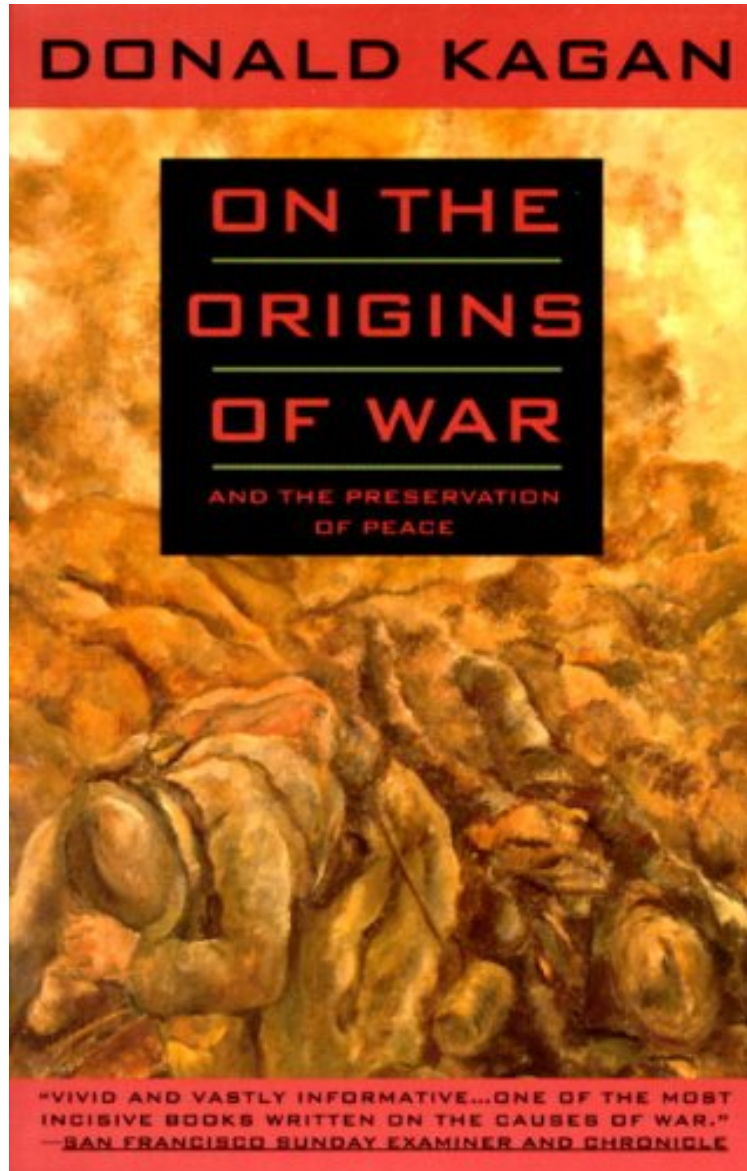


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## On the Origins of War: And the Preservation of Peace

*Donald Kagan*

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**Donald Kagan : On the Origins of War: And the Preservation of Peace** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On the Origins of War: And the Preservation of Peace:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Peace Doesn't just happen with good intentions it must be worked for By John Stults A thoughtful well written piece of historical analysis. The author use five case studies on wars that started or in the case of the Cuban missile crisis did not start as the basis of his study. He also provides a short

introduction to each case study for those unfamiliar with the historical event. If you are rushed for time his intro and conclusion do a good job of presenting his conclusions, basically peace is not free and one must work at it to allow peace to continue. Dr Kagan does not play favorites and even such modern day heroes as Churchill and such ancient ones as Pericles (and my personal favorite Alcibiades) come in for some share of criticism. He wrote late enough that many of the "secret" files from the Cuban missile crisis were in the public domain and we get a chance to see early on the falsehoods presented to Congress and the American people by the likes of McNamara and Rusk. A good example that even with all the supposed elements of power to maintain peace lousy leaders can make a difference. I read the paperback version of this book and there were a couple of printing errors (a small portion of one page was blanked out) Also I like a lot of maps and found myself following along on internet maps at times during the reading. For those of you who have attended military schools you will find the format very much like that used at the academies and war colleges. The book is well worth the time to read (as are Dr Kagan's works on the Peloponnesian War). 20 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Phenomenally good  
By Michael Wendt  
If you are at all interested in international relations, politics, or war as subjects for study, why haven't you read this book? Kagan, without ever pressing home some pet thesis, lays out in detail the events leading up to four wars that were and one that wasn't. Aside from learning many lessons from these individual histories - states and individuals almost never truly want war, "honor" construed as a potential or actual presence in international affairs (deference, prestige, etc.) often winds up being crucial in triggering a conflict, wishful and idealistic thinking or a failure to recognize a threat to a rival nation's security or honor have often contributed mightily to growing conflicts, and many others - one will also get a vivid, in-depth account of some critical moments, accounts that are likely to stick in your mind better than a more general history. While some of Kagan's points may seem to lean toward the trivial when taken out of context and looked at in the clear light of day, it is the very fact that over many years and many events, a slow buildup toward war involves these very things - that at the time are much harder to see clearly - that contribute to movements that end in war. To see the many missteps in detail in these cases is fascinating. With the exceptions of Chamberlain and some of his cronies, and especially Kennedy, very few of the men in this book come off as anything approximating downright foolish; nevertheless, in these pages you will find many men, through many small mistakes, leading their nations to war. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent work of history!  
By Ron J. Easy  
to read but very insightful on military and diplomatic history as well as human nature. I'll be keeping this book for my own collection.

A brilliant and vitally important history of why states go to war, by the acclaimed, award-winning author of *The Peloponnesian War*. War has been a fact of life for centuries. By lucidly revealing the common threads that connect the ancient confrontations between Athens and Sparta and between Rome and Carthage with the two calamitous World Wars of the twentieth century, renowned historian Donald Kagan reveals new and surprising insights into the nature of war and peace. Vivid, incisive, and accessible, Kagan's powerful narrative warns against complacency and urgently reminds us of the importance of preparedness in times of peace.

From Publishers Weekly  
This book is best read as a counterpoint to Paul Kennedy's 1987 study, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Kennedy emphasized the primacy of domestic politics; Kagan, professor of history and classics at Yale, focuses on international relations, pondering why states choose to go to war. He sees the determining factors as those enunciated by Thucydides: "honor, fear, and interest." War cannot be eliminated because peace is not regarded as an absolute good, yet particular conflicts can be averted, according to Kagan. He analyzes five wars, ranging across 2500 years and involving widely different kinds of governments. He begins with the Greek city-states that fought the Peloponnesian Wars and moves to the Second Punic War between Rome and Carthage, before jumping to the 20th century for the two world wars and the near-war of the Cuban missile crisis. The wide temporal gap between the ancient and the modern examples highlights Kagan's thesis that peace does not keep itself: "A persistent and repeated error through the ages has been the failure to understand that the preservation of peace requires active effort, planning, the expenditure of resources, and sacrifice, just as war does." A thoughtful review of an age-old phenomenon. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
In his latest work, Kagan continues the theme of a parallel between ancient and modern history, which he brought forward in *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy* (LJ 11/15/90). Studying the international systems in place at the time of the Peloponnesian War, World War I, the Second Punic War, World War II, and the Cuban Missile and Berlin Wall crises, Kagan concludes that peace is an active process requiring constant attention; it is not merely the absence of war. Kagan's overall premise will be certain to spark discussions in academic circles, and his discussion of the events that led to a near-war in the 1960s, particularly the tacit acceptance of the construction of the Berlin Wall by the Kennedy administration, may provoke a more public controversy as well. This work deserves a place in history collections. While his style is academic, his message is of importance to all in this post-Cold War world. Highly recommended for public and academic libraries.  
Stanley Planton, Ohio Univ., Chillicothe  
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From Booklist  
Whenever a prestigious professor distills a lifetime of erudition into a single volume, it is a significant intellectual event. An expert on Greco-Roman political history at Yale, whose eminent four-volume history

of the Peloponnesian War is unmatched but by that of Thucydides himself, Kagan here refines his thoughts on hostility between world powers in five case studies: the Athens-Sparta war, the Second Punic War, World Wars I and II, and the world war that wasn't--the Cuban missile crisis. As causal factors, Kagan emphasizes a "Thucydidean triad" of honor, fear, and interest. The triad grows out of the inherently anarchical character of international systems, which are fundamentally shifting patterns of power. The problem is to ameliorate the fears of security that changing patterns generate and satisfy a state's need for the prestige power confers. Rationality does not rule, as Kagan analyzes how a revolt in Epidamnus in 431 B.C., a Carthaginian siege of Saguntum in 218 B.C., an assassination in 1914, a farrago of mistakes in the 1920s and '30s, or a few nuclear-tipped missiles in 1962--each one objectively not worth a war--degenerated into a fearsome stare down over relative power. An incisive series of stimulating studies that bears the closest attention from the foreign policy community and from libraries that attracted patrons with John Keegan's *A History of Warfare* or Kissinger's *Diplomacy*. Gilbert Taylor