

The Price of Peace

Discussion Questions

1. From the Maasai warriors to the Czechs attempting to deter Hitler, societies use force – or the threat of it -- to deter aggressors. Why can't societies simply state peaceful intentions and hope for a similar response?
2. Niall Ferguson, Professor of History at Harvard, defined deterrence as "If you hit me, I'll hit you back. I may even hit you harder." Which makes deterrence more effective, the threat of violence, or the certainty of action?
3. Victor Davis Hanson, military historian, said that deterrence is "trying to prevent a reckoning." A reckoning will distill who is strong and who is weak, and the strong need to remind the weak that they are strong. Do you agree or disagree with this approach?
4. George Savile, 1st Marquess of Halifax: "Men are not hanged for stealing Horses, but that Horses may not be stolen." How important is deterrence in setting an example for others?
5. Victor Davis Hanson, military historian, argues that deterrence doesn't siphon off precious resources that could be used on arts and culture. Upon study, he argues, it preserves them, claiming that war is the most destructive human act. Do you agree or disagree that deterrence ultimately preserves resources?
 - a. When the British withdrew the ice-breaker HMS Endurance from the Falkland Islands, many believe it sent a signal to the Argentinians that they were no longer willing to defend the Falklands. After the winning the war, the British built the Mt. Pleasant air base (1985) and staffed it with more soldiers than were there previously. Would it have been less costly to leave the ice breaker and a small force?
6. Does human nature improve over time, or is it largely fixed, meaning we will always have to defend against the barbarians of our time?
7. Was Mutual Assured Destruction (M.A.D.) an effective policy? It arguably led to proxy wars like Korea and Vietnam, in which tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians died. Do you think the proxy wars were an "outlet" that allowed for nuclear war to be avoided? Was that the less costly trade off compared to a nuclear war?

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A Personal Exploration by Johan Norberg

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8. North Korea continues the cycle of “Antagonize, provoke, appease, demand concessions.” Is this an effective strategy from their perspective? What should be the response from other **countries**?