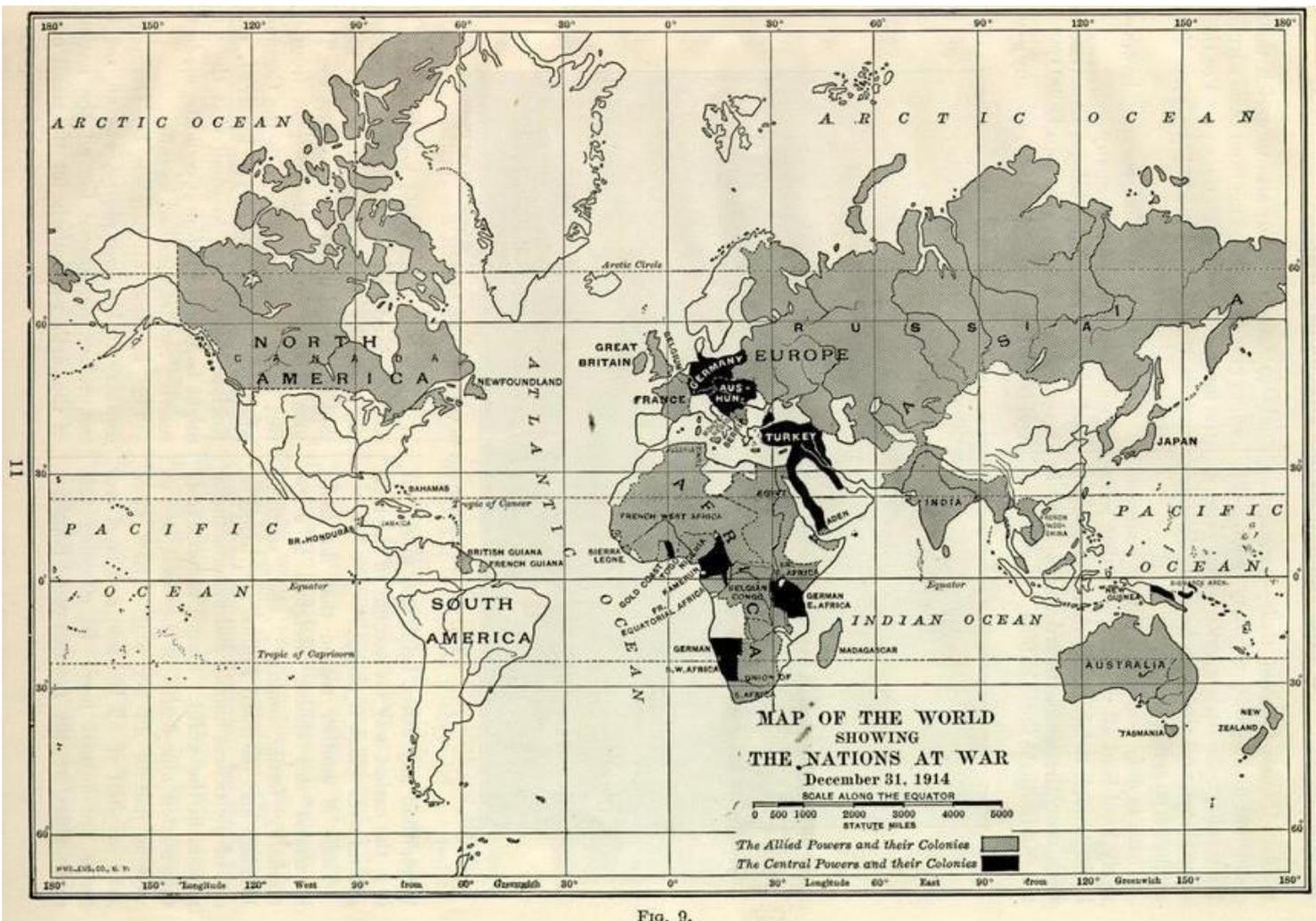


WWI Source Pack

Parliament and the outbreak of war

This pack contains

- Lesson Plan/Research project
- Five historical sources



Use this lesson plan and associated sources, including two re-enacted speeches, to support your students to develop their historical research, analysis and presentation skills.

 60 minutes

Run a lesson or research project in five steps

1. Introduce the Task:

Each student (or small group) will undertake historical research into the role of the House of Commons at the outbreak of WWI in 1914. They will be provided with a source pack, including two re-enacted speeches that took place in the House of Commons on the eve of war (available as videos).

2. Assign Questions:

Either use the suggested questions included in this pack or create your own. Alternatively, encourage your students to develop their own questions, based on the sources they are presented with.

3. Distribute Sources:

Hand out copies of the source packs to the students and give them access to the speeches available online. You might want to allow students to find further evidence to support their research elsewhere such as online or the school library.

4. Individual/Group Research:

Depending on the time and resources available, you can either encourage students to use as many sources as they choose to form their argument, or limit them – for example, by explaining that their final argument must use two sources from this pack, along with one other piece of evidence found through further research using online sources or the library. You can use the research prompts below to brief the students before they begin.

5. Present Findings:

Students present their findings to the class. The presentation tips below can be used by the students to help them put together and present a clear argument.

If some people have answered the same question, compare the arguments and evidence they chose. If they are different, why? Which argument is stronger?

Alternatively, you can ask for research to be delivered in written form.

Research Questions (with optional follow-up questions)

What was the House of Commons' role in The UK entering WWI?

- What arguments did Sir Edward Grey use to persuade the House of Commons to support the UK joining WWI?
- What arguments were put forward to oppose entering the war?

Key sources: Speeches by Sir Edward Grey and Ramsay MacDonald, image of the House of Commons chamber, image of House of Commons war memorial.

What were the causes of WWI?

- What events led to the outbreak of the war?
- Which countries were involved and why?

Key sources: Speech by Sir Edward Grey, 1914 map of Europe.

Why did the UK enter the war?

- What arguments were made for and against the UK entering WWI? What perceived benefits were there for the UK?
- What arguments might be used today for or against the UK entering the war?

Key Sources: Speeches by Sir Edward Grey and Ramsay MacDonald, 1914 map of Europe.

Sources provided

Source 1: MP profiles (p5-6)

- Sir Edward Grey, including image
- Ramsay MacDonald, including image

Source 2: Speech re-enactments (audio)

- Sir Edward Grey on entering into war, 3 August 1914 youtu.be/wrePa0wGGNI
- Ramsay MacDonald's response to Sir Edward Grey, 3 August 1914 youtu.be/cKbz0bXCCK8

Transcripts for these speeches are included on p7-11.

Sources 3-5: Images (p12-14)

- Photo of the House of Commons chamber from 1914
- Photo of the House of Commons War Memorial
- Map of Europe circa 1914

Research prompts

- What information do I need to be able to answer the question?
- Which sources from my pack offer me that information?
- What are the gaps in my knowledge?
- Where could I look to find evidence to fill those gaps?
- Once research is complete – which pieces of evidence best support my argument?
- How shall I present my findings to create a strong argument?

Presentation tips

- Begin preparing by listing the key points you want to cover
- You could write notes on index cards, or using PowerPoint, so that you can easily move around points to try out different orders
- Use key words and phrases, rather than full sentences, as prompts
- Be wary of time allocated for your presentation and make sure you can cover all your key points
- Try to look up regularly from your notes to speak directly to the audience
- Suggested presentation structure:
 - Opening – introduce the question you are answering
 - Summary – summarise your argument in brief
 - Evidence – introduce each piece of evidence you have chosen, and draw out the specific points which best support your argument
 - Conclusion – sum up your argument in around three clear, short points.

Source 1: MP profiles

Sir Edward Grey MP

Sir Edward Grey was Foreign Secretary at the time of World War I.

He firmly believed that Britain had an 'obligation of honour' to support France – he even threatened to resign if France were abandoned. Grey was shocked that his foreign policies had failed to prevent war.



Edward Grey, 1st Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Henry Walter ('H. Walter') Barnett
© National Portrait Gallery, London

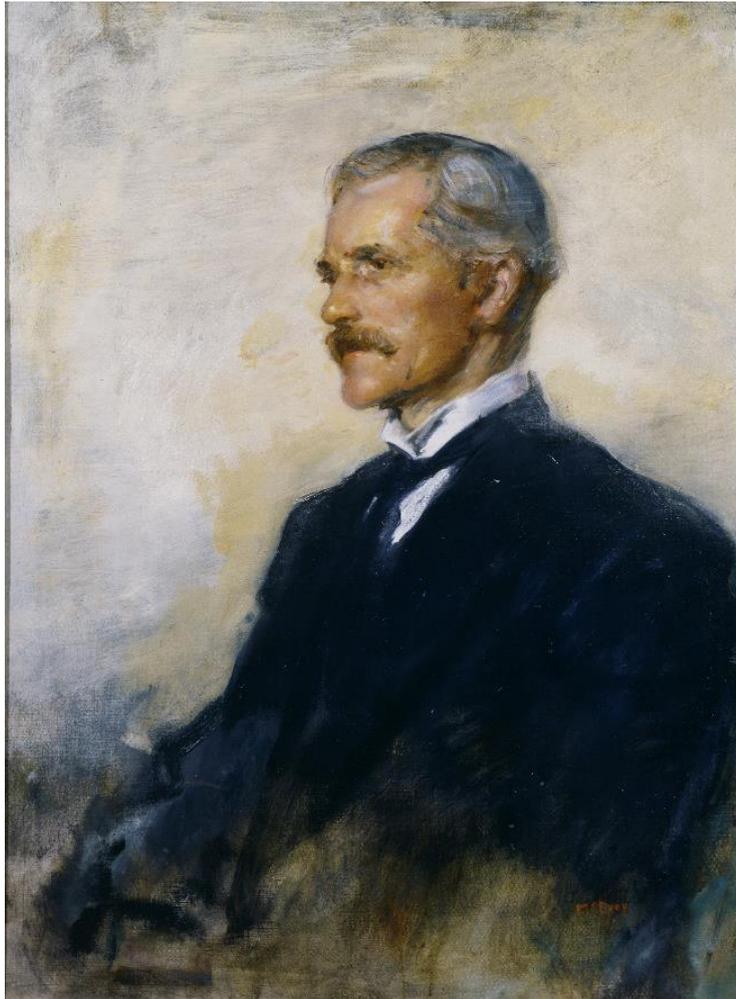
"We are going to suffer terribly in this war, whether we are in it or whether we stand aside."

"I believe that when the country realises what is at stake, what the real dangers are... we shall be supported throughout, not only by the House of Commons, but by the determination, resolution, courage and endurance of the whole country."

Ramsey MacDonald MP

James Ramsay MacDonald became leader of the Labour Party in 1911.

He resigned in 1914 due to his strong opposition to the UK's participation in WWI. He was in a complex situation, as although he did not want Germany to win, he loathed violence. MacDonald later became the UK's first Labour Prime Minister.



James Ramsay MacDonald by Arthur Ambrose McEvoy
© Palace of Westminster Collection, WOA 6021 parliament.uk/art

“You are engaging in a whole European war, which is not going to leave the map of Europe in the position it is in now.”

“No such friendship between one nation and another could ever justify one of those nations entering war on behalf of the other.”

Source 2: Speech transcripts

Sir Edward Grey, speech to the House of Commons, 3 August 1914

Narrator: The following recording is a re-enactment of Sir Edward Grey's address to Parliament on the eve of war, August 3rd 1914. This is an edited version of the speech. A full transcript is available online.

Sir Edward Grey: Last week I stated that we were working for peace not only for this country, but to preserve the peace of Europe. Today events move so rapidly that it is exceedingly difficult to state with technical accuracy the actual state of affairs, but it is clear that the peace of Europe cannot be preserved. Russia and Germany, at any rate, have declared war upon each other.

First of all, let me say, very shortly, that we have consistently worked with a single mind, with all the earnestness in our power, to preserve peace. The House may be satisfied on that point.

I would like the House to approach this crisis in which we are now from the point of view of British interests, British honour, and British obligations, free from all passion as to why peace has not yet been preserved....

The situation in the present crisis... has originated in a dispute between Austria and Serbia. France are involved in it because of their obligation of honour under a definite alliance with Russia.

That obligation of honour cannot apply in the same way to us. We are not parties to

the Franco-Russian alliance. For many years we have had a long-standing friendship with France.

The French fleet is now in the Mediterranean and the northern and western coasts of France are absolutely undefended.

My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside... and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes, with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing.

I believe that would be the feeling of this country.

Let us assume that today we stand aside in an attitude of neutrality. Let us suppose the French fleet is withdrawn from the Mediterranean; and let us assume that out of that come consequences unforeseen, which make it necessary in defence of vital British interests, we should go to war; we might have exposed this country from our negative attitude at the present moment to the most appalling risk.

Things move very hurriedly from hour to hour, and I understand that the German Government would be prepared, if we would pledge ourselves to neutrality, to agree that its fleet would not attack the northern coast of France. I have only heard that shortly before I came to the House, but it is far too narrow an

engagement for us. And, Sir, there is the more serious consideration -- becoming more serious every hour -- there is the question of the neutrality of Belgium...

I telegraphed to both Paris and Berlin to say that it was essential for us to know whether the French and German Governments were prepared to undertake an engagement to respect the neutrality of Belgium.

I got from the French Government this reply: "The French Government are resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium." From the German Government the reply was: "The Secretary of State could not possibly give an answer before consulting the Emperor and the Imperial Chancellor."

I telegraphed at the same time to Brussels to the Belgian Government, and I got the following reply from Sir Francis Villiers: "Belgium will, to the utmost of her power, maintain neutrality, and Belgium expects and desires other powers to uphold it."

It now appears from the news I have received today that an ultimatum has been given to Belgium by Germany, the object of which was to offer Belgium friendly relations with Germany on condition that she would facilitate the passage of German troops through Belgium.

We have great and vital interests in the independence of Belgium.

If it be the case that there has been anything in the nature of an ultimatum to

Belgium, asking her to compromise her neutrality, her independence is gone.

If her independence goes, the independence of Holland will follow. I ask the House from the point of view of British interests to consider what may be at stake. If France is beaten in a struggle of life and death, beaten to her knees, loses her position as a great power, becomes subordinate to the will and power of one greater than herself...

If that were to happen and if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence, and then Holland, and then Denmark, then would not Mr. Gladstone's words come true, that just opposite to us there would be a common interest against the unmeasured aggrandisement of any power?

It may be said, I suppose, that we might stand aside, husband our strength, and that, whatever happened in the course of this war, at the end of it intervene with effect to put things right, and to adjust them to our own point of view. If, in a crisis like this, we run away... from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost.

We are going to suffer, I am afraid, terribly in this war, whether we are in it or whether we stand aside.

I do not believe for a moment that at the end of this war, even if we stood aside and remained aside, we should be in a

position, a material position, to use our force decisively to undo what had happened in the course of the war, to prevent the whole of the west of Europe opposite to us -- if that had been the result of the war -- falling under the domination of a single power, and I am quite sure that our moral position would be such as to have lost all respect.

The Belgian treaty obligations, the possible position in the Mediterranean, with damage to British interests, and what may happen to France from our failure to support France -- if we were to say that all those things matter nothing, were as nothing, and to say we would stand aside, we should, I believe, sacrifice our respect and good name and reputation before the world, and should not escape the most serious and grave economic consequences.

The most awful responsibility is resting upon the Government in deciding what to advise the House of Commons to do.

We worked for peace up to the last moment and beyond the last moment. How hard, how persistently, and how earnestly we strove for peace last week. But that is over, as far as the peace of Europe is concerned. We are now face to face with a situation and all the consequences which it may yet have to unfold.

I have now put the vital facts before the House, and if, as seems not improbable, we are forced, and rapidly forced, to take our stand upon those issues, then I believe, when the country realises what is at stake, what the real issues are, the

magnitude of the impending dangers in the west of Europe, which I have endeavoured to describe to the House, we shall be supported throughout, not only by the House of Commons, but by the determination, the resolution, the courage, and the endurance of the whole country.

Ramsay MacDonald, response to Sir Edward Grey, 3 August 1914

Narrator: The following recording is a re-enactment of a statement made by Ramsay MacDonald on the eve of war, August 3rd 1914. MacDonald, along with Parliament, has just heard an impassioned speech by the Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, advising the House that he believes Britain has no choice but to enter into war.

Ramsay MacDonald: I should, had circumstances permitted, have preferred to remain silent this afternoon. But circumstances do not permit of that. I shall model what I have to say on the two speeches we have listened to, and I shall be brief.

The Right Hon. Gentleman, to a House which in a great majority is with him, has delivered a speech the echoes of which will go down in history. The speech has been impressive, but however much we may resist the conclusion to which he has come, we have not been able to resist the moving character of his appeal.

I think he is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong.

We shall see. The effect of the Right Hon. Gentleman's speech in the House is not to be its final effect. There may be opportunities, or there may not be opportunities for us to go into details, but I want to say to this House, and to say it without equivocation, if the Right Hon. Gentleman had come here today and told

us that our country is in danger, I do not care what party he appealed to, or to what class he appealed, we would be with him and behind him. If this is so, we will vote him what money he wants.

Yes, and we will go further.

We will offer him ourselves if the country is in danger. But he has not persuaded me that it is. He has not persuaded my hon. friends who cooperate with me that it is, and I am perfectly certain, when his speech gets into cold print tomorrow, he will not persuade a large section of the country.

If the nation's honour were in danger we would be with him. There has been no crime committed by statesmen of this character without those statesmen appealing to their nation's honour.

We fought the Crimean War because of our honour. We rushed to South Africa because of our honour. The Right Hon. Gentleman is appealing to us today because of our honour.

There is a third point. If the Right Hon. Gentleman could come to us and tell us that a small European nationality like Belgium is in danger, and could assure us he is going to confine the conflict to that question, then we would support him.

What is the use of talking about coming to the aid of Belgium, when, as a matter of fact, you are engaging in a whole European War which is not going to leave the map of Europe in the position it is in now.

The Right Hon. Gentleman said nothing

about Russia. We want to know about that. We want to try to find out what is going to happen, when it is all over, to the power of Russia in Europe, and we are not going to go blindly into this conflict without having some sort of a rough idea as to what is going to happen.

Finally, so far as France is concerned, we say solemnly and definitely that no such friendship as the Right Hon. Gentleman describes between one nation and another could ever justify one of those nations entering into war on behalf of the other.

If France is really in danger, if, as the result of this, we are going to have the power, civilisation, and genius of France removed from European history, then let him so say.

But it is an absolutely impossible conception, which we are talking about to endeavour to justify that which the right hon. Gentleman has foreshadowed.

I not only know but I feel that the feeling of the House is against us. I have been through this before, and 1906 came as part recompense.

It will come again.

We are going to go through it all. We will go through it all.

So far as we are concerned, whatever may happen, whatever may be said about us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will take the action that we will take of saying that this country ought to have remained neutral, because in the deepest parts of our hearts we believe that that was right and that that alone

was consistent with the honour of the country and the traditions of the party that are now in office.

Source 3: House of Commons Chamber, 1914

This image shows the House of Commons as it looked in 1914, very similar to how it looks today. Sir Edward Grey would have made his speech from one side of the chamber, while Ramsay MacDonald would have stood from the opposing benches to react. The chamber was designed in this way, with two clear sides, to promote debate, discussion and sharing of different points of view.



Source 4: WWI Memorial, Westminster Hall

This Parliamentary War Memorial commemorates members of both Houses of Parliament who died in the First World War – 145 individuals. Designed by the Australian sculptor Bertram Mackennal and unveiled in 1922, it stands in St Stephen's Porch at the south end of Westminster Hall. More information can be found at parliament.uk/ww1



Source 5: Map of Europe c.1914

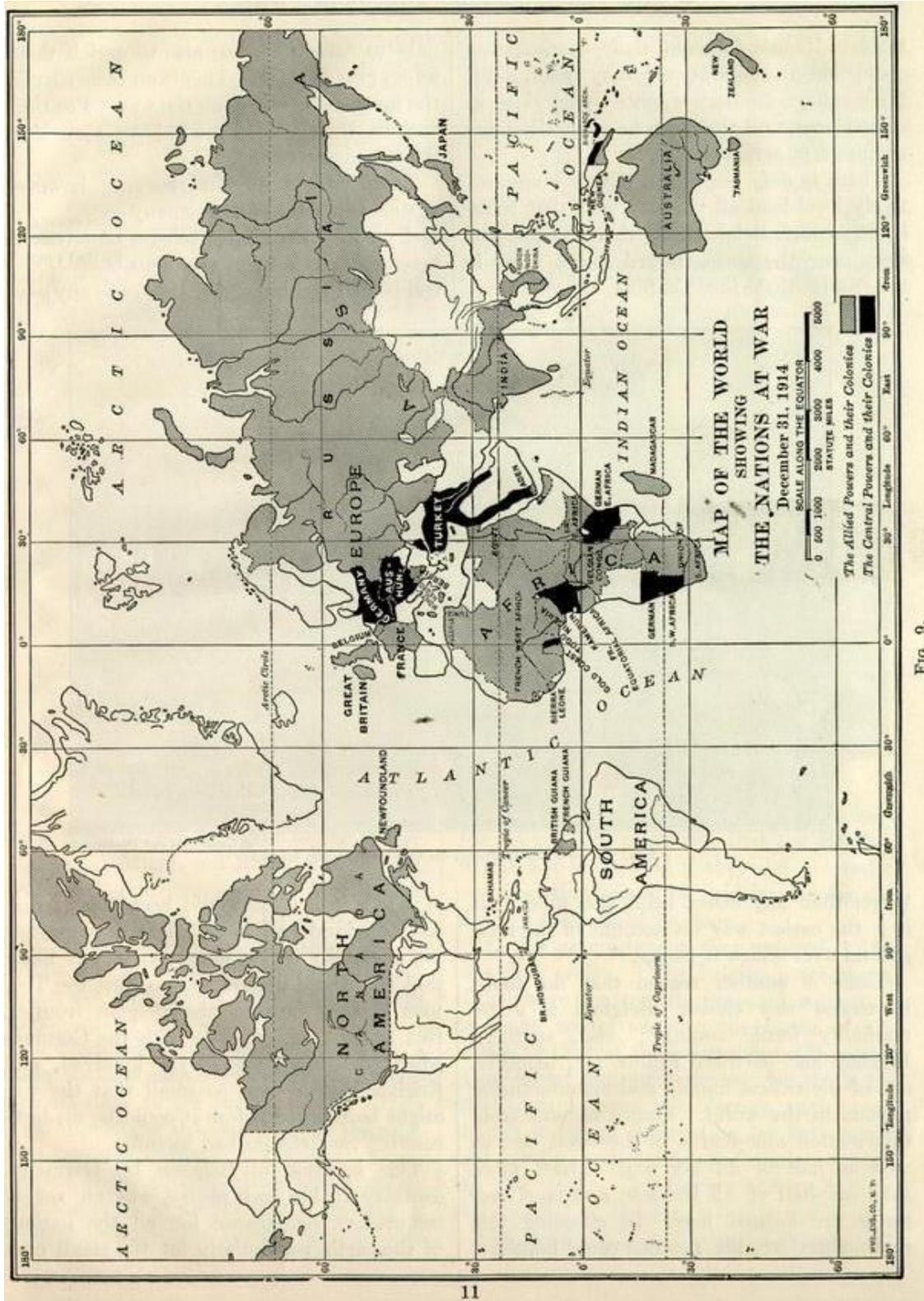


FIG. 9.

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The Geography of the Great War, by Frank M. McMurry, PH.D, 1919