary paradigm according to which "civilization was progressing beyond warfare and [...] militarism was becoming anachronistic."[77] As co-founder and president of both the Women's Peace Party and the International Congress of Women, Addam's thinking greatly influenced the work of those organisations. It thus comes as no surprise that in the resolutions adopted at the International Congress of Women at the Hague in 1915, it is noted that "war is the negation of progress and civilisation."[78] Finally, the rejection of war through embracing the "peaceful pursuit of civilisational development" in the Covenant of the League of Nations exemplifies this shift towards an emerging view of war as an illegitimate way of conducting politics.[79]

The association of war with a 'lower' stage of civilisational progress implies that abolishing war is only a realistic goal at a certain stage of evolutionary development, namely the one that meets an unspecified threshold of 'civilisation.' For example, Carnegie determines the central objective of the CEIP to be the "speedy abolition of international war between so-cald [sic] civilized nations," thus excluding those nations deemed uncivilised or not-yet-civilised from the organisation's efforts.[80] As a result, war turns into a problem for the "family of nations" but not for 'primitive' societies.[81] Peace is a condition only attainable between states or societies above a certain developmental state, while the occurrence of war among them

73. Elias 2000, 41–2.
74. Carnegie 1927, 1. It is worth noting here that Carnegie's collective 'we' in this letter is not universal but refers to the "English-speaking race," that is, Great Britain and the US, whom he perceived to be the most advanced. See also Patterson 1970, 373; Weber 2014, 539.
75. Ginn 1909, 275.
76. Addams 1907, 212.
77. Tickner and True 2018, 225.
78. ICW 1915, 12. The International Congress of Women transformed into the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) after its first congress in the Hague in 1915 and Addams continued to serve as president until 1929.
79. League of Nations 1921, especially Articles 1 and 22. See also Allan 2018b, 202.
80. Carnegie 1927, 3.
81. For the concept of the "family of nations," see, e.g., Kleinschmidt 2016; Koskenniemi 2001, 53. Cf. Andrä, forthcoming, 12, who argues that because war is presumed the opposite of modern progress, it is "a problem of others who, however, are incapable of addressing it."

tarnishes their claim to civilisation.[82] In other words, the ideal of universal peace within this "stratified version of world order" as the end product of the project of abolishing war is embedded in and limited by a racialised conception of the world.[83] In turn, this implies that abolishing war is only a realistic goal at a certain stage of evolutionary development. At this point, the causal linkage between peace and civilisation becomes circular.

Although the discourse on preventing war since the mid-20th century has mostly abandoned the language of 'barbarism' and 'civilisation,' it features occasionally when documents refer to the concept of the "family of nations."[84] However, the prevention discourse at large is more expansive. The Charter of the United Nations and subsequent affirmations appeal to all its peoples to further the cause of peace.[85] A central addressee is humanity as a whole, which makes war a genuinely global problem.[86] Similarly, the Carnegie Report notes that "all governments and peoples" have a stake in preventing war, while the 2018 *Pathways for Peace* report, in line with the overall line of the UN, emphasises that the primary responsibility to prevent violent conflict lies with the governments of the member states.[87] That is, the list of addressees for appeals to prevent war has become increasingly inclusive.

5.4 The Consequentialist Claim: War's Adverse Effects

5.4.1 Counterfactuals and Calculations: The Costs of War

The deontological claim that war is objectionable because it is immoral is often paired with consequentialist arguments about the costs associated with the preparation for, destruction by and reconstruction after war. These costs can be broadly divided into having direct or immediate and indirect or distant effects. Direct and immediate effects are those relating to the expense of finances and material resources, as well as to the "human costs" of war.[88] The human costs of war refer to the direct and immediate effect on the human population such as death, injury and displacement, as well as to the indirect repercussions for "families, communities, local and national institutions and economies, and neighbouring countries."[89] Thus, the human costs of war are often understood to not only concern the direct damage

82. Carnegie 1927, 1. Carnegie's peace advocacy and Utopian visions of racial unity were intertwined, which becomes clear in many references to the "English-speaking race," which he perceived to be the most advanced. Bell 2020, 95–9; see also Weber 2014, 539.
83. Bell 2020, 306. It is worth noting that the racialised progress narrative was disrupted by the existence of poor whites and the threat of "white racial degeneration" within states considered to be civilised, see Willoughby-Herard 2015.
84. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 22; UNGA 2004, 16.
85. UN 1945, 2.
86. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 4; UN and World Bank 2018, xi.
87. CCPDC 1997, 9; UN and World Bank 2018.
88. Annan 2001, 7. See also Chapter 4.
89. ibid., 7.

that is inflicted by armed conflict but also the lost opportunities through the destruction of social and political systems, livelihoods, education structures and knowledge.[90] As a result, such costs are in part based on the counterfactual of how a state, society or community could have prospered if it had not experienced conflict.

However, the argumentation that war should be prevented in order to avoid incurring the human costs is not exclusively consequentialist. Instead, it is usually paired with an emphasis of the moral obligation to save lives. Secretary-General Annan noted in his 2001 report *Prevention of Armed Conflict* that the UN "has a moral responsibility to ensure that vulnerable people are protected" and "to take seriously this challenge of prevention."[91] Similarly, the associated resolution of the UN General Assembly, also titled *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, recognises "imperatives, including moral, of the prevention of armed conflict and its benefits for peace and development," and the 2018 joint report of the UN and the World Bank *Pathways for Peace* acknowledges the "moral value associated with saving human lives."[92] While the 'human costs'-argument leverages both deontological and consequentialist claims, the latter play a greater role in cost-benefit reasoning relating to material and financial expenses for the preparation for, conduct of and reconstruction after violent conflict. War, so the argument goes, is a burden on the budgets of states and organisations due to its excessive costs that are never matched by its spoils and benefits—if there are any.[93] In economic terms, war is thus cost-*ineffective*, whereas preventing it is cost-*effective.*

Consequentialist arguments making an economic case against war already feature in pacifist writing from the beginning of the 19th century. In *War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ*, Dodge asserts that war is unwise because it "entails both the destruction of property [...] and the infliction of great hardship on the poor."[94] The seizure of merchandise by Napoleon had "seriously pinched the firm of which Dodge was a member," which might have led him to also the negative economic impact of war alongside religious and moral arguments—or at least "may have sharpened his pen."[95] Anticipating the counterfactual argumentation of the costs of war, he claims that the expenses for the wars in the span of twenty years between the last years of the 1700s and the beginning of the 19th century would not only have been enough to make "every poor person on earth comfortable" but also to "educate every poor child on earth in the common rudiments of learning, and to support missionaries in abundance to convey the gospel of peace to every creature."[96] A similar claim is advanced by Worcester in his tract *Solemn Review of the Custom of War*, in which he

90. See, e.g., Annan 2001, 7; CCPDC 1997, 20.
91. Annan 2001, 7 and 36.
92. UN and World Bank 2018, 2; UNGA 2003, 2.
93. Cf. Rapoport 1982, 16.
94. Brock 1968, 453.
95. ibid., 454; Curti 1973, 8.
96. Dodge 1905b, 10.

asserts that "whole amount of property in the United States is probably of far less value than what has been expended and destroyed within two centuries by wars in Christendom."[97] However, neither Dodge nor Worcester provide any specific calculations nor sources for these counterfactual claims, so that they remain conjectures, if not hyperboles.

The rise of rationalisation and efficiency over the course of the 19th century made the costliness of war an even more pressing issue,[98] so that pacifist writings increasingly included accounts of war financing that detailed military salaries, costs for armament and the resulting national debt. These were often presented as descriptive statistics in lists, tables and graphs that provided specific and aggregate amounts of various expenses. Such data makes it possible to compare the magnitude of war's costs across time and space.[99] This bolsters the utilitarian imperative to prevent, as quantitative comparisons visualise how the costs of war outweigh its gains.[100] Consequently, not incurring those costs by avoiding wars is the most cost-effective policy option. One of the first examples of such data-driven approaches to the consequentialist argument against war is the aforementioned *First Report of the Committee of Inquiry* of the Massachusetts Peace Society of 1818.[101] While the committee refrained from making comparisons between wartime and peacetime expenses because "the European nations have been [...] constantly engaged in war"—up until two years before the time of writing for the committee—thus making the juxtaposition impossible, it presents specific amounts of expenses for armies, navies, ordnance as well as commissariat and barracks taken from treasury reports of the British, Austrian and US governments.[102]

Although the report purports that direct comparisons of wartime and peacetime are not yet possible, it claims that budgetary problems of governments are exclusively caused by war. It states that it is "well known that it is only *war* that increases national debts, which are always diminished in peace."[103] The evidence presented for this claim relies on accounts of the increase of state debt in Britain, Austria and the US due to wartime expenses. While it makes no direct comparison to peacetime budgets, the report implies that the expenses incurred for military purposes in a given period were larger than those dedicated to civil areas of society, including the government, religion, literature and charity.[104] Here again, the report leverages the counterfactual argument that the resources spent for war could have been used for other efforts with greater returns and value for society:

97. Worcester 1904, 5.
98. Alexander 2008; Allan 2018b, 18–9.
99. On the quantification of war, see Chapter 4.
100. See also Chapter 5.
101. See Chapter 4.
102. MPS 1818, 24.
103. ibid., 26.
104. Curti 1973, 26.

> If this sum, thus squandered on employments, which have tended only to destroy, degrade and demoralize mankind, had been judiciously applied by those nations, to the encouragement of the Arts and Sciences, the diffusion of comforts and improvements, and particularly to the extension of the knowledge and influence of the Gospel of Christ; what would have been the state of society at the present time, compared with what it actually is?[105]

Similarly, noting the achievements of the organisation—recruiting members, inspiring the foundation of other peace groups, publishing pacifist pamphlets—despite its small budget,[106] the *Second Annual Report* of the Massachusetts Peace Society argues that only "a *hundredth part* [one percent] of the annual expenditures of Christian nations in preparing for war" would be enough to "abolish the custom" in every Christian country.[107] As a result, the report concludes that it is reasonable to presume that in due time, it will become abundantly clear that preventing war that it is "much better and cheaper, as well as more christian [sic], […] than to support such barbarous, expensive, and all-devouring custom."[108]

Thus, the report establishes war as a financial problem in three ways. Firstly, it engages a cost-benefit calculation arguing that the means needed for society to prosper are smaller than those needed to wage war. Secondly, it argues that if the means used for military purposes in war were used for civilian purposes in peace, this would not only reduce poverty and thus improve societal well-being but also advance cultural aspects such as arts and sciences. This counterfactual thus emphasises again the binary opposition of war and peace, in which the former is *de*structive and the latter *con*structive. As a result, avoiding to wage war becomes the rationally preferable option. Finally, it fuses the rational-consequentialist case for prevention with the deontological argument. Premised on the belief that following the values of Christianity, or the so-called gospel, is good and right in itself, the report claims that one of the ways in which the expenses used for war can be put to better use is to distribute the message of Christ, presumably through missionary efforts.[109] As within the Christian pacifist reasoning, Christian values are civilised and non-Christian ('heathenish') beliefs and customs are not, war is understood to be an aberration for the former but normalised for the latter, as I have explained in the previous two sections. In this way, diverting financial means from war efforts to mission work becomes an investment in peace, as the latter is only an

105. MPS 1818, 27.
106. Like other peace societies, the MPS was exclusively funded through subscription fees, which amounted to one dollar per member (which would equal about 22 dollars today), of which the report lists 304 in 1818. These fees were then used for printing and reprinting peace pamphlets, periodicals and circular letters, which were distributed for free (this was not the case for all peace societies, as others sold their publications for a small price). See ibid., 15.
107. ibid., 18, emphasis original.
108. ibid., 21.
109. ibid., 27.

attainable goal in Christian societies, or as the report puts it, war can be abolished only in countries "on which the gospel shines."[110]

Counterfactual claims about how countries and societies would have prospered if their budgets had been put towards civil purposes rather than war is a recurring theme in (proto-) scientific studies of war. Such a statement also features in the 1867 study *Contemporary Wars* by the French economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu. He calculates that a total of 1,193 million Pounds Sterling have been consumed by a number of wars, which, "if employed in works of peace, would have *entirely transformed* the social and financial condition of civilised nations" within the same time span.[111] However, even where not garnished with conjectures about what would have been possible if it were not for war, comparative studies of the pacifist movement argued that any gains through victory would never exceed the financial losses of war. This is the core argument of the study *The Future of War in its Technical, Economic and Political Relations* on modern industrial warfare by the polish businessman and economist Ivan Bloch, published about thirty years after Leroy-Beaulieu's *Contemporary Wars*. In the preface, Edwin Mead, the president of the WPF at the time, points out that according to Bloch's analysis, the "destructiveness of modern warfare, with its frightful new weapons, becomes so appalling that a general European war would bring the universal bankruptcy of nations."[112] That is, Bloch answers the eponymous question of whether war has become impossible in the affirmative because the costs and destruction of war make victory meaningless.[113] As a result, where victory does not promise gains or at least a balancing out of the costs incurred for war, the expenditure for armies and navies becomes branded as wasteful, especially considering these "gargantuan" and "enormous" amounts only reflect the directly visible defence spending.[114]

In its effort to approach the abolition of war by publicising empirical evidence, the *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* extensively addresses the economic ramifications of the Balkan Wars. Dedicating an entire chapter to the wars' "economic results," it advances the claim that, first and foremost, "war is a destruction of wealth."[115] This concerns not only the material destruction of land, towns and villages, transport infrastructures such as railways and bridges or expensive weaponry and ammunition, but also the disruption of financial flows and the reduction of reserves. Even before the outbreak of armed hostilities, the report notes, the buildup towards war already has negative financial repercussions as "[c]redit facilities are restricted; monetary circulation

110. ibid., 18.
111. Leroy-Beaulieu 1869, 56–7, emphasis original.
112. Mead in Bloch 1903, iii.
113. Bloch 1899; see also Martel 2011, 150.
114. See, e.g., Fried 1905, 61, own translation; Ginn 1909, 275.
115. CEIP 1914, 235. For the historical background of the report, see Chapter 3.

disturbed; production slackened; orders falling off to a marked degree; and an uncertainty prevails which reacts harmfully on trade."[116] The report already broaches the subject of what current-day economists would call 'human capital.' As soon as the mobilisation for war begins, it notes, men are drafted into the armed forces, which not only shrinks the available labour force but also leaves families without the main breadwinner.[117] Here again, the counterfactual notion that if it were not for war, societies would prosper resonates as the report laments that "the young, the strongest, who were yesterday the strength of their country, who were its future of fruitful labor, are laid low by shot and shell."[118] According to this argument, war diminishes future opportunities as current as well as potential workers die on the battlefield. On the other hand, the report notes that the human toll of war also creates economic opportunities as many "invalids" need to rely on prosthetic limbs after having been irreversibly injured, which creates new industries for products such as artificial legs.[119]

5.4.2 War as Development in Reverse

The discourse of the prevention agenda after 1990 continues to present war as costly. Echoing the lines of argument of early 19th-century pacifists, war and armed conflict become branded as a "reckless waste of precious resources" that could otherwise have gone towards social and economic development.[120] The case for prevention in the late 20th and early 21st centuries also follows cost-benefit reasoning. The Carnegie Report, for example, explicitly acknowledges that preventing war is also associated with financial investments when it notes that prevention "entails action, action entails costs, and costs demand trade-offs." However, the costs of preventing war are "minuscule when compared with the costs of deadly conflict."[121] These costs, in turn, do not only concern the direct expenses for waging war, as I have already noted at the beginning of this section. Even long after war, its costliness can be felt through "reduced economic growth, minimized trade and investment opportunities, and the added costs of reconstruction."[122] In contrast, prevention constitutes a "more desirable and cost-effective strategy to ensure lasting peace and security than trying to stop it or alleviate [war's] symptoms."[123] In this way, the argument that preventing violent conflict is cost-effective vis-à-vis the cost-ineffectiveness of war continues from early peace advocacy to the internationalised prevention agenda of the 21st century.

116. CEIP 1914, 235, punctuation original.
117. ibid., 235.
118. ibid., 235.
119. ibid., 243.
120. ICISS 2001, 27
121. CCPDC 1997, xlvi.
122. UN and World Bank 2018, 25.
123. Annan 2001, 10.

However, as was the case in the early Christian pacifist writings advocating for prevention, the consequentialist argument about war's cost-ineffectiveness blends with a deontological argument in the discourse of development that is increasingly latched onto the prevention of war and conflict in the 20th century. In more recent documents, the association of war and peace with 'barbarism' and 'civilisation,' respectively, is rather implicit. For example, the Carnegie Report states that it "clarif[ies] the tasks and strategies, the tools available, and the opportunities for various actors: who can do what to make a truly civilized world."[124] This implies that a world without war would be 'truly civilised' and thus that those waging war are either incompletely or only ostensibly civilised. In a similar vein, the report further suggests that escalating prejudices and ethnocentrism into violent conflict are "anachronisms of our ancient past" and that "[i]f we cannot learn to accommodate each other respectfully in the twenty-first century, we could destroy each other at such a rate that humanity will have little to cherish."[125] While the latter statement is presumably aimed at emphasising the destructive capacity of weaponry in the 20th century, and especially nuclear weapons, it also implies that peaceful relations are learned behaviour and thus the result of societal development.

Yet, a continuity can be drawn from the discourse of war as barbarism to the framing of the Global South as an aberration from the 'normal' mode of the liberal peace and the prosperity of the Global North.[126] After the Second World War, the issue of civilisation increasingly morphed into a discourse of (under-)development as a problem of global governance.[127] As the legal standard of civilisation that split the world into 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' nations became obsolete, this "two-tiered states system" continued in the distinction between the 'First' and 'Third' world that was set apart by a new, more implicit, "standard of modernity."[128] Modernity within this dichotomy represents the group of capitalist liberal democracies—or the so-called West—while the 'rest' is imagined as "backward" or "pre-modern." Modernisation, i.e. the process of achieving the standard of modernity, is achieved through economic development. Development assistance, in turn, constitutes an intervention of the modern into the pre-modern world analogous to the classical standards of civilisation that justified interventions of the 'civilised' into the 'uncivilised' world.[129]

While the explicit vocabulary of race has become implicit and the "unit within which the ontology of difference is situated" shifted from civilisation to state capacity and institutionalisation, the evolutionary teleology that takes the European experience of modernity

124. CCPDC 1997, xiv.
125. ibid., xii.
126. Cramer 2006, 7.
127. The idea of 'underdevelopment' as a problem, if not a threat, goes back to US President Truman's Four Point Speech, see, e.g., Macekura 2013.
128. Bowden 2004, 52–3; Gong 1984, 92.
129. Bowden 2004, 59 and 63; see also Hall 2019.

as its ideal is carried forth in the linear development ideology.[130] When during the 1990s economic models of conflict began to proliferate in research and policy, conflict and 'underdevelopment' increasingly became to explain each other's occurrence.[131] In some cases, such explanations would rely on essentialist conceptions of ethnicity and race, also known as the "new barbarism thesis" or "Malthus-with-guns," thus pathologising violence in so-called developing countries.[132] This conception of war with primordialism and deep-seated hatred was influential in both media narratives, analyses by "nonspecialists," as well as in the thinking and practice of foreign policy and international interventions in the 1990s and 2000s.[133] For example, upon reading Robert Kaplan's "The Coming Anarchy,"[134] then-president Bill Clinton reportedly ordered the essay to be faxed to every US embassy in Africa.[135] Similarly, in her study on UN peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of the Congo conducted between 2004 and 2007, Séverine Autesserre finds that interveners saw the Congolese people as remaining in a Hobbesian natural state, thus understanding occasional and localised attacks as 'normal,' which in turn is a central reason for why peace operations have failed to curb violence.[136]

Analyses of the causes of conflict in terms of neoclassical economics, where the primary factors contributing to armed violence are economic inequality, poverty and resource competition, increasingly defined the problem of war and armed conflict as interdependent with the issue of development, which is a governance object in itself.[137] Against the background of a growing preoccupation with the 'pervasiveness' of violent conflict in the Global South, such explanations are primarily found in conflict analyses of the World Bank in the 2000s. Here, the prevention agenda latched onto the existing governance issue of development. At the same time, the prevention agenda of the UN acknowledges that economic growth alone will not bring peace but see war as a hindrance to progress and growth.[138] Most prominently, Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* states that "peace and development are interdependent."[139] Annan's report *Prevention of Armed Conflict* of 2001 reaffirms the claim that war and armed conflict are "put[ting] the affected countries further behind in their development, marginalising them from the global economy."[140] Consequently, so the reasoning goes, every step

130. Gruffyd Jones 2013, 60–1.
131. Cramer 2002.
132. Kaplan 1994; Richards 1996, xiii.
133. Cramer 2006, 30; Straus 2016, 63. Straus notes that most scholarly accounts reject(ed) this perspective as reductionist. For 'nonspecialist' examples employing primordialist frames, see, e.g., Kaplan 2014; Rose 1999.
134. Kaplan 1994.
135. Cramer 2006, 30; Richards 1996, xv. For more context on the influence of Kaplan's work and especially the "The Coming Anarchy" essay on US foreign policy thinking, see Shaw 2003.
136. Autesserre 2010.
137. Allan 2018b, chapters 4 and 5; Cramer 2006, 7–8.
138. CCPDC 1997, 84; UN and World Bank 2018, 1.
139. Boutros-Ghali 1992, 18.
140. Annan 2001, 25.

taken "towards reducing poverty and achieving broad-based economic growth [...] is a step towards conflict prevention."[141] Therefore, any investment in prevention is also an investment in development. In this way, peace and economic development become two sides of the same coin, while war and 'underdevelopment' are their negative counterparts. A resolution passed by the UN General Assembly in 2003, also entitled *Prevention of Armed Conflict* and in direct reference to the Secretary-General's report, reaffirms this by recognising "that peace and development are mutually reinforcing, including in the prevention of armed conflict."[142]

Along similar lines, the development policy of the last decade has identified war and violent conflict as a major hindrance to reaching development objectives. The consolidation of the agendas of preventing conflict and sustainable economic development becomes explicit with the World Development Report of 2011 on "Conflict, Security, and Development," the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* resolution of 2015 and the *Pathways for Peace* report of 2018, the latter of which was jointly authored by the World Bank and the UN in an effort to formulate an integrated agenda of conflict prevention and development.[143] According to the *Pathways for Peace* report, war does not only destroy the internal cohesion of societies but also damages infrastructures and production systems.[144] As a result, violent conflict "reverses hard-won development gains, stunts the opportunities of children and young people, and robs economies of opportunities for growth."[145] In this way, the report reaffirms that violent conflict is a major obstacle to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and argues that conflict prevention "is cost-effective, saves lives, and safeguards development gains," while war constitutes an "impediment to development and prosperity today and in the future."[146]

According to this reasoning, inadequate development is both a cause and an outcome of war. In this way, the essentialising and the economistic explanatory frames converge in the assumption that war is "development in reverse," with 'development' standing in for modernist and technological progress in one case and economic growth and prosperity in the other.[147] In this understanding of war as nullifying advances in development thus reverberates the characterisation in the report of the International Congress of Women from around 100 years earlier that war is "the negation of progress."[148] As a result, the prevention of war and conflict becomes not only a "matter of humanitarian obligation" but also a form of pursuing "enlightened self interest," according to the Carnegie Report.[149] This is not only because prevention "is a less costly option for the international community than military

141. Annan 2000, 45; Annan 2001, 8.
142. UNGA 2003, 2.
143. UN and World Bank 2018; UN 2015, 9; World Bank 2011.
144. UN and World Bank 2018, 34.
145. ibid., 11.
146. ibid., xviii , 1; see also UN 2015, 9.
147. See, e.g., Collier et al. 2003.
148. ICW 1915, 12.
149. CCPDC 1997, 105.

action, emergency humanitarian relief or reconstruction after a war has run its course," as stated in the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (also known as Brahimi Report after the chairman of the panel, Lakhdar Brahimi), which conducted a review of and formulated recommendations for strengthening the UN's peacekeeping capacities.[150] Prevention is also self-interested because of its practical value, because "where peace and cooperation prevail, so do security and prosperity," which, in turn, are understood to be the conditions for growth and development.[151] Almost twenty years later, the flagship report of the prevention agenda of the UN and World Bank, the *Pathways for Peace* report, echoes this reasoning by reaffirming that prevention does not only inhere a "moral value associated with saving human lives and preventing atrocity" but it also "minimizes the costs of destruction generated by cycles of violence," thus making it "a rational and cost-effective strategy for countries at risk of violence and for the international community."[152] From the "immense human suffering" and the "exorbitant costs of conflict" follows both a moral and practical imperative to prevent such conflicts from occurring in the first place.[153] In this way, preventing war becomes not only morally, but also economically justified, as the costs of war and post-war reconstruction far outweigh the costs of prevention,[154] or as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan puts it, "[m]ore effective prevention strategies would save not only hundreds of thousands of lives but also billions of dollars."[155]

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how war became constructed as a problem for different audiences associated with different interests. In order for an issue to become an object of international governance, it needs to be seen as relevant to the interests and identities of policymakers, so that they feel compelled to invest direct their scarce attention and resources at resolving the problem.[156] I argued in this chapter that the process of defining war as a problem of international importance rests on two ways of moral reasoning. These can broadly be distinguished into deontological and consequentialist claims, although both often merge in arguments advocating for preventing war and conflict. The most basic distinction between the deontological and consequentialist position is that for the former what matters to assess moral worth are whether an action follows rules, while for the latter what matters is whether the effects of an action are moral or immoral. Deontological reasoning is based

150. UN 2000, 5.
151. CCPDC 1997, 162.
152. UN and World Bank 2018, 2.
153. ibid., 2 and 289.
154. Ban 2011; Boutros-Ghali 1992; CCPDC 1997; UN 2000; UN and World Bank 2018.
155. Annan 2001, 8.
156. Allan 2017, 138.

on prescriptions of absolute principles, which means that actions are only moral when they align with such principles.

As I argued in the first half of the chapter, for the early Christian pacifists, these rules or principles were rooted in religious beliefs, with the Bible as an authoritative text to guide moral behaviour. Focusing on three influential pamphlets of the early peace movement of the 19th century, I showed that Christian pacifists defined war as a problem for Christians because they deemed it incompatible with the message of Christ. While pious Christians observing the gospel should display mercy, nonresistance and piety, war is understood to be an inherently cruel and brutal undertaking. War, in other words, is painted to be 'barbaric' and thus not an appropriate means of conflict resolution for those who deem themselves civilised. Engaging colonial tropes of self-sacrifice, infanticide and ritual burning, the early pacifists emphasised that the war in the ostensibly civilised parts of the world is even worse. Thus, if Christians denounce the 'heathenish' customs of peoples in the colonies, they must—even more so—denounce war.

This association of war and barbarism continues in the peace advocacy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, although less based on religious authority. Instead, the philanthropists and peace activists of the pre- and interwar years buy into (pseudo-) scientific explanations of human behaviour, and especially the theories of evolution that become increasingly popular in the second half of the 19th century. Here, the notion of war as barbaric works on the basis of a racist understanding of humanity that is stratified rather than universal, distinguishing into fully and less-than, not-quite or sub-human. In the evolutionist conception, humankind continuously develops and strives for progress and the processes of civilisation and pacification are intertwined, in the sense that once humankind has arrived at the highest stage of civilisations, it rises above the need for fighting. As a result, those for whom fighting is understood to be natural are considered not-quite or not human.

Consequently, the peaceful world order in the imagination of the scientific peace philanthropists and pacifists of the early 20th century only applies to the ostensibly civilised 'family of nations' but not to 'primitive' societies. In this conception, war is a problem for those who understand themselves to be civilised, as it is inconsistent with their evolutionary stage. War is thus rendered problematic because it exists in and among supposedly modern and civilised societies although it *ought to* only exist in 'primitive,' 'uncivilised' and 'barbarian' societies that do not (yet) have attained the developmental capacity for peaceful conflict resolution. The reason here is deontological in the sense that civilised societies are understood to be following a rule-based (specifically, law-based) order and conflict resolution, while 'barbarian' and animalistic behaviour of violent conflict resolution breaches these rules.

In the second half of this chapter, I showed how consequentialist claims blend with

deontological ones to constitute war as a governance problem. According to consequentialist reasoning, an action is immoral when its effects—or consequences—are immoral. I argued that this logic is at play where peace advocates, scientists and organisations emphasise the costliness of war. Claims about the costs of war concern both material and financial expenses incurred by preparing for, conducting and reconstructing after war, as well as the so-called 'human costs' of war that refer to the direct and indirect effects on combatants and civilians. The central consequentialist reasoning is the claim that war is cost-ineffective and prevention cost-effective. The emphasising of war's costs is a consistent feature from early pacifist writing to the early attempts at cataloguing war and data-driven reports of the contemporary prevention agenda, often accompanied by counterfactual claims arguing that the financial and material investments in war would have yielded greater returns in terms of economic, societal and cultural development if they were used towards civilian efforts.

In the final section of this chapter, I examined the problematisation of war through its association with underdevelopment. I argued that the discourse on development transforms the binary of civilised vs. barbarian into developed vs. underdeveloped, thus shifting the focus from evolutionary progress to economic growth, state capacity and institutionalisation. Nevertheless, it takes the European experience of modernity as the norm. Against this background, underdevelopment and war become understood as interdependent problems. As a result, the agendas of preventing war and promoting development merge as investments in the former become investments in the latter and vice versa. On the flipside, war becomes a problem for those subscribing to the idea of development, both in the sense of modernist progress and economic growth and prosperity.

6

Unmaking Prevention? Martial Ecologies and the De-problematisation of War

6.1 Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I have grappled with the question of how the idea of preventing wars and armed conflicts became possible and developed into a given in the discourse of IOs, commissions, NGOs and development actors. I argued that the idea of prevention relies on a binary between war and peace, where both are temporally, spatially and ontologically delimited and thus not only separable from one another but mutually exclusive. That is, war happens in specific places while others remain 'peaceful,' it starts and ends, and it is qualitatively different from a purely civilian setting.[1] The default state of the world in this imagination is peaceful, whereas wars are the exception.

The exceptional notion of war has two central corollaries. Firstly, it means that the underlying ontology of war within the prevention episteme relies on its fixity, in the sense that war is something that first is and then is not (and vice versa) rather than something that is continually becoming. Secondly, the notion that war is an exceptional and cataclysmic event that interrupts 'normal' political and social life means that war is implicitly understood to be external to institutions and sectors of society (such as the economy) rather than being integral to their emergence and functioning.[2]

In contrast, an ecological understanding of war sees it as manifesting through a multiplicity of micro-events, "ranging from misogyny and mass incarceration to all-out combat."[3] In this conception, war is not only *not* temporally and spatially limited as expected by the prevention agenda but it is inherently entangled with the functioning of everyday life and world order. As I argue below, if it found application in the policy sphere, this conceptual

1. Dudziak 2012.
2. Grove 2019, 60.
3. Fastholm 2020, 1416.

shift would unmake the constitution of war as a governance object as I have described it in previous chapters. Where the war-peace binary is abandoned and war is no longer understood as an aberration, prevention is no longer possible.

In the following, I first explain the central premises of ecological approaches to war to elucidate my argument. Harkening back to the conditions of possibility I introduced as part of the problem construction framework in previous chapters, I discuss the theoretical implications for the idea of prevention and explain how it becomes conceptually obsolete in the second section. The third section discusses how Anthropocene thinkers imagine war as no longer resolvable and how they suggest an affirmative approach to war could manifest. In this section, I also examine to what extent such thinking has found its way into prevention policy, especially regarding the concept of resilience has both been taken up in the prevention agenda and been described as compatible with postmodernist approaches to governance in the academic literature. Finally, I consider the ethics of the conceptual shift of martial ecologies towards abandoning the idea of prevention and affirming war. Since conceptualisations of 'becoming with' war tend to romanticise suffering through abstract celebrations of creativity, they cement the *status quo* rather than offering emancipatory potential. In contrast, I argue that if one accepts the premise that war is not separable from 'peace' in a meaningful way and that it manifests through a range of violent and oppressive relations, Black and Indigenous 'worlding' presents perspectives of relational being beyond the totalising visions of the Anthropocene that are ethical and just.

6.2 War is Not a Metaphor: Martial Ecologies

As I explained in Chapter 3, a central premise for the constitution of war as a governance object that underlies the conflict prevention agenda is the assumption that 'war' is different from 'peace.' However, there are various conceptions that reject the notion of a definitive binary between war and peace. For example, feminist scholarship has emphasised how the ostensibly clear line between what is 'war' and what is 'peace' frequently blurs once the focus of the research lies on the everyday rather than exceptional and spectacular instances of violence.[4] Instead, such works have carved out how peace itself is shaped by violence and unfolds along a continuum rather than a binary.[5] As an extension of this, feminist scholarship of the more recent 'experiential turn' shines a light on war's "ordinariness." This work analyses the manners in which war shapes people's everyday experiences, which may include horror and trauma as well as joy, love, pleasure and humour.[6] However, how war

4. Wibben and Donahoe 2020, 1. For a review of feminist pacifist thought, see, e.g., Hutchings 2018c.
5. See, e.g., Cockburn 2004; Enloe 2000; Reardon 1993.
6. Welland 2018, 439. See also, for example, Basham 2013; Krystalli and Schulz 2022; Parashar 2014; Sylvester 2013.

affects peace is mostly understood as 'encroachment' via militarisation in the bulk of feminist scholarship. In this way, conceptions of the continuum of war and violence are often still marked by a "desire to challenge [war's] practice" and focused on 'achieving peace' through calls to de-militarisation, understood as the preservation or reconstitution of the 'normal' or peaceful state of affairs.[7] Thus, these approaches do not reject the war-peace binary entirely. However, rather than a theoretical shortcoming, the retention of war as a bounded entity is a conscious normative choice for feminist scholarship, as it is explicitly invested in overcoming war.[8]

Postcolonial works that critique the Eurocentrism of modernity usually only consider war as a continuity from imperial or colonial violence.[9] As one exception, Tarak Barkawi argues that 'decolonising war' entails reassessing the very definition of war. The idea of the war-peace binary, according to Barkawi, is based on provincial, European histories in which war is imagined as "large-scale, organised, and reciprocal violence compressed in time and space."[10] He turns to Clausewitz to argue that "the political character of war confounds efforts to establish what war is and when it is or is not happening." Barkawi concludes that Clausewitz's account of the difficulty of clearly delineating 'war' from 'peace' points to a relational ontology in which one shapes the other and vice versa.[11]

A recent perspective in the study of war that takes the notion of a relational ontology seriously is made up of ecological approaches. Although the bulk of this work focuses on political and societal challenges in light of the climate crisis, 'ecological' in this context does not denote a narrow focus on aspects of the environment. Instead, it encompasses a "broader theoretical and methodological disposition that puts the co-evolution of beings and their milieus at its heart."[12] In doing so, ecological approaches privilege the idea of encounter and entanglement as "deep relational processes across geographical scales" over causality and human agency.[13] Material objects thus take an active part in such relations and are included in them as parts of assemblages that act as a whole, rather than only as "passive conduits of human intentionality."[14]

The ecological conception of war is broad and flat at the same time: while it is broader than battle,[15] proponents of this approach do not seek to 'solve' or 'fix' the ontology of war. Instead, they embrace war as a "mystery" that is best meaningfully studied through radical,

7. Howard 2018; Welland 2018, 440.
8. See, e.g. MacKenzie and Wegner 2021, 1.
9. See, e.g., Fanon 2004, esp. 1–62; Hull 2013, 332.
10. Barkawi 2016, 201.
11. ibid., 203.
12. Bousquet 2019, 76; see also Grove 2014.
13. Grove 2019, 43.
14. Bousquet 2019, 76.
15. Grove 2019, 3; cf. Barkawi and Brighton 2011.

martial empiricism that pays attention to the myriad ways in which war is continuously becoming.[16] According to this radical empiricist methodology, war manifests in a multiplicity of everyday micro-events and relations.[17] As Jairus Grove puts it, practices, systems and organisations ranging from

> resource extraction, enclosure, carbon liberation, racialization, mass incarceration, border enforcement, policing and security practices, primitive accumulation by dispossession, targeted strikes, to all-out combat—are relations of war than merely correlates or opportunities for a war metaphor. To put it a bit more bluntly, politics, colonialism, settlement, capitalism, ecological destruction, racism, and misogynies are not wars by other means—they are war. War is not a metaphor.[18]

That is, war is everywhere and inherently entangled with the functioning of world order. An ecological understanding of war thus goes distinctly against the conception of war as an "anomalous or rare event that suddenly breaks out" as assumed in mainstream IR, quantitative conflict research and prevention policy. Like the feminist approaches mentioned above, an ecological approach sees war as an ordinary practice.[19] The notion of war as an exceptional event assumes a domain of politics that is 'normal,' 'peaceful' and 'civilian' until the moment of military intrusion so that the arrival of war-like relations is understood as an aberration. However, the conception of encroachment fails to capture continuing legacies of politics, knowledges and technologies, and how these are emerging from and through war.[20] Similarly, albeit not explicitly adopting an ecological perspective, Barkawi and Brighton argue that as long as social and political thought continues to be formulated in "strangely pacific" terms, it will continue to misconstrue "that around us which belongs to an order of war as belonging to that of peace."[21]

Ecological approaches to theory and methodology are usually discussed in relation to the so-called Anthropocene.[22] The latter was introduced initially as a term for a new geological epoch to capture how humans have become a "telluric force."[23] The effect of human activity on the planet is intense and long-lasting to such an extent, so the argument goes, that it

16. Bousquet, Grove and Shah 2020.
17. Fastholm 2020, 1416.
18. Grove 2019, 60–1.
19. ibid., 6.
20. Howell 2018.
21. Barkawi and Brighton 2011, 141–2.
22. For the original introduction of the term, see Crutzen and Stoermer 2000 and Crutzen 2002. It is worth noting that opinions diverge on when exactly this geological era is supposed to have started, with suggested starting points ranging from the colonisation of the Americas in the 15th century, to the transatlantic slave trade from the 16th century onwards, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the middle of the 18th century, or the invention and use of nuclear fission in the 20th century. See, e.g., Lewis and Maslin 2015; Waters et al. 2014; Waters et al. 2016; Yusoff 2018; Zalasiewicz et al. 2015. For the discussion on dating the beginning of the Anthropocene in the social sciences and humanities, see, e.g., Davis and Todd 2017; Ellis et al. 2016; Harrington 2016, 483–4; Morton 2013, 7.
23. Bonneuil 2015, 19. See also Chakrabarty 2009.

will still be readable as geological strata "well after man ceases to be, even if there are no geologists [...] to undertake this imagined future reading."[24] Since its introduction in the early 2000s, the concept of the Anthropocene has expanded from the natural sciences into the social sciences and humanities.[25] Indeed, it has proliferated to such an extent that the term 'Anthropocene' "has become a buzzword that can mean all things to all people."[26]

Since its emergence as a geological epoch, 'Anthropocene' has evolved into an umbrella term for a broader, all-encompassing political and philosophical crisis. This conceptual expansion suggests a certain collectivity of humans as a species that is responsible for shaping the planet politically, socially and materially. To delineate central positions within the vast literature on the Anthropocene across disciplines, Elisa Randazzo and Hannah Richter suggest distinguishing two broad strands. The first perspective is "discontinuous-descriptive." It is centrally informed by the natural sciences, especially Earth sciences, and emphasises the ecological changes of the Anthropocene as catastrophic. Within this school, eco-modernist approaches hailing technological solutions to halt the climate catastrophe through, for example, geoengineering have emerged.[27] Ecological approaches that view these changes as an opportunity for reimagining relations and decentring the human make up the second strand, which Randazzo and Richter call "continuous-ontological."[28] The fundamental difference between these strands lies in what is at stake in light of the Anthropocene. While the former approach focuses on the measurement and management of catastrophic ecological changes, the latter sees in the Anthropocene a "seismic shift" in the understanding of what it means to be in the world.[29] However, both strands are united in drawing attention to the multitude of ways through which anthropogenic effects shape the very makeup of the planet.

The Anthropocene concept thus emphasises the constitutive interconnectedness of various systems—ecological, political and economic alike. However, Grove argues that it is insufficient in capturing the omnipresence of martial relations today. Instead, he charges that (academic) debates on the Anthropocene largely omit war and instead focus on the climate crisis as the primary planetary threat.[30] While war's central role in making the world as it is today is a staple of political theories in the sense that war is understood as productive of order and knowledge,[31] the conception of martial relations is more expansive and much more 'quotidian' in Grove's conception. He concurs with the literature in History,

24. Colebrook 2014, 10.
25. See, e.g., Dalby 2002; Haraway 2016; Morton 2016; Tsing 2015.
26. Moore 2016, 3.
27. Randazzo and Richter 2021; see also Rothe 2020.
28. Randazzo and Richter 2021.
29. ibid., 298.
30. Grove 2019, 59.
31. Barkawi and Brighton 2011; Giddens 1985; Mann 1986; Mann 1993; Tilly 1975; Tilly 1990.

Political Science and IR that war is world-making in that it brings about, shapes and erodes socio-political systems, institutions and processes. However, from an ecological perspective, this world-making goes beyond the socio-political realm by shaping the face of the earth in material ways.[32] That is, not only are humans are a terra-forming force in this new geological epoch, but they are doing so through war.

There are numerous examples of how war has formed the earth as it can be measured and seen today: the colonisation of the Americas and the concomitant genocide of Indigenous peoples by the European invaders resulted in a large-scale depopulation, which led to such a high CO_2 uptake in the abandoned land surface that the temperature dropped globally.[33] Testing for the eventuality of nuclear war has left toxic landscapes in the Pacific Ocean, with some parts remaining uninhabitable for the foreseeable future.[34] The Czech Hedgehogs that were not scavenged for scrap metal and the concrete casemates that are too heavy and robust to fall into the sea remain on the beaches of Normandy as the ruins that made the so-called Atlantic Wall. The shelling at Omaha beach was so heavy that a team of researchers found that samples of sand taken in 1988—more than 40 years after D-Day—still consisted of 4% shrapnel.[35]

The Anthropocene is supposed to unite humanity into a collective, carried by a sentiment of "we-who-are-in-this-together" that shall induce hope and inspire change.[36] However, this notion omits that only a few of the eponymous humans have brought about the geopolitical arrangements that facilitated the arrival and maintenance of this new era, regardless of when one defines it to have started.[37] Instead of being a result of the actions of humanity as a singular force, the accelerating destruction of the planet has primarily been brought about—and is continuing to be brought about—by "those on the frontlines of modernisation: white, wealthy, rich males of European heritage."[38] In addition, the wealthy members of Western industrialised societies not only bear the primary responsibility for these ecological changes and martial arrangements but are also left with more means and opportunities to avoid being affected by the most devastating consequences.[39]

To capture the inequalities that are masked by the term Anthropocene, a number of scholars have proposed alternative labels and concepts, from 'Anthrobscene,' 'Capitalocene,'

32. Grove 2019, 3.
33. Koch et al. 2019. This dip in atmospheric CO_2 was first described by Lewis and Maslin 2015, 175, who named it the "Orbis spike."
34. See, e.g., Alexis-Martin 2019; Bahng 2020; Teaiwa 1994.
35. McBride and Picard 2011.
36. Hardt 2021, 18. See also Braidotti 2020; Connolly 2017, 121.
37. Grove 2019, 43–4. See also Karera 2019, 38.
38. Harrington 2016, 483. See also Davis et al. 2019; Malm and Hornborg 2014.
39. Randazzo and Richter 2021, 299. See also Davies 2016; Moore 2016; Saldanha 2017.

'Chthulucene,' to 'Plantationocene.'[40] In this vein, Grove suggests the concept of the 'Eurocene' to reflect that none of the anthropogenic threats that the planet faces, from the peril of nuclear war to the climate crisis, have originated outside the "Euro-American circuit of expansion, extractivism, and settlement."[41] War as an ecology, so the argument, is endemic to the Eurocene in that the quotidian workings of global affairs are enacting war through seemingly disparate practices and relations on those who are "racialized, Indigenous, disabled, queer or otherwise constituted as a threat" to congeal and order the global system.[42] That is, modern liberal politics are indebted to the Eurocene to such an extent that war can be considered, somewhat counter-intuitively, a form of life.[43]

6.3 Theorising De-problematisation: Is Prevention Obsolete in the Eurocene?

A perhaps seemingly trivial but critical premise for prevention is knowing what is to be prevented. In the case of preventing conflict, such knowledge requires, for example, the identification of certain characteristics that make some instances of violence 'war' and thus include them in the remit of the prevention agenda, or that exclude them from its purview. It can also entail defining certain indicators, which suggest that an outbreak of violence is imminent according to a specific set of theories and models. Both conceptually and operationally, prevention relies on the premise that its target of governance can be 'known,' i.e. that it can be identified, measured and ultimately managed or averted.[44]

In contrast, ecological approaches argue for affirming the Anthropocene as being complex, entangled, constantly emerging and thus inherently unpredictable.[45] As a result, ecological approaches abandon the belief in the quasi-millenarian power of science and technology and give up on the motivation to steer and control the future through "technofixes."[46] To be sure, this does not mean that approaches affirming the Anthropocene discount science altogether but rather critique it "as the cheerleader for modernist discourses of progress."[47] As Anna Tsing put it, this way of thinking entails letting go of "those handrails, which once made us think we knew, collectively, where we were going."[48]

40. Haraway 2015; Haraway et al. 2016; Moore 2016; Parikka 2015. See also Morton 2014. For a critique of the neglect of race in the concept of the Plantationocene, see Davis et al. 2019.
41. Grove 2019, 11; see also Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 18.
42. Grove 2019, 62; Howell 2018, 118.
43. Grove 2019, 59–78.
44. See also Chapter 2.
45. Chandler 2018, 3; Tsing 2015, 2.
46. Haraway 2016, 3.
47. Chandler 2019b, 36. See also Haraway's contribution in Haraway et al. 2016, 546–7.
48. Tsing 2015, 2.

Such an onto-political approach has implications for conceptualising security more broadly.[49] At the core of strategic thinking lies the idea that the human needs to be secured against the world, which becomes impossible in the Anthropocene where the separation between human and nature is suspended.[50] Abandoning the idea of science and technologies as the facilitators of progress, in turn, does away with the notion inherent in much of conflict scholarship and policy—that if only were war sufficiently known, it can be resolved.[51] In contrast, Antoine Bousquet argues that the epistemological commitment of ecological approaches affirms "the essence of war as fundamentally unknowable" and thus, consequently, ungovernable.[52] Any attempt at "conceptually shackl[ing] war is undone by the creative advance of its new modes, residences and intensities," so that Marc von Boemcken even goes as far as claiming that it escapes human intelligibility.[53]

In the previous three chapters, I provided a narrative of war's construction as a governance object by tracing the concurrent processes of designation, translation and problematisation. These processes rely on a specific configuration of rationalities, representations, technologies and standards of investigation made possible through modernism.[54] In Chapter 3, I argued that the shift towards a scientific cosmology from the 16th century onwards gave rise to the conditions that made possible the construction of war as a governance object. Then again, if a certain cosmological configuration makes problem construction possible, this means that if the underlying cosmology changes, the problem conception also shifts or erodes. Ecological perspectives that draw on Anthropocene and posthumanist thinking reject crucial elements of the scientific cosmology that enables the conception of war as a problem, leading to war becoming de-problematised and prevention becoming conceptually impossible.

To reiterate, I followed Allan in my understanding of cosmologies as uniting sets of ideas that can be grouped as five constitutive elements comprising ontology, episteme, temporality, cosmogony and destiny. A "key organising logic" of modernist thinking based on scientific cosmology is the separation between nature and culture, which the relational ontology of ecological approaches reject.[55] Similarly, the modernist cosmology relies on an epistemic understanding according to which reliable and 'true' knowledge can be produced

49. Fagan 2017.
50. Chandler 2018, 10. Then again, to assume Anthropocene thinking as overcoming modernist thinking works to universalise the idea of the separation between culture and nature. As Todd 2016 notes, there is a multitude of non-Western and Indigenous cosmologies in which the sentient environments and entanglement (rather than anthropocentrism) go back millennia. Yet, these are frequently erased in Euro-Western academic discussions of the Anthropocene, resilience and relational ontology. See also Randazzo and Richter 2021.
51. See, e.g., Deutsch 1970, 473; Singer 1976, 120.
52. Bousquet 2019, 77; see also Grove 2019, 230.
53. von Boemcken 2016, 238.
54. Allan 2017, 137.
55. Fagan 2017, 293. See also Chandler 2018, 4–5; Dalby 2009; Latour 2017, 13–5; Walker 2006. See, e.g., UNDP 2020 for a policy example of the idea of the interconnectedness of humans and nature.

through scientific investigation, objective measurements and theoretical abstraction.[56] In contrast, ecological approaches reject the problem-centred rationality of modernity and instead view the world as interconnected and entangled, which means that the epistemic tools of supposedly objective science are called into question.[57]

Where ecological approaches to war dismiss the notion of 'fixing' war's ontology through scientific investigation and instead embrace it as entangled with the functioning of world order, thus suspending the binary between war and peace, the conditions for constituting war as a governance object are no longer fulfilled. As I have argued with the help of Corry in Chapter 1, to be capable of turning into a *governance* object, epistemic objects need to meet three criteria. They need to be conceivable as a meaningful entity on their own, as manipulable through human intervention and as relevant to the identities and interests of political actors.[58] However, ecological thinking rejects the distinction between war and peace, which means war is no longer an entity that is meaningfully distinguished from other entities such as colonisation, racism, gender-based violence or ecocide.[59] In other words, the conception of war as inherently entangled and continually becoming undermines the designation of war as an object.

Prevention, in the most basic sense, is an intervention in the present to avoid an undesired event or outcome in the future. As such, it is embedded in a cosmology in which events come into existence through causal chains.[60] That is, humans can intervene in the course of events to manipulate their development. While modernism centres on human reasoning and transformative agency, the radical critique of ecological approaches seeks to decentre the human and instead emphasises distributed agency in the world.[61] The aspects of temporality and destiny, i.e. ideas about the direction of time and the role of humans in the universe, gave rise to the idea of improvement and progress within the scientific cosmological order.[62] In contrast, ecological thinking "interpret[s] the Anthropocene as impervious to response, solution and control."[63] While this challenge to the idea of human agency in the Anthropocene literature is primarily directed at the notion of humans' power over nature and eco-modernist visions of geoengineering the climate crisis,[64] it has been taken up in the literature on martial ecologies. From the perspective of entanglement, questions of responsibility become obsolete. Instead, proponents of ecological approaches put increased urgency into the need "to learn

56. See also Chapter 4.
57. See, e.g., Grove 2014; Haraway 2016; Tsing 2015.
58. Corry 2013, 87.
59. Grove 2019, 60–1.
60. See also Chapter 3.
61. Chandler 2019b, 26–7.
62. Allan 2018b; see also Hutchings 2008.
63. Hardt 2021, 17–8.
64. Rothe 2020.

to adapt to the world we have created."[65] Thus, ecological approaches take a pure realist stance in the sense that they advocate taking the world as it is.[66] Such accounts often engage a strangely optimistic tone as they abandon the nihilistic pessimism of modernist critique of "averting tragedy, identifying errors and limits, or forecasting the end of humanity" and instead turn to appreciate the "creativity and spontaneity of life" in the post-apocalypse.[67]

A similar suggestion can be found in the few accounts that consider the affirmation of war. Where liberal international relations, both in theory and policy, most often seek peace and try to "expel war from the world while maintaining a modern order entirely indebted to it," Grove argues for finding possibilities of living in and with a "dying or worse yet expanding Eurocene civilization."[68] As the Anthropocene (or as Grove has it, Eurocene) is thought of as a totalising entity,[69] there is no option to find an 'outside,' which means there is no way out but only through.[70] As a result, from the affirmative perspective, there is no use in trying to resolve or prevent war in a world that is borne by martial relations. While war can be known and researched in its localised manifestations, as snapshots of ever-changing assemblages, it is and remains inherently ungovernable due to its intrinsic relations with the very instruments employed to eradicate it. To put it with Audre Lorde, the tools originating from a world enmeshed in war-like relations will never bring peace.[71]

In sum, ecological approaches reconceptualise both how and to what extent war can be 'known' and what, if anything, can be done about it. An ecological ontology of war and conflict as continually emerging processes rather than as "stabilised entit[ies]" that can be identified as distinct problems means that war can no longer be 'solved' or 'cured.'[72] Combined with the idea that war is a quotidian fact of life rather than an exceptional and limited event, it can only be "coped with and managed rather than known, understood or resolved" by engaging specific expertise.[73] By conceiving the world as constantly becoming, ecological approaches privilege what *is* over what *ought to be.* As David Chandler puts it, it is "the present not the future that is important."[74] Such thinking poses an existential challenge to the working principle of prevention that is oriented towards future outcomes. Prevention cannot conceptually exist where the idea of intervening in the present to alter the future is abandoned.

65. Burke et al. 2016, 500. For a critique and rejoinder to this manifesto, see Chandler, Cudworth and Hobden 2017 and Fishel et al. 2017.
66. I thank Stefano Guzzini for pointing this out to me.
67. Bargués-Pedreny 2019, 7; see also Tsing 2015; cf. Karera 2019, 39.
68. Grove 2019, 292.
69. Randazzo and Richter 2021.
70. Grove 2019, 11.
71. Lorde 1984, 110.
72. Chandler 2019a, 181.
73. ibid., 170.
74. Chandler 2019b, 35.

6.4 Becoming Otherwise: Resilience Redux?

Despite defining war as ubiquitous and ungovernable, the scholarship on martial ecologies barely discusses what 'affirming' war would look like in practice. While the bulk of the Anthropocene literature sees the central threat faced by the planet in the climate crisis, war and how to 'become with' it remains largely under-appreciated.[75] Two exceptions are Jairus Grove and David Chandler, of which the latter explicitly discusses conflict in his work on onto-politics in the Anthropocene, while the former dedicates an entire book to the foundational role of war in the current planetary condition.

In a chapter provocatively titled *Apocalypse as a Theory of Change,* Grove claims to sketch out the possibilities and ways of "other becomings [...] in the neighborhood of the Eurocene's martial order" by describing what a position might look like that no longer seeks to end war or transcend the Eurocene.[76] Central to the idea of 'becoming' in Grove's argument is the understanding of apocalypses as "not ends but irreversible transitions" that can be "catastrophic, sometimes tragic and cruel, and sometimes generative."[77] That is, in contrast to the eco-modernist approaches to the Anthropocene that understand the apocalypse as the demise of humanity,[78] Grove argues that apocalypses are neither singular nor final. Thus, an apocalypse is "the end of something but never *the* end."[79]

However, Grove's ostensibly pessimist-but-not-nihilist[80] vision of in- and post-apocalyptic becoming remains abstract and vague, couched in rhetoric that embraces the collective 'we' despite his prior efforts in arguing that there is no such homogenous collective that has created and is maintaining this Eurocene martial order. His suggestion for going through (instead of escaping) the Eurocene is to embrace *ratio feritas* or "feral reason." While what it *is* remains undefined, feral reason is supposed to offer "the possibility of other futures oriented toward creativity and adventure rather than conservation and technological homogenization."[81] This future of conservation is what Audra Mitchell and Aadita Chaudhury describe as the politics of "re-vitalisation and post-apocalyptic resurgence" propagated by the eco-modernist discourse of the Anthropocene.[82]

Grove dwells in the creative potential of catastrophe, relying on philosophers such as Manuel De Landa and Gilles Deleuze to argue for experiments, surprises and "unpredictable

75. For the notion of "becoming-with," see Haraway 2016.
76. Grove 2019, 229.
77. ibid., 280.
78. Cf. Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020. See also Randazzo and Richter 2021.
79. Grove 2019, 280, emphasis original. Similarly, see also Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, who suggest understanding 'extinction' not in ontic terms of life and death but as ontological, i.e. permitting and eliminating life*forms* through becoming and negating.
80. Grove 2019, 230.
81. ibid., 9.
82. Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, 317.

moments of bifurcation."[83] Although he emphasises that affirming war means to 'become otherwise' in a way that is not limited by the absence of conflict as a normative marker of peace,[84] most of the instances in a list of potential and historical scenarios he uses to illustrate such unexpected developments are united by taking a peaceful turn:

> the Israeli soldiers who suddenly will not pull the trigger; the flinch of a silo captain when confronted by an incoming nuclear missile; saving the world from a nuclear war almost triggered by an unusually rapid weather balloon rocket launched in Finland; food sovereignty movements; the inexplicable generosity of an Algerian Jew who returned the hatred of anti-Semitism with the impossible generosity and affirmation of deconstruction rather than the self-destructive drive of Zionism; love among state enemies; the impossible gesture of the African National Congress refusing to expel Afrikaners who once tortured and murdered them; career military officer William 'Fox' Fallon, who sacrificed his prestigious position as head of Central Command because he would not go along with the plan to attack Iran; the cascading events of the Arab Spring.[85]

Grove's examples underline the serendipitous nature of the course of history, in which change sometimes happens as a result of years of repression and suffering, and sometimes as a result of the decisions by individuals with a strong moral compass or perhaps only a gut feeling. The options of what 'becoming otherwise' looks like beyond the ideal of achieving peace thus seem to be situated on a spectrum between 'making do despite' to 'taking a stand against' a martial order, while never actually attempting to erode it. These "unpredictable moments of bifurcation" thus primarily read as atomised instances of individuals and groups resisting the normative pressures of the Eurocene.[86]

In contrast, Chandler argues that in the last two to three decades, new modes of governance have emerged that can be understood as transcending modernist rationalities that have characterised (especially neoliberal) policies in the 1990s and prior, such as being centrally directed, structured along hierarchies of power and guided by a belief in universal knowledge as the basis for policy design.[87] For Chandler, the Anthropocene has arrived in policymaking by the 2000s with affirmative ways of governing that "start from the empirical reality of the world rather than from assumptions of modernist progress, universal knowledge or linear causality."[88] To varying extents, such modes of governance appreciate complexity and accept that "little can be done to prevent problems" and thus shift their objective from problem-solving to enhancing the responsivity of systems and communities.[89] A recent example of such governance modes in the context of the Anthropocene is the 2020 Human

83. Grove 2019, 232.
84. ibid., 230.
85. ibid., 213–2.
86. ibid., 232.
87. Chandler 2018, 21.
88. ibid., 4.
89. ibid., 88–9.

Development Report by the UNDP that "questions the very narrative around 'solutions to a problem'" and explicitly conceptualises the world as complex and nonlinear.[90]

The governance of war features in Chandler's analysis in considerations around Big Data analysis for conflict risk reduction, where conflict is "sensed" through signals in citizen-generated data in social media. Since such data sensing is carried out to influence socio-political dynamics such as social media discourses *before* they escalate, labelling such an approach as affirmative seems somewhat contradictory as it retains its orientation towards averting undesired outcomes in the future. However, according to Chandler, pre-empting conflict escalation on the basis of designated early warning signs picked up through monitoring is not the same as prevention, as distinctions between 'pre-' and 'post-conflict' are obsolete where conflict is affirmed as a state of the world. Conflict thus becomes "normalised as an aspect of life that requires modulation," thus shifting the objective from prevention to real-time management. Conflict is then managed through "community self-responsivity," also known as resilience.[91]

Originating in the discipline of ecology in the 1970s, resilience denoted the (measurable) ability of ecosystems to absorb sudden changes without going extinct.[92] In the original understanding, living systems "do not develop on account of their ability to secure themselves prophylactically from threats" but adjust to them.[93] Put simply, resilience describes adaptation, not prevention. As a transferable concept, resilience "foregrounds the limits of predictive knowledge and insists on the prevalence of the unexpected."[94] Since it is a "capacity of life itself," thus stretching beyond states and human populations, it has been taken up as a concept in the discourses on security and sustainable development.[95] As a principle—or rather ideal—of governance, resilience became so ubiquitous since the 2000s across a range of vastly diverse policy fields, ranging from climate change to cyber security, that it appears to have become the "policy buzzword of choice."[96] Writing in 2013, Mark Neocleous charges that the term 'resilience' "falls easily from the mouths of politicians, a variety of state departments are funding research into it, urban planners are now obliged to take it into consideration, and academics are falling over themselves to conduct research on it."[97]

While the principle of 'resilience' is broadly understood as a commitment to abandon preconceived grand strategies for policy problems and instead embrace improvisation, pragmatism and experimentation, what exactly it is in theory and practice depends on its

90. UNDP 2020, 5 and 47.
91. Chandler 2018, 127.
92. Holling 1973.
93. Reid 2012, 71.
94. Walker and Cooper 2011, 147.
95. Reid 2012, 71.
96. Chandler 2014, 1.
97. Neocleous 2013, 3.

application and purpose.[98] Despite its definitional elusiveness, it seems to have increasingly come to replace "security" in political discourses to such an extent that it became co-opted by neoliberal politics.[99] By the time of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the term became associated with human opportunity and economic development based on adaptation and learning.[100] Through this "adroit reformulation," neoliberal economic development morphed into a constitutive element of resilient politics in various national and international agendas.[101]

Resilience has also been discussed in policy design as an approach to conflict with regard to post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding as an affirmative, pragmatic approach.[102] It has been prominent in the human development agenda of the UN for some time and features prominently in the aforementioned Human Development Report that focuses on the "planetary pressures" of the Anthropocene.[103] Resilience as a concept has also taken hold in the current prevention agenda, such as in the joint 2018 report *Pathways for Peace* by the UN and the World Bank, here in the context of the societal capacity to withstand and survive shocks brought by conflict rather than environmental degradation. It is scattered throughout the document with all sorts of attributes—community, social, institutional and economic.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, as the report is an agenda-setting document, resilience is also mostly framed as an aspiration rather than something that is already being implemented on the ground.[104] Indeed, it is stated in the introduction that "[h]olistic and sustained approaches to maintaining peace and building local resilience are rare."[105] Overall, while actors on multiple levels, including regional, non-governmental and civil society organisations, are appraised as playing a crucial role in forging societal pathways towards sustainable peace, the report reaffirms that the primary responsibility for preventive action resides with states and their governments.[106]

Apart from simply adding resilience, international policymaking and agenda-setting in both the prevention and development agenda more broadly have seen a move away from the one-fits-all solutions of the 1990s towards acknowledging the complexity and contextuality of the issues at hand.[107] As drivers of conflict are manifold and deeply contextual, the design

98. Alt 2019, 138; Chandler 2014, 5.
99. Neocleous 2013, 5. See also Evans and Reid 2013; Joseph 2013; Reid 2012; Walker and Cooper 2011. For a more nuanced critique of resilience as a neoliberal concept and policy, see Corry 2014a; Krüger 2019.
100. Folke et al. 2002, 438.
101. Reid 2012, 72.
102. Bargués-Pedreny 2018; Chandler 2014; Pospisil 2019.
103. UNDP 2020.
104. E.g. UN and World Bank 2018, xviii, 121, 149, 191, 288. An exception to the overall aspirational framing of resilience is the info box 6.5 on p. 201–2, which includes an analysis of local resilience in Nigeria following a number of policy decisions.
105. ibid., 5.
106. ibid., 231.
107. See also Chandler 2018.

of policy responses has to be equally complex, as the *Pathways for Peace* report argues.[108] So are the dynamics of conflict, as they become increasingly multidimensional through the involvement of more and diverse actors, including non-state armed groups as well as regional and international actors.[109] In addition, conflicts are embedded in the contemporary context of global interconnections, which in itself is getting increasingly complex and progressively connected to other (security) issues like climate change, disasters, transnational organised crime and cyber security.[110]

The eponymous concept with which the UN and World Bank attempt to address the ever-complicating entanglement of relations and layering of conflict drivers is path-dependency. Path-dependencies are "endogenous and self-reinforcing feedback loops of social interaction [...] which, once established or stabilised, are held to be very difficult to overcome."[111] The overarching idea of the UN-World Bank prevention agenda is that the pathway from violence to sustainable peace is unique for each society, as it is shaped through compounded and culturally, geographically and politically specific societal interactions.[112] In turn, societies themselves are defined as "complex systems in which change follows nonlinear trajectories, created by the interaction, decisions, and actions of multiple actors."[113] This idea thus indicates a turn away from universalised problem-framing towards contextualised understandings of violent conflict.

While the pathways-framing conveys the idea of nonlinear causality that is associated with post-modern thinking,[114] the report is at the same time still firmly anchored in causal narratives. For example, it defines prevention as "activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict" by way of, among other measures, "addressing *root causes*."[115] Further, there is a tension between the acknowledgement that it is often difficult (albeit not necessarily impossible) to boil down the various factors that contribute to the eruption of violence to a single cause. The report references the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which besides confirming sustainable development as the overarching goal, is also claimed to provide "a universal framework for addressing the *root causes* of conflict, recognizing the deep complexity and interconnectedness on the path to

108. UN and World Bank 2018, 5, 7, 255 and 276.
109. ibid., 18.
110. ibid., xi, xviii, 7, 11, 66 and 85.
111. Chandler 2018, 39.
112. UN and World Bank 2018, 6, 78.
113. ibid., 77.
114. See also Chandler 2018.
115. UN and World Bank 2018, 77, emphasis added. The expression is drawn from the definition of 'sustaining peace' in the 2016 twin resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, respectively. It is worth noting that neither of these resolutions refers to peace as a matter of complexity, path-dependency, or resilience. However, both resolutions, which are almost identical, refer to 'root causes' twice. UNGA 2016; UNSC 2016.

peace and progress."[116] While this interpretation of the *Agenda for Sustainable Development* affirms the complexity narrative of contemporary armed conflicts, it remains anchored in the causal narrative frame of conflict by referring to the concept of 'root causes,' which implies that the reasons for a conflict outbreak can be traced back and funnelled to a small set of issues in a historical regression with a fixed point of origin.

In short, the way in which resilience is framed does not seem to aim at fundamentally transforming the idea of war from a problem of governance to accepting it as a given, or at transforming the idea of prevention towards affirmation. While some post-modern approaches to epistemology and governance, such as resilience and complexity, have found their way into the prevention agenda, it still relies on causal narratives on conflict and thus has not abandoned the problem-centred paradigm. The framework of pathways retains the worldview of war and peace as ontologically separate, with the former as the rare aberration and the latter as the aspirational norm, thus not (yet) unmaking the concept of prevention as it was brought about through epistemic modernism. As a result, the prevention agenda remains epistemologically caught between the postmodernist disillusion with liberal interventionism while at the same time seeking to problem-solve.

6.5 Apocalypse Now: The Ethics of Affirming War

In the previous section, I have shown that while within policy discourses, resilience remains conceptually ambiguous and more of an ideal rather than as something to be routinely implemented, the way the few academic accounts discuss ways of affirming war seems rather atomised and risks reducing politics to decisions of individuals and communities to make do with what they have. As they no longer carry "the modernist baggage of problem-solving based on understanding the 'root causes'," affirmative approaches such as resilience thus do not aim to solve problems but instead welcome the world as complex and emergent.[117] In this way, resilience can be understood as a homeostatic approach to living in the current conditions, as it seeks to maintain the status quo.[118] However, this also means that resilience affirms the role of whatever it aims at 'becoming with'—be it precarity,[119] the climate crisis[120] or war[121]—in sustaining contemporary systems of injustice and oppression. As Axelle Karera argues, much of Anthropocene thinking is unwilling to account for past and current injustices and is fixated on imagining "an apocalyptic state of

116. UN and World Bank 2018, 7 and 50.
117. Chandler 2018, 22; Evans and Reid 2013, 85; Finkenbusch 2019, 135.
118. Chandler 2018, 22.
119. Tsing 2015.
120. Burke et al. 2016.
121. Grove 2019.

emergency that is mostly inspired by a narrative of vitality."[122] Resilience, as Neocleous notes, "wants acquiescence, not resistance."[123]

Resilience thinking does not consider suffering to be an evil but rather an essential driver for learning, adaptation and renewal.[124] Becoming resilient is to affirm and adapt to traumatic experiences rather than trying to evade them, as catastrophic events are painted as not just inevitable but as opportunities to learn and thrive in the face of adversity.[125] In its optimistic stance towards creative adaptation to the point of romanticising vulnerability and precarity, resilience implicitly rejects emancipation and liberation. To persist despite shocks and challenges, the resilient subject "must disavow any belief in the possibility to secure itself" and instead understand life as requiring permanent adaptation and struggle.[126]

In this light, the Grovian notion of the end of the world as a theory of change risks idealising the apocalypse and post-apocalypse as moments of productive transformation and downplaying the suffering and death that comes with them. Grove himself recounts various mass extinction events, including the invasion of the Americas at the end of the 15th century that resulted in the death of millions of Indigenous people. However, while he emphasises that the violence committed by the European invaders should never be diminished, he notes that "the vast majority of deaths in the Americas would have happened even if the conquistadors had been hospitable visitors" as they were not superior in knowledge, number or technique but primarily contagious with diseases the Indigenous peoples had never been exposed to before.[127] Nevertheless, the claim that "fecundity and destruction cohabit" in apocalypses past, present and future adds an odd implication of balance to the suffering, death and loss that hides behind the word 'destruction.'[128] The lethal effect of the Anthropocene and its affirmation is clearer in Scott Gilbert's characterisation of it as "The Great Dying," akin to the Permian-Triassic extinction 252 million years ago that saw the elimination of 90% of the planet's species.[129] Then again, ethical questions arise as some die first and miserably, since this 'great dying' of the Eurocene martial order does not afflict everyone and everything equally and at once but is inflicted by some humans onto others.

In fact, for some, any Anthropocene story only exists because of the annihilation of Black and Indigenous populations, regardless of whether it starts with the arrival of Europeans in the Caribbean in the 15th century, the so-called Industrial Revolution around the 1800s or

122. Karera 2019, 34.
123. Neocleous 2013, 7; see also Colebrook 2016, 94.
124. Rothe 2020, 162.
125. Evans and Reid 2013, 83.
126. Evans and Reid 2014, 41–2.
127. Grove 2019, 247–8.
128. ibid., 247.
129. Haraway et al. 2016, 541. Incidentally, this is also the nomenclature some geographers use to describe the genocide of Indigenous people in the Americas after 1492, e.g. Koch et al. 2019.

the discovery and subsequent use of nuclear fission in the 1950s.[130] All too often, the post-apocalyptic narrative of the Anthropocene is imagined in future tense and as a dramatisation of "white people living under the conditions they have forced upon others," which omits the extinctions already undergone by Black and Indigenous people.[131] For example, Kyle Powys Whyte argues that many Indigenous peoples are no longer able to relate locally to the environments that are significant to them due to settler colonialism, expropriation and resettlement so that they are already living in their ancestor's dystopias that Western Anthropocene scholars are still imagining as lying in the future.[132] Similarly, Christina Sharpe narrates the present as the wake, understood as both a vigil held after a person's death as well as the trace a moving ship leaves behind its keel on the water surface. Through this double metaphor, Sharpe analyses Blackness through the nested experiences of Black death and the enduring legacy of transatlantic slavery as post-apocalyptic.[133] Thus, narratives of the environmental apocalypse in the Anthropocene frequently "interpellate subjects of white privilege of assuming that readers are not (currently) affected by the harms" of extinction.[134] Seen through this lens, 'becoming with' a Eurocene martial order is a (temporarily) viable option only for those benefiting from white, male and class privilege.

The omission of stark inequalities in the notion of affirmation—of war, environmental degradation, precarity etc.—shows "the difficulty of giving our attention to—and sustaining our attention on—certain forms of suffering."[135] The ethics of affirming relations of hardship, harm and potential death such as war thus pose serious questions about the benefit of affirmation for affected populations. Blackness, Black suffering and Black death constitute a crisis for relationality, one of the Anthropocene's central concepts. They seriously undermine the notion of a relational ethics without consideration of the conditions of racist exploitation that brought about the Anthropocene's very existence.[136] In this sense, Karera contends that "black suffering—especially in the figure of slain black bodies—indefinitely haunts the possibility of a post-apocalyptic political afterlife."[137]

Consequently, while discourses of the 'end of the world' are "specifically concerned about protecting the future of *whiteness*" and Western civilization,[138] affirmative approaches to environmental degradation and the martial order such as resilience do not present ethical alternatives either, as they do not grapple with their racial politics. This is not to imply that

130. Yusoff 2018. See also Davis and Todd 2017; Morton 2013, 6–7.
131. Fishel and Wilcox 2017, 340. See also Danowski and Castro 2016, 75; Gross 2014; Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020; Yusoff 2018, 51.
132. Whyte 2017, 2018.
133. Sharpe 2016.
134. Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, 313.
135. Ahmed 2010, 216.
136. Karera 2019, 47.
137. ibid., 34, lowercase original; Leong 2016, 16.
138. Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, 310, emphasis original. See also Rothe 2020.

the lack of the consideration of race in what Randazzo and Richter are referring to as the "continuous-ontological" strand of Anthropocene scholarship is in any way intentional.[139] Indeed, as Mitchell and Chaudhury note, many or perhaps the majority of the authors of apocalyptic discourses are most likely oblivious to the integral influence of whiteness on their reasoning, "and would almost certainly be horrified at the thought of their work entrenching racialized injustices."[140] However, where the imagination of resilience and survival omits the modes of injustice, oppression and violence along the lines of race, Indigeneity, ableism, gender and class through which they are achieved, affirmative approaches—intentionally or not—acquiesce the *status quo* and thus work to reproduce the conditions that make the Anthropo- and other -cenes possible in the first place.[141]

A political ethics of the Anthropocene thus requires refusing to lose "sight of those for whom both the Anthropocene and its apocalyptic imaginaries do not necessarily hold an emancipating value," i.e. on those who are unequally exposed to the relations of the martial order because of their race, Indigeneity, disability, gender and sexuality or class.[142] As Karera argues, to do so is to interrogate the conditions that make their lives "unregisterable and therefore un-grievable" and build communities of solidarity to dismantle these conditions.[143] In response to the modernist conception of politics that assumes governance to be centrally directed through a hierarchy of power and operationalisation of scientific knowledge in a universal and linear way, the idea of radical affirmation gives up entirely on the idea of problem management through the mode of "command-and-control."[144] In contrast, Black and Indigenous scholars, activists and scholar-activists instead argue for "intentional steering, futurity, and planning, which does not reject the notion of planned action altogether, but which highlights the need to acknowledge power dynamics" in the co-management of various relations.[145] One such approach of relational, mid-range planning that extends beyond environmental management to other societal and political structures is what the scholar-activist adrienne maree brown brands "emergent strategy."[146] Emergent strategy can be thought of as the opposite of grand strategy as long-term, broad, top-down and all-encompassing. Instead, it aims at "building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions."[147]

139. Randazzo and Richter 2021.
140. Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, 311
141. See also ibid., 312.
142. Howell 2018, 118; Karera 2019, 34.
143. Howell 2018, 118; Karera 2019, 44.
144. Chandler 2018, 21.
145. Randazzo and Richter 2021, 302. See also Porter et al. 2017; Watson 2013; Whyte, Caldwell and Schaefer 2018.
146. brown 2017.
147. ibid., 6.

The emergent strategy approach shares central ontological and epistemological commitments with ecological thinking. It also starts from the premise that the world is constantly in flux and continuously becoming, so that being in this world needs to be adaptive and attuned to how beings relate.[148] Further, it shares the post-modernist conviction that management and control of the Anthropocene present and future are elusive. Similar to the calls by many scholars of the Anthropocene literature, an emergent strategy aims at developing "speculative, future-oriented practices" such as "social justice organizing, protest, and resistance to policing; solidarity-building; the generation of pleasure, and grassroots efforts to widen access to food, land, and healing."[149] This approach is affirmative in the sense that it starts from the world that *is* rather than one that will be but it is also not affirmative in the sense that it distinctly *does not* advocate for acquiescing to the *status quo* but for changing the *current* systems of oppression and harm. This explicitly includes "interrogating and dismantling systems that strengthen white-dominated power structures by placing BIPOC groups into relations of co-oppression."[150]

However, to pick up Audre Lorde's metaphor once again, this is not the same as attempting to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools, as a central aspect of an emergent strategy is to continuously imagine other systems and other worlds. This imagining the world differently and imagining many different worlds is what has been referred to as "worlding" in the academic literature and refers to a long-standing anti-colonial tradition.[151] As Adom Getachew draws out in her analysis of the projects of Black Anglophone thinkers such as W. E. B. DuBois, Kwame Nkrumah or Julius Nyerere, their vision of decolonisation was more than just the rejection of alien rule but one that sought to build a world that is egalitarian and free of domination—that is, a world beyond the one constituted by European imperialism.[152]

In this way, 'worlding' and the emergent strategy approach share a central commitment with pacifist perspectives in intersectional feminism, to which I have alluded above. I have noted that intersectional feminist approaches retain the idea of war that is, albeit a complex "product of an international system shaped by patriarchy, militarism, white supremacy and capitalism,"[153] ultimately bounded. This is because they are invested in eventually overcoming war—a pacifist goal that is seriously undermined by the idea of war as ubiquitous, unending and indistinguishable from 'peace.' As opposed to affirming war, intersectional feminism

148. brown 2017, 6.
149. ibid.; Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, 323.
150. ibid., 323; see also brown 2017; Simpson 2021.
151. For the idea of worlding (also referred to as worldism, world-making or pluriversal politics) as an ontological and epistemological concept in IR, see, e.g., Agathangelou and Ling 2009; Bilgin 2017; Blaney and Tickner 2017; Hutchings 2019; Kristensen 2020; Ling 2014; Tickner and Blaney 2013; Walker 2010.
152. Getachew 2019, 2–3.
153. MacKenzie and Wegner 2021, 1.

as well as Black and Indigenous approaches explicitly set out to imagine what *could be* and what *ought to be* rather than accepting and adapting to the present.[154] Thus emphatically normative, such approaches imagine (a) world(s) without war, which goes hand in hand with a radical rethinking of social structures and reorganising social and political life, as their vision is not limited to "silencing guns" but aims more broadly at "dismantling wider systems of oppression that limit people's everyday security."[155]

Worlding beyond the totalising idea of the Anthropocene is not "just fighting *against*" structures of colonial domination, racial and gender inequality, ableist systems and, in Grove's Eurocene conception, other martial relations. Rather, it is to try "to build a more just world on a planetary scale" by creating solidarity and community "across imposed lines of race, gender and sexuality, species, generation, and temporality."[156] The difference between Grove's serendipitous "moments of bifurcation" and brown's emergent strategy is that the latter does not revolve around the individual but puts organisation and community at its core, all the while being attuned to the environment—thought here as social, political, economic *and* ecological—in which and with which communities live.[157] For example, if racist policing and mass incarceration constitute some of the martial relations, as Alison Howell and Jairus Grove argue,[158] then imagining a world beyond incarceration is not prison reform (as it is equal to incremental change *within* an existing socio-political system) but prison abolition, which requires an entirely different conception of social organisation and transformative justice.[159]

Another example is the argument by the Wiradyuri[160] scholar Jessica Russ-Smith, who suggests understanding the bush fires in Australia in 2019 and 2020 as war. In Russ-Smith's conceptualisation, colonial violence is war, and since the fires resulted from ongoing colonial practices, they qualify as such. Specifically, they are war against Country, which for the Wiradyuri encompasses "land, water, people, animals, ancestors, stories, songlines and sovereignty."[161] As opposed to the modernist ontology and epistemology that are founded on mind-world dualism and the separation of culture and nature, the Wiradyuri, and other Indigenous people, understand themselves as inseparable from Country—they *are* Country.[162] The wildfires were a result of the "ignorance and neglect of climate change by white

154. ibid., 3.
155. ibid., 12.
156. Mitchell and Chaudhury 2020, 325; Táíwò 2022, 5.
157. Grove 2019, 232.
158. ibid.; Howell 2018.
159. There is a vast and long-standing literature on prison abolition informed by Black radicalism and Black feminism, Marxist thought, Indigenous organising and anarchism. See, e.g., Abolition Collective 2020; Ben-Moshe 2020; Davis 2003, 2005; Gilmore 2007; Kaba 2021; Norris 2020; Purnell 2021; Vitale 2017.
160. I have adopted here the spelling by the cited author. However, it should be noted that the more common spelling is 'Wiradjuri.'
161. Russ-Smith 2021, 16.
162. ibid., 20.

politicians and citizens" and, in this way, "purposeful and strategic actions of the war on Country."[163] As a result, Russ-Smith argues that the wildfires are war because they are "part of the colonial relationship to land that reflects possessive and hierarchical logics" as they violently displace and disconnect people, animals and plants not only from their land but also from one another.[164]

Russ-Smith's explicitly non-metaphorical understanding of the Australian bush fires as war thus shares with ecological approaches the broad conception of war as a phenomenon that is complex in both its causes and manifestation. Like Grove, Russ-Smith emphasises how war shapes not only social and political life but also the natural environment. Her argument also shares the rejection of modernist problem-solving with ecological, and particularly affirmative, thinking. However, she comes to a different conclusion that is similar to brown's emergent strategy approach. Instead of pleading for affirming the world as is, Russ-Smith suggests drawing on Indigenous knowledge to develop relationships of care with Country that envision and build (a) world(s) beyond the martial futurity of settler colonialism.[165]

Quoting the Hawaiian activist Bryan Kamaloi Kuwada who writes that the "future is a realm we [Indigenous Hawaiians] have inhabited for thousands of years," Russ-Smith notes that Indigenous futurities "do not signal a *new* solution to ending war."[166] Indeed, these micro-interventions for community-building and enacting solidarity are part and parcel of a political praxis that intersectional feminist, Black and Indigenous activists are already making use of and have done so for decades. This is also not coincidental or surprising, as the point of many Black and Indigenous writers such as brown, Russ-Smith, Sharpe and Whyte is exactly that Black and Indigenous people in many aspects are *already*—and have been for a while—living in, adapting to and rebuilding post-apocalyptic worlds destroyed by settler colonialism, capitalist expropriation, genocide, pollution and war.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the implications for the idea of prevention in light of a conceptual de-problematisation of war. While the core of this thesis manifests in the three previous chapters that have outlined empirically how the idea of prevention became to be naturalised through problematisation in interlocking processes of designation, translation and problematisation, this chapter adds a somewhat speculative consideration in light of recent theoretical developments that move away from the central ontological premises required for constructing war as a governance object. Specifically, I discussed the idea of martial

163. Russ-Smith 2021, 22.
164. ibid., 20.
165. ibid., 24. See also Yoshida 2021.
166. Russ-Smith 2021, 24, emphasis added.

ecologies of war, which is a recent strand in the academic literature that understands war as always becoming, intrinsically entangled with the functioning of the world and order and thus ordinary rather than exceptional.

I outlined how ecological approaches more broadly have emerged in connection with the idea of the Anthropocene. Although initially conceived as a term to describe the current geological epoch that is marked by anthropogenic effects on the Earth's geological strata, it has travelled beyond the Earth sciences and transformed into a general term in the social sciences and humanities to encapsulate the several connected and multi-layered crises of the planet today. Several scholars have taken the Anthropocene as an opportunity to radically rethink the ontology of the world by rejecting the modernist culture-nature dualism, the belief in science as the bringer of progress, and with it, the idea that the world can be definitively known, manipulated and managed by humans.

The martial ecologies approach applies this thinking to war. As a result, the understanding of war differs starkly from the ontological and epistemological premises on which its construction as a problem of governance relies. Recalling Corry's conditions for *epistemic* objects to turn into *governance* objects, I argued that these are no longer fulfilled within an ecological conception of war. According to the ecological approach, war is neither temporally nor locally limited and manifests through numerous relations of oppression and violence beyond battle. In this way, it is no longer meaningfully distinguished from 'peace,' which means that the central condition for the designation of a governance object—that can be delineated as a definitive entity in itself—no longer applies.

In addition, Corry purports that, to become a governance object, a set of phenomena not only needs to be defined as a meaningful entity but also be understood as manipulable and politically salient. In contrast, I showed that ecological approaches give up on the modernist idea of governance and instead advocate for affirming the world as it is, thus turning to adapt to, cope with and manage rather than resolve issues. Consequently, since prevention relies on the premise that the future can be manipulated through intervention in the present, it becomes conceptually impossible within the reasoning of martial ecologies.

While the bulk of the Anthropocene literature privileges the climate crisis over war as the central planetary threat, I discussed the work of Jairus Grove and David Chandler, whose work constitutes an exception to the general silence on how to 'become with' war in ecological thinking. Although Grove puts forward a rather vague plea for adopting 'feral reason' to live in what he calls the Eurocene, Chandler argues that the postmodernist mode of governance that has already found its way into policy is resilience. However, taking the 2018 UN-World Bank report *Pathways for Peace* as an example, I argued that the aspiratory framing of resilience within the prevention agenda does not conform with the approach of

martial ecologies or affirmation, as it remains within a problem-solving rationality and thus does indicate a radical transformation of the idea of war away from its modernist conception as I outlined it in Chapters 3–5.

In the final section of this chapter, I discussed the ethical implications of affirming war as central to the functioning of the world as in Grove's conception of the Eurocene. I argued that approaches that advocate for 'becoming with,' 'living through' or 'adapting to' martial relations do not constitute an ethical alternative to the modernist problem-solving approach to war as they either overlook power hierarchies underlying martial relations or even acquiesce to the conditions that make oppression and violence possible in the first place. Instead, Black and Indigenous praxis of community organisation and solidarity-building as 'worlding' constitute ethical alternatives to the totalising conception of an Anthropocene that cannot be escaped.

Conclusion

Argument Summary

I started this thesis with the observation that war was seen as some combination of inevitable, justifiable and productive over the course of centuries, while a particular discourse about how war ought to be governed is prevalent among IOs, development actors as well as other inter- and non-governmental bodies today. This discourse purports that war not only can but also should be prevented. I argued that prevention emerged as the dominant orientation of policy among IOs as a heterogenous group of actors constructed war as a problem of international governance against the background of epistemic modernism. In this thesis, I traced the this process of problem construction that produced the notion of war as undesirable but calculable and governable.

Much of the literature in IR so far has taken for granted that war and armed conflict are issues of international concern. As a result, the kind of problem that war is for international governance, how it emerged as such and, in further consequence, how it enabled the development of a dedicated policy agenda—conflict prevention—has remained under-appreciated until now. The literature discussing conflict prevention as a policy agenda often only starts in the early 1990s. In some cases, it traces the beginnings of international conflict prevention to the efforts of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld during the Cold War. However, the underlying assumptions and arguments that support the seemingly self-evident claim that war both *can* and *should* be prevented are rooted in the development of pacifism, philanthropy and conflict research that originate in the 19th century. Thus, the idea of prevention as it is being envisioned, operationalised and implemented in the contemporary prevention agenda emerged as a result of a specific scientific cosmology and through specific historical processes. As these epistemological underpinnings of European modernist thought remain unacknowledged in the literature to date, conflict prevention presents as a universal, somewhat ahistorical and decontextualised policy goal. With this thesis, I have aimed to

provide a historicisation and contextualisation of these epistemological underpinnings of conflict prevention.

Only recently have scholars using an object-centred approach to IR started to develop a framework to analyse how problems of global governance come to be understood as such in the first place. These approaches point out that the way in which problems are constituted has direct policy consequences, as such constitutive processes determine why something is a problem in the first place, what type of problem it is, whose problem it is, and what can be done to resolve it.[1] As I showed in this thesis, the specific confluence of scientific developments, historical backgrounds and interplay of actors constructed war in a way that already inhered its ideal (preemptive) governance response as prevention. Adopting a framework first introduced by Bentley Allan, I showed how heterogeneous groups of actors constructed war as an issue to be governed through prevention in three interrelated processes.[2]

Firstly, Christian pacifists *designated* war as a distinct phenomenon by distinguishing it from 'peace,' connoting it as cataclysmic and treating it as an object of scientific interest. Admittedly, the notion of the war-peace binary and war's association with destruction and suffering are not new in the early 19th century. However, they are reaffirmed in Christian pacifist writing and play a central role for prevention to emerge as an actionable policy goal, as only if war can be clearly delineated as an exceptional disruption of the 'normal' times of peace does prevention—which notably relies on temporal conceptions of 'before' and 'after' as I discussed in Chapter 3—make sense as a concept. In addition, only when war has a negative connotation does it constitute a problem because, from a rational perspective, actors are disinclined to change things that they perceive as positive and beneficial to them. Pacifists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries reaffirmed this notion of war as undesirable and inglorious, both through discursive means such as the portrayal of war as a 'scourge' and increasingly also by supporting their arguments against war with what can be considered the beginnings of the scientific study of war. The modernist idea that technical and statistical knowledge makes problems calculable, predictable and therefore ultimately governable helped establish what can be called a 'peace science' that started with philanthropic investments into researching the causes and effects of war. It was driven by the motivation that if only war were sufficiently known, it can be averted altogether.

This treatment of war as a scientific object made it into a phenomenon that is countable, measurable and commensurable. Scholars and pacifists increasingly represented war as numbers and statistics, thus *translating* it across contexts by conveying the notion that war is a global phenomenon, even if it presents differently across time and space. Quantification,

1. Sending 2015, 4.
2. Allan 2017.

in turn, requires abstracting specific instances of violence from their historical context to be aggregated into the phenomenon 'war' and compared to other phenomena of the same kind that occur at different times and in other places. In this way, war transforms from a historically specific event into a general category, which describes a problem of international concern that warrants attention by international actors. The quantification of war produced, and still produces, metrics that bolster the argument that war needs to be prevented, especially by putting the human toll of war in numerical, and thus comparable, terms. In this way, the representation of war in numbers not only makes it a tangible object that can be known through scientific inquiry but also makes it useful to attract and focus advocacy as it expresses the extent, severity and urgency of war.

Thirdly, activists and policymakers within organisations then *problematised* war by addressing specific publics and latching it onto existing issues and agendas for convincing policymakers that it is worth their time and resources. Against different historical backgrounds, different problem formulations took place. Early evangelical pacifists defined war as a problem for Christians as they understood it to negate Christian virtues. Against the backdrop of colonial expansion and racist evolutionist theories, pacifists at the turn of the last century associated war with barbarism, thus defining it as a problem for those who subscribe to the ideas of modernity and civilisation. In the 20th century, war increasingly became a problem for both states and IOs invested in the development agenda as it became understood as a cause of reversing development outcomes. This problematisation of war conveys both deontological and consequentialist moral arguments for the imperative to prevent. The former purport that war needs to be prevented as it is inherently immoral where it runs against Christian ideals or is antithetical to the telos of civilisational progress and, in the 20th century, development goals. Consequentialist arguments, in turn, construct war as wasteful and thus cost-ineffective. As a result, the preferred option is not to incur those costs in the first place. The contemporary prevention discourse often combines the deontological and consequentialist aspects, so that preventing war is presented as morally right and cost-efficient at the same time.

These three stages of object construction are neither once-off processes nor do they necessarily take place consecutively. Instead, I have shown at the example of war as a governance object that the processes of designating, translating and problematising an object can be interlocked within the same texts, agendas and discourses. Furthermore, as time passes and the object becomes more politically salient, it is exposed to contention.[3] It thus has to be continually re-constituted and stabilised, such as by delineating 'war' from the use of force in the form of colonial expansion, revolutionary and decolonising struggles or humanitarian intervention.

3. ibid., 139.

Implications

Within the discourse of IOs, development actors, countless commissions, initiatives and NGOs, the preventability of conflict constitutes both an interpretive grid through which conflict is seen and an organising principle that presupposes central assumptions. These are, centrally, that war and conflict are undesirable but temporally and spatially delimited and scientifically knowable so that they both can and should be prevented.[4] In this sense, the eponymous "culture of prevention" for which the Carnegie Commission, UN Secretary-General Annan and others have called not only involves the mainstreaming of conflict prevention as a pressing issue across agendas, (sub-) organisations, programmes as well as social and political institutions. It also relies on an *epistemic culture* that produces, reinforces and promotes the conception of war as a governance object.

As I have shown in this thesis, war was constituted as a measurable and comparable object long before the 1950s, where many see the beginning of what is considered to be peace and conflict research today.[5] In Chapter 4, I have shown how war increasingly became represented through numbers and statistics as part of a broader development of the mathematisation of knowledge and the proliferation of statistics for the governance of social and political problems. The latter emerged against the background of the shift towards a scientific cosmology in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries.[6] In turn, modern Newtonian science relies on the idea that the observer is external to the phenomenon rather than implicated in its construction.[7] As a consequence, the construction of war as a governance object that can be known through abstraction and measurements, as I have traced it in Chapters 3 through 5, presupposes the knowers as external to the phenomenon of war.[8] While I have focused on quantification in much of the explanation of how war became and is maintained as a scientific object, 'science' is—by far—not limited to numbers. The conflict researchers I have written about in this thesis also generate expert knowledge on war through many other mechanisms of abstraction and theorising. My tracing of the constitution of a particular conception of war that underlies the prevention policy *also* employs a theoretical framework that abstracts and adds to the scholarly corpus of knowledge. Thus, in contrast to assuming the conception of war within policy and scholarship to be an "unauthored resultant constellation," I explicitly include myself in the actor group of 'scientists' and 'conflict researchers' that produce and maintain war as a scientific object.[9]

4. See also Ferguson 1994, xiii.
5. See, e.g., Gleditsch, Nordkvelle and Strand 2014, 146; Kelman 1981, 95.
6. Allan 2018b.
7. For an explanation and critique of the separation of mind and matter, see the juxtaposition of diffractive and reflective thinking in Barad 2007, esp. Chapter 3.
8. See also Andrä, forthcoming.
9. Ferguson 1994, 21.

As Allan notes, such a position not only aligns with an object-centred analysis but is a constitutive component of it. Here, reflexivity "is not an afterthought or an ethical-political constraint" but necessarily follows from the effort to trace "how knowledge has become bound up in the constitution of the world."[10]

As opposed to existing histories that usually start in the (late) 20th century, the historical narrative of this thesis traced the emergence of prevention as a rationality for governing war against the background of scientific developments of modernity. Examining the construction of war as a governance object and what is widely taken for granted as its ideal policy response—preventing it,—I called attention to the cosmological location in European thought of this development. I have argued that their idea of prevention and its underlying understanding of war as purported by pacifist, philanthropic, scientific and organisational discourse is grounded in Western experience and epistemology in which the telos of progress is imagined as inherently pacific despite the West's empirical record of violence for the purpose of expansion, expropriation and dominance.

Along these lines, the origin story presented here shows that the idea of prevention as it exists in international discourse today is not only distinctly provincial rather than universal. In addition, those who aim to prevent war are enrolled in the constitution and re-constitution of the very problem they intend to address. Thus, war is "merely an idea" in the sense that it "does not exist independently of the way we think about it."[11] In this regard, this thesis makes a similar argumentative move to James Ferguson's "anti-politics machine," which, in turn, builds on Michel Foucault's explanation of the birth of the prison. As Ferguson explains, Foucault argues that the prison was invented to rehabilitate criminals, but instead of reforming, it made it virtually impossible for them to return to 'normality' after incarceration, thus producing a class of delinquents that can be used for social control.[12] That is, while the prevention agenda might or might not be successful in averting conflict (the evaluation of which is beyond the scope of this thesis), what it did and does succeed in—intentionally or not—is producing and maintaining a particular idea of war as governable.

As such, the argument that phenomena of political and social concern and governance are socio-material configurations, which are, in turn, the product of the confluence of actors and things, is well-established within Constructivism and STS. However, I do not imply that war is 'not real,' just as constructivist approaches do not purport that whichever social or political phenomenon they discuss is 'not real.'[13] Instead, discussing phenomena 'as an idea' points to the constructedness of the *knowledge about* them. This knowledge defines

10. Allan 2018a, 859; see also Hamati-Ataya 2013.
11. Mueller 1989, 7; Zehfuss 2018, 3. See also Walzer 2011, 24.
12. Ferguson 1994, 19–20; Foucault 1979, especially Part Four.
13. Notwithstanding splits and nuances within Constructivist scholarship since then, an early and influential example of this is Wendt 1992.

entities as problems that need to be handled in a certain way and by certain actors. In other words, it interrogates how ideas become constitutive of reality. Taking the example of war, I have shown how knowledge production about war delineates which kind of violence gets to be included in said problem construction (for example, violence resembling the European-archetypal war involving a certain number of battle deaths) and which does not (for example, violence accompanying colonial expansion). This means that those invested in preventing the problem of 'war' are integral to the ways in which it comes to be known in the first place. The discourse purporting that war both *can* and *should* be governed provides a frame for knowing war in that it draws the boundaries around what war is and what it is not.

Finally, a brief discussion of the normative implications of this argument is in order. As I have touched upon at the beginning of this thesis, I do not want it to be read as a critique or dismissal of the prevention agenda or prevention practice. Since I am not evaluating the latter, I also do not make an argument about whether and, if so, how prevention practice ought to be improved. However, although I do not make a normative argument in this thesis, I equally do not claim not to have normative commitments. Indeed, although—to engage a metaphor—the road on which I eventually arrived at the research question for this thesis was long and winding, and although the journey involved many breaks, turns and roadblocks, it was always fuelled by the conviction that war is suffering and that suffering must be avoided.

In my understanding, my analysis showing that the idea of war that underlies the prevention agenda was formed against modernist and colonial thinking does not mean that prevention is 'wrong.' As Bartelson argues, at least since the dawn of the age of nuclear weapons, "very few people have been prepared to argue that war is morally desirable" and I certainly do not wish for this thesis to be read as one of those few apologetic accounts of war.[14] Instead, my main aim with this thesis is to provide an account of how war came to be formulated as a problem that can be governed through a specific policy agenda. In doing so, I am not suggesting that war is not, in fact, 'problematic' nor does my analysis imply that the prevention agenda and prevention policy are based on erroneous claims about war. Instead, it is "precisely because war continues to be a problem" and a staple of international agendas and policymaking—often implicitly or explicitly based on the three "inescapable observations" of the Carnegie Report with which I have opened this thesis[15]—that it is important to ask "*how* exactly it is so."[16]

14. Bartelson 2018, 14.
15. CCPDC 1997, xvii.
16. Andrä, forthcoming, 29, emphasis original.

While I acknowledge positions—some of which I have cited in this thesis—claiming that violence that might count as war can sometimes be necessary, legitimate and justified, such as in the cases of anti-colonial, revolutionary and liberation struggles,[17] I do not make any claims about the necessity of any specific conflict. Since I, like many in the English-speaking academy, have never encountered or experienced myself the violence "about which we write and upon which [...] we build our careers" myself,[18] I hold that the normative judgement about when and how to respond to violence with violence is better made by those subjected to it, rather than by those theorising from a place of relative privilege. Yet while I refrain from making normative judgements about the conflict prevention agenda, I maintain that it is useful to contextualise and historicise it to understand its contemporary manifestation.

Avenues for Future Research

Finally, this section outlines some avenues for future research that connect to or follow this thesis. Firstly, I have only briefly touched upon tools and practices of conflict prediction, early warning and forecasting in Chapter 2. Further research is needed on how the construction of war as an object of governance shapes such tools in scholarship and practice. Academic efforts at developing and improving models for anticipating conflict epitomise the idea that war can not only be known through scientific inquiry (particularly through quantitative research) as I have outlined it in Chapters 3 and 4, but especially that *the future* of war and conflict can be known and, as a result, be governed or even prevented. Forecasting tools, prediction models and early warning mechanisms rely on a set of indicators to gauge whether an armed conflict is imminent. Thus, the conception, design and calibration of such tools and models inadvertently rely on certain definitions and assumptions about war and conflict. In this sense, such tools and mechanisms can be understood as modes of abstraction that contribute to the designation and translation of the entity 'war.'[19] More work is needed in examining how ideas of what war is, how it can be recognised and in which ways it is 'problematic' reverberate in these tools and mechanisms, and in further consequence, how these assumptions then steer the way in which these tools are developed, improved and used; and how they shape the implied resolution to the problem of war. Such research is particularly pertinent in light of the proliferation of sophisticated technologies using Big Data streams and artificial intelligence (AI) for predicting and forecasting conflict,[20] which

17. See, e.g., Cramer 2006; Fanon 2004; Richards 1996.
18. Dauphinee 2013, 348.
19. For modes of abstraction and translation, see Allan 2017, esp. 138.
20. While often used interchangeably in both prevention practice and academic parlance, prediction and forecasting are not strictly synonymous. Prediction comes from statistical language and refers to the inferences of outcomes and paths from past data. The events, effects or developments predicted in probabilistic models do not need to lie in the future as such, which means that prediction is not necessarily anticipatory

promise to cope more effectively and accurately with today's complex conflict landscape,[21] with some scholars even going as far as arguing that Big Data and AI should not only be used to forecast conflicts but should also offer explanations and recommendations for action.[22]

Relatedly, future studies could expand this account of the constitution of war as a governance object by investigating other modes of abstraction that play a role in translating war, i.e. in making it an *international* problem. In this thesis, I have discussed quantification as one mode of abstraction, focusing on death counts as indicators that establish commensurability. However, as Allan notes, "multiple modes of abstraction might be used to translate the object into a legible, portable entity."[23] For example, another mode of abstraction that explicitly establishes a categorical relationship between contextually and spatially disparate events while comparing and ordering is the practice of watchlisting. Conflict watchlists are popular outputs created regularly (mostly annually) by a number of IOs and NGOs in the conflict prevention space. Examples include ACLED's *10 Conflicts to Worry About*,[24] the Council on Foreign Relations' *Conflicts to Watch*,[25] the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research's *Konfliktbarometer*,[26] the ICG's *Watch List*,[27] or the International Rescue Committee's *Watchlist*.[28] Research that interrogates how the processes of designating, translating and problematising war play into the compilation of such lists could draw on existing anthropological work on global governance. For example, watchlists can be understood as being based on what Sally Engle Merry calls composite indicatorisation. Composite indicators combine several systems of counts and ratios, multiple sources and kinds of data, converted into a single rank or score—such as through an ordered list.[29] Indicators ranking countries, according to Merry, "tend to be particularly influential" because they are easily consumable, particularly when they are accompanied by "color-coded maps, typically coloring top countries green

per se, so that Gurr and Lichbach 1986 argue that such models technically *post*dict. In contrast, forecasting is to make inferences about unrealised events or trajectories, i.e. those that have not happened yet, see Hegre et al. 2017. In this way, it can be considered a subfield of prediction. See also Dunn Cavelty 2020, 90.

21. See, e.g., Blair, Blattman and Hartman 2017; Blair and Sambanis 2020; Brandt et al. 2022; D'Orazio and Lin 2022; Ettensperger 2021; Guo, Gleditsch and Wilson 2018; Hegre et al. 2019; Mueller and Rauh 2018; Schrodt 1991; Vestby et al. 2022. For sceptical accounts towards the suitability and promise of Big Data and machine learning for (conflict) forecasting, see, e.g., Cederman and Weidmann 2017, 475; Jäger 2016.
22. Guo, Gleditsch and Wilson 2018, 332.
23. Allan 2017, 138.
24. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20220322210756/https://acleddata.com/10-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2022/.
25. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20220322210009/https://www.cfr.org/report/conflicts-watch-2022.
26. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20220326123114/https://hiik.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CoBa_01.pdf.
27. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20220322210724/https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/watch-list-2022.
28. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20220322210930/https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/6423/cs2201watchlistreportfinal.pdf.
29. Merry 2016, 15.

and bottom ones red."[30] This is the case for many watchlists that frequently come with a world map, on which the countries to be watched are marked red, often using a darker shade to indicate a greater severity or immanence. Further research on the translation of war could then also investigate whether and how abstraction affects international actors' understanding of war in the abstract and specific warscapes. As I discussed in Chapter 2, while abstraction creates commensurability that makes it possible to port an object from one context into another, it necessarily relies on the reduction of complexity and removal of context. As a result, while the translation of war into an international object enables its governance through international actors, the emphasis on specific variables and aggregates might also hinder those actors' ability to fully grasp the compounded and interlocking dynamics of the problem they intend to address.

In addition, future research could connect the question of how war was and is being constituted as a governance object with other problem frames that were beyond the scope of this thesis. For example, as I have elucidated in Chapter 2, the conflict prevention and the atrocity prevention agendas are different but closely related.[31] Although the latter is focused on a narrow set of four mass atrocity crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes), there is a direct connection to the governance of war as all of these often—and in the case of war crimes, per definition exclusively—occur during active conflict.[32] In addition, while not limited to military means, the R2P doctrine reserves military intervention as an option of the last resort to protect populations.[33] Thus, the relationship of the prevention and atrocity agendas could be explored in more detail in terms of whether and to what extent the idea of war as preventable in the former clashes with, undermines or reinforces the option of using force to prevent mass violence in the latter. Such work could draw more explicitly on existing literature that discusses the definitional delineations and evasions about identifying the use of force as 'war,' 'armed conflict,' 'military intervention,' etc., in policy discourse and practice.

Moreover, further research could also investigate the contemporary effects of the modernist and colonial underpinnings of the prevention episteme. As my analysis has shown, the construction of war as a problem was supported by racialised ideas about which types of violence are permissible for whom, as pacifists in the 19th and 20th centuries argued that war is immoral and barbaric. As a result, it was considered normal for 'uncivilised' and 'underdeveloped' peoples but not considered appropriate conduct among those who are Christian, 'civilised' and 'fully developed.' As Ann Laura Stoler notes, colonial entailments such as these

30. ibid., 19.
31. Bellamy 2011; Welsh 2016; Woocher 2012.
32. Bachman 2020, 1; Krain 1997.
33. On the relationship of the R2P norm and military or humanitarian intervention, see Bellamy 2008b.

"wrap around contemporary problems [and] adhere in the logics of governance."[34] While often not readily tangible or visible, colonial pasts continue to cue unspoken distinctions and are taken to impart implicit lessons.[35] Where international reports, analyses and policy briefs reaffirm that war should be prevented, they convey a set of unspoken assumptions about its ontology and, in this way, facilitate the justification and legitimisation of a range of scientific and political interventions for the sake of averting war's undesirable consequences.

As I noted at the beginning of this thesis, the historical narrative of prevention I provided here is interested in the dominant conception of prevention and its underlying ideas and assumptions. To that end, I focused on empirical material taken up by influential actors to construct war as a problem, which is mostly of Western origin. However, by adopting this focus and drawing out the Eurocentric legacy in the history of the prevention idea, my research runs the risk of overwriting the thought and agency of others who have worked to define war differently. Future research could look into how and at which moments non-Western epistemologies and non-Christian religions, to which I could only dedicate a footnote in this thesis, influenced current prevention policy and its implementation. While I have opened up a discussion of thinking and acting beyond the modernist frame of prevention in Chapter 6, more research is needed to fully appreciate the immense labour of Black, disabled, feminist, Global South, Indigenous and queer scholars and activists to shape the conception and policy of conflict prevention, whose contribution was and is marginalised in international discourse.

While it would require a different set of empirics and was therefore beyond the scope of this thesis, future research could interrogate how these epistemological underpinnings shape the contemporary policy agenda. Such research could look at specific examples of armed violence and ask whether and through which mechanisms these were classed as war (or not) and, as a result, considered preventable (or not). Beyond, or in addition to, specific case examples, future work could examine the policy discourse on prevention to investigate which instances and kinds of violence practitioners associate with 'war' and 'conflict,' and where these are thought to be found. For example, the *Pathways for Peace* report states that "much of today's violence is entrenched in low-income countries" and some of the "deadliest and seemingly most intractable conflicts are occurring in middle-income countries."[36] Indeed, much of the report's focus appears to be concentrated on African countries. That is, the problem of war and armed conflict seems to be primarily located in the Global South, while conflict in the Global North or the threat of nuclear war do not seem to be major concerns.

34. Stoler 2016, 3–4.
35. ibid., 5.
36. UN and World Bank 2018, 12.

Finally, the discussion on the de-problematisation of war I provide in Chapter 6 is still rather conceptual and speculative, as the theoretical approach of martial ecologies is fairly new and, as far as I could ascertain, not widely (if at all) discussed or applied in policy circles. However, there is some indication that situations of protracted conflict are increasingly understood as and approached from an affirmative stance, such as in the concepts of deferring peace or "political unsettlement."[37] Like the scholarship of martial ecologies, affirmative approaches to peacebuilding also borrow from Anthropocene thinking. They abandon the idea of a "collective happy ending," which, in the case of resolving protracted conflicts, is usually a peace agreement and stable political settlement.[38] Further research could thus continue and develop the concept of de-problematisation through empirical work through interviews with practitioners and monitoring policy outputs such as briefs and reports, to follow whether, how and why ecological approaches are adopted in prevention policy and practice in the future.

37. Bargués-Pedreny 2018; Pospisil 2019.
38. Tsing 2015, 21.

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