**Should War be an Option to Maintain Peace?**

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War is perhaps the easiest option, as seen throughout human history, available to belligerents to resolve their disputes. However, it remains the most expensive and painstaking method to attain political objectives. Therefore, the question does arise that why do nations adopt war as an option to resolve their disputes, and whether a war should be an option to maintain peace in today’s so-called civilised world.

Briefly analysing the major wars of the last century as well as the first two decades of the current century clearly reflects that states did not hesitate in initiating wars and conflicts. Moreover, the human and economic losses during these wars and conflicts did not deter them from launching similar campaigns in future. For instance, WW-I began with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary in June 1914. According to Martin Kelly, this was only one of the five reasons for breaking out of WW-I. The others being, Mutual Defense Alliances, Imperialism, Militarism and Nationalism among the European states. The result was a prolonged war with massive destruction of lives and properties across the globe, mainly in Europe. Despite differences in the casualty figures, studies reveal, “The total number of casualties in World War I, both military and civilian, was about 37 million: 16 million deaths and 21 million wounded. The total number of deaths includes 9.7 million military personnel and about 6.8 million civilians. The Entente Powers (also known as the Allies) lost about 5.7 million soldiers while the Central Powers lost about 4 million.”

The first “live” television war laid the foundations of a much wider conflict in the Gulf region involving extra-regional forces.

WW-I ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, with an aim to bring Germany to its knees and ensure that it would never be able to wage a war again. However, the world saw that in little over two decades, a far stronger Germany under Adolf Hitler launched a more ferocious military campaign against its rivals. The losses and destruction as compared to the previous global war were far more. According to some studies, “[T]he Second World War was the most widespread and deadliest war in history, involving more than 30 countries and resulting in more than 50 million military and civilian deaths (with some estimates as high as 85 million dead).”

Other wars and conflicts of the twentieth-century include; The Korean War (1950-1953), Kashmir Conflict (1947- till date), Arab-Israel Conflict (1948- till date), The Vietnam War, Afghan War-I and II, Gulf War-I and II, Iran-Iraq War, so and so forth.

A critical review of the causes, losses and result of each of these wars and conflicts reflect that very little was achieved by the warring states. The Korean War was the first military engagement of the Cold War; the Kashmir Conflict and the Arab-Israel Conflict fall into different categories. The Korean War was relatively short but highly destructive and cost nearly five million lives. The result: the Korean Peninsula remains divided with a constant fear of military engagements between North and South Korea, with the former having nuclear capability.

The Vietnam War (1959-75) was fought between the two communities; communists and non-communists with western allies’ support, mainly the US. More than three million people lost their lives in the immense destruction of Vietnam, which later became one under a communist regime.

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

The Gulf War I, the first “live” television war culminated with the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq’s unjust invasion. But again, it laid the foundations of a much wider conflict in the Gulf region involving extra-regional forces.

Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), one of the longest, most expensive and inconsequential wars between two Middle-Eastern oil-rich neighbours, was responsible for over half a million deaths and unrestricted use of chemical weapons.

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

In my opinion, the use of kinetic means to tame down an adversary would continue unabated unless war is kept as an option to resolve disputes among states. Therefore, there is a need to evolve a consensus among the international organizations and global powers that wars will not be an option to resolve disputes. It may sound too idealistic, especially while Russia-Ukraine War, Yemen War, and Syrian War footages are regularly showing massive casualties, but certainly doable with determination and self-control.

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