



General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Examination
June 2013

Critical Thinking

CRIT2

Unit 2 Information, Inference and Explanation

Source Material

This source material is to be read in conjunction with the questions in Unit CRIT2

A

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Document A: The ancient Chinese curse ‘May you live in interesting times’ applies to our age with a vengeance

1. We are the most technologically advanced society that has ever existed. We know more about ourselves and the universe we inhabit than any past generation, thanks to the extraordinary progress of scientific understanding in the 20th and 21st centuries. And yet, we face an unprecedented crisis of crime, terrorism and war.
2. The end of the Cold War* between the USA and the Soviet Union in 1991 had the potential to open a new era of global peace, but a whole generation of politicians missed their chance as a shift in power away from western countries has led to a series of wars – from the former Yugoslavia to Iraq and Afghanistan. We must also remember the on-going crisis in Israel–Palestine, and Africa’s most deadly war, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where one million people may have died. Our other war, the war on terror, has stopped attacks in the west, but terrorism has, if anything, increased in other parts of the world, usually on the fringes of wars. This is the case in Somalia, the Yemen, Iraq and Pakistan. Some of these events contributed to the Arab Spring, when people of the Middle East attempted to overthrow non-democratic governments. They succeeded in Tunisia, but are failing in Syria and Bahrain, where thousands are thought to have died at the hands of security forces.
3. Furthermore, the forgotten war on drugs is still raging. The arrival of guns, gangs and knives has seen the murder rate in our cities rise, especially the killing of young people. Meanwhile, the repellent cocaine addiction among some of our bankers, lawyers, pop stars and the idle rich has cost 30 000 lives in Mexico alone, as mafia gangs battle to control the supply of drugs. It is a tragedy of our time that these same people have helped to create the economic conditions, such as unemployment and poverty, which drag young people into criminal life.

***The Cold War** was the state of political hostility and military tension between the USA and the Soviet Union after World War II until 1991. It involved the threat of global nuclear war but primarily consisted of propaganda, subversion, economic sanctions and other measures short of open warfare. However, wars with other allied countries occurred regularly.

Source: AQA, 2012

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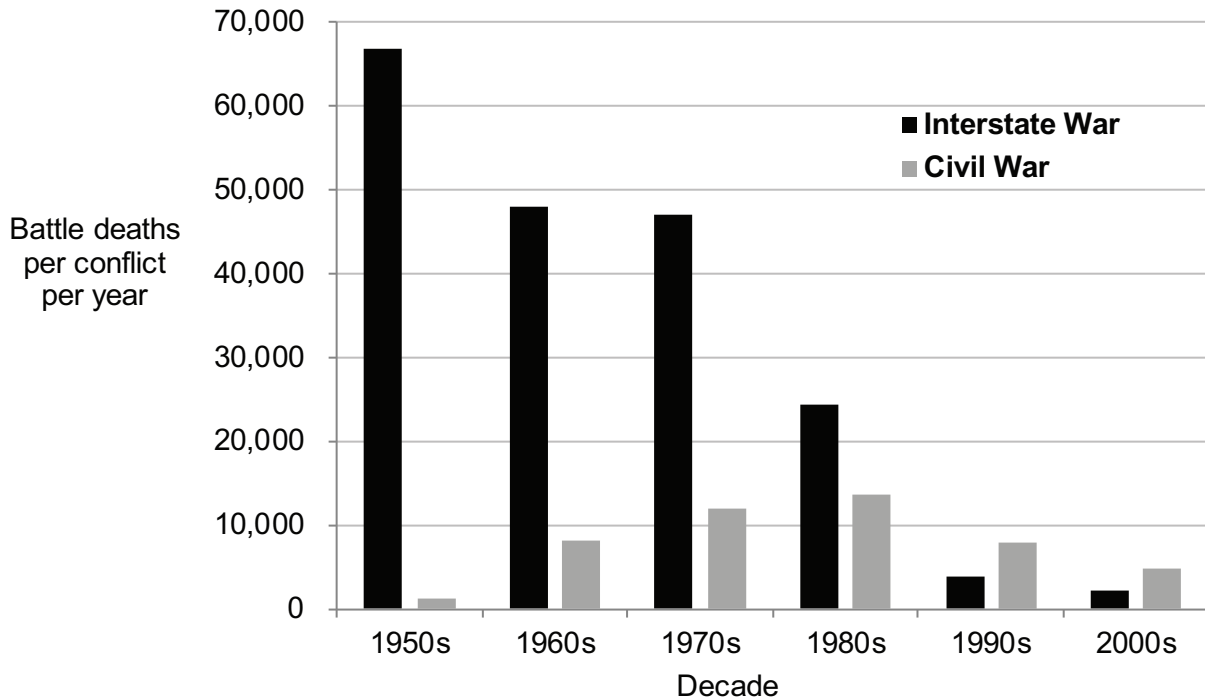
Document B: If it bleeds, it misleads – why the pessimists are wrong about violence

1. You would think that the disappearance of the gravest threat in the history of humanity would bring a sigh of relief among commentators on world affairs. Contrary to numerous expert predictions on the Cold War, there was no invasion of Western Europe by Soviet tanks, no escalation of a crisis in Cuba or Berlin or the Middle East into a nuclear holocaust. The cities of the world were not vaporised; the atmosphere was not poisoned by radioactive fallout or choked with debris that blacked out the sun and sent Homo sapiens the way of the dinosaurs.
2. Not only that, but (again, contrary to expert predictions) a reunified Germany did not turn into a fascist state, democracy did not go the way of monarchy, and the great powers did not fall into a third world war but rather a 'long peace', which keeps getting longer. **So experts should be recognising the improvements in the world's fortunes from a few decades ago.**
3. But no – the pundits are glummer than ever. In 2007, columnist Frank Rich summarised the view of innumerable professors, writers and journalists, saying that the world was "a more dangerous place than ever". If Rich is correct then the world was more dangerous in 2007 than it was during the two world wars, the Berlin crises of 1949 and 1961, the Cuban missile crisis, and all the wars in the Middle East. That's pretty dangerous.
4. This pessimism has been inspired by 'new wars' involving guerrillas and paramilitaries that plague the developing world, symbolised by images of gun-toting teenagers. It has been stoked by the widely repeated (and completely bogus) claim that at the beginning of the 20th century, 90% of war deaths were suffered by soldiers and less than 10% by civilians, but by the end of the century these proportions had been reversed. It has fed on the claim that the world learned nothing from the Holocaust, and that genocides are as common as ever. And of course it has been redoubled by the threat of terrorism, which has been said to pose a threat to the very existence of western countries, to 'do away with our way of life' or even to end 'civilisation itself'.
5. Each of these factors continues to take a toll in human lives. But it's only recently that political scientists have tried to measure how big a toll it is, and they have reached a surprising conclusion: all these kinds of killing are in decline. Battle deaths per 100 000 of the world population have fallen from 300 during the height of the Second World War to fewer than 20 in the post-war years, single digits during the Cold War, and less than one in the 21st century.
6. The deliberate killing of civilians has shown a similar bumpy yet downward trajectory. And other than in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, deaths from terrorism in the past decade were far lower than they were in the 1970s and 1980s, with their hijackings and bombings by countless revolutionary fronts, leagues, brigades and factions.
7. It's not easy to see the bright side in the world today, where the remnants of war continue to cause tremendous misery. The effort to quantify the misery can seem heartless, especially when it undermines claims that are serving as effective propaganda for raising money and attention. But there is a moral imperative in getting the facts right, and not just because truth is better than error. A better understanding of what drove the numbers down can steer us towards doing things that make people better off, rather than congratulating ourselves on how morally sophisticated we are.

Source: extract adapted from *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, STEVEN PINKER (Harvard University)
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Document C: Graphs 1 to 4 used by Steven Pinker (author of Document B) as supporting evidence

Graph 1: The average 'deadliness' of interstate wars and civil wars, 1950s–2000s



Definitions:

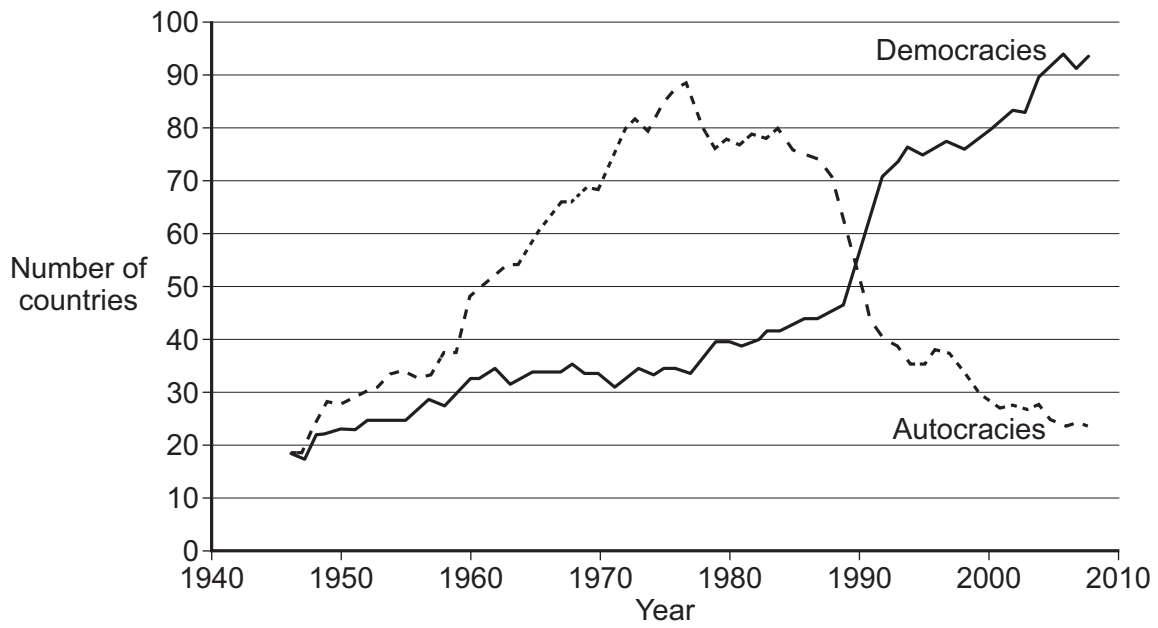
An **interstate war** is a conflict between states (i.e. a war between countries).

A **civil war** is a conflict between groups within one country (although forces from other countries frequently become involved).

The '**deadliness**' of a conflict is defined as the average number of battle deaths that occur in that conflict each year that the conflict lasts.

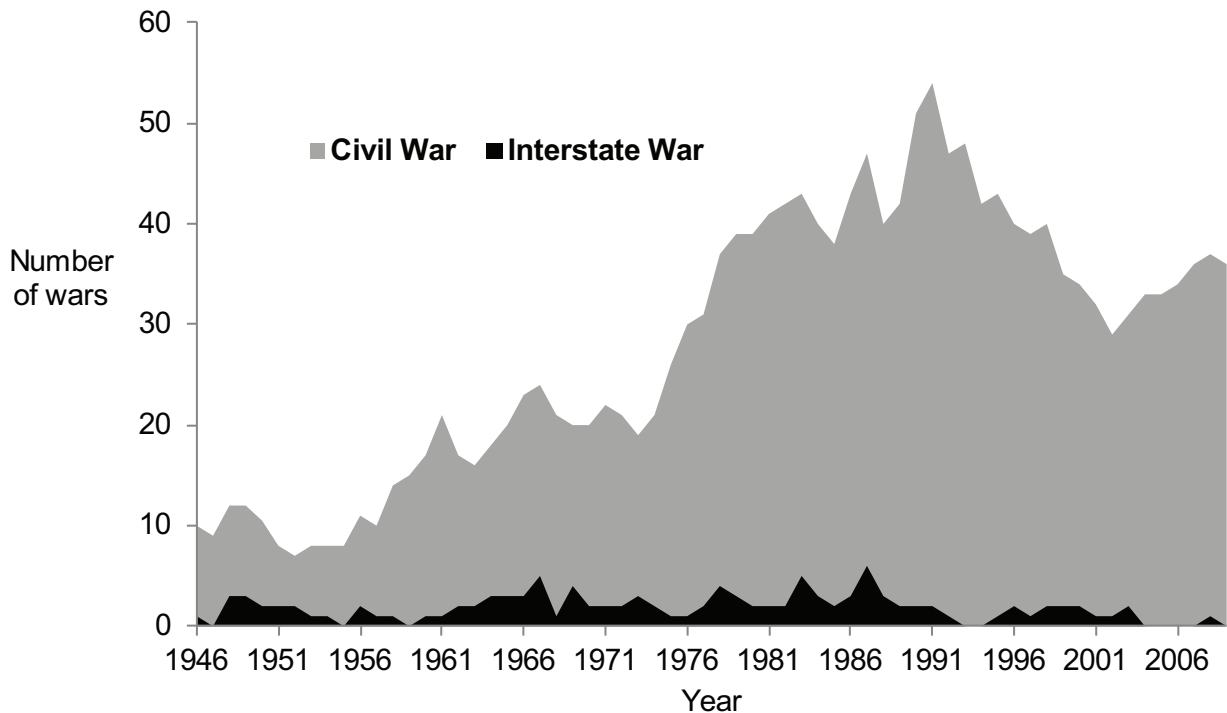
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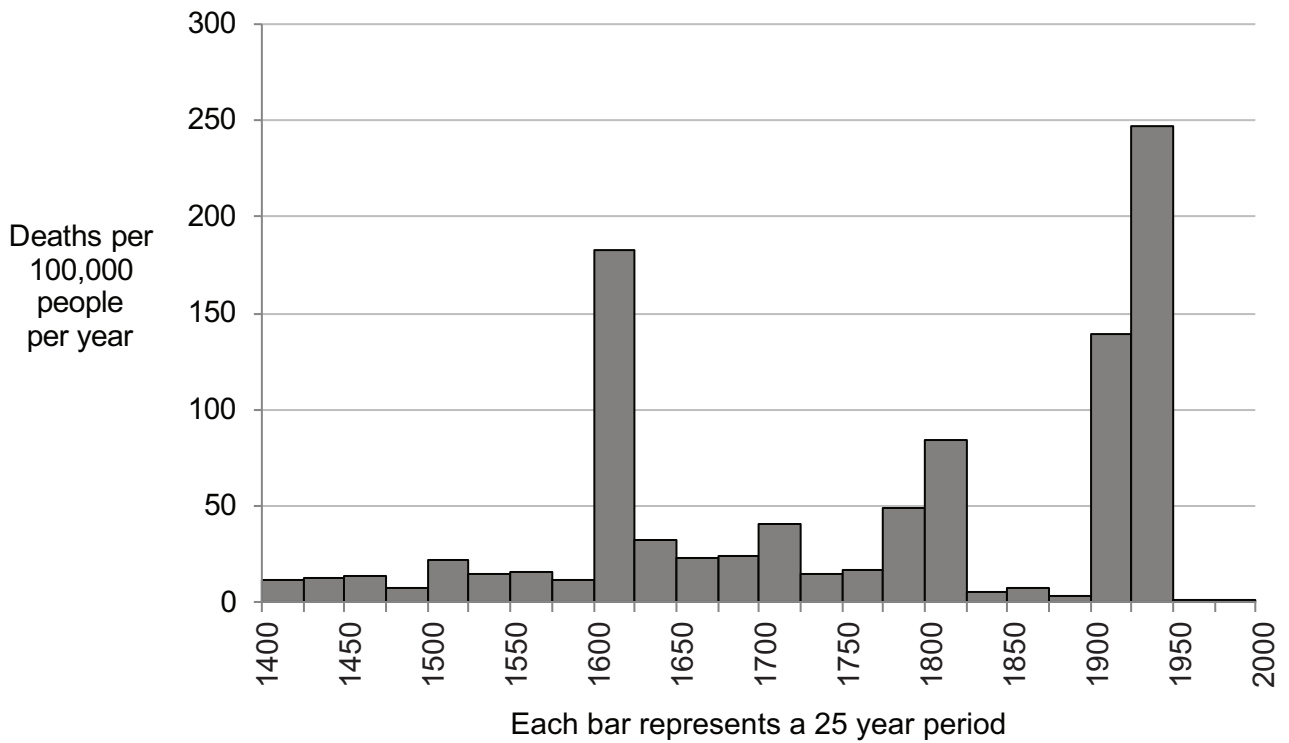
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Graph 2: Frequency of two types of government, 1946–2008

Note: Only countries with a population greater than 500,000 are included.

Definition: **Autocracy** is government by an individual, usually unelected.

Graph 3: Number of civil wars and interstate wars, 1946–2009

Graph 4: Rate of death in conflicts in Europe, 1400–2000

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