

War Never Ends: Why countries will always fight

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Introductory Remarks



Wars and Violence

- War is primarily a political act, a political choice, backed by psychological goals and aims.
- Carried out using military and economic means
- Countries more often fail to win for economic or political reasons than for military reasons
- We will look at twentieth century warfare in this context, but first some notes on violence



Wars and Violence

- Spectrum of violence:
 - Assault and homicide -> organized crime -> terrorism and civil conflict -> wars between states
- The twentieth century was bloody and miserable
 - Total of 203 million died (M. White, *Historical Atlas 20th Century*)
 - 86m by Communism; 116m by non-Communism
- But looking at twentieth century warfare in the context of historical trends in violence, we are becoming less violent



The Violent Twentieth Century?

- Organized violence in the twentieth century: a bloody century

Cause	Killed, mn
World War II	55
Chinese Famine and Terror under Mao	40
Soviet Famine and Terror under Stalin	20
World War I	15
Russian Civil War	9
Chinese Civil War	3

- Source: Pinker (2011), p. 195. Numbers killed are the median or modal figures from many sources consulted.



The Violent Twentieth Century?

- Organized violence in the recorded history:
- In this table, three of the top ten occasions of violence by numbers killed happened in the twentieth century (with 15 million deaths World War I would have been no. 13).

Cause	Century	Killed, mn	Rank
World War II	20	55	1
Chinese Famine and Terror under Mao	20	40	2
Mongol conquests	13	40	3
An Lushan Revolt	8	36	4
Fall of the Ming	17	25	5
Taiping Rebellion	19	20	6
Annihilation of American Indians	15-19	20	7
Soviet Famine and Terror under Stalin	20	20	8
Middle East slave trade	7-19	19	9
Atlantic slave trade	15-19	18	10

- Source: Pinker (2011), p. 195.



The Violent Twentieth Century?

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Middle East slave trade	7-19	19	9
Fall of the Ming	17	25	5
Fall of Rome	3-5	8	15
Tamerlane	14-15	17	11
Annihilation of American Indians	15-19	20	7
Atlantic slave trade	15-19	18	10
World War II	20	55	1
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- Source: Pinker (2011), p. 195.



World War I: The Cult of the Offensive

- World War I occurred because everyone thought it was going to happen. It was seen as psychologically and politically inevitable – internal and externally.
- In 1912 the Germans concluded modest rearmament was leaving Germany ever weaker relative to rivals. Britain rearming faster and with more ships than Germany.
 - The foreign balance of power was tilting in the “wrong direction”.
- Without a modern fiscal system (decentralized, reliant on taxing trade) the government struggled to pay for rearmament.
 - War would give Germany stronger central state (as in 1870), make more powerful
- With socialists increasingly represented in the parliament.
 - Satisfy “Iron and Rye collation” prevent socialism



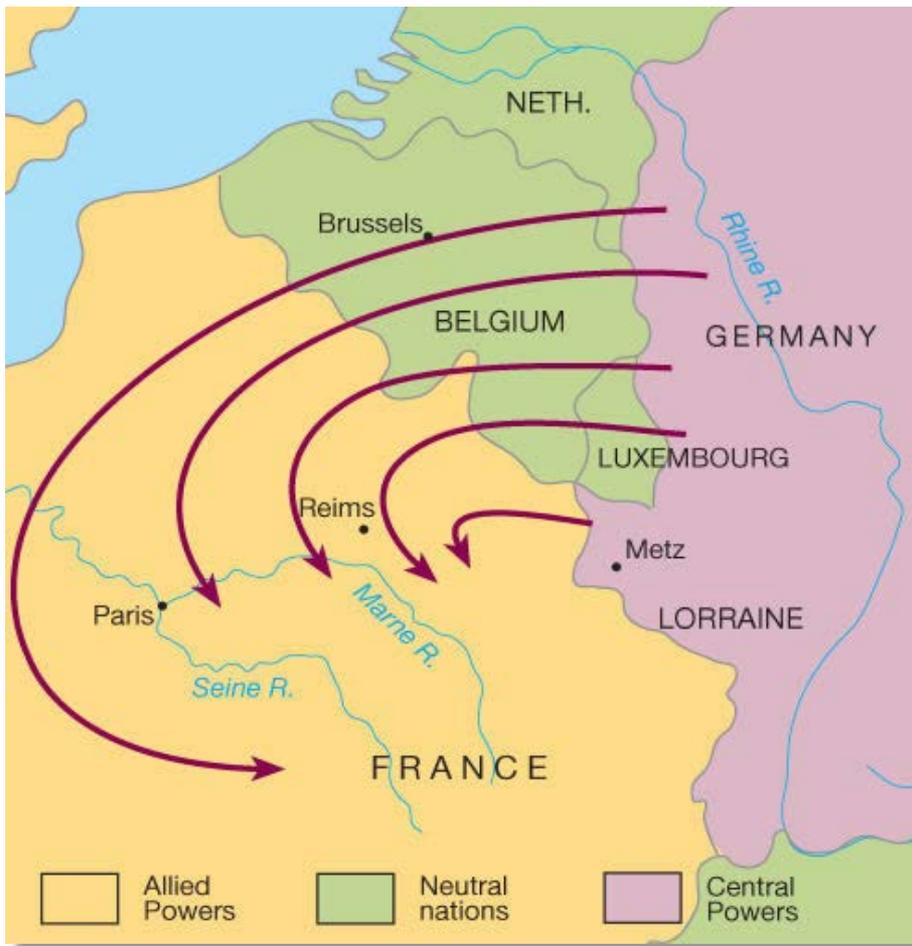
World War I: The Cult of the Offensive

- The **Schlieffen** plan depended on **sudden action and surprise**, not on overwhelming numbers, “cult of the offensive”
- In case of war with Russia, France would attack.
- Germany could not fight both at once.
- France more dangerous; Russia would require six weeks to mobilize.
- Stage 1: First attack and defeat France – within six weeks.
- Stage 2: Transfer forces from west to east; attack and defeat Russia.
- Stage 1 to be launched at first sign of either French or Russian mobilization; otherwise Russia would have time to mobilise before French defeat.

World War I: The Cult of the Offensive

Schlieffen plan with Molke amendments:

- German army to invade France through **Belgium**
- Take the Channel coast to outflank French defences and **prevent a British landing.**
- Push the French army up against the Rhine and destroy it.





World War I: The Cult of the Offensive

What happened next:

- In 40 days the German forces had **exhausted supplies** expected to last the entire campaign and lost contact with each other.
- The Russians mobilized in 30 days, not 40, and invaded East Prussia.
- The British landed on the Channel coasts of France and Belgium.
- The German advance stopped at river Marne (September 1914).
- France was not defeated.
- Long-term economic warfare meant Germany lost



Mobilization Outcomes: Overall

	Allies	Central Powers	Allies:CP
Prewar GDPs	1.8→2.5*
Prewar populations	2.2→1.6*
Soldiers mobilized, million	41.0	25.6	1.6
Military deaths, million	5.4	4.0	1.4
Weapons produced:			
Guns, thousand	59.9	82.4	0.7
Rifles, million	13.3	12.1	1.1
Machine guns, thousand	656	319	2.1
Aircraft, thousand	124.5	47.3	2.6
Tanks	8919	100	89.2

Source: Broadberry and Harrison (2005). * The first ratio is for the great powers at war in 1914, and the second is for those at war in 1918. Real GDPs are valued in 1990 prices and international dollars.

-> The side that mobilized the most resources won the war.

-> Allies should have won in 1914/5, but they were incompetent



Balance Sheet for the Great War

Source: Broadberry and Harrison (2005).

Military Costs of World War I:

	Prewar population, million	Deaths Thou.	% of prewar
France	39.6	1,327	3.4
Great Britain	46.1	715	1.6
Italy	35.9	578	1.6
Russia	167.0	1,811	1.1
Other Allies	31.1	599	0.2
British Empire	342.2	198	0.1
French colonies	52.7	71	0.1
USA	98.8	114	0.1
Allies, Total	813.4	5,413	0.7
Turkey + Bulgaria	26.4	892	3.4
Germany	67.8	2,037	3.0
Austria-Hungary	58.6	1,100	1.9
Central Powers, Total	152.8	4,029	2.6
Grand Total	966.2	9,442	1.0



Failure of Peace

The Treaty of Versailles, June 1919: Germany's losses (% of possessions, 1913).

Population	10
Territory	13
Productive capacity:	
Arable land	15
Coal	26
Steel	38
Iron	44
Iron ore	75
Merchant shipping	90
Colonies mandated to League of Nations	100

Sources: Hardach (1976, p. 191); Berghahn (1982, p. 67).

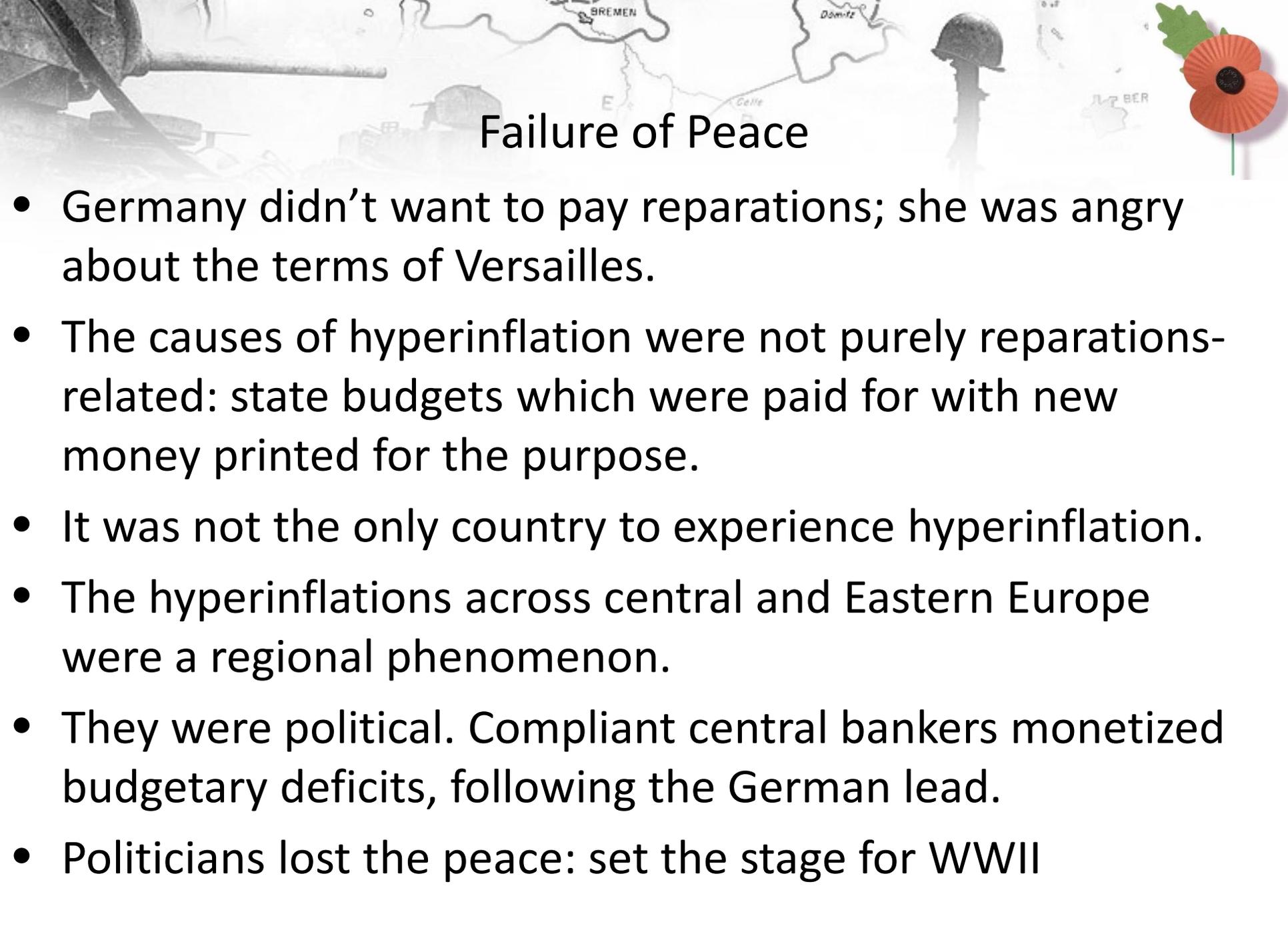


Failure of Peace

New states under various post-war treaties and actions:

- Austria-Hungary → Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia (incorporating Serbia).
- Russia → Soviet Union, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland
- Ottoman Empire → Turkey, Armenia (later part of Soviet Union), Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey.
- United Kingdom → United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland.

Typical attributes of new states included fragile **political institutions** and **ambitious, inexperienced leaders**.



Failure of Peace

- Germany didn't want to pay reparations; she was angry about the terms of Versailles.
- The causes of hyperinflation were not purely reparations-related: state budgets which were paid for with new money printed for the purpose.
- It was not the only country to experience hyperinflation.
- The hyperinflations across central and Eastern Europe were a regional phenomenon.
- They were political. Compliant central bankers monetized budgetary deficits, following the German lead.
- Politicians lost the peace: set the stage for WWII



Failure of Peace

- Countries experienced hyperinflation at the beginning of the 1920s; most did not have to pay reparations.
- Leaves a number of weak, vulnerable, un-supported new states in Eastern Europe

	Price level at stabilisation, ratio to initial price level
Russia	10^{11}
Germany	10^{10}
Poland	10^6
Austria	10^5
Estonia	10^2
Latvia	10^2

Source: Bresciano-Turroni (1937)



World War II: Inevitable

- Rearmament:
 - Believing that war was inevitable, Stalin began Soviet rearmament before Hitler came to power.
 - Britain and France sought to appease Hitler at all costs, but rearmed.
 - US rearms for deterrence; after Munich, U.S. ambassador to France William Bullitt wrote to Roosevelt: “If you have enough airplanes, you don’t have to go to Berchtesgaden.”
- Some acceleration when perceptions of Hitler changed in 1935/6:
 - Many saw Spanish Civil War as fascism’s trial run.
 - Shift to increasing military mass production in US, USSR, UK.
 - Stalin: Great Terror (1937/38) and Red Army purge.
 - The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (1939): Each side thought they had bought more deterrence and more time than the other.



World War II: New German Tactics

- New offensive tactics developed by the Germans in 1935
- Blitzkrieg:
 - Independently operating penetration groups of **shock troops**, supported by air and armoured forces.
- Qualitative superiority:
 - **Evolutionary improvement** of military technology through continuous feedback from the battlefield to the equipment suppliers.
- Lebensraum, Autarky and the Hungerplan:
 - Self-sufficiency in food through **conquest** at the expense of hunger in the occupied regions.
- Time horizons:
 - The time horizon for any particular campaign was **expected to be short**, while that of the overall struggle for world domination was to be leisurely.



World War II: Lebensraum

- Occupation of Eastern Europe and European Russia was a political and ultimately psychological goal.
- Hitler in 1920: Is it right “that there is eighteen times more land per head for every Russian than there is for a German?” (cited by Milward 1977, p. 134).
- And in *Mein Kampf*, 1924: “Only a sufficiently large space on this earth assures a nation of freedom of existence ... If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states.”



World War II: Lebensraum

- By comparison, occupation of Western Europe and Scandinavia was an accidental side-effect of the way the war evolved.
- Hitler in 1936 (cited by Kay 2006, p. 15):
 - We are overpopulated and cannot feed ourselves on this basis ... I thus set the following task: I. The Germany army must be fit for action in 4 years. II. The German economy must be capable of waging war in 4 years.



World War II: Lebensraum

Aims of Eastern European occupation:

- Space for German colonial settlement.
- Guaranteed food and raw materials for Germany.
- Problem: The region of Eastern Europe and European Russia did not have a food surplus.
- The rural food surplus that existed (e.g. in Ukraine) was already used to feed urban population in Russia.
- A hunger plan was developed: starve and kill eastern Europe
- Clear out the urban population for German living space.



World War II: Racial Killing and the Holocaust

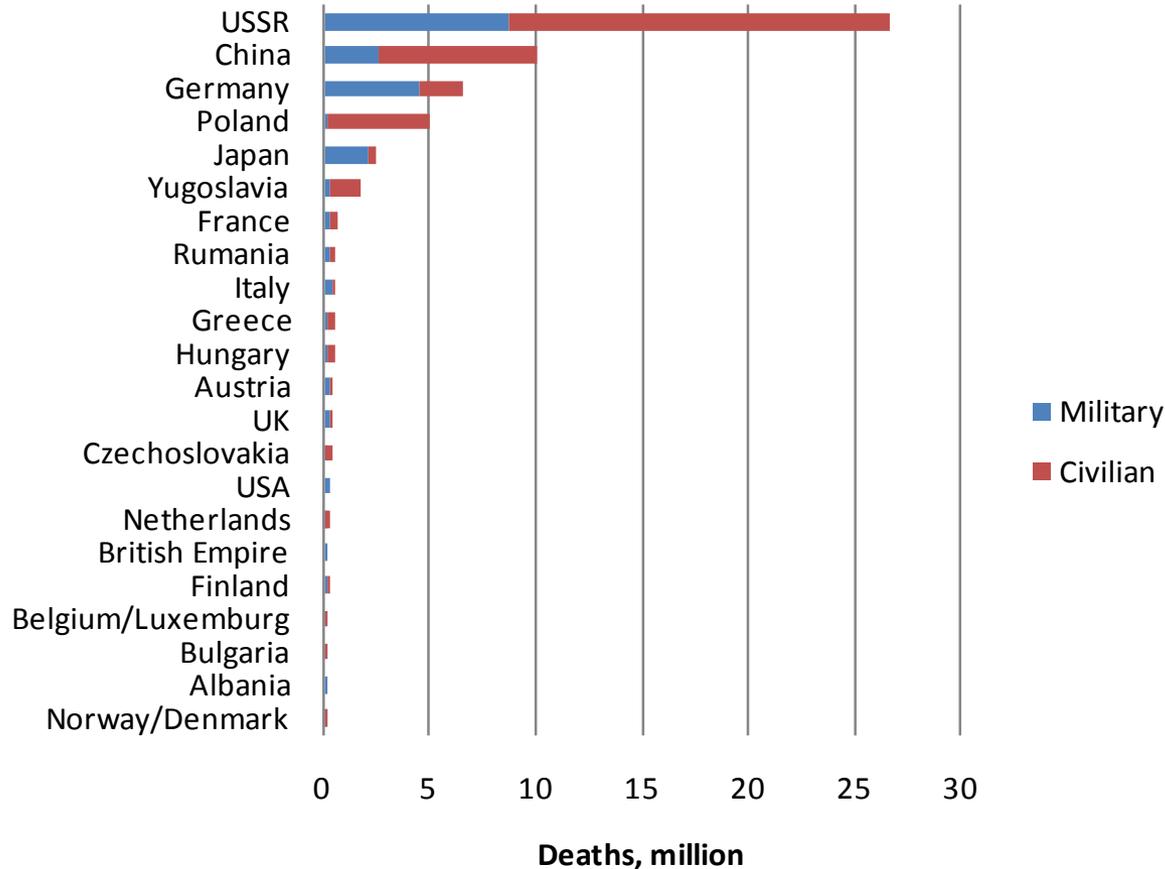
- Racial killing under German occupation had two dimensions:
- A broad intention to bring about the deaths by deportation, starvation, and other means of around **30 million Russians**.
- An increasingly detailed, specific plan to kill all **11 million Jews** in occupied Europe from West to East (viewed as enemies within).
- Both went through various stages of escalation with related triggers.



World War II: Costs

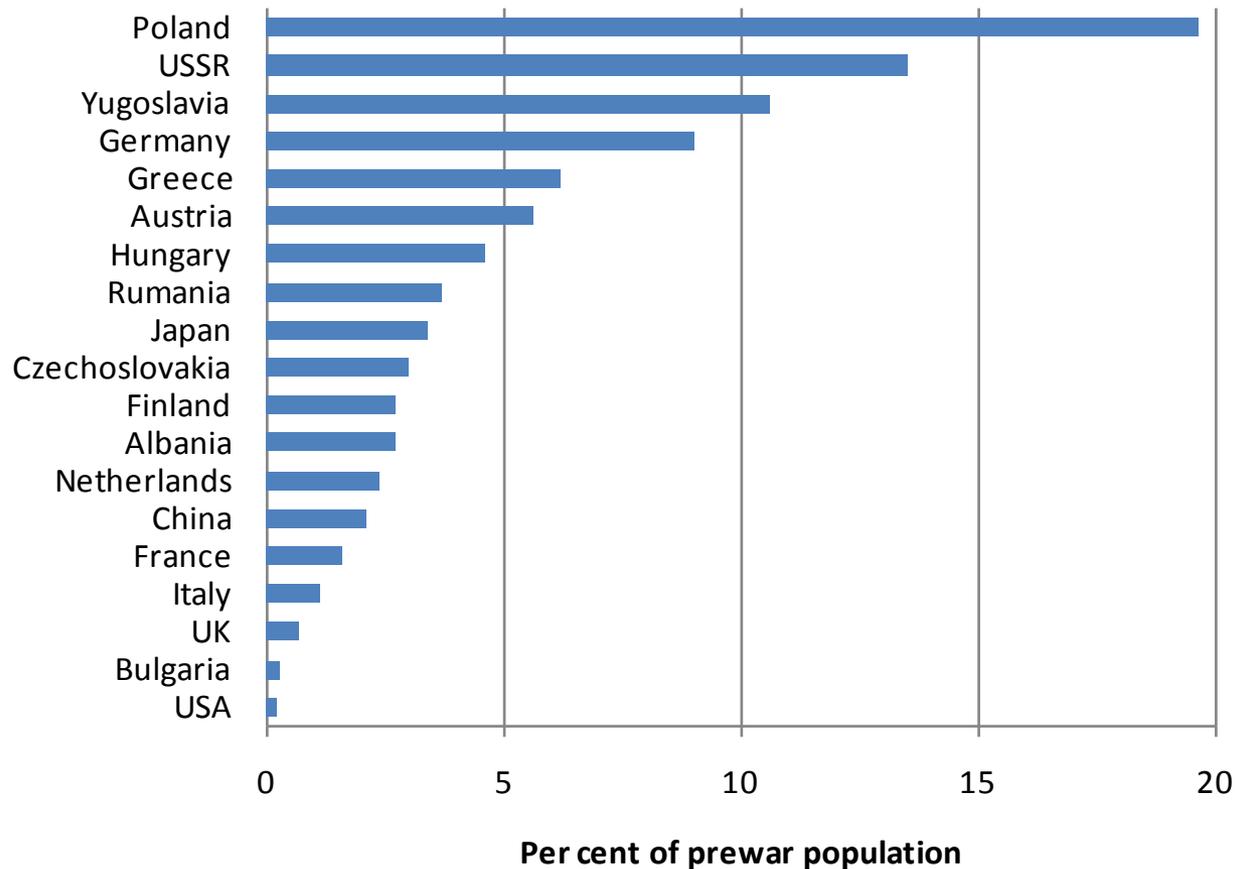
	World War I	World War II
Duration	1,560 days	2,076 days (Europe) 2,979 days (Asia)
Theatres	Northwest Europe/Atlantic Eastern Europe Southern Europe Near East	Northwest Europe/Atlantic Eastern Europe Mediterranean Asia/Pacific
Principal countries	14	25
Populations	1,400m	1,800m
Mobilized	70m	110m
Military deaths	10m	32m
Civilian deaths	10m	23m

World War II: Costs: How Many Deaths?



Source: Urlanis (1971), except Soviet figures updated from Andreev et al. (1990b).

World War II: Costs: How Many Deaths?

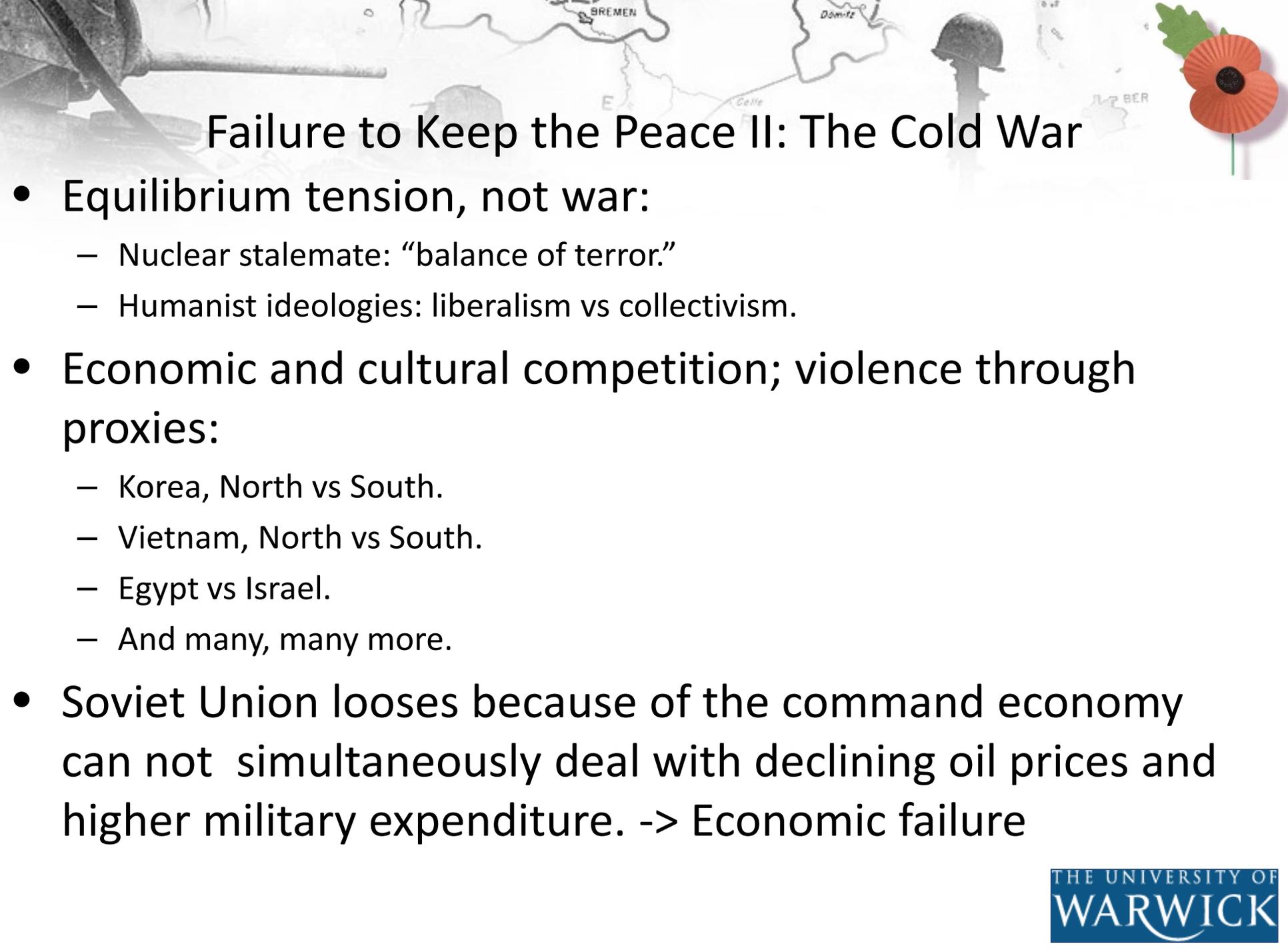


Source: Urlanis (1971), except Soviet figures updated from Andreev et al. (1990b).



Failure to Keep the Peace II: The Cold War

- Causes (much debated):
 - Unresolved inter-Allied conflicts stemming from the outbreak of World War II.
 - Post-war treatment of Poland became an acid test of the wartime Alliance.
- First shots of the Cold War were simultaneous:
 - East Asia: Atomic bombing of Japanese cities.
 - East Europe: The NKVD moved in the wake of the Red Army.
- Motivations: Rival values of the great powers.
 - USA: A democracy committed to free markets and non-discrimination in world trade.
 - USSR: A dictatorship committed to political and economic mobilization under authoritarian rule.
- Result: Equilibrium tension.



Failure to Keep the Peace II: The Cold War

- Equilibrium tension, not war:
 - Nuclear stalemate: “balance of terror.”
 - Humanist ideologies: liberalism vs collectivism.
- Economic and cultural competition; violence through proxies:
 - Korea, North vs South.
 - Vietnam, North vs South.
 - Egypt vs Israel.
 - And many, many more.
- Soviet Union loses because of the command economy can not simultaneously deal with declining oil prices and higher military expenditure. -> Economic failure

Failure to Keep the Peace II: Cold War Costs



- Direct costs: Billions of 2012 dollars and per cent:

	Years	Total direct cost	Total GDP during war period	Cost/GDP
WW1	2	26	128	20%
WW2	4	288	923	31%
Korea	3	54	1,375	4%
Vietnam	10	111	9,677	1%
Persian Gulf	8/12	61	5,917	1%

Source: Poast (2006, p. 10).



Modern Wars

- If the USSR lost because of declining oil revenue and increased military expenditures, what is Russia doing in Ukraine?
- Any economist will tell you neither Ukraine nor Russia cannot win over any serious interval of time. For Russia:
 - Rouble is slowly collapsing, down 30% so far
 - Inflation is up to at least 18% per year
 - Capital is flowing out at a rate of at least \$200million a day, close to \$20bn a quarter.
 - Sanctions will make this worse.
 - Traditional Russian allies want little to do with conflict.



Modern Warfare

- So why do we keep fighting?
- Surely no one wants to fight. No longer the celebrations of people at the start of World War I.
- In the era of mass communications we have the tools to analyze what politicians say and dismiss the rhetoric from the reality? -> **In the west maybe, but sadly Russia suggests otherwise. Some want the USSR back.**
- We would rather consume more goods and do other things with our spare time?! -> **Most done on debt, civilian trade-offs not required. No 70% tax rates.**



Modern Warfare

- War as a political tool: psychologists have done studies which show war binds people together. The experience is life changing and refashions the way the brain thinks, particularly for 18-23 year olds.
- Builds a sense of political cohesion, community, goals and inspires individuals to act ‘heroically.’
- It also becomes entrenched in much the same way the mafia or gangs do: you adhere to a group and see yourself as living through them. (e.g. Israelis/Gaza/Syrian conflict)



Modern Warfare

- Pragmatically, there is no question the Palestinians lost their conflict some time ago and Israel can dictate peace terms. So why do they keep fighting?
- Analyzed in the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict we see some relevance to the psychological approach.
- There are few reasons this conflict should be continuing other than the ingrained psychological need to fashion Israeli and Palestinian self-identity and internal political solidarity. -> **possible self-sustaining war**



Modern Warfare

- Indeed, while facing down the potential aggressors, the big lesson from looking at these conflicts is that we need to fight back against the political and psychological rhetoric which drives countries to war.
- The economic history of warfare gives us this power.
- We can explain the futility of war by looking at past costs and losses. Offering people alternatives.
- For conventional conflicts, we know who will win and who will lose; or who has already lost.



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