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Abstract. This article considers common psychological theories of warfare in light of the current Eritrea-Ethiopia war.

Many "biological" theorists about the origins and maintenance of warfare advocate that aggressive instincts intrinsic to being human are at war's foundations. These theorists then engage in ad hoc hypothesizing about the rise and fall of instinctual strength, choice of targets, aims of the instincts, and modes of expression that in many ways mirror the writings of Sigmund Freud in discussing the elaborations of sexual instincts. A major problem for these theorists is the creating and naming of instincts as a primary means of explaining and understanding the behaviors of war. In actuality, these theorists often have done nothing more than create an instinctual target that still needs much explanation and understanding--but one that is now much less observable than external behavior.

Many "environmental" theorists ascribe significant causal robustness to stimulus features of specific situations--e.g., weapons, natural disasters, economic shortfalls, and unforeseen external threats. These theorists then engage in ad hoc hypothesizing about when, why, and how these stimulus features elicit the behaviors of war. A major problem for these theorists is that warfare may not occur when the "requisite" stimulus features are present--and may occur without the presence of these features. Thus, the "requisite" stimulus features may be neither necessary nor sufficient.

Many psychodynamic theorists maintain that warfare most often comprises a significant component of unconscious, intrapsychic conflict. Participants in warfare may be projecting their unconscious perceptions of their own evil onto others who then deserve to be militarily engaged. Or participants provoke external conflict as a means to better contain, manage, or resolve their own unconscious intrapsychic conflict. Yet again, participants may engage in warfare as a socially authorized satisfaction of that which usually must not be acknowledged--let alone expressed--as dictated by internal and external regulations. A major problem for these theorists is that the available hypotheses are so rich, varied, and procrustean that they seem not subject to disconfirmation.

Many theorists of evolutionary psychology assert that warfare among men exists because it has helped resolve specific problems of survival and, ultimately, reproduction within social groupings. Because, in a variant of anatomy is destiny, men's constraints on reproduction largely involve the numerical access to partners as opposed to women's numerical terms of pregnancy, successful prosecution of war has teleologically been about garnering an increase of male access to female partners. Thus, man's present penchant for warfare is based on what has worked in the past. Although combatants need not believe that they are going to war for greater reproductive success, they must believe that (1) their group will emerge victorious, (2) there is ambiguity about who will live or die, and (3) individual combatant's risks and contributions involving warfare must translate into commensurate degrees of benefits. Besides the politically incorrect foundation of the evolutionary perspective, one also might note the ease with which it is misperceived by other theorists as to its positions on genetic determination, behavioral change, human phenomenology, and the alleged optimization of current human behavior. As with Nietzsche's views on God, is this perspective fated to be contaminated by humanity?

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There are yet other theoretical cliques, e.g., the cognitive, the social learning, the oxymoronic humanistic cabal on warfare, and so on, but a major problem shared by them all--save for the evolutionary--is their relative discounting of the cooperative nature of warfare--combatants imbued with aggression who nevertheless band together as in the Eritrea-Ethiopia war. All need to be subjected to specific tests concerning rationales for why diplomats, journalists, politicians, and officials, and the future combatants can seem to see war coming but are unable to stop it--as in the Eritrea-Ethiopia war. As well, all must be subjected to tests when confronted with a war over territory--e.g., the contested Badme region between Eritrea and Ethiopia--that is apparently devoid of valuable natural resources and any other type of strategic import. Moreover, tests are needed to confront wars among former allies--as Eritrean and Ethiopian leaders were allies in the successful prosecution of an earlier war against Mengistu Haile Mariam.

A cardinal premise of the most promising theoretical perspective--that of evolutionary psychology--that humans are prisoners of their past reproductive successes in confronting contemporary exigencies--may explain much that seems illogical and irrational without needing to posit illogical, irrational, and nonparsimonious mechanisms. So far, at least, each generation's war between past and present suggests more of the same for the future. (See Freud, S. (1907). Three essay on the theory of sexuality. In J. Stachey (Ed.). *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 7). London: Hogarth Press; Lowtzky, F. (1952). Mahatma Ghandi: A contribution to the psychoanalytic understanding of the causes of war and the means of preventing wars. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 33, 485-488; Miller, L. (1972). Identity and violence: In pursuit of the causes of war and organized violence. *Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, 10, 71-77; Stagner, R. (1941). Psychological causes of war. *Psychological Bulletin*, 38, 484-488; Winter, J.M. (1989). Causes of war. In J. Groebel & R.A. Hinde (Eds.), *Aggression and war: Their biological and social bases*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.) (Keywords: Eritrea, Ethiopia, War.)