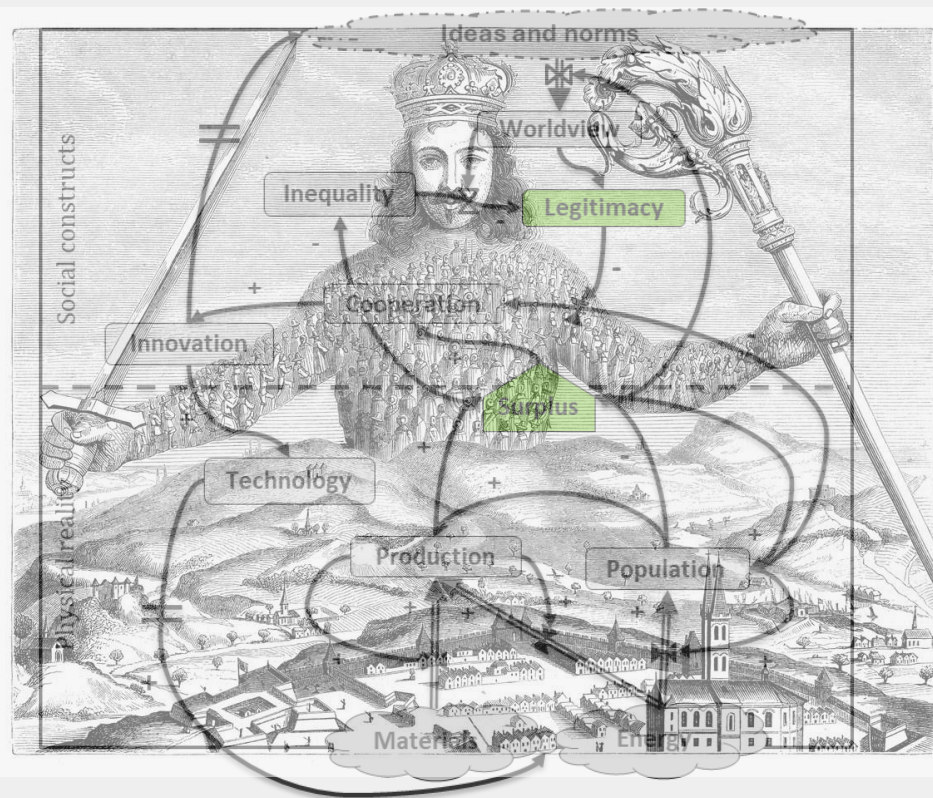




Critical ontology of war, for realistic peacebuilding

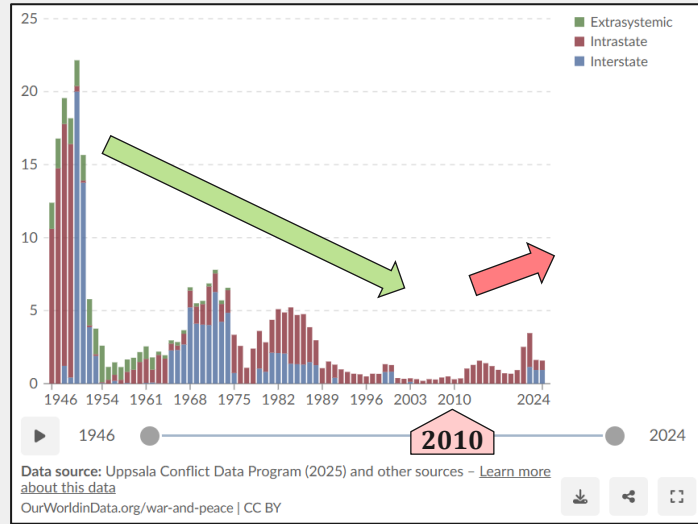
*Major Sebastian Langvad
Course director, Complex Operations
Norwegian Military Academy*

Norwegian Military Academy

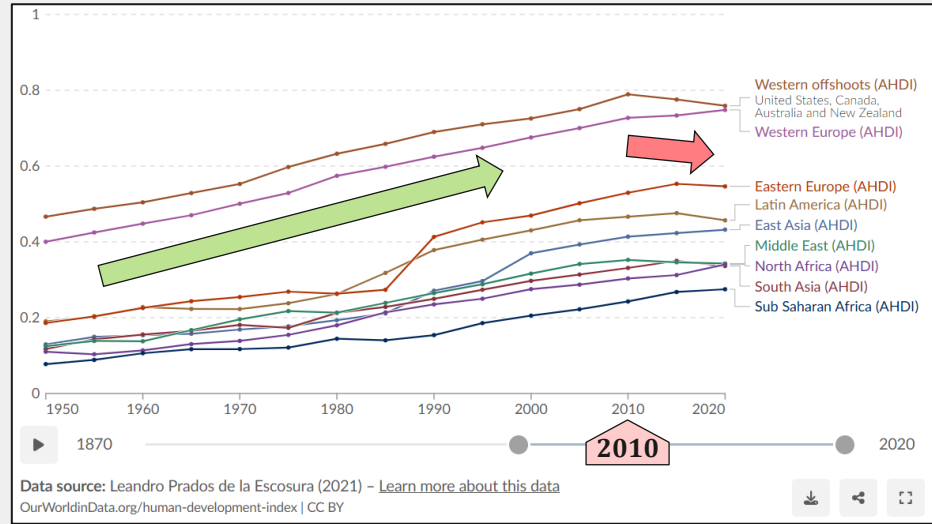


The Problem: War

Rate of conflict deaths $\approx$ **Negative peace**



Aug. Human Development Index $\approx$ **Positive peace**



➡ The world can become better, and it has.

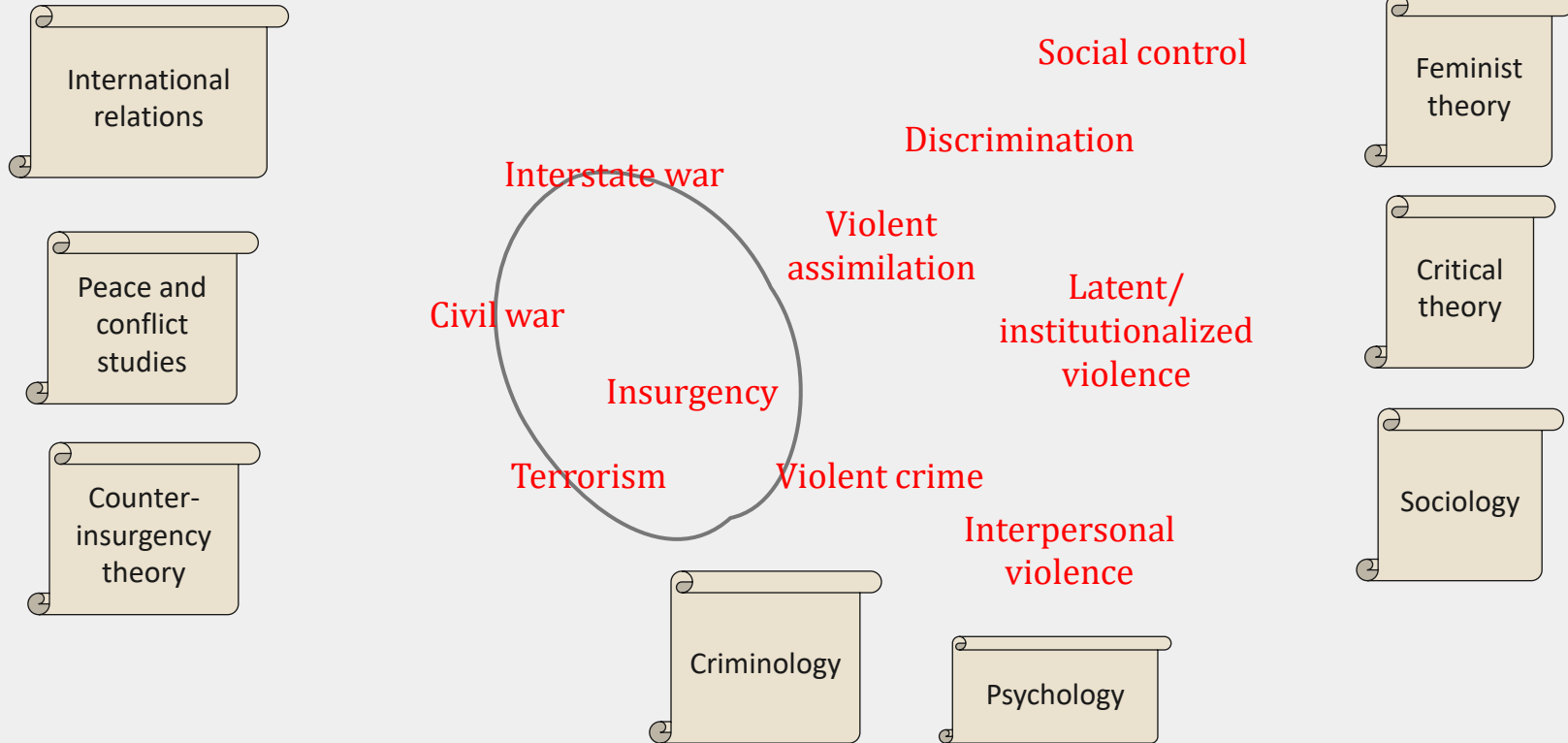
➡ But it is not inevitable, and it requires effort.

2010 What worked 1945-2010, and what changed?

The Scientific Obstacle: Ontology and epistemology of War and Peace

Negative Peace

Positive Peace



4th generation warfare **Counterinsurgency** **Regular war**

Asymmetric war

Terrorism **Hybrid war**

Communist insurgency **Irregular war** **Old wars**

New wars **War Amongst the People**

Traditional peacekeeping **Stability operations**

Revolutionary war **Facist insurgency**

Jihad

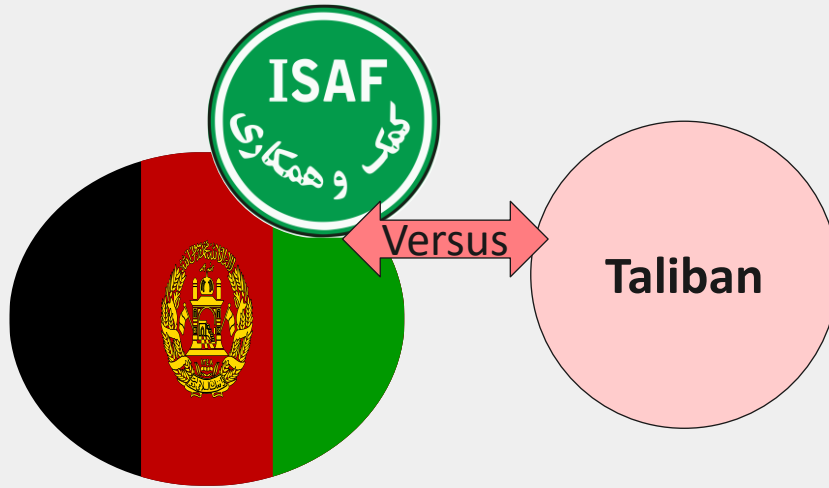
Robust peacekeeping

Unconventional war

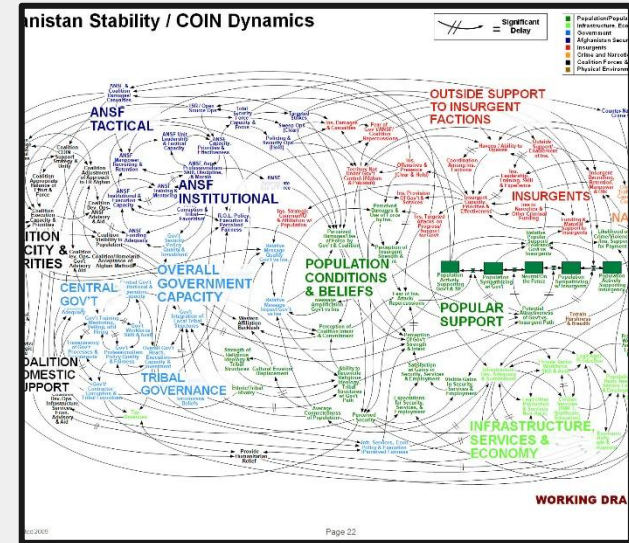
Guerilla war **Operations Other Than War**

Consequences of scientific confusion, example : Afghanistan (non-)strategy

Unrealistic simplification



Unfocused, counterproductive complexity



Research Questions

How can complex systems thinking provide an ontological framework for

- (1) more accurate explanations and predictions for war?
- (2) designing more effective strategies in statebuilding and peace operations?

The Opportunity: Indications of fundamental human universals regarding politics and war.

All large groups of humans, on average, behave the same [under the same conditions].

Ian Morris, *War! What is it Good for?*

The solution to the “enigma of war” is that no such enigma exists. [Just as in nature in general, humans] can resort to co-operation, competition, or conflict, strategies they variably mix, depending on [the situation].

Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization*

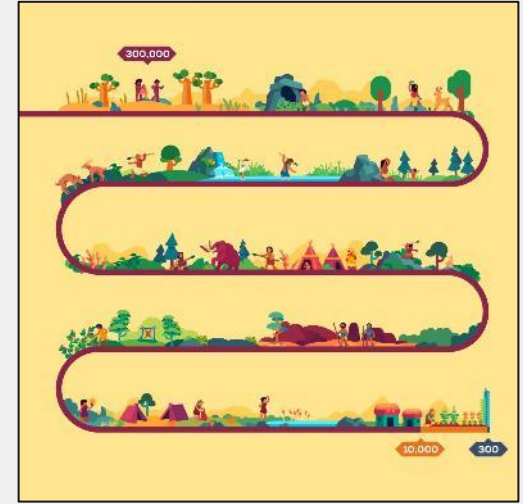
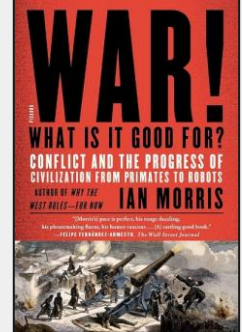
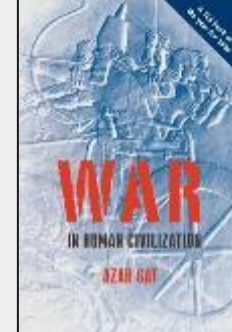
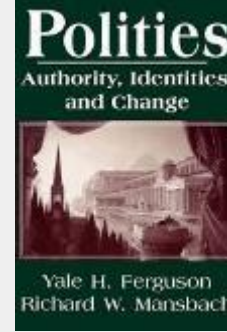
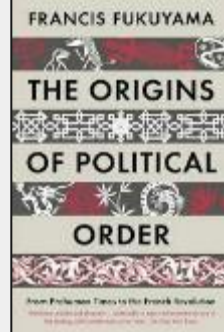
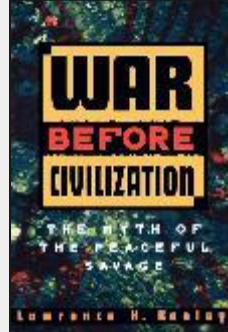
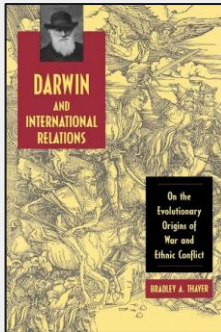
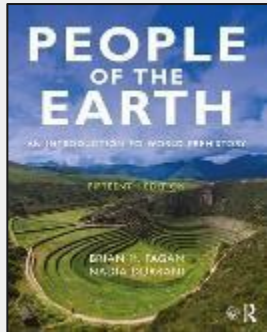


Image: Kurtzgesagt



*[Politics is when] people decide **who gets what, when, how***¹

*War is the continuation of politics, with the **admixture** of [violent] means*²

[War] is the worst imaginable way to create larger, more peaceful societies, [but] it is pretty much the only way humans have found³.

1: Clausewitz, *On War*, Book 8, Ch 6A

2: Harold Lasswell (1936) *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*

3: Ian Morris (2015). *War! What is it Good For?*

The Polity Model

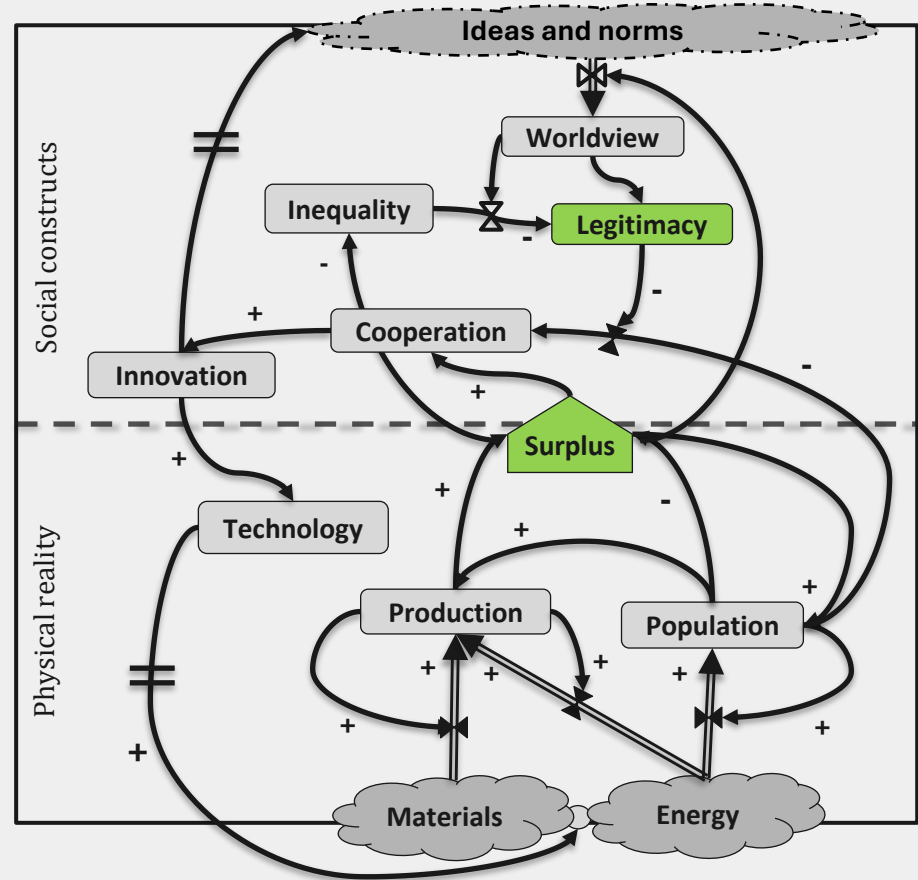
The Polity: Who gets what, when, and how?

The Durkheim sub-system

Humans' create identity and narratives beyond genetic proximity that allows exponentially expanding social cooperation. The greater the appeal and effectiveness of a group's ideas and norms, the larger it can grow and the more it can accomplish. **Control of worldview and identity becomes central source of power.**

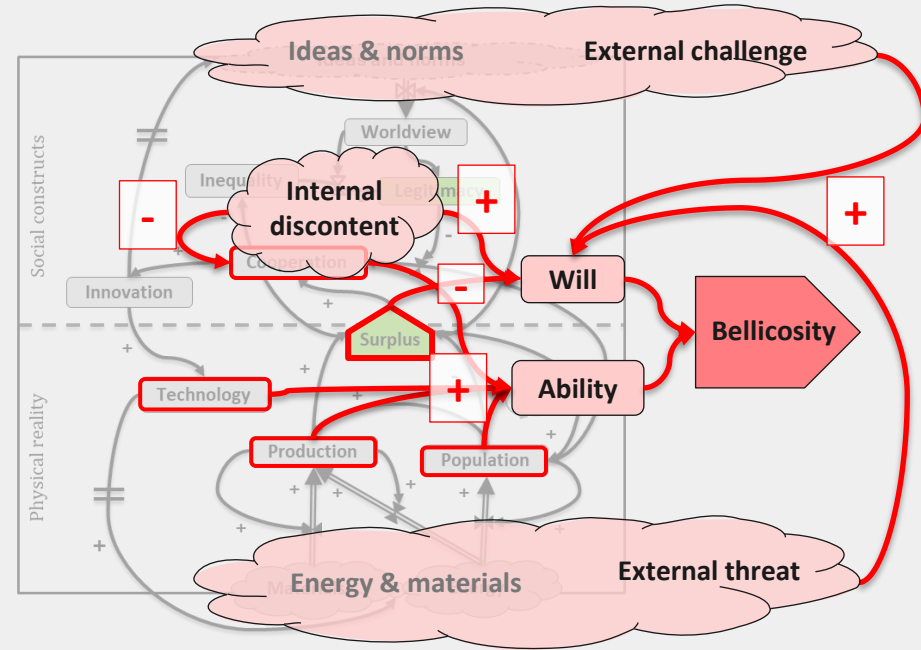
The Malthusian sub-system

Humans' evolutionary niche to fulfil the needs of each gene-carrying individual is group formation, planning, toolmaking and eusocial cooperation. Core balancing loop: **More success → bigger group → decreased surplus + strained trust.**



The Hobbesian sub-system: Violence as political instrument

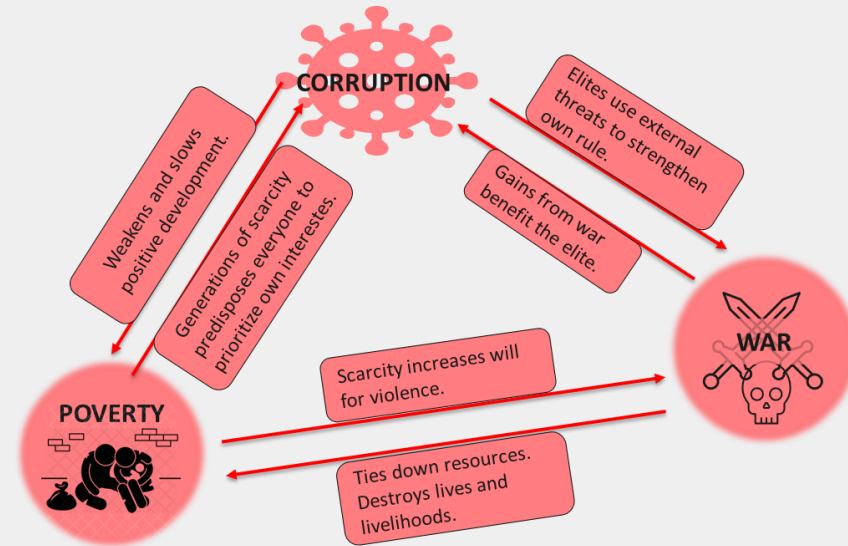
- The agentic aspect of the Polity model: **why and with what capacity does a polity opt for violence?**
 - The “**Bellicosity**”-output in the model.
- Captures the interconnected drivers of war, which are often fragmented and competing explanations in different orthodox International Relations traditions. (e.g. Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism etc.)



How can complex systems thinking provide an ontological framework for more accurate explanations and predictions for war?

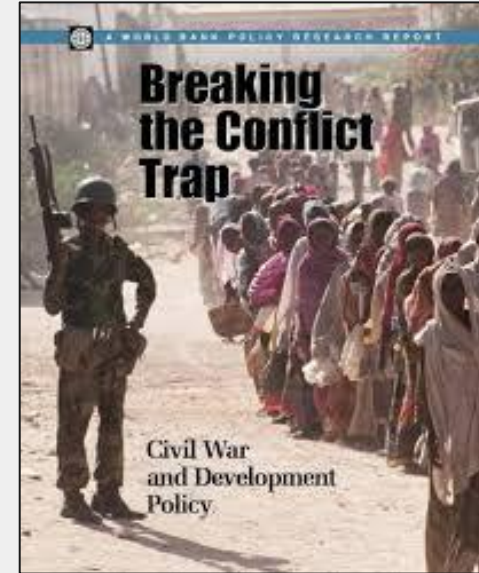
The Polity Model: Key conclusions and real-world consistency

- Scarcity in basic physical resources, i.e. energy (food and fuel) and non-luxury materials, are the fundamental drivers of conflict.
- Scarcity both drives bellicosity directly and causes reduced external solidarity and willingness for compromise.
- The vicious cycle of “**the Conflict Trap**”: Scarcity → reduced legitimacy → internal violent repression → less cooperation → more scarcity. (+ externally: violence to secure resources and/or deflect internal discontent → external war).



Individual conflicts: Breaking the Conflict Trap.

- 2% GDP-growth for 10 years → 50% reduction of civil war risk.¹
- Peacekeeping/ stability operations for the first 5 years necessary to break the core vicious cycle of the conflict trap.
 - ROI x60 for USD into UN peace ops → USD gained for a society escaping the conflict trap.²

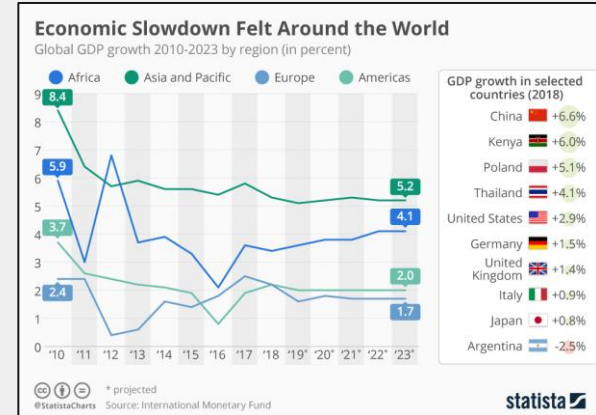
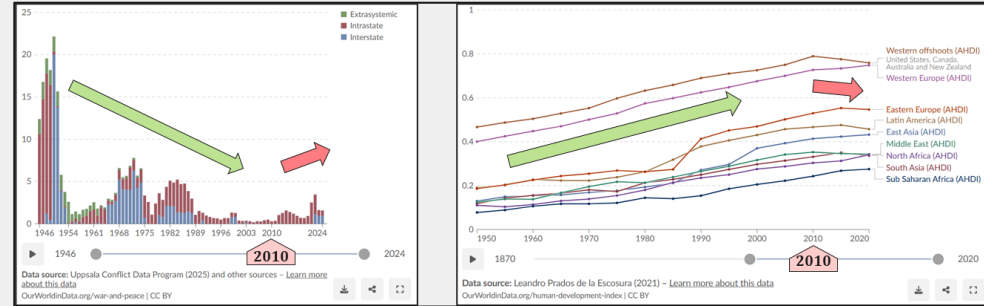


1: Paul Collier et al. (2003) Breaking the Conflict Trap. World Bank Publications

2: Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2004) The Challenge of Reducing the Global Incidence of Civil War, Oxford

Global systemic conflict: The Great Recession and economic slowdown

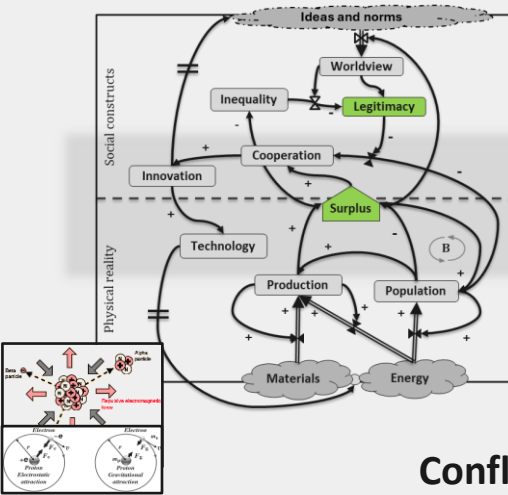
- Core findings from the Polity Model indicate a causal connection between the financial and food crises of 2009-2012 and the inflection points in global negative and positive peace centered on 2010.
- Global humanist positive peace is possible** but requires sustained, and **sustainable**, economic growth, while simultaneously containing and defeating threat actors that would not see that form of peace realized.



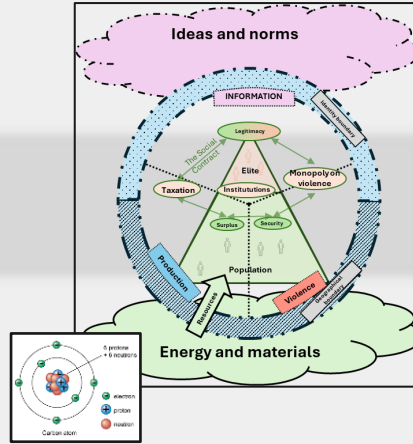
How can complex systems thinking provide an ontological framework for designing more effective strategies in statebuilding and stabilization operations?

All models are wrong, but some are more useful

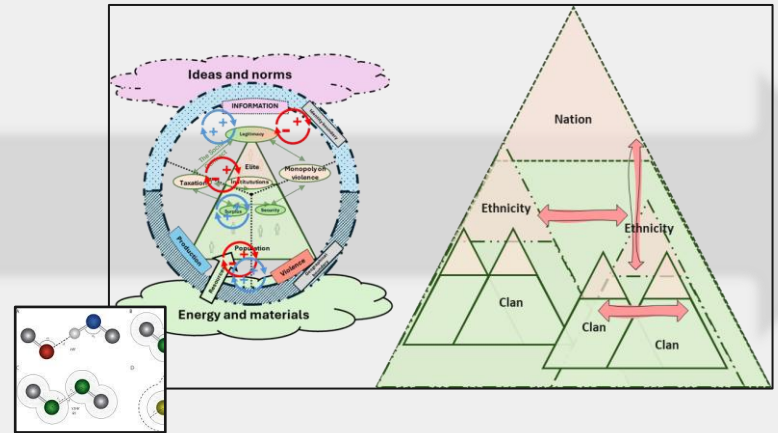
The Polity Functions



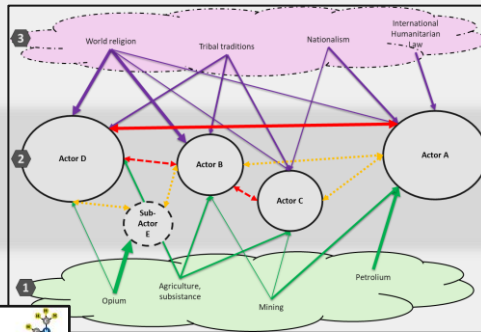
The Polity



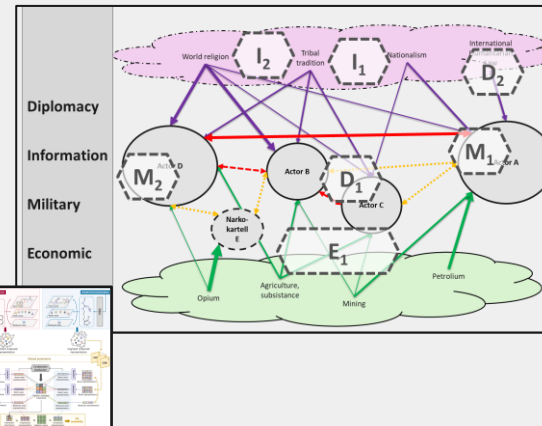
Dynamic and nested polities



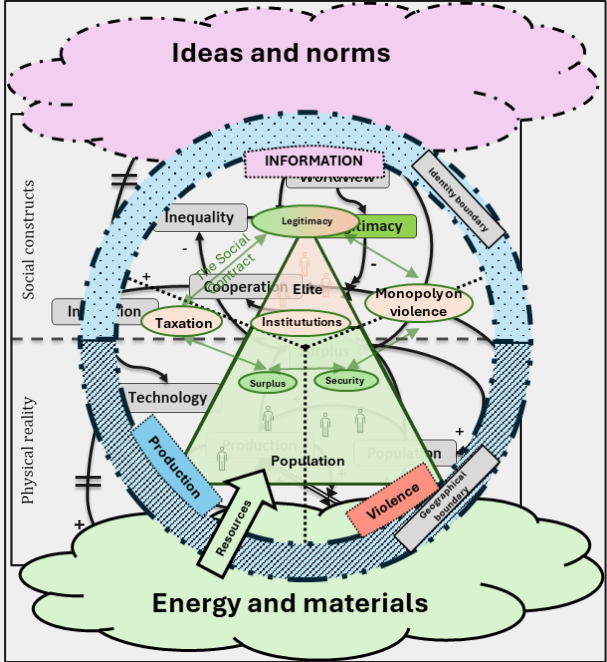
Conflict system



Strategy



***The Polity:** A group of humans performing all political functions, delineated within geographical and identity boundaries.*

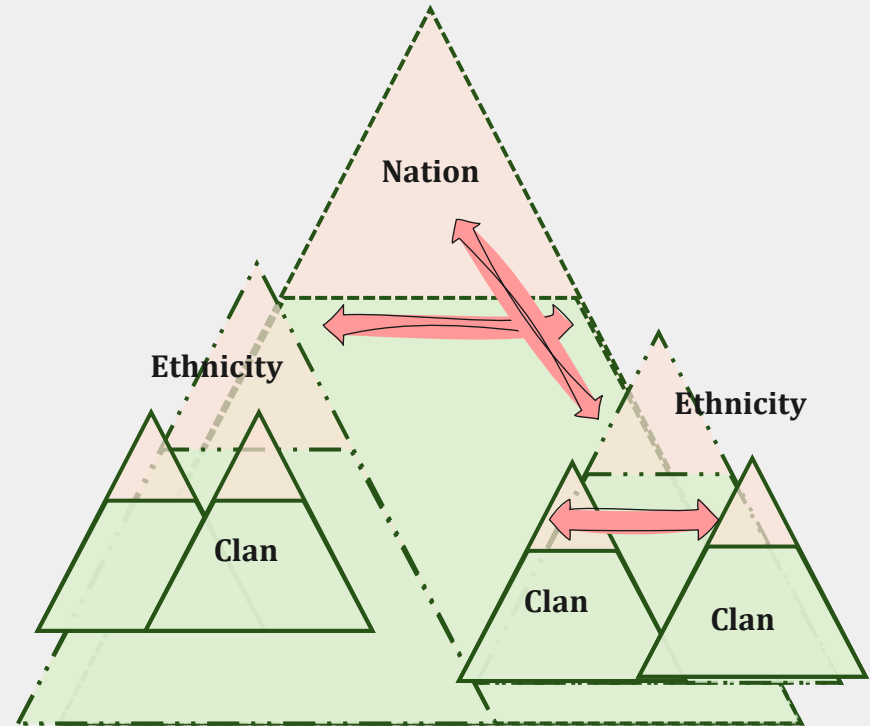
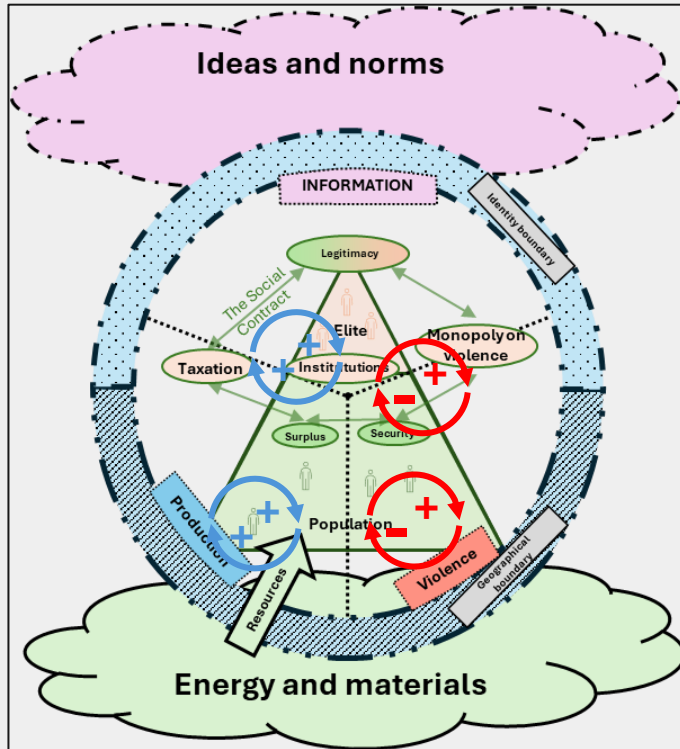


	Production	Legitimacy	Violence
Nation state	Primary, secondary, tertiary industry	Constitution	Standing armed forces
Cartell	Drugs, smuggling etc	Money, fear	Armed enforcers, mercenaries
Kingdom	Large scale farming, merchants	Organized religion, dynasty	King's guard, militia, mercenaries
Tribe	Farming, craftsmen	Ancestor worship, "big man"	Warriors
Band	Hunting, herding	"First among equals"	All males

Dynamic and nested polities:

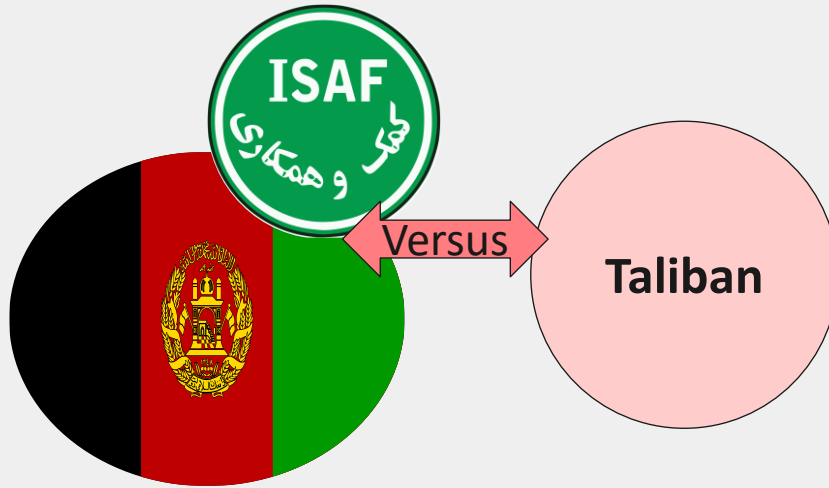
Internal and external variability strengthen and weaken polities.

Polities cooperate, compete, conflict, subsume and fragment, both horizontally and vertically.

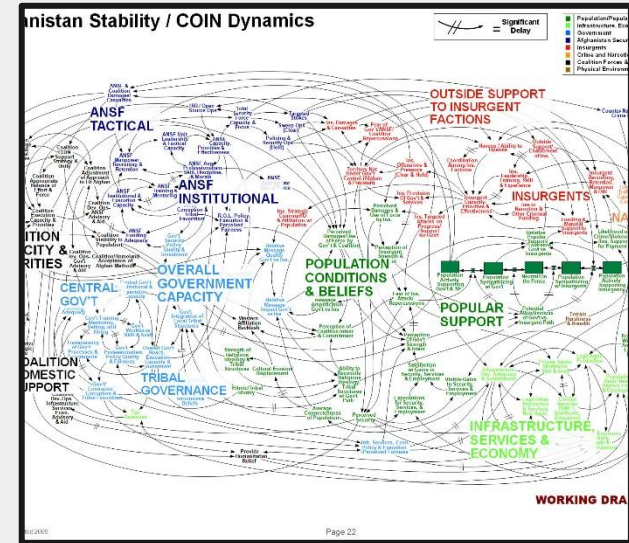


Consequences of scientific confusion: Afghanistan (non-)strategy

Unrealistic simplification

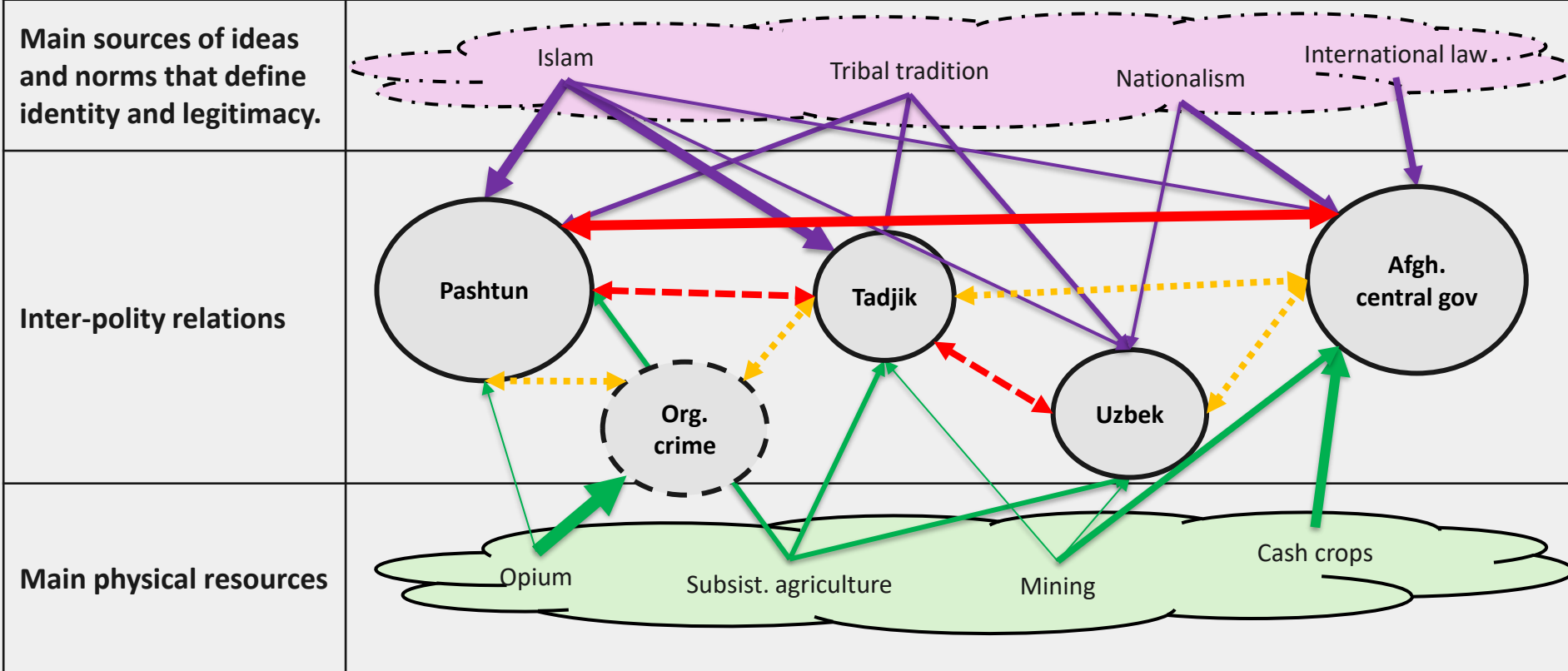


Unfocused, counterproductive complexity



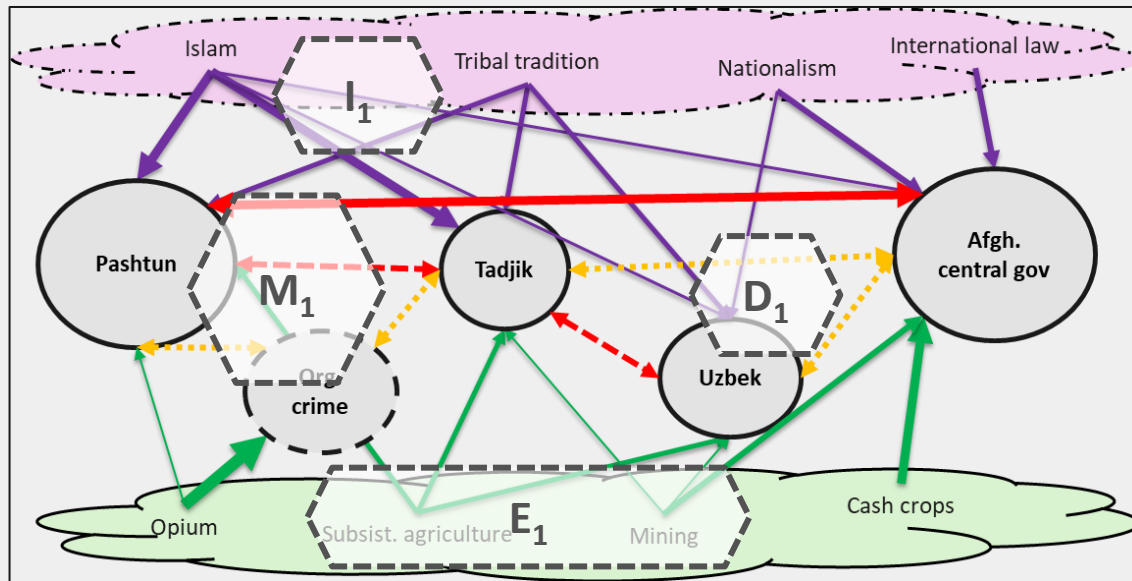
Strategic conflict system:

The framework of the *polity functions* and nested polities facilitates structured understanding of the conflict system. Actionable, rather than paralyzing, complexity.



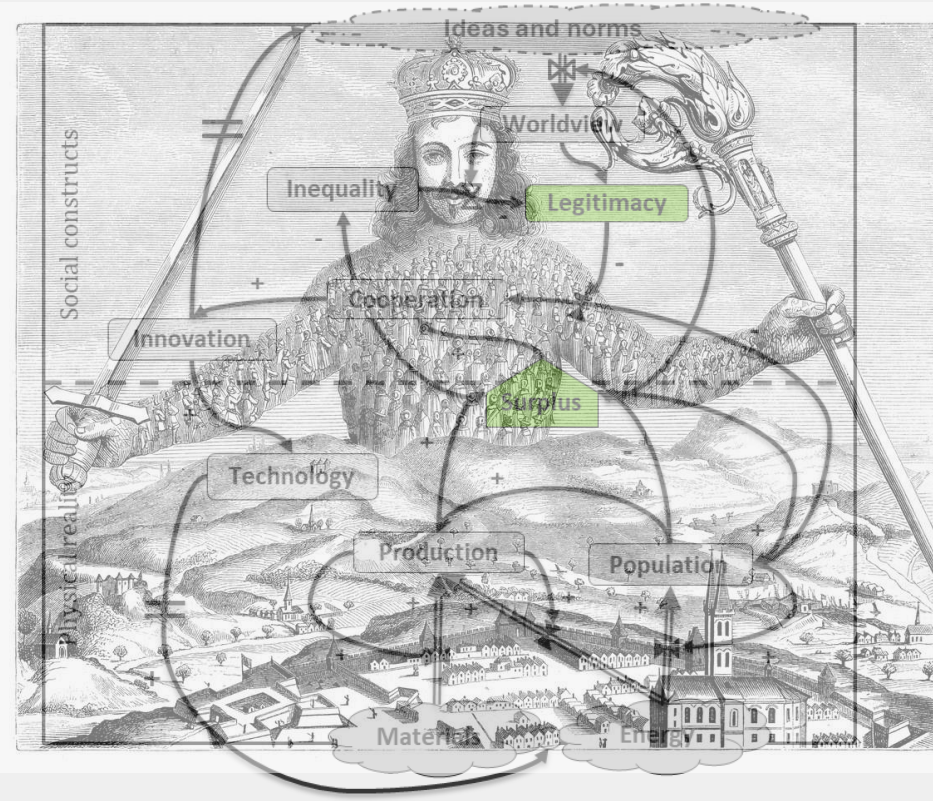
Strategy:

Visualizing the application of instruments of power to influence the state of a conflict system.



Instruments of power	Examples
Diplomacy	Three-way negotiations, Tadjik, Uzbek, Gov. Discuss semi-independent confederacy.
Information	Reinforce religious authorities and tribal elders that promote less radical, more pragmatic form of Islam. Highlight less-religious, tribal heritage.
Military	Limited operations to deter, if necessary neutralize, «spoiler» activity.
Economic	Locally driven, bottom-up development of key sectors and resources. Bypass centralized corruption.

Si vis pacem, cognosce bellum



Bibliography

Clausewitz, Carl von. 1989. *On War* (Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Trans). Princeton University Press. doi:(Original work published 1832).

Collier, Paul, V L Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2003. *Breaking the Conflict Trap*. Washington DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press.

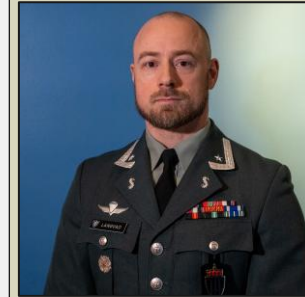
Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 6, No. 3, 167-191.

Gat, Azar. 2008. *War in Human Civilization*. Oxford University Press.

Lasswell, Harold D. 1936. *Politics; Who gets What, When, How*. Whittlesey House.

Morris, Ian. 2014. *War! What is it good for?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Thayer, Bradley A. 2004. *Darwin and International Relations: On the Evolutionary Origins of War and Ethnic Conflict*. University Press of Kentucky.



Major Sebastian Langvad
Course director, Complex
Operations
Norwegian Military Academy

slangvad@mil.no

*Langvad, Sebastian -
Norwegian Armed Forces*