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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 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 ...

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.

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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 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

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evolution.

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 Jo

This book introduces a new perspective on risk seeking behaviour, developing a framework based on various cognitive theories, and applying it to the specific case-study of Turkey's foreign policy toward Syria. The author examines why policy makers commit themselves to policies that they do not have the capacity to deliver, and develops an alternative theoretical model to prospect theory in explaining risk taking behaviour based on the concept of overconfidence. The volume suggests that overconfident individuals exhibit risk seeking behaviour that contradicts the risk averse behaviour of individuals in the domain of gain, as predicted by prospect theory. Using a set of testable hypothesis deduced from the model, it presents an empirical investigation of the causes behind Turkish decision makers' unprecedented level of risk taking toward the uprising in Syria and the consequences of this policy.

'Brilliant ... it will change how you think about confidence.' Johann Hari 'Important for everyone but crucial for women.' Mary Robinson 'Interesting and important.' Steven Pinker _____
Why do boys instinctively bullshit more than girls? How do economic recessions shape a

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generation's confidence? Can we have too much confidence and, if so, what are the consequences? Imagine we could discover something that could make us richer, healthier, longer-living, smarter, kinder, happier, more motivated and more innovative. Ridiculous, you might say... What is this elixir? Confidence. If you have it, it can empower you to reach heights you never thought possible. But if you don't, it can have a devastating effect on your future. Confidence lies at the core of what makes things happen. Exploring the science and neuroscience behind confidence that has emerged over the last decade, clinical psychologist and neuroscientist Professor Ian Robertson tells us how confidence plays out in our minds, our brains and indeed our bodies. He explains where it comes from and how it spreads - with extraordinary economic and political consequences. And why it's not necessarily something you are born with, but something that can be learned.

If pacifists are correct in thinking that war is always unjust, then it follows that we ought to eliminate the possibility and temptation of ever engaging in it; we should not build war-making capacity, and if we already have, then demilitarization—or military abolition—would seem to be the appropriate course to take. On the other hand, if war is sometimes justified, as many believe, then it must be permissible to prepare for it by creating and maintaining a military establishment. Yet this view that the justifiability of war-making is also sufficient to justify war-building is mistaken. This book addresses questions of *jus ante bellum*, or justice before war. Under what circumstances is it justifiable for a polity to prepare for war by militarizing? When (if

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ever) and why (if at all) is it morally permissible to create and maintain the potential to wage war? In doing so it highlights the ways in which a civilian population compromises its own security in maintaining a permanent military establishment, explores the moral and social costs of militarization, and evaluates whether or not these costs are worth bearing.

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

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lives.

Presents a controversial history of violence which argues that today's world is the most peaceful time in human existence, drawing on psychological insights into intrinsic values that are causing people to condemn violence as an acceptable measure.

Most wars between countries end quickly and at relatively low cost. The few in which high-intensity fighting continues for years bring about a disproportionate amount of death and suffering. What separates these few unusually long and intense wars from the many conflicts that are far less destructive? In *Logics of War*, Alex Weisiger tests three explanations for a nation's decision to go to war and continue fighting regardless of the costs. He combines sharp statistical analysis of interstate wars over the past two centuries with nine narrative case studies. He examines both well-known conflicts like World War II and the Persian Gulf War, as well as unfamiliar ones such as the 1864-1870 Paraguayan War (or the War of the Triple Alliance), which proportionally caused more deaths than any other war in modern history. When leaders go to war expecting easy victory, events usually correct their misperceptions quickly and with fairly low casualties, thereby setting the stage for a negotiated agreement. A second explanation involves motives born of domestic politics; as war becomes more intense, however, leaders are increasingly constrained in their ability to continue the fighting. Particularly destructive wars instead arise from mistrust of an opponent's intentions. Countries that launch preventive wars to forestall expected decline tend to have particularly ambitious war aims that they hold to even when fighting goes poorly. Moreover, in some cases, their

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opponents interpret the preventive attack as evidence of a dispositional commitment to aggression, resulting in the rejection of any form of negotiation and a demand for unconditional surrender. Weisiger's treatment of a topic of central concern to scholars of major wars will also be read with great interest by military historians, political psychologists, and sociologists.

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