

Even in the 20th century the term 'total war' could not be applied to any war. With reference to both WW1 and WW2, explain to what extent you agree with this judgement.

Topic: World War 1 and World War 2.

Timeframe: 1914 - 1918, 1939 (Europe), 1941 (Asia Pacific) - 1945

Terms: A total war means that a country uses all its human, economic and military resources to fight the war and ensure complete victory over the enemy.

Themes: Using of civilians in the war effort, using of all weapons available and development of new ones in order to ensure victory, government control of key aspects of the economy so that it can be directed into war effort

Thesis: 'Total war' cannot be applied completely to both wars as there is limited civilian effort in war, but there is a constant attempt to use all weapons available and develop new ones and the government in the involved countries direct their economies to war effort

'Total war' can be applied as civilians are involved in the war effort.

- WW1
 - Concription was introduced in most countries. It was introduced in Britain in 1916 due to the need for more men to fight the war and also to better manage manpower to ensure the British industry did not lose too many of its skilled workers to jeopardise its chances of winning the war. In Britain, France, and Germany, there was a need to recruit women to join the workforce for the governments to be able to keep up with the production demands. Air raids such as that conducted by the German Zeppelin airships were on London, the Midlands, and the East Coasts which killed several hundred civilians.
- WW2
 - Military conscription was introduced in Britain from the beginning. Industrial conscription was also introduced for women. In USA, the War Commission in 1942 recruited workers for where they were needed most and new industries were created, particular the production of synthetic materials. Therefore, the people contributing to war effort were not limited to combatants. Civilians, especially women who were usually discouraged from doing labour-intensive work, were actively used by the government to maximise war productivity to increase chances of victory. The Japanese army massacred 300,000 Chinese civilians and prisoners of war during the 1937 Nanking Massacre. Richard Overy estimated total air raid deaths at 353,000 for German civilians. The innocent were not spared if it meant that complete victory could be attained. Hence, in both wars are 'total wars' as the countries of both sides used all their human resources to fight the war and ensure victory over their enemies.

However,

- Both wars not completely 'total' as restraint was practiced when it came to involving civilians.
 - WW1
 - Conscription had been resisted in Britain until 1916, two years after the outbreak of war. In all countries, there was resistance to employing women. The British government had to agree to terms like employment of women would only be a temporary measure and that women would not be trained up as full skilled tradesmen with trade unions. Moreover, due to the nature of trench warfare, most of the combat did not affect the civilian population. As such, civilian deaths due to direct military action reached only 950,000.
 - WW2
 - Hitler did not want women in the workforce due to his idea that women should focus on 'Children, Church, Kitchen' and Hitler was concerned about losing the

support of the people. In Japan, the government never efficiently organised industry to maximise production or use workers efficiently. Factories therefore lacked workers but women were discouraged from work, and as a result Japan was unable to supply its army and navy adequately though war time production was much greater than before. Japan thus lacked fuel and metals of all sorts throughout the war. Therefore, countries did not immediately go all out to use all their civilians for war effort due to reasons like traditionalist views and need to retain support, thus the wars were not 'total wars'.

'Total war' can be applied as there is using of all weapons available and development of new ones in order to ensure total victory and total victory means to completely overwhelm the enemy to surrender.

- WW1
 - Due to the exhaustive nature of trench warfare and attrition strategy, weapons to kill the enemy were constantly developed but so were weapons to protect themselves from the new weapons. The mustard gas was a vesicant that was introduced by Germany in 1915 prior to the Third Battle of Ypres. It caused painful blisters to the skins of soldiers. However, Britain also manufactured its own mustard gas in 1916 in response thus the mustard gas caused much lesser damage and the war was back to a stalemate. In 1917, the Germans carried out blockade on the Royal Navy to sink merchant ships with U-boats. Britain lost 464000 and then 834000 tons of shipping, and was soon down to only 6 weeks' worth of supplies of corn. However, in 1918 the sonar was developed to detect the U-boats and Germany lost 69 U-boats and at this stage of war they could not replace them. There was a constant back-and-forth use of weapons to counter the enemy and gain an upper hand and emerge victorious.
- WW2
 - A notable war-ending weapon was the atomic bomb. USA invented the atomic bomb, a weapon of mass destruction. USA dropped the first one, 'Little Boy' in Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 and demanded for Japan's surrender. 'Fat Man' was dropped in Nagasaki on 9 August 1945. Total casualties caused by both bombs reached up to 200,000. Germany developed long-range missiles, one notably being the bazooka, when major powers had mainly short-ranged rockets. Germany thus made a superior weapon to increase its chances of victory. Weapons for the Japanese also came in human form with Kamikaze. The Kamikaze was established as Japan was losing and had lesser resources to work with, thus by using volunteers and cheap aircraft Japan need not worry as much about developing superior weapons. Allied troops were unable to defend themselves from the suicide pilots; 5000 American and Allied sailors died from Kamikaze attacks. This was an extreme method, but it raised Japan's chances of victory significantly. Therefore, different methods to use and develop weapons were seen in order to ensure war victory, thus both wars were considered 'total wars'.

However,

- Both wars were not completely 'total' as the weapons could not be fully utilised on the battlefield.
 - WW1
 - The prevailing wind on the Western Front was blowing from west to east, which meant the British more frequently had favorable conditions for a gas release than did the Germans. The German's newly developed ships were not fully utilized as they were costly to build and damage done to them would destroy their morale, hence Germany did not use its most advanced weapons to defeat the enemies.
 - WW2
 - Germany's focus on producing a large number of different types of armaments backfired as some were not practical or did not work at all on the battlefield, putting the German soldiers at a major disadvantage instead.

'Total war' can be applied as there is government control of key aspects of the economy so that it can be directed into war effort.

- WW1
 - Restrictions on drinking through the reduction of licensing hours and increased taxation were largely introduced to promote productivity by stopping drunkenness of workers, especially in munitions. In Britain, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was passed in 1914, allowing the government to take over the coal mines, railways and shipping. In Germany, food supplies had to be redirected towards the armed forces and, with German commerce being stopped by the British blockade, German civilians were forced to live in increasingly meager conditions. Food prices were first controlled. Bread rationing was introduced in 1915 and worked well; the cost of bread fell.
- WW2
 - The USSR was turned into Stalin's 'single war camp' where war production was the only priority and concentration was on the production of large number of weapons as simply and quickly as possible. For USA, the War Production Board (WPB) was established in 1942, which directed industrial production to war effort. As a result, military aircraft production, which totaled 6,000 in 1940, jumped to 85,000 in 1943. Factories that made silk ribbons now produced parachutes, automobile factories built tanks, typewriter companies made machine guns, undergarment manufacturers sewed mosquito netting, and a roller coaster manufacturer converted to the production of bomber repair platforms. For Germany, during the early months of the Nazi occupation, the French puppet government was forced to pay a "quartering" fee of twenty million Reichmarks per day. Supposedly, the fee was payment for the Nazi occupation forces. In reality, the money was used to fuel the Nazi war economy

However,

- Both wars were not completely 'total' as the government exercised restrained control over the economy in regards to war effort.
 - WW1
 - America faced economic confusion in 1917. President Wilson was unable to figure out what to do, or even decide who was in charge. Coal was their major source of energy, thus when the coal shortage hit there was a mass confusion and thus the government failed to exercise proper control over their resources. 44,000 loaded freight and coal cars were tied up in horrendous traffic jams in the rail yards of the East Coast. Two hundred ships were waiting in New York harbor for cargo that was delayed by the mess.
 - WW2
 - In 1942, Albert Speer was put in charge of the Central Planning Board but he had little support in trying to organise the deployment of human resources more effectively.

In conclusion the term 'total war' cannot be applied to both wars as they did not completely fulfill the criteria needed to be defined as 'total war' due to limitations in terms of resources and context, but they still have some elements of a 'total war'.