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Has Humanity Learned Anything from WWI's and WWII's Lessons?

The history of the human race is characterized by the dominance of periods of wars rather than peace, but WWI and WWII are the two most culminating points in international aggression. The scope of destruction, suffering, and deaths experienced over the two wars was immense, but even after WWI was over, nations joined in WWII. However, the post-WWII period demonstrates relative international stability and the absence of conflicts having as large a scope as the two world wars. The current situation on the international arena proves that the answer to the question of whether the humanity has learned anything from WWI's and WWII's lessons is dualistic. Although nations now extensively utilize diplomacy instead of force, try to avoid large, unpredictable armed conflicts, and have created international organizations to mediate international relations, force is still used to resolve local conflicts, pretexts are searched to justify aggression, and propaganda remains strong in many countries.

The analysis of the aftermath of both WWI and WWII has revealed to humans that wars are highly destructive and result in massive economic, social, and demographic losses. The modern world is in a less chaotic state than before, which indicates that humanity has considered

the lessons from the two world wars. People remember the history, understand the unpredictability of wars, and international organizations play an essential cross-national role.

First, from the modern perspective, it appears that humanity values and remembers history. The massive destructions that countries experienced during WWI and WWII have contributed to the strengthening of diplomacy's role in international relations. Now, countries tend to rely on the diplomatic way of resolving conflicts instead of applying force. The Cold War between the USSR and the U.S. exemplifies such a lesson from the two wars, as the two countries managed to settle the conflict by using diplomacy instead of starting a new war. Besides, over the period after the end of WWII, there were no large armed conflicts that involved as many nations as the two world wars did.

Secondly, the modern situation in the international arena suggests that humanity has learned that war is unpredictable. WWI and WWII showed that the initial confidence in fast victories with few losses might lead to a long-lasting armed conflict with substantial damage to all the parties involved. Despite the strong qualitative development of countries' military technologies, the concept of war has changed little, and the factor of unpredictability has not been eliminated. Therefore, modern countries tend to avoid initiating international armed conflicts, because the initially developed plans might fail due to unpredictable circumstances.

Thirdly, the lessons from WWI and WWII have proved the importance of international organizations as mediators of international relations among countries. Such entities did not exist during the two wars, and countries could not delegate supervisory or regulating powers to external parties. Nowadays, states seem to have learned the lesson that international

organizations are more beneficial and cost-effective than the application of military force. As a result, countries prefer to turn to these entities in cases they disagree with other states' actions and policies to receive a law- and diplomacy-based resolution.

Therefore, there is much evidence that demonstrates that humanity has learned lessons from WWI and WWII. The consideration of historical knowledge, reliance on diplomatic rather than force-based methods of cross-national conflicts resolution, and the establishment of international peace-keeping organizations shows that states tend to avoid large armed conflicts. Nevertheless, despite the positive aspects of the modern international arena, there are some facts that prove the opposite. Countries continue using force at the local and regional scale, search for pretexts to justify conflicts, often disregard the value of human lives, and execute propaganda.

First, the key lesson from WWI and WWII does not seem to have been learned. The enormous rate of deaths during the two wars did not show countries that the application of power to solve conflicts with other states is disadvantageous and destructive. Nowadays, force is still applied to resolve local and regional conflicts, and such a resolution method was executed even within a short period after the end of WWII. The Vietnam War, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the modern armed conflicts in Eastern Europe illustrate that the use of soldiers and military machinery is sometimes preferred to diplomacy in many states—even those which participated in WWI and WWII.

Secondly, the conclusion that the lessons from WWI and WWII have not been sufficiently learned may be made from the fact that countries continue to search for pretexts to initiate armed conflicts. The analysis of the two world wars shows that states were ready to fight,

but could not do so without a reason or a pretext. Post-WWII history also demonstrates that states have developed their military capabilities and arsenal to the extent when they start seeking opportunities to apply them and promote national interests. Most of the post-WWII conflicts were initiated after an applicable pretext was found and an offense could be justified. Therefore, the intentional search for a reason to start a war at a local or regional level proves that humanity has not understood important lessons from WWI and WWII.

Thirdly, the armed conflicts that occurred after WWII confirm that countries did not manage to learn the lesson that human life is priceless and should be valued above material concepts and interests. Modern countries chose to improve military technologies, which reduced the chances of death and injuries but failed to eliminate the fact of wars—even though the two world wars devastated millions of families. The fact that the value of a human life is still not a priority for every state justifies the statement that the lesson of avoiding armed conflicts was partially ignored.

Finally, countries still do not refuse from using propaganda as a means to convince citizens of the advantages of wars. WWI and WWII were preceded by massive propagandistic campaigns that aimed to increase the support of populations and increase the chances for victory. Nowadays, countries continue executing such informational measures and use them to get their citizens' approvals of local and regional armed conflicts. Thus, humanity has not learned this lesson from the two world wars and continues to get people prepared to approve conflict.

WWI and WWII were highly destructive events in human history and culminated in the continuous tendency of the application of force. Humanity learned some lessons from this

experience, but failed to consider others. Undoubtedly, history is remembered today and diplomacy is preferred to the use of force, people avoid large wars due to their unpredictability, and international organizations help resolve numerous international misunderstandings. Nevertheless, humanity did not learn all the lessons necessary, as force is applied to solve local and regional conflicts, pretexts are searched for to initiate armed conflicts, human lives are still undervalued, and mass propaganda continues.



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