[1] *The World Crisis, c.1900–1930: Europe and the "Middle East"*

The World Before War: Idealism, Communitarianism and Radicalism
The First World War: Europe and the American Intervention
The Crucible of War: The Eastern and Western Fronts
Decentring the World Crisis: South-Eastern Europe and the "Middle East"
Reflections, Comparisons and Differences

There could hardly be a more deeply studied or more complex event with which to open any general history than the First World War. The vast range of writing on the conflict has recently been greatly expanded by the many publications and programmes timed to coincide with the centenary of the war's outbreak in 1914 and its course thereafter.[1] This chapter, therefore, is not intended to add further detail on the European war as such. Yet, it does attempt to put the war more firmly into a wider geographical and temporal context. It reemphasises the war's importance for the European empires and beyond, but also places it within a near 40-year span of global developments, beginning in the generation before 1914, with their consequent dramatic impact on society, economy and ideologies.

In regard to the first point – the geographical dimension – it will be useful to outline a typology of different regions and forms of conflict during the war itself, differentiating between the detailed narratives of other historians who have begun to expand its range.[2] There were, first, areas of mass warfare, mass killing and general mobilisation. Evidently, these included Western Europe, western

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Russia, the Balkans and parts of the Ottoman Empire, especially its northern and southern borderlands. Next, there were areas of highly disruptive, but less sustained, conflict which did not see mass mobilisation or fundamental economic transformation, for instance much of colonial Africa, where European empires fought out the war. Then again, there were areas, colonised or semi-colonised, which saw significant military and civilian labour recruitment and consequent political turmoil, but did not themselves become the site of direct armed conflict. These included India, French Indochina, the China coast, the United States and the British dominions: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and South Africa. Finally, there were parts of the world which felt the economic and political effects of the war, provided resources for it but did not directly contribute significant manpower to the conflict, such as Central and South America and Japan.

One striking effect of this geographical expansion of the range of warfare was the manner in which it reached small communities distant from the fronts, sometimes advantaging them, sometimes not. So, for instance, New Zealand Maori soldiers were recruited for the British Empire in significant numbers. Early conflicts with white officers gave way to a sense of ethnic and national solidarity after the Gallipoli debacle.[3] This helped the Maori communities gain a stronger voice in the country during the 1920s, whereas in the previous century their land and social cohesion had been constantly under threat. By contrast, indigenous peoples in eastern Siberia were suppressed by the White Army and then the Bolsheviks between 1917 and 1922.[4] This geographical expansion gave a great advantage to the Allied powers, which, unlike the Central Powers, could draw on agrarian as well as manpower resources from four continents.[5]

In terms of the temporal expansion of focus, this chapter emphasises the major changes that had preceded the European war, especially the conflict between Japan and Russia and the Chinese, Persian and Mexican revolutions. It is difficult to bring these conflicts into a single frame of analysis, particularly one which embraces the war itself. Yet, there were common features and connections. In all cases – and this would also extend to the post-war conflicts in North Africa, the Middle East and China – these events reflected aspects of the last phase of the "new imperialism" of the 1890s, led by an imperialist front which now included Japan. In a limited way, it also included Theodore Roosevelt's United States, which, since the early nineteenth century, had kept European empires at arm's length, but had nevertheless been an indirect supporter of their attempts to divide the world.

Lenin wrote of the war and imperialism of this period as "the highest stage of capitalism",[6] and there is, indeed, much analytical power in his argument, as noted in the Introduction. But here the idea of "gentlemanly capitalism" advanced by P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, who developed earlier arguments of Joseph Schumpeter, remains significant.[7] Yet, it was older landowning and military elites, many drawn from rural and non-industrial areas of the competing states, that often sparked off these conflicts and provided atavistic ideologies to support them. These old or declining elites included the *Junker* class in Germany; the samurai of Japan, which had lost economic power after 1868;

Figure 1 Maori soldiers. Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 31-A2. Photo by Herman John Schmidt.

families of military and landholding elites from southern France and Corsica; and the imperial governors, judges and naval families of the now-ageing British Empire. Nationalism and a sense of entitlement certainly empowered the spread of intrusive finance capital across the world, but they cannot be reduced to it.

The longer-term causes – and consequences – of the world crisis should also be brought into the picture. Again, a quasi-Leninist interpretation remains useful. Ruling elites, worried by the emerging power of industrial, artisanal and even peasant labour, subjected these new and alarming forces to an "internal reconquest" through aggressive nationalist rhetoric, calls to empire and, in the final analysis, conscription and warfare. New media, mass newspaper circulation, an expanded telegraph and postal system and, later, radio were used to mobilise people for economic progress and patriotism, but also in hostility against a newfound enemy. This form of moral coercion persisted well beyond the end of the Great War itself. Colonial wars in the 1920s and the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s were pre-eminently new wars of propaganda.

In fact, nearly 30 years of conflict created a form of general traumatic psychosis on a global scale. Post-war nightmares which sparked further conflict

included the "Jewish conspiracy", which allegedly brought down Germany; the threat of "Bolshevism" on the River Tyne in England in 1919; and most broadly, the mental crisis of the world's middle classes diagnosed, in their different ways, by Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Mohandas Gandhi. Traces of the impact of the world crisis, *c.*1900–1926, can be found across every subject touched in this book, from the understanding of the twentieth-century person through the trajectory of religion to the nature of modernity in art.

THE WORLD BEFORE WAR: IDEALISM, COMMUNITARIANISM AND RADICALISM

If the First World War had not been such a trauma for much of the human race, the two decades before it would now be seen as a period of radical change and rupture rather than the serene end to the Victorian era,[8] as it is often portrayed in popular literature, television and film. Unprecedented developments in communication were heralded by Louis Blériot's first air flight, the first radio connection across the Atlantic and even the creation of a new set of time zones across the world. While attention has been concentrated on the treaties which presaged the war itself, international agreements directed to reducing conflict had been implemented for Antarctica and a series of peace conferences, doomed as they later appeared, had been greeted as signs of hope in international affairs. They seemed an appropriate balance to the onward march of European empire. Democratic socialist parties flourished in Western Europe while colonial subjects invoked the spirit of the nation in an age of idealistic spirituality represented by the Chicago World Parliament of Religions of 1893.

Politics changed dramatically at a world level over these years. The so-called Progressive Era in the United States saw attempts to improve popular representation and education along with moves to cut back on the power, influence and corruption of the big corporations, which had emerged as the economy expanded rapidly after 1890.[9] Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft endorsed these moves in a period when income inequality grew very rapidly. Mexico's revolution predated the Bolshevik revolution by five years. In Britain, governments moved to introduce minimum wages. Yet more dramatic changes took place outside Europe and the Americas. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and the multinational intervention against it undermined the 300-year-old Qing Empire, and presaged the 1911 revolution, which plunged the country into conflict and uncertainty that lasted until 1949. The Persian revolution of the same period gave heart to liberals across the Middle East, but led in the longer term to the installation of a military autocracy. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 in the Ottoman Empire both modernised the regime and promoted Arab separatism.

Meanwhile, colonial powers viewed with alarm the rise of Pan-Islamic movements[10] heralded by the Mahdist state in the Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s. Nationalist agitation in Egypt and India passed into a more militant

phase with the Wafd and the Indian National Congress divided between radicals beginning to espouse violence against the British and moderates still looking for constitutional gains from colonial policymakers. The latter sought to portray themselves as liberals but were often constrained by conservative proconsuls and the movements of events. This dilemma also faced the British in Ireland, where, after 1913, Sinn Fein and Catholic Irish nationalism was opposed by a strong counter-force in Protestant unionism. In France, a secular, anti-Catholic party took power in 1902, while the Social Democratic Party made gains in Germany. Under Theodore Roosevelt, the United States seemed to be moving towards a new phase of imperialism, if only locally in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Yet by far the most dramatic event of the period was the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905[11] and the ensuing Russian Revolution in the same year, which, although violently suppressed, heralded a new era of leftist radical politics. The emergence of a centralist, domineering Communist Party had already been foreshadowed by the Bolshevik–Menshevik split of 1903. The year 1905, however, saw the formation of the first soviet directed by Leon Trotsky, advocate of "permanent revolution".[12] Japan's victory also signalled to Asian, Middle Eastern and African colonised people the first breach in Europe's 200 years of world dominance. Yet, the various popular uprisings of these years from Russia in 1905, through Pan-Islamic movements across the Muslim world to the radical *Swadeshi* ("home production") movement in India resulted in an imperial "counter-attack" by the major powers which attempted to impose stronger government in their borderlands, preparing the way for two generations of further conflict.[13] These moves included the reassertion of Russian control over Finland, Poland and Kirghizstan; Habsburg control over its Serbian borderlands; Anglo-Russian intrusion into Persia; and the Indian government's partition of Bengal in 1905, an attempt to divide Muslims from the Hindu radicals. In Brazil between 1898 and 1903, the central government brutally suppressed settlers and *mestizos* in the Canudos rebellion, as part of what was called, in retrospect, "the scramble for the Amazon".

One further effect of this political turmoil and the development of communications in the last two decades of fragile world peace was the speeding up of migration. The Russian crisis and rise of anti-Semitism there sent hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees to the West and, in particular, to the United States and Canada. Here they joined migrants from crowded northern European industrial cities and impoverished rural areas such as southern Italy and Sicily, while Spanish migrants continued to move to Latin America. Elsewhere, the decisive victory of Japan attracted numbers of anticolonial activists from India and Southeast Asia, who formed cells in Tokyo and other major cities.

Groups which felt themselves oppressed in the prevailing social order grasped the opportunity of the new means of communication, notably newspapers, radio and film, to advertise their grievances. Suffragettes paraded for women's votes in Britain. Led by Gandhi, Indians and, later, Africans demanded civil rights in South Africa, where, following the Anglo-Boer War, they remained excluded from the privileges taken for granted in white society. In the United States, the black population of the South, which had

drifted to northern cities as the industrial economy grew, was slowly politicised. Very widely, the monopoly of the old white ruling families was challenged by new forms of politics and new methods of communication. The four years of warfare with its unparalleled orgy of killing overshadowed, but in another sense speeded up, the radical changes which this age of idealism, conflict and migration had already unleashed.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR: EUROPE AND THE AMERICAN INTERVENTION

The First World War has long been the most studied and memorialised event in history. It was marked by economic and political turmoil on a massive scale and began what Oswald Spengler perhaps rightly saw as the "decline of the West", or at least its initial phase. The war's consequences – the emergence of mass democracy, Communist revolution and the rise of fascism – were epochal. The centenary of the outbreak of war in 2014 was heralded by a further wide range of publications, television series and reminiscences based on private papers. Among the most significant recent revisions was that proposed by Christopher Clark, who presented a more nuanced version of the crisis of July 1914 in his book *The Sleepwalkers*.[14] This partly shifted the "blame" for the outbreak of war away from Germany, showing how miscalculations by Austria–Hungary and Russia in response to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by an aggressive Serbian nationalist cell were compounded by the complacency and fear of statesmen in London and Paris. Even the German statesman Helmuth von Moltke only urged "a preventive war . . . as long as we still have a reasonable chance in this struggle".[15] Clark demonstrated that Russia, not Germany, was the first to mobilise in an effort to protect its Serbian brothers, a fact recognised in 2014 by Vladimir Putin. This represented a significant intellectual shift, since the standard view was more a projection backwards of Germany's role in 1939 than a straightforward analysis of the July crisis. Ironically, the most vigorous proponent of the earlier view had been the German historian Fritz Fischer, who had traced the origin of Germany's war aims back to the 1890s or earlier.[16]

Clark also advanced a more difficult, sociological argument that most political and military leaders involved in the July crisis and the subsequent rush to war were gripped by a kind of "crisis of masculinity". As lower-class and non-white movements became more assertive in the two decades before 1914, the once comfortable ruling classes of gentlemanly capitalists, landowners and old military families felt the need to assert their leadership and continuing dominance by bellicose statements and actions which turned a local crisis into a conflagration. Yet, during the 2014 centenary, British participation was debated, as it had long been, along the lines of local nationalism. Conservative patriots argued that the Kaiser's Germany was a proto-fascist state, presaging the Third Reich, and therefore had to be confronted. The historian Niall Ferguson suggested that Britain should have refrained from participation in

Figure 2 The 9th Queen's Royal Lancers of the British Army charging German artillery, 1916. Underwood Photo Archives/Superstock.

the war until its forces were strong enough to defeat Germany without a long and desperate struggle. This kind of speculation is worth considering, but the more important point is that, for the previous century, France had continually fought against German domination of the Continent, while the British had also opposed any hegemonic continental power.

A broad study published before the flurry of activity connected with the 1914 centenary was Hew Strachan's monumental history, published in 2001, and his subsequent shorter history of the war as a whole, published in 2003.[17] This was followed by David Stevenson's one-volume history in 2004[18] and Adam Tooze's *The Deluge* in 2014.[19] Strachan's interest in tactics and strategy and his useful overturning of the idea that nobody expected a long war were valuable. So too was his insistence on the bellicosity of European nationalism, fuelled both by a perverted form of Christianity and Nietzschean desire for supremacy. Again, his depiction of industrial and financial mobilisation in 1914 was of great importance in broadening the field of study beyond the purely military dimension of warfare.

Strachan's and Stevenson's most significant contribution to the literature, however, was their insistence that it was Germany's global strategy on land and sea, once it had been drawn into war, that turned a European conflict into a world war. This is not to say that this was inevitable, let alone that it represented a long-term German plan for world domination. Yet, even before the end of 1914, Germany's rulers had planned to strike at the weak links in the global power of Britain, France and Russia by fostering Pan-Islamism and the aims of the Ottoman Empire, so threatening Russia's southern territories and even challenging British India by suborning the ruler of Afghanistan. The German seaborne offensive in the Atlantic and Pacific, initially announced by the voyage of the battleship SMS *Emden* into the Indian Ocean in 1914, was designed to divert British resources away from Europe. But the expansion of this policy to the Atlantic ultimately brought the United States into the conflict and so

ensured Germany's defeat in the longer run. The following sections aim to follow and develop this line of argument, but also to extend the chronology of war backwards into the 1900s and forward into the 1920s.

Both world wars, indeed, are best seen as world crises in Winston Churchill's sense and their causes and consequences had exceptionally long genealogies.[20] Conservative historians in both Europe and the United States recently began to object to the moving of the focus away from the Eastern and Western fronts, and it is clearly true that the mass casualties of four years of warfare were disproportionately felt in Europe. Equally, the conflict presaged the decline of Europe's long dominance of the world scene, even though the United States did not move decisively into the military and political void until 1943. Yet, putting the European war into world context highlights a whole range of historical changes from the early victories of radical socialism, through non-European nationalism to new forms of Islamism, all of which were to shape the following century as decisively as the European war itself.

THE CRUCIBLE OF WAR: THE EASTERN AND WESTERN FRONTS

The Western European war took a path only too well known in earlier conflicts, with the invasion of Belgium and northern France. But at the Battle of the Marne on the Belgian border, Germany failed to repeat the quick success of 1870, which had inaugurated its new world power.[21] Paris was saved and Europe was enmeshed in a long war of attrition in the trenches which ran between Flanders and Switzerland. This massive conflict began to be decided in 1917, when the first tanks came onto the battlefield, but the decisive point was only reached in 1918, when American troops began to reinforce the forces of the Triple Entente against the Central Powers. On the Eastern Front, Russian troops were held at bay in 1914 by Field Marshal von Hindenburg, but the unexpectedly rapid Russian counter-attack gave an advantage to the French, as German troops were diverted east. At the same time, Germany's Ottoman ally was defeated by the Russians at the Battle of Sarikamish in 1914 and this, in turn, led to a long military standoff in the east and south, similar to that on the Western Front. The deadlock was not broken until the tsar fell in March 1917 and Russian military power disintegrated as a consequence of the ensuing revolutions.

In the meantime, the need for mass mobilisation of perhaps 60 million men, machinery and resources had undermined the old liberal political consensus in Britain and France, leading to the installation of coalition governments the like of which had not been seen before. At sea, Germany once again made early advances, but British naval power slowly recovered. The British established a naval blockade of the Continent, managed to protect trans-Atlantic shipping with difficulty and, finally, began to turn the German fleet back following the Battle of Jutland in 1916. Yet, even after the advent of US forces in early 1918, the Germans were still able to mount highly effective campaigns on the Western

Front, now drawing in resources from the east, where an armistice had been declared with Russia. As was to occur once again in the Second World War, however, Germany had too limited a resource base in Europe, especially after the country's Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian allies began to weaken and disintegrate in the Balkans.[22] German cities lacked food, the air war began to demoralise civilian populations and political radicalism spread amongst an impoverished urban working class. Still, unlike the situation in Russia, open Communist insurgency did not take place until the Spartacist revolt of 1919.

The Great War in Europe provoked huge social, economic and moral changes which were evident throughout the century. As men were called up after 1916, women were drawn into the workforce and demands for women's political rights, which had been heard before the war, particularly in Britain and France, became more insistent. Progress was set back after 1918, but the slow movement towards women's enfranchisement continued in Western Europe and the United States at least. Technical developments in air, sea and road travel counted among the more benign developments. A report announced, "The Clyde Valley emerged from the period of hostilities with its productive capacity in steel, shipbuilding and engineering greatly enhanced."[23] But air bombardment, machine gunnery and the use of chemical weapons such as chlorine and mustard gas were dramatic features of the war and these were later used across the world, particularly in the European colonies.

Perhaps, though, the moral and ideological forms which emerged during and after the conflict were its most powerful results. Mutiny was often met with execution. But the more ambivalent form of "conscientious objection" to war was the inevitable consequence of mass mobilisation. Radical hostility to all authority buoyed socialist and fascist movements across Europe. Equally, the arrival of American troops alerted Europeans to the less rigidly class-based society across the Atlantic and to its command of material resources and inventiveness. The mass slaughter of the conflict empowered new religious movements, such as the Oxford Group that would eventually become Moral Re-Armament, and the determination to establish international bodies such as the League of Nations. Yet, it also sowed the seeds of forms of more mobile warfare and created a generation of hate-filled young men which heralded the next round of politically legitimated killing.

If the collapse of the old regimes, the mobilisation of labour and the slow advance of gender equality were features of change across much of the Western European and American world as a result of the war, fragmentation on ethnic, linguistic and religious lines was equally general both inside and outside these continents. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires created a host of minor wars, especially in the imperial borderlands, which persisted over the next century as newly empowered ethnic groups began to claim nations as their own, marginalising and expelling minority peoples. China began to fragment into regions and even in Africa, India and Southeast Asia various forms of inter-ethnic and inter-religious rivalries were reinforced.

Why was this? Economic crisis and the collapse of the legitimacy, if not force, of European rule was one common feature. At the same time, the empires and nation states in conflict had armed and empowered a whole range of middle

groups, officers and subalterns (in the strict sense of the world), who took up the fight for regional and local political entities which had been only distant aspirations in the pre-war era. Outside Europe and the Americas, the war should indeed be seen as a further stage of the new imperialism which had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. The surviving colonial powers found that playing off some of these groups against others helped to perpetuate their diminished local influence, if not dominance. The chapter goes on to assess the impact of the war in these broader arenas.

Decentring the World Crisis: South-Eastern Europe and the "Middle East"

The most recent generation of historians of the First World War displayed much greater interest than their predecessors in the origins and consequences of conflict in the Balkans, Russia and the Caucasus. This modified the prevailing view of the central role of statesmen and soldiers in Berlin, Paris and London. The "shift to the East", however, can be taken much further and justified in terms of the longer span of world history. The conflict on the Western Front certainly gave rise to what has been called Europe's civil war, 1914–1945. But thereafter, both Eastern and Western Europe entered a new era of relative peace. In the Middle East, by contrast, the long-term consequences of the First World War in the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Zionism, the creation of Israel and a whole range of ethnically engineered states in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Libya were still very much in evidence in 2015. From the point of view of global Islam, the conquest of the Hijaz by Abdulaziz ibn Saud in 1925 – a direct consequence of the war – was one of the critical developments of the twentieth century, empowering a radical, puritan strain of the faith. Even in South and East Asia, which were not directly involved in the war, the conflict unleashed new forms of mass politics and, in the case of Japan, a new imperialism, with worldwide consequences in the 1930s and 1940s. Adam Tooze, in turn, brought China into the picture.[24]

Emerging ethnic and religious nationalism in the central and south-eastern territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which set Slavic Orthodox subjects against their former Catholic German rulers, coloured the history of the next generation after 1914. While there was no simple teleology, the fragmentation of empire between German, Hungarian and Czech speakers, as between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs, was to reverberate through the following century. Even before the war, a related process, caused by similar moves on the part of an imperial state, had been evident in the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul had gradually centralised power, moving away from the model of ethnic plurality which had characterised the Empire of the Renaissance period and after.[25] Non-Muslims, such as Greeks, Armenians and Syrian Christians, had been weeded out of the army and the self-government previously devolved to the old religious and ethnic authorities (the millets) had been curtailed. Most significantly, after the Young Turk revolution of 1908, the state had embarked upon a policy of

"Turkification". Whereas previously, Arab and other local leaders had been slowly acculturated into the ways of Istanbul by residence and state service, now the Turkish language was increasingly imposed on the elites of outlying provinces.[26]

This was an uneven process and loyalty to the Ottoman Empire remained strong, but a reaction was inevitable. Some Arabs had long felt a sense of suppressed superiority in regard to the Turkish imperial centre.[27] The Prophet had been an Arab and Arabic was the language of the Qur'an. They felt that the Khilafat should have remained in the hands of an Arab regime and the holy places governed by Arab leaders without interference from Ottoman Turkish authorities, which had become more intrusive as the Hijaz Railway was completed towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ambivalently, the Egyptian middle and upper classes had urged "Egypt for the Egyptians", that is to say for the Arabs, against both Turks and Europeans since Colonel Urabi's rebellion of 1881. People in the Baghdad province of the empire had also called for local Arab autonomy during political crises in the 1900s. This sentiment became public during Arab conferences held in Paris and Lausanne in 1913. The later historian of the "Arab Awakening", George Antonius, noted that conservative Arabs believed that the secularising Young Turks had betrayed the faith to Western influences.[28] This was certainly the claim made by Sharif Hussein of Mecca when, with the support of the British and the French, he raised the Hijaz against the Ottoman Empire in 1916. Meanwhile, the former Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, buttressed by Russia, fought two precursor wars against Istanbul in 1909 and 1913, which set the scene for the widening of conflict in 1914.

In Syria and Lebanon, the Great War imposed extreme hardship on the local populations, compounded by famine, drought and infestation by locusts.[29] The Ottoman authorities came down heavily on signs of Arab disaffection, executing several leaders in 1916 and 1917. But most Arabs hedged their bets in regard to their future relations with Ottoman power, particularly as much of the Arab part of the empire remained under Istanbul's control until late in 1917. The Ottomans also retained the loyalty of significant numbers of Arab officials who had been trained in Istanbul. Yet, the existence of earlier claims to local autonomy did ensure that, when Allied armies invaded Palestine, Syria and what was to become Iraq, Britain and France could institute a "divide and rule" strategy, not only between Arabs and Turks, or more accurately "Ottomanised" leaders, but also between Sunnis and Shias, Wahhabis and Orthodox, Kurds and Arabs, Alawites, Christians, Jews, Copts and Muslims.[30] The ethnic and religious balancing acts characteristic of semi-independent new states, such as Iraq or Trans-Jordan, and imperial provinces, such as Palestine and Syria, provided a constant source of political confusion and divisions throughout the twentieth century and were transformed into revolution and warfare once again after 2011.

The Ottoman authorities had gradually become disillusioned with their old ally, Britain, following the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, because they felt abandoned in favour of their greatest enemy. Germany had been reaching out to the empire since the Kaiser's visit of 1900. But war was by no means inevitable

before 1911, when both the British and the Young Turks began to take a more aggressive stance.[31] The main war aims of the British in the sector were the protection of the Suez Canal from an Ottoman attack through Palestine and an attempt to knock the Ottomans out of the war rapidly and expose the southern flank of the Central Powers. Secondly, a thrust through Basra and Baghdad, using the Indian Army, seemed an appropriate strategy. Basra, with a substantial Indian population and with its north-facing waterways controlled by the British firm Lynch and Company, seemed an excellent staging post. Predictably, neither of these aims was easily achieved. The Anglo-Indian army was stalled by fierce Ottoman resistance at Kut al-Amara, south of Baghdad. A landing, promoted by Winston Churchill, at Gallipoli in 1915 by British and ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand) forces intended to avoid a lengthy advance from Egypt through Palestine was overwhelmingly defeated, leading to recriminations between British and Australian leaders. Ultimately, however, British forces took Baghdad in 1917, entered Jerusalem in the same year and marched into mainland Turkey in the summer of 1918, stirring the jealousy of French leaders.

These painful military advances were accompanied by murky political and diplomatic manoeuvrings. Egypt, already a virtual British colony in 1914, was completely taken over and mobilised for the Palestine conflict once the British had declared war against the Ottoman Empire. Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, announced the creation of a vaguely defined "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine in 1917.[32] British hopes for rapid agrarian development pioneered by Zionist settlers blended with London's desire for a strategic bloc of pro-Western force north of the Canal. The Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916, publicised by the USSR after the Bolshevik Revolution and formalised at the later peace conferences, gave Syria to the French and Palestine and Trans-Jordan to the British, overriding the Arab desire for independence. Iraq, like Syria, was to be technically a mandated territory under the newly formed League of Nations. But it, too, began its independence from Istanbul as a virtual British colony. Further north, the British occupied Istanbul and became complicit in a Greek invasion of Asia Minor, which was only frustrated by the fierce resistance of Turkish regular troops led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Over much of the Middle East, as in Europe, then, direct involvement in fighting had the effect of heightening tensions between ethnic and religious groups whose elites had already begun to assert stronger identities well before the First World War.[33] A related and equally powerful force was the escalation of class identities and labour conflict as a result of the political and economic pressures of the war. Returning soldiers of peasant and working-class backgrounds demanded a better livelihood and new rights to land and income. But these aspirations clashed with the economic conditions let loose by the war. After 1916, there had been a global increase in prices as the demand for commodities and labour soared. Not only soldiers but also huge numbers of labourers were drafted into the war fronts. By 1919, however, prices had collapsed, labour was dispensed with and this occurred precisely at a time when old supremacies and new states were attempting to build up their revenue

bases across Africa and Eurasia. The result was a firestorm of peasants' and workers' movements which erupted in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. This coincided with industrial unrest in Britain and France, the Spartacist movement in defeated Germany and the "red" and "green" revolutions across Eastern Europe and Russia. The forces of state and empire cracked down fiercely on these movements, setting the scene for the rise of both authoritarian government and mass colonial nationalism over the next generation.

So, in the former Ottoman domains a series of major revolts against European control flared up between 1919 and 1923.[34] In Egypt, frustration that the country was unable to claim independence under the leadership of the landlord-dominated Wafd Party combined with deep social problems to create an explosion similar to that of 1879–1882. Large numbers of workers who had been critical in the logistical support for Britain's Palestine campaign were laid off. The rural community was scarified by the sudden decline in prices of basic commodities as wartime demand fell off. The ulama, the clerical class, long hostile to the growing numbers and deeper intrusion of British and other European officers after 1914, provided a degree of ideological leadership for the revolt against British control which reached its peak in 1919. Egypt, the most populous of the Arab countries, proved extraordinarily difficult for the British to control. Eventually, in 1922, they conceded a degree of local self-government to the Wafd and Egyptian local leaders, but not before the revolt had forced the British to maintain large numbers of Commonwealth and Indian troops in the country at considerable cost.[35] Further to the west, the conditions of war promoted unrest in Libya and Tripoli, conquered piecemeal by the Italians after 1911, and also in French Algeria, where wartime privation increased tensions between French settlers, the local Jewish population and the Arab majority.[36]

Meanwhile, the three provinces of Mesopotamia, now Iraq, rebelled in 1920. Former Ottoman officials, displaced by British and Indian officials in Basra and Baghdad, vented similar grievances to their peers in Damascus and the Lebanese towns where French troops and civilians were billeted on them. Ottoman loyalism played a part and there were armed interventions from Syria into western Iraq. Equally, heavy-handed British administration of the bazaars and the introduction of the "Tribal Civil and Criminal Disputes Regulation" on an Indian model offended established judicial officers. Peasant farmers rebelled across the region, affected by similar price falls to those in Egypt and India, demands for labour services by the occupying armies and also by a rise in land revenue as the British and British Indian authorities attempted to recoup the enormous costs of the Mesopotamian campaign.[37] At this point, economic and political grievances mixed with religious and ethnic ones. Shia clergy and commoners revolted around the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf, offended by the presence of infidels. Then later, in 1922–1923, when some of these insurgencies had been smothered by RAF bombing or had lost steam, there was a major revolt in the Kurdish areas to the north. British intrusion here again caused a sharp reaction.[38] The costly British determination to remain arose, in the words of the Arab specialist, Gertrude Bell, from the fear that "[i]f Mesopotamia goes Persia goes, inevitably, and then India".[39]

In Syria, the French rapidly converted a conquered territory into a mandate under the League of Nations and then into a virtual colonial province, centred on Damascus.[40] A number of impulses came together to create this new form of French imperialism towards the end of the First World War. Before 1914, the Parti colonial had been a bit player in French politics. But public opinion had been mobilised by the sight of French Senegalese, Algerian and Indochinese troops marching into battle on the Western Front.[41] The idea of colonial development (*"mise en valeur des colonies françaises"*) promoted by Albert Sarraut, Governor of Indochina before the war, appealed to a society devastated by conflict and determined to seek reparations from Germany and the repayment of pre-war Ottoman loans.[42] The occupation of Syria seemed the least that could be expected if France was not to be marginalised by the British and the country's presence there was supposedly legitimated by a history stretching back to the Crusades.

The French, like the British, were adept at playing off ethnic and religious groups against each other, again with long-term consequences for the stability of the region.[43] They sought, and largely received, the support of the Maronite Christians of Lebanon. Lebanese merchants working in French colonies in Africa, who remitted money to their homeland, also tended to support the regime. In short order after the First World War, the French suppressed rebellions by the minority Druze, also of Mount Lebanon, and the majority Sunnis of the Damascus region. Fostering political parties supposedly representing the elites of the minority groups, the French brazened out their control of the region through a further set of revolts in the early 1930s, until the onset of the next war in 1939.

Palestine provided a further example of an anticolonial insurgency which emerged out of wartime conditions and policies. Even in the last days of Ottoman administration, pressure from the great powers had forced the Ottoman administration to admit large numbers of Jewish settlers, many of them fleeing the pogroms that scarred the Russian Empire in its last two decades. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, announced as the British began to rule Palestine, encouraged a new surge of Jewish settlement, which fanned out from Haifa and the coastal towns into the interior of Palestine. This occurred at a time when Arab farmers and Bedouin herdsmen were suffering badly from the straitened circumstances of wartime and early British rule. The influx of settlers tipped the balance between the Muslim and Christian Arab inhabitants and the long-established Jewish population. This had amounted to about 10% of the total but was now swelled to more than 20% by the new arrivals. Jewish settlers brought with them firm ideas about settlement, development and a determination that "a homeland for the Jews" meant local and separate Jewish administration from a position of strength.[44] Arab protest against this culminated in riots in Jerusalem in 1920 as well as the more famous Wailing Wall riots of 1929. The conflict between Jews and Arabs over territorial control of the holy city was to continue throughout the century.[45]

Another indirect, though critical, outcome of the First World War was of importance here. In 1916, Sharif Hussein of Mecca had revolted against the Ottoman Empire, with covert British support, later dramatised in the writings

of T. E. Lawrence. The Sharif, chafing since the 1900s against Ottoman interference in the Hajj and his Hijaz kingdom, invoked the Arab Khilafat against what he termed "Turkish usurpation and Westernisation". But after the end of the war, relations between the British and the Sharifian kingdom declined, while conflicts developed between the Sharifians and the purist Wahhabis of central and eastern Arabia, who, since the early 1800s, had believed themselves to be the rightful protectors of the holy places of Mecca and Medina.[46] In 1926, as noted above, supported by another British officer, Henry St John Philby, the Wahhabis annexed the Hijaz to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, demolished many of what they regarded as impious shrines and tombs and imposed a rigid form of Islam in Mecca and Medina. Ultimately, the British came to see the Saudi dynasty as a buffer against French and other foreign interventions along the Red Sea and compromised with the new regime. This was to be a momentous development in the history of Islam, though it was not until some years later that the importance of Arabian oil resources became clear.

The fate of the Turkish rump of the Ottoman Empire was of considerable significance, for it resulted in the emergence of a new type of state: a republic dominated by Muslims yet formally secular, and ruled by a president who was supported by a powerful, modernised army, urban elites and some remaining large landholders. This was a precedent followed later as the European powers withdrew from Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya and Algeria. For much of the twentieth century, it was assumed that this form of state had effectively suppressed Islamism, and its generally neutral attitude to private property and foreign investment, particularly for oil extraction, allowed a compromise with Western powers to emerge. An outcome of this sort was, however, far from clear during the war years themselves. In the northern Ottoman lands, indeed, the war years extended from 1911 to 1923. An Italian–Ottoman war broke out in 1911, leading to the Italian occupation of Libya. This was followed in short order by the two Balkan Wars of 1911 to 1914. First, Greece and Serbia partitioned much of the remainder of "Turkey in Europe" and created an independent, but still partly Muslim, Albania. Then followed the Second Balkan War, when the victorious Christian powers fought amongst themselves, allowing a small Ottoman resurgence, but which also forced Serbia into greater dependence on Russia, a situation which led indirectly to the Great War itself.

After the Ottoman defeat by the British and French and the Arab revolt, the Western powers moved effectively to partition Turkey itself, occupying Istanbul and conspiring in a Greek invasion of Smyrna. In the capital, the last Ottoman Sultan and a hastily reconvened parliament became clients of the British. Lloyd George, the British prime minister, had long been a Hellenophile though the key continuing British concern was for the freedom of navigation along the Bosporus. But the British had overreached themselves. Indian soldiers had already mutinied in Singapore and Mesopotamia and now showed serious signs of disaffection in Istanbul and its environs. The long war and earlier patterns of Turkification, spreading down to the small towns and peasant farmers of Anatolia, had also created a powerful sense of nationality linking the army and ordinary people. A remarkable leader, Mustafa Kemal "Atatürk", turned this sentiment to his advantage as the Greeks occupied the Aegean coast.

Establishing a Grand National Assembly in the inland town of Ankara, Atatürk thrust westwards, defeating the Greeks on the coast and forcing the British, who were themselves divided on how to respond, to a stalemate.[47] War-weariness and the realisation that Atatürk would compromise on freedom of the Straits and refrain from intervention in French-controlled Syria or British-controlled Iraq ultimately led to the 1923 Peace of Lausanne which guaranteed the territorial integrity of the new Turkish Republic. Atatürk asserted, "he is a weak leader who needs religion to uphold his government." The Sultanate and Khilafat were abolished and Turkey became the first avowedly secular Muslim society.

REFLECTIONS, COMPARISONS AND DIFFERENCES

The emergence of the Turkish Republic, a linguistically and ethnically homogenous state (Kurds apart), which created a distance between religious confession and political power, was also characteristic of the effects of the War as they impacted on large parts of Europe. Here nationality was increasingly defined in ethnic terms. Whether in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Serbia or Yugoslavia, there began an attempt culturally to assimilate or drive out minority communities which culminated 20 years later with the ethnic cleansing enforced by Nazism, fascism and its Eastern European proxies. The War had created a range of militant nationalist organisations promoting a hard-edged ethnicity, fearful of "the foreigner" and often doubly enraged by the Peace Treaties of 1919. Some of these conditions applied to the remainder of the Middle East beyond Turkey which, like Europe, had been directly embroiled in military conflict. Yet, here it is important to avoid overgeneralisation – the kind of overemphasis on connection and similarity queried by some of the historians mentioned in the Introduction. In large parts of the Arab Middle East, Iran or parts of Africa discussed in the next chapter, vigorous ethnicities certainly emerged after 1914, but their purchase was much weaker than in Europe or even in the new Turkey.

In part this was because the older ideology and tactic of ethnic and class-based alliance persisted here well beyond the War and held benefits for both local elites and the colonial powers: Alavite (Shia) and other minority rulers were able to retain circumscribed power in Syria–Lebanon, Sunnis held a dominant position in a Shia majority Iraq, and landowners controlled the Wafd Party in Egypt. Representative politics and quasi-democracy, in its aggressive European form, had virtually no antecedents in much of the Middle East, where local monarchs or military strongmen tended to replace Ottoman governors, as Chapter 3 suggests. The communication of invented national traditions here was much less in evidence than in Europe and was held in check by the colonialists. Some political scientists have argued that the so-called Arab Spring of the 2010s, rather than being a democratic awakening, was an ethnic nationalist upsurge similar to that seen in Europe after the First World War. In this sense, events in the Middle East after 1916 were a mere premonition. Provided the danger of positing a straightforward modernisation theory is

avoided, there seems some truth in this. Certainly, as George Antonius argued, Arab and other regional ethnicities were "awakened" by the First World War and this created historical memories which later leaders, secular and religious, could draw upon.[48] Yet, there was no simple historical progress in these regions towards a single modernity, nationalist or otherwise, over the next three generations.