



CHAPTER 6 | WINNING THE WAR & LOSING THE PEACE

INTRODUCTION

The title of this chapter summarizes what I am about to explain, and if it seems strange to you that a war can be won even while a peace is being lost, keep reading.

At the end of Chapter 5, we left American soldiers finally in the thick of the fighting, where they provided desperately needed support for the European Allies during the crucial battles of 1918. Germany finally reached its limits of exhaustion and asked for an armistice. The shooting then stopped, but World War I wasn't over till a peace treaty was signed.

The end of hostilities was the “winning the war” part. Now we come to “losing the peace.” You see, while the maps of Europe, Asia, and Africa were redrawn as politicians decided the fates of empires and colonies in the wake of World War I, the final treaty they hammered out—the Treaty of Versailles—did not bring about lasting peace. Instead, it planted the seeds for an even bigger world war twenty years later. That is how a war can be won even while peace is being lost.

THE LAST YEAR OF WORLD WAR I

Germany's Spring Offensive

Let us begin with the crucial battles of 1918. Some of the darkest days of the war were lived out in the first six months of that year. The German commanders had spent the end of 1917 laying plans and training troops for their Spring Offensive, and they had done their work thoroughly. The Offensive enabled Germany to advance more in these spring months of 1918 than they had done since 1914, though at the cost of terrible casualties on both sides.

For one thing, the peace with Russia on the Eastern Front allowed Germany to move hundreds of thousands of men to the Western Front. The Germans knew that American troops were on their way and that this was Germany's final opportunity to win the war outright. They looked ahead to March 21, 1918, as a date that would launch both their Spring Offensive and (they hoped) the beginning of the end of the war.

At first, the Germans' Spring Offensive made impressive gains. Learning the lessons that the Russians taught them during the Brusilov Offensive in 1916, the Germans had trained stormtroopers (elite soldiers with machine guns, flamethrowers, and grenades) to attack lightly defended portions of the Allied trenches. After shelling the Allied lines for five hours, German stormtroopers invaded the Allies' trench system and punched through it, allowing regular German soldiers to advance and widen the gaps.

Unfortunately for the Germans, the reason for the light defense of those trench lines was that the territory behind them was strategically useless. There were no cities, railroad lines, or other important targets that mattered. Nevertheless, territory gained is territory gained, especially since the Germans broke the Allies' lines and advanced for miles in various places. A mile is a great deal in trench warfare!

French troops were pushed back almost to Paris with the Germans hard on their heels. By World War I standards, the Spring Offensive was quite successful because the Germans got close enough to Paris to attack the city with long-range artillery. The exhausted men of the Allied armies (the French and British) just managed to resist the Germans.



Unfortunately, Germany's early success was not sustainable. Because Germany had drafted almost every man able to fight by this time, each man they lost was difficult to replace. The British and French losses were just as bad, but they were replaced four times over by the two million American soldiers now beginning to arrive.

The Germans thought the Allies were near the limits of their strength, so they did not expect fierce resistance. The Allies, however, had appointed strong leaders like French General Ferdinand Foch to lead the Allied troops, and the British soldiers fought with impressive skill and courage.

When the Germans and the Allies met in July at the Second Battle of the Marne (July 15, 1918), the Germans were eventually forced to retreat, due in part to American support of the Allied lines. Also, though the Germans had initially advanced and taken many prisoners and enemy guns in their offensive, the Germans had advanced too quickly and did not have artillery support or enough supplies to sustain their gains. On August 8, when the Allies broke the German line at Amiens, the Germans were pushed back to the defensive positions they had held a year prior.

After the Allies had withstood the German's Spring Offensive, they were able to make plans for a counter-attack. With the arrival of fresh American forces and production of a significant number of new tanks, the Allies decided it was time for a significant offensive against the Hindenburg Line in September of 1918. After four days of fighting, the combined French, British, and American forces broke through the Line, and the Germans began their retreat.

Thousands of German soldiers died from exhaustion, malnutrition, and a deadly flu virus in the German trenches during the second half of the year, further weakening their armies. Ultimately, the Germans failed because they ran out of men and supplies. All told, the Spring Offensive lasted from March to July, with five major battles that cost each side over 500,000 men.

This deadly flu virus had first appeared in March 1918, but a more deadly form surfaced a few months later just as soldiers were heading home from war. The flu didn't really come from Spain, as far as we know, but Spain was one of the few neutral countries in World War I, and because the Spanish government didn't particularly care what people said or wrote concerning the war, Spain didn't have strict censorship laws that kept people from finding out about the flu. Thus, it was called named "The Spanish Flu" after the country that made it public.

World War I killed about 15 million soldiers, but the "Spanish Flu" epidemic that the soldiers carried home killed even more. Different sources list different numbers for the total death toll, but we do know that a third to half of all influenza deaths occurred in India. In all, nearly one-third of all the humans on earth became sick with the flu, and it killed between 20 to 50 million people worldwide in 1918 (compare that to COVID, which killed about 3 million people in 2020).

If this epidemic had arrived at any other time, it would have been the biggest news since the Black Death in the 1300's A.D. However, because it came on the heels of World War I, it killed a vast number of people without drawing a great deal of attention to itself. The death tolls from war and disease almost blurred together.



Low German Morale

The failure of the Spring Offensive discouraged the German soldiers, but Germany had even more serious problems to worry about. The British Royal Navy's blockade was stronger than ever, and food shortages in German cities were intensifying. Not only was there not enough food for the soldiers, but the German people were starving. Some soldiers who had gone home on leave or had marched through Germany when transferring from the Eastern to the Western Front, so they saw for themselves the suffering on the home front and began to speak of mutiny.

The Americans' arrival in force also had a significant impact, for their healthy, fresh countenances only worsened German morale. The German soldiers knew that the Allies had a nearly inexhaustible supply of guns, ammunition, and food since the Americans were now part of their war effort. Allied planes and ships were the finest in the air or on the sea, and new tanks gave the Allies yet another advantage.

America Among Her Allies

America's new French and British allies received her soldiers into their ranks with mixed feelings. Though mildly hopeful that the Americans would help, they did not expect the young, untried soldiers to be strong or courageous fighters. America poured money, manpower, food, and other supplies into war effort, all of which were greatly needed and appreciated. Yet, to battle-hardened French and British soldiers, the Americans looked more like lovable puppies than fierce war dogs. Would American troops be up to the trenches?

The Americans may have been inexperienced, but they were fresh and fearlessly ready to attack in ways that the Europeans, who had seen so many attacks fail, were not. The Americans proved to be good fighters who learned from their mistakes, and they were also well led. American troops were soon fighting beside the Allies in several vicious battles. Their participation in the Marne victory, along with several other Allied offensives, soon made the American forces invaluable to the British and French (and also shocked the German army). After these performances, the British and French respected American forces.

After the Allies resisted the Germans' Spring Offensive, they were able to make plans for a counterattack. With new American soldiers and hundreds of new tanks, the Allies launched an offensive against the Hindenburg Line in September of 1918. After four days of fighting, the combined French, British, and American forces broke through the line, and the Germans began to retreat.

Middle East

While the Germans were suffering defeat on the Western Front, big changes were taking place in the Middle East. For example, as you may recall, Edmund Allenby (the new British commander), took Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire in December 1917. This was an event of some importance because, as you probably know, Jerusalem is an important holy place in *three* major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The city had been in Ottoman hands since 1516, and so its capture by Christians (the first since the days of the Crusades) was an encouragement to the Allies and a discouragement to the Ottomans.



The Jews claim Jerusalem as the City of David, their holy city, and the religious capital of their faith. Their Torah is full of references to the city. Christians care about Jerusalem for all the same reasons as the Jews because Christians accept the Old Testament as part of the Bible, but Christians also add to their claim on Jerusalem that it is the place of their Savior's crucifixion and resurrection.

Meanwhile, the Muslims care about Jerusalem because they believe it is the spot from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven during the Night Journey (Isra and Mi'raj), as described in Islamic tradition. The rock inside the shrine is believed to be the spot from which the Prophet began his journey to the heavens. While controlling Jerusalem at various points in history, the Muslims built a shrine, called the Dome of the Rock, on the former site of the Jewish Temple in the A.D. 600's.¹

1. "[A] historical survey shows that the stature of the city, and the emotions surrounding it, inevitably rises for Muslims when Jerusalem has political significance. Conversely, when the utility of Jerusalem expires, so does its status and the passions about it. This pattern first emerged during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad in the early seventh century. Since then, it has been repeated on five occasions: in the late seventh century, in the twelfth-century Counter-crusade, in the thirteenth-century Crusades, during the era of British rule (1917-48), and since Israel took the city in 1967. The consistency that emerges in such a long period provides an important perspective on the current confrontation." Quoted from Daniel Pipes, "The Muslim Claim to Jerusalem" *Middle East Quarterly* (September 2001). Accessed 17 April 2009. <<http://www.danielpipes.org/84/the-muslim-claim-to-jerusalem>>. For more on the relationship of the Muslims to Jerusalem, read the article cited above.

On October 30, 1918, the Turks finally surrendered control of their lands to the Allies. By October of 1920, the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. After World War I, the newly-formed League of Nations (I will tell you more about the League later) gave France and Great Britain control over territories in the Middle East. Over the years that followed, the present-day nations of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, and Arabia emerged. Where Israel is today, the Allies created a commonly-governed area called Palestine. France and Great Britain also controlled "mandates" in Palestine, creating new states there.

These changes in the Middle East shaped the history of the region down through to the present day, but not necessarily in a good way. For example, during World War I, many promises were made by various nations to other nations and groups, and these sometimes conflicted. Thus, for instance, the British government promised Arab leaders that Arabs would still rule the Middle East after the war, but the British also made an agreement with the French to divide the Middle East into French and British territories. Meanwhile, the British foreign secretary declared his support for a Zionist¹ leader, thus angering and alienating the Arab leaders who had supported the Allied cause.

Those are just a few of the major British promises, but they are enough, I trust, to show the difficulty. The French, Russians, Greeks, Turks, Italians, Caucasians, Armenians, Georgians, Jews, and Kurds all had their own ambitions and plans for land in the Middle East. Some, like the Turks, were able to achieve their goals, but most were disappointed to one degree or another, and that was not a recipe for lasting peace.

1. Zionism is the name of an influential Jewish movement whose adherents wanted to settle in Jerusalem and create an independent Jewish state. This group will feature prominently in our study of the establishment of modern Israel later on.



Isolation, Abdication, Armistice

While the Ottomans were surrendering in the Middle East (October 30th, 1918), the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been dissolving slowly as her national groups declared political independence and ceased to fight. The Italians had been fighting valiantly with the Hungarians throughout the war, and finally their offensive at Vittorio Veneto forced Hungary to surrender on November 3rd, 1918. Even the Bulgarians were defeated and sued for peace. Germany's allies—the Ottomans, the Austro-Hungarians, and the Bulgarians— were falling again like a neat row of dominoes, but this time towards defeat.

Germany was left fighting alone with her exhausted manpower, starving people who had begun to talk of revolution, and hungry, angry, increasingly rebellious soldiers ready to mutiny. The military leadership saw that their hope had become forlorn by mid-July of 1918 (the Second Battle of the Marne), but German political leaders took months longer to reach the same conclusion.

After the Hindenburg Line broke, Kaiser Wilhelm and his military commanders were convinced of defeat. With the Ottoman Empire destroyed, the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrating, and the Bulgarians defeated, Germany had no allies. Even Germany's military generals were turning against the Kaiser. The Allied Powers, in fact, refused to discuss the terms of an armistice while the Kaiser was still in power.

The beginning of the end came when the German fleet was ordered to put to sea and attack the British navy. Even though they were about to lose, the German admirals wanted to be remembered for fighting bravely. The two navies were about equally matched so the German sailors knew that there would be no easy victory in store. They couldn't see the sense in getting themselves killed in a major battle when the war was about to be lost.

The Allied Powers refused to discuss the terms of an armistice, however, while the Kaiser was still in power. The beginning of the end came when the German fleet was ordered to put to sea and attack the British navy. Even though they were about to lose, the German admirals wanted to be remembered for fighting bravely. The two navies were about equally matched so the German sailors knew that there would be no easy victory in store. They couldn't see the sense in getting themselves killed in a major battle when the war was about to be lost.

And so, they mutinied. They refused to set sail, and they weren't alone. The mutiny spread across the country in a matter of days. A week later, the German commanders told the Kaiser that they could no longer trust or obey his orders and urged him to abdicate. On November 9, 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm II stepped down from his throne. Two days later, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the armistice went into effect. This wasn't a peace treaty, but it was a truce, a pause in the fighting. The guns of the Western Front were silenced for the first time in four years.

Interestingly, it was President Woodrow Wilson who helped to convince the political leaders of Germany to ask for peace. On January 22nd, 1917, Wilson had made an important speech to Congress while America was still relatively uninvolved in World War I. He said that he wanted "peace without victory." Wilson explained that "Victory would mean peace forced upon a loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished," and "It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which term of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand."



This was an important point for the Europeans. Traditionally, the victor in a war made the loser pay for some of the damages of the war. If there were peace without victory, then each side would simply stop fighting, take its losses, and go home to rebuild. As one of World War I's chief instigators, Germany decided that Wilson's vision of "peace without victory" would be a defeat that they could accept with honor.

It was a long way from armistice to peace, however, and the chance for lasting peace in Europe like the one crafted by the Congress of Vienna (which lasted for a century) would be lost in the months that followed.

PEACE AND CONSEQUENCES

Wilson Triumphant

The World War I peace process made President Wilson the first American president to travel to Europe while in office. He headed the American delegation of diplomats that went to offer wisdom and direction for the peace process. Wilson was greeted throughout Europe by wildly enthusiastic crowds. I'm afraid the fame and cheering went to his head; Wilson took the enthusiasm of crowds that had never voted for him as popular support for his ideals during the peace process.

Wilson was determined to be the man through which peace for all time came and thus failed to recognize his limits and the fact that no merely human will ever bring lasting peace on earth. Wilson, however, wanted to play savior. He had outlined "Fourteen Points," a set of principles and goals, in a speech to Congress on January 8, 1918. They were intended to serve as a blueprint for a just and lasting peace after the war:

1. Open Diplomacy: There should be no secret treaties between nations.
2. Freedom of the Seas: All seas should be free for navigation during peace and war, except when international law dictates otherwise.
3. Free Trade: Barriers to international trade, such as tariffs and economic restrictions, should be removed.
4. Equal Tariffs: There should be fair and equal trade conditions among nations that accept peace.
5. Reduction of Armaments: Nations should reduce their military forces to the minimum required for national security.
6. Fair Colonial Policies: Colonial issues should be resolved with the interests of both colonizers and colonized in mind.
7. Evacuation of Occupied Territories: All territories occupied during the war should be evacuated, and sovereignty should be restored to the people.
8. Self-Determination: Peoples who were formerly subjects of empires should have the right to determine their own political status and government.
9. League of Nations: The creation of a League of Nations (which later became the United Nations) to maintain peace and settle disputes diplomatically.
10. Reparation for War Damages: Fair compensation should be made for damage caused by aggression.
11. Recognition of Russia: Russia should be welcomed back into the international community, following its 1917 revolution.



12. Respect for Belgium: Belgian territory should be evacuated and restored.
13. Readjustment of Italy's Borders: Italy's borders should be redrawn along lines of nationality.
14. Independence for Austria-Hungary: The people of Austria-Hungary should be given the opportunity to develop their own nationalities and determine their own futures.

These principles were meant to promote self-determination, open diplomacy, and the prevention of future conflicts through cooperation and diplomacy. They laid the groundwork for the negotiations and treaties that followed World War I, particularly the Treaty of Versailles, which officially ended the war and included some elements of Wilson's points.

Treaty of Versailles

Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Britain, Georges Clemenceau of France, and President Woodrow Wilson led the peace talks at Versailles. Together with Vittorio Orlando of Italy, they were frequently referred to as the "Big Four," or the "Big Three" when speaking of the British, French, and American leaders (Italy was considered of less importance).

The leaders of Britain, France, and America, all wanted to make sure Germany could not successfully initiate another war. They disagreed, however, about the best way to accomplish this goal. The people of Britain and France wanted their leaders to punish Germany, but Wilson (who felt great freedom to act alone) was more focused on preventing future wars. Wilson believed his own rhetoric: he wanted "peace without victory"—in other words, he did not want a vengeful treaty.

The British and French had paid the highest price for victory: millions of men dead or wounded and billions spent on weapons and ammunition. In 1919, unwilling to accept that they played an eager part in starting the war, leaders of the European Allies shifted the blame for the war onto Germany. Unfortunately, fighting World War I did not mean that people had dealt with the problem of human sin. Indeed, the war was brought on by worldly motives, and the carnage was heightened by those same motives. Pride, selfishness, racial hatred, and pursuit of personal power were common among most European rulers.

In dramatic contrast to Wilson's dream of "peace without victory," the British and French leaders required the Germans to assume full responsibility for the moral guilt of the war. They demanded revenge on Germany for their losses. Thus the British and French diplomats made sure that the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were both harsh and burdensome to the German people:

- The Treaty of Versailles forced the Germans to cut the size of their army significantly.
- The Germans were also forced to give up significant territories to the Polish, French, and Danish governments, which the Germans had taken in the 1700's and 1800's.
- Germany also had to return the lands they had occupied during the war, such as parts of France, Belgium, and Russia.
- The Germans were forced to hand over their overseas colonies.
- The "war guilt" clause of the treaty forced the Germans to accept responsibility for starting the war.
- The Allies demanded that the Germans pay the Allies war reparations (money paid by one side to another after a war to repair, reimburse, and rebuild) in the amount of over 132 billion gold marks (about 500 billion in today's money) since they were (allegedly) guilty of starting the war.



Thus, the humiliating treaty that emerged from the peace talks sowed seeds of bitterness and anger in Germany. The Treaty of Versailles officially ended World War I, but it was so harsh to Germany that it simply set the stage for World War II. Indeed, French General Ferdinand Foch said of the Treaty: “This is not peace. It is an armistice for twenty years.” He was exactly right: when World War II began twenty years later, it took up more or less where World War I had left off.

The “Big Four” did not only load the guilt of World War I on the back of Germany. After all, the war toppled four empires: Tsar Nicholas II and Kaiser Wilhelm II both abdicated, the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed, and the Ottoman Empire was crumbling. By the time they were through addressing all these changes, the “Big Four” had redrawn the political maps for *three continents*: Africa, Asia, and Europe.

In Africa, the Treaty of Versailles gave away Germany’s territories. Neither Austria nor Bulgaria had territory in Africa, so there wasn’t much impact beyond that change. In Asia, as I told you earlier, the League of Nations eventually gave lands in the Middle East that belonged to the Ottoman Empire to the French or British as protectorates (also called “mandates”) under the League’s supervision. This included Palestine. As a result, Arab leaders who had been promised control of the Middle East felt betrayed. The decision to set Palestine aside as a homeland for the Jewish people also stirred Arab resentment and bred trouble in the area. Meanwhile, the northern part of the old Ottoman Empire became Turkey.

In Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, and from the ruins rose up not only Austria and Hungary (now separate and smaller states), but also two new nations: Czechoslovakia and a Slavic nation that became Yugoslavia. Poland was recreated as an independent nation. Romania and Italy received additional territories at Austria-Hungary’s expense. Bulgaria, which had helped Austria conquer Serbia, lost a great deal of land and many of its industrial resources were taken away.

In the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed March 1918, you may recall that Lenin gave the Russian Empire’s territories—Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—to Germany in return for peace. In 1919, all four became independent nations thanks to the Treaty of Versailles.

There can be no question that personal and national ambition and selfishness among national leaders played a part at Versailles. For example, Britain continued to repress increased restlessness in her colonies around the world. Lenin conducted a war of extermination and repression against the Russian people in pursuit of personal power, and Stalin (Lenin successor, whom we will discuss more in later chapters) followed Lenin’s prescribed path after him.

Meanwhile, the conquered peoples of Germany and the belittled ones of Italy and Japan nursed bitterness and hatred, making themselves vulnerable to a new group of leaders (like Hitler, Mussolini, and Tito) who appealed to their peoples’ sin natures in order to springboard themselves into power.

As a result of limiting the sizes of armies (an external solution for the problem of war) and carving up the map to reflect the Big Four’s notions of correct groupings, a number of Eastern European countries (Yugoslavia, Armenia, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia) were weakened beyond their ability to stand, enabling radical forces to take over. Most of the newly created democracies in Eastern Europe quickly turned to oppressive socialist strong men. Also, numbers of people in Eastern Europe were particularly resentful when they found themselves separated from family members and being grouped with people whose language and customs they did not share due to the new national boundaries.

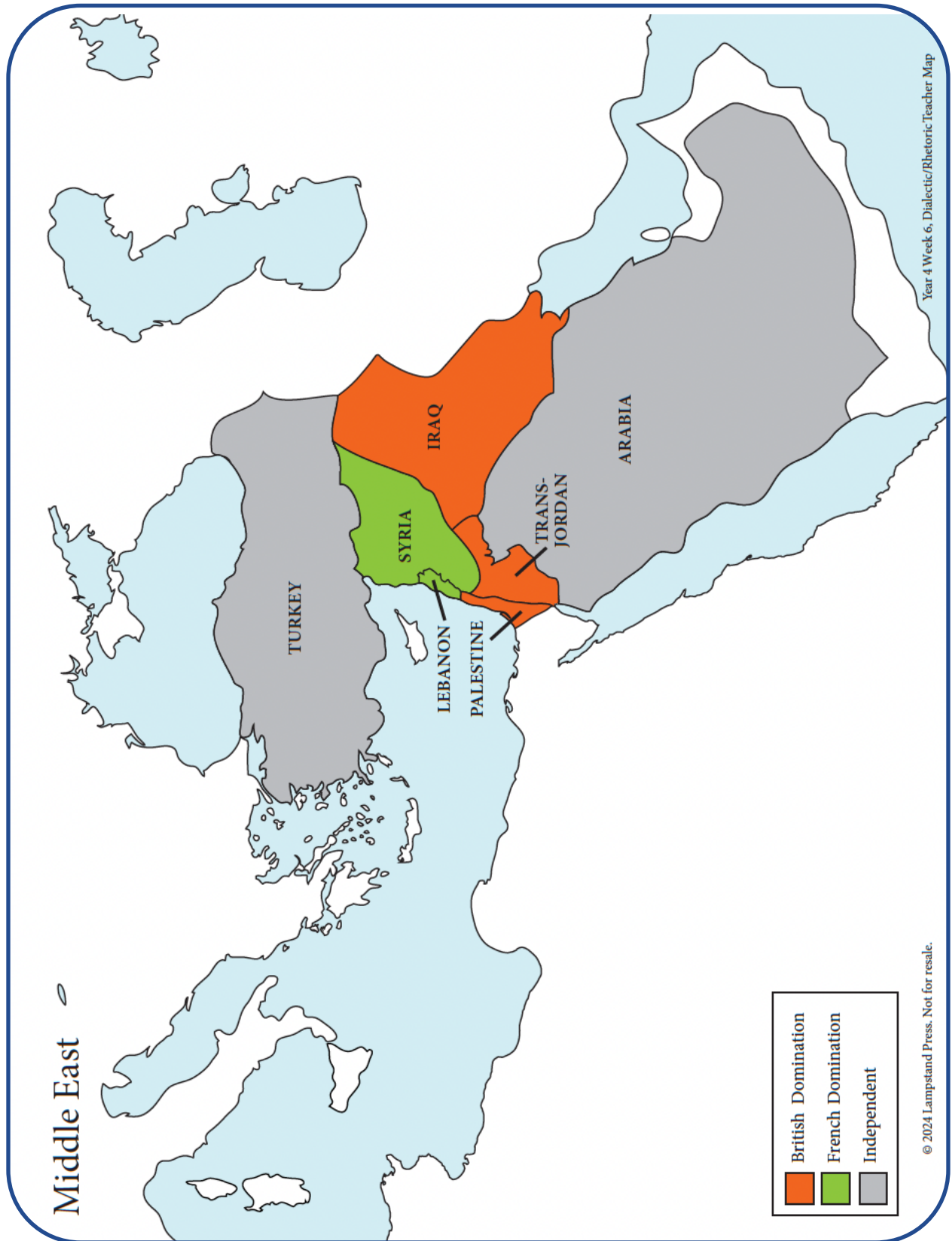
Many European nations did not approve of Britain, France, America, and Italy making these important decisions for them, but those were the fortunes of (this) war. President Wilson could perhaps have helped



the Europeans craft a more lasting peace if he had not been so focused on creating the League of Nations. Wilson decided to give France and England their way with Germany in exchange for their support in the matter of the League.

Though Wilson attempted to lead Europe to a “peace without victory,” and he tried to “do good” to all, he left out the need for repentance towards God, forgiveness between enemies, and reliance on God’s wisdom, when he became focused on his own solution: the League of Nations. Like the other leaders, his hope seems to have been founded on the wisdom of men. Wilson’s attempts were wholehearted and probably noble, but they were also self-reliant, “merely” intellectual, and (in the end) ineffective.







Wilson Defeated

Although Wilson did not coin the phrase “the war to end all wars,”¹ Wilson seems to have believed that the Great War (as it was then called) might provide the grounds for a new order that would indeed end warfare. In his April 2nd, 1917 address to Congress, Wilson asked that America join World War I on the grounds that,

“The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.”

Wilson also dreamed of a League of Nations, an organization of diplomats who would discuss and resolve arguments between countries peaceably. Through the League, Wilson believed, the differences of the nations of the world could be settled without wars. He introduced this idea of the League to the world as the last of his Fourteen Points, and his determination to create the League led him to compromise in other areas. For example, to keep Britain and France on board, Wilson allowed the Allied victors to saddle Germany with bigger and bigger burdens as they negotiated the Treaty of Versailles.

Wilson seriously misjudged his ability to create such a League. He was an idealist and an intellectual who was flattered by the way Europeans treated him after the war. They had praised him for the help America brought to the fight and were wildly happy that the war was finally over. Those two things didn't mean that they believed Wilson could best decide how they should be governed in the future. As we just said, the leaders of England and France only agreed to the League if they first got what they wanted.

Wilson also made the mistake of assuming that the American people would listen to reason (his reasons, at least) and give up some American authority to hopefully prevent future wars. But while Wilson was in Europe month after month negotiating the peace treaties, he lost political support back home.

Thus, when Wilson had convinced the European nations to try his idea of a League of Nations, and it had been written into the Treaty of Versailles, he returned home to find opposition. The United States Constitution stated that though the president did have the ability to create treaties, the Senate needed to ratify them to make them operational. Unfortunately for Wilson, the Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles because it stipulated that America must enter the League.

Why was Congress so unwilling? There were several reasons. On the one hand, many conservative Republicans believed that the country ought to return to a state of isolation from world events and take care of domestic interests first. Additionally, Republicans spoke for many Americans when they sought an end to the crusading spirit of the Progressive era. Republicans were also angered because Wilson had purposefully denied them representation on his staff as he journeyed to the Paris Peace Conference.

On the other hand, Wilson had also alienated his own Progressive base when he asked for a declaration of war, instituted the draft, and instituted repressive and controlling policies as part of the war effort. As a result, many Progressives did not support his League.

Congress was not merely sulking over real or imagined injuries; their attitude also represented real caution about various vague wordings and loopholes in the Treaty of Versailles that might hamper America's in-

1. H.G. Wells authored the phrase.



dependence. They also reflected the dominant reaction of Americans to the war. Once the fighting spirit had receded, America was war-weary, worried about rising prices, and looking to the future. Americans were perfectly ready to turn back to the isolationist foreign policy that had served them well throughout their national history thus far.

President Wilson did not understand this. His idealistic and intellectual nature, coupled with heightened pride and overconfidence from both his years as the unopposed commander in chief and his brilliant reception from Europeans after the war, led to a belief that he could tap the “reasonableness” and “educability” (remember, this was the man who used propaganda to “train” Americans into hatred of Germany and readiness to fight in World War I) of the American people.

He expected Americans to follow his lead into further involvement with European affairs via the League of Nations because he felt it was morally right, and because he was used to people following him without question by this stage of his presidency. On September 3, 1919, Wilson undertook a speaking tour of the country at a killing pace (8,000 miles in 22 days) to appeal directly to the American people for their support so that the United States might join the League.

Unfortunately, the only dramatic political result of Wilson’s tour was the destruction of his health. He collapsed in Pueblo, Colorado, then rallied for the return to Washington, where he had a stroke on October 2nd that almost killed him. Although Wilson recovered enough to continue pleading for the Treaty of Versailles and especially America’s entry in the League of Nations, there was no hope. By the time Republican Warren Harding was elected as President in 1921, Wilson’s dream had died. The League of Nations was eventually created, but the United States did not join it (at least, not until World War II, but that is a different story).

Thus, weary of war and worried about rising prices, Americans swung back to their traditionally isolationist position. Being part of the League would mean being involved in future European squabbles, which many wanted only to ignore. Even Wilson’s own party wouldn’t listen to him or support his dream. When the America Senate refused to join the League, Europe ended up with a toothless League and a treaty with fangs.

POST-WAR SOCIETY

A soldier returning home from World War I would probably have a difficult time adjusting to his new civilian life, especially if he had lost limbs or had severe emotional or psychological trauma from his time in the trenches. Soldiers probably would have seen many horrific atrocities and lost many comrades in the war, causing heartache and sometimes permanent mental damage.

Then, too, the home to which these soldiers came would not necessarily look like the one they left. Post-war settlements swept away most of the old autocratic regimes: tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, and the German Empire. All but Russia were replaced (at least initially) by more democratic governments. Traditional class distinctions became blurred. Much adjustment would have been necessary even for the soldiers who returned relatively whole and sane.

Of course, it is an ill wind indeed that blows no good anywhere, and World War I was not so ill a wind as that. For instance, the war hastened medical advances, especially in wound management and techniques for setting fractures. The scale of the casualties taught medical workers the advantages of specialization and professional hospital management. In America, World War I also opened some new opportunities for black Americans and women.



Black Americans and Women in Post-War America

The mistreatment and discrimination against black Americans and other minorities in America began to weaken as a result of World War I. Some all-black American units won French medals for bravery overseas (and some African and Asian units were also distinguished for courage and valor). In fact, a popular song in 1919 had the line, “How ya gonna keep ‘em down on the farm, after they’ve seen Patee [Paris]?” Black soldiers who came home from France weren’t eager to go back to sharecropping, and sometimes they didn’t have to.

The war effort demanded vast amounts of manpower, just as the army shipped millions of men off to fight in Europe. All those jobs had to be filled by someone, and many Southern black men and women found new jobs in Northern cities. Once they established a foothold, a great migration of Southern black Americans flooded to the cities and factories in the North. Their arrival strengthened the Republican party since the Democrats were associated with racist Jim Crow laws and control in the South.

You shouldn’t think that this migration resulted in an obvious or legal change for black Americans. Jim Crow laws were still in effect in Southern states. Some whites in the North expressed racism and hostility towards blacks who competed with them for jobs. But by moving North, blacks established communities where they could work hard and begin to prosper.

From that prosperity (and the freedom to vote) they began to build up momentum and power to resist discrimination as well as recruiting white allies to their cause. The Republican party had sought to support blacks during Reconstruction, and it continued trying to advance the cause of racial equality during this period as well.

Women also received the right to vote in Britain in 1918 and in America in 1920. (You may recall that, in Book Three of this *Warp* series, I told you about the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which is often pointed to as the first official step on the path to this great change for women. Seventy-two years of effort—rallies, marches, speeches, articles, and arguments—finally resulted in the 19th Amendment to the Constitution that gave women voting rights in 1920.)

Women in the workforce, which began as necessity during the war years, became increasingly commonplace in the years that followed. To be clear, women had worked in factories ever since the start of the Industrial Revolution, but these were mostly the poorest of women who desperately needed the money to help their families survive. Any family with enough wealth to do so expected women to be at home while the men worked.

The idea that a woman who didn’t have to work outside the home would choose to do so was uncommon. When their men arrived back from Europe, ready to start working again at their old jobs, many women did return to homemaking, and gladly! Men’s work was often hard, dirty, and exhausting. However, the culture had also changed during World War I. Women had proven that they could do jobs that required effort, skill, and intelligence.

Thus, while men were still usually preferred by employers, but more and more often women were hired for jobs that were closed to them before the war. Progress was slow and at times inconsistent, but decade by decade women found more opportunities and acceptance as they worked outside the home.



Post-War Society and the Arts

World War I also profoundly affected the world of poetry, literature, and art. Post-war poetry, for instance, communicates both the spirit of the times and the soldiers' individual experiences in war. For example, Brooke's poetry captured the patriotic, positive ideas of the glory of war. Sassoon's poetry was a biting description of the pain and loss of life in the trenches. Owen's work communicated the despair and hopelessness of the soldiers.

After the war was over, some of the men put their experiences down on paper. Edmund Blunden's *Good-bye to All That*, Ernst Junger's *Stahlgewittern*, and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* describe the horrific details of the war, of which many people had been unaware. Ernest Hemingway, an American author, wrote *A Farewell to Arms*, in which he asserted that words such as glory, honor, and courage no longer have the meaning that they once did. J.R.R. Tolkien's experience in the war affected his future book, *The Lord of the Rings*, in which he portrayed the Dead Marshes as a muddy no-man's-land filled with waters covering the bodies of dead warriors.

World War I also affected photography and paintings. Because it was difficult to take photographs in the swampy trenches, and because the government strictly limited where photographers could go, very few pictures showed the true brutality of the war. After the war, however, some photographers released pictures they had taken in hopes of opening the public's eyes to wartime realities. Other artists sought to enlighten the public through their paintings. For example, Otto Dix's paintings of wounded soldiers was a harsh reminder of the soldiers' experiences during the war. John Singer Sargent's *Gassed* was also a powerful representation of injured British troops after a gas attack.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we've learned that World War I began with great confidence – the European nations were convinced that they could defeat each other in a matter of months. Each was convinced of its own superiority, each country believed it was better than the others around it. As the war dragged on and the bodies pile up, the nations of Europe grew ever more stubborn, refusing to admit what a terrible mistake they had made and unwilling to bear the consequences of defeat.

Europe had largely turned its back on God during the Enlightenment a century before. Their answer to the question of, "Who is Jesus?" was that he was not the Son of God. Europeans exchanged the truth of God's wisdom to trust in their own understanding, and it may be argued that God, for a season, turned his back on Europe, allowing them to reap the deadly harvest they had sown for themselves.

Against all sanity to not make the same mistake twice, they charged the machine guns time after time; against all knowledge of better things, they lived in the trenches among rats and mud and the bodies of dead comrades for years; and against all reason or reasonableness they fought on and on instead of making peace. Although we cannot speak for God, it certainly looks like he allowed Europe to suffer through a season of madness.

Of the Central Powers, Germany was the largest, strongest, and most effective nation. German soldiers simultaneously defeated the Russians, propped up the Austrians and Ottomans, and held back the combined might of England and France. A nation with 68 million citizens (and 76 million ineffective allies) fought the combined might of its enemies, (300 million strong) to a stalemate. It may be argued that only four years of brutal war, horrific casualty counts, and devastating destruction allowed the fresh American troops to so easily defeat their German opponents in 1918.



It was Germany, therefore, that the Allies held responsible for World War I, and they burdened the German people with the weight of impossible reparations. By mistreating the Germans, Wilson and the Allies sowed the seeds for World War II. The bitter Germans looked for new leaders who would restore them to greatness. As we will learn in the weeks to come, they found such a leader in Adolf Hitler.

Wilson wanted peace without victory, but he wound up with a victory without peace. He insisted on creating the League of Nations, which proved to be a useless folly. Without real support from the American people, the League never had a chance. Wilson was determined to be the man through which peace for all time came, but he failed to realize that Jesus alone can end war for all time. Irony occurs when an outcome is the opposite of what one would naturally expect or consider appropriate. Far from ending all wars, the peace process in many ways sowed the seeds for World War II.

Historians largely agree that World War I was the dividing line between an Age of Innocence before the war and the Age of Ideologies that followed. New ideas gained power as men and women struggled to make sense of a world shattered by war. The promises of ideologies—fascism, socialism, communism—and the men who preached them seemed to offer hope for a better future to the common people of nations struggling to rebuild.

As we will see, however, such hopes were broad roads of destruction leading to cliffs over which millions leaped (or were pushed) to their deaths. The only true hope for each person and all mankind is the gospel; Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. This world is not our true home, and those who seek to establish Heaven on Earth will always fail until the Lord returns.

