On the eve of the 20th century a Polish banker and industrialist, Jan Bloch, wrote a voluminous treatise, entitled the *Future of War*, in which he contended that war, carried on under modern conditions, had become impossible or, rather, self-destructive.

Also on the eve of the 20th century an inter-governmental conference, dedicated to the problems of the avoidance of war and the future of peace, took place in The Hague. This conference had been convened on the initiative of the Czar of All Russians, whose advisor Jan Bloch was. The future of peace turned out to be less certain than that of war and the events of the first half of the 20th century put Bloch in the right.

On the eve of the 21st century, this 1899 Peace Conference was commemorated in the Peace Palace in The Hague. At the same time, armed activities were carried on under the most modern conditions by an alliance of 19 sovereign states against the territory of a relatively small state in south-east Europe. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose?* Certainly not, for the connotations of the terms ‘war’ and ‘peace’ have radically changed in the course of the last 100 years.

At the end of the 19th century, ‘war’ stood for ‘a state of belligerency between two or more states’, which usually was followed by the conclusion of a peace-treaty, leading to an end of hostilities and a disengagement of military forces. Such wars and such peace agreements have largely, though not completely, disappeared in the second half of the 20th century.
The wars of the end of the 20th century are mostly armed conflicts finding their origin in situations within a state. They are no longer fought by armies on battlefields but, often by irregular militias, in the streets of cities and the fields around villages and hamlets. As a consequence, the number of civilian war casualties has risen from 15 per cent at the beginning of the century to 90 percent at its end.

With the meaning of the term ‘war’ the meaning of the term ‘peace’ has changed. As the High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms Sadako Ogata, once said ‘Wars that change in character must necessarily lead to peace of a different kind’. The peace treaties which terminated the inter-state wars of the past initiated a period of absence of violence and force, even when they sometimes already contained the seeds of a new war. Modern peace agreements, like the Dayton Agreement, important though they may be, are only elements in an ongoing struggle. Peace no longer is concluded or restored. After an internal war it has to be built; peace-building has become an important term in UN-jargon.

What does peace mean in the war-torn country of Bosnia, in the war-stricken areas of Sierra Leone, in the looted and pillaged cities and villages of Kosovo, even if a ‘peace’ agreement has been hammered out?

On the eve of the 21st century, it seemed useful to organize a conference in order to take stock of the developments and trends of the last century and to cast a cautious glance at what we may expect in the next century. The Foundation for War Studies took the initiative to organize such a conference and chose as venue St Petersburg, the city where Bloch published his work and Czar Nicholas issued his Imperial Rescript leading to The Hague Peace Conference. Were the lessons of 1899 learned and what are the lessons of 1999? The reader may find some – often tentative – answers in the present book.