UNIT 3 : The Development of Warfare c.1250 to the present day

Have wars always had the same causes over time?

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS : c.1250s-1700s

The Medieval Period

There were a number of causes of war during this period:

- The **desire for conquest** and **to gain territory** was a major cause e.g. Edward I's conquest of Wales and his attempt to conquer Scotland. The flip side of this was the **struggle for independence,** for example attempts by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Owain Glyndwr to fight against English control.

- **Dynastic disputes** over the right to rule also led to war e.g. the claim by Edward III of England to be rightful king of France led to the Hundred Years War. It was also a cause of the Wars of the Roses.

- **Economic factors** also played a part, as the more land a king ruled, the wealthier and more powerful he would be.

- **Religion** was another reason e.g. the crusades. However, in 1291 the loss of Acre, the last crusader stronghold, brought the crusades to an end.

WELSH EXAMPLE : The Edwardian conquest
Between 1277 and 1283 Edward I defeated Llywelyn and conquered Wales. Welsh attempts to regain independence through rebellions by Madog ap Llywelyn in 1294 and Llywelyn Bren from 1316-18 both failed. Owain Glyndwr between 1400 and 1409 did bring much of Wales under his control before the new English king Henry V defeated him and reasserted English authority.

The early modern period

- **Politics** was a main cause of war in the 16th and 17th centuries e.g. in the 1640s disagreements between King Charles I and parliament led to the Civil War.

- **Religion** was also a key factor in war. Many MPs were Puritans and did not like Charles' Catholic wife. They also hated the religious reforms that Charles tried to force on them.

- **Economic rivalry** also led to war. As Britain began to develop an empire, wars over trade and territory were fought against rivals like Spain and France for control of trade in the West Indies and North America and also against local rulers to take control of their land.

WELSH EXAMPLE : Wales in the Civil War
Wales was divided in its support. Many great landowners like Richard Vaughan, who were Anglican, supported the king and provided soldiers for the Royalist army; others like Thomas Myddleton the Puritan MP for Denbigh were parliamentarians. He commanded parliamentary forces in North Wales.

INDUSTRIAL PERIOD : c. 1750s - 1800s

The late 18th and 19th centuries

This period saw a huge expansion of the British Empire across the world. The result was that Britain was almost constantly at war for most of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

- The **desire for territory** and **economic power** led to the development of the British Empire. It was believed that overseas territories brought trade which in turn created wealth. This meant not only going to war to win land, for example from Indian rulers, but also fighting against European rivals or trying to stop British colonies from gaining independence e.g. The American War of Independence.

- **Imperial rivalry** followed on from this. Other nations e.g. France also wanted to build empires, and this led to war over disputed territories such as the Seven Years War (1756-1763) during which Britain gained control over Canada, India and some Caribbean islands from the French.

- **Religion** was less of a factor in causing war, but the fact that Britain's main imperial rivals, France and Spain, were both Catholic powers could be used to justify war.

- Britain was developing **a sense of patriotism,** an idea that she had been chosen by God to rule over others. The song "Rule Britannia" was written in 1740. In it we are informed us that Britain rose "at heaven's command". The original words "Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves, Britons never will be slaves" were written during the war with Spain (see below) and meant to encourage patriotic support for the war.

As Britain continued to expand her empire in the 19th century she fought many more wars against rivals eg. the Crimean War against Russia to protect the sea route to India, and against local peoples fighting to keep their land eg. The Maori in New Zealand and the Zulu in Africa.

WELSH EXAMPLE : The "War of Jenkin's Ear"

Robert Jenkins, the Welsh sea captain, had his ship stopped by a Spanish warship. Jenkins was accused of smuggling and had his ear cut off by the Spaniards. On his return to England Jenkins complained about his treatment. The war with Spain, which started in 1739, was not so much about avenging Jenkins but more about winning Caribbean islands from Spain and gaining trading rights in that area.

MODERN PERIOD : c.1900s-present day

The causes of war in the 20th century

- **Nationalism and expansionism** become a major cause of war in the 20th century. This can be seen as a cause of both World War I and World War II when nations went to war to promote their own national interests. This also linked to other factors e.g. In the early 20th century Germany wanted an **overseas empire** but the only way she could do so was to take territories from Britain and France, who did not want to part with them.

- **Imperialism** remained an issue. Britain and France were determined to keep their empires, while in the 1930s other nations such as Italy and Japan began to build their own, often in areas under British and French control.

- **Ideology** also emerged as a cause of war. In the 1930's **Nazi Germany** expanded its borders and became a threat to peace in Europe. Britain went to war in 1939 when Germany attacked Poland. This was the start of World War II. After World War II **communism** was seen as the great threat to democracy, which led to **the Cold War** between the USA and its allies and the USSR. Though there was no physical fighting in Europe, there were wars in other parts of the world, for example the Korean War 1950-3 to which Britain sent troops.

- In the last 30 years, **religion** has again become a cause of war, with the rise of religious extremism. Britain has been involved in wars in the Middle East e.g. Iraq and Afghanistan as a result.

21st century causes

British troops continue to serve abroad in various war zones eg. Iraq and Afghanistan. However, over the past 40 years they have also been involved in a different role, one of **peace-keepers.** There have been British forces in Cyprus since 1974 and more recently they have also been deployed in places like Kosovo, Lebanon and South Sudan.

WELSH EXAMPLE : Welsh anti-war sentiment

After Edward I's conquest in the late 13th century, Wales had no independent say in decisions about war. However, in the late 19th and early 20th popular opinion in Wales was not always the same as in other areas of the UK. As Wales became a predominantly non-conformist nation, many Welsh people opposed what they felt were unjust wars. Lloyd George was against the Boer War and many of his countrymen supported his view.