

# Historical Crisis Committee



Paris Peace Conference

## Study Guide

# Historical Crisis Committee Study Guide

European Union Simulation in Ankara (EUROsimA) 2026

Organized by

**Foreign Policy and International Relations Society**

Middle East Technical University

Üniversiteler Mah. Dumlupınar Bulvarı No: 1

İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi B Binası Zemin Kat

06800, Çankaya, Ankara, Türkiye

EUROsimA 2026

Ankara - Türkiye 2026

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. Letters .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>a. Letter from Secretary-General .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>b. Letter from Under-Secretary-General .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>c. Letter from Academic Assistant .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Historical Background.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>a. Events Prior to the Great War .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>i. Agadir Crisis .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ii. Italo-Turkish War .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>iii. First Balkan War .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>iv. Second Balkan War .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>v. July Crisis .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>b. Causes of the Great War .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>i. Shattered Balance of Power .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ii. Arms Race .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>iii. Revanchism .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>iv. Nationalism .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>v. Imperialism .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>vi. Markets and Resources .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3. Timeline of the Great War .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>a. European Theatre .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>i. Western Front .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>ii. Eastern Front .....</b>	<b>22</b>

	2
iii. Italian Front .....	23
iv. Balkan Front .....	25
v. Gallipoli Front .....	26
vi. Caucasus Front .....	28
<b>b. Asia-Pacific Theatre .....</b>	<b>29</b>
i. Mesopotamian Front .....	30
ii. Arabian Front .....	31
iii. Siege of Tsingtao .....	32
iv. Capture of German Oceania .....	33
v. Pacific Naval War .....	35
<b>c. African Theatre .....</b>	<b>36</b>
i. East African Campaign .....	37
ii. South-West African Front .....	38
iii. West African Front .....	39
iv. North African Campaign .....	41
<b>d. Conclusion of the Great War .....</b>	<b>42</b>
i. Russian Withdrawal From the War.....	42
ii. American Entry to the Great War .....	44
iii. Last Offensives of the Great War .....	46
iv. Wilson Principles .....	47
v. Famines .....	48
vi. Spanish Flu .....	49
<b>4. Armistices .....</b>	<b>49</b>

	3
<b>a. Armistice of Salonica .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>b. Armistice of Mudros .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>c. Armistice of Villa Giusti .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>d. Armistice of Compiègne .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>5. Aftermath of the Great War .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>a. The Dissolving Empires .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>    i. The Russian Empire .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>    ii. The Ottoman Empire .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>    iii. The Austro-Hungarian Empire .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>    iv. The German Empire .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>6. Questions to be Addressed .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>7. References .....</b>	<b>95</b>

EUROSIMA

2026

## 1. Letters

### a. Letter from Secretary-General

Dear participants,

My name is Ata Yağız Topaloğlu, and I am a third-year student in Political Science and Public Administration at the Middle East Technical University. It is a great honor for me to serve as the Secretary-General of the EUROsimA'26.

As this is the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of our conference, it also coincides with my age; thus, carrying the torch of this significant conference has become one of the greatest journeys I have ever had. Participating in Model United Nations and Model European Union conferences has shaped my worldview and guided me in my decision to study this major. Joining the EUROsimA team two years ago was the greatest decision I have made in my university life. I cannot proceed without thanking my partner in this conference, our Director-General Buse Kemahlı, who has been a great colleague and a great friend to me. I cannot thank her enough for this incredible and unforgettable journey. Our academic and organizational teams worked diligently to provide you with a remarkable experience that will be remembered forever.

As we say in EUROsimA, it will always be a family business to us. This was not just a business to us, as we shared a lot while building up this conference for you. I cannot wait to see you all in the coming days; please do not forget to come prepared. I believe that our hardworking delegates will always put forth their best effort in the one and only European Union simulation of our country.

Thank you,

Ata Yağız Topaloğlu

## **b. Letter from Under-Secretary-General**

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to EUROsimA 2026!

I am Berkay Akpınar, a junior history student at Middle East Technical University, and I feel deeply honoured to be serving as your Under-Secretary-General. Having embarked on my journey with this conference as a first-timer, passionate delegate in EUROsimA'23, it is incredibly fulfilling to now address you in this capacity, and it gives me great pleasure to now be on the academic end of organising this committee.

Together with my Academic Assistant, Samet İhsan Arslan we have created a committee that requires lots of effort but yields extremely rewarding results. For this year's conference, we have decided to simulate the Paris Peace Conference. While dealing with a geopolitical turmoil resulting from the end of the Great War, we encourage you to showcase your best diplomacy, problem-solving, and creativity.

As participants in this committee, it is essential that you immerse yourselves in the study guide and the handbook provided. These will serve as your compass as you manoeuvre through negotiations, alliances, and strategic decisions. No matter which position you will represent, whether it will be one of victorious Great Powers or a newly established nation seeking its own place under the sun, your actions will directly shape the map of Europe and the World for decades to come.

Before concluding, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our Secretary General, Ata Yağız Topaloğlu and Director General, Buse Kemahlı, whose tireless work behind the scenes has made this conference possible. I also thank Mr Arslan for his invaluable support in crafting this committee into a compelling and enriching experience.

Should you have any questions or require assistance at any point, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via my e-mail [berkayakpinar136@gmail.com](mailto:berkayakpinar136@gmail.com).

Kind regards,

Berkay Akpınar

Under-Secretary-General, Historical Crisis Committee: Paris Peace Conference

### c. Letter from Academic Assistant

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to EUROsimA 2026!

I am Samet İhsan Arslan, and I feel deeply honoured to be serving as your Academic Assistant. I participated in my first-ever conference as an enthusiastic newcomer in 2024, and it gives me great pleasure to now be on the academic end of organising this committee.

Together with my Under-Secretary-General Berkay Akpınar, we have created a committee that requires lots of effort but yields extremely rewarding results. For this year's conference, we have decided to step into the exciting and sometimes nerve-racking world of the Paris Peace Conference. While dealing with a geopolitical vacuum resulting from the end of the Great War, we encourage you to showcase your best diplomacy, problem-solving, and creativity.

The most crucial step you can take right now if you wish to excel in this committee is to read the Study Guide thoroughly. The information provided in the document will serve as the foundation for navigating through all those unforeseen crises, secret agreements, and negotiations. No matter which position you will represent, whether it will be one of victorious Great Powers or a newly established nation seeking its own place under the sun, your actions will directly shape the map of Europe and the World for decades to come.

At the very beginning, let me thank my Secretary-General, Ata Yağız Topaloğlu and Director-General Buse Kemahlı for making this committee and conference happen. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my amazing Under-Secretary-General Berkay Akpınar, who contributed a lot to making this era interesting for simulation purposes.

Should you have any questions, difficulty in understanding the guide, or seek advice on preparation, do not hesitate to contact me via email at [samet.ihsan352@gmail.com](mailto:samet.ihsan352@gmail.com).

Yours sincerely,

Samet İhsan Arslan

Academic Assistant, Historical Crisis Committee: Paris Peace Conference

## 2. Historical Background

### a. Events Prior to the Great War

#### i. Agadir Crisis

The Agadir Crisis in 1911 serves as a concrete example of how gunboat diplomacy employed by Germany backfired and led to the creation of enemy alliances that resulted in the Great War. The situation arose in spring 1911, when France sent its troops to the Moroccan capital, Fez, under the pretence of quelling internal uprisings. The move broke previously established international treaties and demonstrated France's intentions of transforming the independent Moroccan nation into a fully-fledged colony. Sensing an opportunity to test the waters of the Anglo-French Entente, the German government reacted swiftly in July 1911 by sending a gunboat, SMS Panther, and the light cruiser Berlin to the sealed harbour of Agadir, an event glorified by historians as the "Panther's Leap." However, Germany's main concern was not preserving Moroccan independence but rather exploiting the supposed threat posed by its navy to force France to cede the whole of the French Congo in exchange for recognising its dominant position in Morocco (Clark 2013, pp. 204-241).

However, the strategy proved futile as it prompted a quick and unified reaction from both the French and British governments that humiliated the German Empire diplomatically. The British authorities were quick to react to the anticipated German naval manoeuvre in proximity to important Atlantic shipping routes, resulting in Lloyd George's Mansion House Speech. Therein, the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that Britain's national honour was at stake, declaring that the British Empire refused to become a passive spectator and threatened war if Germany continued to pressure France. The formation of such an Anglo-French alliance, along with an ensuing financial crisis in Germany due to the diplomatic issue, compelled it to concede and agree to the Treaty of Fez. The consequences of the decision were strategically unfavourable for Germany: the French gained control over Morocco under international law, whereas Germany received only marginal and practically worthless territories in the French Congo (Neukamerun). In the long run, the Agadir Crisis resulted in a drastic shift in German politics and military tactics, cementing the country's feeling of encirclement by hostile nations and speeding up pre-war militarisation in Europe (Clark 2013, pp. 204-241).

## ii. Italo-Turkish War

The Italo-Turkish War is essentially characterised as a clear imperial expansion motivated by the desire of the Italians to attain the status of the French and British Empires through establishing an empire in North Africa. Italy aimed at seizing the territories of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in North Africa, which were then known to be the least secure areas under Ottoman sovereignty. Thus, the Italians confidently expected a quick end to the war and assumed their superiority over the outdated Ottoman squadrons. By September 1911, the well-equipped Regia Marina easily defeated the Ottoman squadrons and bombarded the coastal cities such as Tripoli, allowing the Italians to quickly capture the coastal regions. However, the expected quick success was followed by a long-term asymmetric battle in the desert. Instead of surrendering, the local tribes of Arabs and Bedouins allied with competent Ottoman officers like Mustafa Kemal, who later founded modern-day Turkey, and fought against the Italian army with a highly effective guerrilla tactic that forced the well-trained army to remain within the fortified coastal bases (Clark 2013, pp. 242-250).

Faced with the difficult situation in the desert, the Italians used their superior technology to escalate the war, hence creating several key milestones in the modern warfare era that were to become common in Europe shortly afterwards. The conflict marks the first use of the heavier-than-air aircraft for military purposes; on October 23, 1911, the Italian Captain Carlo Piazza flew the first air reconnaissance mission against the enemy using a Blériot XI monoplane. More than a week later, Lieutenant Giulio Gavotti hung out of the primitive Etrich Taube aircraft and dropped the four hand bombs on the Ottoman army below, marking the first aerial bombardment in the history of aviation. The Italians also used their navy to escalate the war by launching attacks against the Dardanelles and capturing the Dodecanese Islands, which put the Ottoman capital of Constantinople in danger. The war eventually ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ouchy in October 1912, not because of the defeat of the Ottoman–Bedouin resistance in Libya but because of the total failure of the Ottoman territorial integrity concept, which revealed its vulnerability to foreign aggression. With a looming threat of an invasion by the newly created Balkan League, the Ottomans were forced to give up their Libyan territories to the Italians in order to save their capital, which triggered the outbreak of the First Balkan War (Clark 2013, pp. 242-250).

### iii. First Balkan War

One defining aspect of the First Balkan War was a well-organised and unified coalition of all major states within the region, which swiftly succeeded in driving out the Ottoman Empire from Europe in just a few months. Having identified significant vulnerabilities in the Turkish Empire after the previous Italo-Turkish War, the traditional enemies – Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro, under the patronage of Russia – formed a pragmatic Balkan Alliance. Employing a united armed force of nearly 700,000 soldiers, the Alliance launched a simultaneous attack in early October 1912, which proved too swift and effective for the already weak Ottoman defences. In particular, the Bulgarian troops broke through the major Turkish defence line in the area of Thrace and won two major battles – Kirk Kilisse and Lule Burgas. By the end of the month, the Ottoman forces were driven out of the Balkan Peninsula altogether and forced to fall back into the Chatalja lines by Constantinople (Clark 2013, pp. 251-280).

Such a swift and complete collapse of the Ottoman forces led to an urgent response by the Great Powers in the form of the establishment of a peace settlement that would later be used to initiate further hostilities. Specifically, according to the Treaty of London signed in May 1913, the Ottoman Empire was deprived of 83% of its European territory and 69% of its European citizens. These developments worried Austria-Hungary, as the rapidly expanding and Russian-controlled Serbia threatened their own territories. In order to stop Serbia from getting any closer to the Adriatic coast, Austria-Hungary managed to achieve the independence of Albania. Unable to claim a part of the coast, the Serbs decided not to retreat despite having agreed beforehand to give Macedonia to Bulgaria. Such a betrayal was unacceptable to the Bulgarian leadership (Clark 2013, pp. 251-280).

### iv. Second Balkan War

The Second Balkan War was caused by conflicts among the victors of the First Balkan War over the territorial booty, which happened as a consequence of a fatal military misjudgment made by Bulgaria. As soon as the new state of Albania appeared on the map of Europe, a secret military agreement was signed between Serbia and Greece aimed at partitioning the disputed Macedonian territory. Thus, both Serbia and Greece reneged on their obligations to Bulgaria and allied before the First Balkan War. In response to a perceived unfair sharing of the conquered territories, King Ferdinand of Bulgaria ordered an immediate military

strike against Serbian and Greek lines on 29 June 1913, hoping to annex Macedonia before the intervention of the Great Powers. Nevertheless, the operation turned out to be fatally wrong for Bulgaria as both Serbian and Greek troops successfully defended themselves against the attack and triggered a retaliatory multi-front war on the part of Bulgaria's neighbours. As a result, Romania managed to occupy the northern territories of Dobruja, while Turkey occupied Adrianople on the eastern front as the Bulgarian army was being defeated (Clark 2013, pp. 251-280).

The result of the Second Balkan War was the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest (August 1913), which created an unfavourable geopolitical situation leading to the eruption of World War I. Indeed, Bulgaria was forced to surrender almost all newly-conquered territories gained during the previous conflict, which became a reason for further national humiliation, contributing to Bulgaria's siding with the Central Powers in 1915. On the other hand, Serbia received many gains in both territorial control and demographic numbers – the country literally doubled in both size and number of people inhabiting it after the two conflicts. Besides, the Serbian army received additional armament and grew more nationalistic and assertive as a whole. The rapid growth of the Serbian military potential alarmed the neighbouring Austro-Hungarian Empire, making the ruling authorities believe that the Serbian danger should be destroyed as soon as possible. The resulting desire to act led to Austria-Hungary's military response to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 (Clark 2013, pp. 251-280).

#### v. July Crisis

The Great War, also known as the First World War, was the bloody military conflict between the Central Powers, which were composed of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, and the Entente, namely France, Great Britain, Russia, the United States, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and many others. The Great War began on 28 July 1914 after the driver of the Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Franz Ferdinand took a wrong turn in his visit to Sarajevo, Bosnia and came across Gavrilo Princip, a 19-year-old Serbian student, who was a member of the secret Serbian “Unification or Death” society popularly known as the “Black Hand” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018).

Determined to kill the Archduke, Gavrilo Princip drew his pistol and shot twice towards the car, hitting both the Archduke and his pregnant wife. Both died minutes after the assassination

attempt. Princip was spared from the death penalty due to his young age; he later died from tuberculosis in captivity (Strachan 2005, 5–15).



The seal of the secret Serbian society Black Hand (PublicDomain).

This assassination of the Archduke and his wife by Princip caused a month-long crisis in Europe, also known as the **July Crisis**, from the assassination date of 28 June to 28 July. Austria-Hungary sent an ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July, which had severe terms, especially with the 6th demand, which required the Serbian government to allow Austro-Hungarian law enforcement and military officials to operate freely on Serbian territory to suppress subversive movements and investigate the assassination and demanded a response from Serbian authorities within 48 hours. Initially, the Serbian government, advised by the Russian Government, attempted to negotiate a compromise and accepted all terms except the 6th term; however, the negotiations failed, Austria Hungary cut off all diplomatic relations. After the diplomatic ties were cut, the Serbian government mobilised the country on 24 July. Austria-Hungary mobilised the next day and declared war 3 days later on Serbia on the 28th of July. All the Major powers in the conflict, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Germany, France and Great Britain, declared war on each other one by one (Mombauer 2018).

**EXTRA! THE ONION EXTRA!**  
 Wednesday, August 5, 1914 The Best Source of News in Our Great Republic. Price Two Cents.

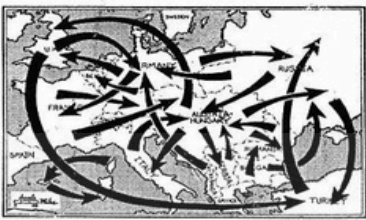
# WAR DECLARED BY ALL

**AUSTRIA DECLARES WAR ON SERBIA DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY DECLARES WAR ON FRANCE DECLARES WAR ON TURKEY DECLARES WAR ON RUSSIA DECLARES WAR ON BULGARIA DECLARES WAR ON BRITAIN**

**OTTOMAN EMPIRE ALMOST DECLARES WAR ON ITSELF**  
**NATIONS STRUGGLE TO REMEMBER ALLIES**

From the London and Washington Bureaus, Aug. 4.—After weeks of unbearable tension following the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the great European powers have declared war on one another in a bitter struggle for something that is sure to be determined by war's end. Hereinset is a confusing string of rivalries and alliances, diplomats, politicians, and military leaders.

**WAR DECLARED BY GERMANY FRANCE BRITAIN AUSTRIA HUNGARY RUSSIA SERBIA OTTOMAN EMPIRE LUXEMBOURG BELGIUM MONTENEGRO ROMANIA BULGARIA ALBANIA GREECE AUSTRALIA CANADA IRELAND SCOTLAND SOUTH AFRICA WEST INDIA INDIA STOP MORE TO NAME BUT OTHERS WAITING TO USE GABLE STOP ARCHDUCKE OF AUSTRIA HUNGARIAN EMPEROR SERVED SHOT SOMEHOW RELATED FROM**



mightily Triple Entente alliance, which no one can really put his finger on, either.

**FRANCE NOTHER WILSON**  
 President Woodrow Wilson received the fatal news via a trans-Atlantic cable communication from the U.S. consulate in London. The cable reads as follows:

**WAR DECLARED BY GERMANY FRANCE BRITAIN AUSTRIA HUNGARY RUSSIA SERBIA OTTOMAN EMPIRE LUXEMBOURG BELGIUM MONTENEGRO ROMANIA BULGARIA ALBANIA GREECE AUSTRALIA CANADA IRELAND SCOTLAND SOUTH AFRICA WEST INDIA INDIA STOP MORE TO NAME BUT OTHERS WAITING TO USE GABLE STOP ARCHDUCKE OF AUSTRIA HUNGARIAN EMPEROR SERVED SHOT SOMEHOW RELATED FROM**

**ASSASSINATION OF ARCHDUCKE SPREADS FEAR AT ARCHDUCKE CONVENTION**  
 The Hague, Netherlands, Aug. 4.—European archdukes attending their annual convention expressed alarm at the assassination of fellow aristocrat Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose end came at the hand of a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo several weeks ago.

Archdukes attending the convention expressed concern for the issue of nobility safety, once considered a birthright. Most also claimed they had no knowledge of the Serbian demand for independence from Austria. "Could it be that the oppressed minority people in our own countries are weary of centuries of authoritarian rule, as well?" asked Archduke Karl von Kremsbitt, who cut short a month-long hunting jaunt to attend the convention.

The convention, held yearly since 1821, gives archdukes of diverse backgrounds an opportunity to get acquainted, exchange archduke ideas, and purchase special archduke-only stocks and bonds.

**AREA DRUNKARD DECLARES WAR ON IRELAND**  
**ALE-HOUSE PEERS FALL IN AS ALLIES**

Davenport, Iowa, Aug. 4.—As bloody conflict rages throughout Europe, Dravid Brunsford, a drunkard of many years' experience, declared war on Ireland Friday evening.

**WILSON HELD MEETINGS**  
 Two gentlemen assembled with Brunsford at Quigley's Ale House in Davenport. They are Archduke Johnson, 38, and Senator Debusbaum, 36, both of Davenport.

**WILSON MEETS WITH DRUNKARD**  
 The Department of War has been alerted to Brunsford's declaration. President Wilson, upon hearing of Brunsford's statements, called the drunkard to the Capital building for an emergency session.

Wilson also discussed tactical matters with the drunkard. "Look over last one of 'em in the shop, I say," Brunsford advised the president.

A satirical newspaper cover criticising the international political stage during the July Crisis (The Onion staff, 2006).

The Military High Commands of both France and Germany believed the war would be swift, relying on aggressive manoeuvres, similar to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.

The Franco-Prussian War only lasted for six months. Before the war, France implemented "Plan XVII," devised by Field Marshal Joseph Joffre, while Germany followed the "Schlieffen Plan," created by Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen and later modified by General Helmuth von Moltke the Younger. The French "Plan XVII" was based on an "offensive à outrance", meaning "all-out offensive" in English, into German-occupied Alsace-Lorraine. These attacks soon turned disastrous, leading to a shift toward defensive plans following the defeat at the Battle of the Frontiers. Casualties for the Battle of the Frontiers are 350,000 on the Entente side and 165,000 on the German side. Consequently, Joseph Joffre purged 58 generals. The German

Schlieffen Plan aimed to eliminate France from the war as quickly as possible by marching to Paris through neutral Belgian territory, while maintaining a minimal presence on the Russian border (Strachan 2005, 35–42).

The Schlieffen Plan depended on rapid manoeuvres, Belgian indifference, and a slow mobilisation of Russia. Although the French army was unprepared for an attack from the north and caught off guard, the Belgian Army put up a valiant resistance, and Russia mobilised more swiftly than anticipated, resulting in additional units dispatched to the Eastern Front. Consequently, the German Army failed to execute the plan on time and was halted at the First Battle of the Marne by the reorganised Entente forces. This led to the promotion of General Erich von Falkenhayn instead of General Helmuth von Moltke the Younger. After both sides failed in their attempts to end the war quickly, they raced to the sea to outflank one another, leading to a solidification of the front as both began to dig trenches. The ensuing trench warfare on the Western Front would result in the loss of millions of lives in the coming years. However, perhaps the most significant weakness of the Schlieffen Plan was its failure to foresee the early British intervention in the war (Strachan 2005, 42–52).

## **b. Causes of the Great War**

### **i. Shattered Balance of Power**

In 1879, Europe saw the formation of the Austro-German Alliance, which was an alliance between the nations of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire. The two empires agreed to support each other in case of a war against one of the nations from Russia. German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck saw this alliance as a way to deter Russia from attacking Germany, believing that Russia would not attack both countries. With the time closing in May 1882, Italy sought German and Austro-Hungarian support against France. Italy decided to join sides with the Germans and Austro-Hungarians and signed the secret treaty of the **Triple Alliance**. With the treaty, Germany and Austria-Hungary were to provide support in case of a French attack to Italy. If Russian troops attacked Austria-Hungary, Italy agreed to remain neutral, freeing Austrian troops which otherwise needed to guard the Italian border. (Myers 1920, pp. 244-259).

As one of his masterstrokes, Bismarck managed to sign a secret neutrality pact with the Russians, which would be named the **Reinsurance Treaty (1887)**. This pact prevented a two-front war where France and Russia would push the Germans from both sides, which would likely be disastrous for Germany. After Wilhelm II came to power and became the new Kaiser, he ignored the previous agreements and pacts of Otto von Bismarck, which were necessary to divide the French, Russians and the British to prevent them from siding with each other against Germany. Wilhelm II also dismissed the Reinsurance Treaty, along with others, believing that autocratic Russia and republican France would never ally (German History in Documents and Images 2026).

Despite Wilhelm II's beliefs, France and Russia, driven by a mutual historical fear of a dominant Germany and a need for French capital to industrialise Russia, two ideological opposites formed a defensive military pact. This was the German nightmare of the two-front war, which had become a reality. In 1904, Britain, which had previously maintained the "Splendid Isolation" policy, felt threatened by Germany's naval buildup and aggressive colonial policies. This led to closer relations and a settlement of previous colonial disputes with their ancient rival, France, with a new common enemy, Germany. And with the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention, where England and Russia settled their disputes in Central Asia, the Triple Entente was officially formed. However, initially, the Entente was not a strict military alliance, and instead, it created binding moral and strategic obligations.

## ii. Arms Race

The naval arms race was mostly between Germany and Great Britain. Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz was the secretary of the German Imperial Naval Office, and Tirpitz was very eager to build a navy that could challenge the British Navy. He believed that Germany needed to establish Naval supremacy in Europe to deter Great Britain from joining France's side. He developed a "**Risiko Gedanke**" (**Risk Theory**) in which he believed that by building a German Navy just enough to damage the British Royal Navy severely, theorizing that the British would rather join the Germans' side than risk losing their global naval dominance. With the launch of the HMS Dreadnought (1906), which was so heavily armed and so fast that no ship could compete with it, the naval arms race reached a climax, forcing both nations into a wildly expensive ship-building panic (Echevarria 2015, pp. 23-26).

The arms race on the ground was mostly between Germany and Russia. With the French loans provided to Russia. They announced a massive army and logistical expansion, which was mostly railway networks. This created a massive paranoia in the German High Command since they calculated that by 1917, the Russian army would be too large and too fast to defeat, creating a “window of opportunity” for a German strike around 1914. While Germany and Russia were expanding their armies, France, in response, lacking the manpower, simply extended its mandatory military service from two years to three years to keep its standing army at a sufficient size. This massive accumulation of men and artillery made both sides believe that the war would be swift and quick, similar to the Franco-Prussian War. This belief caused them to think that whoever attacked first with overwhelming force would win a short, decisive war (Echevarria 2015, pp. 23-26).

### iii. Revanchism

With the end of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War and the signing of the Treaty of Frankfurt, Germany annexed Alsace and much of Lorraine, taking over 1.6 million French citizens and the region’s massive iron ore and coal deposits. With the loss of such valuable land, the French politicians were desperate to get revenge and take back Alsace-Lorraine. They deliberately institutionalised grief and taught a generation of French children to stare at maps where Alsace-Lorraine was shaded entirely black, which symbolised their grief and unforgotten bonds. Politicians who suggested abandoning the claim on Alsace-Lorraine committed political “suicide”, guaranteeing that France would jump at the chance for a restorative war alongside a strong ally such as Russia (Fitzpatrick 2015, pp. 207-228).

Ottoman entry into the Great War was heavily motivated by a desire to avenge the losses suffered at the hands of Russia in the 19th century and reclaim their eastern borders. These defeats and losses were the result of the loss of the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War in which the Ottomans was fighting on two fronts at the same time (Balkans and Caucasus) While Ottoman commanders like Osman Pasha mounted a legendary, months-long defense at the Siege of Plevna in the Balkans, the sheer numerical superiority of the Russian army eventually crushed the Ottoman lines. The Russian army marched almost entirely unchecked to San Stefano (Yeşilköy), just miles outside the Ottoman capital, before halting. The outcome of this tragic war was that the Ottoman Empire lost massive amounts of European territory alongside

the eastern provinces of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, which directly fueled the revanchism of the Ottomans. The primary goal of the Ottoman commander Enver Pasha was to recover the “Three Sanjaks” in the Caucasus (Kars, Ardahan, Batum) from the Russians, which directly started the Caucasus campaign (Bobroff 2000, pp. 76-95).

One year before the war in 1913, the Second Balkan War broke out. This war completely dictated Bulgaria’s alliances due to the fact that Bulgaria’s government felt betrayed by its allies in the First Balkan War. In the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria lost its region of Vardar Macedonia to Serbia. This bitter loss drove Bulgaria to reject Russian diplomacy and join the Central Powers in 1915, specifically to crush Serbia and take Macedonia back (Bobroff 2000, pp. 76-95).

#### **iv. Nationalism**

Serbian nationalism was an existential danger for the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. With the complex multi-ethnic nature of the Habsburg Empire, the secession of its South Slavic populations could jeopardise the stability of the entire empire. Aspiring to be the “Piedmont of the Balkans,” Serbia sought to unite all of its people within one nation. Following its gains during the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1913, the Serbian government, possibly influenced by Russia, had a historical duty to free its compatriots who were oppressed in foreign lands. With millions of Serbs in the Habsburg Empire after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908, which was considered an insult to Belgrade, a new generation of radicals emerged. This led to the establishment of secret military societies such as Crna Ruka (Black Hand), which eventually resulted in the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 (Malešević 2019, pp. 188-212).

While Italy unified in 1861, most of the Italian population remained under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Most of these Italian people lived in the cities of Trentino, Trieste, Istria, and parts of Dalmatia. The desire to be united fully with the remaining Italian people created an intense nationalist pressure to seize the Austro-Hungarian land. This nationalist agenda made Italy a highly unreliable partner to Berlin and Vienna. This geopolitical vulnerability was exploited by the Entente powers in the 1915 Treaty of London to pull Italy into war against its former allies (Gravino 2014).

Before the start of the war, Transylvania was an integrated part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but its population was majority ethnic Romanian. In the first years of the war, Romania stayed neutral, waiting to see which side would offer it the best deal to unite the ethnic Romanians. Even though Romania had a German ruler at the time, who came to power since the Romanian public wanted a German ruler, Romania sided with the Entente when the Entente powers officially promised Transylvania to Romania in the secret 1916 Treaty of Bucharest, which was the sole reason Romania entered the war against the Central Powers (Mândru 2014, pp. 319-336).

#### v. Imperialism

The friction between the established empires of Britain and France after the scramble for Africa caused the newly unified industrializing Germany and Italy to not be able to get as many colonies as they wanted. After Wilhelm II took power and became the Kaiser of Germany, he abandoned Bismarck's continental focus of **Realpolitik (Realistic Policy)** in favour of **Weltpolitik (World Policy)** in the 1890s (Pflanze 1958). By the time Germany and Italy started to seek overseas colonies, most of the profitable regions in Africa and Asia had already been divided between Britain and France. This meant that any German or Italian colonial expansion needed to challenge either British or French rule. This late scramble grew a sense of “encirclement and paranoia within Berlin and Rome, as every attempt they made to expand their colonial impact was blocked by the Entente powers (Press 2022).

In an attempt to divide the Entente powers, Kaiser Wilhelm II tried to start crises in the African and Asian colonies of the Entente powers. In 1905, Kaiser Wilhelm II arrived in Morocco and openly supported the Sultan of Morocco's independence and directly challenged the French influence. However, to the dismay of the Kaiser, in the following Algeiras Conference (1906), Germany's aggressive posturing backfired and left it diplomatically isolated as Britain lent its full support to the French. Italians also attempted to gain colonies, but their attempts were rather more peaceful towards the Entente. This aggressive posturing by the Germans terrified London and Paris into transforming their loose diplomatic understanding into a strong, coordinated military alliance rather than shattering the Entente powers (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2026).

## **vi. Markets and Resources**

In the 1910s, global production was undergoing a devastating change in production metrics. By 1914, Germany was effectively producing twice as much steel as Great Britain and had achieved near-total monopolies in modern chemical and electrical engineering sectors. German shipping vessels were outcompeting the British in global markets. This economic turnover terrified the British government in London. Great Britain, knowing that their entire naval supremacy was being funded by its superior economy, came to understand that if the Germans won the trade war, its naval supremacy would vanish. With the competition between Britain and Germany rising, both sides started to seek “protectionism”, in which they secure their own raw materials and markets in their own economic sphere, ultimately collapsing the international free trade era. Except for Great Britain, all of the major powers in Europe implemented massive tariffs in the years before 1914 to protect their domestic industries, entirely destroying international economic cooperation. One example of this search for domestic materials and industries was the Berlin-Baghdad railway, in which the German officials hoped to secure a direct route to the oil reserves of the Middle East and the agricultural markets of the Ottoman Empire. However, later the Germans decided to expand this railway into the Gulf region. London viewed this track expansion as a way to attack the Suez Canal and India. It proved to the Entente that the economic projects of the German Empire were indistinguishable from military threats.

### **3. Timeline of the Great War**

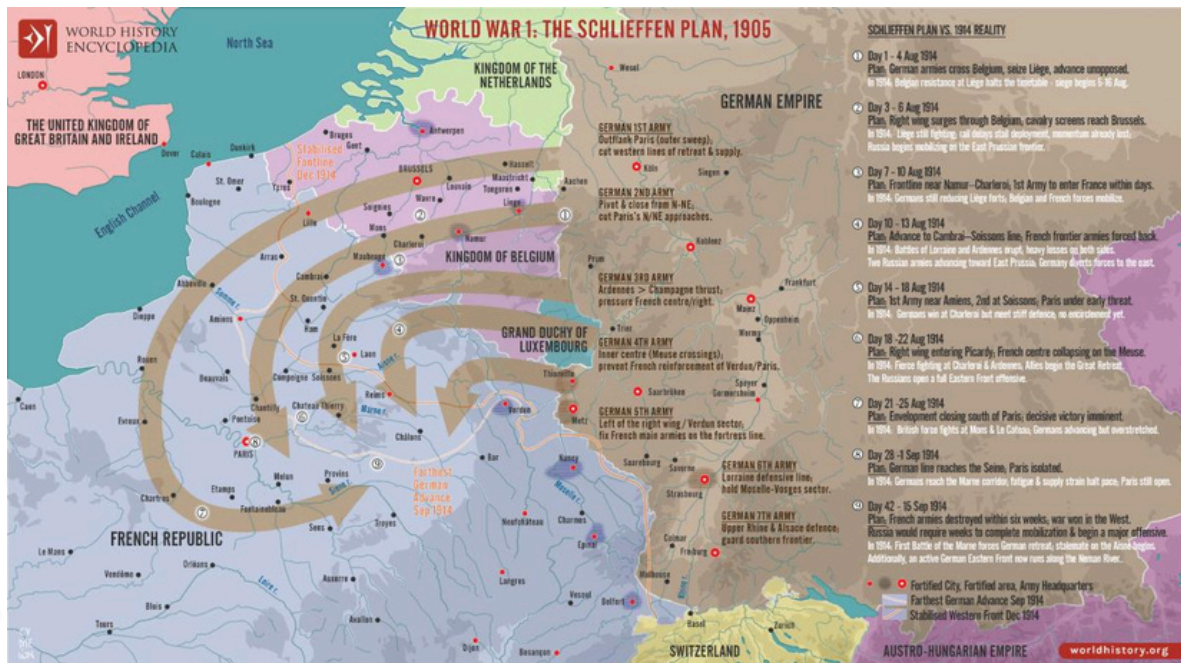
#### **a. European Theatre**

While looking into the Great War’s history, one likely needs to understand that the Western and Eastern Front as the most important fronts in the Great War. Nearly all of the major powers of the war had their mainland and their biggest military presence in Europe.

#### **i. Western Front**

With the belief that the Great War would be swift like the Franco-Prussian War, Chief of the General Staff Helmuth von Moltke “the Elder” executed a modified version of the

**Schlieffen plan** in the German offensive. This plan required the German right wing of the army (refer to the German 1st army in the image below) to rapidly sweep through neutral Belgium to catch the French army by surprise and to encircle Paris. However, Moltke weakened this right wing to reinforce the eastern border against Russia, believing that Belgium could not defend itself against even a weakened German 1st Army (Krause 2015).



*Map of the Schlieffen Plan v. the 1914 Reality* (World History Encyclopedia, Netchev S.).

French generals disastrously adhered to the “**Plan XVII**” and the **offensive à outrance (all-out offensive)**. Following these plans and doctrines, the French army charged at the German lines in 19th-century bright red and blue outfits, and this was the reason for the high casualties of the French army in the first months of the Great War. These uniforms made French soldiers very easy to see, and they were mowed down by German Maxim machine guns, resulting in the death of over 27,000 French soldiers in a single day (August 22, 1914)(Snyder 1984, 57-106). In September 1914, the German army was logistically exhausted and a gap opened between the German 1st and the 2nd armies, allowing the British and French forces to counterattack in what would be the First Battle of the Marne. The French used around 600 taxicabs to carry around 4000 French soldiers or 5 battalions to the frontlines from the rail station, which ended up saving the Battle of the Marne (Hanc 2014). Following the established frontlines becoming impenetrable, both armies tried to flank each other from the North, digging defensive trenches as they went. This “race” ended only when they reached the Belgian coast

of the English Channel, which resulted in a continuous 700 kilometres from the Swiss border to the North Sea (Porch 1981, pp. 191-212).



*General Map Showing the Plan XVII (webmatters.net).*

The trenches in this 700-kilometre line actually had around 56,000 km of trench lines.

The reason behind this extensive length was that these trenches were not just straight tunnels; instead, they were built in zigzag patterns to prevent shrapnel or enemies from firing down the full length of the trench without getting obstructed, and they were built to be organised for different purposes, such as front-line, support and reserve trenches all connected by communication trenches. In February 1916, German General Erich von Falkenhayn formulated a brutal strategy to bleed out the French manpower. He attacked the historical fortress of the city of Verdun, knowing that the French would defend it to the last man. However, the French pulled a logistical miracle and managed to bring in around 2 million men and thousands of tons of supplies into the castle by the only road called **La Voie Sacrée** (The Sacred Way), which connects it to Bar-Le-Duc. (Sánchez et al. 2023,) After around two months of the battle of Verdun's start, the British tried to relieve pressure on Verdun by starting a counter-offensive. Despite the 7-day bombardment before the British counter-offensive, the German trenches had survived. When British forces initiated the offensive on January 1st, they suffered around 57,000 casualties in just a day, in what would later be called the Battle of the Somme (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2026).

While the frontlines were mostly stationary and had not seen much progress, the technological advancements were developing quite fast, and they fundamentally altered the battlefield environment. The Second Battle of Ypres saw the first mass deployment of chemical weapons (chlorine gas) by Germany. In the following years, with technological advancements, the Germans developed less detectable and more deadly chemical weapons such as phosgene and mustard gas. In 1916, at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, the British troops introduced a new spectrum to trench warfare: the Mark I tank. These early tanks were extremely slow and unreliable; however, they provided the crucial ability to crush barbed wire and push through the trenches under fire. The first en masse coordinated tank offensive was seen a year later in the Battle of Cambrai. Because of the extensive trenches both sides built, the Great War heavily depended on artillery fire. In the early days of the war, most of the artillery division relied on visual targeting, which was highly inaccurate and led to artillery teams deploying near the frontlines. However, as the war continued, other techniques emerged, such as sound-ranging, which led to artillery teams being able to use indirect, predicted fire on enemy positions. This development gave the ability for the artillery to deploy a “creeping barrage”, which is a curtain of artillery fire that advances just meters ahead of the attacking infantry (Miller 1977).

In the last years of the war, the morale of the armies on both sides was almost near to collapsing. This resulted in soldiers refusing orders and paralysing their armies. One example of this is in the Nivelle Offensive, where nearly half of the French divisions refused to attack. In the spring of 1918, the Germans were desperately trying to win the war before the Americans arrived in force. They started to use **Stoßtruppen (Stormtroopers)** utilising “Hutier tactics” which were heavily armed, highly mobile squads bypassing strongpoints to infiltrate deep into the rear, supported by brief, intense hurricane bombardments rather than days-long shelling. With the arrival of the American troops and the Allies mastering the “combined arms” warfare, integrating air superiority, tank formations, creeping barrages, and infantry assaults to finally shatter the heavily fortified German Hindenburg Line, forcing the armistice (Alfoldi 1976, pp.69-74).

## ii. Eastern Front

In the Eastern Front, the Russians started unprecedented attacks on German territories in 1914 and successfully pushed into German territory. This sudden push alarmed the German

High Command and forced Moltke to pull troops from the Western Front, severely weakening the Schlieffen Plan. In August 1914, the Battle of Tannenberg was underway. The German generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff managed to defeat the Russians and inflict a catastrophic amount of casualties on their troops. Russian commanders in this battle, Pavel Rennenkampf and Alexander Samsonov, despised each other, which caused them to make fatal technological and operational blunders. For example, because they lacked telephone wires, they broadcast their troop orders in uncoded radio transmissions, which the Germans easily intercepted and took action against these orders. While the Russians failed against the Germans most of the time, they utterly crushed Austro-Hungarian troops at the Battle of Galicia, pushing deep into the Carpathian Mountains and capturing the fortress of Przemyśl (Dowling 2014).

In the following year, 1915, a massive German and Austro-Hungarian breakthrough happened. This was made possible due to the German artillery superiority, which was so overwhelming that Russian trenches were flattened before the infantry even attacked. At the same time, the Russians were having a deep logistical crisis. At the height of the retreat, Russian artillery divisions were restricted to only 3 to 5 shell fires per day and new conscripts were sent to the frontlines without any weapons and were expected to scavenge weapons from their dead comrades. In these scarce moments, the Russian High Command made a strategic decision to abandon Poland, Lithuania and parts of Latvia, trading thousands of miles of territory for time to rebuild their armies. Tsar Nicholas II decided to personally take control of the army at this time, believing that the survival of the Romanov dynasty was through military victories. (Dowling 2014).

In 1916, General Aleksei Brusilov started an offensive that revolutionised the Russian army with his tactics. He introduced a doctrine where, instead of week-long artillery fires that gave away attackers' intentions, he used brief heavy bombardments and highly trained shock troops that targeted weak points across the 500-kilometre frontline, paralysing Austro-Hungarian defences. Brusilov heavily relied on comprehensive aerial reconnaissance to accurately map enemy trench networks and guide his localised artillery strikes. The Russians also deployed the "Sikorsky Ilya Muromets", the world's first four-engine heavy strategic bomber, which the Russians utilised for deep strike bombing and reconnaissance over the vast Eastern Front. While the offensive shattered the Austro-Hungarian defences (capturing over 400,000 prisoners of war) and forced Germany to divert troops from Verdun, it completely

exhausted the Russian army, resulting in a loss of around a million soldiers they could not replace. (Dowling 2014).

In 1917, February a revolution around the country started to rise, the revolutionists wished for more leftist economic policies, and they were fed up with the starvation of the working class because of the Great War. The revolution spread around the country, eventually collapsing the Tsarist authority. The Petrograd Soviets gave the "Order No. 1," which instructed soldiers to only obey orders that did not contradict the Soviet, effectively destroying military discipline and the chain of command. In July 1917, the Russian Provisional Government decided to launch one last, disastrous offensive to appease the Entente allies, which triggered mass rebellions and the eventual Bolshevik takeover in October. Following the Bolshevik takeover, Germany and the new government decided to formulate a peace deal. However, Germany dictated brutal terms, and Russia was forced to transfer the Baltic states, Belarus, and Ukraine, stripping away around 30% of its population, around 50% of its industrial land, and around 90% of its coalfields. This draconian treaty served as the ultimate warning to the Entente of what a German-dictated peace would look like (Figs 1997, pp. 406-455).

### iii. Italian Front

Italy joined the Great War in May 1915. The Italian Front took place in the Alps, which forced the Italian army to push uphill into pre-existing and fortified Austro-Hungarian defences. The wars that happened on the Italian Front were named the "**Guerra Bianca**" (**White War**) due to the thick snow and ice. In addition, the rocks in the Alps were too hard to dig trenches. Instead of digging trenches, engineers used pneumatic drills and explosives to carve miles of tunnels and artillery bunkers directly into the sides of glaciers and mountain peaks. The artillery divisions used the mountains to their advantage by shelling into the mountains. This created deadly stone shrapnel and massive avalanches. Deliberate artillery strikes were used by both sides, which resulted in the burial of entire barracks and an estimated death rate of around 60,000-100,000 soldiers from the avalanches alone. Because Alpine valleys were too small for massive armies, **Italian Supreme Commander Luigi Cadorna** focused almost his entire war effort on the relatively lower (but still heavily defended) **Isonzo River valley**, aiming to break through to the city of Trieste (Gravino 2014).



A photograph showing Austro-Hungarian troops marching through the snow (Stefano Torrione, National Geographic-Italia).

General Luigi Cadorna believed in sheer numerical superiority. In the Battles of the Isonzo Offensive, he repeatedly threw identical waves of conscripts across the river and up the rocky Carso plateau, which was easily defended and resulted in massive casualties compared to the mere gains of a hundred meters. By the **Eleventh Battle of Isonzo** (August 1917), the Italian army was exhausted, and morale was near collapsing. To maintain order during these suicidal offensives, General Cadorna authorised the routine execution of his men for cowardice and retreat. He utilised ancient Roman decimation tactics, which deeply alienated the Italian working-class conscripts from the state. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2025).

In the **Twelfth Battle of the Isonzo (Caporetto)**, the Austro-Hungarians, who were on the verge of collapse, asked the Germans for help. The Germans sent elite divisions and General Otto von Below to formulate a counter-offensive. The Germans produced a tactically brilliant offensive. They utilised heavy but brief bombardments of lethal phosgene and tear gas (which the Italian masks could not filter) combined with heavily armed **Stoßtruppen (Stormtroopers)** who rapidly infiltrated the valleys, bypassing the mountaintop fortresses and cutting off the Italian defenders from behind (Alfoldi 1976). With the arrival and the successful breakthrough of the Germans, the Italian Second Army disintegrated. Italy lost over 300,000 men, all of their artillery, and retreated nearly 100 miles back to the Piave River just north of Venice. This

humiliating disaster forced the Entente to rush British and French divisions to Italy to prevent total collapse, and ultimately led to Cadorna's dismissal. (Wilcox 2014).

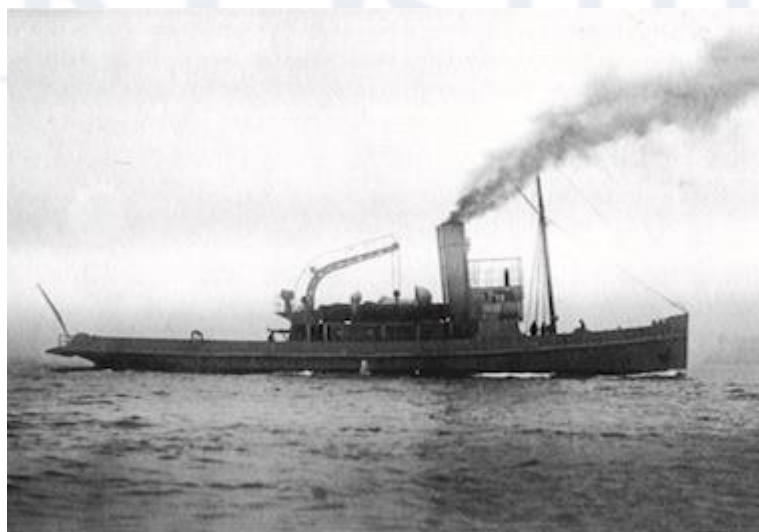
#### iv. Balkan Front

In 1914, the Austro-Hungarians declared war on Serbia, officially starting the Great War. Initially, they made small advancements in Serbian lands; however, they were easily repelled by the Veteran army of the Serbians (who had real battle experience from the Balkan Wars) at the Battles of Cer and Kolubara, severely humiliating Vienna. In October 1915, after almost a year of bidding by both sides, Bulgaria finally joined the war on the side of the Central Powers to exact revenge on Serbia for the Second Balkan War. The involvement of the Bulgarians resulted in a triple-invasion of the Serbians by Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. However, rather than surrendering to the massive enemy forces, the Serbian King and his army enacted a winter retreat over the freezing, hostile Albanian mountains to the Adriatic coast. In this retreat, over 200,000 soldiers and civilians froze to death or died of typhus (a bacterial infection) before Allied ships evacuated the survivors to the island of Corfu (Schindler 2002, pp. 159-195).

To aid the Serbians and their efforts, the Allied forces landed in the Greek port of Saloniki (Thessaloniki), despite Greece officially being a neutral country. This triggered the "National Schism" in Greece, sparking a near civil war between the pro-Allied Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos and the pro-German King Constantine I. For 3 years, a massive Allied army, which was named Allied Army of the Orient, was deadlocked by malaria (a disease transmitted by mosquitoes) (World Health Organisation 2025) and Bulgarian defences in the mountains north of Salonika. The German High Command mockingly referred to it as their "largest internment camp" because it tied down hundreds of thousands of Entente troops who weren't fighting on the Western Front. In September 1918, the Allied Army of the Orient launched a massive offensive that shattered the exhausted Bulgarian army. Bulgaria immediately surrendered, and this caused the only direct land route from Germany to the Ottoman Empire to be severed, exposing Austria-Hungary's southern borders, triggering the rapid collapse of the Central Powers. (Shuster *n.d.*).

## v. Gallipoli Front

The Gallipoli Campaign is one of the most significant failures of the Great War due to the enormous gaps between the ambitious strategic plans of the British Empire and the realities of amphibious operations. The operation, which was initiated by First Lord of the Admiralty Sir Winston Churchill, was advertised as the means to solve the problem of the deadlock on the Western Front. The Allied High Command was convinced that the Ottoman Empire, disparagingly termed as the "Sick Man of Europe", would surrender quickly after being exposed to modern imperialist power. The plan required a significant number of the Anglo-French fleet to pass through the Dardanelles to bomb Constantinople, withdraw the Ottoman Empire from the war, and provide key access to Russia, which was isolated from the Entente. However, the operation started showing signs of failure on March 18. The Allies failed to realise the defensive capability of the Ottomans; for example, a mine layer called Nusret secretly laid down a minefield near the Asian coast of the Dardanelles close to Eren Köy Bay. Consequently, three Allied ships were sunk by the mines - HMS Irresistible, HMS Ocean, and the French Bouvet (Atli 2024).



*Nusrat during trials in Kiel, Germany (Krupp archives).*

By giving up their advantage of surprise, the Allies allowed for a month-long preparation period for the German general and commander of the Ottoman Fifth Army, Otto Liman von Sanders, against the planned amphibious invasion. Once the operation started on 25 April, it immediately encountered a challenging landscape due to incorrect intelligence reports and mapping mistakes. The ANZAC's did not arrive at open beaches as expected, but

in a small cove surrounded by vertical cliffs covered in scrub vegetation leading to elevated ground. This gave the enemy a strong position since they could direct Allied soldiers into vertical death zones. Very quickly, the operation became a prolonged period of trench warfare where the Ottoman troops fought fiercely out of nationalism. The Ottoman military strategy was demonstrated by the genius of the lieutenant colonel Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the founder of modern-day Turkey. Recognising the threat to Chunuk Bair, Kemal organised an immediate and unauthorised counter-offensive. He declared his famous command to the 57th Infantry Regiment: “I do not order you to fight, I order you to die. In the time which it takes us to die, other troops, other commanders can take our place.” (Atlı 2024).



Mustafa Kemal in trenches in Gallipoli (Public Domain).

The efforts of Kemal thus successfully delayed the Allied breakout, ensuring the long-standing stalemate between the opposing sides. During the summer, soldiers experienced harsh weather conditions: the deep trenches were filled with decaying bodies and fly-infested areas,

while excessive heat coupled with a severe lack of clean water led to deadly outbreaks of dysentery among both allies and the Ottomans. After the last failed attack against the Ottomans in August at Suvla Bay, the Entente Command recognised the impossibility of winning the war and ordered a full retreat from Gallipoli. Interestingly, despite the numerous failures during the nine months of battle, the evacuation proved to be the most successful endeavour, with almost no faults committed by the Allies. Between December 1915 and January 1916, the Allied army conducted a sophisticated covert operation, utilising tactics such as "drip rifles," i.e., guns with attached water cans that fired automatically, suggesting that the trenches were still filled with soldiers. In secrecy and under the cover of night, the Allies safely withdrew over 140,000 soldiers, animals, and artillery pieces right under the nose of the Ottomans without losing any lives. Overall, the battle cost both sides over 250,000 men, destroyed Winston Churchill's political career for good, weakened Britain's imperial standing immensely, and sparked the beginning of Turkish nationalism (Atlı 2024).

## **vi. Caucasus Front**

The Caucasus campaign required complex geography, insane logistics, and a restless chase for retribution that resulted in devastating military and humanitarian disasters. Prompted by their desire for revenge following the massive losses they took between 1878 and 1880 in the conflict called the "93 Harbi" and to reclaim the eastern territories of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, Enver Pasha of the Ottoman Empire's Ministry of War decided to take personal control of the Third Army in late 1914. Enver Pasha planned to launch a winter pincer movement through the harsh Allahüekber Mountains in the Battle of Sarikamish. However, the poorly equipped Ottoman soldiers, whose winter supplies included summer clothing without adequate food, tents, or winter clothes, faced massive destruction, not from Russian guns but the extreme winter weather nicknamed the "White Death." Out of the 118,000 Ottoman soldiers who were engaged in the assault, around 60,000 to 90,000 were killed before coming into contact with the enemy, mainly as a result of freezing and snowstorms. In contrast, under the astute leadership of General Nikolai Yudenich, the Russian forces launched an aggressive advance, resulting in asymmetrical warfare in which Russian-sponsored Armenian militia fought alongside the Russians while the Ottoman Kurdish cavalymen supported the Ottomans. Following the attacks of the Armenian militias, the Tehcir Law was issued in May 1915 to

deport all Armenian militias into the Syrian desert, which later would be blamed for causing widespread starvation, disease, and massacre. (Martirosyan 2023).

Militarily, the Ottoman decline continued into the next year, with Yudenich carrying. An offensive that led to the collapse of what was left of the Ottoman Third Army and the subsequent seizure of Erzurum and then Trabzon, which gave control of the Black Sea port to the Russians and cut off Ottoman supply lines by sea. However, the geopolitical situation took a sharp turn in the direction of the Ottomans when the Bolshevik Revolution erupted. With the withdrawal of the Russian Army from their trenches and their abandonment of positions in the Caucasus, the Ottomans were able to advance quickly into the power vacuum created by this withdrawal. As a result of this advance, in March 1918, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk forced the Soviets to officially cede the territories of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum to the Ottoman Empire, thus fulfilling Enver Pasha's aim with respect to his original war objective. Nonetheless, one last mistake made by Enver would be to ignore the crumbling Ottoman front lines in both Palestine and the Balkans. Instead, he chose to raise an army called the "Army of Islam" and moved completely out of Anatolia to engage in a territorial race with the Bolsheviks, the British Dunsterforce, for possession of the oil fields at Baku on the Caspian Sea. (Martirosyan 2023).

## **b. Asia-Pacific Theatre**

The Asia-Pacific theatre of the Great War was especially important for both Allies and Central Powers since the Asian theatre dictated who would control the untouched Middle East's oil reserves and natural resources, and the Pacific theatre dictated who would control the important trade routes passing through the Pacific islands.

### **i. Mesopotamian Front**

An exemplar of mission creep in practice, the Mesopotamian Campaign provides an illustrative history of the concept wherein a strategically calculated military mission aimed at securing natural resources was expanded to encompass imperialism. Beginning in late 1914, the mission began in its proper context: the British-led Indian Expeditionary Force D (IEF D) landed at Fao Peninsula to secure the oil refinery owned by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Abadan to ensure that there would be a consistent supply of fuel available for use by the new

Royal Navy's dreadnoughts. However, as a result of early success in battle against weak opponents, General Charles Townshend advised his superiors in India that they should pursue a more aggressive strategy that included a push up the twisting, muddy banks of the Tigris River, seizing Baghdad in the hopes that it would provide the Empire with some political success following their defeat at Gallipoli. It did not take long for this strategic decision to prove itself costly; the advancement stopped, and the forces lost almost entirely in the Battle of Ctesiphon in November 1915, twenty-five miles from Baghdad. The weary and stretched troops retreated to the vulnerable bend of the Tigris River at Kut-al-Amara, whereupon they were placed under siege for five months by Halil Pasha, the Ottoman commander, with help from his German advisor, Baron Colmar von der Goltz. Within the besieged town of Kut, conditions quickly deteriorated, and Townshend's men faced starvation, scurvy, and disease as the Hindu and Muslim Indian soldiers had to break their religious code and eat horseflesh to avoid starvation. After three failed attempts at relief involving losses of almost 23,000 men fighting through the flooded plains downstream from Kut, Townshend surrendered the 13,000 soldiers left on 29 April 1916. The surrender of this large force marks the largest loss of the British military to surrender until the fall of Singapore during the Second World War. Whereas Townshend was provided hospitable treatment by the Ottomans as a distinguished guest, his troops were made to march to their deaths through the Syrian desert to aid in the building of the Taurus Railway, with about 70 per cent of the British and 30 per cent of the Indians held prisoners under Ottoman custody dying during the march. The operation was salvaged by the eventual appointment of General Stanley Maude, who demanded an overall restructuring of the area's logistic setup prior to the operation's proceeding. With the construction of a port at Basra, the laying down of light railways along the river banks, a larger medical staff, and the creation of a special force of flat-bottomed river boats, Maude went about systematically dismantling the Ottoman fortifications. With Baghdad being captured in March 1917, the British released their famed proclamation of Baghdad, which announced to the Arabs of the area that the British had come to them "not as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators." (Herzog2018).

## **ii. Arabian Front**

The Arabian Front is one of the most politically unstable and far-reaching fronts. During the Great War, due to the prominence of asymmetrical guerrilla warfare and imperial

violations. The British government was apprehensive about potential uprisings among Muslims in British India and Egypt following the Ottoman Sultan's declaration of a holy war (Jihad). Hence, the government required a suitable Islamic counterbalance in the form of an agreement between British High Commissioner Sir Henry McMahon and Sharif Hussein of Mecca, according to which the former promised an independent and unifying Arab state spanning from Aleppo to Yemen in exchange for starting a rebellion against the ruling centralised "Young Turk" empire (Rogan 2015). In the summer of 1916, the uprising took place; Mecca and Jeddah quickly fell into the Arabs' hands, while the siege of Medina proved to be a difficult undertaking due to a well-fortified city garrison under the command of Fakhri Pasha. Realising that a conventional offensive was ineffective against the fortified positions of the enemy, British liaison officer T.E. Lawrence, better known as "Lawrence of Arabia", convinced Hussein's son Emir Faisal and his Arab Northern Army to change their doctrine and pursue guerrilla warfare. Instead of destroying the strategically important Hejaz Railway, Lawrence resorted to harassment and sabotage. As a result, tens of thousands of Ottomans were immobilised, forced to create fixed garrisons along the rail line, in the midst of the desert. Such a tactic yielded several positive results, one of them being a successful capture of Aqaba in July 1917; the port was seized after a daring campaign that lasted two months and involved a long march through the seemingly impassable Nefud Desert to launch an attack from the land side. In addition to serving as the right mobile flank of the regular British advance through Palestine led by General Edmund Allenby, the Arabs assisted in winning the crucial Battle of Megiddo in September 1918 and facilitated quick movement to Damascus by October. It was understood that capturing the city was essential to setting up the future government before being occupied by Europeans. The diplomatic grounds for the uprising were clearly broken. While McMahon had assured the independence of the Arabs, their lands were already claimed by the British and French governments in their respective spheres of influence according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which was further broken by the Balfour Declaration of 1917. With the arrival of Emir Faisal at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, none of his achievements on the battlefield amounted to much before the leadership of the Allies, as proven by the French military's invasion of his newly formed Syrian state during the Battle of Maysalun in 1920 (Rogan2015).

### iii. Siege of Tsingtao

In this case, the Japanese Empire is seen as taking advantage of a European crisis to consolidate its dominance in the region. The siege of Tsingtao is one of many cases of geopolitical opportunism, showing how Tokyo took advantage of Europe's preoccupation with a war to increase its hegemony in East Asia. Based on the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, Tokyo responded to the appeal for naval assistance from Great Britain by sending an ultimatum to Germany demanding the unconditional surrender of the Jiaozhou leasehold and the Tsingtao harbour. However, London showed alarm concerning the aggressive behaviour of its partner and feared that Tokyo might annex Chinese land. To watch the development of events, the British sent a small contingent of troops, including the South Wales Borderers, to join the Japanese army (Perry 1929).

From the very onset, the implementation of the plan demonstrated the impact that the European conflict had on other countries. Instead of landing troops in the German fortress, the Japanese army decided to make a landing in Longkou, which is located more than one hundred miles away in the Shandong peninsula and then move overland. This act clearly disregarded the sovereignty of neutral China, insulting the Chinese Republic and exposing Tokyo's ambitions in the region. With insufficient forces to prevent the Japanese invasion, the president of the Chinese Republic, Yuan Shikai, could only respond by declaring a "war zone," leading to anti-imperialist sentiments after the war (Perry 1929).

In terms of duration, the siege lasted about two months, which made it one of the most concise examples of the new style of warfare. Contrary to the futile mass charges against entrenched German positions typical of the Great War on the Western Front, Japanese General Kamio Mitsuomi conducted a methodical reduction of German redoubts under the leadership of naval captain Alfred Meyer-Waldeck. It should be mentioned that the battle was an important technological breakthrough, as it saw the first successful attacks from the air using aircraft launched from a warship. Indeed, after being deprived of ammunition and breaking through the lines of defence, the Germans surrendered on 7 November 1914, thereby completing the process with minimum losses suffered by either side (Perry 1929).

However, its significance went beyond the tactical or military spheres, becoming apparent during the ensuing negotiations, as the victorious country imposed severe pressure on China. In contradiction to the earlier statements concerning the return of the Shandong

Peninsula to Chinese control, Japan occupied the entire province militarily and diplomatically. Moreover, using the newly won position, Japanese diplomats presented an ultimatum in the form of twenty-one demands in January 1915, which, if accepted completely, would mean the establishment of a protectorate in China. In essence, this act of territorial aggression was a poison pill for the subsequent events at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where Japan received the Allied permission to keep its conquests in the Shandong Peninsula, and thus forced the delegates of China to leave and initiated the May Fourth Movement across the nation (Perry 1929).

#### **iv. Capture of German Oceania**

The Pacific Campaign of the Great War may be seen as a quintessential example of Sub-imperialism, which is an act when regional countries like Australia and New Zealand took advantage of a world war setting to form their own subordinate empires within a very short time frame. While achieving its strategic interests in the Pacific region, Allied nations needed to destroy the German East Asia Squadron via the deliberate destruction of Germany's advanced radio-communication system in the Pacific Ocean area. Taking advantage of long-term goals and pursuing strategic interests in the region, the New Zealand Expeditionary Force conducted the first military operation for the Allies. With the help of a multinational naval fleet, the forces made a successful landing at Apia, German Samoa, on 29 August 1914. Since there were no German military forces stationed on the island for protection, German officials simply gave up without putting up any resistance, leading to New Zealand gaining control of the wireless station without firing a shot (Jennings 2015).

Meanwhile, the Australian theatre saw the beginning of the Great War in Australia, where the nation faced its first military deaths in the Great War. Being responsible for seizing the regions of German New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago, the hastily established Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) had to fight through the tropical rainforest area. The battle came to its peak at the Battle of Bitia Paka, which took place on 11 September 1914. During this battle, Australian forces launched an offensive in order to take over the vital wireless station on Neu-Pommern (New Britain). They met fierce resistance from German reservists and police troops. After the station was successfully taken over, acting

Governor Eduard Haber admitted defeat and officially surrendered all of German New Guinea several days later (Jennings 2015).

While the British and Australian navies were preoccupied with chasing the German East Asia Squadron into the South Pacific during the early stages of the conflict, the Imperial Japanese Navy used the opportunity to conduct a quick and largely unchallenged operation above the Equator, gaining complete control over the remnants of German territorial possessions in Micronesia. The Japanese successfully abstracted the entire Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall Islands chains with minimal opposition. In doing so, Japan substantially changed the power dynamics in the Pacific and raised fears among Japan's allies in Australia and the United States due to its sudden expansion. Through the acquisition of the Micronesian islands, the Japanese navy was now positioned in the proximity of the vital sea routes between the United States and its colonies in the Philippines, allowing Japan to project its power thousands of miles eastward from its national borders.

To deal with an abrupt and chaotic expansion of influence and prevent Japan from a confrontation with Australia, the British government decided to conduct a secret accommodation agreement in 1917, where it agreed to draw the line of demarcation for territorial gains according to the course of the Equator itself. Accordingly, Japan was entitled to all the landmasses north of the Equator, while the British Empire, in particular Australia and New Zealand, could keep everything located south of the Equator. This covert imperial deal led to further diplomatic complications at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Due to the perceived existential threat of Japanese expansion, the Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, attempted to legitimise his wartime acquisitions. Thus, the subsequent tensions resulted in the designation of the "Class C" mandates of the League of Nations, making possible the de facto expansion of each party's control over the Pacific islands in its sovereign territory (Jennings 2015).

#### **v. Pacific Naval War**

Firstly, it is important to consider that the nature of the Pacific Naval War is associated with both significant logistics and 'cat and mouse' tactics common to commerce raiding in the early twentieth century. Thus, at the beginning of hostilities in August 1914, when the German admiral Maximilian von Spee realised that the presence of Tsingtao was the source of potential

disaster, he decided to retire to the open areas of the Pacific. Being the head of a very efficient modern force that included two armoured cruisers, SMS Scharnhorst and SMS Gneisenau, Spee turned his force into an elusive one. However, his existence was fully contingent upon what could be termed as the tyranny of coal; the lack of friendly ports for refuelling meant that his ships were dependent on unreliable supplies of fuel carried aboard colliers of the German Navy. Consequently, to replenish the supplies necessary for further action, Spee's squadron had to either capture coal from the Allies or use some other neutral ports, like those in Chile. To avoid interception and monitoring by the British intelligence services, he was able to maintain radio silence that allowed him to disappear for weeks or even months, thus causing panic among coastal regions of Australia and North America (Osborne 2014).

To cause maximum damage to the enemy and to distract attention from his own activities as a leader of a major German fleet, Spee ordered the detachment of the light cruiser SMS Emden, commanded by Captain Karl von Müller. In two months of its active mission, SMS Emden caused exceptional damage to the enemy, being responsible for the individual destruction of about thirty merchant ships belonging to the Allies. Among the operations performed by Emden, one should single out its entry into the British port of Penang, resulting in the sinking of the Russian cruiser Zhemchug and French destroyer Mousquet. Nevertheless, Captain Karl von Müller stuck to cruiser rules and rescued all civilian crewmen before sinking their ships, thus gaining considerable respect from the British press that hailed him as a 'gentleman raider.' In November 1914, the SMS Emden became a participant in the Battle of Cocos, when it was hunted and destroyed by HMAS Sydney, an advanced Australian light cruiser.

The climax of this pursuit involved the confrontation between General Spee's squadron and its British adversary near the coast of South America, where Spee commanded his ships to inflict a considerable defeat on the British Royal Navy. In the process of pursuing the German fleet, British Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock headed the inferior and poorly-armed ships HMS Good Hope and HMS Monmouth. During the Battle of Coronel on 1 November 1914, General Spee skillfully used sunset conditions to render silhouettes of British ships against the sunset, while keeping his own ships hidden in the failing light. The British faced a disaster both psychologically and strategically; they lost both their ships in the battle with minimal losses on the other side, with Sir Cradock and 1,600 of his men killed in action. It was Britain's first naval

defeat for more than a hundred years, which shocked the political elite in London (Osborne 2014).

The reaction of Britain to the defeat in Coronel could not have been any quicker, tougher, or more destructive; the First Sea Lord, Sir (Jackie) Fisher, immediately withdrew the two superior battlecruisers HMS Invincible and HMS Inflexible from the Grand Fleet, sending them secretly to the South Atlantic to eliminate Spee. Knowing that he needed rest and coal urgently, Spee chose to attack the British coaling facility in the Falkland Islands, oblivious to the fact that the two battlecruisers were already there by the time. During the subsequent Battle of the Falklands on 8 December 1914, British naval superiority decided the result of the conflict; British battlecruisers were faster and equipped with more powerful cannons capable of striking from afar, allowing them to catch up with the German ships and destroy them from a distance. Thus, General Spee and his flagship Scharnhorst went down with the rest of the squadron in the process (Osborne 2014).

### **c. African Theatre**

Whereas the Great War received consistent global focus regarding industrial warfare in Europe, the war in Africa involved an entire continent engaged in a large-scale campaign of battles that entailed major logistical difficulties, rampant disease, and the extreme exploitation of indigenous people. For Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany, Africa was a source for critical manpower and materials rather than a marginal theatre of war. Battles fought in East, South-West, West, and North Africa demonstrated high levels of mobility and asymmetry of power, in contrast with the static trench wars of Western Europe. Impelled by imperial interests of securing enemy land and expanding colonies, the European nations deployed more than two million Africans into combat and support roles, who suffered extremely high death tolls from tropical diseases, malnutrition, and exhaustion. Delegates representing crisis countries will be faced with a unique situation in the African Theatre where nature is often deadlier than the opposing forces themselves, and decisions made in Europe have tragic consequences on a continent in the grips of colonisation (Paice 2008).

### **i. East African Campaign**

The East African Campaign is a perfect example of guerrilla warfare tactics used by one side to restrain an overwhelmingly strong enemy state, which is a common form of conflict in asymmetrical warfare. Knowing that he could not defend his colony using conventional tactics due to the inferiority of the size of his army, German Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck employed a policy of causing maximum damage and distraction of the British forces from their major campaigns in the West. He aimed to preserve his army's effectiveness, divert the attention of British troops, ships, and supplies from the Western Front and keep Germany in the war by causing maximum disruption to Britain's East Africa colony. Using a combination of conventional tactics and guerrilla warfare, Lettow-Vorbeck led his colonial army, known as the Schutztruppe, consisting mainly of highly qualified and dedicated Askari African soldiers under German officers, to a spectacular win at the Battle of Tanga in November 1914. After launching an amphibious landing attack on German East Africa, a considerably smaller group of Germans managed to successfully repel British-Indian forces in what would be called the "Battle of the Bees," owing to constant attacks on British troops in the coastal scrub by bees, causing them to retreat and abandon modern guns in the process (Paice 2008, pp. 11-76).

After defeating the British forces in Tanga, Lettow-Vorbeck began a guerrilla offensive in the hope of taking advantage of terrain and numbers over his enemies. Raiding the neighbouring territory of British East Africa (Kenya), the Germans made extensive use of dynamite attacks on the Uganda Railway. Pursuing the Germans into the interior of Africa, the terrain and climate became deadly enemies for the Allies. The spread of the tsetse fly among British transports quickly resulted in the loss of almost all the British transport horses. To stay mobile and disrupt the enemies' ability to move freely, Lettow-Vorbeck resorted to scorched earth policies, depriving them of the food resources supplied by locals (Paice 2008).

It is in the logistics of this brutal engagement that the highest casualty rates of the campaign were experienced, most especially by the conscripted Africans who served as the primary source of manpower. Since traditional transport animals had been quickly wiped out by disease, everything else, including weapons, ammunition, food, and medicine, had to be carried by African porters. To ensure that the movement of their armed personnel continued unhindered, the British, German, Belgian, and Portuguese powers forcibly conscripted around a million Africans into porter service, known as the "carrier war." The loss of lives in this

category was enormous. Fought in malarial marshes and thick jungles on rations of barest subsistence, the death rate in this category was above 100,000, which was way higher than the casualties among soldiers fighting in the theatre (Paice 2008, pp. 167-290).

The last stages of the campaign were characterised by the unprecedented mobility of the combatants. It was fought beyond national boundaries and gave rise to a wider regional crisis. Following increasing military pressure from the British side, Lettow-Vorbeck abandoned German East Africa and marched into Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) to acquire food and weapons before crossing the border to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). He thus embarked on a continuous chase of the Allies in the interior of the continent. His strategic success was remarkable. At the conclusion of the war, his small but extremely mobile army of about 14,000 men had fought and immobilised a massive 300,000 soldiers of the Allies. Cut off from all news from outside the continent, he surrendered only on November 25, 1918, two weeks after signing the armistice in Europe (Paice 2008, pp. 291-391).

## ii. South-West African Front

Unlike other campaigns during the Great War, the South-West Africa Campaign began not as an encounter between rival empires, but as a serious internal political crisis that almost led to the disintegration of the recently formed Union of South Africa. After being approached by the British government to invade its German neighbour, South Africa was once again reminded of the unresolved resentments from the Boer War, which ended only twelve years ago. Several prominent Boer commanders, remembering Germany's long-standing support for their side, openly declared themselves unwilling to fight for the British Empire against their kinsmen. This led to the Maritz Rebellion later that year, initiated by the Boer general and Lieutenant Colonel Manie Maritz together with his accomplice Christiaan de Wet, where thousands of deserters joined hands to proclaim a German-backed republic in southern Namibia. While Prime Minister Louis Botha, a Boer leader in the previous conflict himself, was still considering which side to take regarding the neighbouring frontier, he first had to quell the insurrection in time to launch an invasion (Paice 2008).

After the defeat of the internal threat, the invasion could begin, showing that in this case, it was not the German military that posed the main obstacle, but the treacherous nature of Namibian lands. Understanding that their numerical disadvantage would make a pitched battle

unwinnable, Botha and General Jan Smuts planned a rapid two-front attack using mounted cavalry along the new railroad network to cross the hostile territory. To disrupt this movement, the German Schutztruppe, led by their chief Victor Franke, retreated into the interior of the continent. To prevent pursuit, the German forces poisoned any potential sources of water behind them with arsenic and carcasses. However, the South Africans were able to counter such tactics through the use of modern technology, using oil-drilling rigs to reach fresh underground water and armoured vehicles to outmanoeuvre the fleeing columns (Paice 2008, pp. 77-124).

Unlike the endless and seemingly never-ending deadlock on the Western Front in Europe, the South-West Africa offensive moved at remarkable speed and quickly led to the quick defeat of German resistance. South African cavalry continuously deceived the Germans by bypassing their defences, thus making it impossible for a guerrilla war like the one fought in East Africa to develop. Besieged, cut off from the rest of the world and unable to resupply themselves, the German Governor, Theodor Seitz and Major Franke surrendered the whole colony to South Africa on 9 July 1915 at Khorab. The entire campaign lasted barely seven months and came to a decisive end within this time without the huge number of casualties typical of Europe's fighting fields (Paice 2008, pp. 125-166).

### **iii. West African Front**

Military activities on the West African front began with the shortest of all campaigns, which resulted from the necessity to interfere with the communications of Germany worldwide before its navy could benefit from them. The primary objective of the operation was to destroy the Kamina wireless transmitter located in German Togoland (now Togo). It was a sophisticated station used to connect Berlin to its fleet operating in the South Atlantic Ocean and its colonial territories in Africa. Fortunately for the Allies, Togoland was surrounded by unfriendly territories such as the British Gold Coast and French Dahomey. The hastily assembled Anglo-French forces attacked the isolated colony in August 1914. Considering the impossibility of holding out in the siege, the commander of German colonial troops ordered to destroy the transmitter and surrendered unconditionally on 26 August 1914. In this way, the Allies gained their first victory in the Great War (Osuntokun 1979).

In contrast, the invasion of the Allied troops into German Kamerun (now Cameroon) transformed into a long and cruel campaign, which posed a significant logistical problem due to the harsh conditions in one of the harshest areas of tropical Africa. The forces of invasion included a large coalition of Allied troops, mainly represented by WAFF soldiers from Nigeria and French Tirailleurs Sénégalais, reinforced by Belgian troops from Congo. Having understood the numerical superiority of the enemy, the German commander, Major Carl Zimmermann, used the advantages of the local geography wisely. Whereas the seaport capital, Duala, was quickly seized by a naval attack from Allied forces in September 1914, Zimmermann moved his troops into tropical forests and mountains. Thus, the campaign lasted for eighteen months because of the inability of the Allied logistics to overcome heavy monsoonal rains and flooding in river valleys. However, nature became the main adversary during the campaign, causing many casualties in Allied and German troops primarily due to malaria and dysentery (Osuntokun 1979).

The tactical implications of the Kamerun operation demonstrate a unique use of international law by the German command in effectively using neutral frontiers to avoid destruction. By early January of 1916, the Allied command was able to begin its concentrated, multilateral concentric offensive, resulting in the seizure of the internal German bastion of Jaunde (Yaounde). Threatened with inevitable capture or destruction, Zimmermann engaged in his last desperate gambit and, instead of surrendering to the British or French troops closing in on him, conducted his surviving Schutztruppen along with many of the African loyalists across the border into neutral Spanish Guinea (Rio Muni). Pursuant to international law, the neutral Spanish government quickly disarmed the weary forces and interned the German and African troops on the island of Fernando Po for the rest of the war, thus bringing the military phase of the West African operation to a close (Osuntokun 1979).

However, the diplomatic consequences of the West African operations are crucial to comprehend for the postwar resolution because of the way in which imperial powers divided the conquered lands despite the fact that the larger conflict had not yet ended. Immediately following their victories in Togoland and Kamerun, the British and French colonial governments began carving up the conquered lands between themselves based upon the lines arbitrarily drawn upon the map, with disregard for the ethnic and linguistic divisions of the indigenous population. In particular, the French seized the lion's share of Kamerun as part of

its policy of imperial revanchism seeking to recapture "Neukamerun" lost to Germany as part of the terms of peace following the 1911 Agadir Crisis (Osuntokun 1979).

#### iv. North African Campaign

One such event that portrays the strategic importance of using jihad is the North Africa Front, where an insurgency instigated by the Central Powers emerged as a major threat to the security of the Allied powers. In an attempt to divert attention from the crucial Suez Canal and punish Italy, the Ottoman Empire and Germany helped initiate an Islamic revolt against the Allied forces. Headed by the Senussi, an important Sufi movement in North Africa and headed by Sayyid Ahmed ash-Sharif, this rebellion started following the formal announcement of holy war by the Ottoman Sultan in December 1914. Istanbul and Berlin extended massive financial assistance to the Senussi to attack British Egypt and Italian Libya. This mission received significant help in the form of covert intelligence. U-boats belonging to Germany secretly transported gold, guns, and military experts like Nuri Bey, half-brother of the famous Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha, to train and motivate the Senussi army in Libya (George 1928, pp. 7-68).

As a result of extensive support offered by the Ottomans and the Germans, the Senussi launched a military attack on western Egypt in November 1915 and captured several coastal cities and oasis towns. The mission succeeded in its primary goal when it forced the British to quickly mobilise the Western Frontier Force, made up of soldiers from South Africa, India, and Britain, and divert essential resources from the Middle East to protect their western front. The climax of the campaign was reached during the Battle of Agagia in February 1916, highlighting the clash between the traditional techniques of desert warfare and modern weapons. Using traditional methods of cavalry along with smuggling in rifles, the Senussi were thwarted by the use of a new type of weapon, the armoured car. A group of Rolls-Royce armoured cars led by the Duke of Westminster chased down and defeated the withdrawing Senussi cavalry (George 1928, pp. 154-204).

This marked contrast in the two neighbouring colonies, the quick successes of the British military mechanisation in Egypt on one hand, and the absolute collapse of Italian control in Libya on the other, stands out in stark relief against the background of the ongoing Great War. Italy had only just finished taking Libya away from the Ottoman Empire in the Italo-

Turkish War of 1911-1912, and its hold was still remarkably weak. The provision of weapons and military consultants from the Ottomans, as well as the numerous rebellions by the Senussi tribes and Berbers, led to a series of defeats that forced Italy to evacuate much of the Libyan desert interior and concentrate on defending its coastal strongholds such as Tripoli and Khoms. As a result, the Senussi became the de facto governing political power in the Libyan interior, and this situation would persist for the rest of the war, causing significant diplomatic problems for Italy in the post-war period (George 1928).

To the south of the Libyan theatre, meanwhile, the British took advantage of the prevailing mood of Muslim uprising in order not only to defend but to redraw the imperial landscape. In 1916, Sultan Ali Dinar of Darfur (then part of Sudan) responded to the Ottoman call to arms, challenging British hegemony. Britain quickly moved troops to suppress the insurrection and, at the same time, made use of nascent air power in order to employ Royal Flying Corps aircraft for reconnaissance and bombarding the Sultan's forces with primitive ordnance. After the death of Sultan Ali Dinar, Britain did not return to the status quo ante. Rather, Britain abolished the Sultanate and officially annexed Darfur as part of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, solidifying Britain's gains of the Great War (George 1928).

#### **d. Conclusion of the Great War**

##### **i. Russian Withdrawal From the War**

The emergence of the geopolitical vacuum after the Russian retreat was not the result of any communist plot but rather came as a result of the spontaneous overthrow of the Romanov government in early 1917, caused by severe famine, heavy losses in battles, and general logistical problems. As a consequence, in March 1917, after bread riots and rebellions in Petrograd, Nicholas II had no other choice but to renounce his rights in favour of a moderate Provisional Government, which was eventually led by Alexander Kerensky. Nevertheless, Kerensky made a fatal diplomatic mistake. In order to fulfil existing agreements between Britain and France, he left Russia fighting, although it was impossible due to the internal situation. This resulted in the catastrophic defeat of the Russian Army during the Kerensky offensive in July 1917 and paved the way for more radical political forces (Fitzpatrick 2017, pp. 16-68).

Knowing about such an internal situation, the German High Command intentionally decided to bring down the Russians using political exiles, mainly Vladimir Lenin. Thus, in April 1917, after a special operation organised by the German intelligence service, the most radical leader of the Marxist party, Vladimir Lenin, was brought from his exile in Switzerland by a so-called sealed train in order to destabilise the regime. Unlike complex political programs based on theory, Lenin managed to attract exhausted soldiers and peasants that are affected by famine with a very clear slogan, "Pão, Terra e Paz" (Bread, Land and Peace). After the seizure of power in Petrograd by the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution, the first actions taken by the new regime included the Decree on Peace, which demanded a truce with the Central Powers immediately (Fitzpatrick 2017, pp. 16-68). What is most important for further international diplomatic situations, soon after taking power, the Bolsheviks got access to Tsarist diplomatic archives and published the secret treaties signed with the Entente. These were the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of London, and the Constantinople Agreement. Publishing these documents in the international media, Lenin and Leon Trotsky openly accused their former allies of having purely imperialist goals and showed once again that the Great War was the means of capitalist and territorial expansion (Schattenberg 2014).



An iconic illustration of the October Revolution of 1917 (Hegemonic Project Games).

As peace negotiations took place in Brest-Litovsk after the signing of the armistice agreement, an unusual diplomacy ensued, with the two parties finding themselves in a stalemate of sorts. The new Bolshevik Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Leon Trotsky, devised a strategy of prolonging negotiations based on “neither war nor peace”, counting on

spontaneous Communist rebellions among the fatigued workers of both Germany and Austria. However, the German High Command proved quite effective in its response to Trotsky's manoeuvring, realising that the Russian army had been all but defeated in the war and launching an offensive operation called "Faustschlag" (Operation Punch). This operation involved a swift, largely unopposed advance of 500 miles using rail transportation and mechanised troops. By capturing vast territories in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic region, as well as threatening Petrograd with invasion. The German High Command forced the weakened Bolshevik administration to sign a humiliating peace deal with Germany in order to secure the existence of the regime (Schattenberg 2014).

Consequently, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on March 3, 1918, brought heavy losses to the former Russian Empire and fundamentally transformed the geopolitical realities of Eastern Europe. Russia agreed to leave the war in return for conceding 34 per cent of its population, 54 per cent of its industries, 89 per cent of its coal mining regions, and much agricultural land, allowing Germany to grant de jure independence to Ukraine, Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states, which were now firmly under German hegemony. The Allied powers eventually compelled Germany to cancel the Brest-Litovsk terms via the Treaty of Versailles of 1919; however, the diplomatic fallout of these events affected the Paris Peace Conference of the same year. Since the new Soviet Russia was deemed a dangerous state and hence excluded from negotiations in Paris, the Allied nations opted against giving back any of the lost territories to Russia. Rather, the Big Four decided to use independent nations as a cordon sanitaire to quarantine any spread of the Bolshevik ideology into a weary and vulnerable Western Europe (Schattenberg 2014).

## **ii. American Entry to the Great War**

The United States' shift from an exceptionally isolationist to a decidedly bellicose state in the Great War was initiated based on the idea of strict neutrality. In August 1914, President Woodrow Wilson encouraged citizens of the United States to be "impartial in thought as well as in action." Yet this political statement sharply contradicted America's economic reality at the time. Due to the effective Royal Navy blockade, American trade was limited solely to Entente powers. As a result, this economic relationship swiftly turned into a source of financial support for the Allies. By 1917, American banks, with J.P. Morgan being the most famous

example, granted more than \$2 billion to Britain and France for their war effort, in contrast to merely \$27 million to Germany. Therefore, a victory of the Allies was crucial to America's prosperity, since otherwise, its domestic economy would have collapsed due to defaults (Kennedy 1980, pp. 3-44).

Nevertheless, despite all efforts, neutrality could not be maintained due to constant diplomatic disputes. They were mostly concerned with the problem of freedom of the seas. Since Germany had no means of overcoming the British naval blockade of the surface fleet, it resorted to a cruel tactic of unrestricted submarine warfare and used U-boats to sink civilian ships without warning to force Britain to surrender by depriving it of supplies. It constantly violated international rules of maritime law until May 1915, when the British ocean liner RMS Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk while carrying American civilians. 1,198 lives were lost, among them 128 Americans. While this did not directly trigger a declaration of war, it dramatically affected the opinions of Americans and set them against Germany. To avoid a confrontation with the United States, the German High Command briefly ceased unrestricted submarine warfare in 1916, issuing the Sussex Pledge and pledging to follow traditional cruiser rules by warning ship captains to abandon their crew beforehand (Kennedy 1980).

The culmination of the diplomatic crisis took place at the beginning of 1917 and was caused both by a carefully planned military move and a critical intelligence error made by Germany. Having noted the signs of gradual failure in their efforts to fight attrition, the German High Command decided to start the unrestricted use of submarines in January 1917. They knew that such measures were likely to cause an American declaration of war, but felt confident about forcing Britain to surrender as a result of the submarine blockade before the U.S. would succeed in deploying enough troops to Europe. Furthermore, at the same time, British naval intelligence (Room 40) managed to intercept and decipher a secret cable sent by the German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann to the Mexican Government. In the message, Zimmermann suggested forming an informal military alliance and offered Mexico help to restore its lost territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona in exchange for starting hostilities against America. The intelligence service chose to leak the information about the document to the American media, thus making the government look like a serious threat to the national interests of the United States (Kennedy 1980, pp. 45-143).

Responding to the developments, President Woodrow Wilson was able to position the whole conflict as a moral crusade beyond Europe. By doing this, he managed to lay the

ideological groundwork that would have to be taken into account when planning further negotiation attempts. Namely, on April 2, 1917, Woodrow Wilson went to Congress asking for a declaration of war, which happened four days later, as requested. Importantly, this decision was made due to the fact that the world should be "made safe for democracy". Thus, while becoming engaged in the Great War, the United States refused to be referred to as an allied nation, instead choosing to position itself as Associated Powers, thus stressing ideological superiority and calling for the formation of new international relations. In particular, this position found its reflection in Wilson's Fourteen Points, which promoted freedom of the seas, national independence for ethnic minorities, and the creation of the League of Nations. It should be noted that for crisis negotiators, these ideas represent important background knowledge, as the idealistic position of the United States would undoubtedly encounter the imperialistic reality of Europe at the peace conference in Paris (Kennedy 1980, pp. 144-295).

### iii. Last Offensives of the Great War

The third phase of the war saw a high-stakes offensive move made by the High Command of the Germans. The offensive campaign, called Kaiserschlacht (spring offensive), was aimed at winning the war before the expected arrival of millions of newly mobilised American troops. In March 1918, General Erich Ludendorff launched Operation Michael using fifty divisions that were released to the Western Front as a result of the Russian surrender. The offensive temporarily ended the trench deadlock with the introduction of Stormtruppen (stormtroopers). Instead of launching traditional attacks involving mass troops, the highly-trained soldiers used infiltration techniques to avoid resistance points and strike deep into the Allied lines, getting closer to Paris within artillery range. However, the grand strategy failed largely because of excessive logistics strain. The rapid advance of the German soldiers meant that they were too far from their supply lines, and they became exhausted, hungry, and without any means of transportation since they had no time to arrange motor transport. As a result, they could not focus on advancing and started looting captured supplies of their opponents and failed to occupy Athe miens rail centre (Lloyd 2014).

As a result of the offensive move, the Allied command launched the Hundred Days Offensive (August – November 1918) aimed at pushing the German troops back to their own territory. In response to the near-defeat during spring operations, the Supreme Command of the

Allies decided to combine their efforts under the command of the French general Ferdinand Foch. Historians suggest that the key date marking the beginning of this offensive is the Battle of Amiens on August 8, 1918, which Ludendorff called the "Black Day of the German Army". The battle featured a modern attack including hundreds of tanks, aircraft, and creeping artillery barrages, causing huge losses for the Germans. The combination of seasoned French and British armies and an additional influx of American troops under John J. Pershing allowed the Allies to break through the Hindenburg Line. As a result, the psychological collapse of the German High Command took place. Combined with the physical defeats, the psychological collapse resulted in requests for an armistice. Moreover, the collapse served as evidence against the Stab-in-the-back legend (Dolchstoßlegende), negatively affecting politics in Germany during the next decade (Lloyd 2014).

#### iv. Wilson Principles

President Woodrow Wilson's speech to Congress in January 1918, in which he set forth the Fourteen Points, defined the ideology of U.S. involvement in postwar peace, hoping to finally resolve the issues behind war through the dismantling of the pre-war order of European imperialism. It was the president's idea to end secret diplomacy, open agreement of the parties, unhampered freedom of the high seas, and elimination of barriers to international economic exchange. Of all the proposals put forward by Woodrow Wilson, that of "self-determination" was probably the most provocative one, implying that people belonging to various ethnic minorities and colonised nations had the right to choose their fate in terms of political sovereignty and governance. The American rhetoric thus gained widespread circulation around the world due to the telegraph, making President Woodrow Wilson appear as some sort of liberator to the subordinated peoples of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (Manela 2007).

Among the ideas mentioned above, the fourteenth point was especially significant, suggesting the creation of a League of Nations as a means of guaranteeing political independence and territorial security to all countries. While it was an idea of American idealism, the approach of Wilson's European counterparts seemed much more realistic and revisionist. Both Prime Minister of Great Britain David Lloyd George and Premier of France Georges Clemenceau were not convinced by Wilson's ideological discourse, Clemenceau once

reportedly commenting, "God gave us the Ten Commandments, and we broke them. Wilson gives us the Fourteen Points. We shall see." Ideological opposition played a crucial role in creating tensions during the Paris Peace Conference. Leaders of colonies such as Emir Faisal of Arabia and Ho Chi Minh of French Indochina, demanding self-determination and independence, created a serious dilemma for the Allies: how to protect the imperial interests in practice and keep American ideals on paper (Manela 2007).

#### **v. Famines**

During the Great War, the lines between combatant and non-combatant blurred significantly due to the utilisation of food as a strategic tool for bringing about the downfall of a nation, which involved starving the population into submission and bringing about political instability within the affected countries. During the war, the Royal Navy of the British Empire instituted an extreme blockade that was meant to prevent the Central Powers from importing any form of food or fertilisers into their territories. The blockade ended up contributing to what became known as the "Turnip Winter" of 1916–1917 in Germany, where the crop failure meant that the civilian population had to survive off rutabagas, which are usually used only as animal feed in Germany. As a result, between 400,000 and 750,000 civilians died of malnutrition, leading to internal unrest within the country, which helped bring about Germany's surrender in 1918 (Cronier 2021).

Meanwhile, during the same time period, a similar, albeit greater tragedy befell the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon in the Middle East. Cut off from the sea by the Entente blockade and ravaged by locusts in 1915, the majority-Christian territory was deliberately starved by General Djemal Pasha, who ordered that the food supply be drastically reduced, as a punishment for the supposed allegiance of some segments of the civilian population towards the Allied powers. As a result, at least 200,000 people, amounting to roughly half the population of Mount Lebanon before the war, perished (Cronier 2021).

#### **vi. Spanish Flu**

The Great War generated favourable logistical grounds, leading to an epidemiological disaster around the globe. The crowded military staging camps, destitute trench environments,

and continuous mobility of soldiers across international borders created a perfect scenario for spreading and mutating the H1N1 influenza virus. To maintain the spirit of their citizens, warring nations such as the USA, the UK, Germany, and France enforced strict censorship over any reports of outbreaks. Therefore, the virus was referred to as the Spanish Flu simply because Spain, which did not take part in the war, publicly announced a disease devastating its nation. By the fall of 1918, the virus infected the world with a lethal second wave. Unlike other annual variations of influenza that kill mostly children and old people, this particular strain caused cytokine storms that were responsible for the death of otherwise healthy people aged between 20 and 40 years old. These individuals participated directly in the war and consequently accounted for the total number of casualties. Approximately 500 million people became victims of the pandemic, about one-third of all the world's inhabitants. It caused up to 50 million deaths worldwide, which is even higher than both civilian and military casualties during the Great War combined (Barry 2004).

#### **4. Armistices**

##### **a. Armistice of Salonica**

The fight between Bulgaria and the other Balkan states in the Great War could be considered as the Third Balkan War, since the First and the Second Balkan Wars saw alliances shifted in mere years in the Powderkeg of Europe. The Great War gave the Bulgarians a chance to get revenge on the Serbians for what they had lost in the Second Balkan War. After some successful campaigns in 1914 and 1915, Bulgaria had managed to occupy large chunks of Serbian Macedonia and consolidate its position against the Entente armies on the Macedonian Front. Bulgaria even gained the Dobruca back from Romania. In the Fall of 1918, the memories of early successes were already fading away, and Bulgaria was helplessly waiting for the war to end (Hall 2011).

Eventually, Bulgaria was the first member of the Central Powers to withdraw from the war. After the Allied offensive into the Bulgarian province of Vardar, the defending Bulgarian army collapsed under the pressure, and mutinous soldiers declared a republic, which forced the Bulgarian government to surrender to the Entente Powers to prevent the further destabilisation of the country. Tsar Ferdinand somewhat histrionically explained the situation to Emperor and King Karl of Austria-Hungary:

“The destruction of my unfortunate army proceeds at a rapid pace. The First Army of Nezerov is melting away. The helpless Second Army is threatened by the superior power of the Greeks and English and is unable to move its artillery because of a lack of horses and draft animals. Revolutionary troops, burning and murdering everywhere, are already threatening Sofia. The Malinov Government demands an armistice and an immediate peace from me. I have submitted my abdication to the Ministerial Council. I am still alive, but tomorrow, maybe not. I think it is better to stay here to save what can be saved. (Hall 2011)”

In Thessaloniki, at the start of the armistice negotiations, the Bulgarian delegation quickly realised that declaring war on the Americans was not a good idea to begin with, since they believed the American diplomats could have helped mitigate the armistice conditions. At the end, the Bulgarians were forced to accept all the Entente demands, including the free passage of Entente soldiers through Bulgarian territory, the right of British and French troops, though not Greek or Serbian, to occupy some strategic points within the country, the end of relations with the other Central Powers, and the repatriation of prisoners of war. The articles of the Armistice of Saloniki, the first treaty to conclude the Great War, were relatively mild compared to later treaties (Hall 2011).

Below is the full text of the Armistice:

**“The Bulgarian Armistice Convention, Signed September 29, 1918**

**MILITARY CONVENTION REGULATING THE CONDITIONS OF SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THE ALLIED POWERS AND BULGARIA**

- I. Immediate evacuation of the territories still occupied by Bulgarians in Greece and Serbia; no cattle, cereals, or provisions to be exported from such territories, which must be left undamaged; the Bulgarian civil administration will continue to function in the parts of Bulgaria actually occupied by the Allies.
- II. Immediate demobilisation of the entire Bulgarian Army, except for a fighting force comprising 3 divisions of 16 battalions each, 4 regiments of cavalry, which will be employed, 2 divisions for the defence of the east frontier of Bulgaria, and of the Dobrudja and 1 division for guarding the railways.

- III. Surrender at points designated by the high command of the armies of the east of arms, munitions, and military vehicles belonging to the elements demobilised, which will be stored by the Bulgarian authorities and under the control of the Allies. The horses will also be handed over to the Allies.
- IV. Restitution to Greece of the material of the Fourth Greek Army Corps, taken from the Greek Army at the occupation of eastern Macedonia, insofar as it has not been sent to Germany.
- V. The elements of the Bulgarian troops now to the west of the meridian of Uskub will lay down their arms and will be considered, until further order, as prisoners of war; the officers will be allowed to keep their swords.
- VI. The Bulgarian prisoners of war in the East will be employed by the Allied armies until the peace without reciprocity as concerning the prisoners of war of the Allies. These last will be immediately surrendered to the allied authorities, and deported civilians will be wholly free to reenter their own country.
- VII. Germany and Austria will be allowed a delay of four weeks to withdraw their troops and military organisations from Bulgaria. The diplomatic and consular representatives of the Central Powers, as well as their citizens, must withdraw in this same period. The orders for the cessation of hostilities will be given at the time of the signature of the present convention.

(SIGNE D) GENERAL FRANCHET D'ESPEREY, ANDRÉ LIAPTCHÉW, GENERAL LOUKOFF.

**MILITARY CONVENTION    REGULATING THE CONDITIONS OF    SUSPENSION OF  
HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THE ALLIED   POWERS AND BULGARIA**

**SECRET ARTICLES**

- I. The eventual passage of the Allied military forces over Bulgarian territory, as well as the utilisation of railways, roads, waterways, and harbours, will be the object of a special covenant between the Bulgarian Government and the High Command of the Army of the East. Some negotiations to this effect will begin in about eight days at the most.

They will also concern themselves with the control of the telephone, telegraph, and the stations of T. S. F.

- II. A certain number of strategic points in the interior of the Bulgarian territory will be occupied by the great allied powers. This occupation will be provisional and will serve purely as a guarantee. It will not give way to coercion or arbitrary requisition. The General in Chief of the armies gives assurance that, unless unusual circumstances arise, Sofia will not be occupied.
- III. The General in Chief reserves for himself, in case of necessity, the right to demand absolute cessation of every relation between Bulgaria and her former allies.
- IV. The opening of Bulgarian ports to the vessels of allied and neutral powers.

(SIGNED) GENERAL FRANCHET D'ESPEREY, ANDRÉ LIAPTCHEW, GENERAL LOUKOFF (Allied and Associated Powers, 1919).”

#### **b. Armistice of Mudros**

After a period of uncertainty, whether to join the war or not, or to which side to join, the Ottoman Empire found itself in the Great War after the Black Sea Raid, committed by the two German ships, which were bought instead of two ships which were built by the British for the Ottoman Empire, but not delivered after the war started. The Great War was very difficult for the old empire, despite the German and, limited, Austrian help. A decade of war produced a capable military staff and an experienced soldier reserve, but left the empire exhausted from constant fighting on different continents (Zürcher, 1998, p.266-275).

Throughout the war, the Ottoman Empire was constantly finding itself on the brink of collapse, but successfully evaded it every time; victories at Gallipoli, Kut, and the Caucasus successfully kept the Ottoman Empire in the war until the end. However, in 1918, it was on the brink of collapse; British forces, equipped with tanks, occupied Syria and were ready to invade the Turkish homeland, Anatolia, and multiple minorities were either resisting or in full revolt against their Turkish overlords. Especially Armenians, whom the empire took very harsh measures against, to safeguard its military campaign in Eastern Anatolia, including the relocation of the Armenian masses to Northern Syria (Zürcher, 1998, p.266-275).

The final nail in the coffin for the Empire at war was the Bulgarian capitulation. Now, the critical supply routes such as the Berlin-Baghdad Railway were cut, and the Ottoman Empire was surrounded by enemies from all sides. Most importantly, the Sublime Porte was now under threat of invasion again. However, this time, the Empire did not hold the strength to defend its capital and the Three Pashas, otherwise known as the Young Turk triumvirate, decided that the war was lost irreversibly and resigned. Immediately after, they fled the country in the belief that a new pro-British government would smooth the negotiations for the Empire. They also feared that they could face charges for their acts in wartime. Ahmed İzzed Pasha took the Sadrazam seat, although he was from the now dissolved CUP. His and the cabinet's name was clear from the atrocities against Armenians (Zürcher, 1998, p.267-275).

Unlike Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire never declared war on the United States and believed that the Americans and the Wilson Principles could be their saviour. However, the peace terms were pretty much dictated to the Ottoman delegation with very little room to negotiate. The resulting treaty was much harsher than the Armistice of Salonica, with articles that granted the Entente to occupy forts controlling the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus and any Ottoman territory "in case of disorder" threatening their security. The Ottoman Army was demobilised, and all ports, railways and other strategic points were made available for use by the Entente. In the Caucasus, the Ottomans had to retreat to within the pre-war borders between the Ottoman and the Russian Empires (Zürcher, 1998, p.267-275).

Below is the full text of the Armistice:

### **“The Turkish Armistice Convention, Signed October 30, 1918**

#### **MILITARY CONVENTION REGULATING THE CONDITIONS OF SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THE ALLIED POWERS AND TURKEY**

- I. Opening of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, and secure access to the Black Sea. Allied occupation of Dardanelles and Bosphorus forts.
- II. Positions of all minefields, torpedo-tubes, and other obstructions in Turkish waters to be indicated, and assistance given to sweep or remove them as may be required.
- III. All available information as to mines in the Black Sea is to be communicated.

- IV. All Allied prisoners of war and Armenian interned persons and prisoners to be collected in Constantinople and handed over unconditionally to the Allies.
- V. Immediate demobilisation of the Turkish army, except for such troops as are required for the surveillance of the frontiers and for the maintenance of internal order. (Number of effectives and their disposition to be determined later by the Allies after consultation with the Turkish Government.)
- VI. Surrender of all war vessels in Turkish waters or in waters occupied by Turkey; these ships to be interned at such Turkish port or ports as may be directed, except such small vessels as are required for police or similar purposes in Turkish territorial waters.
- VII. The Allies have the right to occupy any strategic points in the event of any situation arising which threatens the security of the Allies.
- VIII. Free use by the Allied ships of all ports and anchorages now in Turkish occupation and denial of their use to the enemy. Similar conditions apply to Turkish mercantile shipping in Turkish waters for purposes of trade and the demobilisation of the army.
- IX. Use of all ship-repair facilities at all Turkish ports and arsenals.
- X. Allied occupation of the Taurus tunnel system.
- XI. Immediate withdrawal of the Turkish troops from Northwest Persia to behind the pre-war frontier has already been ordered and will be carried out. Part of Trans-Caucasia has already been ordered to be evacuated by Turkish troops; the remainder is to be evacuated if required by the Allies after they have studied the situation there.
- XII. Wireless telegraphy and cable stations to be controlled by the Allies, Turkish Government messages excepted.
- XIII. Prohibition to destroy any naval, military, or commercial material.
- XIV. Facilities to be given for the purchase of coal and oil fuel, and naval material from Turkish sources, after the requirements of the country have been met. None of the above material is to be exported.
- XV. Allied Control Officers to be placed on all railways, including such portions of the Trans-Caucasian Railways as are now under Turkish control, which must be placed at

the free and complete disposal of the Allied authorities, due consideration being given to the needs of the population. This clause includes the Allied occupation of Batoum. Turkey will raise no objection to the occupation of Baku by the Allies.

- XVI. Surrender of all garrisons in Hedjaz, Assir, Yemen, Syria, and Mesopotamia to the nearest Allied Commander; and the withdrawal of troops from Cicilia, except those necessary to maintain order, as will be determined under Clause V.
- XVII. Surrender of all Turkish officers in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to the nearest Italian garrison. Turkey guarantees to stop supplies and communication with these officers if they do not obey the order to surrender.
- XVIII. Surrender of all ports occupied in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, including Misurata, to the nearest Allied garrison.
- XIX. All Germans and Austrians, naval, military, and civilian, to be evacuated within one month from the Turkish dominions: those in remote districts to be evacuated as soon as may be possible.
- XX. The compliance with such orders as may be conveyed for the disposal of the equipment, arms, and ammunition, including transport, of that portion of the Turkish Army which is demobilised under Clause V.
- XXI. An Allied representative is to be attached to the Turkish Ministry of Supplies in order to safeguard Allied interests. This representative is to be furnished with all information necessary for this purpose.
- XXII. Turkish prisoners to be kept at the disposal of the Allied Powers. The release of Turkish civilian prisoners over the military age is to be considered.
- XXIII. Obligation on the part of Turkey to cease all relations with the Central Powers.
- XXIV. In case of disorder in the six Armenian vilayets, the Allies reserve to themselves the right to occupy any part of them.
- XXV. Hostilities between the Allies and Turkey shall cease from noon, local time, on Thursday, 31st October, 1918.

Signed in duplicate on board His Britannic Majesty's Ship Agamemnon, at Port Mudros, Lemnos, the 30th October, 1918.

(SIGNED) ARTHUR CALTHORPE, HUSSEIN RAOUF, RECHAD HIKMET, SAADULLAH. (Allied and Associated Powers, 1919).”

### c. Armistice of Villa Giusti

Newly crowned Emperor and King of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Charles I & IV of Habsburg-Lorraine, took a very difficult citation from his late great-uncle, to keep the destabilised empire together, and protect a millennium-old Habsburg rule over the Danubian lands. Shortly after his coronation, in 1917, he started secret peace talks using his brother-in-law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, an officer in the Belgian Army, as intermediary. The peace talks eventually failed as the French only accepted a separate peace if Austria accepted caving to full Italian claims. Emperor Charles decided to continue to fight alongside the Germans until the bitter end, or perhaps the sweet victory. However, the Emperor's effort to put Austria out of the war backfired when French Prime Minister Clamenceau exposed the letters between Prince Sixtus and Emperor Charles. Germans forgave Austrians only after gaining control of all military units, railroads, and factories, making such an attempt again impossible (Keleher 1992).

Throughout the war, the Habsburg Empire could not show any major success without help from its allies. This incompetency is largely tied to several factors. For example, poor planning before the war, insufficient material and manpower pool, the Slavic populations' unwillingness to fight and early major losses that wiped out the experienced officer staff. At the end of the war, it was clear the Empire was going to collapse under its own weight. Although Emperor Charles tried to pacify the minorities by giving more and more autonomy to them, minority convenes outright rejected any offers from Vienna and made clear that they would rather be independent. The Czechoslovakian Provisional Government even declared independence from the Crown and joined the Entente. Before the war, there were Russian plans to crown a Romanov as the King of Bohemia, and many of the ex-POWs formed the Czechoslovak Legion to fight alongside the Russians.

In October of 1918, the Italian Army launched a major offensive into Austrian lines, which was depleted after their last unsuccessful attack. A strong offensive brings the Austrians to the peace table. The Armistice of Villa Guisti was prepared beforehand and dictated to the Austro-Hungarians like previous treaties. It could be argued that it was the harshest among all of the armistices which were signed to end the Great War. It specifically proposed such articles to ensure that the Empire would not survive the upcoming months before peace talks. A strategy of divide and conquer, engineered by Italy to guarantee its claims in the secret Treaty of London. As it was expected, the Empire collapsed only after a few weeks.

Below is the full text of the Armistice:

**“The Austro-Hungarian Armistice Convention, Signed November 3, 1918**

**MILITARY CONVENTION REGULATING THE CONDITIONS OF SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES  
BETWEEN THE ALLIED POWERS AND AUSTRIA-HUNGARY**

**A. MILITARY CLAUSES.**

- I. The immediate cessation of hostilities by land, sea, and air.
- II. Total demobilisation of the Austro-Hungarian Army and immediate withdrawal of all Austro-Hungarian forces operating on the front from the North Sea to Switzerland.

Within Austro-Hungarian territory, limited as in clause 3 below, there shall only be maintained as Austro-Hungarian military forces a maximum of 20 divisions, reduced to pre-war peace strength.

Half the divisional and army corps artillery and equipment shall be collected at points to be indicated by the Allies and the United States of America for delivery to them, beginning with all such material as exists in the territories to be evacuated by the Austro-Hungarian forces.

- III. Evacuation of all territories invaded by Austria-Hungary since the beginning of the war. Withdrawal within such periods as shall be determined by the commanders in chief of the allied forces on each front of the Austro-Hungarian armies behind a line fixed as follows: From Piz Umbrail to the north of the Stelvio it will follow the crest of the

Rhaetian Alps up to the sources of the Adige and the Eisack, passing thence by Mounts Reschen and Brenner and the heights of Oetz and Ziller.

The line will thence turn south, crossing Mount Toblach, and meeting the present frontier of the Carnic Alps. It will follow this frontier up to Mount Tarvis, and after Mount Tarvis, the watershed of the Julian Alps by the Pass of Predil, Mount Mangart, the Tricorno (Terglou), and the watershed of the Passes of Podberdo, Podlaniscam, and Idria. From this point, the line will turn southeast toward the Schneeberg, excluding the whole basin of the Save and its tributaries; from the Schneeberg, it goes down toward the coast in such a way as to include Castua, Mattuglia, and Volosca in the evacuated territories.

It will also follow the administrative limits of the present Province of Dalmatia, including to the north Lisarica and Tridania, and to the south territory limited by a line from the shore at Cape Planka to the summits of the watershed eastward, so as to include in the evacuated area all the valleys and watercourses flowing toward Sebenico, such as the Cicola, Kerka, Butisnica, and their tributaries. It will also include all the islands in the north and west of Dalmatia from Premuda, Selve, Ulbo, Scherda, Maon, Pago, and Puntadura in the north to Meleda in the south, embracing Sant' Andrea, Busi, Lissa, Lesina, Tercola, Curzola, Cazza, and Lagosta, as well as the neighbouring rocks and islets, and Pelagosa, excepting the islands of Great and Small Zirona, Bua, Solta, and Brazza.

All territories thus evacuated will be occupied by the troops of the Allies and of the United States of America.

All military and railway equipment of all kinds (supplies of coal and others included) belonging to or within these territories to be left in situ, and surrendered to the Allies according to detailed instructions given by the commanders in chief of the forces of the associated powers on the different fronts.

No new destruction, pillage, or requisition to be done by enemy troops in the territories to be evacuated by them and occupied by the forces of the associated powers.

- IV. The Allies shall have the right of free movement over all road and rail and waterways in Austro-Hungarian territory, and of the use of the necessary Austrian and Hungarian means of transportation.

The armies of the associated powers shall occupy such strategic points in Austria-Hungary at such times as they may deem necessary to enable them to conduct military operations or to maintain order.

They shall have the right of requisition on payment for the troops of the associated powers wherever they may be.

- V. Complete evacuation of all German troops within 15 days, not only from the Italian and Balkan fronts but from all Austro-Hungarian territory.

Internment of all German troops which have not left Austria-Hungary by that date.

- VI. The administration of the evacuated territories of Austria-Hungary will be entrusted to the local authorities under the control of the Allied and associated armies of occupation.

- VII. The immediate repatriation without reciprocity of all allied prisoners of war and interned subjects, and all civil populations evacuated from their homes, on conditions to be laid down by the commanders in chief of the forces of the allied powers on the various fronts.

- VIII. Sick and wounded who can not be removed from evacuated territory will be cared for by Austro-Hungarian personnel who will be left on the spot with the medical material required.

**B. N AVAL CLAUSES.**

- IX. Immediate cessation of all hostilities at sea and definite information to be given as to the location and movements of all Austro-Hungarian ships.

- X. Notification to be made to neutrals that freedom of navigation in all territorial waters is given to the naval and mercantile marines of the allied and associated powers, all questions of neutrality being waived.

- XI. Surrender to the Allies and to the United States of America of 15 Austro-Hungarian submarines, completed between the years 1910 and 1918, and of all German

submarines which are in or may hereafter enter Austro-Hungarian territorial waters. All other Austro-Hungarian submarines were to be paid off and completely disarmed, and to remain under the supervision of the Allies and the United States of America.

- XII. Surrender to the Allies and to the United States of America, with their complete armament and equipment, of 3 battleships, 3 light cruisers, 9 destroyers, 12 torpedo boats, 1 mine layer, 6 Danube monitors, to be designated by the Allies and the United States of America. All other surface warships (including river craft) are to be concentrated in Austro-Hungarian naval bases to be designated by the Allies and the United States of America, and are to be paid off, completely disarmed and placed under the supervision of the Allies and the United States of America.
- XIII. Freedom of navigation to all warships and merchant ships of the Allied and associated powers is to be given in the Adriatic and up the River Danube and its tributaries in the territorial waters and territory of Austria-Hungary. The Allied and associated powers shall have the right to sweep up all mine fields and obstructions, and the positions of these are to be indicated. In order to ensure the freedom of navigation on the Danube, the Allies and the United States of America shall be empowered to occupy or to dismantle all fortifications or defence works.
- XIV. The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and associated powers are to remain unchanged, and all Austro-Hungarian merchant ships found at sea are to remain liable to capture, save exceptions which may be made by a commission nominated by the Allies and the United States of America.
- XV. All naval aircraft are to be concentrated and immobilised in Austro-Hungarian bases to be designated by the Allies and the United States of America.
- XVI. Evacuation of all the Italian coasts and of all ports occupied by Austria-Hungary outside their national territory, and the abandonment of all floating craft, naval materials, equipment, and materials for inland navigation of all kinds.
- XVII. Occupation by the Allies and the United States of America of the land and sea fortifications and the islands which form the defences, and of the dockyards and arsenal at Pola.

- XVIII. All merchant vessels held by Austria-Hungary belonging to the Allied and associated powers are to be returned.
- XIX. No destruction of ships or of materials to be permitted before evacuation, surrender, or restoration.
- XX. All naval and mercantile-marine prisoners of war of the Allied and associated powers in Austro-Hungarian hands are to be returned without reciprocity.

The undersigned plenipotentiaries, duly authorised, declare approval of the above-indicated conditions. November 3, 1918.

SIGNED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY: F. VICTOR WEBER EDLER VON WEBENAU, KARL SCHNELLER, YON VON LIECHTENSTEIN, F. V. NYÉKHEGYI, ZWIERKOWSKI, VICTOR REIHERR VON ESLLER, KAMILLO RUGGERA

SIGNED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE ITALIAN ARMY: LIEUT. GEN. PIETRO BADOGLIO, MAJ. GEN. SCIPIONE SCIPIOONI, COL. TULLIO MARCHETTI, COL. PIETRO GAZZERA, COL. PIETRO MARAVIGNA, COL. ALBERTO PARIANI, NAVY CAPT. FRANCESCO ACCINI.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY PROTOCOL

Containing the details and the execution clauses of certain points of the armistice between the Allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary.

#### A. MILITARY CLAUSES.

- XXI. Hostilities by land, at sea, and in the air shall cease on all the fronts of Austria-Hungary 24 hours after the signature of the armistice; that is, at 3 p. m. on November 4 (central European time). From that instant, the Italian and associated troops will refrain from advancing beyond the line reached at that time. The Austro-Hungarian troops and the troops of the countries allied with Austria-Hungary shall withdraw to a distance of at least 3 kilometres in an air line from the line reached by the Italian troops or by the troops of the allied and associated countries. The inhabitants of the 3-kilometre zone

included between the two above-mentioned lines may, in order to obtain the necessary provisions, apply to their own national army or to the armies of the associated powers. All the Austro-Hungarian troops who at the time of cessation of hostilities are behind the fighting line reached by the Italian troops shall be considered as prisoners of war.

XXII. As regards the clauses contained in Articles 2 and 3 on the subject of the artillery and its equipment and of the military material which are to be assembled at places indicated or left on the spot in the territories which are to be evacuated, the Italian plenipotentiaries, as representatives, of all the allied and associated powers, declare that they give said clauses the following interpretation, which will be carried into execution:

(a) Every article which may be used for a war purpose, or the parts of which can be used for such a purpose, shall be surrendered to the Allied and associated powers. The Austro-Hungarian Army and the German troops are authorized to carry off only the personal equipment and armament of the soldiers who are to evacuate the territories mentioned in Article 3, as well as the horses of the officers, the transport train, and the horses regularly allotted in each unit to the transportation of food, of kitchens, of the baggage of officers, and of the sanitary material. This clause applies to all the various arms and to all the services of the armies.

(b) As regards the artillery in particular, it has been arranged that the Austro-Hungarian Army and the German troops will leave the territory to be evacuated, all artillery material and all its equipment. The calculation necessary for obtaining the complete and exact total quantity of the artillery of the army corps and army divisions possessed by Austria-Hungary at the moment of the cessation of hostilities (and half of which is to be surrendered to the associated powers), will be made later, in order to arrange, if necessary, the delivery of other artillery material of the Austro-Hungarian Army, and possibly the return of material to the Austro-Hungarian Army by the allied and associated armies. All artillery which does not actually form part of the divisional and army corps artillery shall be surrendered without any exception; nevertheless, it will not be necessary to calculate the amount.

(c) On the Italian front, the delivery of all the divisional and army corps artillery shall be effected at the following places: Trento, Bolzano, Pieve di Cadore, Stazione per la Carnia, Tolmino, Gorizia, and Trieste.

XXIII. The commanders in chief of the allied and associated armies on the different fronts of Austria-Hungary will select special commissions which shall immediately proceed,

accompanied by the necessary escorts, to the places they regard as the most suitable from which to control the execution of the above provisions.

- XXIV. It has been determined that the names Mount Toblach and Mount Tarvis indicate the groups of mountains dominating the Toblach saddle and the Tarvis Valley, as shown on the 1:500.000 sketch map appended hereto by way of elucidation.
- XXV. On the Italian front, the evacuation of the Austro-Hungarian troops and of the troops allied with Austria-Hungary behind the line indicated in Article 3 of the protocol of armistice conditions shall take place within a period of 15 days from the date of the cessation of hostilities. As regards the Italian front, on the fifth day, the Austro-Hungarian troops and those allied with Austria-Hungary shall be situated behind the line: Tonale-Noce-Lavis-Avisio-Pordoi-Livinallongo-Falzarego-Pieve di Cadore-Colle Mauria-Alto Tagliamento-Fella-Raccolana-Sella di Nevea-Isonzo. They shall, moreover, have effected their withdrawal from the territory of Dalmatia as fixed in the above-mentioned article. Austro-Hungarian troops on land and sea, or the troops allied with Austria-Hungary, which shall not have effected their withdrawal from the territory indicated within the period of 15 days, will be regarded as prisoners of war.
- XXVI. Payment for requisitions made by the armies of the Allied and associated powers in Austro-Hungarian territory shall be carried out according to the rules laid down in the first paragraph of page 227 of "Servizio in Guerra, Part II, edizione 1915," now in force in the Italian Army.
- XXVII. As regards railroads and the exercise of the right confirmed to the associated powers by Article 4 of the armistice protocol between the allied and associated powers and Austria-Hungary, it has been determined that the transportation of troops, war material, and supplies for the allied and associated powers over the Austro-Hungarian railroad system outside the territory evacuated under the armistice clauses, as well as the direction and operation of the railroads, shall be intrusted to the employees of the Austro-Hungarian railroad administrations under the supervision, however, of special commissions appointed by the allied and associated powers and of the military commanders of the railroad stations which it may be deemed necessary to establish. The Austro-Hungarian authorities must give right of way to this transportation before all others and must guarantee its safety.

- XXVIII. In the territory to be evacuated at the end of hostilities, all mines along the roads and railroads, all mine fields, and every other device for the interruption of communication by road and rail shall be discharged and rendered entirely harmless.
- XXIX. Within a period of eight days from the cessation of hostilities, prisoners and Italian citizens interned in Austria-Hungary must cease all work, except for agricultural pursuits, so far as concerns prisoners and interned persons already employed in agricultural pursuits before the date of signing the armistice. In any case, they must be ready to leave immediately on request made by the commander-in-chief of the Italian Army.
- XXX. Austria-Hungary shall provide for the protection, safety, and provisioning (cost to be repaid) of the various commissions of the allied and associated governments selected to take over war material and to exercise general control, whether the said commissions are in the territory to be evacuated or whether they are in any other part of Austro-Hungarian territory.

**B. N AVAL CLAUSES.**

- XXXI. The hour for the cessation of hostilities at sea is the same as that for the cessation of hostilities on land and in the air. At the same hour, the Austro-Hungarian Government shall have furnished to the Italian Government and to the associated governments, through the wireless station at Pola (which shall transmit it to Venice), the necessary information in order to make known the situation and movements of all Austro-Hungarian ships.
- XXXII. All the units referred to in Articles 2 and 3, which are to be surrendered to the associated powers, shall reach Venice between 8 o'clock a. m. and 3 o'clock p. m. of November 6. They shall embark on a pilot 14 miles from the shore. An exception is made with respect to the Danube monitors, which shall proceed to the port indicated by the commander in chief of the associated forces on the Balkan front, under the conditions which the said commander in chief shall deem it necessary to determine.
- XXXIII. The ships which are to proceed to Venice are the following: Teghethoff, Saida, Prinz Eugen, Novara, Ferdinand Max, Helgoland. Nine destroyers of the Tatra type (800 tons minimum) of most recent construction. Twelve torpedo boats of the 200-ton type.

Mine-layer Cameleon. Fifteen submarines were built between 1910 and 1918, and all German submarines which are or may be in the Austro-Hungarian territorial waters.

- XXXIV. Damages premeditated or taking place on board the ships to be surrendered will be considered by the Allied and associated governments as a most grave infringement of the present armistice. The Lake Garda flotilla shall be delivered to the associated powers in the port of Riva. All the ships which are not to be delivered to the associated powers shall be concentrated in the ports of Buccari and Spalato within a period of 48 hours from the cessation of hostilities.
- XXXV. As regards the right to sweep all mine fields and destroy all barrages, the Austro-Hungarian Government undertakes on its honor to deliver the plans of the mine fields and barrages of the ports of Pola, Cattaro, and Fiume to the commander of Venice and to the naval commander at Brindisi within 48 hours from the cessation of hostilities; and within 96 hours from the same time the plans of mine fields and barrages of the Mediterranean and of Italian rivers and lakes, with additional notification of the plan of mine fields and barriers laid by order of the German Government which are known to it. In this same period of 96 hours, a similar communication concerning everything relating to the Danube and the Black Sea shall be addressed to the commander of the associated forces on the Balkan front.
- XXXVI. The restitution of merchant ships belonging to the associated powers shall take place within a period of 96 hours from the time of cessation of hostilities, in accordance with the indications determined by each associated power, which will be brought to the knowledge of the Austro-Hungarian Government. The associated powers reserve to themselves the constitution of the commission referred to in Article 5 and of informing the Austro-Hungarian Government of the details of its functions and of the place where it is to meet.
- XXXVII. The naval base referred to in Article 1/6 is Spalato.
- XXXVIII. The evacuation referred to in Article 1/7 shall be carried out within the period fixed for the withdrawal of the troops beyond the armistice lines. No injury shall be done to any stationary, movable, or floating material in ports. The evacuation may take place through the canals of the Lagoon, by means of Austro-Hungarian boats which may be brought in from outside.

- XXXIX. The occupation referred to in Article 8 will take place within a period of 48 hours from the moment of cessation of hostilities. The Austro-Hungarian authorities shall guarantee the safety of vessels transporting troops for the occupation of Pola, of the islands, and the other places as provided for in the armistice for the land army. The Austro-Hungarian Government shall give the necessary directions so that the ships of the associated nations proceeding to Pola should be met, 14 miles out, by pilots capable of showing them the safest way into port.
- XL. All damage to the persons and property of the associated powers shall be regarded as a very grave infringement of the present armistice.
- XLI. The undersigned plenipotentiaries, duly authorised, declare that they approve the above-mentioned conditions. November 3, 1918.

SIGNED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY: F. VICTOR WEBER EDLER VON WEBENAU, KARL SCHNELLER, YON VON LIECHTENSTEIN, F. V. NYÉKHEGYI, ZWIERKOWSKI, VICTOR REIHERR VON ESSLER, KAMILLO RUGGERA

SIGNED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE ITALIAN ARMY: LIEUT. GEN. PIETRO BADOGLIO, MAJOR GEN. SCIPIONE CIPIONI, COL. TULLIO MARCHETTI, COL. PIETRO GAZZERA, COL. PIETRO MARAVIGNA, COL. ALBERTO BRIANI, NAV. CAPT. FRANCESCO ACCINI (Allied and Associated Powers, 1919)."

#### **d. Armistice of Compiègne**

By the autumn of 1918, the German Empire was no longer capable of sustaining the monumental pressures of the Great War. However, its state was very different from that of its allies. The German public was still in the belief that Germany was still on the winning side. The public did not know the failure of the Spring Offensive and the loss against the Entente in the 100 days offensive because of censorship. They thought that following the exit of Soviet Russia from the war granted Germany vast lands in Eastern Europe, most importantly Ukraine, and on the Western Front, they were still in enemy lands. Not even an inch of the German lands was occupied.

When the Entente powers, now heavily reinforced by fresh American troops, launched the Hundred Days Offensive, they continuously pushed the German army back, ultimately breaking the Hindenburg Line. Which meant one thing for the German High Command, which was aware that the difficult situation Germany was in, that the next attack of the Entente would be into Germany. Faced with these battlefield realities, the German High Command, led by Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff, privately conceded that a military victory was impossible.

The rapid disintegration of its allies salted the wounds of the German Army. Now the German Empire was responsible for covering the frontlines of the entire border of Germany, possibly even more than that. In late September 1918, Bulgaria became the first Central Power to sign an armistice, exposing the Balkan front. The Ottoman Empire followed suit in October. The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed under the weight of military defeat in Italy and internal ethnic fracturing. On November 3, 1918, Austria-Hungary signed the Armistice of Villa Giusti, which mandated the total demobilisation of the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Furthermore, all armistices granted the Entente the right of free movement over all roads, railways, and waterways within the lost nation's territory. This disastrous development left Germany's southern border completely exposed to a potential Allied invasion.

Unbeknownst to the public, Germany was crumbling from the inside out. The years of British naval blockade had severed access to vital raw materials and food imports, leading to severe malnutrition, disease, and starvation among the civilian population. War weariness, plummeting morale, and economic devastation severely afflicted the German people.

The breaking point arrived in late October 1918. When naval commanders ordered the German High Seas Fleet to embark on a suicidal final battle against the British Royal Navy, sailors in Kiel mutinied. This mutiny rapidly spread across the country, evolving into the November Revolution. Workers' and soldiers' councils seized control of major cities and infrastructure. Recognising he had lost the support of both the military and the public, Kaiser Wilhelm II was forced to abdicate on November 9, 1918, and fled to the Netherlands. In his wake, a new German Republic was proclaimed in Weimar.

Facing a collapsing front line, an indefensible southern border, and a full-scale revolution at home, the new civilian government was left to bear the burden of ending the hostilities. A German delegation, led by civilian politician Matthias Erzberger, was dispatched

to a railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne in France to negotiate with the Allied Supreme Commander, Marshal Ferdinand Foch.

The Allies presented uncompromising terms designed to entirely neutralise Germany's ability to resume fighting. The conditions included the surrender of massive amounts of military hardware (artillery, machine guns, aeroplanes, and the navy), the immediate evacuation of all occupied territories, the withdrawal of German forces east of the Rhine River, and the continuation of the Allied naval blockade. Acknowledging that the military was completely incapacitated and the nation was on the brink of anarchy, Erzberger signed the armistice. The ceasefire officially went into effect at 11:00 AM on November 11, 1918, silencing the guns on the Western Front (Chickering 2014, 245–56).

Below is the full text of the Armistice:

**“The German Armistice Convention, Signed November 11, 1918**

**MILITARY CONVENTION REGULATING THE CONDITIONS OF SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN THE ALLIED POWERS AND GERMANY**

**A. CLAUSES RELATING TO THE WESTERN FRONTIERS OF GERMANY**

- I. Cessation of hostilities on land and in the air six hours after the signature of the Armistice.
- II. Immediate evacuation of the invaded countries: Belgium, France, Luxembourg, as well as Alsace-Lorraine, so ordered as to be completed within fifteen days from the signature of the Armistice. German troops who have not evacuated the above-mentioned territories within the period fixed will be made prisoners of war. Joint occupation by the Allied and United States forces shall keep pace with evacuation in these areas. All movements of evacuation or occupation shall be regulated in accordance with a Note (Annex No. 1), drawn up at the time of signature of the Armistice.
- III. Repatriation, beginning at once, to be completed within fifteen days, of all inhabitants of the countries above enumerated (including hostages, persons under trial, or convicted).

IV. Surrender in good condition by the German Armies of the following war material:

5,000	guns	(2,500	heavy,	2,500	field)
25,000					machine-guns
3,000			trench		mortars
1,700	fighting and bombing aeroplanes in the first place, all D7's and all night-bombing				aeroplanes

The above to be delivered *in situ* to the Allied and United States troops in accordance with the detailed conditions laid down in the Note (Annex 1) determined at the time of the signing of the Armistice.

V. Evacuation by the German Armies of the districts on the left bank of the Rhine. These districts on the left bank of the Rhine shall be administered by the local authorities under the control of the Allied and United States Armies of Occupation.

The occupation of these territories by Allied and United States troops shall be assured by garrisons holding the principal crossings of the Rhine (Mainz, Coblenz, Cologne), together with bridge-heads at these points of a 30-kilometre (about 19 miles) radius on the right bank, and by garrisons similarly holding the strategic points of the area.

A neutral zone shall be reserved on the right bank of the Rhine, between the river and a line drawn parallel to the bridgeheads and to the river and 10 kilometres (6 and a quarter miles) distant from them, between the Dutch frontier and the Swiss frontier.

The evacuation by the enemy of the Rhine districts (right and left banks) shall be so ordered as to be completed within a further period of 16 days, in all 31 days after the signing of the Armistice.

All movements of evacuation and occupation shall be regulated according to the Note (Annex 1) determined at the time of the signing of the Armistice.

VI. In all territories evacuated by the enemy, evacuation of the inhabitants shall be forbidden; no damage or harm shall be done to the persons or property of the inhabitants.

No person shall be prosecuted for having taken part in any military measures previous to the signing of the Armistice.

No destruction of any kind to be committed.

Military establishments of all kinds shall be delivered intact, as well as military stores, food, munitions and equipment, which shall not have been removed during the periods fixed for evacuation.

Stores of food of all kinds for the civil population, cattle, etc., shall be left *in situ*.

No measure of a general character shall be taken, and no official order shall be given which would have as a consequence the depreciation of industrial establishments or a reduction of their personnel.

VII. Roads and means of communications of every kind, railroads, waterways, roads, bridges, telegraphs, telephones, shall be in no manner impaired. All civil and military personnel at present employed on them shall remain.

5,000 locomotives and 150,000 wagons, in good working order, with all necessary spare parts and fittings, shall be delivered to the Associated Powers within the period fixed in Annex No. 2 (not exceeding 31 days in all).

5,000 motor lorries are also to be delivered in good condition within 36 days.

The railways of Alsace-Lorraine shall be handed over within 31 days, together with all personnel and material belonging to the organisation of this system.

Further, the necessary working material in the territories on the left bank of the Rhine shall be left *in situ*.

All stores of coal and material for the upkeep of permanent way, signals and repair shops shall be left *in situ* and kept in an efficient state by Germany, so far as the working of the means of communication on the left bank of the Rhine is concerned.

All lighters taken from the Allies shall be restored to them.

The note (Annex 1) defines the details of these measures.

VIII. The German Command shall be responsible for revealing within 48 hours after the signing of the Armistice, all mines or delay-action fuses disposed on territories evacuated by the German troops, and shall assist in their discovery and destruction.

The German Command shall also reveal all destructive measures that may have been taken (such as poisoning or pollution of wells, springs, etc.). Breaches of these clauses will involve reprisals.

- IX. The right of requisition shall be exercised by the Allied and United States armies in all occupied territories save for the settlement of accounts with authorised persons.

The upkeep of the troops of occupation in the Rhine districts (excluding Alsace-Lorraine) shall be charged to the German Government.

- X. The immediate repatriation, without reciprocity, according to detailed conditions which shall be fixed, of all Allied and United States prisoners of war, including those under trial and condemned. The Allied Powers and the United States of America shall be able to dispose of these prisoners as they think fit. This condition annuls all other conventions regarding prisoners of war, including that of July 1918, now being ratified. However, the return of German prisoners of war interned in Holland and Switzerland shall continue as heretofore. The return of German prisoners of war shall be settled at the conclusion of the Peace preliminaries.

- XI. Sick and wounded who cannot be removed from the territory evacuated by the German forces shall be cared for by German personnel, who shall be left on the spot with the material required.

**B. CLAUSES RELATING TO THE EASTERN FRONTIERS OF GERMANY**

- XII. All German troops at present in any territory which before the war formed part of Austria-Hungary, Rumania, or Turkey, shall withdraw within the frontiers of Germany as they existed on 1st August, 1914, and all German troops at present in territories which before the war formed part of Russia, must likewise return to within the frontiers of Germany as above defined, as soon as the Allies shall think the moment suitable, having regard to the internal situation of these territories.
- XIII. Evacuation of German troops to begin at once, and all German instructors, prisoners and agents, civilian as well as military, now on the territory of Russia (frontiers as defined on 1st August, 1914), to be recalled.

XIV. German troops to cease at once all requisitions and seizures and any other coercive measures with a view to obtaining supplies intended for Germany in Romania and Russia (frontiers as defined on 1st August, 1914).

XV. Annulment of the treaties of Bucharest and Brest-Litovsk and of the supplementary treaties.

XVI. The Allies shall have free access to the territories evacuated by the Germans on their Eastern frontier, either through Danzig or by the Vistula, to convey supplies to the populations of these territories or for the purpose of maintaining order.

**C. CLAUSE RELATING TO THE EAST AFRICA**

XVII. Evacuation of all German forces operating in East Africa within a period specified by the Allies.

**D. GENERAL CLAUSES**

XVIII. Repatriation without reciprocity, within a maximum period of one month, in accordance with detailed conditions hereafter to be fixed, of all interned civilians, including hostages and persons under trial and condemned, who may be subjects of Allied or Associated States other than those mentioned in Clause III.

XIX. *Financial Clauses*

With the reservation that any subsequent concessions and claims by the Allies and the United States remain unaffected, the following financial conditions are imposed:

Reparation for damage done. While the Armistice lasts, no public securities shall be removed by the enemy which can serve as a pledge to the Allies to cover reparation for war losses.

Immediate restitution of the cash deposit in the National Bank of Belgium and, in general, immediate return of all documents, specie, stocks, shares, paper money, together with a plan for the issue thereof affecting public or private interests in the invaded countries.

Restitution of the Russian and Romanian gold yielded to Germany or taken by that Power.

This gold is to be delivered in trust to the Allies until peace is concluded.

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**E. NAVAL CLAUSES**

- XX. Immediate cessation of all hostilities at sea, and definite information to be given as to the position and movements of all German ships.

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Notification to be given to neutrals that freedom of navigation in all territorial waters is given to the Navies and Mercantile Marines of the Allied and Associated Powers, all questions of neutrality being waived.

- XXI. All Naval and Mercantile Marine prisoners of war of the Allied and Associated Powers in German hands to be returned without reciprocity.
- XXII. To surrender at the ports specified by the Allies and the United States all submarines at present in existence (including all submarine cruisers and mine-layers), with armament and equipment complete. Those that cannot be put to sea shall be deprived of armament and equipment, and shall remain under the supervision of the Allies and the United States. Submarines ready to put to sea shall be prepared to leave German ports immediately on receipt of a wireless order to sail to the port of surrender, the remainder to follow as early as possible. The conditions of this Article shall be completed within 14 days of the signing of the Armistice.
- XXIII. The following German surface warships which shall be designated by the Allies and the United States of America, shall forthwith be disarmed and thereafter interned in neutral ports, or, failing them, Allied ports, to be designated by the Allies and the United States of America, and placed under the surveillance of the Allies and the United States of America, only care and maintenance parties being left on board, namely:

6		battle		cruisers
10				battleships
8	light	cruisers	(including	two minelayers)
50 destroyers of the most modern type				

All other surface warships (including river craft) are to be concentrated in German Naval bases, to be designated by the Allies and the United States of America, completely disarmed and placed under the supervision of the Allies and the United

States of America. All vessels of the Auxiliary Fleet are to be disarmed. All vessels specified for internment shall be ready to leave German ports seven days after the signing of the Armistice. Directions for the voyage shall be given by wireless.

- XXIV. The Allies and the United States of America shall have the right to sweep up all minefields and destroy all obstructions laid by Germany outside German territorial waters, and the positions of these are to be indicated.
- XXV. Freedom of access to and from the Baltic is to be given to the Navies and Mercantile Marines of the Allied and Associated Powers. This to be secured by the occupation of all German forts, fortifications, batteries and defense works of all kinds in all the routes from the Kattegat into the Baltic, and by the sweeping up and destruction of all mines and obstructions within and without German territorial waters without any questions of neutrality being raised by Germany, and the positions of all such mines and obstructions to be indicated, and the plans relating thereto are to be supplied.
- XXVI. The existing blockade conditions set up by the Allied and Associated Powers are to remain unchanged, and all German merchant ships found at sea are to remain liable to capture. The Allies and the United States contemplate the provisioning of Germany during the Armistice as shall be found necessary.
- XXVII. All Aerial Forces are to be concentrated and immobilised in German bases to be specified by the Allies and the United States of America.
- XXVIII. In evacuating the Belgian coasts and ports, Germany shall abandon, *in situ* and intact, the port material and material for inland waterways, also all merchant ships, tugs and lighters, all Naval aircraft and air materials and stores, all arms and armaments and all stores and apparatus of all kinds.
- XXIX. All Black Sea ports are to be evacuated by Germany; all Russian warships of all descriptions seized by Germany in the Black Sea are to be handed over to the Allies and the United States of America; all neutral merchant ships seized in the Black Sea are to be released; all warlike and other materials of all kinds seized in those ports are to be returned, and German materials as specified in Clause XXVIII are to be abandoned.

- XXX. All merchant ships at present in German hands belonging to the Allied and Associated Powers are to be restored to ports specified by the Allies and the United States of America without reciprocity.
- XXXI. No destruction of ships or of materials to be permitted before evacuation, surrender or restoration.
- XXXII. The German Government shall formally notify all the neutral Governments, and particularly the Governments of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Holland, that all restrictions placed on the trading of their vessels with the Allied and Associated countries, whether by the German Government or by private German interests, and whether in return for specific concessions, such as the export of shipbuilding materials, or not, are immediately cancelled.
- XXXIII. No transfers of German merchant shipping of any description to any neutral flag are to take place after the signature of the Armistice.

**F. DURATION OF ARMISTICE**

- XXXIV. The duration of the Armistice is to be 36 days, with an option to extend. During this period, on failure of execution of any of the above clauses, the Armistice may be repudiated by one of the contracting parties on 48 hours' previous notice. It is understood that failure to execute Articles III and XVIII completely in the periods specified is not to give reason for a repudiation of the Armistice, save where such failure is due to malice aforethought.

To ensure the execution of the present convention under the most favourable conditions, the principle of a permanent International Armistice Commission is recognised. This Commission shall act under the supreme authority of the High Command, military and naval, of the Allied Armies.

The present Armistice was signed on the 11th day of November 1918, at 5 o'clock a.m. (French time).

(SIGNE D) F. FOCH, R. E. WEMYSS, ERZBERGER, A. OBERNDORFF, V. WINTERFELDT,

VANSELOW

11th November 1918.

The representatives of the Allies declare that, in view of fresh events, it appears necessary to them that the following condition shall be added to the clauses of the Armistice:

‘In case the German ships are not handed over within the periods specified, the Governments of the Allies and of the United States shall have the right to occupy Helgoland to ensure their delivery.’

(SIGNED) R. E. WEMYSS, ADMIRAL, F. FOCH

The German delegates declared that they will forward this declaration to the German Chancellor, with the recommendation that it be accepted, accompanying it with the reasons by which the Allies have been actuated in making this demand.

(SIGNED) ERZBERGER, OBERNDORFF, WINTERFELDT, VANSELOW

#### ANNEX NO. 1.

- I. The evacuation of the invaded territories, Belgium, France and Luxembourg, and also of Alsace-Lorraine, shall be carried out in three successive stages according to the following conditions:
  - A. **FIRST STAGE:** By acquisition of the territories situated between the existing front and line No. 1 on the enclosed map, to be completed within 5 days after the signature of the armistice.
  - B. **SECOND STAGE:** Evacuation of territories situated between line No. 1 and line No. 2, to be carried out within + further days (9 days in all after the signing of the armistice).
  - C. **THIRD STAGE:** Evacuation of the territories situated between line No. 2 and line No. 3, to be completed within 6 further days (15 days in all after the signing of the armistice).

Allied and United States troops shall enter these various territories on the expiration of the period allowed to the German troops for the evacuation of each. In consequence, the allied troops will cross the present German front as from the 6th day following the signing of the armistice, line No. 1 as from the 10th day, and line No. 2 as from the 16th day.

II. Evacuation of the Rhine district. This evacuation shall also be carried out in several successive stages:

Evacuation of territories situated between lines 2 and 3 and line 4, to be completed within 4 further days (19 days in all after the signing of the armistice).

Evacuation of territories situated between lines 4 and 5 to be completed within 4 further days (23 days in all after the signing of the armistice).

Evacuation of territories situated between lines 5 and 6 (line of the Rhine) to be completed within 4 further days (27 days in all after the signing of the armistice).

Evacuation of the bridgeheads and of the neutral zone on the right bank of the Rhine to be completed within 4 further days (31 days in all after the signing of the armistice).

The Allied and United States army of occupation shall enter these various territories after the expiration of the period allowed to the German troops for the evacuation of each; consequently, the army will cross line No. 3, 20 days after the signing of the armistice. It will cross line No. 4 as 'from the twenty- -fourth 'day after the signing of the armistice; line No. 5 as from the twenty-eighth day; line No. 6 (Rhine) the thirty-second day, in order to occupy the bridgeheads.

III. Surrender by the German armies of war material specified by the armistice: This war material shall be surrendered according to the following conditions:

The first half before the tenth day, "the second half before the twentieth day. This material shall be handed over to each of the Allied and United States armies by each larger tactical group of the German armies in the proportions which may be fixed by the permanent International Armistice Commission.

**ANNEX NO. 2.**

Conditions regarding communications, railways, waterways, roads, river and sea ports, and telegraphic and telephonic communications:

- I. All communications as far as the Rhine, inclusive, or comprised, on the right bank of this river, within the bridgeheads occupied by the allied armies, shall be placed under the supreme and absolute authority of the commander in chief of the allied armies, who shall have the right to take any measure he may think necessary to assure their occupation and use. All documents relative to communications shall be held ready for transmission to him.
- II. All the material and all the civil and military personnel at present employed in the maintenance and working of all lines of communication are to be maintained in their entirety upon these lines in all territories evacuated by the German troops. All supplementary material necessary for the upkeep of these lines of communication in the districts on the left bank of the Rhine shall be supplied by the German Government throughout the duration of the armistice.
- III. Personnel: The French and Belgian personnel belonging to the services of the lines of communication, whether interned or not, are to be returned to the French and Belgian armies during the 15 days following the signing of the armistice. The personnel belonging to the organisation of the Alsace-Lorraine railway system are to be maintained or reinstated in such a way as to ensure the working of the system.

The commander in chief of the allied armies shall have the right to make all changes and substitutions that he may desire in the personnel of the lines of communication.

- IV. Material(a) Rolling stock: The rolling stock handed over to the Allied armies in the zone comprised between the present front and line No. 3, not including Alsace-Lorraine, shall amount to at least 5,000 locomotives and 150,000 wagons. This surrender shall be carried out within the period fixed by clause 7 of the armistice, and under conditions the details of which shall be fixed by the permanent International Armistice Commission.

All this material is to be in good condition and in working order, with all the ordinary spare parts and fittings. It may be employed together with the regular personnel, or with any other, upon any part of the railway system of the Allied armies.

The material necessary for the working of the Alsace-Lorraine railway system is to be maintained or replaced for the use of the French army.

The material to be left in situ in the territories on the left bank of the Rhine, as well as that on the inner side of the bridgeheads, must permit the normal working of the railways in these districts.

(b) Permanent way, signals, and workshops: The material for signals, machine tools, and tool outfits, taken from the workshops and depots of the French and Belgian lines, is to be replaced under conditions the details of which are to be arranged by the permanent International Armistice Commission.

The allied armies are to be supplied with railroad material, rails, incidental fittings, plant, bridge-building material, and timber necessary for the repair of the lines destroyed beyond the present front.

(c) Fuel and maintenance material: The German Government shall be responsible throughout the duration of the armistice for the release of fuel and maintenance material to the depots normally allocated to the railways in the territories on the left bank of the Rhine.

- V. Telegraphic and telephonic communications: All telegraphs, telephones, and fixed W/T stations are to be handed over to the Allied armies, with all the civil and military personnel and all their material, including all stores on the left bank of the Rhine. Supplementary stores necessary for the upkeep of the system are to be supplied throughout the duration of the armistice by the German Government according to requirements.

The commander in chief of the allied armies shall place this system under military supervision and shall ensure its control, and shall make all changes and substitutions in personnel which he may think necessary. He will send back to the German Army all the military personnel who are not, in his judgment, necessary for the working and

upkeep of the railway. All plans of the German telegraphic and telephonic systems shall be handed over to the commander-in-chief of the Allied armies.

**CONVENTION PROLONGING THE ARMISTICE WITH GERMANY, DECEMBER 13, 1918.**

The undersigned, in virtue of the powers with which they were endowed for the signing of the armistice of the 11th November, 1918, have concluded the following additional agreement:

- I. The duration of the armistice signed on the 11th November, 1918, has been prolonged for a month, i. e., till 5 a. m. on the 17th January, 1919. The one-month extension will be further extended until the conclusion of peace preliminaries, provided this arrangement meets with the approbation of the allied Governments.
- II. The clauses of the convention (11th November) which have been incompletely fulfilled will be carried out during the period of extension, according to the conditions laid down by the Permanent International Armistice Commission following the orders given by the Allied generalissimo.
- III. The following clause is added to the convention of the 11th November, 1918:

*[Historical Note]* This condition was first announced in a note of the Allies on December 12, 1918, in which infractions of 12 articles of the armistice by Germany were listed. These included failure to deliver war material, aircraft, railroad rolling stock, and naval vessels in the time and quantity provided. In connection with the last category, the statement read: "Five submarines in Spain, one in Norway, and one in the Netherlands ought to be delivered," and "The refusal of the German Government to deliver the vessels condemned by the prize court is considered as contrary to the terms of the armistice."

Other infractions were stated to be ill-treatment of inhabitants of evacuated territory and neglect of liberated prisoners of war; failure to indicate live mines in evacuated regions; failure to open navigation to the Baltic and removal of securities and gold reserves pledged as a financial guaranty to the Allies.

Germany replied on the same day, asserting her good faith and that such

infractions as had occurred were due to physical impossibilities and the upset conditions of the country. The Allies, however, reasserted the new condition, taking account particularly of “the ill-treatment and cruelty inflicted upon allied prisoners as well as the diminution of financial guaranties given by Germany to the Allies” (quoted in *Holland News* 2: 2520 et seq. from *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 17, 1918).

From now onwards, the generalissimo reserves to himself the right of occupying (when he deems it advisable), as an additional guarantee, the neutral zone on the right bank of the Rhine, north of the bridgehead of Cologne, and as far as the Dutch frontier. Six days’ notice will be given by the generalissimo before the occupation comes into effect.

Trèves, December 13, 1918.

(SIGNED) F. FOCH, ADMIRAL WEMYSS, ERZBERGER, A. OBERNDORFF, WINTERFELDT, VANSELOW (Allied and Associated Powers, 1919”).

## **5. Aftermath of the Great War**

### **a. The Dissolving Empires**

#### **i. The Russian Empire**

The transition from the October Revolution of 1917 to the organised carnage of 1918 was less a blazing epic and more a tragi-comedy of state collapse. By November 1917, the Bolsheviks, under the banner of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, found power lying in the streets of Petrograd and picked it up from there. The fall of the Provisional Government was remarkably bloodless, resulting in only six casualties among the attackers. By early 1918, a formal White opposition began to coalesce in South Russia, centred on the newly formed Volunteer Army. This movement, initiated by General Mikhail Alexiev, positioned itself as the legitimist saviour of Russia against the Bolshevik usurpers. The Reds, meanwhile, held the industrial core but lacked a professional apparatus to defend it. For the Bolsheviks, the first months of 1918 were defined by a desperate pivot from a party of agitators to a state capable of absolute military and political survival (Bullock 2008).

By early 1918, the Bolsheviks recognised that revolutionary zeal alone could not win a conventional war. On March 10, 1918, the capital was moved from the vulnerable Petrograd to the ancient medieval fortress of the Kremlin in Moscow, signalling a retreat to the traditional heartland and a commitment to centralised control. Initially relying on Red Guards, paramilitary forces composed of factory workers, sailors, and politically conscious front-line deserters, led by elected officers. The Bolsheviks found their forces possessed high morale but often failed in strategy, with soldiers sometimes voting on whether to defend positions. To rectify this, the regular, disciplined Red Army was officially formed on February 23, 1918, built via universal military training and conscription, reaching a strength of 600,000 by December. Leon Trotsky, as Commissar for War, transformed this force through two decisive institutional pillars. To provide technical expertise, he mobilised nearly 50,000 former Imperial officers as Military Specialists, whose knowledge of artillery, supply, and aviation was essential despite the risk of treachery. To ensure political reliability, every commander was paired with a Political Commissar who held equal authority, reigning over morale and keeping the specialists under constant surveillance (Bullock 2008).

This internal consolidation was a direct response to the immense external pressure exerted by the Central Powers and the need to secure a separate peace. In March 1918, Lenin faced a geopolitical necessity. As the Bolsheviks dragged their feet during negotiations, the German army launched a massive advance deep into Ukraine and the Crimea. Fearing a total German takeover of the Russian heartland, the Bolsheviks accepted the punitive Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, losing Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Ukraine, and portions of the Caucasus. Beyond the territorial loss, the treaty acted as a catalyst for civil war. It permanently alienated the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, who viewed the peace as a betrayal and turned toward armed revolt. This betrayal also served as a recruitment tool for the Whites, who branded the Bolsheviks as German hirelings and rallied those wishing to restore Russia's territorial integrity (Bullock 2008).

The early White movement was a desperate struggle. In the South, Generals Kornilov, Alexiev, and Denikin forged a resistance primarily composed of officers and teenagers from military schools. Before his suicide in February, General Kaledin found himself so isolated that he could field only one loyal unit, the elite Chernetsov Partisans. The foundational myth of the White resistance became the Ice March, or First Kuban Campaign, of early 1918. Under 4,000 Volunteers fled Rostov-on-Don in February as the Red Army entered. For 80 days, the force

weathered snow and sleet, fighting 40 actions against overwhelming Red forces estimated at over 100,000 in the region. In April, tragedy struck when General Kornilov was killed by a Red artillery shell during the failed attempt to capture Ekaterinodar (Bullock 2008).

The White ideology of a "Russia One and Indivisible" ultimately alienated nationalist states like Poland and Ukraine, who viewed White victory as a return to Russian imperialism, while their political neutrality regarding land reform lost them the support of the peasantry. Furthermore, vesting generals with wide civil power appeared as a veiled dictatorship to those wary of the old order. Ideological splits further weakened the movement, with some leaders like General Krasnov willing to trade with the Germans for arms, while General Denikin remained a pro-Allied legitimist who refused to deal with Russia's World War I enemies (Bullock 2008).

The struggle was not a simple binary, as Third Forces emerged reacting to the extreme centralisation and conscription efforts of both the Reds and Whites. The Blacks were an anarchist grassroots movement believing in local autonomy and freely elected soviets; while they supported land seizures, they were hostile to the Bolsheviks' state-controlled communal farms. The Greens were primarily regional nationalists or peasants living in the forests under a piratical code of honour, fighting for regional independence and the protection of local villages from the requisitioning squads of both major factions. The chaos caused by these groups reinforced the Bolshevik conviction that only total internal repression could secure the revolution (Bullock 2008).

This escalation of violence into systematic Red Terror was officially sanctioned following Fanya Kaplan's failed assassination attempt on Lenin in August 1918. The Cheka, led by Felix Dzerzhinsky, became the shield and sword of the party. It served primarily to eliminate dissent through gruesome internal repression, exterminate the bourgeoisie by systematically targeting the nobility and middle class, and provide political stiffening to endangered military fronts. The Red Terror operated as a psychological tool for survival, signalling that the Bolsheviks were prepared to use a level of iron ruthlessness that dwarfed the actions of their enemies (Bullock 2008).

By December 1918, the conflict had transitioned from localised uprisings to a full-scale continental war. The Bolsheviks remained ensconced in the industrial heartland, surviving by transforming from a revolutionary party into a state power supported by the Red Army and the

Cheka. The White movement, having lost its architect, General Alexiev, in October, saw General Denikin assume command and establish a Special Council to handle civil and military affairs. With the November Armistice ending the World War I German threat, the Reds could concentrate on the Whites, while the Whites pinned their hopes on massive Allied intervention. In 1918 alone, the Volunteers suffered horrific casualties, proving that both sides were committed to a war of extermination. As the year closed, the Whites began to speak of spending the next Christmas in Moscow, unaware of the massive, decisive battles that lay ahead (Bullock 2008).

## ii. The Ottoman Empire

By late 1918, the Ottoman Empire was a phantom of its former self, having suffered the catastrophic 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War, the Trablusgarp and Balkan conflicts, and the state had been bled dry. For the Great Powers, this exhaustion signalled the long-awaited opportunity to resolve a centuries-old geopolitical agenda known as the Eastern Question. Formally articulated during the 1815 Congress of Vienna, the Eastern Question was the strategic dilemma of how the European powers would partition and liquidate Ottoman territories without upsetting the delicate balance of power among themselves. By 1918, the Entente believed they had finally reached the final blow. In Istanbul, Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats were haunted by a singular, desperate question of how the state could be saved. As the empire faced total collapse, five primary thought currents emerged to navigate a path to survival: Westernism advocated for total modernization and integration into the Western political order; Islamism focused on the spiritual and political unity of the Ummah under the Caliphate's authority; Turkism emphasized a shift toward Turkish national identity as the core of the state; Meslek-i İctimat took a sociological approach aiming at fundamental social reform; and Socialism sought state survival through class equity and social justice. While these internal debates raged, the external reality of total defeat moved the struggle from the intellectual realm to the cold, hard terms of a dictated peace (Yurtsever 2023).

The signing of the Armistice of Moudros on October 30, 1918, aboard the British battleship *Agamemnon* did not merely halt hostilities; it served as the legal mechanism to subjugate the Ottoman state. This document dismantled the empire's capacity for self-defence, demanding the surrender of its fleet and control of the Straits. The most lethal instrument of

this surrender was the vague 7th Article, which granted the Entente the right to occupy any strategic point if they deemed their security was threatened. In the hands of the occupiers, Article 7 was not a security measure but a license for the wholesale partition of Anatolia. While the stated justification of the treaty was to establish an immediate cessation of hostilities and maintain order in threatened areas to facilitate a transition toward a final peace based on Wilson's 14 Points, the actual strategic outcome was vastly different. It resulted in the total neutralisation of Ottoman defences, provided a strategic blueprint for the piecemeal occupation of any desired Ottoman territory, and orchestrated the formal beginning of the final blow to the empire's integrity. With the signing of this document, the struggle for national existence shifted from the battlefield to the diplomatic tables of Istanbul, where a weakened government hoped for mercy the victors never intended to grant (Yurtsever 2023).

The Entente Powers, led by Britain and France, viewed the post-war landscape through a purely colonial lens. While Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points offered a veneer of self-determination, the victors applied these principles with cynical selectivity, honouring them only where they did not impede imperial expansion. The Entente's ambitions were categorised into three strategic pillars. First, for partitioning and strategic control, the British intended to turn Istanbul into a second Gibraltar, ensuring permanent naval dominance over the Straits and the Black Sea. Second, there were active, documented plans for mandate systems to transform Anatolia into a second Egypt, reducing the Turkish heartland to a protectorate or a colonial dependency. Finally, the occupiers sought the neutralisation of the Caliphate by keeping the Sultan-Caliph as an impotent figurehead in Istanbul, utilising his religious prestige to maintain order in their own Muslim colonies while stripping the office of any genuine political agency. While the Great Powers treated Ottoman lands as colonial spoils, the leadership in Istanbul remained trapped in a cycle of self-preservation and political retribution (Yurtsever 2023).

Following the armistice, the Ottoman capital descended into a state of political frailty. The Committee of Union and Progress, having overseen the war and the eventual defeat, dissolved itself on November 9, 1918. The incoming administration immediately declared the Committee a national and international enemy, sparking a period of human hunting where former members were arrested and vilified. This was a calculated survival strategy; by scapegoating them for the war's entirety, the new government hoped to appear innocent and secure mercy from the Entente. Sultan Vahdettin navigated this turmoil by rotating Grand Viziers to suit the level of occupier pressure. Ahmet İzzet Paşa attempted the impossible task

of managing the immediate post-armistice fallout but was soon forced to resign. Ahmet Tevfik Paşa, a moderate figure and the Sultan's relative by marriage, was chosen as a mild leader to present a submissive, non-threatening face to the Entente. Later, Damat Ferit Paşa was utilised for his harsh pro-Entente stance, acting as a loyalist lightning rod for the Sultan's policy of total compliance. This revolving door of governments underscored the capital's total impotence. It was into this atmosphere of surrender that the one man capable of challenging the entire structure arrived (Yurtsever 2023).

November 13, 1918, stands as the symbolic nadir of the Ottoman era. On this day, a massive Entente fleet steamed into the Golden Horn, training their heavy guns directly on the Sultan's palace in a profound humiliation of the Caliphate and the Ottoman sovereign. On that same day, Mustafa Kemal Paşa arrived in the city from the southern front. His stay in Istanbul until January 1919 was a period of intense observation, during which he realised that the submissive diplomacy of the capital was a path to national extinction. The official government adopted a policy of not raising a hand against the occupiers to avoid further provocation, seeking survival through mild diplomacy and exploring British or American mandates as the only viable means to preserve the Sultanate. In contrast, Mustafa Kemal witnessed the total duress of the government, concluding it was an occupied tool of the Entente. After attempting to influence the Sultan and Parliament toward a firmer stance, only to meet indifference or fear, he recognised that Istanbul was a diplomatic dead end. The divide was absolute: while Istanbul sought to survive under a foreign shadow, Mustafa Kemal realised the only path toward sovereignty lay in a national resistance movement rooted in Anatolia (Yurtsever 2023).

The period between October 1918 and January 1919 was not a transition to peace, but a volatile power vacuum that served as a political laboratory where the failure of traditional diplomacy made the National Struggle inevitable. A fundamental asymmetry of intent existed; the Ottoman government viewed the armistice as a stop to the fighting and a basis for negotiation, while the Entente viewed it as a license to partition and settle the Eastern Question. Furthermore, the Istanbul leadership prioritised the biological survival of the dynastic house over the political sovereignty of the nation, leading to a fatal willingness to accept mandates. Finally, relying on Wilson's 14 Points was a strategic trap of expectations, as the Entente had no intention of granting self-determination to a state they intended to colonise. The Entente's refusal to grant even the most basic terms of independence rendered the campaign of submissive diplomacy a failure. As the capital remained paralysed by the guns of the fleet, the

focus of the Turkish nation shifted toward the independent spirit of Anatolia, setting the stage for the War of Independence (Yurtsever 2023).

### iii. The Austro-Hungarian Empire

The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire represented the final transformation from dynastic statehood to national statehood. For centuries, the Habsburg monarch was the singular point of gravity for a vast, multi-ethnic empire. However, the rise of modern nationalism transformed this ethnographical mosaic into a site of centrifugal political forces. The traditional legitimacy of the Crown could no longer withstand the ideological pressure of populations demanding sovereign control over their own destinies. The principle of national self-determination, the idea that a collective defined by shared language, culture, or history possesses the inherent right to form an independent government, served as the primary solvent of imperial unity. As the empire's dynastic character became increasingly incompatible with the aspirations of its constituent peoples, extra-constitutional bodies known as National Councils emerged to claim the sovereignty once held by the Emperor, rendering any reform short of full independence obsolete (Bondarenko 2024).

As the imperial structure began to fracture, Emperor Karl I attempted a final, desperate reorganisation to preserve the monarchy's existence through federalisation. Recognising that the old Dual Monarchy was unsustainable, he sought to save the throne by transforming the empire into a federation of free nations to appease national movements before they could fully sever ties with the Crown. On October 16, 1918, he issued the "People's Manifesto," aiming to transform the Austrian half of the empire into a federation of five historical kingdoms: Austria,

Hungary, Carniola, Bohemia-Moravia, and Galicia. However, this reform was explicitly limited to the Austrian part of the empire, excluding the Kingdom of Hungary, to preserve the 1867 Compromise. This proved to be a case of too little, too late. By maintaining the dualism of the empire, the Manifesto failed to satisfy the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs, who demanded a reorganisation that crossed the Austro-Hungarian border, and national movements were no longer interested in federal autonomy within a Habsburg framework. On November 11 and 13, Karl issued the "Eckartsau Declarations," stating that he "paused" his participation in government duties. While the press falsely reported this as a formal abdication, Karl

strategically avoided a legal resignation to leave the door open for a future restoration of his rule (Bondarenko 2024).

These internal manoeuvres were ultimately rendered moot by external diplomatic interventions that shifted the theatre of conflict from the imperial courts to the international stage. The dissolution was a managed dismantling by the Entente powers and the United States, providing the extra-constitutional bodies on the ground with the legitimacy needed to supersede imperial law. On October 19, 1918, the United States Secretary of State Robert Lansing informed the imperial government that federalisation was not enough, signalling that the United States now recognised the independence of the empire's constituent nations and effectively withdrew the possibility of a negotiated peace with the Dual Monarchy as a single entity. In a radical diplomatic manoeuvre, the Entente recognised the Czechoslovak National Council and Yugoslav Committees as de facto belligerent governments. This legitimised the leadership of states that had not yet been physically or legally formed on the map. Furthermore, President Wilson refused to negotiate peace with a Habsburg monarch, actively promoting republican forms of government for the successor states to encourage revolution and ensure the Habsburgs were effectively dethroned (Bondarenko 2024).

This isolation from the international order triggered a rapid sequence of independence declarations as the central authority in Vienna evaporated. Between late October and mid-November 1918, centuries of Habsburg hegemony dissolved in less than three weeks. On October 28, a successful coup d'état in Prague established Czechoslovak independence, led by republicans like Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš. The following day, the Croatian Parliament unanimously terminated its long-standing dynastic union with the Hungarian Crown, seeking a new union with the Yugoslavs. On November 1, the Western Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed in Lviv, signalling the dissolution of the empire's northern administrative reaches. Following the Emperor's declaration to pause his duties, the Republic of German Austria was proclaimed on November 12. Finally, on November 16, the revolutionary National Council formally proclaimed the Republic of Hungary, ending the union with the Habsburgs and the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen (Bondarenko 2024).

The emergence of these successor states necessitated a choice between historical continuity and revolutionary change. While some former territories of the Russian Empire briefly experimented with monarchical systems to ensure stability against Bolshevism, the Austro-Hungarian successor states almost exclusively embraced the republic. For the new

nations, the republic was the ultimate expression of national statehood, signalling that power was no longer a dynastic inheritance but derived from the will of the people. In Hungary, this transition was spearheaded by Count Mihály Károlyi, known as the "Red Count," who bypassed traditional parliamentary forms to establish a republic almost immediately after the King's pause in duties. This rapid shift was viewed by monarchists as a total violation of pre-revolutionary law, arguing that because these republics were often established by quasi-representative bodies rather than through established legal channels, the transition was illegitimate. This perceived usurpation of power provided the ideological grounds for the monarchist counter-revolutions that would follow in the post-war years (Bondarenko 2024).

By January 1919, the idea of a "Danubian United States" had been rejected in favour of a fragmented landscape of independent republics. The transition from a centuries-old imperial system to a series of modern nation-states remains the defining moment of early 20th-century European history. The dissolution demonstrated a profound shift in sovereignty, where political legitimacy moved from dynastic statehood and loyalty to the monarch toward national statehood and the will of the people, fundamentally altering the basis of the rule of law. It also highlighted the necessity of external validation, as the survival of these new states was determined by the strategic recognition of the Entente and the United States, who utilised nationalist aspirations to dismantle the Central Powers. Ultimately, the rapidity of the collapse proved that once international and ideological legitimacy was withdrawn, the structures of the Habsburg Monarchy could not survive (Bondarenko 2024).

#### **iv. The German Empire**

By late 1918, the German High Command faced a strategic collapse that threatened the very foundations of the Imperial state. The Black Day of the German Army at Montdidier on August 8 had stripped the military elite of their grip on the war, rendering the conflict a desperate game of chance. In response, mid-August conferences between the Kaiser, Hertling, Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and the Emperor of Austria concluded that Germany must seek a favourable moment for peace. By September 29, Hindenburg and Ludendorff informed the Chancellor that the Eastern Front was desperate and demanded that the government be broadened to include parliamentary support. They orchestrated a cynical revolution from above, a tactical manoeuvre to forestall a total social upheaval from below. By forcing the

resignation of Chancellor Hertling and installing the liberal-leaning Prince Max of Baden in early October, the military sought to shift the burden of defeat onto the politicians. The Social Democratic Party nominated Bauer and Scheidemann to the cabinet to democratise the state's appearance, and on October 4, the new government proposed an armistice to President Wilson based on his Fourteen Points. This controlled transition was designed to preserve the core of the state and the military's prestige, yet it failed to account for the mounting radicalisation of the masses, for whom a change in cabinet was no substitute for the end of the war and the monarchy (Broué 2005).

The terminal point of military discipline occurred in the Imperial Navy. In late October, the Naval General Staff, seeking to preserve the honour of the admiralty, ordered a final, suicidal honour battle against the British fleet. The sailors, recognising this as a death sentence for a lost cause, refused. Between October 28 and November 4, this mutiny transformed into a national political crisis. The revolt in Kiel saw the election of the first sailors' council under Karl Artelt of the USPD, and when Admiral Souchon was forced to concede to their demands, the myth of officer authority was irrevocably broken. Fearing lethal reprisals, the sailors were forced to spread the revolution, moving inland and shattering the state's coercive power. As mutinous units moved to other cities, the wildfire of the council movement rapidly consumed the regional capitals. In Hamburg, after youth leader Friedrich Peter was killed in a skirmish, a provisional council was formed; in Bremen, under Adam Frasukiewicz, a general strike ensued as sailors joined workers in electing councils; in Stuttgart, Spartacist Fritz Rück led a city-wide workers' council following a strike at Daimler; in Munich, USPD leader Kurt Eisner collaborated with the Peasant League, leading to the flight of King Ludwig III and the proclamation of the Bavarian Republic; and in Brunswick, Spartacist August Merges became President of the Socialist Republic following the ruling prince's abdication (Broué 2005).

The revolutionary movement was a fragmented spectrum of competing visions. The Majority Social Democrats (SPD), led by Ebert and Scheidemann, were fundamentally committed to democracy over Bolshevik methods, collaborating with the old state to prevent Russian-style chaos. Their strategy was one of pre-emption, as seen when they advocated for Karl Liebknecht's release on October 21 solely to deprive him of the halo of a martyr. The Independent Social Democrats (USPD) acted as a centrist bridge between reform and revolution. While leaders like Haase remained hesitant, the party's true engine was the Revolutionary Delegates, a clandestine network of Berlin factory leaders led by Richard Müller

and Emil Barth, who provided the organisational muscle for the coming insurrection. Finally, the Spartacists, led by Liebknecht and Luxemburg, formed the radical vanguard seeking a socialist republic based on councils. However, Liebknecht faced a profound paradox; though a heroic symbol to the masses, he stood alone without a general staff, his Berlin group numbering only about fifty activists, leaving him dependent on the more cautious Revolutionary Delegates. As the USPD and Delegates argued over revolutionary gymnastics, the pressure on the SPD intensified, forcing them to join the movement they had previously sought to suppress to maintain control (Broué 2005).

On November 9, 1918, the physical movement of workers' battalions from the industrial districts into the heart of Berlin signalled the end of the Hohenzollern era. As thousands of workers and fraternizing soldiers converged on the city centre, the institutional vacuum was filled by two competing proclamations that highlighted the fracture in the revolutionary movement. Philipp Scheidemann, in a spontaneous and unauthorised act from a balcony of the Reichstag, proclaimed the German Republic as a strategic pre-emption of the radicals, an act that reportedly infuriated Friedrich Ebert, who still hoped for a constitutional continuity or even a Regency. Shortly thereafter, Karl Liebknecht, standing on the balcony of the Imperial Palace, proclaimed the German Socialist Republic, calling for a state of councils and world revolution. The final collapse was confirmed when Prince Max of Baden, without the Kaiser's permission, announced the abdication of Wilhelm II and transferred the Chancellorship to Ebert, leaving Germany in a state of dual power between Ebert's legal government and the revolutionary council system (Broué 2005).

To prevent a fratricidal struggle and stabilise the state, the SPD and USPD formed a Socialist Unity government. Liebknecht and the radicals had initially presented six conditions for collaboration, functioning as a blueprint for a proletarian state: proclamation of a Socialist Republic, all power to the councils, exclusion of all bourgeois ministers, participation only until the armistice was concluded, technical ministries to be under the control of political staff, and parity of representation between the two parties. In a calculated move to maintain the old state's machinery, the SPD rejected the first four conditions, refusing to accept a class dictatorship, and only accepted the final two. The struggle for control culminated in the Busch Circus meeting on November 10, where Otto Wels orchestrated a masterful tactical manoeuvre. By printing 40,000 leaflets demanding unity and parity, he flooded the meeting with soldiers who desired an end to the war rather than a social revolution. The SPD used the soldiers to

swamp the more radical factory delegates, forcing the resulting Executive Committee of the councils into a parity of twelve SPD-aligned soldiers and twelve workers split evenly between the SPD and USPD. The final settlement produced a six-member Council of People's Commissars consisting of Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann, and Otto Landsberg for the SPD, alongside Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittmann, and Emil Barth for the USPD (Broué 2005).

The rapid transformation of the German state from a military monarchy to a republic was an event of seismic proportions, yet the victory was marked by a new reality of deep internal contradictions. The Hohenzollerns and all regional princely houses were swept away in a matter of days, ending centuries of monarchical tradition. However, a precarious institutional dualism emerged between the legal cabinet of People's Commissars and the revolutionary council system, creating a state of permanent friction. The end of World War II merely signalled the beginning of an internal civil conflict over the nature of the German state, as the consensus on peace gave way to a violent divide between parliamentary democracy and council socialism. As Karl Liebknecht declared, it only took four days to break the rule of capitalism, but while the monarchy had fallen, those four days of November only set the stage for the turbulent birth of the Weimar Republic, a state born from the compromise between the old order and a fragmented revolution (Broué 2005).

## **6. Questions to be Addressed**

- How will the conference reconcile President Woodrow Wilson's idealistic principles of "self-determination" with the imperial, strategic, and colonial ambitions of the victorious Entente powers?
- What specific mechanisms will the proposed League of Nations utilise to guarantee political independence and territorial security for all nations, and how will membership be determined?
- How should the conference address the contradictory and controversial nature of secret wartime agreements, such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of London, and the Constantinople Agreement, which the Bolsheviks exposed to the world?

- How should the borders of the dissolved Russian, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and German Empires be redrawn to balance emerging national identities with long-term regional stability?
- What unified approach, if any, should the international community take regarding the geopolitical vacuum and the ideological threat posed by Bolshevik Russia, especially given their exclusion from these peace negotiations?
- How will the former colonial possessions of Germany and the territories of the Ottoman Empire (particularly in the Middle East, Africa, and the Pacific) be administered without simply reverting to 19th-century imperialism?
- What coordinated efforts are required to manage the massive post-war humanitarian crises, including the devastating global death toll from the Spanish Flu pandemic and widespread, blockade-induced famines?
- To what extent should the defeated Central Powers, particularly the newly formed German Republic, be held financially and morally culpable for the damages incurred during the Great War?
- Should individual leaders who orchestrated the war or committed wartime atrocities, such as the exiled Kaiser Wilhelm II or the Young Turk triumvirate (the Three Pashas), face international prosecution?
- How can the conference ensure that punitive measures and territorial stripping do not trigger the complete economic and political collapse of the newly formed successor states?
- Could and which of the National Representatives of the Paris Peace Conference could be accepted as signing countries to the treaties?

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