

Good example of how
the human element of
war has changed
since world war i
argume...

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Modern warfare as we know it today began to take shape during the 19th century, with the rise of nation states came patriotic fervor and the need to express this through a strong, varied and most importantly competent military force. For the first time in history, armies became institutions and nations took pride in training and equipping their regiments. This change coincided with the industrial revolution which brought wide ranging changes to manufacturing processes. The production line allowed weapons and other instruments of warfare to be produced in mass numbers never before seen. More advanced manufacturing techniques meant more secure ammunition, better guns, more mobile artillery, fortified warships and a supply line fuelled by trains and steam engines which could stock an army thousands of miles away. The result of all of which was, an ability to inflict human casualties, and damage on a level previously impossible to imagine (Lynch, Bravman 2).

This rapid accumulation of technology, increased organization and the improvements in military strategy allowed by improving supply lines came to a head in the era of Total War (Lynch, Bravman 18). The first of which was World War I. This war was defined almost entirely by the disparity in advances between defensive arms versus offensive methods, during earlier skirmishes cavalry charges were still part of the strategy employed by advancing generals. The result of this imbalance was trench warfare. This was a form of engagement that neither the commanders of the various armies nor the millions of soldiers involved could have prepared for. Strategy in this case lagged far behind the horrors of the reality, as thousands of men would be sent over the top in group after group only to be mown down with

ease by artillery fire. Alongside this you had the first instances of chemical warfare being introduced by the Germans, allowing great swathes of enemy forces to be incapacitated from a dispassionate distance. War, it was being discovered no longer had to be fought in close quarters in order to be effective.

Total war as witnessed during the first two World Wars, was a society-wide endeavor it called for the population of an entire nation to become involved in the war effort (Lynch, Bravman 19). As the majority of able-bodied young men were enlisted into various branches of the military, it was left to women to pick up the slack in industry and manufacture. In addition governments took over all manner of privatized industry commandeering their resources and manufacturing capacity and turning them towards supplying the needs of war.

Feeding the machinery of war was not a compartmentalized pursuit, and thus whole nations became effective targets for cutting down effectiveness of opposing armies. Civilian casualties were no longer a byproduct of warfare, affecting those present during the action, they became an end in and of themselves. This became more and more apparent during World War II as advances in airplane and naval technology meant that opposing nations could plan strikes on sensitive locations from bases thousands of miles away. Once again war was becoming more distant, with more of a focus on strategy than on-field tactics. The human element was becoming more and more involved in planning as machines became better able to assist in execution.

After 1945 it became apparent that the cost of a full-scale global conflict was

too dear for the benefits reaped by empire building (Lynch, Bravman 25). In fact after the dust had settled on the major world wars many of the major empires of the 19th century had been dismantled or reduced to a fraction of their previous strength. The British Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the great swathes of land conquered by Germany, all relinquished. Added to this the devastating potential of nuclear weapons seen during the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had convinced most of the major powers that alternative method to full-scale war were necessary. The establishment of the UN also went some way to scaling back what nations were allowed to do in the pursuit of military objectives, The Nuremberg Principles, Conventions on Prevention and Punishment of Genocide and, the Geneva conventions all worked to curtail the atrocities seen in the during previous conflicts.

This became the era of the unconventional war, no longer would two nations engage in full-blown conflicts on an equal footing. Deterrence became the name of the game, through the stockpiling of ever greater armories of aircraft, ships, submarines, tanks and ammunitions and pursuing advances in technology (Lynch, Bravman 26).. Nations hoped to convey the message that they were prepared for any eventuality. Armies were no longer symbols of a nation's pride, they were professional entity tasked with the defense of a state's interests. The establishment of security communities such as NATO ensuring mutual defense against the threat of war and safeguards against mutual conflict became vital tools in negotiating armed conflicts rather than engaging in winner takes all battles. The world's major superpowers at this point, the USSR and the United States became more concerned with fighting their battles through the use of espionage and counter-espionage. Since,

neither nation could risk mutual nuclear destruction, the human element of war during this “ Cold War”, became more and more involved with intelligence gathering so that decisions could be made before a threat from either side ever became imminent (Fernandez 1).

As conventional war moved away from the centers of global power, it began more and more to involve smaller nations at the outskirts of these worldwide struggles. In theatres such as Sudan, Libya, Palestine and Kashmir, warfare took on the form of long-drawn out low intensity conflicts. With a constant presence of troops maintained by both sides and violence erupting in short intense intervals (Lynch, Bravman 50). These conflicts are often characterized asymmetry with one force deploying far smaller numbers of military personnel, many not organized through a draft system or even formally representing a nation. The actors in this kind of warfare are often lightly armed, and loosely distributed, focused on avoiding head-on engagements, rather working to sap the morale of their larger foes. This method of warfare has in fact found great success on many occasions most famously in the American occupation of Vietnam, and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, in both cases the larger more conventional military aggressor was beaten back through guerilla tactics. These forces are not concerned with casualties or the cost of war, in many of occasions as occupied parties over the course of twenty years, their goals are long-term, to win at any cost and with any amount of casualties.

Modern warfare is increasingly fought through the use of proxies, funding is the new weaponry for achieving strategic objectives in a region. Large-scale invasions of the style seen twenty or thirty years ago, are becoming

increasingly rare with the last being the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Haddick). Nations now choose to forego the cost of deploying on-ground troops in favor of bankrolling insurgencies to agitate and work towards achieving a country's goals in a particular area (Cockburn). This tactic can be seen to be used by Pakistan in supporting Kashmiri militant against Indian forces. Iran in supporting destabilizing elements within Syria and Lebanon such as Hezbollah. Even when superpowers, such as the US do engage in military maneuvers they do so through a decentralized structure employing independent contractors such as Blackwater, local agents and intelligence trained for the purpose or highly trained special operative to achieve very specific targets (Cockburn).

The depersonalization of war started with the advent of airplane technology has taken center stage, with drone warfare. Now, both strategic and tactical decisions can be made from the comfort of command base, these machines provide real-time imagery as well as the option to strike at specific targets (Padusniak). The people manning these robots are not the patriotic draftees of World War I and II, or even the professional soldiers employed in conflicts in the latter part of the 20th century, they are civilian personnel trained in a very specific art of war (Jin). With this technology the human element of warfare may be removed altogether at least on one side, with no human casualties risked by the aggressor there are parallels drawn to the imbalances of trench warfare, where one party was able to drop chemical weapons with no fear of repercussions forthcoming.

So, it can be seen that the evolution of modern warfare has not been in the form of clean breaks, where all previous advancements were wiped clean

and replaced with a new way. Instead each advancement in technology and strategy has been used to augment and improve upon existing methods. Human involvement will always be necessary in warfare, it is humans who necessitate war and it is human casualties that are the main loss in warfare. Whether it is the large scale massacre of infantry during World War I, or the steady accumulation of lost lives by combatants and innocent civilians in the Palestinian conflict the casualties are just as keenly felt. Though a whole slew of human rights conventions have been developed and implemented by the international community to lessen the impact of war, and prevent atrocities technology moves in lockstep with drone warfare allowing nations to kill large numbers of innocent civilians in the pursuit of specific targets. On-ground troops will always be a necessity in directing the war effort, but whilst before they represented the vanguard of a nation's interests. They are now made up of a disparate group of trained individuals some not even members of the nation they fight for with no allegiance past the provision of their funding.

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