



EUROPE, 1914

- Allied Powers
- Central Powers
- Neutral Powers



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Introduction: The Great War

- The European powers began a devastating war against each other in July-August 1914. It ended in November 1918, but its aftereffects reverberated in the decades to come, which resulted in another World War. The Great War thus turned out to be World War I.
- This is an introductory lecture. We will continue to unpack the war till the end of this semester. Next week, we will focus on the Russian Revolution and explore its connections to the First World War.
- In the next unit, we will devote two weeks to the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles, which reshaped the world post-the Great War.

Introduction: The Great War

- The Versailles Treaty will also allow us to explore the American engagement with the war and the creation of the League of Nations.
- We will separate the European and Asian components of the Treaty to see how they continue to affect the situation in the Middle East to this day.
- The economic provisions of the treaty will continue to pose an insurmountable challenge to the defeated central power. We will study how nationalist and fascist elements exploited them and created conditions which, we now know, culminated in WWII.

Introduction: The Great War

- Today, our objective is that by the end of our discussion, we should be able to answer the following five questions:
 - What was the most immediate trigger of the war?
 - How relevant was the trigger to the spread, ampler and momentum it gained, and the human toll it took?
 - What were the objectives of the major powers and states that joined the war?
 - How many fronts did it open over the land, air, and sea?
 - How did the war fronts fall silent?

References

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- Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).
- Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750 to the Present*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994).
- Santanu Das, “Indians at home, Mesopotamia, and France, 1914-1918: Towards an Intimate History,” in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

The Immediate Trigger of the Great War

- We have known the multiethnic-multicultural Habsburg/Austria-Hungary Empire, most recently because of the Napoleonic Wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the 1815 Congress of Vienna, which resolved to protect European Monarchies against any such resurgence.
- This empire shared its borders with the Balkans, where its southern rival, the Ottoman Empire, had been in ascendance since 1389, when it defeated the Balkan Serbs at Kosovo. The nineteenth century, however, had seen this empire decline in the region.
- In terms of world order, historians termed it as the “Eastern Question,” which meant how the major powers should balance the interests of the Austria-Hungary, Russian, and Ottoman Empires without ceding any ground to Russian ambitions for the Bosphorus and the Strait of Dardanelles.

The Immediate Trigger of the Great War

- The region had experienced turbulence since the Russo-Ottoman war of 1878. The Treaty of Berlin, July 1878, recognized the independence of Serbia. It also retained Ottoman Sovereignty over Bosnia-Herzegovina, but placed it under the tutelage and administration of Austria-Hungary.
- Using force and heavy deployment of troops, Austria-Hungary first secured its role and then annexed the territory in 1908.
- Another major upheaval occurred in 1912-13. Albania declared independence in November 1912. Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro formed the anti-Ottoman Balkan League and sought to secure Ottoman territories by force.
- The Ottomans ceded most of their European territories to the Balkan states in the Treaty of London, May 1913, to end the Balkan War.

The Immediate Trigger of the Great War

- About a year after the Balkan War, the Austrian-Hungarian heir-presumptive, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and the future queen, Sophie, paid a visit to their relatively new subjects in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He inspected the military maneuvers as Inspector General.
- The visit coincided with June 28 Vidovdan, St. Vitus Day, Serbian commemoration of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo.



The Immediate Trigger of the Great War

- A Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, on Vidovdan, June 28, in Sarajevo.
- Austria immediately suspected a Serbian plot and presented a charter of demands requiring intrusive investigation, violating Serbian sovereignty.
- Serbs showed willingness to cooperate, but rejected the intrusive component of the demands.



The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. The other major actors followed in two broad alliances they had formed since 1879:
- The core of the Central Powers was a Dual Alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany since 1879. Italy joined them in 1882 and thus generated the Triple Alliance. Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914, and then on France on August 3, 1914.
- Italy did not join the Central Powers' war declarations because its government claimed to be pursuing its “sacred interests”.
- Bulgaria joined in September 1915, ending its neutrality, for territorial gains at the cost of Serbia.

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- On the opposite side, the Entente Cordiale between Russia and France had existed since 1894. England's joining them in 1904 turned it into the Triple Entente.
- Russia, as the protecting power of Pan Slavism, was the first to join immediately after Serbia declared war on Austria-Hungary.
- Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914.
- After a secret treaty promising territorial gains, Italy switched sides and joined the war with the Allies in 1915.
- Romania joined the Allies in August 1916, but the Central Powers occupied it mainly to gain control over its energy resources and transportation network.
- Japan declared war on Germany in August 1914.

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- In 1917, the alliance faced a huge setback and simultaneously acquired the most decisive element in the outcome of the war.
- The setback first: After Lenin successfully steered the Russian revolutionaries to power in November 1917, the already faltering Russian participation collapsed by December 1917.
- In March 1918, Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which silenced the eastern front and spared the German forces for western trench warfare.

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- The USA joined the Allies in April 1917 as an “associate,” not allied power, declaring war on Germany.
- The US declaration against Austria-Hungary was not added before December of that year.
- The US did not declare war on Turkey and Bulgaria.
- When the Allies, excluding the US, took the war against the Ottoman Empire to the Middle East, the Arabs joined them, expecting sovereignty over the Arab lands.

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- We learned from the Omdurman and Boer Wars last week how the human capacity to kill had been increasing since the Industrial Revolution.
- By the second decade of the twentieth century, we can see the phenomenal rise in the ability of national and imperial governments to mobilize human beings for war. The mechanized total war takes a massive toll on human lives across the war fronts that, in this case, stretched from Europe to Asia, Africa, the Atlantic, and the Pacific.

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- The military expenditure grew exponentially. Hobsbawm writes that the British military expenditure rose from £32 million in 1887 to £ 44.1 million in 1898, and over £77 million in 1913-14. The Navy claimed the biggest share of it. In 1885, it cost the state £ 11 million, while in 1913-14, the cost was four times as much.
- The German expenditure grew from 90 million Marks in the mid 1890s to 400 million German Marks by 1913-14.
- The nexus between the governments and the private armament producers strengthened. The share of private producers in the supply contracts for the British armed forces kept rising, from a third in the 1880s, to 46% in the 1890s, and 60% in the 1900s. In Germany group KRUPP employed 16,000 in 1873, 24,000 around 1890, 45,000 around 1900, and almost 70,000 in 1912 (p.307-308).

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- Says Hobsbawm, “the merchants of death” were war advocates as well: “...the modern international trade in death was well underway,” (p. 309). You can replace death with the Freudian term, Thanatos, if you like.
- LaFeber refers to the gun maker Maxim, who performed in a silent movie of 1915-16, titled The Battle Cry for Peace, advocating for the arms industry and war (p. 291).
- We must remember that there is a geography and definition attached to each death that occurs in a war. Wars in our era are no exception to that rule. In retrospect, however, we can have a more inclusive view.
- Here are some [numbers to reflect upon](#).

The Trigger, the War-Spread, and the Human Toll.

- The Massive Mobilization for war efforts extended to the Imperial colonies as well.
- France raised 200,000 men from West Africa and 550,000 from the Empire as a whole.
- Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa provided the British Empire with 1.2 million men.
- Das maintains that India made the largest contribution to the First World War in terms of manpower of any of the colonies or dominions of the British Empire. According to government records of the time, the total number of Indian ranks recruited during the war up to 31 December 1919 was 877,068 combatants and 561,169 non-combatants, making a total of 1,440,437. In addition, there were an estimated 239,561 men in the British Indian army in 1914.

Objectives of the Major Powers and States

- We will see that the trigger-war connection, under strain from the beginning, totally breaks down as the war progresses. We can get a glimpse of it in their stated/inferred/implied objectives of the major actors.
- The Central Powers first: Austria-Hungary had its war aims closely connected to the trigger. Twelve nationalities composed the empire. Nationalism was antithetical to the multiethnic, multicultural imperialism.
- Serb nationalism could inspire the Bosnian Serbs and other ethnic groups to follow that path. Austria-Hungary had to establish the supremacy of the imperial model over the rising nationalism. Serb defeat will enable them to make their point.

Objectives of the Major Powers and States

- The Germans were the core of the Central Powers. Besides consolidating the alliance system, their objectives had changed with the departure of Bismarck in 1890. Kaiser William II, unlike him, aggressively pursued an international status and stature comparable with his idea of a recently unified, victorious (Franco-Prussian War 1870-71), and industrially growing Germany. This became the driving force of the Weltpolitik of 1897.
- Various defined as Mitteleuropa and Mittelfrika, Germany coveted more Lebensraum, the living space, the territories and colonies in both Europe and Africa.

Objectives of the Major Powers and States

- Germany's military-industrial, economic, and nationalistic profile built a strong justification for its demands.
- Serb lands were equally useful, but competing against the British was their main target.
- Hobsbawm argues that the Anglo-German confrontation was the principal reason for the war, the way it unfolded.
- The Ottoman Empire defended itself against Russian ambitions for control over the passageway to the Mediterranean, the Dardanelles Straits. British and French Imperialism threatened them directly.

Objectives of the Major Powers and States

- France, like most European powers, resented the emergence of a European Hegemon. German unification of 1870, French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, and German annexation of the French Alsace and Lorraine had revived that scare.
- France sought the restitution of Alsace and Lorraine, and a weakening of the Hegemon forever to eliminate such recurrences.
- Russia wanted to reassert itself as the protector of the Slavs. Most recently, because of its experience with the Napoleonic Wars, Russia shared apprehensions of a European Hegemon as well.

Objectives of the Major Powers and States

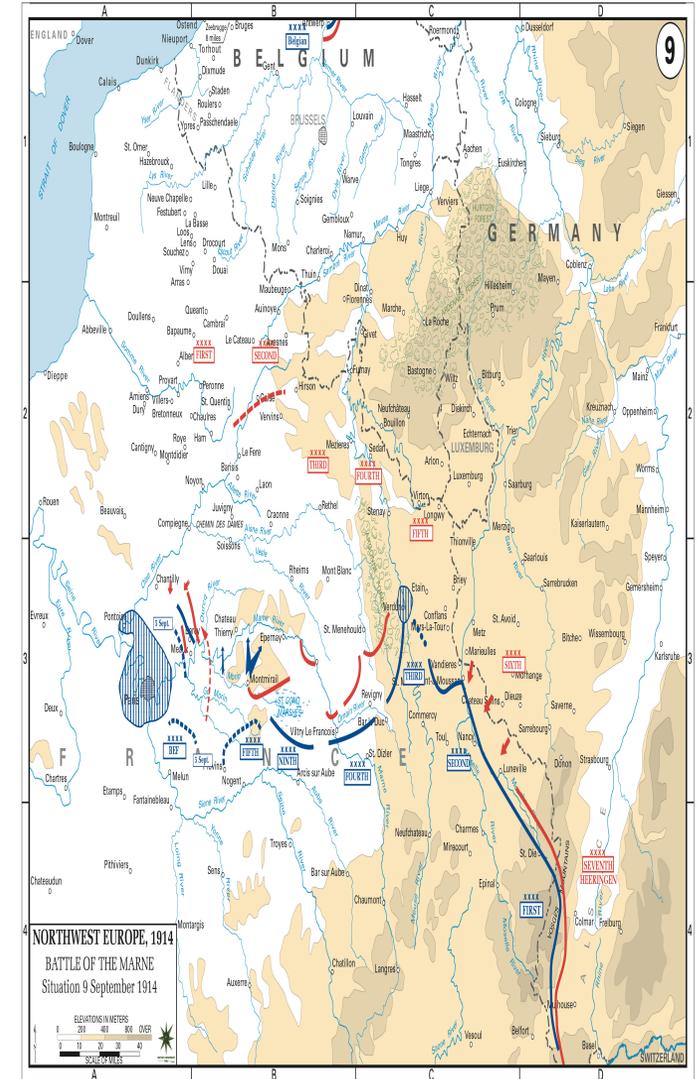
- Most immediately, the British had been guarantors of Belgian neutrality since 1839. They had to challenge any violator of this status quo.
- The possible emergence of Germany as a near-equal naval, military, and economic power posed a threat to the supreme naval and colonial power of the world. They had to subdue this emerging rival.
- Italy sought parts of Austria-Hungary at variable degrees of ethnic density and an enhanced share of colonial resources.
- Japan aspired to emerge as a regional power and coveted greater political, military, and economic influence over China.

Objectives of the Major Powers and States

- The US was last, but the most crucial and impactful, power to engage on the allies' side, as an “associate power.”
- We need a detailed discussion about the US war aims. We will do it as part of our lectures on the Versailles Treaty and the Russian Revolution.
- Briefly and ironically, President Wilson’s principal “war aim” was to steer the postwar peace process with a view to ending all wars. The world had to be made safe for democracy.
- Annihilating the German menace on the high seas and enabling allies to win the war against her were the immediate objectives.
- Unintended, the war transformed the US into an economic superpower, a leading world manufacturer, and an emerging naval and military power.

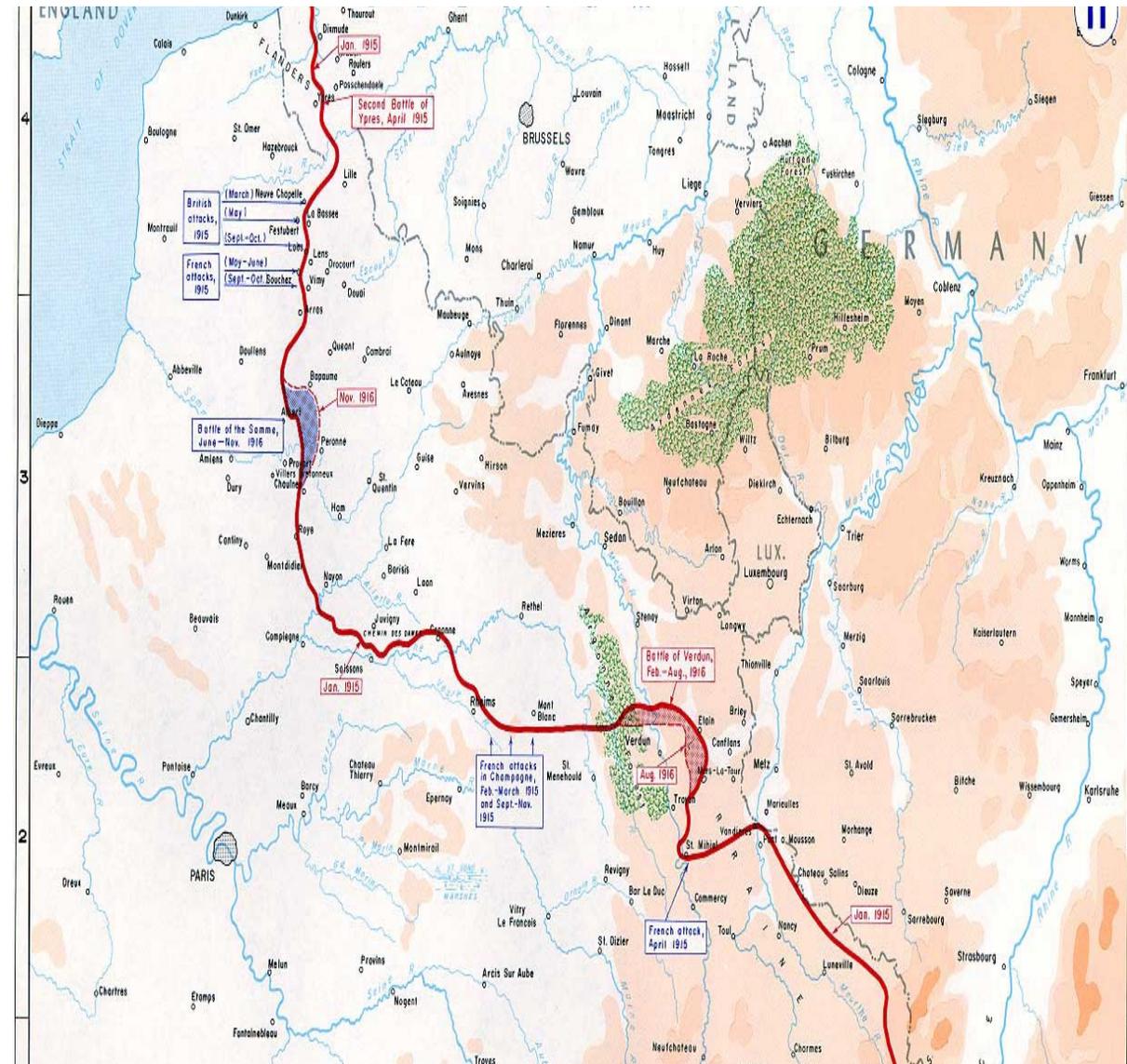
The War Fronts: Western

- The Germans launched the war at the front where they had smashed the enemy in 1871. As three of the four powers on the Allies' side fought this war, it remained the most high-profile nerve center of the war.
- Named after a late military commander, Schlieffen Plan successfully violated Belgian neutrality and drove the German forces up to the Marne River, some twenty miles from Paris. The Battle of Marne, in September 1914, stalled their advance.
- This turned out to be the last spurt of mobility on the Western Front until 1918, when the American-led allies broke through the German lines. At Marne, the French blocked the advance, and the two sides stalled in a stalemate, digging out and getting into, finally, some four to five hundred miles-long trenches on both sides.



The War Fronts: Western

- The two sides took defensive positions in trenches along a dividing line that finally ran 400 or 500 miles.
- From the North Sea coast, the Belgians held the top forty mile-part north of Ypres.
- The British held the next ninety miles, down to the river Ancre, including Somme and Picardy.
- The French held the rest.



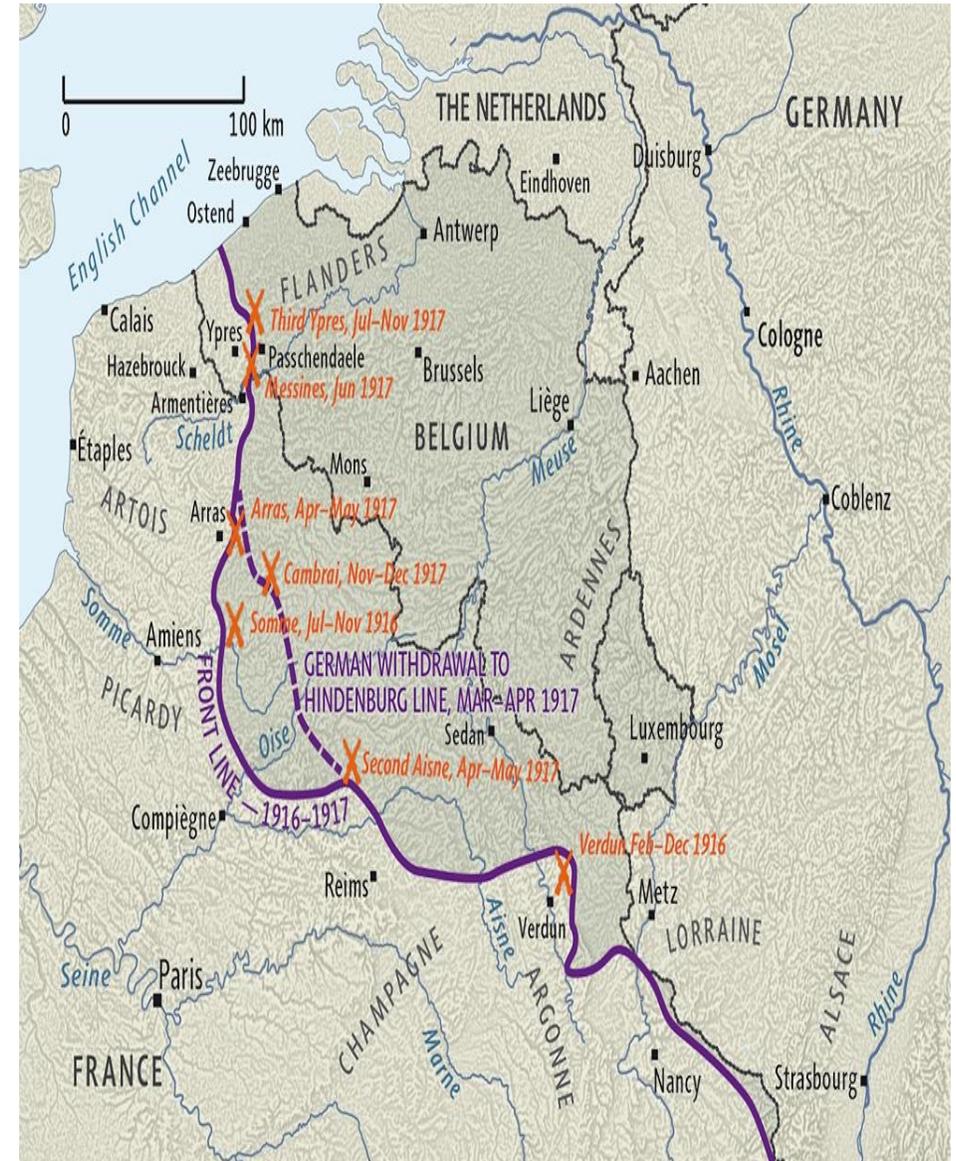


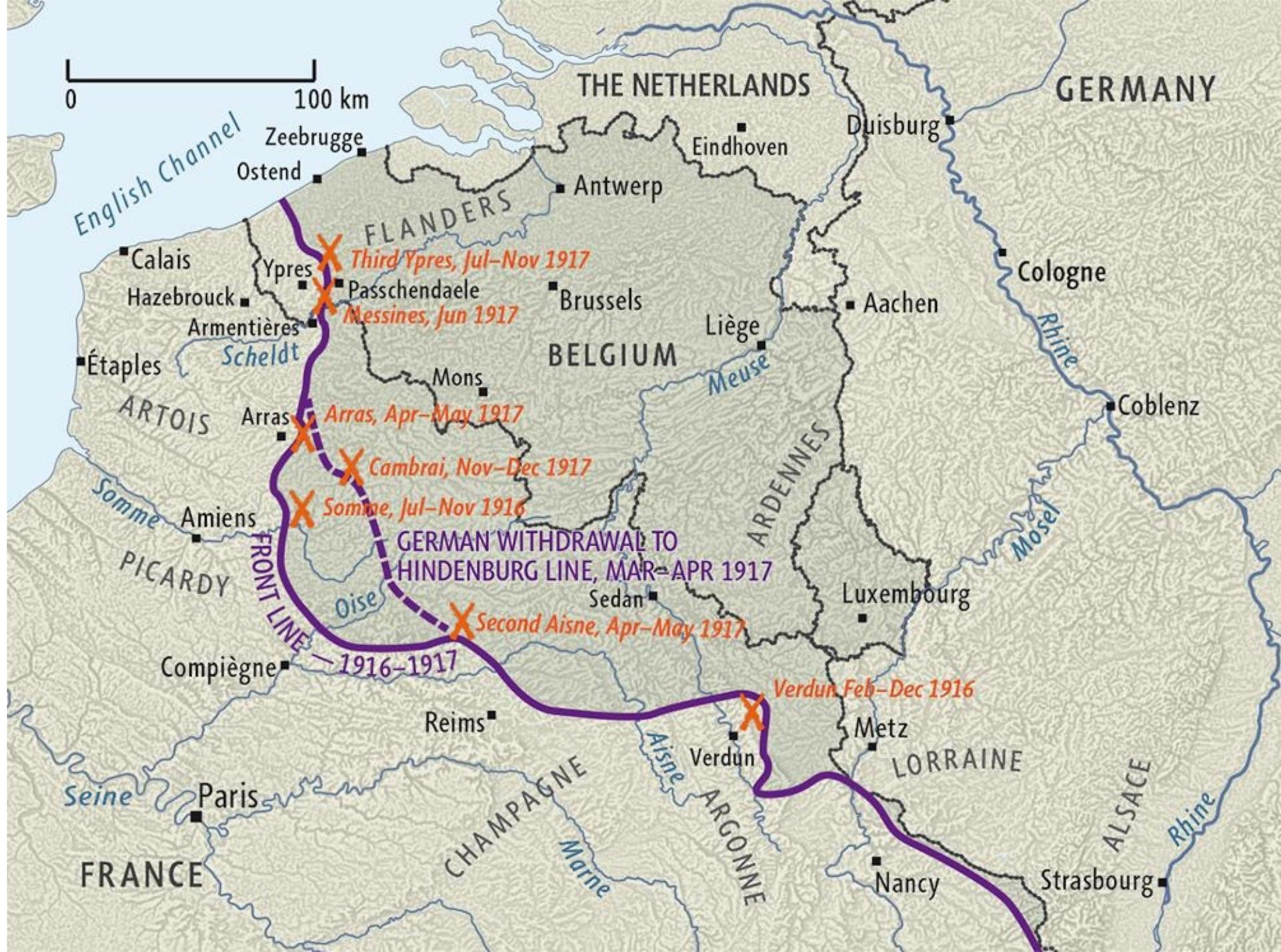
The War Fronts: Western

- The war on the Western Front, right from the Marne stoppage, meant planning breakthroughs, breaching the enemy lines wherever the strategic location and geographical features permitted. Such major initiatives as:
 - Ypres (Oct-Nov 1914 and July-Nov 1917)
 - Verdun (Feb-Nov 1916),
 - Somme (July-Nov 1916)

involved massive shelling, sometimes for days, and mobilizing ever-greater numbers of soldiers, at ever-growing volume of fatalities.

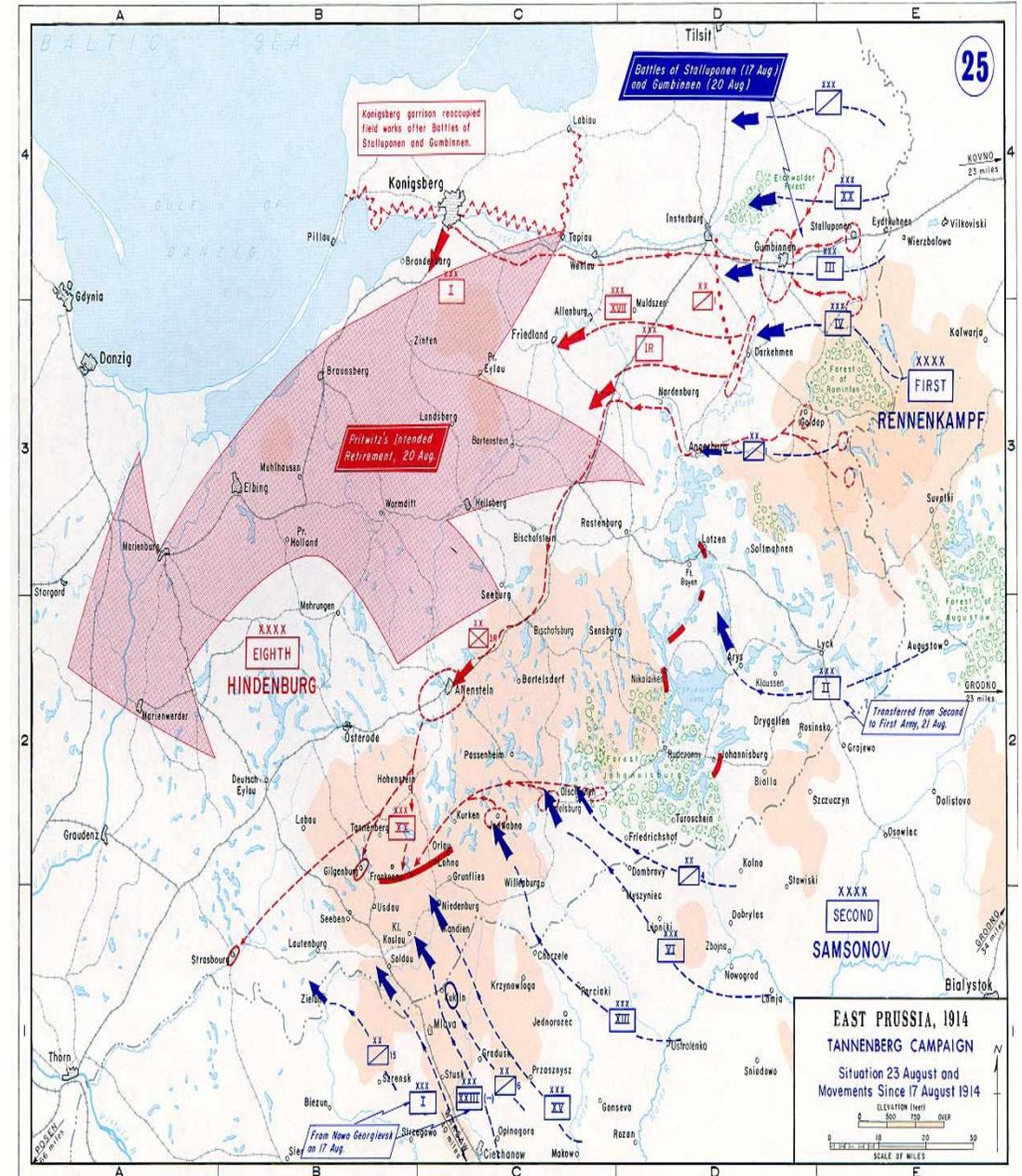
- German and later British use of chemical gas from April 1915 failed to help.
- The Allies deployed tanks at the Somme (1916) and Cambrai (1917) to little effect.
- At the Battle of Amiens (August 1918), finally, 456 tanks broke through the enemy line.





The War Fronts: Eastern

- The distraction strategies meant increasing demands on the enemy war personnel and armament needs outside the Western Front.
- This meant elementary air and sea warfronts, and the wars on the eastern and southern fronts.
- Eastern warfront, first: Russia opened it. Between entry with a bang in August 1914 and total collapse by December 1917, the Russians experienced their rise and fall.
- The rise was short-lived, and the resurgence towards the end was unsustainable.



The War Fronts: Eastern

- The Russian advance in 1914 began by taking over Eastern Prussia and Galicia.
- The Germans launched a counter-offensive at the Battle of Tannenberg at the end of August 1914 and thus discovered the most vulnerable sector of the war, and the war commanders General Paul von Hindenburg and his chief of staff, Erich Ludendorff.
- They replaced the German high command in August 1916. Until then, they administered the conquests in the East.



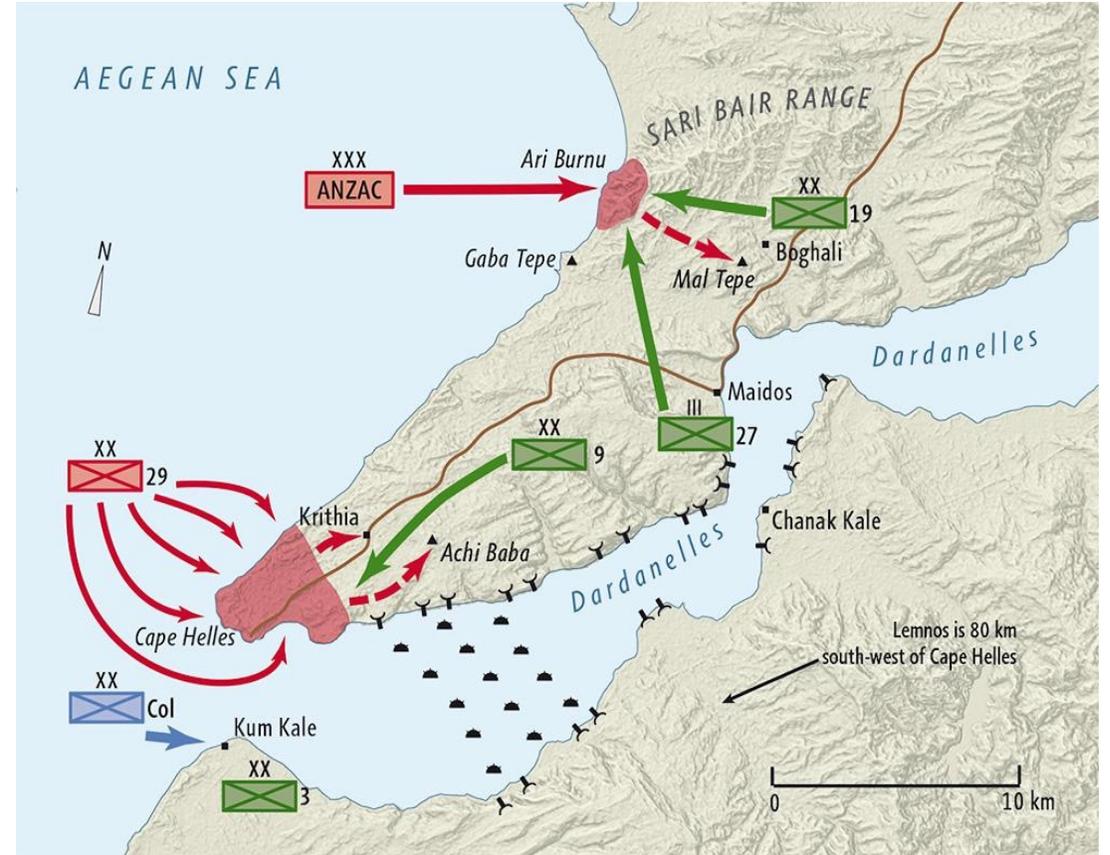


The War Fronts: Eastern

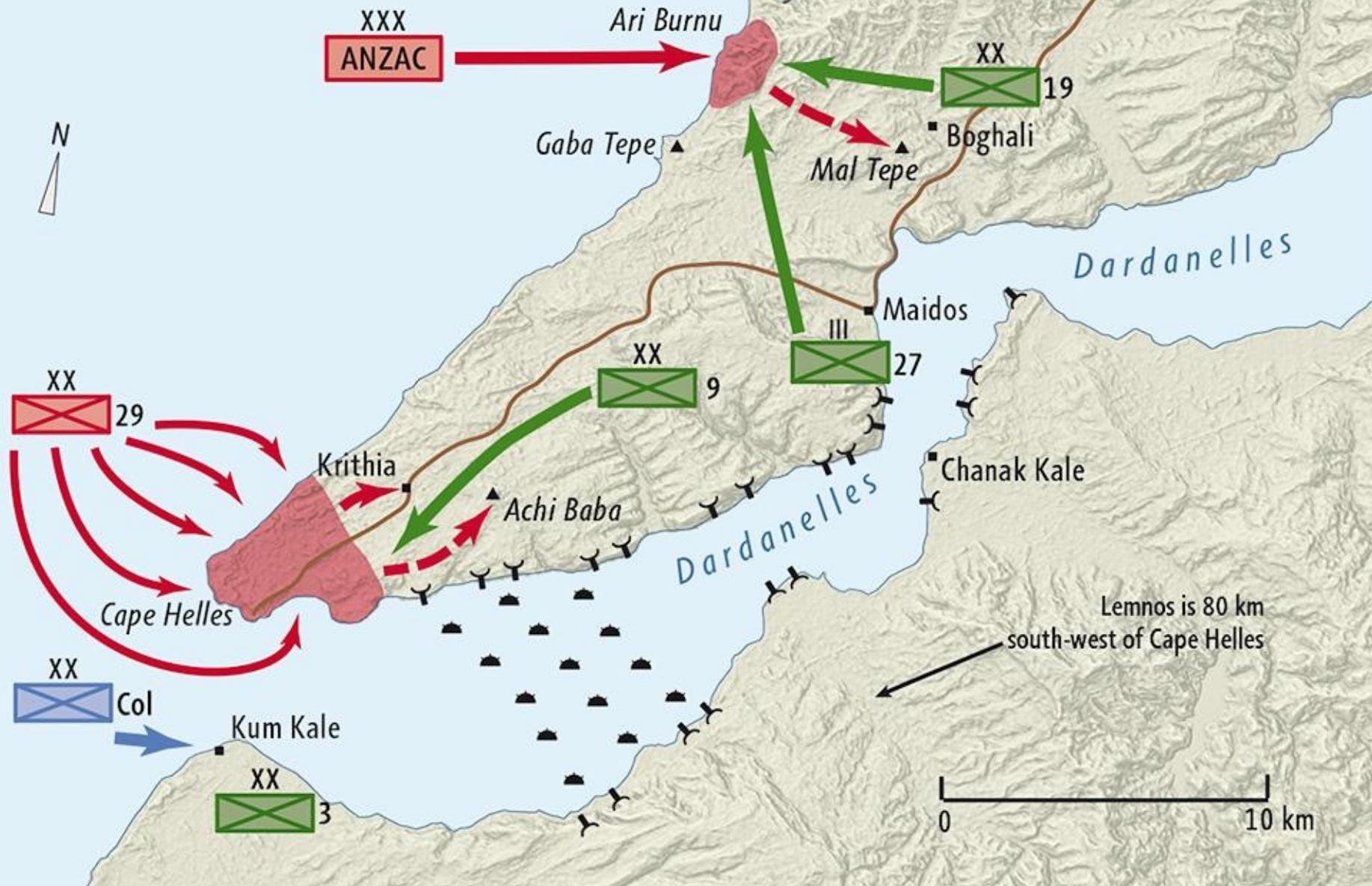
- The Central Powers scored several victories in the east, including the present-day Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. They also seized Brest-Litovsk and the cities of Warsaw and Vilnius.
- In the winter of 1915, the Central Powers also found their way to Serbia, and occupied Romania in September 1916, useful for its energy resources and transportation network.
- Russian General Brusilov-led campaigns regained momentum in June-August 1916, but from July 1917, the Central Powers retook most of Galicia, and occupied Riga as well as the Estonian islands of Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, and Muhu.

The War Fronts: Southern

- Besides the Balkans, the Allies opened the Southern Front at two adjacent points: Gallipoli (1915-16) and Salonika (1915-18), both aimed at reinforcement of Russia and Serbia.
- The Ottoman Empire resisted and turned the Gallipoli front into a replica of the stalemate in the West.
- The Allies withdrew by Jan 1916.

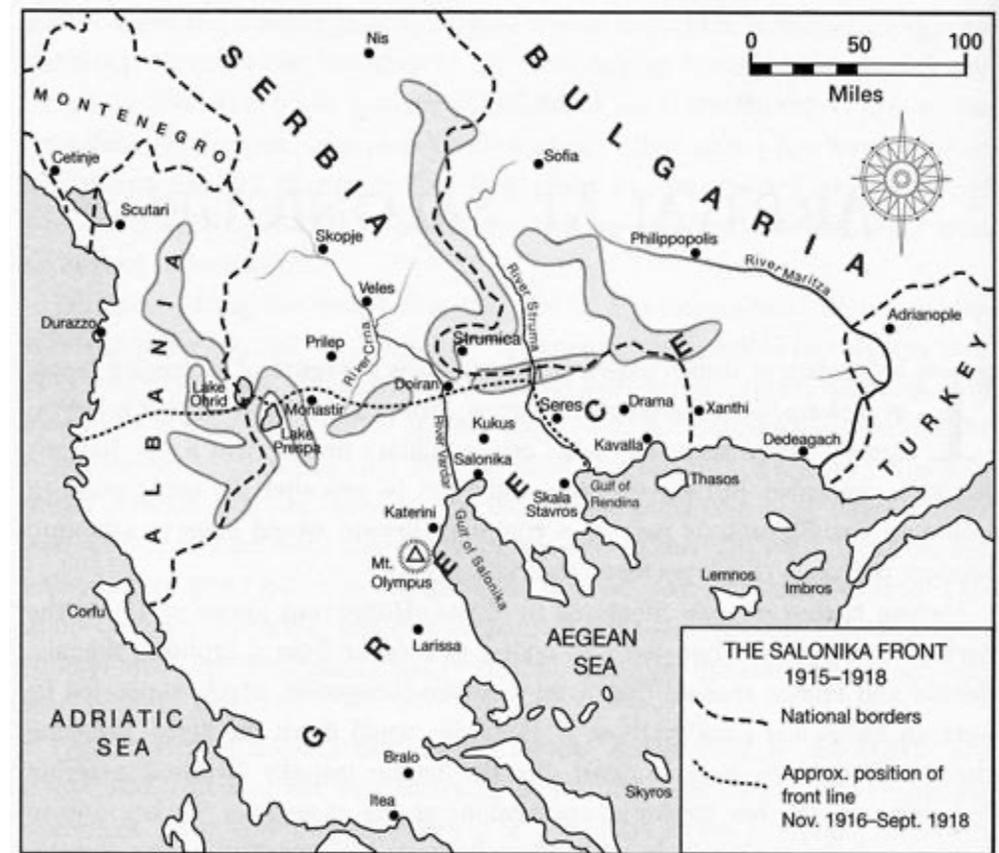


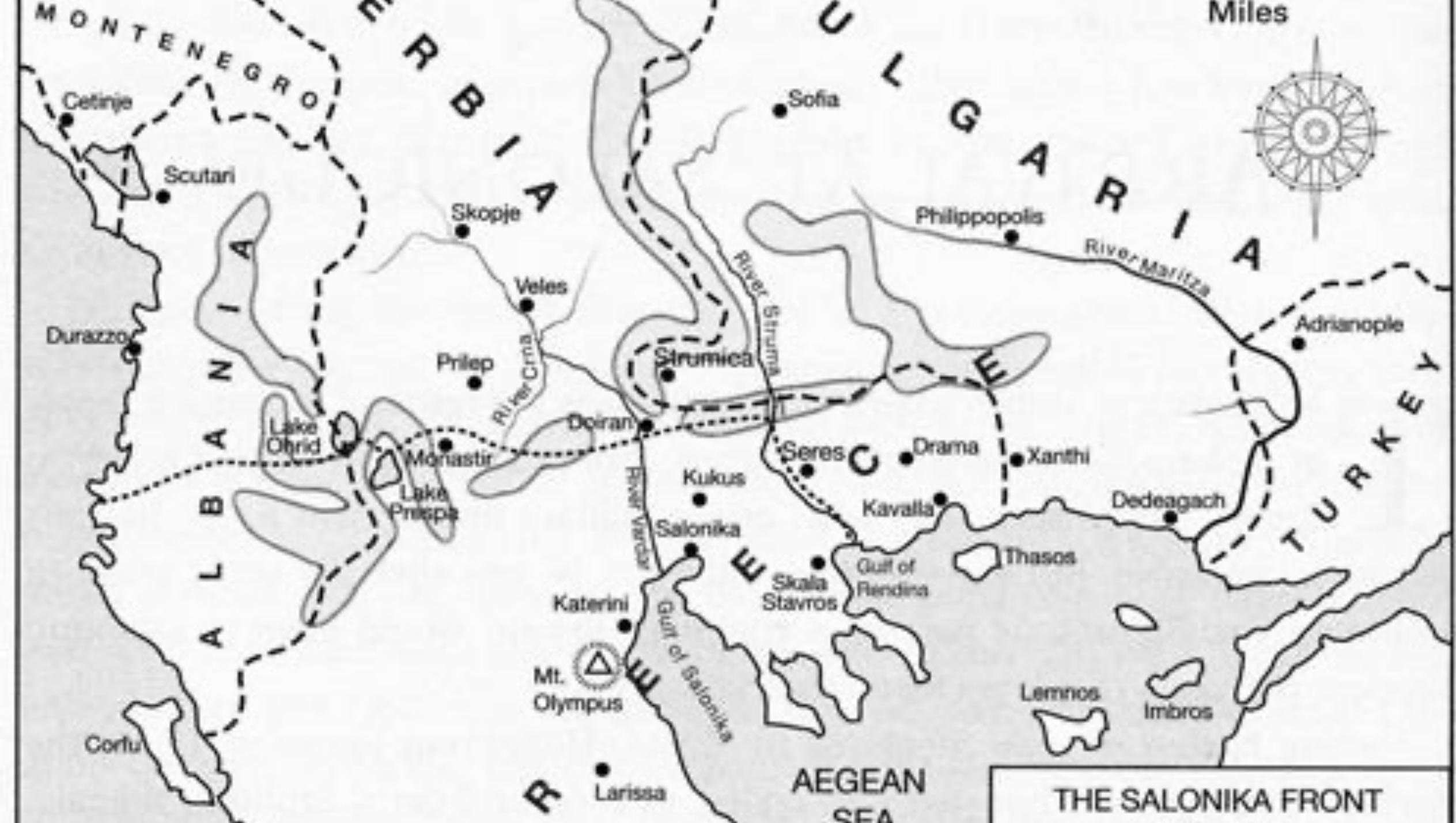
AEGEAN SEA



The War Fronts: Southern

- Salonika was another front that the Allies held from 1915-18, in violation of Greek neutrality.
- The deployment turned advantageous only in August 1918 when the Allies could strengthen Balkan initiatives from there.
- Salonika also became the site of the first Central Power armistice when Bulgaria asked for peace end September 1918.





The War Fronts: Southern

- Italy opened a front in 1915, but faced enormous difficulties because of the harsh mountainous terrain and the Austro-Hungarian resistance.
- The situation changed in Oct-Nov 1918 when the general collapse of the Central Powers began. Italy gained territories such as Trentino and Trieste. Details: when we discuss the Versailles Treaty.



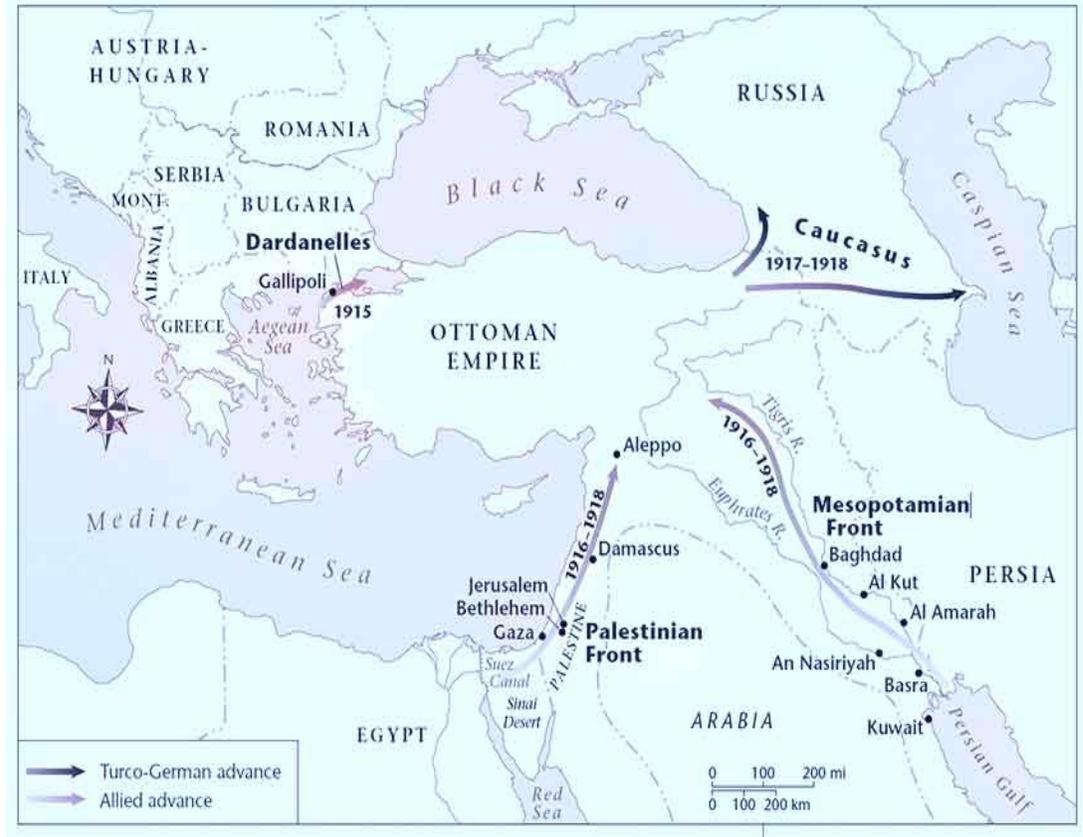


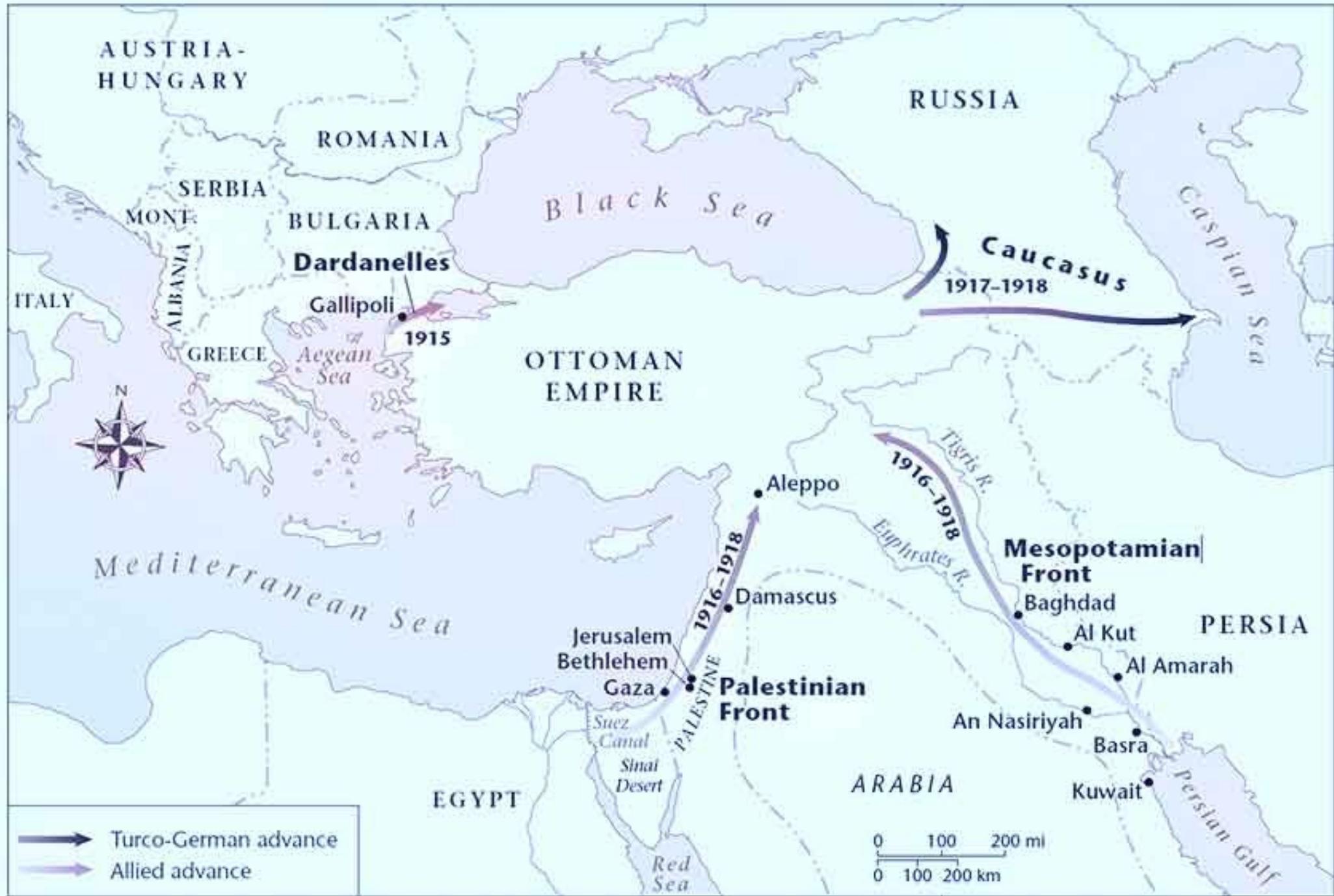
Italy
left
before
and
right
after
the
War.



The War Fronts: Middle East

- The Anglo-French duo within the alliance leveraged their colonial-imperial resources to demolish the Middle Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.
- The Arabs sided with the British command in Egypt and India, enabling them to conquer the provinces of Syria, including Palestine, and the oil-rich Mesopotamia.
- Failed in 1914-16, the British Indian Army took Baghdad in 1917. In December of the same year, Allenby marched into Jerusalem, and Damascus fell in 1918.
- The Middle Eastern front enabled these two powers to claim a large share of the Ottoman bounty during the peace process, our focus in the next unit.





The War Fronts: Africa

- On this map, we can see German possessions in Southwest Africa and East Africa.
- The Germans failed to defend their Southwest colony against the South African forces in 1915.
- In the east, the Germans held on to their colony till the end of the war.



The War Fronts: Far East

- The British Empire dominions of Australia and New Zealand moved to take possession of the German islands in the Pacific.
- Japan did the same for the Shandong province of China, but then went a step further. It presented 21 demands, highly intrusive, to China with a view to subduing it politically, militarily, and economically.
- The British mediated to reduce these to thirteen, enabling the Japanese to gain enormous economic privileges in China.



The War Fronts: Air and Sea

- The two sides began with a limited number of planes in their arsenals. This valuable possession had seen a substantial increase by the time the war ended.
- The growing number of planes were used for reconnaissance and artillery observers. Improved wireless communications enhanced their usage as did the ability to fire without hitting its own propellers. Limited air warfare between the pilots also began.
- The Germans deployed the Zeppelins to bomb the British cities. British resolve remained undented.
- Sea war had serious consequences and contributed to the ultimate outcome of the war. Its biggest impact was that the Germans ended American neutrality, and the Allies won the most crucial support of this “associated power” that ushered in the final victory at the cost of Woodrow Wilson’s irritating demands for a durable postwar peace.

The War Fronts: Sea

- The British remained the dominant maritime power. They maintained an effective blockade of the maritime supply routes to the German destinations.
- In the only maritime Battle of Jutland, in the North Sea near Denmark, in May 1916, the Germans sank two British ships and escaped the trap, and yet a scared William II securely anchored his expensive dreadnoughts, never allowing them to see action again (Yergin, 172-173).
- The German submarine warfare on the high seas, however, turned out to be most lethal for the Allies and the United States.



The War Fronts: Sea

- Torpedo attacks on the maritime traffic resulted in losses both commercial and in human lives, including Americans, in violation of frequent pledges to avoid recurrence. Examples: Lusitania and Arabic (1915), Sussex (1916), three US ships (March 1917).
- On Feb 1, 1917, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare on maritime shipping, ignoring the possibility of the US joining the war. They believed that they could establish a super blockade on Britain.
- In mid-January 1917, the British also decoded a telegram from the German Foreign Secretary, Zimmerman, inviting Mexico to join the war for a possible reconquest of the areas ceded under the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo, 1846.
- The US declared war on Germany on April 2, 1917.

How did the war fronts fall silent?

- The US began deployment in 1917, raising an army of 2 million soldiers, but not as part of the Allied command, except for 200,000 African troops seconded to the French units with an excellent record of service.
- In May 1918, the Americans turned back the attacks on the Marne River.
- By August, the German military had suffered defeat.
- By September 1918, 600,000 American troops broke through the German lines. The US and the allied troops remained on the roll.
- On November 9, the German monarchy ended as Kaiser William II fled the country.
- Germany asked for peace on November 11, 1918.

Congress of Vienna to the [League of Nations](#)

- President Wilson presided over the post-war peace process and the Versailles Treaty that also created the League of Nations.
- This link offers details of all the compromises and concessions made. We will discuss it in detail in the next unit.

EUROPE 1914



The old empires...

EUROPE 1923



...became new countries



Former Russian Empire

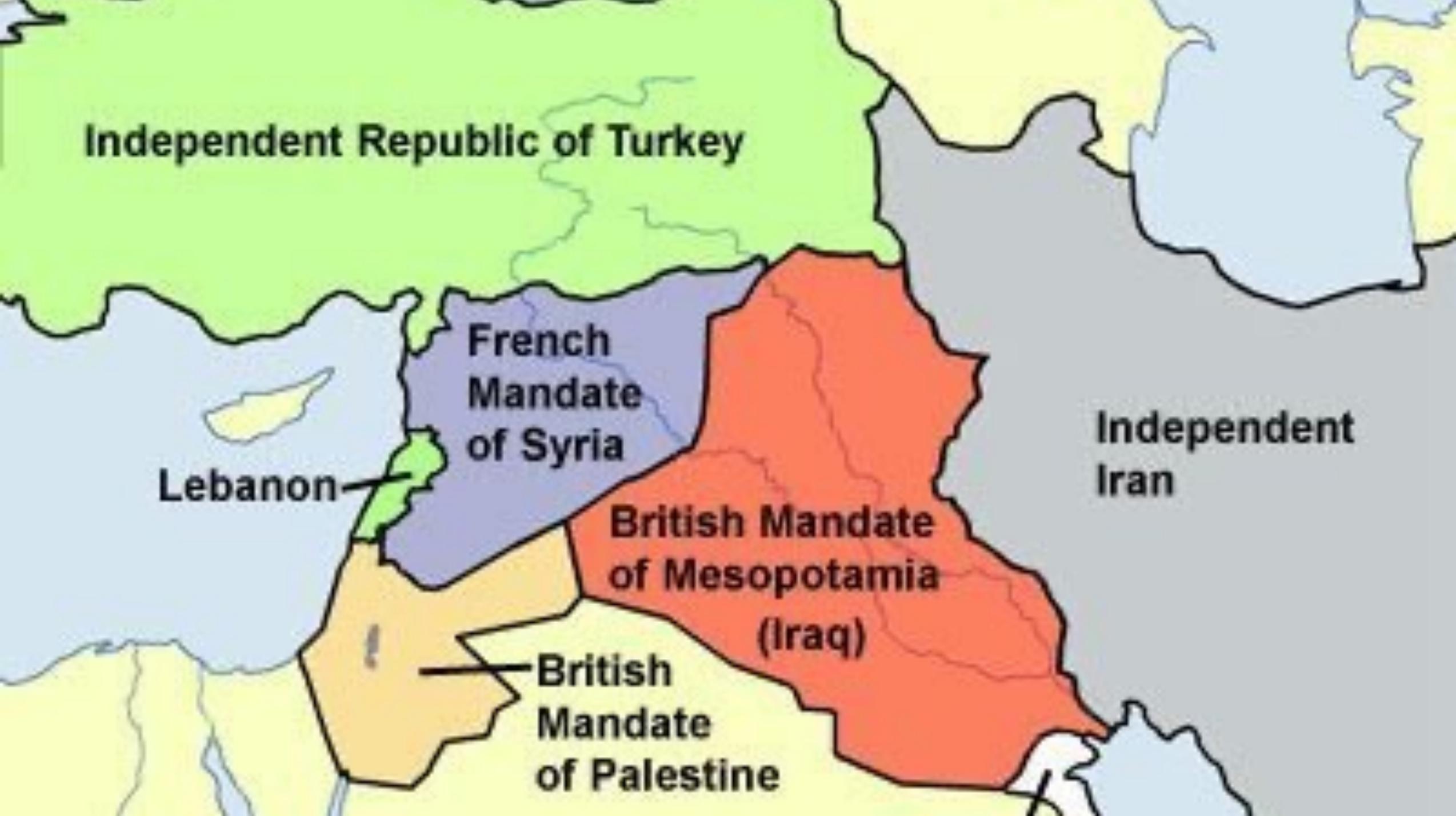
Defeated former empires:

- Germany
- Austria-Hungary
- Ottoman Empire

Free cities

Areas subject to referendum

Contested areas



Independent Republic of Turkey

Lebanon

**French
Mandate
of Syria**

**British Mandate
of Mesopotamia
(Iraq)**

**British
Mandate
of Palestine**

**Independent
Iran**

Conclusion

- Wars and conflicts occur when human beings fail to overcome their mutual differences over their interests, the way they define them. A growing consciousness of power elements makes negotiated solutions complex, difficult, or impossible. It does not help.
- Post-war, the Allies required Germany to pay an indemnity of 132 billion gold marks (about £6.6 billion - around £280 billion in today's money). British economist John Maynard Keynes condemned the settlement. He was right. It was not the best way to define the post-war interest of the victors. We will learn that the Great War was World War I.