

Have Things Improved- Research on Warfare Improvement

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Abstract: ‘Have Things Improved’ is a very board topic, so I am going to present one side of this question, which is Has War Improved. War is an undeniably crucial part of humanity, since the first records of human violence in a conflict happened more than 10,000 years ago. Ever since then, our technological advancements were based heavily on warfare, such as the Cold War in the mid-1900s, escalated our knowledge of the universe and ultimately, using rocket science, we managed to reach beyond Earth for the first like in humanity. The 3 definitions I will be providing my argument is as follows. Improvement is a wide ranging word, and it is defined in Cambridge English Dictionary as: an occasion when something gets better or when you make it better. War is defined as: Any situation in which there is strong competition between opposing side or a great fight against something harmful. Warfare is defined as: The activity of fighting a war, often including the weapons and methods that are used. By the end of the essay, I would be proving that warfare has improved technologically while war has in fact gotten worse. Firstly, I would be arguing how warfare has improved overtime through modernized weapons and increased efficiency in military transportation. Whereas secondly, I would be arguing how war has worsened in terms of brutality and ethics.

1. Introduction

Warfare is the way humans fight wars and the strategies and weapons that could impact the outcome of a battle. It is seen as a steady progression throughout the history of war, that the invention of different weapons, such as tanks, could change the way the battle is won, for example, the blitzkrieg. Some people may say that due to the technological advancements in the modern era, it would be harder to overtake opposing forces as easily as before. The modern Era is referred as after the industrial revolution. An example of quick, decisive victory before the revolution was William the Conqueror’s conquest of England[1] which was completed in a matter of 20 days. Therefore, one may say that warfare has not improved because it has not become more efficient despite our advancements in technology. However, in this section, it would be argued that warfare has improved in regards of its efficiency.

Modern technology allows wars to be fought much more efficiently and therefore warfare can be said to have improved. In this case, efficiency in war is defined as “Time to necessary to achieve objectives”.

The advancement in transportation made it much easier for armies to travel from one place to another. For example, it took great military leaders like Julius Caesar 8 years (58 BCE – 50 BCE) to conquer Gaul[2], which is modern France, while it took Nazi Germany 6 weeks. In the process of Julius Caesar’s conquest, he only had infantry and cavalry, and therefore it took a long and painful 4 months for Caesar to move his whole army across the Alps (March 58 BCE – July 58 BCE). In battle, the fastest cavalry could move without breaking the formation, which would cause significant chaos, is 20 kilometres per hour, not to mention the steep elevation of the Alps that made it close to impossible for cavalry to cross safely. On the other hand, the Nazis took a mere 6 days to Alps[3-4], since they had the technology of Panzer Tanks, which could not only move at a steady pace of 40 kilometres per hour, but it could also carry up to 3 people per tank[5]. Not to mention that the Nazis had 10 regiments of Panzer Tanks each with 35 of them.

In addition, due to the industrial revolution, factories nowadays could allow the country to mobilize much quicker in times of battle. In this context, mobilization is defined as “how quickly a

country could assemble and ready military troops for active service”. For example, William the Conqueror was a Norman Monarch who claimed the throne of England in 1066, and his mobilization of the Norman Army took 7 months to complete[6] while the Russian mobilization in 1914 against the Austria-Hungarian Empire and Germany took a mere 18 days[7]. For William’s conquest of England, he mobilized 7,000 men, of which around 2,500 are cavalry, and 600 transport ships. However, in WW1, there was an abundance of factories, indicating the ability to mass produce weapons without manpower. Therefore, Russia managed to mobilize 5 million soldiers with 4.6 million rifles in a matter of 18 days[8-9] and caused Germany to have to fight a war on 2 fronts, which is exactly what the Schlieffen Plan was trying to avoid.

Some people might say that efficiency of how war was fought does not correlate to a victory. As an example, the Nazis used the same strategy they used to conquer France, the blitzkrieg, to conquer the Soviet Union, known as Operation Barbarossa, and it ended up being one the main reasons causing them to lose WW2. However, warfare is not only based on speed, but also on strategy. Hitler invaded Russia on June 22, 1941, and expected a resounding victory in approximately 10 weeks, therefore he did not consider equipping his troops with winter clothing. Nevertheless, the roads to Russia are muddy and difficult to cross with tanks which severely decreased the army’s manoeuvrability, in addition, the Nazis had to hold siege at 3 cities of Moscow, Stalingrad and Leningrad which greatly defeats the purpose of blitzkrieg[10]. In conclusion, the main reason of the Nazis failing Operation Barbarossa was not because of efficiency, but the strategy and decision of generals to hold siege at 3 of the most important Soviet Union cities in the time of winter.

2. Has War Improved

War is a process of where two opposing forces inflict damage on one another until one comes out as victorious. It is known for its brutality and destruction it could cause, and throughout humanity, it is estimated that more than 150 million people died in a war. Some people may say that due to the Just War Theory, and afterward the Geneva Conventions, that war has become less brutal than before, and therefore improved. For example, During the Cold War between the Soviet Union and USA, which last from 1949 – 1991, there were many opportunities to fire nuclear weapons from either country. Nevertheless, both countries abided: “the Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.”[11] Established in Geneva, 1864 and refined in 1949, which saved up to hundreds of millions of innocent civilians. Therefore, one may say that war has improved due to agreement and knowledge of protection of civilians during war time situations. However, in this section, it would be argued that war has not improved regarding its ethics and brutality.

The Geneva Conventions in 1864 and 1949 did not decrease the brutality and civilian death tolls in time of war, on the other hand, it increased drastically. In addition, throughout the past 40-50 years, a new group of people emerged, called terrorists, and their main focus is to inflict terror and despair among normal civilians. Brutality, in this case, is defined as: “The number of civilian deaths after the Geneva Conventions in comparison with before it.”

The word terrorism was first recorded in English-language dictionaries in 1798, and one of the first acknowledged terrorist attacks was staged after the Great Famine in Ireland from 1846 – 1852, in which terrorists bombed the Clarkenwell Prison in London and killed 12 people while injuring 100. However, after the Geneva Conventions of 1949 of the protection of civilians during wartime, one iconic attack staged in modern terrorism (Islamic terrorism after the 1960s) was the 9/11, in which terrorists struck 4 times at important American buildings including: The World Trade Centre, The Pentagon and The Twin Towers. After the 9 Years War, in 1603, where Great Britain has controlled the whole of Ireland ever since. This caused disrupt and anger among the Irish society and with the additional Great Famine of Ireland[12], killing approximately 1.8 million inhabitants, lead to a revolutionary group of 100,000 people, established in 1858 to bring independence back to Ireland, called the Fenians. Their biggest terrorism strike was against the Clarkenwell Prison in London in 1867 which killed 12 people and injuring 100[13]. Yet 9/11 was the same exact attack

just thousands of times more brutal and impactful[14]. The roots of the attack started from 1982 where Osama Bin Laden, leader of 9/11 and terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda, saw the US air force helping the Israelis conduct air raids on Lebanese buildings. After that, Bin Laden vowed to give the Americans “a taste of their own medicine”[15], which led to 9/11 on September 11, 2001 where 4 commercial planes crashed into the World Trade Center, The Twin Towers, and The Pentagon, killing up to 2,977 people in the process.

The Geneva Convention agreement in 1949 established the “Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War” and “the Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War” however, that did not limit the brutality of the Korean War (1950-1953) on its civilians and treatment of their Prisoners of War. On the other hand, the American Civil War (1861-1865), even though being the bloodiest war in American History, had a limited amount of civilians deaths in comparison. The Korean War was fought between the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK, or known as North Korea) against the Republic of Korea (ROK, or known as South Korea) which resulted in approximately 5 million deaths, 3.5 million were in fact civilian casualties (roughly 70% of all deaths). It started on June 25th, 1950, when the North Korean People’s Army crossed the 38th parallel line and invaded South Korea, with the intention of uniting the country until it’s communist regime[16]. During the war, there were about 200 incidents of open fire at civilians on either side, the most infamous being the No Gun Ri Massacre in July, 1950, where armed forces in South Korea shot down hundreds of refugees. In addition, Prisoners of Wars of North Korea were normally executed right after capture or forced to go on death marches so it became impossible for their comrades to rescue them. If one side was forced to retreat, civilian transportation left behind were constantly destroyed regardless to whether it caused civilians to stuck in an “active combat zone”[17]. The American Civil War was fought between the Confederates (the South) and the Union (the North) resulting in up to 625,000 casualties in which 50,000 of them were civilians (roughly 8% of all deaths). The Civil War started on April, 12th 1861, where the Union claimed Fort Sumter were under their possession, and Confederates opened fire on them[18]. It started with the intention of abolishing slavery in the South and reuniting the country as the “United States of America”. During the War, armies often destroyed civilian property, seized food and turned houses into hospitals, in addition, people in cities often suffered from overcrowding, inflation, and hunger[19].

Many people may say that the development of chemical weapons is a great development our technology and is a swift way to overpower their enemy and therefore the threat has made war less likely, faster, less damaging if it does occur, and is therefore an improvement. In addition, chemical weapons were banned internationally after WW1, and the law was reinforced in both 1972 and 1993. However, in the Iran-Iraq War on the day of March 16th, 1988 in the city of Halabja. The dictator Saddam Hussein used a combination of mustard and nerve gases, the former harms the nose, lungs and throat, while the latter harms the eyes and respiratory system, to target the inhabitants of the city, and it caused a total of 3,500 fatalities and up to 10,000 wounded.

3. Conclusion

“Have Things Improved” is a very board topic, so in this essay I introduced whether or not “War Has Improved”. Throughout the essay, I argued that warfare has improved while war has gotten worse. Firstly, I argued how warfare has improved overtime through modernized weapons and increased efficiency in military transportation. Where Germany had advanced Panzer Tanks which allowed them to conquer France much quicker than Caesar, who didn’t have access to modern technology. In addition, with the development of factories and mass production, the Russian Army was able to mobilise an army of 5 million soldiers in 18 days, whereas it took William the Conqueror 7 months to mobilise an army of 7,000 soldiers without the help of factories. And secondly, I argued how war has worsened in terms of brutality and ethics. Where the Clarkenwell Prison terrorist attack in 1867 was significantly less destructive than 9/11 in 2001, and how the Korean War in 1950 violated the rules of the Geneva Conventions and tortured civilians along with Prisoners of War, while the American Civil War in 1861 was less destructive towards civilians

despite happening previous to the Conventions. Finally, even though aspects of war has improved, it still took away the lives of more than 150 million brave men and women, boys and girls, civilians and soldiers, and should be avoided at all costs.

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