The Purpose of the First World War

War Aims and Military Strategies

Schriften des Historischen Kollegs

Herausgegeben von Andreas Wirsching

Kolloquien
91

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Herausgegeben von
Holger Afflerbach

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Schriften des Historischen Kollegs
herausgegeben von
Andreas Wirsching
in Verbindung mit
Georg Brun, Peter Funke, Karl-Heinz Hoffmann,
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Das Historische Kolleg wird seit dem Kollegjahr 2000/2001 – im Sinne einer „public private partnership" – in seiner Grundausstattung vom Freistaat Bayern finanziert, die Mittel für die Stipendien kamen bislang unter anderem von der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, dem Stiftungsfonds Deutsche Bank, der Gerda Henkel Stiftung und dem Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft. Träger des Historischen Kollegs, das vom Stiftungsfonds Deutsche Bank und vom Stifterverband errichtet und zunächst allein finanziert wurde, ist die „Stiftung zur Förderung der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und des Historischen Kollegs".
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Danksagung

Dieses Buch ist ganz auf Englisch – aber zumindest die Danksagung soll auf Deutsch sein. Schließlich ist dieser Band ein Produkt meines einjährigen Aufenthalts am Historischen Kolleg in München. Ich war im akademischen Jahr 2012/13 Senior Fellow an diesem fabelhaften Institut und ich möchte dem Kolleg für diese mich sehr ehrende Auszeichnung und allen Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern herzlich für ihre Freundlichkeit, Hilfsbereitschaft und ihre Professionalität danken. Ich bin dem Kuratorium des Historischen Kollegs sehr verpflichtet und nenne hier stellvertretend die Vorsitzenden, Prof. Dr. Lothar Gall, und seinen Nachfolger, Prof. Dr. Andreas Wirsching. Ich danke auch dem Geschäftsführer des Historischen Kollegs, Dr. Karl-Ulrich Gelberg, stellvertretend für alle Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter seines Hauses.

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Princeton, im Februar 2015 Holger Afflerbach

List of Abbreviations

AHR	American Historical Review
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AOK	Armeeoberkommando
AUSSME	Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CD	Constitutional Democratic Party
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
D.D.I.	I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
EHR	English Historical Review
GMR	Gemeinsamer Ministerrat
GWU	Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht
HHStA	Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien
HJ	The Historical Journal
IHR	International History Review
JAfrH	The Journal of African History
JModH	The Journal of Modern History
KA	Kriegsarchiv
MdÄ	Ministerium des Äußeren
MGM	Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen
MKSM	Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät
NARA	National Archives Records Administration, USA
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
OHL	Oberste Heeresleitung
REZL	Magyarországi Réformátus Egyház Zsinati Levéltar (Hungarian Reformed Church Synodal Archives, Budapest)
RH	Revue historique
RHDipl	Revue d'histoire diplomatique
Arhiv SANU	Archives of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
RSDLP	Russian Socialist-Democratic Labour Party
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SR	Socialist Revolutionary Party
SR	Slavic Review
TNA	The National Archives, UK

TOE	Théâtres d'Opérations Extérieures
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VfZ	Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte

Introduction

Holger Afflerbach

What Was the Great War about?

War Aims, Military Strategies and Political Justifications during the First World War

From 29 July 1914, the day when Austrian troops fired the first shots into Serbia, until 11 November 1918, the day of the armistice in Europe, the First World War lasted 1,566 days. The belligerent nations fielded about 66 million soldiers, 8.8 millions of whom died together with nearly 6 million civilians.[1] This means that on average around 9,400 fatalities occured on every day of the war – and this continued for more than four years. Death was only a part of the misery. We have to add the millions mutilated in body or soul, the hardships of war, the sorrow of many and the suffering of all.

Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, an army commander on the Western Front during the First World War later described it as "the most stupid of all wars".[2] He did so, significantly enough, during the Second World War – which had, indeed, clear aims, being, for one side, a ruthless war of conquest and for the other an attempt to stop and destroy a merciless aggressor: a terrible war indeed, but one that had, for both sides, a clear purpose. World War I was different. It is possible that the fascination this war exercises on us, one hundred years later, is its lack of a clear purpose. Clausewitz said that "the reason [for war] always lies in some political situation, and the occasion is always due to some political object".[3] This seems only partially true in the case of the First World War. The war aims adopted during the First World War were not, for the most part, the cause of the conflict, but a reaction to it, an attempt to give the tragedy a purpose – even if the consequence was to oblige the belligerents to go on fighting until victory. War aims were created during the war, not before. This is at least true for the states which entered the War in August 1914. All the Great Powers of Europe were responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914, albeit perhaps to different degrees; but as most historians

[1] The figures are approximate. See Rüdiger Overmans: Kriegsverluste. In: Gerhard Hirschfeld/Gerd Krumeich/Irina Renz (eds.): Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg. Paderborn 2003, pp. 663–666, esp. pp. 664f.

[2] Dieter Weiß: Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern. Eine politische Biografie. Regensburg 2007, p. 307.

[3] Carl von Clausewitz: On War. Ed. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton 1984, pp. 86f.

would say today, the conflagration in the form it actually took was planned and desired by none.[4] Alliance considerations, fear and the feeling of the need to react to, or to preempt, an unprovoked attack were the main reasons behind the actions of governments during the July crisis.

Once at war, the belligerents went on to develop widely different agendas. Nearly all of them had well-defined war aims and a "lust for conquest" was undeniable. This was also true for most of the powers that entered the conflict later – witness the interventions of Italy, analysed here by John Gooch,[5] and Bulgaria in 1915, and that of Romania in 1916. The Ottoman Empire was, as Mesut Uyar shows, something of an exception, and entered the war very much for defensive reasons; but also in this case the lust of conquest came later.[6]

This volume focusses on a number of aspects of the development of war aims and strategy during the Great War. One important aspect is the development of coherent strategies, considered not as a purely military task, but also, indeed mainly, as a political one, as defined Clausewitz: "War is the continuation of politics by other means."[7] Hew Strachan provides us with an important clarification of what contemporaries understood by the term "strategy", namely something we today would describe as "tactics".[8] The tasks of the individual contributions will be to show the complex interplay between political war aims, military strategy, morale at home and at the front, economics and war financing.[9] It will be necessary to specify the war aims of the particular belligerent states and to show how they interacted with military and political realities. In the case of France, Georges-Henri Soutou discerns a quite determined political approach and a military strategy that fitted French political aspirations.[10] Keith Jeffery argues that the British war effort was undermining the political coherence of the empire, which nevertheless proved to be victorious and to have attained, at least at first sight, the peak of its global power in 1918. Also the Austro-Hungarian government insisted stubborn-

[4] Christopher Clark: The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914. London 2012.
[5] See the contribution of John Gooch in this volume.
[6] See the contribution of Mesut Uyar in this volume.
[7] Von Clausewitz: On War (see note 3), p. 87.
[8] See the contribution of Hew Strachan in this volume.
[9] Michael Howard: Grand Strategy. Vol. 4: August 1942–September 1943. London 1972, p. 1, defines "grand strategy" as follows: "Grand strategy in the first half of the twentieth century consisted basically in the mobilisation and deployment of national resources of wealth, manpower and industrial capacity, together with the enlistment of those of allied and, when feasible, of neutral powers, for the purpose of achieving the goals of national policy in wartime." Andreas Hillgruber: Der Faktor Amerika in Hitlers Strategie 1938–1941. In: Wolfgang Michalka (ed.): Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik. Darmstadt 1978, pp. 493–525, p. 493, defines strategy as "die Integration von Innen- und Außenpolitik, von militärischer und psychologischer Kriegsplanung und Kriegführung, von Wehrwirtschaft und -rüstung durch die Führungsspitze eines Staates zur Verwirklichung einer ideologisch-politischen Gesamtkonzeption"/ ("the integration of domestic and foreign policy, of military and psychological war planning und war conduct, of defence economy and military build-up by the leadership of a state towards the realisation of a ideological-political concept").
[10] See the contribution of Georges-Henri Soutou in this volume.

ly, up to the very end, on making gains in the Balkans, as shown here by Marvin Fried.[11]

Equally important is the question of national consensus. What did the political and military elites do to rally their respective nations to continue the struggle? How was this consensus perceived, how do we see it today?

A second point is the nature of political decision-making under the pressure of an enormous crisis. The First World War was not only a global war but also one of the most severe and complex political crisis of human history. Analysing the decision-making of political and military leaders involves empathising with their *mentalités*, fundamental political attitudes and priorities; but we must also take account of contingent factors, such as the accidents of war, the need to take decisions under pressure, and the incalculability of interacting parties – all of which figure in this volume. War, of course, had a dynamic of its own; and war aims were not static, but were considered, and reconsidered, and modified countless times, even if there was, as in the French case, a very solid stock of unchangeable ideas.[12] Political decision-making too was equally subject to unforeseen contingencies, unpredictable interactions, military and political stopgap measures to postpone rather than settle insoluble problems, and above all to the need to survive.

The same dynamics lay at the root of another important development: the longer the war lasted, the more the political opposition in the belligerent countries looked to it to bring them internal political change. People started to talk about fundamental reforms as a reward for their war contribution and their suffering, and the war aims debate was enlarged and became a debate on internal reforms. In some cases – for example, those of Germany and Russia, as described by Roger Chickering and Boris Kolonitskii – the demand for, and the resistance to, internal reforms started to overshadow the classic debate about war aims.[13]

Moreover, as a political catastrophe, the war also pointed the way not only to internal reform, but to alternative structures for conducting international relations: Woodrow Wilson's ideas about a new international order are discussed by Klaus Schwabe,[14] and Holger Afflerbach.[15]

Related to these issues of political options and dynamics in wartime is the question why governments did not try to reduce their war aims – or abandon them altogether – to save the lives and happiness of millions of people. Instead we see a picture of grim determination, a very striking example being Serbia, described by Dušan T. Bataković. Forced into exile by the Central Powers in late 1915, the Serbian government continued the fight on Greek soil, stubbornly refusing to reduce

[11] See the contribution of Marvin Fried in this volume.
[12] See the contribution of Georges-Henri Soutou in this volume.
[13] See the contributions of Roger Chickering (Germany) and Boris Kolonitskii (Russia) in this volume.
[14] See the contribution of Klaus Schwabe in this volume.
[15] See my contribution in this volume.

its political programme, let alone conclude a separate peace. Such tenacity came at a high price, however; and Serbia suffered, in proportion to its population, the highest losses of all belligerent nations.[16] Serbia was perhaps an extreme case. All the other belligerents, however, were almost equally unyielding; and the question of why no political compromise was reached, and why this World War, despite costing more than 14 million lives, was continued until the complete defeat of one of the two sides is discussed here by Lothar Höbelt and Holger Afflerbach.[17]

The editor and the authors of this volume are well aware of the enormous complexities surrounding the war aims and military strategies of the First World War, and have not even attempted to cover all the questions they raise – an impossible task when one considers that Fritz Fischer's volume on German War aims alone runs to more than 900 pages and even then does not manage to cover all aspects of German strategy and war aims.[18] We hope, nevertheless, that the present volume will offer an overview to our "ideal audience" of students and informed general readers with an interest in the First World War, and may invite them to reflect on the political and strategic reasons and rationales behind that catastrophe.

[16] See the contribution by Dušan T. Bataković in this volume.
[17] See the contribution of Lothar Höbelt and my contribution in this volume.
[18] Fritz Fischer: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914–1918. Düsseldorf 1961.

Hew Strachan

Military Operations and National Policies, 1914–1918

"There is a certain book, 'Vom Kriege', which never grows old", Paul von Hindenburg wrote in his war memoirs, published in 1920. "Its author is Clausewitz. He knew war, and he knew men. We had to listen to him, and whenever we followed him it was to victory. To do otherwise meant disaster. He gave a warning about the encroachment of politics on the conduct of military operations."

Hindenburg was venting the frustration which he had felt in early September 1914, after his victory at the Masurian Lakes over Rennenkampf's 1st Army. *Oberste Heeresleitung* (hereafter OHL) had told him not to exploit his success by pursuing the retreating Russians, but to switch the axis of his attack to the south, so as to give "direct support" to the Austrians "on political grounds". In the passage which followed, Hindenburg reflected as much his own experiences at OHL in the second half of the war, when he himself was chief of the Prussian general staff, as his frustrations in 1914. "The political tune is a ghastly tune! I myself during the war seldom heard in that tune those harmonies which would have struck an echo in a soldier's heart."[1]

Today "Vom Kriege" is not read as it was read by German officers of Hindenburg's generation. Clausewitz's nostrum that war is the continuation of policy by other means has led theorists of civil-military relations to claim that, in the words of Samuel Huntington, "the ends for which the military body is employed […] are outside its competence to judge". Huntington concluded his consideration of Clausewitz's "Vom Kriege" with the assertion that, "In formulating the first theoretical rationale for the military profession, Clausewitz also contributed the first theoretical justification for civilian control."[2] Thanks not least to Huntington, military subordination to civil control is the current norm and we interpret Hindenburg's frustration as a classic Prussian military misreading of Clausewitz. The First World War was, after all, waged by recognisably modern states. Most had constitutions which were sufficiently progressive to mean that there was some level of parliamentary accountability, even in those countries which were not de-

[1] Paul von Hindenburg: Out of My Life. London 1920, pp. 111f.

[2] Samuel P. Huntington: The Soldier and the State. The Theory and Practice of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge, MA 1957, pp. 57f. On the differences in the reading of Clausewitz, see Hew Strachan: Clausewitz and the First World War. In: Journal of Military History 75 (2011), pp. 367–391; Hew Strachan: Clausewitz en anglais. La césure de 1976. In: Laure Bardiès/Martin Motte (eds.): De la guerre? Clausewitz et la pensée stratégique contemporaine. Paris 2008, pp. 81–122.

mocracies. It was also a war in which armies were not on the whole commanded by their monarchs, even if some of those monarchs aspired to be autocrats.

There are of course significant exceptions to both those statements. Neither of the leading democracies among the original belligerents, Britain and France, held an election during the war, and as a result their populations were never given the opportunity to pass judgement on their governments' conduct of it. There are also important caveats to be entered in the case of the autocracies. Kaiser Wilhelm may have spent much of the war railing at his marginalisation, but he still retained the crucial power to hire and fire both Germany's chancellors and its service chiefs.[3] Tsar Nicholas II took over the supreme command of the Russian Army in September 1915 and exercised it until his abdication in March 1917. By then the new and young Kaiser Karl was increasingly involved in the command decisions of the Austro-Hungarian Army. However, neither of these observations detracts from the general point, that civil authority was more divided from the exercise of military command than it had been in Clausewitz's day. Hindenburg's problem in making strategy was different from, and more complex than, that which confronted Frederick the Great or Napoleon.

Hindenburg's was one of the first of the post-war memoirs, forming part of a flood in which the Germans led the way: his predecessor as chief of the general staff, Erich von Falkenhayn, published his in 1920, and his first quartermaster general, Erich Ludendorff, was fast off the mark in 1919. The tensions of civil-military relations set the tone for many of these books, whether written by soldiers or by civilians. According to the soldiers' line of argument, they would have won the war sooner or – in the case of the German officers – they would simply have won the war, if they had been left unfettered by the politicians to fight it. According to the politicians, the generals were stupid and bloodthirsty, and should never have been given as much head as they were. As David Lloyd George, the British prime minister, put it in a concluding chapter of his memoirs entitled "Some reflections on the functions of governments and soldiers respectively in a war": "There is a region where the soldier claims to be paramount and where the interference of the statesman seems to him to be an impertinence. One is the question of whether a great battle which may involve enormous losses ought to be fought – if so, where and at what time. The second question is whether a prolonged attack on fortifications (practically a siege) which is causing huge loss of life without producing any apparent result, ought to be called off. Should Governments intervene or leave the decision entirely to the soldiers?"[4]

[3] Walter Görlitz (ed.): Regierte der Kaiser? Kriegstagebücher, Aufzeichnungen und Briefe des Chefs des Marine-Kabinetts Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller, 1914–1918. Göttingen 1959, is full of examples of the Kaiser's frustrations; Holger Afflerbach: Wilhelm II as Supreme Warlord in the First World War. In: War in History 5 (1998), pp. 427–449, shows how extensive his power remained.

[4] David Lloyd George: War Memoirs. 2 vols. London 1938, here: vol. 2, p. 2035; on the War Memoirs, see Andrew Suttie: Rewriting the First World War. Lloyd George, Politics and Strategy. Basingstoke 2005.

Lloyd George's question was of course rhetorical, but its tone was also self-exculpating. He was anxious to defend himself from the charges that in 1917 he had not prevented the 3rd battle of Ypres and had not subsequently intervened after its commencement to forestall its continuation as Haig's Army floundered towards Passchendaele.

Most historians today have moved away from the tired and self-serving arguments of the memoirs. There were few, if any, pure "westerners" or "easterners" in Britain, but probably quite a number in Germany, especially in the winter of 1914–1915.[5] Moreover, the person who espoused a particular line in strategy was not necessarily to be identified as either (to continue the British nomenclature for these categories) a "frock-coat" (i.e. a civilian) or a "brass-hat" (i.e. a soldier). One of the reasons for Lloyd George's readiness both to support Robert Nivelle's appointment as the French commander-in-chief and then to back his request that the British Expeditionary Force be subordinated to French command was his own political need for a major victory on the western front. Hence too Lloyd George's ambivalence about Haig's plans for the second half of 1917. If Haig succeeded, he would give what Lloyd George badly needed: a much more secure political platform from which to pursue his own desire to defeat Germany. Real wartime ambiguities underlay the apparent post-war certainties of the memoirs. In Germany itself, Falkenhayn was a resolute "westerner" but achieved his greatest gains in the east, while Ludendorff – at least until he himself moved to OHL in 1916 – was an impassioned "easterner".

As the memoirs have been discredited by the opening of the archives, another narrative has suggested a different line of historiographical attack. In 1917–1918, the Entente powers won the war precisely because their civilian governments fought back against their generals and their accretion of political influence, so reasserting civilian authority over military. In Britain, Lloyd George, having angered the King, the Cabinet and Parliament by agreeing to place Haig under Nivelle without consulting any of them, a sin compounded by the failure of the Nivelle offensive in April 1917, amazingly recovered. He was helped by Haig's dogged persistence at Ypres, which discredited the British Expeditionary Force's commander in the eyes of his principal political supporters, the Conservative party and its press. In the winter of 1917–1918 Lloyd George managed to contrive the removal of Haig's principal staff officers, including his Director of Military Intelligence, John Charteris, and his Chief of Staff, Launcelot Kiggell. In February 1918 the prime minister manoeuvred Sir William Robertson out of his post as Chief of the Imperial General Staff and replaced him with Sir Henry Wilson, whom Haig disliked. And at the end of March Haig was finally brought

[5] For Britain, see the essays in Brian Bond (ed.): The First World War and British Military History. Oxford 1991; on the debates in Germany, see Karl-Heinz Janßen: Der Kanzler und der General. Die Führungskrise um Bethmann Hollweg und Falkenhayn 1914–1916. Göttingen 1967, which provides a lively if now somewhat dated introduction. Holger Afflerbach: Falkenhayn. Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich. München 1994, is fundamental.

under French command when Ferdinand Foch was appointed the Allies' generalissimo.

To represent this as the triumph of Lloyd George over Haig, of civilian control over military, is however as much in danger of overstatement as were the aspersions and categorisations popularised by the memoirs. The differences between the British prime minister and the army's generals should not be exaggerated. Both were more united in the ends they were pursuing than it suited either party to admit in later life. Lloyd George's complicity in the 3rd battle of Ypres makes the point.[6] In the spring of 1918, with Haig's power base clipped, the army might have been expected to kick back, and at one level it did. On 7 May, the Director of Military Operations at the War Office, Major General Sir Frederick Maurice, wrote a letter to the national press in which he accused the prime minister of misleading the House of Commons with regard to the strength of the British Expeditionary Force in France as at 1 January 1918. This mattered because Haig had asked for more men but had not been given them, and so Lloyd George could be accused of starving the BEF of manpower and of contributing (at least in part) to the success of the German offensive on 21 March 1918. Maurice's letter was a bolt from the blue, a flash of anger more than a conspiracy. He had not forewarned H. H. Asquith, the former prime minister, the leader of the Liberal party and the most likely alternative to Lloyd George as premier. Neither Maurice nor Sir William Robertson could see Asquith as a viable wartime leader. So, willy-nilly, both were tied to a prime minister who was as unequivocal in his pursuit of victory as they were. Nor was the army united in support of Maurice's stand, or at least not openly so. His quixotic gesture failed to produce any support from General Headquarters in France: Haig wrote to his wife, "No one can be both a soldier and a politician at the same time".[7]

A similar pattern can be tracked across the other Entente powers. On 8 November 1917 Luigi Cadorna, who had commanded the Italian armies in eleven battles on the Isonzo since 1915, was dismissed after the rout at Caporetto. Significantly it was the king, not the prime minister, who acted, and it was the king who chose his successor, Armando Diaz. The army's own choice would have been the Duke of Aosta, and one staff officer at the supreme command exploded on hearing that Diaz had got the job: "We need a 'flag' in the army, around which everybody can rally […]. With Diaz, who is not well respected, most of his direct subordinates will begin to waver [...] this is a disaster."[8]

[6] Trevor Wilson: The Myriad Faces of War. Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918. Cambridge 1986, pp. 462–468.

[7] On 7 May 1918, quoted in: Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters 1914–1918. Ed. by Gary Sheffield and John Bourne. London 2005, p. 411. On the Maurice affair, see Nancy Maurice (ed.): The Maurice Case. From the Papers of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice KCMG, CB. London 1972; John Gooch: The Maurice Case. In: id.: The Prospect of War. Studies in British Defence Policy 1847–1942. London 1981; David R. Woodward: Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men Prior to the German Offensive of 21 March 1918. In: HJ 27 (1984), pp. 241–252.

[8] Mario Morselli: Caporetto 1917. Victory or Defeat? London 2001, p. 103; see also John R. Schindler: Isonzo. The Forgotten Sacrifice of the Great War. Westport, CT 2001, pp. 261f.

It was not. Italy rallied. In France, Georges Clemenceau, installed as prime minister on 16 November 1917, similarly played off generals against themselves. He had inherited as his senior officers Philippe Pétain, appointed to command the French Army on 15 May 1917 in the wake of Nivelle's failure, and Ferdinand Foch, who had been given the now separate office of chief of the general staff. He admired the second for his optimism, even if he rejected his Catholicism, and disliked the first for his pessimism. What had weakened his political predecessors had been the ambivalence of their commitment to the war. By dedicating the French nation anew to the fight, Clemenceau reunited the government and the people with the army in a common objective. Between 18 January 1918 and the armistice on 11 November, he devoted a third of his time to visiting the front. In June 1918, after the successful German offensive of 27 May on the Chemin des Dames, Clemenceau felt able to act, replacing Pétain's chief of staff, Anthoine, removing two army commanders, and bringing back the "butcher", Charles Mangin. Pétain was forced to accept changes in up to eight senior military appointments.[9] Potentially the greatest challenge to Clemenceau's ministry was the appointment of Foch to be Allied generalissimo on 26 March 1918. Although a French officer, Foch now answered to an Allied body, the Supreme War Council, and so had the excuse to reject his own prime minister's authority. Clemenceau did not give him the opportunity, not least by showing his own clear support for the principle of unified Allied command, and by his public statements backing Foch, culminating with his promotion to be a marshal of France.

The narrative was very different in the case of Germany. The army played the game of divide and rule better than the politicians. The chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, colluded in the isolation of Falkenhayn and 2nd OHL, and in August 1916 saw the populist and popular duo of Hindenburg and Ludendorff installed as 3rd OHL. As a minister appointed by the Kaiser, rather than a leader of a major political party, Bethmann Hollweg lacked his own power base in the Reichstag. So his value to Wilhelm II depended on his capacity to manage a body which owed the chancellor no loyalty. Bethmann Hollweg was in some ways, therefore, more prey to popular demand than were the elected heads of Britain and Germany. More had united him to Falkenhayn in terms of strategy than either appeared to recognise; what held him to Hindenburg and Ludendorff was the public's faith in their military brilliance hatched by the victory of Tannenberg. Martin Kitchen has called what followed after they took over OHL in August 1916 a "silent dictatorship", in which the casualties were not just the Reichstag and nascent parliamentarianism but ultimately the monarchy itself.[10] The reform to the Prussian constitution, adumbrated before 1914, was continually

[9] Jean-Baptiste Duroselle: Clemenceau. Paris 1988, pp. 655 f., pp. 665–670.

[10] Martin Kitchen: The Silent Dictatorship. The Politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff 1916–1918. London 1976; see also Gerhard Ritter: Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk. Das Problem des "Militarismus" in Deutschland. 4 vols. München 1954–1968, here: vols. 3 and 4.

postponed throughout the war, and in the death throes of the conflict the generals – not the chancellor – told the Kaiser he had to go, and to do so because he no longer commanded the confidence of the army, not because the German people rejected him. In this narrative Germany lost because militarism prevailed.

Therefore, according to this account, the Entente won the war because its members were democracies. It is a narrative which can accommodate the problem of Tsarist Russia, because it resolved to liberalise itself in March 1917, after the first of the revolutions, the better to fight the war. Moreover, in the following month, the pre-eminent democratic power of the twentieth century, the United States, joined the war as an "associate" of the Entente, and so revalidated the liberal ideals for which it was fighting. The Entente won not just because its members were fighting for the rule of law, for freedom and civilisation, but because democracies proved better able to wage major war, by harnessing military operations to the pursuit of national objectives. Ironically, democracy, by militarising itself for the duration of the war, proved better at waging war than did militarism. In the orthodoxy of civil-military relations theory, as enunciated by Huntington in particular, bringing generals under the control of the government led to victory.

This interpretation has some merit but it is couched in the rhetoric of post-Cold War triumphalism. It fits into the master narrative of the "short" twentieth century, that democracy will prevail over totalitarianism. So the Allied success in 1918 is part of an ascending sequence which runs on to the defeat of Hitler in 1945 and the collapse of Communism in 1989–1990. This was the *Zeitgeist* of 2002–2003: democratic governments, although slow to fight, fight to win.

The emphasis on civil-military relations in this version of events misses a key point, the character of the First World War itself. The dynamic created by the war involved all sides in an interactive and escalatory spiral, and this trumped the internal, domestic debates specific to each state. For the original belligerent nations of 1914 the First World War was what today is called an "existential" conflict, a war of national survival. All of them, with the exception of Britain, were directly invaded in the opening moves of the conflict: Serbia by Austria-Hungary, Austria-Hungary by Russia, Russia by Austria-Hungary, Germany by Russia in East Prussia and by France in Alsace-Lorraine, Belgium by Germany, and France by Germany.

The imposition of martial law and the army's intervention in other areas of domestic government were therefore justified by military necessity. The 1851 Prussian law of siege, which had been adopted by the empire in 1871, stated that, if any part of Germany was threatened, the Kaiser could declare all to be in a state of war. It came into effect on mobilisation and gave the deputy commanding generals of the corps districts into which Germany was divided powers which were independent of the civil authorities, leaving each of them answerable only to the Kaiser.[11] In 1912, during the Balkan Wars, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had em-

[11] Wilhelm Deist (ed.): Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914–1918. 2 vols. Düsseldorf 1970, contains the relevant documents; Gerald D. Feldman: Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany 1914–1918. Princeton 1966, pp. 31–33.

ulated Germany's law of siege by adopting a war service law. It covered not just the mobilisation of manpower defined in narrowly military terms but also the subordination of all the empire's resources to the needs of the army. The rights of private citizens were potentially forfeit to legislation which in due course would allow the *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* or war surveillance office, part of the ministry of war and originally charged with censorship and the control of information, to assume responsibilities previously held by other government departments and to penetrate many areas of public life. After Serbia's rejection of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, a state of emergency declared that Austria was to be governed by decree until parliament was recalled; that did not happen until 1917. The army's supreme command (AOK or *Armeeoberkommando*) stepped into the space available. Trial by jury was suspended and an increasing number of offences were transferred from civil to military courts. Hungary managed to resist much of this, particularly the intervention of the war surveillance office, but there is a good case for saying that Austria, at least until 1917, was – of all belligerents – the power most under the thumb of the army.[12] In both France and Russia invasion in 1914 and 1915 respectively resulted in large swathes of territory falling under the direct military administration of the Grand Quartier Général and of Stavka. On 2 August 1914 the President decreed that all the departments of France and of Algeria were in a state of siege and on 3 September all France was declared to be in a state of war. The army's powers to convene courts martial and its capacity to dispense summary justice were extended in 1914, and then gradually clawed back from 1915 onwards.[13] Britain, although not directly attacked at the outset of the war, was subject to raids from the sea and the air, and never entirely divested itself of the fear of German invasion, particularly in the winter of 1914–1915. Parliament passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) on 8 August 1914, conferring on the government the power to rule by decree. Originally designed to curb espionage, in 1915 DORA was adapted to convert factories to munitions production, and by the war's end had intruded on many civil liberties, from the regulation of the trade unions to the licensing of the sale of alcohol.

For the later entrants to the war, motivated by alliance obligations and by the promise of territorial gain, the imperative of national survival might at first be less evident. The Ottoman Empire, Italy, Bulgaria and Rumania each made a conscious choice as to which side it would support rather than being confronted by a set of circumstances which left it with no choice. But the war could still become existential – for the Ottoman Empire through the Gallipoli landings and the invasion of eastern Anatolia in 1915 and for Italy with the defeat at Caporetto and the retreat to the Piave in October–November 1917. As Italy's new prime minister,

[12] Joseph Redlich: Austrian War Government. New Haven 1929, pp. 56–58, pp. 77–86; Tamara Scheer: Die Ringstraßenfront. Österreich-Ungarn, das Kriegsüberwachungsamt und der Ausnahmezustand während des Ersten Weltkriegs. Wien 2010.

[13] Pierre Renouvin: The Forms of War Government in France. New Haven 1927, pp. 28–37.

Vittorio Orlando, put it in the wake of the disaster, "The people must know that when the nation is in danger, we are all united".[14]

The rhetoric of unity – *union sacrée*, *Burgfrieden* – was not just oratory. In terms of civil-military relations it highlighted the point which Clausewitz had drawn from his consideration of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and from his own experience of the defeat and occupation of Prussia in 1806–1807. As he put in book 8 of "Vom Kriege", in wars which approached the absolute, policy and its role become less evident because policy is more fully in harmony with war's true nature – which is to escalate and not to be limited or constrained. It was this reading of Clausewitz which underpinned the use of "Vom Kriege" in Hindenburg's memoirs quoted at the beginning of this chapter. In the First World War, therefore, national policy and military operations should have been running on convergent, rather than divergent, lines. In the Entente powers in 1917–1918, they did. Orlando's words were echoed in the speeches of Lloyd George and Clemenceau, both of them premiers who used their not inconsiderable powers of speech to demand national mobilisation and complete commitment to the achievement of victory. To continue the Clausewitzian refrain (in this case his development of the idea of the "trinity" in book 1), they united the people, the army and the government in a common cause, the waging of war.

Clemenceau's speech to the French chamber in November 1917 began by praising the army: "We have great soldiers with a great history, under chiefs tempered in the furnace, inspired to the supreme sacrifice which made the reputations of their ancestors." But having paid tribute to the army, both ordinary soldiers and generals, Clemenceau went on to speak of the "strength of the French soil", which "inspires our people to work" as well as to fight. "These silent soldiers of the factory, deaf to pernicious suggestions, these old peasants bent over their soil, these sturdy women at work, these children who bring their help with a seriousness that belies their weakness – there are our soldiers [*voilà de nos poilus*]."[15] It was France which in 1917–1918 coined the phrase "la guerre totale" – total war – to refer specifically to the mobilisation of the nation for a war of national survival, and it chimed with the patriotic calls to arms of 1793 and of revolutionary war.[16]

So the ends of this war were not divisive. What were divisive were the means to the ends, in other words the strategy. Civil-military relations in democratic states were also not ends in themselves; they were means to enable the effective formulation of strategy. And it was strategy which caused friction because there was more than one way to bring military operations and national policy into harmony.

The challenge of formulating strategy was even more fundamental than that. In 1914–1918 strategy was not understood in the sense in which it is understood today. After the First World War one of its veterans, Basil Liddell Hart, defined

[14] Schindler: Isonzo (see note 8), p. 264.
[15] Georges Clemenceau: Discours de guerre. Paris 1968, p. 131.
[16] See most obviously: Léon Daudet: La guerre totale. Paris 1918.

strategy as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy".[17] That definition resonates today, but it was itself a product of the experience of the First World War. It was not how strategy was defined in 1914.

"The object of strategy", Friedrich von Bernhardi wrote in "Vom heutigen Kriege" in 1912, "is to bring the troops into action in the decisive direction and in the greatest possible strength; to bring about combat under as favourable conditions as possible."[18] What was at issue for Bernhardi, a retired Prussian officer recalled to service in 1914–1918, was the relationship between strategy and tactics, and his understanding of strategy was accordingly much closer to what today would be called operations.

The leading luminaries of other powers did not disagree. In 1902 G. F. R. Henderson, who taught Haig and Robertson at the Staff College, defined strategy as "the operations which lead up to battle, and which follow battle".[19] Ferdinand Foch, lecturing at the Ecole de Guerre in 1903, told his pupils, "*No strategy can henceforth prevail over that which aims at ensuring tactical results, victory by fighting*. A strategy paving the way to tactical decisions alone: this is the end we come to in following a study which has produced so many learned theories". And he went on: "Strategy does not exist by itself, as is it is not worth anything without tactical efficiency."[20]

This relationship, that between strategy and tactics, received more coverage from Clausewitz, than that between strategy and policy. The discussion of the latter, policy, is largely confined to books I and VIII of "Vom Kriege". The former, strategy, dominated the description of Napoleonic war at the core of "Vom Kriege", which provided the principal reason for reading Clausewitz before 1914. Clausewitz had defined strategy as the use of the battle for the purposes of the war. Because the task of strategy was to exploit the outcome of battle, he can and could be read as saying that strategy is superior to tactics. However, most pre-1914 commentators saw strategy's role as that of bringing about the decisive battle, and so read "Vom Kriege" in that light. For them battle was not a beginning but a culmination, the pay-off for strategy, and plenty in "Vom Kriege" also endorses that interpretation.

With strategy defined in these terms, as an operational matter, its institutional home was the general staff of an army. It followed that strategy defined in more modern terms, as lying along the fault line between military operations and national policy, lacked not only an intellectual foundation, but also an institutional basis. For the autocracies, civil and military authority converged on the person of the monarch, but in 1914 none of the personalities – Wllhelm II of Germany,

[17] Liddell Hart used the word "strategy" to cover the full range – from grand strategy to what he called "pure strategy". This definition dates from 1954, and therefore follows the experience of a further world war: see Peter G. Tsouras (ed.): The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations. London 2000, p. 453.

[18] Friedrich von Bernhardi: On War of Today. 2 vols. London 1912–1913, here: vol. 2, p. 336.

[19] G. F. R. Henderson: The Science of War. London 1919, p. 11.

[20] Ferdinand Foch: The Principles of War. London 1918, pp. 43 f. (emphasis in original).

Nicholas II of Russia or Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary – matched the institution or the office. In any case the scale of the war dwarfed the capacities of a single supreme civil-military head.

In Britain, the defence needs of the empire, the requirement to combine military and naval advice with policy direction, had prompted the formation of the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1902.[21] And so Britain before the war began had already created a body in which ministers and the professional heads of the services met on an equal footing. It was the Committee of Imperial Defence which on 5 August 1914 recommended the despatch of the BEF to Europe, the most important British strategic decision of the First World War. However, because it was a sub-committee of the cabinet, it had no executive power. Given that the dominant business of the government was now to wage war, the cabinet itself focused on the war and so took over the Committee of Imperial Defence's job. And that – by implication – makes a further point: both the Committee of Imperial Defence before the First World War and the British government during it were focused not on what was understood by strategy in 1914, but on policy. The Committee of Imperial Defence had been set up when Britain was at peace, in the aftermath of the South African War, and its key driver was not the conduct of major war but the need to maintain imperial defence in peacetime, and to apply sea power in its support. Its objective was, to use a phrase which became current after the First World War, the development of grand strategy.[22]

The character of the First World War demanded that each belligerent conducted its policies in such a way as to produce grand strategy. This had nothing to say directly about strategy as understood by staff colleges and general staffs before 1914, about envelopment and breakthrough, about lines of operations, and about the interface between strategy and tactics. The focus of grand strategy was on a higher plane: the creation of a mass army; the implications of drawing manpower from industry; the need therefore to coordinate all the state's human resources for the production of munitions and food as well as for the generation of fighting power; the establishment of the state as the principal purchaser of goods and services; the waging of an economic war, on land but especially at sea; the coordination of war in several theatres simultaneously; and the achievement of all this at national level in conjunction with Allies; in sum the waging of coalition war.

Pre-1914 concepts of strategy, even when they faced up to the relationship between strategy and policy (and military theorists like Bernhardi, Henderson and Foch were not so pre-modern as to deny the link), had not generated any definition of strategy that was broad enough to cover all these topics. They belonged in

[21] Nicholas d'Ombrain: War Machinery and High Policy. Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain 1902–1914. Oxford 1973; Franklyn Arthur Johnson: Defence by Committee. The British Committee of Imperial Defence. London 1960.

[22] Julian Corbett: Some Principles of Maritime Strategy. London 1911. Reprint Annapolis 1988, pp. 308f., pp. 327f., distinguished before the war between what he called "minor strategy" and "major strategy", but he also occasionally used the term "grand strategy".

the realms not of strategy, of the use of the battle for the purposes of the war, but of policy and politics, and the soldiers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were as contemptuous of politicians as are those of today. Increasingly during the war, and particularly after it, the strategic concept which would be used most often to embrace the war in its entirety, from tactics to policy, was attrition. However, in English the word lacks precision, and that ambiguity was reflected in other languages. In France in 1915 Joffre employed the verb *grignoter*, hence the noun *grignotage*, meaning to nibble. He nibbled the Germans by fighting, using offensive tactics to do so. But others spoke of *usure*, as in *la guerre d'usure*, implying the using up or exhaustion of resources, an objective which might be achieved by economic warfare without mounting attacks in land operations. In Germany, the words were always verbs (unlike the English preference for a noun, attrition; "to attrite" or "to attrit" is an Americanism and its use in a military context recent) or their derivatives: *zermürben*, *reiben*, *ermatten*, *erschöpfen*.

A concept of attrition had made its way into strategic theory before 1914, but the debate that it generated was itself indicative of the difficulties. Hans Delbrück, the Berlin professor who established military history as a proper academic subject, had taken Clausewitz's prefatory note to "Vom Kriege", dated 10 July 1827, as a departure point to argue that strategy had two forms. "War can be of two kinds, in the sense that either the objective is to overthrow the enemy – to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent, thus forcing him to sign whatever peace we please; or merely to occupy some of his frontier-districts so that we can annex them or use them for bargaining at the peace negotiations."[23] Delbrück concluded that Clausewitz was proposing that strategy either aimed at annihilation through decisive victory, so enabling a dictated peace, or used attrition, intending to wear out the enemy and forcing him to negotiate a settlement. The latter was the preferred method of the weaker, not the stronger, power, and Delbrück contended that Frederick the Great had opted to use it in the Seven Years' War. The historians of the Prussian general staff vigorously contested this interpretation of Frederick's strategy, pointing out the regularity with which he had sought decisive battle, especially in 1757.[24]

The debate was symptomatic of the wider problem of whether strategy was set in a political or an operational context. Delbrück was doing the first. Frederick

[23] Carl von Clausewitz: On War. Ed. and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton 1976, p. 69; German original: Carl von Clausewitz: Vom Kriege. In: Werner Hahlweg (ed.): Hinterlassenes Werk des Generals von Clausewitz. Berlin [16]1952, p. 77: "Diese doppelte Art des Krieges", Clausewitz had written, "ist nämlich diejenige, wo der Zweck das Niederwerfen des Gegners ist, sei es, daß man ihn politisch vernichten oder bloß wehrlos machen und also zu jedem beliebigen Frieden zwingen will, und diejenige, wo man bloß an den Grenzen seines Reiches einige Eroberungen machen will, sei es, um sie zu behalten, oder um sie als nützliches Tauschmittel beim Frieden geltend zu machen."

[24] Sven Lange: Hans Delbrück und der "Strategiestreit". Kriegführung und Kriegsgeschichte in der Kontroverse 1879–1914. Freiburg i. Br. 1995; Arden Bucholz: Hans Delbrück and the German Military Establishment. War Images in Conflict. Iowa City 1985.

the Great did seek battle, but in the Seven Years' War his inferiority in resources and in manpower, when confronted by a coalition of Austria, France and Russia, increasingly required him also to avoid it, and instead to exhaust his enemies by manoeuvre, using his central position between the three powers to exploit the advantages of time and space. What Delbrück understood by attrition, *Ermattungsstrategie*, said little about seeking battle to exhaust the enemy and rather more about using events outside battle to wear him down. Attrition was not the opposite of manoeuvre, as it was to become when NATO debated the lessons of the Vietnam War in the 1970s and 1980s, but its consequence. So in terms of the First World War the nearest equivalent of Delbrück's *Ermattungsstrategie* was to be found not on the battlefield but at sea, in economic warfare waged by the Allies through the blockade of the Central Powers and by Germany through unrestricted submarine warfare. *Ermattungsstrategie* also carried implications for the war's length: by avoiding battle, the belligerents were postponing the decision.

A war of indeterminate length presented Germany with a conundrum. In the Seven Years' War Frederick had avoided battle after 1757 and so lengthened the conflict out of weakness. By 1763 his conduct of a prolonged (and in some fashionable interpretations global) struggle had prostrated Prussia economically, even if it had won the war. Clausewitz too had seen the use of defence to postpone a decision as favouring the weaker power: time, he argued in book VI of "Vom Kriege", works to the advantage of the defence as the attack spends its energy in its advance, until it passes the "culminating point of victory". Schlieffen had confronted a different calculation. Germany had to attack precisely because of its economic weakness: time would work against Germany and in favour of any alliance in which Britain was a partner. So in Schlieffen's case grand strategic weakness demanded offence, not defence. He embraced operational solutions leading to decisive battle to cut through a problem not dissimilar to that confronted by Frederick's Prussia, its encirclement by a hostile coalition, although crucially in 1914 Austria-Hungary would be Germany's ally, and Britain Germany's enemy.[25]

For the Prussian general staff the implications of its operational view of strategy were played out in tactics. As a result its perspective was radically different from Delbrück's, precisely because it was thinking about another level of war. Strategy's purpose was to enable battle, not to shun it. The German wars of unification, the most obvious model of short, sharp wars in recent European history, supported that set of ideas. And so too did the experience of colonial campaigning. The advantages which imperial powers possessed over native populations were tactical, and lay in the discipline, organisation and firepower of their armies.[26] The principal object in war was to bring the enemy to battle, whether it was waged in Europe or outside it.

[25] Stig Förster: Der deutsche Generalstab und die Illusion des kurzen Krieges, 1871–1914. Metakritik eines Mythos. In: MGM 54 (1995), pp. 61–95; Hew Strachan: The First World War. Vol. 1: To Arms. Oxford 2001, pp. 1005–1014.

[26] Charles Callwell: Small Wars, Their Principles and Practice. London ^{3}1906, esp. pp. 71–107.

In 1914, the levels of war – strategic, operational and tactical – were not as clearly defined or demarcated in military theory, let alone in practice, as they are today. Pre-war plans conflated strategy and tactics, as has much of the subsequent analysis of those plans by historians. A decision to invade France was not inevitably the same as a decision to mount an attack in a tactical sense; similarly the French "spirit of the offensive", a set of ideas developed to deal with the challenge of crossing a fire-swept battlefield, did not in itself imply a commitment to launch an offensive into Alsace-Lorraine when war broke out.[27] As Germany showed on the western front for much of the period 1915–1917, it was possible to combine the strategic offensive with the tactical offensive. The French response had de facto to be the opposite: to launch tactical offensives to drive out the invader and to recover the territory that had been lost.

The problem for all parties in the First World War was that in practice the complexion of the war was defined not from the top down, but from the bottom up – not at the political or even at the operational level, but at the tactical. Trench warfare was adopted for tactical reasons, to protect soldiers from the destructive effects of industrialised firepower, but it also had operational and grand strategic foundations. Operationally, it allowed ground to be held with fewer men, and so enabled units to be freed up for use elsewhere, even on other fronts in other theatres. Grand strategically, it defended territory, and the resources, both human and industrial, that the territory sustained. It was therefore vital to the economic war. Moreover, holding territory could determine the settlement of frontiers at the war's end. However, trench warfare meant tactics dominated strategy. Operational intent became subordinated to the decisions of junior officers. The linear battlefield which trench warfare created caused command decisions to travel downwards to the front, as the corps lost out to the division, the division to the brigade, the brigade to the battalion, the battalion to the company, the company to the platoon, and even the platoon to the section or squad. Strategy as it had been defined by general staffs before 1914 could not deliver the decisive battle which it had claimed as its *raison d'être.*

As a result by 1915 ideas which rationalised attrition at the operational level – at the interface between strategy and tactics – increasingly recommended themselves to more reflective officers . Philippe Pétain and Henry Rawlinson, both of them army commanders before the year was out, were cases in point. They stressed the need to limit offensives and to achieve better coordination between artillery and infantry.[28] By taking ground using the tactical offensive, but limiting

[27] In the English language, see for the origins of this sort of thinking, Basil Liddell Hart: The Ghost of Napoleon. London 1933, pp. 131–137; Michael Howard: Men against Fire. The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914. In: Peter Paret (ed.): Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age. Oxford 1986, pp. 510–526, did not overthrow it, but Jack Snyder: The Ideology of the Offensive. Military Decision-Making and the Disasters of 1914. Ithaca, NY 1984, is the fullest and most ambitious statement of this "orthodoxy".

[28] Stephen Ryan: Pétain the Soldier. Cranbury, NJ 1969; Robin Prior/Trevor Wilson: Command on the Western Front. The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson 1914–1918. Oxford 1992.

the depth of the attack to that which could be fully supported by artillery, Rawlinson hoped to provoke the enemy to counter-attack in order to regain what he had lost. In doing so, the enemy would forfeit the advantage of the tactical defensive for the disadvantage of the tactical offensive, and so suffer more losses and deplete his reserves. As an operational concept, designed to give purpose to the tactical possibilities, what Rawlinson called "bite and hold" had merit. But what it struggled to do was to find a wider strategic context. The logical conclusion to this idea of attrition, which assumed that Germany's reserves could be exhausted at a greater rate than those of the Entente, was that both sides would negotiate at the point when Berlin began to run out of men, but before German troops had been forced out of Belgium and north-east France. The return of the occupied territories was an irreducible object of the war for both France and Britain, and yet militarily they would still not be in a position to ensure its delivery.

"Bite and hold" was also flawed operationally, as became clear when Hindenburg and Ludendorff succeeded Falkenhayn at OHL in September 1916. Why should a German commander counter-attack to regain a few hundred yards of muddy trench unless the ground mattered for other reasons? Falkenhayn had insisted that ground lost should be re-won, so playing into the logic of "bite and hold"; Hindenburg and Ludendorff did not, and in February 1917 even withdrew from the Somme battlefields to shorten the western front and create a stronger defensive position, called the Siegfried line.[29] According to this logic attritional battles were likely to occur where a breakthrough by one side or the other would have strategic effect, and where it was therefore important for the defence to hold its positions. At Ypres, the Germans needed to hold the high ground behind which their main line of communications ran. The British, with their backs to the Channel ports through which their supplies and reinforcements passed, were in a comparable position. To the east the Austro-Hungarian Army fought two dogged defensive battles – in the Carpathians to prevent the Russians erupting into Hungary and on the line of the Isonzo to forestall an Italian breakthrough to Trieste and Ljubljana. Major movement where the ground mattered less could occur without having strategic effect. The principal shifts in front in the west between 1916 and 1918 occurred in Picardy, with both sides registering significant territorial gains, the Allies in early 1917 and the Germans in 1918: neither movement proved decisive, however geographically impressive.

As a result when attrition was used by generals to explain their strategies to their political masters, to relate military operations to national policy, it was frequently to rationalise failure, not to anticipate success. Haig's planning for the battles of the Somme and 3rd Ypres intended to achieve breakthrough; in 1916 he created a reserve army – commanded by a cavalryman, Hubert Gough – to exploit that moment, and in 1917 his aims had a clear strategic objective, the main German railway junction at Roulers. When neither battle went as well as he hoped, then he fell back

[29] Fritz von Lossberg: Meine Tätigkeit im Weltkriege 1914–1918. Berlin 1939, is relevant to all this.

on attrition, redefining his original objective in terms of what he had actually achieved. His fullest statement on attrition, relating tactics to operations to strategy in a coherent way, was retrospective and written in 1919.[30] Similar points can be made about Falkenhayn and the most notorious case in which attrition was allegedly applied through battle in the First World War. In his so-called Christmas memorandum of 1915, Falkenhayn said that his aim at Verdun was to bleed the French Army "white".[31] There are two objections to this interpretation of his intentions. The first is that in overall terms the Central Powers had fewer men to lose than did the Entente: at least Haig had that degree of logic on his side.[32] The second is the evidence. No copy of the Christmas memorandum has been found, outside its author's post-war memoirs; it was not present in the Prussian archives even before they were destroyed by Allied bombing in 1945.[33] Attritional arguments to explain the battle only started to appear in German press reporting in April 1916, after the German attack had failed to achieve its initial objectives.[34]

Falkenhayn nonetheless had a greater feel than most for what would come to be called grand strategy. He knew that Germany lacked the resources to win against a coalition underpinned by Britain, and he therefore appreciated the need to unpick the enemy alliance, seeking a separate peace with Russia to do so. By the same token, a strategy of attrition, however logical it could be made in Delbrück's terms, could not make sense as an operational method. Falkenhayn could see the value of submarine warfare against Britain, because it was a way of eroding British maritime and economic strength, but there was no merit in fighting an attritional battle on land against a coalition superior in resources as well as in manpower. And it was for his failings at the operational level, the interface between strategy and tactics for which the chief of the general staff was particularly responsible, that he was so castigated in German accounts written in the 1920s. In 1931 Hermann Wendt took Falkenhayn's Christmas 1915 memorandum at face value and deconstructed the attritional purpose on which the battle of Verdun purportedly rested: Wendt's interpretation had a greater influence than is often acknowledged, not least on Alistair Horne when he wrote "The price of glory. Verdun 1916" published in 1962.[35] In 1920 Friedrich von Bernhardi, now retired

[30] See Haig's final despatch, in: J. H. Boraston (ed.): Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches (December 1915–April 1919). 2 vols. London/Toronto 1919, here: vol. 1, pp. 311–357.

[31] Erich von Falkenhayn: General Headquarters 1914–1916 and Its Critical Decisions. London 2009, pp. 209–218.

[32] David French: The Meaning of Attrition, 1914–1916. In: EHR 103 (1988), pp. 383–405, discusses Kitchener's efforts to give strategy shape.

[33] Afflerbach: Falkenhayn (see note 5), pp. 543–545, discusses the authenticity of the memorandum.

[34] Général Palat [Pierre Lehautcourt]: La grande guerre sur le front occidental. Vol. 10: La ruée sur Verdun. Paris 1925, pp. 330–333.

[35] Alistair Horne: The Price of Glory. Verdun 1916. London 1016; see also: Hermann Wendt: Verdun 1916. Die Angriffe Falkenhayns im Maasgebiet mit Richtung auf Verdun als strategisches Problem. Berlin 1931. Horne specifically mentions Wendt in his notes for further reading on Falkenhayn's strategy but omits the full bibliographical details as Wendt is omitted from the bibliography itself.

once more, used a brief book on future warfare to condemn attrition. Continuing the pre-war debate, he declared Delbrück to be wrong, because a strategy which avoided attacking and aimed to win solely by exhausting the enemy without battle was empty. He too saw war as possessed of a dual nature, but his understanding of strategy still shunned the relationship between military action and national policy. One type of war was "operational", in which the defender for numerical or geographical reasons found it impossible to construct a secure flank which could not be enveloped. The other was positional war which sought to break through the enemy's front. However, in this second case, the aim remained to create a flank which could be enveloped. For Bernhardi the First World War had changed little: the principle of envelopment, so forcefully advocated by Schlieffen before it, especially in his retirement, still dominated, and there was no need to abandon operational solutions to resolve the challenges of grand strategy.[36] In 1925, one of the Reichsarchiv historians, Georg Soldan, argued that "the experiences of those who fought in the front-line should be the basis for the lessons drawn from the world war". In so doing he acknowledged that the war had been changed from the bottom up, but his conclusion was an unequivocal rejection of Delbrück. Because Germany would always be weak, not least thanks to the treaty of Versailles which limited the size of the army to 100,000 men, it would have to embrace battle, not avoid it, in order to solve its strategic dilemmas.[37]

If attrition made little sense for the economically inferior alliance, it made a great deal more sense – whether at the levels of grand strategy or of operations – for the Entente. Whereas Falkenhayn's Christmas memorandum became the basis for his subsequent vilification, Haig's final despatch as the commander-in-chief of the BEF became the grounds for his defence. "The rapid collapse of Germany's military power in the latter half of 1918 was the logical outcome of the fighting of the two previous years", he wrote on 21 March 1919. "It would not have taken place but for that period of ceaseless attrition which used up the reserves of the German armies, while the constant and growing pressures of the blockade sapped with more deadly insistence from year to year at the strength and resolution of the German people. It is in the great battles of 1916 and 1917 that we have to seek for the secret of our victory in 1918." This is a perfectly logical way to understand the Allied victory and it has been used to good effect both to support Haig specifically and to explain the war's outcome more generally.[38] However, hindsight is not intent.

In order to find a new and more modern understanding of strategy emerging during the First World War itself we certainly need to look to Britain. This was

[36] Friedrich von Bernhardi: Vom Kriege der Zukunft. Berlin 1920; id.: Denkwürdigkeiten aus meinem Leben. Berlin 1927, p. 126, p. 133, p. 143, expresses Bernhardi's continuing contempt for Delbrück.

[37] George Soldan: Der Mensch und die Schlacht der Zukunft. Oldenburg 1925, here: pp. 16–20.

[38] John Terraine: The Smoke and the Fire. Myths and Anti-Myths of War 1861–1945. London 1980, p. 58, p. 60; see also John Terraine: Douglas Haig. The Educated Soldier. London 1963; Gary Sheffield: Forgotten Victory. The First World War. Myths and Realities. London 2001.

where economic warfare and military capacity were most obviously equal pillars, not only in sustaining the national war effort but also in enabling the endeavours of Britain's Allies and in coordinating them across different theatres. But we should not therefore focus on Britain's best known (or for many most notorious) general: Douglas Haig was a national theatre commander, no less and no more. His international contemporaries were often more. Joffre was both a theatre commander and the chief of the general staff in 1914–1915, and all chiefs of the Prussian general staff throughout the war were commanders in several theatres, of which the western front was only one. In some senses they too were coalition commanders, as Nivelle was (briefly) in 1917 and Foch in 1918. For men in such positions, operations constantly vied with broader definitions of strategy and vice versa. In Britain theatre command was separated from the post of chief of the imperial general staff, an office taken up by Sir William Robertson in December 1915 and which he held until February 1918. The fact that he had to juggle the western front with other fronts, even if the former was the most important, both gave him more leeway and enabled him to develop a perspective different from those of Britain's theatre commanders, including Haig.

Robertson had negotiated an enhancement of his powers compared with those of his predecessor. They included the right to report directly to the government, bypassing the Secretary of State for War. He also realised the changes that were occurring within war and the need for strategy to adapt. "If you keep hammering away in a methodical and careful manner the Boche may yet crack", he wrote on 26 July 1916 to Henry Rawlinson, then commanding the 4th Army in the Somme battle. "The thing you have to keep your eye on is that he does not beat you in having the better man-power policy. We never cease here giving our attention to this question, and do not omit thinking about black as well as white men. The general situation is now better than it has ever been before and all that is needed is the use of common-sense, careful methods, and not to be too hide-bound by the books we used to study before the war. As you know better than I do each war has its own peculiarities, but one would think that no war was ever so peculiar as the present one, and Field Service Regulations [the army's principal doctrine on operations, first published in 1909] will require a tremendous amount of revising when we have finished with the Boche".[39]

By May 1917 Robertson had concluded that limited offensives using as much artillery as possible and resting on careful preparation were the best operational solution to the problems of trench warfare. Little therefore separated him from Pétain and Rawlinson on his point, and like them he rested his conclusions on his first-hand experience of 1914–1915, first as the BEF's quartermaster general and then as its chief of staff. Secondly, he did not think the Allies would win the war before 1919, and so he was anxious to husband Britain's resources and not to engage in overly ambitious and premature offensives. Thirdly, he was able to put the

[39] David Woodward (ed.): The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff December 1915–February 1918. London 1989, p. 72.

western front in context. While the main British effort should continue to be in France and Flanders, the other fronts should be coordinated in their effects so that German reserves were pulled in different directions. In June 1917 he was even open to the idea that it might be best first to target Austria-Hungary and force it to make a separate peace. The Central Powers held the heart of Europe and so enjoyed the advantages of what Robertson's Staff College education called "interior lines". Germany and Austria-Hungary could move troops on a short chord from one point on their circumference to another. The Entente powers were condemned to operating on exterior (and longer) lines, circling around Europe's periphery. As the Allied military planners had recognised in December 1915 and December 1916, when they had met to produce strategic designs for 1916 and 1917 respectively, simultaneous attacks around the circumference of the Central Powers were the best way to rob the enemy of these strategic advantages. When understood in these terms, the western front could never be considered in isolation from other fronts.[40]

Robertson's understanding of strategy had moved from the interface between operations and tactics to that between operations and policy, a point fully borne out in both his post-war memoirs. The challenge was to develop an institutional framework to give effect to this intellectual awakening. As he put it later, in 1921, "The real headquarters of Armies in these days are not to found in the field abroad, but at the seat of government at home; and plans of campaigns are, and must be, analyzed and criticised by civilian Ministers in a way quite unknown a few decades ago."[41] Through his participation in the deliberations of Lloyd George's war cabinet, Robertson straddled the operational and the political, but he was frustrated on the one hand by Haig and on the other by the prime minister himself. His own determination to show a united military front to the politicians led him publicly to support Haig, even when he disagreed with him (as by 1917 he increasingly did). The fact that Haig commanded the largest British Army ever put into the field while enjoying the support of the king gave him an independent political leverage of the sort that Robertson could not match. Lloyd George did not come to Robertson's aid, but used the proposed creation of a strategic reserve and the establishment of the Supreme War Council to undermine both generals.

By 1918 the Entente had created the mechanisms for the formulation of coalition strategy. It had set up the Supreme War Council and appointed Foch to be the Allies' generalissimo. Both steps can be seen as late and inadequate. The Supreme War Council was never given the strategic reserve for which Lloyd George had lobbied and so struggled to shape strategy within and across the theatres of war. Foch was never allocated a general staff commensurate in size with his status, and so remained reliant on the capacities of the individual national staffs for de-

[40] Ibid., p. 193 and references on p. 324; see also David Woodward: Lloyd George and the Generals. East Brunswick, NJ 1983, pp. 163f., p. 170.
[41] William Robertson: From Private to Field Marshal. London 1921, as quoted by: Tsouras (ed.): Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations (see note 17), p. 90.

tailed planning. However, this list of deficiencies ignores the degree of coordination that had been achieved across a broader definition of strategic effects – economic, naval, and industrial – and which began to take effect much earlier in the war. In February 1915 the Allied finance ministers met in Paris to discuss how to share and coordinate their resources, proposals which themselves carried military implications, particularly for purchases of munitions. The entry of the United States to the war had an immediate effect on the coalescence of the Allied effort, for all that the United States became an associate rather than a full ally. Before April 1917 New York's money market and stock exchange had forced the Allies to coordinate their overseas borrowing and their American purchases; afterwards its economic leverage prompted the United States and the Entente powers to centralise their demands for shipping space, food and raw materials.

The result was a much broader definition of strategy than anything current in the Central Powers, and which became a model that inspired the Allies' direction of strategy in the Second World War. In 1923 a serving British officer, J. F. C. Fuller, developed these experiences into a broader articulation of the idea of grand strategy. "The transmission of power in all its forms, in order to maintain policy, is the aim of grand strategy", he wrote in "The reformation of war." "While strategy is more particularly concerned with the movement of armed masses, grand strategy, including those movements, embraces the motive forces which lie behind them both – material and psychological. […] The grand strategist we see is, consequently, also a politician and a diplomatist."[42] This was a vision which united military operations to national policy, but in the ambition and scope which it claimed for strategy it could only inflame, rather than resolve, the tensions inherent in civil-military relations. The ongoing challenge for democracies in the twentieth century was to find the institutional framework which could formulate strategy on Fuller's lines. It proved hard in major wars; it has been almost impossible in minor ones.

[42] John Frederick Charles Fuller: The Reformation of War. London 1923, p. 219.

War Aims and Strategies of the Entente Powers of 1914

Georges-Henri Soutou

French War Aims and Strategy

Basically, the strategy of the French during the First World War was largely influenced by their evolving war aims. The idea was not just to win the war, but to realise, through and during the war, a not absolutely but largely constant set of war aims. It was a clearly Clausewitzian relationship, with war being indeed the continuation of politics.

It would be useful first to remind ourselves of the overall frame of mind of the French in 1914. After the (in the eyes of the post-1870 generations) dangerous experiments of Napoléon III with the "Nationalities Principle", they generally supported the concept of a European balance of power, underpinned by a system of permanent consultations among the major Powers. At the same time they were convinced that when the Emperor Franz Joseph died, the cards would be redealt and the Dual Monarchy would disappear. Austria would join Germany. As compensation, in terms of the European balance, France would recover Alsace-Lorraine – probably through a general congress. Much the same went for the Ottoman Empire, where France also nourished long-term goals.[1]

Even so, during the years between the First Moroccan Crisis in 1905 and 1914, the French had been divided on how the European balance could best be maintained. A minority recommended negotiating with Germany without trying to isolate her (inclusiveness had after all been the name of the European game since the Congress of Vienna). But a large majority felt that the danger of an ever more hegemonic Reich ruled that option out: the only way a balance could be maintained was by strengthening the Franco-Russian alliance and the Anglo-French Entente as a counterweight to the German-Austrian alliance. This was very much the view of Raymond Poincaré, president of the Republic since 1913 – a fateful turning point:[2] until then the alliance systems had a braking effect in a crisis, with less directly involved partners calming down their more militant Allies, as the Russians did with the French in 1905, the French with the Russians in 1908, and the Germans with the Austrians in 1912 and 1913. With the sharp increase of tension after 1913, however, the priority became to keep alliances functioning, and supporting an ally to the hilt became the

[1] Christopher M. Andrew/Alexander S. Kanya-Forstner: France Overseas. The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion. London 1981.
[2] John F. V. Keiger: Raymond Poincaré. Cambridge 1997.

order of the day – witness the July 1914 crisis.[3] As a result, French Grand strategy in the last years before 1914, while continuing to assume a basically defensive or "deterrent" posture against an ever more powerful Germany) had become much more offensive both at the diplomatic level (involving full support for the Russian ally and extensive aims if war should come) and, quite logically, at the strategic level, as we shall see.

To come to the heart of my topic: the system of political-military relations evolved during the war. Joffre was a decidedly republican commander-in-chief – he would not have been chosen if he had not been so – who fully respected the government's prerogatives in matters of political guidance. A well-known instance is the meeting, on 9 January 1912 of the Conseil supérieur de la Défense nationale, the highest military-political body, that included the president of the Republic, the prime minister, the ministers for War and Foreign affairs, and Joffre. Joffre asked to be fully informed about the current status of French alliances, and, quite specifically, about Belgian neutrality in terms of international law. He asked to be authorised in case of war to march through Belgium, which was much more suitable than Lorraine for a broad offensive. The political authorities demurred, however, insisting that that would cost France the support of Great Britain (because of the 1839 guarantee 1839 treaty).[4] One could argue, in fact, that Paris won the First World War on that day.

It should be noted, however, that while initially Joffre, as chief of staff and designated commander-in-chief, recognised that the overall direction of the war was a matter for the government, he was adamant that operational planning was strictly a matter for the military.[5] Indeed, this went so far that at the beginning of the war Joffre refused to inform the government about the events at the front, contenting himself with asking them to leave Paris for Bordeaux, the usual destination of French governments in distress.[6] When it became evident, contrary to initial expectations, that the war would be a long one, contrary to initial expectations, the politicians regained a modicum of control. But the full strategic freedom of action of the general staff did not disappear until 1916, when the bloody battles of Verdun and the Somme and the growing dissatisfaction of government and parliament about military secrecy and obfuscation by the high command moved Briand, prime minister since October 1915, to reorganise and streamline the French war effort all along the line. The high command was reorganised on 13 December

[3] Christopher Clark: The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914. Allen Lane 2012; Stefan Schmidt: Frankreichs Außenpolitik in der Julikrise 1914. München 2009; Sean McMeekin: The Russian Origins of the First World War. Cambridge, MA 2011; Fritz Fischer: Krieg der Illusionen. Die deutsche Politik von 1911 bis 1914. Düsseldorf 1969; Günther Kronenbitter: "Krieg im Frieden". Die Führung der k. u. k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906–1914. München 2003.

[4] Guy Pedroncini: Stratégie et relations internationales. La séance du 9 janvier 1912 du Conseil Supérieur de la Défense nationale. In: RHDipl 91 (1977), pp. 143–158.

[5] Maréchal Joffre: Mémoires. 2 Vols. Paris 1932.

[6] Henry Contamine: La Victoire de la Marne. Paris 1970, p. 223.

1916. Henceforward Joffre and his successor Nivelle met the president, the prime minister and the ministers for War and Foreign affairs regularly at the meetings of the newly formed War Committee, where political-strategic but also strictly strategic matters were discussed.[7]

The Meaning of the "Plan XVII": an Offensive Thrust Arising from Strategic and Military Considerations, or a Politically Motivated War Plan to Achieve Ambitious War Aims?

Was the famous "Plan XVII", adopted in 1912 and envisaging a speedy offensive against Germany, solely the result of strategic and tactical considerations? Or did the French general staff also have ambitious political and territorial war aims in mind, aiming ultimately at destroying Germany's hegemony in Europe? That there was general agreement between Paris and St. Petersburg in the event of war to eliminate Germany as a dominant power, if war did come, through a short offensive war, seems according to recent research quite plausible.[8] This does not mean that France and Russia deliberately provoked a war; merely that, if it came to war, they intended to solve the German problem once and for all.

Already the Franco-Russian alliance, formed in 1893 with the strictly defensive aim of the "maintenance of peace", had taken another direction in 1899 when foreign minister Delcassé widened its scope to a more far-reaching "maintenance of the balance between European forces". For both countries this new objective was designed to take into account the eventual disintegration of Austria-Hungary and to prevent Germany from absorbing the German-speaking part of the Danube Monarchy and to expand towards the Balkans. In fact, Delcassé believed, (like many of his compatriots) that if Germany were to expand with the fall of the Dual Monarchy, then France would be entitled to recover Alsace-Lorraine in the name of "European Balance".[9]

In the last years of peace the Franco-Russian alliance was steadily strengthened. Raymond Poincaré, prime minister in 1912 and president of the Republic the next year, was convinced war might soon break out, and that anyway a reinforced Alliance was the only way to deter Germany and Austria. Despite vociferous opposition the Three Years military service law was voted in 1913, both to reinforce the French Army if war broke out and in order to enhance France's credibility with the Russians.[10] It was also in order to reinforce the Alliance that Delcassé was sent

[7] For instance one may quote the February 6, 1917 sitting of the War Committee: see Raymond Poincaré: L'année trouble. Paris 1932, p. 59.
[8] See Schmidt: Frankreichs Außenpolitik (see note 3); McMeekin: Russian Origins (see note 3), pp. 46–58.
[9] See Georges-Henri Soutou: L'Europe de 1815 à nos jours. Paris 2007, p. 152.
[10] Gerd Krumeich: Aufrüstung und Innenpolitik in Frankreich vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Die Einführung der dreijährigen Dienstpflicht 1913–1914. Wiesbaden 1980.

by Poincaré as ambassador to St. Petersburg, in the course of which mission he also discussed with foreign minister Sazonov the peace conditions to be imposed to Germany after an eventual war.[11]

As early as 1911 the new chief of staff, general Joffre, devised a new plan for the event of war, "Plan XVII", which came into force in 1912. It was actually a mobilisation and concentration plan for the start of war, not really an operational plan, but its thrust was evident, and proceeded seamlessly from concentration to the first phase of the campaign in a way which proved that everything had been thought out in advance. There were to be two offensive thrusts, one towards Alsace, and the main one towards Lorraine, the centre of the German front. The strategic concept was one of a quick decisive victory, crushing the German centre, along the "Austerlitz paradigm" dear to the heart of French strategists since Napoleon. It is worth stressing that the significant word "decisive" occurred frequently in Joffre's plans and orders at the time and expressly alluded to the "final crushing of the foe". Of course the offensive concept was partly a reflection of the current systematic "offensive dogma" of the French military.[12] However, these ambitious plans[13] had also much to do with the Russian alliance and the wish, if war were to come, to crush Germany in order to reorganise Europe – as is evident from the content of Franco-Russian staff talks in 1911, 1912 and 1913.[14] We know that on 23 July, during their visit to St. Petersburg, just before the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July, Poincaré told the Russians to remain firm. They feared that, if the Russian government were to let the Serbs down, the Central Powers would reinforce their position in both the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire; and against the background of the victory of the Left, less favourably inclined to the Alliance, in the recent French elections, they feared for the survival of the Alliance if Paris and St. Petersburg did not stand together in the crisis. Only firmness, in Poincaré's view, could deter the Central Powers from declaring war; and if war came nevertheless, France had to support Russia, lest she find herself isolated facing a Reich that had beaten Russia and dominated the Continent. It should be added that most contemporaries had little idea of the kind of war that was impending and assumed that after a short campaign a new European order would be arranged around the negotiating table.

[11] See Soutou: L'Europe (see note 9), p. 152.
[12] Pierre-Yves Hénin: Le Plan Schlieffen. Un mois de guerre. Deux siècles de controverses. Paris 2012, pp. 310ff., esp. p. 335.
[13] This point was made already by Contamine: Victoire (see note 6). See Dimitri Queloz: De la manœuvre napoléonienne à l'offensive à outrance. La tactique générale de l'Armée française de 1871 à 1914. Paris 2009.
[14] Joffre: Mémoires (see note 5), vol. 1, pp. 127–134.

As Early as September 1914 Paris Decided to Seek a Complete Victory, not a Negotiated Peace. War Was Waged Accordingly and Government and High Command Marched in Step

Shortly after the Marne victory (6 September) the Russians, fearful that the French might content themselves with pushing the Germans back and liberating Alsace-Lorraine, asked Paris about its intentions, adding that, for their part, they indeed intended to "create in Europe a situation which would ensure world peace for many years". The French replied on 20 September that the liberation of occupied territory and Alsace-Lorraine would not be enough to end the war, and that they were as determined as the Russians to "put an end to the hegemony of Prussian militarism". That expression, coated with a veneer of republican ideology, was proclaimed publicly on 22 December; and although it was vague, it was, in fact, very significant. Indeed, this exchange with Petrograd demonstrated that almost immediately, if not beforehand, the central war aim was clearly to defeat Germany completely and to reconstruct Europe.[15]

Accordingly, from the Marne victory in September 1914 until the Nivelle offensive in April 1917, the French high command tried, despite German material superiority and despite many costly setbacks, to achieve a "break-through" by adopting a largely offensive strategy in harmony with France's ambitious political, territorial and economic war aims. As early as the autumn of 1914 and throughout 1915, despite the fact that the several offensives ordered by Joffre had failed, the French went on developing an impressive set of war aims against Germany.[16] The recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, was, of course, taken for granted, but there was talk in many quarters in Paris of establishing French control of Luxembourg and separating the Saar and Rhineland from the Reich. Those territories would perhaps, but not necessarily, be annexed, but they would at the very least be subjected to French strategic, political and economic control.

Between September and November 1914 the Russians, including the emperor himself, repeatedly told the French that they could establish their new frontier anywhere they wished between the pre-war border and the Rhine, while the French endorsed similar Russian aims in the East. In 1915 the French thinking was concentrated on the Saar region, whose coal production would be most useful once Lorraine with its steel works had been restored to France. Luxembourg too, with its important heavy industry – in 1913 its steel production amounted to 50 % of that of France – began to attract a good deal of attention. Nor did the creation of a new European international system based on the dismemberment of the Bismarckian Reich escape consideration. The Russians let the French know very early that they wanted to take the imperial title away from the House of Hohenzollern and to restore Hanover as an independent Kingdom. The French gov-

[15] Georges-Henri Soutou: La France et les Marches de l'Est 1914–1919. In: RH 260 (1978), pp. 341–388.
[16] Joffre: Mémoires (see note 5), vol. 1, pp. 51–94.

ernment did not at that stage commit itself beyond vague if ominous talk of "ending the hegemony of Prussian militarism", but the language of many Paris press articles (passed by the censor) was already very explicit.[17]

1915 and the Near Eastern Conundrum

Close correlation between strategy and war aims was much less in evidence in the Near East. Joffre was against both the Gallipoli landing in the spring of 1915, and that at Salonika in the autumn. Nothing should be allowed to distract attention from the main, Franco-German, front. For him, unlike the British government, with their grandiose outflanking strategic thrusts,[18] the drawing of German forces away from the main battlefield, was the only benefit that a peripheral strategy could conceivably offer. Not that the French did not have any war aims in the region. But they were divided over the issue, and did not have the means to cover everything anyway. Some in the government agreed with Joffre that the priority was on the North-Eastern front, others supported by influential circles, advocated an ambitious policy for historical, religious and economic motives eventually embodied in the Sykes-Picot agreements of February 1916, promising France Lebanon, part of Syria and a zone of influence in the North of Iraq (including the Mosul region). When in 1917 Great Britain reneged on those agreements, however, France, with only one regiment in the whole theatre against one million British soldiers, was in no position to do anything.[19]

On might note here a quite modern feature of the relationship between strategy and war aims, viz. the special staff for operations outside France (*Théâtres d'Opérations Extérieures*, TOE), which was distinct from, although collocated with, the general staff proper. It had been established later in the war for the Gallipoli and Salonika expeditions, with reserve staff officers, who did not come from the regular army but from all sectors of French élites, who thought "out of the box" and did not rely solely on the famed "solution de l'Ecole de Guerre". They were particularly innovative in bolstering French post-war influence in the region by using the war-time presence of French forces not only at the political and military level (the antecedent of the post-war French alliances in the region) but also in the economic field. One good instance is oil: the path for the post-war expansion of French companies in Romanian oil had already been prepared during the war by officers of the TOE, who were in civilian life active in the oil business.[20]

[17] Georges-Henri Soutou: La France et le problème de l'unité et du statut international du Reich, 1914–1924. In: id./Jean-Marie Valentin (eds.): Le statut international de l'Allemagne. Des traités de Westphalie aux accords "2+4" (= Etudes Germaniques, vol. 59,4). Paris 2004, pp. 745–793.
[18] Joffre: Memoires (see note 5), vol. 1, pp. 95–140.
[19] Andrew/Kanya-Forstner: France Overseas (see note 1); Marion Kent: Oil and Empire. British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900–1920. London 1976.
[20] Jean de Pierrefeu: GQG Secteur I. Trois ans au Grand Quartier Général. 2 Vols. Paris 1920; Gérard Fassy: Le commandement français en Orient (octobre 1915–novembre 1918). Paris 2003;

In Search of a Decisive Victory to Achieve Maximum War Aims: The Somme and Nivelle Offensives of July 1916 and April 1917

Briand, who in October 1915 replaced Viviani as head of the government, was a far more forceful war leader than his predecessor. He pleaded for unity of purpose and convergence of action among Allies, and in November/December 1915 was instrumental in creating both an Allied military and an Allied political council.[21] At the military council meeting in Chantilly in December it was decided to take the offensive simultaneously on all fronts (in the Anglo-French case, this was eventually to become the Somme offensive, which was delayed by the battle for Verdun until 1 July, 1916). Briand further helped to cajole Romania into entering the war on 28 August, with a view to compounding the problems of the Central Powers by getting the Salonika front moving at last.[22]

It is not surprising that, with the perspective of these hopefully decisive strategic moves, the war aims question came back to the fore. After the defensive victory at Verdun in June 1916, and the promising beginning of the Somme offensive in July, a number of French diplomats in neutral capitals noted the onset of a real political "disarray" in Germany.[23] On 12 August President Poincaré asked Joffre to prepare terms for an eventual armistice. This started a process which eventually embraced all France's war aims, with studies at government and general staff level leading to a very important meeting of the principal ministers with Poincaré on 7 October. After this French war aims were put in writing, with approval of the Cabinet, in a letter of 12 January 1917 to Paul Cambon, the French ambassador in London.[24]

Alsace-Lorraine was, of course, to be recovered, but within its borders of 1790 (thus including a large part of the Saar province), not those of 1815. Owing to differences within the government no conclusion was reached as yet over the three possible solutions for the Rhineland question (outright annexation, permanent military occupation with the region remaining part of the Reich, and the establishment of one or two separate states closely linked to France); but Paris would demand from the Allies full freedom to decide the issue at the end of the war. Beyond this, the possibility was mooted with the Russians of ultimately discussed of signing the final peace treaty with the individual German states, thus

Jean-Noël Grandhomme: Le Général Berthelot et l'action de la France en Roumanie et en Russie méridionale (1916–1918). Genèse, aspects diplomatiques, militaires et culturels avec leurs incidences, prolongements et perspectives. Vincennes 1999; Georges-Henri Soutou: L'impérialisme du pauvre. La politique économique du gouvernement français en Europe centrale et orientale de 1918 à 1929. In: Relations internationales 7 (1976), pp. 219–239.

[21] Marjorie Farrar: French Blockade Policy 1914–1916. A Study in Economic Warfare (= Ann Arbor Microfilm). Ph.D., Stanford 1968, pp. 162f.

[22] On Briand and Romania, cf. Georges Suarez: Briand. Vol. 3: 1914–1916. Paris 1939, pp. 352ff.; on Greece cf.: Yannis G. Mourélos: L'intervention de la Grèce dans la Grande Guerre (1916–1917). Athens 1983.

[23] Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Dépôt de Nantes, Ambassade de Londres, 1914–1920, carton 36.

[24] Soutou: La France et les Marches (see note 15), p. 359.

disposing of the unitary Reich altogether.[25] Meanwhile Luxemburg was attracting more and more attention, and extensive economic war aims were devised that included customs unions with Belgium and Italy and an inter-Allied control system for major raw materials after the war – all to the detriment of German economy and to the benefit of the French. Indeed, by tripling its steel capacity with the recovery of Lorraine and the annexation or control of the Saar region and Luxembourg, France would become a major industrial power in Europe.[26]

Exactly in these very months (October 1916–January 1917) the General Staff (under Joffre and later under Nivelle) was preparing, in full agreement with the political leadership, what was to be known in April 1917 as the "Nivelle Offensive", which, coming after the blow delivered to Germany by the Battle of the Somme, was expressly designed to "seal the ruin of the Central Powers".[27] Several meetings of Joffre with the principal ministers and Poincaré ensured that all the necessary preparations were fully coordinated.[28] Now, for the first time, the government was fully informed of the operational plan and contributed to it its implementation (through the reorganisation mentioned above). Nothing less than complete victory was contemplated.

The same went for the Allies: on the basis of a French general staff memorandum of 12 November 1916 (which had been sent to Poincaré and Briand) an Allied staff conference in Chantilly proclaimed on the 15th that the 1917 campaign would be "decisive".[29] Joffre's successor, Nivelle, retained the projected offensive and its extensive aims, including not only the liberation of territories occupied by the Germans, but also the "control of enemy territories, possession of which is necessary to negotiate peace and achieve favourable terms".[30]

The chronology testifies not only to the close connection between the preparation of a "decisive" offensive and the setting up of ambitious war aims, but to the profound agreement between government and high command.

May to November 1917: Peace Feelers, More Prudent War Aims, and Their Strategic Implications

From April 1917 to May 1918, however, starting with the failure of the Nivelle offensive followed in June by numerous acts of indiscipline in the French Army

[25] Ibid., p. 360.
[26] Georges-Henri Soutou: L'or et le sang. Les buts de guerre économiques de la première guerre mondiale. Paris 1989, pp. 171–188.
[27] Joffre: Mémoires (see note 5), vol. 2, p. 341.
[28] Ibid., pp. 341ff.; Raymond Poincaré: Au service de la France. Neuf années de souvenirs. Vol. 9. Paris 1917, p. 15, p. 22.
[29] Joffre: Mémoires (see note 5), vol. 2, pp. 346ff.
[30] Operation plan for 1917, 25. 1. 1917. In: Commandant de Civrieux. L'offensive de 1917 et le commandement du Général Nivelle. Paris 1919, pp. 42ff. (account supportive of Nivelle but very well informed).

in June, the difficult military situation demanded a defensive strategy, flanked by a secret diplomatic approach to Vienna. During the summer and autumn 1917 a negotiated peace could no longer be ruled out, and French war aims were correspondingly reduced. Certainly, Alsace-Lorraine was to be recovered at all events, but outright annexations in the Rhineland were no longer seriously considered. Even so, there might be a permanent military occupation or the separation of some areas from the Reich; at any rate, all were agreed that, as a minimum, some sort of security guarantee for France in the region was absolutely necessary.

This scaling down converged with the views of the average soldier in the field, as recorded by the military censors who checked their mail: they deeply felt that they were engaged in a rightful, defensive war, and that Alsace-Lorraine should be restored to France. Beyond that, however, they wanted no annexations but a peace underpinned by some sort of international system of guarantees to prevent Germany's challenging it in the future.[31] After all, they realised, however dimly, that France was also fighting for a "Republican model", as opposed to the "Prussian authoritarian militaristic system".

In Paris, the same general orientation, if somewhat more sanguine, could be observed in the Assembly, in on the only occasion on which it was able express its views about war aims (the government usually prevented any discussion of the topic), after the publication of a number of secret Franco-Russian agreements by the provisional government in Petrograd. At the beginning of June 1917 the Assembly set up a "secret committee" and passed a resolution rejecting "all thought of conquest", while reaffirming the need to bring down "Prussian militarism" and establish "lasting guarantees of peace". The debates, too, showed that although the deputies renounced the idea of annexing the Rhineland, they wanted it under permanent occupation after the war, or even separated from the Reich.[32]

Paul Painlevé, a former education minister in the Briand Cabinet, war minister under Ribot from March to September 1917, then prime minister until November, was a particularly prudent exponent of an alternative policy and pushed the new, moderate, orientation even further. He no longer believed – particularly after the Russian revolution – in the possibility of a decisive victory, and decided to replace Nivelle, after the failure of his offensive, by Pétain, who was convinced that until the Americans appeared at the front in force and until the new armaments, particularly the tanks, could be produced in quantity, Allied strategy had to remain defensive.[33]

As for war aims, Painlevé abandoned many of the ambitious goals devised since 1914. For him there was only one noli me tangere, the return of Alsace-Lorraine

[31] François Lagrange: Moral et opinions du combattant français durant le premier conflit mondial d'après les rapports du contrôle postal de la IV^{ème} armée. Paris 2009 (Ph.D. at Paris IV in March 2009, under my supervision).

[32] Soutou: La France et les Marches (see note 15), p. 370–373.

[33] About that question and the domestic policy and war aims background see: Georges-Henri Soutou: Poincaré, Painlevé et l'offensive Nivelle. Des étoiles et des croix. Mélanges offerts à Guy Pedroncini. Paris 1995.

(still within the 1790 borders, however, and including a big part of the Saar region). Beyond that everything would depend on how the war ended. In short, Painlevé rejected the idea of an all-out offensive followed by an imposed peace. For him, the only way was to seek a relative victory by combining a defensive strategy with a set of diplomatic manoeuvres, particularly in the direction of Vienna – either to entice Austria-Hungary into concluding a separate peace, or to persuade Berlin, by raising the spectre of isolation, to accept a general peace conference.

As regards the Dual Monarchy, a whole series of peace feelers went from Painlevé to Vienna which cannot be detailed here.[34] The general idea was to offer the bait of a guarantee of Austria-Hungary's survival; but the Monarchy would have to be reconstructed along federal lines, according a due share of influence to the Slavs, and thus ensuring that Vienna would lean more on Paris than on Berlin in future. Vienna should also support France over disarmament and security measures in the Rhineland, and reparations. Even so, Germany might be granted compensations, for perhaps in the French colonies. In short, Painlevé was proposing what he saw as a fair and comprehensive settlement, vastly diminishing the hegemonic position of Germany in Europe through a new balance quite favourable to France, but without tearing up the whole fabric of the Continent.

All these issues were discussed between Painlevé and Lloyd George and between Briand and von der Lancken, the chief of the German administration in occupied Belgium, in Boulogne on 25 September 1917. Two points are of interest for us here: in the first place, there was general agreement on the idea, which was being ventilated in many quarters,[35] that peace might be easier to achieve if in return for concessions to the Allies in the West the Germans were allowed to compensate themselves at the expense of Russia. In the second, probably sensing that peace negotiations might be imminent, Painlevé lost no time in extracting from Lloyd George the undertaking (which London had so far stubbornly resisted) that there could be no peace without the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France – as Lloyd George, albeit hardly overjoyed, announced in public on 11 October.[36]

Of course the fleeting moment when a negotiated peace seemed possible soon vanished again. On the one hand, the Germans managed to bring the Austrians into line, on the other, a coalition of conservatives and "jusqu'au boutistish" leaders London and Paris forced Lloyd George to abandon the idea of negotiations and drove Painlevé from office altogether.

[34] Georges-Henri Soutou: Paul Painlevé und die Möglichkeit eines Verhandlungsfriedens im Kriegsjahr 1917. In: Walther L. Bernecker/Volker Dotterweich (eds.): Deutschland in den internationalen Beziehungen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. München 1996, pp. 169–187; id.: Paul Painlevé et la possibilité d'une paix négociée en 1917. In: Claudine Fontanon/Robert Frank Paul (eds.): Painlevé (1863–1933). Un savant en politique. Rennes 2005, pp. 71–82.

[35] As the King of the Belgians told Poincaré, on September 22nd; see: Poincaré: Au service (see note 28), vol. 9, p. 293.

[36] David Stevenson: French War Aims Against Germany 1914–1919. Oxford 1982, p. 83.

Meanwhile, however, Pétain, Nivelle's defensive-minded successor as commander in chief, chosen by Painlevé after the failure of the April offensive had of course revised his strategy on the assumption that full victory was now very doubtful, that some sort of negotiated peace might come quickly, and that it might not be disastrous for France if both camps agreed to end to the war at the expense of defeated Russia.[37] (Significantly, many of Painlevé's peace overtures too had been made through the Deuxième Bureau of the General staff, in charge of evaluating the enemy and in control of the Secret Service). Of course Pétain, exactly like Painlevé, wanted to ensure that in any case France would achieve its minimal war aim: the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine; but the offensive plan for 1918 which he devised in October 1917 did not really aim at beating the Germans "decisively", like earlier war plans (and as all the grand strategists of the Clausewitz-Foch school had preached). Its aim was simply to secure Alsace-Lorraine physically for France, come what may.[38] Once again war aims and strategy were co-ordinated, but with far more modest ends in view.

November 1917 to July 1918: The Brest-Litovsk Armistice, the Impending German Onslaught and the End of the Peace Feelers

Clemenceau, prime minister from 17 November 1917, soon put an end to the peace feelers initiated by his predecessor, and vowed to make war and nothing but war. He refused to be specific in about French war aims, apart of course from Alsace-Lorraine, but in private he did not conceal his intention to work for the more favourable 1790 boundary, the annexation of the Saar, and at the very least the permanent occupation of the Rhineland. However, he also had to take President Wilson's Fourteen Points into account, unenthusiastic as he was about them; and he rightly suspected that the Americans and the British would be difficult as regards French war aims.[39]

As his war aims were more extensive than those of his predecessor, it was not surprising that he refused to support Pétain's strategic plan for 1918, which had been strictly defensive in expectation of the German offensive which would evidently follow the transfer dozens of German divisions from the Eastern to the Western front. (Pétain had planned to regain the initiative in 1919, when there would be enough American forces in France; but that would have meant that the war would become even more Anglo-American than it was already, and that France would have even less say about peace terms.[40]) Clemenceau, therefore, pronounced in favour of Foch (Allied commander-in-chief since March 1918) and his plan to confront the enemy with counter-attacks, and, if the occasion arose, to

[37] Guy Pedroncini: Pétain général en chef (1917–1918). Paris 1974, p. 235.
[38] Ibid., pp. 122–137.
[39] Soutou: La France et les Marches (see note 15), pp. 380f.
[40] Jean-Baptiste Duroselle: La Grande Guerre des Français. 1914–1918. Paris 1994.

launch "a combined offensive with decisive aims", even in 1918.[41] This was exactly what was to occur with Foch's offensives that started, after Ludendorff's spring and summer offensives had run out of steam, on 18 July.

July 1918, the Big Push: Common Allied War Aims, or a Particular French Agenda?

For a time, even after the Germans began to retreat after the big Allied offensive of 18 July, the future looked uncertain. Pétain, commander in chief of French forces, and Foch, the Allied commander in chief, were divided as to the course to follow. Foch prepared a series of offensives along most of the front involving all the Allied forces but his aim at this stage was simply to push the Germans back as far as possible and to regain important railways and industrial assets – certainly not to achieve a decisive result already before the end of the year.[42]

At the same time, however, the French general staff and Pétain had another idea: they wanted to launch a concentrated offensive in Lorraine. On the one hand, the German front was thinner there, and given the importance of Lorraine in terms of lines of communication, important strategic results could be expected. On the other hand, the idea was patently to conquer and to hold in French hands, independently of the Allies, territorial assets that would be particularly important for Paris in any forthcoming peace negotiations.[43] Foch refused to agree to this (in complex discussions that need not be recounted here) until 5 November. As a result the Lorraine offensive – the plans had been basically completed on 10 October, but time was still needed to concentrate the necessary forces – was scheduled to begin on 14 November. The Armistice intervened three days before.[44]

As for Clemenceau, although he did not usually hesitate to intervene forcefully in high command matters, reminding everyone of that he was (as not only president of the council but also war minister) the "constitutional chief of the Armies", his role in this debate is hard to discern. It is difficult to believe that he did not understand the scope of the issues at stake. He was, however, trapped in a contradiction between French war aims (including those regarding the Rhineland) as they had developed since 1914, which he did not – pace his critics – abandon, and the hard fact that if France was to enjoy American and British support at the end of the war, she would have to abide, at least outwardly, by the Wilsonian agenda.[45]

It could be said that Foch's strategy was really an inter-Allied strategy, designed to facilitate a basic agreement with London and Washington at the conference table and after the war, while Pétain's strategy was the more strictly "national" one, based

[41] The best account in: General ***: La crise du commandement unique. Le conflit Clemenceau Foch Haig Pétain. Paris 1931, pp. 55–70.
[42] Pedroncini: Pétain (see note 37), p. 414.
[43] Ibid., p. 422.
[44] Ibid., pp. 423–427.
[45] Soutou: La France et les Marches (see note 15), pp. 381–383.

on the conviction that a number of specific French war aims would not be readily accepted by the Allies unless the French themselves could create faits accomplis before the fighting ceased. Clemenceau was caught in a contradiction between his cardinal policy of keeping in line with the two other major liberal democracies, and his desire to achieve France's national objectives. Here, perhaps, lay the roots of his less than decisive approach to strategy in the summer and autumn of 1918?

The Armistice Controversy: Insufficient Coordination between French Strategy and French War Aims?

The failure to start the Lorraine offensive was the subject of fierce debate at the time and later, as to whether the chance had been missed to achieve a decisive result, and whether, as many in Paris felt, the Armistice had been granted to Germany too soon.[46] Did the acceptance of the 11 November mean the renunciation of former war aims? Was there a sudden disconnection between war aims and the conduct of the war? Or did the Armistice not rather connect with Clemenceau's policy of achieving the most that could be achieved without breaking with the Allies – who would remain after all the main source of French security in the face of a Germany which would emerge from the war diminished, but in no way eliminated from the European scene as many had hoped in 1914 and later.[47] Much has also been made of a dispute between Foch and Clemenceau at the time when the Armistice articles were being prepared: Foch wished the armistice agreement to either proclaim or refer to the annexation of the Rhineland to France, or at least the formation of a State separated from the Reich. Clemenceau demurred, objecting that that would have amounted to a confusion between military and political matters and that Foch, in charge of the Armistice as Allied commander in chief, should have no say in drafting peace terms anyway. Some have claimed that here Clemenceau was renouncing any extensive war aims. This was not so; but he recognised all the same that France would have to bring the Allies, not only the Germans, to accept its views. He managed, at any rate, to extract from the Allies the condition that German forces should evacuate not only Belgium, the occupied territories, Alsace-Lorraine, but also the Left Bank of the Rhine, including the bridgeheads on the Right Bank. He understood perfectly well what could be later achieved from that staging ground. As he told Foch: "Peace guaranties must find anchor points in the Armistice." The British, for their part, were all too well aware of the ulterior motives of the French, and feared, that once they were ensconced on the Left Bank, they would be very difficult to dislodge.[48]

[46] Pierre Renouvin: L'armistice de Rethondes. Paris 1968.
[47] Margaret Macmillan: Peacemakers. The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War. Londres 2001; Georges-Henri Soutou: 1918. La fin de la Première Guerre mondiale? In: Revue historique des Armées 251 (2008), pp. 4–17.
[48] Renouvin: L'armistice (see note 46), pp. 195ff.

For the present, even Foch was convinced that the occupation of the Left Bank and of the bridgeheads made it impossible for Berlin to resume hostilities in the immediate future; and that the Allied powers could therefore devise peace terms at their ease.[49] Nor were Clemenceau's terms those of a peace of renunciation. True, the Reich would not be divided after all: Clemenceau was convinced, unlike many of his countrymen, that German unity was not artificial; but that it could nevertheless with the help of the USA, and UK and the new independent States in Central Europe, be controlled in an international system along Wilsonian lines. This would not preclude either a broad French influence over the Saar and Rhine regions and Luxembourg and German economy and a strictly limited German military; or even French support for independence movements that might develop in the Rhineland and in Bavaria.

In short, Clemenceau, although he had not supported Foch's demand to include the annexation of the Left Bank in the Armistice, remained active and retained his ulterior motives. On 16 February 1919 he assured the Senate that the Rhineland would be separated from the Reich, and would form an autonomous State under French occupation and linked to France through a customs union: "In other words, we shall occupy until the region will be ready to join France."[50]

He also permitted the French military and secret service to support Rhineland autonomists seeking separation from Prussia and the transformation of the Reich into a loose confederation. The Dorten coup of May 1919 enjoyed secret but effective support from the French authorities, and even from Clemenceau himself, who desisted only because of Wilson's strong reaction. At the same time Clemenceau supported the attempt of the French High Commissar for the Rhine territories, Tirard, to promote the French democratic model as a sort of magnet to influence the evolution of Germany as a whole in a more democratic direction. Hence, Clemenceau's Rhineland policy was multi-faceted advancing French "republican" political and cultural influence in Germany as a whole; and, if the inhabitants of the Rhineland wished to go in that direction promoting a large degree of autonomy from Berlin, and, eventually, closer and closer links to France.[51] By such devices, Clemenceau could reconcile his genuine liberalism and dislike of annexations with his obsession about buttressing France's security.[52]

Without entering into the complex negotiations over the Peace treaty, it is worth noting that many of its provisions were linked to complex time-tables: the final status of the Saar was to be resolved by a plebiscite in 1935; the occupation of the Rhineland, linked to the payment of reparations, would last 15 years or more. The French were convinced that by 1935 the inhabitants of the Saar would

[49] Raymond Recouly: Le mémorial de Foch. Mes entretiens avec le Maréchal. Paris 1929, pp. 29ff.
[50] Soutou: La France et les Marches (see note 15), p. 384.
[51] Pierre Jardin: La politique rhénane de Paul Tirard (1920–1923). In: Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande 21 (1989) 2, pp. 208–216.
[52] Cf. Georges-Henri Soutou: The French Peacemakers and Their Home Front. In: Manfred B. Boemecke/Gerald D. Feldman/Elisabeth Glaser (eds.): The Treaty of Versailles. A Reassessment after 75 Years. Cambridge 1998, pp. 167–188.

come to appreciate the superior French social system and vote for France. As for the Rhineland, Clemenceau himself was convinced that Germany could never pay the reparations and that France would stay on the Rhine indefinitely.[53] But for Clemenceau this rather disingenuous system of time-tables at least allowed him to paper over his differences with the Allies, whose support, as he fully recognised, was so vital to French security.

The elimination of Germany as a unified national State remained a long term aspiration in influential circles in France, but Clemenceau never adhered to it, he was convinced that German unity was both strong and a natural development.[54] But even there his attitude was more complex than is often assumed. Between complete dissolution and a fully centralised Reich many possibilities could be envisioned, such as some sort of loose confederation or at least "federalism", in the sense of greater autonomy from Berlin. Clemenceau, among others, believed that such an evolution might be appropriate not only for the Rhineland, but for Bavaria.[55] For all these short-term aims and long-term ulterior motives a lengthy period of occupation of the Left Bank, as envisaged by the Armistice and later the Treaty of Versailles was, as things stood, about the best that Paris could hope for; and there was perhaps more harmony after all between French strategy and French war aims than has usually been assumed.[56]

Conclusions

The French government, the French Army and a significant body of public opinion were in agreement, throughout the entire war, on France's minimal war aims – the "de-annexion" of Alsace-Lorraine; and even if we consider that real military-political coordination was not achieved until the end of 1916, already before that date France enjoyed better coordination than, for instance Germany (witness the dissension over Belgium in the internal German debate about war aims). In France, generally speaking, the interplay between strategy and the definition of war aims, was productive, with two exceptions: the Near East (where French interests were not much in evidence, and French military power on the spot was

[53] Soutou: La France et les Marches (see note 15), p. 385.
[54] Cf. Jean-Baptiste Duroselle: Clemenceau. Paris 1988, p. 727.
[55] See Georges-Henri Soutou: La France et la Bavière, 1866–1949. In: France-Bayern. Paris 2006, pp. 252–261; id.: La France et le problème de l'unité (see note 17), pp. 761f.
[56] The same applies for Eastern Europe, where the political aim to create new states as bulwark against Germany was supported on the spot by the numerous French military missions in the region. Stevenson: French War Aims (see note 36), pp. 137f.; François Grumel-Jacquignon: La Yougoslavie dans la stratégie française de l'Entre-deux-guerres (1918–1935). Bern et al. 1999; Traian Sandu: Le système de sécurité français en Europe centre-orientale. L'exemple roumain 1919–1933. Paris 1999; on top of that Paris was diligently furthering an economic penetration of the whole region to eradicate German influence: Georges-Henri Soutou: L'impérialisme du pauvre. La politique économique du gouvernement français en Europe centrale et orientale de 1918 à 1929. In: Relations internationales 7 (1976), pp. 219–239.

overshadowed by the British); and 1918, when a divergence arose between what might be termed French national war aims supported by a French national strategy and an Allied strategy, to which French war aims had to be adjusted if they were to be accepted by the Allies.

Keith Jeffery

British Strategy and War Aims in the First World War

Before we can explore this topic we need to consider the apparently unremarkable but in fact potentially tricky term "British", which is conventionally used to describe the United Kingdom, but at the time of the First World War often comprehended the wider British Empire and its distinctive strategic concerns. If, in the words of Benedetto Croce, "all history is contemporary history" this might account for one characteristic feature of recent military history writing on the First World War: the "disaggregation" of the British military war effort. This reflects modern and contemporary political developments, and changes in our understanding of "British" and "Britishness", in both a political and a cultural sense. Ever since the First World War, speculation about a possible break-up of the United Kingdom (and, after all, the strains of that war were one reason for the secession of part of Ireland in 1921) has encouraged researchers to question the concepts of "Britain" and "Britishness" and to write in terms of particular "Irish" and "Scottish" elements in the British war effort. Indeed, the growth of sectional and separatist nationalisms in the United Kingdom has sometimes fostered perceptions of the past which focus on the component parts of the United Kingdom to the exclusion of any sense of overarching Britishness or unified national endeavour. This has been most obvious in the case of Ireland (to which I myself have contributed),[1] but studies of a distinctively Scottish engagement with the war are on the increase too.[2] How far such perspectives really help us to understand historical reality is, of course, debatable. As Catriona Pennell has recently demonstrated,[3] it was similarity of response and national unity that were the predominant characteristics of the United Kingdom, in the early months of the war at least.

What we might call the disaggregation of the "British world" – or British *imperial* world – is even more apparent when we consider the broader imperial context of 1914–18 and the Great War histories of the self-governing British Dominions, which in a striking number of cases favour the sectional to the exclusion, even suppression, of the historical actuality. This is most egregious regarding Gallipoli

[1] For example, in my book: Keith Jeffery: Ireland and the Great War. Cambridge 2000.
[2] A pioneering example is: Catriona M. M. Macdonald/Elaine W. McFarland (eds.): Scotland and the Great War. East Linton 1999.
[3] Catriona Pennell: A Kingdom United? Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland. Oxford 2012.

where the established Antipodean narrative focuses relentlessly on the Australian and New Zealand – ANZAC – involvement, to the considerable disadvantage of the British (indeed, English) majority troops on the peninsula.[4] We can see this phenomenon elsewhere, too: Beaumont-Hamel on the Somme is today largely possessed by the Canadians despite the fact that on 1 July 1916 no Canadian soldiers fought there at all (just one battalion of Newfoundlanders), and the overwhelming majority of troops in action at that place on that day were British (notably the Scottish 51st (Highland) Division).

What has this got to do with "British war aims and strategy"? It is relevant because the very term "British" can be problematical, given that the United Kingdom was both a multi-national state and an imperial one. In terms of high policy and grand strategy the domestic dimension is perhaps less important, though it is not wholly irrelevant as the implications of Irish political challenges to the authority of the British government could influence strategic decision-making.[5] The "imperial dimension", by contrast, is of paramount importance to understanding the environment within which British policymakers were operating. Any limited and exclusive focus on British-as-United-Kingdom policy-making fails to do justice to the imperial actualities of the times – what might be termed the British "imperial mind". And while the moment of commitment to war in August 1914 had an understandably European focus, the experience of the war itself lent the conflict an increasingly imperial dimension that eventuated in an "imperial" momentum which continued even after the war on the Western Front had ended.

The Imperial Dimension

The imperial dimension of British strategic policy was important in two respects. First, United Kingdom policy-making encompassed a global, imperial power system, reaching far beyond the British Isles; and, second, the empire itself was able to a certain degree to influence strategic policy-making.[6] We can see this in the articulation of British strategy, as put before the representatives of the Dominions (the British white colonies of settlement of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland and South Africa) in May 1911 at the imperial conference and on 23 August at the famous meeting of the British Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) comprising the only high-level and comprehensive review of British strategy before 1914.[7]

[4] This is discussed in the introduction to Jenny Macleod: Gallipoli. Making History. London 2004.
[5] See Geoffrey R. Sloan: The Geopolitics of Anglo-Irish Relations in the 20th Century. London 1997, pp. 114–163.
[6] The discussion below draws on my chapter: Keith Jeffery: The Imperial Conference, the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Continental Commitment. In: Peter Dennis/Jeffrey Grey (eds.): 1911. Preliminary Moves. Canberra 2012, pp. 20–40.
[7] Michael Howard: The Continental Commitment. The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of Two World Wars. Harmondsworth 1974, p. 51.

On 26 May, during the imperial conference, Dominion representatives were invited to attend meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence (which since 1902 had been the primary forum for the specialised discussion of British defence issues). Here Sir Edward Grey treated them to a frank summary of British foreign policy, emphasising that "what really determines the Foreign Policy of this country is the question of sea power". Grey described how, since about the turn of the century, Britain's relations with France and Russia had appreciably improved, to such an extent that it had become "apparent that our relations with Russia and France were better than our relations with Germany". While it was British policy to remain friendly towards Germany, "if we come to any understanding with Germany of a public kind which puts us on good relations with Germany, it must be an understanding which must not put us back into the old bad relations with France and Russia".

As Grey described it, thus, France and Russia had a veto power over any possible future Anglo-German rapprochement. Reflecting on the military dangers of the current diplomatic situation, Grey outlined the threat posed by Germany (though without mentioning it by name). He asserted that there was "no appreciable danger" of Britain "being involved in any considerable trouble in Europe", unless "some Power, or group of Powers" had the ambition of achieving what he called "the Napoleonic policy", by which a single power might aim individually to crush other states. "The moment the weakest Powers in Europe were assailed, either by diplomacy or by force", he warned, "one by one they would appeal to us to help them". And, although Britain was not committed by any existing "entanglements which tie our hands", if the country "sat by and looked on and did nothing, then people ought to realise that the result would be one great combination in Europe, outside which we should be left without a friend". Stressing the imperial strategic dimension of this position, he said that there was an "obvious […] common interest between us here at home and all the Dominions", since "if the control of the seas was lost, it would not only be the end of the British Empire as far as we are concerned, but all the Dominions would be separated from us, never to be rejoined".[8]

Four months later, prompted by the Agadir, or "second Moroccan", crisis, which raised the spectre of war between France and Germany,[9] a meeting of the CID was summoned on 23 August 1911 to discuss "Action to be taken in the event of intervention in a European war".[10] At this meeting the army's preferred strategy (as propounded by the Director of Military Operations, Brigadier-General Henry Wilson) committing Great Britain to definite intervention at the side of the French in the event of a German attack was adopted (as against the navy's

[8] Minutes of CID 111th meeting, 26. 5. 1911, UK National Archives (henceforward TNA), CAB 38/18, no. 40.

[9] The best general account is in Samuel R. Williamson, Jr.: The Politics of Grand Strategy. Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904–1914. Cambridge, MA. 1969, pp. 141–166.

[10] Minutes of CID 114th meeting, 23. 8. 1911, TNA, CAB 2/2/2.

vaguer plans for a maritime blockade coupled with limited military strikes against the German North Sea coast).[11]

Two points might be observed about this decision. First, it confirmed that Great Britain's essential strategic interests lay primarily in Europe. "Imperial defence" at its most basic was the defence of the United Kingdom's position in Europe, including its relations with other European Great Powers. Hence, the first call on the resources of the empire would always be for the protection of the "Mother Country". Second, despite assurances given at the time of the imperial conference that Dominion representatives would be invited to attend defence discussions affecting them, this did not happen in August 1911, and in fact the Dominions were not offered any meaningful share in strategic policy-making until well into the First World War. But the formal inclusion of the Dominions in policy-making is only one aspect of the "imperial dimension"; for whatever the focus of the debate might be, whether operations in Western Europe or Lord Curzon's preoccupations elsewhere, a markedly "imperial" world-view was always one of the "unspoken assumptions" of British decision-makers (especially after Lloyd George replaced Asquith as prime minister in December 1916).

The influence of the Dominion governments, however, was hardly greater in the summer of 1914 than it had been in the summer of 1911. Although they rallied loyally to the side of the "Mother Country", unstintingly committing men and matériel to the cause, they were still treated very much as spectators and excluded from the decision-making process.[12] The Canadians were the first to jib at this: early in 1915 the Canadian prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, travelled to London himself to seek information about British policy-making. In October Andrew Fisher resigned as Australian prime minister and became High Commissioner in London so as to be nearer the centre of affairs. But their hopes of gaining a voice in the direction of the war were disappointed. In January 1916, Borden, back in Canada, was dependent on newspapers for information. "As to consultation", he complained to the Canadian High Commissioner in London, "plans of campaign have been made and unmade, measures adopted and apparently abandoned and generally speaking steps of the most important and even vital character have been taken, postponed or rejected without the slightest consultation with the authorities of this Dominion. It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400,000 or 500,000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were toy automata. Any person cherishing such an expectation harbours an unfortunate and even dangerous delusion. Is this war being waged by the United Kingdom alone or is it a war waged by the whole Empire?"[13]

[11] The circumstances of this decision are discussed in Keith Jeffery: Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. A Political Soldier. Oxford 2006, pp. 92–97.

[12] Nicholas Mansergh: The Commonwealth Experience. London 1969, pp. 166f.

[13] Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden to Sir George Perley, Canada's Acting High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, 4. 1. 1916, quoted in: ibid., p. 171.

Matters improved somewhat after Lloyd George became prime minister and called an Imperial War Conference in March 1917. Urged on by imperial-minded colleagues, such as Lord Milner and Leopold Amery, he invited the Dominion premiers to attend, forming an "Imperial War Cabinet". This constitutional innovation was certainly of some symbolic importance, though the extent to which the Dominion premiers (who did not continuously participate in British cabinet meetings) actually influenced detailed policy-making is open to question. Only the South African Jan Christian Smuts, who was brought into the British war cabinet as a full member in June 1917, was given a share of executive responsibility in high-level policy-making. A measure of how far the sharing of decision-making had gone by the end of the war was the dual representation accorded to the Dominions at the peace conference, both as members of the "British Empire Delegation" and with separate representation, equivalent to that of smaller Allied powers. At least, they now had more influence – for example in the discussions over the former German colonies – than they ever had during the war itself.[14]

Fighting the War

Neither Great Britain's general strategic disposition nor any amount of Anglo-French staff talks had committed the United Kingdom to go to war with Germany. In 1914, however, the German invasion of Belgium was seen by the British as linking their underlying strategic imperative to maintain the balance of power in Europe to a higher moral purpose, that is to say the proper conduct of the European (or international) states' system.[15] This combination of *Realpolitik* with a liberal defence of the rights of small nations was crucial, as Hew Strachan has observed;[16] and, as Charles Cruttwell argued, fitted into a longstanding pattern of British strategy: "Once every century since the end of the sixteenth", Britain had gone to war "to uphold what was idealistically called the freedom of Europe and more prosaically the balance of power".[17] The idealistic rationale may have helped the governing Liberal party to remain substantially united, and this point reminds us of the significance of domestic political considerations in war policy-making. British strategy and war aims emerged from the interplay of Great Britain's enduring imperial strategic interests; of shifting wartime realities; and the need to sustain popular support for the war effort within the framework of a more-or-less democratic political system.

[14] See ibid., pp. 173–180.
[15] An explanation articulated early in the war in: Members of the Oxford Faculty of Modern History: Why We Are at War. Great Britain's Case. Oxford 1914.
[16] Hew Strachan: The First World War. Vol. 1: To Arms. Oxford 2001, p. 97.
[17] Cruttwell quoted in: Gary Sheffield: Forgotten Victory. The First World War. Myths and Realities. London 2002, p. 77.

At the start of the war in 1914 it was generally assumed that Great Britain's main role would rest on its economic and maritime power, the former enabling it to act as paymaster to the Anglo-French-Russian Entente; the latter both securing maritime communications as well as enforcing a blockade on the enemy powers. This strategy assumed a minimal initial British military commitment, though the newly-appointed Secretary for War, Lord Kitchener, believed that a mass army should be raised, which could be deployed to significant effect by, say, 1917, when the other belligerents would have fought each other to a standstill.[18] While it appeared in August 1914 that there might still be room for debate about the extent to which Britain might become actively involved in a military sense, the available options had in fact been restricted by the war planning of the previous three years. The British cabinet's discussion about whether six divisions (as had been planned), or four, should be deployed in France was of very secondary importance in comparison with the crucial decision that *some* British land forces must be engaged alongside the French. Ferdinand Foch had famously observed that the size of the force was irrelevant. "We only ask for one corporal and four men", he is supposed to have told Henry Wilson, "but they must be there right at the start. You will give them to me and I promise to do my utmost to get them killed. From that moment I will be at ease since I know that England will follow them as one man!"[19]

So it was to be. As the conflict in the West settled down into a static war of attrition, the initially modest British commitment expanded into a Continental-scale mass army. The entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war by November 1914 opened up further possibilities. The apparent and costly stalemate on the Western Front which had developed by the end of 1914 led some British policymakers to consider where else the "Central Powers" might be attacked, and early in 1915 they approved a plan for a naval operation against the Dardanelles.[20] As it would not only strike close to the Turkish capital but also provide strong encouragement (and possibly even practical support) for Russia, this seemed to offer a relatively low-cost opportunity to make a dramatic difference to the balance of power. This option was backed by Winston Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty and seeking to exploit Britain's naval strength) in particular, but also by Lloyd George and Opposition leaders, including Bonar Law. Faced with the choice between a steadily increasing "butcher's bill" on the Western Front, and an imaginative operation that might materially shorten the war, it is not difficult to see why such people plumped for the latter. But there was also a strong body of opinion, mostly within the army, which warned that the war against Germany could only be won by success on the Western Front – "the old principle of decisive numbers at decisive

[18] A succinct summary of British strategy is in: David French: Allies, Rivals and Enemies. British Strategy and War Aims during the First World War. In: John Turner (ed.): Britain and the First World War. London 1988, pp. 22–35.
[19] Victor Huguet: Britain and the War. A French Indictment. London 1928, p. 26.
[20] David French: British Strategy and War Aims 1914–1916. London 1986, pp. 68–74.

theatre", as Henry Wilson noted in his diary.[21] This debate, sometimes characterised as one between "Easterners" and "Westerners" (with the latter dismissing their opponent's projects as mere "sideshows") was to continue for most of the war.

David French has argued that the notion of "Easterners" against "Westerners" is in fact "a caricature of reality created by the memoirs and biographies of the participants which were published in [the] 1920s and 1930s"; and that "the real division" was not between "Easterners" and "Westerners", but between the "business as usual" school, for example Reginald McKenna, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1915–1916, who believed Britain should limit its military commitment on the Continent and concentrate on supplying money and munitions to its Allies, and those, such as David Lloyd George, who were all for deploying a large conscript army in France.[22] Yet perhaps there is more to these distinctions than French suggests. For it was not solely a question of defeating Germany, important though that was. The divide between "Easterners" and "Westerners" was fundamentally a matter of different perceptions, *Weltanschauungen*, or "views of the world". The more imperial the perspective, and the greater the awareness of Britain's global power system, the more "Eastern" the strategic vision was liable to be. In other words, the distinction should be made, rather, between a relatively limited, local and European mindset, and a more expansive, "imperial mind", embodying an imperturbable sense of global reach, the product of the nineteenth-century world in which Britain's leaders had grown up.

In the event, as the Dardanelles campaign proved a costly failure, and with both the French and Russian war efforts faltering during 1915, it became clear that Great Britain would have to make a major military commitment in the West. Even so, a substantial British effort in the Battle of Loos in late September achieved little, and at the end of the year an Allied conference at Chantilly agreed that the strategy for 1916 should comprise a co-ordinated series of Russian, French, and British offensives. This plan was upset by the titanic German assault against Verdun which began in late February, and the failure of the Russians to defeat the Germans in the east. Consequently, the British were left to shoulder the main burden on the Somme, where a major offensive was launched on 1 July, and sustained (but with no conclusive result) until November 1916.[23]

At home, these failures undermined support for Asquith as war leader, and helped to bring about his replacement by Lloyd George (December 1916). If the generals were evidently unable to "win" the war in the West despite its appalling human cost, the new prime minister was keenly interested in alternatives to costly

[21] Diary of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 1. 2. 1915, Imperial War Museum.

[22] French: Allies (see note 18), p. 24.

[23] For a lucid analysis of British strategy on the Somme, see Elizabeth Greenhalgh: Why the British Were on the Somme in 1916. In: War in History 6 (1999), pp. 147–173. The overall impact of the battle is much debated. See, for example, Sheffield: Forgotten Victory (see note 17), pp. 159–189.

slogging-matches on the Western Front; and he turned his mind to the possibilities for putting pressure on Germany and its Allies in other places – north Italy, Palestine, Mesopotamia (Iraq) or even the Caucasus. The debate between "Westerners" and "Easterners" revived.

There were, moreover, clear limits to the manpower the British could supply to fight in any particular theatre. What they could supply, however, was money and material to bolster up their Allies, and since Russia had the greatest reservoir of manpower, it made sense to explore the ways in which Great Britain (and France) could support and encourage its efforts against Germany.

In December 1916 the Allied military leaders came to much the same conclusions they had done a year before, and decided that in 1917 the Allies should once more mount co-ordinated attacks on each of the main fronts. A political conference in Paris resolved in addition that a special effort should be made to co-ordinate strategy between West and East. "The only chance of a really great success in 1917", Lloyd George insisted, "was completely effective co-operation with Russia".[24] Indeed, according to the "legend" later propagated by Lloyd George, "Russia, had she received proper help from her western allies, could have contributed decisively to an overthrow of the German Empire quite early in the war".[25] The Russian revolution in 1917 gave the lie to such notions, but hopes continued for some alternative to the interminable slaughter in the West, especially after the failure of yet another Anglo-French effort, the Nivelle offensive, in the spring of 1917.

In the early summer of 1917 Lloyd George moved to improve the process of British strategic decision-making by establishing a "War Policy Committee", consisting of himself, Curzon, Milner and Smuts, to review policy as a whole;[26] and it was now conceded that a "war of attrition" was the only realistic policy on the Western Front. True, in view of Russia's collapse, Lloyd George proposed sending troops to Italy to bring pressure on Austria, which might in turn enable the Allies to knock out Bulgaria and Turkey. But the British military leaders opposed this, and demanded another offensive in Flanders. In the end the committee, accepting the need to offer support to the French in the West (and to secure some morale-boosting success), grudgingly assented to the military's plan, "but not to allow it to degenerate into a drawn out, indecisive battle of the 'Somme' type. If this happened, it was to be stopped and the plan for an attack on the Italian front would be tried."[27]

Haig's offensive, which became known as the third battle of Ypres, began on 31 July 1917, as did a month of rain, which turned the marshy Belgian land into a

[24] At an Anglo-French Conference, 28. 12. 1916, quoted in: David French: The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition 1916–1918. Oxford 1995, p. 45.
[25] Norman Stone: The Eastern Front. London 1975, p. 12.
[26] Lord Hankey: The Supreme Command 1914–1918, vol. 2. London 1961, pp. 670–686; French: Strategy (see note 24), pp. 94–123.
[27] Hankey Diary, 16. 7. 1917, quoted in: Hankey: Supreme Command (see note 26), p. 683.

quagmire; and although September saw some limited Allied successes, with the return of the rains, and the mud, in October the advance ground to a halt at the tiny village of Passendale (Paschendaele), a name henceforth synonymous with the worst horrors of the Western Front. Not surprisingly, this catastrophe revived Lloyd George's desire to find some alternative to the war of attrition in the West. Already in April he had been able to take heart when the strategic situation changed with the entry of the USA into the war. But by the end of the year it was clear that President Wilson was reluctant to become embroiled in what he regarded as primarily *European* imperial quarrels. The USA remained an "Associated Power", rather than an Ally; and Wilson's concentration on the moral purpose of the war, with his Fourteen Points, Four Principles and Five Particulars of January, February and September 1918 obliged the Entente powers more or less to follow suit.

Meanwhile, Lloyd George's determination to by-pass the unpalatable advice offered by the British military high command led him in November 1917 to back the creation, with his own man Henry Wilson as the British representative, of a new interallied Supreme War Council (SWC), designed to provide independent advice on strategy. One of its early productions, "Joint Note 12" of 19 January 1918, advised that no victory in the West could be predicted for 1918, and that the Allies should merely hold and strengthen their position, both along the Western Front and in Italy. In the Turkish theatre, by contrast, a "decisive result" might be possible, for "the present condition of Turkey is one of almost complete material and moral exhaustion".[28] In so far as it recognised the primary importance of the Western Front, Note 12 was no simple "Eastern" manifesto; but it certainly embodied Lloyd George's policy preferences, and did not go down at all well with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Robertson, or the Commander-in-Chief in France, Sir Douglas Haig. Even so, Lloyd George's replacing Robertson by Sir Henry Wilson in February 1918, did not signal any dramatic change of policy. It was decided for the time being simply to "tread water" in the West during 1918, lest any frittering away of precious manpower in costly attritional engagements should leave the British weakened vis-à-vis the Americans; and instead to build up resources for a 1919 offensive. The great German spring offensive launched in March 1918 upset these plans, however, and prompted a review of the high command on the Western Front which led to the appointment of the French General Ferdinand Foch as "Generalissimo" of the Allied Forces on 17 April.

In July 1918, with the German offensive running out of steam, Henry Wilson prepared a long paper for the Cabinet on "British military policy, 1918–1919".[29] It reiterated the view that the best which could be hoped for in 1918 was to hold the line in the West; and recommended some limited attacks to secure a tactical advantage in preparation for a major offensive in the summer of 1919. By then, Wilson predicted, the Allies would be only slightly superior in terms of numbers, but

[28] 1918 Campaign, 19. 1. 1918, Imperial War Museum, Wilson Papers, HHW 3/14/1.
[29] Wilson, British Military Policy, 1918–19, 25. 7. 1918, TNA, CAB 27/8 W.P. 70.

(according to the Supreme War Council's Note 12), well ahead in terms of machine-guns, tanks, aircraft and artillery. Placing faith in the latest technical advances, but not being over-optimistic, Wilson argued that "properly supported by the fullest equipment of every mechanical auxiliary, and efficiently directed under one supreme command", there would be "a fair chance of achieving substantial military success". According to Paul Guinn "in its emphasis on mechanical warfare" Wilson's "very able paper […] undoubtedly indicated the right road".[30] At the core of the study was an understanding that ultimately the war could only be won in the West; and after all, no one else had come forward with any another "practical general plan of action". In the event, the sudden collapse of Germany and its Allies rendered the elaborate war planning of 1918 redundant. In the late autumn of 1918, as if belatedly to vindicate the case for "side-shows", Bulgaria sued for peace in September, Turkey in October, and Austria-Hungary at the beginning of November. The Germans, defeated in battle, and withdrawing behind their frontiers, were finally left isolated at a time when their government, indeed their whole political system, was beginning to buckle under the prolonged strains of fighting a total war.

It is clear that, as the war progressed, what we might call the "British disposition" became more imperial. In 1914 the British state, the United Kingdom, went to war and the empire followed. By 1918 the British war effort was less unilaterally, or less exclusively, based on the United Kingdom alone. This was true in three distinct ways. First, perhaps most obvious, there was the territorial expansion of empire, from the acquisition of German colonies, to the protection of key zones of imperial vulnerability, such as Suez or the Persian Gulf, and finally, with conquest in the Middle East, the massive over-insurance of the defence of India and the creation of Lord Curzon's fantasy empire in the region.[31] Second, in terms of personnel, the First World War provided an unparalleled opportunity for obsolescent imperialists to shin up the political greasy pole. Partly this was because of the very nature of war, the mechanisms by which the state was mobilised for war, and the rhetoric employed. All of these privileged imperial tropes of military service, of power, of dominion and of high imperial endeavour. Thus, Lord Kitchener, an outstanding imperial hero, was brought in at the start as secretary for war. When Lloyd George became prime minister he introduced Lords Curzon and Milner to the inner circle of his war cabinet, both imperialists, the former of the old sort, the latter a modernising, "progressive" (though by no means democratic) type. From June 1917, moreover, Jan Christian Smuts, "South African poacher turned imperial gamekeeper",[32] was made a full member of the war cabinet. Lloyd George him-

[30] Paul Guinn: British Strategy and Politics 1914 to 1918. Oxford 1965, p. 314.
[31] A process discussed in: John Gallagher: The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire. Cambridge 1982, pp. 86–94; Keith Jeffery: The British Army and the Crisis of the British Empire 1918–22. Manchester 1984.
[32] Anthony J. Stockwell: The War and the British Empire. In: Turner (ed.): Britain (see note 18), p. 36.

self proved an unlikely imperialist, considering his stance on the Boer War at the turn of the century. To keep the Dominions fully on board he admitted their premiers to the highest policymaking level in the (albeit intermittently-meeting) "Imperial War Cabinet" – partly, but not entirely, a rhetorical, symbolic device; and at the 1917 imperial conference India, for the first time, was admitted on more-or-less equal terms with the Dominions. Third, there was the contribution which the empire – India and the Colonial Empire, as well as the Dominions – made to the overall war effort, in terms of men, money and matériel. By the end of the war the British Empire had come closer than ever in its history to becoming a coherent political, military and strategic unit. As Lloyd George told the imperial conference of 1921: "There was a time when Downing Street controlled the Empire. Today the Empire is in charge of Downing Street";[33] and, although the prime minister's rhetoric was prone to hyperbole, this was not entirely untrue.

War or Wars?

A further approach to the analysis of British strategy and war aims is to disaggregate the war itself, and investigate the extent to which we are dealing, not with one, but with a plurality of conflicts. At one level the conflict was primarily, in A. J. P. Taylor's phrase, a "struggle for mastery in Europe",[34] essentially a contest between Germany and Allies against a coalition of Great Power rivals, initially comprising France, the United Kingdom and Russia. While this European war sucked in other states on the Entente side – Italy (progressively) from 1915 and Romania in 1916 – until 1917 the main focus of the struggle lay on Germany's western and eastern frontiers. For Great Britain and France, the European War which began with the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914, ended with a German surrender on the Western Front in November 1918; and for them, in military terms, this war was primarily fought on the Western Front. But there was a maritime dimension, too, the strategy of which focused on three key areas: the defence of the British Isles; the protection of British maritime supply-lines and imperial communications; and the enforcement of a blockade on the enemy.

The defence of the British Isles was conspicuously successful. Despite prewar anxieties about vulnerability to invasion from the Continent,[35] British naval superiority ensured that a German landing on Great Britain was never even a remote possibility. Beyond a few strikes against targets on the East coast of Britain and some early successes against warships in British waters, the German surface naval threat was fairly easily met by the Royal Navy, and the only major battle, at Jutland in May 1916, although costly for the British, resulted in the German High

[33] Mansergh: Commonwealth (see note 12), p. 217.
[34] Alan J. P. Taylor: The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918. Oxford 1954.
[35] These are extensively discussed in: A. J. Anthony Morris: The Scaremongers. The Advocacy of War And Rearmament 1896–1914. London 1984.

Seas Fleet never seeking action again. British maritime dominance was underpinned by excellent naval signals intelligence, which also ensured the interception in April 1916 of a German vessel carrying arms to support a separatist rising in Ireland.[36] British naval command of home waters also ensured that the vital cross-Channel communications between England and France were never greatly disrupted. The only sustained threat in home waters came from German submarines which continued to operate until the end of the war.[37]

The British navy was also able – eventually – to secure Britain's maritime supply-lines and imperial communications, the latter more easily than the former, with the mopping up of most German surface warships by the end of 1914. But submarines were a different matter and they posed the greatest threat to the transatlantic supply-lines upon which Britain (and its Allies) depended for survival. Germany's adoption of unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917 exacerbated Britain's already critical supply position, and might have achieved its aim of bringing Britain to its knees had the British not belatedly implemented a convoy system and had it not also accelerated the United States' entry into the war.

Enforcing a blockade was the third pillar of Britain's naval strategy. It achieved considerable success, not simply in weakening the enemy by denying them foodstuffs and vital war commodities, but also from the strains to which it subjected the German imperial administration and civil society generally, to an extent that, ultimately, gravely undermined the legitimacy of government in Germany.[38] Thus the global maritime reach of British naval power was able to bring pressure to bear on its chief European enemy and contribute to Germany's general collapse in the autumn of 1918.

While there was a global dimension to the war from the start, with engagements in 1914 occurring from North China to the Middle East, Africa and the seas off South America, a strong case can be made for there truly being a "world war" only from April 1917, with the entry of the USA, after which all the greatest powers in the world were involved.[39] The widely-scattered engagements at the start of the war merely reflected the fact that Britain and Germany in particular had global interests. But the rolling-up by Britain of Germany's colonial possessions (with assistance from France and Japan, as well as from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand) suggests that we might find within the wider world conflict (however defined) a war which could be characterised as "the last war of British imperial expansion". Among the earliest operations of Australian and New

[36] Eunan O'Halpin: British Intelligence and Ireland 1914–21. In: Christopher Andrew/David Dilks (eds.): The Missing Dimension. Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century. London 1984, pp. 54–77.

[37] For example, the mail boat *Leinster* was sunk in the Irish Sea on 10. 10. 1918.

[38] Avner Offer: The Blockade of Germany and the Strategy of Starvation, 1914–1918. In: Roger Chickering/Stig Förster (eds.): Great War, Total War. Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918. Cambridge 2000, pp. 169–188.

[39] China declared war on the Central Powers in August 1917, and Brazil joined in October, after which at least one major power in each continent was engaged in the war.

Zealand forces was the seizure of German possessions in the Pacific. The first British shots of the whole war on land were reputedly fired on 12 August 1914 in Togoland, and during 1914 there were five further colonial campaigns involving British forces: in the Cameroons, East Africa, South-West Africa, New Guinea and Samoa.[40] In a late revival of the nineteenth-century Partition of Africa, Britain conceded the lion's share of the Cameroons to France in order to stave off demands for East African territory. In the words of Robert Holland, the suppression of unrest in Darfur during 1916 "belatedly completed the pacification of the Sudan" begun in the late 1890s.[41]

Jack Gallagher once remarked that the First World War was an "opportunity for a new partition of the world", providing "a vast bargain basement for empire builders".[42] Nowhere was this more true than in the Middle East. Hitherto Britain's strategy in the region had been to maintain the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire in Asia, principally in order to forestall the regional ambitions of France and Russia. But the entry of the Turks into the war in November 1914 rendered that strategy obsolete and prompted the greatest British imperial expansion of all. Driven by a combination of factors – not just defeating the Turks, but also securing the Suez Canal and the lines of imperial communications running through the region, preserving British interests in the Gulf and reinforcing the forward defence of India – and inspired by what John Darwin has called "war imperialism" – by late 1918 British and Anglo-Indian forces had occupied a great swathe of territory across the Middle East and even Central Asia. This imperialism, "devoid of any concern for either the civilising mission or the economic exploitation of captured territories",[43] was sustained above all by the simple logic – and momentum – of conquest.

To be sure, this imperium was not acquired unilaterally, nor without a number of contradictory commitments, made under the pressure of wartime imperatives, through which Britain sought to enlist and retain wartime Allies. The Treaty of London (April 1915), for example, offered Italy territorial compensations on the Mediterranean littoral of Asia Minor. The Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 1916) effectively partitioned the northern Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire between Britain and France, and the Balfour Declaration (October 1917), sought to enlist Jews for the Entente cause by promising British support for "the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people". Various agreements were made with Arab nationalists promising the postwar creation of an independent Arab kingdom in exchange for Arab support against Turkey, a commitment enthusiastically championed by T. E. Lawrence. Russia's collapse in 1917 left a

[40] Robert Holland: The British Empire and the Great War 1914–1918. In: Wm. Roger Louis/Judith M. Brown (eds.): The Oxford History of the British Empire. Vol. 4: The Twentieth Century. Oxford 1999, pp. 114–137.
[41] Ibid., p. 121.
[42] Gallagher: Decline (see note 31), p. 87.
[43] John Darwin: Britain, Egypt and the Middle East. Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918–1922. London 1981, p. 161.

power vacuum in the oil-rich Caucasus and Central Asia. In order to deny this region to the Central Powers (and, it was believed, protect India) a motley collection of British imperial forces moved forward from Mesopotamia (Iraq), Persia (Iran) and North-West India (now Pakistan): Dunsterforce (later Norperforce) in north Persia, under the command of Kipling's Stalkey, General L. C. Dunsterville, which reached Baku (in Azerbaijan) in August 1918; General Wilfrid Malleson's intelligence mission ("Malmiss"), originally based at Meshed in north-west Persia, but which by late 1918 loosely held a line in Transcaspia (Turkmenistan) from Krasnovodsk (Türkmenbaşy) to Askabad and Merv. Even in Central Asia Britain exercised maritime power, represented by a squadron of the Royal Navy in the Caspian Sea. This new cut-price empire reached its greatest extent in 1919, when British forces held territory across Caucasia, from Batumi on the Black Sea to Baku on the Caspian.[44]

The rationale for this imperial British war was articulated in mid-1918 by the Conservative MP Leo Amery, an especially enthusiastic imperialist on the staff of the Supreme War Council: "We have battled and will continue to battle our hardest for the common cause in Europe. But on behalf of that cause, as well as in defence of our existence, we shall find ourselves compelled to complete the liberation of the Arabs, to make secure the independence of Persia, and if we can, of Armenia, and to protect tropical Africa from German economic and military exploitation. All these objects are justifiable in themselves and don't become less so because they also increase the general sphere of British influence, and afford a strategical security which will enable that Southern British World which runs from Cape Town through Cairo, Baghdad and Calcutta to Sydney and Wellington to go about its peaceful business without constant fear of German aggression."[45]

Although British hegemony in Central Asia could not be sustained – the most forward positions had been abandoned by 1920 – Great Britain emerged from the war as the predominant power in the Middle East, with an enhanced position around the Persian Gulf, and mandates for Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine. Even allowing for the growing challenges of nationalism, both within the empire and in states such as Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, the defence of India and of British imperial communications through the region seemed secure as never before.

The Ending of the War(s)

The momentum of war imperialism that carried British military operations in the Middle East into 1919, reminds us that, while in the West Britain's strategic objectives were evidently sufficiently met by November 1918 to permit the ending of

[44] This imperial expansion, and the strains it brought, is explored in: Jeffery: British Army (see note 31).
[45] Amery: British War Aims, 8.6.1918, UK Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, F/2/1/24.

open hostilities, this was not entirely the case elsewhere. Fighting across the world did not stop the moment the whistle blew on the Western Front.

The ways wars end can be revealing about both strategy and war aims (actual as well as perceived), since the point at which the costs of continuing to fight outweigh the benefits must be one when at least some war aims have been obtained. Indeed, strategy and war aims are all about the peace; the moment (for the victors at least) when they have been sufficiently met to allow fighting to cease. Similarly, the objectives that states pursue at peace conferences ("war by other means"), will embody those war aims; though what they can actually secure may well fall short of their ambitions. Chronology is important here, for judgments as to whether war aims have been achieved often change with the passage of time, and may well look very different on, for example, 11 November 1918; 28 June 1919 (when the Treaty of Versailles was signed); 10 September 1919 (Treaty of St Germain with Austria), and so on. Certainly, for the British Empire, its apparent success in the Middle East enshrined in the Treaty of Sèvres of 10 August 1920 proved no more than an interim settlement, to be replaced by the last of the First World War peace treaties at Lausanne in July 1923.

In general terms, the British strategic requirements outlined by Grey in May 1911 had apparently been triumphantly met by the end of the war. The threat of a power "or a group of Powers, acquiring […] a dominating position in Europe" had – for the time being – been eliminated by the comprehensive defeat of the Central Powers. On the crucial question of sea power ("what really determines [British] Foreign Policy"), the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow on 21 June 1919 could give no more dramatic demonstration of Britain's maritime power. But – and here the chronology may be particularly significant – if one moves the moment of assessment forward by only three years or so to the Washington Naval Conference in 1922 the situation looks very different. Here, for the first time ever, Britain agreed to a measure of disarmament (if only of obsolete warships), and the towering British maritime supremacy of November 1918 and June 1919, had become no more than a commitment to maintaining set proportions of capital ships with (for the moment) friendly powers.[46]

The means by which the British imperial war effort had been sustained between 1914 and 1918, which combined an intensification of governmental control and exploitation of domestic and imperial resources with the espousal of idealistic war aims (including, in the end, a measure of self-determination for nationalities), catalysed national movements and stimulated national challenges in the unsettled aftermath of the war: in India, in Iraq, in Egypt, and in Ireland. Even in the Dominions, the experience of the war had a centrifugal effect, placing them more definitely on the road to autonomy. The lofty position described in December 1918 by the Commander-in-Chief in India General Sir Charles

[46] John Robert Ferris: The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919–26. London 1989, pp. 99–101.

Monro – "Now it is all over […] the Empire stands on a pinnacle built by her tenacity & courage"[47] – was unsustainable. For a brief moment only, the successes of British arms and the momentum of war imperialism propelled Great Britain and its empire to a position of global power unknown before. Even so, perhaps the case for speaking of an imperial decline in the 1920s, so brilliantly made by Jack Gallagher in his matchless survey of the British Empire as a power system in the twentieth century, can be overstated.[48] After all, Great Britain remained a superpower in the interwar years and the British imperial power system retained sufficient vitality for the "decline" to give way to enough of a revival to fight another war, essentially for the same strategic objectives as in 1914–1918. Here again, although much weakened, Great Britain survived to emerge on the winning side – but this time the cost of imperial victory was the empire itself.[49]

[47] Monro to Sir Henry Rawlinson, 12. 12. 1918, National Army Museum, London, Rawlinson Papers, 5201/33/79.
[48] Gallagher: Decline (see note 31); for an operational account, see Anthony Clayton: The British Empire as a Superpower, 1919–39. London 1986.
[49] As is argued in Keith Jeffery: The Second World War. In: Louis/Brown (eds.): Oxford History (see note 40), pp. 326 f.

Boris Kolonitskii

War as Legitimisation of Revolution, Revolution as Justification of War

Political Mobilisations in Russia, 1914–1917[1]

From the very start of the First World War there was a constant struggle in all the belligerent Powers to define objectives that would be both acceptable to those directing policy and effective in persuading the public to fight for them. Everywhere, military operations became the subject of special propaganda efforts, while political decision-makers were in turn exposed to pressure from public opinion both in their countries and, occasionally, overseas. Russia, however, became something of a special case among the Great Powers, as there the task of persuading the public to continue the fight was complicated by a revolutionary crisis that demanded a particular rationale to justify the government's war aims. Indeed, their development from 1914 to 1917 was very much influenced, and finally completely overshadowed, by the impact of the increasing strains of war on the internal situation.

The Political Decision-Makers: The Emperor, the Duma and the Parties

The attitude of these actors towards the war was often determined by their views on the internal situation. The Emperor and the monarchists hoped that the slogan of the defence of Russia would create a broad political coalition, and that in the end victory would consolidate the power of the dynasty. The reunification of Poland under Russian rule (perhaps as an autonomous part of the empire), the acquisition of Eastern Galicia, Constantinople with the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits, Eastern Anatolia – these ambitious goals elaborated between 1914 and 1916 inspired both Russian conservatives and liberals despite their conflicting views on other matters, and the government tried to exploit them to mobilise their support.

The Emperor was, of course the key political actor: the Council of Ministers consisted of bureaucrats and generals nominated by him, and all ministers reported to him. Certainly, issues might be discussed in the Council before being ap-

[1] The author wishes to thank Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies for its support and for its special scholarly atmosphere. I'm grateful to Daniel Orlovsky and Mikhail Lukianov for their comments and advice.

proved by the Emperor; but some important decisions of internal and foreign policy were implemented without formal discussions when a minister had managed to persuade the sovereign through personal contact.[2] In the realm of legislation the Emperor's power was vast: without his approval no bill, even if passed by the (wholly elected) State Duma and by the State Council (half elective and half appointed by the Emperor) could obtain legal force; and he retained the right to sign ukazes (decrees) that had the full validity of law.[3]

The Emperor was well aware that taking the country into war would inevitably create serious internal problems, but he was under strong pressure from political and military elites that in the last critical days was supported by the people in the streets. The capital became the scene of violent nationalist demonstrations, the police having to improvise barricades to protect the German and Austrian embassies; and when war broke out and the police were unable to prevent the storming of the German embassy (in which one embassy employee was killed), the governor of St. Petersburg banned all demonstrations in the city.[4] As for more acceptable manifestations of public opinion, the Emperor played an active role in mobilising patriotic feeling. Moreover, contrary to rumour, he absolutely refused to consider a separate peace with Germany or her Allies (which would have been political suicide for him). Altogether, the Emperor was concerned to shape and channel patriotic mobilisation in a way that could strengthen the monarchy, and he certainly hoped that diplomatic successes and military victories would increase his authority.

The State Duma's membership certainly did not reflect the views of the whole population – suffrage was neither universal nor equal, and different social groups were represented according their property and status, while some ethnic groups were not represented at all – but the three main groups in the State Duma – conservatives, liberals and radical left – could be said to reflect the views of the political elite. Most conservatives supported the Emperor's and Russia's war aims; but some of them also added a xenophobic note, denouncing the "German yoke" under which the country laboured, and supporting legislation to limit the rights (including property rights) of people of German and other "alien" origins.[5] Other conservative politicians, by contrast, thought that Russia was making a mistake in confronting Germany, and predicted that the end of the war would bring

[2] E.g. the famous appeal to the Poles (August 1914) was officially signed by Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. The text was prepared in the Foreign Office and approved by the Emperor. Other ministers were shocked when this controversial manifesto was released. Grigory N. Trubetskoi: Russkaja diplomatija 1914–1917 gg. i vojna na Balkanakh. Montreal 1983, pp. 34f.

[3] Paul P. Gronsky: The War and the Russian Government. In: The War and the Russian Government. New Haven, CT 1929, p. 7, p. 119.

[4] Tsuyoshi Hasegawa: The February Revolution. Petrograd, 1917. Seattle/London 1981, p. 4; Boris I. Kolonitskii: "Tragicheskaja erotica". Obrazy imperatorskoj sem'i v gody Pervoj mirovoj voiny. Moscow 2010, p. 77, pp. 82f.

[5] Eric Lohr: Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I. Cambridge, MA/London 2003, pp. 55–120.

the collapse of the monarchies in both countries; and while they could not speak up explicitly the idea of a separate peace, they found ways to express some of their misgivings by criticising Russia's Allies, first and foremost Great Britain.[6] The main liberal force, the Constitutional-Democratic Party (CD), wanted to create a real constitutional monarchy in the country.[7] The authorities were traditionally suspicious about their loyalty – during the Russo-Japanese war some of them had seen in the victory of the enemy the lesser evil for Russian society – and their newspaper was even closed for a while at the beginning of the war. These suspicions were in fact groundless – the party supported Russia's war aims; but its support for the Government was, in the long run, conditional: the CD hoped for political reforms after the war, and soon began to demand reforms even during the war. Their pro-British and pro-French attitudes fitted in with their political ideals: constitutional monarchy and liberal values. In 1915, during the "great retreat" of the Russian Army a coalition of several liberal and conservative fractions – the "Progressive Bloc" – was created that controlled the State Duma, with only the extreme Right and Left refusing to support it; but although its demands for immediate reforms and the creation of a "government of confidence" was supported by influential newspapers, associations and local governments, and even though some ministers were ready for such a dialogue,[8] Nicholas II refused to work with the "Progressive Bloc". On the contrary, the war seemed to have offered the government an opportunity to reduce the Duma from a legislative to a consultative body. For the outbreak of hostilities had in fact enhanced the official powers of the Emperor: the normal course of work in the legislative chambers was interrupted[9] and, as a contemporary scholar observed, "several wartime finance measures especially the imposition of taxes, were passed by special enactments of the government, without consulting the Duma. At best Duma deputies could use the parliament as a tribune to voice their oppositional criticism of the regime, but they had no power over the military budget, war aims or the conduct of the war."[10]

[6] Boris I. Kolonitskii: Politicheskie funktsii anglofobii v gody Pervoj mirovoj voiny. In: N. N. Smirnov (ed.): Rossija I Pervaja mirovaja voina. Materialy mezhdunarodnogo nauchnogo kollokviuma. St. Petersburg 1979, pp. 271–287. Anti-English sentiments had a tradition in Russian politics.

[7] Norman Stone describes the Constitutional Democratic Party as "self-confessedly Republican". Norman Stone: The Eastern Front, 1914–1917. London 1975, p. 194. However during the February Revolution Pavel Milyukov defended the principle of monarchy even at the time when more conservative politicians had ceased to do so.

[8] On the "Progressive Bloc" see: Valentin S. Diakin: Russkaja burzhuazija i tsarism v gody Pervoj mirovoj voiny. 1914–1917. Leningrad 1967; William G. Rosenberg: Liberals in the Russian Revolution, 1917–1921. Princeton 1974; Evgenii D. Chermenskii: IV-aia Gosudarsvennaia duma is sverzhenie tsarizma v Rossii. Moscow 1976; Melissa K. Stockdale: Pavel Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880–1918. Ithaca 1996.

[9] Gronsky: War (see note 3), pp. 119f.

[10] Mark von Hagen: The First World War, 1914–1918. In: Ronald G. Suny (ed.): The Cambridge History of Russia. Vol. 3: The Twentieth Century. Cambridge 2006, pp. 94–113, here: p. 98.

In reality, however, the course of the war witnessed an increase in the political role of State Duma. Liberal and conservative deputies participated in various patriotic mobilisation projects (including industrial mobilisation), and they created a number of committees that allowed them to act when the Duma was in recess. They also developed their contacts within the civilian and military administration; and their influence over public opinion increased in spite of censorship – and sometimes because of it: rumours about speeches in the Duma that were prohibited for publication excited the popular imagination. At the same time some ministers found it useful to exploit their contacts within the Duma. The foreign minister Sazonov, for example, could cite the "will of public opinion" when pressing Russia's war aims on the Allies; and he quoted discussions in Duma concerning the issue of the Straits.[11]

The socialist parties had only a small representation in the State Duma (thanks to the electoral law), most of the left-wing newspapers were closed during the war, and many activists were arrested and exiled. Initially, the public knew little about the fierce discussions among small groups of émigrés and exiles, underground activists and radical intelligentsia, but in the course of the war, and especially after the fall of monarchy, the role and influence of the socialists was to increase dramatically. Although different nationalities of the Russian Empire had their own Socialist parties or (and) their special groups within all-Russian Socialist parties, there were two main socialist parties in Russia, both advocating the establishment of a democratic republic as their first goal. The Russian Socialist-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was a Marxist organisation, while Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR) combined the Russian populist socialist tradition with other radical theories. Both parties were split according to their tactics and basic ideas of how they should be organised; and while the SR rejected elections to the Duma, two fractions of RSDLP – the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks – were represented there.

The World War changed the structure of Russian Socialist movement. Some leaders decided to support the war effort of the Entente, among them George Plekhanov, an émigré celebrity who enjoyed the reputation of the "grandfather of Russian Marxism". Initially he concentrated on supporting "western democracies", rather than the "defence of the Fatherland" but gradually he came to support the Russian government, and even demanded a postponement of all reforms in Russia until the end of the war: "Victory will be beneficial for my country and her democracy." Not surprisingly his articles were approved for publication in Russia.[12] Some prominent SRs émigrés also demanded the postponement of the revolution until the end of the war; centrist groups demanded the subordination

[11] Trubetskoi: Russkaja (see note 2), p. 127.

[12] Samuel H. Baron: Plekhanov. The Father of the Russian Marxism. London 1968, p. 328; Stanislav V. Tutukin: Vojna, mir, revolutsia. Idejnaia bor'ba v rabochem dvizhenii Rossii, 1914–1917 gg. Moscow 1972, pp. 54–57; id.: Georgij V. Plekhanov: Sud'ba russkogo marksista. Moscow 1997, pp. 301–323.

of revolutionary interests to the interests of war, and even socialist activists supported the war effort by participating in the War Industries Committees (while criticising the inefficiency of the government).[13]

A number of groups of SR and Social-Democrats who supported the Russian war effort were termed "Defensists" – (although sometimes they adopted the name themselves). These Socialist defensists hoped that the alliance with the "Western democracies" against "German militarism" would lead to the democratisation of Russia after the war: the "people's war" required reform rather than revolution; and in some of their appeals the "defensists" opposed industrial strikes. Even some members of the Bolshevik group supported the Entente, and like many Russian radical émigrés, several former followers of Lenin volunteered for the French Army.[14] On the other hand, many Socialists, including Social-Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries, in Russia and abroad, decided that they could not support the autocracy in any circumstances. The SR theoretician Victor Chernov, leaders of different Social Democratic fractions like Vladimir Lenin, Lev Martov and Lev Trotsky attended the Zimmerwald Conference (September 1915). There, while some radical Socialists demanded revolution in order to stop the "imperialist war" Lenin denounced their projects as utopian "revolutionary pacifism", urging instead turning the "imperialist war" into a "civil war". Lenin's position was defined as "defeatist": for him, the defeat of Tsarist autocracy by Germany would be the "lesser evil" for the Russian working class. This was too much even for some Bolsheviks to accept: though most of them confronted the "defensists" in countless discussions they found it difficult to convince Russian workers of the necessity of defeat, and some of them took refuge in the slogan of "revolutionary pacifism". Lenin, of course, stood by his "international" position: the proletarians of all countries, not just the Russian workers, must fight their own national governments first;[15] but even such internationalists as Trotsky rejected the "defeatist" approach.[16] The views of local Mensheviks could be even more complicated: Noi Zhordania, the leader of the Georgian Mensheviks recalled that: "I wished defeat on Russia, but I didn't want France to be defeated" (and other leading Georgian Mensheviks were actually pro-German).[17] In the Socialist Revolutionary Party too, the antiwar movement was also divided. As Michael Melancon has shown, Chernov and a number of SR were not initially afraid of a Russian defeat: it would not be a national but the "government's" defeat and would lead to the creation of the "people's government". Polemics continued between "interna-

[13] Tutukin: Vojna (see note 12), pp. 205–225.

[14] Michael Melancon: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Russian Anti-War Movement, 1914–1917. Columbus, OH 1990, pp. 18–189.

[15] Tutukin: Vojna (see note 12), pp. 105–156.

[16] On Martov's anti-war position see: Israel Getzler: Martov. A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat. Cambridge 1967, pp. 139f.; on differences between Trotsky, Lenin and Martov see also: Ian D. Thatcher: Leon Trotsky and World War One. August 1914 to February 1917. London/New York 2000, pp. 38–110.

[17] Noi Zhordania: Moja Zhizn'. Stanford 1968, p. 68.

tionalist" Social Revolutionaries and "defeatist" Social Revolutionaries; some alliances of radical Internationalist SRs and RSDLP groups (including the Bolsheviks) were established underground, and there were even united socialist organisations.[18] Although the Tsarist police confronted even "patriotic" Socialists, some of whom were arrested and exiled, it was the anti-war Socialists who were hardest hit, their newspapers being closed, and even Bolshevik members of the State Duma arrested and exiled to Siberia.

Patriotic Culture and Anti-German Propaganda

While the political decision-makers and the government embarked on the patriotic mobilisation of society, others – writers, publishers, theatre and film directors – also threw themselves into the process: initially the war was a good brand that sold itself. In his magisterial study of Russian "patriotic culture" as exemplified in posters, postcards, theatre performances, cinema films, songs, and poems Hubertus Jahn concluded that the Russian patriotic culture was very efficient in creating negative images of the enemy: favourite targets such as the German soldier and the Kaiser proved to be effective instruments for the negative integration of Russian society. Patriotic symbols for positive integration, by contrast, were according to Jahn a more difficult proposition: the Emperor himself failed to provide such a symbol despite of all the efforts of monarchist propaganda, with fateful consequences for Russian patriotic mobilisation, and to some extent, for the eventual revolutionary crisis.[19]

It might be argued, however, that there were some positive images of social integration but that these proved problematic, if not actually dangerous, for the regime; just as the more successful negative propaganda images of the enemy also created problems for authorities. Wilhelm II, for example, was for Russian propagandists the very personification of the enemy; but he appeared in different "incarnations", some of which backfired: while he was depicted as a head of a state that had prepared for war "for forty years", some peasants would say after defeats of the Russian Army: "The German tsar is clever: he's prepared for the war for 40 years, he ordered to design new artillery guns and to produce more munitions. And what did our fool do? He'd just sold vodka" (an allusion to the unpopular state monopoly of vodka sales). Thus, even anti-German propaganda could give rise to jokes at the expense of the Russian Emperor – not so much because the peasants were unpatriotic or anti-monarchist, but because in the cir-

[18] On Chernov's and SRs position see: Melancon: Socialist Revolutionaries (see note 14), pp. 23f., p. 31, pp. 35f.; on cooperation between the Bolsheviks and other Internationalist groups see: Tutukin: Vojna (see note 12), pp. 226–243; on the split within different Socialist groups in emigration and in the Russian capital see also: Robert B. McKean: St. Petersburg between the Revolutions. Workers and Revolutionaries, June 1907–February 1917. New Haven/London 1990, pp. 351–355.
[19] Hubertus F. Jahn: Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I. Ithaca/London 1995, pp. 172–174.

cumstances, they just did not see Nicholas II as a good Russian monarch, as a "real Tsar".[20]

Certainly, such features of patriotic mobilisation as spy mania and Germanophobia were peculiarly dangerous for the regime because of the family connections of the Romanovs and the German origin of Empress herself. Of course, other royal dynasties with relatives in belligerent countries, could also find themselves in difficulties; but in Russia there were a number of political activists out to exploit such "patriotic" propaganda for their own radical purposes, and a veritable system of negative images of the imperial family had been an component of the revolutionary subculture for many decades. These revolutionaries were quick to seize on the most provocative inventions of "patriotic" propaganda, tapping in to what was a deep tradition of Germanophobia within Russian culture to discredit their political opponents, the imperial family included. As Russian ethnic Germans and Baltic Germans were overrepresented in the bureaucratic, military and business elites, a whole variety of land and labour conflicts, business rivalries and competition for career promotion could be fought out within the context of military patriotic propaganda, which supplied protesters with "legitimate" rhetoric devices. Russia was not the only country that experienced problems of that sort; but in Russia there were perhaps proportionately more political activists ready to use, politicise and radicalise such conflicts. Last but not least, there was a highly elaborate culture of militancy in the political subcultures of both Left and Right; and even the old Moscow–St. Petersburg rivalry and the competition between the business elites of the two capitals were influenced by phobias of that sort, with one famous Moscow industrialist lashing out against "the deadening atmosphere and German influence of St. Petersburg".[21]

The famous anti-German riot in Moscow (May 1915) is often underestimated by scholars of the Russian revolution. When disastrous news from the front coincided with social conflicts and rumours of German sabotage, labour unrest broke out, the property of Germans (and some other foreigners who were treated as "the Germans") was looted or destroyed, and some people were even killed by the mob. The strikers used not only the pretext of patriotic mobilisation to foment the unrest but the traditions of anti-Jewish pogroms.[22] National flags and portraits of the Tsar, Orthodox icons and the Russian anthem were also employed to legitimise the riot, and indeed the police were initially hesitant to confront this "patriotic manifestation". In the end, however, the troops were ordered to fire, there were clashes between the Moscow mob and army units, some barricades were erected, and both sides suffered losses.[23] The reaction of Moscow Socialists

[20] On judicial cases of that sort see: Kolonitskii: "Tragicheskaja erotica" (see note 4).

[21] Alfred J. Rieber: Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia. Chapell Hill 1982, p. 377.

[22] On the cultural code of pogroms see: John D. Klier/Shlomo Lambroza (eds.): Pogroms. Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History. Cambridge 1992.

[23] Lohr: Nationalizing (see note 5), pp. 31–54; Yuri I. Kirianov: Sotsialno-politicheskii protest rabochih Rossii v gody Pervoj mirovoj voiny (iul' 1914–fevral' 1917 gg.). Moscow 2005, pp. 54–57.

to these events is instructive. Whereas some radical Internationalists confronted the chauvinist mood of the mob, other radicals were ready to welcome any confrontation with the government and saw the riot as an initial stage of the revolution. Be that as it may, the Moscow riots demonstrated how dangerous patriotic mobilisation could be for the regime. The censors were instructed to clamp down on the anti-German and anti-Austrian fervour of the press, and authorities even forbade some patriotic demonstrations;[24] but orders of this sort only intensified anti-German suspicions and fed the rumours of treason in high places. Certainly, they did little to alleviate the situation. Perhaps the most dangerous omen was the mutiny of the *Gangut* (one of the dreadnoughts of the Baltic fleet) in 1915. Although Soviet historians have depicted this as a revolutionary uprising inspired by Bolshevik agitation it was in reality a spontaneous revolt against "the German barons" (Baltic German officers who were overrepresented in the Navy, especially in the Baltic fleet), and it was significant that in framing their protest the mutinous sailors used the language of patriotic propaganda.[25]

Leadership Conflicts: Emperor versus Grand Duke

The politics of patriotic unification around "positive symbols" gave rise to a variety of cults based on Russian heroes and warlords. The popularity of the Emperor had increased at the beginning of the war but it was soon rivalled by other patriotic cults. His uncle, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, Commander in Chief of the Russian Armies (a position originally designed for the Emperor himself) enjoyed enormous power, with even some civilian authorities reporting to him. Indeed, some scholars even talk of a "martial law regime".[26] At any rate, this created a very complicated situation from both political and administrative points of view: the term "dual power" was not just a post-revolutionary phenomenon.[27]

The Grand Duke did not owe his importance solely to the authority invested in him by law but also to his own remarkable charisma. A great symbolic actor, he revelled in the attention of the Russian press, and he drew his support from a variety of sources. At the beginning of the war Nicholas II himself supported the commander – his popularity was crucial for patriotic mobilisation – showering new promotions and decorations on the Grand Duke, whose popularity was confirmed by the market (posters and postcards with his images were in demand) and by folklore – he was the hero of a number of popular tales and legends, and many

[24] Kolonitskii: "Tragicheskaja erotica" (see note 4), pp. 558f.
[25] Denis A. Bazhanov: Schit Petrograda. Sluzhebnye budni baltiiskih dreodnoutov v 1914–1917 gg. St. Petersburg 2007, p. 96.
[26] Von Hagen: First World War (see note 10), pp. 97f.
[27] On the crisis of central administration see: Mikhail F. Florinskii: Krizis gosudarstvennogo upravlenia v Rossii v gody Pervoj mirovoj voiny. Sovet ministrov v 1914–1917 gg. Leningrad 1988.

people sincerely (but wrongly) credited him with heroic deeds on the battlefield. Indeed, as the war progressed the cult of the Commander came to overshadow that of Nicholas II, with the successes of the Russian Army – real and imaginary – being attributed to the Grand Duke alone, while any defeats, mistakes and shortcomings were blamed on the imperial couple, generals with German names and unpopular ministers. People compared the "efficient", "strong" and "patriotic" Commander to the "weak" and "foolish" Emperor who was "manipulated" by his German wife and Rasputin. (To some extent these images were confirmed by German front line propaganda addressed to the Russian soldiers, which compared the "peaceful" Emperor to the cruel warmongering Commander.)[28] Of course, the cult of a strong commander could be problematic for other monarchs too (the Hindenburg cult is one example); but in Russia it was particularly dangerous for the regime, as the commander was a relative of the Emperor – who was not unaware of the fact that people were already beginning to talk about "Nicholas III".[29] Indeed, it was the fact that the Grand Duke was becoming the personification of patriotic mobilisation (rather than his indifferent military record) that lay behind Nicholas II's decision to dismiss him in August 1915 – admittedly after the army had suffered a terrible run of defeats. However, critics of the regime only saw in this a further confirmation of their suspicions; while the Emperor's decision to take personal command of the army himself was strongly criticised by his ministers and opposition, by memoir writers and historians. Although the Emperor's objectives were rational enough – to unite the government, combat the dangerous popularity of the Grand Duke, and perhaps stem the tide of defeats – the move perhaps only made things worse: as the historian Nicholas Riasanovsky put it, "in spite of the protests of ten of his twelve ministers, the sovereign unwisely took personal command of the armed forces [...] leaving Alexandra and Rasputin in effective control in the capital. Thus a narrow-minded, reactionary, hysterical woman and an ignorant, weird peasant [...] had the destinies of an empire in their hands."[30]

Riasanovsky, like many critics at the time and since, overestimated the role of the Empress and Rasputin; and although their political importance certainly increased after August 1915 as their unpredictable interventions led to a veritable "ministerial leapfrog" that sapped the morale of the government, their "real" impact is still a matter for debate.[31] At the time, however, many people, from illiter-

[28] On propaganda leaflets on the Russian front see: Alexander B. Astashov (ed.): Propaganda na Russkom fronte v gody Pervoj mirovoj voiny. Moscow 2012.

[29] Joseph T. Fuhrmann (ed.): The Complete Wartime Correspondence of Tsar Nicholas II and the Empress Alexandra (April 1914–March 1917). Westport, CT/London 1999, p. 239.

[30] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky: A History of Russia. New York/Oxford [4]1984, p. 421.

[31] It is impossible to deny Rasputin's interference in nominations within the Russian Orthodox Church, which insulted both clergy and laymen, and alienated them from the regime. The "Church revolution" was an integral part of the Russian revolution. Pavel Rogozny: Tserkovnaja revolutsia. Vysshee duchovenstvo Rossijskoj Tserkvi v bor'be za vlast' v eparciah posle Fevral'skoj revolutsii. St. Petersburg 2008.

ate peasant soldiers to officers of the General Staff and the political elite were convinced that Rasputin had become the real ruler of the empire; and given the political situation in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Russia such rumours could often count for more than actual facts in creating a new political reality. From here, it was no great leap to attributing Russia's defeats and shortcomings to treason in high places; and a number of conspiracy theories were intertwined. For the revolutionaries the monarchy itself was an institutionalised conspiracy against the people (as was proved by all problems of the war); just as the war itself was a global conspiracy of monarchs (ruling classes) against nations (working classes). Liberals and conservatives had their own conspiracy theories about the war, in which German and Jewish espionage and sabotage often figured as "explanations" of all Russia's problems.[32] Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich and his entourage did a lot to foster such a *mentalité* in their efforts to find scapegoats for Russian defeats and provoke new waves of patriotic enthusiasm by xenophobic accusations – all of which only furthered the multiplication of conspiracy theories, one benefiting from another.

Thoughts of Revolution

In the course of the war a number of political groups – Socialist, Liberal and even Conservative – became attracted to the idea of revolution. Some liberal politicians made contact with Generals, including General Alexeev, the Tsar's Chief of Staff; others discussed plans for a coup d'état; and conspiracies that were in turn founded on conspiracy theories all added fuel to the revolutionary crisis. To some Socialist opponents of the war the idea of revolution came quite naturally, although their future plans varied widely. While most Internationalists wanted a revolution that would stop the war, Lenin and his followers wanted to turn the "imperialist" war into a "civil" war; and although they were a minority among underground Socialist groups, they, like other revolutionary groups in Russia (SR, Finnish, Ukrainian, and Georgian national movements and Moslems) and the Entente countries – enjoyed the support and sponsorship of the German government.[33] The role of "German money" in provoking the Russian Revolution should be

[32] Korneliy F. Shatsillo: Delo Polkovnika Myasoedova. In: Voprosy Istorii 4 (1967), pp. 103–116; William C. Fuller, Jr.: Foe Within. Fantasies of Treason and the End of Imperial Russia. Ithaca 2006.

[33] Zbynek A. B. Zeman (ed.): Germany and the Revolution in Russia 1915–1918. Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry. London 1958; Zbynek Zeman/Winfried B. Scharlau: Merchant of Revolution. Alexander Helphand, 1867–1924. London/New York 1965; Seppo Zetterberg: Die Liga der Fremdvölker Russlands 1916–1918. Helsinki 1978; Gennadij L. Sobolev: Taina "nemetskogo zolota". St. Petersburg 2002; id.: Tainyi sojuznik. Russkaja revolutsija I Germania. St. Petersburg 2009. On Turkish efforts in Georgia, Ukraine and Russian Muslim territories see: Michael A. Reynolds: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918. Cambridge 2011, pp. 129–134.

considered in the general context of the war. Russia was the scene of a great propaganda battle, in which all the Great Powers participated both before and after 1917. At the same time, a number of revolutionary groups were getting increasing support from Russian sources, thanks to the cooperation between some revolutionary Socialists and radicalised Liberals. Not that any of this financial support, some of which bore no fruit at all, really determined the course of the internal crisis in Russia.

While moderate Socialists initially hoped that Russia's alliance with French and British "democracies" against "German imperialism" might help to create a revolutionary situation after the war, they soon turned to the idea of a revolution during the war to ensure the "victory of democracy". For them, the chief charge against the Tsarist government was that it was not efficient enough to ensure military success, a charge that seemed to be confirmed by a host of rumours. In 1915 even Plekhanov declared that the slogan of "national defence" was turning into one of "merciless struggle" against the autocracy. Some defensist Social Revolutionaries also turned towards revolution: "The struggle for freedom is in the interests of defence. Defence is a way to freedom. Revolution in the name of defence. Defence as a way to revolution." Although Lenin in emigration denounced such talk as "revolutionary chauvinism"[34] some Bolsheviks in Russia established tactical alliances with other socialist groups.

There was a parallel movement in the same direction on the part of the Russian liberals. Although they were of course interested only in reforms, and were at first prepared to postpone even those until victory, they soon began to demand reforms in order to achieve victory. As for revolution, they were desperately anxious to prevent it, as their own experience in 1905–1907 had taught them that they could not control mass movements. However, when they came to discuss ways of channelling the revolutionary activity of the masses they considered the option of a revolution from above to prevent a Russian defeat. Even some Conservatives toyed with the idea of a "palace revolution" to force the Tsar to abdicate and to eliminate "German influence in the country". Neither Liberals nor Conservatives, however, wanted more than a limited and controlled revolution of elites, a kind of a military coup to head off a revolution "from below" – although some of them took the revolutionary movement into account and planned if possible to utilise it. Some politicians speculated about possible actions involving the General Staff and Imperial Guards officers; some liberals established contacts with moderate Socialists, others with pragmatic bureaucrats; while masonic ties were used by radical intelligentsia to establish contacts between different groups of Socialists and liberals.[35] True, given the insurmountable differences between and within socialist, liberal and conservative groups, no united revolutionary front ever actually materialised; but the success of the February Revolution was a result of the participation of all those groups; just as the proliferation of rumours about treason in

[34] Tutukin: Vojna (see note 12), pp. 189–205.
[35] Hasegawa: February Revolution (see note 4), pp. 172–197.

high places was essential in uniting those disparate political groups in their opposition to the regime.

The political impact of rumours – the word is often found in the sources and research literature – was indeed far-reaching. Millions of soldiers believed that the Empress was a German spy and that the Emperor himself was planning to sign a separate peace. These "facts" were never proven, but information of this sort, "confirmed" at the time by officers of the General Staff and Imperial Guards, and retailed by foreign diplomats and prominent intellectuals of different varieties, including conservative intellectuals, had a huge political impact. For example, when the unpopular (and German-sounding) bureaucrat Boris Stuermer replaced Sazonov as Foreign Minister in July 1916 it was viewed as a step towards a separate peace, and high-ranking officials within his Ministry created an unofficial group to prevent any actions incompatible with Russia's war aims and international agreements (and which was to continue its activity after the February Revolution).[36] In more general terms, the proliferation of rumours served to sap the loyalty of those forces that might normally have been expected to spring to the defence of the regime. In February 1917 there were certainly staunch Russian monarchists (who may well have long had their doubts about Nicholas II's ability to govern the empire) who now decided that they simply could not support him, even though they had no desire to see the monarchy fall. Similarly, some officers of the Imperial Guard and General Staff refused to participate in any coup d'état, but they refrained from alerting the authorities to such subversive proposals; and the authorities – and even some members of the imperial family – were involved in the rumours and conspiracies. The political de-mobilisation of the monarchists was an important factor in the February Revolution.

Revolution: War or Peace

The first political struggle after the February Revolution was that over its interpretation. The conservatives stressed its patriotic and anti-German character: "The end of German dominance"; "Victory over the German government"; "We have beaten the Germans here, we will now beat them in the field". (In fact, a number of army and naval officers with foreign names had been special targets for revolutionary sailors and soldiers, and many of them were arrested, purged or even killed.)[37] Allied diplomats and army officers were enthusiastically welcomed

[36] Georgy Nikolaevich Mikhailovsky: Zapiski. Iz istorii rossijskogo vneshnepoliticheskogo vedomstva, 1914–1920, vol. 1. Moscow 1993, p. 247, p. 300. Actually Stuermer authorised some contacts with German representatives: Diakin: Russkaja burzhuazija (see note 8), pp. 279f.

[37] On Russian nationalism and xenophobia in the revolution see: Boris Kolonitskii: The "Russian Idea" and the Ideology of the February Revolution. In: Teruyuki Hara/Kimitaka Matsuzato (eds.): Empire and Society. New Approaches to Russian History. Sapporo 1997, pp. 41–71. Some Russian Allies also viewed the Revolution as a blow to Germany; Hew Strachan: The First World War. London 2003, p. 242.

by revolutionary crowds.[38] The Provisional Government too, was composed mostly of liberals who wanted to continue the war "until complete victory" and accepted the war aims of the Tsarist government. On the other hand, the new foreign minister and ambitious leader of CD, Pavel Milyukov, was given the sarcastic sobriquet of "Dardanelski" by his critics on the Left. For the Provisional Government held no monopoly of power in the capital, being forced to share it with the Petrograd Soviet (Council) of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies composed of a variety of socialists (with the Bolsheviks initially a small minority group). There, the majority incined neither to Lenin nor to the Socialist "patriots", but to the "Revolutionary 'defensism'" of the moderate "Zimmerwald Socialists" (social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries who had accepted the anti-war declarations of the Zimmerwald conference).[39] This still meant that, for them, fighting to defend the "most democratic country of the world" (in contrast to "Tsarist Russia") was acceptable and even necessary. At the same time they labelled the war itself as "imperialist", and invited all European Socialists to organise an international conference to devise a common programme of "democratic peace" and force all governments to follow it. On the 14/27 March the Soviet adopted a special Manifesto ("An Appeal to All the Peoples of the World") demanding peace "without annexations and indemnities".

This was not the only dividing line between the Soviet and the Provisional Government. There was the question of control over the army. When the Soviet issued "Order Number One", creating a system of committees elected by soldiers, NCOs and (sometimes) officers, in the army and navy, the High Command and the Government protested (though they admitted that some such committees were needed to restore calm). Finally an unsatisfactory compromise was reached (preserving the system of committees but leaving their rights only loosely defined) that proved a constant source of conflicts between committees and commanders, officers and men.[40] The combination of the "democratisation" of the army, logistical problems (which increased in the course of revolution) and rumours about land reform provoked huge problems and gravely undermined discipline among soldiers and sailors. In May, when the Government was reorganised after Socialist leaders agreed to enter a coalition (with Victor Chernov, the participant of the Zimmerwald Conference, as Minister of Agriculture) the policy of "democratic peace" "without annexations and indemnities" became the official policy of the government and Russia's pre-revolutionary war aims were abandoned. At that time it was the only way to mobilise public opinion for the war effort.

[38] Harvey Pitcher: Witnesses of the Russian Revolution. London 1994, pp. 43–45.
[39] On "revolutionary defencism" see: Ziva Galili: The Menshevik Leaders in the Russian Revolution. Social Realities and Political Strategies. Princeton 1989.
[40] On Order Number one and its implementation see: Alan K. Wildman: The End of the Russian Imperial Army. Vol. 1: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt. March–April 1917. Princeton, NJ 1987, pp. 182–201.

Kerensky and the Army

Alexander Kerensky, the new minister of War and Navy, was a strong man within the Provisional Government. Elected to the State Duma as a member of Labour Group, a small and moderate populist organisation, he had combined his career as a lawyer and lawmaker with illegal activity, exploiting his deputy's immunity in order to establish contacts between different Social Revolutionary groups.[41] After the outbreak of war the Labour Group had expressed its solidarity with the army, but abstained (like the Social Democratic fractions) during the vote on the war budget. Kerensky's own attitudes towards the war were flexible – almost eclectic. His rhetoric was influenced by Zimmerwald conference, but he tailored his pronouncements to suit his audience; and while he generally did his best to create a united front against the regime, he could also deliver patriotic speeches when necessary.[42] Enjoying increasing popularity because of his oratorical skills, appointed Minister of Justice after the February Revolution, and at the same time a vice-chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviet, he was the only person that in a position of authority in both the institutions that constituted the dual power. When in May Kerensky became Minister of War and Navy, the High Command and the generals made haste to express their enthusiasm; for while these displays were insincere (a young radical lawyer speaking the language of the Zimmerwald conference was hardly to their taste), they recognised that they needed Kerensky to inspire the troops and restore discipline in the army in preparation for the next offensive.[43] They had miscalculated: Kerensky never promised to restore the old discipline. On the contrary, in pursuit of the revolutionary project – idealistic and unrealistic in the long run – of "democratizing the army",[44] he proclaimed a "new iron discipline" of the "citizen-soldier", "the discipline of conscious duty", and "the discipline of free citizens" – in contrast to the "slave discipline" of the old army. He went on to define the rights of committees and consolidate the system of government commissars in the armies. This was followed by a new purge of the command, in which politicised officers and generals were promoted. Despite all Kerensky's efforts, however, and the efforts of commissars and committee members to raise the morale of the troops, the July offensive was a disaster: 48 battalions refused to go into battle, the offensive led to about 150,000 losses and even more desertions. It was the end of the Russian Imperial Army.[45]

[41] Richard Abraham: Alexander Kerensky. The First Love of the Revolution. New York/London 1987, pp. 53–145.
[42] Ibid., pp. 98–100.
[43] Alan K. Wildman: The End of the Russian Imperial Army. Vol. 2: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace. Princeton, NJ 1987, pp. 22–37.
[44] Boris Kolonitskii: "Democracy" in the Political Consciousness of the February Revolution. In: SR 57 (1998) 1, pp. 95–106.
[45] Wildman: End (see note 43), pp. 3–111; Stephen A. Smith: The Revolutions of 1917–1918. In: Suny (ed.): Cambridge History (see note 10), pp. 114–139, here: p. 125. According to other research the Russian Army lost 132,500 men; see: Alexander P. Zhilin: Poslednee nastuplenie. Iiun' 1917 goda. Moscow 1983, p. 76.

Kerensky's July Offensive and the Army

What motivated the key decision-makers to send the army into an offensive in such shape? Some of the political figures involved – and later Soviet historians – cited the pressure applied by Russia's Allies. The offensive was part of the Allied strategy agreed for 1917, and had only been postponed from May to July owing to the Revolution's impact on the Russian Army. Certainly, loyalty to the Allies was an important theme of Kerensky's rhetoric; but in his speeches in 1917 and in his memoirs Kerensky also stressed another motive: the offensive was the only way to establish discipline within the Russian Army which had been gravely undermined by fraternisation. Indeed, fraternisation was a central military and political issue of the Russian Revolution, and was to have serious impact on Russia's war aims. While fraternisation had generally been stamped out on the Western front, on the Eastern front religious holidays (especially Easter) as occasions for peaceful contacts with the enemy had almost become a tradition. At Easter 1916, for example, dozens of Russian regiments fraternised with the enemy, and Nicholas II himself had had to issue a special order forbidding all such practices. Sometimes fraternisation was semi-official, with officers participating and military bands playing. True, such fraternisation, although it was a clear sign of decline of discipline in general, was not always associated with anti-war sentiments and some officers and even generals (including General A. A. Denikin, future leader of the Whites) treated it as a kind of military tradition.[46]

Fraternisation after the Revolution was inevitable, and the large-scale fraternisation at Easter 1917 was quite predictable. Germany and her Allies, for their part, decided to take advantage of it to further their own war aims: special propaganda units were trained, leaflets and newspapers printed in Russian, and loads of gifts prepared (including stores of liquor). Initially this was a major success for the German command: on the one hand, there were real ceasefires lasting for weeks in several parts of the front, which enabled the Germans to transfer units to the Western front; on the other, serious conflicts broke out within the Russian Army, especially between the infantry and artillery units (when the command tried to use artillery fire to stop fraternisation). According to Russian émigré historians, out of 220 Russian infantry divisions 165 participated in fraternisation, in the course of which at least 38 promised not to attack Austrian and German units. German military intelligence estimated that out of 214 Russian divisions on the front, no fewer than 107 had been contacted by Austrian and German propaganda and intelligence officers.[47]

[46] Anton I. Denikin: Ocherki russkoj smuty. Krushenie vlasti I armii. Fevral'–sentiabr' 1917 g. Moscow 1991, p. 329; see also: Sergey N. Bazanov: Phenomen bratanija v Pervuju mirovuju voinu. In: Elena S. Sinjavskaja (ed.): Vojenno-istoricheskaja antropologija. Ezhegodnik. Moscow 2002, pp. 287–301.

[47] Anton A. A. Kersnovsky: Istoria russkoj armii. Vol. 4: 1915–1917 gg. Moscow 1994, p. 270; Mikhail S. Frenkin: Russkaja armiia I revolutsiia 1917–1918. Munich 1978, p. 173.

Russian Socialists were divided in their attitudes towards fraternisation. Some influential Soviets and committees supported it and published revolutionary counter-propaganda in German and Turkish. Even some Russian Army officers viewed fraternisation as a good chance to undermine the morale of the enemy (which was sometimes the case, especially as regards Austrian units). One prominent officer of the Russian General Staff even considered the idea of organised "counter-fraternisation", and his article was published in the War Ministry newspaper in preparation for the Russian offensive.[48] However, such views were exceptional. The army command, the conservative and liberal press, and even some socialist newspapers demanded an end to fraternisation. At the other end of the spectrum, the Bolsheviks and some other Internationalists continued their fraternisation propaganda, and they enjoyed the support of non-party activists in some regimental and even divisional committees. The issue was a major challenge for the "revolutionary defensists", but in the end the Petrograd Soviet and the influential military committees rejected fraternisation. As for the government, it opted for an offensive as the only possible means to stop fraternisation and increase the morale of the Russian Army; and the July offensive was launched against a background of orders and speeches by Kerensky and patriotic propaganda of all kinds preaching not only solidarity with the Allies but an end to fraternisation.

Meanwhile, the logic of "revolutionary defensism's" position demanded a special rationalisation of the offensive. There was a strong revolutionary message within militant offensive propaganda: democratic Russia was offering generous terms for a democratic peace, but these had been spurned by the enemy, and even by Russia's Allies, because Russia's slogans were not backed up by the real strength of her armies. Revolutionary soldiers therefore must enforce the ideas of democratic peace on Europe. The slogan was coined "the peace offensive", an offensive that would bring about a democratic peace. Of course, all this had strong international-revolutionary, even utopian connotations: Kerensky himself talked about "bringing new freedom to the heart of Europe with our bayonets", military propaganda promised revolutions among the Central Powers as a result of the offensive, and some enthusiastic Russian soldiers even had a vision of the red flag over the German Reichstag.[49] As one soldier declared: "We must do battle not only for the Russian Revolution, but for the triumph of truth in the whole world, for a third International, for our Fatherland."[50] The language of revolutionary interventionism was elaborated during this propaganda campaign. The Russian offensive was advertised as the best way to increase the influence of German Social-Democrats, and Karl Liebknecht was depicted as an ally of the Russian revolutionary Army. The image of the army attacking the enemy with red banners was central for Kerensky's rhetoric, and he promoted a plan for decorating the best combat units with

[48] Georgij Klerzhe: Kontr-bratanie kak sredstvo bor'by. In: Russkij invalid. 1917. 24 maja.
[49] From the very beginning of the Russian revolution different rumors about revolution in Germany were circulating and enthusiastically welcomed.
[50] Wildman: End (see note 43), p. 32.

Red Revolutionary banners (a plan implemented by the Bolsheviks in the course of the Civil War). While socialist culture generally provided the language and symbolism for antiwar protest, in certain cases – of which the Russian July offensive was a good example – that same culture could be used to mobilise a country for war.[51]

Kerensky also had a political motive for launching the offensive. He was hoping to unite an eclectic coalition, ranging from radical Socialists, Zimmerwaldists, Russian patriots and committee members, to business elites and the younger generation of generals, behind the idea of revolutionary offensive against "German imperialism" and "German autocracy". Even some conservative and liberal politicians, as well as generals were attracted to the idea in the hope that the offensive could revive the patriotic mood and lead to a restoration of Russia's pre-revolutionary war aims.

These hopes, of course, like their hopes of a return to the old discipline in the army, collapsed with the failure of the offensive. But even that failure was turned to his advantage by Kerensky who was clever enough to prepare public opinion for a "stab in the back" conspiracy theory even before the offensive started; and the concept was easy enough to deploy after the abortive Bolshevik copy of the July Days (even though it had been clear at the end of June that the offensive on the Southern-Western front had ground to a halt). The upshot was a double, if only temporary, triumph for Kerensky, with the establishment of a new, "revolutionary" system of administration in the army and the creation of the cult of the revolutionary and military leader (Kerensky). Through the first, tens of thousands of ambitious and militant men got a sense of real power and thought of themselves as heroes of the offensive. They had managed to persuade regiments and divisions to attack with red banners in their hands, they had lost their comrades in the first lines of attackers; they had confronted Bolshevik agitators and deserter snipers, and they were set to become the new political class of revolutionary Russia. As for the second, a whole host of supporters of the offensive – conservatives, liberals and most of all socialists – now did their best to increase the authority of Kerensky (regardless of their own personal attitudes towards him) and the "new political class" in the army too was instrumental in creating and ministering to the cult of "leader of the revolutionary army" (that was later to have such an impact on Soviet political culture).[52]

Conclusion: The Birth of a New Culture in Russia

Russian literature was famous for its creative and precise recording of new social and cultural trends. However, unlike other national literatures of the twentieth

[51] John Horne: Public Opinion and Politics. In: id. (ed.): A Companion to World War I. Oxford 2010, pp. 279–294, p. 286.

[52] On the cult of Kerensky see: Boris I. Kolonitskii: Kerensky. In: Edward Acton/Vladimir Iu. Cherniaev/William G. Rosenberg: Critical Companion to the Russian revolution, 1914–1921. Bloomington/Indianapolis 1997, pp. 138–149.

century it failed to record a whole "lost generation". One possible explanation is that during the revolutionary period young, ambitious Russian veterans found themselves in different committees and political organisations, and later, during the Civil War, in opposing armies. Their war experiences shaped their specific patriotic identities and militarised them, while patriotic indignation fuelled by rumours and military propaganda alienated them from the government and the imperial family. Speeches in the Duma confirmed their suspicions, which intensified after the dismissal of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. Their specific military patriotism became less and less based on loyalty to the Emperor. Yet while many sections of society were disillusioned with national politics before the revolution, it was only after the fall of the monarchy and the dramatic radicalisation of politics that ensued that new elements such as ambitious ensigns and NCOs really came into their own. Many of them got their first real taste of power when they were elected to committees (like the future Soviet marshals – Budenny, Zhukov, Rokossovsky, and Konev); "revolutionary defensism" offered them an acceptable identity – patriotic and revolutionary at the same time; the creative and charismatic Kerensky helped them to find their new style, new language, while they helped in turn to create his cult of the leader. The June offensive legitimised these social, cultural and political processes. Kornilov challenged their power and was defeated. Kerensky and his followers were also defeated in the end; but their role in creating a new political culture was crucial. Different elements of that new culture would later be taken up by both the Bolsheviks and their opponents, while conflicts within that "class" made the Civil War inevitable.

Dušan T. Bataković

Serbian War Aims and Military Strategy, 1914–1918

The Austro-Hungarian declaration of war of 28 June 1914 found both the Serbian government and the General Staff completely unprepared for a major military conflict. In that summer, after spectacular military successes in the Balkan wars (1912–1913), Serbia was still recovering from the enormous financial effort and considerable losses in manpower and military equipment. Although Serbia was on the way to becoming a regional political hub with considerable prestige among South Slavs of Austria-Hungary, her political and military leaders had no plans for armed confrontations in the foreseeable future: tens of thousands of soldiers wounded in the Balkan Wars were still recovering in hospitals and there were shortages of war materiel. After all exports had ceased and the procurement of war materiel doubled expenditure on imports, state revenues had dropped sharply. The total cost of the Balkan Wars, was about one billion francs.[1]

Moreover, Serbia needed a substantial period of peace and stability, not only for restoring the agricultural production drained by military campaigns, but also for fully integrating the newly-acquired territories in the south: Old Serbia and Macedonia. Serbia had almost doubled her territory – by an additional 39,000 km^2, containing some 1,290,000 inhabitants, including often hostile Albanian and Bulgarian minorities. The New Territories were labouring under an Ottoman legacy of a backward feudal-type economy and lacked the rule of law and political liberties.[2]

After peace had been restored by the Conference of Ambassadors in London and the Treaty of Bucharest of 10 August 1913, Serbia's immediate concern was to repel frequent Albanian armed incursions from Albania into Kosovo and Bulgarian *comitadji*s into eastern Macedonia. Apart from the impending border delimitation with Albania, the only (secret) plans on the table in early 1914 were for the merging of two Serb kingdoms, Serbia and Montenegro, into a real union with common military, customs and diplomatic structures.[3] As for any eventual war planning, the delicate international situation, together with the sharpening internal conflict between military pressure groups and the democratically elected gov-

[1] Cf. more in: Andrej Mitrović: Serbia's Great War 1914–1918. London 2007, pp. 53–63; Frederic Le Moal: La Serbie du martyre à la victoire. 1914–1918. Saint Cloud 2008, pp. 20–32. On Balkan Wars: Henry Barby: Les victoires serbes. Paris 1913, pp. 55–84, pp. 119–149.

[2] Michael Boro Petrovich: History of Modern Serbia 1804–1908, vol. 2. New York/London 1976, pp. 603 f.

[3] Dušan T. Bataković: The Kosovo Chronicles. Belgrade 1992, pp. 173–176.

ernment were decidedly limiting factors on any Serbian activity. The internal strife, mounting since the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 and the humiliating recognition of this act by Belgrade in March 1909, had led to the founding of "National Defence", an anti-Habsburg organisation to defend the endangered rights of the Bosnian Serbs; but once the initial revolutionary enthusiasm had abated, National Defence had limited its activities mostly to cultural action through a network of confidants. Meanwhile, the pressure of the Young Turks' pan-Ottoman policy on Serbs in Turkey-in-Europe after 1908 had exacerbated national frustrations among Serbian Army officers previously involved in secret *comitadji* action (*četnička akcija*) in Macedonia;[4] and it was against this background that a clandestine pan-Serbian organisation, "Unification or Death" – soon to become notorious as the "Black Hand" – was founded in 1911 in order to further the process of Serbian unification. Consisting mostly of army officers and led by younger conspirators of 1903, this influential military clique was a mixture of uncompromising patriots and fervent nationalists with limited political experience. In terms of foreign policy, national unification was the society's absolute priority.[5] Its unofficial leader, Dragutin T. Dimitrijević Apis, head of the Intelligence Department of the Serbian General Staff, started by setting up an intelligence service of officers stationed along the borders with the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary; and after 1912, drawing on confidants of the National Defence, and boosted by the enthusiasm of the Serbian population living in both neighbouring empires, they developed a rapidly expanding network of agents. Also admitted into the "Black Hand" were Serbian students from Bosnia, such as Vladimir Gaćinović, leader of Young Bosnia, and Yugoslav patriots from Dalmatia.[6] During the Balkan Wars, the "Black Handers" proved to be first-class officers, leading the Serbian Army in its key battles at Kumanovo, Monastir and Bregalnitza; and they enjoyed the protection of the leading Serbian strategist, Field-Marshal Radomir Putnik, architect of Serbia's victories in the Balkan Wars, who held their military skills and ardent patriotism in high regard.[7]

Only a few of the "Black Hand's" leading figures had any political agenda beyond national unification. Its daily *Pijemont* (Piedmont), started in 1911 by a group of Belgrade freemasons (Ljuba Jovanović Čupa, Branko Božović, Bogdan Radenković), had among its contributors Serbian, Croat and Jewish journalists (including Tin Ujević and Moša Pijade) of both pan-Serbian and Yugoslav orientation (as the two were often considered compatible).[8] Apart from tirelessly cam-

[4] Vojislav J. Vučković: Unutrašnje krize u Srbiji i Prvi svetski rat. In: Istorijski časopis 14/15 (1963–65), pp. 173–229.

[5] Čedomir A. Popović: Organizacija "Ujedinjenje ili smrt" ("Crna ruka"). Uzroci i način postanka. In: Nova Evropa 15 (1927) 12, pp. 401f.

[6] Oskar Tartalja: Veleizdajnik. Moje Uspomene. Zagreb/Split 1928, pp. 31–33.

[7] Cf. more in: Milan Ž. Živanović: Pukovnik Apis. Solunski proces hiljadu devetsto sedamnaeste. Prilog za proučavanje političke istorije Srbije od 1903 po 1918 god. Belgrade 1955.

[8] Dnevnik ppuk. Velimira Vemića, Arhiv SANU (Archives of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts), no. 14.434/6; cf. also: Ivan Mužić: Masonstvo u Hrvata. Split 1983, pp. 77–89.

paigning for pan-Serb unification, *Pijemont* offered a variety of mostly rightist political ideas, targeting corruption and discord in Serbia. The post-1903 Serbian democracy was portrayed as an unrestricted democratic chaos with endless political rivalries absorbing most of the nation's energy.[9] The symbol of the prioritisation of party politics over sacred national goals – and hence a main target of *Pijemont*'s attacks – was Nikola P. Pašić, charismatic leader of the Old Radicals. An experienced and shrewd politician, Pašić was in fact a patriot as well as a democrat, but he was never prepared to allow the democracy he had struggled for in the decades before 1903 to fall victim to the influence of the military clique, or to enter into long-term arrangements with them.[10]

Pijemont, by contrast, determined to assert itself as a political movement in the making, denounced both Pašić's government and the opposition (Independent Radicals, Liberals, Progressives, Social Democrats) and sought to make the military the key factor in the country's domestic and foreign policy. During the negotiations for the Balkan alliance with Bulgaria, the "Black Hand" had backed Pašić's cabinet, but a definitive rift opened up between them over territorial concessions to Bulgaria. The "Black Handers" were also at odds with Crown Prince Alexander, who was gathering around himself a rival group of military officers popularly known as the "White Hand". In 1913, the conflict between the government and the "Black Hand" officers, put on hold at the start of the Balkan Wars, re-erupted in full force over the Serbo-Bulgarian dispute over the "contested zone" in Macedonia.

The escalating military-civilian conflict between the "Black Hand" and the Pašić government, became public early in 1914, when the "Priority Decree" by Interior Minister Stojan M. Protić accorded priority to civilian over military authorities in the newly-liberated areas. Initially, the Pašić government had not extended the provisions of the Serbian Constitution to Old Serbia and Slavic Macedonia; but its provisions were now gradually introduced through special decrees and regulations which opened the way for power abuse by civilian officials, usually Old Radicals, and sharpened the rivalry between civilian and military authorities.[11] The "Black Handers", as the most influential pressure group within the army, emboldened by their late military victories, demanded that Serbian Army representatives should continue to take precedence over civilians on public occasions in the New Territories; and Apis even advised the military commanders, mostly members of the "Black Hand", to threaten the government with a military coup if their priority in the newly-acquired territories was not recognised. Clearly, the "Black Hand"

[9] Cf. David MacKenzie: Ljuba Jovanović-Čupa and the Search for Yugoslav Unity. In: David McKenzie (ed.): Serbs and Russians (= East European Monographs, vol. 459). Boulder/New York 1996, pp. 111–131.

[10] Dušan T. Bataković: Nikola Pašić, les radicaux et la "Main noire". Les défis à la démocratie parlementaire serbe 1903–1917. In: Balcanica 37 (2006), pp. 155–162.

[11] The Priority Decree was eventually modified in order to defuse discontent within army ranks. In detail: Dušan T. Bataković: Sukob vojnih i civilnih vlasti u Srbiji u proleće 1914. In: Istorijski časopis 29/30 (1982–1983), pp. 477–492.

posed a major political threat to Pašić, who, determined to resist the undermining of democracy by politically "irresponsible factors" such as the "Black Hand", moved to thwart them with the support of the ambitious Heir Apparent, Prince Alexander, and the influential Russian Minister in Belgrade, Nikolai Hartwig. The upshot was that old King Petar, who although popular enough as a constitutional and democratic ruler, was in the last resort unwilling to make a stand against the army that had put him on the throne in 1903, was persuaded to abdicate "on the grounds of ill health", and hand over his regal powers to his second son, Alexander, who became Prince-Regent on 24 June 1914, a few days before the Sarajevo assassination. Meanwhile Pašić, determined to get rid of the threat posed to Serbian democracy by Apis and his dangerous meddling once and for all,[12] proceeded to call new elections in the hope of rallying popular support against his opponents, the Independent Radicals and Liberals, tactically backed by Apis.

The Defensive War Strategy and Plans for Yugoslav Unification, 1914–1915

It was in the middle of this crisis, when Pašić was on his electoral tour in southern Serbia, and the ailing Chief of Staff, Radomir Putnik, was actually in Austria, taking the cure at a spa, that the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum was delivered to the foreign ministry in Belgrade. Totally unprepared for war as the Serbs were, they did everything they felt they could justifiably do to avoid it.[13] The Serbian response to the ultimatum was conciliatory and very skilfully drawn: the only conditions that were rejected were those incompatible with the status of a sovereign state – that delegated investigators from the Habsburg police be permitted to search for potential accomplices on Serbian soil. Otherwise, Belgrade expressed its readiness to fulfil, with minor modifications, all terms of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum.[14]

The Austro-Hungarian declaration of war was met with defiance. The Prince Regent reminded his people that "thirty years ago, Austria-Hungary conquered Serbian Bosnia and Herzegovina", provinces which "it finally and unlawfully appropriated six years ago", and summoned the nation to defend "their households and the Serbian race with all their strength". In Montenegro King Nicholas announced that his subjects were "ready to die in defence of our independence" – in fact, when war broke out the only tangible political and military support Serbia could count on was from the co-nationals of Montenegro. Serbia had no formal alliance with the Triple Entente apart from her 1913 treaty of alliance with Greece, Athens explained to Pašić, would not be activated unless Bulgaria attacked Serbia.[15]

[12] Dušan T. Bataković: La Main noire (1911–1917). L'armée serbe entre démocratie et autoritarisme. In: Revue d'histoire diplomatique 2 (1998), pp. 94–144, esp.: pp. 127–136.
[13] Mark Cornwall: Serbia. In: Keith Wilson (ed.): Decisions for War, 1914. London 1995, pp. 55–95.
[14] Mitrović: Serbia's Great War (see note 1), pp. 43–52.
[15] Dušan T. Bataković: Yougoslavie. Nations, religions, idéologies. Lausanne 1994, p. 118.

Ever since 1903, when Belgrade had chosen to look for support to Russia and France instead of the Dual Monarchy, Austria-Hungary had been the most likely adversary of Serbia. Since then, relations had gone from bad to worse, as the Monarchy launched the "Tariff War" in 1906 (in Serbian eyes a crude attempt at coercion by crippling their economy), annexed Bosnia and the Herzegovina in 1908, and by 1912 even used the threat of military action to force Serbia to withdraw her troops from the Adriatic littoral of autonomous Albania, Vienna's new protégé. Not surprisingly, therefore, Serbia's strategic planning in these years was very much directed towards coping with a potential Austro-Hungarian invasion.[16]

Once war broke out Serbian strategists, like most of their counterparts abroad, believed that the military conflict would be over within two or three months. In the Serbian General Staff, this view was strengthened by the conclusions they drew from the Balkan Wars.[17] Hence, the Serbs planned to stick to a purely defensive strategy for the first few months of the war, expecting – in fact correctly – that the major attack would not come through the open valley of the Save to the north, but from the west, across the Drina.[18] In this case, the Serbs reckoned that their best chance of inflicting a mortal blow on the Austro-Hungarian troops would be to allow them to penetrate deeper into Serbian territory. In the event, this defensive strategy worked: the first invasion of Serbia, from eastern Bosnia, was marked by a brilliant Serbian victory on the slopes of Cer, from 16 to 19 August 1914 – the first Allied victory in what had now become the Great War – and a second invasion was successfully repulsed in December.[19] Offensive operations, by contrast, were less successful. Two Serbian breakthroughs into the Austro-Hungarian territory during 1914 – in eastern Bosnia, up to Pale near Sarajevo, and in the Srem area, now Vojvodina – although welcomed by both the local Serbs and the South Slav population in general – proved insufficiently prepared and overambitious for the limited effectives of the Serbian Army.

As regards Serbian war aims, these were at first strongly influenced by the belief that the war would not last longer than a few months – and were naturally formulated at an early stage of the war.[20] In September 1914, Pašić summoned a

[16] Cf. in detail: Vladimir Ćorović: Odnosi izmedju Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u XX veku. Belgrade 1991, pp. 371–488.

[17] Like so many others they drew the wrong lessons: they should have looked not at the lightning (rather flukish) victories at the start, but at the endless slog of the trench warfare that developed at Chataldja.

[18] Hew Strachan: The First World War. Vol. 1: To Arms. Oxford 2001, here: pp. 335–347.

[19] For the victory in the battle of Cer, General Stepa Stepanović was promoted to Field Marshal (vojvoda). A still valuable account in: Crawfurd Price: Serbia's Part in the War. Vol. 1: The Rampart against Pan-Germanism. London 1918, pp. 85–114; Marie Alphones Th. R. A. Desmazes/Naoumovitch: Les victoires serbes en 1914. Paris 1928.

[20] Dimitrije Djordjević: Vojvoda Putnik. The Serbian High Command and Strategy in 1914. In: Béla K. Király/Nandor Dreisziger (eds.): East Central European Society in the First World War. Boulder 1985, pp. 569–585; Dimitrije Djordjević: The Idea of Yugoslav Unity in the Nineteenth

number of eminent Serb scholars to Niš to put together a statement of Serbia's war aims, including the vision of a union of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. When asked about the post-war borders, Pašić indicated an area on the map that included Marburg, Klagenfurt and Szeged. "If we fail", he said, "we shall fail in good company – with the Entente powers".[21] In Serbia, the idea of Yugoslav unification was primarily a programme embraced by the Independent Radicals, the second largest political party. Prior to 1914, an influential group of Serbian intellectuals (St. Novaković, J. Cvijić, J. Skerlić, J. M. Žujović, A. Belić) had strongly advocated a Yugoslav union, citing linguistic similarities, a common culture and ethnic origins. Meanwhile, the Croato-Serbian Coalition, both in Croatia-Slavonia (under Hungary) and Dalmatia (under Austria), and a growing pro-Yugoslav feeling among the younger generation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, boosted tangible support for the Yugoslav movement.[22] The cultural unity of Yugoslavs (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) was also preached, prior to 1914, by an influential elite of Croatian scholars (V. Jagić, T. Maretić). Yugoslavs were described as "a nation in the making" (M. Marjanović, Š. Kurtović) which would constitute a synthesis of East and West in the Slavic South. Already in 1911 the Serbian historian and diplomat St. Novaković, was predicting that a future Yugoslav state would stretch from Split in the west, to Subotica in the north, and from Lake Ohrid in the south to Marburg (Maribor) in the north. Croatian advocates of the Yugoslav idea included Dalmatians who were imbued with more central-European attitudes, including Mazzinian ideas.[23] Another important theoretical basis for the Yugoslav idea was provided by the geographer Jovan Cvijić, who argued that the Dinaric Alps (covering most of Montenegro, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Dalmatia) were a specific geopolitical whole with an almost uniform ethnic composition (since numerous migrations had mixed up Serbs and Croats and created related patterns of culture and civilisation). At any rate, with the outbreak of war this Yugoslav idea, essentially a construct of theorists before 1914, became an important and concrete element of Serbia's programme of war aims. Moreover, thanks to the military and political support of the Triple Entente in their struggle against the Dual Monarchy, the Serbs were presented for the first time with the opportunity to achieve Yugoslav unity and by creating a large "Yugoslav" state under the Serbian dynasty to rid themselves once and for all of Austria-Hungary's relentless threats to their sovereignty and independence. As Pašić declared in a circular of 4 September to all Serbian legations "Serbia should become a strong south-western Slavic state that would include all the Croats and all the Slovenes as well". Only such a state could achieve "the abolition of Germanic supremacy

Century. In: id. (ed.): The Creation of Yugoslavia 1914–1918. Santa Barbara/Oxford 1980, pp. 1–18, esp. pp. 7–14.

[21] Panta M. Draškić: Moji memoari. Ed. by Dušan T. Bataković. Belgrade 1990, p. 87.

[22] Milorad Ekmečić: Ratni ciljevi Srbije 1914. Belgrade 1971, pp. 80–112; Ljubinka Trgovčević: Naučnici Srbije i stvaranje Jugoslavije 1914–1920. Belgrade 1986, pp. 28–32.

[23] Bataković: Yougoslavie (see note 15), pp. 124–129.

and its penetration towards the East" and stand up to "all the combinations whose aim would be to endanger European peace or to annul the successes of the Allies' weapons".[24]

Further military successes against the second Austro-Hungarian invasion at the end of the year boosted the self-confidence of the Serbian government and the army considerably; but the overall situation in the kingdom remained difficult. In the two campaigns in 1914, out of 250,000 Serbian soldiers 163,557 perished, while 69,000 civilians died in the campaign of terror conducted by Austro-Hungarian troops.[25] (According to renown Swiss forensic expert Austro-Hungarian troops committed horrible massacres in western and central Serbia, executing thousands of civilians, including elderly people, women and children.) Meanwhile, some 600,000 internally displaced Serbs constituted an additional heavy burden on a country which two Austro-Hungarian invasions had left with a ravaged economy and agriculture.[26]

Moreover, although the Serbian Front along the border with Austria-Hungary was to remain quiet for nearly a year after the Battle of the Kolubara the military and economic exhaustion of Serbia caused by the ravaging of western and central Serbia and large-scale war crimes by Austro-Hungarian troops, led in early 1915 to the outbreak of a typhoid epidemic, which epidemic took the death toll of more than 100,000 of 400,000 infected soldiers and civilians, and undermined Serbia's defensive capacity considerably.[27]

The official proclamation of Serbia's war aims came in December 1914 during the Battle of the Kolubara, regarded as a decisive victory over the Dual Monarchy, a vanishing empire doomed to crushing defeat at the hands of the Allies. Proud but exhausted, Serbia now hoped for a speedy end to the war which had already drained most of her military and economic strength. When Belgrade, was liberated and the last Habsburg soldier was expelled from Serbia between early and mid-December, the moment seemed appropriate for an official statement of Serbia's war aims, whereupon the new coalition cabinet headed by Pašić and including ardent pro-Yugoslav Independent Radicals summoned a National Assembly in Niš, the wartime capital of the kingdom, on 7 December and issued the Niš Declaration proclaiming the unification of the

[24] Milorad Ekmečić: Serbian War Aims. In: Djordjević (ed.): Creation (see note 20), pp. 19–36, here: pp. 21–23; see also Djordje Dj. Stanković: Nikola Pašić. Saveznici i stvaranje Jugoslavije. Belgrade 1981, pp. 47–55.

[25] The architect of the Serbian counteroffensive in the Battle of Kolubara (3–14 December 1914), General Živojin Mišić, was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. Cf. Dušan T. Bataković/Nikola B. Popović (eds.): Kolubarska bitka. Belgrade 1989.

[26] Rodolphe A. Reiss: Report upon the Atrocities Committed by the Austro-Hungarian Army during the First Invasion of Serbia. London 1916, pp. 30–146 (chapter "Massacres and Atrocities Perpetrated on Civilians"); cf. also: Henry Barby: Avec l'armée serbe. De l'ultimatum autrichien à l'invasion de la Serbie. Paris 1918, pp. 112–147.

[27] Cf. chapters on Serbia in 1915 in: John Reed: The War in Eastern Europe. New York 1916, pp. 22–96.

South Slavs (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) of Austria-Hungary as Serbia's ultimate war aim.[28]

Six months later, in May 1915, these Serbian war aims were endorsed by the Yugoslav Committee of exiled Croats, Slovenes and Serbs in Paris. Sponsored by the Serbian government, the leading members of the Yugoslav Committee – A. Trumbić (its President), F. Supilo, N. Stojanović, F. Potočnjak, H. Ninković – vigorously promoted the idea of Yugoslav unity in Allied capitals. Thus, the Niš Declaration became not merely a Serbian vision of Yugoslav unity, but also a response to the demands of prominent Yugoslav political exiles from the Austria-Hungary for the formation of a common state with Serbia and Montenegro. As the very first Manifesto of the Yugoslav Committee called explicitly for South Slav unification, the dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy was clearly on the agenda.[29] Meanwhile, a Yugoslav Congress, held in Niš in May 1915 under the presidency of the Dalmatian writer Ivo Ćipiko, also adopted a resolution calling for the "complete and indestructible national unity of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes". The Serbian government, for its part, sent a group of leading Serbian scholars (J. Cvijić, A. Belić, P. Popović, J. M. Žujović, Lj. Stojanović) to Allied capitals to promote the Yugoslav union, the necessity for which, incidentally, suggested that proposals for the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary were not universally welcomed.[30] Petrograd, for instance, objected strongly to the Serbs' uniting with Croats and Slovenes, since the latter had fought fiercely against the Russian Army on the Eastern Front.[31] In Rome, too, there was fierce opposition to Serbia's Yugoslav programme, and Italian war aims as embodied in the 1915 Treaty of London with the Entente gave rise to major conflicts with both the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee. For example, the Treaty gave Italy most of Dalmatia, Adriatic islands and Istria, which the Croats and the Dalmatian Serbs were claiming as a part of the future Yugoslav state with Serbia as its "Piedmont"; and although the Yugoslav Committee was focused primarily on the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, its first broader action was a fervent campaign against the provisions of the Treaty of London.[32]

[28] Dragoslav Janković: Niška Deklaracija. In: Istorija 20 (1969) 10, pp. 7–111. On overall situation in Niš in late 1914 see the memoirs of the Russian chargé d'affaires: Vasilij Štrandman: Balkanske uspomene. Belgrade 2009.

[29] [Le Comité yougoslave]: Le programme yougoslave: avec une carte. Paris 1916; Dragovan Šepić: Srpska vlada i počeci Jugoslavenskog odbora. In: Historijski zbornik 13 (1960), pp. 1–45.

[30] Dinaricus [Jovan Cvijić]: Jedinstvo Jugoslovena. Niš 1915, pp. 5–60; Jovan Cvijić: La pensée de la nation serbe. In: Revue hebdomadaire, 10. 4. 1915, pp. 209–219; St. Novakovitch: Problèmes Yougo-Slaves. In: La Revue de Paris, 1. 9. 1915; W. M. Petrovitch: Serbia. Her People, History and Aspirations. London 1915; Trgovčević: Naučnici Srbije (see note 22), pp. 35–54.

[31] Michael B. Petrović: Russia's Role in the Creation of the Yugoslav State 1914–1918. In: Djordjević (ed.): Creation (see note 20), pp. 73–94, here: p. 76.

[32] Cf. more in: Vaso Bogdanov: Jugoslavenski odbor u Londonu u povodu 50-godišnjice osnivanja. Zagreb 1966; Gale Stokes: The Role of the Yugoslav Committee in the Formation of Yugoslavia. In: Djordjević (ed.): Creation (see note 20), pp. 51–71.

One unforeseen consequence of putting forward demands for the dismemberment of Dual Monarchy at this early stage of the war was felt by the ordinary population of Serbia after the third invasion ended in the occupation of the entire country in late November 1915. The kingdom was divided into Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian zones, and a systematic campaign to denationalise the Serb population was accompanied by the systematic plundering and destruction of cultural property, libraries, archives and monastery treasuries. Indeed, a veritable campaign of terror by the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian military authorities against civilians now ensued, which included internment in detention camps in Hungary, arbitrary arrests, hostage-taking, and mass executions. Between August and October 1916, 16,500 Serbs were deported to detention camps in Hungary; by May 1917 the number of Serbs held in detention camps of the Dual Monarchy had risen to 40,000; and even the Pope was moved to intervene in Vienna against the internment of children. After a Serbian insurrection in the region of Toplica in 1917, however, deportations and mass executions intensified further.[33]

The Allies, Bulgaria's Claims and the Serbian Campaign in Albania 1915

In their efforts to attract Bulgaria into their camp in 1915 the Entente Powers exerted growing pressure on Serbia to cede most of Macedonia (the 1912 "contested zone") to Bulgaria, offering in return territorial compensations at the expense of Austria-Hungary: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slavonia, Bačka, northern Albania and most of Dalmatia, up to the port of Split (August 1915). None of these offers were accepted: Pašić considered the Morava-Vardar axis vital to maintaining the balance of power in the Balkans, which would be seriously upset by the further enlargement of Bulgaria. In any case, Serbian officials were sure (and were later proved right) that the Central Powers were offering Sofia even more significant territorial concessions at Serbia's expense than the Allies.[34]

Meanwhile, an undeclared war had been going on since 1913 on Serbia's border with Albania: Albanian paramilitary units, often trained by Ottoman officers and financed by the Dual Monarchy, had launched a number of incursions in an attempt to instigate a large-scale rebellion of Kosovo Albanians. Pašić, for his part, sent 23,000 soldiers into Albania in May 1915 to support Essad Pasha Toptani, his only ally in this traditionally hostile environment. Essad, formally a supporter of the Entente, was balancing between Italy and Serbia, and had concluded two agreements with Pašić about closer political cooperation, in Niš in 1914 and in

[33] Dimitrije Djordjević: Austro-Ugarski okupacioni režim u Srbiji i njegov slom 1918. In: Naučni skup u povodu 50-godišnjice raspada Austro-Ugarske Monarhije i stvaranja jugoslovenske države. Zagreb 1969, pp. 220f.; on Toplica insurrection more in: Andrej Mitrović: Ustaničke borbe u Srbiji 1916–1918. Belgrade 1987.

[34] Dušan T. Bataković (ed.): Histoire du peuple serbe. Lausanne 2005, pp. 272f.

Tirana in 1915. Now, with Serbia's decisive military support Essad Pasha defeated the supporters of the Central Powers and re-established his authority in central Albania. Giving military assistance to Essad Pasha had been a bold political gamble; but it was to prove fully justified later in the year, during the Serbian retreat across Albania.[35]

The Third Campaign Against Serbia: Military Defeat and Exile, 1915–1916

Halted on the Marne and compelled to resort to trench warfare, the German High Command chose to cut back on its operations on the Serbian front. After its Austro-Hungarian Allies had suffered two humiliating defeats in 1914, Germany had taken command of the campaign against Serbia, and by late August was preparing a new offensive. On 22 September Bulgaria finally joined the Central Powers and ordered a general mobilisation. The outlines of the impending offensive were taking shape: a German attack from the north towards the Morava valley under General Mackensen; an Austro-Hungarian attack across the Drina from the west; and a Bulgarian move into the Vardar valley from the east to cut off the southward route of retreat for Serbian troops. The Entente Powers had adamantly rejected the demands of Putnik and Pašić for a pre-emptive strike to neutralise Bulgaria and Serbia now found herself unable to fight on two fronts.[36] True, Venizelos, the Prime Minister of Greece, in a defensive alliance with Serbia against Bulgaria since 1913 and Serbia's only ally in the Balkans besides Montenegro, asked the Allies to send 150,000 Allied troops to Salonika from the Near East, and actually ordered mobilisation a day after Bulgaria. But on 5 October, as the Allied troops began to disembark in Salonika, King Constantine, brother-in-law of Wilhelm II, determined to keep neutrality of Greece, dismissed Venizelos from office. The new cabinet in Athens declined Serbia's desperate appeal to implement the 1913 alliance treaty and assist her against her Bulgarian attackers.[37]

The Austro-German offensive against Serbia was launched on 5 October 1915, and Bulgaria's from the east on the 7th, on a front that was almost 1,000 kilometres long, and comprised three German and three Austro-Hungarian Army corps which crossed the Save at Belgrade, and two Bulgarian armies advancing towards Niš and Skoplje. Belgrade, under fierce attack, was abandoned after heroic resistance. The Serbian plan to secure a retreat route via Niš and Skoplje to Salonika, and join the Allied forces under General Sarrail, had already been thwarted by the fall of Venizelos's government and the slow disembarkation of Allied troops in

[35] Dušan T. Bataković: Essad Pasha Toptani and Serbian Government. In: Andrej Mitrović (ed.): Serbs and Albanians in the 20th Century. Belgrade 1991, pp. 57–78.
[36] Balcanicus [Stojan M. Protić]: The Aspirations of Bulgaria. London 1915.
[37] Dušan T. Bataković: Serbia and Greece in the First World War. An Overview. In: Balkan Studies 45 (2004) 1, pp. 59–80.

Salonika.[38] As early as 16 October, the vital communication line, the Niš-Skoplje railway, was severed by the rapidly advancing Bulgarian troops, while the Serbian attempt to break the Bulgarian front line at Kačanik and get to Skoplje had ended in failure by mid-November.

Not that these reverses sapped the determination of the Serbs to fight on. As early as 4 November, as rumours began to circulate that Austro-German agents were offering peace negotiations, Pašić, for whom the separate peace was no option, dispatched the following instruction to all Serbian diplomatic missions: "I have learnt that Serbia is rumoured to be about to conclude a separate peace treaty with Germany and her Allies. I would kindly ask you to deny such rumours categorically and assure the domicile government that Serbia, even though she is in a very difficult situation, and even if the situation gets more difficult, is nonetheless determined to fight the invader to the end, and, loyal to her Allies, endure the whole war which she is convinced will end with the enemy's defeat." Even when, on 18 November, after two more weeks of disasters, the Serbian government, now in exile in Scutari, discussed the separate peace offers it was almost unanimous in its support of Pašić's firm stance.[39]

The plan for a gradual retreat to join the Allies at Salonika was finally abandoned after General Sarrail held his forces back from penetrating further into Macedonia to meet the Serbian troops. The proposal of Field-Marshal Živojin Mišić, the hero of the Battle of the Kolubara, to concentrate in Kosovo for a decisive counter-offensive against the combined German-Austrian and Bulgarian force was also abandoned. Instead, on 25 November, the Serbian General Staff ordered a general retreat across Albania.[40]

This, of course involved a change of retreat routes. One headed towards Scutari and Saint Giovanni di Medua through Montenegro. Defending the western flank of the retreating Serbian Army, the Montenegrin Army inflicted a serious defeat on the Austro-Germans in the epic Battle of Mojkovac (7 January 1916) but could not withstand another attack. The Montenegrin parliament decided to follow the Serbs and withdraw into exile without surrendering. King Nicholas, however, crushed and demoralised, left for Italy in early 1916, while the Montenegrin government, after the fall of Lovćen, was forced to sign a capitulation.[41]

The other route was via Prizren. Putting up fierce resistance and launching occasional counterattacks, the Serbian rear-guard secured the retreat of the main body of the army and masses of civilian refugees, through Kosovo Polje to the Albanian border west of Prizren. In Albania, the only safe area for the retreating Serbian troops was the domain of Essad Pasha in Durazzo and its hinterland. Ac-

[38] See: Charles E. J. Fryer: The Destruction of Serbia in 1915. Boulder/New York 1997, pp. 74–93.

[39] Stanković: Nikola Pašić (see note 24), pp. 79–82.

[40] A concise documentation on Serbian military operations in: Mihailo Vojvodić/Dragoljub R. Živojinović (eds.): Veliki rat Srbije 1914–1918. Belgrade 1970, on retreat through Albania, pp. 221–260.

[41] Novica Rakočević: Crna Gora u Prvom svjetskom ratu 1914–1918. Cetinje 1969, pp. 152–167.

cording to the Serbian General Staff's initial plan, the troops would reassemble under the protection of Essad Pasha, and re-equip themselves with material that the Allies were to supply by sea.[42]

This plan soon proved unfeasible and, at the initiative of France and the insistence of the Tsar, plans were set on foot to evacuate the Serbian troops on Allied ships. In view of the difficult terrain and wintertime conditions the Serbian Army decided to abandon its military equipment, including the French cannons, and to cross into Albania with only small arms. In early December 1915, the terrible ordeal of the retreat, long to be remembered as the "Albanian Golgotha", began, over snow-laden Albanian mountains and swollen rivers.[43] The exhausted Serbs, were ill prepared and suffering from shortages of food, warm clothing and footwear in extreme winter conditions. Once outside the region controlled by Essad Pasha's gendarmerie, they faced surprise attacks from hostile Albanian tribes; and owing to Italian obstruction, they were obliged to fight their way through to Valona in the south, where French ships waited to evacuate them to safety.[44]

In fact, the "Albanian Golgotha", went down to history as the worst human catastrophe in the history of modern Serbia. The overall losses in 1915–16 amounted to 247,887 dead, wounded, captured or missing. The Allied ships, mostly French, first took 10,000 exhausted evacuees to Bizerta, but the vast majority – the army, the ailing King, the government, the parliament and masses of civilian refugees – were evacuated to Corfu, occupied by the French for that purpose. In Corfu, host to 151,288 soldiers by the spring of 1916 and Vido, a further 7,751 soldiers died from exhaustion and diseases;[45] but by May, recovered and rearmed, three Serbian armies over 115,000-strong with a cavalry and six infantry divisions were deployed on the Salonika Front within the ranks of the French-led Armée d'Orient. At first, the Serbian Prince-Regent, as the Supreme commander of the Serbian Army, tried to insist on exercising a fully autonomous command; but it was eventually agreed that General Sarrail would assume effective command in his name.[46]

"Greater Serbia" or Yugoslavia, 1916–1918?

In strategic terms, Serbia's Yugoslav programme was a success in so far as it drew a considerable number of volunteers into the Serbian Army, whose reputation was enhanced by important victories in 1916 (battle of Kajmakčalan, recapture of

[42] Djoko Tripković: Srpska ratna drama 1915–1916. Belgrade 2001.
[43] John Clinton Adams: Flight in Winter. Princeton 1942, pp. 151–197.
[44] Fortier Jones: With Serbia into Exile. An American's Adventures with the Army that Cannot Die. New York 1916, pp. 351–391; cf. also: Henry Barby: Epopée serbe. Agonie d'un people. Paris 1916.
[45] Lieutenant-Colonel Ripert D'Alauzier: Un drame historique. La résurrection de l'armée serbe. Albanie, Corfou, 1915–1916. Paris 1923, pp. 174–208.
[46] Cf. more in: Petar Opačić: Le front de Salonique. Belgrade 1979, pp. 52–62.

Bitolj [Monastir]);[47] and two divisions of volunteers under Serbian command served on the Salonika Front. Apart from Serbs – the majority – the volunteers included a number of Croats and Slovenes attracted by the prospect of Yugoslav unification, a number of whom came from as far afield as North and South America (having originally emigrated from the South Slav provinces of Austria-Hungary). Indeed, a separate "Yugoslav division" was made up of Yugoslav volunteers enlisted primarily in the United States. Meanwhile, the show trial at Salonika of Apis and his clique of "Black Hand" officers in 1917, indicted for alleged conspiracy against life of the Prince-Regent, eliminated both a threat to democracy and potential opposition to Yugoslav unification within army ranks.[48] On the other hand the February Revolution in Russia deprived Serbia of one of her main supporters, namely, the Emperor Nicholas II, who had on a number of critical occasions, shown his utter devotion to Serbia, whereas the old ruling elite in Russia frowned on Serbian plans for a union with the South Slavs of Austria-Hungary, preferring simply an enlarged, i.e. "Greater" Serbia.[49]

The Corfu Declaration signed between the Pašić government and the Yugoslav Committee in July 1917 – intended partly as a counter to demands for a separate South Slav polity within a reorganised Dual Monarchy – was an essential step towards a common state, although, despite long deliberations, no agreement was reached as to its future internal organisation. For Pašić, the Yugoslav Committee had no real legitimacy; thus he considered the Corfu Declaration not as a binding document but as an important political statement regarding the future unification. In contrast, for Ante Trumbić and most other members of his Yugoslav Committee, the Corfu agreement was a binding preliminary constitutional arrangement. The Montenegrin Committee for unification with Serbia, also accepted the Corfu Declaration; and most Serbian intellectuals and politicians were in favour of Yugoslav unification. Pašić himself remained cautious, insisting on the unification of predominantly Serbian-inhabited lands (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Montenegro, Srem) with Serbia in advance of any eventual union with Croats and Slovenes – a plan which generally coincided with the territorial compensations that the Allies had offered Serbia in 1915 if she ceded the "contested zone" of Macedonia to Bulgaria.

Meanwhile, in the Dual Monarchy, the Corfu Declaration served as a wake-up call for Slovenes and Croats interested in preserving the Dual Monarchy. Prior to the Declaration, Anton Korošec, leader of the Slovenian People's Party, warned the Austrian Premier that in the south of the Monarchy, the "Greater Serbian idea is the strongest" and proposed countering it by uniting Slovenia with Croatia. Indeed, at his initiative, in May 1917, the Yugoslav club of Croatian and Slovenian

[47] Eugène Gascoin: Les victoires serbes de 1916. Paris 1919, pp. 84–143.
[48] David MacKenzie: The "Black Hand" on Trial. Salonika, 1917. Boulder/New York 1995, pp. 373–399.
[49] Petrović: Russia's Role (see note 31), pp. 76–80; Nikola B. Popović: Odnosi Srbije i Rusije u Prvom svetskom ratu. Belgrade 1977, pp. 310–344.

members of the Viennese parliament actually adopted a declaration which, "on the basis of the national principle and the Croatian state right, calls for the unification of all the lands in the Monarchy inhabited by the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs into one independent state […] under the sceptre of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty". The overwhelming majority of the Serbs in the Dual Monarchy, by contrast, remained completely opposed to such a solution.[50]

Concurrently with the assertion of the principle of self-determination as a solution for the Polish and Czecho-Slovak questions, the Yugoslav programme was gradually finding its way to the Allied cabinets, eventually featuring prominently in April 1918 at the Rome Congress of Oppressed Nationalities comprising representatives of all the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary. There, the Italian representatives recognised the unity and independence of South Slavs or Yugoslavs; while the U.S. government, after deeper deliberation, assured the Serbian government that "all branches of the Slav race should be completely freed from German and Austrian dominance". In late July 1918, Great Britain acknowledged the unification of Yugoslavs as Serbia's war aim, while France's decision in the summer of 1918, to accept the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, helped further to pave the way to Yugoslav unity.[51]

Meanwhile, the French General Franchet d'Espérey, commander of the Salonika Front since June 1918, accepted Serbia's proposal for an offensive strategy with French-Serbian troops as a main component in the planned breakthrough. Spectacular military victories in the autumn of 1918, in particular a breakthrough by two Serbian armies, brought the realisation of Serbian war aims nearer than had been expected.[52] For, to the fury of Kaiser Wilhelm Serbia's successes on the Salonika Front had a domino effect on military operations on other fronts and made a significant contribution to the outcome of the Great War. Indeed, as the Kaiser put it in a sarcastic telegram to King Ferdinand, commenting on Bulgaria's sudden capitulation: "Disgraceful, 62,000 Serbs decided the war."[53]

With all of pre-war Serbia liberated on 1 November 1918, the strategy for Serbian unification prior to the formation of a common state with Croats and Slovenes began to move forward. Serbian troops under Field-Marshal Stepa Stepanović were invited by the National Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina to liberate these provinces and were solemnly greeted in Sarajevo on 6 November, while French and Serbian troops liberated Kosovo and entered Montenegro. The unconditional unification of Vojvodina (24 November in Novi Sad) and Montenegro

[50] Bataković: Yougoslavie (see note 15), pp. 134f. In contrast to Yugoslav programme, the typical Croat-inspired positions against unification with Serbia are summarised in: L. von Südland [Ivo Pilar]: Die südslawische Frage und der Weltkrieg. Übersichtliche Darstellung des Gesamt-Problems. Wien 1918.

[51] Dragan R. Živojinović: America, Italy and the Birth of Yugoslavia (1917–1919). New York 1972; Le Moal: Serbie (see note 1), pp. 216–228.

[52] Opačić: Front (see note 46), pp. 93–103.

[53] Peter Kirch: Krieg und Verwaltung in Serbien und Mazedonien 1916–1918. Stuttgart 1928, pp. 101–111.

(26 November in Podgorica) with Serbia was followed by the successive unification of 42 of 54 districts of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Banja Luka, Prijedor, Bihać, Ključ, Jajce, Zvornik, Bijeljina, Višegrad, Gacko, Nevesinje, Rogatica, etc.) directly with the Kingdom of Serbia.[54]

The future position of the non-Serbian South Slavs, by contrast, remained uncertain. True, in late October 1918, all state and legal ties with Austria-Hungary were declared annulled by a National Council based in Zagreb, an ad hoc body which went on to proclaim a separate "State of the Slovenians, Croats and Serbs" within the Yugoslav provinces of the former Monarchy. This state was not recognised by the Allies, however, and lacked popular approval; and the National Council's calls for military mobilisation met with no response. The National Council authorised the Yugoslav Committee to represent it abroad: but in early November 1918, in discussions with Serbian officials at Geneva, the Croat and Slovene negotiators, led by Dr Anton Korošec, President of the National Council and Ante Trumbić, insisted that the new state be organised along dualist, i.e. federalist lines (on the model of the former Austria-Hungary). Suspecting that the Prince-Regent might try to resolve the issue of unification along centralist lines, and pressured by the opposition, Pašić reluctantly agreed to the dualist model and to a proviso that its monarchist character be not specified.[55]

The Geneva Agreement caused a cabinet crisis: several Serbian ministers resigned, warning that the agreement tended "to separate the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srem and Slavonia, Dalmatia and Lika, Bačka, Banat and Baranja, from Serbia, and to play them off against Serbia". Minister St. M. Protić stressed that "our brothers from former Austria Hungary have been materially liberated thanks to the rivers of Serb and Allied blood, but they have not been liberated spiritually. Their ideology remains Austro-Hungarian." At this point Pašić himself submitted his resignation, thereby invalidating the Geneva Agreement altogether; while it was also denounced by the National Council in Zagreb, which was always, like the Yugoslav Committee, more of a revolutionary than a representative body.[56]

All this left simple unification with Serbia as the only viable option. After the Villa Giusti armistice Italy moved to occupy most of Dalmatia and Istria and parts of Slovenia, while Austrians and Hungarians started fighting for control of Carinthia and Styria. Fearing further territorial losses, a delegation from the Zagreb National Council rushed to Belgrade, whereupon Prince Regent Alexander hastily proclaimed the new "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" in the name of

[54] Dušan T. Bataković: The Serbs of Bosnia & Herzegovina. History and Politics. Paris 1996, p. 91. On Montenegro, where the popular representatives deposed the King Nicholas I and his dynasty to merge with Serbia, see: Jovan R. Bojović: Podgorička skupština 1918. Dokumenti. Gornji Milanovac 1989.

[55] Bogdan Krizman: Raspad Austro-Ugarske i stvaranje jugoslovenske države. Zagreb 1977, pp. 80–89, pp. 163–172.

[56] Bataković: Yougoslavie (see note 15), pp. 136f.; Mitrović: Serbia's Great War (see fn. 1), pp. 321–323.

King Peter I, on 1 December 1918. In that way, Pašić's plan for creating a unified or – as the Austrians termed it –, "Greater" Serbia in advance of overall Yugoslav unification was abandoned. True, the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 was to some extent a fulfilment of Serbian war aims; but the price had been very high: according to the official report submitted to the Peace Conference in Paris, Serbia had lost some 845,000 civilians and 402,000 soldiers, a total of 1,247,000 lives.[57]

[57] Cf. more in: Milorad Ekmečić: Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918, vol. 2. Belgrade 1989, pp. 810–832.

War Aims and Strategies of the Central Powers of 1914

Roger Chickering

Strategy, Politics, and the Quest for a Negotiated Peace

The German Case, 1914–1918

The pursuit of uncompromising war aims is, in the common understanding, one of the hallmarks of total war. To use Stig Förster's characterisation, total war is war "to the bitter end", its object "the complete subjugation of the enemy".[1] The passions aroused by mobilising populations for total war, so runs the argument, allow no room for compromise, negotiation, or diplomatic manoeuvre. Despite the ghastly price of achieving it, the unconditional surrender of one side or the other offers the only possible resolution. Although this is in many ways an apt description of the First World War, the proposition masks problems of great complexity. Two orders of calculation, strategic and political, bore on the issues of war aims and peace negotiations, and their interplay complicated understandings of both politics and strategy, as well as understandings of war aims and peace negotiations.

Understood in connection with the theatre-level deployment and commitment of armed force, strategic calculations were, almost by definition, paramount in the First World War. Military thinking in 1914 was governed in all the European armies by an "ideology of the offensive". Founded on readings of Clausewitz by generations of his admirers, this doctrine held that warfare found its natural culmination in the decisive battle and that both strategy and tactics should be geared to offensive operations, which alone could bring victory in the great test of arms.[2] Compromise was foreign to these calculations. It could only mean the failure of the great strategic project. Again with appeals to Clausewitz, proponents of this view embraced a corresponding proposition about the relationship between strategy and politics, one that was itself hostile to the very idea of compromise. The two realms were, in this understanding, entirely independent of one another. The function of the statesman was to present the strategist with the political terrain on which the battle was to be fought, the roster of friends, foes, and neutrals, and the goals to be achieved. The statesman was then to withdraw from the field until informed by the generals that the battle was over. At this point, the statesman

[1] Stig Förster: Introduction. In: Roger Chickering/Stig Förster (eds.): Great War, Total War. Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918. Cambridge 2000, pp. 1–16, here: p. 7.
[2] Jack Snyder: The Ideology of the Offensive. Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914. Ithaca 1989.

returned in order to settle the political consequences. "Policy", as the German emperor William II once noted, "is to remain silent in war until strategy permits it to speak once again".[3]

Most civilian statesmen resisted their banishment in this fashion to the strategic periphery in wartime. The intersections between strategy and politics proved countless, as well as inherently contentious. Nonetheless, most statesmen were hostage to a political logic that was itself resistant to the principle of a compromise peace.[4] Although a now extensive literature has enjoined caution and nuance in generalising about the "war enthusiasm" of 1914, one critical truth has survived.[5] The war began as a moral bargain between state and society. Every belligerent country entered the war in 1914 with broad popular support. Systematically encouraged by governments, consensus reigned everywhere that this was a war to resist foreign aggression, and that national unity and resistance would be rewarded when it was over. The propaganda of the first months – the extravagant claims and atrocity stories that circulated on both sides – sealed the initial experiences of war in demonised images of the enemy. Intellectually and morally, these images organised understandings of the war's terrible human costs, which began to register almost immediately. In these circumstances, compromise with the demons was unthinkable: it would have required an altogether different reading of the war, which could not have carried the same intellectual and emotional load. The origins of the war would have to be framed not in resistance to barbarism but instead in diplomatic miscalculation – the war as a dreadful mistake. No belligerent government could have survived this confession. Political leaders lacked "the courage to make peace", as one of the German emperor's advisors put it in 1916, "because they fear their own people".[6]

Together the logic of both strategy and politics produced a scenario that corresponded in the main to the preferences of the generals. In questions of peace negotiations, diplomacy was shackled to the situation on the battlefield; and even if they wished to, statesmen were all but helpless to negotiate an end to the war until the military outcome was clear. Although there was no dearth of channels through which diplomatic communications – so-called "peace feelers" – could escape the tight confines imposed by coalition warfare, international negotiation was directed principally toward neutrals and allies.[7]

[3] Jehuda L. Wallach: Das Dogma der Vernichtungsschlacht. Die Lehren von Clausewitz und Schlieffen und ihre Wirkungen in zwei Weltkriegen. Frankfurt a. M. 1967, p. 289.

[4] Gerhard Ritter: Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk. Das Problem des "Militarismus" in Deutschland. 4 vols. München 1954–1968, here: vol. 2, pp. 9–77.

[5] For a brief survey see Roger Chickering: "War Enthusiasm?" Public Opinion and the Outbreak of War in 1914. In: Holger Afflerbach/David Stevenson (eds.): An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914. New York/Oxford 2007, pp. 200–212.

[6] Moriz Freiherr von Lyncker, 27. 8. 1916, Schloss Pless, in: Holger Afflerbach (ed.): Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr im Ersten Weltkrieg. Quellen aus der militärischen Umgebung des Kaisers 1914–1918. München 2005, p. 417, Nr. L 458.

[7] David Stevenson: The First World War and International Politics. Oxford 2000.

The same constraints operated on discussions of war aims. These revolved in every belligerent state around visions of victory, and they were formulated in the first instance with allies and domestic audiences in mind. No matter who sought to formulate them, whether soldiers or statesmen, war aims retained a contingent, ephemeral, conjectural character, since the strategic circumstances of the war's end would dictate their practical relevance. For this reason, debates over war aims also militated against a compromise peace, as they tended to raise the stakes in an atmosphere in which the very suggestion of negotiation was thought to be a confession of weakness. A compromise peace would have had to square the circle.[8] It required political agreement that each side had won a victory of some plausible kind over the other.

In all these respects, however, the complexity of the situation during the First World War was compounded by an additional circumstance. Strategy, politics, war aims, compromise, negotiation, victory, peace, and the relationships among them were fluid concepts all. They were objects of unremitting conflict, which intensified with the lengthening war in all the belligerent states.

In the hope of illustrating these dynamics in action, the following essay addresses several moments in the German history of the First World War. These represented the principal junctures at which the German leadership pondered the feasibility of a negotiated peace with more than the casual speculation that attended most discussions of this subject.[9] "Negotiated peace" is understood here to be an end to the fighting prior to a clear strategic decision. For the sake of brevity, the essay focuses on the interaction of strategy and politics in German thinking about a negotiated peace. Hence, it considers only in passing Germany's relations with its several allies, despite their central role in this thinking;[10] and it pays but fleeting attention to strategic and political calculations in the enemy countries. It seeks to demonstrate, however, that in several different sets of circumstances, and for different reasons at several points in the war, the logic of strategy and the logic of politics posed, separately and in combination, insurmountable obstacles on the German side to a negotiated resolution of the war.

Although German strategic thinking in 1914 was also wedded to doctrines of the offensive, it was peculiar in several important political respects, at least if British, French, and Italian examples are taken as the norm.[11] In Imperial Germany, both the civilian and the military leadership was responsible to the em-

[8] Volker Ullrich: Zwischen Verhandlungsfrieden und Erschöpfungskrieg. Die Friedensfrage in der deutschen Reichsleitung Ende 1915. In: GWU 37 (1986), pp. 397–419, here: p. 407.

[9] See ibid., pp. 397–419; Lance Farrar: Divide and Conquer. German Efforts to Conclude a Separate Peace, 1914–1918. Boulder 1978; André Scherer/Jacques Grunewald: L'Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. 4 vols. Paris 1962–1978.

[10] As a classic instance see Wolfgang Steglich: Bündnissicherung oder Verständigungsfrieden. Untersuchungen zu dem Friedensangebot der Mittelmächte vom 12. Dezember 1916. Göttingen 1958.

[11] Antulio J. Echevarria: After Clausewitz. German Military Thinkers before the Great War. Lawrence, KS 2000.

peror alone, not to the federal parliament, the Reichstag. This institution was itself nevertheless indispensable to the waging of war, insofar as its consent was required for the war bonds that provided the financial underpinning of the whole effort. In addition, the Reichstag deputies, who were elected by democratic male suffrage, collectively represented the most immediate institutional index of German popular sentiment. The vectors of wartime power in imperial Germany were thus more complex (not to say chaotic) than to the west.[12] The national executive owed no institutional responsibility to the national legislature. Nor, aside from what the emperor provided, was there any institutional coordination between the civilian and military leadership, or between the service arms at either the ministerial or staff levels (or often even between army commands). The emperor's temperamental inability to provide effective coordination of any kind had become clear before the war. As the war continued, it grew both more obvious and more grave in its consequences insofar as William II remained at least potentially, in Holger Afflerbach's words, "an important, inescapable (*unübergehbarer*) power-factor" in any major strategic or political decision.[13] The emperor's failings blurred still further the already troubled distinctions between policy and strategy; and they encouraged the intrigue, institutional rivalries, ill will, and miscalculation that plagued both. To these difficulties the German constitution added another. Because the emperor was commander-in-chief, it stood to reason that military victory would redound to the credit of the constitutional system that he embodied. The converse was also true. Anxieties were rampant in both the civilian and military leadership that anything short of an unambiguous military triumph would breed calls for democratic reform, if not revolution, threatening not just the government, but the authoritarian constitutional order itself.

The possibility of a negotiated peace first surfaced late in 1914. The failure of the German offensive in the west signalled the collapse of the great strategic plan that General von Schlieffen had laid for a German military victory.[14] In order to assess the implications of this perplexing turn of events, the country's leading soldier and its leading civilian met on 18 November 1914. It was their first major consultation since the outbreak of war. Having just presided over the final fruitless German attempt to turn the Allied flank in Flanders, the head of the army's supreme command (OHL), General Erich von Falkenhayn, announced to the federal chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, that Germany was not militarily powerful enough to achieve a "respectable (*anständigen*) peace" against a coa-

[12] Wilhelm Deist: Strategy and Unlimited Warfare in Germany. Moltke, Falkenhayn, and Ludendorff. In: Chickering/Förster (eds.): Great War (see note 1), pp. 265–280, here: pp. 270f.

[13] Afflerbach (ed.): Kaiser (see note 6), p. 7; cf. Wilhelm Deist: Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr. In: id.: Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft. Studien zur preußisch-deutschen Militärgeschichte (= Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte, vol. 34). München 1991, pp. 1–18; John C. G. Röhl: Wilhelm II. Der Weg in den Abgrund 1900–1941. München 2009, pp. 1191–1195.

[14] See Hans Ehlert/Michael Epkenhans/Gerhard P. Groß (eds.): Der Schlieffenplan. Analysen und Dokumente (= Zeitalter der Weltkriege, vol. 2). Paderborn 2006.

lition of France, Britain, and Russia.[15] From this confession of strategic failure, the general proceeded to demand that the chancellor find a diplomatic solution. The key, he insisted, was to be a separate, negotiated peace with Russia, which he believed Germany could not conquer in view of its vast spaces and manpower reserves. A lenient settlement with this antagonist would free German forces to concentrate in the western theatre; it might also, he reasoned, persuade France to make peace as well and leave Germany free to defeat Great Britain, which Falkenhayn, like many others, had identified as Germany's most implacable enemy, the power "with which the plot against Germany stands and falls".[16] To this end, he suggested limiting military operations in the east in order to encourage the Russians into a negotiated settlement, in which the Germans would demand no more than an indemnity and, for strategic reasons, minor territorial adjustments.

Stunned by the general's proposal, Bethmann Hollweg at first suspected a manoeuvre by the soldiers to blame the civilians for the failed military campaign (a suspicion that was, at this stage in the war, not so much wrong as premature). His own concerns were primarily political, for he was more attuned than Falkenhayn to the domestic circumstances of the war – the dramatic sense of home-front unity during the first hours, the high costs of the initial campaigns, and the popular expectations to which the sacrifice had given rise. His own understanding of a "respectable peace" had taken shape in this atmosphere, amid a cascade of petitions and manifestos that arrived in his office during the first weeks of the war from influential political groups. As the reward for sacrifices borne in the cause of victory, these documents laid out an extravagant vision of German hegemony on the continent, anchored by vast territorial annexations in eastern and western Europe, as well as in Africa.[17] Whatever his personal sympathies in the summer of 1914 or his subsequent beliefs about the feasibility of this vision – and these remain a controversial topic – the chancellor was convinced in November that some dramatic political reward, a *Siegespreis*, was essential both for the future strategic security of the country and to compensate Germans for their wartime sacrifices. In both respects, he found Falkenhayn's call for an immediate diplomatic compromise unacceptable.

This discussion represented a unique moment in the history of the war in Germany: the civilian was resisting the soldier's demand for immediate peace negotiations, the soldier recommending not only a policy of diplomatic compromise, but also the terms of the political settlement. The statesman objected, however, not only to the policy, but also to its strategic premises. The paradoxes let loose in the process extended well beyond the clash of strategy and policy, military and civil-

[15] Holger Afflerbach: Falkenhayn. Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich. München [2]1996, pp. 204–208, cited: p. 204; Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 3, pp. 55–62.
[16] Cited in: Hans von Zwehl: Erich v. Falkenhayn. General der Infanterie. Eine biographische Studie. Berlin 1926, p. 97.
[17] Fritz Fischer: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/1918. Düsseldorf 1961, pp. 87–108.

ian authority;[18] and the effort to negotiate the difficult boundary between strategic and military matters was now complicated by a personal animosity rooted in differences of temperament between the general, whose arrogance had earned him many enemies within the army and without, and the chancellor, a man whose ponderous circumspection struck many soldiers as a sign of weakness. Communication between the two men quickly broke down in the following weeks, as each concluded that the other was unfit for the office he held.

Strictly speaking, Falkenhayn had observed the constitutional proprieties, taking care, in his dealings with the chancellor, to justify his policy recommendations on strategic grounds. In reality, however, his recommendations served a broader strategic purpose, namely of redefining the war into something he thought the German Army could win. The difficulty was that his policy recommendations, and the strategic calculations on which they rested, met with disfavour in a number of important places, of which the chancellor's office was only the first. In fact, Bethmann's reaction to Falkenhayn's call for peace negotiations represented the beginning of a tortuous struggle to devise a political resolution for the basic and abiding strategic dilemma that Falkenhayn had spelled out: the fact that Germany now found itself in a war that it could not win by military means. True, on the basis of Falkenhayn's strategic assessment, Bethmann reluctantly accepted in principle the idea of a separate negotiated peace in the east, in part because he, too, hoped that it might split the entente. He resisted, however, the suggestion of immediate negotiations, lest the difficult strategic situation imply German military weakness and make winning an acceptable *Siegespreis* unlikely. Instead, encouraged by officials in the Foreign Office, who were also worried about the morale of Austrian troops, Bethmann argued that additional military conquests by the Central Powers in Poland would provide the "leverage" (*Faustpfänder*) necessary to strengthen the German position for subsequent negotiations with Russia.

These calculations governed the chancellor's reaction to the unexpected Danish offer of mediation, which arrived in December 1914.[19] Bethmann did nothing to encourage serious negotiations. His response to the Danish overture was dilatory and unenthusiastic – a fact that he sought to hide from the more hopeful Falkenhayn. It quickly became clear, in any case, that the venture had no prospects of success. Not only was the Russian leadership under great pressure from its allies to remain in the war; it was no less reluctant than the German leadership to give the impression of negotiating from weakness. The circle could not be squared. Neither side was willing to concede enough.

The chancellor's tepid response to the Danish offer also betrayed his basic misgivings about Falkenhayn's strategic judgment. As these misgivings intensified, he

[18] Karl-Heinz Janßen: Der Kanzler und der General. Die Führungskrise um Bethmann Hollweg und Falkenhayn (1914–1916). Göttingen 1967, pp. 41–70.

[19] See Wilhelm Ernst Winterhager: Mission für den Frieden. Europäische Mächtepolitik und dänische Friedensvermittlung im Ersten Weltkrieg vom August 1914 bis zum italienischen Kriegseintritt Mai 1915. Stuttgart 1984.

did not shrink from intruding into strategic affairs, showing fewer scruples than Falkenhayn about constitutional niceties.[20] He turned for confirmation of his own, more favourable assessment of Germany's strategic prospects to other army leaders, particularly in the camp of the so-called "easterners", who rejected Falkenhayn's strategic preference for the western theatre and lobbied for his removal as head of the army. The most important figures in this camp were the popular leaders of German forces in the east, the heroes of Tannenberg, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff.[21] These men never made any secret of their disdain for Falkenhayn and his estimation of Germany's strategic situation, and they insisted that with the proper support they could achieve a brilliant military triumph and win the war in the eastern theatre.[22]

With Hindenburg' approval and Bethmann's support, Ludendorff now became the leading force in an elaborate cabal, which extended from the top ranks of the army to the emperor's family and entourage. His goal was to replace Falkenhayn in the OHL with Hindenburg or somebody else. One remarkable feature of the campaign was Hindenburg's threat to resign his command if Falkenhayn remained, for it was an act of insubordination toward the emperor, his commander-in-chief. Another was Bethmann's personal intervention with the emperor on behalf of Ludendorff as Falkenhayn's successor. This step, an incursion into the emperor's authority of command, was at best an act of dubious constitutionality. At this stage in the war, however, the emperor invoked his powers as the constitutional superior of all the main players in the scheme. Because he and his advisors were comfortable with Falkenhayn, disliked Ludendorff, and feared Hindenburg as a potential Wallenstein, no change took place in the supreme command. A temporary truce was established among the conflicting civilian and military agencies on the uneasy basis of a commitment to *Durchhalten*, or "holding out" both in the field and at home until something agreeable transpired strategically or politically.[23]

Bethmann continued nevertheless to support Hindenburg and Ludendorff. He remained blind to Falkenhayn's virtues – his respect for the constitutional limits of his own power and his sober realism about the strategic challenges of the war – and remained unconvinced that Falkenhayn's prioritisation of the western front could produce the political results, the "respectable peace", that he himself believed necessary to vindicate the war effort on the German home front. The extent of his own aspirations for a *Siegespreis* he concealed in abstract allusions to Germany's "self-assertion" or *Selbstbehauptung*, although he hinted that this concept

[20] He had already sought to intervene with the emperor in order to influence land operations in Flanders. See Janßen: Kanzler (see note 18), p. 39.

[21] The best guides are now the two recent studies: Wolfram Pyta: Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler. München 2007, pp. 91–380; Manfred Nebelin: Ludendorff. Diktator im Ersten Weltkrieg. München 2010.

[22] See Ekkehart P. Guth: Der Gegensatz zwischen dem Oberfehlshaber Ost und dem Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres 1914/15. In: Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen 35 (1984), pp. 75–111.

[23] Afflerbach (ed.): Kaiser (see note 6), p. 21.

embraced a certain "strengthening" (*Stärkung*) of the German position in Europe by means of "securities" and "guarantees".[24] At the same time, he calculated that installing the popular Hindenburg and Ludendorff into the OHL would make a compromise peace, whatever its terms, more politically palatable at home.

Bethmann persisted in this calculation despite a lot of evidence that it was perverse. Erich Ludendorff, the driving force in the eastern command, knew no hesitation or doubts about the possibility of military victory. In this respect he was more captive than Falkenhayn to the norms of German strategic culture, as embodied in Schlieffen with his vision of the *Vernichtungsschlacht*.[25] Ludendorff was easy to describe as a *Willensmensch*, a soldier of brutal obstinacy and no scruples. His experience on the eastern front had only confirmed his instinctive view that strategic success was above all a question of resolve. He was not so much insensitive to potential conflicts between politics and strategy as he was a confirmed believer in the subordination of policy to strategic imperatives, if not in the identity of the two. "Germany must have secure borders and reliable neighbours": his postulates were at once strategic and political.[26] When, in 1916, Falkenhayn's opponents finally achieved their goal and installed Hindenburg (together with Ludendorff) in the supreme command, a new political dynamic took hold in the German war effort, and it proved very much to Bethmann's disadvantage. As the possibility of a negotiated settlement again became a central issue, the chancellor found Ludendorff's shadow looming over every attempt to define the bases of a compromise peace.

The dispute between Bethmann and Falkenhayn at the turn of the year 1914/1915 had taken place largely out of public view. Although Falkenhayn's enemies were in touch with several figures in the Reichstag, neither the political nor the strategic issues became the object of public debate. The practical consequences of the dispute, however, soon did. The emphasis in Falkenhayn's strategic thinking remained fixed on the western front. Here he resolved to hold onto the territorial gains of 1914 and to wear down his opponents with a strategy of limited offensive operations, despite the conundrums inherent in this approach. Falkenhayn seemed wedded to the paradox that, as he explained in the autumn of 1914, "if we don't lose the war, we will have won it".[27] Translating a strategy of attrition into a practical political scenario for the end of the war involved another paradox. It appeared to require a victorious peace – albeit a "moderate" one (*gemäßigten Siegfrieden*) – in the west, with military triumphs significant enough to persuade one or more of the country's antagonists to make political concessions at the negotiating table.[28] These could then be sold to the German public as

[24] Winterhager: Mission (see note 19), pp. 533f.
[25] This conclusion is admittedly at odds with the observations of Isabel Hull: Absolute Destruction. Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany. Ithaca/London, pp. 217–225; see also Sven Lange: Hans Delbrück und der "Strategiestreit". Kriegführung und Kriegsgeschichte in der Kontroverse 1879–1914. Freiburg i. Br. 1995.
[26] Nebelin: Ludendorff (see note 21), p. 381.
[27] Cited: Afflerbach: Falkenhayn (see note 15), p. 198
[28] Cited: Afflerbach (ed.): Kaiser (see note 6), p. 28.

a victory. The difficulty with this scenario, which invoked hopeful recollections of the Peace of Hubertusburg in 1763, was that the country's antagonists were better able than the Germans to sustain a war of attrition.[29] And by the summer of 1916 this point had become incontrovertible. Falkenhayn's approach stumbled into a massive and misconceived offensive at Verdun, to which the Entente powers responded with their own massive and misconceived offensives at the Somme and in Galicia, in which they showed little sign of being worn down.[30] So the war continued. The price of "holding out" on the German home front meanwhile became increasingly difficult to endure.[31] Thanks in large part to the Allied blockade, but encouraged by home-grown bureaucratic disarray, shortages of food and other basic goods became the bane of everyday life in Germany, as well as the source of growing popular protest.

Bethmann Hollweg's decision late in 1916 to make a formal offer of peace negotiations came in response to these pressures. It reflected his growing pessimism about Germany's strategic predicament, and it played out in a broader political forum, which now included admirals as well as generals, the Reichstag, Germany's allies, and the president of the United States. The debates that provided the context for the chancellor's peace offer focussed on the German submarine fleet, whose ruthless deployment now seemed to promise more than relief from the dilemmas of attritional warfare; it portended the kind of decisive military victory that had eluded German forces in 1914.[32] By mid-1916, after more than a year of controversy over the risks as well as the benefits of unrestricted submarine warfare, a showdown loomed in a renewed clash of strategy and politics. The arguments in favour of unleashing the submarines were formulated in the German Admiralty, reinforced by an imposing body of expert testimony, and pervasively popularised in order to mobilise public support. They rested on the (strategic) claim that unrestricted submarine warfare would drive Britain out of the war and render the Entente unable to continue fighting within a matter of months. The opposing arguments reflected scepticism about these extravagant strategic claims, but were ultimately political: unlimited submarine warfare against Allied commerce threatened to drive the neutrals, above all the United States, into the war on Britain's side and to assure Germany's eventual defeat.

As the issue was at once strategic and political, it was again difficult for the German leadership to resolve. Falkenhayn and Bethmann Hollweg had long quarrelled over it.[33] The general contended that deploying submarines was purely a strategic decision, over which the admirals' professional judgment could not be

[29] Wallach: Dogma (see note 3), p. 301.
[30] See, in addition to Afflerbach: Falkenhayn (see note 15), pp. 351–359, pp. 410–423, Robert T. Foley: German Strategy and the Path to Verdun. Erich von Falkenhayn and the Development of Attrition, 1870–1916. Cambridge 2005.
[31] For a survey, see Roger Chickering: Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918. Cambridge ^{3}2014.
[32] See Bernd Stegemann: Die deutsche Marinepolitik 1916–1918. Berlin 1970.
[33] Afflerbach: Falkenhayn (see note 15), pp. 376–403; Janßen: Kanzler (see note 18), pp. 190–209.

impeached by civilian leaders with no constitutional authority in such matters; and Bethmann insisted that the civilian leadership bore the final responsibility for such a decision, whose political impact threatened to defeat its strategic purpose. In these circumstances, the chancellor concluded that the greatest hope of averting both a strategic and political disaster lay in the kind of compromise peace that he was now offering. As the pressure for unrestricted submarine warfare mounted from the army, the navy, the Reichstag, and the press, the chancellor struggled to find a diplomatic resolution.

His efforts were complicated by the change of army leadership in the late summer of 1916, in the wake of Romania's entry into the war on the Entente's side. Once Hindenburg and Ludendorff took over the OHL, a decision about the submarine could not be postponed much longer. Bethmann originally welcomed the change in the supreme command, calculating that the new leaders would be more open than Falkenhayn to his own political reasoning and that they would provide cover for the diplomatic offensive that he was now planning (although he failed to share his hopes with the two soldiers in question).[34] He proposed to publish an offer of peace negotiations, possibly with American mediation, in the hope that the overture would split the Entente, bring an end to the war with France or Russia, and result in German territorial gains that, however "lean" (*mager*), would prove politically acceptable in Germany because they would enjoy the endorsement of the two new army leaders.[35] In this scenario the popular generals were to provide Bethmann with, as Karl-Heinz Janßen put it, his "alibi with the German people".[36] Even if the negotiations did not get this far, a German offer to negotiate in good faith might, Bethmann reasoned, serve as a tactical device to win sympathy in America for Germany's plight and reduce the risk of war with the U.S. over the submarines.[37]

As became evident in tangled negotiations during the fall of 1916, Bethmann was worse than wrong in his assumptions. His tactics conceded a central role to the two army leaders – both as arbiters in the strategic debate over submarine warfare and as political godfathers to any negotiated peace. In one of their roles, Hindenburg and Ludendorff agreed to postpone a decision about the submarines until the campaign against Romania was over.[38] In their other role, they arrogated to themselves the power to define the bases on which Germany would offer to negotiate. As he sought to define the terms of his peace offer, hence the minimum

[34] Karl-Heinz Janßen: Der Wechsel in der Obersten Heeresleitung 1916. In: VfZ 7 (1959), pp. 337–371.
[35] Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg: Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege. Ed. by Jost Dülffer. Essen 1989, p. 175.
[36] Janßen: Wechsel (see note 34), p. 345.
[37] On this episode see Karl E. Birnbaum: Peace Moves and U-Boat Warfare. A Study of Imperial Germany's Policy towards the United States, April 18, 1916–January 9, 1917. Uppsala 1958, esp. pp. 100–251; Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 3, pp. 319–385.
[38] Birnbaum: Peace Moves (see note 37), p. 136, p. 180; Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 3, pp. 320f.

goals to be achieved, Bethmann Hollweg was reminded of the perils of discussing war aims in the absence of a strategic resolution of the conflict. His own ambitions had evidently retreated. He was by now in fact coming to adopt a definition of a victorious outcome much like that of Falkenhayn in late 1914: "If we survive against this coalition of superior strength (*Übermacht*) and emerge able to negotiate credibly", he confided in late October 1916, "we will have won."[39] Even on the subject of Belgium, whose retention had become a central symbolic marker of a victorious peace in Germany, his ideas constituted, as Professor Ritter has written, "a programme of extreme moderation" (although they did not envisage the complete restoration of the status quo ante).[40]

The chancellor was hardly in a position, however, to make the peace offer independently. "No one can imagine the enormous difficulties in which every action is entangled", wrote his confidant, Kurt Riezler, as Bethmann worked on his proposals. "Agreement must be achieved with the OHL and our allies, the federal states informed, the ministries filled in, the party leaders [and] the press managed – to say nothing of the emperor."[41] The complications quickly multiplied. When Bethmann consulted the other Central Powers, in whose name the offer was also to be extended, he received a catalogue of ambitious war aims, which stood not a chance of acceptance by the Entente as bases for negotiation.[42] When he sought the views of the army's supreme command about the strategic dimensions of a German negotiating position, he was robbed of all his illusions about the generals whose ascent he had recently abetted. Hindenburg and Ludendorff laid before him their own long list of demands for indemnities and annexations in the east and west. This document radiated Ludendorff's understanding of secure borders and reliable neighbours, as well as his disdain for Bethmann's diplomatic project, whose best outcome would be, he believed, to fail and thus to provide a pretext for unrestricted submarine warfare. That a peace offer was nonetheless published in December 1916 was a testimony to Bethmann's persistence and negotiating skills; but it arrived stillborn and shorn of any specific demands. Lest it be construed as a confession of German weakness, the supreme command insisted that its public announcement be swaddled in allusions to Germany's military strength and that it contain a scarcely veiled threat of unrestricted submarine warfare should the overture be rejected. For good measure, on the prompting of the supreme command, the emperor then contributed a widely reported, blustering speech to the same effect. As a consequence, Bethmann's peace offer invited the conclusion abroad that Germany had already won the war.[43]

The complications that beset even inter-allied negotiations on war aims spoke volumes about the obstacles to a compromise peace in this war; and the difficul-

[39] Ibid., p. 336.
[40] Ibid., p. 335.
[41] Kurt Riezler: Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Dokumente. Ed. by Karl Dietrich Erdmann. Göttingen 1972, p. 377.
[42] Steglich: Bündnissicherung (see note 10), pp. 59–93, pp. 107–125.
[43] Birnbaum: Peace Moves (see note 37), p. 249.

ties that stood in the way of agreements with the enemy were even more formidable.

Whatever the degree of Bethmann's moderation, no language – short of an offer of military surrender – would have persuaded the Entente to accept either the overture from the Central Powers in December 1916 or Woodrow Wilson's offer to mediate, which arrived in Europe several days later. The collapse of Bethmann's diplomatic plan removed the last barriers to unrestricted submarine warfare. In the face of another extravagant memorandum from the Admiralty, in which the virtues of the strategy were allowed to swamp the political perils, even the chancellor dropped his opposition to the step. The formal decision came in early January 1917, in a meeting at which the emperor presided. This meeting represented a unique instance of institutional coherence in the German war effort, the sole occasion on which a major decision emerged after consultations, however perfunctory, among all the agencies concerned, political as well as military.[44] But correct procedures were no guarantee of sensible decisions; and this one was a fateful leap in the dark.[45] It pandered to desperate hopes, which were grounded in the same popular stereotype of a "nation of shopkeepers" that had underpinned the image of Great Britain as Germany's most dangerous and devious foe.[46] The decision also reflected, not for the last time, Ludendorff's profound ignorance of the United States, which he regarded as a less serious strategic threat than Holland or Denmark. In fact, for him the decision for war with the U.S. held no qualms, if only because a compromise peace was nowhere in his intellectual repertoire, as his actions confirmed several months later.

The collapse of the German peace offer of December 1916 hastened the dramatic realignment of power that had begun in Berlin with the appointment of the new OHL. The decision to let loose the submarine, a weapon that had by the beginning of 1917 assumed the aura of a *Wunderwaffe*, was greeted with widespread jubilation in Germany. Popular commitment to the vigorous prosecution of the war was now embodied in the supreme command, particularly in the figure of Hindenburg, who had become, thanks in part to his astute cultivation of his own image, the symbol supreme of a victorious peace.[47] The power of the new supreme command thus had a popular, acclamatory basis. It differed fundamentally from Falkenhayn's, which had rested entirely on support within the emperor's inner circle. In so far as a majority in the Reichstag continued to vote in favour of the war bonds, the chancellor could claim a degree of tacit popular support, but his power, too, ultimately rested on the confidence of the emperor. Bethmann was thus more vulnerable in the new political landscape. So was the emperor himself,

[44] Deist: Strategy (see note 12), p. 277.
[45] Moriz Freiherr von Lyncker, 26. 1. 1917, Pless, in: Afflerbach (ed.): Kaiser (see note 6), p. 468, Nr. L 550.
[46] See Matthew Stibbe: German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918. Cambridge 2001.
[47] See, in addition to Pyta: Hindenburg (see note 21); Anna von der Goltz: Hindenburg. Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis. Oxford 2009, pp. 14–42; Jesko von Hoegen: Der Held von Tannenberg. Genese und Funktion des Hindenburg-Mythos. Köln 2007.

who had, in Riezler's judgment, "fled into the shadow of the two soldiers – and swims meekly in their wake".[48] William II's own credibility was now hostage to threats of resignation from the heroes in the supreme command. Given this new dynamic, an intensifying public debate over how to end the war drove sentiment toward two institutional poles, the army's supreme command and the Reichstag, each of which could lay claim to some sort of popular mandate. The issue was more complex than the institutional polarisation of strategy and politics, however, for the positions of both the OHL and the Reichstag entailed far-reaching strategic as well as political implications.

From the moment it was appointed, the new OHL enjoyed secure authority over strategic decision-making, for it faced none of the dissent and intrigue within the officer corps that had plagued Falkenhayn. Under the aegis of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the logic of strategy also shed the subtle ambiguities that had stalked Falkenhayn's thinking about how to end the war. The new commanders were resolved to win it by means of a decisive military victory, although, paradoxically, they adopted their predecessor's belief that the great battle would take place in the western theatre. Less paradoxically – and less subtly – they embraced the political logic that had guided Bethmann's thinking. The sacrifices borne by the German people demanded a *Siegespreis*. As a reminder of this fact and in hopes of raising morale in the army as well as on the home front, the OHL pressed the political leadership in the fall of 1916 to remove all restrictions on public discussion of German war aims. Like the decision to force the wholesale regimentation of the German economy in anticipation of a great strategic offensive, and like the decision to launch unrestricted submarine warfare, this move showed how far the army leaders'all-embracing view of strategy now intruded into politics.[49]

It is tempting, in view of these developments, to speak of a military dictatorship in Germany after 1916.[50] To do so, however, would be to underestimate the institutional constraints placed on the OHL, particularly by the Reichstag, which now emerged as a significant voice in the issue of war aims and peace. Here the increasing strains of war had found expression in growing restiveness, as well as in sympathy within the left-wing parties for the idea of a negotiated peace. Thanks in no small part to decisions by the supreme command, events in the first half of 1917 not only intensified the unrest in the Reichstag, but also brought the question of peace negotiations directly within its purview. Predictably, the decision to launch unrestricted submarine warfare drew the United States into the war in early April 1917, only weeks after revolution in Russia had brought down the tsarist autocracy. Both events dramatically altered the ideological terrain of the war, turning imperial Germany suddenly into the most autocratic party in the conflict; and they

[48] Riezler: Tagebücher (see note 41), p. 383.
[49] The classic study is Gerald D. Feldman: Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany, 1914–1918. Princeton 1966.
[50] See Martin Kitchen: The Silent Dictatorship. The Politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916–1918. London 1976; Nebelin: Ludendorff (see note 21), has resuscitated this argument.

had a marked impact on the German debate about a compromise peace.[51] President Wilson's calls for a "peace without victory" and a "world safe for democracy" resonated in appeals from the new Russian republic for a "peace without annexations or indemnities on the basis of the self-determination of peoples".[52] The messages from America and Russia seemed to point towards a compromise peace; and by linking such a peace to democratic reform they emphasised that the future constitutional order in Germany would be determined by the outcome of the war.

Nowhere was this nexus more a goad to action than in the German Social Democratic party, the largest in the Reichstag. This party spoke for the poor, the social groups that were most vulnerable to the material burdens of the lengthening war. It was already the leading parliamentary proponent of a compromise peace when the events of the spring of 1917, particularly the revolution in Russia, altered the political stakes. For one thing, to the Socialists the fall of the Russian autocracy represented a great victory, fulfilling their central war aim and resolving the principal issue that had persuaded the party to support the war in 1914. For another, events in Russia threatened to fan revolutionary opposition to the war within the labour movement in Germany, the Social Democratic party's primary constituency. The formation of a radical anti-war party, the Independent Social Democratic party in April 1917, raised the alarm. All these pressures lent new urgency to demands for a compromise peace, and they created a potential solvent for the political and strategic obstacles to negotiation. The key lay in the definition of an alternative *Siegespreis*, to be obtained from a negotiated end to the war: the reward for the sacrifices of the German people was now not to be territorial aggrandisement but democratic reform of the German constitution instead – the establishment of ministerial responsibility to the Reichstag, as well as suffrage reform in Prussia and the other German states.

Prospects for this kind of peace carried a high price, however, namely the end of the national consensus in favour of war, which had been struck in 1914. The heated debates over war aims, which had intensified since late 1916, made this truth all too evident. Both within the Reichstag and without, loud and articulate sentiment on the Right insisted on holding out for a much grander *Siegespreis*, the great territorial annexations that would accompany a German military triumph. The similarities to the thinking of the OHL were not coincidental; they corresponded to the material and moral support that the army provided to the advocates of this expansionist vision. Such were the lines along which political opinion polarised in Germany between Right and Left, between the proponents of a decisive "Hindenburg Peace" and the supporters of a negotiated "Scheidemann Peace" (named after the Social Democrats' parliamentary leader).[53] At issue now were

[51] Wolfgang Steglich: Die Friedenspolitik der Mittelmächte 1917/18. Wiesbaden 1964, pp. 59–116.
[52] Arno Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin. The Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917–1918. Cleveland/New York 1967, p. 133.
[53] See Steffen Bruendel: Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat. Die "Ideen von 1914" und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg. Berlin 2003.

conflicting definitions of victory, which meant conflicting visions of peace, as well as conflicting visions of domestic politics, for the Right insisted that military victory would vindicate the authoritarian institutions that the Left proposed to reform.

In the middle stood Bethmann Hollweg. The logic of the chancellor's own thinking about a negotiated peace entailed, as he himself recognised, concessions of some kind to domestic reform. So did his effort to preserve the support of the Social Democrats for the war bonds. But making constitutional reform, in addition to a negotiated peace, politically acceptable put all his powers of compromise, obfuscation, and intrigue to their greatest test. His tactic again featured an effort to compose intractable issues into ambiguity. In this case, contradictory assurances to the leaders of the Left and Right accompanied a series of vague public promises of domestic change. These culminated in the so-called Easter Message (*Osterbotschaft*) of 1917, a proclamation from the emperor that spoke of reforming the Prussian suffrage, but only after the war. Such gestures satisfied neither the Left nor the Right, so the domestic debate over peace and domestic reform smouldered on until it erupted in early July, in a parliamentary attack on the strategic direction of the war.

The uproar was occasioned by the leader of the Catholic Centre Party, Matthias Erzberger, who in a sensational speech to a parliamentary committee, declared that the German submarine campaign against Allied shipping had failed, that this strategy had been based on faulty reasoning from the start, and that, to make matters worse, the country's Austrian ally was on the verge of collapse. A majority in the Reichstag, which extended from the Social Democrats on the left to the Centre Party, thereupon voted to respond formally, on its own authority, to the Russian and American declarations about a negotiated end to the war. "The Reichstag", read the resulting resolution, "strives for a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of the peoples. With such a peace, forced acquisitions of territory and political, economic, or financial oppression are inconsistent."[54] This action, a defiant challenge to both the chancellor and the OHL, turned the Reichstag into the public proponent of a negotiated peace in Germany. But it also left no doubt where power ultimately resided. In the eyes of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who had long regarded Bethmann as little more than the manager of opinion in the Reichstag, the peace resolution represented his terminal failure in this capacity. The resolution itself they condemned on strategic grounds, as detrimental to "the offensive and defensive capability of the army".[55] Before it could even come to a vote, they provoked a showdown. They threatened to resign if Bethmann remained in office. The bewildered emperor, whom Bethmann had coaxed remarkably far towards making political concessions to the Reichstag, had no choice but to accept his chancellor's resignation and to appoint as his successor a little known bureaucrat, Georg Michaelis, whose principal qualification for office was his respect for

[54] Mayer: Wilson (see note 52), p. 133.
[55] Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 3, p. 580.

the strategic and political views of the soldiers. This much he made clear in his initial appearance before the Reichstag, when he pledged to support "your" resolution "as I understand it", noting that his understanding excluded any peace that did not "guarantee the security of Germany's borders for all time".[56]

The implications of Michaelis' appointment for the prospects of diplomatic compromise quickly became evident at the next stage in the unhappy history of peace negotiations during the First World War: the Papal Peace Note of 1 August 1917. This overture to the belligerent powers, which proposed the renunciation of German claims on Belgium as the basis for peace negotiations, has inspired a long controversy in Germany and a small mountain of literature, largely because a committee of the Reichstag was peripherally involved in formulating the German response.[57] In truth, this controversy has been beside the point. Quite apart from the resistance that it encountered generally among the belligerent powers, the Pope's overture foundered on the political realities in Germany, including the reluctance of Michaelis and Richard von Kühlmann, the foreign minister, to renounce German claims for fear of the domestic political consequences. Those members of the Reichstag who wished to pursue the Pope's overture had no power to do so. The OHL, which did have the power to do so, had no thought whatsoever of renouncing Belgium. "We would be completely secure", replied Ludendorff when asked for his views on the strategic aspects of the problem, "only if we occupied all of Belgium militarily and stood on the Flemish coast".[58] Ludendorff's logic, whether one called it strategic or political, was a barrier around which no proposal for peace negotiations could manoeuvre. The principal role of Michaelis and the foreign minister was to persuade the Reichstag not to challenge this truth.

The same truth crippled the peace feelers that the two sides continued to put out during the rest of the year.[59] It also governed the unsettled political situation in Germany during the last year of the war, as the polarisation intensified around the questions of peace and constitutional reform. Large organisations, the German Fatherland Party and the People's League for Freedom and Fatherland, sought to mobilise popular support for the various *Siegespreise* that were now associated respectively with the names of Hindenburg and Scheidemann.[60] Their

[56] Bert Becker: Georg Michaelis. Preußischer Beamter, Reichskanzler, Christlicher Reformer 1857–1936. Eine Biographie. Paderborn 2007, pp. 369–378.

[57] Steglich: Friedenspolitik (see note 51), pp. 117–231; Wolfgang Steglich (ed.): Der Friedensappell Papst Benedikts XV. vom 1. August 1917 und die Mittelmächte. Diplomatische Aktenstücke des Deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes, des Bayerischen Staatsministeriums des Äußern, des Österreichisch-Ungarischen Ministeriums des Äußern und des britischen Auswärtigen Amtes aus den Jahren 1915–1922. Wiesbaden 1970, esp. pp. 1–17; see also Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 4, pp. 40–66.

[58] Steglich (ed.): Friedensappell (see note 57), p. 537.

[59] Wolfgang Steglich (ed.): Die Friedensversuche der kriegführenden Mächte im Sommer und Herbst 1917. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen, Akten und Vernehmungsprotokolle. Wiesbaden 1984; Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 4, p. 248.

[60] Heinz Hagenlücke: Deutsche Vaterlandspartei. Die nationale Rechte am Ende des Kaiserreichs. Düsseldorf 1997.

activity revealed how war-weariness was now affecting the debate over war aims. The advocates of the Ludendorff Peace faced the charge that they were *Kriegsverlängerer*, warmongers whose extravagant demands were prolonging the war in their own political interests (which included the advantages afforded them by systems of class-based suffrage), while the advocates of compromise peace (and democracy) could offer an earlier end to the war.[61] The whole debate merely confirmed the fact, however, that constitutional reform was in principle no different from any other war aim. Like Belgium, Poland, or the iron fields of Briey-Longuy, its future awaited the strategic outcome of the war. This had been Ludendorff's premise all along; and in the end, he was right.

The German quest for a compromise peace had a coda, in which Ludendorff himself played a bizarre role. For a brief moment in the spring of 1918 it appeared that the general's ferocious resistance to a compromise peace would be vindicated – and this with the support of the Reichstag. Late in 1917 his armies won the war in the east. The ensuing negotiations at Brest-Litovsk resulted in a draconian treaty that not only documented Ludendorff's understanding of a compromise peace. The ratification of the treaty by a majority in the Reichstag also threw a revealing light on this institution's understanding of the same concept.

Ludendorff thereupon set out in the spring of 1918 to win the war in the west. The initial success of the great German offensives in France, towards which his strategic and political thinking had been oriented since the summer of 1916, raised prospects that the war would end in a magnificent German military triumph and a peace that would, like Brest-Litovsk, reward the most ambitious visions of a *Siegespreis*. By July, however, with the Allied counteroffensives, the collapse of these hopes became undeniable. It remains uncertain when Ludendorff admitted the failure to himself. He had nothing but contempt for the political offensive that the civilian leadership began to signal in June. After the middle of July, however, as strategic setbacks mounted along with indications that the morale of the German armies was eroding, his erratic actions and statements, like his hectic search for scapegoats, suggested the limits of his own confidence. At the end of September, pressed by his own advisers, he abruptly confessed the bad news to Hindenburg and the civilian leadership, calling for "an immediate armistice to prevent a catastrophe" and, to facilitate this escape from strategic crisis, the reform of the German government "on a broader basis".[62]

Ludendorff's demand recalled Falkenhayn's challenge to Bethmann Hollweg in November 1914. Once again the soldier confessed strategic failure and told the statesmen to enter peace negotiations – though now much more in the transparent hope of deflecting responsibility for military defeat onto the civilians. Like Falkenhayn, Ludendorff also called for a diplomatic compromise with the enemy. To this end, he offered, as "an enormous military concession", the orderly evacu-

[61] For one local example: Roger Chickering: The Great War and Urban Life in Germany. Freiburg, 1914–1918. Cambridge 2007, pp. 536–538.
[62] Nebelin: Ludendorff (see note 21), pp. 462f.

ation of the territories occupied by the German army in the west.[63] Then, in the expectation that the route to negotiations would be easier via the Americans, he endorsed the idea of approaching President Wilson, whose Fourteen Points, read superficially, seemed to promise a less vindictive settlement, albeit one negotiated by a democratic German government.[64]

Here the parallels with 1914 ended. This time the strategic catastrophe was no longer latent. Ludendorff's own subsequent efforts to argue otherwise only betokened his own increasing flight into fantasies. His admission of defeat at the end of September found a responsive audience among the civilian politicians, who, after brief consternation occasioned by the abrupt character of the news, could harbour few illusions about either the strategic or political implications.

With his confession, Ludendorff set in motion forces over which he quickly lost control, although his behaviour in this final crisis revealed habits of thought that had been impossible to break. The very language he used to describe the armistice he was seeking, "an offer of peace and armistice" (*Friedens- und Waffenstillstandsangebot*), reflected the thoroughgoing conflation of political and strategic categories in his mind, as well, perhaps, as his continuing retreat into his own illusions.[65] He seemed in fact to have regarded the offer primarily as a strategic manoeuvre, a move toward a cease-fire that would be protracted enough to allow the German armies to regroup for further action. As the ongoing negotiations with Wilson revealed the futility of this expectation, Ludendorff invoked strategic considerations in an attempt to block the political consequences of his own actions. Wilson's third note, which arrived in late October, prompted him to sign – without consulting the civilian government – a general order that dismissed Wilson's terms as unacceptable, "an exhortation (*Aufforderung*) to us soldiers to continue resisting with all our powers".[66]

By this stage, however, the politicians no longer heeded him. Unlike Falkenhayn in 1914, Ludendorff could not survive the terrible confession of strategic failure, for it destroyed the basis of his own political power, which in the end had rested on the promise of military victory. The emperor could no longer save him, because, thanks largely to Ludendorff, he himself was impotent. Nor could Hindenburg save him, as long as he himself hoped that his nimbus would somehow survive the catastrophe for which he shared responsibility with Ludendorff.[67] The dynamics were different in 1914 and 1918 in one other, fundamental respect. For the first and only time during the war, the strategic and political imperatives were now aligned in favour of a settlement. The civilian statesmen and the generals who mattered now agreed on the urgency of negotiations. The difficulty was that Ger-

[63] Ibid.
[64] See Patrick O. Cohrs: "American Peace" – Ein "demokratischer Frieden"? In: Jost Dülffer/Gottfried Niedhart (eds.): Frieden durch Demokratie? Genese, Wirkung und Kritik eines Deutungsmusters. Essen 2011, pp. 73–103.
[65] Ritter: Staatskunst (see note 4), here: vol. 4, p. 416.
[66] Ibid., p. 446.
[67] Pyta: Hindenburg (see note 21), pp. 350f.

many was no longer in a position to "negotiate" for peace. The strategic decision had been reached. Germany had lost.

"Germany risks losing the war strategically with Falkenhayn and losing it politically with Ludendorff."[68] Whatever its general accuracy as a verdict on Germany's military leadership during the First World War, this remark, which Bethmann Hollweg is reported to have made in the summer of 1916, well captured the gist of the chancellor's complaints about the two soldiers with whom he had to work in search of a negotiated peace. The same remark also threw light on the great obstacles – the difficulties of securing a consensus of political and military judgment – that prevented this outcome, for such a consensus was the indispensable prerequisite for any diplomatic compromise that might have had the remotest chance of success. The struggles between the civilian and military leadership were testimony as well to the immense problems that attended top-level decision-making in Germany, where institutional disarray compounded the contested conceptual ambiguities of strategy and politics.

Several points in this story deserve emphasis at the end. Although the soldiers erected high barriers to peace negotiations, they were not the only ones to do so. The civilians' political objections to ending the war without a conclusive military verdict were decisive early in the war; and they remained formidable throughout, even as war-weariness mounted and political pressures for a compromise peace gathered in the Reichstag. As this institutional development also made clear, decisions about peace negotiations were never the monopoly of a small group of civilian or military leaders. Thinking in the army leadership about strategy was deeply embedded in military institutions and traditions. The anxieties of the civilian leadership about the domestic political consequences of a negotiated peace were neither narrowly held nor illusory, as the bitter public debates over war aims and then the events in the autumn of 1918 demonstrated. It is arguable that the real illusion was the very prospect of a negotiated end to the First World War. It does not suffice simply to describe the resistance to such an outcome in Germany. The strategic and political obstacles were insurmountable everywhere.

[68] Cited in: Janßen: Wechsel (see note 34), p. 371.

Marvin Benjamin Fried

"A Life and Death Question": Austro-Hungarian War Aims in the First World War

Introduction

While a good deal of research has been done on the war aims of Germany and a number of other Great Powers, the aims of Austria-Hungary have been comparatively neglected. This chapter seeks to reappraise Austro-Hungarian war aims and to argue that they were far from incoherent, inconsistent, or insignificant. Rather, both civilian and military leaders in Vienna and Budapest pursued aggressive and expansionist policies aimed at securing and increasing the territorial, economic, and military power of the Dual Monarchy. A detailed analysis of the Monarchy's most important war aims, as discussed internally and in conjunction with its most important ally, Germany, will demonstrate three points: first, that these war aims were more offensive, expansionist, and annexationist in the Balkans and in Poland than previously thought; second, that the Foreign Ministry remained in overall control of the formulation of war aims, in opposition to the army's wishes and contrary to the German example; and third, that Austria-Hungary's at times almost delusional insistence on its principal war aims was of considerable historical importance as a factor prolonging the war.

Phase I: Stalemate and Uncertainty – July 1914 to October 1915

Historians of the Dual Monarchy agree that, at the outbreak of the war in July 1914, few of its leaders had any specific war aims in mind beyond the military defeat and political subjugation of Serbia. However, once the Monarchy was at war with Russia and it was clear that the conflict would not be as short as originally hoped, the Austro-Hungarian leadership began to develop detailed, and ultimately very extensive, war aims which formed the subject of furious debate at the highest echelons of power. Initially, the military focused on battlefield successes in Serbia and Galicia, while the diplomats concentrated on preventing hostile interventions by Italy and Romania.

But from the very start of the war until the defeat of Serbia eighteen months later, Austro-Hungarian officials, confronted with stalemate on the battlefield and potential threats from the Monarchy's neighbours, were uncertain about their

wartime goals. Even so, as this section will show, key policies were developed and crystallised with regard to the Balkans and Poland. In these months of relative political harmony, the Foreign Ministry (*Ministerium des Äußeren*, henceforth MdÄ) under Leopold Count Berchtold and the Military High Command (*Armeeoberkommando,* henceforth AOK) under General Conrad von Hötzendorf were in agreement that political and military hegemony over Serbia and the Western Balkans was a vital war aim. The Hungarian Prime Minister István Count Tisza, by contrast, was more preoccupied with so-called "negative war aims", notably warding off hostile Romanian, Italian, and even Bulgarian intervention. It was Berchtold's perceived weakness in this area that led to his replacement by the "Balkanist" István Baron Burián von Rajecz.[1] As Burián was Tisza's close ally, however, the change still left the MdÄ in a strong position to insist that an honourable peace depended on victory in the Balkans rather than against Russia.

Given the military defeats the Monarchy was facing on all fronts, the AOK's influence on war aims was as yet somewhat limited. Yet, the whole Austro-Hungarian leadership – both military and diplomatic – continued to pursue offensive goals in the Balkans, even when the crushing might of Russian intervention forced them to undertake a northwards troop deployment the purpose of which was mere survival. Even so, in these months of AOK failures to achieve victory on either front, the MdÄ was less inhibited in defining the Monarchy's war aims than at any later stage, even if these remained theoretical for the time being. These ideas provided the framework for consistent war aims planning by the MdÄ, albeit later modified by the AOK's excessive and Tisza's minimalist demands, but continually under the auspices of the Monarchy's foreign policy establishment. Finally, the conviction of the elites, even after several failed invasions of Serbia, was that an honourable peace could not be achieved unless their Balkan war aims were met – hence the need to fight on.

War Aims Regarding Serbia and the Balkans

The area where Austro-Hungarian officials were most united over war aims was Serbia: it was here that the sacrifices of the war could be made good in terms of territorial expansion and political control. The question was just how much could the Monarchy demand.

Tisza's towering stance against an offensive war at the Common Ministerial Council (*Gemeinsamer Ministerrat*, henceforth GMR) of 7 July 1914 in response to Sarajevo is well documented;[2] he followed it up with a letter to Emperor Franz

[1] Francis Roy Bridge: Österreich(-Ungarn) unter den Großmächten. In: Adam Wandruszka/Peter Urbanitsch (eds.): Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918. Vol. 4,1: Die Habsburgermonarchie im System der internationalen Beziehungen. Wien 1989, pp. 313–318.

[2] See i.e.: Samuel R. Williamson, Jr.: Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War. New York 1991; Wandruszka/Urbanitsch (eds.): Habsburgermonarchie (see note 1); József Galántai: Hungary in the First World War. Budapest 1989; Richard F. Hamilton/Holger H. Herwig: Decisions for War, 1914–1917. New York 2004.

Joseph himself insisting that Serbia should not be "destroyed, much less annexed"[3] – a position he would hold to throughout his term in office. Instead, Serbia must cede territory to Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania, along with a few "strategically important border corrections" in favour of Austria-Hungary, as well as pay reparations. All this, Tisza argued, would suffice to keep Serbia under the Monarchy's control. The fact that he hoped that this "middle road",[4] non-annexationist approach might suffice to keep Russia out of the war only testifies to the unbridgeable gulf that had opened up between the Monarchy and Russia. Tisza was, after all, the most moderate member of the GMR, yet even he was espousing the reduction of Serbia as a war aim. Although he still professed a desire for "as little territorial growth as possible", he nevertheless stated that some regions needed to be annexed due to "very important strategic concerns", including the north-western corner of Serbia called the Mačva, the north-east of Serbia around Negotin, and Belgrade.[5] He expressed similar views to the Germans.[6] These were by no means minor border rectifications, and demonstrate an incremental growth in Tisza's war aims planning that brought it closer to the MdÄ's goals. After the AOK lost Belgrade and Schabatz (the administrative centre of the Mačva) in mid-December 1914 and it even looked as though the Serbs would launch a counter-attack into Austro-Hungarian territory, Tisza spoke of an impending "catastrophe".[7] Yet despite what was looming on the northern front, Tisza argued to Berchtold and the Emperor that quashing the danger in the south and solving the Serbian question was still the "most important principal duty" of the Monarchy, which would have to be "solved by all means".[8]

Berchtold, too, was remarkably tenacious in his insistence on the primacy of the Balkan theatre:[9] from a "political perspective the prostration of Serbia" and the ancillary benefits of extending the Monarchy's influence in the Balkans were "far more important" than advancing further in Russia or even recapturing occupied Austrian territory in Galicia.[10] Although he generally deferred to Conrad on military matters, in one of Berchtold's few moments of independent strength he emphasised the "great political importance" of the Balkan front;[11] proposals for a "peace without victory" could not be entertained as long as the Serbian Army was still intact. While the Foreign Minister professed to be concerned with securing the supply lines to Turkey as the Germans wanted, it was the goal of bringing Serbia to its knees that was "an absolute imperative".[12]

[3] Tisza to Franz Joseph, 8. 7. 1914, Magyarországi Réformátus Egyház Zsinati Levéltar (= REZL) [Hungarian Reformed Church Synodal Archives, Budapest], 44b.12.10a.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Tisza, Memorandum, 16. 11. 1914, REZL, 44b.12.10a.
[6] Tisza, Aide Memoire, 5. 12. 1914, REZL, 44.7.21-22.
[7] Tisza to Franz Joseph, 23. 12. 1914, REZL, Box 45/17.
[8] Tisza to Berchtold, 15. 12. 1914, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Wien (= HHStA), PA-I-499.
[9] Berchtold to Giesl (AOK), 26. 11. 1914, HHStA, PA-I-500.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Berchtold to Giesl (Conrad), 26. 11. 1914, HHStA, PA-I-499.
[12] Ibid.

The Foreign Ministry's officials, who were engaged in developing various political and economic plans for Serbia, went even further and on occasion even disregarded the views of Tisza. One of their plans, for example, drawn up for Berchtold by MdÄ Section I (Balkans) in early August 1914, listed various ways in which Serbia could be subjugated and exploited. The most "radical" method, and one they recognised as being contrary to the GMR decision, was Serbia's complete disappearance by means of annexation and integration.[13] Alternatively, an "independent" Serbian state might be limited by a customs union or similar device, although Austria-Hungary would need to control much of the country's internal administration such as customs and finances. If the country was to be released after the war, the officials recommended a commercial treaty similar to those prior to 1908.[14]

In practice, however, from the outbreak of war until the new year, it was Tisza's position on Serbia that was the decisive factor in Austro-Hungarian war aims planning. During the July Crisis, his goal had been to prevent Russian involvement by assuring the world of Austria-Hungary's defensive intentions. After this failed, he began to gradually support and then even to spearhead the MdÄ's policy of limited annexations, particularly in talks with the Germans. Moreover, he agreed with the MdÄ that, although the AOK was suffering heavy losses on the Russian front, success on the Balkan front remained the principal goal; they had similar objectives in key trans-Danubian border areas such as Belgrade, Mačva, and Negotin. Although Berchtold and Tisza had some differences in approach, the fact their goals were the same allowed the MdÄ to retain overall control of policymaking and the formulation of war aims. For the MdÄ as for Tisza, a victory in the Balkans remained the only basis on which a peace with Russia could be negotiated.

Polish Sub-Dualism or Tisza's Division?

In addition to the Balkans, Austro-Hungarian officials spent considerable time debating the future of Poland. The question of Polish independence was a poisoned chalice for Austria-Hungary. On the one hand, removing Poland from the already overwhelming Russian power-complex was a clear policy goal from mid-August 1914,[15] but acquiring it would not necessarily be beneficial. True, some politicians in Vienna might calculate that detaching the Galician Poles and uniting them with their brethren in Congress Poland would remove from the *Reichsrat* an important Slav grouping which threatened the German majority. But that is where the potential benefits ended. A strengthening of the Polish national consciousness

[13] Andrássy, Denkschrift, 10. 8. 1914, REZL, 44.7.21-22.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Lothar Höbelt: Die austropolnische Lösung – eine unendliche Geschichte. In: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (ed.): Der Erste Weltkrieg und der Vielvölkerstaat (= Acta Austro-Polonica, vol. 4). Wien 2012, pp. 35–54.

might lead to further centrifugal pressures in the Monarchy. The Hungarians, for their part, were dead against anything that might lead to the replacement of Dualism by a Trialist system which would dilute Magyar power. Tisza therefore supported a so-called Austro-Polish solution, which would see Poland unified but under *Cisleithanian* (i.e. Austrian) suzerainty in a "sub-Dualist" fashion.

With the defeats on the Russian front in 1914 and the loss of Galicia, neither option could be implemented. This did not prevent the MdÄ from developing its plans, however. For the former Consul General in Warsaw and future *Zivillandeskommissar* in Lublin (Poland), Leopold Andrian zu Werburg, for example, the aim of this war must be for Austria-Hungary to remain "independent and strengthened";[16] and his maximum programme, to be implemented if Germany managed to be victorious in the west, was to make Austria-Hungary truly a "European Great Power of the first order" through widespread annexations in Poland at the expense of a defeated Russia.[17]

The Hungarians, by contrast, were less interested in annexations in Poland and Tisza's bias in favour of Serbia became clear. Rather than insisting on Bosnia for Hungary as a compensation for Poland's falling to the Austrian half of the Monarchy, he was already thinking a step ahead. As early as December 1914 he recommended to Berchtold and various other leaders a pre-emptive division of (as yet unconquered) territory. With the excuse that a "triple allocation" of civilian occupation personnel in Serbia (Austrian, Hungarian, and Imperial Austro-Hungarian) was wasteful and would lead to "completely superfluous tensions", Tisza recommended a "competitive advantage" approach.[18] By employing "Hungarian officials in Serbia and Austrian officials in Russian Poland", Tisza thought a "natural" division of labour would strengthen the Monarchy's administration of each of these regions.[19] Although his request was rejected by both Berchtold and the Austrian Prime Minister Count Stürgkh,[20] Tisza's goal had been to make use of Hungarian officials in Serbia to prevent the army's de facto annexation, gambling that the Austrians would never allow Poland to secede entirely.

The other problem with Poland was Germany's involvement, as Poland was a central war aim for Berlin too.[21] As early as August 1914 the German State Secretary Gottlieb von Jagow had rejected the idea of an Austro-Polish solution,[22] and the German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg had tied the question to the *Mitteleuropa* programme. *Mitteleuropa*, the initially vague German plan for

[16] Andrian, Denkschrift "Übersicht der für den Friedenschluss in Erwägung zu ziehenden Lösungsmodalitäten", December 1914, HHStA, PA-I-496.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Tisza to Berchtold, 2. 12. 1914, HHStA, PA-I-973.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Stürgkh to Tisza, 11. 12. 1914, HHStA, PA-I-973.
[21] Gary W. Shanafelt: The Secret Enemy. Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance, 1914–1918. New York 1984, p. 39.
[22] John Leslie: Austria-Hungary's Eastern War Aims. August 1914 to August 1915. Unpublished Ph.D. Diss. Cambridge 1975, p. 45; cited in: Höbelt: Austropolnische Lösung (see note 15), p. 2.

a customs union with Austria-Hungary and any other friendly or dependent countries, would remain German policy throughout much of the war and was formally put forward in November 1916 as a condition for Germany's acquiescing in an Austro-Polish solution.[23]

Burián's Brinkmanship

Berchtold's replacement by Burián at the helm of the MdÄ on 13 January 1915, the result of the former's perceived weakness in the face of Italian threats of war, strengthened Tisza further. Burián was dismissed by his detractors as a mere "doctrinaire" diplomat who "has always been in the Balkans and conducted a Balkan policy".[24] In the event, however, Burián, stern of demeanour and given to strong rhetoric, applied himself with some vigour to strengthening the prestige of the Monarchy and ensuring its parity with Germany. To this end, he engaged in a degree of brinkmanship, rejecting the option of Serbian peace, for example, but also the army's annexationist attitudes, in pursuit of policy aimed at securing the conditions necessary to achieve the Monarchy's war aims in the Balkans.

Initially, he concentrated on preventing the Balkan neutrals and Italy from attacking Austria-Hungary. In February 1915 he stated that he would rather have war with Romania and Italy than give up even a "square meter"[25] of Austro-Hungarian soil. However, in his first turbulent months in office Burián was faced with the loss of the fortress Przemyśl in March and the Gallipoli landings in April; and when Italy, enticed by Entente promises of extensive gains, called his bluff and declared war May 1915, the Monarchy was fighting on three fronts.

The failure of Burián's unyielding line against Rome did not, however, alter his behaviour towards Romania, whose demands he continued to reject. This exasperated the Germans[26] and even his benefactor Tisza, who believed that a Romanian attack would "automatically" follow an Italian one. Such a fourth front would lead to Italian, Romanian, and Serbian troops invading deep into Austrian and Hungarian territory, rendering any gains on the Russian front useless. Indeed, it would mean the "complete collapse" of the Monarchy, leading to its "dissolution".[27]

Burián was not impressed by this gloomy talk; nor would he consent to the vast offers of territory to Bulgaria that Tisza and the Germans were demanding to secure Bulgaria's assistance.[28] Tisza insisted frantically that the "entire future de-

[23] Shanafelt: Secret Enemy (see note 21), p. 71.
[24] Stephan Burián von Rajecz: Báró Burián István Naploi [diaries], (henceforth Burián: Napló), 1907–1922. Edited by Magyarországi Réformátus Egyház Zsinati Levéltar, Erzsébet Horváth, Sándor Tenke. Budapest 1999, p. 139, fn. 159; quoting Forgách to Tisza, 26. 2. 1915, REZL, 44b 154–155, 44a 27.
[25] Bridge: Österreich(-Ungarn) (see note 1), p. 344; original location is HHStA-PA-I, Forgách Aide Memoire, 10. 01. 1915.
[26] Burián, Memorandum, 25. 5. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-503; also: REZL, 44.10.27.
[27] Tisza to Burián, 1. 5. 1915, REZL, 44.11.28.
[28] Tisza to Burián, 18. 5. 1915, REZL, 45/17.

pended" on holding the Balkan situation, mainly by using the Bulgarian link,[29] as this was the "only way to prevent the collapse in the Balkans";[30] yet Burián was only prepared to make a few concessions to Bulgaria in the region of Macedonia, but nowhere else in the Balkans.

As regards Serbia, Burián's war aims, despite his initial hesitations, ended up becoming more extensive. Although when in late May 1915 the Germans suggested a separate peace with Serbia, Burián told Bethmann he was prepared to consider it, he was not thinking of an unconditional accommodation with Belgrade.[31] Indeed, he ruled out a return to the status quo ante and insisted on Serbia's "humiliation"; his demands included border corrections, the cession of Macedonia to Bulgaria, and guarantees against Greater Serbian "machinations". Bethmann, for his part, was dismayed, and complained that Burián was not prepared to offer any "tangible benefits" to Serbia in return for a separate peace, and only "highlighted" Serbia's "humiliation and diminution" as Austria-Hungary's war aims.[32]

The positive implementation of war aims could only begin in earnest after the most serious losses were reversed. Although the AOK was able to hold back the larger Italian Army in the Alps, Serbia had still not been defeated and it took German assistance to turn the tide for Austria-Hungary in 1915. This came with the Battle of Gorlice-Tarnów (May to September), which brought the liberation of almost all Austro-Hungarian territory and pushed the Russians out of Congress Poland all together. As the Dual Alliance successes against Russia grew, so did optimism about eventual victory in the Balkans; but with the ensuing march southwards Burián found himself facing strong adversarial challenges, from both Germany and Bulgaria, in the Monarchy's own historic backyard.

Despite the fierce fighting on the northern and then Italian fronts, Burián continued, and even developed further, Berchtold's policy of giving priority to the Balkans. At the same time, however, he had been installed in office in order to strengthen the Monarchy's prestige and establish its parity with Germany by driving a very hard bargain with Italy; and he was stubbornly determined not to cave in to pressure from Berlin or anywhere else. Although he ultimately failed to prevent Italian intervention, his approach only hardened vis-à-vis Romania; but whether he would be able to implement his Balkan war aims would depend on the defeat of Serbia, for which the Monarchy needed both German and Bulgarian assistance.

Phase II: Conquest and Occupation – October 1915 to January 1917

Austria-Hungary achieved its long desired goal of defeating Serbia and Montenegro in the winter of 1915. After the Gorlice-Tarnów offensive the Bulgarians con-

[29] Tisza to Burián, 23. 5. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-519.
[30] Tisza to Burián, 18. 5. 1915, REZL, 45/17.
[31] Burián, Memorandum, 25. 5. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-503; also: REZL, 44.10.27.
[32] Ibid.

cluded that the Central Powers were likely to win the war, and agreed to join them in exchange for Serbian Macedonia. The addition of Bulgarian troops was vital to achieving the fall of Serbia by engulfing it in a three-pronged pincer movement, creating widespread optimism in Vienna and Budapest: Serbia could at last be taught a "lesson" to satisfy "Austria-Hungary's prestige".[33] (This, of course, ignored the fact that the Monarchy's successes had mainly been achieved thanks to German and Bulgarian assistance.) This section will analyse the internal and external pressures the Monarchy's leaders faced in determining and securing their war aims in these months of apparent success and what changed in their planning when the Brusilov Offensive once again put Austria-Hungary on the defensive.

The Future of the Balkans

With the retreat of Serbia's Army across Albania, military realities began to give the AOK a new, disproportionate voice in discussions on the future of the Balkans. Conrad, for example, now began an aggressive foray into influencing Austro-Hungarian war aims, which can be traced in the discussions between the MdÄ, AOK, and the Emperor via the military-bureaucratic framework of the *Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät* (MKSM). In October 1915, in one of the earliest wartime examples of his annexationist views, Conrad advocated "potential territorial growth in Russia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Italy".[34] In November, in an extraordinary approach to the Emperor himself – who generally only communicated with his Foreign Minister about such matters – Conrad insisted that Serbia should not be restored as an independent state, which would only be an "agitation cauldron" that could reignite yet another "catastrophic war".[35] He recommended a simple solution: the complete annexation of both Montenegro and Serbia by the Monarchy; and dismissed as irrelevant the resulting increase in Austria-Hungary's Slavic component. Rejecting the frontier modifications that had been mooted earlier, he argued that an "artificial construct" linked to Albania and including only Belgrade, the Mačva, and the Sandjak without wider annexations would leave the Monarchy with a disjointed and indefensible southern frontier that would inevitably lead to a "most serious conflict".[36] The question was important, Conrad explained, because the Balkans represented the "most natural development region for the economic goals of the Monarchy",[37] – in comparison with which the Polish question was secondary. His aims in the western Balkans were, therefore, to throw the Italians out, to avoid a protectorate over Albania by dismembering it, and to annex or at least perpetually occupy Montenegro and rump Serbia so as to keep Bulgaria in check. In short, for Conrad, the "final delineation and stabilisa-

[33] Hohenlohe to Burián, 6. 10. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-952.
[34] Conrad to Franz Joseph, 10. 10. 1915, Kriegsarchiv (= KA), Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (= MKSM), 1915 18-27, 25-1/5.
[35] Conrad to Franz Joseph, 22. 11. 1915, KA, MKSM, 1915 18-27, 25-1/5.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

tion" of Austria-Hungary's Balkan aims and borders represented of all political and military questions the "most vital of the vital questions",[38] and to allow even a small Serbia to survive would mean that despite its military victory "the Monarchy would have to consider the war a defeat".[39]

Conrad's plans and recommendations stood in sharp contrast to Tisza's. Essentially, the Hungarian Prime Minister wanted the Monarchy to reserve the exploitation of rump Serbia for itself while keeping Germany and Bulgaria out. Burián was of similar mind: Serbia was a "border land" in the "most immediate sphere of interest" of the Monarchy, and therefore its occupied regions had to be exclusively under the control of an Austro-Hungarian military and civilian administration.[40] However, while no one in the Monarchy wanted to share the Austrian half of the Austro-Bulgarian partition of Serbia with Germany, Tisza could not afford to see it annexed to the Monarchy. He was worried – unlike the cavalier Conrad – that annexation would eventually mean political power for the southern Slavs which could overwhelm the Dualist configuration of the Monarchy. Hence, Tisza desired to keep the majority of Serbs out of the Monarchy and to segregate them in the newly incorporated border regions from rump Serbia.[41] The means to do this would be a lengthy transition period during which the newly acquired border territories would be governed autocratically, while the Monarchy implemented a "generous colonisation of Hungarian and German elements".[42] This new "patriotic majority" would form a wedge between the Serbian rump state and the Serbian population of Slavonia and south Hungary. In an analogous fashion, Tisza wanted to see a "systematic augmentation" of Hungarian and German towns in Syrmia, Bacska, and the Banat as a barrier to protect the southern border of the Monarchy from without and repress the Serbian minority within.[43] He therefore advocated a Hungarian annexation of the Mačva, followed by an "intensive colonisation" of reliable Hungarian and German farmers in order to create a wedge between the Serbs inside and those outside the Monarchy. In this way, Tisza hoped, Belgrade would sink to the level of a Hungarian provincial town and cease to be the focus for South Slav nationalism.[44] Placing his premiership on the line, Tisza threatened to resign if his colleagues and the Emperor decided to annex rump Serbia; and certainly he, above all others, deplored the idea of extensive territorial growth by the Monarchy. Yet his own solution (tantamount to demographic rearrangement similar to the German "*Grenzstreifen* concept" in Poland) was at its core also both an expansionist and aggressive policy; Tisza even recognised that Russia would remain an enemy as a result. He believed,

[38] Ibid.
[39] Conrad to Burián, 25. 12. 1915, KA, MKSM, 1915 18-27, 25-1/5.
[40] Burián to Thurn, 7. 11. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-973; also: REZL, 45/15.
[41] Tisza to Franz Joseph, 4. 12. 1915, REZL, 44.14.31; also: REZL, 44.9.25.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Miklós Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie, 1914–1918. Budapest 1966, p. 365.

however that this was the only acceptable solution, and that the best chance for an honourable peace lay in leaving at least a portion of Serbia intact.[45]

It was Burián who applied the brakes to both Conrad's and Tisza's extravagant ideas – although his own policies, while more moderate than theirs, could still hardly be considered modest. For example, he wanted territorial changes in the Balkan peninsula and elsewhere to provide for the "greatest possible increase in power and security" for Austria-Hungary,[46] neutralising Serbian-Russian agitation[47] and ensuring that in some form or another Serbia and Montenegro would fall under Austria-Hungary's "political, military, and economic rule".[48] True, while he assured Tisza that he regarded Austrian and Hungarian security as indivisible,[49] and promised Conrad that he would work for some, but not all, the annexations the AOK was demanding, he refused to endorse their wilder plans for "radical territorial reorganisation".[50] It was not that Burián was opposed in principle to annexing Serbian territory, or to expanding his Balkan war aims; but he was unwilling on the one hand to sell himself short by committing himself too early, or on the other to commit himself to annexations which might prevent an honourable peace. Even so, he was of one mind with both Conrad and Tisza over a quite impressive programme of war aims: Montenegro must lose its coastline, including Mount Lovćen which threatened the Austro-Hungarian naval base at Catarro, and some northern territory to the Monarchy, and territory to Albania, while Serbia must lose Belgrade, the Mačva, and the territory promised to Bulgaria.[51] Albania would become an Austro-Hungarian protectorate, while Poland was to be kept away from Germany and "affiliated" with the Monarchy. Tisza also pushed for his 'Poland for Austria, Serbia for Hungary' plan, which he considered the "most important question".[52]

The final GMR to settle this debate took no decisions in detail about Serbia, allowing for maximum flexibility, but it agreed that any territory annexed by the Monarchy would go to Hungary.[53] Some later writers have erroneously interpreted this as a GMR decision for the outright annexation of Serbia,[54] but according to statements from diplomats at the time this was clearly not the case; although Burián admitted in his diary that he personally preferred to annex Serbia,[55] he was more pragmatic in discussions at the GMR. In fact, although there would be three

[45] Tisza to Franz Joseph, 4. 12. 1915, REZL, 44.14.31; also: REZL, 44.9.25.
[46] Burián to Conrad, 25. 12. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-499; also cited in: Fritz Fischer: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18. Düsseldorf 1967, p. 396.
[47] Conrad to Burián, 21. 12. 1915, REZL, 44.14.31; Burián's comments, quoted by Conrad.
[48] Conrad to Burián, 25. 12. 1915, KA, MKSM, 1915 18-27, 25-1/5.
[49] Burián to Tisza, 10. 12. 1915, REZL, 44.3.3.
[50] Burián to Conrad, 10. 12. 1915, HHStA, PA-I-499; also: Burián to Tisza, 10. 12. 1915, REZL, 44.3.3.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle (see note 44), 4. 1. 1916, p. 363.
[53] Ibid., p. 374.
[54] Fischer: Griff (see note 46), p. 397.
[55] Burián: Napló (see note 24), p. 167.

more GMRs under Burián's auspices in 1916, none of them raised the issue of war aims again. Burián therefore was left with a free hand to determine war aims policy, and he exercised it immediately. At the end of January 1916 he told his top negotiator that the discussions with Montenegro would be "less about negotiating, than about dictating Austria-Hungary's peace conditions"[56] and this *Diktat* included the cession of Montenegro's coastline, the Lovćen plateau, other militarily vital areas, and domestic policing and customs control.[57] Although Burián believed these terms would create a strong position for the Monarchy in Montenegro – a goal deemed to be a "life and death question"[58] for Austria-Hungary – they satisfied neither Conrad (who felt they were too lenient)[59] nor the Germans (who felt they were too harsh).[60] There were similar controversial debates about Albania, which Burián wished to treat as a protectorate and expand Austria-Hungary's influence right down the eastern Adriatic and into the Mediterranean.[61] Here too, however, despite pressures from internal and external stakeholders, Burián stood firm and the MdÄ continued to pursue the war aims he had laid down.

The Austro-Bulgarian Clash

Perhaps the strongest evidence of Austria-Hungary's willingness to resist any encroachment on its sphere of interest came from its confrontations with Bulgaria over Serbia early in 1916. Indeed, a diplomatic and military clash over Kosovo nearly caused a fatal unravelling of the Quadruple Alliance. For while Burián, in his determination to keep his hands free, was refusing to clarify his intentions regarding Kosovo and other regions of Serbia which did not fall on the Bulgarian side of the agreed treaty line, the Bulgarians began to advance into this territory, provoking both Conrad and Burián to respond in a manner which was harsh even by their standards.

True, the German Foreign Ministry disapproved of Bulgaria's encroachments west of the treaty line,[62] and Burián managed to use this to obtain Berlin's support for his planned protectorate over a greater Albania, which was to include Kosovo.[63] He even got the Turks (never keen to see Muslims consigned to Slav rule) to support his project.[64] The Bulgarians, however, continued to attach "very great

[56] Burián to Otto, 19. 1. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-953k.
[57] Burián to Conrad, 20. 1. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-953k; also: REZL, 45/16.
[58] Burián to Fürstenberg, 22. 1. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-954p; also: REZL, 45/16.
[59] AOK to Burián, 22. 1. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-953k.
[60] Tschirschky to Jagow, 22. 1. 1916, National Archives Records Administration, USA (= NARA), PG-1117, SA (T-136).
[61] Marvin B. Fried: The Cornerstone of Balkan Power Projection. Austro-Hungarian War Aims and the Problem of Albanian Neutrality, 1914–1918. In: Diplomacy & Statecraft 23 (2012) 3, pp. 425–445.
[62] Jagow to Treutler, 31. 1. 1916, NARA, UM-3/1-297.
[63] Burián to Hohenlohe, 2. 2. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-1007; also Hohenlohe to Jagow, 5. 2. 1916, NARA, UM-3/1-297.
[64] Tschirschky to Bethmann-Hollweg, 13. 2. 1916, NARA, PG-1117, SA (T-136).

importance"[65] to annexing Pristina and Prizren in Kosovo, which fell on the Austrian side of the treaty border but where they had already installed civilian administrators. Torn between their allies, the Germans were perplexed and divided: on the one hand, Kaiser Wilhelm repeatedly urged Tsar Ferdinand to accept "the independence of Albania under Austrian protection".[66] (According to Fischer, the Germans were beginning to fear for their fair share of the "spoils of war",[67] and Berlin may have been hoping that German support for an Austro-Hungarian success in the Balkans might sugar the pill of a German rejection of the Austro-Polish solution.) However, while the German Foreign Ministry supported Burián, the German High Command supported Sofia.

In this situation, the Bulgarians were unimpressed by equivocal advice from Berlin and continued to maintain their civilian administrators in Pristina, Prizren, and elsewhere in Kosovo. The first actual confrontation with the Austrians occurred on 27 February 1916, when an Austro-Hungarian unit was prevented by Bulgarian troops from entering Kazanik in southern Kosovo, whereupon Conrad immediately halted all deliveries of war supplies to the Bulgarians.[68] In Berlin, Foreign Secretary Jagow was extremely alarmed lest independent actions by the Bulgarian and Austro-Hungarian High Commands might result in further clashes; he supported Burián's recommendation (made rather contrary to Conrad's wishes) to ask the German General August von Mackensen to mediate. Burián, meanwhile, firmly reminded Tsar Ferdinand that "west of the treaty border began the Austro-Hungarian sphere of interest" and insisted to Jagow that it was only due to the "cool heads" of the AOK that more serious incidents had not taken place.[69] Although, when Vienna ordered the withdrawal of its forces from the area, the situation had returned to "approximately the status quo ante",[70] the Austrians still refused to permit the Bulgarians to administer Kazanik and left their troops in Pristina and Prizren to keep an eye on the Bulgarians and demonstrate the Monarchy's continuing interest in the area.

With regard to Bulgaria's future activities, Burián planned to continue friendly negotiations,[71] while at the same time supporting the AOK in its negotiations, under German auspices, with its Bulgarian counterpart.[72] Unfortunately for Conrad, however, German good offices did not make much difference on the ground. On 7 March the AOK learned of a written Bulgarian order prohibiting all further requisitioning by Austro-Hungarian troops in Pristina and Prizren, prompting AOK protests. Clearly incensed but aware that the Monarchy was currently too weak to "defend its rights with military means of coercion", Con-

[65] Jagow to Treutler, 11. 3. 1916, NARA, FT 5004 (T-120,2522); also: NARA, UM-3/1-297.
[66] Jagow to Falkenhayn, 19. 2. 1916, NARA, FT 5004 (T-120,2522) E285613-748.
[67] Fischer: Griff (see note 46), p. 288.
[68] Treutler to Jagow, 1. 1. 1916, NARA, FS-UM-134 (T-137) 1-156.
[69] Jagow to Treutler, 3. 3. 1916, NARA, FS-UM-134 (T-137) 1-156.
[70] Jagow to Treutler, 2. 3. 1916, NARA, FS-UM-134 (T-137) 1-156.
[71] Jagow to Treutler, 5. 3. 1916, NARA, FT 5004 (T-120,2522).
[72] Burián to Thurn/Tarnowski, 5. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.

rad proceeded to ask Burián for more diplomatic support against these "ever larger and more alarming violations":[73] Bulgaria must agree to a partition of the Pristina-Prizren region, recognise Austria-Hungary's exclusive military authority in north Albania and all of Montenegro, and retreat from Djakova.[74] This episode opened a second Austro-Bulgarian crisis – at alliance level. Burián supported Conrad's demands,[75] but his repeated pleas to the Bulgarians for restraint in the matter of civilian administration fell on deaf ears;[76] his compromise suggestion of a joint Austro-Hungarian-Bulgarian military commission to control Pristina-Prizren was rejected by Conrad.[77] The Bulgarians, for their part, felt they had the right to install civilian administrators in any territory they conquered; and Vienna was afraid that they would never be willing to part with such territories.[78] Even Tisza, who badly needed the Bulgarian goodwill to keep Romania in check, roundly condemned their "exorbitant greed".[79] On 18 March Sofia formally demanded that Prizren, Pristina, and Elbassan remain under their Bulgarian civilian administrations. Jagow considered this plan both fair and beneficial to Germany, since otherwise "a serious conflict with Vienna" could result, which must be avoided "at all costs".[80] However, Burián's "brusque"[81] rejection of it made Jagow fear that Bulgaria might defect from the alliance – a nightmarish prospect indeed, given that "the bloc whose coalition first goes to pieces" would be doomed to lose the war.[82]

Meanwhile, the situation on the spot again became precarious. By 23 March the Bulgarian administration in Djakova (Montenegro) was using force to prevent the population from following the directives of the local Austro-Hungarian commanders.[83] Conrad warned the Bulgarian High Command that unless the local Bulgarian commander abstained from meddling with the Austro-Hungarian administration, a "conflict with Austro-Hungarian troops" would be "inevitable".[84] In the event, although the Bulgarians continued to station troops in Kosovo, on 25 March they sealed off the treaty border, thereby formally designating it, in effect, as the "new Bulgarian national border".[85] This move was actually welcome to Conrad – hence his decision, abandoning his previous intransigent attitude, to recall an Austrian battalion deployed on the Bulgarian side of the treaty border: for this gave him the opportunity to summon the Bulgarians to withdraw their

[73] Thurn to Burián, 7. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[74] Burián to Tarnowski, 8. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[75] Burián to Conrad, 10. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[76] Burián to Tarnowski, 8. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Oberndorff to Jagow, 15. 3. 1916, NARA, UM-3/1-297.
[79] Tisza to Tarnowski, 18. 3. 1916, REZL, 44b.8.6.
[80] Jagow to Treutler/Oberndorff, 18. 3. 1916, NARA, UM-135/777-795.
[81] Oberndorff to Jagow, 23. 3. 1916, NARA, UM-135/777-795.
[82] Jagow to Oberndorff, 25. 3. 1916, NARA, UM-135/777-795.
[83] Wiesner to Burián, 24. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Thurn to Burián, 25. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.

units stationed on the Austro-Hungarian side of the treaty border, namely in Pristina-Prizren, Djakova, and Elbassan.[86]

The Chief of the German General Staff, Erich von Falkenhayn, attempted to broker a temporary agreement whereby both sides would withdraw their military forces from the disputed towns;[87] but Burián was in no mood to accept even this proposal, let alone what he termed "unjustified Bulgarian claims" on Pristina-Prizren; and he was pleased to see that the AOK had redeployed troops there to enforce Austria's wishes.[88] Apparently, Sofia regarded Serbian territory west of the treaty border as fair game because the Austrians had not laid claim to anything beyond a Belgrade bridgehead and the Mačva.[89] Conrad therefore urged Burián and the MKSM to make it clear once and for all that "formerly Serbian territory west of the treaty border remains reserved exclusively under Austro-Hungarian dominion".[90]

The crisis was suddenly defused on 27 March when the AOK – in accordance with Conrad's wishes and contrary to Burián's stated position on the matter – provisionally vacated the Pristina-Prizren area in exchange for the Bulgarians doing the same in Djakova and Elbassan.[91] The agreement was made without informing Berlin or Pless beforehand,[92] but at least it met with the approval of the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand.[93] Burián, frustrated in his hopes of removing the Bulgarian civilian administration from Pristina-Prizren, attempted at first to plead ignorance of the military deal.[94] In the end, however, he was forced to accept what he termed the AOK's "military provisional arrangement", although it had been made "against the objections of the MdÄ". Burián rejected Conrad's charge that it had been his failings that had whetted Bulgarian appetites for Kosovo in the first place, and pointed out that the MdÄ had repeatedly informed Sofia that the area to the west of the treaty border was "an Austro-Hungarian sphere of interest".[95] In the end, Burián and Jagow would have to work hard to insist on the temporary status of the military agreement over Prizren-Pristina, and that the Austrian government "fully maintained its demands" on Kosovo[96] – despite the "vehement lamentations" of Tsar Ferdinand who had clearly hoped the issue had been settled permanently in his favour.[97] In the summer of 1916, however, all these questions were pushed into the background as the Monarchy once again faced an existential threat emanating from Russia.

[86] Ibid.
[87] Oberndorff to Jagow, 28. 3. 1916, NARA, UM-135/777-795.
[88] Burián to Wiesner, 25. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[89] Conrad to Burián, 25. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[90] Ibid.; also: Treutler to Jagow, 28. 3. 1916, NARA, FT 5004 (T-120,2522).
[91] Burián to Hohenlohe/Kral/Tarnowski, 27. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[92] Oberndorff to Jagow, 29. 3. 1916, NARA, UM-135/777-795.
[93] Treutler to Jagow, 28. 3. 1916, NARA, FT 5004 (T-120,2522).
[94] Burián to Hohenlohe/Kral/Tarnowski, 27. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[95] Burián to Conrad, 28. 3. 1916, REZL, 45/16.
[96] Oberndorff to Jagow, 9. 4. 1916, NARA, FT 5004 (T-120,2522).
[97] Ibid.

The Brusilov Offensive

The success of the Gorlice-Tarnów offensive in Poland and Bulgaria's intervention in the Balkans marked the high point of Austria-Hungary's hopes of achieving its war aims in both regions. In the south, Austria-Hungary had established occupation regimes in Serbia, Montenegro, and half of Albania, while in the north it controlled roughly a third of Congress Poland from Lublin. Once the Brusilov Offensive started in June 1916, however, followed by the hostile Romanian intervention in August, the Monarchy was no longer able to fight independently and had to rely henceforth on its powerful German ally. It was only with German assistance that these offensives had been halted (with staggering losses in the Russian case); the weakening of Austria-Hungary's diplomatic position as a result of these military embarrassments was bound to undermine its ability to pursue and achieve its own war aims. Out of the victory over Romania, for example, the Monarchy achieved only limited gains (albeit including the dock of Turn-Severin, Romania's "largest and most efficient dockyard",[98] indispensable for the control of the Iron Gates); but for the rest – valuable resources and services such as Danube transport, food reserves, industry, and agriculture – the Germans slowly and steadily appropriated for themselves.

Although Tisza had made it clear that "securing Austro-Hungarian interests in the Balkans was a principal axiom" of the Monarchy's policy,[99] Vienna now found its allies encroaching more and more on its most vital spheres of interest: Bulgaria, for example, her eyes still "peering towards the Adriatic",[100] continued to create tension in the western Balkans. Perhaps even more worrying, in power-political terms, the Germans seemed to have set their sights on the Albanian port of Valona. In a top-secret memorandum for Bethmann Hollweg in November 1916 recommending the establishment of a Mediterranean naval base in Albania, Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff declared straight out that Valona "must become German".[101] Meanwhile, the Germans were interfering with Austro-Hungarian planning in other areas, such as Montenegro and Serbia.

In a discussion of war aims on 15 November 1916, Burián attempted to counter German demands, protect Austria-Hungary's conquests, and secure conditions for peace. He failed, and the weakness of his position was demonstrated when he was forced to sacrifice almost all interests relating to Albania and the western Slavs. The Germans rejected an Austrian annexation of Montenegro, pressing instead for the union of Montenegro with Serbia.[102] Only on one point was Burián able to resist with a categorical refusal: the idea of allowing a Serbian port in the Adriatic at the expense of Albania. This, he said, would

[98] Conrad to Czernin, 17. 1. 1917, HHStA, PA-I-1043.
[99] Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle (see note 44), 12. 1. 1917, p. 447.
[100] Wedel to Zimmerman, 10. 12. 1916, NARA, T-120-1498-D627063-627714.
[101] Holtzendorff to Auswärtiges Amt, 26. 11. 1916, NARA, T-120-1498-D627063-627714.
[102] Burián, Memorandum, 15. 11. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-524; also: Burián, Memorandum, 20. 11. 1916, REZL, 45/15.

give Serbia's prestige such a boost that Vienna would "really have to ask itself why it was fighting this war".[103] For the rest, his hopes of putting forward a peace "without relinquishing vital interests"[104] were dashed in the face of German resistance.

As regards Poland, the military disasters of the summer at last forced Burián, under pressure from Tisza and Stürgkh, to give up the Austro-Polish solution, as the Germans were demanding; but he still continued to demand complete parity with Germany in Poland.[105] From July, however, the Germans were pressing the Austrians hard to accept a subordinate role in Poland, arguing that a German-controlled Poland would be a "kind of parallel to the 'Balkans' for Austria-Hungary".[106] Burián, for his part, refused to equate the two and played down Austria-Hungary's future role in the Balkans in order to achieve parity in the Polish question, which, he reminded Berlin, was "politically, militarily, and economically" the Dual Alliance's "most important joint accomplishment".[107] Besides, he argued, control of Courland and Lithuania would be a greater gain for Germany than Serbia, Montenegro and Albania put together would be for Austria-Hungary.[108] In short, Burián was attempting to treat the Balkans as non-negotiable with the Germans, just as Berlin would never allow Vienna a voice in Baltic affairs. The key difference was, of course, that Germany was helping to win a war in the Balkans which Austria-Hungary could not manage alone; but Burián continued to hanker after ensuring parity in Poland to justify Austria-Hungary's sacrifices there, while demanding for the Monarchy exclusive control over as much of the Balkans as possible. Ultimately, the decision to establish Poland as a constitutional monarchy under the joint control of the Central Powers was made in August, and finalised at Pless in October. A Polish "Condominium" was duly proclaimed on 5 November 1916, but the question of who would in fact control it remained open. At any rate, despite Burián's earlier insistence that "conquest of Poland had not been a war aim",[109] he was still hoping somehow to draw the territory into the Monarchy's sphere of influence. Indeed, if the flame of Austro-Hungarian expansionism had flickered temporarily with the military setbacks of the summer of 1916, it had by no means been extinguished – as the final section of this chapter will show.

[103] Burián, Aide Memoire, 15. 11. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-524.
[104] Bridge: Österreich(-Ungarn) (see note 1), p. 353; Bridge cites Burián to Bethmann, 18. 10. 1916, in: André Scherer/Jacques Grunewald (eds.): L'Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la première guerre mondiale. Documents extraits des archives de l'Office allemande des affaires étrangères. Vol. 1: Des origines à la déclaration de la guerre sous-marine à outrance. Août 1914–31 janvier 1917. Paris 1962, p. 517.
[105] Shanafelt: Secret Enemy (see note 21), p. 89.
[106] Burián to Hohenlohe, 4. 7. 1916, HHStA, PA-I-501; also: REZL, 45/17.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle (see note 44), p. 290.

Phase III: Hunger and Decline – January 1917 to October 1918

The final phase of the development of Austria-Hungary's war aims testified to an irreversible decline in its power that inevitably diminished its ability to achieve its goals. Although the Monarchy was to fight on for almost two years after the death of Emperor Franz Joseph, the focus of the new leadership was less immediately concerned with achieving offensive goals than with heading off starvation, revolution, and dissolution. Even so, it is striking that both the new Emperor Karl I and his Foreign Minister Ottokar Count Czernin von und zu Chudenitz clung to the belief that an honourable peace must still include territorial conquest and economic domination and that despite the Monarchy's obviously declining importance, Berlin still had to pay at least lip service to Vienna's daydreaming.

Peace as Cover for Conquest

In this last phase of the war, when hunger became the most pressing issue facing the Monarchy, Karl and Czernin began to encounter stiff resistance from an establishment unwilling to settle for simply making peace. Although Karl managed to remove his most troublesome opponents in the form of Burián, Conrad, and eventually Tisza by mid-1917, other diplomats and soldiers stepped in to defend what they perceived to be the Monarchy's interests from the young Emperor and his crafty Foreign Minister.

It should be noted, however, that even Karl was not prepared to settle for peace on absolutely any terms. Although he was prepared to make compromises to secure the Monarchy's more important accomplishments – for example, to allow Serbia to survive provided his "principal war aim", maintaining the Monarchy's integrity, was assured[110] – he nevertheless sanctioned an accord signed by Czernin and Bethmann in March 1917 setting out the maximum and minimum war aims of the Central Powers. According to the minimum programme, their armies would only withdraw from Russia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Romania if the status quo ante bellum were restored in the east and the west. The maximum programme provided for expansion "in the east" for Germany and in Romania for the Monarchy;[111] although the actual extent of these annexations would depend on the ultimate diplomatic position on the "performances/achievements" of each of the allies (which implied that Germany would receive the lion's share).[112]

Ostensibly, Czernin only wished to talk about peace, and he even endorsed Woodrow Wilson's plans for disarmament, international arbitration, and a League of Nations. In reality, however, his desire for expansion in the Balkans remained

[110] Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle (see note 44), 12. 1. 1917, p. 451.
[111] Czernin to Bethmann-Hollweg, Agreement, 27. 3. 1917, HHStA, PA-I-524; also: NARA, T-120-1498-D627063-627714.
[112] Ibid.

as strong as ever, although he kept other parties in the dark about it.[113] From Bethmann he demanded no less than complete "parity with Germany in economic and territorial questions", with no Balkan or Russian (i.e. Polish) territory being returned until the occupied portions of the Monarchy had been returned.[114] By demonstratively aligning himself with peace parties such as the Meinl Group, he sought to prove that Austria-Hungary was not "fighting a war of conquest";[115] but secretly he wanted to "arrange" a number of Balkan questions "according to Austria-Hungary's wishes",[116] calculating that the Entente would turn a blind eye rather than to allow the entire peace negotiations to fail. In Montenegro, for example, he sought to create a "kind of fait accompli"[117] by annexing the entire Lovćen outright, together with enough of the coastline to create a connection with Albania.[118] Such plans were consistent with previous Austro-Hungarian war aims, and Czernin was willing to mask his true intentions to achieve them. The Germans, by contrast, felt no such compunction, as the High Command began to ignore Austria-Hungary's wishes and sought to control not only vast territories in the east and the west, but the Dual Monarchy itself.

Poland, Ukraine, and Brest-Litovsk

Amidst all the talk of war aims, the conclusion of a peace that would secure the food supply – "the most burning question of the whole war"[119] – was beginning to replace territorial expansion as the Monarchy's primary objective. As the threat of starvation and of infection by the Russian revolution intensified the emperor's desire for a speedy peace, Czernin took unprecedented steps to persuade Germany to give ground in the west. He offered to hand over all of Austrian-occupied Poland, and even Galicia, the Monarchy's largest crown territory and Austrian since 1815, to a Polish state that would be controlled from Berlin. This offer, endorsed by the AOK in July 1917, was made in the hope of obtaining grain supplies from Romania (where the Germans were still in control) and the Ukraine;[120] and it showed that the AOK was no less prepared than Czernin to cede Austrian territory provided that as part of a final peace the population of the Monarchy would be fed, its Hungarian territory enlarged, and its Balkan acquisitions secured.

This was Czernin's policy at the Brest-Litovsk peace conference, where, in an attempt to secure grain supplies from the new Ukrainian government in exchange for the cession of the Cholm district of Galicia, he signed the so-called "Bread Peace" with the Ukraine on 9 February 1918. In the event, however, the Monar-

113 Arz to MdÄ, 6. 10. 1917, KA, AOK-Fasz-3483, MV-165.044.
114 Czernin, Memorandum, 16. 3. 1917, HHStA, PA-I-504.
115 Czernin to Otto, 18. 8. 1917, HHStA, PA-I-1074.
116 Ibid.
117 Czernin to Otto, Secret Annex, 18. 8. 1917, HHStA, PA-I-1074.
118 Ibid.
119 Czernin to Hohenlohe, 23. 4. 1917, as cited in: Shanafelt: Secret Enemy (see note 21), p. 140.
120 Kuhn to Burian, Belgrade, 22. 7. 1917, HHStA, PA-I-973.

chy received no grain owing to the chaos prevailing in Kiev; while the cession of the Cholm so infuriated the Poles that any future 'Austro-Polish' solution or similar method of controlling Poland indirectly was destroyed forever. Despite Karl's attempts to backtrack, proposing to Berlin the creation of a Poland "as satisfied and untrimmed as possible",[121] the damage had been done. Even the Poles of Galicia now broke with the government in Vienna; and by the autumn all talk of resolving the Polish question by some form of association with Austria-Hungary, even with German consent, had come to nothing as Austria-Hungary was itself being torn apart.

Daydreaming amid Collapse

In some respects, things seemed to look good in the summer of 1918. Austria-Hungary had achieved most of its offensive war aims: Russia had been defeated and forced to accept peace on terms that even Czernin thought excessively draconian, Ukraine was a possible future grain supplier and buffer-state, and despite estranging Poles at home and abroad the Monarchy retained its Lublin occupation zone and therefore a say in the area. In Romania, the threat from irredentist expansionism had been crushed while the Monarchy won key border rectifications, an annexation of the Iron Gates, and a one-third stake in the state oil monopoly – although Germany secured near total control of the infrastructure. In the Balkans, its territorial "backyard", Vienna had successfully fended off a series of German and Bulgarian threats to its occupation zones in Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania. Finally, the Monarchy's most despised enemy, Italy, had nearly collapsed after Caporetto and in spite of Allied assistance was no longer the threat it had once been. Perhaps most important of all, the territorial integrity of the Monarchy had been restored, as foreign forces had been evicted from all of its lands and its armies stood without exception on enemy territory.

Yet this impressive scenario was to a large extent, if not utterly, vitiated by a number of facts on the ground: at home, the Monarchy was grappling with rampant hunger, constant strikes, and the very real threat of a Bolshevik-style revolution; abroad with political and military subordination to Germany, and the physical exhaustion of its armed forces. This being the case, Austria-Hungary's ambitious programme of war aims, which had always contained surreal elements, could now only be described as daydreaming. Changes at the top – with the Sixtus affair in April 1918 undermining the emperor's credibility and precipitating the resignation of Czernin and the return of Burián to the *Ballhausplatz* – did nothing to remedy the situation. On the contrary, voices now gained a hearing that were even more remote from reality.

In the summer of 1918 the Chief of the General Staff Arz von Straussenburg, who initially after his elevation in Conrad's place had been far less aggressive and

[121] Ungron Report, 6. 4. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-1039 Liasse 56/30, as cited in: Höbelt: Austropolnische Lösung (see note 15), p. 9.

involved in political questions than his predecessor, suddenly developed a strong belief in the AOK's right to criticise the Foreign Ministry's allegedly feeble position on war aims. While the AOK was gearing up for what would turn out to be Austria-Hungary's last offensive in the war, on the Piave, Arz embarked on a discussion of the Balkans with Burián on 27 May. Arz pressed him to agree to the annexation of Albania,[122] but the Foreign Minister objected that as even Italy had given up its Balkan colonialism for the principle of national self-determination, Vienna could not possibly revert to reactionary "annexationist tendencies".[123] This did not satisfy Arz at all, who dismissed MdÄ attitudes as mere procrastination while Austria-Hungary's last region of potential expansion slipped out of its control. Even as the material and psychological exhaustion of the Monarchy was threatening its collapse, the AOK persisted with its demands for annexations as if the war were being won on all fronts.

For example, while the OHL (*Oberste Heeresleitung*) suffered a major setback with the failure of its Champagne-Marne Offensive in July 1918, Arz himself was busily planning a counterattack in Albania set for 24 July. Indeed, on 21 July he sent Burián an extensive, and somewhat astonishing, memorandum on Austro-Hungarian war aims in the western Balkans, together with several elaborate maps detailing the division of territory in best-case to worst-case scenarios. Even his minimum war aims involved widespread annexations of Serbian and Montenegrin territory. Arz insisted that Austria-Hungary's "war aims in the Balkans must be the complete incorporation" of both Serbia and Montenegro into the Monarchy;[124] for a victor had the right to determine the outcome of his victory, and Austria-Hungary was undoubtedly the "victor in the Balkans". Of course, Arz might have said more about the fact that Bulgaria still maintained extensive claims right across the Balkans, that the Entente still held a so far impenetrable front from Valona to Salonika, and that Germany was slowly making itself dominant in Romania. In fact, he did warn that the strengthening of Bulgaria would be "tantamount" to a "hegemonic takeover" in the Balkans which would in turn mean the Monarchy's "losing its hegemony" in the only area where it was still capable of exercising it. If Vienna were politically and economically rolled back in the Balkans, it would lose "all elbow-room" and would be forced into a new war to secure the territory it needed for its economic expansion.[125] In short, Arz had come to understand that only in the Balkans could Austria-Hungary hope to extract any territorial gains from what was a disastrous and costly war; although it has to be said that his faith in the Monarchy's ability to survive and fight a future war was truly remarkable.

[122] Trauttmansdorff to Burián, 27. 5. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-1007; also: Arz to Burián, 11. 6. 1918, AOK-Fasz-3543, MV-318.295, based on Helmut Schwanke: Zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Militärverwaltung in Albanien (1916–1918). Unpublished Ph.D. Diss. Wien 1982.
[123] Burián to Trauttmansdorff, 5. 6. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-1007.
[124] Arz to Burián, 21. 7. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-500.
[125] Ibid.

Aware that the MdÄ and the Hungarians would resist the wholesale incorporation of the western Balkans, Arz laid out the minimum military border rectifications necessary to protect Austro-Hungarian interests from "most serious damage" if an independent Montenegro and Serbia had to be created. Not that this was a very generous offer anyway: Arz remained committed to Austria-Hungary's earliest war aims in the region – Mount Lovćen, the Sandjak, and Majdanpek mines – and the Montenegrin and Serbian capitals would both be annexed. Any territory whatever that was incorporated would have to be ruled militarily "for decades" to properly "educate" the populations.[126] Finally, Arz stressed the need for speedy action: after all, Austria-Hungary's "unpreparedness" for peace negotiations had had very "detrimental consequences", in the north-east and Poland and such mistakes must not be repeated in the Balkans. There, Austria-Hungary's passivity would be exploited by the Bulgarians and the Germans, both of whom had interests that conflicted with the Monarchy's and damaged its prestige.[127]

In contrast to Arz, Burián remained level-headed enough to know the AOK's far-reaching plans could not be achieved. On 30 July he told Arz that he failed to understand the necessity of "transitioning to a policy of conquest";[128] but even he was now prepared to admit that the vagueness that had characterised the MdÄ's policy since early 1915 could always be clarified to suit the military situation, and might well prove useful in securing the maximum gains for the Monarchy.

Germany as the Final Guarantor

Apart from fending off Arz, Burián had to contend with German attempts to deny Austria-Hungary a voice in the debate over northern questions. In a discussion with Chancellor Georg von Hertling and his Foreign Secretary Richard von Kühlmann on 11 June 1918, Burián returned to the Austro-Polish solution but was directed towards compensations in Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro. He replied that annexations of large swathes of territory in the latter two countries was "not part of Austria-Hungary's policy programme";[129] and that he personally, unlike the AOK and the Hungarians, was "decidedly opposed" to any annexations in Serbia whatsoever.[130] In fact, all talk of the Monarchy's expanding further into Slav territory was fast becoming a pipedream, as before the month was out U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing had proclaimed Wilson's goal of liberating all branches of Slavs from German and Austro-Hungarian rule, and both France and Britain had rallied to his support. The Monarchy was now fighting for its own survival, and though the Germans gave way over Serbia, Montene-

[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Burián to Arz, 30. 7. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-1007.
[129] Burián Report of Hertling/Kühlmann talks, 11. 6.–12. 6. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-505; also: HHStA, PA-I-536.
[130] Ibid.

gro, and Albania, they insisted on retaining Valona, together with control over petroleum, trains, and shipping.[131] The fact that in return for these grudging concessions the Monarchy was pledged to go on fighting in Europe for German objectives as far away as the Crimea, Egypt, and Mesopotamia was further evidence Vienna was steadily falling into a condition of vassalage to Berlin.

By September 1918, when Burián met Kühlmann's successor Paul von Hintze in Vienna, it was clear that the war effort of the Central Powers was collapsing. What remained was to identify some minimal joint aims that could still be achieved. Yet even here there were differences of approach: while Burián was asking the Germans to guarantee what he still described as the Monarchy's "war aims",[132] it was significant that Hintze's handwritten record of the conversation referred only to common "peace goals".[133] According to Hintze, the two sides agreed on the following programme: Germany wanted its territorial integrity and the freedom of the seas, in return for renouncing annexations and granting independence to Belgium, to which it was prepared to pay compensation.[134] Burián also professed his commitment to the status quo ante, but at the same time went on to list a number of "small territorial expansions". These peace conditions included the Lovćen and a "border strip" in Romania.[135] Even at this late stage in the game, when not even Germany felt it could prosecute an effective war and was prepared to accept the status quo ante bellum for the sake of an immediate peace, Burián tried to insist on Hintze's taking responsibility for Austria's expansionist war aims. Hence, although both men spoke of the need for common war aims, the talks ended without an agreement.

Hintze's evasive tactics only served to spur the Austrians into action. One day before the Allied Balkan offensive of 15 September that would knock Bulgaria out of the war, Burián issued Karl's emotional public proclamation, calling on all belligerents, without ceasing military operations, to send official delegates to a neutral state to discuss terms of peace. Although he had gone behind the Germans' backs, he was after all only proposing a compromise, not a separate peace; but the initiative came to nothing anyway, being interpreted, as the Germans had warned, as a capitulation. After this, Vienna's voice ceased to matter in international circles.

By the end of September the Central Powers were collapsing on every front from Syria to the Somme, and after the Bulgarians requested a ceasefire, Ludendorff demanded an armistice at once, even before the Hindenburg line had been breached. In Berlin, the issue of war aims was put on hold, as the elite sought to contrive a revolution from above that would get them a peace on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points. The situation in Austria-Hungary was even more serious.

[131] Bridge: Österreich(-Ungarn) (see note 1), p. 363.
[132] MdÄ, Notes of Burián/Hintze conference, 5. 9. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-524k.
[133] Hintze, Handwritten Notes, 6. 9. 1918, NARA, T-120/1500.
[134] Burián, Notes of private Hintze talks, 6. 9. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-524k; see also David Stevenson: The First World War and International Politics. Oxford 1988, p. 223.
[135] Hintze, Handwritten Notes, 6. 9. 1918, NARA, T-120/1500.

On 27 September the AOK began its retreat from the Balkans.[136] The Bulgarian armistice of 29 September meant that Austria-Hungary could no longer hold Albania without being outflanked, and was probably going to be pushed out of Montenegro and Serbia too by the advancing Entente Army. By 10 October Burián's programme had been reduced to ensuring that Austria-Hungary received the same treatment as Germany in any armistice.[137] He was now prepared to agree to everything: Serbian access to the sea, and the re-establishment of Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, and Romania. As for expansion, his only, final claim was for a small border rectification against Romania, which he insisted should not be regarded as an annexation.[138]

It all came to nothing. Karl, Czernin, and Burián had tied the Monarchy to Berlin and were reduced to hoping that Germany might yet come to its rescue; but Germany herself was defeated and in no position to negotiate terms on behalf of Austria-Hungary with adversaries uninterested in any such a conversation. On 14 October came Burián's unilateral request for an armistice, followed by Karl's promise of a federalised Austria (though not Hungary). Lansing responded on 18 October stating that the Fourteen Points no longer applied to Austria-Hungary. All hopes of imperial gains were finally buried on the following day, when Burián acceded to a request by General Kövess to seek a ceasefire in the Balkans.[139] Five days later Burián resigned and Karl severed the alliance with Germany on 26 October, in the midst of the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, which ended in a defeat for Austria-Hungary and a separate peace by means of armistice on the Italian front. After the South Slavs, Czecho-Slovaks, and even Hungarians had all declared independence, Austria-Hungary ended not only its tragic involvement in the First World War but also its political existence; and the offensive goals that the government and military had wrangled over for more than four years of war disappeared along with them.

Conclusion

Austria-Hungary's war aims were one of the reasons why its elites sought to continue fighting during the First World War, and they risked – fatally as it turned out – paying the ultimate price a state could pay, namely its existence. The evidence shows that extensive war aims were continually being developed and pursued in both the Balkans and in Poland; and it was to these areas that the elites looked to fulfil their political, economic, and military objectives in a post-war world.

The evidence has also shown that the political leadership in Vienna and Budapest managed, albeit sometimes not without a struggle, to retain control of deci-

136 Lejhanec to Burián, 27. 9. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-999.
137 Burián to Trauttmansdorff, 10. 10. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-966.
138 Burián to Hohenlohe, 11. 10. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-966.
139 Burián to Trauttmansdorff, 19. 10. 1918, HHStA, PA-I-966.

sion-making and to keep both the military and its allies in check. Ultimately, the Monarchy failed in its endeavour, by pursuing offensive, expansionist war aims, to conquer, subjugate, or otherwise control the neighbouring states in order to preserve, even enhance, its Great Power status. Even so, its pursuit of them in the first place was clearly among the underlying causes of both the protracted conflict and what came after.

Reflection

Lothar Höbelt

Mourir pour Liège? World War I War Aims in a Long-Term Perspective

War Aims versus "Profound Forces"

It is a commonplace to say that the First World War changed the international system profoundly. It marked the transition from the old-established 18th-century European pentarchy to a fairly asymmetrical system of five potential super-powers that in the end was to have almost as little time for victorious France as it had for defeated Austria-Hungary, whereas both Germany and Russia undoubtedly continued to be members of that exclusive club. Earlier World Wars had seen Europeans fighting each other overseas with the help of native Allies. That still held true for parts of Africa. But in terms of the Great War, Lettow Vorbeck's exploits – and the reaction of General Smuts, poacher turned game-keeper – were no more than an exotic side-show.[1] The salient point was that for the first time the USA had decisively intervened in a European conflict, and even Japan had managed to send a few destroyers to the Mediterranean. The First World War ushered in a period where the process of globalisation switched currents, and Europe has tended to be at the receiving end ever since.

The results of the Great War can be seen as a natural outcome of the famous "profound forces" that shape history. However, it is in fact surprisingly difficult to establish a connection between the war aims of the supposedly victorious powers and the long term results of the Great War. True, France got Alsace-Lorraine and Italy got Trento e Trieste. But the single biggest change on the map of Europe – in terms of both territory and population – was undoubtedly the re-creation of an independent Poland, just as the single biggest net-result of the French Revolutionary period had been the disappearance of the Polish "rzeszpospolita". Strangely enough, moreover, the resurrection of Poland was the one item on the agenda about which – at least after the First Russian Revolution – all the contending parties were in agreement.[2]

[1] Hew Strachan: The First World War in Africa. Oxford 2004, pp. 135–164.

[2] Austro-Polish diplomat Count Alexander Skrzynski immediately saw that meeting as a possible turning point. Poland was the one and only area where "in our own interest we could move closer to the programme of our enemies". Skrzynski to Andrian, 10. 4. 1917, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien (= HHStA), PA I 1013, fol. 256.

In global terms, of course, one might note the loss of the German colonies but that was a loss for which – for all the diamonds in Namibia – every German Chancellor of the Exchequer could only give heartfelt thanks. Germany was a world power because it outproduced all the rest of Europe in steel not because it owned a few palm trees or patches of desert overseas. Some far sighted Boers may even have thought that they had succeeded in laying the foundations of a White Africa along the mountainous Eastern spine of their continent. Maybe the fate of the Middle East deserves a little more attention as most of today's political headlines – and headaches – can still be traced back to the consequences of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, from the Balfour Declaration to the Arab awakening. At the time, Britain – although pursuing three quite different strategies, favouring Saudis, Hashemites and Zionists, in turn[3] – made great strides in securing its lines of communication with India. But those were developments that turned out to be transient. On the the other hand, the USA got nothing and Japan only a few barren islands in the Pacific. Once again, territorial changes were poor indicators of who had actually benefited from the First World War.

The discussions over war aims during the War have provided a field day for polemicists castigating wicked Imperialists, greedy robber-barons and militarists with tunnel vision. Emperor Charles' angry outburst in the autumn of 1917 that peace was being held up because the Germans would not let go of Liège, is just one of many examples.[4] Even on the Entente side, Versailles and the associated treaties were later called all sorts of names, starting with a "Cartaginian peace". Balfour chimed in with his description of Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau as "three all-powerful, all-ignorant men carving up continents".[5] Yet, seen from a long-term perspective, all the peace terms look fairly moderate, if not at all times innocuous. That view may seem strange coming from Vienna. Yet, the break-up of the Habsburg Monarchy had little to do with the war aims of the Western powers. Once the black-and-yellow colours had finally been hauled down, there was no way the Western powers could have stopped its constituent parts from going their own way. They could fiddle around with the small-print, order a plebiscite in Carinthia or hand over Eger to Bohemia rather than Bavaria,[6] but they could hardly tell the Yugoslavs or Czechoslovaks to go back to Habsburg rule for the sake of the balance of powers.

[3] On the Saudi aspect, favoured by India, see Madawi Al-Rasheed: A History of Saudi-Arabia. London 2002, pp. 41–46; John C. Wilkinson: Arabia's Frontiers. The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert. London 1991, pp. 132–140; Jacob Goldberg: The Origins of British-Saudi Relations. The 1915 Anglo-Saudi Treaty Revisited. In: Historical Journal 28 (1985), pp. 693–703.

[4] Diary of FML Ferdinand v. Marterer, Vice-Chief of the Military Chancellory of the Emperor, 10. 10. 1917, Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät, Wien (= MKSM), Kriegsarchiv (= KA), B/16.

[5] See that treasure trove of juicy quotes: Simon Sebag Montefiore: Jerusalem. The Biography. London 2011, p. 514.

[6] That possibility was at least discussed among the "Great Four" in 1919 but rejected for convenience sake; see Paul Mantoux (ed.): Les Délibérations du Conseil des Quatre (24 mars–28 juin 1919). Paris 1955, p. 149 (4. 4. 1919).

As Dennis Showalter succintly observes, the First World War was indeed a "Total War for Limited Objectives".[7] Napoleon expanded the French Empire to the Baltic; Clemenceau toyed with annexing the Saar. Hitler annexed all of Poland; Jagow dithered over border rectifications that might strengthen the Polish minority in Prussia. Even if one chooses to discount Napoleon or Hitler as megalomaniac aberrations, the various wars of national unification during the long nineteenth century (i.e. including the Balkans Wars of 1912–1913) doubled the size of Prussia, Serbia and Greece, let alone Piemont, after a few weeks campaigning. Of course, this purely territorial approach ignores the reparations issue: but war indemnities were not such a novel idea, either.[8] If anything, the reparations issue pointed to the dilemma facing the Western powers. Only a Germany that was allowed to dominate Europe economically could earn enough foreign exchange to be able to pay reparations. But such a Germany was exactly the sort of Germany France had every reason to fear.

Indeed, in themselves, the war aims of the major powers, even if sometimes regarded as outrageous, would have done little to change the balance of power in Europe. The "disannexation" of Alsace-Lorraine satisfied the yearning for a "revanche pour Sedan"; it did not really improve the geo-political position of France all that much. Strategists of course had their obsessions with specific bits of territory they regarded as indispensable for security. The acquisition – or the neutralisation – of Liège would have eased the worries of German staff officers anxious to avoid getting stuck in that bottle-neck on their way to brush the Channel with their sleeves. But then, one of the lessons of the Great War had surely been that if the Schlieffen Plan had not succeeded in the fairly free-wheeling world of 1914-style operations, it was even less likely to work in the era of trench warfare that had replaced it.[9] On the Eastern Front, too, German possession of the Narev fortresses, the notorious "Grenzstreifen", might stop any repetition of Tannenberg in its tracks.[10] That might be one temptation less for the Russians; but it would hardly stop them from being a great power.

The First World War is sometimes seen as the first stage of another Thirty Years War in Europe. It might be worthwhile for a moment to compare this twentieth century Thirty Years War with its predecessor in the age of the baroque. That Thirty Years War, and its Franco-Spanish extension that ended with the Peace of

[7] Dennis Showalter: Total War for Limited Objectives. An Interpretation of German Grand Strategy. In: Paul M. Kennedy (ed.): Grand Strategies in War and Peace. New Haven 1991, pp. 200–208.

[8] Arms limitations clauses imposed by a victorious power pose a more difficult problem, historically. Even so, there was the example of Napoleon and Prussia in 1807, let alone the Romans who forbade the Seleukids to build a fleet or own elephants in the second century BC. See: Sebag Montefiore: Jerusalem (see note 5), p. 75.

[9] Of course, "by the mid-1930s things had changed [...] to the Guderians and Mansteins […] the internal combustion engine was restoring the parameters of strategy"; Showalter: Total War (see note 7), p. 120.

[10] Imanuel Geiss: Der polnische Grenzstreifen 1914–1918. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Kriegszielpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg. Lübeck 1960.

the Pyrenees, marked the transition from the siglo d'oro to the era of the Sun King, from Spanish to French pre-dominance in Europe. But once again, those fundamental shifts within the balance of power had very little to do with the two fortresses of Arras and Perpignan that changed hands in 1659, or even with Breisach, which Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar had bequeathed to France. Whether one chooses to attribute the decline of Spain to imperial overstretch, demographic collapse or Cromwell's folly,[11] it was a cause rather than the consequence of the loss of two tiny border provinces.

What was really at stake in 1659 was the future of the Iberian Empires, or rather, the impact of their temporary eclipse, both in the old world and the new. What was at stake in 1917–1918, one might venture to say, was the fate of the Russian Empire or the impact of its temporary eclipse, both in Europe and in Asia. For France, Louis XIV's marriage to the Infanta Maria Teresa, which was an integral part of the peace settlement in 1659, held out the hope of winning the Spanish inheritance as a whole, thus achieving no less than a renversement des alliances (and finally eliminating the Northern front that was so uncomfortably close to Paris and the French heartland). It was the "flanking powers" (to use Dehio's term[12]) like Sweden, and later on Cromwell's England, that had helped France to defeat the Habsburgs, just as it was America that helped France defeat the Kaiser. But those war-time alliances proved to be transient constellations. The U.S. withdrew from Europe, just as the Swedish position in Germany vanished almost overnight once their army had been paid off. Only a switch in alliances could consolidate the achievements of French victory. In 1917–1918, the trouble for France was that such an opportunity beckoned for the Germans rather than for the heirs of Richelieu and Mazarin.

War Aims versus Compromise Peace

During the First World War, winning the war became almost an end in itself.[13] That was partly a result of domestic politics, notably the perception prevalent amongst almost all policy makers that after such huge sacrifices people were expected to expect gains commensurate with the losses they had suffered. "The greater the participation of a population in a war, the greater must be the reward (or bribe) offered."[14] Any government that seemed prepared to close such a traumatic experience without further ado was commiting suicide.[15] Even though it was

[11] For the latter, see Churchill's doubts on his return from the Teheran conference: John Charmley: Churchill. The End of Glory. London 1993, p. 467.
[12] Ludwig Dehio: Gleichgewicht oder Hegemonie. Betrachtungen über ein Grundproblem der neueren Staatengeschichte. Krefeld 1964, p. 12, pp. 209f.
[13] Victor H. Rothwell: British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914–1918. Oxford 1971, p. 45.
[14] Gary Sheffield: Forgotten Victory. The First World War: Myths and Realities. London 2001, p. 57.
[15] David French: The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition 1916–1918. Oxford 1995, p. 147; paradoxically, it was war weariness that made a passive policy unacceptable.

war weariness rather than disappointed chauvinism that led to revolution or mutiny in 1917–18, governments were apparently still convinced that anything that could be interpreted as a deviaton from the straight and narrow path of patriotism would be punished just as severely. Thus, to quote but one famous example, in Germany in 1916 Bethmann and Jagow thought they could get away with a "puny peace" only if Hindenburg gave it his blessing (which was one of the reasons why they were so anxious to be associated with him in the public eye).[16]

In the absence of reliable opinion polls, it is difficult to tell whether those assumptions were justified or not. Press reactions are a popular but inherently misleading measure of "public opinion". Under war-time conditions in particular, Churchill's famous adage about statistics might almost be reformulated as: never believe a newspaper you have not censored yourself.[17] The public's willingness to subscribe to war loans might be a way to measure support for the war effort but not necessarily for specific war aims. Above all, it may not always be possible to pigeonhole popular dissatisfaction neatly as left-wing or right-wing: the Austro-German political atmosphere of April 1918 (after the uproar over the Sixtus affair) certainly combined war-weariness (i.e. complaints about the dismal supply situation) with the resentment of nationalists outraged by peace-feelers that they regarded as a betrayal of the German alliance.[18]

Debates about war aims in the first half of the war were largely exercises in wishful thinking, what the Austrians call "drafting letters to Santa Claus". If your side won – and patriotism seemed to demand no less than complete faith that it would win – every lobby had to be ready with its shopping-list. The more, the merrier. In the first half of the war there were hardly any attempts at peace feelers, only attempts to woo, bribe or deter the neutrals. Courting the neutrals was an absorbing game, with the Italian trick turning out to be less decisive than the Bulgarian one, with Romanian neutrality being the catalyst. Germans, or maybe even more so, Austrians were amazed at their good fortune in 1915 but saw no way to turn those military successes into political gains: "We don't know what to do with our victories."[19] The Entente, for its part, was simply waiting until Kitchener's armies could redress the balance in 1917, if not earlier.

The idea of winning the war by enticing a member of the opposing coalition into making a separate peace certainly had its attractions but the harsh fact was that no

[16] Jagow to Tschirschky, 3. 8. 1916, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Abt. IA, Österreich 88/7. I owe that quote to Rudolf Jerabek, the eminence grise of the Austrian State Archives; Wolfram Pyta: Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler. München 2009, p. 215.

[17] That view may reflect Austrian prejudices; to the outrage of the Austrian ambassador, the Germans proved to be far more tolerant with dissenting voices, Report 33–B, 5.3. 1917, HHStA, PA III 173.

[18] Even at the time, the Austrian MP Josef Redlich drew that conclusion in a letter: Redlich to Bahr, 1. 5. 1918, in: Fritz Fellner (ed.): Dichter und Gelehrter. Hermann Bahr und Josef Redlich in ihren Briefen 1896–1934 (= Quellen zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, Bd. 2). Salzburg 1986, p. 334 (1. 5. 1918).

[19] Marterer, Diary, 21. 8. 1915, MKSM, KA, B/16, quoting his boss, General Bolfras.

real opportunity beckoned. At best, the Central Powers had high hopes of detaching Russia, but these were based on nothing but rumour. Incidentally, this idea was one of the few things Conrad and Falkenhayn agreed about, although Austrians in general and Burian in particular were less keen on it, partly because they sensed that such a peace would be concluded at their expense. Later on, Charles I became known for his efforts to broker a peace with the western powers; but first and foremost, however, he was a fan of the Three Emperors alliance.[20] France seemed a less likely candidate for a separate peace, but the British always had their doubts about the reliability of France and saw a "dovish" Caillaux government ante portas whenever a Paris cabinet got into difficulties. However, these fears seem to have been much exaggerated or were sometimes even used as scare-tactics by the French to get their way i.e. over Salonika or the 1917 offensive[21] – a strategy avidly copied by Czernin after 1917, with ponderous Professor Heinrich Lammasch cast in the role of Caillaux.[22] Entente efforts in the direction of a separate peace primarily centered on Bulgaria, with little help from a Serbia that was unwilling to part with its gains from the Second Balkan war to ensure victory in the Third. The British in particular, with Lloyd George and "Wully" Robertson for once agreeing, continued to toy with the idea of detaching Sofia from the Central Powers even after "Foxy Ferdinand" had taken the plunge in the summer of 1915.[23]

If a separate peace was unattainable, and final victory a long way off, what was left was the idea of a compromise peace. Such a parti remis could be based on one of two concepts, either uti possidetis or the status quo ante bellum. A strict interpretation of uti possidetis was clearly unacceptable to the Entente as long as the Germans continued to occupy Belgium and parts of Northern France. Yet, the situation at the fronts would obviously have to be taken into account when formulating negotiating positions. In their first round of discussions about possible peace terms in late 1916 and early 1917, the Austrians were still worried about the fate of Russian-occupied Eastern Galicia and Italian-held Gorizia. While pressing for peace openings, both Burian and Czernin also held out for a reciprocal territorial guarantee. Such preoccupations found their counterpart in German worries about their colonies, even if the Austrians were outraged that Tarnopol should be compared with Tsingtao.[24]

[20] See Charles's notes from 1914 in: Elisabeth Kovács (ed.): Politische Dokumente zu Kaiser und König Karl I. (IV.) aus internationalen Archiven (= Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs, vol. 100,2). Wien 2004, p. 79, pp. 85f. Such a desire was made easier for him because he was not enamoured of the Poles (ibid., p. 74, p. 82); Miklós Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie (1914–1918). Budapest 1966, pp. 448f. (12. 1. 1917).

[21] David Dutton: The Politics of Diplomacy. Britain and France in the Balkans in the First World War. London 1998, pp. 61–83; French: Strategy (see note 15), pp. 117–119.

[22] Heinrich Benedikt: Die Friedensaktion der Meinlgruppe 1917/18. Graz 1962, pp. 130f., pp. 151f.

[23] Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 51, p. 118, p. 141, p. 171, p. 221; see Stephen Constant: Foxy Ferdinand. Tsar of Bulgaria. New York 1980.

[24] When Bethmann-Hollweg tried to turn the Austrians away from the idea of a complete territorial guarantee by suggesting that nobody could expect the Austrians to fight until Tsingtao was

Perhaps a more promising concept than uti possidetis was the status quo ante bellum or at least the status quo ante with only minor changes. Charles I and Czernin held fast to this more or less consistently, albeit with a certain amount of doublethink as far as the Balkans were concerned. Their idea of a plausible interpretation of the status quo ante applied to the Great Powers only and did not exclude the creation of a Greater Bulgaria or a partitioning of Rumania. (At one point Czernin mused that Rumania might as well be reduced to a miniature principality in the Danube delta, comparable in size to Monaco or Liechtenstein.[25]) This South-East European smallprint apart, one of the reasons the Habsburgs found it easier to charge ahead in pursuit of an early peace was that for the general public the war-aims debate in Austria was focussed not on territorial expansion, but on a reorganisation of the empire, on issues such as autonomy for the Sudeten Germans versus Bohemian state rights. If anything, many Austro-Germans actually wanted to get rid of surplus Slavs, like the Galician Poles. Even so, Charles I remained as stubborn about concessions to Italy, as Bethmann was about Alsace – any cession would have to be camouflaged as an exchange of territory, even if Charles was willing to settle for face-saving wastelands like Somalia rather than the ore-mines of Briey as compensation.[26]

A status quo peace of course raises the same question as the concept of neutrality: neutral for whom? Who would emerge as the real winner if there were no winners? Not surprisingly, both Conrad and Ludendorff are on record with statements that a return to square one – without any improvements of the strategic map – would be tantamount to defeat. So is "Wully" Robertson even if intriguingly he still regarded a "reasonably strong Germany" as a necessity, too.[27] On the other hand, Hindenburg once mused that the Great War should be interpreted as a repeat performance of the Seven Years War that finally put Prussia on the map as a great power.[28] A Hubertusburg-style peace – with not a square mile changing hands, in Europe at least – sounded reasonable enough, even if it meant holding on to Alsace, just as Frederick the Great had insisted on keeping Glatz rather than offer that salient as a sweetener to Maria Theresa. In the light of later Prussian history, Hubertusburg had opened the gate for better things to come. The implication of all this was that once Germany had survived this trial, rich pickings (like the Polish partitions of the late eighteenth century) would automat-

German again, Burian retorted that colonies could not be compared with European territories; 4./6. 12. 1916, HHStA, PA I 536, fol. 217.

[25] André Scherer/Jacques Grunewald (eds.): L'Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, vol. 2. Paris 1966, p. 51 (26. 3. 1917); Czernin seems to have projected his own feelings for Romania, where he had been ambassador between 1913 and 1916, onto others. He argued the Entente "hated and despised" the Romanians just as much as the Central Powers did; see: Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle (see note 20), p. 446.

[26] Elisabeth Kovács: Untergang oder Rettung der Donaumonarchie? Die österreichische Frage. Kaiser und König Karl I. (IV.) und die Neuordnung Mitteleuropas (1916–1922). Wien/Köln/Weimar 2004, p. 172.

[27] French: Strategy (see note 15), p. 34.

[28] Pyta: Hindenburg (see note 16), p. 209.

ically accrue, even if, for the time being, having defended the status quo against all comers had to be deemed sufficient.

Yet it would seem, as regards the beneficiaries of a status quo peace, that the First World War had more in common with the Thirty Years War, rather than the Seven Years War. When the Emperor was sounding out the Swedes about peace terms in the years before 1648, there is one consideration that crops up over and over again. For the Swedes, let alone the French, the enemy alliance was a given, something permanent: the Habsburg "family compact" – to borrow a term coined later for the Bourbons, but even more applicable to the Habsburgs – might sometimes find it difficult to coordinate their moves but they would always find it easy to team up at a moment's notice. The coalition that served as a counterweight to Habsburg dominance, by contrast, was a one-off arrangement that had taken much time, effort and good luck to piece together. Once dissolved, it would be very difficult to reassemble again, let alone at short notice. Hence, the Habsburgs had to be decisively defeated before the Allies could afford to stop fighting.[29]

Similar considerations could well be said to have coloured the attitudes of Entente statesmen in the First World War. Their predicament was similar to that of the anti-Habsburg forces in the seventeenth century. The alliance of the Central Powers, for all the constant bickering that figures so prominently in the historiography, was held together by far more than foreign policy interests. Even apart from German national feeling, their aristocratic elites were intertwined in a way that was noticeable even for the cosmopolitan European upper class of yesteryear.[30] Some Austrian leaders, like Conrad who provided historians with an embarrassment of riches in terms of bitchy quotes about the Prussians, resented big brother's patronising attitude but they could hardly be blind to the fact that it was German arms that had saved the Dual Monarchy from being crushed by the combined efforts of Russia, Serbia and Italy in 1915.

On the other hand, for all the talk about an encirclement of Germany, a status quo peace was likely to lead to a re-orientation of Russian foreign policy in a direction that British diplomats had already described as dangerous in 1914 because of its implications for their position in Asia "where our very existence as an Empire will be at stake".[31] After all, Russia had more of a choice than most. Russians had suffered disproportionate losses; they were entitled to at least some of the gains they had been promised, and if these were not forthcoming, the Entente might well be written off as an unprofitable investment. Thus, it is no surprise to find one of the chief architects of the Anglo-Russian Entente, Sir Charles Hardinge,

[29] True, in 1646–1647, it was the Dutch who rose above those anxieties when they made their separate peace with the Habsburgs. It was one of their descendants, General Smuts, who approached a similar level of detachments in his conversations with Count Mensdorff.

[30] On this point I admit I do respectfully but strongly disagree with Salomon Wank: In the Twilight of Empire. Count Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal (1854–1912), vol. 1. Wien 2009, p. 222. The Fürstenberg, Hohenlohe and Hoyos families spring to mind.

[31] Keith Wilson: Britain. In: id. (ed.): Decisions for War, 1914. London 1995, pp. 175–208; here: p. 186.

echoing Ludendorff's words in even more apocalyptic terms: a compromise peace, he thought, would signal "the destruction of our country".[32]

The long-term Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Constantinople, the Margrave of Pallavicini, reiterated the obvious solution: suitable compensation could be found for everyone if the powers agreed to partition the Ottoman Empire. For example, Russia could give up Poland in return for the Straits and maybe Armenia.[33] With hindsight, and allowing for all the caveats associated with counterfactual hypotheses, Pallavicini's suggestions, even if perfidious, seem to outline the only solution that might actually have been acceptable to both sides. In that case, Germany would had lost an ally, but improved its position on the continent. Austria's Balkan ally Bulgaria would still have emerged victoriously from the war, thus making Serbia's eventual survival irrelevant. True, open discussion of such a solution was risky, as leaks might produce a violent reaction from those about to be sacrificed; but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Central Powers – certainly Czernin, with Bethmann-Hollweg not that far behind – were far more willing to countenance something approaching a compromise peace, than the Entente. Indeed, the latter were, for equally understandable reasons, almost bound to reject it, as Henri Georges Soutou has emphasised in his paper.[34] Lloyd George summed up Britain's demands as "restitution, reparation, guarantee against repetition".[35] Of course, even reparations might be included in the term "status quo peace", under a suitably "loose construction". But what about guarantees against a repetition of German aggression, or rather against the possibility of successful German aggression, or even worse, against a Germany that no longer needed to behave aggressively because no one was going to stand up to it, anyway ? Only "a peace secured permanently by the United States" could render a status quo peace acceptable to at least some of the decision-makers in London and Paris.[36]

The pertinent charge against Ludendorff (or his followers on the German Right in general) is not that his programme was excessive in itself, but that given the benefits that would accrue to Germany from a status quo peace, he did not do more to bribe France and Britain to acquiesce in German dominance in the East.

[32] Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 41.

[33] HHStA, PA I 945, Liasse 21a, reports 102 A–D/P (11. 12. 1917) and 103 A–E/P (15. 11. 1917). Similar ideas may also have crossed the mind of Sir Eduard Grey's advisor Eric Drummond; see: Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 56.

[34] Too much such should not be made of the specific wording of Cabinet minutes, but it is suggestive that when Czernin outlined his proposals for a status quo peace to his colleagues, he added that he thought it advisable to leave the entente and in particular England under the illusion (!) that there would be no victors or vanquished, thus antedating Wilson's formula by ten days; Komjáthy (ed.): Protokolle (see note 20), p. 447 (12. 1. 1917).

[35] French: Strategy (see note 15), p. 38.

[36] Daniel Larsen: War Pessimism in Britain and an American Peace in Early 1916. In: IHR 34 (2012), pp. 795–817, here: p. 798, concentrates on McKenna's arguments; for similar sentiments on Grey's part see also Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 21; for the general argument Dehio: Gleichgewicht (see note 12), p. 211.

That might have enhanced his reputation as a Moltke turned Bismarck, but it is unlikely to have changed the course of history. Perhaps Czernin when pressing the Germans to let go of Alsace-Lorraine, gave the game away when he enthused about the benefits of peace with France: "And if that is so, we have won." Precisely.[37] There are a few tantalising hints that some French staff officers were simultaneously drafting memoranda discussing a compromise peace.[38] Maybe there was a window of opportunity in the late summer of 1917, just before Clemenceau's rise to power. Then a sham victory for French amour propre, combined with a tacit admission of Germany's hegemony on the continent, might just have been possible, at a time when doubts about Russia had started to surface but before Russia's collapse turned such a deal into an all too obvious boon for Germany.[39]

However, Britain seemed to turn a deaf ear to all such suggestions: at the Bellevue meeting in September 1917, for example, Kühlmann managed to push his offer of secret negotiations on the basis of a German withdrawal from Belgium past Hindenburg, thus invalidating Charles I's charge that peace prospects were foundering on the issue of Liège. According to Wolfgang Steglich, Kühlmann's initiative failed because his Spanish intermediaries got confused and did not follow up their initial contacts.[40] British sources prove, however, that such an offer had already been discussed in governmental circles in London a few weeks earlier – and rejected, at least for the time being.[41] After all, why discuss terms with an opponent who had already shot his bolt and missed. Once the submarine challenge had been met, there was no reason why the British should not wait for the weight of the U.S. to make itself felt – even if they were dismayed to learn that U.S. help would come later than expected, and with all sorts of uncomfortable political strings attached.[42]

[37] Besprechung mit Michaelis, HHStA, PA I 504, fol. 842ff. Charles wrote in a similar vein to the German Crown Prince, see: Ottokar Czernin: Im Weltkriege. Berlin 1919, p. 98. Of course, Czernin may have been hinting at a separate peace that might be bought with Alsace.

[38] Hannes Leidinger: Die Ukrainepolitik Frankreichs. In: Wolfram Dornik et al.: Die Ukraine zwischen Selbstbestimmung und Fremdherrschaft 1917–22. Graz 2011, pp. 391–412; here: p. 393; David Stevenson: French War Aims against Germany, 1914–1918. Oxford 1982, p. 93, p. 249 (no. 157); Roy A. Prete: French Military War Aims. In: Historical Journal 28 (1985), pp. 887–899, paints a far more hard-line picture of the French military, at least among the top people.

[39] There was an extra inducement idly mentioned by a German diplomat after "Red October". Germany might hold out the promise of repayment to French owners of Russian bonds by "pooling" French claims and German armed might; Wolfgang Steglich (ed.): Die Friedensversuche der kriegführenden Mächte im Sommer und Herbst 1917. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen, Akten und Vernehmungsprotokolle. Stuttgart 1984, p. 326 (note of Count Kessler about a conversation with Count Karolyi, 28. 11. 1917).

[40] Wolfgang Steglich: Die Friedenspolitik der Mittelmächte 1917/18. Wiesbaden 1964, pp. 186–190, pp. 217–219, pp. 285f.

[41] French: Strategy (see note 15), p. 178.

[42] Ibid., p. 102, p. 294; for his reference to the shock when Britain realised that American help would come late, thus putting Britain into a military dilemma in 1917/18 and possibly into a political one in 1919 when she might be exhausted and America able to dictate the peace; ibid., p. 94, p. 278.

Thus, although all sorts of contingency plans were hatched, no real peace initiatives were launched after the spring of 1917. Of course, there is the one fascinating scenario suggested by Lloyd George's apparent willingness in September 1917 to discuss a peace based not on the status quo ante but on a package that amounted to a fairly radical *Ostverschiebung* of Germany.[43] Once the possibility of Russia's withdrawal from the war had become a probability, or, in Curzon's terms, once the Western powers concluded that they were dealing "with an ally who is really a traitor", it was a matter of bowing to the inevitable and granting Germany a free hand in the East. In return they would not only get Alsace-Lorraine, but also be allowed to keep the German colonies (and, presumably, large swathes of the Ottoman Empire). It seems, however, that here Lloyd George was fairly isolated within his Cabinet, while the Foreign Office did its utmost to sabotage the idea.[44]

French support for Lloyd George's ideas was uncertain, to say the least, and was even less likely after Clemenceau's rise to power.[45] In any case there was, yet again, no one on the other side who was in a position to accept the offer, anyway. Charles and Czernin might have supported it in secret, but in public they felt constrained to put the defence of Strasbourg in the same league as the defence of Trieste. The return of the German colonies had always been regarded as an essential quid pro quo for a German withdrawal from Belgium, and any mentioning of ceding Alsace had to be approached with great caution. Kühlmann could hardly be expected to get away with giving way on all of these issues simultaneously in return for the Western Powers' consent to a "new order" in Eastern Europe that they were unable to prevent in any case.

With hindsight, of course, the Germans should have jumped at the idea. But it is extremely doubtful if they – or Lloyd George – could have prevailed against the scepticism of their colleagues or Allies. As regards the opposition within the Entente, even German moderation in the East would not have helped that much, after November 1917. In the Western capitals, the Bolsheviks were increasingly seen as German agents[46] – an over-simplification that may have turned into a self-fulfilling

[43] Interestingly, the Danish Foreign Secretary Scavenius had already predicted in January 1917 that after having ridden to power on a wave of chauvinism, Lloyd George would now try and arrive at a compromise peace; Tagesberichte, 26. 1. 1917, 20. 2. 1917, HHStA, PA XL 57.

[44] Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 100 (Curzon's quote), pp. 106–109; French: Strategy (see note 15), pp. 145f.

[45] See Stevenson: French War Aims (see note 38), p. 105: Clemenceau und Pichon were "never tempted by a peace which would satisfy the Allies in the west at the price of a free hand for the Central Powers in the east".

[46] The Head of the French Military Mission to Rumania said so almost literally: "Les bolsheviks qui ne sont d'ailleurs que les agents boches"; Glenn Torrey (ed.): General Henri Berthelot and Romania. Boulder 1987, p. 115, p. 124. Obviously, that was a long drawn-out process, with the talks between Trotskij and Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart acting as a counter-current into the spring of 1918; but the British refusal to recognise Lenin's government on 7/8 Feb. 1918 might be seen as the turning-point; see Michael Kettle: Russia and the Allies. 1917–1920. Vol. 1: The Allies and the Russian Collapse. March 1917–March 1918. London 1981, pp. 222–228.

prophecy, but one which, in the short term at least, was a valid assumption for all that. Prussian generals and Russian revolutionaries both had their ulterior motives, and from the very beginning of their strange partnership they tried to undermine each other; but throughout 1918 self-interest drove them to uphold their alliance in the face of all sorts of temptations – witness Germany's willingness to risk a conflict with Turkey in mid-1918 rather than antagonise the Soviets over Baku and the Transcaucasian lands.[47] Except for President Wilson with his easy-going approach towards revolutions from Mexico to Moscow,[48] it is unlikely that German willingness to offer better terms to Russia would have been regarded as anything else but further evidence of collusion between Lenin and Ludendorff.[49]

The Dilemmas of Neutrality: Opting Out or Switching Partners?

In fact, the Russians were not switching sides out of pique but simply trying to opt out of the war under duress in 1917; but they discovered that it was not easy to do this without fatally antagonising their former Allies. To the Western powers, after the collapse of Russia a diminuition of German power appeared all the more imperative, and even more difficult to achieve. Unless Russia could be put on its feet again, Germany had won, to all intents and purposes. As Hankey had put it in a nut-shell a few months earlier: "Of all the assets on the side of the Allies, the manpower of Russia is one that ought to come first."[50]

The probable fate of Poland exacerbated the problem. If the Central Powers had breached the status quo unilaterally by proclaiming the independence of Poland in November 1916, the Entente soon topped their opponents' proclamation with a similar promise of their own.[51] However, just as the First Russian Revolution improved the terms of trade for the Entente with respect to Poland, the Second Russian Revolution left all but the most left-wing Poles with no option but to throw themselves into the arms of the Central Powers, like it or not, German arms, in military terms, preferably Austrian ones, politically.[52] The Austrian be-

[47] Sean McMeekin: The Berlin Baghdad Express. The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898–1918. London 2010, p. 333; Winfried Baumgart: Deutsche Ostpolitik 1918. Von Brest-Litowsk bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges. Wien 1966, pp. 184–206.

[48] Eugene Trani: Woodrow Wilson and the Decision to Intervene in Russia. A Reconsideration. In: JMH 48 (1976), pp. 440–461 sums up his attitude in both cases as: "Let them sort it out themselves."

[49] If anything, Britain was concerned not about the Baltic states but about a possible threat to India emanating from the Southern parts of the old Czarist Empire.

[50] French: Strategy (see note 15), p. 62 (8. 12. 1916).

[51] Ronald Bobroff: Devolution in Wartime. Sergei D. Sazonov and the Future of Poland, 1910–1916. In: IHR 22 (2000), pp. 505–528; Jeffrey Mankoff: The Future of Poland, 1914–1917. France and Great Britain in the Triple Entente. In: IHR 30 (2008), pp. 741–767.

[52] During the following months, several indications reached the eager Austrians that even Dmowski and the National democrats ("Endeks") were reconsidering their hitherto Pan-Slav or at least pro-Russian options, at least for the time being; Telegram 325, 21. 4. 1918, HHStA, PA I

trayal of Polish aspirations at Brest-Litovsk caused much heart-searching but did not fundamentally alter the situation. [53]

Meanwhile, the Polish conundrum gave rise to a number of witticisms such as: "Whoever loses, gets Poland."[54] But such quips aside, the reality was once again that a neutral alternative, in this case one that demanded sacrifices from both sides, turned out to favour the Central Powers. Throughout the inter-war period, Poland effectively isolated Germany from Russian pressure, as Balfour had already warned much earlier;[55] and ideological cleavages only exacerbated France's problems in that respect. Of course, German pride was offended to see Warsaw lording it over the junkers or cutting off East Prussia from the Reich.[56] But strategically an independent Poland – let alone one led by Pilsudski, with his slogan: "Oczy na wschod" (Eyes to the East) – still proved to be an asset for Germany.[57]

As for France, she could no longer even be certain of her status as a great power unless she could find a substitute for the Russian Army. Unfortunately for her, after 1917, Germany found itself in a much better position vis-à-vis Russia. Berlin could play "Red Army" and "White Russians" against each other, in a fairly successful combination. In a double-think procedure that finds its exact parallel in the minds of Allied leaders,[58] the Kaiser and Ludendorff agreed that it was imperative to back the anti-Bolshevik side, both for ideological and for practical reasons, as they were most likely to win. But the German Foreign Office nevertheless successfully curbed any attempt to give substance to that policy (apart from fighting guerillas in the Ukraine).

The Entente shared many of the basic assumptions of the Germans; and they also often courted the same Allies in Russia. (As Kühlmann once observed: "Isn't it strange that most of our newly-found friends have formerly served as adjutants

1015; the alternative, as Prince Eustace Sapieha complained, was to emigrate to the U.S., see: Report 208 A-B/P, 3. 12. 1917, HHStA, PA I 1013. The standard account by Heinz Lemke: Allianz und Rivalität. Die Mittelmächte und Polen im ersten Weltkrieg (bis zur Februarrevolution). Wien 1977, ends on a more pessimistic note because it stops after the First Russian Revolution.

[53] Lothar Höbelt: Die austropolnische Lösung – eine unendliche Geschichte. In: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (ed.): Der Erste Weltkrieg und der Vielvölkerstaat (= Acta Austro-Polonica, vol. 4). Wien 2012, pp. 35–54.

[54] Fritz Fellner/Doris Corradini (eds.): Schicksalsjahre Österreichs. Die Erinnerungen und Tagebücher Josef Redlichs 1869–1936, vol. 2. Wien 2011, p. 4 (8. 1. 1915).

[55] Balfour to Dmowski, quoted by Emmerich Seiwald: Die österreichische "Polenpolitik" zwischen den beiden russischen Revolutionen im Kriegjahr 1917. Diss., Innsbruck 1977, p. 81.

[56] Probably the worst aspect of German losses in the East, both formally and economically, the loss of Upper Silesia in 1921, actually resulted from a revision of the Versailles treaty. Hans-Christof Kraus: Versailles und die Folgen. Außenpolitik zwischen Revisionismus und Verständigung 1919–1933. Berlin 2013, p. 47.

[57] Anthony Polonsky: Politics in Independent Poland. The Crises of Constitutional Government. Oxford 1972, p. 200.

[58] Michael J. Carley: The Origins of the French Intervention in the Russian Civil War, January–May 1918. A Reappraisal. In: JMH 48 (1976), pp. 413–439; Kay Lundgreen-Nielsen: The Mayer Thesis Reconsidered. The Poles and the Peace Conference. In: IHR 7 (1985), pp. 68–102, here: p. 95. The French Army – more concerned with short-term prospects – was less taken with attempts to roll up Russia from the periphery.

of the Czar ?"[59]) But the Western Powers found it more difficult to either woo or threaten Lenin, even if the Czech Legion's advance to the Volga – 12.000 amateurs who almost brought down the Bolshevik regime in July – caused something of a sensation.[60] The armistice left the Western powers in a half-way house: committed to the Whites, but equally committed not to be committed too much. It has often been hinted, especially after Hitler's rise to power, that the Versailles treaty left some "unfinished business" behind. In that respect, Karel Kramar, the first Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, was right.[61] To put a seal on winning the war the West would have to finish their business in the East. At Versailles the Allies still insisted on a clause that left the door open for the Russians to rejoin the Entente and claim their share of reparations.[62] But with every passing month that prospect became increasingly utopian.

For Austria-Hungary, once Serbia and Russia were defeated the war had ceased to have much point. The problem was the Monarchy could not simply opt out without switching alliances, either. Charles I's peace efforts have attracted a lot of attention, and the intermediaries he employed successfully clouded the issue both for contemporaries and for a few historians, by giving the impression that Austria-Hungary was on the point of signing a separate peace and just needed one final push to do so. The fact was, however, that the Emperor had no intention of signing a separate peace, unless Germany rejected a reasonable peace offer from the Entente. Czernin made this clear to the Germans in no uncertain terms. "Suppose Entente offers peace on the basis of the status quo. You want to continue fighting. We say no. Then casus foederis lapses." [63] The Austrians even considered bribing the Germans with Galicia, and at one point even with Austrian Silesia. (Once the Kaiser rejected the Galician offer, it is true, the Austrians returned to the pursuit of the Austro-Polish solution with a vengeance, but they did so mainly for reasons of domestic politics.) In the end, Czernin failed to soften up the Germans enough: Alsace-Lorraine remained out of bounds; but even more important, as we know, the Entente offer to negotiate on the basis of the status quo that he was expecting never materialised.

In early 1918, Charles was pinning his hopes on contacts with the Americans. Czernin even made a conciliatory reference to Wilson's "Fourteen Points". But he warned the Emperor that a separate peace with the Americans "whom we are only fighting on paper", was pointless. "What we have to do is both of us to rally

[59] Quoted by Baumgart: Ostpolitik (see note 47), p. 186 (26. 5. 1918).
[60] Josef Kalvoda: The Genesis of Czechoslovakia (= East European Monographs, vol. 209). Boulder 1986, p. 407; Richard Luckett: The White Generals. An Account of the White Movement and the Russian Civil War. London 1971, pp. 167–170.
[61] Jan Bilek/Lubos Velek (eds.): Karel Kramar (1860–1937). Zivot a dilo. Prague 2009.
[62] Germany and Russia agreed to solve that problem autonomously at Rapallo in 1922; see: Kraus: Versailles (see note 56), p. 31, p. 51.
[63] Fritz Fischer: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/1918. Düsseldorf [4]1964, p. 540. Fischer's path-breaking study unearthed a lot of interesting material. The trouble is that whenever German policy proves to be inconsistent, Fischer would still insist on its basic continuity.

our allies behind peace proposals."[64] Moreover, even if the Austrians had been willing to explore the possibilities of a separate peace, the trouble was that once Russia had collapsed a separate peace with Austria-Hungary would not have helped the Entente all that much. Theoretically, it would have freed up an Italian Army that was unlikely to show much enthusiasm for continuing the fight on the Western front.[65] But it would only have been of substantial benefit to the Western powers if Austria-Hungary had proceeded to adopt a hostile attitude towards her former Allies, i.e. by cutting off Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire from German support. Once she did so, she would effectively have switched sides. In that case, German retaliation might well have precipitated her disintegration.

If he had been living in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, Charles might have succeeded in withdrawing from the war. But in 1917/1918, such an option was not available. There was simply no way Austria-Hungary could be genuinely neutral. Charles faced a dilemma rather like Pope Leo X whom Henry VIII advised to stay neutral in 1521: the Tudors could remain neutral if they so wished, as their realm was surrounded by the sea, but the Papal States were no island.[66] For Austria-Hungary, too, her exposed land frontiers had long been the source of fears and complaints. Once it moved out of the protective shield of the Dual Alliance, the Monarchy faced the danger of falling between two stools. Smuts who certainly saw the attractions of a Habsburg monarchy as a counterweight to Germany, also appreciated that Austria-Hungary could only start detaching herself from the German alliance once the war was over – accompanied and buttressed by an internal reorganisation of the monarchy that could hardly be undertaken during war-time.[67]

Resümee

Much as historians love *Weichenstellungen*, watersheds, and partings of the ways, these random remarks do tend to reinforce a fatalististic interpretation of the First World War. War Aims discussions tell us a lot about the internal balance of power within each of the players, of frock coats versus brass hats, of industrial lobbies versus working-class movements, of the rivalries of ethnic groups and so on; but they tell us little about the reason why the war ended the way it did. Charles I was wrong: peace did not founder on the rock of Liège. For all the

[64] Czernin to Demblin, 10. 3. 1918, HHStA, PA I 1092a (Czernin papers).
[65] That was why French Prime Minister Ribot had been sceptical about a separate peace with Austria-Hungary in 1917; see: Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 84.
[66] Quoted by Christine Shaw: The Papacy and the European Powers. In: id. (ed.): Italy and the European Powers. The Impact of War, 1500–1530. Leiden 2006, pp. 107–126; here: p. 118.
[67] Steglich (ed.): Friedensversuche (see note 39), p. CXXIV, p. 295, p. 299, pp. 360–372; on the connection between foreign policy and domestic politics Lothar Höbelt: Kaiser Karl und sein Außenminister Czernin. "Hier stehe ich, ich kann auch anders." In: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum (ed.): Kaiser Karl I. Wien 2013, pp. 17–36.

charges levelled at the decision-makers of the First World War, it is difficult to see how they could have played their hand differently – with one glaring exception: the German decision, supported by all the Austro-Hungarian military leaders, to declare unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917.[68] Trusting to technology, Kipling's "reeking tube and iron shard",[69] proved fatal to the Central Powers.

Bethman-Hollweg had tried to stave off that "second declaration of war" by launching his compromise peace proposal a few weeks earlier. It has recently been argued that the British were following a similar strategy when they encouraged Wilson's offer of mediation in the spring of 1916 as a way to avoid the battle of the Somme. In both cases, internal constraints – from civil-military relations to splits within the Cabinet – conspired to make these attempts so opaque, half-hearted and convoluted as to be almost unintelligible to their recipients. As a result, the go-it-alone factions won out, in Germany as well as in Britain. "Those who believed that Britain could win the war without the United States took their country to the brink of default in early 1917." [70] But they were saved by their opposite numbers on the other side. Thanks to unrestricted submarine warfare, the Germans were "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory".[71]

Thus, the Western powers won the Great War. That still did not enable them to win the peace – as Balfour confessed in August 1918, at the start of Britain's military triumph and a week after the German Army's "black day" at Amiens: "Even if the whole of the war aims he had indicated in Europe were fulfilled, Germany would still remain the biggest military power in Europe."[72] Perhaps the Versailles trio Balfour stigmatised with such candour were perhaps not all that ignorant; but they were certainly not all-powerful. They might carve up the Middle East, but they were unable to carve up Germany or effect a regime change to their liking in Russia.[73] Instead, they got a regime change in Germany and a carve up of Russia-in-Europe that did not serve their long term interests at all. True, there was a "subtle difference" between "preeminence in Europe" and hegemony.[74] But the pre-war Entente that had troubled Germany so much had

[68] See two valuable new additions to the existing literature: Vaclav Horcicka: Austria-Hungary. Unrestricted Submarine Warfare, and the United States' Entrance into the First World War. In: IHR 34 (2012), pp. 245–269; Justus D. Doenecke: Nothing Less than War. A New History of America's Entry into World War I. Louisville 2011.

[69] Rudyard Kipling: Recessional (1897). In: id.: Poems Selected by James Cochrane. London 1977, p. 131.

[70] Larsen: War Pessimism (see note 36), p. 810, p. 814.

[71] John Milton Cooper, Jr.: The Command of Gold Reversed. American Loans to Britain, 1915–1917. In: Pacific Historical Review 45 (1976), pp. 209–230; here: p. 228.

[72] Rothwell: British War Aims (see note 13), p. 283 (War Cabinet, 15. 8. 1918).

[73] As Sebag Montefiore: Jerusalem (see note 5), p. 498, hints, with perhaps a little bit of exaggeration, there was a link between the carving up of the Middle East and British concern over regime change in Russia, as London's conversion to zionism was at least partly designed to appeal to Russian Jewry: "Had Lenin moved a few days earlier, the Balfour Declaration may never have been issued." Churchill continued to regard Zionism as an antidote to "the foul baboonery of Bolshevism"; ibid., p. 521.

[74] Showalter: Total War (see note 7), p. 114.

disintegrated to such a degree that it took all of Hitler's (or Ribbentrop's) bloody-mindedness to put it together again a quarter of a century later. Thus, it was the Germans after all who had achieved their foremost war aim, even if the circumstances attending their collapse in late 1918 made it difficult for them to take such a cheerful view of things.

"By contrast France's strategic position was weaker than it had been in 1914."[75] When the French asked for a guarantee from the U.S., the answer was an unequivocal No. Even worse, when they tried to enforce their reparation claims against Germany by military means in 1923-4, their war-time partners in Wall Street, J. P. Morgan foremost among them, were adamant that they would bail out the franc yet again only if the French promised to behave themselves and no longer cause trouble in Europe.[76] At roughly the same time, the armed services of the two potential continental giants with a grievance, *Reichswehr* and Red Army, were embarking on their cooperation. Strangely enough, it was the Italians – rather than the French – who started talking about a "vittoria mutilata"; just as it was the Germans who believed they had been stabbed in the back when in fact they had just been freed from the nightmare of the Russian steam-roller that had dominated their pre-war fears.[77] But that is another story.

[75] Sheffield: Forgotten Victory (see note 14), p. 272. I would disagree with Sheffield on German war-aims, but I certainly agree with his reading of the results of the war.

[76] Stephen A. Schuker: The End of French Predominance in Europe. The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan. Chapel Hill 1976; John Douglas Forbes: J. P. Morgan, Jr., 1867–1943. Charlottesville 1981, pp. 90–98, pp. 143 f.

[77] Manfred Zeidler: Reichswehr und Rote Armee 1920–1933. Wege und Stationen einer ungewöhnlichen Zusammenarbeit. München 1993.

War Aims and Strategies of Powers Entering the Conflict Later than August 1914

Mesut Uyar

Ottoman Strategy and War Aims during the First World War

The Ottoman decision for war, followed by the Ottoman navy's fateful naval attack on the Russian Black Sea ports on 29 October 1914 has attracted the attention of politicians and scholars for nearly a century. The political decision-making process, the role of political and military leaders, public opinion, intellectuals and the press have been well covered by recent scholars drawing on newly opened archives and comparative studies.[1] We now know for certain that it was not a foregone conclusion that the Ottomans would join the Central Powers. We also have a better picture of Ottoman leaders' early dilemma of keeping the empire out of war while securing an alliance with a Great Power. Although we still come across old clichés[2] repeated in recent books,[3] most historians no longer believe that the Ottomans were actively seeking war in 1914, and there is no need describe the background to their decision at length.

All the same, there is a dearth of academic works on Ottoman political and military decision-making processes during the war itself; and this chapter will focus on a basic, and for the most part still unanswered, question – "how were war aims and strategy formulated and implemented?" – from the perspective of military history. Nevertheless, before going into this it is important to emphasise that the Ottoman decision to enter the war on the side of Germany was a mixture of band-waggoning and balancing strategies. As regards the first, given that the Entente was regarded in Constantinople as the stronger side, it might have made sense to side with that combination. However the short-sightedness of the Entente in refusing an Ottoman alliance offer,[4] its siding with Greece over disputed

[1] Mustafa Aksakal: The Ottoman Road to War in 1914. The Ottoman Empire and the First World War. Cambridge 2008; Michael A. Reynolds: Shattering Empires. The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908–1918. Cambridge 2011, pp. 82–119; Erol Köroğlu: Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity. Literature in Turkey during World War I. London 2007, pp. 47–71; Feroz Ahmad: The Late Ottoman Empire. In: Marian Kent (ed.): The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire. London ²1996, pp. 5–30, here: pp. 5–23.

[2] "It is difficult to think of any rational motive for this act." Alan J. P. Taylor: The First World War. An Illustrated History. London 1963, p. 58.

[3] Daniel A. Butler: Shadow of the Sultan's Realm. The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East. Washington 2011, pp. 53f.

[4] Geoffrey Miller: Straits. British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire and the Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign. Hull 1997, p. XXII, p. 59, pp. 196–198, pp. 205f., pp. 234–236; Harry

Aegean islands, the British government's requisitioning of two Ottoman dreadnoughts –Reşadiye and Sultan Osman[5] – being built in England, the presence on the spot of a German Military Mission[6] and the general effectiveness of German diplomacy[7] changed the attitudes of decision makers. Although Ottoman leaders were about equally divided in their sympathies at the beginning of the war,[8] they were all impressed by the power and the advantages of the German military system. Indeed, in their view, Germany had the means and talent to achieve victory well before the Entente could bring the might of its colonial resources into play. Hence, in the short term at least, although they were well aware of the junior role they were likely to play, they still saw the Ottoman Army as capable of tipping the balance and offsetting the longer-term advantages of the Entente.

Initial War Aims

In comparison to those of the other belligerents Ottoman war aims were initially relatively few – just two – and conservative. The most obvious one was to preserve the integrity and independence of the empire, a constant aim of Ottoman diplomacy and the military since the end of the eighteenth century. However the series of defeats in the recent Balkan Wars had shaken both the self confidence of the Ottoman military and the Porte's faith in the international system. The Great Powers had shown their colours by endorsing the territorial gains of the Balkan states in direct violation of their treaties and promises.[9] The Great Powers – espe-

N. Howard: The Partition of Turkey. A Diplomatic History 1913–1923. New York ²1966, pp. 71–74, p. 96, p. 106; Yusuf Hikmet Bayur: Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi, vol. 3,1. Ankara 1983, pp. 133–144; Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), pp. 42–45, pp. 110–112; Gerard E. Silberstein: The Troubled Alliance. German-Austrian Relations 1914 to 1917. Lexington 1970, pp. 50–52; Hew Strachan: The First World War. New York 2005, p. 103.

[5] Joseph Keller: British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire 1908–1914. London 1983, pp. 116–123; Miller: Straits (see note 4), pp. 219–224; Howard: Partition (see note 4), pp. 93f.; Henry Morgenthau: Secrets of the Bosphorus. London 1918, pp. 30f., pp. 33–35, pp. 44–52.

[6] George P. Gooch/Harold Temperley (eds.): British Documents on the Origins of the War. Vol. 10,1: The Near and Middle East on the Eve of War. London 1930, pp. 135f., pp. 143–277, pp. 338–423; Robert J. Kerner: The Mission of Liman von Sanders II. The Crisis. In: The Slavonic Review 6 (December 1927) 17, pp. 344–363.

[7] Morgenthau: Secrets (see note 5), p. 4, p. 15, p. 17. It is important not to forget the crucial role played by the Austria-Hungarian diplomats during the initiation and negotiation phases of the alliance. Frank G. Weber: Eagles on Crescents. Germany, Austria, and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance 1914–1918. Ithaca 1970, pp. 5f., pp. 17–77; Ulrich Trumpener: Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914–1918. Princeton 1968, pp. 12–61; Silberstein: Troubled Alliance (see note 4), pp. 8–16, pp. 76–98.

[8] Rear-Admiral Limpus's message to Churchill on 8 September 1914. Martin Gilbert: Winston S. Churchill, vol. 3,1. London 1972, pp. 102f.; Cemal Paşa: Hatıralar. İttihat ve Terakki. Vol. 1: Dünya Savaşı Anıları. Ed. by Alpay Kabacalı. Istanbul 2001, pp. 117–163.

[9] Keller: British Policy (see note 5), pp. 67–82; Ahmad: Late Ottoman Empire (see note 1), p. 15; Gooch/Temperley (eds.): British Documents (see note 6), pp. 428f., pp. 463–470, pp. 939f., pp. 991–994, pp. 1002–1004.

cially Britain – formally declared at the beginning of the Balkan Wars that they would not accept any changes of the border and status quo. Apparently they were expecting an Ottoman victory. The Balkan Wars changed this perspective. Instead of trying to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as they had previously done, they had accommodated themselves to the idea that the multinational empire was disintegrating. In this situation, the Ottoman government was anxious to enlist the support of at least some of the Great Powers, even if that meant joining the war.

With the luxury of hindsight Turkish and western scholars have tended to see the Ottoman leadership's belief in the need to join one of the alliance systems as a fatal blunder.[10] However they are ignoring not only the general psychology of the Ottomans with their ingrained fear of Russia[11] but also the signs and messages coming from all of the Great Powers. A German alliance seemed to offer security against the territorial aspirations of all the other Powers, great and small. In Ottoman eyes, Germany was the only Power that would respect the integrity and survival of the empire in return for an alliance. At the same time Ottoman leaders were hoping to reinforce their regional security by constructing a Balkan bloc with Rumania and Bulgaria; and here, too, they would need Germany's support. It was certainly a gamble, but one which offered a chance of winning.[12]

One controversy that has become increasingly important for modern scholarship is that over the role of internal problems in the Ottoman decision for war. These domestic problems, especially the Armenian question, certainly raised worries about the security and integrity of the empire; but at the beginning of the war they were still regarded as manageable and tolerable (rather like those of Austria-Hungary on the outbreak of war), and they do not seem to have influenced Ottoman decision-making at this stage.[13]

[10] Bayur: Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi (see note 4), pp. 267f., p. 274; Keller: British Policy (see note 5), p. 163; Aksakal: Ottoman Road (see note 1), p. 1.

[11] Ahmad: Late Ottoman Empire (see note 1), p. 15. Starting from the late 19th century the Straits became the focal point of Russian political and economic interests. The disastrous defeats that had been suffered against Japanese played instrumental role in changing strategic orientation from Far East to Middle East. Although the Straits did not initially appear within the official Russian war aims, it was apparent to Britain and France that Russia would do everything to solve the Straits problem once and for all at the first opportunity. Alan Bodger: Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire. In: Kent (ed.): Great Powers (see note 1), pp. 76–110, here: pp. 77–80, pp. 96f., p. 102; Sean McMeekin: The Russian Origins of the First World War. Cambridge 2011, p. 13, pp. 17–19, p. 23, p. 26, pp. 33–35; Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), p. 29, p. 35, pp. 40f., p. 72, p. 76, pp. 114f.; Morgenthau: Secrets (see note 5), p. 16.

[12] Aksakal: Ottoman Road (see note 1), pp. 13f., p. 17, pp. 153f.; Bayur: Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi (see note 4), pp. 110–121; Silberstein: Troubled Alliance (see note 4), pp. 6f.; Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), pp. 119f.; Strachan: First World War (see note 4), p. 104; Ahmad: Late Ottoman Empire (see note 1), p. 18; Keller: British Policy (see note 5), p. 163.

[13] Gooch/Temperley (eds.): British Documents (see note 6), pp. 424–548. Some scholars claim that "plans for the Turkification of Anatolia" and to put an end to "the reform agreement for the Armenian provinces" played important part for the Ottoman decision to enter the war. Even though historians are divide about whether the Ottoman leadership welcomed the war as an op-

The second Ottoman war aim was the economic independence of the empire and the creation of a modern economic system by radical reforms. War seemed to provide a unique opportunity to get rid of the irksome Capitulations, the dream of several generations. The Ottoman economy had always been in a critical state, but after the Balkan Wars it had got into an acute downward spiral and with the July crisis it collapsed altogether. Most western-owned businesses completely stopped their activities and foreign-dominated maritime transportation came to a halt. It was only by signing the alliance with Germany that the Ottoman government was able to raise any foreign loans at all. These terrible experiences convinced the leadership that the empire had to do all it could to establish an independent and viable economy and that this could not wait for the end of the war. The Capitulations were unilaterally abrogated just before the empire entered the war;[14] and once hostilities started economic reforms were introduced, including such novel measures as making use of women in the labour force.[15]

Contrary to a common view, irredentism did not feature prominently among the empire's initial war aims.[16] While Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania openly bargained with both sides about concrete territorial gains as a price for their support,[17] Constantinople eschewed such tactics. Of course the loss of important European provinces just two years before was still a burning issue for all levels of society; but the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population of Macedonia had effectively made the recovery of these areas impracticable.[18] To make matters worse, on 3 September 1915, the Ottoman government had to cede the strategically important west bank of the Maritza to Bulgaria to encourage it to join the war on the Ottoman-German side.[19] Obviously an "irredentist" government would not have made such a sacrifice of the security of its last remaining European territory. Similarly the continuing neutrality of Greece effectively stopped any mention of the northern Aegean islands which had precipitated a naval arma-

portunity, this view of seeing everything from the perspectives of Armenian question is a highly exaggerated understanding of the situation in the empire and also in Eastern Anatolia. The facts are not supporting the claim. For a standard version of this claim see: Taner Akçam: A Shameful Act. The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility. New York 2006, pp. 111f., pp. 121f.

14 Bayur: Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi (see note 4), pp. 149–173, pp. 181–193; Ahmed Emin: Turkey in the World War. New Haven 1930, pp. 112–116; Ahmad: Late Ottoman Empire (see note 1), pp. 15–17; Howard: Partition (see note 4), pp. 102–106; Morgenthau: Secrets (see note 5), p. 23.

15 Zafer Toprak: İttihat-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi. Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye'de Devletçilik. Istanbul 2003; Yavuz Selim Karakışla: Women and Work in the Ottoman Empire. Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women (1916–1923). Unpublished Diss., Binghamton 2004.

16 Ian F. W. Beckett: The Great War 1914–1918. Harlow ²2007, p. 102; Keller: British Policy (see note 5), p. 163; Akçam: Shameful Act (see note 13), p. 112.

17 Silberstein: Troubled Alliance (see note 4), pp. 16–30, pp. 33–58, pp. 129–178; Richard J. Crampton: The Balkans, 1914–1918. In: Hew Strachan (ed.): World War I. A History. Oxford 1998, pp. 66–79, here: p. 66.

18 Ahmad: Late Ottoman Empire (see note 1), p. 23; Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), p. 150.

19 Silberstein: Troubled Alliance (see note 4), pp. 119–126.

ment race between both countries only two years previously. In short, at the beginning of war the Ottomans displayed great caution regarding possible territorial gains.

In fact, neither pan-Islamism nor pan-Turkism played an important role in the Ottoman decision for war and formulation of initial war aims. In direct contrast to German[20] and British[21] decision-makers, the Ottoman leadership had little faith in the potential of either of these pan-ideologies, having learned from past experience that pan-Islamism had failed to unite or rally the Muslim citizens of the empire against increasing western encroachments.[22] Instead of supporting the empire most Muslims preferred to concentrate on their well-established local or regional interests and to await the outcome without throwing their lot with either side prematurely. Even in Libya locals rallied to the Ottoman banner only after suffering terribly from the heavy-handedness of the Italian colonial administration and bloody counterinsurgency operations.[23] Nevertheless, Ottoman leaders welcomed additional German funds for Pan-Islamist projects so long as they could finance their military and agents without committing themselves too much.[24]

To sum up: their initial war aims demonstrate clearly that Ottoman decision-makers were not expecting a momentous outcome in terms of either territory or power; and that their prime motive for entering the Great War was simply to preserve the independence and integrity of the empire as far as possible, and, ideally, to reinforce their position by means of Balkan pact. In short, they considered their options and formulated their war aims rationally, not in terms of making gains but of eliminating threats.

Ottoman Strategy in the Early Stages of the War

The Ottoman military was completely unprepared for action when the German Army stormed into Belgium. The Balkan Wars had left it exhausted, demoralised and in need of urgent re-equipment and refurbishment. For these reasons the Ottoman Empire was hardly regarded as a worthy opponent by the Entente powers while its new ally, Germany, also had serious doubts about its potential.[25] The

[20] Donald M. McKale: War by Revolution. Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I. Kent 1998, p. X, pp. 46–68; Fritz Fischer: Germany's Aims in the First World War. London 1967, pp. 126–131.

[21] McKale: War (see note 20), p. 3, pp. 69–75; David French: British Strategy & War Aims 1914–1916. London 1986, p. 46.

[22] Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), p. 123; McKale: War (see note 20), p. XIII.

[23] Hamdi Ertuna: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi Osmanlı Devri Osmanlı-İtalyan Harbi (1911–1912). Ankara 1981, pp. 142–182.

[24] Aksakal: Ottoman Road (see note 1), pp. 15–18.

[25] Weber: Eagles (see note 7), pp. 1 f., p. 10, p. 17; Jehuda L. Wallach: Bir Askeri Yardımın Anatomisi [= Turkish translation of the German original "Anatomie einer Miltärhilfe"]. Translated by Fahri Çeliker. Ankara 1977, pp. 142–144.

German Colonel Friedrich Bronsart von Schellendorf[26] had been at the head of the Ottoman General Staff for less than a year. Officially, the Minister of War Enver Pasha was the Chief of the General Staff and Bronsart was his first assistant. However, Enver had neither the experience nor the training needed to handle highly technical and demanding general staff duties; nor had he any taste for staff work. Instead, he preferred to deal with important issues and even then only in general terms. Bronsart therefore became de facto chief of the General Staff in a very short time, and he immediately started reorganising it in the image of the German General Staff. German general staff officers were assigned as branch chiefs with young, talented Ottoman general staff officers, most of whom were German-trained, as their deputies; and it was they who duly amended the Ottoman strategic mobilisation and concentration plans and rewrote most of the future campaign plans under Bronsart's close supervision.[27]

In addition to reorganisation and planning the General Staff was also responsible for coping with the dreadful disorder arising from the Balkan defeats. Army corps headquarters and divisions that were deployed around the Chataldja fortified zone had to return thousands of prisoners of war to their old or new garrisons; detainees returning from captivity had to be reintegrated into their new units; and in some provinces civil disturbances had to be dealt with. The confusion was so great that a number of headquarters and units were moved backwards and forwards and subjected to repeated reorganisations. The effect of these incessant changes in the structure of military organisation structure together with uncertainties about recruitment districts naturally tended to slow down the mobilisation process.[28]

Even without these problems, the Ottoman General Staff faced a peculiar combination of constraints and dilemmas in mobilising its resources. Even after losing its European territories, the empire was huge; while its inhabitants were thinly dispersed and the means of transportation and communications poor and problematic. In fact, this all considered, the mobilisation of personnel proceeded surprisingly smoothly in most of Anatolia. Indeed, so many men flooded into the recruitment centres that at least a quarter of them had to be sent home owing to the impossibility of feeding, clothing and equipping them all. In the eastern parts of Anatolia, by contrast, and in the predominantly Arab-populated provinces in the south, there was no such mass volunteering. In those areas, there existed a

[26] Deutsche Offiziere in der Türkei [Manuscript], Reichsarchiv 1940, Turkish General Staff Directorate of History [ATASE] Library, Ankara.

[27] Cemal Akbay: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1. Ankara 1970, pp. 169f.; İsmet İnönü: Hatıralar. Vol. 1. Ed. by Sebahattin Selek. Ankara 1985, p. 87.

[28] Şerif İlden: Birinci Dünya Savaşı Başlangıcında. Vol. 3: Ordu. Sarıkamış Kuşatma Manevrası ve Meydan Savaşı. Ed. by Sami Önal. Istanbul 1998, pp. 33f.; Arif Baytın: İlk Dünya Harbinde Kafkas Cephesi. Sessiz Ölüm Sarıkamış Günlüğü. Ed. by İsmail Dervişoğlu. Istanbul 2007, pp. 13f.; Carl Mühlmann: Çanakkale Savaşı. Bir Alman Subayının Notları [= Turkish translation of the German original "Der Kampf um die Dardanellen 1915"]. Translated by Sedat Umran. Istanbul 2004, pp. 21–24.

wide gap between the expectations of the General Staff and the population's understanding of universal military obligation; and most of the nomadic and mountain tribes, together with non-Muslim religious groups who had practically no tradition of conscription, did their best to evade conscription.[29]

In terms of weapons, equipment and ammunition the situation was dire. More than half of the army's heavy equipment and weapons had been lost during the humiliating retreats and surrenders of the Balkan Wars. For this reason the quality of weapons and equipment varied enormously between units, and the army obviously did not have the means to provide for its greatly expanded numbers. To make things worse, corruption, incompetence and, to a certain extent, even outright treason plagued the logistics of mobilisation. Nor, contrary to Ottoman hopes, could even the the new alliance with Germany do much to rescue the situation because of the lack of direct railway connections. All transportation between Germany and the empire was at the mercy of Romania and Bulgaria and only a fraction of the aid promised by Germany ever arrived.[30]

While the General Staff was dealing with the problems of mobilisation, the ruling authorities failed to develop an effective strategy for achieving their political aims. In the first place, they the were divided into two camps in terms of both their attitude towards joining the war and their preferred alliances: Enver Pasha, Cemal Pasha and Talat Bey – the triumvirate of the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) – managed to win over or outmanoeuvre the opposition to the German alliance; but their methods aroused ill-feeling and further opposition. In the second place, the Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha and civilian members of the leadership did not fully understand the demands of war. They had only a limited understanding of the basic decisions that would affect the nature, scope, length, and the economic and human costs of the war; and they lacked the courage to tackle such problems. Clearly, these civilian politicians were overruled by the CUP triumvirate.[31] In the third place, for Enver and the inner circle of the CUP, who were firm believers in the superiority of German military thinking and in the imminence of victory, the role of the Ottoman military ought to be to tie down as many Entente

[29] Even after these regional problems the mobilised personnel strength of the military was imposing; more than a million men with a combat strength of 820,000. However the strength of regular officer corps were only 12,469, so for every one hundred combatant soldiers the administration provided only 1.5 officers, literally a drop in an ocean of men. İlden: Birinci Dünya Savaşı Başlangıcında (see note 28), pp. 39f.; Selahattin Selışık: Kafkas Cephesinde 10ncu Kolordunun Birinci Dünya Savaşının Başlangıcından Sarıkamış Muharebelerinin Sonuna Kadar Olan Harekatı. Ankara [2]2006, pp. 3–5; Ali İhsan Sabis: Harp Hatıralarım. Birinci Dünya Harbi, vol. 1. Istanbul 1990, pp. 159–164, p. 285.

[30] Akbay: Birinci Dünya (see note 27), pp. 171–176; Ulrich Trumpener: German Military Aid to Turkey in 1914. A Historical Re-Evaluation. In: JMH 32 (1960) 2, pp. 145–149; Selışık: Kafkas (see note 29), pp. 6f., pp. 11–16; Mühlmann: Çanakkale Savaşı (see note 28), pp. 29–34; Morgenthau: Secrets (see note 5), pp. 41f.

[31] Bayur: Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi (see note 4), pp. 65–70, pp. 80f., pp. 94f., pp. 99–106; M. Naim Turfan: Rise of the Young Turks. Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse. London 2000, pp. 332–363.

troops as possible, so as to enable the Germans to win decisive victories on the main fronts. This thinking was, of course, welcomed by the German General Staff, which saw in the Ottoman Army a useful diversionary tool to force the enemy to waste more troops in "Oriental side shows". But it was a way of thinking that went directly against the need to defend the empire's territories and it confronted the leadership with a dilemma which they were to prove unable to resolve.[32]

Given the limitations of the Ottoman leadership, the German-led General Staff soon became the driving force in developing an effective strategy. Of the Ottomans only Enver and to a certain extent Cemal seem to have made any significant contribution to the formulation of strategy. According to them, however, the most vulnerable part of the empire was still the capital, and the Straits. If all too often in the past the enemies of the empire had sought to force the Straits in order to dictate terms to Constantinople, there was now also the problem that against all expectations Bulgaria and Romania were stubbornly refusing to join the Central Powers. In these circumstances, not only the Straits but the empire's European frontier and the fortress city of Edirne (Adrianople) had to be protected against a possible attack. Not surprisingly, therefore, a strong defensive posture in the west seemed to be essential.[33]

As regards the strategy to be adopted against the Russian threat in the Caucasus, the Ottoman leadership and General Staff took more time to reach agreement. In the nineteenth century the Ottomans had twice failed to stop Russian assaults at the border, the Tsar's army managing to penetrate deep into eastern Anatolia and capture Erzurum both in 1829 and in 1877. The feeling was therefore one of scepticism and it was decided to conduct a strategic defence; but no clear decision was reached as to where the main defensive line was to be established. The Third Army commander Hasan İzzet Pasha received conflicting and vague orders, some advising him to use the archaic Erzurum fortress and the high ground around it, while others recommended defensive lines near to the border.[34]

As for the southern provinces of the empire, these were, interestingly enough, virtually ignored at this stage. There was no threat assessment or discussion of Mesopotamia, Yemen and Hejaz and only some speculations about the defence of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. Indeed, units that were stationed or mobilised in the south were considered suitable for deployment at the Straits or in Thrace.[35]

[32] Friedrich Freiherr Kreß von Kressenstein: Son Haçlı Seferi Kuma Gömülen İmparatorluk [= Turkish translation of the German original "Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal"]. Istanbul 2007, pp. 11f.; Liman von Sanders: Five Years in Turkey. Translated by Carl Reichmann. Baltimore 1928, p. 32; Trumpener: Germany (see note 7), pp. 19f.; Ali İhsan Sabis: Harp Hatıralarım. Birinci Dünya Harbi, vol. 2. Istanbul 1990, pp. 52–88, p. 167; İnönü: Hatıralar (see note 27), p. 96, pp. 103–108, p. 148.

[33] Silberstein: Troubled Alliance (see note 4), pp. 28–39, pp. 73–76, pp. 82–88; Paşa: Hatıralar (see note 8), pp. 141f., pp. 152–162.

[34] Hakkı Altınbilek/Naci Kır: Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi 3ncü Ordu Harekâtı, vol. 2,1. Ankara 1993, pp. 69–72, pp. 87–94, pp. 98–100.

[35] Akbay: Birinci Dünya (see note 27), pp. 157–160.

The problem of internal security was woefully neglected.[36] To create more mobile tactical units for the army, it was decided to reorganise the gendarmerie to suit conventional military needs and to establish line infantry divisions and regiments. Consequently, even the most volatile provinces were left without adequate security, and governors later struggled to maintain order using old or unfit ex-servicemen and the always problematical village guards.[37]

One of the most novel, if least known, aspects of Ottoman strategy was without doubt the decision to employ unconventional warfare against the Russian and British Empires. Modern scholars generally confuse this with Ottoman and German pan-Islamist projects, but in reality it was born out of decades of counter-insurgency experiences against rebels and guerrillas in Macedonia and Crete. Most Ottoman officers in leading positions had spent many of their formative years fighting against all sorts of irregular forces;[38] and they had been impressed by the Bulgarians' use of irregular warriors behind Ottoman lines during the Balkan Wars. They now argued that recourse to unconventional warfare might solve the problem of mobilising Kurdish, Arab and some other martial tribes. These tribes were potentially of some military value; and they lived in regions where the General Staff was planning to economise on regular troops. Although they might be completely useless for conventional purposes their employment under experienced officers might prove something of an ideal solution.[39] Enver, consequently entrusted a semi-official Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Special Organisation)[40] with carrying out these unconventional operations. Initially he and the General Staff employed the new strategy relatively cautiously, and only in Mesopotamia, Eastern Anato-

[36] In contrast to Ottoman leadership's underestimation, the Russian military had been making plans to incite Christian population of the empire for several decades. The Russian Caucasus command began to arm Armenians and some Kurdish tribes and tried its best to incite them for rebellion well before the start of hostilities. Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), pp. 115ff.; McMeekin: Russian Origins (see note 11), p. 17.

[37] Altınbilek/Kır: Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde (see note 34), pp. 81f.; Justin McCarthy et al.: The Armenian Rebellion at Van. Salt Lake City 2006, p. 177.

[38] A.Kadir Varoğlu/Mesut Uyar: The Impact of Asymmetric Warfare on the Military Profession and Structure. Lessons Learned from the Ottoman Military. In: Giuseppe Caforio/Gerhard Kümmel/Bandanna Purkayastha (eds.): Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution. Sociological Perspectives. Bingley 2008, pp. 49–60, here: pp. 52–58; Charles D. Haley: The Desperate Ottoman. Enver Paşa and the German Empire – I. In: Middle Eastern Studies 30 (1994) 1, pp. 1–51, here: p. 15.

[39] This strategy also turned out to be useful to get rid of not only partisan officers (including the former hitmen of the CUP), but also other troublesome elements like medium level CUP leaders, bandits and ex-convicts. They were enlisted in the creation of guerrilla bands from martial tribes. Arif Cemil Denker: Birinci Dünya Savaşında Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Ed. by Metin Martı. Istanbul [not dated], pp. 9–22; Süleyman Gürcan: Memleketim Trabzon Mahallem Tekfurçayır. Binbaşı Süleyman Bey'in Manzum Anıları. Ed. by Ömer Türkoğlu. Ankara 1997, pp. 130–133; Haley: Desperate Ottoman (see note 38), p. 23.

[40] About this organisation see: Philip H. Stoddard: The Ottoman Government and the Arabs. A Preliminary Study on the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Unpublished Diss., Princeton 1963, pp. 1–8, pp. 51–60; Polat Safi: History in the Trench. The Ottoman Special Organization – Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Literature. In: Middle Eastern Studies 48 (2012) 1, pp. 89–106, here: pp. 89–102.

lia, Libya and Macedonia; later, however, it was extended to the Arabian Peninsula and Sinai-Palestine.

Yet although their threat assessment – even one that discounted any threat from the south – rightly stressed the importance of strategic defence, the Ottoman military leadership was greatly influenced by the "cult of offensive" in vogue all over Europe. Like their European counterparts they believed that modern wars would be very brief and the outcome would be decided by massive offensive operations. The Russo-Japanese War and the initial victories of the Balkan Allies were taken as testimony to the efficacy of the offensive. As they also feared that a protracted war would destroy the fragile socio-political framework of the empire in any case, they concluded that confine themselves to a defensive strategy was to risk defeat. Besides, the Ottoman military felt they would have to contribute directly to the main theatres of operations in Europe before the final German victory if they were to secure an honourable place at the peace negotiations. When, therefore, Liman von Sanders and Colmar von der Goltz suggested using the divisions that had been concentrated near the Straits to open a new front either on the Romanian frontier – Berlin was at that time put pressure on Istanbul to devise a project to include Romania as an ally – or in Odessa, Enver was no less enthusiastic about this than the German General Staff itself.

One obvious difficulty, of course, was Bulgarian and Romanian neutrality,[41] but the Ottoman General Staff nevertheless went ahead and prepared a single mobilisation and concentration plan (the so-called Plan Number One) in which, while twenty-six out of thirty-seven numbered divisions would still be concentrated defensively around Istanbul and the Dardanelles Straits, two army corps were earmarked for use against Russia (either at the Romanian border or around Odessa) in order to lighten the burden on the Habsburgs. As a result, one army corps from the Third Army, two army corps headquarters and three out of four divisions from the Iraq Regional Command and nearly all the divisions of the Fourth Army were deployed to Thrace. However when a number of conflicting messages began to arrive from the German political and military authorities the Ottomans began to change their plans drastically. For example, in order to launch a surprise attack against the Suez Canal, two army corps, each with two divisions, were reallocated to the Fourth Army; whilst the X Army Corps was returned to its mother unit, the Third Army, for possible operations against Russia. These sudden changes created havoc within the units, which found themselves first ordered to advance, then to retreat.[42]

In fact, even before the Ottoman decision to join the war the German General Staff, feeling increasingly optimistic about the capability of the Ottoman Army, had decided to intervene more directly in Ottoman military affairs and assigned

[41] Von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 25 f.; Fevzi Çakmak: Büyük Harpte Şark Cephesi Hareketleri. Şark Vilayetlerimizde, Kafkasya'da ve İran'da. Ankara 1936, p. 8.

[42] Çakmak: Büyük Harpte Şark Cephesi Hareketleri (see note 41), pp. 3 f., pp. 6–8, p. 10; Selışık: Kafkas (see note 29), pp. 17–25, pp. 28–34; Sabis: Harp Hatıralarım (see note 32), pp. 170–174.

more and more German staff officers to the Ottoman General Staff. Not surprisingly, the Ottoman general staff officers did not like these new arrangements and tried to resist the tightening of German control; but within a relatively short time (by September 1914) Bronsart had managed to replace the Ottoman deputy branch chiefs with German officers or to sideline them; and he had also increased the number of staff branches, thereby reducing their respective powers. General Hans von Seeckt who succeeded Bronsart in December 1917, was to continue his policy of excluding Ottoman officers from positions of influence, and even kept them in ignorance of important developments. Indeed, it might be said that after September 1914 the Ottoman General Staff became more or less a field army headquarters (*Großer Generalstab*) under the direct command and control of the German General Staff, in which the Ottomans had little real influence.[43]

Application of the Strategy

Somewhat to the surprise of Constantinople, the Entente responded to the Ottoman raid of 29 October on the Black Sea ports by initiating hostilities without issuing or waiting for an official declaration of war. The British light cruiser HMS *Minerva* bombarded Akaba on 1 November 1914 and the Dardanelles outer fortresses two days later. Russian troops started to cross the Ottoman frontier on 4 November and a reinforced Indian divisional group (the so-called Indian Expeditionary Force "D") which had set sail well before war was declared, captured the crucial beachhead of Fao on 7 November. Obviously the Ottoman General Staff made a mistake in paying no attention to the combat strength of British India and the quasi autonomous decision-making processes of the Government of India. However instead of making a drastic change in Mesopotamia it was decided to replace the theatre commander with an experienced insurgency expert.[44]

Meanwhile, an over-hasty and ill-executed Russian invasion had exposed Russia's military weakness and encouraged Enver and his staff to change their defensive strategy into an offensive one.[45] The plan for the Sarıkamış campaign was simple but daring: one army corps and a cavalry division would tie down the Russians by frontal assaults and create a window of opportunity for two more army corps to encircle and assault the right and rear of the enemy. At the same time

[43] Kâzım Karabekir: Birinci Cihan Harbine Nasıl Girdik?, vol. 2. Istanbul 1994, pp. 154–159; Ahmed İzzet: Feryadım, vol. 1. Istanbul 1992, pp. 182f., p. 193, p. 216; İnönü: Hatıralar (see note 27), p. 148; Sabis: Harp Hatıralarım (see note 32), p. 143; Şevket Süreyya Aydemir: Makedonya'dan Orta Asya'ya Enver Paşa, vol. 3. Istanbul 1985, pp. 380, p. 382, pp. 412–423.

[44] Frederick J. Moberly: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914–1918, vol. 1. London 1923, pp. 78–126; Nezihi Fırat/Behzat Balkış: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, İran-Irak Cephesi, vol. 3,1. Ankara 1979, pp. 65–71.

[45] Çakmak: Büyük Harpte Şark Cephesi Hareketleri (see note 41), pp. 28–42; E. V. Maslofski: General Maslofski'nin Umumi Harpte Kafkas Cephesi Eserinin Tenkidi. Translated by Nazmi. Ankara 1935, pp. 53–83; Altınbilek/Kır: Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde (see note 34), pp. 101–351.

Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa guerrilla bands supported by token conventional units would launch diversionary raids deep into enemy territory from the north. The campaign duly began on 22 December 1914 with a surprise advance into Russian rear, but if the plan itself was perhaps over-ambitious, given the shortage of heavy weaponry and communications difficulties on the Ottoman side, terrible weather conditions, the difficult terrain and stiff Russian resistance were among the other factors contributing to the defeat of the Third Army on 4 January 1915. Whatever the chances for an Ottoman victory might have had been, the Sarıkamış offensive turned out to be a self-inflicted disaster that brought major problems for the empire in its wake. Obviously a defensive or even a cautious offensive strategy would have left the empire in a better position. As it was, out of 118,174 combat effectives on 22 December only 42,000 survived.[46] The Sarıkamış Campaign not only effectively ended any chance of Ottoman offensive action but moved the Ottoman General Staff to assign a low strategic priority to the Caucasus front until Russia collapsed at the end of 1917.

The second offensive enterprise was the Suez Canal Campaign, in connection with which Germans had cherished high hopes of an Islamic rebellion in Egypt. But this campaign too fell short of its planners' expectations. Only two reinforced divisions of a newly organised expeditionary force were assigned as the first echelon of the campaign. They managed to escape detection by British surveillance teams and patrols in the inhospitable Sinai desert; and the logistical preparation and planning were also of the highest order in terms of sophistication and foresight. Nevertheless, when it came to actual operations, the campaign was a total failure. Ottoman intelligence grossly underestimated the combat strength of the enemy; and deficiencies of firepower and a lack of bridging and water-crossing equipment further weakened the chances of success. On the other hand, the theatre commander, Cemal Pasha, was quick to recognise the futility of continuing the offensive and managed to break contact skilfully and withdraw the Ottoman units professionally.[47] Moreover, his secrecy and boldness with which the undertaking had been conducted greatly worried the British colonial administration and effectively pinned down the large British garrison of Egypt for more than a year. In these respects at least, and taking into account the light casualties and minimal resources committed to the enterprise compared to the much larger British commitment, the Suez Canal Campaign, contrary to conventional wisdom, can perhaps be termed something of a success.[48]

[46] Çakmak: Büyük Harpte Şark Cephesi Hareketleri (see note 41), pp. 50–81; Maslofski: General (see note 45), pp. 84–170; Altınbilek/Kır: Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde (see note 34), pp. 354–528.
[47] Mütekait Miralay Behçet: Büyük Harpte Mısır Seferi. Istanbul 1930, pp. 4–34; Ali Fuad Erden: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Suriye Hatıraları. Ed. by Alpay Kabacalı. Istanbul 2003, pp. 11–19, pp. 30–76; Paşa: Hatıralar (see note 8), pp. 174–188; George MacMunn/Cyril Falls: Military Operations Egypt & Palestine, vol. 1. London 1928, pp. 31–33, p. 48, p. 59; Yigal Sheffy: British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign 1914–1918. London 1998, pp. 2–20, pp. 33f., pp. 48f., pp. 52–59.
[48] Erich von Falkenhayn: General Headquarters and Its Critical Decisions, 1914–1916. London 1919, p. 50; McKale: War (see note 20), pp. 100f.

Admittedly, the achievements of "unconventional warfare" were fairly modest (in comparison to the extravagant expectations of Enver and his staff) and were psychological than military. Certainly, in military terms, the concept of drawing on the potential of tribal and other conventionally "unusable" groups was certainly innovative; but the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa operatives did not fully understand the selfish, pragmatic and ever shifting loyalties of the tribes, who were mostly just out to get what they could from the conflict. In Libya, for example, the locals were very willing to act against the Italians but not against the real Ottoman target, the British, and militarily the Ottoman-led strikes against Egypt from Libya achieved nothing substantial. Psychologically, however, these attacks – in combination with the repeated Ottoman Suez Canal campaigns – seemed to justify the worst fears of the British authorities, especially when they seemed to lead a number of Egyptian officers, and even whole companies, to desert. Moreover, in terms of the resources committed to it by the Ottoman Empire, it was very much a low-cost operation (fewer than a hundred Ottoman officers and other ranks, limited amounts of war material and these largely financed by Germans), but an effective one all the same, in so far as it obliged both the British and Italians to divert much needed forces away from major theatres and to spend large sums of money on keeping local grandees loyal.[49]

In Mesopotamia, in contrast to Libya, the unconventional warfare strategy failed completely. After some initial failures Enver appointed his loyal friend, Lieutenant Colonel Süleyman Askeri Bey, as regional commander in Iraq and *de facto* director of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Süleyman Askeri, who had all the qualifications needed to direct unconventional warfare on a grand scale, set about blending tribal warriors with conventional forces and creating units of multi-purpose independent troops. In his view, success could be achieved by using regulars to tie the British down while the tribes hit them from every direction at every opportunity. In order to divert as many enemy units as possible from the main theatre, he decided to send a detachment reinforced with tribal warriors to Southern Iran. In the first month, his new methods achieved some modest successes, which encouraged him to attack the British positions near Shaiba on 12 April 1915. Here, however, the offensive of the Ottoman regular units against the British defensive line failed, whereupon the tribes decided to flee, Süleyman Askeri committed suicide, and his method of unconventional warfare died with him.[50]

As for the local population of Mesopotamia, throughout the war they either watched passively or sought to take advantage of the power vacuum to stage rebellions and attack friend and foe alike. Enver and his staff learned the hard way that it was impossible to succeed in unconventional warfare against a highly

[49] MacMunn/Falls: Military Operations (see note 47), pp. 102–145; Şükrü Erkal: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. Hicaz, Asir, Yemen Cepheleri ve Libya Harekâtı 1914–1918. Ankara 1978, pp. 641–681.

[50] Fırat/Balkış: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 44), pp. 120–131, pp. 142–161, pp. 172–210; Moberly: Campaign (see note 44), pp. 167–201, pp. 224–338.

trained and disciplined modern conventional army without active popular and support; and they consequently modified their strategy for Iraq to one of a conventional attritional war designed to lure, exhaust, and delay the advancing British, channelling them into the river valleys and annihilating them deep inside Iraq Tribal warriors would only be employed as auxiliaries for screening tasks and harassing the enemy. This time, the Ottoman General Staff's assessment and arrangements turned out to be correct. The British expeditionary force was lured deep into Mesopotamia and trapped at Kut-al Amarah; a relief force failed to break through the Ottoman lines of contravallation and suffered 25,000 casualties in nearly five months of standstill before over 13,000 British military personnel surrendered on 29 April 1916. It was the largest surrender of a British Army between Yorktown in 1781 and Singapore in 1942. Even so, perhaps the blow to their prestige only spurred the British on to commit even more troops to Mesopotamia to change the military balance; and here again, while unconventional operations might produce isolated successes, they were perhaps in the end no more than a serious nuisance for the Allies.[51]

The Entente naval attacks against the Dardanelles, by contrast, and later the Gallipoli land campaign completely changed the strategic picture. As has already been pointed out the Ottoman mobilisation and concentration plan was designed with an eye to coping with possible attacks on the Straits by land and sea. The Anglo-French naval bombardment of 3 November 1914 only seemed to fit in with this; and neither the naval attack nor the following land campaign was a big surprise for the Ottomans. The Dardanelles Fortified Zone Command, with the help of German artillery and naval experts under Admiral Guido von Usedom, managed to improve the plans, fortifications and mine lines well before the start of the naval campaign on 19 February 1915.[52] Although western scholars tend blame the British for their political and naval blunders, in reality the naval victory of 18 March 1915 was more the result of successful Ottoman-German defence planning and the heroic performance of the artillery and naval personnel.[53]

After this victory a new army, the Fifth Army, was activated on 25 March 1915 under the command of Liman von Sanders, who chose to disregard the experience and advice of the Fortified Zone Area Command and, after a brief inspec-

[51] Fırat/Balkış: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 44), pp. 227–257, pp. 261–265, pp. 287–333, pp. 421–782; Frederick J. Moberly: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914–1918, vol. 2. London 1924, pp. 34–146, pp. 157–459.

[52] Muhterem Saral et al.: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. Çanakkale Cephesi Harekâtı, vol. 5,1. Ankara 1993, pp. 33–39, pp. 44–47; Hikmet Süer: TSK Tarihi Balkan Harbi (1912–1913). Şark Ordusu İkinci Çatalca Muharebesi ve Şarköy Çıkarması, vol. 2,2,2. Ankara ²1993, pp. 47–50; Hüsnü Ersü: 1912–1913 Balkan Harbinde Şarköy Çıkarması ve Bulayır Muharebeleri. Istanbul 1938, pp. 14–26.

[53] Julian S. Corbett: History of the Great War Naval Operations, vol. 2. London 1921, pp. 223–230; Robert Rhodes James: Gallipoli. Sydney 1965, pp. 63–70; Victor Rudenno: Gallipoli. Attack from the Sea. Sydney 2008, pp. 26–56.

tion, disbanded the old defence system. According to the old plan, all units were mainly stationed near possible landing sites and kept small reserves in the interior. Von Sanders categorically rejected this plan as unsuitable for defence against modern amphibious warfare, ordering his units to establish small observation and screening units to watch the beaches but to maintain their main forces as mobile reserves.[54] It is now well known that von Sanders's concept of defense was ineffective in preventing landings.[55] Luckily for the Ottomans the performance and sacrifice of the Ottoman troops surpassed all expectations, surprising not only the Allied planners but also the Ottoman General Staff. Company and platoon size units kept the amphibious landings at bay for hours and, in some cases, for more than a day.[56]

Unfortunately for the Ottoman defenders, however, both von Sanders and later Enver fatally underestimated the deadly effect of the combination of modern fire power and entrenched infantry; just as they underestimated the destructive power of naval bombardment on infantry units attacking in dense formations. The failed counter-attacks by which they attempted to destroy the landing parties ended with heavy Ottoman casualties in May and June 1915.[57] The Allied August 1915 offensive (better known as the Suvla landing) was seen by the attackers as their last chance of conquering the Straits; and its failure, which coincided with the growing importance of the Western Front convinced British decision-makers of the futility of continuing the campaign. The new Allied theatre commander General Charles Munro immediately proposed evacuation, and this was duly carried out at the turn of the year. As the Ottoman field commanders ignored the early signs of his intentions and did little to hinder him, the evacuation turned out to be the sole Allied sole success in the whole campaign.[58]

[54] Von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 57–61; Saral et al.: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 52), pp. 109f., pp. 217–230; Selahattin Adil: Hayat Mücadeleleri. Istanbul 1982, pp. 208f., pp. 235–237, p. 257; Mühlmann: Çanakkale Savaşı (see note 28), pp. 71–78; Remzi Yiğitgüden et al.: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. Çanakkale Cephesi Harekâtı, vol. 5,2. Ankara 1978, pp. 8–10; Fahrettin Altay: 10 Yıl Savaş ve Sonrası (1912–1922). Istanbul 1970, p. 80, pp. 84f.; Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: Arıburnu Muharebeleri Raporu. Ed. by Uluğ İğdemir. Ankara 1986, pp. 6–11, pp. 19–26.

[55] Liman's mobile defence plan was recently judged by Klaus Wolf to be an "appropriate" and "very clever" defence scheme: Klaus Wolf: Gallipoli 1915. Das deutsch-türkische Militärbündnis im Ersten Weltkrieg. Sulzbach i. Taunus/Bonn 2008, p. 105.

[56] Altay: 10 Yıl Savaş (see note 54), pp. 85f.; von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 63–67; Cecil F. Aspinall-Oglander: History of the Great War. Military Operations Gallipoli, vol. 1. London 1929, pp. 162–264; Mühlmann: Çanakkale Savaşı (see note 28), pp. 83–90; Yiğitgüden et al.: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 54), pp. 12–37, pp. 239–244.

[57] Yiğitgüden et al.: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 54), pp. 175–182, pp. 191–211, pp. 327–393; Altay: 10 Yıl Savaş (see note 54), pp. 93–98; von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), p. 71, p. 73, p. 76; Mühlmann: Çanakkale Savaşı (see note 28), pp. 95–114, pp. 122f.

[58] Cecil F. Aspinall-Oglander: History of the Great War. Military Operations Gallipoli, vol. 2. London 1929, pp. 459f., p. 478; İrfan Tekşüt/Necati Ökse: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. Çanakkale Cephesi Harekatı, vol. 5,3. Ankara 1980, pp. 479–500.

Evolving War Aims

As it has already been mentioned the Ottomans went to war to preserve the empire rather than to expand its territory; and the Sarıkamış and Mesopotamian defeats at first led to an even greater emphasis upon the survival of the existing empire. However as the war progressed, sacrifices and costs increased, and important eastern and southern border provinces were occupied by the enemy, the Ottoman leadership began to reconsider its initial war aims. Not that there was any desire to abandon the original aims; but there was a growing unease lest Germany and Austria-Hungary might not help the empire to reclaim its lost provinces at the end of the war.[59] In this situation, the double victories of Gallipoli and Kut and the apparent success of the Ottoman Army in diverting Entente divisions from the Western front encouraged Constantinople not only to demand concrete promises of support in recovering the occupied provinces but also to reconsider the question of territorial expansion.

For some, the acquisition of the northern Aegean islands had now become a necessity: if the Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaigns had reinforced pre-war anxieties, the entry of Greece into the war finally removed all Ottoman inhibitions about it. Meanwhile, to the east, the Russian Revolution whetted the appetites of the Ottoman government: territorial expansion there would not only enhance the empire's security, but would give it an opportunity to establish direct connections with the Muslims of the Caucasus. Despite contemporary and later accusations of pan-Turanian irredentism the Ottoman leaders were actually sober realists in their plans for territorial expansion at the expense of Russia. For they were convinced that Russia's weakness was temporary and that she would soon re-establish herself in the region, and they were initially only trying to use a window of opportunity their target to reclaim lost provinces and the frontier of 1877. After the relatively easy advance and the recapture of some former provinces they modified their plans to include assistance for independence movements in the Caucasus and the creation of a buffer zone uniting a number of Muslim groups.[60] The Germans, however, were uneasy from the start about the Ottomans' enlarging their war aims against Russia; and their unease changed to outright hostility when the Ottoman units ignorCed their warnings, and even threats, and crossed the 1914 frontier – whereupon a brigade-sized unit was hurriedly raised from German detachments in Palestine and the Balkans and dispatched to Georgia to guard German strategic interests in the Caucasus.[61]

[59] The Ottoman suspicion about its Allies' secret plans and deals turned out to be true. The Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary Count Ottokar Czernin openly discussed with his German counterparts and peace-feelers about a fast peace with Entente at the expense of the Ottoman Empire in March 1917. Weber: Eagles (see note 7), pp. 211–222.

[60] Reynolds: Shattering Empires (see note 1), pp. 169–190.

[61] Ibid., pp. 209f., pp. 215–218, pp. 231–233; Wallach: Bir Askeri Yardımın Anatomisi (see note 25), pp. 236–238; Charles D. Haley: The Desperate Ottoman. Enver Paşa and the German Empire-II. In: Middle Eastern Studies 30 (1994) 2, pp. 224–251, here: pp. 231–233.

While the two Allies were trying to outmanoeuvre each other in the Caucasus the Ottoman economy and society began to show serious signs of collapse. The British and Russian naval blockade and the heavy burdens of war were instrumental in causing wide spread famine and hunger. Regions like Syria, Lebanon and Palestine which depended on food imports even in peacetime were hit especially hard; while Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea coast were dramatically hit by the Russian occupation, by continuous campaigns and internal unrest. The government in Constantinople tried very hard not to see these obvious signs of an impending collapse. At any rate, they had practically no plans to counter them and seem simply to have hoped for a victorious end to the war to save them from the emergency at home.[62]

Strategic Reorientation

The year 1916 had started well, with a victory at Gallipoli and the imminence of another at Kut al-Amara. For the first time since the Sarıkamış blunder, the future seemed bright as the Ottoman General Staff at last had both a strategic reserve (the divisions massed around Gallipoli Peninsula) and the strategic initiative. Nevertheless, Enver and his German advisers lost touch with the realities on the ground and decided to realise their vision of full participation in the European theatres of operations. They correctly predicted that the British would not dare to advance on the Sinai-Palestine Front until the end of the year and they were confident of their own strength on the Mesopotamian Front. On the other hand, their judgement of what Russia might do could not have been more wrong. On 10 January 1916, taking full advantage of winter conditions, General Yudenich launched a massive assault against the hapless Third Army, the Russian cavalry penetrating eight to ten kilometres deep into the Ottoman rear. Overwhelmed by assaults from a multitude of different directions and unable to match the Russian tempo, Third Army units had no other choice but to retreat nearly fifty kilometres in six days. The key fortress city of Erzurum fell on 16 February after three days and others followed, including the main port city of Trebizond (16 April) and the key transport junction and logistics base of Erzincan (25 July).[63]

Meanwhile, while this disaster was going on, the Second Army (nine divisions strong) which had just been released from the Gallipoli Front had been reorganised, refurbished (with the help of the Central Powers) and reinforced with the best recruits available for its new mission of helping Austria-Hungary. Although

[62] Emin: Turkey (see note 14), pp. 239–265.

[63] William E. D. Allen/Paul Muratoff: Caucasian Battlefields. A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border. Cambridge 1953, pp. 331–383; Hakkı Altınbilek/Naci Kır: Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi 3ncü Ordu Harekâtı, vol. 2,2. Ankara 1993, pp. 9–121; Aziz Samih İlter: Birinci Dünya Savaşında Kafkas Cephesi Hatıraları. Ankara 2007, pp. 67–95, pp. 99–101.

the Ottoman General Staff reluctantly agreed to deploy most of this Army to the Caucasus front, they stripped it of its best divisions in order to help their Allies in Europe; and if that was not bad enough, one division was diverted to Iraq and another one to Syria.[64] As for the Caucasus front, the General Staff neglected to assign a theatre-level commander at all when what was left of the Second Army was deployed there. The Commander of the Third Army, Vehib Pasha refused to serve under the operational command of the Second Army Commander, Ahmed İzzet Pasha; while the latter, for his part, refused to help Third Army, even though some of his divisions had already arrived in theatre, pleading the need to conserve his strength. Not surprisingly, therefore, as the Second Army divisions had leisurely acclimatised themselves while the Third Army continued its desperate struggle, the Third Army in turn sat idle when Ahmed İzzet Pasha launched his long awaited assault on 2 August. The August offensive of the Second Army achieved meagre results (only one army corps was able to reach its target) largely because the Russians were able to concentrate their troops against it thanks to the inactivity of the Third Army. Altogether, the Second Army paid a terrible price – some 30,000 well trained and combat-hardened Gallipoli veterans were lost – for its separate and ill-planned offensive, which struck a further crippling blow at the Ottoman Army. Its available troop strength had been effectively squandered in the feud between Ahmed İzzet Pasha and Vehib Pasha that left the whole region under threat and at the mercy of the Russians.[65]

Undaunted by the fate of the Second and Third Armies and despite intense criticism from both Ottoman officers and the German Advisory Mission, Enver nevertheless insisted on sending Ottoman troops to the European theatre. This was certainly good news for Germany and Austria-Hungary, who were desperate to make good the huge losses inflicted by the Brusilov Offensive of June 1916. In August, the 19th and 20th Divisions – the best divisions in the empire – were reinforced with selected officers and soldiers and dispatched to Galicia, where they remained until September 1917. After another urgent request from the German General Staff the VI Army Corps was assigned to joint operations against Romania between September 1916 and May 1918. Similarly, the XX Army Corps was sent to relieve the hard pressed Bulgarians on the Salonika Front in October 1916 and remained there until March 1917. The overall performance and contribution of the Ottoman troops in these operations was noteworthy, especially when compared to the performance of their Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian comrades, whose national aims were supposed to be at stake in these battles.[66]

[64] İzzet: Feryadım (see note 43), pp. 246–253; Fikri Güleç: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, Kafkas Cephesi, 2nci Ordu Harekâtı 1916–1918, vol. 2,2. Ankara 1978, pp. 37–69.

[65] Altınbilek/Kır: Birinci (see note 63), pp. 148–150, pp. 160–162, pp. 269–272; Güleç: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 64), pp. 91–151, pp. 148–153; Allen/Muratoff: Caucasian Battlefields (see note 63), pp. 390–428; İzzet: Feryadım (see note 43), pp. 253–270.

[66] Ali Fuat Cebesoy: Birüssebi-Gazze Meydan Muharebesi ve Yirminci Kolordu. Istanbul 1938, pp. 15–18; Cihat Akçakayalıoğlu: Birinci Dünya Harbi Avrupa Cepheleri. Galiçya Cephesi, vol. 7,1. Ankara 1967; Fikri Güleç: Birinci Dünya Harbi Avrupa Cepheleri. Romanya Cephesi,

If the Ottoman General Staff might be accused by some of squandering its last strategic reserve in the Caucasus and Central Europe, it certainly made another strategic error when it underestimated the importance of the Sinai-Palestine Front and the threat from the steadily growing British military presence in the form of an expeditionary force. Most probably, given its innate myopic inability to see the whole strategic picture, the general staff was deceived by the low cost of the early Ottoman victories in the Sinai and the slowness of the British military build-up. It regarded the Sinai-Palestine Front as nothing more than a sideshow to draw away the largest possible number of British troops from the European Fronts.[67] Similarly, dazzled by Kut al-Amara it began to assume an adventurist, offensive attitude towards Iran and Azerbaijan. When the XIII Army Corps was redeployed from the Iraq Front to advance into Iran its orders were pretty open-ended: to safeguard the rear of the Sixth Army against a possible Russian advance, to clear foreign elements from Iran, and conquer as much territory as possible. But after an encouraging start the Ottoman advance stopped with the capture of Hamadan on 9 August. Despite Enver's assurances, there was no local support, let alone an uprising. Some desultory fighting with the Russians went on while Ottoman soldiers fell easy prey to epidemics caused by malnutrition and lack of efficient medical support.[68] In the meantime, while a reinforced army corps was perishing in Iran for no strategic purpose the new British expeditionary force commander General Stanley Maude exploited the weakness of the Ottoman position and outflanked it from the south bank of the Tigris within two days. On 23 February 1917 the Ottoman units managed to escape from encirclement; but by this time the sheer power of the British was too much for the outnumbered, outgunned and demoralised Sixth Army units defending Baghdad, which was evacuated and duly fell to the British on 11 March.[69]

At this juncture, the German General Staff came up with a surprising proposal to establish a German-led army group (the so-called *Heeresgruppen-Kommando F*) in the Middle East. Actually, the idea had been evolving well before the fall of Baghdad as a counter to the impasse in the Sinai and the Arab Revolt. According to the German General Staff, Ottoman soldiers (especially ethnic Turks) were of superior quality but needed equipment and leadership. Moreover, the Arab Revolt clearly pointed to ethnic fractures within the fabric of the empire. Germany

vol. 7,2. Ankara 1967; Fazıl Karlıdağ/Kani Ciner: Birinci Dünya Harbi Avrupa Cepheleri. Makedonya Cephesi, vol. 7,3. Ankara 1967.

[67] Paşa: Hatıralar (see note 8), pp. 210–219; Kreß von Kressenstein: Son Haçlı Seferi Kuma Gömülen İmparatorluk (see note 32), pp. 296–299.

[68] Ali İhsan Sabis: Harp Hatıralarım. Birinci Dünya Harbi, İstanbul 1991, vol. 3, pp. 178–349, vol. 4, pp. 21–90; Necati Ökse/Özden Çalhan: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi. İran-Irak Cephesi, vol. 3,2. Ankara 2002, pp. 52–57, pp. 183–241, pp. 357–370; Halil Kut: İttihat ve Terakki'den Cumhuriyete Bitmeyen Savaş. Kutülamare Kahramanı Halil Paşanın Anıları. Istanbul 1972, pp. 193–197; Allen/Muratoff: Caucasian Battlefields (see note 63), pp. 430–447.

[69] Kut: İttihat ve Terakki'den Cumhuriyete Bitmeyen Savaş (see note 68), pp. 198–202; Ökse/Çalhan: Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi (see note 68), pp. 76–175, pp. 289–357; Frederick J. Moberly: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914–1918, vol. 3. London 1925, pp. 201–249.

as a neutral player could easily heal the fractures and unite both Turks and Arabs in the common cause of defeating the Entente. Hence, the German military was offering to provide an army group headquarters to command and control at least two Ottoman field armies.[70]

In an atmosphere of intense criticism and ill-feeling the staff of Army Group F, now entitled "Thunderbolt" (Yıldırım), started work under its commanding general, Field Marshal Erich von Falkenhayn. Originally, the Yıldırım Army Group was charged with re-conquering Baghdad, Iraq and Iran by taking the Sixth and newly formed Seventh Army under its command. However, the situation drastically changed when the enemy concentration against Gaza and Beersheba became much stronger, as a result of which the Yıldırım Army Group was rerouted to the Palestine Front before finishing its deployment to Aleppo in September 1917. But all this came too late: General Allenby managed to capture Beersheba on 31 October, and force the Ottoman Eighth Army to abandon the Gaza fortifications.[71]

Von Falkenhayn and the Yıldırım staff took over the responsibility for the front during the chaos that followed this collapse. As a veteran of the European fronts, von Falkenhayn doubted whether his field armies could establish a solid defensive position without entrenchment materials, engineers and heavy artillery support, and he decided instead to delay and wear down the enemy, relying on a series of temporary defensive positions and limited counterattacks. However, his plan to trade space for time while strengthening the Jerusalem defensive perimeter did not work very well: the Ottoman infantry regiments had limited mobility whereas the British had aerial superiority, strong cavalry and mechanised units; and to make matters worse, locally recruited soldiers began to desert their units at every opportunity while Arab tribes harassed lines of communication and forced field commanders to allocate more troops to securing the rear. After a month of battles Jerusalem fell to British on 11 December 1917,[72] whereupon von Falkenhayn was relieved of his command.

The new Ottoman theatre commander Liman von Sanders received clear orders to defend the remaining portion of Lebanon and Syria at all costs and to keep the lines of communication with Hejaz secure. In the circumstances, this was an impossible mission. Even though he restored a measure of harmony between German and Ottoman officers, the strategic prospects for his new command were

[70] Werner Steuber: Yıldırım [= Turkish translation of the German original "Jildirim Deutsche Streiter auf Heiligem Boden"]. Translated by Nihat. Istanbul 1932, pp. 5–19; Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir Erkilet: Yıldırım. Ankara 2002, pp. 4f., pp. 11–13, pp. 15–26, pp. 36–83; von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 173–177; Cebesoy: Birüssebi-Gazze (see note 66), pp. 23–26.

[71] Kreß von Kressenstein: Son Haçlı Seferi Kuma Gömülen İmparatorluk (see note 32), p. 301, pp. 309–362; Paşa: Hatıralar (see note 8), pp. 210–226; Cebesoy: Birüssebi-Gazze (see note 66), pp. 54–80; Cyril Falls: Military Operations Egypt & Palestine, vol. 2,1. London 1928, pp. 25–141.

[72] Erkilet: Yıldırım (see note 70), pp. 48–83; Kreß von Kressenstein: Son Haçlı Seferi Kuma Gömülen İmparatorluk (see note 32), p. 302, pp. 313–318, pp. 354–364; Paşa: Hatıralar (see note 8), pp. 210–214, pp. 224–226; Cebesoy: Birüssebi-Gazze (see note 66), pp. 26–35, pp. 54–80; Altay: 10 Yıl Savaş (see note 54), pp. 128–147; von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 76f.; Falls: Military Operations (see note 71), pp. 149–264.

dismal. Although on paper von Sanders was commanding five army corps, the number of combat effectives of his army group was actually that of one standard army corps. Consequently, he ordered his units to defend every centimetre of the line and committed his cavalry not as an operational reserve but to the defence of the passes in the army's rear area. He could do nothing about the massive British superiority in cavalry, the use of which had proved so effective in breaking the deadlock on the Gaza-Beersheba line.[73]

Allenby, by contrast, built his strategy around mobility based on cavalry and combined infantry-artillery operations, massing five infantry divisions and the Desert Mounted Corps on the western sector near the coastline (a local superiority of a fourteen to one). On 19 September 1918, he launched his long awaited assault, which was destined to become famous as the last great cavalry operation in history. During the Battle of Megiddo highly mobile British colonial infantry, under the protection of massive artillery fire, easily breached the Ottoman main defensive line, which the cavalry then tore through and raced to block the Ottoman lines of retreat. During the following days Ottoman field commanders, acting perforce independently of each other and under relentless pressure from the British cavalry, strove in vain to save their respective units.[74]

The disaster on the Palestine-Syrian Front and the collapse of Bulgaria effectively ended any chance that the Ottoman Empire could continue the war. Even so, unlike its Austrian and Bulgarian Allies and its arch-opponent Russia, the Ottoman Army, though severely mauled, was still in the field. Its units were going through a massive reorganisation and some of them were still fighting in Azerbaijan, Dagestan and Iran. Even the disarmament clauses of the armistice did not destroy its organisation and solidarity, and the Ottoman military lived on to fight a new war, the War of Turkish Independence.

Conclusion

Strategy demands a realistic evaluation of means in relation to ends and objectives that are commensurate with the resources available to achieve them. From this perspective the Ottomans' formulation of their initial war aims so as to ensure that at the end of the war the empire would be in a better position both regionally and globally, seems realistic and rational. Similarly their initial strategy of concentrating on the defence of key areas, such as the Straits, was logical in terms of the level of the threat and the resources available to meet it. On the other hand, when it came to putting the strategy into execution the Ottoman leadership lacked coherence and consistency. The protection of Mesopotamia was neglected and grave

[73] Von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 196–267; Falls: Military Operations (see note 71), pp. 310–312.
[74] Von Sanders: Five Years (see note 32), pp. 269–305; Falls: Military Operations (see note 71), vol. 2,2. London 1928, pp. 447–589.

internal problems were played down. Furthermore, once Russia's over-hasty offensive seemed to give the Turks the advantage, drastic changes were set on foot about which most of the Ottoman leaders were kept completely in the dark or only informed at the very last moment. In other words, the decision making processes did not in practice function according to any legally and customarily established pattern.

In all fairness one must admit that many of the empire's problems were not unique. All belligerents faced similar strategic problems and shortcomings in decision-making. Serious civil-military problems and in-fighting occurred nearly everywhere throughout the war; strategic mistakes were made – for example, almost every belligerent took the offensive at once, and with disastrous results. Even so, the hard fact remains that the Ottoman leadership was unsuccessful. Why did it fail the test of war? The answer is closely related to the implementation of Ottoman strategy. Even before the start of hostilities Bronsart had been practically in charge of planning, mobilisation and concentration; and step by step the General Staff extended its control, taking advantage of the political leadership's ignorance of military affairs. Thus, in a relatively short time not only the political but the military leadership too was sidelined by Enver and the German-led Ottoman General Staff. Later on even Cemal Pasha and other important members of CUP were assigned to positions far away from Istanbul in order to keep them out of central decision making system. Similarly any opposition to General Staff's plans and orders by field commanders was severely punished, and talented and experienced generals were either dismissed or reassigned to prestigious but passive posts. However, while only those serving at the front could develop any sense of what was actually happening (or what the Germans called *Fingerspitzengefühl*), by silencing all high ranking Ottoman generals Enver and his German advisers, cocooned in their own world of luxurious offices in the capital far away from the theatres of war, naturally often had difficulty in grasping the realities of the strategic situation. Indeed, they proved all too easily influenced by the General Staff in Berlin to give priority to Germany's interests.

The upshot of this fatal combination of sheltered existence and absolute deference to the German General Staff was a series of strategic mistakes and flawed assumptions.

For example, when Enver and the inner circle of the CUP decided that the Ottoman military's role should be to divert as many Entente troops as possible in order to enable the Germans to win decisive victories on the main fronts, they were in fact showing more regard for their Allies' demands and needs than for the grave crises afflicting their own empire. In theory, of course, alliances are partnerships of equals whatever the disparity in their political, economic and military resources. That was not the case with the Ottoman-German alliance, however, in which, in terms of burden of commitment, risks and costs, the Ottomans generally had to obey German requests and directives – even if, in a few instances, Enver disregarded German demands that trespassed too openly on his plans for the future (as in the case of his independent Caucasus policy).

Clearly, the Ottoman Empire's entry into the war was important, both in opening new fronts that kept sizeable proportions of British, Russian and French forces away from main theatres and in encouraging Bulgaria to join the war against the Entente and isolating Russia effectively.[75] However these achievements came at a terrible price in terms of casualties and, ultimately, loss of territory. The CUP triumvirate had been prepared to accept heavy casualties well before they committed the empire to war; but they did not anticipate a long war of attrition in which resources and supplies were of such vital importance. As a result, they found themselves either searching in vain for simple, clear, engineering solutions, silver bullets to solve massive political, military, economic and social problems or being obliged in effect to ignore them and leave the responsibility for them to subordinate military commanders or governors. Meanwhile, some of their own desperate attempts to change the situation created more problems than solving the original ones.

In conclusion, therefore, the Ottoman military achieved some striking successes, not only on the battlefield, but in their total mobilisation of the empire's meagre human and economic resources; and this compared well with the overall performances of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Russia. By 1918, however, the Ottoman political and military leadership failed the test of war. Thus, in the final analysis, instead of improving the integrity and security of the empire, the war effectively dismantled it.

[75] Howard: Partition (see note 4), pp. 113–115; Bayur: Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi (see note 4), pp. 267f.

John Gooch

"An Act of Madness"?

Italy's War Aims and Strategy, 1915–1918

> The historian assumes that all his individual characters are mad. The important question is, why did their madness take this particular form?
> A. J. P. Taylor

The manner in which Italy entered into the First World War in May 1915 seems on the face of things to be yet one more example of her propensity for rash and damaging international action. Guilty, it has been said, in 1911 of "arguably the most cynical and dangerous act of imperialist aggression in the whole pre-war period", her decision to defect from the Triple Alliance – technically just about justifiable within its terms and scarcely surprising in view of the history of Austro-Italian relations – has been variously described as another cynically Machiavellian act typical of Italian diplomatic practice, a "political gamble", and an "act of madness (*follia*)". Diplomatic madness would appear to have been matched by strategic madness in the form of Italy's own version of the "short war illusion" that flew in the face of a mounting pile of contemporary evidence accumulated between December 1914 and May 1915 which seemed to point ineluctably to battlefronts shaped and determined by static warfare and not by manoeuvre. The consequence of ill-advised decisions (if that is indeed what they were) was the subsequent slaughter of half a million of their own citizens by an incompetent ruling oligarchy ably assisted, it has been claimed, by an incompetent military caste.[1] The war consumed large numbers of men and more materials than Italy herself possessed and resulted in fewer and less rewarding prizes than the statesmen sought and the public expected, making it in the view of Denis Mack Smith "one of the great disasters of her [Italy's] history".[2] Hindsight would therefore appear to suggest that for Italy

[1] Paul W. Schroeder: Embedded Counterfactuals and World War I as an Unavoidable War: http://www.vlib.us/wwi/resources/archives/texts/t040829a/counter.html (accessed on 20. 4. 2015); Gian Enrico Rusconi: L'azzardo del 1915. Come l'Italia decide l'intervento nella Grande guerra. In: Johannes Hürter/id. (eds.): L'entrata in guerra dell'Italia nel 1915. Bologna 2005, pp. 15–74, here: p. 61; Holger Afflerbach: Da alleato a nemico. Cause e conseguenze dell'entrata in guerra dell'Italia nel Maggio 1915. In: ibid., pp. 75–101, here: p. 75, p. 89, pp. 90–94, p. 99; Lorenzo Del Boca: Grande guerra, piccoli generali. Una cronaca feroce della Prima guerra mondiale.Turin 2007, passim.
[2] Denis Mack Smith: Italy and Its Monarchy. New Haven, CT 1989, p. 313.

joining and fighting the war was not a good idea – but in 1915 hindsight was an advantage that neither Italian diplomats nor Italian soldiers could call on. The questions to be answered therefore are: was joining the war a rational, or at least an explicable, act; and once involved in it why did Italy's statesmen and generals persist in following what appears to have been a foredoomed military strategy until forced by near disaster to re-think their war – but not their war aims?

War Aims and War Objectives

Italy's decision to join the war on the side of the Triple Entente was certainly a gamble – but by the time that the Great War broke out gambles by great powers were a well-established phenomenon, so we should not be unduly surprised at or critical of Italy for doing what she had done in 1911 when she launched on the Libyan war, and what Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary were all doing in July–August 1914. Rome's was however a calculated gamble. Unlike other contending powers, Italy was looking for relative advantage from her participation in the war, not outright victory and the dissolution of an enemy polity. The aim of Italian foreign policy during the July crisis was to secure territorial compensation from Austria-Hungary; the foreign minister, Antonino Di San Giuliano, set that condition before he knew of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia and stuck to it thereafter. When the European war began, Rome looked for the best available odds.

Di San Giuliano asked himself the "what if?" questions that historians are now encouraged to explore, but once he decided on immediate neutrality he could find no easy answers. If the Central Powers won an absolute or a partial victory there would be no compensation for Italy, and if they lost the Entente would have no reason to compensate her. Going with the Entente had two very considerable drawbacks: it would strengthen France's position in the Mediterranean and weaken Italy's, and it would make Germany and Austria-Hungary into implacable enemies. One thing seemed clear and in the circumstances entirely reasonable: if Italy did take the gamble, she should join the war only when there was the certainty, or near certainty, of winning and when events had swung the final outcome against the Central Powers. To help him work out the answer to his dilemma Di San Giuliano sought a military assessment from general Luigi Cadorna, chief of the Italian general staff, and diplomatic advice from his ambassadors. None can have helped him much. Cadorna's advice amounted to making sure that Russia attacked Austria-Hungary at the same time as Italy and as strongly as possible; Ambassador Bollati in Berlin thought the Germans were likely to win even if Austria-Hungary was defeated, in which case Italy would suffer; and Ambassador Tittoni in Bordeaux offered the opinion that either the war would last a long time and end indecisively or the Entente would win.[3]

[3] Di Sangiuliano to Salandra, 9. 8. 1914; Di Sangiuliano to Salandra, 27. 8. 1914, encl. Cadorna to Di Sangiuliano, 27. 8. 1914; Bollati to Di Sangiuliano, 31. 8. 1914; Tittoni to Di Sangiuliano, 15. 9.

The political process of deciding and developing a programme of war aims which now began was influenced by the past as well as by the present. In the decades following Unification Italian soldiers, sailors, diplomats and politicians shared a widespread perception that their country was geographically, strategically and socially vulnerable. For years the authorities had worried that unified Italy was too fragile and her social cohesion too feeble to put up much resistance if an enemy threatened her coasts. At the start of the twentieth century they believed Italy to be less vulnerable socially but not strategically. In 1907 the navy said that it could not protect the *piazza marritime* (coastal fortresses) or even defend Rome without a bigger fleet, and in 1913 the army pushed the case for more defensive fortifications on the north-western border. Despite Italy's membership of the Triple Alliance and her participation in the naval convention in June 1913, admiral Paolo Thaon di Revel, chief of the naval general staff, was at least as worried by the Austrian as by the French fleet. In July 1913 he proposed a five year building programme that would give the Italian navy a 4:3 advantage over the Austrians: and while at the cabinet meeting on 1 August 1914 that decided on neutrality he emphasised the dangers of going to war against the British and French navies.[4] Such was his obsession with Italy's eastern seaboard that he would later be described as suffering from *scabbia adriatica* ("Adriatic itch").

Di San Giuliano died on 14 October 1914, leaving his successor Sidney Sonnino to grapple with the twin problems of defining Italy's war aims and choosing a side. When he explained the course of his negotiations to parliament on the eve of the war, Sonnino spoke of Italy's situation in the Mediterranean and the "possible" development of her colonies, but "security and relative strength in the Adriatic" came first. As he told Colonel House, President Wilson's aide, much later but in broadly similar terms, his foremost concerns were "nationality and independence, but also security".[5] For Sonnino Italy's "declaratory" war aims centred on security. How it was to be achieved was a matter for practical geo-strategic calculation with an admixture of economic interest. The army, whose contribution to the list of territorial acquisitions compiled over the winter of 1914–1915 appears to have been limited, wanted defensible land frontiers, which in practical terms meant control of the watersheds in the Dolomites, and by the war's end a firm foothold on the Istrian peninsula too. The navy, backed by the king, demanded as a minimum control of the Adriatic, which meant possession of the Dalmatian coast, and looked askance at the actuality of the French

1914; all: I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (hereafter D.D.I.). 5th series, vol. 1. Rome 1954, no. 151, no. 468, no. 526, no. 691, p. 83, pp. 255–257, p. 295, p. 402; William A. Renzi: Italy's Neutrality and Entrance into the Great War. A Re-Examination. In: AHR 67 (1968), pp. 1414–1432, here: p. 1419.

[4] Ezio Ferrante: Il grande ammiraglio Paolo Thaon di Revel. Rome 1989, pp. 50–54, pp. 184f.

[5] Notes for a parliamentary speech, 20. 5. 1915, D.D.I., 5th series, vol. 3. Rome 1985, no. 735, pp. 577–581; Pietro Pastorelli (ed.): Sidney Sonnino. Diario 1916–1922. Bari 1972, p. 314 (15. 11. 1918). On the primacy of the Adriatic, see Sonnino to Tittoni et al., 26. 10. 1914, D.D.I. (see note 3), 5th series, vol. 2. Rome 1984, no. 43, pp. 29–31.

naval presence in the Mediterranean and the possibility that the Russian fleet might arrive there too.

At the *Consulta* Sonnino focused on the Balkans, where for more than a dozen years he had been attracted by Greek coal, Montenegrin tobacco and the possibilities for railway building. Italian possession of Albania was at the head of his wish list, not least as a barrier against both Serbian and Greek expansionism. He also took on ambitions in Asiatic Turkey which his predecessor, Di San Giuliano, had considered "a vital economic and political interest".[6] Although the Balkan wars of 1912–1913 undoubtedly reinforced Sonnino's priorities, not much of this was new: talk of supremacy in the Adriatic and Italian possession of Albania dated back at least thirty years, though interest in the economic possibilities of Turkey only went back to 1907. Whether the army – and the navy – were actually capable of achieving Italy's war aims was a question that no-one seems to have confronted directly.

Italy did not enter the war in 1915 in pursuit of empire. For the first eighteen months colonial acquisitions were not seen as a matter of any great importance. Wanting to use the opportunity to settle some overhanging issues from the past, Ferdinando Martini and his advisers at the Colonial Ministry came up with a list of desiderata in November 1914 that included French Somaliland, Kassala, border modifications with Egypt, and the formal acknowledgement of "rights and interests" in Ethiopia that Italy had written into the treaty of Uccialli (Wichale) in 1891 and lost in 1896. Sonnino, never inclined to give colonial war aims much time, was happy to leave the issue to be settled after the war via Article 13 of the Treaty of London, which simply stipulated "compensation" if Great Britain and France extended their colonial dominions in Africa. In mid-1916, however, Italy's war aims agenda expanded. After the conquest of the German Cameroons in February 1916 only German East Africa still held out, raising the possibility of a share-out of the spoils. The Italian declaration of war on Germany on 28 August 1916 opened that particular door and three months later Martini's successor, Gaspare Colosimo, handed Sonnino the first definitive statement of Italy's colonial war aims. A "maximum" programme staked a claim on 2,947,000 square kilometres of East and sub-Saharan Africa, while the "minimum" programme cut that amount to 722,000 kilometres, chiefly by reducing Italy's claims in the Libyan hinterland.

Sonnino waited three months before responding. When he did so, he refused to take a definite stand and would go no further than allowing that some parts of the colonial wish list might be fulfilled as part of the general peace settlement. In his view, the colonial programme could not be allowed to compromise Italian demands in the eastern Mediterranean; and as far as officialdom's colonial war aims went, that was more or less that until the fighting stopped and the peace process

[6] Riccardo Faucci: Elementi di imperialismo nell'Italia prefascista. In: Massimo Pacetti (ed.): L'imperialismo italiano e la Jugoslavia. Urbino 1977, pp. 15–82, here: pp. 38–39, pp. 52–56; Marta Petricioli: L'Italia in Asia Minore. Equilibrio mediterraneo e ambizioni imperialiste alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale. Florenz 1983, p. 15 et passim.

began.[7] It was not, though, the end of the story as far as informed public opinion was concerned. Colosimo's programmes were leaked to journalists and an intense press campaign began. The tone was set by senator Leopoldo Franchetti, writing in the "Corriere della Sera" on 8 October 1916: "It is certain that the Italian nation, just as it wants unredeemed lands and military predominance in the Adriatic, also wants its share of the Mediterranean coasts."[8] With that the newspapermen began carving up the Ottoman territories between the great powers and calling for "greater guarantees" for Italy in North Africa and exclusive influence in Abyssinia. The British occupation of Baghdad in March 1917 intensified the press campaign. Nationalists and journalists wrapped all the goals up together in a *memoriale* presented to premier Boselli and backed by some 3,000 signatories including D'Annunzio and Mussolini. The swelling of Italy's colonial aspirations in the latter half of the war gave many on the Right reason to keep on fighting.

Public opinion played no direct part in determining Italy's war aims. In Giolittian Italy foreign policy was conceived as being different from domestic policy and above party. Public opinion was guided and formed by the government, chiefly through the press, and foreign policy was held not to be a matter in which public opinion ought to interest itself.[9] The world of politics was in any case a restricted one. Although the Italian electorate had more than doubled in 1912 to 24.5 per cent of the population (8,672,249 people), when it went to the polls in October 1913 more than a quarter did not vote. Collectively parliament, which could be and frequently was prorogued for months on end while the government ruled by decree, never exercised any real influence on the way the state conducted the war or the goals for which it was fought. Questions of high policy were considered and decisions made by three men – initially Sidney Sonnino, Antonio Salandra who served as prime minister from March 1914 until June 1916, and the king. The two politicians were died-in-the wool conservatives. Vittorio Emanuele III, a figure of not inconsiderable power and importance in the parliamentary monarchy, seems in 1914 to have been preoccupied with a domestic crisis that left him depressed and uncertain. As his politicians began the process of feeling for a deal, he was worried lest either action or inaction might be damaging to the crown and was above all anxious that Italy should not end up on the defeated side in a great war. Once the war got under way his political support was of considerable importance in keeping Luigi Cadorna in post as *generalissimo*.

War aims were one thing, war objectives were another. In the kaleidoscopic world of Italian politics, different factions fought the war for different and some-

[7] René Albrecht-Carrié: Italian Colonial Policy, 1914–1918. In: JModH 18 (1946) 2, pp. 123–147; Robert L. Hess: Italy and Africa. Colonial Ambitions in the First World War. In: JAfrH 4 (1963) 1, pp. 105–126; Giovanni Buccianti: L'egemonia sull'Etiopia (1918–1923). Lo scontro diplomatico tra Italia, Francia e Inghilterra. Milan 1977, pp. 1–37.

[8] Saverio Cilibrizzi: Storia parlamentari politica e diplomatica d'Italia. Da Novara a Vittorio Veneto, vol. 6 (1916–1917). Naples 1950, p. 337.

[9] Brunello Vigezzi: Politica estera e opinione pubblica in Italia dal 1870 al 1945. In: Nuova Rivista Storica 63 (1979) 5–6, pp. 548–569, here: pp. 551–555.

times entirely contradictory reasons. Some wanted to preserve the old political system, others to change it, and yet others to pull it down altogether. On the Right, conservative liberals waged the war to preserve the existing system of *trasformismo* politics and to defend a monarchy tarnished by the financial scandals and military disasters that had been a feature of Umberto I's reign (1878–1900). Although Vittorio Emanuele III appeared to be making some progress towards reviving the crown's standing, rowdy scenes and the boycotting of the king's speech to parliament in November 1913 were scarcely comforting. Salandra and Sonnino both believed that the monarchy would not survive if, by clinging to its neutrality, Italy made no political and territorial gains when peace came to Europe, and Giolitti thought the same.[10] Nationalists who saw Austria and Greece as serious rivals for influence in the Balkans fought for territorial and prestige gains; but they were repelled by the "juridico-sentimental" democratic convictions of the Allies and also fought for a new international order in which Italy, a "young proletarian nation", would shake off both French and Austrian predominance.[11]

On the Left, the Italian Socialist Party tried to stay loyal to its pre-war doctrines of internationalism, which meant in practice adopting a neutralist stance that cut it off from all the other major socialist parties, while some local sections stayed true to the doctrine of social revolution, earning the scathing comment "revolutionary cretinism" from the French socialist Gustave Hervé. The official line né aderire né sabotare ("neither adhere [to government policy] nor sabotage [it]") adopted in May 1915 opened the door to splits which deepened after the two Russian revolutions.[12] Democrats and reformist socialists fought for domestic and international ideals that had fired the Risorgimento and had been shattered with the German invasion of Belgium: calling for intervention in February 1915, the Socialist Ivanoe Bonomi wanted to "raise high the unforgettable words of Garibaldi and Mazzini".[13] The Liberal Left also fought the war to put an end to the corrupt manipulations of *Giolittismo*, and on its more extreme wings republicans, anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists saw it as an extension of the social struggle they had waged – and lost – before the war. These deep ideological and programmatical divergences between the many political groupings had two very important consequences: they made it impossible to form a substantial neutralist

[10] Pietro Bertolini: Diario (agosto 1914–maggio 1915). In: Nuova Antologia 1221 (1923), pp. 214–224, here: p. 217 (29. 10. 1914, 4. 12. 1914).

[11] Alexander J. De Grand: The Italian Nationalist Association in the Period of Italian Neutrality, August 1914–May 1915. In: JModH 43 (1971) 3, pp. 394–412; Raffaele Molinelli: I nazionalisti italiani e il primo governo di guerra (maggio 1915–giugno 1916). In: Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento 52 (1977) 3, pp. 449–469.

[12] Carlo Pinzani: I socialisti italiani e francesi nel periodo della neutralità italiana (1914–1915). In: Studi Storici 2 (1974), pp. 364–399, here: p. 385; Luigi Cortesi: Il PSI dalla "settimana rossa" al congresso nazionale del 1918. In: Rivista Storica del Socialismo 32 (1967), pp. 1–44.

[13] Adrian Lyttelton: Il linguaggio del conflitto politico nell'Italia pre-fascista. In: Problemi del socialismo 1 (1988), pp. 170–183, here: p. 172.

bloc in 1914–1915, and they also made possible the continuation of the war. Thus, while the fall of the Salandra government on 10 June 1916 was occasioned by the external threat posed by the Austrian *Strafexpedition*, it was at bottom the work of a political combination of left and right interventionists who wanted a more energetic internal policy and a declaration of war on Germany.[14]

Italy's three war-time administrations all held to the core of the war aims programme, and with occasional local variations, to its wider ramifications too. Important in the political stratosphere, the government's declared war aims were of considerably less importance to the soldiers and civilians at ground level. As an early and shrewd military commentator remarked, if after Caporetto officers had had to tell their men that they were fighting for Spalato and Jibuti they would first have shot at them and then abandoned the front.[15] Accustomed to a world bounded by the authority of the landlord, the mayor, the priest and the *maresciallo dei Carabinieri*, the rural peasantry obeyed the powers that be and fought their masters' war against the Austrians and later the Germans, just as they would have done against the French if things had turned out differently. Practised at subordinating civil law to executive power, and accustomed to granting extraordinary powers to the military, the war-time state expanded the powers of the army both within the war zone and beyond it – as other combatant states did. Powerful tools were to hand to exercise surveillance and control everywhere: at the front the *Carabinieri's* numbers tripled to 20,000 by November 1918, and in the interior they and the agents of the *Pubblica Sicurezza* policed the factories, inspected the brothels and collared anyone suspected of avoiding or trying to escape from military service.

Soldiers, Strategy and War-Fighting

Italy was a country highly conscious of the weight of the past, and the army went to war very well aware of the burden it carried. In the five decades that had passed since 1861 loyal establishment historians had air-brushed the military record and glossed over the monarchy's many shortcomings, creating the legend of the *Re galantuomo*. The sacralisation of a supposedly glorious past reached its climax shortly before the world war broke out with a grand official ceremony at the ossuary at San Martino (whose tower bore over its door the inscription "To Vittorio Emanuele II") on 24 June 1909, followed two years later by the unveiling of the "Vittoriale" monument at the very epicentre of Rome's historical empire.[16] There

[14] Vittorio De Caprariis: Partiti politici ed opinione pubblica durante la grande guerra. Atti del XLI Congresso di Storia del Risorgimento Italiano. Rome 1965, p. 99, pp. 125–130. On the *Strafexpedition*, see John Gooch: The Italian Army and the First World War. Cambridge 2014, pp. 155–161.

[15] Novello Papafava: Appunti militari 1919–1921. Ferrara 1921, p. 29.

[16] Piero Del Negro: Villafranca. La leggenda di un "Re nazionale". In: Piero Del Negro (ed.): Esercito, stato, società. Bologna 1979, pp. 71–124; Jonathan Marwil: Visiting Modern War in Risorgimento Italy. New York 2010, pp. 192–210, pp. 213 f., pp. 217–220.

was, however, a deep contradiction between memorialisation and reality. The wars of the Risorgimento had not gone well for the army which had been defeated by the Austrians at Custoza in 1849, had won only a single engagement in 1859, and had been defeated again at Custoza in 1866. The last time it had won a battle unaided, its critics reminded it, was at Legnago in 1176**.** Italy's gains, Lombardy and Venetia, had been received from her Allies. The army had two humiliating defeats at Austrian hands to avenge, and in 1918 its determination not to repeat the experience of being handed the trophies of war by the French played no small part in the decision to fight the battle of Vittorio Veneto.

As chief of the general staff between 1908 and 1914, general Alberto Pollio was a convinced *triplicista* who looked forward to going to war alongside Moltke and Conrad. However, war planning also involved sizing up the Austrians. The general staff in Rome watched with mounting alarm as Austria modernised existing forts along the common frontier, built new ones, constructed field works, put in new roads, and extended railway lines. Staff rides compared Italian and Austrian communications, defences and logistical arrangements along the eastern frontier, and masses of data poured into headquarters as the staff tracked every alteration in Austrian manpower policy and analysed every tactical, operational and technical regulation it could lay its hands on. Simply counting the number of men the enemy could put into the field was far from straightforward, but however it was done the result was always the same: the Austrians were half as strong again as the Italians. In 1905 the Italian standing army numbered on average 207,000 men against the Austrians 371,000, and in 1914 a standing Austrian Army of sixteen corps faced an Italian Army of twelve corps.[17]

As to what the enemy would do, the general staff in Rome first expected that the main Austrian attack would come from the Trentino but in 1910 they changed their minds and by 1913 they expected it to come on the Isonzo front, joining hands with a converging attack from Carinthia to confront an Italian Army that was only just completing its deployment on the Piave. If things went as the Austrians planned, their numerical superiority and the strategic situation "which is so unfavourable to us" would soon decide the war in their favour.[18] On the eve of the war the planners changed their minds yet again, forecasting that the Austrians would saturate the mountain zone with troops and launch a "spoiling attack" from the eastern face of the Trentino along one or more of five possible lines of advance. Even so, despite all the difficulties highlighted in previ-

[17] Filippo Cappellano: L'Imperial regio Esercito austro-ungarico sul fronte italiano 1915–1918. Rovereto 2002, pp. 28–33, pp. 48 f., pp. 87 f.; Maurizio Ruffo: L'Italia nella Triplice Alleanza. I piani operativi dello Stato Maggiore verso l'Austria-Ungheria dal 1885 al 1915. Rome 1998, pp. 197–214, pp. 236–254.

[18] Studio sulla radunata delle truppe austro-ungariche alla nostra frontiera e sui concetti informatori in presunto piano di operazioni. Deduzioni circa le modalità di attuazione in piano stesso, 16. 9. 1913, Archivio dell'Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito (AUSSME), F3 busta 388.

ous plans, the Italian general staff were confident that they could block the Austrian advance "and with good luck, blow the enemy's plans to the winds".[19]

Pollio died unexpectedly on 1 July 1914 and was succeeded on 27 July by general Luigi Cadorna. The strategic plan for war on the eastern frontier that he inherited in 1914, which envisaged pushing cavalry and one army corps forward into Friuli to allow the bulk of the Italian Army to move up to the Tagliamento and launch a counter-offensive, was based on the assumption that both sides would mobilise simultaneously. The government's decision to opt initially for neutrality, while remaining determined to acquire the Trentino and Trieste, threw the military's cards up in the air. Cadorna now had to devise an offensive that would unfold when the Austrians were already fully mobilised, giving them the opportunity to move already active troops swiftly across from the Russian and Serbian fronts as soon as war was declared and thus put the Italians at a disadvantage from the outset. The outline plan was finished by the end of August 1914. The main Italian attack would drive east from the Tagliamento to the Isonzo and then along the Sava river towards Lubljana, while subsidiary attacks across the mountains opened the roads to Klagenfurt and Villach. In three bounds the army would reach its objective – Vienna. The new war plan was driven by Cadorna's belief that confining wars to limited goals was a cardinal error. They were won by hitting the enemy in his vital centres. "Conquering ground means nothing if the enemy is left in a condition to re-attack and take revenge", he told the newspaper editor Olindo Malagodi in December 1914.[20]

On the map it looked straightforward: the Italian armies would percolate a leaky mountain barrier like water flowing along the cracks in a pavement. In fact it was, as the colonial minister Ferdinando Martini put it, "heroic proof of fantasy". Although the army had assiduously studied mountain warfare in its pre-war staff rides, it severely underestimated the difficulties it would face. For example, the staff concluded confidently that the army had enough artillery to subdue the forts of Malborghetto, Hermann and Flitsch that protected Villach.[21] Fort Hermann was smashed to pieces but the Italians never conquered Flitsch (Kluže), which stands intact at the entrance to the valley to this day.

Cadorna's strategic plan has been seen by his critics as evidence of considerable obtuseness, though it is worth noting that on the eve of the Treaty of London the French 3ème Bureau thought that the Italian Army could push to Vienna and Budapest once it had penetrated the Laibach-Klagenfurt region.[22] Why, then did Cadorna not see what others saw then and have seen since? And why did he not do

[19] Studio circa occupazione avanzata austro-ungarica alla nostra frontiera, 1914, AUSSME, F3 busta 388.

[20] Ruffo: L'Italia (see note 17), pp. 161–167; Olindo Malagodi: Conversazioni della Guerra, vol. 1. Milan/Naples 1960, pp. 33ff. (2. 12. 1914).

[21] Circa l'attacco degli sbarrimenti a. u. in caso di offensive nel settore orientale, n. d. [1914], AUSSME, E2 busta 131.

[22] Résumé de la note relative à l'intervention de l'Italie, 11. 4. 1915: cit.: Paul G. Halpern: The Anglo-French Naval Convention of 1915. In: HJ 13 (1970) 1, pp. 106–129, here: p. 111.

something different? The answers to these questions lie in the social and professional pre-conceptions that were part of his mentality. As Italy prepared for war the weaknesses in the fabric of Italian society were a matter for concern at the highest levels. The general staff believed that the country and the army needed an early success which, "given the characteristics of our race", would have a decisive effect on the remainder of the campaign. Cadorna was sure that Italy needed a short war "not so much for reasons of economics […] but in view of the country's morale and disciplinary condition, on which the outcome will largely depend".[23] He was warned by his staff in December 1914 that if Italy entered the war she must be ready to sustain heavy sacrifices for a long time to achieve her ends – but took no notice. He planned to fight a short war because he believed that the country could not fight a long one.

Cadorna's strategy depended upon an essential pre-requisite – energetic and successful action by his future Allies to draw down the strength of the Central Powers – which appeared probable and even likely at various moments during the winter and spring of 1914–1915 as the army readied itself for war. Unfortunately for Italy, in May 1915 the fates would decree otherwise. There was also evidence in the attachés' reports from the fighting fronts to support Cadorna's belief in the offensive. Much has been made of the fact that by May 1915 he had been well-briefed by Italian observers with the French and German armies about the trench warfare that was emerging on both fronts and alerted to the strength of the defensive. Cadorna was disclined to dismiss them, thinking them "impregnated" with *germanofilia* and *austrofilia*. In any case, minds attuned to the offensive could find grounds in their reports to believe that the offensive was not yet a busted flush. When colonel Bongiovanni toured the East Prussian and Polish fronts at the start of January 1915 the main tactical lesson he brought back from his visit was that, although modern weaponry had strengthened the power of the defensive, manoeuvre was still possible and indeed necessary in order to win. After a trip to the German front at Lille in mid-February and using accounts of the French attack at Soissons the previous month, he told Rome that a well-prepared attack could get across the *zona battuta* (the area between the opposing lines beaten by enemy fire) without excessive loss.[24]

Yet despite appearances to the contrary, Cadorna was not entirely impervious to what was happening elsewhere in the war or to the difficulties he and his army were going to have to overcome, and shortly before the war began he modified his initial ideas. On 1 April 1915 his commanders were warned that revised mobilisation arrangements meant that the army would arrive at the frontier in successive waves, ruling out the offensive bounds that had been the cornerstone of his original design. The Central Powers now looked able to deploy forces strong

[23] Promemoria per S. E. il Capo di Stato Maggiore, 11. 10. 1914, AUSSME, F3 busta 85/6, p. 2; Cadorna to Zupelli, 26. 11. 1914, AUSSME, F3 busta 85/6, no. 8.
[24] Note tattiche, 6. 2. 1915, AUSSME, G29 raccoglitore 13/4,5, no. 39, p. 1; Guerra di posizione, 30. 3. 1915, AUSSME, G29 raccoglitore 13/4,5, no. 68, p. 8.

enough to meet the Italian offensives. Finally, given the strength of the new Austrian defensive works on the Carso and Friuli fronts it was possible that an Italian offensive in that direction might "run into tenacious resistance and remain paralysed in the same way as has happened in Flanders and in Poland". New directives to his field commanders instructed them to conquer positions that would be used as starting points for a general offensive when all the troops had assembled. A lot now depended on Russia, with whom Cadorna signed a military agreement on 8/21 March 1915. Given the improvement in the Austrian frontier defences, he warned his new ally, "our first offensive leap will be slow, difficult [and] possible only if there is simultaneous and energetic pressure by the Russian army".[25] Four days before the fighting started he warned the war minister, General Zupelli, that given the organisation, strength and moral solidity of Italy's enemies (he included Germany) the coming campaign was unlikely to be brief, and he asked for another 150,000 infantry and as many field guns as possible to be ready for use by April 1916.[26]

Cadorna's strategy sentenced the Italian Army to three years of bloody stalemate; and his tactical doctrine made doubly sure that costs would be high. In his infamous "red pamphlet", issued in February 1915, he shrugged off trench warfare ("this very unusual form of war"), entirely discounted the difficulties of advancing over open ground, and privileged "irresistible forward movement" as the principal way to demoralise the enemy and win victory. In May 1915 new and equally lethal regulations set out how the attack was to work: the forward threatening movement of the Italian infantry, protected by field artillery, would force the enemy defenders to expose themselves so that they could then be destroyed by Italian artillery. This required levels of expertise and co-ordination that Cadorna's artillerymen never achieved. A pamphlet on French methods of frontal attack accompanied the new doctrine. Cadorna urged his subordinates to study it, but then added that it was "improbable that our troops will have to have recourse to such procedures, other than exceptionally on very limited portions of the front". Stalemate was unthinkable and everyone had to believe that trench warfare could and must end. Guns were the key that would unlock the door, destroying organised enemy defences, hitting personnel, interdicting attacks, and firing on enemy trenches until the exact moment that the Italian infantry reached them. All this was of a piece with pre-war French artillery doctrine which was at that very moment piling up casualties in fruitless attacks at Artois, Champagne and St. Mihiel. Cadorna was about to start fighting his war using methods that Joffre was already employing in vain.[27]

[25] Luigi Cadorna: La guerra sul fronte italiana. Milan 1934, pp. 77f.; Capellano: L'Imperial (see note 17), pp. 75f. (1. 4. 1915); Sonnino to Carlotti, enclosing Cadorna to Ropolo, 2. 5. 1915, D.D.I., 5th series, vol. 3. Rome 1985, no. 540, p. 427.

[26] Cadorna to Zupelli, 21. 5. 1915, AUSSME, H5 busta 17/3, no. 2492.

[27] Filippo Stefani: La storia della dottrina e degli ordinamenti dell'esercito italiano, vol. 1. Rome 1984, pp. 506–510, p. 516; Robert A. Doughty: Pyrrhic Victory. French Strategy and Operations in the Great War. Harvard, MA 2005, pp. 26f., pp. 141–152.

Climate and terrain posed great obstacles to success but they were by no means the only ones confronting Cadorna's soldiers. The Italians began the war short of almost everything except manpower. Partly this was a consequence of their having failed to foresee and plan for the needs of modern combat – a failing shared in varying degrees by other armies to be sure. Partly it was the unavoidable consequence of Italy's weak industrial base and disorganised manufacturing power. The consequences were crippling – and lasting. Within weeks of the start of the war field howitzers were being limited to firing ten rounds a day, and as late as July 1918 medium calibre guns were rationed to two rounds a day and light calibre guns to four during pauses between major offensives. When the fighting began paper sacks were used for sandbags and the attacking infantry did not even have garden shears to cut the Austrian wire.

Before the war Cadorna, like many others, thought in terms derived from the Napoleonic paradigm in which successful strategy was a matter of imaginative brilliance combined with rapidity of manoeuvre. His initial strategy required his commanders to move fast in order to take possession of key entry points in the Austrian lines. It fitted poorly with a ponderous and inexperienced army whose commanders had succumbed to the comfortable bureaucratic routines of peacetime, and within days the front had congealed along lines that stayed more or less the same for the next two and a half years. With the war less than a month old he advised his generals henceforth to avoid improvised attacks "which although they show the valour of our troops do not allow [us] to achieve results proportional to [our] losses".[28] The enemy's positions would have to be tackled using "method and patience". Operationally, "method" meant using the artillery to break down the enemy's front-line defences and inflict heavy damage on his forces, thereby creating the necessary conditions for successful infantry attacks. Strategically, "method" meant intensifying the pressure on the Austrians along the Isonzo, levering open a gap in the enemy's defensive lines and thereby acquiring the freedom of movement and manoeuvre necessary to gain the immediate objectives – Gorizia, which was taken in August 1916, and Trieste, which was never captured. If it was ever going to succeed, Cadorna's "method" required resources that Italy simply could not provide. In his defence, though, it can be said that he was seeking to do exactly what Joffre and Haig were attempting on the western front – to exchange the unfamiliar contemporary realities of static warfare for a historically familiar and conceptually more agreeable world of manoeuvre warfare.

In the shaping and implementation of strategy the first charge on Cadorna was to achieve the government's objectives, and although he may not have known its war aims in detail (the Treaty of London was only published by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution, by which time he had been replaced) there was for two years no compelling reason for it to think that he could not fulfil them. The Austrian Army obviously had to be defeated and the field commander was clearly trying to do exactly that. The capture of Gorizia in August 1916, to vociferous

[28] Operation order no. 7, 11. 6. 1915; cit.: Gianni Rocca: Cadorna. Milan 2004, p. 82.

nationalist delight, was a step towards Trieste and the achievement of an openly trumpeted war aim.

Cadorna had also to take into account the external strategic and political environment. The actions of Italy as a member of a military alliance, he told his daughter in July 1915, had to be considered "not only for the effect they have on our theatre of war, but also and more particularly for their repercussions on the entire European theatre".[29] Aware of the desirability of co-ordinating Allied offensives – as much in his own as in his Allies' interests – he launched or advanced offensives in response to requests for co-operation or help. In the summer of 1916 he told the foreign minister that he intended to press on with offensives and engage all the enemy forces confronting him in order to prevent their transfer to the Russian front. In the autumn, saving Romania after her ill-timed entry into the war required detaining enemy forces on the Italian front. At the fourth Chantilly conference in November 1916 the Allies agreed to launch general Allied offensives the following spring, and Cadorna acted in conformity with that agreement. In April 1917 Foch was assured that attacking Trieste meant threatening "the most sensitive point" of the Central Powers and one they would have to mass to defend – to the Entente's advantage. After the tenth battle of the Isonzo in May 1917 the Allies wanted another one to wear down the Austrians, and the eleventh and last battle of the Isonzo in August 1917 was indeed designed partly to coincide with the Anglo-French offensive on the western front and partly to take pressure off the Russian front. In other words, Allied strategic politics gave Cadorna further reason to do what he was already doing. It also made it much more difficult to contemplate removing him: he could hardly be sacked for being a good ally! Ironically his successor, general Armando Diaz, made his reputation in part by resisting pressure to shape Italian strategy to meet the needs of Italy's Allies.

For Cadorna's "method" to have a chance of succeeding he needed more guns – in May 1915 he started the first battle of the Isonzo with 112 heavy field guns and by the time that the third battle ended in early November he had only 57 left. He also needed better guns – between June and December 1915 139 of his medium field guns had exploded – and more ammunition than he was ever to receive. To get his offensives going at all he had perpetually to shuttle artillery up and down the 650-kilometre front. The Italian gunners, working to a complicated doctrine which in any case not all subordinate artillery commanders followed, were always under self-induced and external pressure to economise on ammunition.[30] They proved not to be up to the job. Attack training for the infantry was more or less non-existent until the very last months of the war. Cadorna's command style made a bad situation much worse. Isolated at his headquarters at Udine – known unflatteringly in the army as the *Comandissimo* – where a gang of

[29] Cadorna to Carla [Cadorna], 11.7.1915. In: Raffaele Cadorna (ed.): Lettere famigliari. Milan 1967, p. 113.

[30] Enrico Caviglia: La dodicesima battaglia [Caporetto]. Milan 1935, pp. 87–99.

colonels ran departments with cross-cutting powers and roles, he terrorised divisional and corps commanders with telephone calls known as "Cadorna's torpedoes" from which they often emerged weeping. Faced with the certainty of immediate dismissal if their attacks failed for want of aggression, they in turn bullied their subordinates, launched offensives that were all too often ill-prepared and purposeless, massaged the results, and when failure could neither be concealed nor explained, they blamed their juniors and each another.[31] As a military instrument, the army was unprepared and unable to carry out Cadorna's strategy. As a social construct, by the time of Caporetto it was fast becoming dysfunctional.

Strategy and Civil-Military Relations

From the start Cadorna was determined not to be shackled by politicians: in April 1915 he notified the war minister, general Zupelli, that the royal decree under which he held office gave him the power in the king's name to require every member of the government to inform him of any measures they intended to take which could directly or indirectly influence the development of military operations.[32] In general, he was strategic master in his own house. There were occasional skirmishes with war ministers over the numbers of troops being kept in Libya, but they were of no substantial importance. More importantly, civilians and military differed over Greece: after the French landing at Salonika in February 1915 the Italian government came under pressure to take a share in military operations there, but neither Salandra nor Sonnino was so inclined. (One of the *Consulta's* aims was to see Greece reduced during or as a result of the war and Sonnino thought any kind of alliance with her undesirable.) Cadorna by contrast, was prepared to put in 30,000 Italian troops, if only to draw off Austrian troops fighting on the Isonzo; and an Italian contingent would eventually appear in Greece – but not until August 1916.

Only Albania caused a really serious clash between the "frocks" and the "brasshats", and Cadorna emerged from it in a virtually unassailable position. Whereas Salandra, Sonnino and the war minister General Zupelli all wanted to expand Italy's foothold in Albania, Cadorna objected strongly to what he regarded as a dangerous side-show. As a result, he was taken out of the chain of command and the venture went ahead under Zupelli, Valona being occupied on Christmas Day 1915. Cadorna, for his part, protested that there should be no penetration into the interior and warned that the military consequences of not heeding his advice would be dire. In very short order he was proved right. A politically-inspired push from the Italian enclave at Valona to Durazzo turned into a

[31] The most egregious example of the latter was the ill-conceived attack on Mount Ortigara in June 1917; see: Alessandro Tortato: Ortigara. La verità negata. Le sconvolgenti rivelazioni di documenti d'archivio che nessun italiano avrebbe mai voluto leggere. Valdagno 2003, p. 34 et passim.
[32] Cadorna to Zupelli, 17. 4. 1915, AUSSME, F3 busta 85/4.

tragi-comedy and by the end of February 1916 Italian troops were back at Valona, from where they would conduct what one historian of the Great War labelled "[a] little mountain war of no significance" until the Armistice arrived in 1918.[33]

Durazzo was a key ingredient in the only major crisis in wartime civil-military relations involving Cadorna, and it is instructive in showing where power lay in wartime Italy and how it was exercised. Perhaps emboldened by his (briefly) independent command, perhaps exasperated by a field commander with whom his relations were getting steadily worse, Zupelli chose at the start of January 1916 to contest Cadorna's monopoly over military strategy. Pointing out that there was no evidence to suggest that future attacks on the Isonzo would do any better than they had in the past, Zupelli offered the cabinet a new strategic formula: a concentrated attack on a 12 kilometre front massing 500 guns to take Trieste. Sonnino, who wanted to get rid of Cadorna, tacked on a proposal for a war council composed of the top military men and Salandra took both ideas to the king. Generals whom Cadorna had fired and others that he had promoted were all saying that the army was banging its head against a brick wall; could the government remain indifferent to what was "indubitably the spirit of the army and [one] with which the country is every day being infused"? Salandra asked Vittorio Emanuele. Zupelli was sent to put his strategic alternative to Cadorna while the king's aide-de-camp, general Ugo Brusati, sounded out him out about the idea of a military council. Rightly scenting a plot to get rid of him, Cadorna was predictably furious and refused point-blank to share his military authority with anyone. A carefully orchestrated press campaign which contrasted the Olympian high command at Udine with the puny politicians in Rome got public opinion behind him; and the king told him not to worry: "If I had a bad opinion of you, I would not have defended you as I have – more than you can think."[34]

Determined to make his military power unchallengeable, Cadorna now brought Durazzo into play. In taking off down a path to which he was absolutely opposed, the government had challenged his authority and rejected his judgement. On 27 February, six days after his reassuring audience with the king, Cadorna demanded Zupelli's head. When Salandra brusquely reminded him that constitutionally it was none of his business to tell an administration which ministers it could or could not have, he tendered his resignation. He could be sure that it would not be accepted, for he had in his pocket concrete evidence of the king's support. On 29 February (the day before he offered his resignation) a royal decree gave him command of the entire army, removing the possibility of an independent strategy run by the government via the war ministry while confirming that political directives about the conduct of the war were reserved for the administration. The king asked Cadorna to withdraw his resignation, which he did – characteris-

[33] Charles R. M. F. Cruttwell: A History of the Great War 1914–1918. Oxford 1964, p. 236; [Mario Montanari]: Le truppe italiane in Albania (Anni 1914–1920 e 1939). Rome 1978, p. 36 et passim.
[34] Piero Melograni: Storia politica della grande guerra 1915/1918, vol. 1. Bari 1977, pp. 173–177; Rocca: Cadorna (see note 28), p. 110.

tically on his own terms: he would accept the revision of his powers only so long as the directives he was given could militarily be acted upon and the ends were proportionate to the means. His victory was sealed when, on 6 March, Zupelli resigned. (Fifteen months later, now a divisional commander, the one-time war minister was fired by Cadorna for "inefficiency".)

Short of a disaster – and it would take a disaster of catastrophic proportions to unseat him – both Cadorna and his strategy were now immovable.

The unexpected and almost fatal Austrian *Strafexpedition* attack in May 1916 posed just such a threat to his tenure. His administration tottering, Salandra thought seriously about replacing the field commander, and for the only time in the war the king indicated that he was prepared to change the chief of general staff. Cadorna was saved by the fighting power of his army, which held the Austrians on the very edge of the Asiago plateau, and by his rapid and energetic organisation of a reserve army on the plain below. Reassured that there would be no humiliating retreat to the Piave, Salandra saw no reason to sack the field commander. Cadorna's position was secure, but Salandra's was not. His administration was already on its last legs on the eve of the Austrian attacks with interventionists demanding a wider based government of national unity. The Trentino was the occasion for a political crisis, not a military one: a moment when Giolittian ant-interventionists could combine with left and right interventionists, reformist and "maximalist" socialists, republicans, radicals and nationalists to unseat a premier who, for various reasons, they all wanted to get rid of. On 10 June Salandra's administration fell. The capture of Gorizia two months later simply made Cadorna even more untouchable.

The one-sided pattern of Italy's wartime civil-military relations continued under Salandra's successor. Paolo Boselli tried to exert some control over Italy's warlord by appointing the interventionist socialist Leonida Bissolati (who had won two silver medals for gallantry) as a minister without portfolio and liaison with the *Comando supremo*. Cadorna's reaction was swift and uncompromising: all government missions to the war zone "with duties not exactly defined and notified [in advance]" must cease. When Boselli at once agreed (his note, written in a trembling hand, was apparently scarcely legible) Cadorna issued an army order barring any visit by any minister to the war zone without his prior consent and forbidding Bissolati, whom he suspected of wanting to have him removed, from visiting under any circumstances. The row was patched up after the king interceded on Bissolati's behalf and the minister without portfolio assured Cadorna that he had never hesitated to express complete faith in him at critical moments, but Bissolati's freedom to exercise his liaison function was severely restricted: he was not allowed to deal with subordinate commands, or assemble and speak to troops. Peace eventually broke out between the two, but only because of Bissolati's complete submission. As Vittorio Orlando, then the interior minister, remarked, Cadorna continued to be the arbiter of everything.[35]

[35] Melograni: Storia (see note 34), pp. 193–207.

The character of Italian politics and the combination of intermittent success and the absence of outright failure on the military front do much to explain why Cadorna kept command of the army and was allowed to fight the war as he chose for almost two and a half years. There are, however, other reasons that have to do with the particular Italian military-political *milieu* in which the war took place. Individual politicians might have their own favourite generals (though not many seem to have done so) but in Italy, unlike France, there was no tradition of "generals of the Left" and "generals of the Right". There were thus no focuses for a "patriotic opposition" behind whom questions could be raised about how the war was being run. Nor were there any easily identifiable military alternatives, either doctrinally or personally. In France competing military doctrines of the offensive personified in Joffre and the defensive propounded by Pétain offered those at the political helm the chance to choose between alternative ways of fighting the war they wanted to pursue at the right moment. In Italy there was only one doctrine. Likewise, Italy had no Nivelle to offer the government a new formula with which to win the war at less cost and therefore more acceptably. Nor, finally, was there any obvious successor waiting in the wings. The only realistic rival for the top spot, general Luigi Capello, was a man whose star was still rising when at Caporetto it fell with the collapse of his 2nd Army.

Caporetto and the Risveglio Nazionale

During 1917 there were signs that a combination of unresolved pre-war structural inequalities, emerging political conflicts and wartime stresses and strains was creating a maturing social crisis. At Christmas 1916, encouraged by the German Peace Note, long processions of women wound through the lower Arno valley carrying banners bearing the word *Pace*; the prefect of Florence thought things might be on the point of explosion. Strike actions and demonstrations increased during the spring and early summer. In Rome a socialist conference in February 1917 called on its adherents to stop fighting the *guerra dei signori* and make a revolution instead. Everywhere in northern Italy prefects saw the not-so-hidden hand of socialism at work. South of Rome demonstrations were fewer and were generally recognised to be economic in origin. Up and down Italy the authorities reported that socialists were reverting to pacifism and noted a revival of anarchism. One leading "minimalist" socialist shared the authorities' concern: in May 1917 Filippo Turati thought that a rising by the countryside was not far off. On 30 June he inadvertently gave the "maximalist" socialists, who were lining up with Lenin and Trotsky, ammunition when he suggested in parliament that the government open peace negotiations. His declaration that "In the coming winter there must be no war" was converted by his fellow socialist, Claudio Treves, into something that sounded more like a firm statement of intent – "Next winter no longer in the trenches".

By August 1917 challenges were being issued to the government to think seriously about stopping the war. When a Russian mission arrived at the beginning of

August it was greeted with spontaneous cries of "Viva Lenin"; Giolitti emerged from a lengthy self-imposed silence and at a speech in Cuneo on 13 August called the war "the greatest catastrophe since the Great Flood"; and two days later Pope Benedict XV's papal peace note condemned the "useless slaughter" of the war, adding to the authorities' alarm. Then on 23 August a general strike broke out in Turin and over the next four days rebels and soldiers battled for control of the city. When the smoke finally cleared 41 people were dead, 193 were wounded, and a thousand had been arrested. The rallying cry during the Turin riots was "Let's do like Russia".[36] At the front desertions increased and were running at 5,500 a month between June and September 1917. The ideals for which the war was being fought were no longer enough to banish the growing feeling of discouragement; believing in them after more than two years of war required, it has been well said, "a sufficient capacity for abstraction from the primary facts of existence".[37]

Neither socialist defeatism nor Catholic condemnation of the war appear to have done much, if anything, to undermine the army in the run-up to Caporetto, though the military authorities were persuaded that socialist propaganda had sapped the army's powers of resistance. Paradoxically – to judge by the way things were going in the months beforehand – defeat at Caporetto saved Italy from what would have been a steadily weakening home front and increasing dissent from a demonstrably sterile strategy. The authorities would in all likelihood have been able to keep the lid on things – the repressive powers and proclivities of Liberal Italy should never be underestimated – and although Salandra's successor Paolo Boselli was anything but a strong premier there is no reason to suppose that his administration would have revised Italy's war aims or could have changed the strategy in the foreseeable future. As it was, both the premier and the chief of general staff fell from power. Vittorio Orlando, who replaced Boselli, was no Clemenceau but like the Frenchman he led a nation with its back to the wall. Defending the *patria*, recovering the invaded provinces and avenging a defeat that was a national humiliation were causes that everyone could understand.

Armando Diaz, who replaced Cadorna, rebuilt the army and re-made strategy, enabling Italy to keep fighting the war and keep believing that she might win it. Anxieties about the army's reliability took some time to dissipate. In mid-November an entire brigade surrendered almost without fighting, and at the beginning of December 25,000 mostly untested men surrendered on the *altopiano*. At the start of 1918 Orlando was afraid that the army might take to heart talk of Caporetto as a military strike or a politico-military revolt and do what it had not thought of doing on 24 October 1917. It was not until April 1918 that Diaz was finally assured by his chief of military intelligence that all was now indeed calm. Meanwhile, under his direction and with the assistance of one of his two deputy

[36] Alberto Monticone: Il socialismo torinese ed i fatti dell'agosto 1917. In: id. (ed.): Gli italiani in uniforme 1915/1918. Intellettuali, borghesi e disertori. Bari 1972, pp. 89–144; Cortesi: Il PSI (see note 12), pp. 30f.

[37] De Caprariis: Partiti (see note 14), pp. 130f.

chiefs of staff, general Pietro Badoglio, the army was reconstructed in what amounted to a revolution in Italian military culture. Trench tours were reorganised, leave was increased, pay and conditions were improved, leisure facilities and activities were provided, and although punishments were still harsh there were no more decimations and military judicial procedures were improved.

Taking motivational responsibilities out of the hands of under-trained junior officers, where Cadorna had left them for two and a half years, Diaz set up a sophisticated propaganda service – *Servizio P* – to educate and inform the troops about why they were fighting. Trench newspapers explained and justified the war in terms that ranged from the highly sophisticated argument that German-owned factories and banks had taken the fruit of the workers' labours while their own money was paying for the guns that were killing them to the simplistic call to "Kill the damned race […] that wants to have your women, steal your crops and livestock […] kill the filthy violator of Italian women."[38] Italy was finally fighting a genuinely national war to which all could relate.

Diaz's management of the final year of Italy's war was sensibly cautious and from Italy's point of view well advised, though it did nothing to improve his country's standing in the eyes of its Allies. While the Allies thought that they had saved Italy by coming to her rescue, the Italians, having called up more than a quarter of a million men in December 1917, thought with some justice that they had saved themselves. On 21 January 1918 the Supreme War Council at Versailles invited them to develop plans for "the widest possible offensive" on their front. Uncertain as to whether the Allies were waiting for the Americans to arrive in force, Diaz saw his central strategic tasks that spring as ensuring the strongest possible defence, preparing counter-offensive operations in case of enemy attack, and being in a position to forestall the enemy if possible by means of offensive actions. Reeling from the Ludendorff offensive, the French pressed the Italians to turn words into action. Neither Diaz nor his deputies were prepared to be hustled into premature activity. It would be a gross error, Badoglio argued, to wear out the army when there was still a possibility that the Central Powers might take their revenge. It should only be employed at the moment of maximum effectiveness: "We must hold all our cards in our hand and only play them on a sure thing."[39] Conscious that his army was still in a convalescent state, sceptical of the strategic worth of an offensive, and increasingly convinced that the Austrians were planning a major attack, Diaz temporised. On 12 June Foch urged him to put into effect a local offensive in the mountains, for which the French had been pressing since the spring, pointing out that the Austrian attack had not transpired. Two days later it came.

[38] Mario Isnenghi: Giornali di trincea (1915–1918). Turin 1977, p. 165; see also: Mark Cornwall: The Undermining of Austria-Hungary. The Battle for Hearts and Minds. London 2000, pp. 99–104 et passim.

[39] Rino Alessi: Dall'Isonzo al Piave. Lettere clandestine di un corrispondente di guerra. Milan 1966, pp. 236 f. (7. 5. 1918).

Yet even after he had beaten off the Austrian June offensive, and with only six complete divisions left, Diaz was facing renewed calls from Foch for a mountain offensive; and he was coming under increasing pressure from the prime minister who was worried about carrying Italy's war aims at the forthcoming peace conference. Badoglio brushed Orlando aside. "Give me a written order to attack", he reportedly told the premier, "and I'll tell you how many minutes later I'll resign."[40] Talking up the Italian theatre, which he claimed was assuming "a decisive character", Diaz mounted what was in effect a challenge to Foch's "Germany First" strategy and proposed that the Allies should instead aim at the outright defeat of Austria, thereby isolating Germany and bringing about her collapse. A campaign of the size he had in mind, which would exorcise the ghosts of 1866, needed Allied manpower and munitions and in Paris at the end of August he asked for 20–25 Allied divisions. Foch told him Austria-Hungary was weak, Pershing urged him to attack, and he was sent home empty-handed. Believing at this point that the war would last into 1919, Diaz was only prepared to undertake an offensive if there was either a decisive Allied victory in France, or serious uprisings in enemy countries, or if he was given more Allied troops.[41]

The end came much sooner than anyone expected, the Bulgarian armistice on 29 September signalling the start of the collapse of the Central Powers. With one of his three preconditions met, Diaz was ready to attack and finally to consummate the much delayed union between strategy and policy. "To wait until a future armistice resulting primarily from the action of Allied arms gives us the possibility of attaining our desired goals without having worn ourselves down I don't think [is] a desirable solution and not at all commensurate with our position and the scope (*grandezza*) of our aspirations", he told Orlando.[42] He had already shifted his ground. At the end of August Badoglio secretly initiated planning for what became the battle of Vittorio Veneto, and Diaz approved the operational design on 25 September. A month later, Italian armies routed their enemy and won an outright victory in the field – the only Allied power to do so.

Conclusion

In 1914 it was as obvious to Italians as to any other sentient observers that the war which began that August was going to change the balance of power. One or other of the two contending sides was going to emerge from it the loser, with its power and influence greatly diminished. Austria-Hungary's disappearance would not be in Italy's best interests and Sonnino for one never sought this, but any diminution in her power would be to Italy's advantage in areas she deemed im-

[40] Silvio Bertoldi: Badoglio. Il generale che prese il posto di Mussolini. Milan 1993, pp. 87f.
[41] Diaz to Orlando, 14. 9. 1918, AUSSME, H5 busta 10/5, T. 41P.
[42] Diaz to Orlando, 14. 10. 1918; cit.: Luigi Grattan: Armando Diaz Duca della Vittoria. Foggia 2001, p. 154.

portant or even critical to her security and desirable for her future economic well-being. Italy went into the war as a regional power fighting what both soldiers and politicians initially expected would be a short war for limited ends. If there was a fatal miscalculation, this was it. No-one considered the alternative – a war of unforeseeable duration – and no major figure other than Giolitti believed that Italy could stay out of the war and still make tangible gains. To the men in charge of the state, there were more and more pressing reasons to fight than not to fight – a viewpoint shared by all the other combatants.

Once the fighting began Italy's statesmen, like civilian leaders everywhere else, took a functional view of their military. Cadorna and Diaz were expected to find the key to defeating the Austro-Hungarian Army, thereby creating the circumstances in which aims could be achieved. To do this the soldiers had to translate war aims into objectives and then secure them. This was the point at which strategy and war aims parted company. In only a few cases – Trieste for example – did a war aim and a strategic objective physically coincide. Writ large, Italy's war was a *va banque* game: either the Austro-Hungarian armies would be defeated, in which case claiming her war aims would then become a task for her statesmen, or they would win, in which case war aims would be irrelevant. Once in it, leaving the war voluntarily was never a realistic option: doing so would have overturned the political card-table with incalculable consequences. What Italy did not foresee, understandably enough, in 1915 was that the war would change the rules of the international game, making it impossible for her to pocket some of the prizes she wanted – and had been promised.

Klaus Schwabe

President Wilson and the War Aims of the United States

The Horrors of War

The strategy and war aims of the United States in the First World War were very much determined by one person: the American president, Woodrow Wilson. True, he was acting against the background of a lively debate at home over the aims of the United States in its war against the Central Powers; but as the American president he assumed for himself the prerogative of defining them while claiming at the same time the right to determine the broad outlines of military-political strategy for accomplishing them.[1] The following analysis will focus on Wilson himself, therefore; and it is to him that the central questions of this volume will be addressed: was he aware of the horrors that this world conflict had conjured up? What objectives justified, in his view, America's participation in this slaughter? Did his policy prolong or shorten the war? What was the impact of Wilson's war aims programme on the Western military and naval strategy? What military outcome was he working for in order to realise America's war aims? At the end of this analysis the programme and policy that president Wilson took to the Paris peace conference should become visible.

The *first question* is easily answered: as Wilson stated in his powerful peace message to Congress on 22 January 1917, he had seen in the First World War, even before America entered it, the great humanitarian catastrophe of subsequent historical record.[2] In his message of 2 April 1917, calling on Congress to declare war on the German Empire, he revealed his "profound sense of the solemn and even

[1] John A. Thompson: More Tactics than Strategy. Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1914–1919. In: William N. Tilchin/Charles E. Neu (eds.): Artists of Power. Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Their Enduring Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy. Westport 2006, pp. 95–116, here: p. 96. For contemporary reactions see: David Esposito: The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson. American War Aims in World War I. Westport 1996, p. 120; see also: Lloyd E. Ambrosius: Wilsonian Statecraft. Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism During World War I. Wilmington 1991, p. 16.

[2] Wilson, Address to the Senate, 22. 1. 1917. In: Arthur S. Link et al. (eds.): The Papers of Woodrow Wilson. 69 vols. Princeton, NJ 1966–1994 (cited: Link et al.: Wilson Papers), here: vol. 40, p. 534; see also: "This tragical and appalling outpouring of blood", cited in: Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers, vol. 45, p. 535.

tragical character of the step I am taking". It was, he said, "a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance".[3] A particularly poignant aspect of what he meant by this tragedy was, as he disclosed to his friends in confidence, that his decision amounted to a death sentence for thousands of young Americans.[4]

A New World Order

Wilson's dismay at this catastrophe – and this brings us to our *second question* – lay at the root of his war aims programme, which caught the imagination of many of his contemporaries and which, at the same time, later analysts found so difficult to comprehend. It had both international-legal-moral as well as concrete material aspects. His chief concern lay in the field of international law as the sole remedy to prevent a repetition of that disaster. Here, he saw himself as the embodiment of a world-wide idealistic-progressive train of thought centred on the desire to ensure that this would be the last war. But the president was also aware that this global conflict heralded the end of America's geographically guaranteed security both immediately and in the long term: he saw his country's security directly threatened by the German proclamation of unrestricted submarine warfare (1 February 1917), which not only threatened to paralyse America's foreign trade, but also conjured up the spectre of a German victory that would destroy the balance of power in the world and ultimately threaten the security of the United States in the western hemisphere. For the first time Wilson thus invoked the principle of the balance of power, a doctrine he had so often in the past condemned.[5] In the long term, there loomed also the danger that a victorious militaristic Germany would force the United States to become a militarised state too, and, thereby, to jettison its democratic institutions.[6] By participating in the war, he demanded therefore, America must seek to ensure that this would be a "war to end all wars".[7]

This, Wilson's first and overriding war aim, implied a far-reaching global reform of international relations. Old, discredited power-political traditions were to

[3] Wilson: War Message to Congress, 2. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 526; Wilson: Flag Day Address, 14. 6. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 499.

[4] Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. IX, p. 483, p. 541.

[5] Ross Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson, World War I and an American Conception of National Security. In: Diplomatic History 25 (2001), pp. 1–32, here: pp. 3f., p. 8, pp. 10f., p. 13, p. 26, p. 30; Ross Kennedy: The Will to Believe. Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and America's Strategy for Peace and Security. Kent, OH 2009, p. 86, pp. 130f.

[6] Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson (see note 5), p. 14, p. 16, p. 30.

[7] Wilson, Address to the Senate, 22. 1. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 40, p. 534; Thomas J. Knock: To End All Wars. Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order. Princeton 1992, p. 163.

be replaced by an "organised peace".[8] This was to be realised through a worldwide peace organisation, a "League of Nations". This international-legal institution was for Wilson the most important part of his programme, which he had conceived for the most part even before the United States had become belligerent, and which he held to, on the whole, for the entire period of American participation in the war. Hence, he declared in his war message to Congress that "the world must be made safe for democracy"[9] – i.e. that the democracies, which in Wilson's view were by nature pacific, should no longer be exposed to threats from any aggressor.[10] At the same time, he made it clear what his programme was directed against: "Against secret diplomacy, against the old system of power rivalries as practised at the Congress of Vienna, against 'exclusive alliances', against the principle of the balance of power, and against the pursuit of 'selfish interests' by individual nations".[11]

In positive terms Wilson's new world order and the League of Nations guaranteeing it were to consist of several elements: the basis was to consist of nations that were democratic, i.e. that enjoyed self-determination and equality of political and economic rights. In material terms this implied the freedom of the seas and of trade. The institutional framework was to be a world peace organisation to guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of every member state, whether large or small. The United States was to be an internationally responsible member of this world order. With this programme, Wilson had made himself the global spokesman for the pacifist longing for peace that characterised the moderate left, friend and foe alike, and not least in his own country.[12] More precisely, this world order meant two things: in the first place, Wilson wanted to use it to exclude the factors of power and violence from international relations and to establish them on a basis of international law. "What we seek", he declared on 4 July 1918 at Washington's tomb, "is the reign of law, based upon the consent of the governed and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind": violence was to be replaced by law.[13] What he demanded ultimately amounted to no less than replacing tradi-

[8] Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson (see note 5), p. 8, p. 10, pp. 28ff.
[9] Wilson, Address, 2. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 525.
[10] Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson (see note 5), p. 16.
[11] Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 198; Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 536; Wilson, Address to the U.S. Senate, 22. 1. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 40, p. 536, p. 539; also: Wilson, Address, 4. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 198; Knock: End (see note 7), p. 97.
[12] Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 538f.; Wilson, Address, 2. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 524; Wilson, Reply to the Pope's Peace Proposal, 27. 8. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 44, pp. 58f.; Tony Smith: America's Mission. The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century. Princeton 1994, p. 94; Knock: End (see note 7), p. 163; Arno Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin. Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917–1918. Cleveland 1964, pp. 37ff.; Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 88f., p. 131.
[13] Wilson, Address, 4. 7. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 48, p. 517.

tional international diplomacy and *Realpolitik* by global domestic politics (*Weltinnenpolitik*). This was to have, as will be seen, significant consequences both for strategy, and for the way the war was to be brought to an end. In the second place, if peace-loving and internationally trustworthy democracies were to be the only guarantors of peace, the consequence would be that those states which, like the German Empire, not only lacked a democratic constitution but had also violated international law, would not be allowed to join the League of Nations. As will be seen, Wilson's pronouncements on this point were not always consistent. At any event, by making the establishment of democratic institutions by the Germans a pre-condition for their admission into the new international order, Wilson clearly deviated from the peace programme he had presented in the United States before America entered the war. Once America was in the war, however, the president made absolutely clear which states he regarded as undemocratic and law-breaking – naturally the Central Powers, above all Germany, who had deceived the United States before the war and was now ruled, in Wilson's view, by a warmongering autocracy that was pursuing its imperialistic expansionist aims regardless of the opinions of its subjects. This autocracy and its supporters must be removed by the war. This was, for Wilson, the foremost palpable objective of America's participation in the war against the Central Powers: from the start he made a distinction between the inherently peaceful masses on the enemy side and their autocratic rulers. The latter were to be discredited, both militarily and in terms of propaganda, and driven from power. At bottom, so he claimed, America was also fighting for the cause of the innocent and oppressed German people. Once the masses had come to power in the enemy states, therefore, he believed, the hour for reconciliation between friend and foe would have struck.[14] Then, and only then, would the way be clear for the creation of a lasting international order that would guarantee peace and justice, the blessings of which were also to extend to a Germany freed from its autocrats.[15]

This may all sound somewhat naive; but Wilson was in deadly earnest about it. In fact, it secured for him a place in a long tradition in the making of American

[14] Wilson, Address, 2. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, pp. 523 f.; Wilson, Address, Flag Day, 14. 6. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, pp. 500 f., p. 503. Already in the decisive Cabinet meeting of 20 March 1917, in which Wilson asked his cabinet for their opinions about a possible declaration of war on Germany, Secretary of State Robert Lansing urged that Wilson should stress the autocratic nature of the German Empire as a justification for declaring war on it: "I felt strongly that to go to war solely because American ships had been sunk [...] would cause debate, and that the sound basis was the duty of this and every other democratic nation to suppress an autocratic government like the German because of its atrocious character and because it was a menace to the national safety of this country and all other countries with liberal systems of government. Such an arraignment would appeal to every liberty loving man the world over"; cited in: Robert Lansing, Memorandum, 20. 3. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 441.

[15] See i.e. Wilson, War Message to Congress, 2. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 524; Wilson, Address, 4. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 196, p. 198.

foreign policy: the tradition of "regime change", that in contrast to Old World notions of sovereignty permeated Wilson's programme, both as a political-psychological tool and as a war aim. It is a goal that can be observed– witness Iraq, Libya and Syria – in the conduct of American foreign policy up to the present-day.[16] Here the key question is one, as it was for Wilson and has remained ever since, of how regime change can be achieved. Openly stirring up a revolution within the enemy country was considered to be "politically incorrect" (as we should say today), as Wilson's closest adviser, Colonel E. House, admitted.[17] Yet House himself was advising his president at the same time "to break down the German Government by building a fire 'back of it within Germany'". The president, he added, "agreed to incorporate the thought that the United States would not be willing to join a league of peace with an autocracy as a member".[18] "Incitement" (or *Aufwiegelung*, as it was termed in contemporary German documents) or "subversion" (*Zersetzung* as it was later called under Hitler) of the enemy's political structures,

[16] In the wake of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 the topic of regime-change has been the subject of a number of individual studies, none of which, however, mentions Wilson; see: Binoy Kampmark: No Peace with the Hohenzollerns. American Attitudes on Political Legitimacy towards Hohenzollern Germany. In: Diplomatic History 34 (2010) 5, pp. 769–791, here: pp. 776 f.; Robert S. Litwak: Regime Change. Baltimore 2007; Stephen Kinzer: Overthrow. America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq. New York 2006; more recently: John A. Thompson: War Aims. 1917 to November 11, 1918. In: Ross A. Kennedy (ed.): A Companion to Woodrow Wilson. Chichester 2013, pp. 367–385, here: p. 378, p. 381; for the Latin-American background consult Niall Fergusson: Colossus. The Rise and Fall of the American Empire. London 2004, pp. 52 ff., p. 58, p. 64, esp. p. 54: "The paradox of dictating democracy".

[17] Referring to the drafting of Wilson's address to Congress, which demanded a declaration of war on Germany (2 April 1917), House noted in his diary: "The President read the address to me and I suggested his eliminating a phrase which read something like this: 'until the German people have a government we can trust'. He was doubtful about this part of the sentence and I had no difficulty in persuading him to eliminate it. *It looked too much like inciting revolution*" (Italics Klaus Schwabe), cited in: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 528. For Wilson's view see: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 197, p. 536; recently: Daniel Larsen: Abandoning Democracy. Woodrow Wilson and Promoting German Democracy, 1918–1919. In: Diplomatic History 37 (2013) 3, pp. 476–508, here: p. 486, p. 498.

[18] Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 41, p. 498. For this see also the correspondence between House and Wilson on 30. 5. and 1. 6. 1917 respectively. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2) vol. 41, p. 425, p. 433. House in his letter predicted that military set-backs would foster liberal currents in Germany: "If […] military reverses come, the Kaiser and his ministers will lean towards the liberals and give Germany a government responsive to the people. In the meantime, they will give no terms because they hope to hold what they have seized, and if their intentions were known, there would be near revolution in Germany because a majority of the people want peace even if it should be without conquest." In a letter to the president he "cautioned" "against mentioning him [the Kaiser]. He is nearly as unimportant as the Tsar was before he was dethroned – both merely representatives of systems. It will vastly accelerate liberalism in Germany to ignore the Kaiser, and let the German people work out their own details." Meanwhile he – Wilson – should not discourage the consideration of Allied material war aims. See: House to Wilson, 5. 6. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 456. In another letter House had urged that "Imperial Germany should be broken down within as well as from without"; see: House to Wilson, 30. 7. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 425.

was, therefore, one of Wilson's chief war aims and at the same time an instrument for winning the war – but still an aim which Wilson and those around him shrank from calling by its name.[19] Instead, Wilson resorted to euphemisms, taking into consideration political developments inside the German Empire: on 14 June 1917, for example, he declared that in the event of the military defeat of the "masters" of Germany and the breakdown of their prestige, the German people would "thrust them aside". A government responsible to the people would then be "set up" which would be able to join the world-wide union for peace.[20]

In his Fourteen Points speech of 8 January 1918, his most detailed pronouncement regarding America's war aims, as we will see, president Wilson declared that he would recognise the left-wing majority in the Reichstag that had voted for a peace resolution in July 1917 as a legitimate partner for negotiations – which would have amounted to the transformation of the German Empire into a British-style parliamentary monarchy or at least to far reaching changes in the personnel and policies of the German ruling elite.[21] Finally, at the end of September 1918 the president reminded "the German people" yet again that America could not rely on the word of the German government and, therefore, could not consider reaching an understanding with it.[22]

The Fourteen Points

Concerning the *material and territorial terms* that would constitute a lasting peace Wilson initially denied that the United States was pursuing any "selfish" designs whatever.[23] At a time when the U.S. was not yet a belligerent he had also given to understand that his government was prepared to discuss peace terms. By that he meant the war aims of the two war faring coalitions – aims he wanted to sort out and evaluate in order to prepare the material ground for a "just" peace meaning a

[19] Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 539; see: Mezes: Inquiry Memorandum, 4. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 467. I do not share Ross Kennedy's view that Wilson was seeking a change of regime in Germany rather *after* a German defeat. For Wilson, regime change in Germany was just as much a political instrument designed immediately to accelerate an Allied victory as a long-term precondition for getting rid of the autocracy in Prussia; see: Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson (see note 5), p. 16; see also note 17.

[20] Wilson, Address, 14. 6. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 502.

[21] Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918, and 11. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 534f., p. 539; Wilson, Address, 11. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, pp. 320f.; John Milton Cooper: Woodrow Wilson. A Biography. New York 2009, p. 423, largely glosses over this aspect.

[22] Wilson, Address, 27. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, pp. 129f. In speaking to the diplomatic corps on America's Independence Day Wilson had declared that the autocrats of Central Europe were afraid of their subjects; Wilson, Address, 4. 7. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 48, p. 516.

[23] I.e. Wiseman, Memorandum, 23. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 88.

peace of mutual understanding and accommodation inspired by the principles of his international-legal programme. During America's neutrality he had only come out in favour of war aims that presumably were uncontroversial between both sides. He was prepared, though, to commit himself to creating the material and legal preconditions for a "just peace", i.e. a peace based on compromise and understanding. Hence, in a speech of 22 January 1917 to Congress outlining his programme he called on the belligerent parties to conclude a "peace without victory", i.e. not a peace "forced upon the loser", in which no peoples would be "handed from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property". In his view, that included, especially, a free Poland with access to the sea, such as both the Central and the Western Powers had agreed to.[24]

Once America became a belligerent, Wilson's war aims were determined increasingly by the general evolution of the military and political situation. Initially the United States were fighting alongside the Triple Entente, which was pursuing far-reaching aims in Europe and even more in the Near East. These were in many respects imperialist objectives, which they could only hope to impose on the defeated Central Powers after a total victory. They stood, therefore, in diametrical opposition to Wilson's concerns regarding a peace of accommodation. Still, according to traditional international law the United States as the new ally of the Western Powers and Russia, was obliged to subscribe to their war aims. This was also what the British were hoping for when they sent their foreign secretary Arthur J. Balfour in late April 1917 – i.e. less than three weeks after America's entering the war – to Washington for talks about their shared war aims and, generally, the requirements of coalition warfare. These discussions alerted the president to the vast extent of the war aims of his new comrades in arms. Balfour informed him that not only Belgium, Serbia and France were to be "restored" (with France recovering Alsace-Lorraine), but also the new Poland was to be given access to the Baltic in the German speaking area of Danzig. The Habsburg Monarchy was to be reduced to its core territories of German Austria proper, Bohemia and Hungary, with the Adriatic coast being left to Italy. Finally Turkey (with which the United States were not even at war) was to be divided among the victorious powers and would suffer, as Balfour put it, "virtual destruction". At the express request of the Wilson administration the texts of all the secret agreements between the Entente Powers dealing with territorial changes after the defeat of Germany were forwarded to the president.[25] After taking note of the terms of these treaties Wilson arrived

[24] Wilson, Address, 22. 1. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 40, pp. 536f.

[25] Balfour to Wilson, 18. 5. 1917, enclosure. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 332. After the Paris Peace Conference Wilson denied having had knowledge of these secret agreements. The question whether this was true or not has triggered a lengthy scholarly controversy. Since Balfour's negotiations in Washington in April–May 1917 have become known, historians, however, are agreed that Wilson, except for agreements with Japan, must at least have been aware of the broad outlines of the Allied war aims. See: House, Diary, 28., 30. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, pp. 155f., p. 157, p. 172; Balfour to Wilson, 18. 5. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, pp. 327f., with attachment: Extract from the Pro-

at the conclusion that "England and France have not the same views with regard to peace that we have by any means". "When the war is over", he said, "we can force them to our way of thinking, because by that time they will, among other things, be financially in our hands; but we cannot force them now, and any attempt to speak for them or to speak our common mind would bring on disagreements which would inevitably come to the surface in public […]. Our real peace terms, – those upon which we shall undoubtedly insist, – are not now acceptable to either France or Italy (leaving Great Britain for the moment out of consideration)." [26] In other words: while the war lasted, he felt it would be impossible to press the Entente Powers to adopt the American war aims programme without endangering the consensus within the Alliance fighting Germany. Only when the war was over, he decided, could America think using its clout by exploiting the financial dependence of the Western European Powers on the United States. For the time being Wilson publicly voiced his reservations vis-à-vis the Allies' war aims only by implication. He wished to see the United States defined only as an "Associated Power" and not as an Ally of the Entente powers. Beyond that he refrained from publicly committing himself to any specific war aims. Confidentially, he told Balfour that America did not feel bound by the Allied treaties.[27]

Much to the surprise of his contemporaries on 8 January 1918 Wilson proclaimed America's complete war aims programme in his historic Fourteen Points message. What was behind his sudden change of mind? For the immediate occasion one has to turn to conversations that were held in Paris at the end of 1917 with Edward House, Wilson's most intimate adviser, as the American representative. In these parleys House urged the Entente governments to commit themselves publicly to war aims that were compatible with the American programme. To no avail! The French and British governments refused to comply. Far more important for Wilson, however, was another event – the great change that had taken place in Eastern Europe with the Bolshevik October Revolution; for Lenin, the new Bolshevik leader, offered the belligerents an immediate ceasefire and called for open negotiations for a peace without annexations and indemnities – a platform which was, as it seemed, quite similar to Wilson's idea of a "peace without victory". Lenin also demanded that the right to self-determination should be implemented worldwide, including the Third World. Finally, the new Bolshevik leader set the seal on his break with Europe's imperialist past, by publishing the secret treaties conclud-

tocol of a Discussion of War Aims between the Imperial War Cabinet and Representatives of the Empire, 22. 3. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, pp. 329–342. See also p. 333 of the protocol, which mentions an agreement for a cession of Bosnia and the Herzegovina to Serbia and of Transylvania to Romania. Cf. also: Cooper: Woodrow Wilson (see note 21), p. 396; Thompson: War Aims (see note 16), p. 375.

[26] Wilson to House, 21. 7. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 43, pp. 237f.

[27] Cited in: Knock: End (see note 7), pp. 138f.; see: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 43, p. 238; Esposito: Legacy (see note 1), p. 107; see: Wilson to House, 15. 6. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 521. Allied treaties: Spring Rice to Lloyd George, 26. 4. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 140.

ed between Tsarist Russia and the Anglo-French Entente over their common annexationist aims, and by challenging the Entente statesmen to follow his example.[28] The Central Powers, in contrast to the Western Powers, reacted by declaring themselves ready to negotiate with the new Bolshevik regime on the basis of its programme. As the result, on 22 December 1917 a peace conference duly assembled in Brest-Litovsk without participation of the Western powers.[29]

For Germany's opponents this chain of events was nothing short of catastrophic. Russia disappeared as an ally, the Central Powers had their backs free and created the impression of favouring an early peace of compromise. This course of events dealt a devastating blow to the domestic morale in Great Britain and France: the Entente suffered its worst internal crisis of confidence since the start of the war, worsened by the public impact of its military defeats in Italy. At home, the Left, above all the Labour parties, were deeply impressed by the Bolshevik peace offer, and the broad masses, often socialist-inspired, both at home and at the front, began to question the purpose of the sacrifices their governments were demanding of them. In their despair they looked to the American president as the sole guide to a progressive "new diplomacy" and a lasting peace imbued with non-imperialist principles, above all, with the right to self-determination.[30]

In this crisis of confidence Wilson saw a singular opportunity – the opportunity for him to use his public response to the Bolshevik peace offer to commit the world to his own peace programme, and to claim for the United States global leadership in the war aims debate. The Western European Powers, hard pressed as they were, would, he expected, not dare to criticise his declaration. The German people, on the other hand, were to be persuaded that they had nothing to fear from their adversaries, as the Western powers pursued but moderate war aims not destroying their empire, and thus would be encouraged to resist to the plans of its annexationist rulers. The result, Wilson and his advisers hoped, would be a crisis of confidence within the Imperial Germany. To Wilson his intended declaration also presented the chance to denounce the peace terms Germany confronted the Bolsheviks with and, simultaneously, to distance himself from the Entente's imperialist designs. All this promised to stiffen the moral will-power of the Entente nations to fight on. Apparently, the president even harboured the illusion to be able to turn the tide in Russia. His message, he hoped, would help the Anti-Bolshevik forces to gain the upper hand in the evolving civil war in that war-torn country thus preparing Russia's re-entry in the war against the Central Powers.[31]

[28] Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), p. 260, pp. 262f., pp. 264f., pp. 296f., pp. 306f.

[29] Wilson was informed about the "peace maneuver [sic]" of the German government by Hugh Wilson, the American Minister in Switzerland: Hugh Robert Wilson to Robert Lansing, 28. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 384–387.

[30] Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), p. 306, p. 311, pp. 314ff.

[31] According to the British ambassador in the U.S. Wilson told him that "he himself with the full consent of the American people and their express approval [sic!] had made an appeal to the German people behind the back of the German government. The Bolsheviki in Russia were now adopting the same policy. They had issued an appeal to all the nations of the world, to the peoples and

At the end of 1917, immediately after House's return from his abortive mission to Paris, the president made up his mind to respond to both the Bolshevik and the German challenges. To take that step he also had been encouraged by American representatives in Russia. With regard to controversial war aims he had received expert advice from a high level progressively inclined advisory group, called the "Inquiry", of which the later famous Walter Lippmann was a member.[32] On 8 January 1918, finally, he appeared before the joint Congress to deliver his crucial Fourteen Points address.[33] That speech was expressly directed against the "imperialists". Differently from his earlier pronouncements it encompassed not only general principles, but contained also specific material and territorial propositions. Some of its general points have already been mentioned: the establishment of a League of Nations (Point 14); public access to foreign policy (Point 1: "Open covenants of peace openly arrived at" – this appeal borrowed from the Bolsheviks); the freedom of the seas (Point 2) and the lowering of trade barriers (Point 3). For Wilson these were the "essentially American" points, as he was to emphasise a few months later during the armistice negotiations.[34] Added to this he demanded general disarmament (Point 4).

In concrete terms the president insisted on the re-establishment of an independent Belgium (for him a "must", Point 7); the "restoration" of those areas in Belgium and Northern France that had suffered destruction by the war; and the "righting" of the "wrong done do France by in 1871", in plain terms: the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France (Point 8); free access to the sea for a newly independent Poland and for Serbia (Points 11 and 13). In Point 5 he urged the colonial Powers to "adjust" their "colonial claims", giving "equal weight" to the "interests of the [native] populations concerned". Finally (Point 6), foreign troops were to leave Russia, which was to be welcomed as an internally and externally indepen-

not to the governments […]. There was evidence at hand that certainly in Italy and probably also in England and France the appeal had not been without its affect [sic]. In the United States active agitation was proceeding […]. If the appeal of the Bolsheviki was allowed to remain unanswered, if nothing were done to counteract it, the effect would be great and would increase"; see: Spring-Rice to Balfour, 4. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 456. Two weeks later Wilson in a confidential conversation called the "conduct" of the Bolsheviki in "publishing the secret treaties" "outrageous"; see: Wiseman, Memorandum, 23. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 88; House, Diary, 30. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 400; David Rowland Francis to Lansing, 31. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 411ff.; Lansing to Wilson, 2. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 427ff.; Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), pp. 330ff., pp. 352f.

[32] Derek Heater: National Self-Determination. Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy. New York 1994, pp. 36ff.; House, Diary, 18. 12. 1917, 30. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 323, p. 400; Spring-Rice to Balfour, 4. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 458; House to Balfour, 5. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 486; see also: Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), pp. 338f.

[33] Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 534ff. An explanatory comment is to be found in: Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), pp. 353ff.

[34] See Bullitt Lowry: Armistice 1918. Kent 1996, p. 125.

dent nation into the community of free nations – a deliberately vague formulation that avoided any form of recognition of the Bolshevik regime while remaining perfectly friendly in tone, in order, as House put it, to "segregate" Russia from Germany, i.e. to win, if possible, all of Russia back to the Western alliance.[35]

There was much in this declaration that was remarkable and pointed the way ahead to Wilson's war aims policy of the following months: in the first place, it was clearly aiming at a reduction of Germany's power potential. It was that aspect that probably lay behind Wilson's support, after initial doubts, for France's desire to recover Alsace-Lorraine from Germany.[36] The same may have been true of Wilson's demand that Germany "restore" the war-damaged areas of Belgium and France. At the same time, he was keeping his options open: on the one hand, he avoided the term "contributions", denounced as "imperialist" by the Bolsheviks, thereby implying the expectation that the reparation demands of the victorious Powers on Germany would be kept within bounds. On the other hand, he had already spoken in public about German "reparations" for the misdeeds of her rulers, and thus provided a moral basis for the victors to make far-reaching demands for German reparations.[37]

The president also avoided literally committing himself to the Bolsheviks' call for the self-determination of peoples, choosing to speak instead of "autonomy". He did this for several reasons. On the one hand, he had reservations regarding that concept in principle – to him a disruptive precept leading, when applied, to a never ending atomisation of the existing states.[38] In practical terms, he had no desire to see Russia as a historically grown nation-state dismembered, regardless of the demand of the Central Powers to grant self-determination to the none-Russian nationalities within the former Tsarist Empire. Above all, however, he was motivated by prospects of a separate peace with the Habsburg Monarchy, which had just put out feelers to this end. Demanding national independence for the nationalities of the Dual Monarchy would of course have once and for all killed such chances. But even with respect to the Ottoman Empire, Wilson spoke only

[35] "To segregate": House in a conversation with Wilson; House, Diary, 9. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 553.

[36] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 133 f.

[37] Ibid., p. 137; Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson (see note 5), p. 18. Wilson's attitude regarding reparations had been earlier transmitted by Balfour; see Balfour to Cecil, 23. 5. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 385. According to Balfour, Wilson in commenting on pacifist pronouncements against the transfer of territory and indemnities declared that the latter was "by no means his view. For example he would like to restore Poland & Alsace Lorraine, and to exact compensation for Belgium & Northern France".

[38] In a confidential talk, Wilson conceded that "in point of logic, of pure logic, this principle which was good in itself would lead to the complete independence of various small nationalities now forming part of various Empires. Pushed to the extreme the principle would mean the disruption of existing governments to an un-definable extent. Logic was good [...] but apart from existing circumstances might well lead to dangerous results."; Spring-Rice to Balfour, 4. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 456; Heater: National Self-Determination (see note 32), pp. 43 f.

of the "absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" of the nationalities inhabiting it (Point 12). He did not mention the pronouncement of the British Foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour of November 1917 in favour of a national home for Zionist Jews, and it was only in August 1918 that he expressed his moral support of the aims of the "Balfour Declaration". At the same time, he admonished Italy and the South Slavs – to the great annoyance of both the government in Rome and the representatives of the South Slavs – to see to it that their frontiers were "adjusted" "along clearly recognizable lines of nationality" regarding Italy (Point 9) or "along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality" regarding the Balkans (Point 11).[39] The contrast with the war aims of the European "Associates" was apparent. Even so, the Entente governments, for fear of left-wing public protest, did not risk exposing Wilson's speech and the Fourteen Points to open criticism, but preferred to limit their comments to vacuous praise of the president.[40]

Then on 11 February 1918, in another speech to Congress, Wilson changed the framework of his war aims concept, now expressly endorsing the self-determination of peoples as an American war aim.[41] This was the result of tactical considerations. On the one hand, he may have been moved by a renewed vague hope that a call for self-determination might win over the peoples, and, by indirect pressure, the new government of Russia to the cause of the Western Powers. Even more important to him, however, was the news that was coming out of the German Empire. There, in late January 1918, workers' strikes had broken out, an event that gave reason to hope for a regime change in Berlin. Well-informed observers in Wilson's entourage were even talking of an impending revolution in the Central Powers.[42] Significantly, the implementation of the peoples' right to self-determi-

[39] Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 554 and vol. 46, pp. 86f., pp. 96f. Wilson qualified his praise for the Zionist aspirations by reserving the need, "that nothing would be done to prejudice the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish people of Palestine"; Wilson to Wise, 31. 8. 1918. In: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 49, p. 403. For the importance of history as a nation forming factor in Wilsons's eyes cf. Lloyd E. Ambrosius: Dilemmas of National Self-Determination. Woodrow Wilson's Legacy. In: Lloyd E. Ambrosius: Wilsonianism. Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations. New York 2002, p. 127, p. 130.

[40] Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), p. 384; Drummond to Spring-Rice, 12. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 577f.; Memorandum Wiseman, 23. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, pp. 86f.

[41] Wilson said: "National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. 'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril"; Wilson, Address, 11. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 321; see: Betty Unterberger: The United States, Revolutionary Russia and the Rise of Czechoslovakia. Chapel Hill 1989, pp. 88ff., p. 105; Klaus Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson. Revolutionary Germany and Peacemaking. Missionary Diplomacy and the Realities of Power. Chapel Hill 1985, pp. 18f.; Michla Pomerance: The United States and Self-Determination. Perspectives on the Wilsonian Conception. In: American Journal of International Law 70 (1976), pp. 1–27, here: pp. 2f.

[42] "These risings of the proletariat in Berlin and Vienna [...] are the final proof that the war has entered the era in which it is no longer a war of rival States, but a world-wide social and political

nation figured prominently among the demands of the German Socialists.[43] Wilson was anxious to take up this call, so that the German Left might recognise in it its own programme and stiffen its opposition to the military party.[44] In view of the Vienna government's peace feelers Wilson's speech of 11 February had been especially moderate in tone, while in regard to Germany it stressed the gulf that divided the Left from the "small" military and annexationist party as well as from the German government, whose war aims it castigated as dishonest.[45]

In the course of the summer of 1918 Wilson substantially altered the terms of his material peace proposals. On 27 June he announced that the United States government supported the liberation of all branches of the Slav "race" – by which he meant above all the South Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks – from German and Austrian rule. This reflected, on the one hand, the failure of all the Austro-American soundings for a separate peace, and on the other the desire to win over the former Czech prisoners of war fighting in the Russian civil war to participate in the war effort of the Western Powers. Wilson took this position, although he harboured some doubts whether these new multinational entities in the long run could be held together.[46] On 2 September 1918 the American government once more discarding all ideas of a separate peace with Vienna recognised the Czech National Council in Paris as the provisional government of a Czechoslovakian state. In

revolution. The President can lead that revolution [...]. The Liberals and Socialists in Germany and Austria [...] are prepared to follow the President into a new world of international order and social justice"; quoted from: W. Bullitt, Memorandum, 31. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, pp. 184 f.; see also: W. Bullitt, Memorandum, 3. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 229; Hugh Wilson to Lansing, 5. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 253. In his speech Wilson again denied intending a regime change: "The United States has no desire to interfere in European affairs or to act as arbiter in European territorial disputes. She would disdain to take advantage of an internal weakness or disorder to impose her own will upon another people." Wilson, Address, 11. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 321.

[43] W. Bullitt, Memorandum, 31. 1 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 185; W. Bullitt, Memorandum, 3. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 227.

[44] With his appeal to the Left in Germany Wilson was also seeking to distance himself from the violently propagandist response of the Entente to Berlin's and Vienna's replies to the Fourteen Points; House to Wilson, 3. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 221; W. Bullitt, Memorandum, 3. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 227, p. 229; Wilson to Lansing, 4. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 233.

[45] Wilson expressed regret that the "military and annexationist party" in Germany, due to "tragical circumstance" was "able to send millions of men to their death to prevent what all the world now sees to be just"; Wilson, Address, 11. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 323; see also: House, Diary, 10. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 317; Lansing to Wilson, 27. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 110.

[46] The official Bulletin of the U.S. government of 28. 6. 1918 demanded that the "Slav race should be entirely freed from Teutonic rule". Wilson had the Serbian Minister informed accordingly; see: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 48, p. 435, p. 437, p. 464, note 2. Wilson was also aware of Italian reservations regarding the borders of a future Yugoslav federation, which like Czecho-Slovakia did not yet possess a "definable territory"; cf. Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 48, p. 591 and vol. 49, pp. 287 f., p. 313; Unterberger: United States (see note 41), p. 229, p. 231.

mid-September and again four weeks afterwards there followed Wilson's refusals to consider peace parleys with the Habsburg Empire, regardless how its structure was to be transformed. This meant that he disqualified the Vienna government from representing the interests of the Slav areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, let alone from conducting peace negotiations in the name of the Monarchy as a whole. In early October he reaffirmed his resolution that the Dual Monarchy had to be broken up because of America's commitment to its "suppressed nationalities". Personally for the president, this obligation had developed deep emotional roots.[47]

What also changed was the background against which he put forward his peace programme. In the first months of the war he had based his condemnation of the German military party on its imperialist designs for a German Empire stretching from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf with tentacles reaching as far as India. In the spring and summer of 1918, under the impression of the occupation by German troops of large parts of Western Russia, he warned of the political dangers that would arise from German control of Eastern Europe and Russia.[48] An additional condition for Wilson's negotiating with Germany was, therefore, an assurance that the Germans would withdraw from all territory they had conquered in Russia. Here, Wilson was conjuring up a spectre that was to haunt America's German policy well into the rest of the twentieth century – the nightmare of a combination of Russia's gigantic resources and German technical know-how – a nightmare for which rumours according to which the Bolsheviks were German hired agents provided further nourishment.[49]

As it turned out, Wilson's hopes of bringing the German Empire by political pressure to sue for peace, be it by concluding a separate peace with the Dual Monarchy or be it by stirring up the German Left, remained unfulfilled. On the German Left, the president's speech of 11 February had not made the impression he had hoped for. On the contrary, after the Central Powers concluded what was regarded as the draconian peace of Brest-Litovsk with Russia on 3 March 1918, the Social Democrats in the Reichstag did not vote against it, but only abstained. Soon afterwards the Germans launched their great initially successful spring offensive on the Western front. Wilson, in this situation, did in no way resign. On the contrary, there could be no longer a question of his showing any kind of moderation towards the German enemy that could easily have been interpreted as weakness.

Instead, Wilson did all he could to preserve the moral resolution of his associates to carry on the war until its successful conclusion. On 6 April 1918, in what was a highly critical military situation for the Western powers, he concluded a

[47] Unterberger: United States (see note 41), pp. 315f.; Heater: National Self-Determination (see note 32), p. 52.

[48] Wilson, Flag Day Address, 14. 6. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 42, p. 501; Wilson, Address, 6. 4. 1918, 18. 5. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, pp. 269f. and vol. 47, p. 54.

[49] Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), p. 26, p. 46, p. 119; Klaus Schwabe: Weltmacht und Weltordnung. Amerikanische Außenpolitik von 1898 bis zur Gegenwart. Paderborn 2011, p. 64, p. 68, p. 415.

speech, which endorsed a third "Liberty Loan", by appealing to the Western powers to use "Force, Force to the utmost, Force without stint or limit, the righteous and triumphant Force which will make Right the law of the world and cast every selfish dominion down in the dust". In this speech as well as others he still continued to distinguish between the German people, for whom he claimed to seek justice, and the military leaders of the empire who despised his ideals and whom he wanted to see stripped of their power.[50]

War Aims and Strategy

Our analysis thus has reached its *third question*: was Wilson's programme intended to be, and was it in actuality, an appropriate way of accelerating the end of the war on the basis of a stalemate, or did its realisation depend on the Western Powers' achieving total victory? From a German point of view, the difference was one between a negotiated peace of compromise, and a peace imposed by the victors. Wilson's own pronouncements on these alternatives are somewhat ambivalent. He always claimed that his ultimate long term objective was a peace based on reconciliation that the Germans too would recognise as just. In this respect, he hoped that the war aims laid down in the Fourteen Points would be indeed acceptable to the Germans.[51] He constantly emphasised that he did not wish to infringe on Germany's position as one great power among others.[52] In this connection Wilson raised a question that could be regarded as a litmus test for his intentions in dealing with Germany – the question of whether Germany was to be admitted as a member, of equal rights, of the League of Nations once peace was made. Taking a stand in this question the president could reveal how serious he was about his vision of an early all-embracing non-discriminatory peace. Wilson's view regarding a German membership of the League of Nations would also determine the chances for negotiating with pacifically inclined moderate elements in Germany for a peace that renounced total victory. Unfortunately, once again Wilson's pronouncements on this issue were contradictory and understandably reflected his view of the military situation. In principle, the president conceived of his League of Nations as a world-wide organisation, not simply a continuation of the wartime alliances, with a democratic Germany as one of its initial members.[53] In fact,

[50] Wilson, Address, 6. 4. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, pp. 268–270.
[51] Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 538; Wilson, Address, 27. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, pp. 129f.; recently: Kennedy: Will (see note 5), p. 139, p. 153.
[52] I.e. Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 538. Alongside these conciliatory statements, however, stand his repeated declarations of his determination to end the war with a "decisive victory". See note 66 and Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 137–139; Wilson, Address, 6. 4. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 270.
[53] See Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, pp. 538f.; see also: Wilson, Annual Message to Congress, 4. 12. 1917. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 198; Kennedy: Woodrow Wilson (see note 5), p. 16, p. 19.

Wilson gave to understand that a German regime that had freed itself from its military autocrats and that genuinely represented the wishes of the German people did have a claim to membership of the world organisation. To be sure, the world had to see to it that such a Germany would continue to display a peaceful and democratic attitude.[54]

In the spring of 1918 two events brought Wilson to modify his position on this: the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the initial success of the German spring offensive on the Western front. Both demonstrated to Wilson that the Germans remained more inclined to stand by their military rulers than he had assumed.[55] From this, he drew several conclusions: in the first place, as we have seen, he urged that the Western Powers must intensify their military efforts in order to convince the Germans of the hopelessness of the war their military was waging.[56] Only then would an appeal to the German democrats to overthrow their military leaders have any chance whatever of success.[57] As an alternative Wilson had to get used to the idea that his psychological-tactical calculations aiming at an overthrow of the German "autocracy" might miscarry and that at the end of the war the Western victors would after all have to deal with the traditional ruling German elites.[58] Secondly, banking on the military defeat by the Western powers of an unreformed Germany, he made a curious about-turn over the question of Germany's League membership: for the time being, i.e. until the outbreak of the November revolution he dropped his "democratic pre-condition" for a German seat, and recommended a defeated Germany's admission without reservations. That way the League would become, as regards Germany, exactly what Wilson had always intended – an international body supervising the peaceful behaviour of its members and internationally guaranteeing their integrity.[59] According to Wilson, while this position implied a "decisive" military victory,[60] it also confirmed the continued existence of the German Empire, whether reformed or not: the destruction of the German na-

[54] Wiseman to Reading, 16. 8. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 49, p. 273. For the following see also: Klaus Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson and Germany's Membership in the League of Nations, 1918–1919. In: Central European History 8 (1975), pp. 3–10.

[55] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 136ff.; cf. Wiseman to Foreign Office, 28. 2. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 184; Wilson, Remarks to Foreign Correspondents. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 288.

[56] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), p. 139; Wiseman to Drummond, 30. 5. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 48, p. 202.

[57] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 138f.; W. H. Taft, Memorandum, 14. 3. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 202.

[58] Wiseman, Memorandum, 16. 8. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 49, p. 274; W. H. Taft, Memorandum, 14. 3. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 202; Wiseman to Murray, 30. 8. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 49, p. 399; Wilson, Address, Metropolitan Opera House, 27. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 49, p. 130.

[59] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), p. 139; Wiseman to Murray, 14. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 8; Wilson, Address at Metropolitan Opera House, 27. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 130.

[60] Wilson to Baker, 27. 8. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 49, p. 358.

tional state never was one of the president's war aims.[61] Of course, the Wilson's modification of his view regarding Germany's League membership was not known to the public at that time, and thus could not have exercised any influence in Germany. In German eyes the material peace programme he had enunciated demanded substantial sacrifices on Germany's part. So he could not really be surprised that the German Empire, whether democratic or not, would fail to discern a step towards reconciliation in a peace that would impose on it – for example with the retrocession of Alsace-Lorraine, not to speak of his further reaching demands – a drastic reduction of its power?[62]

Actually, Wilson was only falling back on a train of thought that all the time had determined his attitude towards the empire – the idea that if the Germans "democrats" wished to be trustworthy negotiating partners for the coming peace congress, they had to be two things: both democratic pacifists, and, above all, militarily impotent.[63] It never occurred to him just how German democrats who publicly acknowledged Germany's total defeat and, thus, admitted the pointlessness of a four-years' war effort, would survive domestically, nor was he able to imagine that the German concept of what was a just peace might differ from his own. All along, he clung to his aim of regime change both as a political device to weaken the enemy and as an alternative to total military victory throughout the months when the United States was engaged in the war, even if with the German victories in the spring campaign of 1918 that concept became for a short time a second choice.[64] Simultaneously, he continued to hope for the substitution of the "military party" and the politicians attached to it (the Pan Germans, for example) by a government of German "democrats" – by which he meant primarily the German workers' parties and the bourgeois Progressives. Such a change of regime promised to send to the peace negotiations trustworthy German representatives who would share his progressive political ideology. As to the form that such a change of regime would take – revolution, constitutional reform, or a change of ministers – Wilson never made his views clear.[65] Nor did he really wish to, for a degree of uncertainty regarding his intentions promised to make his German opponents feel more insecure and to promote the ultimate tactical objective behind his policy of regime change: the undermining of the Germans' fighting morale and their will to hold out against all odds up to the bitter end.

Actually, to judge from remarks Wilson made to foreign journalists in April 1918, he was not even really clear in his own mind as to the nature and even

[61] Wilson, Fourteen Points Address, 8. 1. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 45, p. 538. "We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade, if she is willing *to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing*" (Italics Klaus Schwabe); see: Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 139ff.; Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), pp. 27f.

[62] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 132f., p. 153.

[63] Kennedy: Will (see note 5), pp. 138f.

[64] Thompson: More Tactics (see note 1), pp. 109f.

[65] See Mayer: Wilson vs. Lenin (see note 12), p. 378.

the desirability of a regime change in Germany. In response to a question that he had himself raised regarding the characteristics of a free government he cited Edmund Burke: "'A government which those living under it will guard' [...] The fundamental and essential element of it [a free government]", he continued, "is that the people like it and believe in it. The amazing thing to my mind is that a lot of German people that I know like the government they have been living under. It took me a long time to believe it; I thought they were bluffing. But I found some Germans whom I had to believe who really liked it and thought all nations ought to live under that kind of government. Now, there isn't any one kind of government under which all nations ought to live. There isn't any one kind of government which we have the right to impose upon on any nation. So that I am not fighting for democracy except for the peoples that want democracy. If they want it, I am ready to fight until they get it. If they don't want it, that is none of my business." In this issue he professed to follow the English Bill of Rights which accorded to every people the right "to make any government it pleases and change the government it makes in any way it pleases".[66] There can be no doubt that the realistic relativism Wilson at that occasion subscribed to in defining a self-determined democracy represents an unmistakable contradiction to the universalist-idealist creed, which inspired his previous statements extolling the global human striving for democracy. There are two explanations for this discrepancy. On the one hand, his just quoted remarks mirrored his disillusionment about the apparent unwillingness of the German people to espouse his ideal of western democracy; on the other, he revealed that his own concept of what, in the case of Germany, democracy and self-determination really would mean, was still somewhat hazy.[67]

In the following months, when the military situation of the Western Powers had improved, Wilson stood by his aims: no compromises with the military autocrats in Berlin, but their "destruction", or at least their "reduction to virtual impotence"; a peace concluded on the basis of the right to self-determination; a peace-organisation in which the combined power of the free nations must stand up to all aggression. At the same time, he dismissed confidential peace feelers the Berlin government was extending to him. In his last speech a week before the German request for an armistice he repeated his conviction that for a peace to last there could be "no arrangement or compromise" and that "unity of council" was necessary until a "complete victory" was assured. The answer to *question three* raised at the beginning of this paper viz of whether Wilson, once America was in the war, ever considered peace negotiations with the German Empire on the basis of a military stalemate must therefore be a clear "No". Hence, not unlike the West European Allies, and the right wing leaders of the German Empire, he both rejected and prevented what he regarded as a "premature" end of the war, and, as a

[66] Wilson, Remarks to Foreign Correspondents, 8. 4. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 47, p. 288.
[67] See also Kampmark: No Peace (see note 16), p. 785.

consequence, prolonged it. His major aims – a clear victory and a regime change within the enemy – called for no less.[68]

What was the impact of Wilson's war aims programme on the military and naval strategy of the United States and the European Allies? In order to find an adequate answer to our *fourth question* one must point out beforehand that Wilson, as an academic, was ill equipped to give advice regarding the military strategy and the war plans of the Allies. But he overcame this handicap; and it was largely due to him that America's contribution to the victory of the Western Powers over Germany was in the end decisive. Immediately after the outbreak of war, he had decided upon a massive commitment of American land forces in France. He launched a comprehensive shipbuilding programme to counter the U-boat threat, introduced general conscription, and created the foundations for the army of two millions that in the autumn of 1918 brought victory for the Allied armies. Together with his generals he managed to ensure that the American troops were not simply integrated into the French and British armies, only to be employed, when necessary, at critical places in the front. Instead, he insisted on the creation of an independent united American expeditionary force. This was for him not simply a question of national prestige, but one of *Realpolitik* , i.e. the political and material precondition for implementing his programme in the peace negotiations.[69] More than that, he believed that America's clout during the expected peace conference depended on the way he defined the desirable way to bring the war to an end by making the choice between the alternative of negotiating an armistice or forcing unconditional surrender on the German enemy. This issue gained highest relevance at the moment the Berlin government took the decisive step of applying for an armistice. This article thus addresses its *fifth* and final question regarding the peace programme that Wilson took to Paris.

The Final Test: Armistice, War Aims, and Regime Change

On 3 October 1918 the German government under its new Chancellor Max von Baden had a note sent to the American government asking Wilson to "take in hand" the mediation of an armistice between the belligerents and the "establishment of peace" on the basis of the Fourteen Points and the later war aims declarations of the president.[70] This demarche at a moment, when Germany's military

[68] Wilson, Address, 4. 7. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 48, p. 516; Wilson, Address, 27. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 128, p. 132; Klaus Schwabe: Die amerikanische und die deutsche Geheimdiplomatie und das Problem eines Verständigungsfriedens im Jahre 1918. In: VfZ 19 (1971), pp. 1–32.

[69] Esposito: Legacy (see note 1), p. 98, p. 122, p. 124, p. 129, p. 137; Robert H. Ferrell: Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917–1921. New York 1985, pp. 37ff., pp. 52f., pp. 122f.

[70] German Note to U.S. government, 3. 10. 1918, cited in: Klaus Schwabe/Tilman Stieve/Albert Diegmann (eds.): Quellen zum Friedensschluß von Versailles (= Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte der Neuzeit, vol. 30). Darmstadt 1997, p. 54.

situation was becoming desperate, was a rather astute gambit that had been conceived in the German Foreign Office, until general Ludendorff of the German high command gave order to execute it: it promised to avoid total defeat and to secure Germany a relatively favourable contractual basis for a future peace conference as well as terms that would at least not be as severe as those of the European Allies. In the event, the fact that the actual terms of peace turned out not to correspond to the Fourteen Points meant that appeals to the latter were to lend additional credibility to German demands for the revision of the peace treaty.[71]

What the new leaders of Germany had not foreseen was Wilson's ambivalence regarding the character of any kind of a German democracy, his deep seated distrust of everything that was happening inside Germany, and his commitment to a decisive victory over the Central Powers. In view of the bellicose language the president resorted to in his speeches during most of 1918 one would have expected his outright rejection of the German request. While the Germans aimed at a cease-fire that spared them a total defeat, Wilson had insisted on the latter. (He had also refused to consider a similar Austrian proposal.) Above all, however, turning down the German initiative fitted perfectly into Wilson's conception of reformed international politics – the transformation of diplomacy into global domestic politics (*Weltinnenpolitik*). If this concept prevailed, as Wilson hoped it would, no longer would individual states, but only the League of Nations collectively become the instance that was authorised by international law to monopolise the use of force, in order to uphold peace anywhere in the world. If nonetheless individual nations resorted to arms to settle their conflicts by themselves, they would be violating the new international law, just as contending factions within a nation-state, which resorted to military force to settle their differences, violated the state monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (*Gewaltmonopol*), and the result was bound to be civil war. Now, if the League of Nations were to replace the nation-states as the sole instance entitled to use military means in order to enforce peace, wars between individual states would acquire the nature of a civil war, and – as history shows – civil wars historically last long and in most cases are ended not by way of accommodation, but by the total military victory of one side. In fact, in civil wars – see Syria today – both parties tend to insist on an unconditional surrender of their opponent; because in a civil war the aims of warring parties are usually value-related and mutually exclusive (for instance the ideological base of a constitution). Again historical experience demonstrates that it is much more difficult to mediate between ideological objectives than between competing but negotiable material goals, and in the end, unconditional surrender usually proves to be the only way of ending a civil war. In terms of wars between states, this means that the enemy state is not only rendered militarily prostrate, but that its internal structure and even its political identity may be fundamentally

[71] Klaus Schwabe: Deutsche Revolution und Wilson-Frieden. Die amerikanische und deutsche Friedensstrategie zwischen Ideologie und Machtpolitik. Düsseldorf 1971, pp. 88ff., see also: note 41.

altered at the victors' discretion. This problem had to be discussed at some length, in order to show what was at stake regarding Wilson's policy in ending the war.[72] American history provided an example, which Wilson had witnessed as a young boy: the American Civil War, which culminated in the demand of the North that the South "surrender" "unconditionally".[73]

Wilson, however, failed to adopt that "logic": he did *not* ignore the German request, but decided to respond to it. He opened just a crack of the door that might lead to some compromise. He thus exposed himself to the public rebuke that he agreed to play the German game having not absolutely ruled out negotiations with Germany for an *armistice*, even though up to the end of October 1918 he could not be sure whether or not Germany was really beaten. Indeed, he expressly took issue with the vociferous demands for the enemy's "unconditional surrender" coming from militant patriots at home such as former President Theodore Roosevelt, from the supreme commander of the American expeditionary force in France, General Pershing, or from Franklin D. Roosevelt who anticipated the position he would take in the Second World War.[74] Spokesmen of the militant Right bluntly demanded that the order of the day was not diplomatic exchanges but a march to Berlin followed by Germany's unconditional surrender.[75] Wilson thus was face to face with the basic issue regarding the conclusion of the war – the alternative: armistice versus surrender, accommodation versus submission. The intriguing question is: why did he not opt for unconditional surrender? Why did he ultimate agree to an *armistice* with a Germany that was still monarchic?[76]

The attempt to interpret the president's conduct during the negotiations that led to the conclusion of an armistice poses a major challenge to the historian and requires a close re-examination of the essential core of Wilson's war policy. First of all, one should take a closer look at the phrasing of Wilson's answer to the German request for an armistice. In his note the president after inquiring about the exact meaning of Germany's commitment to the Fourteen Points confronted the Germans pointedly with the inquiry whether the "Imperial Chancellor" was "speaking merely for the constituted authorities of the Empire who have so far conducted the war".[77] Asking this question Wilson broadly hinted that he doubted

[72] Cooper: Woodrow Wilson (see note 21), pp. 17f.
[73] Kampmark: No Peace (see note 16), p. 774.
[74] Lowry: Armistice (see note 34), p. 96.
[75] Gerhard L. Weinberg: Surrender in World War II. In: Holger Afflerbach/Hew Strachan (eds.): How Fighting Ends. A History of Surrender. Oxford 2012, p. 314. Jay Winter in his contribution to the same volume does not deal with the diplomatic-political ramifications of the armistice of 1918; see Jay Winter: The Breaking Point. Surrender 1918. In: ibid., pp. 299–309; Kampmark: No Peace (see note 16), pp. 789f.; Thomas J. Knock: Wilsonian Concepts and International Realities and the End of the War. In: Manfred F. Boemeke/Gerald D. Feldmann/Elisabeth Glasser (eds.): The Treaty of Versailles. A Reassessment after 75 Years. Cambridge 1988, pp. 118f.
[76] Lansing to the Swiss minister Oederlin (to be forwarded to Germany), 8. 10. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 269; Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), pp. 112ff.
[77] Lansing to Oederlin (see note 76), pp. 268f.; Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), pp. 40ff., pp. 51ff., pp. 59f.

the democratic legitimacy of the new German government and thus revived the topic of "regime change". Resuming his policy aimed at a regime change the president in his subsequent exchange of notes with Germany left no doubt that he refused to recognise the government of Max of Baden as a "democratic" and trustworthy negotiating partner, regardless of the fact that it rested on the left wing majority in the Reichstag which frantically was hastening to enact reforms, in order to meet the president's wish for a change of regime. In his last note to Berlin before the conclusion of the armistice the president demanded on 23 October 1918 that the hitherto all-powerful "King of Prussia" (for reasons he knew only himself, he did not say "Emperor") be replaced by "veritable" "representatives of the German people, who have been assured of a genuine constitutional standing as the real rulers of Germany […]: If it [the U.S. government] must deal with the military masters and the monarchical autocrats of Germany […] it must demand, not peace negotiations, but surrender."[78] In other words: according to what Wilson declared, a genuine as well as sustainable regime change in Germany remained both a decisive point of his policy and the most important precondition for concluding a peace, which would also be "just" for the loser. The alternative was a military "diktat" imposed on a totally defeated Germany.[79]

Wilson's renewed demand for a regime change in Germany provides one answer as to why he agreed to an exchange of views with the German government regarding an armistice. Apparently, he perceived the German request as an opportunity to dangle prospects of peace before the eyes of the German people including its armed forces and thus to step up his psychological warfare against the enemy. He thus hoped to weaken the latter's determination to resist the military pressure of the Western powers and to speed up their victory over the latter. News he received from Germany in late September was encouraging in this respect. An outright rejection of Germany's request "slamming the door on peace", as Wilson put it, would have deprived the president of this instrument of warfare. It might also have revived the determination of the German soldiers to continue fighting.[80]

[78] U.S. note to the German government: Wilson to Lansing (to be forwarded), 23. 10. 1918, reprinted in: Schwabe/Stieve/Diegmann (eds.): Quellen (see note 70), pp. 59ff.; see also: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, pp. 417f.; Schwabe: Deutsche Revolution (see note 71), pp. 114ff. English translation: Klaus Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), pp. 35ff.

[79] The term "just" was for Wilson extremely wide-ranging: Directly, it involved the adoption of his ideologically-based war aims programme. By extension, it meant a settlement that would foster a system of international relations that was grounded in international law. See i.e.: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 46, p. 320, p. 323 and vol. 47, p. 47, p. 268, p. 287 and vol. 51, p. 130.

[80] About ten days before the arrival of the German armistice request in Washington House, in a private talk with the president, reminded him about the "necessity of fighting Germany from within as well as from without; that it was as much part of military tactics to do this as it was to handle the armies in the field". The military situation in Germany, he pointed out, „was not so bad, but [...] the situation was much worse behind the lines and our every efforts should be to aid our armies by diplomacy". House, Diary, 24. 9. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, pp. 105f.; see also: Wiseman, Memorandum, ca. 16. 10. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 347.

But there were other reasons which explain Wilson's acceptance of the German request. For one thing, it is important to stress that in his second and third notes to the German government the president once more insisted on concluding an "armistice" that would sanction the definite military superiority of the victorious Powers: that is to say he stood firm by his objective of a clear military victory for the Western Powers. The associated European Powers who then were negotiating the armistice terms in Paris were all too ready to comply with this demand.[81] Secondly and even more importantly – with the German request for an armistice Wilson's war aims programme acquired a new dimension. The Fourteen Points became internationally official, and the Entente Powers could not avoid defining their own position in regard to them, especially regarding those points about which they did not agree with the United States. By way of this clarification the U.S. government had the chance to pin them down to its programme. Aware of this, especially the British government was anxious to clarify its position. In order to know Wilson's understanding of his Fourteen Points, it sent Sir William Wiseman, the representative of its secret service in Washington and one of Wilson's closest confidants, to the president. During their momentous conversation on 16 October 1918, it turned out that most controversial of all were Wilson's ideas concerning the freedom of the seas and the future of the German colonies. The freedom of the seas as the Americans conceived of it would have put in question Great Britain's naval supremacy, not least the right to impose blockades. After an ensuing violent row with the British Wilson ended up urging them to place their naval supremacy in the service of the future League of Nations. For taking over the German colonies, he recommended an administration "in trust" for the League of Nations.

The German government, on the other hand, had complied with Wilson's wish that victors and vanquished should recognise Wilson's programme as the basis for the peace negotiations. It had become in fact a secret "partner" of the American president, and it would have been foolish for him to discourage them too much, standing, as he would, to lose them in the event of a *radical* upheaval in Germany as a result of extended warfare and unconditional surrender. This was a third reason for his apparent moderation. Fourthly, Wilson actually wanted to use the remaining weight of his secret German "partner" to bring some pressure on his European "associates". To this end, he instructed Colonel House, his plenipotentiary in the Paris armistice negotiations at the end of October, not to yield too much to Allied demands for more stringent military and political armistice terms. Too many supplementary military and political conditions, he warned, might give the European "Allies" "too much success or security", an effect, as he put it, that "will make a genuine peace settlement exceedingly difficult if not impossible".[82] Wilson, in other words, wanted the remaining German Empire to act as a certain

[81] Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), pp. 86ff.

[82] Wilson to House, 28. 10. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 473: "Too much success and security on the part of the Allies will make a genuine peace settlement exceed-

counterweight to the Western Allies – a situation that would enhance his position as a mediator. Once more, Wilson's concern about the balance of power, a principle he always had condemned in theory, came to the fore. A final consideration on Wilson's part had again to do with the situation in Germany. An unconditional surrender, resulting in the removal of the German government, he feared, might not only eliminate his secret German "partner", but might lead also to two undesirable political consequences inside Germany: firstly, the discrediting of the moderate elements that were eager to open peace talks and the strengthening of their die-hard opponents on the Right, who stood for fighting on the war. The second possible effect of an uncompromising insistence on total victory seemed even more alarming – the possibility that the continuation of the war would lend support to those forces in Berlin which were preparing a radical, Russian-style, change of regime from which the Bolsheviks would emerge as the victors. In that case Germany would have totally detached itself from American influences. Faced with this eventuality, the victorious Powers would have been helpless, as the experience of their vain attempts to cope with Bolshevik Russia had shown. The only option for the victors in that case would have been to occupy the whole of Germany and govern it for a long time – a costly prospect all of the Allies shrunk back from. Furthermore, with a Bolshevik Germany a "just" peace such as Wilson desired – indeed, any peace –, would have become impossible. No wonder then, that at the conclusion of the armistice negotiations and during the Paris Peace Conference the spectre of a Bolshevik Germany was often to prove a useful trump card for the German side.[83] All Wilson's arguments for opposing an unconditional surrender indicate that he was aware of the limits even to America's power: at the end of the First World War radical regime change and "nation-building" in Germany of the kind that were to follow the Second World War was simply not feasible, and Wilson knew that.[84]

Conclusion: A Moderate in Disguise

Wilson had good reason, therefore, for his relatively moderate stance in the closing stages of the First World War: i.e. for granting an armistice to the Germans,

ingly difficult if not impossible."; see Kennedy: Will (see note 5), p. 152; Lowry: Armistice (see note 34), p. 80, pp. 39f., p. 96.

[83] Wiseman, Memorandum, Interview with Wilson, 16. 10. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, pp. 347f. According to Wiseman, Wilson declared that: "We should consider too the condition of Germany. If we humiliate the German people and drive them too far, we shall destroy all form of government, and Bolshevism will take its place. We ought not ground them to powder or there will be nothing to build up from." See: Schwabe: Woodrow Wilson (see note 41), pp. 42ff., p. 46, p. 67; Wiseman, Memorandum, Interview with Wilson, 16. 10. 1918. In: Link et al.: Wilson Papers (see note 2), vol. 51, p. 347.

[84] Wilson dismissed the setting up of a new German government by the victorious Powers as "unthinkable"; Kampmark: No Peace (see note 16), p. 784, p. 786.

regardless of their form of government, rather than demanding their unconditional surrender. Indeed, according to the information available to the president and to the Allies when they signed the armistice treaty, no radical change of regime had yet occurred in Germany, and, as far as they knew, the Western powers were still negotiating an armistice with representatives of Imperial Germany. They were as yet unaware of the German November Revolution;[85] and when Wilson did learn of it, he refused to recognise the new German republic as a political system embodying his ideas of democracy and lawful government – even though the new regime invoked Wilson's principles and appealed for his support.[86]

To be sure, his refraining from insisting on total victory over Germany and his and his Allies' acquiescence in what they regarded as inadequate German moves towards democracy were not without consequences inside Germany: both lent credibility to the illusion that the returning German troops had remained "unbeaten in the field" – a notion that the Right seized on for its "stab-in-the-back" propaganda.[87] At the same time, however, the terms of the armistice did not endear the fledgling German republic to its citizens. Wilson has indeed been criticised for having prolonged the war by rejecting a compromise peace until Germany formally requested an armistice. Judged from today's perspective, however, his most questionable objective – regime change, be it by military or non-military means – has become an acceptable objective in many quarters, especially in the West, in today's interconnected world in which a global responsibility for maintaining peace within every single country is often taken for granted.

Viewed from the American and the Allied point of view Wilson's achievements remain undisputable: he provided the decisive military-political and, indeed, moral support for the ultimately successful continuation of the war. At the moment of the signing of the armistice, Wilson's own as well as America's prestige had reached its peak. It was, as a historian called it, "America's moment".[88] To explain, why Wilson in 1919 ultimately failed is beyond the scope of this paper; but that failure does not detract from his fundamental qualities as a political leader and his ability to comprehend the conundrums of modern political and military warfare, to recognise the limitations of power every victor in a military conflict has to face, and to act accordingly. Despite his weaknesses as a sometimes wily, occasionally disingenuous politician he was a statesman, a unique combination of oratorical

[85] See the recent article by Wolfram Pyta: Die Kunst des rechtzeitigen Thronverzichts. Neue Einsichten zur Überlebenschance der parlamentarischen Monarchie in Deutschland im Herbst 1918. In: Patrick Merziger et. al. (eds.): Geschichte, Öffentlichkeit, Kommunikation. Festschrift für Bernd Sösemann zum 65. Geburtstag. Stuttgart 2010, pp. 363–381, here: p. 365, p. 372.

[86] Kampmark: No Peace (see note 16), pp. 787f.; Larsen: Abandoning Democracy (see note 17), p. 492.

[87] See now: Klaus Schwabe: World War I and the Rise of Hitler. In: Diplomatic History 38 (2014), pp. 864–870.

[88] Arthur Walworth: America's Moment 1918. American Diplomacy at the End of World War I. New York 1977.

brilliance, moral strength, and a powerful vision of human progress together with responsible and realistic political judgement. Endowed with these qualities he attempted to lay the foundations of a foreign policy that was committed to securing in the long-term a world order founded on justice and the principle human dignity.

Conclusion

Holger Afflerbach

"… eine Internationale der Kriegsverschärfung und der Kriegsverlängerung …" War Aims and the Chances for a Compromise Peace during the First World War

The German foreign minister Richard von Kühlmann exclaimed in the Reichstag on 28 September 1917: "Europe! It sounds like a fairy tale from times long gone […]. For none of the states of the old Europe were the political conditions of the last forty years so intolerable that they had to go to war to change them at the risk of self-annihilation. Perhaps it is even today a common interest of all the great powers to ensure that Europe does not perish. A final breakdown will leave every single state, regardless of which side they stand on, weaker and without much of a future, and some will be completely broken and without hope."[1]

Kühlmann's invocation of Europe, of a common bond between the European states who were now fighting each other, was all very well; but he was describing a hope, not the realities of the situation. In fact, the belligerent Powers had no "systemic approach", as political scientists would say, embracing the entire political system of Europe, but only a "unit level" approach:[2] every state was fighting for its own aims – even those that pretended not to be doing so. In the event, the war continued until the total defeat of the Central Powers, and with total disregard for the collateral damage that the struggle for victory was inflicting on the European states system. The war left Europe devastated: Germany was humiliated, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire dissolved, Russia suffering under a monstrous dictatorship and fighting a civil war, France and Italy completely exhausted and Great Britain burdened with massive debts, facing countless interna-

[1] Wolfgang Steglich: Die Friedensversuche der kriegführenden Mächte im Sommer und Herbst 1917. Stuttgart 1984, front page.

[2] Concerning "system level" and "unit level" approach: Paul W. Schroeder: The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848. Oxford 1994, introduction; see also the contributions in The International History Review 16 (1994) 4, esp. H. M. Scott: Paul W. Schroeder's International System. The View from Vienna, pp. 663–680; Charles Ingrao: Paul W. Schroeder's Balance of Power. Stability or Anarchy?, pp. 681–700; T. C. W. Blanning: Paul W. Schroeder's Concert of Europe, pp. 701–714; Jack S. Levy: The Theoretical Foundations of Paul W. Schroeder's International System, pp. 715–744; Paul W. Schroeder: Balance of Power and Political Equilibrium. A Response, pp. 745–754.

tional problems and, Keith Jeffrey argues, already in the initial stages of its imperial and national disintegration.[3] Even the gains of some smaller participants, like Serbia, proved to be a very mixed blessing in the long run and had been bought at the price of horrendous losses which were proportionally higher than those of the other powers.[4] The only winners, in terms of power politics, were the USA and Japan – the two great powers of the day who had not participated fully in the conflict. Many in Europe had suspected that only non-European powers would benefit from a Great War. To cite one example, in September 1912 Erich von Falkenhayn, later Chief of the German General Staff, had written about the "supremacy which the USA and Japan will easily gain from a Great European War"[5] – an opinion shared once the war had broken out by nearly everyone in the German leadership. That the results of the war were, on a unit level, a disaster, was immediately clear. On the systemic level it was even worse; for the deficiencies at unit level meant that the international system could not work, as the interwar period and the Second World War were to demonstrate.

Why the decision-makers of Europe had let the war happen is not the issue here.[6] The purpose of this volume is rather to consider why, once involved in it, the belligerent states pursued their respective war aims so ferociously and tenaciously, and with so little regard for the danger of destroying both themselves and that "world of yesterday"[7] that was so soon to appear to so many nostalgic Europeans as a kind of lost paradise. The answer has something to do with the nature of the First World War.[8]

World War I as a Political Crisis Without a Solution

Once the war had broken out, it was very difficult to imagine a peace settlement based on compromise solution. At least this was Lloyd George's opinion after 1919.[9] There was perhaps simply no solution for the problems which the war created both in internal and international politics. The enormous human, economic and financial losses only made things worse by the day. Statesmen and political leaders found their room for manoeuvre limited by a number of factors. In the first place, they all felt obliged to devise war aims that would provide political

[3] See the chapter on Britain by Keith Jeffrey in this volume.
[4] See the chapter on Serbia by Dušan T. Bataković in this volume.
[5] Translated by Holger Afflerbach. The original text: Falkenhayn, 30. 9. 1912: "des Übergewichts, das Amerika und Japan durch einen großen europäischen Krieg mühelos zufallen muß". In: Holger Afflerbach: Falkenhayn. Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich. München 1994, p. 100; see also Mensdorff's comments here below, p. 248.
[6] Christopher Clark: The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914. London 2012.
[7] Stefan Zweig: Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers. Stockholm 1944.
[8] David Stevenson: The Failure of Peace by Negotiation in 1917. In: HJ 34 (1991) 1, pp. 65–86, esp. pp. 85f.
[9] David Lloyd George: Mein Anteil am Weltkrieg. Kriegsmemoiren, vol. 3. Berlin 1936, pp. 576–585.

justification for the sacrifices they were demanding of their citizens; and in the second, they felt anyway that to settle for a compromise would mean condemning themselves – or the next generation – to fighting the same war over again.[10]

Another very important factor was perhaps inherent in the very nature of alliance warfare. Alliance considerations, which had played such a decisive part in the July crisis, remained important after the war had broken out. Indeed, it was so difficult to harmonise the various aims of the alliance partners that it must have seemed at times politically easier to conclude a separate peace. In all cases, however, governments decided against it, being motivated by a sense of honour not to leave the partners alone, and perhaps even more by fear of isolation.

Certainly, both sides found it difficult to devise a programme of common war aims within the own alliance – witness the dissention between Germany and Austria-Hungary over the "Polish question" from 1916 until the end of the war;[11] or the reluctance of Britain until 1917 to guarantee to France the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine.[12] It was difficult to agree on war aims with partners and seemed virtually impossible to reach compromise agreements on them with the enemy – all the more so as agreements within alliances, like for example the Doumergue agreement of 1917 on Russian and French war aims at Germany's expense,[13] often entailed a maximisation of mutual gains that made any future agreement with the other side all the more difficult.[14]

The situation became more complex and the problems insolvable. New Allies could only be won with large promises, mostly at the expense of the enemy – witness the negotiations with Italy in 1915[15] and with Romania in 1916 – and this rendered a political solution of the war short of complete defeat of one side ever more unlikely.

In short, as David Stevenson has observed, on all sides the obstacles to peace "were real and deep".[16] For too long, all sides preferred to fight on rather than compromise, perhaps because for too long all sides hoped to win. And even when

[10] George H. Cassar: Lloyd George at War 1916–1918. London 2009, p. 162: Lloyd George saying that the Pope's peace proposal would be "a slightly more lasting peace of Amiens"; Milner saying in late 1917 that there would be another conflict in ten years time, if Germany were not beaten now, p. 165.

[11] Werner Conze: Polnische Nation und Deutsche Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg. Köln/Graz 1958; Heinz Lemke: Allianz und Rivalität. Die Mittelmächte und Polen im ersten Weltkrieg (bis zur Februarrevolution) (= Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte Osteuropas, vol. 18). Berlin 1977.

[12] Stevenson: Failure of Peace (see note 8), p. 83; Gerhard Ritter: Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk, vol. 4. München 1968, p. 89.

[13] David Stevenson: Cataclysm. The First World War as Political Tragedy. New York 2004, p. 114.

[14] Wolfgang Steglich: Bündnissicherung oder Verständnisfrieden. Göttingen 1958, p. 177: Scavenius thought that the Entente note to Wilson on 12. 1. 1917 was so boundless because the Entente had integrated all maximum demands to avoid discord among the Allies.

[15] Holger Afflerbach: Der Dreibund. Europäische Großmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Wien 2002, pp. 849–874; Johannes Hürter/Gian Enrico Rusconi (eds.): Der Kriegseintritt Italiens im Mai 1915 (= Schriftenreihe der VfZ). München 2007.

[16] Stevenson: Failure of Peace (see note 8), p. 85.

victory arrived it was to prove difficult to find any common ground, as the Versailles peace conference was to demonstrate in 1919.[17]

The hope that a final victory might prove a panacea for their countless problems caused all participants to pursue a very shortsighted kind of action which may be called "hand to mouth". It was one of the central laws of decision making during the war and made things constantly worse. One example might be the financial side of the war, with the constant reliance on stopgaps[18] in the hope of presenting the bill later to the vanquished or at least of postponing the problem to the future; another, the political promises made to neutral countries to bring them into the war – promises which would never have been made in peacetime. Finally, there was the German plan for *Mitteleuropa* – a very popular proposal in certain circles in 1915, but one which, as Soutou has convincingly demonstrated, was detrimental to German economic interests: the very idea of such a central European economic bloc horrified German industrialists, whose main markets lay outside of it, mainly in Western Europe.[19]

Armies and Populations

Here two questions arise: first, if the politicians were fighting for victory because they did not see any other way out, did the military planners support them or did they try to rein them in and limit the damage and, secondly, what did the populations, the societies who had to bear the weight and the misery of the war, have to say?

The military planners were generally very supportive of fighting until victory. They were not holding the politicians back and not asking any limitation of war aims – on the contrary. In their view, the enemy had to be defeated, and they felt able to provide victory. There were two exceptions to this rule. The first was Erich von Falkenhayn, who advised Bethmann Hollweg in November 1914 that a military victory was unattainable and that the politicians should look for a political way out of the war. The second was Ludendorff, who forced the politicians to ask for an immediate armistice in late September 1918. There are very few other cases where military leaders tried to moderate the politicians; in most cases it was the other way around. In the German case the military leaders pressed the politicians to pursue victory, at least in the period of the 3rd OHL. In some cases military leaders went too far and overstretched the endurance of their armies, as was shown by the Russian and French mutinies in 1917 and the disintegration of the German and Austro-Hungarian Armies in 1918.

[17] Gerd Krumeich/Silke Fehlemann (eds.): Versailles 1919. Ziele – Wirkung – Wahrnehmung. Essen 2001; very thought-provoking: Adam Tooze: The Deluge. The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916–1931. London 2014.

[18] The British example: On war financing see David French: The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition1916–1918. Oxford 1995, p. 42 (British credit in the U.S., finances in general).

[19] Georges-Henri Soutou: L'or et le sang. Les buts de guerre économiques de la Première Guerre mondiale. Paris 1989, esp. pp. 847f.

As for relations between ruling elites and populations, how far were the mass of soldiers and citizens fighting to achieve their governments' war aims? This question is very difficult to answer. It seems that both civilian populations and soldiers were, at least in the later part of the war, increasingly war-weary and mainly interested in ending the war as soon as possible if the terms were half way acceptable.[20] It was mostly the ruling elites, not the broad masses of soldiers and civilians, who desired substantial gains. Sometimes political leaders were afraid that the populations growing desire for peace would undermine their hopes of continuing the war until victory.[21]

On the other hand, it would be wrong to underestimate the strength of nationalistic feelings "from below". Headlines like that in the "Morning Post" of 10 September 1917 could be found at all times in all belligerent countries: "The business of our statesmen and of the nation is to see that the blood of our soldiers is not wasted nor their courage betrayed."[22] There were "patriotic" movements like the *Vaterlandspartei* in Germany or the Irredentists in Italy who fought openly for expansionist aims;[23] and even if these pressure groups appealed only to sections of the population, they remained influential.

It was difficult for all governments to manoeuvre between being accused by a part of their own society of betraying the war effort and losing their nerve, and holding out for too long and straining the patriotic consensus to the breaking point. It was Ludendorff's claim to keep going "for ten minutes longer"[24] that brought Germany to defeat on the battlefield, whatever the purveyors of the stab-in-the-back legend might have claimed later.[25] Another example is the Russian case, where the inability or unwillingness of the government to bring the war to an end caused the revolution and the complete breakdown of the existing political order;[26] and by late 1918 the Central Powers were in a very similar situation to Russia: continuing the war could mean revolution. The French mutinies in 1917 showed that the Western powers too were not immune to the danger of overstretching the goodwill of their soldiers – a danger of which all the belligerent governments were aware from quite early on.[27]

[20] Roger Chickering: Freiburg im Ersten Weltkrieg. Totaler Krieg und städtischer Alltag 1914–1918. Paderborn u. a. 2009; Belinda J. Davis: Home Fires Burning. Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin. Chapel Hill/London 2000; Maureen Healy: Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War I (= Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare Series, vol. 17). Cambridge 2004.

[21] Stevenson: Failure of Peace (see note 8), p. 83, with the example of Painleve.

[22] Cassar: Lloyd George (see note 10), pp. 167f.

[23] Heinz Hagenlücke: Deutsche Vaterlandspartei. Die nationale Rechte am Ende des Kaiserreichs. Düsseldorf 1997.

[24] Stevenson: Failure of Peace (see note 8), p. 85.

[25] See Boris Barth: Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration. Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg, 1914–1933. Düsseldorf 2003.

[26] See the contribution of Boris Kolonitskii in this volume; also: Horst Günther Linke: Das zarische Russland und der Erste Weltkrieg. Diplomatie und Kriegsziele 1914–1917. München 1982.

[27] Falkenhayn, 28. 8. 1916. In: Nicolai papers, Special Archive Moscow, 1414-1-13.

Even so, it is clear, from a historical perspective, that the limits of endurance and the solidity of the national consensus among the belligerent peoples of Europe were enormous and perhaps a good deal stronger than many contemporaries thought. Refusals to fight and revolution only came at the end, after years of fighting and suffering. At the beginning every belligerent nation exhibited a fierce resolution to fight for its national defence. This consensus was stronger than internationalism, socialism, or pacifism; and it held for a remarkably long time, despite all hardships borne by soldiers and civilians.

It would, of course, be a romantic idea to think that the "masses" were peace-loving and in favour of ending of the war regardless of the result. Many families had made enormous sacrifices in the national cause. To cite a German example: the Chief of the Imperial Military Cabinet, Moriz von Lyncker, had lost two of his sons, and so had the Social Democratic leader Friedrich Ebert. Such people could hardly have been indifferent to the outcome of a war which had destroyed their private happiness forever. The same is true on the Allied side: to mention only one of many examples, Bonar Law lost a son in 1917.[28] They all wanted the war to stop soon, but they also wanted the war to end with a good result for their respective countries – in short, "peace with honour", and a peace which left state and society intact. Few wanted peace at any price; and even politicians on the political left favoured realistically obtainable gains and advantages for their countries. A good example is the mood in the Italian people immediately after the war, when President Wilson appealed to them to forego the gains of the Treaty of London and to fight at Versailles for the higher causes of humanity; and when the handful of Italian politicians like Bissolati, who tried to advocate this kind of policy, were quite unable to stand against the tide.[29]

The Development of War Aims During the War

For all of these reasons, the actual outcome of the war was the most likely one: the belligerents fought it out until one party was defeated. Not without reason some contemporaries, like the German field marshal Crown Prince Rupprecht, used the metaphor of sitting in a boat with nobody at the helm.[30] Nevertheless, war aims were never independent from the military situation, with which all the belligerents were consequently much preoccupied. This did not mean, of course, that they did not repeatedly commit very serious errors of judgment in assessing the strategic possibilities.

[28] French: Strategy (see note 18), p. 293.
[29] Holger Afflerbach: "... nearly a case of Italy contra mundum"? Italien als Siegermacht in Versailles 1919. In: Krumeich/Fehlemann (eds.): Versailles 1919 (see note 17), pp. 159–173, pp. 166f.
[30] "Mir kommt es so vor, als wäre ich in einem Boote, das steuerlos in einem reißenden Strom zwischen Klippen hindurchtreibt." Quoted in: Dieter Weiß: Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern. Eine politische Biographie. Regensburg 2007, p. 144.

To consider the major belligerents only, several different "phases" of war aims may be distinguished:

Phase 1 – The establishment of war aims: This phase starts with the outbreak of the war, which actually surprised and shocked all the parties involved in the July crisis.[31] War aims were not inscribed on any hidden agenda prepared beforehand, even if some had been inclined to speculate about what might be achieved in a possible future war (as Georges-Henri Soutou shows in the case of the Franco-Russian alliance).[32] The attempts of historians to prove a strong link between pre-war ambitions, the July crisis and war aims, have proved in the long run unconvincing. The most famous example is Fritz Fischer's "War of Illusions", which attempts to demonstrate that the war had been plotted and prepared by the German leadership ever since the *Kriegsrat* of 8 December 1912.[33] This is today a minority position among historians; for the claim that the war aims of the First World War can be found in events before July 1914 is hardly substantiated by the evidence. In reality, the appetite came with eating: after – or maybe because of – the shock caused by the outbreak of a continental war, all sides very quickly developed the most extravagant war aims. The most famous of these designs is the German September Programme,[34] but the Russian, French and Austro-Hungarian designs for postwar territorial gains were equally extreme.[35]

Phase 2 – Growing realism: While military developments compelled both sides to modify their initial extravagant schemes, they did not abandon them altogether.

The above-mentioned meeting between the German chief of staff, Falkenhayn, with Bethmann Hollweg on 18 November 1914 was particularly important.[36] The general's demand for a political solution of the war because a military victory was unattainable marked a turning point: henceforth the political leaders of the Central Powers began to admit that unlimited gains were not possible and that they had to look for compromise. This culminated in their agreement in March 1917 (*Minimalprogramm*) to fight for the status quo ante.[37] On the Entente side the nadir came in late 1917, when Russia left the coalition.[38] Public opinion in Great Britain and France was divided, but the two governments held firm to their decision to fight on until victory and prevailed over their critics.

[31] Dušan T. Bataković showed this for Serbia, see his contribution in this volume.
[32] See the contribution of Georges-Henri Soutou in this volume.
[33] Fritz Fischer: Krieg der Illusionen. Die deutsche Politik 1911–1914. Düsseldorf ²1969; John C. G. Röhl: "An der Schwelle zum Weltkrieg. Eine Dokumentation über den 'Kriegsrat' vom 8. Dezember 1912". In: MGM 21 (1977), pp. 77–134.
[34] Fritz Fischer: Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914–1918. Düsseldorf 1961, pp. 113–119.
[35] See the contributions of Marvin Fried, Georges-Henri Soutou and Boris Kolonitskii in this volume.
[36] See the contribution of Roger Chickering in this volume.
[37] See the contribution of Lothar Höbelt in this volume.
[38] V. H. Rothwell: British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914–1918. Oxford 1971, pp. 96–142.

After all, as neither government was prepared to settle for a return to the status quo ante, the minimum condition of the Central Powers could not be met.

Phase 3 – Growing despair: From 1916 onwards all European belligerents were in varying degrees of despair. Some, like Austria-Hungary or Russia in 1917, were ready to compromise on war aims, even if they were ultimately held back by their respective alliance partners. Opinion in Germany was divided, at all levels, as to whether to compromise or to fight on. The government therefore gave out signals in both directions, but its numerous, and somewhat clumsy attempts to find a political way out of the war were systematically ignored and ridiculed in Paris and London.

States Who Entered the Conflict Later in the War

States which entered the war *after* August 1914 were in a different position concerning war aims, which were for them not something which was devised after the event, but the actual reason for going to war.

1. The Ottoman Empire entered the war in November 1914 for essentially defensive reasons, without getting many promises or even a guarantee of its territorial integrity. Its decision for war in this moment, and on such uncertain terms, was surprising, but is less mysterious than it looks at first sight.[39] The Ottomans felt themselves victims of an international system, some of whose members had decided to divide them up; they wanted an alliance for protection against this fate; and if the price for such an alliance was entry into war, they were ready to pay it. Later in the war, of course, the Ottoman government was to develop its own extravagant war aims.
2. The Italian government entered the war to acquire the territories promised in the Treaty of London of 1915 and was not ready to abandon any of these ambitions, regardless of the costs.[40] The decision for war was made, according to Salandra, by two people only: himself and the foreign minister Sydney Sonnino.[41] This meant that they had assumed an extraordinary personal responsibility, not only for the war but for its outcome; and it was not surprising that whenever peace was at issue, either a separate peace with Austria-Hungary, or even in Versailles 1919[42] – Sonnino always insisted that Italy's sacrifices on the battlefield had to be honored.
3. The attitudes of Bulgaria and Romania, who joined the war in 1915 and 1916 respectively, were much the same as in the Italian case.

[39] See the contribution of Mesut Uyar in this volume; see also Mustafa Aksakal: The Ottoman Road to War in 1914. The Ottoman Empire and the First World War. Cambridge 2008; Hew Strachan: To Arms. Oxford 2001, pp. 644–693.
[40] See the contribution of John Gooch in this volume.
[41] Denis Mack Smith: I Savoia Re d'Italia. Milano 1993, p. 270.
[42] Afflerbach: Italien (see note 29).

4. The United States, by contrast, who entered the war in April 1917, were not fighting at all for territorial gains, but to change the system of international relations.[43]

Three Different Categories of War Aims

War aims can be divided into at least three categories. "Nationalistic" (or, less polemically, "realist") war aims, reflected prototypical "unit level" attitudes and were concerned with gains and "securities" for existing national states, on the assumption that the world would be the same that it was before the war. In this category fall also certain economic plans for the post war period, designed to create a new economic order to suit particular political and security interests – in the German case, for example, the idea of *Mitteleuropa*.[44]

A second type of war aim, or better, response to the war, was the one Lenin and his followers wanted to pursue: world revolution. It would never do to end the war by a diplomatic deal; rather, the entire social structures of the imperialist belligerent societies must be changed – not only a desirable objective in itself, but the only remedy against a repetition of such a disaster. If this, in contrast to the "unit level" approach of the "realists", constituted a "systemic level" approach, so did the third category of war aims, a liberal or "idealist" answer in the tradition of European pacifism and Kant, in terms of a new international order, with the nationality principle, international arbitration, a league of nations, freedom of trade and freedom of the seas as its key points.

Nationalistic War Aims

First should be mentioned *nationalistic war aims*, which proved increasingly difficult to justify the longer the war lasted. In fact, some territorial demands were from the start so far reaching that they were incompatible with any political compromise and could only be realised by victory. Here, three examples spring to mind:

1. France insisted on the "desannexion" of Alsace-Lorraine, while Germany insisted that there was no "Alsace-Lorraine-question in an international sense" (Kühlmann 1917, Hertling 1918). Whereas the French government never wavered concerning Alsace-Lorraine (with only the socialists in 1917 talking of a plebiscite) everyone in Germany – the government, the military, all parties in the Reichstag, even the SPD – agreed that it was out of the question to hand over these territories to France. This question alone, therefore, ruled out any political compromise.
2. Although by 1917 some members of the Ottoman government were prepared to conclude a separate peace, the demands of the Entente – that the Ottomans

[43] See the contribution of Klaus Schwabe in this volume; for a wider context: Tooze: Deluge (see note 17).

[44] Soutou: L'or (see note 19), passim.

cede all their non-Turkish provinces – were so exorbitant that they felt they had no choice but to fight on.

3. In Austria-Hungary the Emperor Charles and his foreign minister Ottokar Count Czernin were by 1917–1918 so desperate to find an honorable way out of the war that they were prepared to cede Galicia to a newly erected Poland and to hand both over to Germany to persuade Berlin to cede Alsace-Lorraine to France to facilitate a political compromise to end the war. But even they were not prepared to comply with the Treaty of London and cede, not only the Trentino, but the port of Trieste and German-speaking territories, such as Südtirol, to Italy. The Western powers were very unhappy about Italy's stubborn refusal to compromise, but as they felt obliged to honour their promises to their ally the negotiations came to nothing.

Communist War Aims

For many people today, the communist war aims have been discredited by the knowledge of what seventy years of communist dictatorship meant for the people subjugated to it. In 1918, however, things looked very different. Obstinate governments were keeping whole societies fighting, millions were dead or wounded, and Europe was plagued by famine, disease and mass poverty. The general misery combined with the apparent ruthlessness of the belligerent governments made the communists' insistence that the social order must be overthrown sound increasingly plausible. The governments, for their part, were aware and afraid of the Revolution, which Ludendorff feared even more than defeat. Once the war was over, however, only a small minority of Europeans favored the communist experiment. The "world revolution" proved to be a pipe dream and the big majorities in Europe, including the Social democrats, preferred reforms of the existing order by far to radical experiments; and the vast majority agreed with Friedrich Ebert, who hated the social revolution "like sin".[45]

Western and Liberal War Aims

The third group, the "idealists", advocated a different international system, with a league of nations and mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. For some, therefore, they seemed to move on a higher ethical plane than the nationalists – at least Woodrow Wilson thought so. But in fact all governments, except the USA, were bound to both groups: the British, for example, wanted not only territorial gains for themselves and for the dominions, but also a new and better international system.[46] France wanted not only Alsace-Lorraine, and perhaps the Rhineland but also a league of nations. In fact, by the end of the war nearly every-

[45] Max von Baden: Erinnerungen und Dokumente. Ed. by Golo Mann und Andreas Burckhardt. Stuttgart 1968, p. 600.

[46] See the contribution of Keith Jeffery in this volume.

body was in favor of some form of war-preventing international organisation (provided, of course, that it did not hinder their own territorial aspirations).

On the other hand, it might be argued that the high-minded "idealists" did much harm with their inflexible approach towards an enemy they demonised. There was no inevitable or logical connection between liberalism and a Manichaean view of good and evil; but they proved in practice to be closely linked.[47] The Germans had done much to create the image of a brutal military machine: they had invaded Belgium, the chancellor had called the guarantee of Belgian neutrality by the European Great Powers "a scrap of paper"; they had committed "Belgian atrocities", such as killing civilians and burning down historic buildings; their intellectuals had written pamphlets defending "militarism"; their submarines had torpedoed passenger liners with women and children on board. All this, including the person of Wilhelm II and his son, had contributed to the image of a ruthless military autocracy fighting for "world power" and hegemony in Europe. It was not surprising, therefore, that Allied propaganda against Germany was internationally quite effective.

It must be said, however, that it proved to be yet another hindrance to compromise – indeed, to any sensible communication – with an enemy who had been branded as a pirate and a murderer.[48] After all, whatever the war aim was, if the war was to be stopped before one side had been completely defeated it would be necessary to talk; and to talk on an equal footing. As things stood, however, there was little readiness to do so – for reasons that went back to the outbreak of war in 1914 and conflicting interpretations of its causes.

For the German people, persuaded that they had been attacked by Russia and her Entente partners, the war was a defensive one – despite the fact that German armies were fighting everywhere on enemy soil. The political elites in Berlin and Vienna admitted amongst themselves that they bore some of the responsibility for the outbreak of war. German propaganda was defensive in tone from the start and as the Kaiser declared: "We are not driven by any desire for conquest." The same is true of the various pamphlets in which German intellectuals sought to refute Allied accusations of barbarism and militarism.

The Allied powers felt free of guilt, despite the fact that their attitudes and behaviour before and during the July crisis had not been above reproach.[49] For them, the war was simply a German attempt to conquer Europe; and as they all had reason to fear German domination of the continent, it became an Allied war aim to destroy "Prussian militarism". This implied, in modern terms, something like "regime change" in Germany;[50] and of course it presupposed a decisive victory

[47] Detlef Junker: Die manichäische Falle. Das Deutsche Reich im Urteil der USA, 1871–1945. In: Klaus Hildebrand (ed.): Das Deutsche Reich im Urteil der Großen Mächte und europäischen Nachbarn (1871–1945), München 1995, pp. 141–158.

[48] Ritter: Staatskunst, vol. 4 (see note 12), p. 240.

[49] See the latest critical evaluation of Allied politics before and during the July crisis: Clark: Sleepwalkers (see note 6).

[50] See the contribution of Klaus Schwabe in this volume.

over the German aggressor.[51] Precisely how "Prussian militarism" was to be destroyed remained unclear. Perhaps the only effective way would have been to implement one of the French plans for partitioning Germany. Although the British never went that far, their ill-defined language in this direction was the despair of Austrian diplomats desperate to conclude a compromise peace. At the end of 1917 for example Count Mensdorff, former Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London, had met General Smuts in Switzerland in 1917 to discuss peace terms in secret talks. According to Lloyd George's later account, Mensdorff had exclaimed that "Europe [...] was dying at the centre, America was becoming the financial and economic centre of the world, while Japan at the other end was gathering to herself immense power and resources and the whole trade of Asia. Why," he asked, "were we [the British] going on fighting?" He went on to warn his interlocutors that, even though Lloyd George might talk of victory and Asquith of the need to crush Prussian militarism, after "another year of this destruction [...] the position of Europe and civilisation, already so pitiable, would indeed be beyond repair. What", he asked, "was the sort of victory we had in view? How would we know it and when would we consider it to be achieved? Did we want the Hohenzollerns to go? Surely, that was not likely to happen during the War, and would in any case not justify the practical destruction of European civilisation." To all this Smuts could only reply that the British people were afraid that if Germany was not beaten, it would be "a kind of military dictator" of Europe.[52]

According to Mensdorff's chief, Count Czernin, Germany was in British eyes "the exact reincarnation of France under Bonaparte, but Napoleon was replaced by a monster with several heads such as the Kaiser, the Crown Prince, Hindenburg, Ludendorff";[53] and the British felt it essential to destroy the monster before they could even contemplate making peace.

Certainly, Lloyd George said in October 1917 that Britain had to "wear [Germany] down". "That is what the Allies did to Napoleon, and that is what we must do to the Germans."[54] Compromising with them would be as futile as it had been with Napoleon; they had to be defeated. Any compromise peace with Germany would be a repetition of the peace of Amiens: a truce, not a real peace. Meanwhile, as Woodrow Wilson's reply to the Pope's peace proposal of August 1917 showed, decisive military victory had now been adopted as a war aim even by the president, who as a neutral had spoken up for "peace without victory".[55] Perhaps Germany had never a real chance of negotiating a compromise peace. This does

[51] Kurt Riezler: Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Dokumente (= Deutsche Geschichtsquellen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, vol. 48). Ed. by Karl-Dietrich Erdmann. Göttingen 1972. Diary entry of 12. 1. 1917, p. 398.
[52] David Lloyd George: War Memoirs, vol. 5. Boston 1936, p. 30.
[53] Ottokar Czernin: Im Weltkriege. Berlin/Wien 1919, p. 227.
[54] French: Strategy (see note 18), p. 294.
[55] Stevenson: Failure of Peace (see note 8), p. 84.

not excuse the clumsiness with which the Germans had pursued it, however; nor the inefficiency and lack of imagination they displayed when it came to fighting the worldwide battle for hearts and minds.[56]

Entente versus Central Powers

The Entente Powers pursued war aims whose realisation needed complete military victory, to an extent that military victory itself became their central war aim; and given their structural superiority the outcome showed that they could afford to do so. Whether their military victory did not come at too high a price however, is another question. It unhinged the European states system in two respects: by destroying Russia and by rendering the European Powers dependent on the USA. The Allies' "stubborn, immovable" determination to destroy German militarism amounted, to a policy of *fiat justitia, et pereat mundus (Let there be justice, though the world perish).* British politics were, Kurt Riezler complained, – "admirable in all details, absolutely stupid in the overall design".[57]

Perhaps even more stupid however, was the clumsiness of the Central Powers in their attempts to force their opponents and potential opponents to compromise – witness the Zimmermann telegram.[58] Clearly, the Central Powers were having difficulties in devising a strategy in accordance with the realities of the military situation, perhaps the worst of their miscalculations being the declaration of unlimited submarine warfare which brought the USA into the war. On the other hand, there was never any easy way out for the Central Powers. To accept defeat while the military situation was not utterly hopeless would have been politically unacceptable, (even dangerous, as the stab-in-the-back legend was later to show);[59] and there was really nothing much short of surrender on offer to them. Lloyd George's Caxton Hall speech of 5 January 1918,[60] for example, was regarded in Germany and Austria-Hungary as a slap in the face. As Gerhard Ritter summed

[56] A good example for that: Otto Hintze et al.: Deutschland und der Weltkrieg. Leipzig/Berlin 1915. The most renowned historians produced this book for neutral countries. The essays tried to explain the German point of view, but did that in a remarkably inefficient way; even more striking because of the intellectual quality of its contributors. See also the complaints of Max von Baden on the German attempts to deal with foreign public opinion, in: Max von Baden: Erinnerungen und Dokumente (see note 45), passim.

[57] Riezler: Tagebücher (see note 51), 10. 1. 1917, p. 396: "Die englische Politik bewundernswert in allen Kleinigkeiten, im grossen saudumm. Stur, unbeweglich."

[58] Barbara W. Tuchman: The Zimmermann Telegram. New York 1958; very informative on the background, esp. Zimmermann's motivation: Thomas Boghardt: The Zimmermann Telegram. Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America's Entry into World War I. Annapolis, MD 2012.

[59] See Barth: Dolchstoßlegenden (see note 25).

[60] Lloyd George: War Memoirs, vol. 5 (see note 52), pp. 39–42; David Woodward: The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George's January 5 War Aims Speech. In: The Historian 34 (1971), pp. 22–39; the text of the speech is available online: http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Prime_Minister_Lloyd_George_on_the_British_War_Aims (accessed on 20. 4. 2015).

up the situation: the Western powers were ready to enter negotiations only if the Germans "surrendered voluntarily to their enemies" beforehand.[61]

Certainly, the Central Powers might be acting out of egotistical motives; but they tried in fact very hard to stop the war. From, at the latest, March 1917 onwards, Berlin and Vienna were ready to conclude peace on the basis of status quo ante,[62] but this was not acceptable to the Entente Powers, who rejected no fewer than three direct peace offers from the Central Powers (in December 1916, July 1917, December 1917), while Hertling's offer to discuss Wilson's Fourteen Points further went unanswered.[63] By 1918 the Germans were becoming increasingly exasperated – as Hertling lamented at length in the Reichstag: "If we talk of our peaceful disposition, and our readiness for peace, some of our enemies interpret this as a sign of our weakness, of our impending collapse, others see it as a deceitful trap. When we spoke of our unshakable will to defend ourselves against a criminal war of conquest forced upon us, then they heard the rattle of Ludendorff's sword, and they said: this is the voice of Prussian militarism, to which the leading statesmen also have to defer, whether they want to or not."[64]

The failure to achieve a compromise was, to some extent, the result of the absence of respect and trust: the two sides had no effective means of communication that would enable one to hear, understand, and take seriously what the other had to say. The chief obstacle was, however, simply the incompatibility of war aims. As Georges-Henri Soutou has pointed out: „From the very start of the war, the Allied Powers were, much more determined than they admitted for a long time, to drastically reduce the political, military and economic power of Germany."[65] In fact, the Allied claims to be "moderate" were quite astonishing, in view of their expansionist plans at the expense of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, the details of which were published by the Bolshevik government at the end of 1917. Less astonishing was the German reaction of – albeit impotent – outrage.[66] As an

[61] Gerhard Ritter: Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk. Das Problem des "Militarismus" in Deutschland. 4 vols. München 1954–1968, see: vol. 4, pp. 86f.

[62] Ibid., here: vol. 3, p. 478 and vol. 4, p. 207.

[63] Hertling, RT 180. Sitzung, 25. 6. 1918, 5640. See this and all subsequent quotes from Reichstag speeches online: www.reichstagsprotokolle.de (accessed on 20. 4. 2015).

[64] Hertling, RT 180. Sitzung, 25. 6. 1918, 5640. "Sprechen wir von unserer friedfertigen Gesinnung, von unsrer Friedensbereitschaft, so wurde das von den einen als Symptom unserer Schwäche, unseres unmittelbar bevorstehenden Zusammenbruchs aufgefaßt und von den anderen als eine hinterlistig aufgestellte Falle gedeutet. Sprachen wir dagegen von unserem unerschütterlichen Willen, den uns frevelhaft aufgedrungenen Eroberungskrieg abzuwehren, so 'hörte man den Säbel Ludendorffs klirren'; so hieß es: das ist die Stimme des preußischen Militarismus, dem auch die leitenden Staatsmänner sich wohl oder übel fügen müssen."

[65] Georges-Henri Soutou: Die Kriegsziele des Deutschen Reiches, Frankreichs, Großbritanniens und der Vereinigten Staaten während des Ersten Weltkrieges: ein Vergleich. In: Wolfgang Michalka (ed.): Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse. Weyarn 1997, pp. 28–53, here: p. 33: "Die Alliierten waren vom Beginn des Krieges an wesentlich entschlossener, als lange Zeit zugegeben worden ist, die politische, militärische und wirtschaftliche Macht Deutschlands drastisch zu reduzieren."

[66] French: Strategy (see note 18), p. 43.

indignant Hertling exclaimed in the Reichstag on 25 February 1918, "despite their politics which are through and through aggressive and expansionist, the statesmen of the Entente dare to criticise us, militarist, imperialist autocratic Germany, as the troublemaker who has to be contained, if not eliminated, in the interest of world peace."[67]

The interpretation of World War I as Germany's *Griff nach der Weltmacht* or, rather, the story of Allied Powers fighting to frustrate a Germany "grasping for world power", is perhaps something of a distortion, despite Fritz Fischer's skill and accuracy in describing all Germany's expansionist designs. For these have to be put in perspective, notably, in the context of the – in some respects even more ambitious – war aims of the other side.

The Weakness of Compromisers

In practice, of course, all too often both sides found themselves entangled in an impenetrable combination of internal and alliance politics that vitiated their efforts to end the war by compromise. It caused problems for example, for German advocates of a compromise peace based on understanding (*Verständigungsfrieden*), as even they thought in terms of making gains, if strategically possible. It always came down to the same argument: only victory seemed to offer a chance – a questionable chance – of finding an acceptable way out. Yet for all the belligerents the pressure of internal and external events standing in the way of a solution often seemed so overwhelming that Bethmann Hollweg's feeling of being carried away by "a fate, bigger than human power"[68] is understandable. Whether this fatalistic, helpless attitude was not as detrimental to the cause of peace as his opponents' stubborn insistence on imperialist goals is an open question: perhaps a more cynical, "realist" approach would have served the Central Powers better than either the unimaginative "annexionism" of the OHL and the *Vaterlandspartei* or the well-meaning attempts of the compromisers in the Reichstag. There might have been at least a possibility of trading off losses against gains, giving up Belgium, for example, (as the *Wilhelmstraße* planned to do anyway) and Alsace-Lorraine in the West, splitting the Entente and getting out of the war with much bigger gains at Russia's expense.[69] The de facto control of Eastern Europe would have left the position of the Central Powers far stronger than in 1914. However, as David Stevenson observes, it would have taken a

[67] Hertling, RT 133. Sitzung, 25. 2. 1918, 4142: "Und angesichts dieser durch und durch aggressiven, auf Aneignung fremder Gebiete gerichteten Politik wagen es die Staatsmänner der Entente noch immer das militaristische, imperialistische, autokratische Deutschland als den Störenfried hinzustellen, der im Interesse des Weltfriedens in die engsten Schranken verwiesen, wenn nicht vernichtet werden müsse."

[68] Riezler: Tagebücher (see note 51), 27. 7. 1914, p. 192.

[69] See the contribution of Lothar Höbelt in this volume.

politician of "Bismarck's or Lenin's bravura" to have carried through such a policy against the massive opposition of Right and Left alike.[70]

Britain, France and a Compromise Peace

The German government was prepared to attempt a compromise, albeit in a ham-fisted, often counter-productive, fashion; while the French government was insisting on terms that were only obtainable by outright victory. That the British in this situation failed to use their room for manoeuvre to work for a political solution gave them, in the eyes of some, a significant responsibility for the prolongation of the war. The German denunciations of Great Britain as the driving force in the enemy coalition created the groundswell of feeling in Germany that enabled, if it did not compel, Berlin to embark on the implementation of the fatal unlimited submarine warfare in 1917. There is no doubt that peace might have come sooner if Britain had been prepared for a compromise short of military victory. Lloyd George had moments in late 1917 when he considered such a solution, even if the cabinet and the Foreign office were opposed to this idea;[71] and Lord Lansdowne was inspired not so much by nostalgic sentiment as by a realist understanding of Great Britain's self-interest, when he warned in his famous "peace letter" of 29 November 1917 to the "Daily Telegraph" that the "wanton prolongation [of the war] would be a crime differing only in degree from that of the criminals who provoked it".[72] At the same time, Austrian diplomats eager for peace, suggested to pinning the Germans down with their own statements of moderation and the Reichstag's peace declaration of July 1917. This last was, in the eyes of the Allies, quite meaningless because the power in Germany was the military autocracy, not the Reichstag. In fact, those very autocrats found the Reichstag peace declaration a real nuisance – certainly, in so far as it was regarded as politically binding it restricted their options. Meanwhile, the OHL, the political right and the *Vaterlandspartei* favored large "annexationist" designs in both Eastern and Western Europe. But who spoke for Germany? Lansdowne, at least, urged giving the friends of peace a chance by destroying the eternal argument of the hardliners that the fight had to go on because the enemy was not offering an understanding on equal terms.

[70] David Stevenson: With Our Backs to the Wall. Victory and Defeat in 1918. London 2011, p. 535.
[71] Cassar: Lloyd George (see note 10), p. 167.
[72] Douglas Newton: The Lansdowne "Peace Letter" of 1917 and the Prospect of Peace by Negotiation with Germany. In: Australian Journal of Politics and History 48 (2002) 1, pp. 16–39, esp. p. 17.

"… eine Internationale der Kriegsverschärfung und der Kriegsverlängerung …": the Interdependence of the Hardliners on Both Sides

According to Philipp Scheidemann the rejection of the peace offer of the Central Powers by the Entente was followed by a radicalisation of warfare.[73] In one respect, at least, the hardliners on both sides were now keeping each other in power and suppressing the forces of moderation. Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Ludendorff needed each other, both to pursue their external goals and to keep the opposition in check at home. Indeed, individuals as different as Ludendorff and Lloyd George agreed that this war could only end with the defeat of one side.[74] Germany has been the subject of particular scrutiny from historians who have emphasised the constant interventions of Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Bauer and others in the long debate over war aims, but in fact the 3rd OHL owed its power to the continuing war that made it seem essential to concentrate all the nation's efforts on the struggle against an uncompromising foe. As Ludendorff put it in July 1917: "The Field Marshall [Hindenburg] and I myself are aware of the difficult situation […]. But I believe that if we proclaim our modesty, we will only invite the immodesty of our enemies. We will get peace only if we appear outwardly strong or if we declare ourselves beaten. As we cannot do the latter, therefore we have to do the first. The middle way has not so far brought any results, although we have been trying it for nearly a year."[75]

The power of this argument would have crumbled the moment any negotiations on a basis of equality had started. Lansdowne had recommended helping the supporters of a moderate peace to get the upper hand in Germany, and it is perhaps a pity that such a strategy was never put to the test.[76] Certainly, millions of lives might have been saved, but nobody can say for certain whether Europe would have been a better place if the two sides had compromised over their war aims and found a political settlement instead of fighting it out. We return to Kühlmann: whether the international system before 1914 was so intolerable that it had to be destroyed depends on an evaluation of that system and this is, fundamentally, still a controversial question even today. If the pre-1914 system was basically

[73] Speech of Scheidemann at the Reichstag, 27. 2. 1917: "Es gibt eben heute auch eine Internationale der Kriegsverschärfung und der Kriegsverlängerung, deren Glieder einander in die Hände arbeiten." In: www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt_k13_bsb00003405_00061.html (accessed on 20. 4. 2015).

[74] Lloyd George: Mein Anteil, vol. 3 (see note 9), pp. 576–585.

[75] "Ich glaube nur, daß das Bekanntwerden unserer Bescheidenheit die Unbescheidenheit der Feinde reizt, daß wir Frieden nur dann erhalten, wenn wir kraftvoll nach außen auftreten oder erklären, wir wären geschlagen. Da wir das nicht können, gibt es meines Erachtens nur den anderen Weg. Der Mittelweg hat bisher kein Ergebnis gehabt, obwohl wir ihn beinahe ein Jahr lang betreten haben." Ritter von Storck an Czernin, 31. 7. 1917. In: Wolfgang Steglich: Die Friedensversuche der kriegführenden Mächte im Sommer und Herbst 1917. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen, Akten und Vernehmungsprotokolle (= Quellen und Studien zu den Friedensversuchen des Ersten Weltkrieges, vol. 4). Stuttgart 1984, p. 384.

[76] Newton: Lansdowne "Peace Letter" (see note 72), passim.

sound and the war an accident – an interpretation today associated, ironically, with the name of Lloyd George – then it ought to have been possible to end the war by reaching an understanding on a basis of equality. Obviously, the sooner the war had ended, the less would have been the material, political and emotional damage; and in this respect perhaps Wilson's idea of "peace without victory" might have offered the best solution. That would have implied, of course, that neither side would have been able to achieve its war aims in full; and, given the inordinate character of some of these aims, that might not have been a bad thing. As it turned out, the Entente's victorious peace was, despite all the mitigating efforts of the Americans, a disaster for Europe, and the realisation of the war aims of victorious German super-patriots would have been even worse.

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