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Welcome guests, or inescapable victims ? : the causes of prisoner abuse in war / Geoffrey P. R. Wallace

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Abstract:	The treatment of prisoners varies enormously across wars. Why are some prisoners horribly abused, while others are cared for humanely ? The author argues key attributes of the belligerents, alongside the nature of the conflict itself, provides the most convincing explanation for differences in prisoner abuse. Democratic norms and domestic institutional incentives lead democracies to exhibit more restraint when dealing with prisoners. On the other hand, states caught up in drawn-out wars of attrition, or those seeking territorial conquest, are much more likely to resort to prisoner abuse. The author tests this argument against a variety of common alternative explanations using a new data set on prisoner abuse across all interstate wars from 1898 to 2003. The author finds strong support for the role of both the regime type and the nature of the conflict, while the results also suggest several points of difference from existing research on wartime conduct.
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