**World War I** (**WWI**), which was predominantly called the **World War** or the **Great War** from its occurrence until 1939 (World War II), and the **First World War** or World War I thereafter, was a [major war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_war) centered in [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe) that began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918. It involved all the world's [great powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_powers),[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-4) which were assembled in two opposing alliances: the [Allies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_I) (based on the [Triple Entente](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Entente) of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) and [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia)) and the [Central Powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Powers) (originally centred around the [Triple Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Alliance_%281882%29) of [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany), [Austria-Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria-Hungary) and [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy); but, as Austria–Hungary had taken the offensive against the agreement, Italy did not enter into the war).[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-Willmott15-5) These alliances both reorganised (Italy fought for the Allies), and expanded as more nations entered the war. Ultimately more than 70 million military personnel, including 60 million Europeans, were mobilised in one of the largest wars in history.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-6)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-7) More than 9 million combatants [were killed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties), largely because of great technological advances in firepower without corresponding advances in mobility. It was the sixth-[deadliest conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_anthropogenic_disasters_by_death_toll) in world history, subsequently paving the way for various political changes such as revolutions in the nations involved.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-8)

Long-term causes of the war included the [imperialistic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism) foreign policies of the great powers of Europe, including the [German Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire), the[Austro-Hungarian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria-Hungary#The_Great_War), the [Ottoman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire#Dissolution_.281908.E2.80.931922.29), the [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire), the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire), the [French Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Army_in_World_War_I), and [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy_in_World_War_I#From_neutrality_to_the_intervention_in_the_war). The [assassination on 28 June 1914](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Archduke_Franz_Ferdinand_of_Austria) of [Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archduke_Franz_Ferdinand_of_Austria), the heir to the throne of [Austria-Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria-Hungary), by a [Yugoslav nationalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslav_nationalism) in [Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarajevo%2C_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina) was the proximate trigger of the war. It resulted in a [Habsburg ultimatum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Ultimatum) against the [Kingdom of Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Serbia).[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-AJPT2-9)[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-10) Several alliances formed over the previous decades were invoked, so within weeks the major powers were at war; via their colonies, the conflict soon spread around the world.

On 28 July, the conflict opened with the Austro-Hungarian [invasion of Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbian_Campaign_%28World_War_I%29),[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-11)[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-12) followed by the German invasion of [Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium%22%20%5Co%20%22Belgium),[Luxembourg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg) and France; and a Russian attack against Germany. After the German march on [Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris) was brought to a halt, the [Western Front](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_%28World_War_I%29) settled into a static battle of attrition with a [trench line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trench_warfare) that changed little until 1917. In the [East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_%28World_War_I%29), the Russian army successfully fought against the Austro-Hungarian forces but was forced back by the German army. Additional fronts opened after the Ottoman Empire joined the war in 1914, Italy and [Bulgaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Bulgaria) in 1915 and [Romania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania) in 1916. The Russian Empire [collapsed in March 1917](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_%281917%29), and Russia left the war after the [October Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution) later that year. After a 1918 German offensive along the western front, [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) forces entered the trenches and the Allies drove back the German armies in a series of successful offensives. Germany, which had [its own trouble with revolutionaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Revolution) at this point, agreed to a cease-fire on 11 November 1918, later known as [Armistice Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_Day). The war had ended in victory for the Allies.

Events on the [home fronts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_front_during_World_War_I) were as tumultuous as on the battle fronts, as the participants tried to mobilize their manpower and economic resources to fight a total war. By the end of the war, four major imperial powers — the [German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire), [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire), [Austro-Hungarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_Empire) and [Ottoman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) empires — ceased to exist. The successor states of the former two lost a great amount of territory, while the latter two were dismantled entirely. The map of central Europe was redrawn into several smaller states. The [League of Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations) was formed in the hope of preventing another such conflict. The European nationalism spawned by the war and the breakup of empires, the repercussions of Germany's defeat and problems with the [Treaty of Versailles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles) are generally agreed to be factors contributing to [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II).

In the 19th century, the major European powers had gone to great lengths to maintain a [balance of power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balance_of_power_in_international_relations) throughout Europe, resulting by 1900 in a complex network of political and military alliances throughout the continent.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-Willmott15-5) These had started in 1815, with the [Holy Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Alliance) between [Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prussia), Russia, and Austria. Then, in October 1873, German Chancellor [Bismarck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_von_Bismarck) negotiated the [League of the Three Emperors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_the_Three_Emperors) between the monarchs of Austria–Hungary, Russia and Germany. This agreement failed because Austria–Hungary and Russia could not agree over Balkan policy, leaving Germany and Austria–Hungary in an alliance formed in 1879, called the [Dual Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual_Alliance_%281879%29). This was seen as a method of countering Russian influence in the [Balkans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkans) as the [Ottoman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) continued to weaken. In 1882, this alliance was expanded to include Italy in what became the [Triple Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Alliance_%281882%29).

After 1870, European conflict was averted largely through a carefully planned network of treaties between the German Empire and the remainder of Europe orchestrated by Bismarck. He especially worked to hold Russia at Germany's side to avoid a two-front war with France and Russia. When [Wilhelm II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_II_of_Germany) ascended to the throne as [German Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Emperor) (*Kaiser*), Bismarck's alliances were gradually de-emphasized

.

German industrial and economic power had grown greatly after [unification and the foundation of the Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_unification) in 1871. From the mid-1890s on, the government of Wilhelm II used this base to devote significant economic resources to building up the Imperial German Navy for world naval supremacy. As a result, each nation strove to out-build the other. With the launch of [HMS *Dreadnought*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Dreadnought_%281906%29) in 1906, the British Empire expanded on its significant advantage over its German rival. The arms race between Britain and Germany eventually extended to the rest of Europe, with all the major powers devoting their industrial base to producing the equipment and weapons necessary for a pan-European conflict. Between 1908 and 1913, the military spending of the European powers increased by 50 percent.

Austria-Hungary precipitated the [Bosnian crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_crisis) of 1908–1909 by officially annexing the former Ottoman territory of [Bosnia and Herzegovina, which it had occupied since 1878](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_occupation_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina). This angered the [Kingdom of Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Serbia) and its patron, the [Pan-Slavic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Slavism) and [Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire). Russian political maneuvering in the region destabilized peace accords that were already fracturing in what was known as "the [powder keg of Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powder_keg_of_Europe)".

On 28 June 1914, [Gavrilo Princip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gavrilo_Princip%22%20%5Co%20%22Gavrilo%20Princip), a Bosnian-Serb student and member of [Young Bosnia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Bosnia), assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, [Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archduke_Franz_Ferdinand_of_Austria) in[Sarajevo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarajevo), Bosnia.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-Willmott26-23) This began a period of diplomatic manoeuvring among Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, France, and Britain called the [July Crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Crisis). Wanting to finally end Serbian interference in Bosnia, Austria-Hungary delivered the July Ultimatum to Serbia, a series of ten demands intentionally made unacceptable, intending to provoke a war with Serbia. When Serbia agreed to only eight of the ten demands, Austria-Hungary declared war on 28 July 1914.  The Russian Empire, unwilling to allow Austria–Hungary to eliminate its influence in the Balkans, and in support of its longtime Serb protégés, ordered a partial mobilization one day later.  When the German Empire began to mobilize on 30 July 1914, France, resentful of the German conquest of [Alsace-Lorraine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alsace-Lorraine) during the [Franco-Prussian War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco-Prussian_War), ordered French mobilization on 1 August. Germany declared war on Russia on the same day. The United Kingdom declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, following an "unsatisfactory reply" to the British ultimatum that Belgium must be kept [neutral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neutrality_%28international_relations%29).

Faced with Russia, Austria-Hungary could spare only one-third of its army to attack Serbia. After suffering heavy losses, the Austrians briefly occupied the Serbian capital, [Belgrade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgrade). For the first ten months of 1915, Austria-Hungary used most of its military reserves to fight Italy. German and Austro-Hungarian diplomats persuaded Bulgaria to join in attacking Serbia. The Austro-Hungarian provinces of [Slovenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenia), Croatia and [Bosnia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_%28region%29) provided troops for Austria-Hungary, invading Serbia as well as fighting Russia and Italy. Montenegro allied itself with Serbia. Serbia was conquered in a little more than a month, as the Central Powers, now including Bulgaria, sent in 600,000 troops. The Serbian army, fighting on two fronts and facing certain defeat, retreated into northern [Albania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principality_of_Albania) (which they had invaded at the beginning of the war). The Serbs suffered defeat in the [Battle of Kosovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Kosovo_%281915%29).

Italy had been allied with the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires since 1882 as part of the [Triple Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Alliance_%281882%29). However, the nation had its own designs on Austrian territory in [Trentino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trentino%22%20%5Co%20%22Trentino),[Istria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istria%22%20%5Co%20%22Istria), and [Dalmatia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatia). Rome had a secret 1902 pact with France, effectively nullifying its alliance.[[74]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-73) At the start of hostilities, Italy refused to commit troops, arguing that the Triple Alliance was defensive and that Austria–Hungary was an aggressor. The Austro-Hungarian government began negotiations to secure Italian neutrality, offering the French colony of Tunisia in return. The Allies made a counter-offer in which Italy would receive the [Southern Tyrol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trentino-Alto_Adige/S%C3%BCdtirol), [Julian March](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_March) and territory on the [Dalmatian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatia) coast after the defeat of Austria-Hungary. This was formalised by the [Treaty of London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_London_%281915%29). Further encouraged by the Allied invasion of Turkey in April 1915, Italy joined the Triple Entente and declared war on Austria-Hungary on 23 May. Fifteen months later Italy declared war on Germany.

Romania had been allied with the Central Powers since 1882. When the war began it declared its neutrality, arguing that because Austria-Hungary had itself declared war on Serbia, Romania was under no obligation to join the war. When the Entente Powers promised Romania large territories of eastern Hungary ([Transylvania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transylvania) and [Banat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banat)) that had a large Romanian population in exchange for Romania's declaring war on the Central Powers, the Romanian government renounced its neutrality, and on 27 August 1916 the Romanian Army [launched an attack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Transylvania) against Austria-Hungary, with limited Russian support.

Dissatisfaction with the Russian government's conduct of the war grew. [Empress Alexandra's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_Feodorovna_%28Alix_of_Hesse%29) increasingly incompetent rule drew protests and resulted in the murder of her favorite, [Rasputin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Rasputin), at the end of 1916. In March 1917, demonstrations in [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg) culminated in the abdication of [Tsar Nicholas II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_II_of_Russia) and the appointment of a weak [Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government) which shared power with the [Petrograd Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrograd_Soviet) socialists. Discontent and the weaknesses of the Provisional Government led to a rise in popularity of the [Bolshevik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) Party, led by [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin), which demanded an immediate end to the war. The [successful armed uprising by the Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution) of November was followed in December by an armistice and negotiations with Germany. At first the Bolsheviks refused the German terms, but when German troops began marching across the Ukraine unopposed, the new government acceded to the [Treaty of Brest-Litovsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Brest-Litovsk) on 3 March 1918. The treaty ceded vast territories, including Finland, the [Baltic provinces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_states), parts of Poland and Ukraine to the Central Powers.

In December, the Central Powers signed an armistice with Russia. This released large numbers of German troops for use in the west. With German reinforcements and new American troops pouring in, the outcome was to be decided on the Western Front.

At the outbreak of the war the United States pursued a policy of [non-intervention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-intervention), avoiding conflict while trying to broker a peace. When a German U-boat [sank the British liner RMS *Lusitania*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinking_of_the_RMS_Lusitania) on 7 May 1915 with 128 Americans among the dead, President [Woodrow Wilson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodrow_Wilson) insisted that "America is too proud to fight" but demanded an end to attacks on passenger ships. Germany complied. Wilson unsuccessfully tried to mediate a settlement. However, he also repeatedly warned that the U.S.A. would not tolerate unrestricted submarine warfare, in violation of international law. In January 1917, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, realizing it would mean American entry. The German Foreign Minister, in the [Zimmermann Telegram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimmermann_Telegram), invited Mexico to join the war as Germany's ally against the United States. In return, the Germans would finance Mexico's war and help it recover the territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Wilson released the Zimmerman note to the public, and Americans saw it as *casus belli*—a cause for war. Wilson called on antiwar elements to end all wars, by winning this one and eliminating militarism from the globe. Wilson called for war on Germany, which the [U.S. Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Congress) [declared on 6 April 1917](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_declaration_of_war_on_Germany_%281917%29).

The United States was never formally a member of the Allies but became a self-styled "Associated Power". The United States had a small army, but, after the passage of the [Selective Service Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selective_Service_Act_of_1917), it drafted 2.8 million men,[[102]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-101) and by summer 1918 was sending 10,000 fresh soldiers to France every day.

In 1917, Emperor [Charles I of Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_I_of_Austria) secretly attempted separate peace negotiations with Clemenceau, with his wife's brother [Sixtus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Sixtus_of_Bourbon-Parma%22%20%5Co%20%22Prince%20Sixtus%20of%20Bourbon-Parma) in Belgium as an intermediary, without the knowledge of Germany. When the negotiations failed, his attempt was revealed to Germany, resulting in a diplomatic catastrophe.

Operation Marne was launched on 15 July, but the [Hundred Days Offensive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred_Days_Offensive), marked the first successful Allied offensive of the war and by 20 July the Germans were back across the Marne at their Kaiserschlacht starting lines, having achieved nothing. Following this last phase of the war in the West, the German Army never regained the initiative. German casualties between March and April 1918 were 270,000, including many highly trained [storm troopers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stormtrooper). Meanwhile, Germany was falling apart at home. [Anti-war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-war) marches became frequent and morale in the army fell. Industrial output was 53 percent of 1913 levels.

In the late spring of 1918, three new states were formed in the [South Caucasus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Caucasus): the [Democratic Republic of Armenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Armenia), the[Azerbaijan Democratic Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azerbaijan_Democratic_Republic), and the [Democratic Republic of Georgia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Georgia), which declared their independence from the Russian Empire.

The Allied counteroffensive, known as the Hundred Days Offensive, began on 8 August 1918. The [Battle of Amiens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Amiens_%281918%29) developed with British, French, Australian and Canadian troops. It was a massive victory and crushing for Germany.

When Bulgaria signed a separate armistice on 29 September, the Allies gained control of Serbia and Greece. The collapse of the Balkans meant that Germany was about to lose its main supplies of oil and food. Its reserves had been used up, even as U.S. troops kept arriving at the rate of 10,000 per day. Having suffered over 6 million casualties, Germany moved towards peace. [Prince Maximilian of Baden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Maximilian_of_Baden) took charge of a new government as Chancellor of Germany to negotiate with the Allies. Telegraphic negotiations with President Wilson began immediately, in the vain hope that he would offer better terms than the British and French. Instead Wilson demanded the abdication of the Kaiser. There was no resistance when the [Social Democrat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_of_Germany) [Philipp Scheidemann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Scheidemann) on 9 November declared Germany to be a republic. Imperial Germany was dead; a new Germany had been born: the [Weimar Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar_Republic).[[130]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-129)

On 24 October, the Italians began a push which rapidly recovered territory lost after the [Battle of Caporetto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Caporetto). This culminated in the [Battle of Vittorio Veneto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Vittorio_Veneto), which marked the end of the Austro-Hungarian Army as an effective fighting force. The offensive also triggered the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The [Armistice with Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_of_Villa_Giusti) was signed in the Villa Giusti, near [Padua](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padua), on 3 November. Austria and Hungary signed separate armistices following the overthrow of the [Habsburg Monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habsburg_Monarchy).

Following the outbreak of the [German Revolution of 1918–1919](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Revolution_of_1918%E2%80%931919), a republic was proclaimed on 9 November. The [Kaiser](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser) fled to the Netherlands. On 11 November an[armistice with Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_with_Germany) was signed in a railroad carriage at [Compiègne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compi%C3%A8gne%22%20%5Co%20%22Compi%C3%A8gne). At 11 am on 11 November 1918—"the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month"—a ceasefire came into effect. Opposing armies on the Western Front began to withdraw from their positions.

**Allied superiority and the stab-in-the-back legend, November 1918**

In November 1918 the Allies had ample supplies of men and [material](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Materiel) to invade Germany. Yet at the time of the armistice, no Allied force had crossed the German frontier; the Western Front was still almost 900 mi (1,400 km) from Berlin; and the Kaiser's armies had retreated from the battlefield in good order. These factors enabled Hindenburg and other senior German leaders to spread the story that their armies had not really been defeated. This resulted in the [stab-in-the-back legend](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stab-in-the-back_legend), which attributed Germany's defeat not to its inability to continue fighting), but to the public's failure to respond to its "patriotic calling" and the supposed intentional sabotage of the war effort, particularly by Jews, Socialists, and Bolsheviks.

A formal state of war between the two sides persisted for another seven months, until the signing of the [Treaty of Versailles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles) with Germany on 28 June 1919. Later treaties with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire were signed.

In northern [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire), the end of October 1918, saw the beginning of the [German Revolution of 1918–1919](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Revolution_of_1918%E2%80%931919). Units of the German Navy refused to set sail for a last, large-scale operation in a war which they saw as good as lost; this initiated the uprsing.

The rise of [Nazism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism) and fascism included a revival of the nationalist spirit and a rejection of many post-war changes. Similarly, the popularity of the [Stab-in-the-back legend](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stab-in-the-back_legend). Many believed the war heralded the end of the world as they had known it because of the high fatalities among a generation of men, the dissolution of governments and empires, and the collapse of capitalism and [imperialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism). Communist and socialist movements around the world drew strength from this theory and enjoyed a new level of popularity. These feelings were most pronounced in areas directly or harshly affected by the war. Out of German discontent with the still controversial [Treaty of Versailles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles), [Adolf Hitler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) was able to gain popularity and power.

The establishment of the modern state of Israel and the roots of the continuing [Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli-Palestinian_Conflict) are partially found in the unstable power dynamics of the Middle East which resulted from World War I.[[251]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-Economist_2005-250) Prior to the end of the war, the [Ottoman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) had maintained a modest level of peace and stability throughout the Middle East.[[252]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-Hooker_1996-251) With the fall of the Ottoman government, power vacuums developed and conflicting claims to land and nationhood began to emerge.[[253]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-Muller_2008-252) The political boundaries drawn by the victors of the First World War were quickly imposed, sometimes after only cursory consultation with the local population. In many cases, these continue to be problematic in the 21st-century struggles for [national identity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_identity).

U.S. intervention in the war became deeply unpopular. The [U.S. Senate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Senate) ejected the [Versailles Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Versailles_Treaty) and membership in the [League of Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Nations). Congress passed [laws](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neutrality_Acts_of_1930s) in an attempt to preserve U.S. neutrality in any future conflict. (But, in the period between the [fall of France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_France) and the [attack on Pearl Harbor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_on_Pearl_Harbor), public opinion changed dramatically.)

Poland reemerged as an independent country, after more than a century. As a "minor Entente nation" and the country with the most casualties per capita, the [Kingdom of Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Serbia) and its dynasty became the backbone of the new multinational state, the [Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Serbs%2C_Croats_and_Slovenes) (later renamed [Yugoslavia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslavia)). [Czechoslovakia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovakia), combining the [Kingdom of Bohemia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Bohemia) with parts of the [Kingdom of Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary), became a new nation. Russia became the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and lost Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, which became independent countries. The [Ottoman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) was soon replaced by Turkey and several other countries in the Middle East.

In the British Empire, the war unleashed new forms of nationalism. In Australia and New Zealand the [Battle of Gallipoli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallipoli_Campaign) became known as those nations' "Baptism of Fire". It was the first major war in which the newly established countries fought, and it was one of the first times that Australian troops fought as Australians, not just subjects of the [British Crown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Crown).  [Anzac Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anzac_Day), commemorating the [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_and_New_Zealand_Army_Corps), celebrates this defining moment. After the [Battle of Vimy Ridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Vimy_Ridge), where the Canadian divisions fought together for the first time as a single corps, Canadians began to refer to theirs as a nation "forged from fire.” When Britain declared war in 1914 the dominions were automatically at war; at the conclusion, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were individual signatories of the [Treaty of Versailles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles).[[269]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I#cite_note-268)

Germany, 1923: banknotes had lost so much value that they were used as wallpaper. Millions of middle-class Germans were ruined by [hyperinflation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflation_in_the_Weimar_Republic).