

# War, Peace and Diplomacy: An Analysis of Strategic History of the International System

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70626>

Received: 25 April 2023; Revised: 17 May 2023; Accepted: 20 May 2023; Published: 21 June 2023

## ABSTRACT

The International System has been marked by wars, peace, and diplomacy, each playing a crucial role in shaping the strategic history of the world. In the realm of international relations, war, peace and diplomacy form the central themes of interaction between states. War and peace have been used interchangeably to not only claim territories, but also to engage with each other. With the development of diplomacy as a means of interaction between sovereign states, a new frontier was opened which the world has adopted with enthusiasm. However, there remains lessons from significant epochs concerning war and its engagement which offer crucial insights into international relations. Wars have led to the creation of new states, the destruction of empires, and the emergence of new power dynamics. Diplomacy, on the other hand, has been used to resolve conflicts and reach peaceful settlements. This paper discusses the role of war, peace, and diplomacy in the strategic history of the International System. The study found that the International System has been marked by numerous wars that have shaped the strategic landscape of the world. Wars have been responsible for the creation of new states, the destruction of empires, and the emergence of new power dynamics. Based on the findings, peace has also played a crucial role in shaping the International System. The end of World War II marked the beginning of a period of relative peace in Europe, marked by the formation of the European Union, which has played a critical role in promoting economic cooperation and reducing the likelihood of conflict. The study recommends that nations should prioritize peaceful means of resolving conflicts over wars. Secondly, diplomatic efforts should be encouraged and supported to resolve conflicts and promote peace, and the international community should continue to work towards global cooperation to promote peace and stability.

## INTRODUCTION

The International System has been marked by various events throughout history that have shaped its strategic landscape. Wars, peace, and diplomacy have all played important roles in this process. The consequences of these events have been profound, shaping the political, economic, and social structures of nations and the world as a whole. A basic tenet in the study of modern international relations is that it can be understood by analysing strategic history. This is done by analysing the themes that explain matters that affect war and peace and contexts which expound on the variable conditions within which the balance between peace and war oscillates. The theme of historical continuity and discontinuity attempts to answer the question: what changes and what does not? War has an unchanging nature; however, its character is one subject to modifications from time to time (Bertucci, Hayes, and James, 2016). Therefore, while the structure of an army changes from time to time, discipline and training are eternal necessities.

By studying the relationship between politics and war we are able to discern that the threat to use, or actual use of, organised violence has been the hallmark of politicians against each other with the singular aim of gaining some political mileage (Breuning, 2017). Consequently, the waging of war is done at the behest of politics and to the singular fulfilment of those political ideals. This paper aims to analyze the role of war, peace, and diplomacy in the strategic history of the International System.

War, peace, and diplomacy are essential concepts in understanding the dynamics of the international system. War refers to a state of armed conflict between two or more nations or groups, typically characterized by violence, destruction, and loss of life. It often arises from unresolved disputes, territorial claims, ideological differences, or competition for resources. War disrupts social order, damages economies, and causes immense human suffering (Acharya, 2014). It is a manifestation of the failure of diplomacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Peace, on the other hand, represents a state of harmony, absence of violence, and resolution of conflicts. It is the desired condition that nations strive to achieve. Peace is characterized by respect for sovereignty, cooperation, and adherence to international law. It promotes stability, development, and the well-being of societies. Peace can be achieved through negotiation, mediation, and compromise, addressing the underlying causes of conflicts and fostering mutual understanding. Diplomacy is the practice of conducting negotiations and maintaining relations between nations (Buzan and Ole, 2003). It serves as a tool for conflict resolution, prevention of wars, and the promotion of peaceful cooperation. Diplomatic efforts involve dialogue, negotiation, and compromise, aiming to address the interests and concerns of all parties involved. Diplomacy requires effective communication, trust-building, and the ability to navigate complex power dynamics.

In the international system, the concepts of war, peace, and diplomacy are interconnected. Diplomacy plays a crucial role in preventing conflicts and facilitating peaceful resolutions, thereby averting the outbreak of wars. War, on the other hand, disrupts peace and necessitates diplomatic efforts to restore stability and negotiate a peaceful settlement. Peace, as the ultimate objective, is achieved through sustained diplomacy and the collective commitment of nations to resolve disputes peacefully, promote cooperation, and uphold the principles of justice and equality.

### **Research Objectives:**

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the impact of wars on the International System.
2. To examine the role of peace in shaping the International System.
3. To analyze the role of diplomacy in resolving conflicts and shaping the International System.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### Themes and Contexts of Strategic History

The relationship between war and warfare is, on the one hand, between a legal and social entity, one that comprises of the complete relationship between the belligerents, and, on the other, the actual waging of combat in its military dimension. In this case, the intent of war is to bend an enemy's will towards one's objectives; in case a peaceful strategy fails, one may resort to warfare. What makes the greatest impact is not how skilled one's army is, but rather one's capacity to bend the enemy's will.

When one looks at the relationship between politicians and soldiers, history teaches that the two seldom have a common approach to statehood. While both serve the state, political culture points to different values to those espoused by the military. For the success of state strategy, there is need to have a consensus between the two; an agreement of mind and an eschewing of interference with what clearly belongs to the opposite side to deliver.

The interdependence of war and society points to the unique mesh that is society and war. Not only are wars the product of society, but society is always negatively impacted by war (Bertucci, Hayes, and James, 2016). The involvement of society in war is no longer limited to finances and manpower as was during

WWII and public opinion, during and on war, is now a reality not witnessed by any of the other wars in history.

The relations between war and peace, and peace and war, point to a reciprocal relationship that when a state is dealing with the one, it must also contemplate how to later deal with the other. States must always consider the cost of war on peace, and the waves of order and disorder that will follow. Concomitantly, states must understand the significance of periods of peace for the upcoming wars (Breuning, 2017).

The understanding of war is directly related to understanding the contexts in which it occurred; partly because there's more sense in a narrative that consists of force and the context behind, and, partly because it is imperative when studying war to understand the context within which it occurred.

When analysing politics, one looks at what war is all about; the genesis of peace and war; the decisions that informed war (Breuning, 2017). Also under analysis is the interplay between the political leaders and the army, not as a fighting unit but as members of society. A society's values and beliefs may change and evolve over time; what remains constant is the socio cultural context within which policy for or against war is formulated.

When analysing war and peace in their economic contexts, it is prudent not to look at the profitability or financial ability of a state to wage war. What is central is the economic ramifications of war; the economic burden that has to be borne by successive generations for wars fought prior to their existence.

The influence of technology in wars, especially from 1800 has been very crucial. The dynamism that has characterised the advancement of technology vis a vis its application in human conflict has changed the face of warfare (Acharya, 2014). More often than not, technology has been made specifically for war(fare) before its later application and modification for use in civilian and peaceful times.

The military-strategic aspect of war is concerned with policy choices which may have a bearing to the consequences of war and peace. Hence countries are wont to engage in war if, according to their strategic estimates, a bold offensive favours them (Sutch & Elias, 2017). The geographical aspect of war encompasses not only the physical limits of a state, the lands adjacent and also far off that constitute potential conquest areas, but also the sea and air under the control of a state. Geography also refers to the context within which a state is placed relative to its expansionist strategy.

Wars and warfare happen within a historical context. The people, the incidents they influenced, the repercussions of those incidents and how war and peace were shaped by those consequences all fall within a timeline; it is this timeline that forms history. There is therefore need to place the historical context to strategic actions.

### **War and Peace: Controversies in World War I.**

From being the most misunderstood episode of the 20th century, the First World War is replete with controversies; of these, five stand out and shall be addressed herein.

First, it is contended that the war erupted due to government loss of control of their military instrument. This meant that the process of competitive mobilization (by the respective armies) was uncontrollable once it commenced. Due to the inherent rigidities in mobilization, which even today stands true, the difficulties experienced were more or less inevitable. What was, and is still, debatable and lends to scepticism, is why successive countries chose to engage in war, often in disregard to other options.

Second, it is argued that the war was futile. Based on the fundamental principle that war should be aimed at solving a critical problem and should be engaged as a last resort, the failure of WWI was seen in that it (almost inevitably) contributed to the eruption of the Second World War in 1939 (Sutch & Elias, 2017). Despite all the effort and costs, both financial and human, the First World War was fought in vain.

Thirdly, it was posited that the war was conducted by belligerents who had scant, if any experience at all, in military management of war in general and fighting in particular. Due to this incompetence, they were more or less leading the soldiers, and the general public, to the slaughter (Sutch & Elias, 2017). It is improbable that all of the countries in the war had their armies led by blundering fools. The apparent failings of the armies can be attributed to a number of factors, namely: technical inability to communicate effectively during the actual war engagement; poor tactical and operational mobility; high soldier-to-space ratio at the Western Front which was the only plausible arena if one was to have control of the sway of victory; the initial ineptitude of the generals to wage modern warfare (Brown & Ainley, 2015).

Fourth, and congruent to the above point, where military professionals attempted at engaging in their vocation, they failed to employ the available military and strategic strategies of modern firepower. It is evident that the lessons of the 1860s to the 1910s, painstakingly earned, were either ignored or miscalculated.

One of the incontestable facts of the nineteenth century is the heavy influence of the Industrial Revolution. One consequence is that warfare changed; it was more difficult to continue using older tactics against newer and better weapons.

Fifth, there was a general impression on the political and military leaders that the next great war (in relation to the pre-1900 wars) would last shorter. There was a general expectation in the general public that the next great war would last months rather than years. However, evidence shows that the senior most officers in the German, British, and French armies held a contrary opinion. German military knew that their best chances of winning the war lay in a short, intense war; the allies understood that despite belligerence, Germany would be defeated in a long-drawn war, a factor they played to their advantage and consequent, victory.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper utilized historical research design, using qualitative methods, drawing on secondary sources such as books, academic articles, and reports. The data is analyzed using content analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the role of war, peace, and diplomacy in the strategic history of the International System.

### **The impact of wars on the International System:**

Wars have had a significant impact on the International System throughout history. They have disrupted the balance of power between states, reshaped political and economic systems, and caused widespread human suffering. The most significant impact of wars on the International System has been the rise and fall of great powers. The First World War, for example, marked the end of the European balance of power system and the emergence of the United States as a dominant global power. The Second World War resulted in the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers, leading to the Cold War.

Wars have also reshaped political and economic systems. The Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648, established the modern system of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, which remains the foundation of the International System today. The First World War led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of new nation-states in the Middle East, which have had a significant impact on the region's politics to this day.

Wars have also caused widespread human suffering, with millions of people losing their lives or being displaced from their homes. The impact of wars on civilians has led to the development of international humanitarian law, which seeks to protect civilians during armed conflicts.

One of the most outstanding features of World War II is the unprecedented number of casualties; more than 53 million people died. Other than the huge death toll, WWII is infamous for the Holocaust and other genocide-like deaths especially in China under the Japanese.

World War II was comprised of lesser wars which gave the effect of a long-drawn-out conflict. This can be traced from the first attack on Poland to the last Battle of Bulge: the systematic growth and quick decent of the Third Reich was reduced and (forever be) described, not by victory, but total vanquish.

The second phase of war commenced with the entry into the new year where Germany had under its control Denmark and Norway by April 1940; by June, France signed an armistice. So impressive was the Wehrmacht that it took them six weeks to deliver what Germany couldn't deliver in four years in World War I. Despite a strong attack against Britain, Germany failed in making any inroads; this came to benefit the entry of the United States in the war as there was a mean of accessing western Europe and thence, the support of the allied command.

The 'real' war in WWII began in 1941 with Germany's invasion of Russia: despite its superlative definitions, the German army was woefully short in its intelligence and logistic capacities; two handicaps that would cost it the war in (and for) Russia. The third reason that Germany lost its offensive against Russia was an underestimation of how brutal the winters could be (Bertucci, Hayes, and James, 2016).

The end was certainly nigh in 1944 as save for a miracle, which never came, Germany stood to lose. This was compounded by three incidents that changed the tide of the war: the defeat of the Luftwaffe; the Allied landing in Normandy; and, the destruction of German forces by the Russian army. It was however the Battle of Bulge that completed the German narrative of poor operationality of its forces and also wanting in planning (Jonsson & Hall, 2015).

The dawn of 1945 also saw the dusk of the Third Reich; it was unable to replenish its supplies and troops to needed areas and generally suffered consecutive defeats. Hitler's suicide on 29th April and the subsequent surrender of Germany on the 8th sealed the end of the dream for world domination. What awaited the Allies was the previously unbelievably horrors of humanitarian crisis in the form of evidence of the Holocaust.

In order to understand The Holocaust, it is imperative that one has a working grasp of the ideology that informed, and sustained it. It is inarguable that Hitler has a visceral hatred of the Jewish people; this fed his intent to their persecution and physical eradication. It was fed by the view of Jews as a racial virus that had to be eliminated on public health grounds and because of their consideration as agents of a malignant and hostile international conspiracy.

#### War and Peace: The Cold War and even Colder Borders

The course of the Cold War can be understood by looking at five key pointers. First is that the conflict was based on ideology and geopolitics; the former identified and influenced the latter.

Second, Western ideology, being contrary to the Soviet, precipitated any and all antagonism perpetrated by the Soviets. Due to the deep-seated differences, it is safe to say that even if USSR had another leader other than Joseph Stalin, the same policies would have been adopted.

Third, despite both the super powers desiring no confrontation, they genuinely feared an attack from the other. Their ideological and geopolitical differences quickly escalated to enmity and military threat.



Fourth, despite the fact that both sides were in a duel, it was the actions of their supporters that shaped the conflict. Though external to the USA-USSR conflict, allies acted independently and in pursuit of their nation's interests (Jonsson & Hall, 2015). This was however misconstrued by either of the main protagonists and their allies, as the actions of the main players.

Fifth, though termed as a 'cold' war, it was nonetheless a confrontation; with dangers that were hitherto unknown. The saving grace came in the fact that both parties, and their allies, opted for, and worked towards a non-war scenario. However, the dangers of utter and total devastation always lingered in the minds of the general public as the nuclear weapons each had created were, like all things man-made, subject to a myriad of accidents and unintended launches. It took the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis to bring to light how close the world had come to nuclear annihilation.

### **The role of peace in shaping the International System:**

Peace has played a crucial role in shaping the International System in recent times. The end of the Cold War in 1991 marked a significant turning point in the International System, with the United States emerging as the sole superpower. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the peaceful transition to democracy in many of the former Soviet states demonstrated the power of peaceful change.

The end of the Cold War also led to the establishment of new international institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, which have facilitated economic cooperation and integration. The European Union, which has become one of the world's most significant economic powers, was established in the aftermath of the Second World War to promote peace and economic cooperation among European states.

Peace has also played a crucial role in resolving conflicts between states. Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Northern Ireland, for example, led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which brought an end to decades of violence in the region. The peace process in Colombia, which culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in 2016, ended over five decades of armed conflict in the country.

### **The role of diplomacy in resolving conflicts and shaping the International System**

Diplomacy has played a crucial role in resolving conflicts and shaping the International System. Diplomatic efforts have led to the resolution of numerous conflicts, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Diplomacy has also played a crucial role in preventing conflicts from escalating. Diplomatic efforts to defuse tensions between India and Pakistan, for example, have prevented several potential conflicts from escalating into full-blown wars. Diplomatic efforts to negotiate a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria have also been ongoing for several years, although a lasting solution has yet to be found.

Diplomacy has also been used to resolve conflicts and shape the International System. Diplomats engage in negotiations to resolve disputes and reach peaceful settlements. The United Nations has played a crucial role in this process, with its various organs, such as the Security Council, serving as platforms for conflict resolution. For example, the signing of the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2015 marked a significant achievement in diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

The International System is a complex web of interactions between states and other actors. It is a constantly evolving system, shaped by a variety of factors, including wars, peace, and diplomacy. Wars have had a profound impact on the International System throughout history, while peace and diplomacy have played a crucial role in shaping the International System in recent times. In this essay, we will explore the impact of wars on the International System, examine the role of peace in shaping the International System, and

analyze the role of diplomacy in resolving conflicts and shaping the International System.

The centrality of communication to diplomacy is akin to that of blood to the body; the latter cannot perform without the former. Diplomacy is often expressed along the lines of communication; viz, “the communication system of the international society.” In ancient Greece, Hermes was the deity of language and diplomacy with the most prominent diplomatic emissaries considered his offspring.

Communication is regarded as the sending of coded messages, the decoding of such messages and retrieval of the meaning subsisting in such messages; as such a language is necessary. Throughout history, and despite the multivariant nature of human society, there has always developed a central language within which diplomacy would be engaged.

Central to diplomacy is the gathering and assessment of information; this includes but is not limited to the state of the economy of the host state, its foreign policy, the armed forces’ morale, the health of its leader and the prognosis of upcoming elections (Jonsson & Hall, 2015). This has been one of the enduring legacies of diplomacy since time immemorial.

Negotiation is synonymous with diplomacy; it is regarded as the acknowledgement of each other’s independence. International negotiation is premised on several factors (Acharya, 2014). First, there is need for bargaining situations; instances where there is need for the entities to come to a consensus. Secondly, they more often than not involve third parties who come to not only bring the parties together but to also provide an unbiased viewpoint. Third, international negotiations are dependent on the domestic front acceding to what will be decided as the way out; actually, it is the instructions from the domestic end that are negotiated upon.

Technological development, in all its spheres, has enabled the setting up of diplomatic centres in host countries to be feasible within a relatively short time. In addition, communication between the sending state and its envoys suffered greatly as only rudimentary means of communications existed; this even after the introduction of the telegraph. It has taken the development of information technology in the 20th century for communication not only to be fast, and in some instances, instantaneous, but to be discreet and not liable to by form of eavesdropping or interception by others.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The International System has been marked by numerous wars that have shaped the strategic landscape of the world. Wars have been responsible for the creation of new states, the destruction of empires, and the emergence of new power dynamics. For example, World War II led to the formation of the United Nations, which became a crucial platform for international cooperation and conflict resolution. The war also led to the collapse of the British Empire and the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers. The Cold War that followed shaped the world for decades, with both superpowers engaging in proxy wars across the world.

Peace has also played a crucial role in shaping the International System. The end of World War II marked the beginning of a period of relative peace in Europe, marked by the formation of the European Union, which has played a critical role in promoting economic cooperation and reducing the likelihood of conflict. Similarly, the Camp David Accords signed in 1978 between Egypt and Israel marked a significant milestone in the quest for peace in the Middle East.

## **CONCLUSION**

Wars, peace, and diplomacy have all played significant roles in shaping the strategic history of the International System. Wars have led to the emergence of new states, the destruction of empires, and the

emergence of new power dynamics. Peace has played a crucial role in promoting economic cooperation and reducing the likelihood of conflict. Diplomacy has been used to resolve conflicts and reach peaceful settlements. The International System is constantly evolving, and the roles of war, peace, and diplomacy will continue to be critical in shaping its strategic landscape.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Nations should prioritize peaceful means of resolving conflicts over wars.
2. Diplomatic efforts should be encouraged and supported to resolve conflicts and promote peace.
3. The international community should continue to work towards global cooperation to promote peace and stability

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