

# The Failure of Entente Civil Decision Making in Military Strategy: The Case of the Planning and Execution of the Dardanelles Campaign

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The Dardanelles Campaign was one of the most promising but also the most poorly designed and planned campaigns of the First World War. The scheme of the attack on the Dardanelles with an ultimate aim of knocking the Ottoman Empire out of the war by invading Constantinople was not only a simple military affair but also an important step in the determination of the new entente war aims which proved vague and indecisive to produce a combined war effort for the entente.

The argument of this paper suggests that in the initial phase of the First World War, the entente powers' failure in combined war effort was due to their inability to prepare a combined strategy equipped with concrete war aim to initiate such cooperation. The paper sets forth the hypothesis that the decision making process of the scheme was a transformation in the entente's strategy which proved ineffective. Initiated by Britain, The Dardanelles scheme was an effort to create a more efficient strategy by introducing a more rewarding and concrete war aim. The paper aims to discuss the hypothesis by putting forward six claims in an effort to build up the argument. The first three claims would form the argument and the second set of claims would build up the hypothesis, a final analysis would try to prove connect the argument to the hypothesis.

## The Relation between War Aims and Strategy

Clausewitz's theory of war marks a clear distinction between war and warfare.<sup>1</sup> According to Clausewitz, warfare is an action of violence in which one side tries to impose his will to the other. His description of warfare as an act of violence reveals the definition of war should be different and inclusive than warfare which is merely an act of violence. In that sense Clausewitz describes "war" as merely a continuation of politics by other means. The logic of the definition determines war as an instrument for states in which they continue their relations by means of conflict and warfare. In such a sense, war is an act of politics and a kind of communication with a conflicting manner; it's a pattern of struggle for persuasion. Under such conditions, war is politics combined by means of force; a collection of practices reinforced by strategy and tactics to reach defined goals and objectives.

If war should be considered a political activity in Clausewitzian sense, in which political activity would be carried on with means of conflict and violence; than a state should mobilize its resources which would suit for sustaining warfare over a period of time. It should be noted that a state's resources mobilized for war are not necessarily composed of pure militaristic assets and in case of war, to materialize the objectives warfare may not be enough alone. Therefore a correlation between war and peace should also be taken into consideration. Wars are not isolated actions but are made for gaining a favorable position in resolution of political conflicts.<sup>2</sup> In such a sense, all wars are made for a condition of a favorable peace and therefore in times of war, decisions should be made considering the conditions that would appear at the end of the war. Before a choice for war, a state should decide the peace conditions that it wants to dictate. A state should mobilize and use its resources in actions considering such conditions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Gray, *Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p.185.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated to English by O.J. Matthijs Jolles, New York, the Modern Library, 1943, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gray, *Ibid*, p. 86.

However it should be noted that such an organization would be problematic when it comes to decision making as the definition of war suggests decisions should be taken by civil decision makers. The definition of warfare necessitates profession of military. Such a distinction may create a paradox of hierarchy in a state's decision making, if clear objectives and goals which are to be gained by war is not defined. In other words, a state involves in war to materialize certain objectives and under such circumstances constitute a strategy to reach them using instruments of conflict. In such a sense, civil decision making should define the objectives, the strategy should be built by civil and military decision making together as such a build up would necessitate both dimensions and finally the tactics should be made and executed by military decision makers. Such a hierarchy puts civil decision making on top and military decision making as subordinate hypothetically.

### **The Making of the Entente:**

The escalation that had started after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, finalized by the break out of a major European war in the final days of July. By August 1, except Britain, all the great powers that had shaped the status quo of the European politics joined the war. On the news of the German note to Belgium which demanded a safe passage of their armies from Belgium's territory and the German invasion of Belgium. After the refusal of the note, Britain gave a note Germany on 3 August to stop the invasion. As the British demand left unanswered, on August 4, Britain declared war on Germany.

The involvement of Britain to the European war is still a subject of a debate. However it could be argued that the attitude of her diplomatic effort aimed at giving a final diplomatic message to the belligerents that were preparing themselves to the upcoming war. The position which Britain found luxury of resisting war was her nonalignment to any major power with an alliance. The Triple Alliance and the Franco-Russian Alliance leveled their members' diplomatic elasticity during the Sarajevo Crisis or more than that, added a certain level of motive to their ambitions, such as the case of German blank cheque to Austria-Hungary. However Britain had a series of agreements signed with France in 1904 and with Russia in 1907, both bringing solutions to the three powers' colonial disputes. Though neither of these agreements contained any military content, they pave way to further talks of cooperation at the level of military officials. Despite the fact that these talks proceeded until 1914, there was not any kind of treaty signed at the level of governments about an alliance.

What had brought together the entente is still argued today and this paper does not claim to solve the puzzle; instead the definitions of the threats that had been determined as common to the coalition will be put forward. It can be said that both 1904 and 1907 ententes signed in a manner to resolve the problems that the three major European powers confront with each other in peripheries such as Africa and Asia. As in the case of Fashoda in 1898, these problems of periphery indeed had potential to start a major war which would eventually be made in Europe. In that sense it could be argued that all three sides wished to come to terms in case of conflicting colonial issues and indirectly expressed their common understanding of excluding their imperial ambitions out of European politics. Such a determination makes possible to claim why the entente powers found themselves in clash with both Germany and Austria-Hungary who fail to separate their imperial ambitions out of European great power politics. From the Moroccan Crisis in 1905 onwards until the Balkan Crisis in 1913; all European crises that had escalated the tension in European politics were confrontations of such rivalries in which both Germany and Austria-Hungary aimed to gain favored positions in European politics by using imperialist arguments in North Africa and in Balkans. By 1912 the entente stuck together as a bloc to contain the interference of Germany and Austria-Hungary to European politics with measures that the entente's coalition was based upon to reject. The nature of the Sarajevo crisis may also be argued in such a point of view which Austrian imperial ambitions opted for a limited preventive war with Serbia. When in 1914, Austria-Hungary and Germany initiated another crisis which eventually became an armed conflict, the entente powers reacted with

such a reaction that they have developed. It could be said that the common war aim of the entente in 1914 was to contain Germany and Austria-Hungary as they did before in the previous crises before 1914 but this time not by politics only but also by military means. In other words, the combined war effort of the entente, beginning from July 1914 was solely for encountering German aggression and oddly Austria-Hungary was omitted. Therefore as a final verdict it could be argued that to counter the Germany by military means was the ultimate war aim of the entente.

It is not easy to label clear individual war aims for the three states that form the Entente. This is due to the nature of the treaties that combine Britain, France and Russia in a coalition. Even though, France and Russia allied themselves together in 1894, Britain never signed an official alliance treaty with any of these two states. It should be necessary to remember that even 1894 Franco-Russian Alliance Treaty's content was not announced and kept secret until 1918.<sup>4</sup> To add more weight to the confusion, though there was no official binding between Britain and other Entente powers, British officials who occupy different positions negotiated various unofficial treaties with France and Russia, without the consent or even knowledge of their governments. The only official treaty that had bind Britain was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance which was signed in 1902. However the scope of this alliance only covered Far East and apart from the region, it did not mean much but a weak coalition.

Perhaps the only treaty on the Entente side to bear fruit for common war aims was the Franco-Russian Alliance. The alliance was the sum of nearly two and a half years work of both politicians and military of both sides and was neatly designed to work as defensive pact in case of an aggression from a common enemy, namely Germany; however the scope of the alliance was limited to Europe. Though the signature of the treaty was announced, its clauses were kept secret. This was due to the will of the signatories to use the alliance also as a coalition outside of its scope. As both signatories were in an ambitious imperial struggle with Britain during the signature of the alliance, both France and Russia calculated that such cooperation might give a strong impression to Britain who stood alone in "splendid isolation". In such a sense the low density of responsibilities of a coalition allowed to show a strong profile but to limit the danger of plunging in to an unwanted war. Also it should be reminded that during the times of signature of the alliance, neither France, nor Russia had grave misunderstandings with Germany and neither of the both signatories were threatened by German aggression. One good example of this was the Russian note given to Japan after Sino-Japanese War in 1895. The note was a Russian gesture to Japan to give away her privileges that were gained by the treaty of Shimonoseki and it was backed up by France and Germany on Russia's request. However, the alliance was taken seriously by Britain and constituted a basis for the new security strategy of the British Empire after 1895. It seemed that there was more for tension instead of a coalition between Britain, France and Russia during 1890's. It was Britain's success to pacify the Franco-Russian coalition by forcing both sides to come to terms with their rival. While the Fashoda Crisis in 1898 paved way the Entente Cordial of 1904, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 paved way to the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 which eventually made possible the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907.

Under the conditions mentioned above, the reason for Britain's involvement to the major war in Europe may only be explained by her diplomatic attitude towards European politics. The nonalignment was Britain's own choice to fulfill the role she had exercised through most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a balancer to sustain the European balance of power (Though there is a huge argument about Britain's position within the 19<sup>th</sup> century European politics, this study accepts such definition to resolve the war aims of Britain). Though Britain had clearly demonstrated her anti German attitude by taking sides with France in the Moroccan Crises and in forcing Germany to a naval arms race, such attitudes were explained by British officials to be related the main theme in British

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<sup>4</sup> For detail about the alliance see: Georges Michon, *Franco-Russian Alliance 1891-1917*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1929.

European policy of maintaining the “balance of power” in the continent.<sup>5</sup> Technically, Britain’s choice to take position to side with the Franco-Russian Alliance in the war, both added a strong gesture for her balancing purpose but also led to the elimination of a possible peace mediator position which Britain may have undertaken. Perhaps Britain’s choice was based on a sight which dominated almost all other belligerents: the European system was failing and the fight was for a new status quo in which without joining the fight a state may not gain a position at the final regulations.

**Claim 1: The War aims of the Entente was vague in character both on combined and individual levels:**

The literature on the origins and causes of the First World War mostly focuses on disruptive German plans that aimed to change the status quo of European system. However it should be noted that there was also a preparation on her counterparts. As has mentioned in the secret clauses of the Franco-Russian Alliance, the cooperation of military forces were designed. Britain’s involvement in military cooperation with Franco-Russian alliance never existed officially but indeed talks between military staffs had started as early as 1905. There were devised plans between Britain and France which bore out of negotiations in 1906 and 1912. They were vague in implementation and usually related with the time and amount of the deployment of a British expeditionary force to support French army in her fight with its German counterpart. The content of the naval cooperation between the two powers that was negotiated in 1912 by the initiation of the new Lord of Admiralty Winston Churchill was better designed as the areas of responsibility was shared in which British held the North Sea and the Channel while French Navy held the Mediterranean. There were negotiations in 1914 about cooperation of British and Russian navies in Baltic that would be similar with the Anglo-French naval cooperation at the level of admiralties of both powers but yet an agreement was not reached when the war broke out. The problem was that all of these plans were secretly arranged by naval and military authorities and without the consent of the existing governments. When the war broke out, the governments were still unannounced and uninformed of such devised or proposed plans.

Given the date of the signature in 1894, there is a strong argument that has been debated that both France and Russia was aiming for a war with Germany long before the escalation in European politics after 1905.<sup>6</sup> It should be pointed out that there were formal staff meetings of the allied military officials that had occurred in 1900,1901,1906,1907, 1908 in which the primary aim of the alliance was strongly emphasized as the defeat of German armies remains, no matter what the circumstances, the first and principal of the allied armies” and in the meetings between 1910-1913, the defensive character of the alliance was discussed to a point where a conclusion to be reached as the defensive character of the alliance would not rule out any offensive operations.<sup>7</sup> In the staff talks in 1913, it was decided that France would concentrate almost all its military power on her North Eastern front with Germany and start an offensive in the eleventh day of her mobilization, while Russian army would start her offensive on the fourteenth day of her mobilization. Eventually, both sides decided to open wireless channels and back up links to communicate and coordinate their plans and actions.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the main military weakness of the Entente’s military preparedness was the problem of cooperation with Britain. The position of Britain, which she aimed to act as a balancer against the

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<sup>5</sup> Zara Steiner and Keith Wilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, Second Ed., New York, Palgrave, 2003, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> For such an argument see: George F. Kennan, *The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Robert A. Doughty, “France”, *War Planning 1914*, editors: Richard F. Hamilton and Holger Herwig, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 146-147.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 147.

strength of Germany in Europe which is assumed to become a military domination as well as economic, necessitated further support rather than diplomatic only. In that sense the Moroccan Crises in 1905 and 1911 forced British decision makers to negotiate for military support against supposed German aggression. The talks were also made at military staff levels and were based on support of a British expeditionary force that would be sent to France. However, Britain's proposals were vague and most importantly would only be in force if France is attacked and that Belgium's neutrality would be respected.<sup>9</sup>

To point out the problem on the military cooperation on the entente side, it should also be pointed out that to fight a war with Germany, each entente power had different plans which were kept mostly secret from the home governments. Military officials in France had been working on a series of plans since their defeat at 1871 and Plan 17 was the final version that had evolved. Plan 17 was based on a massive offensive towards Alsace Lorraine. On the other hand, the Russian Plan 19 was based on mobilization of five armies but their forward moves were to be decided due to the war's progression. There was no devised war plan made in Britain. A slight observation may reveal that the state of the strategic problems in plan making. Though the war plans were made to wage a war with Germany, they were mostly based on winning battles rather than the war. Neither France's Plan 17, nor Russian Plan 19 compromised a second phase to force the opponent to sue for peace or worse if the plans prove unsuccessful the plans did not offered any solutions for their own makers to sue for peace. This may prove that there was a lack of strategy when the Entente powers entered the First World War. As the Entente armies marched to war, the governments of Entente powers were not sure of the peace that their military would fight for. In such a sense, it could be argued that the Entente powers went to war without any clear war aim that would constitute a post war peace.

In conclusion, these arguments may be put forward: first, the entente was made to exclude any interference of any power in European politics whose attitudes were related with imperial ambitions. In 1914, the entente showed that the coalition was ready to protect their common cause by military means too. Finally, this has constituted a common war aim and after the involvement of Britain to the European war, the entente bloc was virtually formed. Second, though there seems a concrete war aim, that is to stop German aggression to alter the structure of European system's power balance, this proved to be a short term target for the coalition. There was not a proposal or a preparation for any long term changes that may occur after the war's end and the effects of the war on the balance that would eventually emerge. Thirdly, such a short sighted aim could not have been supplemented by a strong strategy and as the entente powers did not have such strategic preparedness as the structure of coalition making does not supplement much means to such an end. Fourthly, the lack of military cooperation on governmental level limited the military effort that could effectively put against the common goal and the sole common war aim of German aggression. Once again the lack of common strategy led to individual war plans or unofficial military cooperation agreements that eventually led to major failures. Finally, the entente fell short of strategies as with the failures and unexpected situations that had come out of the fighting in the continent. Such a situation may two consequences, either an effort for a combined strategy to sustain a combined war effort or dissolution of the entente as a fighting bloc.

It seemed that all these related arguments forced the agendas of entente powers. However there were other major problems after the results of the fighting on the major fronts begun to reveal out of the fog of war.

**Claim 2: The Decision Making Structures of the Entente averted determining war aims on combined and individual levels:**

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 147; Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, New York, Ballantine Books, p.53-66.

Basically, the Entente was a coalition of two constitutional monarchies and a republic. Each state had different institutional decision making processes and different privileges given to different institutions. This situation was mostly evident in the case of the relationship between the security issues and the security institutions of the entente states. Though each of it had war and naval ministries, such institutions differ in mission and also in character related with the description and determination of the security of the state. There was also a problem of hierarchy as military issues still accepted as a sub category of politics in which civil authorities felt vulnerable to military authorities' political ambitions. Therefore a degree of control was aimed to be built upon military by creating positions that carry both political and military characteristics and in a proportion which its scale could easily change. As the First World War started, combined by the lack of strategy, such positions did create problems and decreased the potential in decision making. The case was evident in all of the entente power' decision making mechanisms.

Though Britain and Russia was constitutional monarchies, they were very much different in character. Though after the defeat of 1905 when domestic unrest necessitated political reform Tsar Nicholas was forced to open the State Duma he quickly took the measures to limit its powers to sustain his absolute rule. Neither the Tsar, nor his ministers were not to responsible to the State Duma and therefore the assembly acted as a body with a very limited power about internal affairs and was strictly under control of the Tsar.

The Russian military institutions were not much better than the civil side. Under the Romanov Monarchy, the army served as a mean for domestic oppression. However in the early 1900's, while the rival armies rocketed their renovations, Russian army was somewhere between a police force rather than a regular army.<sup>10</sup> The defeat against Japan in 1905 disturbed the great power image of Russia and the Bosnian Crisis in 1908 added insult to the injury. The first crisis revealed the weakness and the second the incompetence of the Russian military machine. The governmental responses were the establishment of a State Defense Council in 1905 that would serve as a smaller administrative body to provide better administration to the cooperation of both the army and the navy and to harmonize their efforts in state defense. However this institution was abolished in 1909. Also, the Main Directorate of the General Staff was established in 1906 which would act independent of the war ministry and would solely be responsible of military planning and organization. The new body was directly responsible to the Tsar; however War Ministry was accepted as a higher military agency for administration and internal security.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, after the shock of 1908, a reorganization and rearmament program for both the army and the navy were initiated in the end of 1910.<sup>12</sup> By 1914, Russian military forces renovation was bearing fruit, however institutional body of both the army and the navy was a system of cast in which competence and merit meant little.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian army entered the war with many deficiencies in its administrative structure. While the abolishment of State Defense Council disturbed the cooperation of the army with the navy, the hierarchy that has been established for a better decision making process was utterly demolished. As the Minister of War V.A. Sukhomlinov who took the office in 1909, subsumed the General Staff to the War Ministry's subordination and ending its independence, the hope for effective decision making in military affairs faded. Also Sukhomlinov's conservative mind and his distance to foreign policy blocked army's awareness of the declining state of the European politics

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<sup>10</sup>Brian D. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Menning, "Mukden to Tannenberg: Defeat to Defeat", *The Military History of Tsarist Russia*, editors: Frederic W. Kagan and Robin Higman, New York, Palgrave, 2002, p. 209.

<sup>12</sup> William J. Fuller Jr, *Strategy and Power in Russia 1600-1914*, New York, The Free Press, 1992, p.423-432.

<sup>13</sup>Taylor, *Ibid*, p. 63.

and preparedness to the upcoming modern warfare.<sup>14</sup> By 1914 the Russian military decision making was centered on the Tsar and a few short sighted men whom he chose.<sup>15</sup>

Within the powers in the entente, France seems to have a well structured mechanism of establishing a hierarchy between the civil and military decision making. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 and the defeat sustained, the Third Republic felt that there was a need of a new military officer breed to restore the military might of France once again. However there was also a concern about the military's position and cooperation with the civil authority within the hierarchy of the new republic. The previous Bonapartist experiences also added weight to the concerns about the political reliability of the army. Therefore in 1874, the existing small General Staff was extended and added to the subordination of the War Ministry; the Chief of Staff was subordinated to the minister and had no direct control over the army. However it was obvious that the fragmentation of the military hierarchy would deem the effectiveness of the army, so other steps were taken for compensation. In 1872, a Superior Council of War was established which was a committee headed by the president and made of the premier and army's senior generals. The council was defined to be a body of consultation on matters of measures able to affect the constitution of the army and the manner of how these measures should be applied.<sup>16</sup> A second council, the Superior Council of National Defense was established in 1906, which was composed of the president as chief, the premier, the ministers of war, navy, foreign affairs, finance and colonies. The ranking officers of the army and navy also included the council but as subordinates and not as voting members. The council was supposed to act as a forum of discussion about the problems related the defense of the republic.<sup>17</sup> Such councils were the efforts of civil authorities to build a control over military by establishing a hierarchy. Same attitude was also evident in the case of appointing a commander to the army. Instead of giving command of the army under one general, a dualist approach was chosen. Instead of one commander who will be in charge of the army, the power was distributed between two generals who would be subordinated to the Minister of War. One general would act as the chief of staff of the army and work closely with the Minister of War, administrating the activities of the army and its preparation, but would not exercise having any commanding power. The other position designated as vice-president to the Superior Council. The Council was to be made of the top generals that would command the military arm and the vice president would be the top commander. However the council was only a consultant body and was not to make decisions but only advice the Minister of War.<sup>18</sup>

The French designated structure in military decision making shows a great deal of Clausewitzian hierarchy by subordinating the military decision makers to the civil ones. However the French model was an ideal model which pacified the motivation of the preparedness of the army to a state of war. The model was evidently open for manipulation of higher military officials to gain prestige or rank. Such corruption has much potential for nepotism and flattery. The system rested on strong but also skilled control of the civil authority over military but unfortunately France lacked in both. There were twelve Ministers of War in the office from 1911 to 1915 and some of them spent only months at the office. Such a rapid change would have distracted the cooperation of the military subordinates and the decision making process which these subordinates were to advise. The other problem was the psychology of the army which was suffering from the "Dreyfus Incident" and also the socialist-nationalist division which also divided the public opinion. As the ongoing government and minister changes disturbed the effectiveness of the administration of the army, the defense bills suffered the socialist cuts of the armament programs. Finally the traditions of the army was too hard to break for the civilian authority and nevertheless in order to keep their positions the top brass

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<sup>14</sup> Menning, *Ibid*, p. 213-214.

<sup>15</sup> Fuller Jr, *Ibid*, p. 449-450.

<sup>16</sup> Doughty, *Ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

officers needed to be political to their civil authorities. As in the case of the replacement of the General Victor-Constant Michel by General Joseph J.C. Joffre for the position of Vice President of the Supreme Council, because of the former's insistence on defensive plan making for a possible war with Germany. This has created a somewhat new Bonapartist system and the French Army went to war in such a political turmoil.<sup>19</sup>

The First World War caught Britain almost unprepared. As Britain entered the war on 4<sup>th</sup> of August, the decision making process was the responsibility of the cabinet which was consulted by the Imperial Security Council; also the Ministry of War and the Admiralty was integrated as the executive branches. The Imperial Defense Council was established in 1901 and revised in 1904 in order to collect intelligence for the security of the empire and analyze the security problems in order to find possible solutions. The council was responsible to consult and advise the cabinet to take the necessary measures on security issues.<sup>20</sup>

As the speed and the scope of the fighting in the continent grew rapidly, the ponderous structure of British cabinet was not enough to cope with the speed of the war in case of decision making. Therefore, in November 1914, a new body, the War Council, was established upon the mixture of the necessary parts of the existing structure. The War Council was made of the collection of delegates from certain ministries that were related with the war effort, certain members of the Imperial Security Council. The council collected the powers of both the cabinet and the Imperial Security Council in one body.<sup>21</sup> There was a mixed hierarchy of both civilian and military decision makers. However, apart from the Minister of War, Lord Herbert Kitchener, who was the renowned soldier of Britain, the other military officials' presence was needed primarily to advise the council upon military matters and only if needed.

Though the intention in establishing the War Council was to increase speed and the level of logic of the decision making process for the war, the council never achieved its primary objective effectively. This was due to the unhealthy procedures and the lack of transparency in the functioning of the council. From its first meeting onwards, the council never had a schedule and only met when the prime minister asked for. Each member who was either politicians of different affiliations or politicized soldiers, had different visions of the ongoing war and in that sense, a conciliated policy was not possible to achieve. This situation transformed the council a forum in which each character tries to impose his own will or at least seek for allies to achieve this. The civil and military bureaucrats were usually kept silent and their advices were not needed.<sup>22</sup> The main contenders in the council were the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, the Secretary for War Herbert Kitchener and the Lord of Admiralty Winston Churchill.<sup>23</sup> Both the Ministry of War and the Admiralty was acting independently from the cabinet in making and executing decisions that is related with their field of responsibilities. However this independence usually hindered the allocation of the resources and thus the war effort. The head of the both branches Kitchener and Churchill were in a form of rivalry in which Prime Minister Asquith tried to find a balance. Such tensions were prone to political crises. Under such circumstances Britain did have certain causes to involve in the continental war based upon its diplomatic heritage but did not have a strategy to fight the war and more to that her strategy evolved in the form of momentarily reactions against the rapid developments that were reflected over the battlefields of Europe. Such was the case to be for the Dardanelles Campaign.

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<sup>19</sup> For more information see: Kenneth Douglas (trans), *The French Army-A Military Political History*, New York, George Brazillier Inc, 1963, pp. 62-93.

<sup>20</sup> Tim Coates, (editör), *Lord Kitchener and Winston Churchill- The Dardanelles Comission, Part 1*, London, The Stationary Office, 2000, p. 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 18-19.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*, Londra, Pan Books, 1965, p. 24-25.

<sup>23</sup> Coates, Ibid, 18-19.

In relevance with the arguments in the previous topic and given the structures of the entente power's war time decision making such new arguments may be put forward: First, though the entente was a political bloc, to a certain degree the members showed willingness to become a military coalition. However due to the nature of their political regimes and civil-military relations, such a move was not possible between governments; but even so, talks of military cooperation were proceeded with or without the consent of the governments. This situation blurs the vision of a combined entente strategy for war, leveling it to the only connection that sustains the coalition: to stop German expansion either by political or military means. Secondly, the civil military hierarchies of entente powers were vulnerable to domestic political tensions between civil and military decision makers and the possibility of separating the political and military aims in making war time strategy was vague. The approach to civil-military relations in either of the entente power was very different in terms of hierarchy that a combined strategy making was not possible. Though talks of cooperation existed at military level, at political level no long term combined war aim for the possible situation for the post war status quo was to be constituted. Therefore such an obscurity would leave the entente powers to define their own individual strategies for the conduct of war. Due to the nonexistence of a combined strategy to define a possible post war status quo, there was a possibility of conflicting individual strategies. If such a situation emerges, there was a possibility that even though Germany was to be pacified, the entente could be dissolved and fall in conflict within itself.

### **Claim 3: The nonexistence of concrete war aims on the entente side caused the failure of entente strategy during the initial phase of the First World War**

As the fighting started in August 1914, the Entente powers employed their combined schemes as well as their individual plans. On paper these plans contained the transfer of a British expeditionary force to support the France army's left flank and a Russian offensive against Germany to open the second front. The French offensive against Germany was supposed to start on the seventh day of her mobilization and the Russian offensive was to start on the fourteenth day of hers. Further from that point the plans did not contain any procedures or preparations for the establishment of a unified command structure or the schedules for the combined operations. As there was not a united command structure, the communication between the fighting armies was too weak. This problem became evident at Mons when the lack of communication between French and British headquarters clouded the decisions of both side's commanders. Though the combined effort seemed to work in success to halt the German offensives, the cooperation between their efforts were almost nonexistent. The only means of cooperation was the military liaison officers who were assigned to opposite headquarters who acted both as correspondents and as military attachés.

To fight a war with Germany, each entente power had different plans. Military officials in France had been working on a series of plans since their defeat at 1871 and Plan 17 was the final version that had evolved. Plan 17 was based on a massive offensive towards Alsace Lorraine. On the other hand, the Russian Plan 19 was based on mobilization of five armies but their forward moves were to be decided due to the war's progression. There was no devised war plan made for British army.

A slight observation may reveal that a state of uncertainty in strategy. Though the war plans were made to wage a war with Germany, they were mostly based on winning battles rather than the war. Neither France's Plan 17, nor Russian Plan 19 compromised a second phase to force the opponent to sue for peace or worse, if the plans prove unsuccessful the plans did not offered any solutions for their own makers to sue for peace. This may prove that there was a lack of strategy when the Entente powers entered the First World War. As the Entente armies marched to war, the governments of Entente powers were not sure of the peace that their military would fight for.

In fact any kind of hope for a peace at would be won by simply military action eroded in the first months the fighting. After the declarations of war, the entente powers readied their move while

mobilizing their armies. However due to the intensity, the speed and the scope of the German offensive which was based on Schlieffen Plan, the situation necessitated the drop of the previous schemes in the existing plans. The Russian army started her offensive earlier than the planned date and to a degree of unpreparedness. While the premature French offensive to Rhine was miscarried by the German offensive over Belgium; the determined effort of the French army could only stop the German move at major battle of Marne. On the other side, Russian offensive turned to a major disaster at the battle of Tannenberg. After the so called Race to the Sea and the Battle of Ypres, the whole combined plans previously made were falsified. The lack of Entente's creating a united command or even a combined executive body to fight not only the war but the failures of the war was bearing bitter consequences.

By November 1914, it could be said that entente's war aim which can be defined as stopping the German aggression by military means had been fulfilled partially but apart from that hypothetical assumption, the reality was much different. Though the consequences of the first major battles indicated that German offensives were checked, they also showed that the offensive power of both the French and the Russian armies were diminished. The western front seemed to be stabilized but France's northern territories were left at German invasion which meant that an important industrialized region which had supplemented France's war effort was out of reach. Also at Tannenberg, Russian army lost an important deal of man and material which her industry could not fulfill the latter. At Ypres, the British Expeditionary Force was almost wiped out. Almost all entente power suffered a shortage of munitions which their industrial efforts were unable to deal with .

It could be said that both entente's strategy and war aims failed decisively by the end of November 1914. Such a situation necessitated the implementation of a new strategy to sustain the war effort. However as mentioned earlier, the lack of coordination and cooperation between the entente powers, left the coalition to initiate individual actions. Both France and Russia were in a position to face further fighting for their survivals as the fronts have moved over to their home territories. Therefore Britain's position was rather more free to choose her action as she was not in a danger of imminent invasion and also her naval assets could widen the scope of a new strategy. However, a series of new problems seemed to arise. Would a new strategy be made by the entente or by Britain alone? Would cooperation for determining common goals be constituted both militarily and politically or would Britain seek to carve out a new hegemony over European issues? And more importantly, what kind of a new status quo would the new strategy aim to produce if it succeeds?

**Claim 4: The failure of the entente strategy during the initial phase of the First World War initialized the construction of a new strategy determined purely by Britain:**

By the end of November, the frontline in France was stabilized from the Channel Sea to the Swiss border on a line of approximately 500 miles. The burden of this front was shared by British and French armies. As the neutral Ottoman Empire joined the war in November, Russia's position became precarious and as the Ottoman Empire closed the transit from the straits to the Black Sea; the link between the entente powers was seriously damaged. On the other hand, the German move to win Ottoman Empire to move against Russia provided a new area of opportunity for the Entente. The Balkan states and Italy were opportunist neutrals and there was a potential of bribing Italy and Balkan states to join the war on the entente side. However the performance of the entente in the outgoing war was not so prestigious to give a good impression on neutrals and a show of power projection was necessary within the sights of these neutrals. The Ottoman declaration of war may present chance for such an action.

In fact schemes for such an action on the Ottoman straits were presented by Winston Churchill in September to the cabinet after contacting with the Greek Prime Minister Eleferos

Venizelos who had offered the help of the Greek army.<sup>24</sup> Churchill's individual managements made possible official negotiations with the Greek government and military officials and in a conference in which British and Greek military officials discussed on plans of an offensive against neutral Ottoman Empire. It should be pointed out that the conference was not authorized by the cabinet but by Churchill's own initiative. The scheme rested on a Greek offensive to the Gallipoli Peninsula with the aid of the British Navy and force the Ottoman Empire to surrender the straits. However due to the declaration of neutrality by Ottoman government, the unpromising situation of the Greek army and the instable nature of the Balkans, the scheme was rejected upon insistence of the Foreign Secretary Edward Grey by the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith.<sup>25</sup> In his memoirs, he stated that such a scheme was based on the logic of a preemptive strike and more to establish a possible Balkan league to use against Austria-Hungary.<sup>26</sup>

Controlling the traditional arm of the British Empire with mediocre experience and an overconfident attitude, Winston Churchill was a young and ambitious politician who had the habit of initializing political and diplomatic enterprises often without informing his superiors. He was the architect of the secret naval cooperation treaty in 1912 and also some other series of talks with other foreign governments often without the consent of the cabinet. His vision for the outcomes of the war was closely related with his position. According to him the Royal Navy should bear the burden of Britain's war effort as it has always been in history. Churchill was backed up by his military counterpart the First Lord of the Admiralty Jackie Fisher and a good deal of officers in the navy.

Though the naval circles were seeing a war for British Navy to win, the most important military figure in the cabinet was the Minister of War, Herbert Kitchener was in charge of Britain's war effort. Backed up by the top brass officers of the army, his vision of the war was much different than Churchill's. Kitchener assumed that the war was to be won by defeating the German military machine once for good and this was only possible in France. He had been authorizing the imperial defense since mid 1890's and was raising the new British army which fared unsatisfactory in the Boer War; he was probably one of the most important military figures in British history by then. He had the total control of the army and both in the cabinet and after in the War Council, he was the dominant figure on managing and determining the British wartime strategy.

Kitchener's domination had two effects. Primarily his words were the final on any decision in the War Council. Secondly, his vision of the role of the Royal Navy was a subordinate for the army and in that sense he did not want to share any industrial asset that produces war material with the navy. Thirdly, apart from being a soldier, Kitchener was also a clever politician. He was well aware that, the blood bath of the British Expeditionary Force in the Battle of Ypres was far ahead of what had been foreseen and the deadlock that the stabilized front had emerged seriously hampered the British strategy already in application. Despite the negative sight of the European war, his skills helped him to foresee a long war in which the entente powers would mobilize their colonial assets to match with Germany's armed forces but he knew that this would take time. Therefore by the end of November, he was ready to make some room for the navalists and more to strengthen the army's position, he was willing to allow the Royal Navy to stage an act of power projection which would distract the critics that are pointed at the army and relieve the force a bit.

It should be noted that both Churchill's ambitious plan proposed in September and Kitchener's insistence on allocating the British resources reflected the dilemma of the entente strategy. The density in the Western Front drained entente assets and prestige while on the contrary German influence on the neutrals started to rise. The Greek overtures which fancied Churchill in

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<sup>24</sup> C. Jay Smith Jr., "Great Britain and the 1914-1915 Straits Agreement with Russia: The British Promise november 1914", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 70, No.4, (Jul 1965), p. 1019.

<sup>25</sup> For detail see: Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911-1918*, London, the Free Press, 2005, p. 280.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

September, quickly wane and both Greece and Bulgaria seemed to drift to the German alliance. As the entente's diplomatic radius was diminishing, the coalition was in no position to offer diplomatic bribes in forms of territorial promises or else without proving the coalition's might both individually or cooperatively. Therefore as time passes there were more ears in the War Council to listen what the Royal Navy could offer in form of a new strategy.

In December, the meetings of the War Council were dominated by proposals of naval action. Both Churchill and David Lloyd George presented bold but ambitious plans, such an attack on Germany over Baltic, an attack to the rear of the German army in Belgium from Zeebrugge and invading Salonika to serve as a forward base of operations for Balkans. Though neither of them was rejected, Borkum Plan which was based on cooperation with Denmark and Russia for a combined naval and land operation to invade Germany was most favored.<sup>27</sup> However the lack of decisiveness in strategy bore a heavy burden on politics and the conduct of war the war effort. By the end of 1914, while more men, more ammunition and more material were being sent to front in France, not a news or a promise of success was at hand. In the last days of December, after the presentation of three memorandums to Asquith about the unproductive nature of the western front and suggestions on widening the war the flanks of the existing fronts, the final hour to make a decision about taking action had come; otherwise, the War Council would have proved itself an incompetent body.<sup>28</sup> While France and Russia were fighting for survival, Britain was on the brink of a political crisis.

**Claim 5: The radical shift in the British strategy transformed the whole strategy and the war aims of the entente.**

On January 2, Kitchener got a telegram from the British liaison officer in Petrograd which contained a demand from Grand Duke Nicholas, the Head of the Russian General Staff, to stage a divertive action to distract the attention of the Turks from the Caucasus or at least to publish fake reports with the same purpose. This telegram was perhaps the only call of any entente power for coordination since the beginning of the war. It also justifies the argument of the weak ties between the entente war efforts. The telegram did not mention a clear aim or a target but seemed as a desperate demand. However it could be said that the timing of the telegram was perfect and it prevented the political crisis in the War Council which was about to happen.<sup>29</sup>

After the telegram is introduced to the War Council, there was a break in the deadlock. Finally a possibility appeared to form a new strategy and replacing the old one which was evidently short sighted and unsatisfactory. More than that, a new hope of winning the war was born. Under such terms, the strategy was purely British.

In the first days of January, discussions in the War Council shaped the new strategy. First, though western front was once again labeled as the ultimate front, it was decided that action should be taken in East Mediterranean, thus Borkum and Zeebrugge plans were dropped. Second, the new strategy was based on combined actions of both the navy and the army; however, the scale of actions should not surpass the resources necessary for the front in France. Third, the strategy was not based on military action only, but also diplomatic action for winning the neutrals to the Entente side intended. Fourth, the new strategy was based on fighting the German allies rather than German army alone. Therefore the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary was the ultimate targets. Fifth, though the new strategy was born out of a demand for cooperation, the new British strategy neglected it.

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<sup>27</sup> Paul G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I*, Maryland, Naval Institute Press, 1994, p. 103.

<sup>28</sup> Trumbull Higgins, *Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles*, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1963, p. 74-77.

<sup>29</sup> Churchill, *ibid*, p. 318-319.

It could be argued that the new British strategy had serious misjudgments hidden inside its context. Primarily, the target was the problem. Due to the nature of the so-called Eastern Question, the territory of the Ottoman Empire was closely related with the imperial ambitions of all of the entente powers. So an individual strategy which might succeed in bringing the Ottoman Empire down had the potential to initiate a new conflict, this time between the coalition itself; but on the other hand, it also had the potential to start a cooperation for collective action. Secondly, the case of the neutrals was also double edged. On one side it was important to form a bloc by winning the neutrals but on the other side, once the war is won the sector in which the neutrals are based would become a new sphere of influence which without coordination, individual strategies of each entente power might conflict with one another. In other words, given the military strength of the potential enemy, the new strategy sounded strong; but due to its new scope and due to its potential for imperial gains, the strategy inclined to build a mismatch within the Entente.

Despite the negative potential that might disturb the coalition, the War Council pressed on for action in the East; there was an immediate response and various action schemes were discussed. It seemed Kitchener has lifted his psychological obstacle out of the way of the navy, leaving the stage for Churchill and the Royal Navy to act. The only sign of cooperation at this level with other entente powers was the Kitchener's letter in response to Archduke Nicholas that Britain was willing to make the moves which he had demanded earlier, but expressed his doubts that such vague show of force would distract the Turkish attention away from the Dardanelles.<sup>30</sup>

It could be argued that Kitchener was relieved with the new situation as the negative critics on the army immediately vane. More to that, it could also be argued that in his view, the primary task of the entente's strategy was materialized by halting the German army and before moving on to the next stage which is to destroy German offensive power, a breathing space was needed to mobilize the resources of the empire. So to spend this period, a sub strategy could be employed by the navy in a sector in which lesser material could be used to obtain greater results and also failure would not cost the loss of the war. Contrary to that, it seemed such a sub strategy had the potential to put Britain in a position which it had enjoyed rarely. As both Russia and France was struggling to stay up against Germany, there was more to win for Britain in the Eastern Mediterranean than mere military victories but imperial hegemony. However it should also be noted that Kitchener's attitude might not be purely based on strategic concerns but rather a sort of political relief. On January 2, he also exchanged thoughts with Sir John French who is the commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France on the strategic shift. Sir French expressed his negative attitude about the new strategy and pointed out his concerns that such a shift in strategy could weaken the combined war effort of the entente on existing fronts.<sup>31</sup> Therefore he was having a hard time to defend the demanding attitude of the army against the navalist opposition within the War Council as well as defending the army's prestige which was negatively affected by the failure of the previous strategy.<sup>32</sup> Depending on such an analysis it could be argued that Kitchener deliberately provided a space for the young and politically ambitious Churchill who had recently proved to be willing a greater part in the War Council.

As Kitchener cleared the way for an opportunity, Churchill immediately took the chance. On January 3, with a letter to Churchill, the First Lord of Admiralty proposed a plan of attack on Dardanelles with a combined naval and land force. At the very same moments, Churchill sent a telegram to Admiral Sackville Carden who was in command of the Mediterranean Fleet and asked his views on the possibility of forcing the Dardanelles by using only naval assets. His final words in the

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<sup>30</sup> Churchill, *ibid*, s 320

<sup>31</sup> Higgins, *ibid*, p. 77-78.

<sup>32</sup> Such an analysis could be found in the war memoirs of David Lloyd George, see: , David Lloyd George, *War Memories of David Lloyd George*, London, Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1933, Cilt 1, p. 395.

telegram were quite important: “importance of results would justify severe losses”.<sup>33</sup> There are arguments on Churchill’s language which deliberately intended to demand a positive answer from Carden.<sup>34</sup> Carden’s response to Churchill on January 5 mentioned the possibility of such an operation but with a larger fleet of various vessels rather than a fleet made of only battleships. The next day Churchill asked from Carden to notify the necessary assets that would be needed to send for his disposal and his proposed plan for such an operation. On January 11, Carden proposed a scheme to force and pass the Dardanelles and finally to enter the sea of Marmara with a sufficient fleet to neutralize the German-Ottoman fleet.<sup>35</sup> Depending on the scheme Churchill ordered the Admiralty to prepare the final plan of attack and the formation of the naval assets that would be sent to Mediterranean. He set the starting date of the operation as February 1.

Though Admiralty is an executive branch of the armed forces, it was interesting how Churchill acted so independently from the decision making process of the War Council. Even when Churchill gave start to preparations for planning and gathering assets, there was no confirmation that was decided on the higher level. Nevertheless, there was no flaw and on January 13, Churchill presented the plan and it was confirmed by the addition of political objectives which could be defined as the new war aims: to force Italy to enter the war with a probable action on Cattaro and pass the Dardanelles to reach the primary objective: Constantinople. He indicated clearly that the operation would be handled by the Royal navy alone and that there would not be any demands of army. Though the possibility of attack on Cattaro was a ruse, the addition of capturing Constantinople appeared to be a problematic issue; however as mentioned before, it was meant to be the primary action for power projection in order to constitute diplomatic leverage over the neutrals. However, the problem lied in the argument to whom Constantinople would belong. It seemed Constantinople was also the weakest link in the Entente.

**Claim 6: The new entente strategy shifted the ultimate war aim of the entente from “defeating Germany” to “a new imperial status quo”**

As the decision for the attack on Dardanelles was taken on January 13, both France and Russia were informed immediately; however, the determination of Constantinople as an ultimate war aim raised concern. This was due to the earlier negotiations between the entente governments’ foreign secretaries on post war distribution of the Ottoman territory. Though these negotiations constituted vague schemes, it was clear that there had been an understanding between the entente powers that a peaceful future distribution would benefit everyone.<sup>36</sup>

In fact what was proposed by the Dardanelles scheme was the violation of the previous reconciliation between the entente powers’ combined war aims and also indicate how delicate was the ties between the coalition. While the aggressive image of Germany constituted a common cause to form the coalition, the imperial ambitions of each entente power had the potential to transform the coalition in to a conflict. Though the design was a British venture, it was hers to decide to evaluate the outcome and distribute the prize. In that sense, it could be argued that the Dardanelles plan gave Britain a sort of upper hand and putting her at the head of the coalition; thus it is possible to claim that the new entente strategy was constituted by Britain alone and served on to others to decide to join. If Britain would have achieved success in passing through the straits singlehandedly, she would obtain a dominant position not only in Constantinople but in the Balkans and in the Middle East. Such a single handed domination was not a post war status quo which France and Russia

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<sup>33</sup> Churchill, *ibid*, p. 322.

<sup>34</sup> See: Robin Prior, *Gallipoli-The End of the Myth*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 14-15.

<sup>35</sup> For the detail of the plan see: Churchill, *ibid*, 324-327.

<sup>36</sup> For more detail on diplomatic negotiations, see: Smith Jr, *ibid*, pp. 1015-1034; Robert J. Kerner, “Russia and the Straits Question 1915-1917”, *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, Vol. 8, No: 24, March 1930, pp. 589-600.

who were battering under the German aggression, would like to confirm. It was necessary to transform the new strategy from Britain's own to entente's common and therefore once informed, first France and later Russia decided to join the venture.

Upon the arrival of the news of the scheme of the supposed attack on Dardanelles, the French military staff was unhappy about the idea of opening a new front. This was due to the situation on the front which demanded both man and material to sustain the majority in numbers in order to stay on the offensive against the German invaders. A new strategy and a new front would have meant the diversion of man and material and this would hamper the war effort of the French army. Apart that the population of France was nearly half of Germany and such a proportion clearly meant that French army had needed every man available. The French Naval Ministry was not impressed by the idea of action dependent only to naval assets and assumed the chances of success was very weak.

Despite the objections rising from the military circles, the French government had clearly seen the risk of letting Britain alone in such an operation in which a slightest chance of success meant a total domination in the east. In such an understanding French cabinet was willing to risk a small force which would not injure the war effort but serve as a symbol of cooperation with Britain and more a partner to design the post war status quo of the East.

There was also another concern in France's choice of joining the forthcoming campaign. As happened in Britain, the French cabinet was having problems with the top brass of the army. There were constant clashes between the high ranked officers and Joffre who was commanding them all. Such a tension was forcing the balance of the civil-military hierarchy which was deliberately designed before the war. A new front would have meant a separation of command in which Joffre's position would weaken.

It was on February 17 that Russian High Command was officially advised of the plans for the forthcoming campaign at Gallipoli. This was somehow strange because by that date the English fleet in front of the Dardanelles was joined with the supporting French fleet and the first stage of the operation had already started by the initial bombardments. The Russian response was rapid. A liaison officer was sent immediately to the allied fleet to establish a coordination for a possibility of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's help to the Anglo French fleet which is campaigning in the south. Also the light cruiser *Askold* was ordered from the Pacific to join the allied fleet as a symbol of Russian participation.<sup>37</sup>

However due to the little information that flow to the Russian High Command, there was a suspicion of the British intentions of neglecting the Russian participation to the campaign. The lack of coordination and cooperation between Britain and Russia, and also the French existence by a strong naval force agitated Russian high command to take further precautions. The V. Caucasus Corps was ordered to Batumi and stand ready for deployment by sea to Constantinople. Also an assault against the Bosphorus by the Black Sea Fleet was discussed. However the Russian naval capacity in the Black Sea was not enough to fulfill neither of these both tasks.<sup>38</sup> In fact these were momentarily desperate responses related with the possibility of an English success. Also the Russian activity gives good impression of the panicked mood of the Russian High Command but also the low intensity of cooperation between Britain and Russia.

The suspicion and the concern of the Russian High Command was also present in the Russian government. A strong belief that both Britain and France were acting together to create a new status quo in which Russia was left aside. As this was against agreement that had reached in the

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<sup>37</sup> George Nekrasov, *North of Gallipoli*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47.

negotiations concerning the dispersion of the Ottoman territory during the previous month, Russia wanted to get new guaranties. By the end of February, a series of memorandums were exchanged between the entente powers to make sure that the entente was still in consensus concerning a possible chance of status quo in the East.

It could also be argued that the new British strategy that had been put forward in the context of Gallipoli campaign initiated a crisis within the entente. Though the birth of the strategy was closely related by Russian demand in January but what had come out was the least of what Russia would want. It was clear that France's involvement was purely on the basis of not letting Britain to succeed alone, but it was also clear that France was much more informed and briefed than Russia. Perhaps the situation that Russia found herself reminded the visions of her earlier imperial rivalry with Britain and the developing understanding had connections with the past. All in all, what has started to be a naval venture was taking shape of a diplomatic crisis.

As the allied naval force was campaigning in front of the Dardanelles in late February, there was not much progress achieved by naval action only. By the end of February both English and French cabinets approved the deportation of troop detachments to help the effort of the Navy. This had added more concern to the Russian circles. At the beginning of March, by Russia's initiation, a series of memorandums started to change hands between the foreign offices of the entente powers. Finally, by March 12, an agreement was reached that Russia would take possession of Constantinople, however the city will remain a free port. Also further cooperation to join the neutral Balkan states to the entente cause was accepted. A final reconciliation was also established that the new status quo after the successful ending of the campaign would be formed on mutual benefits of the three entente powers.<sup>39</sup> Named later as the Constantinople Agreement, the acceptance of these terms represented the fresh war aims of the entente's new strategy for the ongoing war.

#### **An Analysis on Decision Making of the Entente Concerning on the Determination of War Aims: the Case of Dardanelles Campaign.**

A final analysis would rest on the claims that were put forward to construct the main argument of the paper. The argument was based on two assumptions: First, in the initial phase of the First World War, the entente powers' failure in combined war effort was due to their inability to prepare a combined strategy equipped with concrete war aims and second, the Dardanelles scheme was an effort to create a more efficient strategy by introducing a more rewarding and concrete war aim.

The first three claims are related with the first assumption of the argument. The first claim argues that the structure of the entente was not enough to determine a common war aim for their members. Though on lesser levels military agreements existed, these were not strengthened by official commitments by governmental. Such an obscurity left the entente with a vague war aim. Initially the only common war aim to the entente powers could be transformed in to words as "to exclude any interference of any power in European politics whose attitudes were related with imperial ambitions by all means" as the entente's official agreements were based on that logic. However with break out of the major European war, such a war aim was not enough to constitute a well defined combined war time strategy. The second claim aims to prove that the entente powers' decision making mechanisms were problematic in constituting individual war aims and in cooperating for a common war aim. Therefore such a divergence in decision making structures prevented the collaboration of the entente powers' in military affairs. In such a sense, the unofficial agreements at lesser levels failed to materialize neither a united command nor a combined war effort. However the common cause which labels Germany as the ultimate enemy kept the entente military cooperation

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<sup>39</sup> For the details of negotiations, see: J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and the Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-1956*, Princeton, Van Nostrand, 1956, Vol II, pp 7-11.

alive. Therefore the third claim suggests that the entente had to face the aggression of the common enemy by individual efforts and the war aim proposed in the first claim above proved insufficient to provide an effective alliance or even a promising strategy. By the end of 1914, the entente's weakly coordinated strategy seemed to be a total failure and the war aim of the entente was diminished to only survival individually.

The second set of claims is related with the new strategic approach of the entente which materialized in the Dardanelles scheme. The first claim supposes that after Marne and Tannenberg, both France's and Russia's strategic views were diminished as they struggled for survival. On the other hand, under no imminent danger, Britain was in a position in which a new strategic approach could be determined. It was in Britain's decision makers hands to constitute a common strategy for both keeping the entente together and fulfilling the ultimate war aim of defeating Germany. By the end of 1914, it was evident that the ultimate war aim of defeating Germany could not be fulfilled in the fields of Europe. Therefore the new strategy shifted the scope of the war to the east.

It was obvious that the new strategy proposed was a British enterprise. If successful, the offensive on the Dardanelles promised a hegemonic outcome over the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean and Ottoman territories by using little force. Both France and Russia were unwilling to let Britain to collect the prize, therefore the entente relived its energy to cooperate and gave momentum to its affairs. It was interesting that the mood of cooperation was cynical as both France and Russia joined the campaign purely for not letting Britain to gain an imperial hegemony over a sphere which is also in the interest of other powers. Therefore the cooperation of entente was not a compromise on a strategy to win victory over Germany but rather on a strategy to solve the Eastern Question which had dominated the 19<sup>th</sup> century European politics. So the Dardanelles Campaign was not a military plan only but rather was a political motive which strangely rebuild the entente on a consensus of separation of the post war east between Britain, France and Russia. The new strategy shifted the focus of the entente from Germany to the East where the center is Constantinople.

It should also be noted that the Dardanelles scheme was not a preworked plan but rather a makeshift scheme which Winston Churchill proposed to achieve some kind of political prestige for himself and the Royal Navy which he presents in the War Council. The scheme only collected interest after the initial entente strategy failed. However almost all military circles had doubts once the plan was revealed but the politicians pressed on, fascinated by the imperial gains which may be achieved. Once the campaign started there was almost a complete negligence in the tracking of the military actions and the favorability of military conditions. The campaign transformed in to a political activity of foreign offices who tried to obtain the best share of the oncoming status quo. As the balance of the new strategy shifted towards political activity, the chance of successful military action faded as governments counted on any consequence but a quick victory.

In March 12, with a secret accord, the entente powers agreed on the possession of Constantinople after the campaign. This was the beginning of the series of such secret agreements that included grandiose promises and designs. In March 18, the allied fleet suffered a major defeat in front of Dardanelles. However the cooperative mood and the promise of political gains forced the entente to commit greater assets to continue the campaign; but military actions never achieved a breakthrough. As the landings started in the end of the April to the Gallipoli Peninsula, the campaign created another static front, almost the same version as the front in France.

Though the campaign was a failure in design it helped the entente to materialize a new war aim and a new strategy in which the entente powers rebuild the spirit to cooperate. Therefore it would not be wrong to claim that the campaign served as a catalyst to regenerate the collective spirit of the entente which was fading in the trenches of the Western Front. Transformed from a military venture to an imperial fantasy, the Dardanelles Campaign saved the entente to fight along.