"We make war," Aristotle said, "so that we may live in peace." And the United States is learning again that peace comes at a price. In this section we look at wars past — through the eyes of Boise State community members — as we brace for the present.

By Greg Raymond

In a squat, mud-brick building that once served as a government archive in the capital city of Amarna, archaeologists have found nearly 400 cuneiform tablets describing the relations between pharaonic Egypt and its neighbors. Unparalleled in their historical detail, these tablets reveal that by the 14th century B.C.E., states throughout the region had adopted an elaborate code of international conduct that

UNDERSTANDING WAR

Conflict rages through history

specified when war was justified and how it should be waged. Based on evidence from other parts of the world, we know that efforts to control war were not unique to the ancient Middle East. Regardless of geographic location and historical period, almost every state involved in international politics has lived under the brooding shadow of violence.

War is organized violence conducted by political units against one another. For millennia, the horse, metal-edged weapons and stone fortifications defined how wars were fought. However, once the Chinese discovered that mixing charcoal, sulphur and saltpeter produced an explosive compound, armed combat changed dramatically, especially in Europe where dozens of states were locked in endless quarrels over land and allegiance. Not only did gunpowder allow European engineers to construct artillery capable of pulverizing defensive strongholds from long distances, it also led to the development of flintlock muskets, breech-loading magazine-fed rifles and eventually machine guns, therein giving enormous firepower to infantry fighting at close range. Paralleling the exponential growth in the lethality of

weapons were revolutions in communication and transportation technology that extended the range and duration of military campaigns. From the 14th century onward, innovations in weaponry and logistics encouraged states to replace their undisciplined mercenary forces with professional armies, which were expanded during the Napoleonic Wars into mass organizations capable of fighting battles of annihilation.

Recoiling from the horrors of modern warfare, many people tried to curb excesses on the battlefield. Revulsion over the carnage at Solferino during the Franco-Austrian War of 1859 spawned the Geneva Red Cross Conferences of 1864 and 1868, which sought to establish rules for the protection of sick and wounded soldiers. Additional conferences were held in St. Petersburg (1868) and Brussels (1874) to regulate weapons that aggravated suffering. At the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907, elaborate conventions were drafted governing the conduct of war. Despite these efforts to impose humanitarian controls over the brute realities of combat, the 20th century would suffer from the most gruesome wars ever experienced by humankind. According to

one estimate, approximately 125 million people lost their lives in the carnage.

In view of war's brutality, why do states take up arms against one another? Some theorists contend that wars are due to the personality traits of certain individual leaders who are more dogmatic, risk acceptant and aggressive than their peers. Others claim that there is something about the nature of particular states that leads them to be warlike, with authoritarian forms of government and high levels of militarization often singled out as potential causes. Still others maintain that war is a product of the structure of the international system, which becomes more conflict-prone when the strength of the leading state erodes relative to that of its challengers.

Research indicates that no one set of factors — the psychological characteristics of individual leaders, the national attributes of particular states, or the structure of the international system — provides an adequate explanation for the onset of war. Rather than a single cause of war, there are multiple causes. Indeed, hostilities normally erupt at the end of a complex, multistage process. More than one combination of individual, national and systemic factors may lead to war, and different combinations may lead to different types of wars.

The type of war studied most thoroughly occurs between great power rivals. Conflicts of interest among powerful states are common, though most dissipate before either side resorts to military force. If serious conflicts of interest do not dissipate, they may be settled by third-party mediation, fester for generations or escalate to war. The results from several studies suggest escalation is most likely when disputes about territory accumulate over time. One way the build-up of these disputes leads to war is through the tendency of leaders in successive crises to employ more coercive bargaining tactics in each subsequent encounter. Another way is through the tendency to seek allies and acquire additional arms. The dangers posed by arms and alliance acquisition are twofold. First, disputes that take place during arms races are highly volatile. Second, if they explode into war, the effect of alliances will be to spread the hostilities and create a larger, more intractable struggle.

Whether inspired by offensive or defensive aims, states resort to war amid conflicting and often quixotic expectations about what the fighting will be like. Few human activities evoke stronger emotions than combat. Because fear, rage and grief all attend the battlefield, victors face complex trade-offs when attempting to end a bitter war. Forced to balance competing ideals and interests in an emotionally charged environment, they can be drawn one way by moral principles while being pulled another way by the quest for advantage. Battlefield success, no matter how impressive, does not automatically yield a durable peace.

Perhaps the most famous example of a military victory that was never translated into viable political settlement occurred over two millennia ago, when King Pyrrhus of Epirus overwhelmed a Roman army at Asculum in 279 B.C. The Greek king had recently defeated the Romans at Heraclea, but only after his troops had suffered enormous casualties. Another victory over the Romans, he reasoned, would cement his position on the Italian peninsula and allow him to conquer the wealthier cities of Sicily. Pyrrhus achieved victory. After two days of bitter fighting in the woods and marshes around the Aufidus River, some 6,000 Roman soldiers lay dead. Yet the victory came at a terrible cost, with Pyrrhus's forces again suffering staggering losses. "One more such victory," he grumbled, "and I am undone."

Exhaustion and resource depletion often prevent victors like Pyrrhus from capitalizing on their triumphs. However, these are not the only reasons why military mastery does not always beget a stable postwar world. Peace is not something that happens spontaneously when the infernal engine of war is shut off; it must be cultivated by people of vision.

Since feelings of anger, resentment and similar intense emotions can sour relations between former belligerents well after the fighting is over, how can adversaries assuage the rancor of their collective past and restore amicable relations? What policies will promote an enduring peace settlement? Two schools of thought exist. One school of thought counsels leniency: Victors should be magnanimous to extinguish any desire for revenge by the vanquished. Another school calls for sterner measures: Victors should be harsh to ensure that the enemy's defeat is irreversible. The first approach seeks stability by building trust between adversaries; the second, by eliminat-

Author Gregory A. Raymond is director of the Honors College at Boise State. The author of 10 books on war and peacemaking, he has lectured on security policy in 19 different countries. Dr. Raymond served in the U.S. Army from 1969-1971. He was named the Idaho Professor of the Year in 1994 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

ing an adversary's capacity to mount a future military challenge. Through the ages, philosophers and theologians, novelists and playwrights, as well as journalists and social scientists have debated the relative merits of lenient versus punitive settlements. Their debates reveal that there are costs, benefits, and risks associated with both approaches to peacemaking.

Attaining peace is more difficult than desiring it. Sustaining peace once it has been attained is even more demanding. The victor in search of a lasting accord with the vanquished must somehow blend demands for security from domestic constituencies with policies the former enemy accepts as fitting. It must be able to quash challenges to the new international order while developing procedures that allow complaints to be aired and peaceful change to occur. In short, victors must have the political sagacity to couple firmness regarding their own interests with fairness toward the interests of others.

How wars are fought and won influences how peace agreements are crafted and maintained. Unfortunately, postwar policies rarely emerge from deliberate plans; they unfold incrementally through a tyranny of small decisions, owing more to impulse than design. Without an overarching grand strategy that coordinates the military requirements of warfighting with the political requirements of peacemaking, finding the right balance between retributive and restorative justice is difficult. Some victors go too far, plundering the defeated in fits of avarice and rage; others do not go far enough, humiliating them without weakening their capacity to retaliate in the future. Unless victory on the battlefield is complemented with a clear, coherent strategy for dealing with the defeated, national leaders intoxicated by military success will suffer nasty political hangovers. "It is always easy to begin a war," the Roman historian Sallust reminds us. "But [it is] very difficult to stop one."