

AFK Organski and Jacek Kugler, The War Ledger, Ch.1

Organski et al. present three different models to explain the onset of war: the balance of power, collective security, and the power transition. In their formulation, BoP theory states that nation-states, acting as forward-looking and power-maximizing rational actors in an anarchic, self-help system, will form alliances to ensure their security. The end result of this process is a homeostatic system in which a roughly equal distribution of power (between coalitions, not the states themselves) is associated with a high degree of peace. The collective security model, on the other hand, posits that all members of a given system act in concert to check the predatory actions of an aggressor nation. The identities of the aggressor and the victim are assumed to be clear to all parties concerned and the states which seek to check the aggressor are assumed to be able to form an alliance to do so without any collective action problem whatsoever. In this model, an unequal distribution of power in favor of the non-aggressive states is associated with peace, an equal distribution with war. The power transition model suggests that a static international hierarchy and rapid economic modernization may combine to lead to an outbreak of war. As formerly marginal states modernize, their expectations of the benefits accruing to them from the international order increase but the unwillingness of the traditionally powerful nations to compromise on the division of goodies prevents those expectations from being realized. Exasperated, they declare war. (Compare to TR Gurr's and J. Davies's explanation of revolution). When rigidities in the international status hierarchy fail to reflect the true capabilities of states to bring resources to bear, war is the result.