

WHY DO NATIONS WAR: IDEOLOGY, TERRITORY, POWER AND SECURITY?

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ABSTRACT

Warfare remains the most ancient form to resolve disputes, whereas everything has been transformed. Bilateral Treaties, Agreements, Multilateral Treaties, the League of Nations, and the United Nations have not been able to avoid or prevent wars between states, particularly with territorial disputes. However, the most painful military engagements are those that happen between Unequal Military Powers (UMPs), even if they are not for territorial disputes, particularly in modern times. The realists’ worldview manifests wars and conflicts in all their forms in pursuance of power and security by respective states, primarily in their best ‘national interests.’ Historically, the most common reasons for wars between states have been for territory, independence, resources, and support for allies etc. However, this author has acronymized WAR as ‘Waste of Available Resources’ and therefore, this article is aimed at highlighting the deaths and destructions caused by wars, without any considerable gains for the warring states. The objective is to avert the next war between the UMPs to save the relatively weaker states from destruction. Deploying deductive reasoning and retrospective data, an effort is made to create awareness, understanding, and realization among the stakeholders to invest efforts and energies for the public good, instead of wasting the available resources in causing deaths and destruction of the weak.

Keywords: Wars, conflicts, realism, UMPs, small states, United Nations, superpowers.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, most wars were fought for territorial claims, and control by occupation because “Possession is nine-tenths of Law.”¹ However, when the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648, to define the State and its boundaries, it was assumed that it would settle the boundary issues between States. Perhaps, it held good only for the European states, because it led to regional power’s quest of occupying lands and territories in the regions, beyond Europe.

History revolves around two distinct phases of the State’s expansion: the era of religious expansion to expand religious influence in maximum numbers of

states, and in modern times, the era of colonial expansion to enhance political influence on extra-regional States. This paper deliberates, first on the colonial expansion, then on the decolonization, and finally on the question of why WAR in modern times. Here, it is important to mention that this author has acronymized WAR as ‘Waste of Available Resources.’

Pre-Colonial Era

The pre-colonial era lasted for over a millennium if considered from the period of religious expansion. Islam being the newest and the last of the Abrahamic religion started to expand its areas of influence

through the Ambassadors of Peace, and subsequently through military conquests immediately after the first Islamic State was established with the City of Al-Madinah as its Capital in 622 CE. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him: PBUH) spearheaded the consolidation and expansion of the Islamic State through diplomacy as well as military expeditions. However, after he died in 632 CE, the new Islamic State came under pressure from within and some of the Tribes which had formally embraced Islam and supported the cause under the leadership of Muhammad (PBUH), started to break away. However, Caliph Abu Bakr was able to eliminate the breakaway elements within his lifetime to hand over the reins to Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattāb in 634 CE, a consolidated and strong state.² It was Umar who in his ten-year tenure as the second caliph, added several territories in the Islamic State. "Umar's early campaigns were against the Byzantine Empire. Following the decisive Battle of Yarmouk in 636, the former Byzantine states of Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon were conquered by the Muslim armies."³ In the 630s Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq were conquered, whereas Egypt was taken from Byzantine control in 645, and frequent raids were launched into North Africa, Armenia, and Persia.⁴

Caliph Umar's rule is considered the golden era of reorganization, consolidation, and expansion of the Islamic State, especially Mesopotamia and Syria and began the conquest of Iran and Egypt. However, "in 644, Umar was attacked by a Persian Christian slave named Abū Lu'lu'ah and died from his wounds three days later. While he lay dying, Umar appointed a six-men council that eventually selected 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān as his successor." This was the most significant step that Umar took to avoid infighting for the succession of the Khilafat.

Uthmān, the third caliph of the Islamic State ruled between 644 to 656 CE. His greatest contribution to Muslims forever was the official compilation of the Holy Quran. Caliph Uthman was not as firm as Caliph Umar and that is why several voices started to emerge against him, particularly from Egypt. Finally, a group of dissidents besieged his home in Madinah and killed him.

Caliph Uthman was succeeded by Caliph Ali, who was the closest to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

because he was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was very fond of Ali from his childhood, and despite the age difference used to call him a friend and a close confidant. Ali was also tasked to write the Quranic verses during the times of revelations. During his lifetime, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not nominate Ali as his successor, however, a large segment of the community assumed that it would be Ali, who would succeed the Prophet (PBUH) after his departure. Once Abu Bakr was selected as the first Caliph, Ali showed grace did not show any resentment and remained available for any responsibility that was assigned to him by the Caliph.

After the assassination of the third Caliph Uthman, Ali was selected as the Caliph in 656 CE., however, Ameer Mu'āwiyah, who belonged to Uthman's Umayyad clan resented, and never accepted Ali as the Caliph.

Caliph Ali, who was brave and knowledgeable about religion and administration, was faced with numerous challenges during his reign between 656 and 661 CE. On the one hand, he was facing a religious rebellion because a new Muslim sect Shi'ism was taking its roots of which he was the first Imam (Spiritual Leader), and on the other, he was dealing with political rebellious for not taking action against the killers of Caliph Uthman. Caliph Ali could not stop Ameer Mu'āwiyah from establishing his authority over the areas which were supposed to be part of the greater Islamic State, and hence Mu'āwiyah was able to establish his own Umayyad dynasty, which lasted until 750 CE.

The most unfortunate part of the early years of the Caliphate was that except for the first Caliph Abu Bakr, the three other 'rightly guided' (*rāshidūn*) caliphs were assassinated due to infighting. Caliph Ali also, like Caliph Umar and Caliph Uthman was killed by a Kharijite⁵ called Abd al-Rahman.

With the death of Caliph Ali, the Islamic State started to disintegrate in the sense of Caliphate and there was no one unanimously elected leader from the original group of companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). However, there were a series of different dynasties ruling different parts of Europe and Asia.

Post-Westphalian Era (Modern Colonialism)

This author considers the signing of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, as the game-changer event in the process of all wars for the expansion of territory or religious influence. Post-Westphalian wars may be considered as part of modern colonial expansion, by any of the powers whether it was represented at the Treaty of Westphalia (Roman Empire, Germany, France, and Sweden), or the powers which were not represented (England, Poland, Russia, and Ottoman Empire).⁶

Once the Peace Treaty of Westphalia which delineated most European borders had been reached, interstate wars should have practically ceased because the Treaty acknowledged the territorial sovereignty of the state. However, the process of colonization of Africa and America by the Portuguese and Dutch due to their advancement in sea fare towards the late fifteenth century further intensified and continued unabated.

Interestingly, the European Empire's expansion is considered "a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world."⁷ The major share of colonial expansion shared by the nations which had better command of the sea included Portugal, Spain, The Dutch Republic, France, and England.

This author thinks that conquests in the pre-colonial and modern colonial eras, for the reasons of economic benefits or the expansion of ideological influences were far more fruitful for the expanding empires than the wars in the post-cold War era which are expensive and without many socio-economic benefits to the present-day powers. The modern wars which are mostly between 'Unequal Military Powers' (UMPs) are one-sided and highly unpopular in the Western world, and without any significant gains in territory. Russian expansion in Crimea or Eastern Ukraine during the ongoing war may be an exception, though questionable.

War was once a profitable venture because the colonizers gained territory and the resources of the occupied state, but not anymore, because, once the war is over, the attackers usually end up rebuilding the destroyed country and give political and economic rehabilitation to the displaced people of the targeted state.

20th Century Wars

Some of the 20th Century wars changed the map of the world. The most important being the two great wars, which led to several countries getting independence from their colonial masters, and some getting embroiled in deadly civil wars. While each war and conflict must always be considered as important, because human lives are lost, and property gets destroyed, still some very significant wars will be discussed briefly, in the following paragraphs.

The 20th Century began with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire which had been in place for over 600 years, spanning over areas comprising the Middle East, North Africa, and some parts of Eastern Europe. The beginning of the century did indicate towards a major war in the coming decades, and hence this period may be remembered as the era of conspiracies, and collusion between Britain, France, Greece, and Russia, against a well-established and stable Empire. Hence, it was not surprising at all that when the Ottoman Empire finally broke up, its vast territories were divided between these four powers of the time.

World War I (1914-1918)

The world has seen several conflicts and wars since the earlier times. However, a cursory look at the major wars of the twentieth century reveals horrendous results in terms of the destruction of lives and property of the warring states. Lost lives were irrecoverable, but the destructed property also cost far more than the spent effort, particularly the consequences of two Great Wars, which left humanity reeling for years.

While the outbreak of the First World War remains debatable even after more than a century of dreadful events, several countries certainly changed borders and masters at the end of the most devastating war, to date.

Broke out on June 28, 1914, due to the "assassinations of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, while they were visiting Sarajevo, Bosnia, a country recently annexed into the Austrian Empire."⁸ Austria took the incident seriously and announced a war on Serbia. The war expanded horizontally, as Austria allied, initially with Germany, and then Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, as part of a greater alliance: Central Power.

At this stage, Great Britain, Belgium, France, and Russia: The Allies, which were already colluding against the Ottomans, quickly joined the war, making it to be declared as First Great War. The grand alliance of the Allies was further expanded with the inclusion of Japan, Romania, China, and the United States (US).⁹

The only benefit of this devastating war was that several Empires (Austria-Hungary and The Ottomans), were dissolved, and certain nations that were subjected to centuries-long subordination were freed: Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. The Ottomans were reduced to an independent Turkey only. Poland also benefitted and regained its lost territories from Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Likewise, "Russian land yielded the new nations of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania."¹⁰

On the other hand,

"The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I was around 40 million. There were 20 million deaths and 21 million wounded. The total number of deaths includes 9.7 million military personnel and about 10 million civilians. The Entente Powers (also known as the Allies) lost about 5.7 million soldiers while the Central Powers lost about 4 million."¹¹

While The Ottoman Empire was reduced to a single state when it officially ended in 1922, it was declared a republic on October 29, 1923, under its new leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who was and still is considered the Father of the New Nation, which is secular and more westernized.

After four years of war in most parts of the world, this dreadful event culminated in various Treaties and Agreements, which were humiliating for the defeated nations. Several Treaties and Agreements were signed, which included bilateral and multilateral arrangements. The most significant was the Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, which was crafted between the leaders of the outright winners of the war: David Lloyd George, the prime minister of the United Kingdom; Georges Clemenceau, the prime minister of France; Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States; and Vittorio Orlando, the prime minister of Italy. This was the most controversial and the most debated

treaty to date because it was one-sided and put Germany against the wall. Germany was cheated by the leaders of the winning nations and left with no choice but to accept the unjust terms of the treaty that were not part of armistice negotiations. The terms related to war reparations due to their forced acceptance of war guilt, were extremely harsh. Some estimates suggested that Germany needs to pay at least USD 33 billion in 1921,¹² for the human and material losses that were caused by the Germans against the Allies population. Even at the time, experts believed that it would not be possible to collect such a huge sum of money from a destroyed country, but France and Belgium insisted that Germany must be forced to pay and penalize if it failed to do so.

The next important treaty was aimed at dissolving the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Signed months after the Treaty of Versailles, on September 10, 1919; The Treaty of Saint-Germain gave independence to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and some parts of Poland, out of the new Republic of Austria. Likewise, Bulgaria signed the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine¹³ a couple of months later, losing territory to the new Yugoslavia and all access to the Aegean Sea. Hungary, now an independent state following its separation from Austria less than a month before the Armistice, lost two-thirds of its former territory and 58 per cent of its population in the Treaty of Trianon, signed on June 4, 1920. The next in line was the Treaty of Neuilly, signed on November 27, 1919, between Bulgaria and the Allied and Associated Powers in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France. Its territorial clauses were extremely harsh and humiliating for the Bulgarian society. Bulgaria lost its access to the Aegean Sea because Thrace was awarded to Greece, whereas Southern Dobruja was lost to Romania. Bulgaria too was forced to pay an unreasonable amount of money and other kinds of materials including livestock, as part of the war reparations. Moreover, its armed forces were reduced to border security guards which created enormous challenges for the socio-cultural setup of the state in the post-war period.

Signed on August 10, 1920, was The Treaty of Sevres between the Allied powers and the fading Ottoman Empire of Turkey. Under the terms of this

very significant treaty, The Ottoman Empire was abolished and Turkey had to vacate areas in Arab Asia and North Africa. Armenia gained independence and Greece got control of the Aegean islands commanding the Dardanelles.¹⁴ However, the incoming Turkish nationalist regime did not accept the terms of the treaty and negotiated another deal that culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. Under the new treaty that is set to expire after 100 years on July 24, 2023, Turkey's control over the Arab countries was terminated, and it recognized British possession of Cyprus. The Allies also accepted Turkey's request dropped their demands of autonomy for Turkish Kurdistan, and imposed no controls over Turkey's finances or armed forces. However, the biggest concession that the Allies got was that the Turkish straits between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea were declared open to all shipping.¹⁵

The Aftermath of WW-I

After the successful dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, and the most humiliating conditions of the Treaty of Versailles against Germany, The League of Nations was established on January 10, 1920, with an aim for international cooperation at the initiative of the victorious Allied powers at the end of World War-I.¹⁶ Its headquarters was based in Geneva, and its core concepts were based on liberal philosophy: disarmament, collective security, settling disputes through negotiation and diplomacy, and improving global welfare. However, it was bound to underperform in the realist paradigm, and it happened that way in the coming decades.

WWI also led to an internal revolution in the Czar's Russian Empire, referred to as the Bolshevik Revolution, which started during the war in 1917 due to the large-scale corruption of the regime, and people's dissatisfaction with the performance of the government machinery. The Treaty that sowed the seeds of the Bolshevik Revolution was signed,

On March 3, 1918, in the city of Brest-Litovsk, located in modern-day Belarus near the Polish border, Russia signed a treaty with the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire,

Bulgaria) ending its participation in World War I (1914-18). With the November 11, 1918, armistice ending World War I and marking the Allies' victory over Germany, the treaty was annulled.¹⁷

The revolution resulted in the complete overhaul of the Russian system; social, economic, governance and the government. A new political entity was formed under the banner of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on December 30, 2022, that included the 15 Eurasian states, which held together as part of a superpower until 1991. However, at least five new states gained independence in the aftermath of WWI and as a result of the Russian Revolution: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.¹⁸

The humiliating terms and reparations of the Treaty of Versailles pushed Germany to the wall and hence left them with no option but to bounce back. The Germans, being a hard-working nation, endured hardship, renegotiated the conditions of reparations, and showed promise within a decade of the end of the war. Concurrently, socio-political changes were taking place rapidly and the relatively new political entity, Nazis, were slowly becoming popular with Adolf Hitler among its top leader.

Hitler established an absolute dictatorship between 1933-39, during which Germany strengthened itself in all domains: political, social, financial, and military. Hitler's charismatic leadership attracted the people and supported all his moves related to governance, even under the dictatorship. Hitler's main forte was his ambitious expansion of German territory by invasions and annexations of neighbouring states and beyond Poland, Ukraine, and even parts of the USSR. Hitler, an astute propagandist from his early years, first raised hue and cry against the unjust terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and The League of Nations (October 1933). Hitler successfully projected himself as a peace reformer who was fighting against the unjust Treaty, to give the much-needed relief to its people. Hitler was well aware that his ambitious expansion would need a few allies in the region and beyond. He found Italy's fascist leader Benito Mussolini's

political philosophy more in concert and established a Berlin-Rome axis by October 1936, which was further extended to an extra-regional power in the Pacific: Japan. Hence, Hitler's preparations for his ambitious expansion plan were near completion and he only waited for an excuse to avoid a political fallout.

The Sudetenland, "which had a predominately German population became a major source of contention between Germany and Czechoslovakia, and in 1938 participants at the Munich Conference, yielding to Adolf Hitler, transferred it to Germany."¹⁹ This was the opportunity that Hitler had been looking for and therefore, on March 15, 1939, without much resistance, he marched into Prague, and declared that the rest of "Czechia" would become a German protectorate. The process of German expansion had started and "only a few days later (March 23) the Lithuanian government was forced to cede Memel (Klaipeda), next to the northern frontier of East Prussia, to Germany."²⁰

World War-II

Despite security guarantees by Britain and France to Poland, Hitler moved in amid strong resistance by the Polish people. Concurrently, Hitler signed a formal agreement with Italy "The Pact of Steel" in May 1939, and within months signed another non-aggression pact with Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. Hitler's ingress into Poland started on September 1, 1939, and as expected, Britain and France declared war on Germany within two days, thus formally beginning the Second World War, within two decades of the culmination of the First World War. On December 13, 1939, the British Navy got its first kill when its cruisers defeated "a German pocket battleship at the Battle of the River Plate, the first major naval engagement of World War II."²¹

On the other hand, the Polish territory was ruthlessly divided between Germany and the USSR, with the eastern half going to the latter. Warsaw finally fell to the Germans on September 28, 1939, with its leadership fleeing the country. Hitler's obsession to occupy the whole of Poland led to attacking the eastern Poland which was under Soviet occupation, in June 1941. This brought Germany into direct contact with the Soviet Union and hence the advance

into Soviet territories started. And finally, Hitler launched the 'Operation Barbarossa' codename for Germany's attack on Russia on June 22 1941.

On the German side, Hitler had decided to continue its march towards, and hence invaded Norway on April 8, 1940, after a period of limited land operations usually referred to as 'The Phony War.' However, as Germany extended its land-air operations to geographically expanded areas,²² the Allies started to organize themselves better. The first real success came when "the trapped British army evacuated to England from Dunkirk on May 26-June 4, 1940."²³ However, this consolidation could not save Paris from falling to the Germans on June 14, 1940, and the whole of France was wrapped in only 11 days. Whereas, Britain under its new leader Winston Churchill who became Prime Minister on May 10, 1940, was putting up a brave face²⁴ against Germany's Luftwaffe to deny them any chance of a land invasion.

In the meantime, Italy entered the war in support of Axis powers on June 11, 1940, however, within six months it was wiped out of North Africa by the British forces. Still, Italy and Germany attacked Yugoslavia in early 1941. However, the game-changer event occurred in the Pacific, when Japan attacked a US Naval Base, Pear Harbour on December 7, 1941, and forced the US to enter war on the side of the Allies. In the meanwhile, Germany also declared war on the US, and the US and Britain declared war on Japan.

The US, predominantly an isolationist, during this period, had been building its armed forces and strengthening its economy, perhaps to this day. The next two years saw the Allies recover the lost grounds as well as capture new territories, especially in North Africa. Italy finally surrendered on September 3, 1943, and Paris was liberated on August 25, 1944.

On the Russian front also, the tables had turned because German troops could not manage the supply chain and the harsh winters that welcomed them in the heartland. The German occupation of Poland also ended due to the Red Army's strong intervention, and by April 1945, the Russians were knocking on the doors of Berlin.

In the European theatre, the end of two fascist dictators of Europe: Mussolini and Hitler came on

April 28, 1945 and April 30, 1945, respectively. Germany unconditionally surrendered on May 7, 1945. Whereas, in the Pacific, the Japanese surrender came on August 14, 1945, only when the atomic bombs had been dropped at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945 by the US.²⁵

The Aftermath of WW-II

The post-WW-II era is referred to as the Cold War between two newly emerged superpowers: the US and the USSR. The security architecture was built around the development, deployment, and proliferation of nuclear weapons, after its devastating but successful use against the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on the pretext of forcing Japan to surrender and end the war. The Soviets who were already involved in the research and development of similar technology, did not take much time and, “it would only be a matter of months before the U.S.S.R. exploded its atomic bomb. The Soviets successfully tested their first nuclear device, called RDS-1 or “First Lightning” (codenamed “Joe-1” by the United States), at Semipalatinsk on August 29, 1949.”²⁶

No sooner did the Soviets demonstrate their capability by doing the atomic test, the race to acquire the technology as an ultimate saviour started in Europe. Britain took the lead and tested *Hurricane* on October 3, 1952 with an explosive yield of about 25 kilotons, whereas France followed with its own *Gerboise Bleue* on February 13, 1960, which had an explosive yield of 65 kilotons. The communist China could not have remained quiet and tested its capability on October 16, 1964.

The two superpowers sensing an uncontrolled spread, horizontally and vertically, of this deadliest weapon to date, the US leading, started to make efforts to control the military use of the technology.

The first concrete proposal came from the, “US President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his “Atoms for Peace” In December 1953 presented to the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and urged that an international organization be established to disseminate peaceful nuclear technology while guarding against

the development of weapons capabilities in additional countries.”²⁷

The first international organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to regulate nuclear-related technologies was established in 1957. Its primary responsibility was two-fold: promotion and control of nuclear technology. While IAEA successfully provided technical assistance to peaceful atomic reactors across the globe and continues to do so, it failed in the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology and several states that were initially recognized as the Permanent Member Countries²⁸ by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty entered into force on March 5, 1970.

The first country that secretly acquired the nuclear explosive device in 1967 was Israel,²⁹ though not a signatory of the Treaty.

The two World Wars alone left over 100 million dead and some fifty million injured. Other wars and conflicts of the twentieth century need to a mentioned including The Korean War (1950-53), the Kashmir Conflict (1947- till date), the Arab-Israel Conflict (1948- till date), The Vietnam War (1955-75), Afghan War-I (1979-89), Afghan War-II (2001-21), Gulf War-I (1990-91), and Gulf War-II (2003-10), Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), so on and so forth. A critical review of causes, losses, and the results of each war and conflict reflects that only a little was achieved by the warring states.

The Korean War was the first military engagement of the Cold War. It was relatively short but highly destructive and cost nearly five million lives.³⁰ The result: The Korean Peninsula remains divided with constant fear of military engagements between North and South Korea, with the former having nuclear capability. The concept of proxy wars perhaps started with this campaign, because the divided Peninsula was overtly supported by two camps: North Korea by the Soviets and the Chinese, and South Korea had the full support of the US and its allies.

The Vietnam War (1951-73) was fought between the two communities: communists and non-communists with Western allies’ support, mainly the US. More than three million people lost their lives in the immense destruction of Vietnam, which fortunately became one under a communist regime in 1975. The Post 9/11 Afghan War, was the longest war in which

the US actively participated and also the first one that it lost as it withdrew its combat troops in 1973, amid strong public opposition to the continued military engagement.

While the wars mentioned above were perhaps between opposing ideologies and not for territory alone, but the Falklands War was between two developed states and certainly for the control of the territory. Argentina had a historical claim on the Island, Islas Malvinas, as they prefer to name it. However, the majority of its population came from the natives or the migrants of British descent. No sooner after the Argentinians seized control of the capital Stanley, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher ordered the largest mobilization of the British Navy since the end of WW-II.

The Falklands War was a short but intense engagement mainly between the two air forces and the navies. To keep the Falklands under the Crown, The Royal Navy and RAF lost 34 aircraft, with 255 personnel.³¹ Argentinian losses were far more than this and hence the invading Argentinian troops surrendered on the 74th day losing 649 fatalities.

This was the only war of the previous century fought between two developed nations over the territory where the status quo was maintained after a short and swift military engagement.

The Soviet-Afghan War (1978-92), perhaps laid the foundations not only for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War but also for protracted wars on Afghan soil with much wider consequences for the entire region. Most of the modern wars involving NSAs have their origins in this war. The material losses of this war cannot be accounted for easily because of the immense destruction of Afghanistan. Millions displaced have not been able to return home even after the passage of over four decades. Dead also cannot be correctly counted because of the conflict's continuation to date.

India-Pakistan Wars over Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Arab-Israel Wars on the Palestinians issue have definite purposes which are just and defensible, yet the deaths of civilians cannot be justified. These two protracted conflicts have ideological connotations besides being political and territorial.

Another unnecessary war that occurred towards the later part of the deadliest 20th Century, was Iraq's

invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Usually referred to as Gulf War I, started between UMPs, because Kuwait could not stand against the regional might: Iraq and the entire country were taken over intact, with the ruling elite fleeing to neighbouring states. Hence Saddam Hussain provided an opportunity to the world powers to form a 35-member strong coalition led by the US to resume another war between the UMPs.

The two-phased war: Operation Desert Shield³² and Operation Desert Storm³³ swiftly ended Iraq's brief occupation of Kuwait, and the ruling elite started to return to the Capital Kuwait City, to resume the charge with the responsibility to rebuild the deserted country. Iraq, in one of the most unnecessary wars, lost some 50,000 troops and sowed the seeds for a protracted conflict with the US-led Western Alliance.

Back to Afghanistan, where the civil war had continued unabated since the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1992, and where the Taliban government was in power since 1996, which was recognized by only three countries: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE.

Afghanistan was instantly blamed for the 9/11 attacks on the US cities because it was home to Al Qaida leadership including Osama bin Laden. As expected, Mullah Omar, the Afghan Taliban leader refused to hand over Osama to the US, because it was against the country's socio-cultural norms to surrender the guests. President Bush, without waiting for any conclusive investigations and specific war preparations, started bombing possible hideouts of Al Qaida and turned Afghan territory into a stone age. Within days of the massive air assault, the US-led Western Alliance's ground troops arrived in Afghanistan for another war between the UMPs. Without much resistance, the Taliban started to retreat, because they were not trained, and did not have the necessary wherewithal to fight the world's most modern armed forces of all time. However, the resistance continued through guerilla warfare for two decades, before the US and NATO realized that this nation was undefeatable.

The US and Taliban signed the Doha Agreement on February 29, 2020, following which all occupying forces were to leave Afghan soil within 14 months. However, President Biden requested a few more

months and finally left Afghanistan in haste on August 14, 2022, to the same people who were ousted from power following the 9/11 attacks on the US. History is repeating itself because the Taliban regime remains unrecognized and maintains its stance on women's empowerment, and girls' education, which is unacceptable for the developed West for obvious reasons.

Going back to the Middle East for the Gulf War II, the US-led Western Alliance came back to Iraq to complete the unfinished agenda of senior President Bush: elimination of Saddam Hussain. The Chinese sage Sun Tzu rightly said that one provides the opportunity for the enemy to defeat you. Saddam did the same by invading Kuwait in 1990, and since then the entire US-led alliance has been looking for another opportunity to punish him and force him out of the scene.

For this purpose, the fake folders were created by the intelligence agencies of the US and UK, implicating that Iraq possesses "weapons of mass destruction" and must be disarmed. The allegations were never proven, but in the bargain, Iraq was attacked and destroyed and Saddam was eliminated. To justify the destruction of Iraq, the US needed a narrative and hence "Operation New Dawn" with a commitment to developing the areas of defense and security; education and culture; energy; human rights; services; and trade, in August 2010.

Libya was another case of 'go and get him.' Following the 'Arab Spring' phenomenon, internal dissensions were supported from outside against the long-serving Libyan leader: Muammar Gaddafi. As the internal strife expanded, NATO took charge and assisted the rebel forces until the Gaddafi was removed and eliminated. In the bargain, Libya has been pushed back on its development by at least half a century.

Having destroyed Iraq and Libya, the stakeholders turned towards Syria. The pattern was similar to that of Libya. First, a Non-State entity; Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) was created, funded, and armed, which rapidly seized large territories, and then the US-led NATO entered the arena to eliminate them. ISIL's gains were reversed and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was eliminated in a US air strike in October 2019.

In the meantime, the Syrian civil war continued with President Bashar al-Assad refusing to surrender. Fortunately for Assad, by this time Russia had resumed its asserted role in geopolitics, and hence with the Turkish support, he could hold on, but at the cost of massive destruction of his country.

Having led the destruction of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, the US and NATO turned their attention inwards and instigated Ukraine to join the EU and NATO, to gain access to Russian borders directly. Ukraine had been Russia's red line for a long, and it was widely expected that President Putin would not hesitate to ground invasion of Ukrainian territory, even if NATO's direct intervention is feared.

Well into the second year now, the Russia-Ukraine war is reaching another level where Russian leadership is threatening to use nuclear weapons, in case the Ukrainian counteroffensive succeeds, which has overt NATO support.³⁴ Russia has already sliced at least four ethnic Russian regions and declared them autonomous on September 30, 2022. These regions; Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia, border Russia's extreme west and are considered as the buffer zone, should Ukraine still join NATO. In the meantime, the Ukrainian leadership have claimed that at least 250,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in the war so far.³⁵

CONCLUSION

The end of the Cold War deprived the sole superpower of the time, the United States (US) an enemy but Saddam Hussain readily provided a battleground in the Middle East by invading Kuwait and inviting the US and its allies to begin a new era of wars and conflicts between UMPs. Iraq was destroyed even if Saddam survived after the First Gulf War, only to be demolished again, and eliminated finally, a decade later.

Likewise, Osama Bin Laden's presence in Afghanistan at the time of 9/11, provided enough justification to destroy an already war-ravaged state completely and its people to ruins for a considerable time. However, modern wars have had differing causes; rights, freedom, Right to Protect (R2P), preventive, pre-emptive, and against a state to crush the Non-State Actors (NSAs) of that state. What is interesting is the outcome of any such wars and

conflicts, whether in the far past the near past or even in the ongoing wars and conflicts.

The brief overview of wars and conflicts concludes that early periods of wars were fought for the expansion of ideological influences, whereas colonial period wars were mainly to grab the resources of the captured territory that is still being continued in most parts of Africa. However, post-colonial wars were fought through the proxies, for supremacy and authoritative control over the smaller states through the institutions. Unfortunately, 21st Century wars are widely different from the previous century wars and are mainly fought between the UMPs, destroying the weaker states.

It is necessary to mention the famous dictum of erstwhile Soviet leader Andre Gromyko that, "Ten years of talk is better than one day of war." Gromyko was the longest-serving Foreign Minister of the USSR during the Cold War and his precepts about war and its terrible consequences support this author's definition of 'WAR' as the 'Waste of Available Resources.' Each major war is usually followed by some Treaty, Agreement, or Marshall Plan to rebuild the destroyed state. However, giving some weight to the realist paradigm, I would encourage competition between rival states for the sake of development in science and technology, education and health services to their people, culture and sports, tourism, and interconnectedness, but not WAR, at any cost or reason.

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