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WAR AND PEACE: REVIEWING OBSTACLES TO OBJECTIVE TREND THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at breaking generalisations and fallacies regarding the multifaceted institute of war and the political philosophy-associated trend it is 'residing' on. Too often and easily, a range of distorted conclusions are drawn about wars' obsolescence due to myriads of limited conceptual definitions as well as outdated and unobjective comparative perceptions. Firstly, the research offers a sobering revision about past incidents that unexpectedly took place. Secondly, prevailing fallacies concerning international systems as prerequisites to peaceful times are exposed. Finally, an examination into contemporary prospects for the 'obsolescence' of wars is conducted. The aforementioned examination was executed via literary review of contemporary war definitions and perceptions, which were thereafter challenged alongside the emerging justifications for the obsolescence of war. The discussion-bound critical analysis revealed that the diversity of wars is being defined and acknowledged insufficiently, which thereafter renders the obsolescence thereof impossible, if not backfiring completely by escalation before proper addressing. The research concludes, that wars are not becoming obsolete – rather, they are diverse and ever-evolving alongside society.

Keywords: Obsolescence, war, peace, WWI, WWII, the Cold War, international system, deterrence, political philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Arguably, in the XIX century, Count Leo Tolstoy conducted a monumental socio-anthropological research on the notions of war and peace, and it was ruthlessly delivered via his seminal novel. However, a range of dramatic shifts in the XXI century international security environment have pushed many schools of political thought towards re-evaluating the perseverance of the very institute of war and conflict. Some scholars have begun reflecting on the current state of war from a sociological viewpoint (Malešević 2014), whereas others have gone as far as to claim that war is becoming obsolete (Mueller 1989; Mandelbaum 1999). In general, wars are often depicted as brutal acts and responses teaching a lesson which no one wants to learn again. These notions, however, wholly disregard destructive scenarios that might originate from novel circumstances instead of the same 'loaded gun' or the same perceived threats each time. It could be argued that the process of treating wars as lessons creates the illusion that throughout times, the threats, motivations, and ways of responding to them remain the same. Considering the fact that, after each and every devastating war, there usually comes an attempt to revise the previous international system – a range of new institutions are established, and new boundaries and opportunities agreed upon – should it not be acknowledged that these new systems face new threats entirely? One can hardly learn from a lesson, which bases its learning points on old familiar opponents, resources, or motivations.

As per the reasons and academic justification for this research, there is a hiatus in current scholarship concerning the multifaceted institute of war and the trend it is on. The questions of what is war, and whether it is or is not becoming obsolete, need to be answered more comprehensively. A perception of what war is does not represent an ontologically 'untouched' construct alongside the perceived threats, but conflict cannot be argued to have vanished entirely. Exhibiting relative multi-disciplinarity, scholars have now and again visited the possibility of war becoming obsolete. However, this question poses challenges already on the level of definitions: multiple meanings have been attributed to the terms 'war' and its 'obsolescence'. War becoming obsolete, or in other words, its obsolescence, generally signifies war becoming outdated. Some scholars distinguish between the obsolescence of war and major war, the first of which tends to

remain too general and the second neglecting major and smaller powers' indirect actions against each other.

Moreover, the obsolescence of war is a question which cannot be answered as long as the judgement of what war is, gets studied in the confinement of one era only – either the current era and the concurring events, or by comparing the current to a couple of devastating World Wars (WWs). If judgements of war based on the confinements of one era are used as a point of comparison to the *status quo*, the only legitimate conclusion to be drawn, is that the very constitution of war, the theories applied to it, the opponents waging it, and the resources and means used to wage it are to a large extent different. These differences further complicate efforts at a conclusion regarding the degrading or strengthening trend of war. On the other hand, if conclusions about future conflict trends are drawn from events of the current era only, no regard will be given to the possibility of different circumstances entirely, such as technology or new alliances. Moreover, the concept of war tends to be oversimplified in the literature that touches upon it, and many different forms and occurrences of it are excluded from the term's span. Possibly, it is related to one of the elements of the Tolstoy's unfaded legacy – after all, his groundbreaking novel drew a solid distinguishing line between war and peace.

Thus, academic strives must be made in order to fill the gap regarding objective insights about the nature and direction of war. Fallacies from generalisations of the concept of war have hindered objective analysis of war trends and the assessment of prospects. These fallacies will be exposed by firstly, determining what has constituted, and still does, as war. The argument regarding unprecedented prevalence of peace and the unimaginability of a 'Third World War' (WWIII) will be challenged by exposing fallacies regarding the First World War (WWI) and the Second World War (WWII), and by showcasing the malleability of war from the viewpoint of the Cold War. In addition, the circumstances surrounding these incidents – namely, methods, motivations, and international systems – will be examined in an effort to dig deeper into the reasons as to why efforts at peace building have continued to ultimately disintegrate. For most parts, discussion shall go no further than WWI, for already there one can draw conclusions about the ever-evolving concept of war with a regard to the prevailing international system. International systems offer insight as to the motivations, perceptions and expectations of actors that impact ultimate results. Moreover, the unexpectedness and fallibility surrounding these systems help in building a more informed image of the actual state of affairs.

The second question of this research, the answer to which depends on the results of the first question regarding war's nature, is whether or not war is becoming obsolete. The research shall not attempt to differentiate between different schools of thought in as much as the extent of thought, transcending traditional classifications. Neither is the aim of the author to give any definite answers on the potential future trends of war but to offer means for objective assessment of them.

To attain the aforementioned, and objective insights about war, a literary analysis was conducted based on articles regarding the obsolescence of war and other supportive, analytical, and sometimes historical material. The justifications that emerged the strongest on behest of the obsolescence of war were selected as topics of academic review and critical analysis: the unprecedented *status quo*, the lack of a 'Third World War' up to this day, and the deterrents of democracy, economy, and nuclear weapons. Moreover, the international systems were found to evolve in corollary with war, leading to the further decision of including also international systems as a viewpoint to the study of wars' nature and obsolescence. Finally, future prospects will be discussed based on previous analysis, and also with the support of arguments regarding the prevalence of trust among actors on the international security arena.

For the purpose of defining the author's viewpoint, it shall be noted that this research is conducted by a Finnish (and European Union) citizen, and an undergraduate student of International Relations with an emphasis on European studies. It is the aim of the author to explore existing academic discourse, and to challenge existing perceptions by exposing overlooked sources of conflict in a way that enables objective examination and resubstantiation of the concept of war. Said research will be conducted in an effort to provide the International Relations academia a more comprehensive picture of wars unbound to time and realistic in regard to plausible prospects from the viewpoint and especially for the field of political philosophy.

1. FROM 1914 TO 1991: ESTABLISHING RESTRAINTS TO CONFLICT VISION

Before analysing the nature of war and conflict at present, one ought to examine the source of contrast that greatly impacts the way the concept and prevalence thereof is viewed today. Many scholars, in their attempts to determine the prevalence of war, compare current conditions to the all-round destructive eras surrounding WWI and WWII. The latter mega-conflicts offer an obvious sounding board, for they are extreme examples of how highly organised and civilised nation states could engage in resource and casualty-wise exhausting wars.

However, these points of comparison are extremely limited and present war, its nature, and participants from the view point of two eras only. Moreover, they generalise the two different major wars as similar events, whereas they are highly individual conflicts in their own right and character, mostly shaped by time-specific methods, motivations, and international systems. The argument to be made here is not so much about whether another WWI or WWII could ignite. Rather, it is about how a destructive and surprising world-wide conflict could ignite two times. Not to mention, that these wars took place within a short space of time and within peace-focused international systems, making it plausible for any wars to commence 'the work' regardless of how unimaginable they initially seem to the world audience. Exposing the fallacies surrounding two of the loudest conflicts of recent history in volume will enable a more critical and objective analysis when faced with conflict of any kind at present and in the future.

1.1. The First and Second World War: limited objectivity

Conventionally, the WWs have been portrayed as ultimate lessons about the destructive and unimaginable outcomes of a conflict that consumes opponents worldwide. Wells (1914, 14) was among the believers of the WWI being the last of its kind for its horrendousness, which seemed to be a general sentiment at that time. The sentiment was adopted once more after the WWII.

Freedman (2019, 101) encapsulates, how WWI was not only strategically, but also regarding peace-building, a failure. He then goes on to depict the bleak truth about the lesson unlearned: "After barely two decades had passed, this 'war to end war' was followed by yet another war of even greater length, scope, suffering and destructiveness". Among other academicians, Freedman (2019, 102) refers to the novelty of the extent of WWI and thereafter WWII, convinced that consequent scars are the initiator to what is going to become the end for wars fought among Great Powers. However, Freedman first refers to the Napoleonic time as the previous time a war was waged by such extent of formidable opponents (*Ibid.*). This trend of viewing war, although factually sound regarding past events, draws conflicted conclusions. If wars indeed have been waged in strong volume before, during, and after WWI, how can the present absence of a war of such magnitude in opponents be considered an unprecedented situation with a different chance at a perpetual obsolescence of war? Sometimes perceptions of the concept of war are clouded by comparison to past wars, making contemporary ones appear novel (Strachan, Scheipers 2011, 18).

Both WWI and WWII are 'text-books' on how the trend of war cannot be assessed in the confinement of one era. They were completely different in many ways: resources and reasons varied, even the social order of the international system had seen changes in the form of the League of Nations (LON). Newly established power relations and threats entirely were to be expected in hindsight, yet objective insights were decapacitated by the subjectivity stemming from restrictions to vision by the prevailing era. It is perplexing, how something so horrendous and traumatising as WWI could be forgotten by the same generation that then engaged in a war even more unimaginable and scarring as WWII. Not even the record-breaking number of casualties of the WWI, 37,466,904 (World War . . . *s.a.*), could deter the ignition of WWII which saw the number of casualties climb up to roughly 85,000,000 (Research starters . . . *s.a.*). Not to mention that the occurrence of both wars was just over two decades apart, and memories thereof fresh. By the examination of the changed circumstances, some light shall be shed on the baffling matter.

1.1.1. The evolution of warfare

WWI saw the emergence of many a new weapon and strategy, whereas some of the old ways became ineffective. Churchill offers an animated account on the resources and strategies used during WWI which he characterises as humbling, unsatisfactory, ungratifying, and lacking in appeasement, among other things (*s.a.*, 17-18). Strategies used in the war consisted for instance of submarine bombardments, exhaustion, and point-blank offensives (which Churchill depicts as the most brutal of all), and armament of "[r]amparts more than 350 miles long, ceaselessly guarded

by millions of men, sustained by thousands of cannon" (Churchill *s.a.*, 19-22). Shields of steel protecting from gunshot wounds and torpedo attacks, and toxic smokescreens were named as the novelties of WWI (*Ibid.*, 23-24).

The evolution of warfare during WWI enabled more effective defences and more fatal offensives, which were exploited to devastating levels. The mere availability of new technology encouraged a violent approach to attain what was desired. Even though the war came to an end, the underlying issues remained untangled and a threat (*Ibid.*, 18), and the next war was expected to see the contributions of army be accompanied by social and political aspects (Freedman 2019, 112). Still more effective weapons were invented and used during WWII.

The strategic and resource-related advancements from WWI to WWII saw the corollary rising of damage in territory and casualties. Opportunity made a thief out of many an opponent, in result of which many a civilian also suffered. The exploitation of new, formidable resources when available attests to the malleability of attitudes and perceptions regardless of past sentiments regarding resources – many opponents were left in major debt after expenses of WWI yet got invested again in 1939. Therefore, the strategies implemented, and resources used during the two WWs support the statement of fallacies hindering objective war and trend analysis. Another similar war could be interpreted to have been unexpected after the traumatising WWI, but then again, another similar one arguably never occurred. The next WW was not waged with the same methods or rules, but by new means to a large extent, and therefore hardly categorizable as the same old lesson. Therefore, one ought not to be surprised that major conflicts keep surfacing time and again, but expect each one to be different in kind.

Behind strategic decisions, motivations unrelated to material and expenditures weigh heavily. In possession of deadly weapons, each possessor engages in a cost-benefit assessment, where attitudes and motivations play a crucial role also to the actions to be taken by parties influenced by said assessment.

1.1.2. The power of attitudes, motivations, and leadership

Much had changed in just a couple of decades regarding resources and strategies, and hardly any lessons could be expected to be learned without the gift of seeing to the future. When it comes to the behavioural aspect of war waging however, views especially on the social costliness of WWI strongly prevailed already during and in the aftermath of it. Whereas war was seen as an

honourable opportunity before said incident, it came to be morally costly even for victors (Freedman 2019, 102). The same scholar claims that the threshold of compromise was raised after belligerents claimed moral high-ground (*Ibid.*, 104).

Churchill (*s.a.*, 18) depicts how material aspects of war and its outcome pales in comparison to the impact of man-made decisions, which are less predictable yet very influential historically. He later speculated on the potential turning points that could have prevented the carnage of WWI that were not seized (Churchill *s.a.*, 20):

> "There were regions where flanks could have been turned; there were devices by which fronts could have been pierced. And these could have been discovered and made mercifully effective, not by any departure from the principles of military art, but simply by the true comprehension of those principles and their application to the actual facts."

Churchill (*Ibid.*, 21) further depicts maneuvers of war exceeding battlefields: diplomacy, mechanics, psychology, and time. He (*Ibid.*, 22) also notes how the lack of an international conference at the beginning of 1915 contributed to the outcomes of the war. Considering both Churchill's and Freedman's output, it would be fair to attribute the extent to which WWI was fought to the actions and inactions that were taken by leaders based on their motivations.

The perils of WWI were not enough of a deterrence to prevent the ignition of WWII, and so partially the same generations engaged in war. In a forward to his 1996 reprint of the book *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War*, Mueller assigns plenty blame for the ignition of WWII on Adolf Hitler and on European leaders' clinging onto disbelief about anyone wanting another war like the last one, and onto the reassuring words of Hitler (1989).

In 2012, Mueller (22) holds on to similar notions of the passed incidents meanwhile pointing out that, although not completely unexpected due to the prevailing political, economic, and social circumstances between WWI and WWII, the latter ignited and became what it was largely for the actions of Hitler. In his more recent work, Mueller (2012, 24-38) further presents policy expansions, Hitler's willingness to utilise war strategically, and his skills as a leader and appealing personality, as evidence of his essential role to the ignition of the war. Herein the attitudes and motivations of other leaders come to an intriguing interplay: moral prejudices of the time lead leaders to believe it would be worthwhile to appease Hitler, who then exploited the state of the

international system. Once more, past experiences blinded objective assessments of what was about to become.

1.2. The Cold War and the dawn of new conflict perspective

As previously established, humans thought themselves incapable of another disastrous, all-consuming war after WWI, yet they were restrained by the thoughts of one time and soon found themselves amidst WWII, after which came a conflict of a completely new character – the Cold War, which came close to a boiling hot one. In 1962, the international society stood still as a nuclear standoff between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union came close to a point of escalation. Arguably, the Cuban Missile Crisis was a strong manifestation of the delicacy of international relations and diplomacy, and even years post-education many have a strong recollection of the history lessons regarding said topic. The methodology in the resolution and aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis is revealing regarding attitudes and motivations. A new line of communication, namely the 'red line', was bypassing the international system-bound communicational framework but established to avoid unintentional escalations in the future because of the magnitude of potential end results, yet the culprits for such end results were guarded. What does this say about the state of affairs?

After a realistic scare, the answer was to create technology to prevent further misunderstandings with fatal resources instead of taking the dangerous factor of the equation out by disarming. In this case, it seems more like the symptom instead of root cause, or the 'disease' was treated. Technology, namely the 'red line', could therefore be considered as an enabler of more advanced strategic politicking rather than a preventor of conflict. If parties were sincerely motivated to deter future accidents from happening, surely the scare would have birthed more than a hot line for reassurance and settlement where conflict already existed. Weaver (2014, 179) describes how using force excessively in the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis could have provoked Soviets to the point of escalation or driven America further apart from her allies, whereas more comprehensive diplomatic approach might have been taken as weakness or ignorance. This depiction of possible approaches is very reflective of the motivations and the system of the time.

Disregarding for a moment the abstinence to use nuclear weaponry meanwhile holding onto them, opponents that waged WWII against each other continued to do so outside their own borders by

providing weaponry and troops in parts of Asia, for instance. Referring to the non-appearance of a 'WWIII' after WWII would imply the prevalence of peace, which seems preposterous in the face of everything that eventually transpired during the length of the Cold War. In fact, the distinction of a 'cold' war from that of another WW is particularly interesting especially, since academics across disciplines (Freedman 2019, 108; Kagan *et. al.* 1999, 150) accept that the essence of conflict and war is malleable and, in the wake of Cold War, had changed. Ergo, if the concept of war is prone to change, some detachment from previous incidents ought to be achieved on perceptive levels of comparison as well.

It then becomes a question of definition: what qualifies as a 'WW'? It has already been established and confirmed by other scholars that war is in constant flux. One can hardly start calling the Cold War a 'WWIII', nor is it reasonable to continue the numerical naming of wars considering that, this would either oversimplify the concept, or include even minor conflicts and be deceiving by name. The author suggests that, all notions regarding a WWIII be renounced for the misleading expectations of present and future incidents that come with it. The danger of said misleading expectations will be further addressed in chapters concerning present and future state of war.

1.3. The evolutionary marriage of wars and international systems

Ultimately, the fact that either WW should have come as a surprise to the international society is a reflection on the underlying perceptions regarding the prevailing international systems. Without going too much into details concerning the Napoleonic time, as the Westphalian relative peace broke, another international system was established in Vienna to prevent such incidents from occurring again. The efforts of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 were completely undone in the face of WWI, after which once more, a new system was established – this time it was at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Somewhat ironically, WWII still managed to surprise the international society – the response to which, naturally, was to rebuild the international system. If one is to build a complete picture of the concepts and trends of war, the other part of the 'marriage' in evolution ought to be observed as well: the international society. Thus, a stronger focus shall be casted on the parallel progression of international wars and their societal framework.

There is an interesting corollary to be witnessed between the evolution of increasingly more devastating wars and the evolution of more extensive and regulated institutions – both are

becoming more organised. However, one cannot escape the unoriginality of the trend. When it comes to positive prejudices that were once held regarding the Congress of Vienna's capabilities of fostering peace, one can see relative resemblance to some contemporary circumstances. If the absence of major wars were to be considered proof of the peaceful success of international systems, then the international system from 1945 that saw the establishment of the United Nations (UN), an "unprecedented period of peace" (Sangha 2011, 26) would still be about 25 years Vienna's junior. This is not to say, that threats outside major wars did not exist and prevail during said international system, but on the other hand, the discussion here concerns contemporary notions on the obsolescence of war based on supposedly unprecedented circumstances. Ergo, the currently prevailing system can neither be taken as an infinite achievement nor as an absolute achievement even, not yet anyway.

1.3.1. International systems' contribution to prevailing fallacies

So, instead of asking what lessons previous international systems have taught decision-makers, one should ask: what lessons do decision-makers believe to have been the most potent and valuable yet still fail to follow, when matters begin to escalate? Although the point of bringing up WWI, WWII, the Cold War, and different underlying international systems is to prove the unreliability of subjective past experiences, the examination thereof offers plenty in the sense that the repetitive errors have been made according to some rationale and could be made again. If resources and motivations were in previous chapters deemed as less peaceful than general sentiments would allow to assume as a general will, then the examination of the reason as to why these sentiments exist shall be further examined. That is the part of international systems.

As established, the normative role of different institutions contributing to peaceful interaction has been strengthening alongside the severity of wars. Dupont discusses the Vienna Congress from the viewpoint of historical unification. He (Dupont 2003, 174-175) depicts how the Congress of Vienna came to its final stipulations after a conflict scare among the five negotiating parties, for everyone was working for an angle. Ironically enough, this behaviour within the context of system reconstruction resembled awfully much the same circumstances that led opponents around the round table in the first place. Although local incidents took place, the new international system brought about global peace for some 50 years before the inflexibility of the Coalition led to its dismantlement (*Ibid.*, 175). Dupont (*Ibid.*, 176) suggests that instability from the system's incapability of adjusting to external, societal, and political meanwhile being stuck on conflicting values, was one of the reasons for the system's dismantlement. Astonishingly, Dupont's reflections

on the 1815-originated system appear as a mirror image of the prevailing system regarding pressure points and threats.

The fallacy of international systems' unprecedented jurisdictions by repetitive patterns are confirmed also by Joll (1982, 215), who illustrates for instance, how during the XIX century, liberal thinkers envisioned economic cooperation and technological advancements to create a new international system. In general, he (*Ibid.*, 218) reflects on the pre-WWI international system to have been based on a tripartite competitive platform: the said liberal attempt at peace through "free trade and the democratic control of foreign policy", the use of power balancing through the Concert of Europe, and the socialist notion of war desiccating along the capitalist system after a revolution.

1.3.2. The apparent cyclicality of international systems

Joll (1982, 219) further addresses the post-WWI international system to have been established on liberal sentiments, such as the US President Woodrow Wilson's 14 points and the freeing of trade, decreasing of weaponry, and self-determination, these sentiments forming the LON. However, WWI bred promising outcomes concerning socialist sentiments on behest of Communists, which enforced post-war juxtapositioning (*Ibid.*). Regarding the ignition of WWII, Joll (*Ibid.*, 220-221) describes how the war negated liberals' hopes for the LON and Communists' revolutions – the system was once again faced with the realities of balance of power, yet another attempt at an international system in the form of the UN based on similar liberal notions was conducted. What seems to follow as a trend, is that international systems (in their apparently cyclical existence) have for long consisted of competing sentiments. Moreover, after each system disintegration, the lesson that is regarded as the most valuable, is their failure due to the unadopted ideologies and values that some regarded as prerequisites for peace but were out-shadowed or used only to a partial potential. Perhaps this even morally justifies the uncompromising democratic principles of the contemporary international system, which in reality has several sub-systems for the exact reason that it is exclusive in values and not afraid of imposing these values outside cultural boundaries, where juxtapositioning and countervailing tendencies occur.

Although the UN has been successful on many of its endeavours, threats remain and transform with time (Suleymanov 2017, 92). Therefore, it could be argued that the UN is in no fashion immune to the threats that the Concert of Europe, the Coalition of 1815, or the LON once faced. The fate of the LON for instance, should in fact be considered as an example corollary to the example made out of the WWs: there is a time-bound blindness to future realities. Thus, the UN

ought not to be accepted as a perpetual solution to peace on the mere merit that it has acted as a functional platform for nation-states since the ending of WWII. Instead, the organisation ought to be challenged to rise to the occasion that is war and conflict in a constant flux. Just as the LON once fell in the face of new realities, the UN might find its mandate threatened by whatever future might hold. On the other hand, such speculation must also recognise the possibility that the UN might find its mandate strengthening in the future, which will be further discussed in chapter two.

Freedman (2019, 108) assigns weight on the costs of another WW rather than underlying motivations for the lack of escalation of the Cold War. He further proposes that adjustments to appearances and laws were made to enable engagement in war rather than in peace (*Ibid.*). Since battles seem to be waged still, albeit by more devious approaches, the prevalence of a peaceful system ought to be questioned once more, this time before having seen it turn to dust, which should be considered as just as plausible an outcome as the perseverance of it.

2. THE PRESENCE OF WAR AND CONFLICT TODAY

Evidently, a 'WWIII', which is feared and, speculatively, has not yet occurred in a range of its outdated definitions kept in mind, is completely plausible, as is any type of war. On the other hand, in the apparent lack of grand-scale features that WWI and WWII were associated with, some believe major war is becoming obsolete. Not only might these scholars be blinded by era-bound subjective thoughts (not being able to fathom a reality where similar devastation occurs again), but they also disregard the possibility of war having become something completely new, and a war worthy of as much attention as the expected 'WWIII' could be already ongoing or coming. Many have succeeded in acknowledging different types of wars but still reflect peace in regard to the worst-case scenario, which is fixed onto experiences despite conflict being in a constant flux and resurfacing in unexperienced forms.

Although another war from the imagery league of WWI or WWII might or might not be likely, given the passing of time and the expiration of certain circumstances, a destructive international conflict seems very much like a possibility. Extrapolating from the conflict patterns that seem at least somewhat consistent (major escalation followed by unification), recognising ones that have yet to fit into previous categories (fighting small-scale wars without the 'big guns'), and finding the common denominators between the two should shed some light into a redefinition of war and conflict today and in the future. As was found earlier on, by the definition of WWI or WWII, there would be no international wars being waged currently. Yet, conflicts even at this moment breed devastation in ways countable by more than a number of casualties, and observable at various parts of the world due to actions on behalf of organisations, states, and non-state actors.

2.1. Contemporary views on the state of war

The argument about war becoming obsolete poses challenges right from the beginning: many scholars argue their case without addressing the magnitude of war, or focus on the obsolescence of major war regardless of smaller, disregarded wars and conflicts having the potential for escalation. Distorted conclusions are enabled by efforts at one universal definition of war. Granted,

establishing denominators for a phenomenon that comes in all shapes and sizes is no easy task. Scholars have embarked on the task from different angles, such as minimum number of casualties, which ought to be questioned as a realistic reflection of contemporary circumstances. The existing definitions of war and conflict appear retrospectively reactionary, rather than proactive. Hybrid warfare, economic disturbances, and threats by globalisation are just a couple of examples, where pre-existing definitions of war become insufficient.

It was earlier suggested that the notion of a WWIII be renounced for its misleading characterisation and consequential expectations. This suggestion takes root in the potential threats of focusing in past circumstances meanwhile dealing with new realities. Obsessing over the potential danger or absence of a war comparable to WWI or WWII can achieve two things: a preparation for a state of readiness and/or a disregard for the significance of ongoing and havoc-wreaking conflicts, because they simply do not fit the outdated definitions of war. Both outcomes work counterintuitively: rearmament and even the sustenance of weapon repertoire can evoke similar responses from opposite side of negotiation tables, even though a general volition is to work towards peace. Disregard for, or omission of acknowledgement concerning ongoing conflicts not only prolongs incidents by omission of efforts at mediation and resolution with wider resources, but on the other hand, rouses antipathy through selective determination of which conflicts are notable. Krause (2019, 920) reflects on the multifaceted realities of contemporary war: "So long as researchers do not differentiate among different types of war, it will not be possible to address problems of war termination more comprehensively".

In 1999, Mandelbaum (Kagan *et. al.*, 151), although of the opinion that major war is becoming obsolete in the sense that the horrors of the XX century taught a lesson, recognises the indifference of such obsolescence on citizens of the Balkans and African countries. If peace is desired, conflicts and wars of today must be acknowledged more widely, before they escalate into the type of war that has been feared more.

2.1.1. Definitions of war today

Even though war has changed a lot from what it used to be 105 years ago, it does not mean that only one form can exist at a time – wars being fought on smaller arenas do not exclude the possibility of other wars being fought on inter-state level, even in as great magnitude as a Great Power war with multiple participants. In fact, as the decolonisation process well shows in the era of the Cold War, civil wars might draw bigger corollary conflicts through vested interest.

Decolonisation and the dismantlement of multinational states altered the path of war, for it was because of them that inter-state wars ignited in South Asia and Middle East (Freedman 2019, 108). Freedman (*Ibid.*) depicts how during and after the Cold War, many a war located within states with weak economies and governance, and a newly gained independence, whereas Western countries engaged by picking a side or on the excuse of help. What could be extrapolated is, that war and conflict had transformed yet again after the Bretton Woods Conference, marking an era of different methods and motivations for the international system.

Mueller (2012, 22) states that while during wars it cannot, peace can prevail during conflicts: the end of WWI saw peace, yet conflict prevailed. It should be considered however, whether the meaning of conflict from past eras and its implications today have a difference in meaning: for instance, many of today's 'conflicts' seem to depict only the peak of actions taken by and between Western countries in their efforts to attain a desired outcome. Considering all the contemporary novelties and newly experienced threats, could new definitions completely be adopted regarding war?

It could be argued, for example, that the Correlates of War Project (COW) has been, to a commendable extent, able to adapt definitions of war along its evolution. Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer (2003, 58) describe how the initial classifications of COW defined war as being fought in length by militaries on different levels: inter-state (at least 1,000 deceased per battle), extra-systemic (averaging at least 1,000 deceased per year), and civil (averaging at least 1,000 deceased per year). The same scholars (*Ibid.,* 59) expanded the typology by reclassifying extra-systemic wars as extra-state wars, and adding civil wars within intra-state wars. A trend analysis of war was conducted by examining incidences of all three classifications, the results of which alarmed optimism – the XX century saw more inter-state and extra-state wars than the XIX century (*Ibid.,* 60). In a more recent publication of COW, Sarkees (2010, 9) extends the definition of war into a quadripartite classification system. This system factors in the overlap between international and civil wars by considering inter-state wars, intra-state wars, non-state wars, and extra-state wars (*Ibid.*). The classifications made in the context of COW offer great insight as to the changing perceptions and the nature of war from the early 1990's until 2010. The standing definitions are helpful in classifying prevailing incidents by nature and succeed in acknowledging them, yet the numerical requirements would disqualify many an ongoing incident from the classifications of war.

2.1.2. Attempts at broader concept definitions

Some scholars, such as Malešević (2014, 71-72), have begun questioning the reliability of number of casualties when assessing the phenomenon of war which transforms alongside state and society. Krause (2019, 924-937) recognises similar transformation by his extensive classification of 25 types of wars that can be detectable from the past 300 years, of which some will be brought up here for their extraordinarily comprehensive view regarding some of the contemporary and often dismissed threats. Krause classifies many of the more familiar manifestations of war, such as "major international wars" in which he includes WWI and WWII and which are in his opinion terminable only by the threat of a nuclear war (*Ibid.*, 928). Regarding the classification of contemporary threats, Krause classifies postmodern hybrid wars, anti-civilisation wars, religious wars, and wars of extremist organisations attempting statehood or occupying territory (*Ibid.*, 930-935), to mention a few. His description of waging postmodern hybrid wars covers any acts of destabilation by insurgents, guerillas, traditional methods and more novel ones, such as information war (*Ibid.*, 930). Hybrid war could be described as extremely miscellaneous, and viewed to deviate from a more direct and honest offensive – one might never find out who is behind a hack for instance, which surely impacts the level of trust and caution in the international society.

Krause (*Ibid.*, 934) makes an insightful distinction between the anti-civilisation wars which occur for instance in the context of terrorism and anti-Western sentiments after tribes challenge the stronger civilisation, and religious wars, where he sees a potential escalation of a religious war between Sunnis and Shias, for instance. When it comes to wars concerning extremist organisations attempting statehood or occcupying a territory, Krause mentions the highly organised Islamic state (*Ibid.*, 935). In addition to his comprehensive categorisation of different types of war that have, do, and could prevail in the future, Krause (*Ibid.*, 937) recognises the possibility of a war falling under many of the provided categories by means of evolution. Krause has arguably succeeded in providing frameworks for analysis without constraining conflict thought by categorising the phenomenon into smaller, more distinguishable boxes.

He also notes the challenges of addressing minor ongoing wars, such as wars against insurgency in Mexico (narcotics) and Russia (hybrid) (Krause 2019, 938). Perhaps then, instead of defining war by concrete numbers of casualties, war could be defined by related motivations and desired

outcomes, which often (as novelties such as insurgency attests) undermine the supposedly coveted peace. Since infrastructure is even today targeted (granted often with less civilian casualties), and the objective of harming the targeted one remains, would it not be justified to consider such attacks acts of war and terror? For instance, in the case that economy is considered to be one of the cornerstones of peace today and a crucial part of the functioning of any entity, the objective of disturbing national elections by means of a cyber attack to influence trade outcomes, could be considered an act of war.

2.2. The role of different actors in international relations

Having established some of the existing definitions of war and analysed their meaning to the prevailing international system, a second factor plays strongly into the existence and direction of war and lays foundation to the aforementioned definitions thereof: state-actors' and non-state actors' (both legitimised and guerilla) actions in the international security arena. Social order and warfare evolve side by side (Malešević 2014, 73) where it becomes topical to distinguish between the roles of each type of actor in the system and their way of adapting to, or impacting the direction of warfare. Kaldor (2013, 2) reflects how globalisation, openness, and the weakening of authoritarianism result in the disintegration of different distinctions (war, peace, non-state, internal...) which in turn both causes and acts as a repercussion of new wars. The prevailing social order reflects the interplay of motivations and, consequentially, methods of fulfilling said motivations, meanwhile any actions stirring away from the general sentiments expose underlying issues.

The international system has seen major changes along the evolution of war from the agreeing to and later abandoning of stipulations made first in the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and then in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, to the establishment of new stipulations in Bretton Woods, Yalta, and Potsdam in 1944-1945. The latter three *rendezvous* saw the emergence of new institutions, which have become highly organised, and to which many nation-states have pledged loyalty to even up to this day (such as the UN). However, as has been established, commitments have in the past been disregarded either in the face of new threats or in the escalation of old grievances. The following examination into the distribution of sovereignty, the perceived legitimacy thereof, and consequential actions today shall reveal prevailing perceptions and realities about the state of war.

2.2.1. A delicate game of stability: legitimised versus illegitimate non-state actors

Meanwhile high expectations of a sustainable peace have been built on the cooperation-spirited discussion and action transnationally through international organisations, new threats outside the feared inter-state wars have been neglected by focusing on the success from the lack of a nuclear WW. States, in hopes of common economic growth through reconciliation of differences, have moved further away from the traditional and resource-wise damaging ways of waging wars and ceded some of their sovereignty to international organisations. However, cooperation in the form of international organisations, although motivated by a quest for peace, often increases conflicts by exclusion. In his seminal work, Huntington (1993, 39) describes how organisations such as the UN and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) appear as advocates of the international community, whereas the interests are West's. Malešević offers complementary views on the "cumulative bureaucratization of coercion" (2014, 81), potentially seeing future envinronmental and geopolitical structures bringing about hostilities between social organisations.

There is a strengthening trend of other actors in the international arena in addition to the more traditional "territorial state" (Sarkees 2010, 7). Sarkees depicts ineffective organisations as being the culprits to the rising of new actors and conflicts: "For instance, the flourishing of nonstate actors has been related to, among other things, the increase in worldwide arms trade and the development of private armies" (*Ibid.*). In an earlier publication, Sarkees, Wayman and Singer (2003, 57) explain how the Cold War hindered the establishment of effective international institutions that could have intervened in issues that still prevail, such as weapons trade, drugs, and crime, that have welcomed new actors and issues entirely. Furthermore, stronger levels of contact and communication between civilisations strengthen awareness of pre-existing rifts (Huntington 1993, 25). With the dominance of the West, groups excluded from those cultural domains are more motivated and capable of impacting in the world in their own ways as opposed to the West's (Huntington 1993, 26). Huntington (1993, 27) depicts how cultural differences are less easily settled, having to do with fundamental issues of how one identifies themselves rather than what is their financial situation. Thus, it appears that there are not only issues with solving threats through existing institutions but also ones originating from their existence.

The attempt at an internationally followed rule of law is based on the legitimacy and efficiency of institutions with Western values and only limited powers. Since these rules are not always being

followed, and moreover, they exist and bind actors even when faced with opponents that are not following suit, the mandate of international organisations such as the UN should be questioned in the sense that they could prevent war of any definition.

2.2.2. Critical discussion: state-actors and the significance thereof

When it comes to the role of states in the contemporary international system which is neither geographically, religiously, culturally, nor ideologically confined, many threats arise. As mentioned, the value congruence between international organisations and local cultures of states that interact with said organisations is a source of conflict. Moreover, as the recently established information confirms, non-state actors have become stronger and more capable. The social and economic transformation that is taking place creates further distance between nation-states and citizens, leaving more room for extreme religious sentiments (Huntington 1993, 26). Antipathy by value congruence is just one of the sources of conflict regarding contemporary state conduct.

Another source of conflict regarding modern state conduct and connected to international organisations has to do with the partial ceding of citizen given state sovereignty forward. Populations that feel value system-wise ostracised from Western organisations might not be the only ones that could pose a threat to the social establishments: the width of these establishments, and thereafter, the overwhelming and diverse bunch of populations, disperse a spectrum of expectations which are hardly feasibly met by the few organisations that are in charge of decision-making. The mass of expectations and interests decapacitates effective and allround satisfactory governance, in result of which two outcomes can be expected: 1) the mandates of the respective international organisations are not accepted and their peace-advancing propensities cannot be guaranteed, or 2) the advocates of contradicting interests will compete within the international organisations they perceive and accept as legitimate. It has thus become topical to analyse the question of whether the decentralisation of interests by societal growth will lead to a war fought on an even greater level of magnitude, or whether the decentralisation of civilian and societal expectations will lead to the dispersing of unsatisfied interest groups, such as smaller states or non-state actors. Whatever the answer be, the one trend that does stand out is that of an increasing severance between states and citizens.

The trust and sense of dependability from the side of citizens towards nation-states appear to be weakening in the face of globalisation. It seem that states are increasingly mistrusted with the handling of contemporary threats by globalisation and with the protection of citizens within the

context of human security without external help which again, might not be distributed equally in different regions. However, states are also mistrusted on the external level with the task of representing local culture in decision-making. Even in an attempt to stan for unity and shared values instead of hostility, the democratic approach of prevailing international organisations calls for compromises on behalf of many notable actors with different cultures and traditions which might cast an unfavourable light on further commitment. Reciprocally, states' decision to go to war would arguably be less straight forwardly accepted now than it would have been 80 years back as a method of solving discontentness (especially in Western countries).

Malešević (2014, 81) discusses the impact of global warming, population increase, and finite environmental resources on the balance between war, state, and society. He *(Ibid.*, 81-82) notes that, where states become incapable of feeding and providing safety to citizens, mass migrations will commence and potentially invoke conflicts – such formidable changes might bring about levels of state and organisation dissolution. Moreover, some states might be able to strenghten their organisational position, whereas others might have to struggle in the context of failed states (*Ibid.*, 82). Ergo, states are offering increasingly less regarding representation and security. This discussion begs a question forming a subject of its own, and which will be henceforth tabled in this research: are states becoming obsolete?

2.3. Arguing the effectiveness of deterrence

Turning one's attention back to the expected obsolescence of war, many arguments have been made regarding democracy, economic interdependence, and the threat of mutually assured destruction by nuclear weapons being war-deterring contemporary phenomena. Globalisation has indeed brought about cooperation and interdependency, which have been fortified and safeguarded by contracts and organisations. Yet, the spreading of thoughts, wealth, and resources has also created new threats. The spreading (and at times, force feeding) of one form of governance, capitalist ideologies, and nuclear weapons are all conflicting and, prospectively, escalating issues. Suleymanov (2017, 86) describes how millions of people are affected by threats of globalisation such as poverty, terrorism, environmental degradation, discrimination and more, because of the insufficient administration of globalisation. He goes on to depict the decrease in per capita income in over 80 countries within a decade, which only adds to the reasons of "social and interstate conflicts" (*Ibid.*).

In 1993, Huntington speculated on the future nature of war and conflict from the perspective of clashing civilisations, a huge part of which rings true already today. Huntington (1993, 23) proposes that regarding the division of opponents, cultural and civilizational factors be considered in conflict thought. He (*Ibid.*, 23-24) describes regions, ethnicity, nationality, and religion as some of the centralisations of culture – some of which form together bigger civilisations, and thereafter distinguish groups. Huntington *(Ibid.*, 29) expects a civilizational clash to take place:

> "At the micro-level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other. At the macro-level, states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values."

Interestingly, Huntington's predictions of threats have to do with the same factors that are often claimed to deter wars in their supposedly obsolescent trend: military, economy, and political ideology.

2.3.1. Democracy as a peace-facilitating form of governance

The democratic form of governance has been repeatedly advocated, mostly by Western thinkers, as one of the essential cornerstones of peace and common growth. Consequently, said form of governance has been broadly implemented and imposed on others by former colonisers, and more recently, contemporary international organisations and multinational corporations. This however, has also had repercussions contrary to peace. The increasing juxtapositioning between contradictory ideologies has incited defensive sentiments and physical actions. Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer (2003, 57) describe how the intervention in domestic politics by superpowers during the Cold War saw reactionary repercussions: non-state actors emerged and benefitted from better access to weapons, for instance. Furthermore, the hostilities are reciprocated: In 1999, Doran (Kagan *et.al.*, 147) described how the spreading of different ideologies may have motivated democratic entities to wage violent wars against non-democratic entities increasingly, whereas "mature democratic states" have seen a decrease in war. Ergo, democracy would seem to only bring peace between states that have strong traditions in democracy, whereas forcefeeding it forward only justifies bringing it forcefully or reacts forcefull responses, if not both.

Democracy might also be undermined by values transcending political ones: Huntington (1993, 25) names eight larger civilisations that will, in his estimation, impact the state of international relations in the future because of historical differences that are rooted deeper than that of political thoughts or regimes (*Ibid.*): Japanese, Confucian, Hindu, Islamic, Slavic-Orthodox, Western, Latin American, and potentially, African. Moreover, humans are capable of redefining themselves, where boundaries between civilisations become blurrier (Huntington 1993, 24). The contemporary world has already seen for instance, religious extremists and fundamentalists being successfully recruited from within locations with democratic traditions, which goes to say that, in all instances, democracy might not be as strong a force as it is made out to be.

2.3.2. Free market economy as a tool of peace through interdependency

Globalisation has brought about evermore effective opportunities for trade and growth: route infrastructures and means of transportation have developed, national products spread to worldwide use, and even factories have been relocated to more affordable locations. This growth is often referred to as so pursued, that war would only be seen as inconvenient. However, the growth of economies has cost dearly regarding peace. Not only does the globalisation of economy hurt some local economies that are exploited due to their less-developed industrial economies, but the free markets offering weapons to whomever is capable of buying them is directly proportional to conflict and war. As mentioned earlier, superpower interventions during the Cold War encouraged non-state actors (Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer 2003, 57). Furthermore, the thriving of these non-state actors was and will be enabled by the growing arms trade industry, regions with dwindling economic prospects, and the strengthening position of multinational corporations (MNCs) with territorial and militaristic (private) ambitions (*Ibid.*). Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer further describe these factors playing into the growing number of motivated and resource-wise capable non-state actors willing to fight wars, be it the civil wars of today or wars against nation-states (*Ibid.*):

> "The variety of groups involved in contemporary "civil wars" and the activities of para-military and "terrorist" groups are forerunners of actors that may soon be willing and able to inflict and sustain casualties severe enough to qualify as wars. Thus, not only is it the IGOs (inter-governmental organizations) and MNCs that enjoy greater latitude, there is also evidence of the emergence of failed states, or "quasi-legitimate" states, and regimes with de facto independence, yet which are not members of the international system, that have the potential to engage in warfare."

Capitalism is not welcomed everywhere, yet it offers means to wage wars against it. Krause (2019, 929) reflects how the former 'Third World' countries, plausibly on the Korean Peninsula, might be capable of sustaining a war alike to WWI and WWII without outside help after becoming industrialised. Also, the inequal distribution of economy impacts difference-awareness, (Huntington 1993, 27) in which case juxtapositioning between the 'rich' and the 'poor' ought to be recognised as a potential source of conflict and war. The threats that free market economy and capitalism pose also concern other issues in addition to the facilitated means of attaining weapons.

For one, even if a fight for survival was bargained for a fight for prosperity, the level of consumption already today exhausts natural resources, one of the main issues of the world and highly controversial. In another example, the 'economic interdependency' that has also been perceived as a deterring factor, has also been proven to have been exploited. Kellogg (2016, 24) explains how trade relations might encourage resolving conflicts without violence and the involvement of militaries, but also notes how petro-states engage in dispute more for not being economically constrained. Kellogg (*Ibid.*, 34) continues:

> "While economic interdependence reduces fatal interstate conflict as well as the hostility level of disputes, these pacific effects disappear when at least one state is more than 20% to 30% dependent on oil and gas revenues. Thus, petro-states are uniquely undeterred by economic costs of military conflict."

2.3.3. The negative deterrence of mutually assured destruction

The negative deterrence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has been brought up on a number of occasions in peace studies. Freedman (2019, 116) for instance depicts nuclear weapons as the reason for the excersice of caution, indirect fighting, and the use of alternative power displays in the form of sanctions. Although this seems to be a general trend, any significance of these alternative displays of power ought not to be downplayed. Here, it seems again that present acts of war are not recognised as ones because the point of comparison, which is outdated. This is not to say, that a full-blown nuclear war would not be possible – only that fearing for one might cloud judgements regarding other threats which are also capable of escalating.

Moreover, the absence of a reciprocal, large-scale nuclear war seems to have been interpreted as a guarantee of unwillingness to use WMD for the risk of escalation. However, it does raise questions, why continuous WMD acquisitions and site testings take place. Being in position of a nuclear

weapon surely secures from an opponent getting any ideas or 'an upper hand', but this would still imply that the international society experiences mistrust and a need to defend or to be able to attack. Mandelbaum (Kagan *et. al.* 1999, 150) describes the *status quo* he coined 'warlessness' to prevail among and motivate Europeans and North Americans towards non-proliferation as a sign of faith towards one another.

Moreover, said prevalence is argued to condemn war as an illegitimate way of attaining things of the past, that is, territory, glory, and wealth (*Ibid.*). Attempts at non-proliferation do inspire hope, yet this seems a delicate matter requiring immense trust, understanding, and willingness to forsake hostile threats and actions meanwhile committing to common rules with compromises. If North Americans and Europeans did successfully disarm to some extent, the good faith would have to persist, if total armament was not in the cards because of all the other parties that are excluded from the span of 'warlessness'. This is not so easily done, as will be later discussed in chapter 3. Kagan (*et. al.* 1999, 140) recognises that although nuclear weapons and other deterrents contribute to the establishment of enduring peace, human-made decisions and actions might incite wars of extensive magnitude, even. Moreover, at least one of the supposedly old motivations of war waging listed by Mandelbaum: wealth (Kagan *et. al.* 1999, 150), could still be considered as a major cause of violent altercations. Not to mention Mandelbaum's (*Ibid.*) second 'old' motivator, territory, which according to Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer (2003, 57) is in the interests of MNCs, whereas the third of Mandelbaum's listed old motivators, glory, (Kagan *et. al.* 1999, 150) still prevails as a reason for certain acts of terror related to fundamentalist, religious views.

Thus, one should not rely much on the deterrence from the potency of these weapons, but consider why there is a need for them in the first place. Freedman (2019, 116) explains the 'Long Peace' to have prevailed from 1945 because of the dagerousness of engaging in war. It could be argued that, since WMD were invented for the reason of destroying the opponent, were used in WWII, proliferated around the world and only then, kept unused, the motivations behind their usage might not have changed. It sure is more dangerous to engage now, that the opponent might also be in possession of a similar weapon, but if non-proliferation was to be a complete success, there is no guarantee that WMD would not once again be resorted to. In a concluding note, the presence of a 'Long Peace', that is based on most parties being able either to either destroy each other or pressure others to act in a certain way, would appear to be more of a hostile standoff than a benevolent progression of events.

3. DISCUSSING THE PROSPECTS OF WAR AND CONFLICT

Although another WWI or WWII is unlikely and misleading as an expectation given the passing of time, thoughts, and means, another destructive international conflict seems possible, if not likely. Moreover, this kind of war might originate from currently underestimated incidents and the provocations thereof through responses and resolution structures. Mandelbaum (Kagan *et. al.* 1999, 150) describes "warlessness" to prevail only among Western actors, leaving Russia and China at large to partake in hostilities capable of escalating significantly. Kagan (*Ibid.*, 143) refers to the power the United States (US) holds regarding alternative methods of issue resolution, in result of which the US also has the keys to the dismantling of said behavioural pattern.

Malešević (2014, 81) contributes to the impact of the US actions in stating that, should "Pax Americana" suffer, the reorganisation of institutions and power-relations would transform. Malešević (*Ibid.*, 81) further speculates on the effects of globalisation redefining the balance between war and society in the sense that unsustainability might lead to the disrupting of organisations and state structures. After this, unfed and unprotected citizens might migrate in masses, and by doing so, breed more conflicts meanwhile geo-political power-relations become increasingly unequally distributed (Malešević 2014, 81-82). Thus, it could be concurred that the future will continue to see peace defied by threats stemming from both the actors in international systems and by external, environmental threats.

3.1. The tipping scales of trust: selfish propensities versus utilitarian conduct in the international system

The factor of trust among different actors in the international arena plays ultimately the key role in any arguments regarding the obsolescence of war: in stipulations regarding cooperation and organisation, opposing parties must trust that the other one does not choose another outcome (as revised in discusion about game theory), and with deterrence, one must similarly trust in others' intentions and analogous motivations. Trust is abstract and incomputable, whereas signed contracts

may reflect efforts at it but not guarantee its actualisation. However, one would be remiss in excluding it from the an analysis regarding the stability of such a delicate system as that of the international security arena.

One could argue, that although a social and intelligent species capable of having established relations of such magnitude that exist today both between states and other systems of polities, human is also selfish, and either by instinct or conscious decision, will more often than not choose to prioritise their own interests. Justifications for such action vary from self-preservation to national interest, and to this end, fail-safes are kept. Notions of such selfish propensities of human kind are brought up as early as 1651 by the modern philosophist Hobbes (86-87) in his reflections on one's desire to either "destroy or subdue" the one desiring the same indivisible thing, or on the fundamental reasons as to why men go to war – gain and security (Hobbes 1651, 87).

Connotations regarding mistrust and intrinsic self-interest can easily be detected even today. Descriptive instances of this would be for instance, nuclear proliferation through a globalised free market economy despite the UN's (Treaty . . . *s.a.*) comprehensive Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement based on (Remarks . . . 2017) the protection and advocacy of US citizens and the revision of terms that would be just to them. Freedman (2019, 107) depicts the circumstances surrounding the Kellogg-Briand pact, where states circumvented new stipulations regarding the illegality of declaring war by omitting the declaration and advancing without it, as did Italy in Abyssinia. Said event goes to show both the selfish propensities intrinsic to any actor and the speciousness that, unfortunately, underlays social systems. The failure of the LON and the ignition of WWII are also testaments to the selfish propensity of human kind: had states led by Hitler or Joseph Stalin for instance not been driven by the motives of glory or territorial aspirations, or had theirs and other waging states complied with the mandate of the LON, aspirational compromises could have been made, although surely not being as satisfying to one specific country.

Regardless of waged wars being poor reference to what war is or might be in the future, they do reflect the ever-present underlying mistrust and psychologies of ones that engage in war of any kind: the same cost profit analysis can be seen to be conducted by modern states and state consortiums in economic game theory, for instance. Moreover, as was discussed earlier on, many a conflict concerning economy might be considerable as war. Hobbes (1651, 91) argues that men are in a continuous state of war before renouncing their right to act as they please and should not

other men relinquish their unlimited rights in an attempt at peace, neither should one themselves. Have contemporary nation-states and other actors relinquished their rights to act as they please in their contracts, treatises, and organisations?

One could argue that although state-transgressive institutions are highly contractual and might even comprehend interparliamentary and intergovernmental organs, there is still no authority to which all states owe their ultimate allegiance to. Perhaps this is the case because many wish peace, stable conditions, and prosperity yet uncertainty and mistrust underlays interaction. In addition, it is not the noble, utilitarian spirits of the established institutions and organisations that make decisions – it is humans capable of ambition, error, and miscalculation. Thus, the Hobbesian view of war underlying the system of modern international societies could be argued to prevail.

3.2. On the direction of threats and consequential actions

As previously discussed, some scholars, such as Freedman (2019, 108) have implied that war is becoming obsolete due to the lack of a 'WWIII' because of the costliness-deterring factors of the contemporary international society, whereas some (Mueller 1989, 219) attributes it to the fading of the communist ideology and the power transition from militaristic to economic prowess, and others (Huntington 1993, 29) suggest that the ideological juxtapositioning from the era of the Cold War have metamorphosed into cultural antithesis between civilisations. Whatever form(s) war has and will take in the future, the response should evolve along it – that is, if conflicts are to be managed, never to mention a peace attained. War termination studies offer corollary insights as to the individuality of each war from the viewpoint of how to end them. Krause (2019, 922) discusses war termination policies and compares war to cancer – neither one of the two has one remedy for each occurrence. Krause (*Ibid.*) also notes how there are common denominators regarding the concept of war, yet no theories alone suffice regarding how wars end.

An argument could be made however, that the lack of a solution for wars' ending reaffirms what has already been established: the denominators in existing definitions of war are insufficient, and do not address acknowledge many an ongoing war, causing more conflict. It should come as no surprise that a war, which is misinterpreted, cannot come to an end. Respecting and acknowledging the nuances and their importance of different conflicts is crucial in their termination. De Franco, Engberg-Pedersen, and Mennecke (2019, 895-896) address the issues in war termination by

beginning from the typological level of using "wars" as opposed to "war" to emphasise, how every recurrence of war is individual, and that there are also many types of war.

As a corollary justification, and as has been argued throughout this paper, the author argues that any discussion on the future direction of war based on the question "Is war (or major war) becoming obsolete?" not only provides faulty premises but also misguided answers, for there is an undeniable plurality to the concept of war. Asking the question in plural form: "Are wars becoming obsolete?", although by definition more elaborate, rings naïve and thereafter, reveals underlying truths of the state of affairs, in which the contemporary international system remains conflicted and mistrusting.

CONCLUSION

Firstly, the initial research has been evidently confirmed. As many, even advocates of the obsolescence of war have come to find before, war is not (as of yet, at least) becoming obsolete. For instance, Mandelbaum (Kagan *et. al.* 1999, 150) and Kagan (*Ibid.*, 143) consider the obsolescence of war possible but also recognise that, in reality, it is more plausible that war is simply becoming less 'fashionable' or desirable. The results of the respective study, however supported the initial research claim: war is not becoming obsolete, rather, fallacies from generalisations of the concept of war have hindered objective analysis of war trends and the assessment of prospects.

Although many a devastating war has provided lessons, the lessons have often been forgotten about or simply misinterpreted. Moreover, little could even be expected to have been learned since each new incident has provided its own novel challenges. However, what cannot be described as novel is the trend of system reorganisation that has taken place after each incident, each system also becoming undermined at some later point. This paper found that, although war and society appear to be in constant state of transformation, they are also cyclical. Wars are being fought, systems are being reorganised with competing sentiments, others' notions rise to be more dominant, and in result, new antipathies rise or old ones strengthen. In addition, new threats are being unanswered to because of outdated notions of war, a new conflict ignites, and once more, a new system gets constructed based on values and notions that are dominantly considered 'correct'.

Having established prevailing fallacies both on epitomic incidents' and international systems' levels, the examination was directed towards existing definitions and the insufficiency thereof. The research found, that the contemporary denominators of wars based on fixed casualty numbers do not reflect the hostile *status quo* which is capable of escalating in many parts of the world. In addition, the study found that the issues regarding definitions of wars and the acknowledgement thereof begin from the grammatic level of the concept and word 'war' often being regarded in singular rather than plural form. Attempts have been made in respect to more extensive

classifications and frameworks of war, yet these broad-minded conflict comprehensions ought to be more visibly considered in state and non-state conduct. A delicate balance was found to exist between state and non-state actors, in which case the recognition of contemporary threats and the actors' actions' impact in them becomes all the more significant.

Discoveries regarding the essence and potential direction of wars were made in an analysis of the meanings of absence of war, deterrence's effectiveness, and the significance of globalisation to conflict. All three supposedly war-deterring factors, democracy, weapons of mass destruction, and economy where deemed less than airtight, if not capable of birthing plenty additional issues. Finally, prospects of wars were analysed by the assessment of interaction within international systems and the lack of trust, that seems to have and might continue to impair efforts at peace. Thus, this paper has contributed to the extent of war- and peace-related thought by challenging existing perceptions and proposing new aspects.

The perception of what wars and threats are, have and will continue to change. However, any sentiments about wars' direction, nature, or people's perspective thereof, seem inevitably set to fail: one might be calling a conflict an escalating war, whereas the other might call it a minor incident in the absence of a major war. A liberal politician might call war a negative necessity, whereas a religious fundamentalist might call it a glorious honour and a calling. If one must seek some universally and throughout times applicable truths regarding war, they might have to settle for the notion, that it breeds devastation, malaise, and shortage.

Ergo, attempts at defining war with reference to the XX century understandings quickly become useless when looking at the trends of war and conflict beyond the said era, for in the past peaceful times have prevailed as well, but then come to an end and often for a reason not expected. The unexpected changes to stable conditions have surprised experts throughout centuries as well (Kagan *et al.* 1999, 142), rendering prophesising not only vain, but as established during the respective research, potentially harmful and subjective. One must not expect scholars and decision-makers to have foretelling skills but a humble conflict approach, and the ability to adapt to and recognise evolving hostile circumstances in the international security arena. The *intra-* and *extra-* systemic complex realities and dissonance of the international society have always existed and might never be conformed to everyone's satisfaction, nor be solved in their entirety by prevailing systems, and thus calling for incessant efforts at inclusive and delicate interaction and research in the international security arena. The International Relations academia might find the research of

cross-cultural cooperation between economically, administratively, and resource-wise incomparable parties particularly useful on this front.

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