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Overconfidence And War The Havoc

Following one of his mentors, the Harvard anthropologist Richard Wrangham, he suggests that overconfidence might once have been helpful in war and conflict. On the ancient African savannah, it was actually rational to misestimate your own capacities: a fearsome appearance and bold tactics could intimidate the enemy and help carry the day during lightning raids on enemy camps.

Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive ...

But as Dominic Johnson argues in *Overconfidence and War*, states are no more rational than people, who are susceptible to exaggerated ideas of

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their own virtue, of their ability to control events, and of the future. By looking at this bias--called "positive illusions"--as it figures in evolutionary biology, psychology, and the politics of international conflict, this book offers compelling insights into why states wage war.

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Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions. Opponents rarely go to war without thinking they can win--and clearly, one side must be wrong. This conundrum lies at the heart of the so-called "war puzzle": rational states should agree on their differences in power and thus not fight.

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Dominic D. P. Johnson. Harvard University Press, Jun 30, 2009 - Political Science - 288 pages. 0 Reviews. Opponents rarely go to war without thinking they can win--and clearly, one side must be...

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Opponents rarely go to war without thinking they can win--and clearly, one side must be wrong. This conundrum lies at the heart of the so-called "war puzzle": rational states should agree on their differences in power and thus not fight. But as Dominic Johnson argues in *"Overconfidence and War,"* states are no more rational than people, who are susceptible to exaggerated ideas of their own virtue, of their ability to control events, and of the future. By looking at this bias--called "positive illusions"--as it figures in evolutionary biology, psychology, and the politics of international conflict, this book offers compelling insights into why states wage war. Johnson traces the effects of positive illusions on four turning points in twentieth-century history: two that erupted into war (World War I and Vietnam); and two that did not (the Munich crisis and the Cuban missile crisis). Examining the two wars, he shows how positive illusions have filtered into politics, causing leaders to overestimate themselves and underestimate their adversaries--and to resort to violence to settle a conflict against unreasonable odds. In the Munich

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and Cuban missile crises, he shows how lessening positive illusions may allow leaders to pursue peaceful solutions. The human tendency toward overconfidence may have been favored by natural selection throughout our evolutionary history because of the advantages it conferred--heightening combat performance or improving one's ability to bluff an opponent. And yet, as this book suggests--and as the recent conflict in Iraq bears out--in the modern world the consequences of this evolutionary legacy are potentially deadly.

The willingness to believe in some kind of payback or karma remains nearly universal. Retribution awaits those who commit bad deeds; rewards await those who do good. Johnson explores how this belief has developed over time, and how it has shaped the course of human evolution.

How do people decide which country came out ahead in a war or a crisis? In *Failing to Win*, Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney dissect the psychological factors that predispose leaders, media, and the public to perceive outcomes as victories or defeats--often creating wide gaps between perceptions and reality.

How cognitive biases can guide good decision making in politics and international relations A widespread assumption in political science and international relations is that cognitive biases--quirks of the brain we all share as human beings--are detrimental and responsible for policy failures, disasters, and wars. In *Strategic Instincts*, Dominic Johnson challenges this assumption, explaining that these nonrational behaviors can actually support favorable results in international politics and contribute to political and strategic success. By studying past examples, he considers the ways that cognitive biases act as "strategic instincts," lending a competitive edge in policy decisions, especially under conditions of unpredictability and imperfect information. Drawing from evolutionary theory and behavioral sciences, Johnson looks at three influential cognitive biases--overconfidence, the fundamental attribution error, and in-group/out-group bias. He then examines the advantageous as well as the detrimental effects of these biases through historical case studies of the American Revolution, the Munich Crisis, and the Pacific campaign in World War II. He acknowledges the dark side of biases--when confidence becomes hubris, when attribution errors become paranoia, and when group bias becomes prejudice. Ultimately, Johnson makes a case for a more nuanced understanding of the causes and consequences of cognitive biases and argues that in the complex world of international relations, strategic instincts can, in the right context, guide better performance. *Strategic Instincts* shows how an evolutionary perspective can offer the crucial next step in bringing psychological insights to bear on foundational questions in international politics.

An expert on the psychology of decision making at Berkeley's Haas

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School of Business helps readers calibrate their confidence, arguing that some confidence is good, but overconfidence can hinder growth. A surge of confidence can feel fantastic—offering a rush of energy, even a dazzling vision of the future. It can give us courage and bolster our determination when facing adversity. But if that self-assurance leads us to pursue impossible goals, it can waste time, money, and energy. Self-help books and motivational speakers tell us that the more confident we are, the better. But this way of thinking can lead to enormous trouble. Decades of research demonstrates that we often have an over-inflated sense of self and are rarely as good as we believe. *Perfectly Confident* is the first book to bring together the best psychological and economic studies to explain exactly what confidence is, when it can be helpful, and when it can be destructive in our lives. Confidence is an attitude that takes into account both personal feelings and the facts. Don Moore identifies the ways confidence behaves in real life and raises thought-provoking questions. How optimistic should you be about an uncertain future? What justifies your confidence in something amorphous and subjective like your attractiveness or sense of humor? Moore reminds us that the key to success is to avoid being both over- and under-confident. In this essential guide, he shows how to become perfectly confident—how to strive for and maintain the well-calibrated, adaptive confidence that can elevate all areas of our lives.

Reflections on War is a comprehensive and objective investigation into the problems of war. The book explores the crucial link between theory, strategy and objectives in war, taking all the evidence and theory into account, and should be of interest to military practitioners, specialists in defence studies, and others interested in military history. Also notable about the work is its ability to draw insights together from international legal theory, management sciences, history, sociology and the political economy of war ? showing due respect for the moral complexities involved in waging war.

The history of wars caused by misjudgments, from Napoleon's invasion of Russia to America's invasion of Iraq, reveals that leaders relied on cognitive models that were seriously at odds with objective reality. *Blunders, Blunders, and Wars* analyzes eight historical examples of strategic blunders regarding war and peace and four examples of decisions that turned out well, and then applies those lessons to the current Sino-American case.

Captures the multiethnic, multicultural world of the California Gold Rush, in a richly textured social history that profiles the era's diverse and colorful characters, the evolution of a unique society, and the sources of our legends and myths about the Gold Rush. Reprint.

In the first comprehensive study of the experience of Virginia

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soldiers and their families in the Civil War, Aaron Sheehan-Dean captures the inner world of the rank-and-file. Utilizing new statistical evidence and first-person narratives, Sheehan-Dean explores how Virginia soldiers--even those who were nonslaveholders--adapted their vision of the war's purpose to remain committed Confederates. Sheehan-Dean challenges earlier arguments that middle- and lower-class southerners gradually withdrew their support for the Confederacy because their class interests were not being met. Instead he argues that Virginia soldiers continued to be motivated by the profound emotional connection between military service and the protection of home and family, even as the war dragged on. The experience of fighting, explains Sheehan-Dean, redefined southern manhood and family relations, established the basis for postwar race and class relations, and transformed the shape of Virginia itself. He concludes that Virginians' experience of the Civil War offers important lessons about the reasons we fight wars and the ways that those reasons can change over time.

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