First World War
notes by Denis Basic
WWI and the
Middle East State System

based on James Gelvin
“The Modern Middle East: A History”
The emergence of the powerful German Empire in 1871 disrupted the European balance of power.

June 28, 1914 the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his pregnant wife Sofia assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Prinzip (20 yo) - a young Serbian nationalist from Bosnia.

Austro-Hungarian Empire declares war to Serbia - the Russian (Orthodox Christian) ally. Russia becomes involved in the issue.
- German Empire was allied with the Austro-Hungarian Empire

- Germany decided to attack France, the ally of Russia at the time, and to do so it decided to go via Belgium first

- Britain was committed by treaty to Belgian independence, so it declared war on Germany

- World War One had started
The French and British called the war “the Great War”

German military strategists understood that the war was being waged among rival empires with worldwide interests.

These empires depended on their colonial possessions to maintain their strategic position and economic well-being.

Colonies were also indispensable for the French and British military efforts.
Alliances before WWI

- TRIPLE ALLIANCE
  Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy

- TRIPLE ENTENTE
  Britain, France, and Russia.
Alliances during WWI

- CENTRAL POWERS
  Germany, Austro-Hungary, Ottoman empire, and Bulgaria

- ENTENTE POWERS
  Britain, France, and Russia. From 1915, Italy. From 1917, the US. Associated forces were also Australia, Canada, Indian Empire, New Zealand, Newfoundland, South Africa; Belgium, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Serbia.

- NEUTRAL STATES
  Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.
TRIGGER/MOTIVE
Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne
(Explains the excuse used for initiating the war rather than its cause. The war started being prepared long before the assassination.)

POSSIBLE CAUSES
- Arms race
  (Explains the level of brutality of the war rather than its cause; Why did not the USSR-USA arms race cause WWIII?)
- Alliances
  (Explains the massiveness of the war rather than its cause)
- Nationalism
  (explains the mobilization mechanism rather than its cause; manipulation by elites)
  - National liberation movements of peoples living in multicultural empires - the Ottoman Empire & Austro-Hungarian monarchy (local elites manipulated & encouraged to rebel by rival empires)
  - Nationalist intolerance among great empires (local populations of super powers manipulated by their elites)
- Imperialist Rivalries
  (seem to be the true cause of WWI; for more see the last slide)
## WWI Casualties - Entente Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Mobilized Forces</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Prisoners and Missing</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
<th>Casualties as % of Forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED POWERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>12,000,000</td>
<td>1,700,000</td>
<td>4,950,000</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>9,150,000</td>
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<td>British Empire</td>
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<td>2,090,212</td>
<td>191,652</td>
<td>3,190,235</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>1,357,800</td>
<td>4,266,000</td>
<td>537,000</td>
<td>6,160,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5,615,000</td>
<td>650,000</td>
<td>947,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>2,197,000</td>
<td>39.1</td>
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<td>United States</td>
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<td>116,516</td>
<td>204,002</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>323,018</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>335,706</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>535,706</td>
<td>71.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
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<td>45,000</td>
<td>133,148</td>
<td>152,958</td>
<td>331,106</td>
<td>46.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>267,000</td>
<td>13,716</td>
<td>44,686</td>
<td>34,659</td>
<td>93,061</td>
<td>34.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>230,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>11.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>7,222</td>
<td>13,751</td>
<td>12,318</td>
<td>33,291</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>40.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>42,188,810</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,142,631</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,800,706</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,121,090</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,062,427</strong></td>
<td><strong>52.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WWI Casualties and deaths Tables - PBS
## WWI Casualties - Central Powers

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11,000,000</td>
<td>1,773,700</td>
<td>4,216,058</td>
<td>1,152,800</td>
<td>7,142,558</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>7,800,000</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>3,620,000</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>7,020,000</td>
<td>90.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2,850,000</td>
<td>325,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>975,000</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>87,500</td>
<td>152,390</td>
<td>27,029</td>
<td>266,919</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,850,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,386,200</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,388,448</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,629,829</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,404,477</strong></td>
<td><strong>67.4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>65,038,810</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,528,831</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,189,154</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,750,919</strong></td>
<td><strong>37,466,904</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WWI Casualties and deaths Tables - PBS
# As a comparison: U.S. Casualties in Major Wars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War</th>
<th>Number Serving</th>
<th>Battle Deaths</th>
<th>Disease &amp; Accidents</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary War</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4,435</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>6,188</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of 1812</td>
<td>286,730</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4,505</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexican War</td>
<td>78,718</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>11,550</td>
<td>4,152</td>
<td>17,435</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil War</td>
<td>2,213,363</td>
<td>140,414</td>
<td>224,097</td>
<td>281,881</td>
<td>646,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-American War</td>
<td>306,760</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>2,061</td>
<td>1,662</td>
<td>4,108</td>
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<td>World War I</td>
<td>4,743,826</td>
<td>53,513</td>
<td>63,195</td>
<td>204,002</td>
<td>320,710*</td>
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<td>World War II</td>
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<td>292,131</td>
<td>115,185</td>
<td>670,846</td>
<td>1,078,162</td>
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<td>Korean War</td>
<td>5,764,143</td>
<td>33,651</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>103,284</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam War</td>
<td>8,744,000</td>
<td>47,369</td>
<td>10,799</td>
<td>153,303</td>
<td>211,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War</td>
<td>467,539</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = Not available

* Does not include the number of soldiers missing in action

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

Source: WWI Casualties and deaths Tables - PBS
Losses during the WWI

- Per capita, losses in the Ottoman Empire and Persia among the highest of all nations.
- Germany lost 9% of its population
- France lost 11% of its population
- Ottoman Empire lost almost 25% of its population or 5 million people out of 21 million
- 4/5 of Ottoman victims were non-combatants
Causes for casualties

- Many casualties suffered by the Ottoman Empire and Persia succumbed to famine.

- In Mount Lebanon, famine killed upward of 1/2 the population.

- This tragedy still plays a central role in the Lebanese national narrative, which claims that the (Muslim) Ottoman government intentionally created the famine by requisitioning agricultural products and tools from the largely Christian population.

- While requisitioning certainly aggravated the problem, it was in fact the French and British blockade of eastern Mediterranean ports that had created the famine.
Among these Ottoman victims are also 1.5 million Armenians who died of starvation and ethnic cleansing.

Armenian nationalists believe that the Ottoman government planned the atrocities and call them “genocide”.

Turkish government still claims that the tremendous losses of the Armenians were a result of the unfortunate accident of war.

Although Persia was officially neutral, it had approximately the same losses like the Ottoman Empire.
3 aspects of new political order brought to the Middle East by WWI

1. Creation of the current state system in the region:
   - States built by decree:
     Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine / Israel
   - States built by revolution and conquest:
     Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt

2. Emergence of Middle Eastern nationalisms
   - NATIONALISM - ideology binding together people into political communities based on shared experiences and (alleged) distinguishing traits:
     - Turkish nationalism
     - Arab nationalism
     - Syrian nationalism
     - Egyptian nationalism
     etc.

3. Recognition of Zionist (Israeli nationalist) movement by Britain in November 1917 - the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
State-Building by Decree
France and Britain constructed Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, Jordan, and Iraq

Guided by their own interest and preconceptions, Britain and France partitioned what had once been the Ottoman Empire and created states where states had never existed before

The wishes of the inhabitants of those territories counted for little when it came to deciding their political future
Concert of Europe (also known as Congress System)- term used in the 19th cent. to designate a loose agreement by the major European powers to act together on European questions of common interest. The concert emerged after the Congress of Vienna (1814-15) and included the Quadruple Alliance powers of Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and, as of 1818, France as well. It aimed to preserve peace by concerted diplomatic action reinforced by periodic conferences dealing with problems of mutual concern.

Despite the overall failure of the Congress System it marked an important step in European and World diplomacy. In its approximately 85-year life it had erected an imposing structure of International Law.
By the beginning of the 20th century the Concert of Europe no longer existed.

After the Berlin Congress of 1878, in relationship with the “Eastern question”, the Concert of Europe provided a “protective umbrella sheltering the Ottoman Empire from total dismantlement.”

Ottoman Empire called by Western diplomats a “sick man of Europe”

Austro-Hungarian mandate in Bosnia in 1878

in 1908 Austro-Hungarian empire annexed Bosnia
Russia had its eyes on two prizes

1. claim to the **Turkish Straits** - **Bosporus**
40% of the Russian export goes through the straits

2. claim to the **Ottoman Palestine**
to protect the interest of the Orthodox Christians against Catholics whose interests were backed by France
France claimed to have the “historic rights” in the region of Ottoman Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine (think: Crusader states)

- as a protector of Lebanon’s Maronite Christians

- but also due to its investments in local railroads and silk production
Britain, at first, was a bit flustered about the spoils of war, for they had been the staunched defender of the Ottoman integrity just to oppose the interests of Russia.

However, later the British appointed a special committee to make a list of the war spoils that would secure the British investment and trade routes in the region.

The Brits claimed Persia, later also Iraq due to its expected oil wealth, and Palestine due to its proximity to the Suez Canal.
Entente Secret Treaties

- CONSTANTINOPLE AGREEMENT  
  (March 18, 1915)

  France and Britain recognized Russia’s claims to the Turkish straits and some surrounding territory. Istanbul was supposed to become a free port.

  In return France should get control over Syria (territory never precisely defined)

  The British should get control over Persia.

  What makes this agreement important is that it established the principle that Entente Powers had a right to compensation for fighting their enemies and that at least a part of this compensation should come in the form of territory carved out of the Middle East.
other secret treaties

- Treaty of London (April 26, 1915)
- Treaty of Saint-Jean de Maurienne (April, 1917)
• All these treaties applied the principle of compensation.
• Sometimes the treaties stipulated that compensation should take the form of direct European control over territories belonging to the Ottoman Empire.
• At other times, the Entente powers masked their ambitions by promising each other rights to establish or maintain protectorates or to organize zones of indirect control.
• The new Bolshevik government of Russia not only renounced the claims of their predecessors, but it also embarrassed the other entente powers by publishing the texts of the secret agreements signed by the previous Russian government.
the British offered to shelter Muhammad ibn Saud within a “veiled (secret) protectorate” if he only stays out of conflict between the British and the Ottoman Empire.

simultaneously, they promised ibn Saud’s rival, Sharif Hussein ibn Ali of Mecca, gold and guns and the right to establish an ambiguously defined “Arab state of states” in the predominantly Arab areas of the Ottoman Empire in exchange for a revolt against the Ottoman Empire.
Arab Revolt of 1915

- ... was initiated by the Sherif Hussein ibn ‘Ali with the aim of securing independence from the ruling Ottoman Turks and creating a single unified Arab state spanning from Aleppo in Syria to Aden in Yemen.

- This revolt was set in motion by the coup in 1908 in which the Turkish nationalist reform party Young Turks seized power from the old Sultan Abdülhamid II. The Arab leaders felt discriminated against in terms of parliamentary representation and state’s language policy.

- The Ottomans joined the Central Powers in World War I in 1914.
On the other side, Sherif Hussein, as the head of the Arab nationalists, entered into an alliance with the United Kingdom and France against the Ottomans in 1916. The Arab forces were led by his sons, Abdullah and Faysal. The British government in Egypt immediately sent a young officer to work with the Arabs, this man was Captain Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia.
Australian Light-horse troops marched unopposed into Damascus on September 30, 1918. Captain Thomas Edward Lawrence and the Arab troops rode into Damascus the next day to receive an "official" surrender. At the end of the war, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force with the help of their Arab allies had seized what is today Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, large parts of the Arabian peninsula and southern Syria.

The United Kingdom promised in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence that it would support Arab independence if they revolted against the Ottomans.

On the other side, under the 1916 Sykes-Picot secret agreement, the United Kingdom, France and Russia divided the area in ways unfavorable to the Arabs.

Yet, further confusing the issue was the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised support for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine.

Too many promises and secret agreements related to this geographically limited space produced the seed for future conflicts.
Cairo Conference 1921

- To pacify the dissatisfied Hashemite Arabs who felt betrayed and tricked by the British, they carved the state of **Trans-Jordan** out of Palestine and gave it to ‘Amir ‘Abdallah to rule.

- For his brother, ‘Amir Faysal, a new state was constructed. That was **Iraq** made of three Ottoman provinces - Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul.
Abdullah I of Jordan

King Abdullah I of Jordan (1882 – 1951), also known as Abdullah bin al-Husayn was, successively, ‘Amir of Trans-Jordan (1921–1946) under a British Mandate, then King of Trans-Jordan (1946–1949), and finally King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (1949–1951). He is also frequently called King Abdullah the Founder (عبد الله المؤسس), since he was the founder of Jordan.
Jordan

- ... solved the political problem for the British in 1921; however, it created an economic nightmare. (Trans-)Jordan was a country with virtually no economic resources.

- Foreign subsidies have maintained Jordan since 1921 when the British started paying Abdallah a yearly stipend of 5,000 pounds.

- Foreign subsidies increased steadily for the next half century and by 1979 they provided over 50% of government revenue (the figure now is little over 20%).
Iraq

Faisal’s party at the Versailles Peace Conference 1919
T.E. Lawrence is behind Faysal to the right

Faisal bin Husayn (فaisal بن حسين) (1883-1933) was for a short while king of Greater Syria in 1920 and king of Iraq from 1921 to 1933. He was a member of the Hashemite dynasty.
The majority of the population of Iraq were Shi’a Arabs and the foreign-imposed ruling elite - Faisal and his cronies - were Sunni Arabs.

The legitimacy and reputation of the Hashemites in Iraq could have been only drawn from the fact that they belonged to the reputable Meccan clan of Banu Hashim.

The Hashemites trace their ancestry from Hashim ibn ‘Abd al-Manaf (died c. 510 CE), the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad.

The British granted Iraq independence in 1932.

Faisal’s successors led the Kingdom of Iraq until 1958.
In January 1918, prompted by the publication by the Bolshevik revolutionary government in Russia of secret treaties that revealed the imperialistic war aims of the Allies, the U.S. president Woodrow Wilson presented the Fourteen Points to Congress; these outlined the basic provisions that he believed the post-WWI peace settlement must cover. As the war drew to a close and preparations were begun for a peace conference, Wilson was generally looked upon in Europe as the savior of the future.

In December 1918 Wilson set sail for Europe as head of the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Conference; his attendance broke all American precedents. Wilson was received in Europe with warm ovations and set about trying to create a new world society, which would be governed by the "self-determination of peoples," which would be free from secret diplomacy and wars, and, most important, which would have an association of nations to maintain international justice.
At the peace conference, he became involved in long and bitter wrangles with Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George, Vittorio Orlando, and the other representatives of European powers. The resulting Treaty of Versailles was far from being the fulfillment of his dream, although he did secure the adoption of the covenant establishing the League of Nations. Wilson accepted the treaty as being the best obtainable.

At home, opposition to the League had been growing, and when Wilson returned (July, 1919) with the signed treaty, his accomplishments at Paris were received with mixed feelings. In the Senate, quarrels over the ratification of the treaty and the proposed amendments broke out immediately. In the group that emerged as opponents of the League, Henry Cabot Lodge was outstanding. Nevertheless, despite the agitation of a handful of "irreconcilable," the Senate would probably have ratified the treaty if certain reservations protecting U.S. sovereignty had been added. Wilson, however, refused to compromise and sought popular support by making a speaking tour of the United States. He was on his way east from the Pacific coast when fatigue and strain brought on a sudden physical breakdown in Sept., 1919, and forced him to cancel his trip.
On Oct. 2, 1919, the President suffered a stroke, which incapacitated him for several months. He never entirely recovered, and for the remainder of his second term, Wilson, bitterly disillusioned, was virtually detached from the political scene. It has been postulated that he was so ill that his wife, Edith Bolling Wilson, made virtually all his political decisions for him.

He continued to be uncompromising in his refusal to accept reservations on the League. Three years after the expiration of his term he died. His character and policies have been the subject of acrimonious debate, but even those who have doubted his wisdom have recognized him as one of the pivotal figures of American and world history.

In 1920 he was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize for his Fourteen Points and for securing the adoption of the Covenant of the League of Nations as part of the Treaty of Versailles.
Some Useful Movies

1. Origins of WWI (part 1 and part 2)

2. Treaty of Versailles by BBC Two

3. Treaty of Versailles by Mojo

4. Blood and Oil: The Middle East in WWI