



# War, Peace, and Human Nature: The Convergence of Evolutionary and Cultural Views

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## War, Peace, and Human Nature: The Convergence of Evolutionary and Cultural Views From Oxford University Press

Have humans always waged war? Is warring an ancient evolutionary adaptation or a relatively recent behavior--and what does that tell us about human nature? In *War, Peace, and Human Nature*, editor Douglas P. Fry brings together leading experts in such fields as evolutionary biology, archaeology, anthropology, and primatology to answer fundamental questions about peace, conflict, and human nature in an evolutionary context. The chapters in this book demonstrate that humans clearly have the capacity to make war, but since war is absent in some cultures, it cannot be viewed as a human universal. And counter to frequent presumption the actual archaeological record reveals the recent emergence of war. It does not typify the ancestral type of human society, the nomadic forager band, and contrary to widespread assumptions, there is little support for the idea that war is ancient or an evolved adaptation. Views of human nature as inherently warlike stem not from the facts but from cultural views embedded in Western thinking.

Drawing upon evolutionary and ecological models; the archaeological record of the origins of war; nomadic forager societies past and present; the value and limitations of primate analogies; and the evolution of agonism, including restraint; the chapters in this interdisciplinary volume refute many popular generalizations and effectively bring scientific objectivity to the culturally and historically controversial subjects of war, peace, and human nature.

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**War, Peace, and Human Nature: The Convergence of Evolutionary and Cultural Views** From Oxford University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1163359 in Books
- Published on: 2015-02-01
- Released on: 2015-02-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x 1.70" w x 9.20" l, 1.89 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 584 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"There can hardly be a more urgent task than to understand 'the causes of war and the potential for peace,' the guiding theme of this illuminating collection, drawing from a rich and varied array of sources. These deeply researched studies provide thoughtful and provocative insights into how we might at last be able achieve the promise of the UN Charter, 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,' a recent innovation in human history, and not an ineradicable curse."-Noam Chomsky, Institute Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"This encyclopedic collection of excellent, wide-ranging, and myth-busting essays by renowned scholars should be required reading for anyone interested in how we came to be who we are and the future of humankind. A much-needed paradigm shift is in the making because of the increased recognition that we are not inherently destructive and competitive beings. This remarkable book will facilitate this transition as we expand our compassion footprint and give peace the chance it deserves. Cooperation, empathy, and peace will prevail if we allow them to."-Marc Bekoff, author of *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*, and *The Animal Manifesto: Six Reasons for Expanding Our Compassion Footprint*

"Douglas Fry has produced another pioneering book of the highest quality and relevance. A distinguished international and interdisciplinary group of authors address the elusive concept of human nature in relation to war and peace rigorously marshalling clear reason and hard data. Together they systematically and effectively critique the Western cultural myth of the natural inevitability of war while also demonstrating that peace rather than war is ubiquitous. Moreover, practical ways are revealed for creating a more secure and peaceful world."-Leslie E. Sponsel, author of *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*

### About the Author

**Douglas P. Fry**, Ph.D., is Director of Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research at Åbo Akademi University in Vasa, Finland and an adjunct research scientist in the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at the University of Arizona. Fry is author of *Beyond War* (2007, Oxford) and *The Human Potential for Peace* (2006, Oxford).

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### **Candy Smith:**

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