
The Underlying Cause Of World War I

World War I was one of the most lethal conflicts to occur in history, in which over 16 million people died. The novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque, explores the story of a nineteen-year-old man, Paul Bäumer, who enlists with his classmates in the German army of World War I and discovers the revelations of war. World War I, also known as The Great War, was a global war which lasted from July 28, 1914, to Nov 11, 1918, and started because of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. The costs of war outweigh the benefits because although the war has brought the advancement of technology, it causes one to feel betrayed as they discover the realities of being at war and it causes one to endure psychological disorders, such as PTSD. This essay will examine how the repercussions of war outweigh the advantages. The historical focus will be on the negative effects of World War 1 had on society as well as soldiers. The literary focus will be on how the war has negatively affected Paul and his troops.

When one returns from war they feel deceived as they have been lied to about the realities of war. After World War I, soldiers that had returned back into society were referred to as "The Lost Generation". The word "lost" refers to how the troops were disoriented and directionless, exhibiting the true effects war had on soldiers. WWI caused many people to sense disillusionment, a feeling of disappointment resulting from the discovery that something was not as pleasurable as one believed, and in this case, the soldier's experiences at war were different as they were told it would be. The novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, by Ernest Hemingway, explores an Italian soldier's experience at war after returning back from World War I. The quote, "I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were once glorious and had no glory...Abstract words such as glory, honor, or courage were obscene"(Hemingway 184), discusses how during the time period of war many soldiers suffered from disillusionment. In the novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Paul discovers the war is the slaughtering of innocent people. Paul ponders about the war and says, "I see how peoples are set against one another, and in silence, unknowingly, foolishly, obediently, innocently slay one another." Paul realizes that he has been lied to about the revelations of war as he was told it would be a glorifying experience, but instead discovers that he has taken the lives of innocent people. The diction used such as "unknowingly, foolishly" conveys that Paul did not know that he was slaying the lives of soldiers was immoral, causing him to feel betrayed. These words signify Paul's loss in humanity as at time of war he was unable to sense the true motives of killing. This quote implies that Paul felt a sense of disillusionment, as he discovered the revelations of motives behind war. This fact implies that Paul's generation was directionless and lost, connecting to how many soldiers back from war were considered as "The Lost Generation". The Italian soldier and Paul both to recognize the realities of war, leading to them both feeling a sense of disillusionment and betrayal. As soldiers returned back from war many were unable to fit into society and this is seen as Paul discovers that he has killed innocent people. War causes one to recognize the truth about the war, thus causing one to feel deceitful.

Psychological disorders, such as PTSD, is another cost of war that affected soldiers that had return back from war. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, also known as PTSD, is a psychological disorder where traumatic events that one experiences or witnesses can cause anxiety and flashbacks. According to the BBC, over 20,000 men were suffering from shell shock, also known

as PTSD, after the war had ended. Shell shock was believed to be caused by the result of physical injuries and other traumatic events that had occurred at war. Victims who suffered shell shock often could not sleep or eat and also continued to experience several other symptoms. The article also states that 80% of shell shock victims were never able to return to military duty. This proves that being at war caused many to suffer PTSD, and this affected their daily life post-war. In the novel, Kropp, a German soldier, realizes that the war has caused destruction and chaos to enter into his life and has caused him to experience PTSD. The quote, "The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer, we believe in the war"(Remarque 87-88). The phrase "the first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts" connotes that the war was a traumatic experience and how the first explosion and bombs had broken him, as he realized that he was destroying the world. The tone of this quote signifies that war was horrific and left soldiers, like Kropp, shattered and broken, and also brought about anxiety. This is seen as Kropp feels a sense of fear with the events that took place during the war which causes him to experience PTSD. Both the article and Paul show the repercussions of war, which was PTSD. The article also states that traumatic events such as physical injuries led to shell shock and in Kropp's case, he experienced bombs and explosions which led to him experiencing Post Traumatic Disorder. The PTSD that soldiers from war and Kropp experience convey the costs of war and how traumatic experiences at war affects one deeply.

Although WWI has brought the advancement of technology and weaponry, it has also has taken the lives of several hundred people. Some may argue that one of the benefits of war includes the creation of new machinery helped to make the war more efficient and safer. For example, they contend that World War 1, brought the creation of new technology such as airplanes, used as a mechanism to drop bombs and attack soldiers during the war. The invention of airplanes caused war to become more efficient as soldiers were also able to fight in the air. Airplanes carried mounted machine guns that were used by pilots to annihilate enemies, and these battles in the air were referred to as "dogfights". Additionally, massive guns with explosives, known as artillery were used during war. Artilleries were effective in firing shells 75 miles away and were able to fire a shell at high angles. This argument is flawed because though the advancement of technology in WWI caused war to be effective, it had an immense impact on nations as many suffered casualties. In World War I about 40 million casualties, including civilian and military, proving that the use of technology caused millions of deaths. Russia was continually short on food, guns, ammunition, clothes, boots, blankets, and also suffered a staggering number of battlefield losses. Furthermore, Russia suffered nearly 5.5 million casualties during WWI due to the use of weaponry. Other factors including the use of technology, caused \$338 billion to be lost during WWI. Throughout World War 1, many soldiers operating machines were been unable to communicate with their comrades, therefore there were numerous miscommunications, leading to more destruction and deaths in WW1. The use of automation in WW1 had cost the lives of many and left countries such as Russia, with several civilians and soldiers wounded.

In conclusion, the costs of war outweigh the benefits as war has caused one to feel betrayed as they discover the revelations of war and obtain psychological disorders, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD). Paul feels betrayed due to his experience as war, as he was told that war would be a glorious experience, but he discovers that war destroyed his life. Soldiers who came back from the war were referred to as "The Lost Generation", as many were unable to adapt back into society. Kropp experiences PTSD due to the traumatic event of constant a bomb and explosions, proving that war causes one to endure mental trauma. Although one benefit of war is the advancement of technology, it has cost the lives of several people. War is

unpredictable and though many see war as a solution, it has caused more disputes to rise globally, and we can see this due to the aftermath of WWI.

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