

THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

WASHINGTON, DC 20319-5078

Strategies of the Great War

6008

Fall 2020

Academic Year 2020-2021

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Strategies of the Great War

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Course Overview: Strategies of the Great War

Introduction

Background:

It was known as “The Great War.” “The war to end all wars.” “The war to make the world safe for democracy.” In retrospect, the First World War is remembered as one of the greatest upheavals in history, the effects of which continue to be felt long after the peace treaties were signed. One hundred years after World War I -- the centennial of Armageddon -- it is appropriate that we look anew at this conflict to better understand what happens when the calculus of empire fails, when you fail to understand both the kind of war into which you embark, and the political, economic, and social order that follows.

“Strategies of the Great War” is divided into three parts. In **Part I** we will identify and assess the interplay between military, political and economic strategies of European empires at the dawn of the 20th century. We will examine why what everyone assumed would be a short war dragged on for over four and a half years. We will look at the great powers and ask, “What went wrong and what went right?” We’ll begin in the second half of the 19th century and see how these calculations -- *miscalculations*, really -- played out right up until August, 1914. Seldom in history (if ever) have so many strategic assumptions piled up upon each other so quickly -- and collapsed. What happens when virtually *all of* your pre-war military, political, and economic assumptions are proved wrong -- and there is no “Plan B”?

Part II will focus on the war itself. “Strategies of the Great War” is not a military history course per se, but we must and will familiarize ourselves with the war's major campaigns to understand their strategic context. In 1914, war was by no means new to the states of Europe, but for the first time in WWI we find an example of what may be called “total war,” in which all the resources of the warring states were brought to bear in a terrible clash of technologies, economies, and whole populations. In an era of multiple *asymmetric challenges* between a lone superpower and everyone else, many regard traditional state-on-state wars as a thing of the past. But we must remember that the slaughter of WWI was directly the result of a *clash of symmetries*, and of the failure for over two years of tactician and technologist to adapt to the new reality. Nevertheless, by 1917 changes were afoot, and as we shall see, each major actor chose a significantly different strategy to break the impasse of the trenches.

Finally, in **Part III** we address the “so what” of the Great War. The US has typically regarded “revolution” as a bracketed, discreet historical event. But the Great War unleashed revolutionary *processes* at the strategic level whose echoes resonate among us even today. In Russia and Germany these revolutions were political and violent; in the United States, the war changed the country politically and economically and challenged Americans’ understanding of themselves and their country’s place in the world; in the technical realm, revolutionary modes of war emerged, including air power, armored forces, and attack submarines -- a harbinger of so-called RMAs today. Who or what started the war and how did it finally end? Whose interests did it

serve? Were the sacrifices justified by the outcome? What factors or conditions generated by the war led directly to the disasters that followed?

We must identify the strategic lessons of the First World War. Just over one hundred years ago British journalist and politician Norman Angell wrote *The Great Illusion*, in which he argued that a general war among Europe's great powers was no longer practical. *The Great Illusion* held that the dramatic and complex growth of commercial ties both between European powers and the rest of the world meant that now, in 1910, a major war between those powers would be unthinkable -- or at least irrational -- because it would be *unprofitable*. So influential was Angell's argument that in 1910 excerpts were read aloud in the British Parliament to encourage defense cuts! Then as now, military strategists thought any general European conflict would be short. Then as now, dormant new powers waited in the wings, ready to fill the vacuum should other states, powerful and long-established, destroy themselves.

Approach:

The course consists of twelve two-hour sessions that will analyze issues covered in the readings through group discussion. Student presentations, guest lectures, and visual graphics and handouts and video clips as appropriate will augment the discussion on occasion; the goal is an unconstrained environment that will foster insightful analysis from all perspectives.

A note on the readings:

1. **Please note that readings are in a prioritized order.** *This order reflects a coherence to the theme of each particular class for that day.*
2. *The main text of "Strategies of the Great War" is James Stokesbury's "A Short History of World War I."* Stokesbury was a Canadian historian who had an extraordinarily clear writing style (he died in his nineties in the mid-1990s). His level of detail and treatment of topics is appropriate for an elective that meets for twelve classes.
3. *In addition to Stokesbury's book, I have attempted to make as great a use as possible of what I term "vintage sources."* These could in some academic circles actually qualify as *original* sources but I will be conservative and call them "vintage." These were penned before, during or shortly after the war. They capture the assumptions and views of the era. Part of the historian's dilemma is that it may take decades or even centuries after a momentous event for the importance of it to be fully recognized. But after so long a period of time, historians -- and ordinary people -- have lost the *context* in which these events played out. Our challenge is to identify those writings in which the author knew he was describing an event or process of import, and in which he preserves in a measured, if not detached, tone its actual context.
4. *Finally, some readings are caveated as "alternate" or "scan" readings.* Sections of Martin Gilbert's *The First World War (1994)* may be read in addition to or as an alternative to those previously listed. Gilbert does an excellent job of explaining in detail the events of the war in

the greater context as well as the experience of individual participants. “*Scan readings*” are tracts that you should briefly peruse to capture the "feel" of what the author tried to convey without getting bogged down in its detailed substance. For "scan readings" you should at least read the first sentence of every paragraph; if you find the material especially compelling, by all means engage the article's substance in more detail.

Course Learning Outcomes

The course has three main objectives:

1. Understand the context and the strategies of the great European imperial powers at the dawn of the 20th century.
2. Understand why these strategies failed -- or at least met with only partial success, and the second and third order effects of those failures.
3. Appreciate how and why military strategists as well as diplomats at that time struggled to adapt -- again, at the strategic level -- when confronted with the failure of existing paradigms and doctrine.

Absence Policy

Attendance is mandatory so absences should be avoided if at all possible. The Instructor must be notified in advance of any anticipated absence. Regardless of absences, students must still meet all stated course objectives to pass the course. Thus students who have missed one or more class sessions may be required to complete compensatory assignments at the course director's discretion. Additionally, any student who has missed one or more classes and questions his/her ability to meet the course objectives regardless of compensatory work completed should ask the course director for further remedial assistance.

With the exception of absences due to required International Student Management Office (ISMO) events, any student who misses four or more sessions of a course will meet with a faculty board that will consider whether to recommend disenrollment to the NWC Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs and the Commandant. The Board will consider both extenuating circumstances and the student's potential to meet the course objectives. The Commandant will make the final decision on the student's status.

The above policies apply equally to U.S. students, International Fellows, and students from other NDU components.

Assessment

Students must meet all stated course objectives to pass this course. In determining the student's final grade, the faculty seminar leaders will evaluate seminar performance, as evident by preparation, active weekly participation in discussions, the completion of a 15 minute group battle briefing, and completion of a 6 page paper. In determining the final grade, the decisive weight will go to the quality of the student's seminar performance.

Students must demonstrate mastery of the stated course objectives to pass this course. The course director will use performance on the following assessments to determine each student's final grade: seminar performance 30%, paper 60%, and battle presentation 10%

The following grading scale will be followed:

Letter Grade	Descriptor	Grade Points
A	Exceptional Quality	4.00
A-	Superior Quality	3.70
B+	High Quality	3.30
B	Expected/Acceptable Quality	3.00
B-	Below Expected Quality	2.70
C	Unsatisfactory Quality	2.00
P	Pass	0.00
F	Fail/Unacceptable Quality	0.00
I	Incomplete	0.00

Students who fail to complete all course requirements in the time allotted will receive an overall grade of Incomplete (I). All incompletes must be completed according to the time frame agreed upon with the course director. Incompletes that remain unresolved at graduation revert to a grade of Fail (F). In both cases, the student will enter a remediation program in effort to bring the student's performance up to passing standards.

A student who does not sufficiently meet course objectives as indicated by overall performance on course assessments will receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (C). In this case, the student will enter remediation to conduct additional study and raise his/her performance to an acceptable level. If a student refuses remediation or fails in the process, the grade will convert to Fail (F).

Any student may appeal any course grade. Within a week of the release of the grade, request a review by the course director. Should this review not lead to a satisfactory resolution, submit a written petition to the NWC Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs within two weeks of the release of the grade. The Dean of Faculty and Academic Programs will convene a faculty panel to conduct a formal review; the decision of that panel will be final.

Original Work

As described in the Student Catalog, and to avoid any ambiguity, the College has carefully defined “original work.” The term “original” within the NWC research and writing program means both “produced by the author” and “produced for the first time.” Thus, papers, written to satisfy NWC writing requirements must be produced during the student’s tenure at NWC, be submitted to satisfy only one writing requirement (excludes approved expanded and long papers) and contain the student’s own ideas and analysis except as documented by appropriate citations. Complying with the original work definition will avoid potential issues of plagiarism. When in doubt about options or requirements, consult a faculty advisor or the Associate Dean of Research and Outreach.

Acknowledgments: This course was originally developed by the NWC CIA Chair, Mr. Steven Sigal, a colleague and historian of considerable repute. World War One was Steve’s passion, something that is clearly reflected in the effort he put into this course. When he departed NWC, Steve was kind enough to allow me to continue his work; while I have made several small changes to the curriculum, the credit must go to Steve. Any errors in the syllabus are my own.

Part I: The Strategies
Topic 1: Introduction: The Strategies of Empire

Overview

In the end, they will say that the 20th century began and concluded in Serbia.

In an apocryphal story, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck is said to have predicted a year before his death in 1898 that “one day the great European War will come out of some damned foolish thing in the Balkans.”

Some damned foolish thing in the Balkans... During WWI, one out of every four Serbians died -- not one out of four military-aged males, *but one fourth of all Serbians*. If any state, if any people emerged the losers from WWI it was Serbia and the Serbs. Even after 1918, even after 1945, the 20th century was not finished with Serbia. The first of four Balkan civil wars began in 1989, when a Yugoslav gunboat flying Serb colors shelled a coastal city on the Adriatic. Both the ship and its target city were named *Dubrovnik*.

There were, conservatively, nine million combat deaths in WWI. Five million of them were Russian. In WWI, one out of three military-aged Frenchmen became a casualty, half of them dead, and half of those to this day lie in unmarked graves, or in the great ossuary at Verdun. A million men from Great Britain died in WWI and half of them lie in unmarked graves as well. That number would have been even higher were it not for the work of the imperial poet Rudyard Kipling, whose work with the British Graves Commission and whose own ten year search for his son, killed at Loos in 1915, left him a broken man, emblematic of all the broken fathers of 1914-1918 who mourned a Lost Generation.

As horrific as the human cost of the war was, it would take some time before those who survived and future generations could comprehend the unprecedented transformation of the global economy and its political structures.

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In our first class we look at the strategies -- and assumptions -- of empire one hundred years ago. How did the statesmen of all major countries at the time help to construct what Henry Kissinger called “the diplomatic doomsday mechanism,” while the military generals developed “total war” strategies with no consideration of their political consequences? Were the strategies, as Marx would have argued, indistinguishable between the great powers? Or were the drivers behind a maritime power such as Great Britain substantively different from that of a continental one such as Germany? What was the *character* of war at the dawn of the 20th century and the *utility of force*? What instruments of state power were available to imperial strategists of that era, who sought to preserve the peace *and* continue the march of empire? Was the First World War, as Thucydides would have reminded us, ultimately fought because of fear, honor, or interest?

Key Questions

1. What was the character of European empire one hundred years ago and how did this affect their strategic planning? What are the conventional explanations for how states acted then -- and how they came into conflict with each other in 1914?
2. What was the character of war in the early 20th century before 1914? What were its limitations -- and what opportunities did it present the strategist with?
3. Was WWI inevitable?

Required Readings (110 pgs)

1. van Evera, Stephen, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Military Origins of the First World War," in Military Strategy & the Origins of the First World War, Miller, Steven (ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973, pp. 58-107. *Clausewitz said that all things being equal, defense in war and battle offers more advantages than that of offense. In the century since WWI, military historians -- and planners and strategists -- have grappled with a difficult question: what happens when each of the antagonists enters a war with a strategy that demands they attack?*
2. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 11-34). *Stokesbury taught history in Canada before his death in his nineties fifteen years ago. His is arguably the most clearly written account in English of the Great War, in a length and level of detail appropriate to this course.*
3. Hayes, Carlton J.H., A Brief History of the Great War, MacMillan, New York, 1920, Ch. 1 "The Great War Comes," pp. 1-20 *Not two years after the guns fell silent one academic tried to pen the broad outlines of the what was even then already called simply, "The Great War.. Now that you've seen in reading #1 a "current" view of the war's context, look at what it was shortly after it ended.*
4. Tuchman, Barbara, The Guns of August, Random House, New York 1962. Chapter 1
5. Gilbert, Martin. The First World War, Henry Hold and Co, New York, 1994. Chapter 1 and 2. (alternate reading)

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Mijatovich, Chedomille, The Memoirs of a Balkan Diplomatist, Cassell, London, 1917, pp.227-250, & Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich, Prince, The Serbian People: Their Past Glory & Their Destiny, Vol. II, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1910, pp. 713-729. *Gathering dust in the NDU library are two ancient tracts, in which the authors try passionately to inform the English-speaking reader of Serbia's importance to European security.*

2. Massie, Robert K., Dreadnought, Ballantine, New York, Ch. 4, and Ch. 33, "The Navy Scare of 1909," pp. 609-625. *In recent decades the argument has emerged that one can find the origins of WWI in Germany's 19th century decision to build a "blue water" navy, which challenged England's naval strategic assumptions. Massie's detailed two-volume history of the great powers in the years before WWI begins with "Dreadnought." In this reading, Massie fleshes out this argument.*

3. von Bernhardi, General Friederich, Britain as Germany's Vassal (translated by J. Ellis Barker), George H. Doran, New York, 1914, Ch. 4, pp. 105-119. *A superb -- if disturbing -- articulation of the "social Darwinism" prevalent in the pre-WWI era. Von Bernhardi unapologetically argues that war purifies and strengthens the human gene pool -- why Germany must prevail in the coming contest.*

Topic 2: The Strategies: Germany & Austro-Hungary

Overview

In the eloquent words of John Keegan, “*Lightning victory in the next war had been the dream of every general staff for fifty years before 1914. When war came, France and Germany raced to deliver the knockout blow. The French war plan was a disastrous failure. The German war plan seemed a brilliant success...*”

Among military historians the von Schlieffen Plan is an icon of WWI historiography. Many of us have a general understanding of Germany's sweeping effort to hurl seven armies west immediately upon the outbreak of any future hostilities with France. But nothing in war occurs in a vacuum, and the plan's executor, Helmuth von Moltke (the younger), forgot that in war the enemy also gets to "vote" on your plan. It was the elder von Moltke who said “Therefore no plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force,” often shortened to something like “no plan survives first contact with the enemy.” How and why did Moltke deviate from the Schlieffen’s plan, and what was the outcome? Thus, the role of chance, and of the organic assumptions German strategists made in formulating the von Schlieffen plan, will be the focus of Topic 2.

We will also address Germany's often overlooked partner in WWI, Austria-Hungary. Considering the events of the early days and weeks of the war, did German strategists have an adequate understanding of the function and capability of Vienna and Budapest in a future European war?

Key Questions

1. What are Germany’s perceived national interests in 1914? What role does Germany play in the European balance of power and how stable or unstable was the European diplomatic and strategic system then?
2. What were the main German assumptions going into the war? Which were wrong and which were right?
3. What was the precise role of a major ally such as Austria-Hungary in the German calculus?
4. What was the role of chance and what Thucydides called the “imponderables” of war when August 1914 arrived?

Required Readings (78 pgs)

1. Stokesbury, James L., *A Short History of World War I*, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 36-59.

2. Scan reading: Stokesbury, Ch. 5, pp. 61-74. *Recall from the Syllabus introduction that for "scan readings" you should read at least the first sentence of every paragraph -- and of course if time permits and you find the content compelling, plow on into the rest of the paragraph as practical.*

3. Hamilton, Richard F., Herwig, Holger H., Decisions for War, 1914-1917, Cambridge, pp. 47-69. *This course does not dwell in detail on Austria-Hungary, one of the major actors in WWI (indeed, a running joke for years has been that in the popular board game "Diplomacy," no one wants to play the role of the hapless Hapsburgs). So here at the outset we examine Herwig's broad sketch of the Budapest-Vienna situation.*

4. Mommsen, Wolfgang J., "Domestic Factors in German Foreign Policy," in Herwig, Holger H., The Outbreak of World War I: Causes and Responsibilities, pp. 48-55. *Despite the stereotype of a heavily militarized society, Wilhelmine Germany in 1914 was experiencing a growing social-democratic agenda in the Reichstag. In the rush to study the von Schlieffen plan we often overlook the all-important domestic context of Germany in 1914.*

5. Tuchman, The Guns of August, Ch. 2.

6. Gilbert, The First World War, Ch. 3 and 4. (alternate reading)

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Massie, Robert K., Dreadnought, Ballantine, New York, Ch. 4, "Bismarck's Grand Design," pp.76-103. *The title of this chapter says it all.*

2. von Bernhardi, General Friederich, Britain as Germany's Vassal (translated by J. Ellis Barker), George H. Doran, New York, 1914, Ch. 8 & 9 (pp. 165-187/189-203). *In these chapters von Bernhardi opines on the military preparations of the great powers on the eve of war and how Germany might fare should one break out.*

3. Toynbee, Arnold J., The German Terror in Belgium, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1917, pp. 65-81. *Toynbee was, by the mid-20th century, one of the world's leading historians. In this 1917 work he simply catalogs different accounts of reported German atrocities in Belgium during the opening campaign of 1914. Note that this selection from this book was chosen entirely at random, so consistent is the theme throughout the entire text.*

Topic 3: The Strategies: England and France

Overview

Just as Germany envisioned delivering Keegan's "knockout blow" in the west, so too did France develop a plan to cripple the Reich quickly. But by 1914 France had the burden of decades of recovery from ignominious defeat in 1870 in which it had attempted to wage positional warfare while Prussia waged a war of maneuver. Drawing the wrong lesson from this conflict, France prepared to launch a massive offensive of maneuver warfare against Germany in a future war. Indeed, France's German strategy basically rested on the one-dimensional concept of "revanche" -- revenge for 1870.

England in 1914 was an island kingdom that thought and acted like one. It entered the 20th century with a superb, but tiny, professional army that had to become, by definition, an expeditionary force ready to intervene decisively on the Continent. But would she?

As with Germany, we will ask in Topic 3, what went right for both France and England, and what went wrong? What were their assumptions -- and were these reasonable? What did France and England have to do in 1914, or lose the war?

Key Questions

1. What are the advantages and pitfalls of coalition warfare, and how major a factor was this for England and France in 1914?
2. Why did France blindly embrace the offensive, and how was France's Plan XVII different from Germany's Schlieffen plan in terms of resourcing and execution?
3. What was England's perceived role in enforcing the world order at the dawn of the 20th century? In what ways did its "Imperial Strategy" adopted in 1903 help or hinder its efforts in 1914?
4. What did both France and England get right, and what did they get wrong, when war came?

Required Readings (72 pgs)

Note: *Be sure and get to the Tuchman chapter on France/reading #4 so pace yourself!*

1. Stokesbury, James L., *A Short History of World War I*, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 6, "The War at Sea," pp. 75-89. *A synopsis of the maritime element to the Great War's context.*
2. **Scan Reading:** Massie, Robert K., *Castles of Steel*, Ballantine, New York, Ch. 28 "The Blockade of Germany," pp. 503-521 *England did not fear invasion at the start of WWI -- she*

feared starvation, brought about by losing control of the sea. It was not for nothing that Churchill remarked of the chief of the Royal Navy in 1916 that he was the only man in the British Empire who could have lost the war in a single day. Here Massie's massive volume outlines both the offensive and defensive implications of a naval strategy to fight a land war.

3. **Scan Reading:** [Author's name as given] "The Military Correspondent to The Times," Imperial Strategy, John Murry, London, 1906, pp. 16-29. *The author of this book -- anonymously published in 1906 -- had been a British officer who had a scandalous affair with another officer's wife and was cashiered out of the army. He found a better vocation as a journalist who specialized in military affairs. Here, eight years before the war, he sketches England's strategic position in the world -- and what in his view could end it.*

4. Tuchman, Barbara W., The Guns of August, Ballantine, New York, 2004, Ch. 3 and Ch. 4. *Consider this the obligatory homage to Tuchman's classic. Ch. 3 captures the French dilemma between Sedan and 1914 better than anyone else.*

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Massie, Robert K., Dreadnought, Ballantine, New York, Ch. 23, "Jacky Fisher", pp. 401-432. *Despite having a reputation as the most hidebound human institution ever conceived, the Royal Navy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was actually the epitome of technical innovation. Jacky Fisher was the architect of the Royal Navy; to understand it, one must look at its designer and chief champion before the war. Of note, Fisher, like his German counterpart von Tirpitz, spent the middle of his career in naval R&D, which placed him in the perfect spot to appreciate the latest developments that were affecting fleet tactics and maritime strategy.*

2. [Author's name as given] "The Military Correspondent to The Times", Imperial Strategy, John Murry, London, 1906, Ch. 11 "Railway Strategy," pp. 180-210 (with illustrations). *If European defense planners failed to appreciate the lessons of firepower derived from the American Civil War, they did not miss the implications of railroads and logistics. Here the Time's military correspondent makes it clear that like Germany, London too had given careful consideration to how to militarize rail in the event of crisis.*

3. Wright, Malcom, "Facts & Figures Concerning the British Army of 1914," "Magweb" No. 10, 1997. *A very brief snapshot of what the BEF drew from in 1914.*

Topic 4: The Strategies: Russia, the US, and Other Fronts

Overview

History often offers tempting themes that masquerade as patterns. But for Russia, one pattern clearly and consistently stands out: Long periods of internal repression and stagnation build internal pressures for reform that are only released when Moscow experiences war.

A century before WWI, an infusion of French and German officers had offered the potential for sweeping military -- and even social -- reform. This movement became manifest in the so-called Decembrist Revolt in the 1820s when young officers, exposed to a post-medieval, modern Europe, attempted a coup to force Russia into the modern era. In the 1860s and 1870s following the Crimean War debacle, the serfs were freed and reforms that Europe had experienced a century earlier were introduced into the Russian army. After its ignominious defeat by Japan in 1905, a parliament -- the Duma -- was formed.

Despite -- or perhaps because of -- these advances, Russia in 1914 was a powder keg of frustrated radicals, a resigned middle class, a hopelessly stultified aristocracy, an omnipresent secret police, and illiterate peasant masses barely distinguishable from their medieval ancestors. When reformers and radicals alike referred to a revolution in Russia they spoke of its coming as "when" not "if".

Thus, the Russian Army in 1914 remained a blunt instrument for whatever strategy the czar might embrace. When war came, Russia's early horrendous defeats forced to the surface the country's miasma of decay, injustice, and backwardness. But 5 million Russian soldiers would die before the powder keg ignited.

On the other side of the planet, an emerging great power awaited its moment on the world stage. In Topic 4 we will contrast the strategic positions of Russia and America a hundred years ago, a time when the US had begun to institutionalize in its military strategy the mythology of America as an "island nation."

Key Questions

1. What was the strategic position and perspective of Russia in the early 20th century? As a continental power, what did Russia have to do to remain a *great* power?
2. What was the strategic position and perspective of the United States in the early 20th century? In what ways was the US involved in the war long before it enters the war in 1917?
3. What were the key domestic factors for both countries?

Required Readings (80 pgs)

1. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 5, "The War in the East," pp. 61-74; Ch. 9, "The Dardanelles", pp. 115-127; and Ch. 14, "Imperial Wars and Colonial Campaigns," pp. 180-193.
2. Lincoln, W. Bruce, Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War & Revolution, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1986, Ch.1. "It's A Wide Road That Leads to War," pp. 41-59. *To a generation of students of Russian history, Lincoln was the premier authority on how the Bolsheviks came to power. Here in chapter one, he sets the stage for the war that would end 300 years of czarist rule.*
3. Leavin, D.C.B., "Russia Accepts a General War," in Military Strategies of the First World War, Princeton University, Princeton, pp. 105-112. *Perhaps the greatest single miscalculation of the 1st World War era was Europe's assumption that Russia could not mobilize for war in less than six weeks. Here Leavin examines in greater detail than Stokesbury the critical opening moves of Russia in 1914.*
4. Tuchman, Chapter 5.
5. Gilbert, The First World War, Ch. 15 and 18 (alternative reading)

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Ludendorff, General Eric von, My War Memories, 1914-1918, Vol. I, Hutchinson, London, 1919, "Tannenberg," pp. 41-73. *One of the premier imperial German warlords, Ludendorff in 1919 bitterly composed his memoirs. We will hear more from Ludendorff in later classes; here the architect of one of the war's most decisive battles describes the situation.*
2. Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, August 1914, Penguin, 1974, Ch.1, pp. 7-16. *Arguably if you must read only one Solzhenitsyn novel in your lifetime it would be something other than August 1914. But having read my share of ponderous Russian novels, no other work in the genre has a grander opening chapter -- and is so appropriate for this course on World War I.*

Part II: To The Green Fields Beyond

Topic 5: Movie: *Joyeux Noël*

Overview:

Today we'll be watching the 2005 film "***Joyeux Noël***" (Merry Christmas), a movie that portrays events during the impromptu "Christmas Truce" of 1914. Although the movie is fiction (in that characters were invented for it and that events that actually occurred during the Christmas Truce are consolidated), it is based solidly in fact.

By the winter of 1914 the trench line that extended across France had more or less stabilized, leaving German and Allied troops often a stone's throw away from their enemies. In many sectors, the closeness of the enemy led to some communication and impromptu ceasefires, although overt fraternization was rare. This changed during the Christmas season, when these impromptu ceasefires, begun over a mutually agreed on truces to buried bodies, escalated into fraternization on a wide scale, including carol singing, games of soccer, and exchange of gifts. It is estimated that over 100,000 troops on both sides engaged in the "Christmas truce" of 1914 in activities very similar to those portrayed in the film.

Such activity was obviously not condoned by higher authorities on either side, who learned of the truces through mail censorship. Word soon got out to the press, forcing high commands on both sides to downplay the truces, noting they were little more than temporary cease fires. Although there were no serious repercussions, in future years the reminder to the troops that fraternization amounted to treason effectively ended any further Christmas truces. Given how the war had devolved considerably in violence, however, it is doubtful whether the soldiers of 1915-1918 saw the war in the same light as their earlier comrades.

Key Questions:

1. What were the reasons for the Christmas Truce? Why did it occur on such a large scale?
2. What does the film show of the relationships between Allies? Is this realistic?
3. Did higher commands have reason for alarm, given the temporary nature of the Christmas truce?

Readings: none.

Topic 6: 1915-1917: Catastrophe

Next Week: Paper topics due electronically by COB Topic 7

Overview

By the end of 1915 the “romance” of warfare had worn off in the face of mounting casualties – 2 million by the end of 1915 – and the transition from the maneuver warfare of 1914 to static, trench warfare. Was this a collapse of strategic thinking or a “strategic pause” until someone could think of something better? 1915-1917 saw the significant campaigns -- often referred to somewhat misleadingly as battles in WWI historiography -- that so characterized WWI. Student-led case studies will survey the Flanders salient (Loos/1st, 2nd, & 3rd Ypres), Gallipoli, the Somme, and Verdun. It is also important to look at one of the few successful Russian campaigns of WWI, the Brusilov Offensive.

These were the great campaigns of the middle of the Great War, typified by trench warfare. By the end of 1916, with both sides nearing exhaustion, changes began to sweep the war at all levels. Both sides' strategists sought the elusive return to maneuver warfare, when the troops would break through the enemy's trenches, and pour out “to the green fields beyond,” as the British CONOP for Cambrai described it. It is these changes, at the strategic level, that interest us in the second half of Topic 5. (We will also unflinchingly go back sixty years, to the Petersburg campaign of 1864-1865 in the American Civil War to see if the character of trench warfare in America at that time was a unique phenomenon, or if there were universal consistencies whose lessons could have saved Europe so much suffering six decades later.)

In addition, we want to pause, and look at a handful of the leading strategists who by this time have emerged as critical to their countries' war efforts. Who were Foch, Petain, Fischer and Haig, Brusilov and, lastly and grimly, Falkenhayn and Ludendorff? It is important to analyze these leaders in light of the context and the strategic choices presented to them at the time. As B.H. Liddell Hart wrote, “When the conditions of the War are analyzed, it becomes clear that in the qualifications for high command, and still more for strategic direction, there was little in pre-war experience that helped a man, while there was much that might handicap the development of his personal qualities...The discovery of uncomfortable facts had never been encouraged in armies, who treated their history as a sentimental treasure rather than a field of scientific research. Thus all were amateurs in that war from the moment when the opening moves broke down, and the real nature of the war emerged from the artificial mould of convention in which the pre-war plans and forces had been cast. The question which remained was how quickly they could learn...”

Key Questions

1. What do you do when ALL of your pre-war strategy assumptions are proven wrong – and there is no “Plan B”?
2. What are the major *strategic* similarities, differences, and considerations between the

terrible campaigns of 1915-1917?

3. What was Churchill's calculus in advocating the Gallipoli campaign? Was he right or wrong?
4. What did the commanders during this period get *right*?
5. What factors drove the experiences of WWI's leading strategists that may have caused their alleged inability to change?

Required Readings (32)

1. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 7, "The Western Front, 1915," pp. 90-101; Ch. 11, "The Love Battles" pp. 140-156; Ch. 13, "The Navy Gets Its Chance," pp. 168-179. *1915 saw a surprising amount of maneuver warfare, despite the now ubiquitous trenches. But why did F. Scott Fitzgerald, less than a decade after the guns fell silent, describe Verdun as "an explosion of love"? Finally, Ch. 13 is the clearest description of the complex naval battle of Jutland I have ever encountered. By this point in the course it should be clear to you why Churchill called British fleet commander Jellicoe "the only man who could lose the war in an afternoon."*

2. Adams, R. J. Q., Arms and the Wizard: Lloyd George and the Ministry of Munitions, 1915-1916, Texas A&M, 1978, pp. 16-19, 28-35. *A snapshot of an economy unprepared for a long war. In 1915 Britain experienced a severe ammunition shortage. Here Adams -- probably the preeminent American authority on WWI Britain -- briefly sketches a profile of David Lloyd George, the wartime British leader who catapulted to national prominence through his effort to resolve the crisis.*

3. Junger, Ernst, Storm of Steel, Penguin, New York, pp. 224-256. *Storm of Steel vies with Robert Graves' Farewell To All That as the most intense personal memoir of WWI. Junger was not writing to denounce war in general, nor World War I in particular, rather, he wrote --and throughout his life constantly amended -- Storm of Steel simply to help himself better understand his experiences. The referenced reading above captures the tunnel vision of an ordinary WWI soldier during a major attack.*

4. Scan Reading: Rawling, Bill, Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918, University of Toronto, Toronto, "Conclusion," pp. 216-223 *A concise summary of the trench experience.*

5. Gilbert, The First World War, Ch. 14 and 16 (alternative reading)

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Empey, Arthur Guy, Over the Top: By an American Soldier Who Went, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1917, Ch. XI, pp. 69-77. *In chapter eleven, an American soldier succinctly captures what it was like to "go over the top."*

2. Horne, John (ed.), State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War, Cambridge, Ch. 8, "Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917-1918", pp. 125-143.

Topic 7: Reaction to Stalemate

This week: Paper topics due electronically by COB Today/Topic 7

Overview

The great historiographical error of the First World War for almost a century has been that it was a hopelessly stalemated clash, which devolved into a war of attrition, and ended only when one side reached exhaustion before the other. This is largely false. After the catastrophes of 1915-1917 explored in Topic 6, European strategists began desperately to seek new modes of war at the tactical and operational level, and strategically, many pre-war assumptions *were* cast aside. But for the strategist, what is especially critical is that each of the warring great powers essentially chose a different strategic path to victory. And most dramatically, the stereotype that the Great War ended only after the belligerents had exhausted themselves clashes with the reality that World War I ended not with a whimper, but with one of the greatest and most desperate campaigns of the war.

By the middle of 1917, however, it was clear that change was afoot. Carefully planned battles at Vimy Ridge, Messines, and Cambrai, revealed a British army now capable of the first combined arms actions, meshing infantry, artillery, communications support and maturing airpower into a relatively unified effort. The British still clung to the hope of smashing through the enemy's line, but in a more choreographed and technically sophisticated way than simply sending men over the top with bayonets fixed and hoping for the best.

A crisis in the French Army nearly pushed that country out of the war. In the spring of 1917 France would try one last time to smash through "to the green fields beyond" in one of only two offensives during the entire war named for its commander and chief advocate. After two weeks and over 200,000 casualties, discord and revolt would sweep the French Army, precipitating a crisis that might lose the war...

And mighty Russia, bled to death and pushed to revolution, produced arguably the most salient strategic response to the war's failures to date -- the country simply removed itself from the war.

Finally, by 1918 Germany's dramatic new approach of bypassing enemy strong points had matured. In less than nine months Germany completely rewrote its battlefield doctrine and trained its troops accordingly. It March it was unleashed. It ultimately failed, but not before ensuring that the inertia of trench warfare would be broken forever -- and that the conflict would end with the greatest campaign of the entire war.

Key Questions

1. How did the new concepts at the most basic of tactical levels change the strategic calculus of the war's leaders? Isn't it supposed to be the other way around?

2. How did the different responses against the inertia of trench warfare, and widespread shortages of cash, raw materials, food and other necessities compare to each other? What were the second and third order effects of these choices on the outcome of the war?
3. July 1, 1916 was the worst day in terms of casualties in the history of the British Army, which lost over 57,000 men killed or wounded on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. In 1917, 50% of French divisions refuse to fight. At what point must a strategist realize his strategy has failed? And what is a “reasonable” amount of time that we must expect to pass before a new strategy can replace it?
4. Whose side is time on in late 1916 and early 1917?

Required Readings (54 pgs)

1. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 18, "The Western Front, 1917," pp. 227-243. *1917 sees what British military historian John Keagan called "the breaking of armies." Britain bleeds itself white, France almost collapses (Russia does), and Germany begins to starve. And on everyone's lips is the question: Will America arrive in time?*
2. Passingham, Ian, Pillars of Fire: The Battle of Messines Ridge, June, 1917, Sutton, Gloucester, 1998, pp. 29-34, 42-49. *WWI historians are beginning to identify Messines Ridge as the debut of Britain's newly-minted combined arms approach to fighting on the Western Front. In this short reading, Passingham briefly describes the new British approach in planning a major offensive that was to characterize warfare for the next three decades at least.*
3. Lupfer, Timothy T., The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War, US Army Command & General Staff College, Leavenworth, KS, 1981, pp. 37-42. *Although specific tactics are not the focus of this course, Lupfer's analysis of how the German Army made radical changes to its combat arms in early 1917 set the stage for the climax of the war a year later.*
4. Gilbert, Ch. 18 (alternative reading)

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Lupfer, Timothy T., The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War, US Army Command & General Staff College, Leavenworth, KS, 1981, pp 43-46. *Why stop at page 42 with Lupfer? In the section "The Attack Organization", he succinctly gets into the nuts and bolts of sturmtruppen organization and operations.*
2. Azan, Lt. Col. Paul, (translated by Major Julian Coolidge, US Army), The Warfare of Today [sic], Houghton-Mifflin, New York, 1918. Ch. 6, "How to Achieve Victory," pp. 235-266, Ch. 7

"The Defense of A Position," pp. 267-305, Ch. 8, "Officers and Soldiers," pp. 306-311. A French officer articulates operational changes in his army at the close of 1917, reflecting Petain's reforms. Superbly illustrated, despite the relatively poor quality images from my hand-held scanner at the WWI archive in Kansas City.

Part III: The Birth of the Post-Modern

Topic 8: Social Wars and Revolution

Overview

Besides the glaring demographic and geopolitical fallout of 1914-1918, the massive economic dislocations and disruptions are arguably what really set the stage for the Great Depression and WWII. Moreover, 1917 and 1918 saw three great political-social revolutions; two in Russia in early and late 1917 respectively, and one in Germany in 1918. This topic gives us the opportunity to address often overlooked but critical elements to the period's strategic context in the economic and social spheres that led to unrest, social upheaval, and ultimately revolutions that had significant impact on the post-war period (and on world history).

In our examination of this period we will first look at the demographic disasters of WWI, focusing on the Central Powers' home fronts. A hundred years ago, strategists actually regarded Europe as *over*-populated. What happened in Germany and Austria-Hungary when their societies suddenly found themselves bereft of young men in 1918? What happened to the widows, children, relatives and friends of that "Lost Generation"?

Next we will review the broad sweep of Russia's two revolutions, one that brought in a more-or-less democratic regime, and the second, which did not. The question that concerns us here, however, is not simply Russian revolutionary history. Rather, we want to know how a revolution "plays out," especially when used as a weapon of war. (We Americans view a revolution as an *event*; most other societies see them as a *process*.) We also want to explore further what the effect of the Russian revolution(s) had on Allied strategy, *and what propelled America and England to invade Russia?*

Next we will examine war culture in various countries. The power of propaganda was used for recruiting, financing and directing other resources to the war, to vilify the enemy and to suppress dissent. The US was a prime target of a sophisticated British propaganda campaign while the Wilson administration built a propaganda machine of its own targeting the same population. How did propaganda affect the conduct and the character of the war?

We will conclude by jumping ahead somewhat, to the so-called "Spanish" Influenza outbreak of 1917-1919. Historians often regard this emergency as a mere appendix to the story of World War I. The conventional figure for its toll is 20 million dead but over the past fifteen years historians and epidemiologists alike have come to see this figure as much too conservative; the actual toll may have reached 50-100 million. Indeed, it proved to be more lethal than the war itself -- in essence more than doubling the demographic crisis that now confronted Europe at the dawn of the post-Modern era.

Key Questions

1. What were the short and long-term economic and demographic impacts of the war? Can we draw a firm line between 1918 and collapse of the 1930s?
2. Was Germany far-sighted or short sighted in its wartime policies? How did the military dictatorship of Hindenburg and Ludendorff affect the course of the war?
3. Why did the Kerensky regime fail? Why did the Bolsheviks succeed? What were the ways in which Great Britain and France experienced / avoided revolution amongst their own populations?
4. What does the Influenza Crisis of 1917-1920 tell us about future pandemics?

Required Readings (97 pgs, note "scan" references)

1. Asprey, Robert B., The German High Command at War: Hindenburg and Ludendorff Conduct WWI, William Morrow, New York, Ch. 27, "The Turnip Winter". *Germans called the winter of 1916-1917 the "Turnip Winter" for good cause. Here the desperate plight of Germany's home front is described as the war entered its fourth year.*
2. See charts: Injuries Inflicted to the German National Strength through the Enemy Blockade: Memorial [sic: "Memorandum"] of the German Board of Public Health, December, 1918. *This is an original document in both German and English in the NDU Library. These numbers are actually probably on the low side.*
3. Scan reading: Ludendorff, General Eric von, My War Memories, 1914-1918, Vol. II, Hutchinson, London, 1919, Ch. 1, "The Basis of Future Operations and Our War Machine," pp. 328-336; 349-355. *Ludendorff was one of the key architects of German war strategy. Shortly after the war he bitterly and unrepentantly composed his memoirs. Here he recounts the deteriorating conditions for German citizens at home and the drain the war was having on Germany's economic might and social health.*
4. Wall, Richard, & Winter, Jay (eds), The Upheaval of War: Family, Work, and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918, Cambridge, Ch. 3, Sieder Reinhard F., "Working Class Family Life in Wartime Vienna," pp. 109-115; scan pages 116-134. *A snapshot of deteriorating conditions on the home front in the capitol of the failing Austro-Hungarian Empire.*
5. Scan reading: Horne, John (ed.), State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War, Cambridge, Ch. 5, "Mobilizing Labour and Socialist Militants in Paris During the Great War," pp. 73-79. *Although arguably the most leftist of European great powers at the start of the war, it is noteworthy to see how long France's socialist labor unions continued to support the war -- probably largely explainable by the fact that so many French soldiers had been union laborers.*

6. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 16, "The Collapse of Russia," pp. 205-215. *Before the Arab Spring, before all the anti-colonial revolts of the post-WWII era, Russian "operationalized" Marx. But first, Moscow and the Russian people lurched towards a feckless interim government that unknowingly paved the way for the coming of the Bolsheviks.*
7. Lincoln, W. Bruck, Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War & Revolution, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1986, Ch. "1917," pp. 315-345. *Lincoln, the renowned historian of the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia, focuses on the key moment when a desperate people finally revolt--and a hollowed-out regime that can no longer defend itself.*
8. Scan reading, but see especially (at least) pp. 452-454, p. 457, & p. 467: Smallman-Raynor, Matthew, Johnson, Niall, & Cliff, Andrew D., "The Spatial Anatomy of an Epidemic: Influenza in London and the Country Burroughs of England and Wales, 1918-1919," in Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2002), pp. 452-470. *A look at the pandemic's impact on one country in an attempt to see specifically how the virus spread geographically over time.*

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Curtain, Thomas D. , The Land of Deepening Shadow: Germany at War, George H. Doran, New York, 1917, Ch. 13, "A Land of Substitutes", pp. 156-163; scan Ch. 3, "The Crime Against the Children," pp. 33-38; scan Ch. 19, "The Woman in the Shadow," pp. 225-240. *Written by an American in Germany, these chapters are admittedly subjective sketches of the German "street scene" prior to the US declaration of war but are nonetheless useful as a wartime English language source on the subject.*
2. Horne, John (ed.), State, Society, and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War, Cambridge, Ch. 11, "Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1914-1918," pp. 173-191. *One of the big questions of WWI is the extent to which Austria-Hungary was a help or a hindrance to German imperial ambitions.*
3. Gompers, Samuel, American Labor and the War, George H. Doran, New York, 1918, "Labor's Function in Wartime," pp. 185-196. *Sam Gompers, the great figure of late 19th and early 20th century American labor, explains in a speech to convention-goers in 1918 why the American working man should support the war.*
4. Sydenstricker, Edgar, "Preliminary Statistics of the Influenza Epidemic," Public Health Reports, Vol. 33, No. 52, Dec. 27, 1918, pp. 2305-2321. *Halfway into the epidemic, its impact on the US is tentatively described. Note the charts and maps.*
5. [Author's name as given] G.S.O.; GHQ, Philip Allen, London, 1920, Ch.9, "The Economy Services," pp. 129-135 *In this brief passage, "GSO" describes the British wartime effort to economize, focusing on the metals scrap drive.*

6. Palmer, Frederick, Newton D. Baker: America at War, Vol. II, Dodd & Meade, New York, 1931, section beginning with “Alarm Over a New Russian Danger,” pp. 313-322. *Here Palmer describes US Secretary of War Baker’s views of the collapse of the eastern front and the “need” for Allied intervention in Russia.*

7. Kennan, George F., The Decision to Intervene, vol II, Princeton, 1958. Prologue, pp. 3-14 & scan Ch. 1, pp. 15-33. *The man who conceived of the strategy of containment in the late 1940s was actually in the new Soviet Union from the start. Here Kennan gives the geostrategic context for Allied intervention in the USSR in 1918-1920.*

Topic 9: Enter America

Next week: Class will be divided into three groups to lead discussions about airpower, tanks, and submarines, respectively.

Overview

For almost a century following WWI, historians typically characterized America's role in the war as one of "too little too late". The conventional historiography of the subject portrayed a tiny American force that managed to plug gaps in the Allied line just as a hollowed-out German army finally collapsed. Much of this view was the creation of embittered post-war British historians who were resentful of America's relatively late entry into the conflict. Over the past decade, however, a new picture has emerged of the impact that *two million* fresh US troops had on the war. By the close of 1917, both Britain and France were finished in terms of further offensive operations. Their reserves of both cash and manpower were exhausted. Yet everyone knew that with the collapse of Russia, a million German troops would be freed from the eastern front for one last herculean effort to smash the Allies in the west. And on everyone's lips by the end of 1917 was the question, "will America arrive in time." In the end, when an independent US Army was finally committed to battle, the arrival of US troops proved *absolutely decisive* in bringing the war to a victorious end in 1918.

...

In 1914 America was not yet the arsenal of democracy. Socially, the melting pot was coming to a full boil as we neared the end of an unprecedented wave of immigration from Scandinavia and southern and eastern Europe. This was significant, because it eclipsed what until then had been the single largest immigrant group throughout the mid-19th century: Germans. Thus, the domestic context of Woodrow Wilson's strategy *could have* mattered a great deal. But as we shall see, Berlin's perfidy changed all that.

Topic 9, therefore, will examine America's entry into WWI. We teach schoolchildren that America's entry into the war was an event that occurred in April, 1917. It was not. Like the Second World War a quarter of a century later, America's entry into the war was a process that began long before Congress voted to declare war.

We will examine in special detail in Topic 9 the internal debate in the German high command about whether or not to undertake what turned out to be one of the single greatest strategic miscalculations of the 20th century -- Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare.

Finally, when America does enter the war, will it be as an appendix to the French and British armies, or as a stand-alone force unto itself?

Key Questions

1. What was the US domestic context in from 1865-1914? From 1914-1917? What changed this trajectory?
2. Why did the US enter the war in 1917, really? Was the decision necessary to protect US interests? What were the Americans fighting for?
3. What exactly was the impact of US troops on the Western Front and America's wider entry into the war?

Required Readings (triaged)

1. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 15, "The Nadir of the War," pp. 194-204, pp. 109-113; Ch. 17, "The Submarine Campaign, The US Enters the War," pp. 216-226. *Here Stokesbury sets the context for America's entry into WWI, beginning with the terrible winter of 1916-1917.*
2. Palmer, Frederick, Newton D. Baker: America at War, Vol. II, Dodd & Meade, New York, 1931, Section beginning with "The Integral Army," pp. 106-112. *In his account of Secretary of War Baker's tenure during the war, Palmer recounts the pressures that worked for and against the creation of an independent American army in France in 1917 -- and surfaces the stresses of coalition warfare.*
3. **Charts only:** Wilgus, William J., Transporting the A.E.F. in Europe, 1917-1919, Columbia, New York, 1931. *Look at Wilgus' job description on the title page of this 1931 gem. Now look at the troop numbers the US government was projecting to be in France by mid-1919, when the war, by late 1917, was expected to end.*
4. Steffen, Dirk, "Notes on the Memorandum by Admiral von Holtzendorff of 22 December 1916 Regarding Unrestricted U-boat Warfare," <http://www.gwpda.org/naval/holtzendorffmemo.htm>. *If Germany's greatest pre-war mistake was its assumption about how long Russia would take to mobilize, then the calculus by which she unleashed unrestricted submarine warfare was its greatest wartime blunder. In this brief reading, we see the desperate German stratagem emerge of total U-Boat warfare. Critical to this memo are the assumptions Holtzendorff openly makes about the strategic situation in Britain and the US in the crucial winter of 1916-1917.*
5. Tuchman, Barbara, The Zimmerman Telegram, Constable, London, pp. 168-183, 201-202. *Tuchman, arguably better known for The Guns of August, also penned this shorter work on yet another grave German error --and the one that ultimately brought America into the war.*
6. Gilbert, Ch 20 and 21 (alternate reading)

For those who want to dig deeper

1. [Author's name as given] G.S.O.; GHQ, Philip Allen, London, 1920, Ch.16, "Enter the Americans," pp. 235-251. *An anonymous source who was attached to British General Headquarters opines on the US entry into The Great War. An interesting mix of strategic and very tactical vignettes.*

2. Princess Mary's Christmas box: catalyst for American entry into the war:
http://www.kinnethmont.co.uk/1914-1918_files/xmas-box-1914.htm *Briefly put, how a princess' desire to spread holiday cheer to the troops in the trenches directly contributed to America's entry into the war. A perfect example of a Thucydidean "imponderable."*

3. Neeser, Robert Weldon, Our Army and the Next War, Charles Scribner, New York, 1915, Ch. 6, "Our Naval Requirements," pp. 98-115. *A call to arms -- two years before America enters the war -- for the US to increase dramatically its warship construction. (This is a copy made at the Kansas City WWI archive by a hand scanner and its quality is less than ideal but legible).*

Topic 10: Revolution in Military Affairs

This week: Class is in three groups to lead discussions about airpower, tanks, and submarines, respectively.

Overview

The US military in 2011 was preparing to downsize on a scale not seen since almost a century ago at the end of WWI. Defense planners today must likewise decide on weapons acquisitions based on assessments -- assumptions -- about what kind of conflicts the US and its allies must prepare for and what kind of world there will be decades hence. Will the likelihood of littoral conflicts eclipse the need for "blue water" navies? Is there a future for armor-centric and maneuver warfare? Will we need fighter pilots a generation from now or will the skies above our adversaries be seeded virtually entirely by pilotless, networked drones? And what will be the utility of attacks against -- and defense of -- critical national computer systems? New technologies, driven by economic austerity, force new approaches and radical questions about the future character of war. If we make the wrong acquisition and strategy decisions we will not be positioned to prevail in the conflicts of the tomorrow.

We have seen this before.

In the 1920s and 1930s defense planners faced the same economic and security drivers of today. New weaponized technologies had emerged during WWI that offered tantalizing but fragmentary glimpses about what future military operations might look like. But how to incorporate them into force planning and tactical doctrine when these technologies were still unproven and unreliable? To take one famous example, in 1940 France's army actually had tanks that were technologically superior to those of Germany. But the conservative French military viewed these new weapons as *infantry support vehicles* and parceled them out piecemeal to infantry formations. Germany instead *concentrated* tanks into dedicated armored units and when combined with tactical airpower directed against enemy weak points, the Blitzkrieg -- modern maneuver warfare -- was born.

This process, and similar efforts directed at aircraft and submarines, actually began *before* 1914.

In 1914 none of the great powers, strictly speaking, had an air force. Four years later, air power had emerged as one of the key determinants of battlefield victory -- and would eventually be counted as one of the metrics of a great power. Similarly, the submarine -- a patently offensive weapon -- became an indispensable element of naval power. Indeed, as early as 1917 naval strategists saw it as a potentially decisive weapon of the future. Only the tank -- or more properly speaking "infantry fighting vehicle" -- which first appeared *en masse* in 1917, remained controversial as to its utility when the war ended. Yet twenty years later armored maneuver warfare would not only dominate European battlefields of the Second World War, this new mode of war would become central to planners and strategists for much of the remainder of the 20th century.

In short, Topic 10 will tackle the concept of a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). "RMA" is today a somewhat jaded term doctrinally, but it remains a useful concept for gauging the impact of new technologies on the battlefield. But how does one know when an RMA has begun or is underway? How does our own experience with new, information technology-intensive military operations compare to what occurred in 1914-1918?

Issues for Consideration

1. One reason armies fail initially is because they tend to fight how they "want to fight" or how they "have always fought" instead of how they "have to fight." These concepts drive capabilities developed long before the shooting starts.
2. What were previous RMA-like developments in warfare that would have been reference points for European military strategists in 1914-1918? What should strategists look for to guide them in today's strategic environment?
3. What do the RMA-like events of 1914-1918 tell us about today's changes in the character of war?
4. What were the assumptions and drivers about airpower when Douhet was writing?
5. Similarly, what were the technical parameters of tank design that Guderian had to work with?
6. Were early assessments of the role of the attack submarine accurate? Why? Why not?

Required Readings

For Topic 10 we will have the class in three groups, each leading our seminar discussion on the revolutionary characteristics of airpower, tanks, and submarines in the period 1907-1939.

All read:

1. Freytag-Loringhoven, Lt. Gen. Baron von, Deductions from the World War, London, 1919, Ch. 3, "The Influence of Technical Science," pp. 47-67. *Written very shortly after the war, here a German military theorist attempts to draw early lessons about military hardware and technology from the recent conflict.*

Airpower group:

1. Douhet, Giulio, The Command of the Air, Easton, Norwalk, Chaps 3 & 4, pp. 178-207. *Douhet is famously credited with having been the first true theorist to articulate the role and future of airpower. Douhet essentially "got right" airpower's ability to turn the enemy's "vertical" flank. But he also believed that there was no effective defense against airpower (other*

than attacking the enemy's airfields) and that airpower would soon eclipse in importance ground-based military operations.

2. Palmer, Frederick, Newton D. Baker: America at War, Vol. II, Dodd & Meade, New York, 1931, following sections:

-- "The Four -- The Nine -- and Then the Four Again," pp. 176-179. *US Secretary of War Baker struggles with what type of heavy bomber to produce.*

-- "Most Fickle and Most Technical," and "The IWW & Aeroplane propellers," pp. 179-183. *Washington bureaucrats don't simply snap their fingers and place orders for new weapons. In the US at least, there is always a domestic political context. And in 1917 if you wanted to build aircraft, you had to go through the International Wood Workers union to do it.*

3. Speight, J. M., Air Power and War Rights, Longmans/Green, London, 1924, read annotated Table of Contents, pp. vii-ix, Ch. 1, "Air Power," pp. 5-17. *One of the earliest evaluations of airpower from the perspective of international law and Just War Theory.*

Armor group:

4. Guderian, Heinz, Achtung Panzer, Cassell, London, 1992, pp. 55-71, 136-139. *If Douhet was a theorist then Guderian was a soldier and architect. In these key passages from his memoirs, Guderian recounts the moment when the lessons of the tank in WWI catalyzed the origin of what became Blitzkrieg.*

5. Adams, R. J. Q., Arms and the Wizard: Lloyd George and the Ministry of Munitions, 1915-1916, Texas A&M, 1978, section "V" in Ch. 9, "Munitions Technology," pp. 154-163. *Here Adams captures the key period in 1915 when the British government decides -- tentatively -- to develop the first armored fighting vehicle.*

Submarine group:

6. Fyfe, Herbert C., Submarine Warfare: Past and Present, E.F. Dutton, New York, 1907, Ch. 2, "Submarines and Submersibles, Their Character and Characteristics," pp. 6-14, and Ch. 4, "The Morality of Submarine Warfare," pp. 27-61. *Seven years before WWI, a US naval writer captures key points about submarines in war at the dawn of the submarine era.*

7. Fayle, Earnest K., History of the Great War, Vol. III, Seaborne Trade: The Period of Unrestricted Submarine Warfare, John Murray, London, 1924, pp. 35-43, 85-100, 347-353. *Penned shortly after the war, here is the view of how serious Germany's submarine campaign against England was in the eyes of the government entity responsible for keeping maritime shipments coming. Another classic that gathers dust on the shelves of NDU's library, which should see the light of day.*

8. Curtain, Thomas D., The Land of Deepening Shadow: Germany at War, New York, 1915, Ch. 10, "Submarine Motives," pp. 112-117. *Here Curtain -- last seen in Topic 6 describing wartime conditions in Germany -- provides interesting wartime insights into Germany's U-Boat strategy.*

For those who want to dig deeper

1. Grahame-White, Claude, & Harper, Harry, Aircraft in the Great War: A Record and Study, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1915, Preface pp. 5-10, Part 5, Ch. 1 "Ethics of Air Attack," pp. 161-167, Part 5, Ch. 14 "Destructive Aircraft: A Summary," pp. 250-253; In the public domain online at <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t9c53nw1j> *The First World War was less than six months old when this attempt to capture early lessons from the emerging air war was published. Probably the earliest publication of its kind.*

2. [no author listed], Europe at War: A Red Book of the Greatest War in History, Doubleday, New York, 1914, "Air Fleets of the Nations," pp. 89-90. *A brief synopsis of the infant air war, noteworthy for the ad hoc terminology employed.*

3. Neeser, Robert Wildon, Our Navy and the Next War, Charles Scribner, New York, 1915. *Neeser's evaluation of then-current naval orders of battle led him to conclude that the US Navy was inadequate to the task that he felt would soon be upon it.*

4. Gilbert, Ch. 7 (alternate reading)

Poison gas:

5. Doyle, Arthur Conan, The British Campaign in France and Flanders, 1915, Holder and Stoughton, London, 1917, Ch.3 "The Second Battle of Ypres," pp. 45-50. *Yes, this is the same Doyle who wrote Sherlock Holmes! See pp. 45-50 for a description of the first use of poison gas on the battlefield. (Note that it's easier for a good writer to write military history than it is for an historian to learn how to write well.)*

6. Coleman, Frederick, With the Cavalry in 1915: The British Trooper in the Trench Line Though the Second Battle of Ypres, Sampson Low & Marston, London, 1916, pp. 137-139. *Another brief contemporary account of the first use of gas on the battlefield.*

Topic 11: Kaiserschlacht und Gotterdammerung

Overview

As we have seen by now, many of the nearly century-old stereotypes of WWI are false. Chief among these is the historiography that treats WWI as a *war of attrition*. Such wars are supposed to end with a whimper, where victory goes to the last man standing. But if WWI was one of attrition, why did it end with the biggest, most climactic campaign of the war?

By 1917, for the first time in the war, everyone knew the conflict could not continue on its same trajectory -- but no one knew what its new course might be *or even how to alter it*. In Topic 11 we will review the strategic posture of the belligerents at the beginning of 1917 -- the year the fulcrum of the war lay balanced between the carnage of the past two years, and what was to come. Who is winning? Who is losing? As 1917 dawns, what must an "unsettled" France do? What is England's last gambit? Can Germany hang on? How long before America's entry into the war will be felt? And finally, whither Russia?

As we discussed in Topic 7, by the middle of 1917 it was clear that change was afoot. Carefully planned battles at Vimy Ridge, Cambrai, and Passchendaele revealed a British army now capable of the first *combined arms* actions, which meshed infantry, artillery, and maturing airpower into a relatively unitary effort. The British still clung to the goal of smashing through the enemy's line "to the green fields beyond", but in a more choreographed and technically sophisticated way than simply sending men over the top with bayonets fixed and hoping for the best. As the year drew to a close this was beginning to show results.

By January, 1918 Germany's dramatic new approach of *bypassing* enemy strongpoints had matured. In March it was unleashed -- the *Kaiserschlacht*, or "Kaiser's Battle". This was a series of hammer blows made possible by a million German troops freed from the eastern front after the collapse of Russia and hurled against the depleted armies of France and Britain. And but for the arrival of a million US troops...

Issues for Consideration

1. What were the effects on the war of revolution in Russia?
2. By late 1917, what were the tools available to the war's senior strategists? How had their militaries changed since 1914-1916?
3. What was the rationale and context of the Kaiserschlacht? Was it a 1918 version 1944's Ardennes Offensive? Why did it fail? More subtly, at what moment did the strategic Initiative swing towards the allies?
4. What was the impact of US troops during July and August, 1918?

Required Readings (43 pgs)

1. Stokesbury, James L., A Short History of World War I, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 20, "The German Spring Offensive, 1918," pp. 259-280, and Ch. 21, "Allied Counteroffensive," pp. 281-293. *Stokesbury's narrative builds to a climax as Ludendorff rolls the dice in the West. A very fast read.*
2. Palmer, Frederick, Newton D. Baker: America at War, Vol. II, Dodd & Meade, New York, 1931, section beginning with "The Great Offensive Begins," pp. 103-105. *The outbreak of the Kaiserschlacht on 21 March, 1918 found US War Secretary Baker in France touring the front. Here Palmer briefly describes a vignette from that day.*
3. Lupfer, Timothy T., The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War, US Army Command & General Staff College, Leavenworth, KS, 1981, pp. 46-54. *A quick overview of the 1918 German offensive from the people at Ft. Leavenworth whose job it is to study doctrine.*
4. **Scan readings:** Ludendorff, General Eric von, My War Memories, 1914-1918, Vol. II, Hutchinson, London, 1919, "Preparations for the Attack in the West in 1918," pp. 537-544; 573-588; 609-617; 676-681. *One of the premier imperial German warlords, Ludendorff in 1919 bitterly composed his memoirs. Scan this extensive set of his recollections for insight into the mind of 1918's key architect.*
5. Gilbert, Ch. 23 and 24 (alternate reading)

Topic 12: The Centennial of Armageddon

This week: Brief discussion/summaries of papers in class

Overview

With the failure of Ludendorff's last gamble, came revolution. Unlike Russia in 1917, Germany in 1918-1919 teetered not between monarchy and democracy, but between communism and ultra-nationalism. But revolution began in Germany as it had in Russia -- as a shipboard mutiny on a ship at pier side. In the Kriegsmarine the spark of insurrection ignited when an impossible order came down from the Admiralty -- an order the Imperial Japanese Navy would echo twenty-seven years later. The origins of Nazism are beyond the scope of this course, but we will continue to address the key question that would haunt Europe for half a century after 1945: *How could Germany, even in 1918 the most well-educated, technically advanced, and industrially developed country in the world, succumb to fascism?* In the end the answer historians have settled upon is unsettling: *If it could happen in Germany then, it could happen anywhere.*

Thucydides called the seven year truce between Athens and Sparta in the middle of the Peloponnesian War the "treacherous peace." It was entered into before the war's driving issues had been fully settled and its waters were too dangerous for it to be navigable. He might as well have spoken of Versailles.

In 1919 France wanted its cherished, pre-war territorial *revanche*. Britain -- now itself in staggering financial debt to the US -- sought from Germany crippling war reparations -- *finally paid off only in 2011*. And Wilson envisioned a New World Order in which international courts and arbitration would replace war as a means of inter-state conflict resolution. None of it was meant to be. As the ink dried on the Versailles peace treaty, French Marshall Joffre remarked that all it had done was buy the Allies twenty years' time until Germany re-armed and sought its own *revanche*. He was off by exactly sixty days.

Meanwhile, as the guns fell silent, a wary United States moved in to occupy parts of Germany and foster the growth of democracy there -- sound familiar?

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Human demographics may or may not be destiny, but human nature, Thucydides reminds us, never changes. Additionally, history may not repeat itself, but familiar patterns do occasionally re-emerge. Russia experiences repression, disastrous war, then reform -- or revolution. Britain repeatedly aligns itself in a coalition against whatever the dominant Continental power happens to be at the time. And today America continues to think of itself as an island kingdom, even as other powers, some great but long dormant, others nascent and untested, challenge the liberal Western and US view of the future.

1914 is not a mirror of today. But what if it is a prophecy of 2064? What do we see are the distinct parallels -- and differences -- between today, and the pre-1914 period?

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Key Questions

1. There were arguably winners at the end of WWI. Who were they? And what can we say as specifically as possible about the losers?
2. What makes possible the rise of *a movement such as* the Nazis?
3. What were the strategic military lessons and assumptions in the post-1918 world that European strategists would have drawn upon and made in the interwar period before 1939? Were these the right lessons? Which of these assumptions proved true and which proved false after 1939?
4. Why was Norman Angell wrong? To what degree is his argument applicable today? Specifically, where do the parallels between 1914 and 2014 appear the strongest? Where does this analogy break down?
5. Five hundred years from now, will World War I and World War II be seen as two separate conflicts, or will future historians conflate the two? Will Phillip Bobbitt's view of the period from 1914 to the collapse of the USSR as the "Long War" become convention?

Required Readings: (49 pgs)

1. Stokesbury, James L., *A Short History of World War I*, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981, Ch. 23 "Peacemaking," pp. 308-317, and ch.24 (Epilogue), pp. 318-323. *Historians have penned entire books about Versailles. Here Stokesbury gives us fifteen pages to ponder the flaws of a peace that few thought in 1918 had come prematurely.*
2. **Scan reading:** Horn, Daniel, *The German Naval Mutinies of World War I*, Rutgers, New Brunswick, Ch. 7, "Admirals' Rebellion or Sailor's Mutiny?" pp. 198-233. *The collapse of the German Imperial Navy in 1918 from political radicalization and not battle was a crucial event in the unraveling of the Reich. The Admiralty order that triggered revolt within the Kriegsmarine was truly a Gotterdammerung. Is the disintegration of an army from battle losses different from that of a navy at pierside in time of revolutionary upheaval?*
3. **Scan Reading:** Ludendorff, General Eric von, *My War Memories, 1914-1918, Vol. II*, Hutchinson, London, 1919, "Preparations for the Attack in the West in 1918," pp. 640-654, & "Epilogue," pp. 765-771. *In the first fourteen pages of this reading, Ludendorff painfully recounts the disintegration of the German Army and the collapse of social order in the streets. And in the epilogue, with Germany and the greater Reich in collapse, Ludendorff bitterly claims that his country was stabbed in the back by defeatists, and calls for -- German rearmament!*
4. **Scan Reading--short document:** *American Military Government of Occupied Germany, 1918-1920: Report of the Officer in Charge of Civil Affairs*, Third Army, 1920, pp. 289-292. *One wonders whether the US presence in post-Saddam Iraq would have gone differently had*

Administration officials read this “lessons learned” account of a similar endeavor 70 years before.

5. **Scan Reading:** Angell, Norman, The Great Illusion, G. T. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1933 (1910), Ch. 2, 3, 4, & 5, pp. 75-137. *Angell made quite a stir in 1910, when he first published The Great Illusion. His argument was dramatic, if not radical: despite the rise of nationalism and imperialism, a general European war was no longer rational. No sane state would start a war among the great powers because Europe's growing economic interconnections meant that war would be economically ruinous. A sobering thought one hundred years later.*

6. Gilbert, Ch. 28 (alternate reading)

Optional Readings

1. Bourne, Randolph, Untimely Papers, Huebsch, New York, 1919, Ch. 4, "The Collapse of American Strategy," see only end of chapter, pp. 84-89. *In August, 1917 a writer bemoans US entry into the war -- but not for the "usual" reasons. Note parallels between opinions on the chances for German democracy to take root then, and the hope for similar efforts amidst the "Arab Spring" today.*

2. American Military Government of Occupied Germany, 1918-1920: Report of the Officer in Charge of Civil Affairs, Third Army, 1920, pp. 8-12. *Finally, the actual and succinct Rules of Engagement for US military forces in occupied Germany.*