

Conflict and Cooperation



- Why did the conflict or need for cooperation emerge?
- What happened?
- How was it perceived by those involved?
- How did it affect people's lives?
- What were the consequences?
- What is the legacy?
- How does this fit into the bigger picture?

Important historical battles – The emergence of Diplomacy – Region and Conflict- Uprisings and revolutions- Peace and the Balance of Power- Civil Wars- Occupations and liberation struggles- Total War- The Cold War- International Relations and Collective Security- Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the 21st century

Conflict is a normal part of human behaviour. It tends to arise when individuals or groups find themselves in competition with other individuals or groups. This may be over their share of scarce resources. It may be because they want to protect their own interests even if this is at the expense of the interests of other people. It may be because they want to be top dog in the area – the one who is in control. It may be because they fear the other's plans and intentions towards them. Or it may just be because they feel threatened in some way by other people: their different way of life, their different beliefs and values, their friends and allies.

“Conflict [...] can be religious, ethnic, political, cultural, ideological, industrial, diplomatic or military”

Now in some instances they can choose to ignore the differences and the disagreements and walk away. But if they want to or need to carry on occupying the same space then they are faced by two choices: to cooperate or to compete, knowing that in some situations competition could lead to opposition, hostility, even violence.

If conflict is a normal part of human behaviour then so too is cooperation. There are many things we cannot do or achieve without the help of others. But also as social beings we need peace, security and order. Without this condition it is often very difficult to get things done and to get on with our lives. Security and order depend on rules and people will not agree about the rules to live by without cooperation.

It is common now to think of cooperation as a good thing and conflict as a bad thing but in reality they are both important levers of change. New developments in the visual arts and literature would not have happened without a conflict of ideas. We would not have many of the rights and freedoms that we now enjoy if others before us had not been prepared to fight for them. And, indeed, in some parts of the world the struggle for those rights continues today. Even wars, destructive though they are, can also be powerful levers for social change. For example, the two world wars of the twentieth century also helped to speed up changes in the political and economic status of women.



Bombing of Dresden 1945



Hanseatic League Trade Ship

The modern war has also transformed the economies of many countries, because of the reliance on mass produced weapons such as tanks, battleships, fighter planes and bombers and now, increasingly, the reliance on weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time we can also point to periods in history where groups and nations have joined forces to achieve their goals. Our history books are full of occasions where two or more countries have formed an alliance to protect themselves against other powerful nations, or they have signed treaties agreeing not to

attack each other. Trade has also been another way in which communities and nations have cooperated with each other, recognising that each has something that the other needs or wants. Trade treaties have been the most common form of cooperation of this kind but we could also include here the operations of the Hanseatic League from the 13th to the 16th century which started as an association of northern German towns trading with each other and eventually included towns around the Baltic, the Low Countries and England. Also the developments in international trade during the Renaissance and the great explorations of the 15th and 16th centuries would not have been possible without cooperation between the banking families of Europe. In the 20th century we saw the emergence of multi-national economic and political organisations such as the European Union as well as inter-governmental organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. These too have been important levers for social, political and economic change.

Conflict takes a variety of forms. It can be religious, ethnic, political, cultural, ideological, industrial, diplomatic or military. At one end of the spectrum we have what is sometimes referred to as latent conflict where individuals, groups or nations may have their differences and disagreements but these are not yet so great that one of the sides decides to act to change the situation. Between nations this is often described by historians as an unstable peace. There is always the possibility that the differences and disagreements will escalate into open conflict even violence. At the other end we have armed conflict, which can also take a variety of forms, including terrorism, coup d'états, revolutions, civil wars, wars between two nations and global wars.

The picture of history that we get when we pick up many textbooks is of an almost perpetual string of domestic and international crises, battles and wars, conquests and empires, treaties to end wars and treaties to prevent wars. By contrast the periods of peace seem to be infrequent, short and usually troubled. Monarchs and Emperors seldom seemed to be secure on their thrones, facing unrest at home and threatened by or threatening their neighbours.

In the 20th century alone there have been more than 100 wars and other forms of major armed conflict across the world; three-quarters of them since 1945 and the formation of the United Nations an international organisation established to secure world peace. Since 1900 over 160 million people have died as a result of armed conflicts around the world. Of those less than half were soldiers and armed combatants, the majority were civilians and non-combatants, either dying at the hands of the armed forces or dying from disease and



Signing of UN Charter 26 June 1945, San Francisco

**“In the Middle Ages
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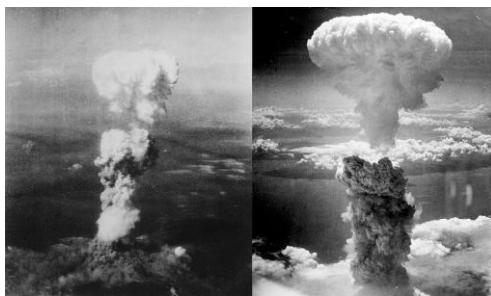
famine as a result of war-time conditions. The term ‘total war’ was coined to describe the First and Second World Wars, precisely because so little distinction was made between combatants and non-combatants. Just under a half of the casualties and deaths in World War I and two thirds of the casualties and deaths in World War II

were non-combatants.

Total war contrasts with 'limited war'. In the Middle Ages it was typical for the artillery and cavalry of two armies to meet on a battlefield and the outcome would be decided in a day. If the victory was not decisive or the conflict continued there would be other battles until one side was victorious or the two sides agreed on a peace treaty. In the meantime the civilian population got on with their everyday lives, trade continued, even between the two warring countries, and the borders often remained open. Wars tended to be a series of set piece battles. This was typical of many of the 18th and 19th century wars: the Napoleonic Wars, for example, and the Crimean War. The Battle of Balaclava on 25th October 1854 fits our image of a set piece battle. The artillery bombardments, the infantry attacks on each other lines, the ill-fated cavalry charge of the Light Brigade against the Russian guns all seem light years away from our understanding of modern warfare as fought on the Eastern Front in World War II or in Vietnam in the 1960s. And yet in recent history we have had battles that have been short and decisive and not that different from the wars fought in earlier centuries. The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 was over in six days. It was fought with planes and tanks rather than canon and cavalry but the strategies and tactics were not so very different from those employed by Napoleon or Wellington. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was virtually over in two days and the Iraqi army was driven out of Kuwait by the US-led coalition in four days.

“The difference between these wars and more recent total wars is one of scale and the weapons that the armies used to kill each other”

At the same time the distinction between total war and limited war, though useful in categorising different kinds of conflict, is seldom as clear-cut as it appears to be. It is certainly true that the numbers of civilians who died in the two World Wars of the 20th century were far greater than in any previous war. And there was no doubt that in the Second World War both sides believed that they were more



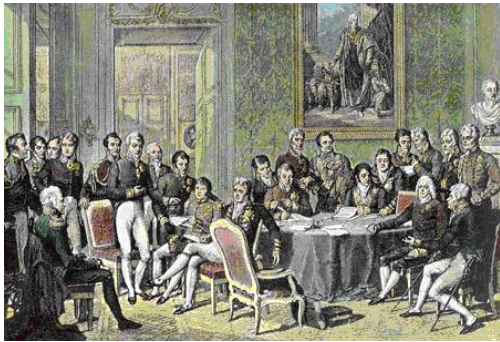
Atomic bomb mushroom clouds over Hiroshima (left) and Nagasaki (right)

likely to bring their opponents to their needs by waging war on civilians. The aerial bombing of British cities by the Luftwaffe, the devastation of Hamburg, Dresden and other German cities by the Allied air forces and the use of the atom bomb on Japan was based on the belief that the ordinary people would put pressure on their leaders to

surrender or sue for peace if they were attacked directly in this way. On the other hand, many of the wars fought in earlier times, such as the Peloponnesian Wars in Ancient

Greece which lasted 13 years or the Thirty Years War fought across much of Europe in the 17th century could also be described as total wars. The armies lived off the land, leaving little for the local populations. Those who were not killed by marauding soldiers died of starvation or disease. The difference between these wars and more recent total wars is one of scale and the weapons that the armies used to kill each other.

However, if total war is not simply a recent phenomenon then neither is the idea of international cooperation to maintain peace and security. From the 15th Century onwards diplomats and rulers in



**The Congress of Vienna by Jean-Baptiste
Isabey, (1819)**

Italy, Spain, central and western Europe increasingly spoke about the importance of the balance of power in Europe. This idea of balance of power was based on the assumption that major powers are natural rivals with different and irreconcilable aims and they all want to dominate the rest. Stability and peace depended on convincing them that this dominance was not possible because their rivals would join together to stop them. Of course there were key players or major powers within this balancing act. Spain remained very powerful until the mid C17th. Then France for a while in the late C17th and

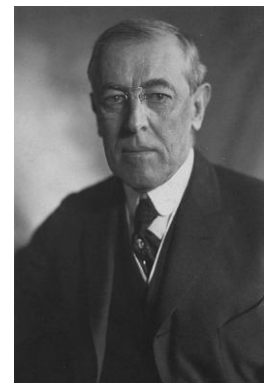
Sweden and the Austrians after the defeat of the Turks in 1680. In the C18th the balance shifted again. The power of Spain and Sweden declined and the colonial powers: England, France and Holland became more powerful and Russia and Prussia acquired Great Power status.

But then Napoleon changed all that. It was not just that the French armies overran so much of Europe and then marginalized some of the former European powers. It was also that the scale and cost of war changed dramatically. Now only a few countries were capable of taking military action against Napoleon's armies: Britain, Russia, Prussia and the Habsburg Empire. Not surprisingly, after Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo these were the nations, along with the representatives of the restored monarchy in France, who came together in the autumn of 1815 for the Congress of Vienna. Their purpose was to agree a peace settlement for Europe that would ensure that no single power could ever dominate the continent again. They still talked about the importance of the balance of power but now it was based on the idea that it was the balance between the five great powers that was important and that they would act together if conflicts between other states threatened to engulf the rest of Europe.

Of course there were still wars during the C19th, even between some of the Great Powers, but the idea persisted that the balance of power between them would prevent any war from escalating to the point where other states would be dragged into the conflict. But that is exactly what happened in 1914 when

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growing rivalry between the powers, combined with tensions between Austria and Serbia, escalated rapidly into a European then a global war. By 1918 the idea of the Balance of Power had become totally discredited. The American President, Woodrow Wilson, wanted to create an international organisation, the League of Nations. A new idea now emerged: Collective Security where all the member states would co-operate together, using economic sanctions and, if necessary, provide armed forces to enforce the League's resolutions. But, in practice it was not capable of preventing aggression towards other member states by Germany and Italy in the 1930s.



**28th American
President Woodrow
Wilson**

By the time that a second world war in 20 years had broken out in 1939 the League of Nations had lost international credibility. From 1944 onwards the Allied powers, particularly the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain, started to think about an alternative international organisation that would have more teeth than the League of Nations and would therefore have a better chance of maintaining collective security. By this time Americans had started to refer to the Allied powers, not just the three major powers but also all the other countries around the world that had formed an alliance with them as the United Nations and this was the name that was adopted for the new organisation which came into being in 1945. For the first 45 years of its existence the world was dominated by the Cold War and a notion, shared by both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, that the best form of collective security was mutually assured destruction through the threat of using nuclear weapons. The changes that took place after 1989 reduced the threat of a global nuclear war but there is still concern about the number of countries that have the capacity for building and using nuclear weapons and this remains one of the major concerns of the UN.



Flag of the former European Coal and Steel Community

In addition to the role of the General Assembly and, above all, the Security Council, in monitoring and maintaining peace, the United Nations has also established an Economic and Social Council to promote international economic and social cooperation and development. In 1950 six countries in Western Europe formed the European Coal and Steel Community which later became the European Economic Community and has now

evolved into the much enlarged European Union. These developments within the United Nations and in Europe reflect a second important idea about collective security. It is not enough to ensure that there is an international organisation for peace keeping. Peace between nations was much more likely if they had a common stake in maintaining a peaceful world.



The ambitious goal of the Exploring European History and Heritage is to build an educational online tool on history and heritage from a European perspective. A European perspective on history and heritage help us to look at our own past through the eyes of the “other” and to understand differences in order to overcome divisions. The thematic approach makes it possible to trace back long term developments, see and analyze turning points in history and see similarities and difference between events and locations. Multiple perspectives on the past and inter- and intra state comparison help, with respect for diversity, to show what people share