

# The Totality of War: Defining Total War as a Concept

1. **Total War** was a term coined during the First World War to sum up the all-encompassing nature of this modern industrial conflict.
2. **Total War** demanded total mobilization of mass armies, economies, societies, and the hearts and minds of people in the countries at war. In this sense, it was a people's war, not one determined by government cabinets and elites.
3. Increasingly, the stakes of **Total War** were seen as total as well: victory or sheer defeat would be the final outcome, not compromise. The winner would be the last one standing after the drawn-out process of attrition.
4. **Total War** had other important implications.
  - a. Because civilians were mobilized to work for their country's victory on the "home front," civilians were increasingly targets of violence as well.
  - b. Total war had a crucial economic dimension, as victory would not be found on the battlefield alone. Thus economic blockades (like the British naval blockade of Germany) were an obvious tool used to deny the enemy resources.
  - c. The enormous demands and strains of total war tore at societies.
  - d. Gaps could grow between the soldiers in the trenches, the civilians on the home front, and the governments seeking to fight the war. Social tensions often led to the search for scapegoats in one's own midst.
5. Though the term **Total War** was new, it came into its own after the war, as participants thought out the implications of what they had lived through. Unfortunately, the term became important in planning for the next war, World War Two.
6. The experience of **Total War** affected movements arising out of the ruins of the conflict. These movements were called "totalitarian" because of their total claims: Communism in Russia, Fascism in Italy, and Nazism in Germany.