

## Imperialism, Capitalism and World War I

### Imperialism

- as noted earlier, many people (including Lenin and many Marxists) saw a direct connection between 'imperialism' and the war—Lenin argued both were direct effects of a particular, final stage of capitalism.

- others have argued that the tensions and hostilities of the competition and the 'scramble' helped to increase the tensions which led to war.

- most historians tend now to reject the idea that the two sets of phenomena were related, especially not as cause and effect. Colonial rivalries were never important enough for European states to go to war over. They always made deals to divide the spoils.

- however, it is very important to note the influence of the arguments.

1. **Marxists had predicted a war**; the outbreak of war gave a great credibility to them, to their explanations and to their predictions. They, of course, focused on the 'capitalists'.

- the impact was not immediate—in spite of earlier pledges not to fight in future wars, most socialists at least acquiesced or joined in active support of the war; however, as the war dragged on, people became more critical and were more prepared to accept that all this misery was caused by someone and the capitalists as a group were a good target, especially as some people in business tended to make huge and inappropriate profits. As a result, Marxist arguments gained greater acceptance.

2. **Armaments Manufacturers** (military-industrial complex)

- there had been growing criticism in late 19th century during the arms race (note G.B. Shaw's play, **Major Barbara**; paradoxically, Shaw made the argument for the armaments manufacturers).

- Hobson included the arms makers among the 'harpies of imperialism'.

- there was a growing pacifism which increasingly argued that wars were often (perhaps usually) fomented by the arms makers; some even asserted that the arms makers of opposing countries worked together in grand conspiracies to bring about war; e.g., that Krupp and Creusot were actually working together to bring about war!

- during and after the war, these ideas flourished; not only did some people reap enormous profit—the war profiteers—but a few inflated them even higher by producing cheap faulty goods (this was not too frequent, but there were a couple of scandals in Canada on this score); it was easy (even if logically fallacious) to draw the conclusion that they had started the war for just such a purpose.

### Evaluation

- conspiracy theories always find an audience; they provide a simple (often simple-minded) explanation for large, complex events and phenomena.

- in fact, no convincing evidence that either the financiers or arms manufacturers had any direct responsibility for the outbreak of war has ever been produced; certainly, the arms makers had an interest in the arms race, but the arms race had been going on for a long time. Is it convincing to argue that an arms race **inevitably** leads to war? The Cold War and the Nuclear Arms Race (these were on a scale that even surpassed the arms races before 1914) fortunately did not.

- as for the financiers, the argument is even less viable. Governments required incredible sums to prosecute the war and it was the financiers who helped to raise much of it. As a result, financiers did benefit from the massive financing of war efforts, but most financiers also lost very heavily because of the war.

- at the outbreak of war, all governments confiscated 'enemy' property and as we pointed out (contrary to Hobson's assertions), Europeans were investing heavily in each other's economies; thus, financiers had very strong incentives to prevent war.

- in fact, we now know that some of the most active people trying to resolve the crisis and avert war in June and July 1914 were the bankers; if the diplomats and politicians had been half as alert and active, they might very well

have averted war.

- capitalists were frequently castigated for the web of intelligence and communications networks (they often got news more quickly than governments). To the conspiracy mongers, these networks were being used nefariously to promote war; in fact, they were being used desperately in attempts to avert war.

- moreover, much of the criticism of capitalists was strongly tainted with anti-Semitism (i.e., international **Jewish** capitalists—the Rothschilds were frequently mentioned); very often it was conflated with “the international Jewish conspiracy” (more rubbish like *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*).

### **Diplomats and Political Leaders**

- we need to pay serious attention to kind of men who frequently were in charge.

- in Russia, Germany and Austria, foreign ministers and other government ministers were appointed by emperors. Ability was not necessarily the most important criterion for appointment.

- in Germany, the men after Bismarck were often short-sighted and far less able; Bismarck was a tough act to follow. Most successors seemed to be trying to achieve the kind of grand successes that he had but lacked his ability to understand the situation or to define goals. As a result, they often miscalculated on grand scales. It has been charged that they treated international relations like a high stake poker game, but with the fate of nations and millions of people riding on their bluffs and gambles.

- in Austria and Russia, there were similar problems—mediocre men trying to score points in diplomatic games.

- as a result, they were often ‘grandstanding’. Almost everyone agreed that the purpose of diplomacy was to further and enlarge the interests of their government. However, how do you define best ‘interests’? . . . Enlarged territories, diplomatic coups and triumphs or peace? Frequently, their analyses of the best interests of their governments were incredibly naive and short-sighted.

- e.g., it should have been clear that the Russian Government could not survive a modern war. The Russo-Japanese War very nearly brought an end. Thus, Russian leaders should have been doing everything possible to avoid war.

- few seemed to see larger issues or long-term objectives. If they did, they too often chose inappropriate means for achieving them.

- e. g., the Germans seemed to rely on the efficacy of bullying and bluster; frequently it worked. However, failure produced, at least, a serious loss of face, but it could lead to war. Even ‘success’ produced a loss of face for opponents (essentially a game of ‘chicken’).

- the Moroccan crises show this. France was building a strong position in Morocco while the Germans had only limited interests there. Yet Germany provoked 2 crises by seeming to threaten war. The crises came after the Entente Cordiale was established and the German objective seems to have been to break up the budding friendship. The Germans seemed to believe that if they put the pressure on, Britain would fail to support France. France would be isolated and taught that they could not count on Britain; as a result, France would become more cautious and perhaps even turn to Germany to seek to ease tensions. However, the ploy backfired. Britain did support France and rallied other support as well. In the end, it was Germany that got isolated and at the same time, it was forced to back down from its demands.

- in Austria and Russia there were other powerful pressures:

- in both, prestige came to play an inordinate role. Both governments were fairly weak at home and felt compelled to try to buoy up popularity or at least try to reduce the flow of criticism.
- both were concerned about the power vacuum created in the Balkans by the decline of Turkish power in Europe.

### **Russia**

- the decline of the Ottoman Empire seemed to provide an opportunity to get an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea (however, perhaps this has been exaggerated as an objective of Russian foreign policy).

- there was a tremendous expansion of empire eastwards in the 19th century to the Pacific Ocean.



- yet social changes (especially the beginning of industrialisation) were increasing concern and problems for the tsarist government. Industrial and urban society requires much more efficient government. While the tsarist government and system were effective in holding this vast agglomeration of peoples and territories together, now more was being required and the tsarist government was less able to cope; internal criticism and dissatisfaction were growing (shown in Russo-Japanese War and its aftermath in the revolution).

- overloaded with the demands of war, the system broke down: food and supplies stopped flowing into the cities, prices and inflation increased, distress and want increased, disturbances increased, troops shot people who were protesting, disturbances increased further and broke out into revolution.

- as a result of these increasing domestic problems, prestige in foreign affairs seemed more important to bolster support for regime. Increasingly, government leaders became concerned about set-backs and humiliations.

- another useful device appeared to be pan-Slavism; this was a movement popular among the middle-class 'intellectuals', a group which provided many of the most bitter critics and opponents of Tsarist regime. Pan-Slavism emphasised the eastern, orthodox version of Christianity; it felt in a struggle with western Christianity and culture. The Serbs were not only Slavs, but also orthodox Christians. Pan-Slavism seemed a good way to mobilise internal support for the government by becoming the great protector for pan-Slavism.

## Hapsburg Empire

- increasingly, growing Slavic nationalisms threatened the continued existence of the Dual monarchy; while the regime might be able to maintain the status quo by 'divide and rule', pan-Slavism seemed to represent a threat to even that possibility.

- in any case, the government felt that prestige and continued success against Slavism externally was essential to keeping the lid on internal Slavic nationalisms.

- as a result, both the Russian and Hapsburg governments felt that their prestige and very existence revolved around their support for or opposition to Slavic nationalism in the Balkans (this is the main factor leading to war according to Lafore, *The Long Fuse*). Both regimes regarded Serbia as a key to their own continued existence in the future either for or against.

- this had its ramifications for Germany as well; because of its role as a crucial ally in the Triple Alliance, the Dual Monarchy's continued existence was seen as essential to Germany's security. In the 1890s, Germany had not renewed its alliance with Russia in the League of the 3 Emperors. They had put all their eggs in the Austro-Hungarian basket.

- moreover, many diplomats and politicians were playing their own peculiar games (most like poker perhaps); they were trying to score points by making diplomatic 'coups' either for personal prestige or for what they regarded as the interests of their regimes; this is the context in which many were short-sighted and simple-minded in their actions and in their definitions of 'interests'. Whatever else they had to fear in regard to the stability and survival of their governments, war was fatal for both yet neither government had defined the avoidance of war as an essential 'interest' and objective.

## Sir Edward Grey

- there is an ironical side in the charges made against Sir Edward Grey (British Foreign Secretary) by German leaders that he bore a major responsibility for the outbreak of war.

- **the key issue:** as the crisis developed in July, would Britain remain aloof or enter the war?

- both the French and German governments were very anxious to know and kept sending their ambassadors to question Grey about it. The French were desperate and even argued, perhaps correctly, that the only thing that would stop the looming war with Germany would be for the German government to be told that it would face Britain in any general war on the continent. Unless they were told, the German government would continue to push ahead and war would be unavoidable.

- to everyone, Grey made the same response, "I don't know." The reason was that the Liberal cabinet and party was split. There were a number of committed pacifists; it was not clear what would happen on a vote to go to war. In the event, the invasion of Belgium so outraged opinion in Britain that most of the waverers came around to agree that such blatant aggression and violation of international treaties must be opposed; only 3 cabinet ministers resigned. However, until the German invasion of Belgium began, it was very uncertain.

- Grey was one of the most sympathetic characters in the period and an honest man. He had been a key figure in easing and helping to solve several of the crises that had threatened war in the 8 years before 1914.

- it is a very interesting insight into the period to note that few people believed that a diplomat or foreign minister could be honest! German diplomats were so devious in their own thinking and actions that they assumed everyone else acted as they did. When their own misinterpretations and assumptions were incorrect, they accused Grey of deceiving them (i.e., he duped them by telling them the truth!)—re: question of whether or not Britain would enter a general European war. [Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor, said in 1917 that if he had known in 1914 that Britain was going to enter the war, he would have done things differently!]

- another argument is that put forward by Albertini; he argues that most European diplomats were devious or incompetent or both; in 1914, the situation reached a point where everything began to slide like an avalanche;

- Albertini argues that Grey was the only man in Europe who had a chance of stopping it; however, to do so, Grey would have had to lie (about the British government's willingness to go to war) and to threaten the German officials.

- Grey was too honest and too sick to do so.

### **Inevitability and World War I**

- many historians are very uneasy about declaring anything 'inevitable'; after an event or series of events, there is a tendency to see the steps leading up as irresistible and unavoidable. However, that 'inevitability' may merely be a lack of imagination to see the other possibilities.

- Marxists, as economic determinists, argue that the war was inevitable as a result of the inherent defects of the economic system (see notes on Lenin and imperialism—lecture 9 Imperialism).

- for others, the tremendous build-up of arms and military preparations was so great that Europe had, in fact, become a giant powder keg; sooner or later, some spark would inevitably ignite the explosion.

- although most historians agree with the powder keg analogy, most of us have a distrust of anything being 'inevitable' (the period from 1945 until recently was similar in many ways with a tremendous arms race between the Soviet Union and the US; if arms races lead inevitably to war, we should mostly all be dead as a result of a nuclear holocaust).

- besides as many historians point out, there was a long series of crises prior to 1914 which threatened to be the spark that ignited the keg, yet all were successfully extinguished or contained; perhaps this could have gone on indefinitely.

- Lafore (in *The Long Fuse*) argues that each crisis was becoming harder to control and that, in effect, the fuse was getting shorter

### **World War I**

- Gilbert has a good set of brief generalisations and outline of the war.

- the war opened with great enthusiasm and excitement (this is in sharp contrast with 1939); part of the reason was that in 1914, there had been no prolonged war in Europe since 1815. The Franco-Prussian War had been quite brief. People had little idea of what war with modern weapons and technology would be like. There was all the emotion and enthusiasm for war that had been inculcated with nationalism, social darwinism, racism and militarism. In 1939, most people had a much better idea of what they were in for.

### **Short War Delusion**

- the belief that the war would be short was also undoubtedly another factor in the enthusiasm shown in 1914. Nobody expected a long war.

- various reasons were given why a modern war in the 20th C with armies numbering in the millions would be too costly and could not last for more than 4-6 months:

1. Materiel (ammunition & equipment) would be consumed at an incredible rate, several times faster than factories could replace it; thus, the war would have to be fought basically on the stockpiles at the beginning.



When those stockpiles were exhausted, the war would have to end.

2. The enormously powerful new weaponry would produce extraordinarily high levels of casualties; no society would be willing to bear such losses for very long before demanding an end to the war.
3. Financial costs of modern war would be unimaginably high. With armies numbering in the millions (even at very low rates of pay) and the incredible consumption of materiel, the daily costs of war would be many times the levels of normal expenditure by government; at the same time because of the disruptions of the economy caused by the war, revenues would be way down. The consequence, so it was argued, would be that governments would not be able to finance a modern war for very long—3-6 months at most—and then they would most of them be facing bankruptcy.
4. Modern war was viewed as a battle between heavy weights (a bit like Sumo wrestlers—big and powerful and contests are decided quickly, often in a few seconds). With such massive armies, one punch could effectively end it; whichever army got the 1st blow and victory would determine the war. They thought it would be like the Franco-Prussian War. The Schlieffen Plan was intended to do this and it came close to success; however, when the German flanking drive was halted at the Battle of the Marne (only 20 miles from Paris), the possibility of a knockout punch ended and the long agony of trench warfare began.

- experience in the war showed that the experts had been wrong in their estimates. However, they erred almost exclusively on the side of **underestimating**—(consumption of materiel, casualty rates and cost estimates)! Actual levels were much higher, often by a factor of 2, 3 or 4. In spite of this, the war dragged on, not just until Christmas 1914 as expected, but for over 4 years.

- before the war, no one understood the enormous resources and the dynamism of modern, industrialised and nationalistic states and societies. With the commencement of trench warfare after the Battle of the Marne, no one was able to solve the tactical and strategic problems of the trenches (the defense had tremendous advantages). The tank had the potential, but it was still evolving and was still only a potential when the war ended.

- as a result, the war could only be ended by attrition and exhaustion, but modern, industrial societies had resources no one realised or imagined. Also, fired by nationalism and fear, peoples were willing to bear unimagined hardship in greatly lowered standards of living, even malnutrition and starvation; they bore horrendous losses in lives of themselves and their loved ones.

- in financing too, no one imagined the possibilities; partly of course, governments could print money, but this was not the major surprise or source of financing (money would soon have become worthless if 'printing' had been the major approach). It was government credit that financed most of the war expenditures. This proved incredibly elastic while funds in the hands of citizens also was elastic; the 2 tended to feed each other.

- it was a circle. The government borrowed money from its citizens as loans and then spent it in the economy buying supplies, materiel & equipment and paying salaries and wages. However, because most consumer production was shut down or later converted to war production, consumer goods were scarce and the population had less to spend their money on. As a result, there were increased savings which the government could borrow in further loans. Etc., etc. As long as people believed in and were willing to support their government, the pattern could continue.

- it should be noted that the system did not work in Tsarist Russia. There, the peasants preferred to put their money into their mattresses, not lend it to the government. Thus, the Tsarist government had to rely more heavily on loans from its allies, Britain and France.

- the system did not work in international transactions either. Why would foreigners provide such loyal support in loans to enable governments to purchase materials and supplies? Nor did they want foreign money. What could they do with it?

- to solve this problem of international purchases (especially from the U.S.), Britain acted as international banker for the Allies. Britain could use its assets (British investments in the US were worth about \$4 billion when the war began) and British prestige enabled Britain to borrow from US banks. However, there were limits to the amounts that American banks were willing to lend to the British government.

- in fact, by early 1917, the British were in trouble. British assets in the US had been liquidated and sold and their credit with US banks was exhausted; in February and March, the British had had to suspend almost all purchases. Only the entry of the US saved the day; almost immediately, the US government extended enormous new credits to the Allies (about \$14 billion by the end of the war). For a long time, this was the most important contribution being made by the US because it took almost a year before the American army could be raised, trained, equipped and transported to France.

- Germany, the main partner in the Central Powers, did **not** face the same problems for international settlements because the British blockade prevented overseas purchases. The only sources of supply were neutral neighbours (Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland). However, the British Blockade

could be used to pressure the neutrals to limit trade with Germany, especially in materials that would aid the war effort.

- one aspect of financing the war may have helped to prolong it. At the beginning, both the French and German governments declared that they intended to force their opponents to pay all the costs of the war in reparations. As the costs mounted to astronomical figures, the peoples in the belligerent countries increasingly felt that they could not afford to lose because reparations payments would produce dismal standards of living for decades into the future. This may help to explain why the populations did not demand an end to the war.

- the major explanation for the long duration of the war, however, is the ability of the modern, industrial nation/state to take punishment and to persist in the pursuit of war. The scale of this ability was simply not imagined by those making the predictions about a short war.

- even the lack of many resources could be overcome. Germany had relied on guano from South America for supplies of nitrogen, which was essential for many explosives based on nitroglycerine. The Allied blockade cut off these supplies very quickly. Yet German scientists discovered ways to 'fix' (i.e., extract) nitrogen from the air.

- also, when experience showed that laissez-faire and free markets were not compatible with prosecuting modern war, Britain transformed itself from the most laissez-faire economy and society into the most regulated and government-directed society and economy in Europe. As a result, war production and mobilisation of resources reached levels no one had dreamed of.

- nevertheless, even those abilities had limits. The Tsarist state was the least modern and the least able to fight a modern war. It collapsed almost completely under the pressure by the beginning of 1917 and out of that collapse emerged a revolution.

- until late in the summer of 1918, it was the only state where this happened, but at that point the limits had been reached in the Central Powers, even in Germany. Mutiny broke out in the German navy and demonstrations began in several German cities. The German collapse came as a compound of several things:

- malnutrition and starvation had been growing for the previous 2 years and the prospect of another winter was too much.
- the military government was heavy-handed in dealing with labour unrest;
- the severity of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk convinced many Germans that the generals were trying to keep the war going.
- the German troops that overran British and French positions in the German spring offensive of 1918 were appalled to see how much food and other supplies the Allies had while everything was so scarce or unobtainable on the German side. The prospect of winning against such well supplied opponents seemed virtually impossible.
- the fresh American troops (over 1 million were there and another million were being prepared and would soon be arriving) entered the war and finally convinced the Germans that they would have to lose. If they would have to lose sooner or later, it was better to end it sooner and stop the casualties and the hardships.

## **War and Change**

- while industrialisation and the acceleration of technological innovation had made rapid change a fact of life in the late 19th and early 20th Cs, the war greatly speeded up the pace of change:

- this was obvious in rapid developments in military technology—aircraft, tanks and the chemical weapons of gas; there were rapid advances in medicine, in food preservation and in radio (the rapid advances during the war made radio broadcasting possible immediately after the war).
- in social terms, many changes and trends which had started were accelerated (moral codes and social norms for women; female emancipation including the franchise in Britain, U.S., Canada and greater participation of women in the work force).
- there was great political change; the old, autocratic dynasties (Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns and Romanoffs) were all destroyed; the Liberal Party in Britain never recovered and was replaced as the alternative to the Conservatives by the Labour Party; all European countries experienced significant turmoil and difficulty in next decade or two.
- the political map of central and eastern Europe was completely redrawn; the 3 autocracies either disappeared altogether or suffered great losses and a large number of new nation/states emerged.



- the costs of war were staggering:

- in manpower, a large portion of an entire generation of males perished and left a generation of females without mates.
- the males lost tended to be the best; recruiting involved screening out the weak and unfit who were left home. Thus, modern war worked exactly opposite to the theories of the social Darwinists (unfortunately, the Nazis and fascists generally failed to learn that lesson & continued to preach social darwinism in the interwar period).
- material costs were heavy; in 4 years, Europe squandered the wealth accumulated over 2 or 3 centuries. Britain and France began the war as creditor nations and ended as debtors (the U.S. did very well, however, and Canada to a lesser degree).
- there were shortages and much reduced standards of living occurred in all countries during the war (accompanied by many inequities until devices like rationing were introduced). The problems were most severe in the Central Powers where civilians suffered extreme deprivation during the last 2 years; starvation and semi-starvation were rampant in Germany by the end of the war.

- all governments used propaganda and distorted the truth. The Germans frequently gave excellent ammunition, especially their actions in Belgium, including the execution of Nurse Edith Cavell and this was exploited in Britain and France. However, other, often worse atrocity stories were fabricated in Britain and France with serious, long-term loss of credibility when the truth came out after the war. [In World War 2 when horrific stories of atrocities being committed by the Nazis in eastern Europe began to filter out, there was a tendency to believe that the stories were untrue and were a repetition of atrocity fabrication.]

### **Civilian vs Military Control**

- the contrast in leadership in Britain and in Germany is very instructive.

#### **Britain**

- in Britain, ultimate authority always remained with the civilian government;

- initially, the Liberals tried to carry on a partisan government in conduct of the war. However, the extraordinary demands of total war and a series of crises required extraordinary responses. Instead, the politicians formed a national government of all political parties to carry on the war (it even included members of the Labour Party and socialists).

- also, a multitude of committees and boards began to be set up to deal with specific problems and issues; in staffing these agencies, they brought in all kinds of expertise (including trade union leaders). Even class distinctions were set aside.

- the shell crisis provides one example of the effectiveness of this approach. Initially, the military were left to deal with acquiring ammunition and artillery shells, either producing them in their own arsenals or letting contracts to industry. This was totally inadequate. Instead a shell committee was set up. It introduced assembly line production and helped to convert many factories to shell production. Assembly line production allowed the use of unskilled labour, including women; it was a revolution.

- there were strikes and labour troubles, but these were solved by negotiations and making concessions on quite a few matters. Having trade union leaders in the government and on many committees and boards helped to bring problems to the attention of government and to find solutions.

- there was a good deal of tension between the government and the military leadership. The government was appalled by the casualties in the trenches as a result of military command's acceptance of the idea that the war would be won or lost in the trenches in France. The government tried to find alternatives; the Gallipoli campaign was the most important example of this effort. The military opposed Gallipoli and (it is argued by some) contributed to its failure by holding back men and resources. Later in the war, the government even withheld men and supplies in order to prevent the military from launching more offensives in France. The military leaders were strong-willed but the government was very reluctant to fire the generals because it was believed to be bad for morale, both among soldiers and the public.

- in other areas, especially in international relations and everything at home, the government was supreme; this

showed in the vastly superior performance as compared to Germany.

## Germany

- in Germany, there was a general feeling that conduct of war should be left to the professionals, the military. Once the war began, the military leadership set most of the agenda and the civilian government very much took a back seat. Even more, from 1916 until the last few days before the armistice, Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff exercised a virtual military dictatorship which proved to be less adaptable and innovative.
- the military were often unaware of or ignored imponderables such as public opinion, but these are often very important in modern, total world war where morale and the number of one's allies are decisive. There was too much tendency to focus on narrow, short-term military advantage and ignore the consequences. We noted this earlier in connection with the Schlieffen plan.
- the heavy-handed treatment of Belgians roused a great deal of negative reaction, not only in Britain, where it helped to solidify support for fighting the war, but also in the US where it was used very skilfully by the British to begin to turn US opinion more in favour of the Allies. Gilbert points out a number of deficiencies of the Germans who were much less effective than the Allies in influencing public opinion in the Neutrals, especially the U.S.
- the submarine campaigns showed this again. In 1915 when it was apparent that the US especially was being alienated and might join the war with the Allies, the civilian politicians in Germany had pushed for and got a suspension of the campaign. However, by 1917, the military was desperate to find some way to break the stalemate and decided that a resumption of the submarine campaign could force Britain to make peace and end the war. They had been warned and knew that resuming the campaign would probably bring the US into the war. Nevertheless, they decided that they could win the war before the Americans could be effective participants and that they should go ahead. The decision to resume the submarine campaign, by bringing the US into the war, ensured that Germany would lose the war.
- when strikes and labour troubles broke out, there was a greater tendency to use repression of dissent. All workers in war industry were placed on the same footing as soldiers with the result that anyone going on strike was faced with the prospect of being treated as mutineers.
- normal distribution of food broke down and soon the black market was the only way to get supplies; even the military and government had to resort to the black market. This was very inefficient and added to a lack of fairness, which was harmful to morale.
- the result was a much lower degree of total mobilisation than in Britain; partly, this was due to the fact that in mobilisation of women, Britain was far ahead. Women did do a good deal of agricultural work in Germany, but there was hardly any use of women in industry. There was no move to assembly line mass production techniques.
- the conduct of Foreign Policy was much less adept in Germany.
- both sides tended to thwart peace initiatives because they would raise or lower demands in accord with the latest military advantage.
- however, the Allies tended to be less blatant and often very astute (e.g. when Woodrow Wilson first offered to mediate, the Allies, who were not very keen, nevertheless, agreed conditionally; the Germans rejected the proposal outright as being unacceptable, making them appear more intransigent).
- another serious case of German blundering was the harshness of Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; it made the German military government appear to be the most warmongering. Even many Germans came to feel that the generals were deliberately prolonging the war; this was an important factor in inspiring the outbreak of revolutionary activities late in 1918 in Germany.
- it also greatly angered Woodrow Wilson who swung around to the view that militarism, especially in Germany, was a major cause of the war. He now began to demand that Germany must surrender unconditionally in order to ensure that the military was discredited.
- the delay in signing an end to the war in the east, which would have allowed the military to transfer large numbers of troops from the east to the western front for the last great German offensive to try to end the war before the fresh new American troops could be decisive, helped to remove any chance of success for the last spring offensive. The Germans could have had a treaty in January, but it was delayed until March 3rd. Only then could the Germans begin to move troops westward.



