



Christopher Blattman
**Why We Fight: The Roots of War
and the Paths to Peace**
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Christopher Blattman is Canadian-American political scientist and economist specialising in a variety of issues, mostly global conflicts, international development and poverty. Since 2016, he has been working as E. Pearson Professor of Global Conflict Studies at the University of Chicago, the Harris School of Public Policy and the Pearson Institute. He is also known for his blog about international relations and global development, which for over 15 years has been very popular. Blattman also regularly contributes to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* or *Foreign Affairs Journal*.

By writing the book *Why We Fight: The Roots of War and the Paths to Peace* as his first commercial book, Blattman's aim was to bring his research and ideas closer to a general audience. In the presented book, the author deals with a framework to understand the reasons that drive violence and result in conflicts. On the other hand, Blattman attempts to offer solutions to achieve a stable environment through several strategies. The book combines knowledge from various disciplines, not only international relations, but also economics, sociology and history. Over 11 chapters, the author focuses on the importance of: the costs of wars,

enforcement of values, sufficient access to information, motivation to enter conflicts, peace persisting, ensuring the stability of society, as well as many other phenomena associated with fights and peace.

The book begins with a brief introductory chapter on game theory, serving as a foundation for a better understanding of the events described in subsequent chapters. In this part, the author also presents the concept of balance of power where he describes how actors can function stably in an uneven environment. At the end of the first chapter, reference is also made to the theory of realism – through the idea that an attack on another actor does not always have a bad intention.

The first section of the second chapter, entitled *Unchecked Interests*, illustrates the causes of fighting with the example of Liberia. Liberia was selected as an example of many decolonised states where the autocratic leaders did not reflect the needs of society, which caused rising tensions and led to a protracted civil war. In addition, Blattman notes that Africa is not the only region where a war bias is considered to be the cause of fights; it has happened throughout history all around the world. Unchecked interests, which are directly related to war bias, are presented by the author as one of the fundamental causes of the fights in pre-modern Europe and America; in Africa, the war bias, as a cause of wars, appeared just prior to post-colonial times. Alongside the events in

Liberia, Blattman illustrates war bias by referring to events in medieval Italy and the fights for American independence. This time difference is explained on the basis that war bias is the main cause of the conflicts when there is a lack of democracy, absence of rules as well as an excessive concentration of power.

The third chapter, *Intangible Incentives*, is devoted to non-material objectives, which also play a key role as a trigger for fights. Ideals and values, such as freedom and justice, proved to be crucial during the Arab Spring. The book points to the values of unfairness and willingness as some of the major values that were the cause of many fights. The author describes the gain of better status and fame as other intangible motivations of the fight; this happened mainly during both world wars. Blattman further notes that the prospect of gaining fame and status is not only a trigger for wars, but also a means of keeping warriors motivated. The second part of the chapter refers to ideologies and their role as one cause of fights. The primary issue with ideology is considered to be the fact that its proponents often view the enforcement of their ideology as the only viable solution. At the end of the chapter, the author reflects on whether people are inherently violent, which he tries to point out through the theory of parochialism.

The fourth chapter describes *Uncertainty*; according to Blattman, uncertainty stems chiefly from a lack of information. Uncertainty is also

related to the fact that many actors deliberately send out mixed information about themselves in order to unsettle their rivals. In the book, uncertainty is also shown to be linked to the concept of reputation; the problem is that reputation may not reflect the current conditions. As an example of uncertainty associated with a bad reputation, the author presents the USA's invasion of Iraq. In that time, both sides were sending mixed signals to confuse the opponent and suffered reputational damage from their reckless actions.

In the fifth chapter, the book deals with *Commitment Problems*, which are directly connected with leaders' abilities and their responsibility for the decisions. It is stated that the most accurate example of commitment problems is a "preventive" war. It is interesting that the author considers Germany's actions which started the First World War as a preventive act since Germany's primary goal could have been to cause a shift in power. The violation of the *Thirty Years Peace* between Sparta and Athens is also mentioned as an example of commitment problems being the reason for the start of fighting. Despite the valid truce, Sparta pre-emptively attacked Athens with the aim of preventing Athens' domination of the ancient Greek world. Civil wars are seen as an even more extreme example of commitment problems since the state is unable to fulfil its commitment to protect its population. At the end of the fifth part, readers can find reflections on the fact that many

conflicts could have been avoided had the leaders better considered their actions; this is also linked to the observance of domestic and international commitments.

The sixth part is entitled *Misperceptions*. In this chapter, Blattman deals with psychological and emotional aspects, which can have massive impact on the start of fights. However, it is stated that the degree to which psychological and emotional factors are involved as triggers of fights is difficult to study since there are no quantifiable data. The author points to some interesting examples showing that there is almost no difference between inexperience, panic, fear and self-preservation. The start of a fight is also caused because each actor might hold a different point of view on a given situation. The influence of psychological factor is also described through group decision-making. The bigger the groups, the more the opinions of the members vary, which creates pressure to adopt the final decision. The last pages of the chapter describe how every person has certain tendencies towards hatred and destruction. However, as indicated in the book, whether and how strong they are manifested depends on the current circumstances.

While the first part of the book is devoted to the causes of fighting, the second part documents the possibilities of peace strategies. The seventh chapter, *Interdependence*, begins with one of Ronald Reagan's famous statements: "*Peace is not the absence of conflict*". Based on some actions

undertaken during Reagan's presidency, the concept of *détente* is illustrated. Blattman builds on the idea that interdependence is an effective peace strategy when it benefits all actors involved. If the actors are isolated economically or politically, they are much more prone to provoke fights. Social interdependence is presented as an effective strategy for preventing civil wars as the barriers between the population of the state are erased. The author also presents the concept of moral interdependence, which is based on the premise that so long as dignity is granted to all people the level of violence will be lower.

The eighth chapter focuses on the concept of *Checks and Balances*, which is related to the decentralisation of power. The author stresses that effective enforcement of the concept of checks and balances calls for transparent institutionalisation – whether on the corporate, sub-state, state or international level. The concept of checks and balances is also clarified via the theory of polycentrism. Polycentrism refers to situations, where polities with a lack of decentralisation of power (e.g., dictatorship or military juntas), are more susceptible to cause conflicts. The chapter ends with the author reflecting on the fact that the current setup of the international system supports greater centralisation, which can disrupt the stability of the international environment.

The ninth chapter is dedicated to *Rules and Enforcement*; the existence

of these two elements is necessary to maintain order in every society. Emphasis is placed on the thesis that society can these days only be fully stable if the state has full control over it and has effective mechanisms in place to enforce order. Hobbs's theory of anarchy is used as proof of this statement, when in the absence of rules: "*A man is a wolf to another man*". In the second part of the chapter, Blattman shows that the enforcement of rules on the international level is much more difficult than on the state level. The reason for this is the non-existence of central authority, as well as the uneven distribution of power across almost 200 states. At the end of the eighth chapter, the author asks whether wars could be prevented if there were some type of "world government". Nevertheless, Blattman currently sees the effective functioning of international and regional organisations as the most effective way of preventing inter-state violence.

The tenth chapter is concerned with *Interventions* and their contribution to obtaining and maintaining peace. Blattman illustrates peace-keeping interventions through five selected strategies - punishing, enforcing, facilitating, incentivising and socialising. International/foreign sanctions are mentioned as an example of punishing. This section offers an interesting debate about the effectiveness of sanctions as well as whether excessive sanctions lead to an increase in tensions. Enforcing is presented through the actions of third parties - UN peacekeeping

operations or humanitarian military interventions. Facilitating is illustrated through using the art of mediation; with mediation between Israel and Egypt or the situation in Liberia serving as examples. The idea of socialisation is discussed through the education of society towards non-violence. The tenth part concludes with the incentivising strategy, which is connected with the idea of free elections and their contribution to peace in society.

The eleventh chapter, entitled *Wayward Paths to War and Peace*, offers an interesting perspective on changes in the organisation of society as possible tools for conflict prevention. Blattman first explains the strategy of putting more women in charge as a possible way of ensuring peace. In this case, it is mentioned that, even though women have a greater inclination for pacifism, whether leadership by a woman brings more peace would depend on the person involved. There is also an interesting view about whether reducing poverty would also lead to more peace, where once again the correlation is not confirmed. Here, the author also reflects on where the line is between the positive consequences of war and the share of the costs, whether financial or human.

The final part of the book is entitled *The Peacemeal Engineer*. In ten separate parts, Blattman tries to explain why social and political problems cannot be solved as easily as happens in other sectors. He also presents a theory about how difficult

it is to resolve conflicts – although we have many examples of how peace was achieved, most situations are fundamentally different, and it is frequently impossible to apply previous solutions. In this context, the book ends with the author writing: “*For the path of peace today there is no universal template. I can give you some concepts, tools...*”.

A positive aspect of the book is that one can find many situations taken from everyday life being used as examples to ensure better understanding of the motivations for the actions by important actors throughout history. Also interesting is the fact that at the beginning of several chapters the author describes a story from the environment of gangs, where he looks for subsequent parallels between gang rivalries and conflicts on a much larger scale. Blattman thereby seeks to illustrate the situations where the causes of ‘everyday’ violence are not so different from the causes of massive conflicts and their resolution.

The book is recommended mainly for because it offers many interesting instances and reflections that would be overlooked without the impulses that are mentioned. Christopher Blattman used his years of experience as a blog writer, as well as a contributor to major newspapers, to write an interesting and engaging book. While the peer-reviewed book is a valuable addition to the library of all students of social and political sciences, it is additionally recommended to anyone interested in the

functioning of society and its changes that lead to either the unleashing of a conflict or the establishment of a path to peace.

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Mike Hulme
**Climate Change Isn't Everything:
Liberating Climate Politics from
Alarmism**

Polity Press, Cambridge, 2023,
200 strani, Paperback 17,00 EUR
(ISBN 9781509556168)

Kako prepoznamo dobre knjige, še preden jih preberemo? Zame je priporočilo vedno na prvem mestu. Me je pa nekoliko presenetilo, ko je na dogodku Univerze v Mariboru *De-diščinska znanost in podnebne spremembe* Johanna Leissner (predstavnica Inštituta Fraunhofer v Bruslju in aktivna članica več evropskih pobud na področju podnebnih sprememb in kulturne dediščine) s posebno vznesenostjo priporočila relativno »staro« knjigo Mika Hulma *Why We Disagree About Climate Change?* (2009). Fotografijo naslovnice je na dogodku pospremila z besedami, da bi to knjigo moral prebrati vsak, ki deluje v polju podnebnih sprememb. Knjigo z očitno družboslovnim, celo komunikološkim naslovom priporoča kemičarka, ki dela v humanističnem polju kulturne dediščine?

Hulme je res avtor, ki ga tudi jaz priporočam v branje vsem v polju t. i.

»zelenega prehoda« - naravoslovcem morda še prej kot družboslovcem, čeprav so teme izrazito družboslovne. Ko sem odložila *Why We Disagree About Climate Change?*, sem vzela v roke še druga njegova dela. Tudi njegovo zadnje delo z namenoma provokativnim naslovom *Climate Change Isn't Everything* je vsekakor vredno branja, gre pa Hulme tokrat v svojem razmišljanju še precej dlje kot v preostalih delih, čeprav je osrednje ideje začel izrisovati že v knjigah *Why We Disagree About Climate Change?* in *Weathered: Cultures of Climate*.

Mike Hulme je večino svojega življenja posvetil raziskovanju učinkov podnebnih sprememb in opozarjanju na njihove negativne posledice. Je profesor družbene geografije na Univerzi Cambridge s častitljivo zgodovino raziskovanja. Med drugim je bil med letoma 1995 in 2001 tudi član Medvladnega panela za podnebne spremembe pri Združenih narodih (IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change) in je pomagal pri pisanju 2. in 3. poročila IPCC (2021 je izšlo 6. poročilo) - tistih dveh poročil, ki sta avtorjem IPCC leta 2007 »prislužila« Nobelovo nagrado za mir; med soprejemniki je bila tudi dr. Lučka Kajfež Bogataj.

Čeprav je naslov mogoče brati dvoumno, pa Hulme nikakor ne govori o tem, da podnebne spremembe ne bi obstajale in da ne bi bile rezultat jasno znanih razlogov povečanih izpustov toplogrednih plinov. Tudi ne govori, da ni potrebno ukrepanje. Slednje v monografiji izrecno in večkrat izpostavi, saj se zaveda, da bi bilo

njegovo delo lahko hitro izrabljeno kot orožje v javni razpravi o podnebnih spremembah v smislu pozicije t.i. »zanikovalca« podnebnih sprememb (angl. climate denayer). Pri čemer pa tudi ne nasprotuje javni razpravi, temveč nasprotno: celotno delo je prežeto z idejo pomembnosti javne razprave, saj bodo, opozarja, le na tak način politike podnebnih sprememb ubežale depolitizaciji. Depolitizacijo vidi v časovni in vsebinski zožitvi razprav o podnebnih spremembah.

Časovno zožitev razprav vidi v alarmiranju, ko se s pritiskanjem za takojšnje in hitre odločitve sprožajo ukrepi izrednega stanja, nevarnega za demokracijo. Na tem mestu prepozna, da se mu bo verjetno vsaj deloma upravičeno pripisovalo pozicijo t.i. »upočasnitelja« (angl. »climate delayer«), s tem ko opozarja na zmernost pri alarmiranju - ne zato ker ukrepanje ne bi bilo potrebno, temveč ker s pozivom na izredne razmere ožimo polje razmišljanja o podnebnih spremembah v urgentnih razmerah.

Vsebinska zožitev razprav ima po njegovem mnenju več razsežnosti, na tem mestu izpostavim tri: (a) v poučarjanju enega cilja pred vsemi ostalimi, (b) v enovzočnih obrazložitvah, ki kompleksne probleme ožijo zgolj na vidik podnebnih sprememb, in (c) v nedemokratičnem izključevanju drugače mislečih in dogmatičnemu sledenju lastnemu prepričanju.

V prvi vrsti vidi vsebinsko zožitev razprav o podnebnih spremembah v priseganju na podnebne cilje nad vsemi ostalimi. Blaženje podnebnih

sprememb ne bi smelo biti nad cilji, ki so vsebinski argumenti za blaženje podnebnih sprememb: dobrobit in zdravje ljudi, biodiverzitet, družbena pravičnost. Nabor tovrstnih argumentov je v prvi vrsti odvisen od vsakokratnega vrednotnega sistema družb. Namesto priseganja na zgolj en cilj, ki da naj bo nad vsemi ostalimi, Hulme opozarja na pomembnost hkratnega prepoznavanja raznolikih ciljev. Bolj primeren kot je cilj 1,5°C povprečne globalne temperature nad industrijsko dobo Pariškega sporazuma, je po Hulmu pristop SDG 2030 Ciljev trajnostnega razvoja do leta 2030, ki skrb za globalni ekosistem umeščajo ob skrb za socialne pravice in demokratičen razvoj družb. Hulme s tem razširi kritiko o tiraniji metrik(e), ki jo sicer poznamo iz kritičnih razprav o vsepomembnosti BDP-ja, tudi na področje podnebnih sprememb, pričemer se boji, da v želji po čim večji učinkovitosti z osredotočanjem na zgolj en cilj (globalna povprečna temperatura ali svetovni ogljični odtis) spregledamo inherentno kompleksnost problemov in teh problemov v najboljšem primeru ne rešujemo, v najslabšem pa povzročamo nove ali pa izvorni problem še poslabšamo.

Prepoznavanje zgolj enega cilja pred vsemi ostalimi lahko namreč po Hulmu prehitro pripelje do perverzних učinkov: od maladaptacije do socialnih krivic ali celo večje energetske odvisnosti od drugih držav, namesto manjše. Eden izmed primerov tovrstnih nezaželenih učinkov je nenačrtovan rezultat zmanjšanja podpore zahodnih držav projektom,

ki so povezani s fosilnimi gorivi v državah svetovnega juga. Kar 2,5 milijarde ljudi, približno 30% globalnega prebivalstva, živi v gospodinjstvih, ki za kuhanje uporabljajo odprti ogenj ali peči na kerozin, oglje, gnoj ali druge oblike biomase. Po podatkih WHO (v Hulme 2023, str. 126) lahko 3,8 milijona preranih smrti pripišemo tovrstnemu načinu kuhanja, kar primarno zadeva ženske in otroke. Ker pa se je zmanjšala finančna podpora zahodnih držav za projekte fosilnih goriv, je to vključevalo tudi podporo menjavam nevarnih kuhalnikov za najcenejšo in glede na trenutno tehnološki razvoj najprimernejšo alternativo – gorilnike na plin. Slednji imajo sicer za približno 30% manjše izpuste toplogrednih plinov kot alternativa, a še pomembneje: zamenjava ima izredno velike učinke na zdravje in življenje predvsem žensk in otrok; njihova dobrobit je navadno prvi argument, zakaj sploh v boj proti podnebnim spremembam. V knjigi so predstavljeni še drugi primeri, npr. v Evropi najbolj znan primer poslabšanja stanja na globalnem trgu hrane in krčenju gozdov za monokulture v namen biogoriv.

Drugič in povezano, vsebinsko zožitev razprav o podnebnih spremembah Hulme vidi v enovzročni/monokavzalni naravi podnebnih diskurzov. »*Monokavzalne razlage so navadno napačne in včasih nevarne*« (Hulme, 2023, str. 14). Monokavzalnost vidi v vse pogostejšem pripisovanju vzrokov za kompleksne družbene fenomene podnebnim spremembam, npr. razumevanje

sirijske vojne kot posledice suše zaradi podnebnih sprememb – interpretacija, ki sicer ustreza Asadovemu režimu, saj spregleda pomembnost zgodovinskih odnosov v državi in politično odgovornost režima. Drug zapomnljiv primer je vprašanje upravljanja delte reke Mekong, ki leži zgolj meter nad morsko gladino in se počasi potaplja. Hulme opozori, da bi ozko razmišljanje o prihodnosti te delte naslovilo zgolj vprašanje dviganja morske gladine (napovedano za 30 do 70 cm v naslednjem stoletju). Ozka osredotočenost zgolj na vplive podnebnih sprememb na dvig morske gladine bi usmerjala aktivnosti v globalno zmanjšanje ogljičnega od-tisa. Spregledala pa bi širšo in kompleksnejšo sliko stanja v delti in primerne- ga prepleta ukrepov: grajenje jezov onemogoča nanose sedimentov, rudarjenje v kanalih odnese 54 megaton peska vsako leto, intenzivna agrikultura in preprečevanje poplav sta nadomestila naravne vodne poti in mangrove z nasipi in akvakulturo, varovanje pred poplavami z betoniranjem nasipov pa z rigidnostjo vodnih strug pomeni še več poplavljanja (Kondolf idr. 2022 v Hulme 2023, str. 158). Dvig morske gladine je torej zgolj manjši del mozaika trajnostnega upravljanja delte Mekong.

Kot tretje, depolitizacijo javne razprave o podnebnih spremembah Hulme prepoznava v drži »*če nisi z nami, si proti nam*«. Hulme uvede koncept »ideologije klimatizma«, ki ga prepoznava v dogmatičnih diskurzih »vseobsegajočih narativ« in »polarizirajočega moralizma«. Prvo

predstavlja podnebne spremembe kot enostavno in koherentno obratovanje delovanja sveta, drugo jasno zgodbarsko slikanje dobrega in zlega, oboje prepleteno z apokaliptično retoriko, ki ponuja religiji podobno dogmatično iskanje smisla lastnega obstoja in politične akcije.

Vendar pa Hulme opozarja, da problem podnebnih sprememb ni enostavna zgodba zlikovcev proti pogumnim herojem, temveč kompleksen (»wicked«) problem, za katerega ni ene enostavne rešitve, temveč morajo v prvi vrsti biti prepoznane pluralnosti vrednot, možnosti specifičnih aplikacij in pluralnosti ciljev – kar Hulme imenuje »nerodne rešitve«. Z »nerodnimi rešitvami« se Hulme vrne k osrednjim idejam »Why We Disagree About Climate Change« in opozori na nujnost umeščanja podnebnih sprememb v širše zgodovinske in politične kontekste, predvsem pa v razmerja do drugih družbenih problemov in ostalih družbenih trendov.

Če sklenem, *Climate Change Isn't Everything* je delo vredno branja, ki pomaga k refleksiji razlogov, zakaj se sploh borimo proti podnebnim spremembam. Monografijo v prvi vrsti berem kot opozorilo o družbenih dejavnostih, v katere je umeščena razprava o podnebnih spremembah, s tem pa tudi kot poziv o pomembnosti vloge družboslovnega in humanističnega pristopa k zelenemu prehodu. Odlikuje jo razumljiv, mestoma celo pogovorni slog pisanja. Posebno vrednost daje pisanju tudi neposredno naslavljanje potencialnih protiar- gumentov in s tem preobrazba teksta

iz monologa v razpravo z zamišljenimi kritiki (npr. »Če se je treba zoperstaviti kapitalistični potrošniški ideologiji, mar za družbeno mobilizacijo ne potrebujemo protiideologije, kot je klimatizem?«, str. 154).

Prednost delu daje tudi priloženo poglavje »Nadaljnje branje«, kjer nam Hulme predstavi osrednja pisanja, na katerih gradi ključne ideje in predvsem vrednote lastnega pristopa. Pri tem pa naletimo tudi na eno izmed ključnih pomanjkljivosti

monografije – šele v tem priloženem poglavju izvemo zelo na kratko o tem, da svoje misli uvršča v »ekomodernizem«, ki da je »tretja pot« med *laissez-fair* ekonomijo in antikapitalizmom. V monografiji pogrešam predvsem razpravo o tej poziciji in kako je usmerjala pisanje dela *Climate Change Isn't Everything*.

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