

THE ORIGINS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, PART I

I. WORLD WAR I IN PERSPECTIVE

- A. In 1890 Europe was a **nice, quiet place. Things were cool. Germany was sated.** Question: **How could such a great war emerge from such an untroubled world?**
- B. World War I started on August 1, 1914, ended November 11, 1918. At the start of the war the Triple Entente (Britain, France, Russia, plus Serbia and Belgium) faced the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). Italy, Rumania, the United States and others later joined the Entente, Turkey and Bulgaria joined the Central Powers. Ultimately the Entente defeated the Central Powers.
- C. World War I was the bloodiest war in history to that point. By one estimate 25,955,000 people died (12,981,000 military, 12,974,000 civilian).¹
- D. WWI unleashed an avalanche of violence that pervaded the 20th century. It caused the 1917 Russian revolution, which caused Stalinism and its vast murders (perhaps 30 million or more killed), and led eventually to the 1947-1989 Cold War, which caused the Korean, Vietnam, Afghan, Angolan, and Nicaragua/Contra wars, killing millions more. The Vietnam war caused further trouble, including the rise of the Khmer Rouge to power in Cambodia in 1975 and their murder of 2 million Cambodians. The Afghan war of the 1980s caused the 1996 rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, who sheltered Al Qaeda, leading to 9/11/01 and the current U.S.-al-Qaeda war. Many argue that World War I also caused the rise of the Nazis in Germany and thus both World War II and the Holocaust. World War II in turn caused the rise to power of communist governments in China, North Korea, Yugoslavia and elsewhere. These governments in turn perpetrated mass murders on an epic scale and started several wars. The U.S. narrowly avoided war with North Korea in 1994 and war remains possible. Bottom line: World War I was a taproot of violence, and a dark scar across human history.

II. WHO CAUSED THE WAR? SIX VIEWS

- A. **"Germany caused the war."** Three main variants are offered. The first two paint the war as inadvertent, the last paints it as deliberate.
1. The minimalist Germany-blaming view: a "calculated risk" by Germany gone bad (Konrad Jarausch). Germany consciously risked a continental war in July 1914 in order to make gains for the German/Austrian alliance--

¹ Ruth Leger Sivard, World Social and Military Expenditures 1996 (Washington DC: World Priorities, 1996). I added Sivard's raw data.

specifically, to achieve the smashing and partition of Serbia. Germany preferred the prewar status quo to a continental war but did knowingly risk such a war to achieve the destruction of Serbia. The war was inadvertent but was caused by witting risk-taking.

2. Two intermediate Germany-blaming views:
 - a. Germany preferred a smashing and partition of Serbia to a continental war (that is, a war against France and Russia); preferred a continental war to the prewar status quo and/or to the simple smashing of the Black Hand terrorist group; and preferred the prewar status quo and/or the smashing of the Black Hand to a world war (that is, a war against Britain, France, and Russia). The world war that happened was inadvertent, but Germany did choose a continental war, making the continental war advertent. This is the view of "Fischer School" moderates, exemplified by Imanuel Geiss. And a more extreme variant:
 - b. Germany preferred a continental war to a smashing and partition of Serbia and to the prewar status quo, and plotted to cause it. But Germany did still prefer the prewar status quo to a world war. Again, the world war was inadvertent, the continental war was advertent.
3. The maximalist Germany-blaming view: Germany preferred even a world war to the prewar status quo and plotted to cause the war that occurred. This is argued by some Fischerites and by Dale Copeland.

These three Germany-blaming views can be distinguished by rank-ordering the preferred outcomes that the view ascribes to Germany. Five outcomes were possible:

Status Quo Ante Bellum (SQAB): Things remain as they were in June 1914. Serbia is wholly independent and feisty toward Austria-Hungary. This SQAB outcome was logically possible but very unlikely, as no state preferred it: the Entente states agreed with Germany and Austria that something had to be done to control Serbian extremism.

Austria and Germany compel Serbia to Destroy Black Hand (SDBH): Austria and Germany coerce the Serbian government to smash the Black Hand and other extremist nationalist Serbian organizations. Serbia survives intact and sovereign.

Austria Destroys Serbia (ADS): Austria conquers Serbia (or compels its surrender) and partitions it, probably between Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania. No more Serbia. Russia, France and Britain do not intervene.

Continental War (CW): War erupts between the Central Powers and the Dual Alliance (i.e., France and Russia). Britain remains neutral.

World War (WW): Britain joins France and Russia in a war against Germany and Austria.

Featured relevant evidence: the December 8 1912 "War

Council." Strong Germany-blaters allege that German leaders decided on war at this meeting.

Three views on why Germany was expansionist can be distinguished:

1. "Germany was mindlessly expansionist in almost random directions--it sought "Weltmachtpolitik" largely for reasons of prestige, and for imagined economic gain." And older view.
2. "Germany believed that its security depended on Austrian survival, and that Serb subversion threatened to destroy Austria. Hence it resolved to destroy Serbia. It also resolved to destroy Russia because it feared Russia's rising power and knew Russia would defend Serbia." A self-defense argument. A newer view.

B, C, D, E, F. **"Russia, or Serbia, or Britain, or France, or Austria caused the war."**

1. During 1919-1945 many Germans alleged that Britain organized the encirclement of Germany and conspired to cause the war. Germany, they said, was wholly innocent.
2. Sidney Fay and other scholars put prime responsibility on Austria and Russia. Some others heavily blame Serbia. Some blame France and Britain for not restraining Russia more firmly. Some suspect that France egged Russia on.

III. WHAT CAUSED THE WAR? EIGHT EXPLANATIONS FOR WORLD WAR I

A common view frames the "MAIN" causes of the war: Militarism, Alliances, Imperialism, Nationalism" (from Sidney Fay).

- A. "Militarism caused the war." Before 1914 European societies were swept by a widespread popular glorification of war and of all things military. Europe's militaries gained undue influence over foreign policy, which they used to press for war. These public attitudes and military influence on policy caused the war.
- B. "Alliances caused the war." The major European powers were dragged into a local Balkan dispute by Europe's encompassing system of competing international alliances. The war stemmed from a local Balkan dispute between Serbia and Austria. The rest of Europe was dragged into this dispute because they were allied with Serbia or Austria, or with one of their allies, and hence were compelled to join the war.
- C. "Imperialism caused the war." By 1914 the major European powers had long contested for control of overseas empire for several centuries. This competition continued in the decades before 1914, as manifest in the Fashoda crisis of 1898 and the Moroccan crises of 1905-6 and 1911, in which European powers nearly came to blows over control of the upper Nile region and Morocco. The July 1914 crisis that produced World War I also stemmed from such rivalries for colonies.

- D. **"Nationalism caused the war." Malignant supercharged nationalism and nationalist mythmaking fueled expansionism and conflict throughout Europe, causing the war.**
1. The rise of nationalist feeling among stateless European peoples led them to demand their own states. This fueled conflict among the major powers. Most notably, it led Serbia to seek to unifying the Serbian people with other South Slavic people under Serb control. Hence Serbia sought to subvert and dismember Austria-Hungary, where many South Slavs lived. The rise of nationalism also magnified divisions among Austria-Hungary's eleven nationalities, leading Austrian elites to fear that Austria might be torn apart by foreign subversion, and to lash out against Serbia when Serbia pursued such subversion. This brought Austria and Serbia into collision, and thereby brought Austria into collision with Russia, which supported Serbia in part from pan-Slavic nationalist sentimentality.
 2. Chauvinist nationalist mythmaking across Europe fueled a spirit of self-entitlement and contempt for others. This fostered belligerence and expansionism, especially in Germany, Serbia, and Russia.

Four more explanations:

- E. **"Crisis bungling caused the war."** In this view no European power willfully risked war. Instead European leaders mismanaged the July crisis.
1. Russian and French leaders misunderstood the nature of mobilization.
 - a. "Russia and France began pre-mobilization without realizing that mobilization meant war, and Russia began without knowing that partial Russian mobilization against Austria was impossible."
 - b. "Russia began pre-mobilizing in the false hope that Russian pre-mobilization measures would deter Germany from moving toward war. Instead German hawks used Russian pre-mobilization as an excuse to mobilize and more to war on July 30."
 2. German leaders misunderstood the nature and meaning of mobilization measures.
 - a. "German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg did not fully understand that mobilization meant war until war was inevitable. Specifically, he did not learn of the secret attack on Liège embedded in the German mobilization plan until July 31."²
 - b. "German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg did not realize that the German military would insist on German

² May and Williamson, "Identity of Opinion": 365.

mobilization and war, forcing the end of peace efforts, if Russia and France launched preliminary mobilization.

Hence Bethmann let the crisis start and continue without understanding how quickly it would explode into war."

3. "British leaders (Grey) did not realize that mobilization meant war; hence they unwisely failed to restrain Russian mobilization."
4. "Austria failed to give Russia its evidence showing that Serbia was responsible for the death of the Austrian Archduke. Had Russia known Serbia's guilt it would have sympathized more with Austria's position."
5. "The French ambassador to Russia, Maurice Paléologue, failed to warn French leaders that Russian leaders were thinking of mobilizing against Austria-Hungary in order to coerce it. Hence French messages urging restraint on Russia arrived too late (July 30) to prevent Russian mobilization."³
6. "German leaders (Jagow) falsely assured Russia that Germany would tolerate Russian partial mobilization against Austria, leading Russia to mobilize."
7. "German leaders wrongly hoped Britain would stand aside from a continental war. This stemmed partly from Britain's failure to make up its mind to fight, and issue clear warning to Germany, until after the July crisis was out of control. In part this reflected British foreign secretary Grey's failure to foresee the speed of events; in part it reflected the secrecy of German plans to attack Belgium."⁴

F. **"The explosive military situation caused the war."** Three variants:

1. Inflexible military mobilization plans caused the war by spreading a local Balkan war outward to engulf all Europe.
2. An imperative to rush to mobilize, stemming from a first-move (first-mobilization) advantage, caused the war. (Some argue that Russian's slowness in mobilizing inclined it to mobilize precipitously, but this is false).
3. The widespread belief in the power of the offense and the general embrace of offensive military plans primed the world for war. This explosive military backdrop magnified the dangers posed by a minor crisis and normal blunders by leaders. They had no margin for error.

³ May and Williamson, "Identity": 376. However, some argue that Paléologue cooperated loyally with the hawkish French president Poincaré to bring war, and omitted to send warning to France of Russian thoughts of mobilizing on Poincaré's instructions.

⁴ May and Williamson, "Identity": 361, 379.

Perhaps these explosive military conditions and beliefs stemmed from undue military influence on states' policies and perceptions. If so they stemmed from "militarism" (see above).

- G. **"Imperial Collapse caused the war."** The collapse of the Ottoman and Ottoman empires created a rule-free vacuum in the Balkans. The escaped Balkan nations fought each other for dominance there, while Austria, Germany and Russia contended for influence. The Austro-Serb and Austro-Russian collisions in the Balkans caused the war.
- H. "Distempered/deformed states caused the war." European aristocratic elites deflected demands for pluralism and social equality by granting some secondary powers to elected parliaments, while still reserving key powers for the monarchs, who were presumed likely to protect the existing aristocratic order. Bismarck developed this model, and Germany under Wilhelm II, Austria under Franz Josef, and Russia under Nicholas II followed it. But the task of running modern industrial states proved beyond the capacity of most hereditary monarchs, especially if they lack strong administrative institutions, without a Bismarck-quality prime minister/chancellor at the Monarch's side. Hence these regimes could not properly formulate, assess and implement policy. Instead chaos reigned and blunders proliferated. These regimes also were penetrated and coopted by parasitic special interests, including professional militaries, whose influence was unchecked by countervailing political institutions (such as parliaments or courts) and who pressed for belligerent policies that brought war. (From Dominic Lieven.)
- IV. BACKGROUND TO WAR: EUROPE 1890-1914
- A. The Powers' relative strength. They ranked as follows: (1) Germany; (2) Britain; (3) Russia; (4) France; (5) Austria-Hungary; (6) Serbia. (See Paul Kennedy tables, attached to these notes, especially Tables 7 and 9.)
- B. Social structure and domestic politics in Europe, 1890-1914.
1. Autocrats and oligarchs who feared upheaval ruled much of Europe, i.e., in Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia.
 2. Germany's neurotic King: Kaiser Wilhelm II (1888-1918) was traumatized, neglected and rejected as a child. His mother never bonded with him. He reacted by rejecting whatever his peace-minded, democracy-minded parents stood for. So he fired Bismarck, embraced the German military as his family, and gave hawkish German military leaders free rein.
 3. Militarism (see assigned Martin Kitchen readings).
 - a. Militaries had great influence, especially in Germany--due partly to Kaiser Wilhelm's emotional embrace of the German officer corps.
 - b. The military's ideas were dangerous. These included:
 - i. Offense is easy // windows are common and large // surprise is essential.

- ii. Waving big sticks makes others nice.
 - iii. Others are hostile.
 - iv. Empires are valuable / allies are essential.
 - v. War is short, glorious, even fun.
 - vi. "Let's start a war!" European militaries were intensely and uniformly hawkish. All pressed for war in 1914.
 - 4. Self-glorifying nationalist myths in the schools--history as chauvinist fiction (see assigned Langsam reading).
 - 5. Lack of independent scholarship. Professors were propagandists for the state who repeated fatuous ideas instead of evaluating them, especially in Germany (see L.L. Snyder, German Nationalism, in "further readings," chapter on scholars).
- C. The changing nature of war.
- 1. The rise of mass armies and the mobilization system.
 - a. During the late 19th century European states adopted mobilization systems for their armies. Mobilization multiplied size of the armies of Russia/France by 2.46x, and multiplied the size of the armies of Germany/Austria by 2.82x. (Niall Ferguson, Pity of War).
 - b. Preliminary mobilization vs. full mobilization.
 - c. Why did mobilization mean war? Because Germany's Schlieffen plan mandated a surprise attack on Belgium immediately after mobilization began; and because Germany would have a fleeting military advantage after it mobilized and it felt it had to exploit this advantage by attacking.
 - d. Was secret mobilization possible? No, but some Russians and French (Gen. Joffre) wrongly thought so, influenced by the Ludendorff Memorandum, acquired by French intelligence.
 - 2. The rise of the power of the defensive on the battlefield: machine guns, barbed wire, railroads, and mass armies.
 - 3. The growth of the "cult of the offensive" and offensive war plans: Germany's Schlieffen Plan, France's Plan XVII, Russia's Plan 20, Austria's offensive war plans. Even Belgium had advocates for an offensive war plan! And France's General Joffre pushed for a French offensive into Belgium as well as Germany!⁵ German, French and Austrian officers paid little heed to evidence against their plans, or even to logic.⁶ French general Ferdinand Foch argued that the increased power of the machine gun helped the offense! British officers said that the machine gun could be overcome by troops imbued with a willingness to "take casualties" (T.H.E. Travers).

⁵ May and Williamson: 375.

⁶ May and Williamson: 347.

Question: What war plans would have made the most sense for each power? Once at war, what was the best way for each side to fight?

- D. Perceptions in Europe (see assigned Geiss reading).
1. The rise of international Social Darwinism and the cult of the offensive.
 2. Big stick ideas in Germany: Admiral Tirpitz's Risk Theory and Kurt Riezler's theory of "bluff diplomacy." (Riezler was Bethmann's top aide.)
 3. The self-encirclement of Germany after 1890, and the German myth that others had conspired to bring it about. Germany had only one adversary (France) in 1890. By 1907 it had three adversaries--France, Russia and Britain--joined against Germany in the Triple Entente, and only one ally (Austria). German belligerence provoked the Entente into forming.
 4. "We need an empire!"
 - a. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Serbia were expansionist. Germans had three imperial dreams: of an empire in Europe ("Mitteleuropa"), Africa ("Mittelafrika") and the Middle East, toward current Iraq/Kuwait/Iran. Austria dreamed of expanding into the Balkans, down toward the Aegean. Serbia dreamed of a vast South Slavic empire that would include Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosniaks, Macedonians, and Albanians. Russia, sought to expand its influence in the Balkans. France and Britain were not expansionist.
 - b. German focus shifted from Expansionism to what might be called Destructionism around 1912. Specifically, Germany came to focus as much on destroying Serbian and Russian power as on expanding Germany's sphere of influence.
 5. "War is good for you"--a remarkable idea found everywhere. 40,000-50,000 assembled outside the Kaiser's Berlin palace in a carnival atmosphere on August 1, as war erupted.⁷
- E. German expansion and the Fischer Controversy (see Geiss reading).
1. How expansionist was Germany? The "War Council" of December 8, 1912: did Germany plot World War I at this meeting? If so, what should we see in the historical record? What should we see in the record if this meeting meant little?
 2. How expansionist was Austria-Hungary? Answer: very expansionist. Austrian leaders were determined to smash Serbia.
 3. How expansionist were the other European powers? Serbs were very expansionist toward Austria. Russia was mildly expansionist--mainly toward the Balkans, a bit toward the

⁷ May and Williamson: 347.

Ottoman empire. Britain and France were not expansionist.

4. What theories explain German, Austrian and Serbian expansion?
 - F. The decline of British power and the Anglo-German Detente of 1912-1914.
 - G. The appearance of a tight (offensive) network of alliances in Europe transformed alliances from "epimachies" to "symmachies.") Defensive alliances appeared in 1879-1894; these spread and became offensive in the years before 1914.
 - H. The crises of 1905-6, 1908-9, 1911, and 1912-13. These crises concerned whether Germany or France would control Morocco (1905-6 Algeciras crisis), whether Austria could annex Bosnia (1908-9 Bosnia crisis), Morocco again (1911 Agadir crisis), and Serbian expansion in the Balkans (1912-13 Balkan crises). Were these causes of trouble or mere symptoms of other causes?
 - I. The naval and land arms races. Were these causes of trouble or mere symptoms of other causes?
 - J. The rise of economic interdependence (it was high in 1914!) and international cooperation (e.g., international agencies regulated railways, postal service and telegraph).
 - K. The alleged appearance of dumb national leaders in Russia, Germany, Britain, and Austria-Hungary. (Perhaps an artifact of Deformed/distempered states? Of the speed of the July crisis?)
 - L. The rise of (incompetent?) peace movements: "Let's arbitrate disputes!"; "Let's have arms control!"
- V. THE JULY CRISIS: JUNE 28-AUGUST 4, 1914
- Ask three questions of these events: (1) **What** caused the war? i.e. what conditions, events, or actions made the war inevitable? (2) **Who** caused the war? What states, or political groups or persons within states? (3) **Why** did these actors cause the war? What expectations and intentions animated their actions? Were they trying to cause war? Expecting to cause war?
- Historians point to eight possible keys to the July crisis: the June 28 Sarajevo assassination; the July 5-6 German Blank Check to Austria-Hungary; Russian and French preliminary military mobilization on July 25; German refusal to restrain Austria during July 25-29; Germany's brief peace effort from 2:55 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. July 30; Germany's decision to halt this belated peace effort and move to full mobilization, decided at ~1:00 on July 30; British dithering during July 23-28; Russian partial military mobilization against Austria on July 29; and Russian's decision for full mobilization at 4:00 p.m. on July 30.
- A. The Sarajevo Assassination of Austria's Archduke Ferdinand, June 28. Was the Serbian government responsible? Unknown at the time, the Serbian military intelligence chief, Col. Dragutin Dimitrijević (a.k.a. "Apis") trained and armed three of the assassins. The Serb prime minister discovered the

- plot, tried to prevent it, then later concealed it.⁸
- B. The German "Blank Check" to Austria, July 5-6. Germany agreed to back an Austrian war against Serbia, aimed at the destruction and partition of Serbia. Germany promised to fight Russia if Russia intervened to protect its Serbian ally from this destruction. Germany could have chosen, more modestly, to back Austrian coercion to compel Serbia to destroy the Black Hand and other violent extremist Serb nationalist groups, while leaving Serbia intact. Russia, Britain, and France would have accepted this remedy. So Germany's decision to back Austria's more extreme goal, of destroying Serbia, proved fateful, as Russia and France would not accept it.
1. German expectations: what were they?
 - > Did the German government think that such a war would provoke Russia to intervene? Most Germans saw a 50-50 chance that the crisis would bring war with Russia. (See Geiss). Those expecting no war thought Russia would sit quietly, from monarchic solidarity, and for window reasons: Germany's good window was the Russian-French bad window.
 - > Was British intervention in such a war expected? Most Germans thought not. And some who expected British intervention thought it would be deferred, so it would come too late for Britain to save France from German conquest.
 2. German desires: what were they?
 - > Did Germany want a war? The elite was split. The army actively wanted a continental war, the Kaiser didn't. In my view the center-of-gravity among the elite had the following preference ordering: (1) Austria Destroys Serbia (ADS); (2) continental war (CW); (3) Serbia Destroys Black Hand (SDBH); (4) status quo ante bellum (SQAB); and the least-desired result was world war (WW). The Kaiser preferred the status quo ante to continental war (CW) or world war (WW), but the army preferred WW by July 30, and prevailed--ultimately in a confrontation on July 30 that was essentially a coup. But who cares what I think? You figure it out!
- C. The Austrian Ultimatum to Serbia, July 23. This had a 2-day deadline, and was designed to be impossible to accept. Austria's plan was then to smash the Serbian army and partition Serbia, but not to annex any of it, because Austria-Hungary's Hungarian politicians wouldn't accept more Slavs in the empire.
- D. The Serbian reply, 6:00 p.m., July 25. Serb leaders considered accepting all Austria's demands but in the end rejected Austria's demand to allow Austrian officials to participate in the Serbian enquiry into the assassination of

⁸ May and Williamson: 351.

Franz Ferdinand. (This would have exposed Serbia's role in the murder.)

On receiving this reply the Austrian government promptly ordered mobilization of its army against Serbia. This order reached the army command at 9:23 p.m. July 25; it posited July 27 as "alarm day," and July 28 as the first day of mobilization.

- E. Russian and French Preliminary Mobilization and Russian Partial Mobilization. Russia ordered preliminary mobilization against Germany and Austria on July 25 at 4:00 p.m.--even before the Serbian time limit expired at 6:00. These measures were promptly detected by Germany (on July 26). Russian leaders also decided in principle to fully mobilize later against Austria (but not Germany) if Austria attacked Serbia. Russia issued orders to ready this mobilization late on July 24.⁹

France began pre-mobilization on July 25. These measures had little immediate effect because they were still substantially undetected by July 28, but they had effects on July 30.

Russian and French preliminary mobilization was cited as a key reason for Germany to mobilize by German warhawks (Generals Moltke and Falkenhayn) on July 30. In this way these premobilizations helped catalyze the war.

Why did the Russians pre-mobilize? With what expectations? It seems some Russian leaders hoped to deter Germany from further belligerent actions. Russians also sought to secure a first-mobilization advantage in what some thought was an inevitable war.

1. One Russian leader, Agriculture Minister Krivoshein, argued that Russian preliminary mobilization offered the best route to peace, as it would deter Germany from further moves toward war.
2. Russian leaders feared that Germany meant to push matters to war and felt compelled to move first to prepare for the coming conflict. Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, outbursted on July 24 "*C'est la guerre Européenne!*" when he heard the terms of the Austrian ultimatum. It seems the Russians already expected war at this point: they felt the Austro-German move showed that Austria and Germany planned to smash Serbia, and that Russia would have to allow this or fight; and since Russia wouldn't allow this, it would have to fight. Perhaps they also felt that Germany would merely find another excuse for war if Russia conceded on Serbia, making concessions fruitless.

If so, it seems that the Russians pre-mobilized to gain the first strike (really first-mobilization) advantage in the war that Germany and Austria seemed to

⁹ May and Williamson: 369.

be forcing upon them. Since war seemed inevitable, and the Russians thought that whoever mobilized first would have the upper hand, quick mobilization made sense.

The July crisis occurred against the backdrop of manifest signs of war fever in Germany (e.g., the Jubilees of 1913) that Russia had detected.

3. Russian civilians (Sazonov and the Czar) were unaware that mobilization meant war until later in the crisis. We can surmise that their soldiers talked them into these preliminary measures before the civilians realized that mobilization meant war.
4. When they authorized preliminary mobilization and partial mobilization against Austria, Russian civilians (Sazonov and the Czar) were apparently unaware that Russia had an "all or nothing" mobilization plan; Russia had to mobilize against Germany if it mobilized against Austria. Moreover, the Russian chief of staff failed to explain this to the civilians at the key meetings on July 24-25. This misconception eased the Russian decision in principle to mobilize against Austria.

This suggests a civil-military split in Russia on whether to mobilize preemptively against Germany: the civilians were not yet sold on preemption on July 24-25. It also suggests that the Russian military manipulated unwitting civilian consent to Russian military measures. In fact partial Russian mobilization against Austria-Hungary was impossible--Russia could choose only full mobilization or none. But Russian officers agreed to partial mobilization in principal on July 24, without telling Russian civilians that this was impossible.¹⁰

5. Russian leaders did not receive Austria's dossier showing Serb responsibility for the Sarajevo murder of Archduke Ferdinand until after Russia had pre-mobilized on July 25 and mobilized on July 30.
- F. Germany hangs tough, July 25-30.
- The British proposed mediation of the crisis under British auspices. But the Germans kept pushing Austria forward, seeking to get the fait accompli finished. The German problem: Austria wouldn't be ready to attack Serbia until August 12. Hence, to foreclose diplomacy, the Germans urged Austria to declare war on Serbia. Austria then declared war on Serbia on July 28, and shelled Belgrade on July 29. The Austrian war declaration in turn helped spur Russia to declare partial mobilization on July 29, and then full mobilization on July 30, by convincing Russia that it would have to fight to protect Serbia or see it destroyed.
1. Germany runs a red warning light. The Germans learned of the Russian pre-mobilization measures on July 26 or 27,

¹⁰ May and Williamson: 368, 370.

one or two days after they began.¹¹ If Germany sought to prevent a continental war, this news should have shocked Germany into backtracking--i.e. pushing Austria to accept a "Halt in Belgrade" and an SDBH final outcome. But Bethmann kept on a belligerent course until overnight on July 29-30. This supports the inference that the Germans viewed a continental war with equanimity, preferring it to an SDBH outcome, and feared only a world war.

2. Bethmann sabotages the Kaiser's peace effort. The Kaiser wasn't told of the Serbian reply for several days. When he saw it, he wrote (July 28) that "every cause of war falls to the ground." He then asked Bethmann to ask Austria to offer the "Halt in Belgrade" peace plan to Russia.

But Bethmann didn't do it! He waited half a day, and then late on July 28 he expressed only vague, mild wishes to the Austrians. He never told them that the Kaiser strongly wanted the crisis ended!

What outcome was Bethmann seeking? He now knew that Britain, France and Russia would not allow an Austria Destroys Serbia (ADS) outcome; but they would have allowed a smashing of the Black Hand (SDBH). SDBH was apparently not enough for Bethmann. He faced what seemed a binary choice at that point: Serbia Destroys Black Hand (SDBH) or Continental War (CW); his hopes of Austria Destroys Serbia (ADS) were gone. He fatefully chose CW.

- G. The German peace effort, 2:55 a.m.-1:00 p.m. July 30. Late on July 29 Bethmann reversed course and tried to pull the Austrians back from the brink, in messages sent overnight, asking Austria to accept the Halt in Belgrade peace formula. These messages were sent at 2:55 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. July 30.

What caused Bethmann to change course? Some say he was scared by the latest warning from Britain, received at 9:12 p.m. July 29, which indicated that Britain would join a war and would do so quickly. Some say Russian partial mobilization convinced him that Russia wouldn't cave. Some suggest that Belgian mobilization alarmed him (Germany learned of significant Belgian mobilization measures on July 29 at 4:00 p.m.) It also seems possible that until late on July 29 Bethmann hoped to entice Britain to remain neutral by offering it a deal: "We will refrain from attacking France in a continental war if you British agree not to intervene in the war"; and that Bethmann only learned that Britain would not buy this deal late on July 29, in conversation with a British official.

- H. Germany abandons its peace move, decides for mobilization and war, July 30.

General Moltke sabotaged Bethmann's effort early on the

¹¹ Suggesting July 26 are May and Williamson: 349.

afternoon of July 30. At 1:00 p.m. he appeared unannounced at a key meeting between Bethmann, Falkenhayn and Tirpitz to successfully demand an end to peace efforts. At 2:00 p.m. he sent a telegram to Austria urging immediate Austrian mobilization against Russia and promising that Germany would follow suit. Shortly thereafter, and before learning of Russian full mobilization, he pressured top German leaders (Bethmann) to commit to decide at noon July 31 whether to mobilize. This was, in essence, a decision to mobilize, but to delay that decision a day in hopes Russia would decide to mobilize in the interim, which would give Germany an excuse for its action. Moltke pointed to ongoing Russian and French pre-mobilization as his excuse for mobilizing, arguing that Germany could not let Russia and France gain the lead in preparation. Moltke also exploited the Kaiser's angry misinterpretation of Czar's remark that Russian mobilization had begun 5 days earlier to claim that the Kaiser wished to end negotiation and begin mobilization. This decision meant that the war would have broken out absent Russian full mobilization, with German mobilization on July 31. (Thus the outbreak of the war was "over-determined.")

Two events apparently occasioned Moltke's switch from laid-back observer of the crisis to fierce war advocate.

1. The Kaiser, in an emotional moment, while misperceiving a note from Russia's Czar Nicholas II, minuted a document with apparent orders to German officials to abandon German peace efforts. Moltke seized this authority and ran with it.
2. Russian and French preliminary mobilizations were proceeding. Germany was flooded with alarming reports of these mobilizations. Moltke pointed to these pre-mobilizations as excuses for mobilizing, arguing that Germany could not let Russia and France gain the lead in preparation.

What motives underlay Moltke's insistence on war at this point? Two different interpretations are possible.

- i. Moltke had hoped to preserve peace, but was finally persuaded that Germany had to mobilize in order to keep pace with the Russian, French, and Belgian preliminary mobilizations. He explained this necessity to Bethmann with sadness in his heart. He pushed for both preliminary and full German mobilization because they could not be separated under the German military system.
- ii. Moltke, having desired an opportunity for preventive war against Russia for months or years, and seeing in the July crisis a fine opportunity for such a war, was delighted that Russia, France and Belgium gave Germany a pretext to mobilize; was enraged that Bethmann might waste this pretext by settling the crisis; and coerced Bethmann to cease his efforts.

Interpretation #i suggests World War I was an inadvertent war caused by military factors that made the July crisis exceptionally dangerous.

Interpretation #ii suggests that World War I was a deliberate war of aggression by Germany, which plotted to provoke, and then exploited, the excuse that Russian mobilization presented in order to wage a war of continental conquest.

- G. British dithering. The British didn't warn Germany that they would promptly intervene if Germany launched a continental war until July 29, chiefly because the British themselves did not firmly decide what they would do until August 3.
- H. Russian mobilization
 - 1. Partial mobilization was decided July 29 and announced publicly. Russia did this in a panicked reaction to Austria's declaration of war on Serbia--the conditions of its July 24 decision for "partial mobilization in principle" has not been met, as Austria had not yet invaded Serbia. Russia nevertheless decided for partial mobilization partly to deter Austria from invading Serbia, partly to offset Austrian mobilization against Serbia, partly to forestall Austrian mobilization in Galicia, and perhaps partly because on July 27 German Secretary of State Jagow lullingly assured the Allies that Germany would accept a partial Russian mobilization that was aimed only at Austria-Hungary.
 - 2. Full mobilization was ordered on 4:00 p.m., July 30, and done secretly, with no public announcement. Reasons: the conviction that war was inevitable, spurred by four factors:
 - a. Reports that the Germans were threatening war against Russia if Russian partial mobilization against Austria proceeded.
 - b. Reports that the Austrians still resisted any compromise.
 - c. Warnings from Russian military officers warning that mobilization was an all-or-nothing matter--a partial, South-only mobilization would make more difficult a full mobilization later if that became necessary.
 - d. False reports that German mobilization had begun.
- J. An interpretation of the crisis to consider. German military leaders rightly knew that Germany could not mobilize in secret for any length of time; but Russian and French military leaders thought Germany could mobilize secretly, with the French believing secret mobilization was possible for a week (See Joffre's memoirs). Why was this? Perhaps German officers, hoping to bait Russia or France into early mobilizations that would then justify German mobilization and the preventive war that many German officers sought, primed French and Russian intelligence with false information that would scare them into a premature mobilization. Joffre does indicate that his 7-days-of-secret mobilization estimate came

from secret intelligence on Germany. Had I been a German general, and had I desired a preventive war, this is exactly what I would have wanted the French to believe, and I would have polluted French intelligence with exactly this sort of information. (This is a speculative interpretation, but I know no evidence against it.)

- K. By July 30 the outbreak of WWI was overdetermined. Three independent paths to war were underway: German general mobilization, Russian general mobilization, and French general mobilization. Even if any two were stopped the third would have produced war. This illustrates how explosive the military situation was.

VI. WORLD WAR I AS A CASE STUDY: USING CASES TO TEST THEORIES, & USING THEORIES TO EXPLAIN CASES. JUDGING THE FISCHER ARGUMENT. Fischerites claim that Germany favored continental war or even world war over the status quo ante bellum. Fischer critics claim Germany preferred SQAB to WW or CW. Who is right? What were German preferences? What evidence is most telltale?

VII. AFTERMATH OF WWI

- A. German territorial losses (see map); and reparations. The myth that Versailles's terms were harsh toward Germany.
- B. The non-occupation of Germany. A mistake?

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