

Revolutions

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Summary

This article surveys the various movements toward social, national, and political revolution that emerged during and in the wake of World War I. The Russian revolutions of 1917 serve as the first case study, followed by the mutinies in France, and the collapse of monarchies in Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary, and Germany. Events in Italy and Greece show the danger of revolution even among the victors. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of modern Turkey, alongside French and British mandates, helped create the basis for the contemporary conflicts in the Middle East. The concluding remarks attempt to show the factors favoring stability over revolution by comparing the differences between specific cases.

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World War I as a Force for Revolution

The First World War began as a struggle between European powers that grew to encompass much of the wider world. Over a span of fifty-two months, from August 1914 to November 1918, some 65 million men were mobilized; of those, over 8 million were killed and another 21 million wounded.¹ The war, and the peace treaties that ended it, redrew the map of Europe and brought an end to four [empires](#) in [Russia](#), [Germany](#), [Austria-Hungary](#), and the [Middle East \(Ottoman\)](#). At the same time, whole societies were in turmoil. In Germany sailors

and soldiers mutinied, while massive strikes broke out, ranging from Berlin to Vienna, from Paris to Brussels to Glasgow, and stretching across the Atlantic to Chicago, San Francisco, and [Canada](#).²

In 1914, only [France](#) and the new government in [Portugal](#) were republics, while [Britain](#) and [Italy](#) had parliamentary governments. The other major powers across Europe were monarchies of one kind or another. In contrast, by 1919, eleven states filled the territories previously controlled by the Romanovs, the Habsburgs, and the Hohenzollerns. The former areas of the Ottoman Empire were soon placed under mandates by Britain and France; the remaining Turkish heartland forged the new nation of Turkey through war. In Europe, the newly formed nations and truncated surviving states appeared to be on the path to democracy, apart from [Vladimir Lenin's \(1870-1924\)](#) Communist Russia and [Yugoslavia](#) (or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as it was known until 1929), which emerged as a monarchy. One more monarchy would appear during the interwar period, [Albania](#), while other states devolved from fragile democracies into reactionary dictatorships.

Revolutionary movements during World War I took a number of different forms, but were united by the common desire to overthrow an existing [government](#) or social order in favor of a wholly new system or set of relationships. One can identify political revolutions that created new governments, national revolutions that created, liberated, or reshaped existing countries, and social or cultural revolutions that fundamentally transformed social and cultural relationships. National and political revolutions may occur quickly and violently to create new nations and political structures, while social and cultural revolutions can more slowly transform entire societies.

In studying revolutionary movements, scholars have used differing criteria to determine what events constitute a "revolution" and why revolutions happen. A "first generation" of revolutionary theory centered around a "natural history of revolutions" developed in the 1920s and 1930s. This approach utilized detailed descriptions of the stages of revolutions, but did not offer an explanatory model of how and why revolutions occurred. A second wave of more general theories emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, as scholars attempted to apply social psychology models to the problem of revolutions.³ According to this method, one way of defining "revolution" is "a rapid, fundamental and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, government activity, and policies."⁴ A more nuanced attempt at defining a revolution can be drawn from Chalmers Johnson, who described a revolution as violence intended to achieve a change of government or regime, or to transform the social and cultural values of a society.⁵

In the 1970s, a “third generation” emerged through the work of Charles Tilly and Theda Skocpol, among others. These scholars analyzed the social and political structures, class-based movements, and revolutionary ideologies behind revolutions. This type of analysis could include the “great revolutions” in England (1640/1688), France (1789), Russia (1917), and China (1949), but in large measure ignored non-class-based revolutionary ideologies, ethnic or religious motivations for revolution, competition between elite groups, and intra-class cooperation.

During the 1980s and 1990s, new studies emerged that analyzed anti-colonial movements, guerilla wars, popular mobilizations, and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These smaller-scale revolutionary movements challenged the prevailing structural basis of the third generation theory, and led to calls for an extension and revision of our understanding of revolution theory toward an emerging “fourth generation.”⁶ By the end of the 20th century, two major studies listed hundreds of events as “revolutionary” in their composition. Yet these movements still had discernible common traits, such as: “(a) efforts to change the political regime that draw on a competing vision (or visions) of a just order, (b) a notable degree of informal or formal mass mobilization, and (c) efforts to force change through noninstitutionalized actions such as mass demonstrations, protests, strikes, or violence.”⁷

In working to synthesize a definition of revolutionary movements that could include these diverse case studies and examples, Jack Goldstone suggested the following definition of revolution: “an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities.”⁸ The emphasis here is on the concerted effort to transform existing institutions and challenge the prevailing political authority, which distinguishes a revolution from military coups, revolts or rebellions that only result in a reshuffling of power or merely challenge the existing political authority. Thus, a fourth generation theory would recognize that political stability is inherently fragile. It focuses on the factors and conditions that cause instability. To allow for a fuller understanding of revolutionary movements, according to Goldstone, scholars “must take account of the plasticity of elite and popular alignments, of the processes of revolutionary mobilization and leadership, and of the variable goals and outcomes of revolutionary actors and events.”⁹

Using this new fourth generation model, scholars can set a revolution apart from other challenges to power such as civil wars, military coups, or smaller-scale rebellions or insurrections. A revolution is perceived to completely transform economic, social, or political

institutions, and need not necessarily be violent. Revolutions can also fail, even after initial victories that prove to be temporary or widespread support that fails to secure power in an enduring sense. Revolutions are typically the result of widespread frustration with the existing social or political order, particularly during and after the turmoil of war.

When examining the consequences of World War I, one of the questions that is most striking revolves around the issue of how, in most cases, order and stability was restored and extended revolutionary change averted. More pointedly, why did some countries tip over into a socialist or communist revolution, at least regionally, while others did not? What factors contributed to the forces of revolution and counterrevolution in European countries, both among the victorious as well as the defeated powers? The revolutionary movements generated by the war gave rise to a communist regime in Russia. In France, [Bulgaria](#), Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy, [Greece](#), and Turkey, revolutionary pressures threatened to topple regimes, but in each case, moderate, conservative, or reactionary forces prevailed in the revolutionary struggle, even in cases where those forces still had political demands and aspirations of their own. This article will examine the revolutionary movements that appeared in these countries as a consequence of the war. It will offer some comparative conclusions for the relative success or failure of nation-states and the revolutionary waves that affected them.

Russia

By January 1917, the tsar's government witnessed the most vocal [demonstrations since 1905](#), with tensions growing over the next several weeks. By February 1917, military commanders in Russia concluded that morale among their troops had collapsed and the rates of desertion made entire units unreliable. In Moscow and Petrograd, the home front was descending into outright rebellion. In March 1917, a series of bread riots exploded into mass revolt, as police and army forces joined workers and peasants in the streets, demanding an end to the war and to tsarist rule. The tsar's government had failed to provide for its people, and [Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia \(1868-1918\)](#) had no choice but to abdicate. A [Provisional Government](#) of civil servants and moderates was formed, and they pursued a path toward constitutional democracy. The Provisional Government's real weakness was its leaders' refusal to end the war, instead continuing to fight. Even at this early stage, workers' councils, or Soviets, composed of workers and sailors formed in Petrograd, called for an immediate end to the war, challenging the authority of the new government. Similar Soviets sprang up within the Russian army, in other cities and towns, and even among the peasantry.

Within the Provisional Government, [Alexander Kerensky \(1881-1970\)](#) played a unique role. As leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) and a member of the Petrograd Soviet,

Kerensky could provide some unity and transparency, even with the military's instability as Russian forces attempted to reorganize for a major offensive to begin in July 1917. Despite some limited initial success, desertions plagued Russian forces, and the notorious "Order Number One"¹⁰ made it impossible to sustain forward momentum in the face of heavy casualties. A German counterattack to the north fully broke the Russian defenses, as entire units deserted and fled the pursuing German forces. By September 1917, the Germans had taken the city of Riga, further discrediting the Provisional Government. By October 1917 (November 1917 by the western calendar), Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin now believed the time was right to strike the revolutionary blow and deliver three key demands to the Russian people: Peace, Land, and Bread. The successful "[October Revolution](#)" swept the Bolsheviks into power as a regime committed to creating a communist dictatorship and ending Russia's involvement in the war. In just eight months, Russia had transitioned from tsarist rule to a provisional limited constitutional government, then to a full-scale communist revolution. Lenin sought an armistice with Germany immediately, and peace negotiations began at Brest-Litovsk in December 1917.¹¹

As 1918 began, it was clear that Russia was no longer a belligerent power. German peace terms for Russia were harsh, demanding the former areas of [Poland](#) and retaining influence in the Baltic states. German goals for territorial expansion overlapped with national independence movements that emerged in former Russian provinces. Initially, [Leon Trotsky \(1879-1940\)](#), the Bolshevik's representative at Brest-Litovsk, bargained for time, hoping that further revolutionary movements would break out in Berlin and Vienna. To encourage such an outcome, some 2 million Russian-held [prisoners of war](#) would be released, most of whom were Austro-Hungarian – including the significant future politicians [Otto Bauer \(1881-1938\)](#), the Austrian socialist leader; [Béla Kun \(1886\)](#), the Hungarian communist revolutionary; and [Josip Broz Tito \(1892-1980\)](#), who would go on to rule over communist Yugoslavia.¹² In response, German forces simply invaded further into Russian territory virtually unopposed, taking Finland, parts of western Russia, and the [Ukraine](#). When the Bolsheviks finally admitted defeat in March 1918, German demands were punishing. Under the terms of the [Treaty of Brest-Litovsk](#) (3 March 1918), the Bolsheviks sacrificed [Finland](#), [Estonia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Latvia](#), Ukraine, Belarus, and the Polish lands, territories which held "90 per cent of Russia's coal resources, 50 per cent of her heavy industry, and 30 per cent of her population," and paid an indemnity of 6 billion marks.¹³

Once the terms of the Treaty became known, Russia erupted into [civil war](#), as rival political parties and former army commanders pursued separate agendas to challenge the Bolsheviks. Trotsky was responsible for creating a new [Red Army](#), loyal to the Bolsheviks, while most of the former Russian generals joined the anti-Bolshevik "White" armies. The British and the

French deployed some 24,000 men to secure the northern Russian ports of Murmansk and Archangel, while some 40,000 former Austro-Hungarian Czech soldiers interned in Siberia and eager to fight for Czech independence revolted against their captors and took control of the trans-Siberian railroad. Attempting to support the Czechs, American President [Woodrow Wilson \(1856-1924\)](#) proposed a force of American and Japanese troops to land at Vladivostok. The Japanese took full advantage of the situation, sending 72,000 troops with the intention of solidifying their holdings in China, while American forces numbered roughly 7,000.¹⁴

While the Red Army faced a number of enemies and internal challenges, its main strength was the disunity of its opponents. None of the various anti-Bolshevik “White” factions shared a common strategy or objectives. The Bolsheviks were able to engage multiple disparate opponents. In order to prevent any counterrevolutionary unity, Lenin ordered the execution of the tsar and his family in July 1918. During the first months of the [Russian Civil War \(1918-1921\)](#), both the Germans and the Allies fought against the Red Army and supported the White forces.¹⁵ The Bolsheviks proclaimed a new “Soviet Union” had succeeded the Russian empire and committed their forces to crushing any opposition to communist rule.

After the armistice of November 1918, the ensuing [Paris Peace Conference](#) negotiations forced the Germans to relinquish nearly all of their gains from Brest-Litovsk, sacrificing territory to recreate a Polish state as well as ceding territory to newly created [Czechoslovakia](#). The Allies also rejected German influence in Finland and the Baltic states (under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk). Emboldened by the continuing civil war in Russia, Polish leader [Jozef Pilsudski \(1867-1935\)](#) launched a [series of attacks against the Soviet Union](#), beginning in April 1919 and quickly exploiting their early successes. Pilsudski dreamed of restoring the lost Polish empire, which had once controlled much of western Russia. Polish forces fared well for a time, taking Vilna in April 1919, Minsk in August 1919, and later Kiev in May 1920. In June 1920, Red Army forces mobilized against the Poles, retaking Kiev and forcing the Poles to retreat back across their own border. By August 1920, Red Army forces threatened Warsaw. Lenin hoped the Red Army’s successes would inspire communist revolutions in western Europe. However, Pilsudski’s gamble had not yet been lost. In a surprise counterattack (planned with French advisors), Polish forces broke through Soviet lines, provoking a panicked retreat by Soviet troops. Soon, however, both sides were exhausted after seven months of intense fighting and concluded a ceasefire in November 1920. Poland would gain new territory at the expense of the Soviets, and the new eastern border was established some 400 to 500 kilometers east of Warsaw with the [Peace of Riga](#) (18 March 1921).¹⁶

During the course of the Russian Civil War, some 2 million people died as a result of fighting,

pogroms, and executions. Millions more died from disease, famine, brutality, and dislocation in the wake of the destruction.¹⁷ Overall, as many as 10 million people perished during the revolutionary chaos from 1918 to 1921, on top of the 1.7 million Russian soldiers who died during the Russian phase of World War I.¹⁸ Despite their challenges, the Bolsheviks survived to reestablish control over the lands of the former Russian empire, save for those lost to Poland, Czechoslovakia, [Romania](#), and the Baltic states. The Soviet Union was declared a federal union in 1922, as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which now included [Georgia](#), [Russo-Armenia](#), and [Azerbaijan](#). Smaller regions, such as Uzbekistan, Turkestan, and Kazakhstan, would come into the Soviet orbit by 1925.¹⁹

France

Morale among French forces was already low by late 1916, ground down by the losses at [Verdun](#) during the German assaults on the system of French fortresses in the region. German General [Erich von Falkenhayn \(1861-1922\)](#) had adopted a strategy designed to “bleed the French white” through a war of attrition. The basis for this alleged strategy were figures from the German High Command’s Intelligence Division, which suggested that France would have significantly fewer troops available during 1916. Should losses continue at the rate the French suffered in 1914-1915, the French army could potentially be on the verge of collapse by fall 1916. Falkenhayn’s plan had been to strike at Verdun, a site of symbolic and strategic importance to the French. The German attack began on 21 February 1916, with mass [artillery](#) bombardments, overwhelming numbers of German troops, [aircraft](#), [poison gas](#), [grenades](#), and [flamethrowers](#).²⁰

By the time the German assault at Verdun ended, with neither side able to claim victory, just over three-quarters of French troops (259 regiments of 330) had fought at Verdun.²¹ When the fighting at Verdun finally ended on 18 December 1916, the frontlines had moved barely one-half mile. French casualties totaled 377,000 men, while the Germans lost 337,000 over ten months of fighting.²² Censored [letters](#) from French soldiers revealed that by late 1916 troops were alarmed by the Romanian defeat, political instability in Paris, and concerns about conditions on the home front. These fears exacerbated the soldiers’ daily struggles with survival in the trenches, cancelled leave, and poor quality food. Formal reports indicated that French soldiers now considered “that the costs of war greatly exceeded any potential gains,” and many demanded an immediate end to the war. French morale was at its lowest point since 1914.²³

[Robert Nivelle \(1856-1924\)](#) was promoted by presidential decree on 13 December 1916 to

commander of the armies of northern and northeastern France, despite the fact that he had only six months of experience as an army commander and had begun the war as a colonel in the artillery. Yet his achievements at Verdun and the personal support of then Commander in Chief [Joseph Joffre \(1852-1931\)](#) helped to propel him into the assignment.²⁴ Nivelle planned a massive Allied offensive for spring 1917, beginning with a large British offensive as a diversion, to be followed by a central French assault. From the outset, the plan was overly ambitious, setting bold goals for its initial objectives, without factoring in the geography or allowing for flexibility in achieving them. Nivelle's faith in the offensive was unrealistic – [Philippe Pétain \(1856-1951\)](#), hero of Verdun, was especially critical – and German withdrawals to the Hindenburg Line in February and March 1917 consolidated their lines and gave them a stronger position to defend.²⁵ Nivelle's confidence and bravado, however, was contagious and many soldiers fell prey to the belief that a significant breakthrough might indeed be possible. [Leonard Smith](#)'s study of the 5^e Infantry Division showed that some troops were rotated out of the trenches for specialized training to exploit such breaks in enemy lines.²⁶

The main French offensive began on 16 April 1917 and almost immediately fell short of Nivelle's expectations. German forces had a clear warning of the coming attack through aerial reconnaissance. They had also captured a sergeant carrying orders that included summaries of the French attack; despite learning of this setback, Nivelle refused to revise his strategy.²⁷ The planned bombardment by French artillery failed to penetrate the "defense-in-depth" of multiple German lines. A key part of Nivelle's plan called for charging up the steep slope of the Chemin des Dames ridge against entrenched German forces, crossing the wide Aisne and smaller Ailette rivers and yet another ridge – in the span of two days. Reality told a different story: in four days, the French captured 20,000 prisoners and 147 guns. Yet over those same four days, French casualties numbered 118,000 (40,000 on the first day), and failed to capture the Chemin des Dames. Despite these setbacks, Nivelle continued to pour more men into an increasingly desperate situation. French soldiers did take part of the Chemin des Dames by 5 May 1917 – day one's objective – after twenty days of fighting. The battle was called off on 9 May 1917; total gains for the French were less than two miles. The cost of Nivelle's failed offensive was 187,000 French casualties, against 103,000 for the Germans.²⁸

The crisis of French morale that Joffre had ignored in fall 1916 broke out in the face of massive offensive disasters. On only the second day of the battle, troops refused to obey orders to advance. The ensuing mutinies, although troop commanders scarcely used the term at the time – preferring instead the phrase "collective acts of indiscipline" – soon spread to

nearly half the French frontline forces.²⁹ The standard study by Guy Pedroncini (1967) identified five phases of the mutinies.³⁰ The first, 16 April to 15 May 1917, coincided with the first month of the Chemin des Dames offensive. During the attack and through its conclusion, twenty-six separate incidents were reported, but most were confined to small numbers of soldiers. Philippe Pétain was brought in to replace Nivelle and restore order to French forces between May and October 1917. The scale of the mutinies expanded, but they were primarily confined to May and June 1917.

Pedroncini's second phase, from 16 to 31 May 1917, chronicled forty-six incidents, some of which involved entire divisions, including units that had not fought at Chemin des Dames at all. A third and most volatile phase lasted from 1 to 6 June 1917, characterized by violence and threats to end the war by desertion and flight to Paris. These two phases were in reaction to continued small-scale attacks to solidify French positions after the formal offensive was called off. In this period, 30,000 to 40,000 French soldiers were actively mutinous.³¹ Phase four (7 to 30 June 1917) revealed the successful effects of Pétain's reforms, which included addressing the atrocious conditions in the trenches and reinstating a revised leave policy. Judicial courts-martial of targeted key offenders defused the most outspoken resistance. A final phase allowed for the airing of lingering grievances and a gradual return to order, as long as Pétain kept his soldiers' losses minimal through limited engagements. The French army as a whole conducted no further major offensives in 1917.³²

Pedroncini's study, corroborated by the work of Leonard Smith, revealed that while judicial punishment and courts-martial were important in restoring order and the prestige of the French army, in many cases Pétain's moderation in the use of capital punishment eased soldiers' burdens. Of the 554 death sentences meted out to French soldiers, only forty-nine were executed.³³ Instead of killing masses of insubordinate men, courts-martial identified leaders, who were then punished and served as an example of [military justice](#) at its highest level. Addressing the legitimate grievances of the men, particularly through the intervention of junior officers, allowed the time and space for morale to begin to recover. Furthermore, despite incidents that affected nearly half of the divisions in the French army, only 3,427 soldiers were convicted for offenses by courts-martial.³⁴

While the French experience ran roughly parallel to revolutionary events that broke the Russian army, the outcome on the [Western Front](#) was different. By the end of the Nivelle offensive, French forces had lost nearly three-quarters of their entire number of war casualties.³⁵ Yet in the end, French soldiers chose to obey orders and return to the trenches, with a tacit agreement that no further futile offensives would be launched. Much of the credit

for this policy must go to Pétain, but its successful implementation – and the fact that full-scale rebellion and mass violence were avoided – must go to junior officers who served as mediators for their soldiers, and who suffered under the same conditions.³⁶ By the end of October 1917, Pétain's strategy of limited offensives had proved its worth; part of the Sixth Army captured the heights of the Chemin des Dames ridge, along with 11,000 prisoners and over 400 heavy guns. The cost: roughly 12,300 casualties, or less than one-third the men lost on day one of Nivelle's offensive. While this huge victory helped to buoy French morale, the absence of American soldiers in large numbers was still a concern. As of January 1918, only 150,000 American troops had even crossed the Atlantic and arrived in France.³⁷

Bulgaria

Bulgaria had been in a state of nearly constant war since 1912; by 1915, more than 100,000 men had been killed. Harvests were faltering by 1916. The entire population was increasingly dependent upon aid from Germany. By August 1918, Bulgarian forces were poorly equipped and had been abandoned by their allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary – both facing increasingly desperate circumstances themselves. French General [Louis Franchet d'Espèrey \(1856-1942\)](#), drawing on his experiences on the Western Front, commanded the "[Army of the Orient](#)." This was a combined force of twenty-eight divisions: one Italian, eight French, four British under the command of General [George Milne \(1866-1948\)](#), six Serbian, who had fled over the mountains to Albania in 1915, and nine Greek. D'Esperey was preparing a decisive offensive designed to knock Bulgaria out of the war and clear the way to Vienna. Over a period of weeks, Allied forces used cables, winches, and tractors to move up hundreds of artillery pieces into the mountains overlooking Bulgarian positions. What followed on 14 September 1918 was a one-day "hurricane bombardment" from more than 500 guns, which destroyed the Bulgarians' stone fortifications. Serbian, French, and Greek units broke through Bulgarian defenses using flamethrowers and grenades. They advanced thirty kilometers in three days. British and Greek divisions flanked Bulgarian positions, forcing the Bulgarians to retreat or desert under threat of Allied shellfire and strafing planes. By 29 September 1918, units of the Army of the Orient had advanced more than 125 kilometers, and even the last-minute efforts of German General [Erich Ludendorff \(1865-1937\)](#) to send reinforcements failed before Bulgaria's surrender. Beginning on 26 September 1918, representatives of the Bulgarian government sought an armistice from d'Esperey, which they signed three days later.³⁸

Even as early as 17 September 1918, some Bulgarian troops were already refusing to obey orders. Others deserted, but a valiant defense was made for a short time at Lake Dorian, where the British and Greeks suffered 7,800 casualties to the 2,700 Bulgarian casualties

before the German commander [Friedrich von Scholz \(1851-1927\)](#) ordered a tactical retreat. That decision broke the back of Bulgarian morale. The defenders were forced to give up their strong position and abandon much-needed supplies. The last resistance to Allied attacks turned out to be an isolated German unit at Skopje. Deserting Bulgarian soldiers took what supplies they could; one band of mutinous deserters even attacked the German headquarters. The first soviets (councils) of soldiers and workers began forming in Bulgarian cities on 23 September 1918. In the capital, Sofia, open rebellion was only checked by a German division sent from Russia. Once the armistice was signed, Bulgarian forces were demobilized. All foreign troops had to surrender or leave the country.³⁹

Four days after the armistice was signed, [Ferdinand I, Tsar of Bulgaria \(1861-1948\)](#) abdicated in favor of his son, who took the throne as [Boris III, Tsar of Bulgaria \(1894-1943\)](#) on 4 October 1918. Boris began to reconcile the political conflicts that had plagued Bulgaria by building a coalition government committed to reform. The popular figure [Aleksandŭr Stamboliyski \(1879-1923\)](#), member of the Agrarian Party, had been imprisoned during the war for opposing the Bulgarian alliance with the Central Powers. He now returned to politics, becoming a member of the cabinet in January 1919. Appointed to his new role as prime minister in October 1919, he would go on to sign the [Treaty of Neuilly](#) (27 November 1919) with the victorious powers. The treaty allocated Bulgarian territory to Greece, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Despite those heavy concessions, Stamboliyski remained popular with his rural base, and the Agrarian Party went on to win a majority in parliament in March 1920. Stamboliyski served as prime minister until he was murdered in June 1923 during a military coup.⁴⁰

Austria-Hungary

The revolutionary events in Russia in February and March 1917 transformed public opinion in Austria-Hungary. This sentiment was reflected in frequent factory strikes. Workers' grievances were first addressed with the ordinance of 18 March 1917, which improved working conditions and eased wartime controls. [Charles I, Emperor of Austria \(1887-1922\)](#) reconvened the Austrian Parliament on 30 May 1917. Its members refused to agree to military control of the civilian population, bringing the conduct of the war and the ability of the government to wage war into question.⁴¹

Sailors during World War I were particularly active as a revolutionary force and played a crucial role in the breakdown of Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German military stability. Each of these naval forces spent much of the war in port. The combination of boredom, inactivity, and greater contact with the home front contributed to sailors' reactions. For

Austria-Hungary, the first naval revolts began in July 1917 over a disruption of food supplies. An Austrian submarine defected to Italy in October 1917, provoking fear that Austro-Hungarian forces might succumb to the revolutionary instability affecting the Russians.⁴²

By January 1918, the situation had grown worse. Hundreds of thousands of workers went on strike in Vienna, while sailors actively supported a workers' strike at the Pola arsenal. Following the January strikes, Slovene, Serbian, Czech, and Hungarian troops in the armed forces mutinied. In February 1918, a [naval mutiny broke out at Cattaro](#); the captain of the cruiser *Sankt Georg* was shot in the head. Mutineers demanded better food and a "just peace" based on President Wilson's [Fourteen Points](#). The arrival of three light battleships convinced the mutineers to surrender, but the uprising confirmed that war-weariness was real. More than 400 sailors were imprisoned for their role in the mutiny, and four were executed. Naval operations stabilized until the final days of the war, when unrest again broke out on 27 October 1918, three days after the Austro-Hungarian army collapsed under an Italian offensive. Naval vessels were soon operating under the control of their crews. By 30 October 1918, Emperor Charles issued an order to turn over the fleet at Pola and Cattaro to the Yugoslav National Council and relinquish the Danube vessels to Hungary.⁴³

The January 1918 strikes were a critical first step on the road to [revolution](#). Not only did they involve elements of the army and navy, but the demands of the Social Democrats helped to create the circumstances that would allow for their own influence during October and November 1918. [Maureen Healy](#) argued that the city of Vienna fell before the military collapse of Austro-Hungarian forces and the dissolution of the empire, as part of a drawn-out process of slow starvation, suffering, and a failure of governance in the capital.⁴⁴

As the collapse of Austro-Hungarian military forces became clear, the last of the Habsburg emperors called for the creation of a federal state composed of ethnic [nationalities](#), belatedly recognizing the destructive forces of nationalism unleashed by Wilson's rhetoric about self-determination. Between 28 and 31 October 1918, the Habsburg Monarchy collapsed. Its armies were scattered and broken, and new national governments had taken regional power. An armistice with Italy was reached on 4 November 1918 and Emperor Charles abdicated on 11 November 1918. The breakdown of dynastic loyalties can be traced back to the death of [Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria \(1830-1916\)](#) at the end of 1916. The combined effects of two Russian revolutions and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk proved that ancient monarchies could indeed fall. Reconvening parliament only gave a public voice to calls for recognition from national minorities like the Czechs, Slavs, Croats, and Poles.⁴⁵

With the dissolution of the multi-ethnic Habsburg Empire, the emerging successor states

struggled to form their own independent national governments, often with support and recognition from the Allies. In each of these cases, save one, Social Democratic or Agrarian-based parties were able to prevent revolution and social chaos by appealing to ethnic pride and patriotism. The sole exception was Hungary, where a “new” independence was an empty reward for the sacrifices of the war. Hungary had enjoyed near independence since the “Compromise” with Austria in 1867. By 1918, Magyar leaders believed that solidarity with Austria was a detriment to Hungarian control of the region and declared their independence on 16 October 1918. After a failed attempt at a separate armistice, Count [Mihaly Karolyi \(1875-1955\)](#) took power and declared Hungary an independent republic on 16 November 1918.

Yet Hungary was still treated by the Allies as a defeated power. Romanian troops invaded Transylvania, while French troops under General d’Esperey threatened to truncate the Hungarian border in March 1919. In response, Karolyi fled from power. Into the vacuum stepped Béla Kun, a Hungarian journalist who had experienced the revolutionary events in Russia and had now become the head of the Hungarian Bolsheviks. The Béla Kun regime formed a soviet government. It controlled Budapest and the surrounding countryside from 20 March to 1 August 1919. Kun tried to establish a socialist state, but alienated the peasantry by nationalizing landed estates. Denied aid from Soviet Russia, Kun found himself without allies. Romanian forces, with support from the French, captured Budapest in August 1919 and Kun fled the country. Conservatives under [Miklos Horthy \(1868-1957\)](#), former admiral of the Austro-Hungarian navy, took power and proceeded to purge the soviets from politics.⁴⁶ The former Habsburg Emperor Charles made two failed attempts to return as king in Hungary in 1921, without Horthy’s support. The Allies sent Charles into exile at Madeira, where he died in 1922.⁴⁷

Germany

As in Austria-Hungary, by 1917 the German population was beginning to chafe under the pressures of war. Food shortages provoked riots and massive strikes across the country. Sailors at Wilhelmshaven first mutinied in August 1917, and in Hamburg and Brandenburg, martial law was required to restore order. The *Reichstag* had already passed a Peace Resolution in July 1917, to little real effect, but these factors forced the [German High Command](#) to demand the resignation of Chancellor [Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg \(1856-1921\)](#). Rather than agree to a peace without annexations, Germany’s military leaders vowed to fight for victory on their terms and deliver a crushing blow on the Western Front.⁴⁸

Under the command of General Ludendorff, Germany launched a series of [offensives in the](#)

[spring of 1918](#) designed to break the stalemate on the Western Front. Strengthened by forty-four divisions transferred westward from Russia, Ludendorff executed a total of five of six planned attacks between March and July 1918. The first of these attacks, named St. Michael, punctured through British positions and brought a return of mobile warfare. Subsequent offensives were also successful, but in the end, German forces had overextended their supply lines, exhausted their resources, and squandered their best troops. In the first round of attacks, between 21 March and 4 April 1918, German forces suffered over 240,000 casualties. By mid-June 1918, it was clear that Ludendorff's gamble had failed, and the Germans had lost almost 1 million soldiers. While the Allies had suffered nearly as many casualties, their numbers were augmented by the arrival of American troops; more than 200,000 fresh soldiers arrived every month from May to October 1918. By late July 1918, more than one million men were part of the [American Expeditionary Force](#) on the Western Front. Between July and August 1918, German divisions abandoned their positions in the face of Allied counterattacks, suffering their worst losses on 8 August 1918, the "black day" of the German army. By 2 September 1918, the Germans had lost nearly all the territory taken in the spring and summer.⁴⁹

On 29 September 1918, Ludendorff announced that German forces could not hold back the Allies, and that the government must seek an immediate end to the war. When the Allies announced their terms a few weeks later, Ludendorff refused to accept their conditions and was relieved of his command by the kaiser. On 3 October 1918, [Wilhelm II, German Emperor \(1859-1941\)](#) appointed the moderate Prince [Max von Baden \(1867-1929\)](#) as chancellor and head of the civilian government, and charged him with obtaining an armistice based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. Furthermore, in order to head off the threat of revolution, Prince Max forced through a series of reforms transforming Germany into a constitutional monarchy. On 29 October 1918, following word of a pending suicidal mission against the British Royal Navy, [German sailors mutinied at Kiel](#). By 4 November 1918, the government and the navy had lost control and the "[revolution from below](#)" began.⁵⁰

Once it became clear that there was no chance of victory, further sacrifices on the home front became impossible. Word of the Kiel mutineers spread quickly to other provinces and cities such as Lübeck, Hamburg, and Cologne, where workers' and military councils were established within days with little resistance. These councils (soviets) demanded an end to the war, the abdication of the Kaiser, and creation of a republic. On 6 November 1918, General [Wilhelm Groener \(1867-1939\)](#), Ludendorff's replacement, informed Prince Max that Germany must seek an immediate ceasefire. While the [Social Democratic Party](#) had split into the Majority and Independent Social Democrats over conduct of the war in 1917, both sides now demanded the Kaiser's abdication.

In Bavaria, the Independent Social Democratic Party leader [Kurt Eisner \(1867-1919\)](#) turned a mass rally into a full rebellion, seizing [weapons](#) and deposing the Bavarian King. On 7 November 1918, Eisner declared Bavaria an independent republic and began separate peace negotiations. Two days later, Max announced the Kaiser's abdication, and transferred parliamentary leadership to the Majority Social Democrats under [Friedrich Ebert \(1871-1925\)](#), which had the support of Groener and the army. [Philipp Scheidemann \(1865-1939\)](#) of the Majority Social Democrats declared a new parliamentary republic from the *Reichstag*. On the far left, the radical "Spartacists" under [Karl Liebknecht \(1871-1919\)](#), nominally part of the Independent Social Democrats, proclaimed a new soviet-socialist republic the same day, revealing the competing divisions within the socialist parties in the faltering state. Ebert secured the armistice drafted by Prince Max on 10 November 1918, and the following day at 11 o'clock in the morning, all became quiet on the Western Front.⁵¹

In Germany, the workers' and soldiers' councils were not radical revolutionaries, and instead supported the Majority Social Democrats working for democratic and social reform. The moderate Socialists wanted to avoid any threat of a Bolshevik-style revolution. The first goal was to create a democratically elected national assembly. When an all-German conference of delegates met in December 1918, of the 488 delegates only ten were radical "Spartacists," and the majority supported the election of a National Constitutional Assembly in January 1919. Workers' and soldiers' councils simply failed to take control of the critical political and economic institutions, leaving the essential infrastructure of the old imperial state intact. The Kaiser was gone, but the bureaucracy, the power of the military, and the importance of the old elite remained. Among those on the right, many demobilized soldiers joined paramilitary "[Freikorps](#)" groups, dedicated to restoring the status quo and suppressing the threat of revolution.

Karl Liebknecht and [Rosa Luxemburg \(1871-1919\)](#) turned the "Spartacists" into the new German Communist Party on 30 December 1918 and challenged Ebert's government in the Spartacist Revolt (5-12 January 1919). Relying on elements of the army and independent Freikorps volunteers, Ebert crushed his opposition and Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered. In demonstrations and fighting in Berlin in January 1919 and Munich in March 1919, over 1,000 people were killed by right-wing groups in order to secure Ebert's regime. In Bavaria, Eisner was assassinated in February 1919. His successors declared communist republics in Munich in April 1919, which were quickly toppled by Freikorps in May 1919. Another soviet republic was created in Bremen.

Elsewhere, Freikorps units threatened competing politicians, killed their leftist supporters, and combated the threat of revolution across Germany. Some even seized control of Berlin

for a short time in March 1920.⁵² The increasing violence threatened the new government with the conditions of a near-civil war. The fragile “Weimar Coalition” forged by Ebert succeeded in creating a new democratic constitutional republic in January 1919, but lost much of its support by the June 1920 elections. In part this loss of support was caused by the repressive policies of Ebert’s government to contain the mass movement increasingly opposed to it. Political assassinations and attempted coups kept the government weak through 1923, and the lingering myth of the “[stab in the back](#)” led many Germans to conclude that the Allies had forced the Weimar government on them.⁵³

Italy

Italy too struggled to sustain its war effort in 1917. Riots over food killed forty-one people in Turin, while [Pope Benedict XV \(1854-1922\)](#) and Italian socialists openly called for a compromise peace. Combined Austro-German forces decisively defeated the Italians at Caporetto in October, with a loss of 733,000 men as casualties or to desertion or capture.⁵⁴ Prime Minister [Paolo Boselli \(1838-1932\)](#) fell, and [Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy \(1869-1947\)](#) talked of abdication. Even former Prime Minister [Antonio Salandra \(1853-1931\)](#) pressed for secret peace talks, to no avail. Finally, Italian soldiers rallied to defend their homeland, holding the line at Piave River and keeping Italy in the war.⁵⁵

Although Italy ended the war on the side of the victors, it was also profoundly disrupted by the forces of wartime mobilization. Few Italians could see any real gains for their many sacrifices. Despite the territories promised to Italy under the Treaty of London (1915), during the negotiations at Paris, Italy squandered its influence with Britain and France through a series of inconsistent demands.⁵⁶ Domestic crises further plagued the country in 1919-1920, as rural militants squared off against urban workers, pitting socialists against agrarian conservatives, northern industrialists against southern peasants, and shattering any sense of national unity. Italy also had the highest rate of inflation among the victors – as rates quadrupled during the war and doubled again by 1920. During the true crisis years of 1919-1920, Italy faced three major challenges that nearly drove the country to open revolution: massive strikes, seizures of land (in 1916 the government had promised land to returning veterans), and right-wing nationalist demonstrations for territory promised by the Allies.⁵⁷

In 1919, 1 million workers walked off the job, followed by another 200,000 in early 1920. In factories that were still operating, workers elected proto-soviet councils to represent their demands. Milan and Turin saw the worst confrontations between the metalworkers’ union

(FIOM) and factory owners. Strikes spread to affect fifty-nine cities and involved 500,000 workers by September 1920. Yet this wave of strikes dissipated, owing largely to Premier [Giovanni Giolitti \(1842-1928\)](#)'s (1842-1928) use of gradual negotiations instead of repression by force. After three weeks, workers abandoned the factories, having achieved some token wage concessions.⁵⁸

Perhaps more troubling was the wave of land seizures that swept much of the country during 1919. Demobilized soldiers, day laborers, and poor peasants occupied land. Their actions were supported by veterans' groups, Catholics, and agricultural unions. In part, this stemmed from popular hostility to the state as a result of the pressures of war. Many viewed the war as one fought by the poor for the benefit of the wealthy elite. Even in the north, landowners were forced to negotiate with rural unions and pay higher wages.⁵⁹

The Treaty of London had promised new territories to Italy, drawing them into the war on the Allied side. A partial list of these gains included islands in the Adriatic, parts of Dalmatia, the Albanian port of Vlorë (Valona), and the creation of a protectorate over Albania.⁶⁰ The treaty nursed the dreams of Italian nationalists, eager to acquire a broad sweep of territory along the Adriatic, and at the war's end Italian forces pushed east and occupied Fiume. In 1919, decision makers at the Paris Peace Conference denied Italian claims to the city, provoking protests of a "mutilated victory."⁶¹ In reaction, [Gabriele D'Annunzio \(1863-1938\)](#) led an 8,000-man militia to seize the city in September 1919, controlling it as the "Republic of Carnaro" until he was forced out by Italian regulars in December 1920.⁶²

D'Annunzio's example served as a powerful challenge to the legitimacy of the Italian state, setting a precedent for right-wing militants and fascists and inspiring [Benito Mussolini \(1883-1945\)](#)'s (1883-1945) later march on Rome.⁶³ The failure of national unity during the war called the very nature of Italian democracy into question. During the war, parliament rarely met, and power seemed concentrated in the hands of a few politicians, industrialists, and military leaders. The social and political divisions engendered by the war effort fractured even further during 1919-1920. The legacy of the war led many veterans and a younger generation of men to embrace the ideologies of [fascism](#), which seemed to provide the sense of unity absent during the war.⁶⁴

Greece

After the collapse of the Dardanelles campaign in September 1915, Britain and France arranged to land Allied troops at Salonika (today Thessaloniki) with the support of the Greek

Prime Minister [Eleutherios Venizelos \(1864-1936\)](#), despite the opposition of the pro-German Greek King, [Constantine I, King of Greece \(1868-1923\)](#), who was married to the German Kaiser's sister. Fighting to keep Greece neutral, Constantine forced Venizelos to resign, but French and British troops arrived to form the "Army of the Orient" and to open a new front against the Bulgarians. The Allies had continually infringed upon Greek [neutrality](#) since 1914, when the French took Corfu and the British occupied the island of Lemnos. Corfu would become home to the Serbian government-in-exile, after the retreat of Serbian forces through Albania in late 1915. Serbian troops were later redeployed to Salonika and incorporated into the Army of the Orient. With the collapse of Serbia, the Allies dug in and reinforced their positions at Salonika, while Constantine continued to follow a policy of armed neutrality.⁶⁵

On 30 August 1916, with Romania now at war on the Allied side, Greece was further destabilized by a military coup led by the pro-Allied Greek colonel [Epaminondas Zymbrakakis \(1861-1928\)](#) in Salonika. Venizelos established a provisional government to challenge Constantine's authority in Athens, dividing Greek society into two rival camps and bringing half of Greece into the war. The Allies took control of the Greek navy in October 1916, and demanded equipment and munitions from the Greek army. When King Constantine refused, the French sent five vessels to bombard Athens and on 1 December 1916, 2,000 Allied troops attacked the city. Royalist forces repelled the attackers, but by January 1917, Constantine moved his army to southern Greece to avoid a civil war. Venizelos promoted Zymbrakakis to general of a new "National Army," which soon swelled to 60,000 men, and threatened to march on Athens and depose the king.

Venizelos agreed to accept Constantine's abdication, which the Allies demanded on 11 June 1917 after landing troops on Corinth. Constantine surrendered the throne to his second son [Alexander, King of Greece \(1893-1920\)](#), and left with his eldest, [George II, King of Greece \(1890-1947\)](#), for exile in Switzerland.

On 26 June 1917, Venizelos returned to Athens to rule as premier, bringing Greece into the war on the Allied side on 29 June 1917. He would represent Greece well at the [Paris Peace Conference](#) in 1919, arguing for grand territorial concessions to Greece, including southern Albania, Thrace, and a large slice of Asia minor from the Sea of Marmara to [Smyrna](#).⁶⁶ Italy and Greece both claimed some of the same areas of the collapsing Ottoman Empire. The decision by [David Lloyd George \(1863-1945\)](#) and President Wilson to allow Greek troops to take the predominantly Greek port of Smyrna (Izmir) in May 1919 seemed to favor the Greeks at the expense of Italy, and brought Greece into war against Turkey.⁶⁷ The short-lived Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) gave most of the Aegean islands and eastern Thrace to Greece. The Greco-Turkish War of 1921-1922 overturned these agreements and created

revolutionary turmoil in Greece. After the death of Alexander on 25 October 1920, Constantine returned from exile to again take the throne. He was later forced from power in a military coup, and his eldest son took the throne as King George II on 27 September 1922.⁶⁸

Turkey (Ottoman Empire)

The decisions of the British and French leaders determined how the Ottoman Empire would be dismembered, beginning with the First Conference of London in February 1920. Yet the Treaty of Sèvres was the last major act of diplomacy to be concluded and its effectiveness was questionable at best. After the Turks signed the [armistice at Moudros](#) on 30 October 1918, it took nearly two years to conclude a [settlement](#) with the Ottoman sultan, [Mehmed VI, Sultan of the Turks \(1861-1926\)](#), while the fate of an independent Turkey hung in the balance and peace had yet to be reached with Turkish forces under Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938). By the summer of 1919, British occupying forces in the Ottoman Empire had fallen from 1,084,000 men to 320,000, rendering the British incapable of enforcing the terms of Sèvres.⁶⁹

The Allies had further complicated the Ottoman question when British Prime Minister Lloyd George chose to use Greek forces to quash Italian ambitions in Anatolia in May 1919, allowing Greek forces to take the city of Smyrna (Izmir). The Turks under Kemal immediately began to reorganize and draft a declaration of independence, viewing the sultan as a helpless pawn of the Allies. Largely unaware of Kemal's efforts, the British and French continued to negotiate in Europe, even as the situation within central and eastern Turkey turned against them. At the end of 1919, Turkish nationalists easily won national elections for a new Chamber of Deputies. These new deputies met first at Ankara, and supported Kemal's National Pact to form an independent Turkish nation, prior to assuming their official duties in Constantinople in January 1920. When the British attempted to impose their will on Constantinople by force of occupation, deputies who escaped the British roundup voted to create a Grand National Assembly, and elected Kemal president.⁷⁰

Facing persistent Turkish attacks, the French and British decided to allow the Greeks to advance from Smyrna in June and July 1920 to enforce the Allies peace terms that would be concluded at Sèvres in August 1920, with the signature of the now-powerless sultan. Yet only Greek forces could enforce the terms of Sèvres, and Greek politics changed virtually overnight in October 1920. The young King Alexander, son of the deposed Constantine, died on 25 October 1920, returning his father from exile to the throne, while Greek premier Venizelos was defeated in Greek elections. In the wake of this political upheaval, the French and Italians abandoned support for the Greeks, who nonetheless believed they could hold Smyrna and challenge Kemal.⁷¹

During the summer of 1921, the Greeks launched a series of attacks designed to defeat Kemal's forces. By August 1921, they advanced to attack Turkish defenders outside Ankara but failed to defeat the Turks and were forced to retreat by mid-September 1921. Nearly a year would pass before Turkish forces routed overextended Greek lines and provoked a massive evacuation of Greek forces and refugees from Smyrna. As Turkish forces took the city in September 1922, fires spread to the Armenian, Greek, and European quarters, destroying up to 70 percent of the city. By the end of 1922, some 1.5 million Greeks had been driven out of Turkey.⁷²

Kemal intended to press on toward Constantinople and force the British to negotiate or fight. Lacking any support from the French, Italians, or Americans, the British commander on the scene chose to negotiate an armistice, which began on 14 October 1922. Kemal sought to achieve Turkish independence, and in November 1922 the National Assembly abolished the sultanate, formally eliminating the Ottoman Empire. A Turkish national state was proclaimed by the National Assembly and a formal peace treaty concluded at Lausanne on 24 July 1923. Britain, France, Italy, and Greece recognized the primary borders of the Republic of Turkey, while the Turks renounced any claims to areas of the former Ottoman Empire. The conflicts in Asia Minor between 1914 and 1922, which include the Great War, [genocide against the Armenians](#), the Turkish war of independence, and forced migrations between the Turks and the Greeks caused the deaths of as many as 5 million people.⁷³

Conclusion: Revolution or Return to Order

Throughout central and eastern Europe and in the Middle East, [new nations emerged from the collapse of four empires](#). The initial climate in 1919 saw the creation of new democracies from Finland and Poland to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Former empires like Germany and Austria became parliamentary democracies with [voting rights for women](#). Even in European colonial holdings in Africa and Asia, leaders argued for representation at the Paris Peace Conference, by right of their respective contributions to the Allied war effort. Closer to home, the British witnessed the electoral success of the Sinn Féin in [Ireland](#) and the creation of the first Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann) as a challenge to British control of the island. By January 1922, Lloyd George settled the issue, for some, by granting the twenty-six Irish counties [home rule](#) as the Irish Free State, while the six northern (Protestant) counties of Ulster remained part of the United Kingdom. Yet the optimism surrounding the spread of democracy was surprisingly short-lived. Greece and Italy quarreled over the spoils of war, while Yugoslavia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland seized new territories at the expense of the war's losers.⁷⁴

Between 1919 and 1926, authoritarian regimes emerged in Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, Albania, Poland, and Lithuania; including Russia's Provisional Government, twelve democratic governments fell by the end of the 1920s.⁷⁵ After the abdication of the Ottoman sultan, Mehmed VI, Turkey briefly recognized his cousin, Abdülmecid II, Sultan of the Turks (1868-1944) as caliph, but Mustapha Kemal abolished the caliphate in 1924, ending any claim to the centuries-old Ottoman Empire. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire also led to the Arab-Israeli Conflict, as the British had made promises to both Jews and Arabs over Palestine and the pro-Zionists of 1917 had turned against the idea by 1922. Under the British mandate, 10,000 Jewish settlers arrived in 1919-1920, followed by another 106,000 during the 1920s.⁷⁶

During the same period, European statesmen attempted to restore order in their respective countries, despite the economic, social, and political challenges that confronted them. By comparing states where revolution was avoided or short-lived with the case of Soviet Russia, one can determine specific revolutionary causes and effects engendered by the First World War. The war created instability in every country, but some countries were better positioned to withstand the revolutionary pressures. One can identify four key factors that would determine the course of revolutionary movements across Europe, and the ways in which specific countries responded to them.

First, countries whose political institutions had been well-established endured the trials of war more successfully than states who had yet to recognize the demands of different minorities, political parties, or interest groups. Industrialized countries like Britain and France had democratic traditions and relatively homogenous populations that remained committed to the war effort. Even in constitutional monarchies like imperial Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, for example, socialist parties had already gained entry into politics, and thus worked toward change within the system, even as the Habsburg emperor or the Kaiser abdicated power at the war's end in the face of revolutionary pressures. In newly emerging countries pressing for national unity, the fragmentation of nationalist aims and competing visions for the future led to political instability and divisiveness within their fragile democracies. Often, parliamentary gridlock and inaction led to the rise of reactionary conservative movements such as fascism and dictatorship.

Second, one must account for the role of [nationalism](#) and patriotism in these newly liberated or established nations. The territorial gains of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia rewarded the national pride of their respective citizens, in contrast with Hungary, which lost territory and gained little through its "new" independence. Nationalism could serve as a unifying force for new liberated national minorities, but where self-determination was

denied, in the case of Austria or for ethnic Germans placed under Polish rule for example, nationalism created long-lasting instability. The settlements that emerged out of the Paris Peace Negotiations created new nations for 65 million people, but also made 25 million people new minorities within these countries. The prospects for assimilation or compromise were not addressed, nor were specific rights stipulated to protect national minorities.⁷⁷

Third, countries and emerging nations in southern and eastern Europe also had large peasant populations who demanded land and could side with revolting workers in cities to destabilize established authorities. In Russia, Lenin allowed peasants to seize land for themselves, thereby neutralizing the peasantry as a force for counterrevolution. In Hungary, Béla Kun's regime tried to create state-controlled farms, denying the peasants' claims to property and discrediting his regime in the eyes of the peasantry.⁷⁸ In Austria and Germany, the peasantry did not side with the forces of revolution, and instead supported moderate, conservative, or reactionary parties.

Fourth, losing a major war can be a force for revolution, and in the Russian case, civil war continued from 1917 to 1921. Even winning a war was no guarantee of political stability, as shown by the cases of Italy and Greece. As part of the victorious Allies, the people (and politicians) of both Italy and Greece expected, but were denied, substantial territorial gains for their wartime sacrifices. In the case of Greece, the attempt to win such territory on their own after World War I ended in defeat and rebellion.

In conclusion, the cases of Italy and Greece hold particular significance. Both countries were on the winning side, but gained little or even lost prestige in the drawn-out peace process. Neither Italy nor Greece had established traditions of democratic government, and both wavered in their initial decision to support the Allies or the Central Powers. Both countries experienced social and political upheaval as a result of the war, and economic chaos in its wake. Any recourse to nationalism after the war also discredited the wartime governments, leading to a military coup in Greece and the rise of fascism in Italy.

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Notes

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2. Macmillan, Margaret: *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World*, New York 2003, p. xxix. [↑](#)
3. Foran, John: *Theories of Revolution Revisited. Toward a Fourth Generation?*, in: *Sociological Theory* 11/1 (1993), pp. 1f. [↑](#)

4. Huntington, Samuel P.: Political Order in Changing Societies, New Haven 1968, p. 264. [↑](#)
5. Johnson, Chalmers: Revolution and the Social System, Stanford 1964; and Johnson, Chalmers: Revolutionary Change, Boston 1966. Both are referenced in: Zagorin, Perez: Theories of Revolution in Contemporary Historiography, in: Political Science Quarterly 88/1 (1973), p. 28. [↑](#)
6. Goldstone, Jack A.: Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory, in: Annual Review of Political Science 4 (2001), pp. 139-187. [↑](#)
7. Tilly, Charles: European Revolutions, 1492-1992, Oxford 1993; Goldstone, Jack A.: The Encyclopedia of Political Revolutions, Washington, D.C. 1998, cited in: Goldstone, Toward a Fourth Generation 2001, p. 142. [↑](#)
8. Goldstone, Toward a Fourth Generation 2001, p. 142. [↑](#)
9. Goldstone, Toward a Fourth Generation 2001, p. 144. [↑](#)
10. Order Number One provided for the creation of Soviets within the army, allowing any soldier to challenge an order from a commanding officer. [↑](#)
11. Lee, Stephen J.: European Dictatorships, 1918-1945, 3rd edition, New York 2008, pp. 8f. [↑](#)
12. Sondhaus, Lawrence: World War One. The Global Revolution, New York 2011, p. 421. [↑](#)
13. Howard, Michael: The First World War, New York 2002, p. 116. [↑](#)
14. Paxton, Robert O.: Europe in the Twentieth Century, 4th edition, Boston 2005, p. 132. [↑](#)
15. Sondhaus, World War One 2011, pp. 423f. [↑](#)
16. Brose, Eric Dorn: A History of the Great War. World War One and the International Crisis of the Early Twentieth Century, New York 2010, pp. 386f. [↑](#)
17. Brose, History 2010, p. 383. [↑](#)
18. Pipes, Richard: Unpublished Lenin, in: Brovkin, Vladimir (ed.): The Bolsheviks in Russian Society. The Revolution and Civil Wars, New Haven 1997, p. 204. [↑](#)
19. Paxton, Europe 2005, p. 134. [↑](#)
20. Sondhaus, World War One 2011, pp. 207f. [↑](#)
21. Sondhaus, World War One 2011, p. 208. [↑](#)
22. Stevenson, David: Cataclysm. The First World War as Political Tragedy, New York 2004, p. 131; Horne, Alistair: Price of Glory. Verdun, 1916, London 1978, p. 327; Sondhaus, World War One 2011, pp. 209f; Hull, Isabel V.: Absolute Destruction. Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany, Ithaca 2005, p. 221. [↑](#)
23. Doughty, Robert A.: Pyrrhic Victory. French Strategy and Operations in the Great War, Cambridge, MA 2005, pp. 317, 321. [↑](#)
24. Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory 2005, pp. 323f. [↑](#)
25. Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory 2005, pp. 337ff; Smith, Leonard V.: Between Mutiny and Obedience. The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division During World War I, Princeton

- 1994, p. 180. [↑](#)
26. Smith, *Between Mutiny* 1994, p. 182. [↑](#)
27. German commanders initially thought the French plan was a decoy, only later did they realize the potential threat and reinforced their lines. Even when word of this shift reached the French, Nivelle assumed his men would simply take more prisoners. See Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* 2005, pp. 345f. [↑](#)
28. Sondhaus, *World War One* 2011, p. 255. [↑](#)
29. "With incidents of open resistance to military authority occurring in units of nearly one-half of the divisions in the French army, the mutinies of May and June 1917 constituted the most significant internal challenge to the prosecution of World War I in any of the victorious powers." Smith, Leonard V.: *Remobilizing the citizen-soldier through the French army mutinies of 1917*, in: Horne, John, (ed.): *State, society and mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, Cambridge 1997, p. 144. See also Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* 2005, p. 361. [↑](#)
30. Pedroncini, Guy: *Les Mutineries de 1917*, Paris 1967, chapter 4; Smith, *Between Mutiny* 1994, p. 181. [↑](#)
31. Stevenson, *Cataclysm* 2004, p. 269. [↑](#)
32. Smith, *Between Mutiny* 1994, pp. 181f. [↑](#)
33. Forty-nine is the figure given by Smith (*Between Mutiny* 1994, p. 206), quoting from Pedroncini (*Les Mutineries* 1967, pp. 194, 215). However, Doughty (*Pyrrhic Victory* 2005, p. 364) quoted Pétain reporting fifty-five men executed, including seven immediately sent to the firing squad. Doughty (*Pyrrhic Victory* 2005, p. 364) then gave the figures from Pedroncini as "52 and [the French] may have executed 10 others". [↑](#)
34. Smith, *Between Mutiny* 1994, p. 206; Pedroncini, *Les Mutineries* 1967, p. 194; Smith, *Remobilizing* 1997, pp. 147ff. [↑](#)
35. Stevenson, *Cataclysm* 2004, p. 162. [↑](#)
36. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* 2005, pp. 361-371. [↑](#)
37. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory* 2005, p. 389; Stevenson, *Cataclysm* 2004, p. 243. [↑](#)
38. Brose, *History* 2010, pp. 349-352; Showalter, Dennis E.: *Salonika*, in: Cowley, Robert (ed.): *The Great War. Perspectives on the First World War*, New York 2003, p. 250. [↑](#)
39. Showalter, *Salonika* 2003, pp. 251ff; Sondhaus, *World War One* 2011, p. 416. [↑](#)
40. Sondhaus, *World War One* 2011, pp. 416, 465. [↑](#)
41. Bauer, Otto: *The Austrian Revolution*, translator H.J. Stenning, New York 1925, p. 31. [↑](#)
42. Sondhaus, *World War One* 2011, pp. 291f. [↑](#)
43. Sondhaus, *World War One* 2011, pp. 291-295; Bauer, *Austrian Revolution* 1925, pp. 36f. [↑](#)
44. Healy, Maureen: *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*, New York 2004, p. 3. As just one example of chronic malnutrition

among Viennese children by the end of the war, Healy cited a 1918 study of 56,849 children in which only 4,637 were identified as healthy. Of the children admitted to the Viennese Children's Hospital in 1918, "88 percent were underweight, some of them drastically" (p. 249). [↑](#)

45. Bauer, *Austrian Revolution 1925*, pp. 36f, 53. [↑](#)
46. Paxton, *Europe 2005*, pp. 141-146. [↑](#)
47. Sondhaus, *World War One 2011*, p. 483. [↑](#)
48. Howard, *First World War 2002*, pp. 116-119. [↑](#)
49. The six offensives were: St. Michael, Georgette, Blücher, Gneisenau, Marneschütze Reims, and Hagen (not launched). Total American forces numbered 1,872,000 by 2 November 1918. Brose, *History 2010*, pp. 323-342; Stevenson, *Cataclysm 2004*, pp. 342, 359. [↑](#)
50. Howard, *First World War 2002*, pp. 120, 132f; Brose, *History 2010*, p. 358. [↑](#)
51. Stevenson, *Cataclysm 2004*, pp. 401-404; Brose, *History 2010*, p. 358; Paxton, *Europe 2005*, p. 138; Broué, *Pierre: The German Revolution 1917-1923*, translator John Archer, editors Ian Birchall / Brian Pearce, Boston 2005, pp. 148f. [↑](#)
52. Brose, *History 2010*, p. 379; Paxton, *Europe 2005*, p. 140. [↑](#)
53. Paxton, *Europe 2005*, pp. 138ff; Stevenson, *Cataclysm 2004*, pp. 404, 416; Brose, *History 2010*, p. 379; Broué, *German Revolution 2005*, pp. 255-258. [↑](#)
54. 10,000 Italian soldiers were killed, and another 30,000 wounded. Worse still, 293,000 men were captured and 400,000 deserted. Brose, *History 2010*, p. 275. [↑](#)
55. Brose, *History 2010*, pp. 273ff. [↑](#)
56. Macmillan, *Paris 2003*, pp. 289ff. [↑](#)
57. Paxton, *Europe 2005*, pp. 146f; Corner, Paul / Procacci, Giovanna: *The Italian experience of 'total' mobilization 1915-1920*, in: Horne, John, (ed.): *State, society and mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 223ff. [↑](#)
58. Paxton, *Europe 2005*, pp. 146f. [↑](#)
59. Paxton, *Europe 2005*, pp. 147f; Corner / Procacci, *Italian experience 1997*, p. 232. [↑](#)
60. Macmillan, *Paris 2003*, pp. 283f. [↑](#)
61. The phrase is D'Annunzio's. Stevenson, *Cataclysm 2004*, p. 416. [↑](#)
62. Paxton, *Europe 2005*, p. 148. [↑](#)
63. Macmillan, *Paris 2003*, p. 303. [↑](#)
64. Corner / Procacci, *Italian experience 1997*, pp. 233-240. [↑](#)
65. Sondhaus, *World War One 2011*, pp. 138, 159; Showalter, *Salonika 2003*, p. 244. [↑](#)
66. Macmillan, *Paris 2003*, pp. 351f; Fromkin, David: *A Peace to End All Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, New York 1989, p. 393. [↑](#)

67. Fromkin, A Peace 1989, p. 407. ↑
68. Sondhaus, World War One 2011, pp. 231f; Showalter, Salonika 2003, p. 245; Macmillian, Paris 2003, pp. 348-352; Fromkin, A Peace 1989, pp. 411, 431, 553. ↑
69. Fromkin, A Peace 1989, pp. 404ff, 428. ↑
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71. Fromkin, A Peace 1989, pp. 430-434. ↑
72. Fromkin, A Peace 1989, pp. 540-546. ↑
73. Fromkin, A Peace 1989, pp. 551f, 559; Sondhaus, World War One 2011, pp. 491f. ↑
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