



Introduction

How To Use This Book

The history of recorded conflict stretches back five thousand years, but it is likely that humans had begun making war on each other long before that. In fact, it is quite conceivable that people have been killing each other in an organized fashion for the entire fifty-thousand-year span of modern *Homo sapiens*. What is certain is that there is not a corner of the inhabited globe that has not been touched by war, and that as a general rule war has been fought on an increasingly grander scale, culminating in the once inconceivable concepts of world wars and the specter of complete annihilation.

The superficial motives for war can be quite complex at times, but the fundamental causes have largely remained unchanged over the millennia. The nineteenth century military thinker Carl von Clausewitz even went so far as to proclaim that all war is simply the ultimate extension of politics. Others would add to that motive the further pressures of economics and demographics—in other words, lack of, or desire for more resources, along with growing populations, can force populations to make war on each other.

Like the motivations for going to war, the fundamentals of waging it have changed very little from the dawn of history. Time-tested strategies (such as, in the words of Nathan Bedford Forrest, “getting there firstest with the mostest”) and classic tactical maneuvers (such as double envelopment) have been winning wars and battles since the days of Ancient Egypt and remain the foundation of armed conflict, even in this day and age of mechanized, computerized warfare.

Organization

To study how humanity has moved from tribal skirmishes fought with copper-tipped spears and hurled stones to global conflicts fought in the shadow of the threat of nuclear holocaust is to study the rise and fall of the greatest civilizations and to follow the personal dramas of men and women whose personal decisions and beliefs impacted the very course of human history. *The Gale Encyclopedia of World History: War* aims to assist the student and generalist reader interested in studying the most significant conflicts of the past, and to impart an appreciation

for the sweep and scale of the subject of military history—for to study the history of war is to study the history of humanity.

Accordingly, each section of this book covers a different war or period of warfare, organized chronologically, and opens with an overview of each conflict, featuring biographies of major figures who, through actions either brilliant or ill-advised, contributed to the conflict's eventual resolution. The reader will see how the simple drama of human lives, the split-second battlefield decision, or the moment of critical hesitation, can have a lasting impact on the course of history.

After the biographies of major figures, the key battles that weave together to tell the story of the war will be examined. The full variety of methods of waging war, and of the opposing generals' tactics, oftentimes startlingly different, being borne out by the soldiers on the battlefield, will be in full evidence here. Readers will discover for themselves the old military truism that "no plan survives contact with the enemy."

In order to better understand the tools that enabled soldiers to fight battles, and to chart the impact of evolving technology on the battlefield, each section also includes articles on the "key elements of warcraft," in-depth examinations of the weaponry and logistical innovations that brought victory to those who employed them and changed the face of warfare for all time.

What's Inside

The book opens with an examination of the first great empire, that of the Assyrians, who set the pattern for the rise and fall of all empires to follow and were the first to introduce concepts of professional armies, psychological warfare, and methodical siegecraft.

The rising dominance of Greek culture in the Mediterranean is next to be examined, first in the great East-West clash of the Persian Wars, including the famous battles of Thermopylae and Salamis, then in the conquests of Alexander the Great, who returned the Persians' invasion with interest and spread the foundation of Western civilization from the Nile to the Indus.

The rise and fall of Rome covers two chapters, looking at the greatest empire of the ancient world and how it got that way, then examining the great barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries and the beginning of the "Dark Ages."

The Medieval period kicks off with an overview of the explosion of Islam and its dominance over the Near East and North Africa, along with the crucial battles that turned the tide away from Europe. The age of the dominance of the mounted warrior covers several chapters, starting with the dark days of Viking raids and the conquest of England before moving on to the centuries-long conflict known as the Crusades.

The Middle Ages come to an end with two devastating wars. The largest empire of all time is examined with a chapter on the Mongol Conquests, while the chapter on the Hundred Years War traces the end of the knight's battlefield dominance and the origin of the modern nation-states of Europe.

Islam's second great period of expansion is covered in two chapters. The first, on the Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, sees a resurgence of western conquests, including the final fall of the last vestiges of the Roman Empire leading up to the

conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The Mogul Conquests of India, meanwhile, examine Islam's spread into south Asia.

Warfare in the so-called "Age of Reason" brought battles on an unprecedented scale and sweeping changes that destroyed entire civilizations. The chapters on the Conquest of the Americas and the Religious Wars in Europe examine the monumental developments that changed the way people on both sides of the Atlantic thought about the world and the violent upheavals that resulted.

On the other side of the world, the foundations of modern Japan were being forged in a series of wars between powerful feudal lords, under whose guidance Japanese warfare changed forever. So bloody and costly were the wars, Japan entered into a two-century-long period of conservative isolationism that would permanently affect the future of Asia and that region's relationship with Europe.

Even as Japan began its long isolation, the mid-seventeenth century saw Europe consumed with war. The Thirty Years War involved nearly all the great Continental powers and dynasties of the time in what began as a war of ideologies and ended in a conflict of pure politics and alliances of convenience, changing the politics of European warfare and setting Germany's unification back two hundred years.

A separate chapter examines how, as the Thirty Years War lurched to a conclusion, England, which had remained aloof of the conflict, was itself sucked into a civil war that would result in the murder of a king and the foundation of a short-lived republic.

Although England's monarchy was restored, the English Civil War marked only the beginning of a nearly century-long period of dynastic struggles across Europe that spread into the colonies of the New World as well. The chapter on these Dynastic Wars covers the first great alliances between modern European nation-states, marking the beginning of a constantly shifting pattern of international politics that would dictate world affairs for the next two centuries.

The section on the Seven Years War covers what has sometimes been called the first true "world war," as it involved all the major powers of Europe as well as their global colonies. By the war's end, the balance of power in Europe had been permanently altered, with the foundations of the British Empire (and in particular its domination of India) firmly established.

Although the Seven Years War resulted in England's domination of North America, the seeds of revolution in the American colonies were laid by the costs incurred by the conflict. The American Revolution chapter examines the origins of a future superpower, the United States.

Inspired by the ideals of the American Revolution, the French Revolution toppled its own monarchy in a bloody reign of terror. The other monarchies of Europe, fearful of witnessing a spread of such extremism, responded in force. Out of the crucible of those wars rose Napoleon Bonaparte, the greatest general modern Europe had yet seen and the man who would give his name to the wars of the age, Europe's bloodiest to date.

The following chapter returns again to the United States, which would be torn apart by an even bloodier conflict, the American Civil War, over forty years after the

end of the Napoleonic Wars. The war between North and South would permanently redefine America's economy and political system and give birth to some of its most enduring heroes and legends.

The Crimean War was Europe's first major conflict after the Napoleonic Wars, witnessing once again a multinational alliance going to war to preserve the balance of power on the continent. Perhaps the greatest legacy of the war came from the reforms spearheaded by Florence Nightingale, who led the efforts to sanitize and improve battlefield medicine.

The other great post-Napoleonic conflicts arose in South America as, one by one, Spain's colonies, led in large part by "the Liberator" Simón Bolívar, fought successfully for liberation from their increasingly weak European master.

In the century of relative peace following the wars of Napoleon, Europe turned its military attention outward towards the rest of the world. Although Europe had established colonies around the world from the fifteenth century onward, the nineteenth century was a time of rampant colonial expansion. By 1900, nearly all of Africa had been divided up between the great powers of Europe, as had large portions of Asia and Oceania. The British Empire—on at least a portion of which, it was said, the sun was always shining—was at its peak of power. The chapter covering this colonial expansion also includes a look at the Boer Wars of South Africa.

Even as the great powers of Europe were cementing their colonial empires, the "War to End All Wars" would erupt back home, spelling the beginning of the end for European dominance. World War I was the first war to reap the true horrors of industrialization and mechanization—troops were gassed, bombed, shelled, and machine-gunned in previously unthinkable numbers.

The hope held out by some that the First World War would prove so horrible and costly as to prevent the thought of ever fighting another would soon be dashed, most visibly in the three-year-long Spanish Civil War. This chapter will examine how Spain's civil war marked the first time the new post-war ideologies of communism, fascism, and Western-style democracy clashed on the battlefield, and the bloody results that were an indication of the ferocity such new political systems could bring out.

The Second World War, which began the same year Spain's war ended, was a global clash of ideologies and the deadliest conflict in history. World War II nearly ruined the once-great colonial powers of Europe and cast the United States and the Soviet Union as the new global superpowers. Thanks to a reluctance to engage in direct nuclear confrontation, the Cold War was fought between the USSR and the United States by proxy. The Korean War was the first such conflict, fought between the communist North, backed by the Soviet Union and China, and the democratic South, which was saved from total annihilation by troops from the newly-formed United Nations.

Another theater of the Cold War conflict is covered in the chapter on the Vietnam War, which erupted in the wake of Europe's colonial withdrawal but then became a proxy war between Communism and the West. Left weakened and fractured by years of imperialistic exploitation, many of the emerging countries of the so-called "Third

World” became ideological battlegrounds as indigenous factions fought amongst each other, aided by either by Western powers or by Communist states.

Another post-colonial region, the Middle East, ends the journey through world conflict, first with a look at the devastating Iran-Iraq War and the continuing impact that conflict has had on world events, and finally with a chapter on the new form of warfare, international terrorism. Included is a look at the events of September 11 and the War on Terror that followed.

Conclusion

It is hoped that by studying the stories contained in this volume, the reader can glean an understanding of the mighty tides of war that have so often helped to shape the world of today. By studying the evolution of tactics and strategy and the ever-increasing integration of technology and industry into the process of waging warfare, the reader will also hopefully gain an insight into the nature of war and its place in the twenty-first century, and the highly personal impact it has on everyone’s lives.

At the very least, it is hoped that the reader will appreciate the great drama and sacrifice contained within the following chapters and will come to recognize the tremendous cost of war for those who wage it.