

## **World War One - *The War That Will End War* <sup>(1)</sup>**

"The First World War bared witness to unmitigated slaughter - out of one shot from a Serbian rebel came a bloody conflict, mobilizing 65 million combatants, taking the lives of over 15 million, and one of the most revolutionary wars in history.

An important cause of the Great War involved a complex system of alliances and treaties which crisscrossed the Great Powers of Europe, making a small conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary into a war involving all powers.

The alliances of that era were different from what we would consider proper in this ideological age. For instance, France, arguably the most liberal out of all of the Great Powers, and Russia, the most reactionary, were very close allies at this point. These two powers which were politically opposite could somehow join together in politics in a way that would be scandalous today.

Another example, Austria-Hungary and Germany were very close allies, despite that when the alliance was made it was not even a decade after Prussia destroyed the German Confederation and stole Austria's dominance over Germany. While there certainly were grudges in politics back then, they had far less significance than they do now. This shows a remarkable difference between then and diplomacy today, the acceptance of realpolitik by the Great Powers.

Alliances were created out of necessity, rather than any kind of ideological or moral code. While it is true today that there are times in which a power will support a government that has glaring differences in ideology, it will practically never do it openly and almost never do it as an equal of such a power.

World War Two alliances, unlike that of the First World War, fell perfectly in line with ideological beliefs, and there was at no point any attempt to change that. The Axis had all the fascist nations, the Allies the liberal democracies, and the Comintern the socialist states. Even when the USSR was attacked in 1941, there was difficulty with Great Britain and them reconciling ideological differences to unite and fight the Axis, and it was only with Roosevelt's help that the alliance was kept together.

There would have been no problem with Russia and Great Britain in 1914 joining

under the same circumstances, they would have quickly made an alliance out of political necessity. It is therefore obvious that the end of the First World War brought rise to an age of diplomacy and international relations we still have not left, the Age of Ideology, where political philosophy dominates international relations.

But there is a far deeper change in World War One that marked the end of over a millennium of history. When the war started, all of the Great Powers except for France and Great Britain were monarchists. While only Russia was still absolutist, the monarch held great power in both Austria and Germany, and monarchism was the dominant form of government at the time. This contributed greatly to the rise of realpolitik in Europe at the time.

By 1919, both the German Kaiser and the Austrian Emperor had abdicated their thrones, the Russian Czar was overthrown in the February Revolution, and the Ottoman Empire destroyed. Dynasties which were hundreds of years old and monarchies which had dominated European politics for centuries were destroyed in nigh four years - in their place rose liberal democracies, socialist states, and soon fascist states.

The empires which were part of European history for centuries were now fractured and split between various groups. The nation of Poland was created and for the first time since 1795 the Poles had a country of their own. The Habsburg Empire, which had been rocked by ethnic tension for years was now splintered into many new nations, including Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary.

Existing empires got a share of some of the territory of the defeated empires. Britain, France and Belgium annexed territories in Africa, Japan received many of the German Pacific islands, and Britain and France took huge tracts of land from the Ottoman Empire, France taking what is now Syria and Lebanon, Britain taking the rest of the empire except for what would become the nation of Turkey.

The British and French carelessly partitioned the Middle East and Africa into states with no consideration for religious or ethnic considerations, leading to many internal conflicts.



An example is the creation of the nation of Iraq - the British had very little consideration for the people they were grouping into one nation. Sunni Iraqis and Shiite Iraqis have many differences in culture and beliefs, making it hard for them to cooperate with each other, and the Kurds are not even of the same ethnicity as either of them.

The crimes of Saddam and the Iraqi War are both consequences of this decision, where ethnic and religious violence will most likely lead to civil war. Another example is creation of the nation of Sudan has led to the genocide at Darfur as well as civil wars between the North and the South.

World War One also gave open for another important event in human history which would create a country and make manifest an ideology which would dominate much of the world for more than 50 years. This event was the October Revolution in Russia. When the Bolsheviks toppled the interim Russian government and established the first socialist state ever, they created a nation which would rise to become a superpower, and whose political ideology would spread to many other countries.

The establishment of the USSR made the Cold War possible, as well the spreading of the socialist revolution to China, Eastern Europe, Afghanistan and many others.

It is also through the October Revolution that WWI would be connected with the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. While many people claim erroneously that the rise of the Nazi's had to do with the anger over the Treaty of Versailles, the economic depression caused at the end of the war and the like, all of those problems were gone by 1926.

In reality, the Nazis are connected in a more subtle way. The fear of communism in Germany helped the Nazis greatly, and much of its base support came from those afraid that the German Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party were too socialist. The Great Depression, which is also interconnected to WWI has to do with this as well.

WWI ended the times of monarchs, colonization and the like which dominated 19th century politics and brought in the 20th century. It was the war that ended a chapter in history centuries long and began a new chapter that is still being written today." (2)

Notes:

(1) *The War That Will End War*, by H.G. Wells, 99 pp, published by Frank & Cecil Palmer, London, OCT 1914. Excerpt: "But now we come to the object of this war. We began to fight because our honor and our pledge obliged us...and war is mortal conflict. We have now either to destroy or be destroyed...Prussian Imperialism has been for forty years an intolerable nuisance in the earth...For this now a war for peace."

(2) Excerpt from [www.politicsforum.org](http://www.politicsforum.org), 11 NOV 2006



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