The High Road to the First World War? Europe and the Outcomes of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–14

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The First World War was a seminal event in the chronicles of mankind. The greatest conflagration in military history until then, it generated political and social developments that signalled the end of an era and shaped much of the twentieth century. For the last nine decades countless books and articles have sought the reasons for the occurrence of this titanic conflict. They often cite the system of alliances before the war, and imperialism, nationalism and militarism as its primary underlying causes. Others have focused on the immediate causes of the war, particularly the slide, some referred to it as an ‘accident’, that led to a clash five weeks after it was supposedly sparked by the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.\(^1\) None of these studies deems the Russo-Japanese War a major cause for the outbreak of the First World War, and most of them overlook the earlier clash altogether, treating it at best as a remote colonial war temporarily affecting Russia.\(^2\) Studies on the Russo-Japanese War itself fared no better and for years none of them argued for any causal relations between the two events. This view has changed recently, starting perhaps with a major edited volume on the war entitled: *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero* (2005). The editors maintain in the preface that the modern era of global conflict began with the Russo-Japanese War rather than in 1914.\(^3\) Although they do not argue explicitly for a link between the two conflicts, nor elaborate much on their contention, the intriguing title inspires an inevitable question: in which way did the Russo-Japanese War affect the outbreak of the First World War?

The effect of the Russo-Japanese War on the subsequent Great War, I argue in this chapter, was momentous and far-reaching. It went well
beyond the realm of Russia and was felt in many channels, especially in the diplomatic, military, and psychological domains. The effect was mainly on the power balance of Europe as a whole, and more than anything it corroborates the argument that the outbreak of the First World War was not an ‘accident’ but stemmed from long processes rather than immediate causes. A glance at the state of affairs in Europe before and after the Russo-Japanese War may suffice to illustrate the startling shift this continent underwent. At the beginning of the twentieth century Europe was characterized by a moderately stable political system. For almost a century its major elements (the ‘powers’) maintained a relative unwavering equilibrium despite occasional but limited conflicts between some of them. The continent was stable enough that neither the temporary weakness of a single power nor the overseas colonial conflicts between several of them could jeopardize it. Although the Russo-Japanese clash took place more than 10,000 kilometres away from the European continent, it had momentous repercussions, some immediate and some delayed, on every major power of Europe. The contention of this chapter is that the Russo-Japanese War shook the long stability in Europe and caused the ‘rigidification’ of the two alliance blocks, an armaments race and mutual suspicion, which contributed to, if not shaped, the European road to the Great War.\(^4\)

Their importance notwithstanding, the repercussions of the Russo-Japanese War on Europe did not last long, and therefore were easily ignored by historians in the subsequent decades. The First World War reshaped European politics and geographical borders so drastically that it erased any substantial influence associated with the earlier conflict of 1904–5. When Germany accepted the armistice terms demanded by the Allies on 11 November 1918 the political circumstances of Europe were very different from those at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904. But to a lesser extent Europe of September 1905, when the fighting in Manchuria had ceased, was different from Europe 19 months earlier. These two transformations, despite their difference in length and scale, were not unrelated. They are linked by explicit causal relations, since the short and minor transformation in 1904–5 contained some of the seeds of the later one. This chapter overviews the repercussions of the war on six major European powers during the decade starting in 1904 and analyses their significance in a continental perspective. The Rashomon-like narratives of the powers focus on the road each of them, and the continent as a whole, took towards the First World War.\(^5\)

RUSSIA: THE RETURN TO A WESTWARD ORIENTATION

Russia was the only European power that took an active part in the Russo-Japanese War, and throughout the following decade the fiasco of its defeat became a major factor in its national politics, but also in the politics of the entire continent. Obviously, of all the powers, Russia was affected the most by the war, and its post-war decline had a consequential effect on
the nation at least until the Bolshevik Revolution, if not throughout the entire twentieth century. The Russian navy, for instance, regained its pre-Russo-Japanese War standing only in the 1970s, this time as the navy of the Soviet Union. While its casualties in the fighting on land and sea were relatively light, Russia lost in the campaign two of its three fleets as well as a large quantity of armament and munitions. It also tarnished its military image at home and abroad, and paid a huge economic price for its 19-month mobilization. Still, the most important consequence of the war for Russia was the outbreak of the revolution of 1905. The war was not the only cause, but it served as its main catalyst. While the upheavals in Russia prevented the political system from acting with full force against Japan, the war outside Russia made it difficult to respond effectively to the riots within the empire.

The revolutionary activities did not cease even with the conclusion of the Treaty of Portsmouth in September 1905, which ended the hostilities with Japan. In the end of October all European Russia was paralysed by a general strike, directed in the capital by the first workers' council (soviet). On 30 October the tsar yielded and granted Russia a constitution that promised a legislative Duma (the so-called October Manifesto). This act split the revolutionaries into two camps: the majority were willing to accept the tsar's concessions, whereas a minority continued resistance for several weeks, fighting in the streets of several cities, notably in Moscow, until January 1906. Thereafter, the tsarist regime suppressed the revolutionaries, although the revolutionary spirit, together with many of the causes for the revolution, did not disappear. The Revolution of 1905 signalled a structural weakness in Russia's social and political system in the following decade, and for this reason it is often regarded as one of the precursors of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, which brought down the tsarist regime and installed instead the Soviet Union for seven decades. Critically, the inability of the tsarist regime to cope simultaneously with a foreign enemy and an internal rebellion recurred with even greater intensity in autumn 1914, and led to its downfall three years later. Although the impact of the Revolution of 1905 on the Bolshevik Revolution was indirect and is still a subject of controversy, the outbreak of the former, and the inability of the tsarist regime to fully suppress it, started a snowball that ended only with the abdication of the tsar and the rise to power of the most extreme revolutionary forces.

In regard to Russia's foreign policy, the war with Japan marked a turning point between two orientations. If until 1904 St Petersburg seemed inclined to an eastward orientation of expansion in Asia, after the war it turned westward again, namely to intense involvement in European affairs. Having lost most of its blue-water navy, and having pushed away from the promising lands of Manchuria and Korea, Russia shifted from its one traditional orientation to its other. Obviously, it did not return to the European arena as a victor. The detrimental effect of the war on its confidence in conducting diplomacy in Europe could be
detected already in June 1905, in its policy on the peaceful separation of Norway from Sweden, and more explicitly a month later when it concluded a treaty with Germany in Bjørkø, Finland. Still, Russia did not choose to withdraw into the confines of its empire and stay tranquil until it rearmed itself. Out of several alternatives, that of an alliance with Britain and France was not the most obvious to the tsarist regime, but the lack of coherence that characterized it before the war with Japan was only accentuated in the following years. Indeed, the return to a European orientation, to the Balkans in particular, was not free of challenges. German determination to achieve political hegemony over Europe (so evident during the war), the rapprochement between Britain and France, and the defeat in Manchuria drove Russia into the arms of Britain, its archrival for most of the nineteenth century. Unimaginable before the war, now an accord between the two could consolidate the Russian position in Europe, but in Asia too, as well as facilitate rapprochement with Japan. With the signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente, only two years after the war ended, a new de facto balance of the European powers came into existence, remaining in force until the outbreak of the First World War.

Based on a harsh reality, Russia's diminished military image in German and Austro-Hungarian eyes was another major outcome of the war and a critical factor in establishing its position in European affairs, the Balkans in particular, in the following decade. The link between the war in Asia and the Russian involvement in the Balkans requires some clarification. Before the war, A.J.P. Taylor contended, Russia 'had no ambitions in European Turkey nor interest in the Balkan states, except as neutral buffers versus Austria-Hungary and Germany', and its main concern in Istanbul was free passage in the Bosphorus. This view seems somewhat to underestimate Russian schemes in the region, as it evidently wished to create in the Balkans a series of semi-autonomous satellite states, but from 1897 to 1906 it tended indeed to see the Balkan questions fairly eye-to-eye with Austria-Hungary. The ostensibly harmonious relations between the two powers did not last long. It was the Russo-Japanese War, as several historians have noted, that served as a turning point in their relations. The war, Robert Seton-Watson pointed out, 'diverted Russia's attention from the Near to the Far East', and consequently created a political vacuum the Central Powers could not avoid exploiting.

The Russian defeats in 1905 resulted in gradual escalation of tension in south-east Europe, as they heightened Russian concern for the Black Sea and apprehension of the Central Powers' increased embroilment in the Balkans and the Near East. Austria-Hungary's involvement in the Balkans during the war was partly responsible for retriggering St Petersburg's support for pan-Slavic national aspirations, of the Serbs in particular, setting it on a collision course with Austria-Hungary and its ally Germany. A year after the war Russia's opposition to the Austrian Balkan railroad project showed that it regarded any significant change in
the status quo as a casus belli. In 1908, however, Russian foreign minister Aleksandr Izvolskii gave his approval to the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in return for Austria's support for the revocation of the clauses of the 1878 Berlin Treaty preventing the opening of the Bosphorus to Russia's Black Sea Fleet. This naval prerequisite was indubitably connected to the Russo-Japanese War, since that fleet was the sole survivor of the once mighty Imperial Russian Navy – the world's third largest naval force before the war. Aware of Russia's dwindled power, Austria-Hungary did not hesitate to announce the annexation prematurely, but still in time to force Russia to accept the annexation, and to do so with much humiliation. In March 1909 the tension over the Bosnian question mounted to the brink of war, but a German ultimatum forced Russia to withdraw its support from Serbia.15

The Bosnian Crisis marks the breakdown of the fragile equilibrium that still lingered in south-east Europe. The crisis was settled, but the obvious Russian and Ottoman weakness was a strong stimulus for the irredentist aspirations of the Slavic peoples in the region, to the extent that in 1912 the members of the Balkan League began to act aggressively without consulting their sponsors in St Petersburg. Russia meanwhile wavered, at least fleetingly, between recognition of German pre-eminence and stronger ties with its Anglo-French allies. In 1912, it became hesitant about the latter option, and as it entered a period of economic expansion it began the following year to allocate sizeable budgets for massive modernization of its army and navy, in what became known as the Great Program.16 On the eve of the Great War, Russian decision makers, the tsar in particular, argued Russia's need of Serbia and Romania as a buffer zone to protect its interests in the Black Sea and the Bosphorus, believing that its national status depended on its role as patron in the Balkans. Their anxiety that another withdrawal would lead Russia to 'second place among the powers', as the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov stated, was not unfounded.17 It was directly associated with the Russian experience since the war with Japan: a domestically unstable Russia, they were convinced, could not afford a further series of humiliating retreats and failures caused by its European neighbours.

GERMANY: THE WAR AS A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR A GREATER WAR

Seven years before the Russo-Japanese War the Kaiser Wilhelm II, together with his Secretary of State Bernhard Fürst von Bülow, launched a policy of achieving imperial greatness abroad, and also, as some argued, of staving off conflict at home. By then German production of iron and steel was the greatest in Europe, and ever since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 all had a high regard for the awesome capabilities of its military machine. While the potential threat of the recently unified empire was looming, it remained neutral during the Boer War and rejected
alliances offered by Britain in 1898 and 1901. In 1904–5, however, the Kaiser's geopolitical aspirations reached maturity, and more important they were recognized as such by his neighbours. In this sense the Russo-Japanese War served as a discernible stage in, or even a catalyst to, the rise of German ambitions to become a world power, or at least the hegemonic power on the continent.  

More than any European nation, it was Britain that became aware of the German transition during the early stages of the conflict in Manchuria. It had a good reason to be alert. Traditionally it acted radically against any power striving for hegemony on the continent; Germany was approaching this state, and was also becoming explicitly anti-British. British leaders needed only to pore over the statistics of the two powers to call for caution. Germany, with a population only slightly larger than Britain's in 1870 (39 vs. 31 million), and a lower GDP by far, was now surpassing it in many economic indices, and a few simple extrapolations indicated that in several years the eclipse of power would be complete. As had been foreseen, by 1913 Germany surpassed Britain even in its share of world manufacturing production and the population difference between the two had risen to 19 million (65 vs. 46 million).  

With the conclusion of its Entente Cordiale with France during the early stages of the Russo-Japanese War, Britain delivered the Kaiser's aspirations their first significant blow. Two years earlier Britain had signed its first major alliance of the twentieth century with Japan, aiming mainly at the reinforcement of its position in Asia vis-à-vis Russia. German supporters of naval expansion were not oblivious to the repercussions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance on British naval standing in Europe as against Germany. Back then, however, Britain was still uncertain about the identity of its allies in Europe. Even in late 1901, slightly before Britain concluded its alliance with Japan, Arthur Balfour, a supporter of an alliance with Germany and soon Britain's prime minister, warned that 'the Japanese Treaty, if it ends in war, will bring us into collision with the same opponents as a German alliance, but with a much weaker partner'. Germany, Balfour cautioned, 'should not be squeezed to death between the hammer of Russia and the anvil of France.' In 1904, by contrast, Germany could interpret the conclusion of the Entente Cordiale as nothing but a tremendous blow to its newly gained position in Europe. Thereafter, France was less isolated on land, whereas Britain could concentrate its naval power against Germany.

Berlin was determined to crack the new alliance, focusing on its archrival France. In the following months it monitored constantly French military capabilities and diplomatic firmness, and finally, three weeks after the Japanese victory at the battle of Mukden, it acted. Using as a pretext the declaration of the French foreign minister, Théophile Delcassé, regarding France's intention to seize Moroccan local rights to regulate customs and trade, German leaders ventured to bully France at a time its Russian allies were trapped in the Manchurian quagmire. Wilhelm II's landing at Tangier on 31 March 1905, and the announcement of his support for
Moroccan independence from France, was a reminder of France’s weakness vis-à-vis Germany, but also of German reluctance to give up the geopolitical advantages gained during the Russo-Japanese War. Receiving alarming reports from its military attaché in St Petersburg and its observers in the front, Paris was painfully aware of the Russian weakness exposed in 1904–5. For this reason, the French now felt heavily dependent on their British allies, who less than a year later were willing to rally to France’s support in the Algeciras Conference. Germany as a result faced a humiliating diplomatic defeat and found itself even more isolated than before. Despite the Kaiser’s public blustering, in private he admitted Germany was still unprepared for a continental war and eventually was forced to acknowledge French involvement in Morocco.

After the conclusion of the peace agreement at Portsmouth, and in view of the German pressure in 1905 and the weakened Russian position in Asia, France and Britain felt obliged to bring Russia into their bilateral alliance. From a British perspective, at least, only a few years earlier an alliance with Russia would have been regarded as an impossibility, but not at this stage. In 1907, the three nations formed a triangle of understanding with regard to Germany, thereafter known as the Triple Entente. The road to an all-European war was not irreversible, but on the diplomatic front no significant change occurred in the power balance over the next decade, and no new alignment was formed to divert Europe from a major conflict. Despite its economic and military hegemony Germany was isolated diplomatically. Lacking a large empire overseas and agricultural hinterland it felt the encirclement by Russia, France, and Britain closing in. The war in Manchuria and the subsequent temporary shift in the military balance in Europe provided Germany with a unique opportunity to reverse its prolonged failing diplomacy, which had begun to deteriorate since its last successful diplomatic collaboration in 1895.

In March 1905, Wilhelm II was trying to drive a wedge in the Anglo-French ties by raising a credible threat of war against its western neighbour France. Five months later he turned to his eastern neighbour Russia, this time in an attempt to prize Franco-Russian ties apart. By signing a treaty with Tsar Nicholas II at Bjørkø, Wilhelm believed that the latter could be wooed at a time of debacle abroad and crisis at home. He was momentarily right perhaps, but within a few weeks the treaty was barely worth the paper it was written on.

While Germany was losing in the diplomatic arena during the Russo-Japanese War, German generals did accelerate their plans for war. The prospects for a successful offensive on their western border were probably better in 1905 than on the eve of the First World War. Concluding that Russia could not help France, German strategists planned in 1904–5 an offensive (‘preventive war’) against the latter. Their scheme did not materialize since Wilhelm was still unready mentally for the undertaking. At this stage he probably did not grasp the full consequences of the war and revolution for Russia, but nonetheless he orchestrated the plans, albeit without sufficient coordination. In December 1905, his
strategists completed the most ambitious plan to take over Europe, known as the Schlieffen Plan. Since this notorious plan remained the basis for the German decision to go to war in 1914, the proximity of its completion to the Russo-Japanese War deserves some elaboration.

In two memoranda written in late 1905, Alfred von Schlieffen, the Army Chief of Staff and person behind the plan, concluded that in a future war the decisive theatre would begin in western Europe as the Russian army in eastern Europe was relatively weak and slow to mobilize. Accordingly, he designed a huge encirclement manoeuvre of two main forces (depicted graphically as a hammer and an anvil), whose target was the north of France while avoiding the French fortresses along the border. During the first three or four weeks of this colossal manoeuvre, Germany was to commit only a single army corps, of 'greenhorns and grandfathers', to hold, together with the Austro-Hungarian armies, the Russians at bay.31 Once the French Army was annihilated, the bulk of the German army was to be moved eastward for another gigantic campaign, this time against Russia. In this vein Schlieffen perceived the Russian dispatch of troops to East Asia and their defeats in Manchuria as bettering Germany's chances of taking over France.32 Less than a month later the Kaiser moved a step closer to confrontation by appointing Helmut von Moltke, nephew of the victor of Sedan, to replace the seventy-two-year-old von Schlieffen, believing the latter was a superb strategist but too old to lead the troops effectively should armed conflict break out.

While theoretically Germany reached military superiority in Europe during the Russo-Japanese War, it still hesitated to exploit its temporary advantage and go to war. Nonetheless, the desire of Germany, and to a lesser extent of Austria-Hungary, to maintain its continental advantage gained during 1904–5 was one of the cardinal causes of the war a decade later. These two powers perceived the Russo-Japanese War as a 'window of opportunity' in which they could exploit their momentary hegemony.33 Used in 1905 in regard to France, this Machiavellian concept reappeared in similar fashion in 1909 in regard to Serbia.

Recommending military action against the Serbian armed forces, the German military attaché in Vienna concluded: 'Such a favourable opportunity for disciplining the unruly Serbs will not come again soon.'34 The report surely struck a chord with the Kaiser, who filled the margins of the document with exclamations 'Correct!' As 1914 approached, the consciousness of a rare 'opportunity' for national greatness turned into a mantra.35 In the decade that followed the war in Manchuria, German politicians and military leaders were becoming painfully aware that relative to Russia, their national power was rapidly diminishing and that the 'window' for a military operation against France, Russia, or both was closing fast. To be sure, the Russian economic and military machine was speedily growing, especially in 1912–13, but the issue at stake was perceptions rather than reality.36

The precarious sense that the period of grace starting in 1904 was about to end became, at least on the German and Austrian side, most
acute in 1914, and this sense, I contend, became one of the most decisive undercurrents for war in 1914. To emphasize this point I will further argue that much of the road to the Great War was associated with the changing perceptions of the German leadership regarding the military balance in Europe during and soon after the Russo-Japanese War.37 Needless to say, the German road to war after 1904–5 shows a marked shift in perceptions and grandiose plans, but also in deeds. German attempts to force the dissolution of the Entente in 1905, its ultimatum to Russia during the Bosnia Crisis, and its aggressive policy towards France during the second Moroccan Crisis of 1911 underscore the transformation in German policy to more aggressive diplomacy, as well as an inclination to resort to military means in time of conflict. France, by contrast, looked for a policy of co-existence with Germany from 1906 onward, and during the second Moroccan Crisis was willing to compensate it with a slice of its colonial empire. Germany, however, did not hesitate again to create an artificial war crisis, which was checked by another Anglo-French collaboration. Starting in 1905, dangerous German games with war crises and ultimatums recurred several times, culminating in July 1914: unaware that it had chosen war, Germany's support for Austria was a cardinal immediate cause of the slide into the First World War.

GREAT BRITAIN: FOES IN TRANSITION

As Japan’s closest ally, Britain was one of the few European beneficiaries of the Russo-Japanese War. Although most of the strategic advantages gained from the conflict lasted only a decade, their legacy helped to sustain the integrity of the British Empire in Asia and stabilize its position in Europe a few decades longer.38 During the nineteenth century, British involvement in Asia was matched only by Russia’s expansion. Britain’s victory in the first Opium War against China (1839–42) set the scene for its armed conflict during the second half of the nineteenth century. These were mostly colonial wars fought far from the British Isles against inferior forces, in Burma, India, New Zealand and the Near East. Twice it cooperated with France: during the Crimean War against Russia in 1853–56, supporting the Ottoman regime, and during the second Opium War with China (1856–60) which ended with the Treaty of Peking, earning Britain indemnities and concessions on Chinese soil. In Europe, however, Britain kept itself in ‘splendid isolation’ throughout the entire period and signed no alliances, while growing and expanding its control elsewhere to nearly a quarter of the world’s lands and population.

The turn of the century signalled the beginning of an evident decline in the British empire. Facing growing competition from the tightening Franco-Russian alliance in Africa and Asia, being challenged by the continental rise of Germany, and having engaged in the Boer War, Britain found itself antagonized and isolated. Even at sea Britain’s undoubted superiority endured some constraints. The naval race against France and
Russia during the 1890s placed a heavy burden on Britain's budget, leading to doubts about the ability to further sustain naval hegemony in the form of the costly 'Two Power Standard Plus'. Among several options, Britain chose to abandon its diplomatic isolation and also determined new priorities for the defence of the empire, which rendered East Asia relatively minor in importance. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 after a sixty-three-year reign was perceived as bringing the empire's glory to a close and the old Prime Minister Lord Salisbury resigned after three terms in office. Prior to his resignation in 1902, he concluded the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which allowed Britain to concentrate more warships in the European arena, while backing Japan's effort to prevent Russia from taking over Manchuria and Korea. Although still apprehensive of the Russian territorial appetite in Asia, in Europe London was becoming more concerned by the rising military and economic might of Germany. In April 1904, the newly elected Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, with the support of King Edward VII, went ahead and signed the Entente Cordiale with France, which drew Britain still farther from a conflict with Russia.

Historians tend to disagree as to the extent to which this Anglo-French alliance was originally intended to isolate Germany, since there was nothing in the accord that could be construed as an anti-German measure. In essence, France agreed to British control over Egypt in return for recognition of French hegemony in Morocco. Nonetheless, many in Britain and France expressed relief at the fact that German foreign policy could no longer count on the tension between the two states. From Britain's viewpoint at least, the accord maintained its traditional policy of preventing any single power in Europe from breaking off its vital trade with the continent. Germany was approaching such a position and during the Russo-Japanese War Britain began to react. Thereafter it fully abandoned its lengthy 'splendid isolation' and became involved in the continental quagmire, leading to its fateful participation in the European conflict of 1914, side by side with its new allies.

At the time of the Russo-Japanese War, and especially during the Moroccan Crisis, Britain's policy on Germany was sealed, remaining unchanged for the next decade and then virtually until 1945. The scheme Britain had for Europe began to become clear with the April 1904 signing of the entente. This second alliance Britain concluded within two years was instrumental in its policy on Germany, as Russia at that time was France's ally, but also seemingly weakened by the war in Manchuria and thus much less than the arch-rival Britain had feared. Admittedly, negotiation on the entente had begun before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, and when the alliance was concluded the war's results were still far from evident. Still, the fact that these two colonial powers, Britain and France, overcame their traditional animosity in early 1904 attests how seriously they both viewed the threat posed by Germany. The sudden outbreak of the hostilities in Manchuria accelerated the Anglo-French rapprochement as both were bound by specific clauses of their
respective alliances with the two combatants: the Anglo-Japanese and the Franco-Russian alliances. Threatened by a direct conflict against each other, which neither wanted, the two settled their differences within two months and concluded their accord.

As in Europe, also in East Asia Britain chose a policy of containment. Thus, during the Russo-Japanese War, it 'may have given the impression,' as Ian Nish phrases it carefully, 'of being more a neutral and less an ally' to Japan. This policy was worthwhile at least vis-à-vis Russia, and indeed in less than two years after the conclusion of the war, Britain consolidated an alliance also with St Petersburg, thereby appeasing both its former main rivals. Of the two, the rapprochement with France had the greatest significance. Only a few years earlier Britain had been uncertain about the identity of its allies in Europe, but after the war it no longer considered Russia a threat and with the urging of France, the two concluded the Anglo-Russian Entente in 1907. Once defeated, and no longer the menace to Britain it was earlier, Russia also amended its policy on Britain. Although Russia did not abandon its interests in East Asia, it temporarily retired from an almost century-long wide-ranging border conflict with Britain across Asia (whimsically referred to as 'the Great Game'), and instead turned its focus back to Europe, the Balkans in particular. For both Britain and Russia, and at least for their French ally too, the containment of Germany was the main objective of the 1907 entente. Over a year earlier, Britain's foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, had declared unhesitatingly: 'An entente between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure. If it is necessary to check Germany it could then be done.' Side by side, as the Russo-Japanese War ended, Britain (but not necessarily all of its decision makers) became convinced that in the event of a continental war in Europe it must send troops to support its new ally France. Despite the Anglo-German détente during 1911–14, this decision to intervene was not modified until 2 August 1914.

FRANCE: ADDING A BITTER FOE TO AN ALLIANCE WITH A FAILING ALLEY

Half a century before the Russo-Japanese conflict, France fought alongside Britain against Russia in the Crimean War. The victory of the alliance propelled Emperor Napoleon III to wage more wars against Austria and conduct a military expedition to Mexico. Increasingly isolated in the political arena, France found itself in 1870 declaring war on Prussia, ending in defeat and the ceding of territories that remained in German hands until 1918. In the following decades French international politics was characterized by the quest for alliances against the growing threat of Germany within Europe, accompanied by a colonial competition with the British empire overseas. In two accords, signed in 1892 and 1894, France concluded an alliance with Russia, ensuring that French security would not depend solely on German goodwill. After the turn of the
century the growing fears of German territorial ambitions both in and outside Europe brought France closer to Britain, despite their lingering colonial friction in Africa and Asia.

The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War shocked French politicians and financiers. Whereas the former were anxious about the possibility that France would have to intervene in that remote war, the latter were concerned for their huge investment in Russia. The signing of the Entente Cordiale liberated France from fear of a military collision with Britain, and a year later, while the war in Manchuria was still raging, France began to exploit its new position in Europe. The accord with Britain, together with the consent of Italy and Spain, inspired French confidence it could violate earlier agreements and extend its control over Morocco. German wrath at the act proved this confidence premature. Uncertain still of its newly established British support, the French parliament took a defensive stance and offered a settlement during the Moroccan Crisis. But when Germany pushed for a better position, it was repelled by an international vote in the Algeciras Conference, allowing France to complete its domination of Morocco. The unexpected success resulted in nationalist fervour that demanded a still more aggressive foreign policy and even the restoration of the monarchy. The Quai d’Orsay chose a safer way but its attempts to appease Germany were not successful, as seen in the second Moroccan Crisis and the consequent escalation of tension between the two powers.

France’s diminished position in European affairs after 1904 was due to the rise of German military might, but also to the weakness of Russia, its closest ally since the early 1890s. Aware of the possible linkage between the Russo-German relative power already before the Russo-Japanese War, France urged St Petersburg to limit its military activities in East Asia and concentrate its power in Europe as a counterbalance to Germany’s burgeoning aspirations. Fearing to jeopardize its new ties with Britain, France was in a most difficult position during the voyage of the Baltic Fleet. When they found out the fleet’s destination, French officials asked the Russian government to route it via Cape Horn, thereby avoiding coaling in French ports. Heavily involved in investments in various projects in Russia, France provided its ally with much needed loans in 1906. A year later it entered into the unofficial Triple Entente with Russia and Britain, thereby completing its vision of a countermeasure for German ambitions.

In military terms too, the French strategists did not remain idle during the war, and revised their Plan XV vis-à-vis Germany, completing it in 1906. In the wake of the conflict in Manchuria, France witnessed some deterioration in its strategic relations with Russia, but was able to mend them by 1907. Russian involvement in the Balkans after the war did not please the French government. It was anxious about being trapped in a conflict between Russia and the Central Powers, but not as much as it feared being isolated in a case of a Franco-German confrontation. Its support of Russia and the Serbs was based on a calculated judgment of
its position in respect of its allies and its fears of remaining isolated against Germany, both outcomes of the recent decade. Similarly, France regarded British support as essential for its position in Europe and did as much as possible not to alienate London. On the whole, however, France emerged as a restraining power during 1904–14, especially in the Balkans, although it was by no means willing to break up the alliance with Russia and Britain, not even at the price of a European war.\(^54\) The alliance with Britain was important, but the meagre British army could not save France in case of a German offensive. Therefore, seven years later, on the eve of the Great War, French foreign policy still centred on its shaky alliance with Russia. On the eve of the First World War, France was the target of the main German attack, as planned in 1905. This time, however, France was stronger than ten years earlier, and due to the two alliances it formed and masterminded during and soon after the Russo-Japanese War, it could withstand German aggression and ultimately survive the war.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: THE SWAN SONG OF AN EMPIRE IN DECLINE

The dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary is considered today a major factor in the ‘slide’ to war, and evidently its government was the one to initiate the violence at that stage.\(^55\) At the same time, on the surface at least, this power had little to gain from the Russo-Japanese War. Dominating Central Europe until 1918, but having only a negligible blue-water navy, it had no imperial aspirations in East Asia or any official vision of the desirable outcome of the clash. Nonetheless, in the next decade Austria-Hungary was much affected by the war, and not by chance. In fact, since the mid-nineteenth century Austria was wary of war in its vicinity in which it did not take part. Austrian indecisiveness during the Crimean War, for example, cost it the control over the Danube principalities. In 1873, Austria, by then six years in a dual monarchical union with Hungary, signed peace treaties with both Germany and Russia, and in 1877–8 supported Russia’s war against the Ottomans in return for supporting Vienna’s plans to gain control over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indignant of Russia’s abuse of its promise, and prepared to resort to force, Austria-Hungary was eventually granted a mandate over Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Berlin Congress of 1878. It then signed a secret treaty with Germany against potential Russian aggression, but under German mediation it signed another treaty with Russia temporarily to avert conflicting interests in the Balkans. In 1882, Italy joined the Dual Monarchy and Germany to form the Triple Alliance, which was renewed in 1891, whereas the alliance with Germany and Russia finally crumbled in 1887.

Vienna followed the Russo-Japanese War with much interest, expecting the conflict to reduce some of its tensions with St Petersburg.\(^56\) Nonetheless, the war caused precisely the opposite result, notably in the Balkans, where the diminished status of Russia contributed further to the destabilization of the region. Initially, Russia’s weakness exposed in
Manchuria caused Austria-Hungary to seek rapprochement, leading the two nations to negotiate a 'Promise of Mutual Neutrality' and to sign a secret protocol in 15 October 1904 to maintain the status quo in southeast Europe.\(^{57}\) The appointment of the crafty Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, the former Austrian ambassador to Russia, as the minister of foreign affairs in 1906 increased the tension between Vienna and St Petersburg. Without doubt, Austria-Hungary's growing sense of confidence during the war was one of the causes of the deterioration of its diplomatic relations with Italy, soon resulting in a war scare and in unresolved suspicions and mutual armament during the following decade.\(^{58}\) As with Italy, Austrian confidence did not deter Russia either, which resumed its meddling in the Balkans after the war with Japan even more intensively than before.

Although Russia had earlier expressed its consent, an Austrian move to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 without notifying St Petersburg resulted in a six-month crisis with Russia. An imminent armed clash with Russia was averted through boycotts, threats and reparations, but the successful annexation left the Dual Monarchy and its ally Germany in greater mutual commitment and with a sense of vindication. The Bosnian crisis, Robert Seton-Watson concluded, 'converted the Southern Slav Question and the relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia into an international problem of the first rank', and it remained so throughout the Balkans Wars of 1912–13 until it triggered the outbreak a year later.\(^{59}\) Russia's diminished power, at least in Austro-Hungarian eyes, manifested itself again in 1912, when St Petersburg was unable to prevent the Balkan League from declaring war on Ottoman Empire.\(^{60}\) In 1914, Russia's position in Austria-Hungary, in contrast to its image in Germany, was at its lowest ebb. At the Common Ministerial Council meeting of 19 July, the Austrian decision makers wasted no time at all discussing the prospects of Russian intervention. They thus categorically disregarded the only power that could stop them from vanquishing their Serbian foes.\(^{61}\)

**THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: A CRUMBLING POWER UNDER TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL THREAT**

In 1904, the Ottoman Empire stretched over three continents, with only a small part of it in Europe. Nonetheless, the empire, disparaged by its western neighbours as 'the Sick Man of Europe,' still had much impact on the crucial developments in south-eastern Europe in the decade between the Russo-Japanese War and the outbreak of the First World War. Like its neighbour, Austria-Hungary, it was uninvolved directly in the Russo-Japanese War but much affected by it, and similarly it was a power in decline, suffering from constant conflicts and rebellions of the mix of populations inhabiting its ever-shrinking Balkan territories. The slow Ottoman retreat from Europe began as early as in 1683 and following the Russo-Turkish War, its influence and territories on the continent
dwindled further. In the subsequent years the empire continued to disintegrate. In 1881 Britain occupied Egypt, in 1885 Eastern Rumelia was united with Bulgaria, and in 1898 Crete was put under international control following fighting between Ottoman and Greek units.

The Russo-Japanese War attracted much attention among both the constantly alert high echelon in the capital and junior officers in the provinces, most of them in favour of Japan – a modernizing Asian model but also an unrelenting enemy of their own greatest foe.\textsuperscript{62} During the war, Istanbul retained its neutrality, seeking to prevent the very likely departure of the Black Sea Fleet.\textsuperscript{63} Sultan Abdul Hamid was personally a target of constant international pressure: whereas Russia demanded that he allow the fleet to pass southwards, Britain pressured him to ensure that Russian ships stayed north of the Dardanelles. Recognizing its own weakness, the Sublime Porte sought to avoid the enmity of the powers, Russia in particular. This delicate Ottoman policy resulted in some acts that might be interpreted as beneficial for Russia, rather than maintaining balanced relations with both sides, let alone showing any official liking for the Japanese.\textsuperscript{64} British pressure, however, was fairly effective most of the war, although it did not prevent the passage in July 1904 of two Russian merchant ships, the \textit{Petersburg} and the \textit{Smolensk}, which carried guns and ammunition and were sailing for the shores of Manchuria. In October that year, Japanese envoys in Istanbul, who kept watch on Russian naval movements, offered the sultan a treaty of friendship with Japan, but the Ottoman authorities declined.\textsuperscript{65}

Following the debacle of the Russo-Japanese War, Russia's greater involvement in the Balkans caused much tension in Istanbul. To add to that, the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 was widely rumoured to contain a new plan for the partition of the declining empire. Partly influenced by this rumour and to some extent affected by the Japanese model, a group of junior Ottoman officers in Macedonia made an attempt to settle this vexed question once for all. Known as the Young Turks, the group sparked an armed rising in Resna in July 1908 and a revolt spread throughout the empire.\textsuperscript{66} Soon, the group took power in the capital, leaving the sultan with no alternative but to restore the constitution. This bloodless revolution aroused enthusiasm throughout the empire, particularly among Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek and Armenian revolutionaries. The restoration of the constitutional regime delayed plans to dismember the Ottoman Empire, but neither Austria-Hungary nor Russia was deterred. On 15 September 1908, their foreign ministers agreed on a partition plan: the Dardanelles were to be in the Russian zone, Bulgaria in the Russian sphere of influence, Macedonia and Serbia in the Austrian sphere of influence, and Albania and Greece in the Italian sphere of influence. Two weeks later, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Bulgaria declared its absolute independence.

Eventually, Russian support to pan-Slavic aspirations in the Balkans and the strong Austrian position in the region since the Russo-Japanese
War brought about further losses to the scanty holdings the Ottoman Empire still retained in the region. While Ottoman forces were struggling to repel an Italian invasion of its Tripolitanian provinces (present-day Libya), several Balkan states declared war on Istanbul in October 1912. This first Balkan War soon turned into a debacle for the Ottoman forces and ended in substantial territorial concessions and further decline of the empire. These losses led the Ottoman government in mid-1913 to the conclusion that its military establishment required urgent reforms, and it chose German army officers to supervise them. This development did not bring Istanbul immediately under the German sphere of influence and during the first half of 1914, Ottoman authorities made various overtures to the Entente powers, France in particular. Nonetheless, the traditional fears of becoming ‘Russia's vassal’, strengthened by Russian conduct in the Balkans after 1905, tilted Istanbul towards Berlin. Consequently, during late July and early August 1914, the two powers consolidated their military cooperation, bringing the Ottoman empire to the side of the Central Powers.  

CONCLUSION: THE COLLAPSE OF THE POWER EQUILIBRIUM IN 1904–5 AND THE ROAD TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The Russo-Japanese War was not the main cause of the First World War, and certainly not an immediate trigger of its the outbreak. That said, I argue that the effect of the former conflict on the latter was momentous and far-reaching. Although the Great War, as Paul Kennedy once suggested ironically, ‘offers so much data that conclusions can be drawn from it to suit any a priori hypothesis which contemporary strategists and politicians wish to advance’, recent studies suggest, in fact, there was no one ‘big cause’ of the war in 1914. It resulted from an array of factors and sources, of which some had begun to play a role decades earlier. Among them, the war in Manchuria in 1904–5 appears to be a catalyst, which played a role in shaping and enhancing the geopolitical circumstances that caused the outbreak of the war a decade later. It was, I posit in this chapter, a turning point on the European road to war that accelerated a number of earlier processes. While disturbing the balance of power in Europe, this remote conflict was instrumental in re-creating it, at least temporarily, albeit in a more ‘rigidified’ manner than before.

Starting with the Prussian victories over Denmark, Austria and France in 1864–71, the meteoric military and economic rise of Germany was the prime factor in unbalancing the relative stability Europe that had experienced since the Napoleonic Wars. Nonetheless, in the first fourteen years that followed the retirement of Bismarck in 1890, the evolving system of two alliance blocs was sufficient to keep Europe steady and induce its parties to look for territorial and economic gains outside the continent. As a newcomer to the Age of Imperialism, Germany could not contain its ambitions for long. Even if the Russo-Japanese conflict was to
be avoided, German aspirations for continental hegemony and the fears of it among the other powers would probably lead to a clash sooner or later. In this context, the Russian fiasco of 1904–5 facilitated the consolidation of a new system of two alliances. By 1907 Europe was divided into two blocs: On the one hand a diplomatic alliance (the Triple Entente) of Britain, France, and Russia; on the other hand a defensive alliance (the Triple Alliance) of the Central Powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, and Rumania. The road to an all-European war was not irreversible, yet on the diplomatic front no change occurred over the next several years, and no new alignment was formed to divert Europe from a major conflict. True, the alliances were defensive, but after 1907 the balance between them was much more volatile than before the war, and within several years they shored up the confidence of the powers to the extent they were willing to risk a continental clash.69

Following its final defeats at Mukden and Tsushima in the first half of 1905, Russia was not reduced to a level of negligibility, but it unquestionably became a second-rate power in its own eyes, in its military capabilities, and in its actual capacity to influence others. While Russia lost its former military status, Germany was about to complete a ten-year period of military buildup and during the war it emerged as Europe's supreme military and industrial power. The German rise was not a new phenomenon, but the Russian defeat suddenly highlighted the continental hegemony of Germany. The exposure of Russia's military weakness, financial burden, and internal instability swung the already uneven military balance in Europe still further to Germany's favour. In the next decade the fluctuating balance between these two powers determined the fate of the continent. During 1904–14 this fragile equilibrium was in large measure, as David Herrmann points out, 'the story of Russia's prostration, its subsequent recovery, and the effects of this development upon the strategic situation'.70

The undermining of the power system in Europe during the Russo-Japanese War created among the powers a spiral of reciprocal fear, exacerbated by a series of crises. Starting with the first Moroccan crisis in 1905–6, followed by the Bosnian annexation in 1908, the second Moroccan crisis and the Tripolitian War in 1911, and finally the two Balkan Wars of 1912–13, Europe entered into a mood of a continental crisis. With each crisis, the powers were further engulfed in an increasingly self-fulfilling prophecy regarding the imminent occurrence of a grand clash, named by Wolfgang Mommsen 'the topos of inevitable war'.71 This mood was felt especially in Germany, which experienced a wave of fatalism and collective paranoia during this critical decade, as best exemplified in Bethmann Hollweg's views of the future of his nation. This chancellor of Germany on the eve of the war doubted the need to plant new trees at his estate, since 'in a few years the Russians would be here anyway'.72

Associated originally with extensive industrialism, urban migration, and harsh social policies, after 1904 much of the German fatalism
stemmed from the idea of being ‘encircled’ militarily and diplomatically, mainly by Russia and France, but also by Britain. In turn, this projection of its own aggression made Germany consider a preventive war necessary, as well as just. Such a move could exploit a supposed rare window of opportunity for territorial gains for both Germany and Austria-Hungary, opened by the shift in the power balance in Europe during and after the Russo-Japanese War. Critically, it was the sense of the gradual closure of this imagined window which pushed these two powers into war, at a time when their military advantage was already marginal at best. By then, a war of aggression in Europe – ‘a battle of Germans against the Russo-Gauls for their very existence’ as the Kaiser himself stated in 1912 – seemed a legitimate outlet.73

The Russo-Japanese War also provided much inspiration for the armies that were to clash in the First World War. Despite its distance, the war attracted the attention of all the larger armies and navies, which sent an unprecedented number of observers to the front to record lessons of the fighting. They witnessed a number of large-scale battles, foremost among them the battle of Mukden, the largest battle in military history until then and, unbeknownst to them, a true archetype for the sluggish trench war to be fought on the Western Front ten years later. The war in Manchuria was overwhelming proof for those still in doubt of the importance of firepower as the dominant factor in military combat, but it did not stimulate a dramatic change in tactics or strategy.74 In the naval arena, however, there was some substantial transformation after the war, resulting in a naval race between Britain and Germany.75 The most important outcome in this domain took place in Britain with the launching of a revolutionary class of battleship, HMS Dreadnought, one year after the war and designed using the lessons of the battle of Tsushima. After the commissioning of the Dreadnought in 1906, more than 100 battleships of earlier classes, many of them belonging to the Royal Navy, became outdated and a new naval race commenced, this time chiefly between Britain and Germany.76

European attention to military innovation and performance during the war in Manchuria was followed by a psychological change, too. Thereafter, the political environment in Europe shifted from a mode of peace, and belief in diplomatic means to solve conflict, to an increasingly fierce armament race (although not necessarily fully linear in form), and a conviction that national objectives could be gained only by military means.77 The war between Russia and Japan offered a desirable model of limited conflict.78 Not total war, nor overly costly, especially in human lives, it appeared to contain the capacity to be resolved quite easily around the negotiation table and to result in decisive political gains to the victorious aggressor. The war also seemed to demonstrate that a newcomer of even limited means but with sufficient determination and a well-trained army could defeat a huge but traditional power. War, as such, no longer seemed an impossible option, but a default.
NOTES

1 For partial exceptions, although in none is the link between the two wars the major topic, see Herrmann 1996: passim; Mombauer 2002: 7–8; Rich 2003: 196–206.

2 For a succinct review of these causes and their historiography see Mombauer 2002; Hamilton and Herwig 2004

3 Steinberg et al. 2005: xix–xxi; see also Kowner 2007a.

4 For the use of the term 'rigidification' of the alliance blocs in this period, see Gilbert 1984: 110.

5 This chapter does not offer a separate review in regard to Italy, since this minor power was hardly affected by the Russo-Japanese War in its national conduct during the following decade.

6 The Russian death toll in the war was about 43,000 men, whereas the number of prisoners of war was slightly less than 80,000: see Kowner 2006: 81, 308.


8 On the relation between the soldiers' unrest in the rear and at the front, see Kusber 2007.


10 On the Russian options and policy after the war see Frankel 2007.

11 On the Russo-Japanese rapprochement after the war, see Berton 2007.

12 Taylor 1971: 484.

13 Austria-Hungary's preferred arrangement for the Balkans was similar to the Russian one, but it saw the fragmented and docile states attuned to Vienna rather than to St Petersburg: see Tunstall 2003: 125.


15 On the annexation and the breakdown of the equilibrium in East Europe, see Stevenson 1996: 112–164.

16 The programme was supposed to increase the size of the peacetime army by 40 per cent by 1917: see Lieven 1983: 111.

17 Quoted in Joll 1984: 55.

18 For the argument that German elites provoked the war in 1914 to establish Germany, among other motives, as a world power, see Fischer 1967.

19 By 1903, the Kaiser's 'basic and primary idea', as his later chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg noted, was 'to destroy England's position in the world to the advantage of Germany': cited in Spitzemberg 1960: 428.

20 Whereas in 1880, Britain's share was much greater than Germany's (23 vs. 8 percent), in 1913, the German share became greater (15 vs. 14 percent): Ferguson 2004: 288.

21 On the impact of the war on the Imperial German Navy, see Eberspaecher 2007.


23 For German reports on French military activities during the war, see Raulff 1976: 128.


For the reasons German decision makers preferred peaceful settlement in 1906, see Stevenson 1996: 75.

The Three Power Intervention, together with France and Russia.

On the Treaty of Bjørkø, see McDonald 1992; 77; McLean 2003.

See Kennedy 1988: 325.

On the German plans for a preventive war in 1905, see Moritz 1974.

Showalter 1991: 68.


For earlier references to the German idea of a national ‘window of opportunity’ and its relation to the origins of the war, see Van Evera 1991: 80–86; Herwig 2003a: 186; Seligman 2007.

Cited in Herrmann 1996: 126.

This sentiment can be plainly discerned, for example, in von Moltke’s view, expressed at a meeting with his Austrian counterpart Franz Conrad von Hötzenendorf on 12 May 1914: ‘To wait any longer means a diminishing of our chances; as far as manpower is concerned we cannot enter into a competition with Russia.’ Eight days later, recalled the German Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow, Moltke lectured him that ‘there was no alternative to waging a preventive war in order to defeat the enemy as long as we could still more or less pass the test’. Cited in Geiss 1967: docs. 3, 4; cited in Ferguson 1999: 100. See also Fischer 1967: 164–167.

In another memorandum regarding Russia’s future potential written in 1914, von Moltke estimated that the Russian army would be fully fitted from 1917 onwards, concluding: ‘There cannot be any more serious doubt about the fact that a future war will be about the existence of the German people.’ Cited in Mombauer 2001: 176. For a similar conclusion regarding von Moltke’s view of ‘war now or never’, see Mombauer 2001: 288.

For economic indices on the relative rise of Russia vis-à-vis Germany throughout the period of 1905–14, see Doran and Parson 1980: 957, especially Fig. 3. For the rise in military expenditure in Russia in 1912–13, see Stevenson 1996: 4 (Table 2).

On the post-war negative image of the Russian national character in general and the capabilities of the Russian Army in particular among the British, German, and Austro-Hungarian military authorities, see Herrmann 1996: 93–95.

On the repercussions of the war for British policy, particularly in Asia, see Otte 2007.


On British awareness of the German challenge in 1902, see Monger 1963: 82.

On the link between the two accords Britain concluded in 1902–4, see Edwards 1957: 19–27.


I.e., Britain informed Japan about the movements of Russian ships and was instrumental in pressuring Istanbul to prevent the Black Sea Fleet from sailing through the Bosphorus.
44 Nish 1966: 292.
45 Monger 1963; passim; Gooch 1974: 171, 175.
46 For British attitudes to Japan in 1907, see Nish 1966: 363–364.
47 On the Russian interest and activities in East Asia soon after the Russo-Japanese War, see Nish 1972: 19–20; Berton 2007, passim.
50 On the French attitude to Russia and Japan during the war, see Beillevaire 2007: 124–131.
51 For the French views on this crucial alliance, see Kennan 1984.
53 On the deterioration of Franco-Russian relations at this stage, see Kiesling 2003: 244.
54 Keiger 1983: 89.
55 See, for example, Williamson 1991: 1, 6.
56 For the coverage of the war in the Austrian media, see Lehner 2007.
58 See Behnen 1985: 100.
59 Seton-Watson 1926: 36.
60 Similarly, Russia's secondary role in the Triple Entente did not prompt its two allies to lend support to St Petersburg's position in this turbulent region during the entire period until the Great War. On Russian diplomatic weakness after the war and Russian policy in the Balkans, see McDonald 1992, 2005.
61 Kann 1971: 12.
62 On Ottoman admiration for Japan during the war see Akmese 2005: 28–31, 72–79; Worringer 2006.
63 The Ottoman insistence on preventing the passage of the fleet was in line with an agreement signed with Russia in 1891, barring the passage through the Bosphorus of warships carrying armaments or munitions.
64 On Ottoman policy during the war, see Akarca 2007.
66 On the Young Turks and their revolution, see Turfan 2000; Hanioglu 2001.
68 Kennedy 1984: 37.
69 While none of the decisions for war was mandated by treaty obligations, as Hamilton and Herwig 2004: 10, note, the treaties did form a mindset of escalation to war. For an argument against the alliance system as a cause for the war, see Herwig 2003: 467–8.
70 Herrmann 1996: 7.
71 Mommsen 1981.
72 Cited in Berghahn 1973: 186.
73 Cited in Fischer 1975: 161.
74 On the military lessons of the war see Herrmann 1996: 87–95; Sheffy 2007.
75 On the repercussions of the war on the naval arena, see Kownar 2007b.

None of the belligerents in the Great War appeared, at least initially, to desire a general European war in which Britain was to join the war against the Central Powers. On the supposed preferences of the Great Powers on the eve of the war in 1914, see Levy 1991: 237.