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“Hang the Kaiser:”† Philosophically Mediated Explanations of World War I by the Decisions and Actions of Those Responsible for the War

MICHAEL S. MOORE*

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† The slogan of David Lloyd George and of the British Liberal Party seeking re-election in December, 1918.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a long-standing curiosity about why Europe destroyed itself in 1914 by starting the catastrophe known as World War I. In the past decade some of this interest was no doubt due to the coincidental fact that one hundred years had passed since the events in question took place. But the origins of the War hold a much deeper interest than that. Part of that deeper interest stems from the perceived impact that War had on the subsequent history not only in Europe, but in the rest of the world—the Russian Revolution, the end of colonial empires, World War II, the Cold War that followed, all being prominent examples of such impact. As many historians would concur, “World War I was, without question, the defining event of the twentieth century.”¹ Even more of that deeper interest in the origins of World War I stems from the starkly negative nature of that impact: World War I was a catastrophe for Western civilization of a magnitude not seen since the fall of Rome.² One aspect of that catastrophe has been

1. RICHARD NED LEBOW, *ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND LIVES! A WORLD WITHOUT WORLD WAR I* 3 (2014).

2. There is no doubt a special place in hell reserved for those leaders in 1914 who both saw with clarity the disaster that the War would become and, with that knowledge and the ability to stop it, did not do so. Prime examples are British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, who after the Austrian declaration of war against Serbia on July 28 (and thus well before he took the steps that formally committed England to the War), advised the House of Commons that the conflict could spread beyond Austria and Serbia and that if it did, it would be “the greatest catastrophe that has ever befallen the Continent of Europe,” and Helmuth von Moltke (the younger), the German Chief of Staff of the Army who on the very same day (July 29) as he cabled his Austrian counterpart, Austrian Army Chief of Staff Conrad von Hotzendorf, not to accept mediation and to fully mobilize the Austrian Army

psychological: never again were we to experience the kind of Enlightenment confidence in the goodness of our cause, the power of our reason, the inevitability of our progress as a society to a state of greater decency and prosperity, as was had by many of our pre-1914 European ancestors. We miss that confidence and understandably want to know how our predecessors allowed themselves to deprive us of it.

A third strand in the contemporary interest in the War stems from our perception of how much was lost with the War besides our self-confidence. Coupled with genuine puzzlement as to what there was to gain from fighting such an immensely costly war, this generates the view that the War—and the policies that lead up to it—was a colossal mistake on all sides. This creates the puzzle as to how the “best and the brightest” of their generation could have made such a mistake. World War I was not some accident nor was it some natural catastrophe like a pandemic or an asteroid strike. It was the product of a set of deliberate choices made by the leaders of the most advanced countries on earth. The puzzle is how they could have been so misguided as to destroy the system they all so admired and from which they derived such benefit.

Historians are fond of George Santayana’s familiar saying that those who are ignorant of history are condemned to repeat it. That view of the utility of historical knowledge generates a fourth strand in the motivations of those who seek to understand why World War I happened. Mistakes can be repeated, and the avoidance of them is a good reason to understand how and why they were made in the past. One of the best-known books about how World War I came about was Barbara Tuchman’s *The Guns of August*, first published in 1962 during the years of John F. Kennedy’s presidency and the West’s cold war with the Soviet Union. President Kennedy found Tuchman’s depiction (of how the bungling of Europe’s leaders produced a war that none of them wanted) so applicable to his own time and to the dangers of the international crises that he faced, that he distributed the book to his cabinet and to then British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, urging that “We are not going to bungle into war” as did the leaders of 1914.

against the Russians, wrote an official memo describing the war which he anticipated to follow as one “which will annihilate the civilization of almost the whole of Europe for decades to come.” (The quotations are from MIRANDA CARTER, GEORGE, NICHOLAS, AND WILHELM: *THREE ROYAL COUSINS AND THE ROAD TO WORLD WAR I* 364, 366 (2010).)

A fifth interest—one that has its own history as it has waxed and waned amongst historians of the War—lies in the question of guilt and responsibility. If the War was the mistake that it was, who made it and with what culpability? Such an interest predominated in the decade or so after the War, scholars in the Allied countries typically explaining the War in terms of evil German war aims and in terms of the actions that executed those aims, and scholars in Germany pointing the finger elsewhere, typically at Russian actions and aims.³ At the present stage in this dialectic of responsibility, one can find reputable work blaming virtually any one of the major participants—France, Russia, England, or even the United States, as well as Austria and/or Germany.⁴

An easily missed sixth interest in explaining World War I is different than the five interests mentioned above, although it is in some ways the most obvious interest. In the early 1920's at the New York Explorer's Club the ill-fated Everest mountaineer, George Mallory, was reportedly asked why he wanted to climb Mt. Everest. His famous answer, perhaps apocryphal, was: "Because it is there." World War I happened, and, like any other event of human history, why and how it happened can be explained. Doing so will illustrate the features that mark an historical explanation as a good one, or, indeed, as an explanation at all. This sixth interest is thus

3. The German view (that Russia and France were to blame for starting the War) was championed by the American historian (albeit funded in his research by the German government), Harry Elmer Barnes, in his *THE GENESIS OF THE WORLD WAR* (1926). Barnes was seconded in more moderate form by SYDNEY BRADSHAW FAY, *THE ORIGINS OF THE WORLD WAR*, two volumes (1929), Fay blaming Russia and Serbia primarily. The Allied view that Germany was solely to blame was revived by BERNODOTTE SCHMITT, *THE COMING OF THE WAR*, 1914, two volumes (1930). Although the nationalities of the authors are now more mixed, the essential debate about war-guilt continues. Compare the revival of the Allied view that Germany from 1912 on aimed at war so as to become a world power, in Fritz Fischer's *GRIFF NACH DER WELTMACHT* (1961), translated into English and retitled *GERMANY'S AIMS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR* (1967), with the German view that Russia all along aimed for a general European war with which to allow it to take control of the long sought after Straits at Constantinople, in Sean McKeekin's *THE RUSSIAN ORIGINS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR* (2011). Co-existing alongside these polar views on war guilt throughout the history of the question has also been the view that no one and no country was to blame for having chosen to go to war; rather, Europe's leaders "slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war" by inadvertence and inattention. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE, *I WAR MEMOIRS* 32 (1933).

4. I will throughout this essay largely eschew the common practice of speaking of countries (or capitals of countries) as if they were persons. Rather, I will focus on the actions, intentions, and motivations of the leaders of those countries. When the identity of such leaders is well known, their causal roles equally identified, and the number of such leaders is remarkably small, then the intentional vagueness and the abbreviatory convenience of speaking of "what Berlin wanted" or "what London did or didn't do," does not justify the imprecision. Speaking of the actions and mental states of determinate historical persons also avoids the hint of animism otherwise given by seemingly attributing feelings and other mental states to collectivities of individual persons.

one born of a curiosity about the nature of historical explanation. The explanation of the War offered up by historians provides a convenient example through which to examine this question in the philosophy of history. The example is more than convenient; because of the widespread interest in the origins of the War, explanations of it are so well developed that one has much material with which to work in extracting the nature of historical explanation in general. (Indeed, the material is so vast as to be daunting to digest and summarize.)

In what follows I have no ambition to advance some novel view explaining why the War occurred. The existing literature is rich enough in exploring all the explanatory possibilities that I suspect that no such radically new view in any event exists. Rather, I will pick and choose amongst existing historical views to develop the explanation of the War that I can then use to bring out the philosophical suppositions of this kind of historical explanation. In so constructing a view I thus claim no originality of historical insight—beyond whatever historiographical originality resides in: revealing the philosophical suppositions involved in giving this kind of historical explanation; classifying explanations into different types, choosing between genuinely incompatible and in that sense competing explanations, recognizing those that are not competing with one another, eliminating redundancies in explanations, assessing the relative strengths of non-redundant, complementary explanations, and constructing an intelligible narrative of the resulting structure of explanations.

II. THE CACOPHONY CREATED BY THE JUMBLE OF FACTORS PLAUSIBLY MENTIONED AS EXPLAINING WORLD WAR I

Immersion in the historical literature explaining why World War I occurred quickly becomes bewildering in its prolixity. Plausibly asserted to be causally contributing factors are matters as diverse as: the German Navy build-up (both before and after the advent of dreadnought battleships in 1906) and the British/German Navy race; the fact that Wilhelm II remained too long in Victoria's womb, resulting in both his deformed arm and some brain dysfunctions, both of which themselves contributed to the less than ideal attitudes and behavior of Wilhelm as Kaiser; the fact that Bismarck misjudged the need to counteract the liberal tendencies of Wilhelm's short-lived father and thus indoctrinated the young Wilhelm to some of the illiberal views that he held; the allowing to lapse of the Russian-German Reinsurance Treaty by Wilhelm II, a treaty that Bismarck had so carefully

preserved; the rise of Germany's industrial base, so that by 1914 its steel production (then a measure of general industrial capacity) dwarfed that of France, and exceeded by a lesser margin even that of Great Britain; the "Great Game" the European powers made of competing with one another to colonize the less developed world; the structure of German Government such that the popularity of the Social Democratic Party, although reflected in that party's representation in the Reichstag, had little influence on the policies foreign and domestic undertaken by the concentration of executive power lying in the offices of Kaiser and Chancellor; the failure of "Manchester Joe" Chamberlain's (Neville Chamberlain's father) attempt to align Germany with the U.S. and Britain in a general alignment that could keep order of the rest of the world; the undertaking of the Boer War by Britain and the War's universal dislike in other European capitals, making the almost century-long "splendid isolation" not seem so splendid any more, resulting in an entente with the French; the French yielding to British imperialism in the Fashoda incident on the upper Nile, making later détente possible; the attitude supposedly common to leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt, the Kaiser, Winston Churchill, and others, that war was necessary both for proper masculine development of individuals and for a nation's vitality; the influence of Mahan's book heralding the importance of sea-power for great nation stature; the success of the Japanese in successfully storming Russian positions at Port Arthur despite the Russian defense by machine guns, inculcating a belief (particularly in French military) in the virtues of offensive strategies for infantry despite technological advances like machine guns, trenches, and barbed wire; the faction-divided nature of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the threatened demise of that Empire to those who ruled it; Russian designs on acquiring the straits so as to gain ice-free ports for its navy and merchant marine, and the centuries-old resistance of Britain and France so as to frustrate this Russian ambition; the less than ideal abilities of Nicholas II to deal with matters of governance; the system of alliances that divided the Great Powers into only two camps, that of the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance; the prior success of European leaders to keep the two Balkan wars local; the rise of Serbian nationalism, including the power of its terrorist organizations including prominently the Black Hand; the long-drawn-out retreat of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans; the general underestimation of both British and American war potential because of the small size (miniscule by continental European standards) of their standing armies during peacetime; the large military budgets of France, Germany, and Russia in the years immediately preceding the War, particularly 1913; the examples of war judged to be a cost-effective and successful means alternative to diplomacy, such as Bismarck's three wars (the Danish War, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870); etc.

Always mentioned, of course, in explanations of World War I, is the precipitating event of June 28, 1914, at Sarajevo, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by an agent of the Serbian Black Hand, Gavrilo Princeps. This assassination lead to the sequence of events between June 28—August 4, 1914, that I shall shortly recount. But despite its primacy, few historians regard this assassination of this heir to the Austrian throne and his wife, as anything more than the proverbial “spark that ignited the powder keg.”⁵ All the interesting explanatory work is said to be done by the makeup and the construction of the powder keg itself. Thus, the jumble of factors above (together with a far greater number I didn’t mention).

A common “solution” to the jumbled nature of the conditions making the assassination the spark that ignited into war, is to adopt the chronological organization of a “just so” story. One rather arbitrarily posits a beginning to such a just so narrative—say 1870–71, the end of the Franco-Prussian War—and describes a sequence of events that plausibly enough link up to end in early August of 1914 with the war-declaring reaction of Europe to the Archduke’s assassination.

Such “just so” narratives are informative, at least so long as they narrate events that plausibly lead one to the next. Yet there is no explanatory architecture in such narratives. There is no classifying of the factors featuring in such stories into different kinds of explanations; there is no sorting of explanations

5. Winston Churchill’s early characterization: “The Continent was a powder magazine from end to end. One single hellish spark and the vast explosion might ensue.” I CHURCHILL, *THE WORLD CRISIS 1911-1918* 116 (1938) (volume was originally published in 1923). There may be a few historians who cling to two fictions: (1) that there is ever a “sole cause” for an event; and (2) that such sole causes of events like explosions are always to be found in precipitating *events* like sparks, and not in equally necessary, background *states or conditions* such as the presence of hydrogen and oxygen at the spark’s location. Yet the literature of the 1950’s and 60’s on the nature of causation (including prominently MORTON WHITE, *THE FOUNDATIONS OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE* (1965)) should convince one that such fictions have no basis in the reality of the metaphysics of causation; rather, picking out “the cause” of anything is always a matter of pragmatic features such as the manipulability of the item chosen (“causation comes with a handle,” as the historian R. G. Collingwood used to put it); or the ignorance of the targeted audience about the item so selected when compared to knowledge of other items (Joel Feinberg’s well-known “lantern criterion,” as he described it); or the abnormality or unusualness of the item selected (the Hart and Honore criterion); or the moral salience the item might have in the assessment of responsibility (Joel Feinberg’s stain criterion”; or . . . etc. See the summary of these and other factors in Joel Feinberg, *Action and Responsibility* in *DOING AND DESERVING* (1970). One may not, thus, discount the constitution of the “powder keg” as a crucial part of the explanation of why World War I began, on the supposed ground that *the* cause of the conflict was Princeps’ action on June 28, 1914.

into complementary versus competing explanations (“competing” in the strong sense that such explanations cannot both be true, as well as in the much weaker sense that one factor is “more important” than another); there is no set of explicit generalizations showing why the events narrated do link up with one another and with Europe’s reaction to the events of June 28, 1914; there is thus no over-all assessment of why the war happened, and no basis for judgment as to how such mistakes might be avoided in the future.

The corrective to such lack of explanatory architecture in such purely narrative accounts, is not to prescind away from any mention of the states and events that such narrations narrate, and to move to Arnold Toynbee-like general laws of history. School history textbooks, for example, often explain World War I in terms of four “isms:” militarism, imperialism, nationalism, and authoritarianism. These suggest a view of human history analogous to the view of the natural sciences. Supra-human “forces” caused the War to break out, just as the forces of drought, for example, caused the extinguishment of certain ancient civilizations.⁶ Yet the outbreak of a war is not like the drought-induced fall of the of Akkadian Empire, nor even like a car accident due to failure of one’s brakes and a child being in the wrong place at the wrong time; starting a war does not “just happen” but is the result of deliberate choices by those with the power to effectuate such choices in their actions. World War I is no different than other wars in this respect.⁷

The upshot is that there is a “bottleneck” of direct factors through which all remote factors must operate if they are to explain the outbreak of the War. That bottleneck is constituted by the choices made by those actors whose actions immediately caused the war⁸—not just Princeps, but the

6. Harvey Weiss et al, *The Genesis and Collapse of North Mesopotamian Civilization*,” 291 *SCIENCE* 995 (1993).

7. I thus align myself with the Marc Bloch view of the philosophy of history, according to which, for events like the outbreak of World War I, explanations in terms of the actions, intentions, and background motivations of human actors is primary, and explanations in terms of social structures, traditions, and forces, is secondary. See MARC BLOCH, *THE HISTORIAN’S CRAFT* (1953).

8. There is a confusion, common enough throughout the special sciences, that would deny the possibility of there being such a bottleneck constituted by the choices and intentional actions of persons. This is the view that if a human choice is caused then it can do no causing. The view treats human choice as an evaporative thing so that once it is caused it “evaporates” as a potential cause itself. Such a view is based either on a kind of conceptual libertarianism—human choices cannot be caused and remain human choices—or on an explicit epiphenomenalism—human choices always lose out in explanatory competitions with the factors that cause those choices. These are both fundamental mistakes; there is nothing precluding human choices, and the actions that execute them, from serving as causal intermediaries. Because neuroscientists make these mistakes no less often than social scientists, I have dealt with these mistakes in that context. See MICHAEL S. MOORE,

Black Hand leaders such as Serbian Army Intelligence Col. Dragutin Dimitrijević (code named "Apis" in the Black Hand) who eased Princeps on his way by providing cash, weapons, and access across the Serbian/Austrian border, and those such as Nikola Pašić, Serbia's Prime Minister, who tolerated the Black Hand and who decided how Serbia would respond to Austria's ultimatum; the leaders of Austria, principally the aging Emperor, Franz Josef, the foreign minister Leopold, Graf von Berchtold, and the Chief of Staff of the Austrian Army, Conrad von Hötzendorf; the leaders of Germany, principally Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Army Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke, and the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg; the leaders of Russia, principally Tsar Nicholas II, his foreign minister, Sergei Sazonov, and the senior member of Russia's Council of Ministers, A.V. Krivoshein; the leaders of France, principally the President Raymond Poincaré and to a much lesser extent the Prime Minister, René Viviani; the leaders of Belgium, principally King Albert; and the leaders of England, principally the foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister H. H. Asquith, and King George V. As I shall detail in a succeeding section, it was the decisions (and the actions that executed those decisions) of these men that directly caused Europe to go to war in July/August of 1914. All of the more remote factors such as those mentioned earlier may indeed explain why the War happened; but if they do, they do so by operating through the bottleneck constituted by the decisions and actions of these actors. The more remote factors operated through such decisions and actions either by constituting constraints on the choices seen to be possible by these actors, by providing motivations for making the choices that they did, or by providing the background attitudes and fixed beliefs that themselves determined their relevant motivations.

III. PRECISIFYING THE QUESTION: WHAT IS BEING EXPLAINED, AND WHAT RELATIONS ARE DOING THE EXPLAINING?

In philosophy there is an old adage to the effect that framing one's question properly is half the battle to getting a decent answer to that question. The same would seem to be true for history and, indeed, for much of our explanatory practices beyond these two disciplines.

MECHANICAL CHOICES: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HUMAN MACHINE (2020) (chs. 1, 7, & 8–11).

A. *Clarifying What is Being Explained: To What Do We Refer
When We Refer to World War I?*

When we ask, “why did World War I happen?” what are we really asking? There are two matters to clarify here. First and foremost: what is the event or the state of affairs that we are seeking to explain? That is, what do we refer to when we refer to *World War I*? Consider four dimensions of indeterminacy in this question of reference.

1. *The temporal duration of the War.* Do we mean to explain why there was a war lasting over the whole four years over which this War lasted, from August 4, 1914 to November 11, 1918? In other words, do we seek to explain why the War was a four-year long war, or only why the War started in the first place? Explanations of the war’s continuance (in the face of the obvious carnage, of the seemingly hopeless stalemate on the Western front once the trenches were established, and despite Woodrow Wilson “peace without victory” initiative of 1916) will differ considerably from explanations as to why in 1914 these nations began hostilities.
2. *The temporal location of the War.* Do we mean to explain why the War began exactly when it did? Or why it happened at all, at any time, in 1914, earlier, or later? If we mean the latter, we need to limit our consideration of the possible wars (that could have substituted for the War that was actually fought), to those possible wars that would have been “close enough” in nature to the actual War as to be in some sense “the same war.” Surely a delay in hostilities between Germany and Britain such that there was a nuclear war between them much later—say, in 1945, for example—should not count as the same war and thus is not an aspect of what we seek to explain. Yet just as surely a war between the same belligerents that started in September rather than August, 1914, should count. In any case, however, we resolve such difficult questions of trans-world identities for events, explaining why there was a war that broke out July/August of 1914 will be much different from explaining why there was some such a war at all, over some different interval of time or range of belligerent nations.
3. *The spatial dimensions of the war and states involved.* We need to resolve what made World War I be the *world* war that it was and we need to do this in terms of the reach of the conflict and the states involved in it. Did the War become *World* War I only when Japan joined the fight on September 23, 1914? When Turkey joined on October 29, 1914? When Italy joined on May 23, 1915? Or only when the United States joined on April 6, 1917? Or was the essence

of the “World War” really a European affair, so that once Austria, Serbia, Montenegro, Russia, Germany, France, Belgium, and England were involved, “the war” had begun? Explaining the outbreak of a general European war with the latter eight belligerents will be different from explaining why each of the late comers to the party joined the fray.

4. *War as a legal status under international law versus war as physical combat between armies.* If one seeks to explain the outbreak of the war rather than its continuation, one then needs to clarify whether one seeks to explain why each nation took the legal action of formally declaring war, or whether we seek to explain why soldiers of the various armies actually engaged in physical combat with each other. These are not the same thing, as the so-called “phony war” of September 1939 to May 1940 illustrates. And the explanation of each may differ.

Often indeterminacies such as these are raised to engender a skepticism about the question possessing such vagaries of meaning. Often, for example, one encounters such skepticism about questions of similarity or of counterfactual dependence. About similarity judgments: since everything is similar to every other thing in some respects, and dissimilar in other respects,⁹ there is said to be no objectivity to judgments of similarity; likewise, because asking what would have taken place if, contrary to fact, something else that did take place had not taken place, can be made to be true or false depending on the nature of the possible world in which one tests such counterfactual statements, judgments of counterfactuals is often thought not to be objective. Yet nothing could be further from the truth in either case. All such considerations show is that to form a proper question one has to specify what one is asking with more precision. Once we specify in what respect(s) similarity is to be judged, and once we specify precisely what must change and what must stay the same in the possible world in which we ask a counterfactual question, these judgments become capable of possessing determinate truth values. So here: I raise my four indeterminacies, not to defeat my question, but only to precisify it to the point where it can be answered.

9. Nelson Goodman, *Seven Strictures on Similarity*, in *PROBLEMS AND PROJECTS* (1976).

Let me now precisify my question along these four dimensions. I am interested in explanations of the outbreak of the war, not its continuation over the four long years of its actual duration. Further, by “outbreak,” I mean the legal declarations of war, not the beginnings of actual hostilities—thus why, for example, Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28, not why it began the bombardment of Serbia’s capital, Belgrade, on July 29. Further, the War was sufficiently underway to be World War I when the eight original European belligerents—Germany, France, Russia, England, Austro-Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Belgium—had declared war. And finally, I mean to explain why in late July/early August of 1914 such declarations of war were issued; I seek to explain *this* war,¹⁰ in other words, not some later war between the same belligerents that would have happened if this war had not taken place where and when it did.

B. Clarifying What Is Doing the Explaining: The Basic Relations Underlying Historical Explanation

I have completed the first clarification of my question, which was to clarify what we are referring to when we refer to “World War I,” along the four dimensions that I have just explored. The second clarification deals not with the nature of the thing explained (“the explanandum”) but rather, with the relation(s) claimed to be doing the explaining. One might think that this second matter is clear: what is wanted are *causal* explanations, so that our question can be translated as, “What caused World War I?” I certainly do mean to include explanations in terms of causes.¹¹ But I also mean to include explanations framed in terms of relations other than causation. The main alternative here is counterfactual dependence. In explaining World War I surely we should be interested in what was necessary for the outbreak of the war, and not just what caused the war to occur.¹² Suppose it were true, for example, that if “Britain” (i.e., either King George in his correspondence with the German Kaiser, or Asquith or Grey in their four party talks proposal)

10. With the caveat that “this war” includes all wars very much like World War I in all essential qualities.

11. And I am not one of those subscribing to the philosophy of a past generation which believed that the relation of reasons to the actions and intentions that they motivate is non-causal so that explanations in terms of historical actors’ reasons are not causal explanations. For the locus classicus in philosophy describing and then dismantling this philosophy of a past generation, see Donald Davidson, *Actions, Reasons, and Causes*, 60 J. PHILOSOPHY 685 (1963).

12. For a defense of the place of counterfactual-based explanations in history, see Niall Ferguson, *Virtual History: Towards a ‘Chaotic’ Theory of the Past*, in VIRTUAL HISTORY: ALTERNATIVES AND COUNTERFACTUALS (Niall Ferguson ed., 1999). See also Richard Ned Lebow, *Counterfactual Thought Experiments: A Necessary Teaching Tool*, 40 HISTORY TEACHER 1 (2007).

had made it clear to all other soon-to-be belligerents that Britain would not remain neutral if France was attacked whether through Belgium and Luxembourg or otherwise, perhaps "Germany" (i.e., by then the Kaiser and von Moltke) would have blinked and not declared war on Russia or issued its war-provoking ultimatum to France. If this is true, then the outbreak of the war (counterfactually) depended on the non-issuance of such clarifying communications by Britain, and surely this dithering by Britain (itself explained in part by its preoccupation with the question of Irish Home Rule) partly explains the War. A like counterfactual dependence may well exist between the outbreak of the War and: the Kaiser's "blank check" to Austria, given July 5 in Berlin to assure Austria of support against Russia as well as Serbia if Austria sought to punish Serbia for the Archduke's assassination; the reassurance of support given Sazonov by Poincaré in the July 20–24 Franco-Russian Summit in St. Petersburg, without which Russian mobilization would not have been ordered. Such counterfactual dependencies, if they exist, would make each of these actions by Wilhelm and Poincaré also explanatory of the War.

Thirdly, I mean to include explanations based neither on relations of causation nor on relations of counterfactual dependence; here I mean to include explanations that are rather based on the distinct relation of probabilistic dependence. Many things made World War I more likely without those things being necessary for the War to happen and without those things being among the causes of the war. Such probability-enhancing factors, too, explain why World War I happened.

Later on we shall have occasion to further subdivide and refine these three major kinds of explanations as they apply to the intentional actions that are to be explained by reason-giving accounts of rational agents. First, however, we need to have before us the familiar tale of what those intentional actions were, by whom, and for what reasons. This detailing of the "bottleneck" through which all other factors did their explanatory work, immediately follows.

IV. THE ACTIONS AND DECISIONS OF JUNE 28–AUGUST 4, 1914, THAT LED TO WAR BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL EIGHT COMBATANTS

Let me restate this familiar story¹³ in terms of a simple timeline. The actions taken and their relations to one another are not much in dispute. The desires, intentions, and beliefs behind those actions have been a central bone of contention since 1914, particularly amongst those historians seeking to allocate blame for starting the War.

1. Early June, 1914: Princip is supplied weapons, cash, and the means to cross the border, by the Black Hand lead by Apis, a senior intelligence officer in the Serbian Army. Princip and two of his fellow assassins is given weapons training by a Serbian Army major, Tankositch.
2. Early June: Serbian Prime Minister Pasic vaguely warns Austria of trouble in Sarajevo if the Archduke visits there, but does not detail the specifics (some of which, at least, he knew).
3. June 28: Princip assassinates Archduke Francis Ferdinand and (apparently by mistake, Princip was later to say) the Archduke's wife Sophia, in Sarajevo, Bosnia, a province recently and controversially annexed by Austria as the southernmost extension of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into the Balkans. Conrad is the first senior Austrian official to learn of the news, and he instantly regarded the murder as a plot by the Serbians that amounted to a declaration of war by Serbia on Austria. Conrad informs the Emperor Franz Josef that same day.
4. June 29: Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold informally gathers the opinions of his fellow cabinet ministers; they and Berchtold are, like Conrad, unanimously in favor of war with Serbia, with one exception, Tisza, the Hungarian minister-president of Hungary. Tisza meets with Franz Josef and may have complained that Berchtold had already made up his mind to wage war with Serbia; in any case, Tisza warns both Berchtold and Franz Josef that war with Serbia "would kindle the fires of a great war. . ." Conrad urges mobilization of the Austrian Army to commence in two days, on July 1, but is overruled by Berchtold.
5. June 30: Berchtold meets with Franz Josef; he and the 83 year old Emperor agree that Austria must punish Serbia in some way; that how must await the establishing of Serbian leaders' complicity in

13. Virtually every book on the origins of the War cited in this article has a chapter giving the history recited in this section, and I have relied upon them all. Most detailed, however, is the book-length treatment of this history alone, in SEAN MCKEEKIN, *JULY 1914: COUNTDOWN TO WAR* (2013).

the assassination plot; and that (at Franz Josef’s insistence) no punitive action was possible without Tisza’s concurrence. On the same day the Russian general staff execute the Tsar’s earlier order to send significant arms (120,000 rifles and 120 million rounds of ammunition) to Serbia.

6. July 1: Tisza drafts and sends an anti-war memorandum to Franz Josef and Berchtold; Tisza warns that war with Serbia would lead Russia to intervene, and that Germany would not back Austria in a war with Russia, a war which no one in Austria or Russia thought Austria could win without German backing. Conrad and Berchtold decide that they must get German assurances. The upcoming funeral for Franz Ferdinand set for July 3 in Vienna is decided upon as the time and place to ask Kaiser Wilhelm for such assurances.
7. July 2: Out of fear for his own personal safety, but publicly reporting lower back pain as an excuse, Wilhelm announces through his Chancellor that he will not be attending Franz Ferdinand’s funeral the next day.
8. July 4: Berchtold prepares a letter to be signed by Emperor Franz Josef informing the German Kaiser that Princeps on July 2 had confessed enough about the assassination plot to assure Austrian investigators of Serbian involvement (“a well-arranged plot whose threads reach to Belgrade”) and that peaceful resolution would be impossible; on July 4 the Austrian Foreign Minister dispatches his chief of staff, Count Hoyos, to Berlin to deliver the letter and to ascertain the level of German support for an invasion of Serbia.
9. July 5: Count Hoyos and the Austrian ambassador to Germany meet in Berlin to coordinate their strategy. The latter lunches with the Kaiser and delivers Franz Josef’s letter; the former meets with his counterpart in the German diplomatic corps, Arthur Zimmermann, undersecretary of state.¹⁴ Zimmerman is generally reassuring of Austria’s plans to punish Serbia; the Kaiser, despite proclaiming that he would have to consult with his Chancellor which he had not

14. Zimmermann is later to achieve fame (of the sort usually called, “notoriety”) by sending the “Zimmermann Telegram” that helped bring America into the War in 1917. *See* Barbara Tuchman, who nicely tells the tale in her *THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM: AMERICA ENTERS THE WAR, 1917-1918* (1958), albeit that Tuchman insufficiently acknowledges the research of the University of Chicago’s esteemed historian, Friedrich Katz, in uncovering the telegram and its provenance in Berlin.

yet done (although he had received an affirmative answer from Moltke that the German Army was ready for a war with Russia), nonetheless blurts out that the Austrian ambassador could assure his sovereign that Austria generally could rely upon “Germany’s full support” and more specifically that in the event of this leading to a war between Austria and Russia, that Germany “would stand at our side.” The Kaiser later briefed his military advisers (chief of which then present in Berlin being General Erich von Falkenhayn) that the Austrians were ready for war against Serbia but wanted first to be sure of Germany’s support.

10. July 6: Count Hoyos and the Austrian ambassador to Germany meet in Potsdam with German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and Arthur Zimmermann. The Austrians obtain Bethmann-Hollweg’s blessing in the form of a blank check, the contemporaneous Austrian understanding of which was: “Whatever we decide [about going against Serbia], we may reckon with certainty that Germany will stand by our side as our ally.”
11. July 7: Berchtold calls an emergency meeting of the Austrian council of ministers to discuss the German developments. Berchtold also communicates that two days earlier, on July 5, Franz Josef had told Conrad that he, the Emperor, was ready to wage war with Serbia so long as “Germany stands by our side.” Berchtold also revealed that one day earlier, on July 6, he had informed Tisza, the Hungarian minister and the only opponent of war with Serbia on the council of ministers, that the German Kaiser had assured Austria of the full support of Germany against Serbia. Tisza assents to Austria going to war with Serbia, but attaches conditions about certain diplomatic maneuverings taking place first; one of these maneuverings is an ultimatum from Austria to Serbia, with the proviso that the ultimatum cannot be so harsh that all of Europe would know that it must be refused by any sovereign state including Serbia.
12. July 8: Conrad and Berchtold meet and agree that an ultimatum to Serbia be prepared with a short (24–48 hour) deadline, the shortness of the deadline being Conrad’s suggestion to better the chances that the Serbs would reject the ultimatum so that Austria could declare war. Remarkably, despite the constant German pressure for a speedy response to Serbia by Austria, Conrad and Berchtold agree on a two week delay on the sending of the ultimatum to Serbia. The delay was doubly motivated: first, the Austrian Army was now on “harvest leave,” the annual leave to help bring in Austria’s harvest (a leave on which it had not been on July 1 when Conrad had wanted to mobilize the Austrian Army); and two,

Berchtold needed to maneuver Tisza into agreeing to a harsher ultimatum and one with no earlier diplomatic maneuverings as its precondition of being sent.

13. July 19: Although midway through the two week delay on sending the ultimatum agreed upon by Conrad and Berchtold the latter had flirted with sending the ultimatum earlier than July 23, Tisza had again frustrated such an earlier timetable by insisting that the Council of Ministers approve the text of any ultimatum before it was sent to Serbia, and the earliest such a Council meeting could be held was July 19. On July 19, a Sunday, a secret meeting of the Council was held at Berchtold's home in Vienna, the location and secrecy chosen in order to hide the meeting from foreign intelligence services operating in Vienna. The sending of a 48 hour time-limited ultimatum was agreed to (although despite Tisza's earlier stated condition) the specific terms of the ultimatum were apparently not discussed. This time Berchtold gets unanimous consent of the Council (including the Hungarian leader) to send such an ultimatum to Serbia, an ultimatum whose terms would be such that all of the Austrian ministers save Tisza both wanted and knew Pasic and other Serbian leaders could not accept.
14. July 20: Baron Musilin, another diplomat in Berchtold's Foreign Ministry, finishes his drafting of an ultimatum requiring Serbia to allow Austria to investigate the Archduke's murder on Serbian soil; the ultimatum is sent to the Austrian embassy in Belgrade to be held there for three days and not to be delivered to Serbia until July 23, the same day that President Poincaré of France would decamp from St. Petersburg on the battleship *France* and thus be out of communication for several days. Musilin later brags that he was "the man who caused the war."
15. July 20-23: The "Franco-Russian summit" occurs in St. Petersburg, with French President Poincaré and Prime Minister Viviani engaged in talks (of which there is no written record) with Tsar Nicholas, Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, and others. There is little doubt but that Poincaré satisfied Nicholas and Sazonov of France's support if Russia found itself at war with Germany.
16. July 23: The Austrian ultimatum is delivered in Belgrade while Serbian Prime Minister Pasic is absent from the city. Serbian Prince Alexander (later to be King of Yugoslavia after the War) solicits the advice of the Russian ambassador to Serbia, Vasily Standeman.

Standeman does not give the requested guarantee of Russian support requested by Prince Alexander, stating he has no authority to issue such an assurance; Standeman, however, telegraphs Sazonov news of the ultimatum's terms, and requests more arms for Serbia. Prince Alexander also directly telegraphs Tsar Nicholas asking for Russian support. Sazonov recognizes immediately that the Austrian ultimatum will lead to a general European war.

17. July 24: Russia's Council of Ministers meets to discuss Russia's position vis-à-vis Serbia and Austria; Sazonov, together with the army and navy ministers, favors support of Serbia, which is adopted. Sazonov then assures the Serbians (through the Serbian Ambassador in St. Petersburg), that Russia would back Serbia against an Austrian invasion. With the Tsar's consent, preliminary mobilization of the Russian Army is secretly ordered.
18. July 25: Within the 48 hours allowed by the Austrian ultimatum for a Serbian response, Nikola Pasic and his ministers draft a response to the Austrian ultimatum agreeing to all of its terms save that affronting Serbian sovereignty, viz, the provision allowing Austrian investigation of the assassination on Serbian soil. Knowing that this response would not satisfy Austria, Pasic orders mobilization of the Serbian Army four hours before the response is delivered to Vienna.
19. July 25: France's War Minister Messing orders all senior French officers on leave to return to their units, without Chief of Staff Joffe yet ordering mobilization of the French Army.
20. July 26: Franz Josef orders mobilization of three-quarters of Austria's army, 12 out of its 16 corps. The Austrians mobilize not just the divisions needed to invade Serbia to the South but also the divisions that would be needed to confront Russia in the East.
21. July 26: Nicholas issues additional "pre-mobilization" orders, furthering the "informal" mobilization of the Russian Army began on July 24 (the Army is not formally ordered to mobilize until July 30). Russian Poland—the common staging ground for a Russian invasion of Germany as well as Austria—is placed under martial law.
22. July 26: Britain's Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey proposes to Germany (via its ambassador to Britain, Prince Lichnowsky) that Germany engage with Britain, Austria, and Serbia in a four power conference over the crisis. Bethmann-Hollweg forwards the proposal to the Austrians but with the recommendation that they ignore it; on the next day, July 27, Bethmann-Hollweg communicates Germany's rejection of the proposal to Grey.

23. July 26: The Kaiser's brother, Prince Heinrich, secretly meets with King George V in Buckingham Palace and receives assurance from George, communicated to the Kaiser, that (in Prince Heinrich's recounting of George's words) "we shall try all we can to keep out of this and to remain neutral . . ." From July 26 to July 30 the Kaiser believes (as he put it to Admiral Tirpitz) that "he had the word of a King" that Britain would remain neutral in a war between Germany, France, and Russia. The Kaiser is only disabused of this belief by Grey's communication of July 29 to Germany's ambassador to Britain, Prince Lichnowsky, communicated to the Kaiser on July 30, that Britain would not remain neutral in a war between Germany and France.
24. July 26–28: On July 26 Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, ceases the dispersal of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet that had previously been scheduled and then two days later (on July 28) orders the Fleet to its war station at Scapa Flow. On June 28 Churchill informs King George V in person that the Royal Navy is ready for war.
25. July 27: French chief of staff Joffre telegraphs his Russian counterparts that they could expect full French support of Russia against Germany.
26. July 28: Emperor Franz Josef signs a declaration of war against Serbia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
27. July 28: Tsar Nicholas and Wilhelm exchange the first of the series of telegrams that came to be known as the "Nicky-Willy correspondence;" in this first exchange on July 28, after news of the Austrian declaration of war, they each urge the other to contain the conflict, Russia by not intervening and Germany by restraining Austria. The exchange continues for five days, through August 1 (when Germany declares war against Russia).
28. July 29: Actual hostilities commence as the Austrians bombard the Serbian capital, Belgrade.
29. July 29: All Germans and Austrians are ordered by Russia's internal ministers to leave Russian soil.
30. July 29: German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, with the Kaiser's blessing, three times telegraphs Berchtold and Conrad in Vienna urging only an occupation of Belgrade with no further invasion of Serbia, and to seek diplomatic rather than military solutions. At midnight on July 30 King George V telegraphs Prince Heinrich to

commend the Kaiser and his Chancellor for their urging of restraint on the Austrians, and offers his own best efforts to contain the war. Nonetheless, Bethmann-Hollweg's request is ignored by Berchtold and Conrad in Vienna, in part because of Moltke's earlier that day telegraphed advice urging complete mobilization of the Austrian Army and rejection of mediation (and, it is alleged, in part because Bethmann-Hollweg signaled that his advice was for appearances sake only and was not to be taken seriously).

31. July 29–30: On July 29, after being warned by German war minister Falkenhayn that the time for German mobilization was now, Germany's Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg telegraphs Sazonov and others warning that Germany would mobilize if Russia did not cease its own mobilization. On July 30 Kaiser Wilhelm continues the Nicky-Willy correspondence by telegraphing his cousin the Tsar that "If . . . Russia mobilizes against Austria . . . [there would be no mediation possible and then] the whole weight of the decision lies solely on your shoulders now, who have to bear the responsibility for Peace or War." Nicholas blinks, and throughout the morning of July 30 consults with Sazonov about reversing mobilization; Sazonov, with the backing of the Russian Generals, insists the mobilization continue, stating that it could not be undone without disaster. Nicholas relents and later on July 30 issues the formal order for general (and public) mobilization, actual mobilization of the full Russian army actually commencing on July 31.
32. July 30–31: On July 30 Bethmann-Hollweg and Moltke decide on German mobilization but delay implementing even a preliminary "declaration of a state of imminent war" until noon July 31; on July 31 they are reinforced in their decision by receipt of the news of the impending Russian mobilization order of the Tsar. Twenty minutes after receipt of such news, at noon on July 31, they obtain the Kaiser's consent to issue a declaration of a "state of imminent danger of war," a precursor to mobilization.
33. August 1: Nicholas telegraphs Wilhelm one last time to say that he understands "that you are obliged to mobilize but wish to have the same guarantee from you as I gave you, that these measures do not mean war. . . . Anxiously, full of confidence, await your answer." Nicholas received no reply but instead, at 5:00 pm on August 1, at his residence in the Berlin Schloss, the Kaiser signs the order of German mobilization and also signs the declaration of war by Germany against Russia, having at 4:00 pm summoned von Moltke, Falkenhayn, and Tirpitz to the Schloss for that purpose. After the news of these orders reaches Nicholas on the evening of August 1, Nicholas only then receives a reply to his earlier telegram

to Wilhelm in which Wilhelm offers to continue talks if Russia halts its mobilization; Nicholas views the telegram as revealing the deceptive nature of Wilhelm's supposed peace overtures all along. Later in the evening of August 1 the Kaiser joyfully receives a telegram from Prince Lichnowsky in London informing him that Britain was now prepared to stay neutral if Germany attacked only Russia but not France; a second telegram from Lichnowsky on that same evening went further, transmitting supposed British assurances that Britain would stay neutral even if Germany attacked France as well as Russia. The Kaiser, revived in his earlier belief (which he held between July 26–30 because of his brother's conversation with King George on July 26) of British neutrality, summoned von Moltke and Falkenhayn back to the Schloss, to announce that Germany now need only fight Russia, not France too. Moltke (by his own later account, at least) is distressed to the point of tears (and possibly suffering a stroke); he stresses that the army, committed by the Schlieffen Plan to strike at France, cannot simply be redeployed to the East to fight Russia, that there were no plans to do such a thing. Nonetheless the Kaiser orders the impending invasion through Luxembourg to be halted, admonishing Moltke that his uncle (the more famous "Moltke the Elder" who had defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870) would not have so resisted *his* Kaiser's wishes. (A dissenting account has it that Moltke too was overjoyed at the news that he now only had to fight a one front war.) Whosever joy it was, it was short-lived: later that same night on August 1 King George telegraphed the Kaiser that Prince Lichnowsky was mistaken, that there was no guarantee of British neutrality. The Kaiser, already having prepared to retire for the night and thus in his bed clothes, then summoned Moltke back to the Schloss for yet a third time that evening, agitatedly but resignedly telling von Moltke to "Now do as you please; I don't care either way." Moltke pleased to stick to the Schlieffen Plan and to attack France first, and so revived the order for the German advance into Luxembourg that very night.

34. August 1: On French Army Chief of Staff Joffre's recommendation, France's Prime Minister Viviani orders mobilization of the French Army. Later that day the French are informed by Germany that they will be allowed to remain neutral in Germany's conflict with Russia only if the French surrender their key forts on the border

with Germany, an ultimatum that would obviously be unacceptable to the French, as indeed it was.

35. August 2: Germany delivers an ultimatum to Belgium demanding free passage of German troops across Belgium soil so that Germany could invade France.
36. August 3: Belgium's King Albert refuses the German ultimatum's demand for free passage of German troops to France. Germany declares war on France.
37. August 4: German troops invade Belgium; King Albert pleads for British assistance. The British Cabinet (chiefly Sir Edward Grey, Prime Minister Asquith, Winston Churchill, and Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George, although with four resignations from the Cabinet, two of which were subsequently withdrawn), and with the backing from the House of Commons the previous day, issues an ultimatum to Germany to cease operations in Belgium else a state of war would exist between Great Britain and Germany as of midnight August 4. Prior to the expiration time set in the British ultimatum Churchill's Royal Navy trawlers are in the North Sea preparing to cut Germany's undersea cables; doing so will cut off Germany's communications to the outside world (save through British-monitorable shortwave). When the ultimatum expires at 11:00 pm London time (midnight Berlin time) without having been responded to by Germany, Britain joins the war. In Grey's famous prophecy given one day earlier, "the lights of Europe are everywhere going dark and they will not again be lit in our lifetime."

V. A TAXONOMY OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF EXPLANATIONS THAT MIGHT BE OFFERED FOR THE INTENTIONAL ACTIONS OF JUNE 28–AUGUST 4, 1914

The outbreak of World War I (in the sense of the phase I earlier stipulated in Part III was my interest) was a set of intentional actions between July 28 and August 4 constituted by the four declarations of war: the July 28 declaration of war by Austria on Serbia, the August 1 declaration of war by Germany against Russia, the August 3 declaration of war by Germany against France and the August 4 declaration of war by England against Germany.¹⁵ The most immediate explanation for this set of actions lies in

15. These are the causally salient declarations of war. The later declarations of war by those already engaged are of lesser significance because of their domino-like sequencing with the four major declarations of war mentioned in the text. Austria, for example, declared war on Russia on August 6, five days after Germany had declared war on Russia;

the intentions of the actors whose actions these were: Franz Joseph declared war on Serbia because that is what he (and Berchtold and Conrad) intended to do, Wilhelm declared war on Russia and then France because that is what he (and Bethmann-Hollweg and von Moltke) intended to do, and George V declared war on Germany because that is what he (and Asquith, Grey, and the rest of the Liberal Cabinet who did not resign) intended to do.

These most immediate explanations of the outbreak of the War are rarely mentioned despite being quite true; this is because such explanations are trivial and unsurprising. To be told that some action that we know to be intentional (such as a declaration of war) was caused by an intention to do that action, an intention held by the actor whose action it is, is not completely vacuous—because (paradoxical as it might sound) not all intentional actions are caused by an intention to do them.¹⁶ But it is uninformative because so many intentional actions are so caused. Of much greater interest, therefore, are the mental states that explain the actions preceding the declarations of war, actions such as the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia or the assurances of support given by the Kaiser and the French President Poincaré: were these caused by an intention to start a general European war? We should thus focus on these earlier actions and ask after the mental states that caused them to occur. There are different kinds of explanation of rational action, and it should prove fruitful to taxonomize why these actors did these earlier actions in terms of these different kinds of mental state explanations.

A. Taxonomizing Explanations of Intentional Actions by the Kinds of Mental States Given to Explain Them

There are two dimensions to the taxonomy that follows. The first is by the kind of mental state doing the explaining: did (for example) the Kaiser *want* the war as an end-in-itself, because he was one of those “war-lovers” who believed warfare was a virtue for both individual persons and states?¹⁷ Or did he *intend* the War, not because he loved war and thought that it

France declared war on Austria on August 11, five days later; England declared war on Austria the next day, on August 12. These last declarations simply rounded out the war already begun between the Central Powers and the Entente by the events of July 28–August 4.

16. See MICHAEL BRATMAN, *INTENTIONS, PLANS, AND PRACTICAL REASONING* (1987) (rejection of what Bratman calls “the Simple View” that all intentional actions are caused by intentions to perform that action).

17. A book-length treatment of the psychology I refer to here is EVAN THOMAS, *THE WAR LOVERS: ROOSEVELT, LODGE, HEARST, AND THE RUSH TO EMPIRE*, 1898 (2010).

was desirable as an end in itself, but as a means necessary to the attainment of some other end (such as the pre-emption of later attack by the Russians when the Russian army and Russian railway system would be better prepared for war)? Or did the Kaiser take the actions he took only foreseeing (predictively *believing*) that those actions would or might lead to the War? Or, finally, were such actions undertaken by the Kaiser ignorant of their risk of producing a general war, that is, not processing the desire, intention, or belief just mentioned?

It is no accident that there are the four possibilities just exemplified by these questions of the Kaiser's mental states. For belief-desire-intention psychology—"BDI psychology," as it is known in the trade—has for thousands of years played the central role in the explanation of the actions of rational agents. For example: you *want* to learn something about the causes of World War I; you believe that by reading this essay you (might, may, or will) learn something about the causes of World War I; because of this desire and because of this belief you therefore form the intention to read this essay; and because of this intention you read the essay.¹⁸

Mental states like intentions, beliefs, and desires are individuated not only by the kind of mental states they are—either a cognitive state of belief, a motivational state of desire, or a conational state of intention, distinctions as old as Plato's tripartite divisions of the soul—but they are also individuated by the *content* of such states. An intention to go downtown and an intention to shop once one is downtown are both intentions; yet they are different intentions because of their differing contents.

Consider the idea of *content* itself. Mental states like belief, desire, and intention all have something called content; one doesn't just intend, believe, or desire simpliciter; rather, one believes that something is or will be the case, one desires that something be the case, one intends to make something the case. What follows the "that" is called the content of these mental states.¹⁹ That there is such a thing as mental content is not simply a grammatical fact about how the words, "believe," "desire," and "intend" are used in the English language. It is that, but it is also (and more deeply) a psychological fact about the kinds of mental states these three states are. They are representational states, states whose content represents the world (either as we believe it is, want it to be, or intend to make it).

In differentiating explanations based on the mental states of historical actors, it is thus not sufficient to characterize those states as being ones of belief, desire, or intention. Suppose, for example, that one is satisfied that

18. For pretty standard treatments of what is often called "the folk psychology," see MICHAEL S. MOORE, *LAW AND PSYCHIATRY: RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP* (1984), ch. 1; MOORE, *MECHANICAL CHOICES*, *supra* note 8, chs. 3–6.

19. *See id.*

Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold’s intentions in drafting the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia were among the salient causes of World War I’s crucial declarations of war. One still needs to know what intentions these were: did Berchtold intend to start a war with Serbia, but Serbia only, when he directed the drafting of the ultimatum by Baron Musilin? Or did Berchtold intend that a general European war result from his action of sending such an ultimatum to Serbia? Or did Berchtold intend both a war between Austria and Serbia, and a general European war, the former as the means of accomplishing the latter? These are three different intentions because they differ in their content.

Dwelling on the content of the mental states of belief, desire, and intention has payoffs (for the construction of our matrix of kinds of explanations) beyond this issue of individuation. Another payoff is to see that there are two kinds of explanations that may explain an action by some historical actor’s mental states of belief, desire, and intention. Vincent Van Gogh, for example, famously took a knife and cut off his left ear. Suppose that we are satisfied that his act of so wielding his knife was caused by Van Gogh’s desire to be a great artist. Do we mean to use Van Gogh’s desire as explaining his action in the way my desire to beat a famous chess master might explain why my heart is racing, why I am sweating, or why I spill my coffee in my state of excitement about our forthcoming chess match?²⁰ Or do we mean to use Van Gogh’s desire as explaining his action as the calculation of a rational agent, viz, where he believed that being earless would reduce the distractions of those senses irrelevant to his art and thus further his desire to be a great artist? The latter is what we usually mean in historical explanation, recognizing that in odd-ball cases like Van Gogh’s we might well mean the former.

To make out this “rationalizing relation”²¹ inherent in this second mode of mental state explanations, there are subtle questions of what I shall call questions of “fit” that must be answered. The central fit question is this: how closely does the upshot actually achieved (say, being without an ear in the case of Van Gogh) *fit* the content of the desire that motivated the action having that upshot? For the desire to operate in a rationalizing explanation, the fit needs to be pretty good; whereas for the first kind of explanation—

20. In MOORE, *LAW AND PSYCHIATRY*, *supra* note 18. I call these “mental cause” explanations.

21. The terminology is Donald Davidson’s. See *Actions, Reasons, and Causes*, *supra* note 11.

where the mental state causes but does not rationalize the result—no fit at all is required.

These questions of fit are more elusive than they may appear to be at first glance. This is because the relation of fit is not identity but is rather, instantiation. To see this, notice that the mental states of desiring that some future state of affairs take place, or intending that it does so, or foreseeing (predictively believing) that it will do so, all involve future events that have not yet occurred at the time the mental state in question is formed. When writing a history of such mental states, by contrast, historians in the past tense seemingly refer to the particular events that actually occurred and that are seemingly referred to in the content of such mental states because, by the time the history is written, those events have occurred and can thus be referred to as particulars. Thus, we might say that Berchtold foresaw *the outbreak of World War I* as the upshot of his ultimatum to Serbia, or alternatively, that he intended this. As put by such historical, past tense statements, the description of the content of Berchtold's belief or intention, "the outbreak of World War I," seemingly refers to the actual sequence of events (the four major declarations of war) that constituted in reality the outbreak of World War I. And therefore, one might think, the question of fit becomes a question of identity, viz, was the outbreak of World War I (referred to in the content of Berchtold's mental states) identical to the outbreak of World War I (the event that actually occurred)? Yet this is a mistake—if Berchtold had the relevant intention and/or the relevant predictive belief, he had no way of picking out the exact nature of the event that had not yet happened (the starting of the War at just the time and in just the way that it in fact started). So despite the idiomatic English seemingly referring to that particular event when historians speak in the past tense about Berchtold's intentions and predictive beliefs, in truth the content of those mental states is a representation of a *type* of event, not a representation of some future particular event. Berchtold intended (or foresaw), not *the* War; he intended (or foresaw) only *a* war. More exactly, Berchtold intended (or foresaw) that *some* token of the type, general European war, occur. Put even more formally, there is a hidden existential quantifier nested within the content of future-oriented desires, beliefs, and intentions, saying not that some discrete particular will occur but only that there exists *some* particular that will occur that instantiates the type of particular specified. Thus, when someone claims, "I predicted the fire that occurred in the factory yesterday;" he is really claiming that he predicted some event of the type, fire in that factory, would occur.²²

22. For the logic of this (in now somewhat dated Quinean terms), see Michael S. Moore, *Foreseeing Harm Opaquely*, in *PLACING BLAME: A THEORY OF THE CRIMINAL LAW* 363 (2010).

The occurrence of the outbreak of World War I is a particular, an event-token; the mental states given to explain it in history, while they themselves are particulars, nonetheless have as their contents *types* of events. The relationship of fit between an historical event like the outbreak of World War I and the content of the mental states of historical actors given to explain it, is thus a relation of instantiation, not identity.

Instantiation admits of degrees. It is sensible to ask: if Berchtold intended *some* general European war ensure from his act of sending the ultimatum, how clearly and how closely did the start of World War I in actuality match the type of general European war that he had in mind? These matching questions are matters of degree—surely if the representation of war in Berchtold’s head had the order or dates of war declaration slightly different than the reality of such matters, the fit is close enough to say that he intended/foresaw “the War;” equally surely, if the representation of war in Berchtold’s head was of a nuclear European war with a different alignment of the belligerents at a much later date, the fit is not close enough to say that he intended “The War.” And there is room for infinite gradations between these poles of clear fit and clear not-fit.²³

Let me digress briefly from the subject of developing an explanatory taxonomy proper, to the moral implications evident in the taxonomy thus far developed. Revert to my earlier example of my writing and your reading of this essay, and the beliefs, desires, and intentions that both causes and rationalize your action and mine. If reading this essay were a bad thing—say, like starting a war—then these kinds of BDI, mental states explanations would grade how morally culpable you were in doing what you did. As the criminal law of almost all legal systems has recognized for centuries, the worst folks are those who (in Aquinas’ words) “set their will” to some evil like war, either as an end desired in itself or as a means intended to fulfill some other end.²⁴ The next most culpable are those who do what they do not desiring or intending that which is bad or harmful in these actions, but they foresee as a side effect of getting what they do desire and

23. These issues are related to, but are not the same as, the issues we explored in part III above. There we were concerned with the size of the event referred to as “World War I.” Here we are concerned with the *representations* of that event as the objects of the desire, intentions, and beliefs of historical actors. Although related, these two questions of individuation are distinct, for we do not individuate mental representations of events in the same way or by the same criteria as we individuate the events themselves, either types or tokens. See Michael S. Moore, *Intentions and Mens Rea*, in PLACING BLAME 449, *supra* note 22.

24. AQUINAS, SUMMA THEOLOGICA.

intend that (with variable degrees of likelihood) their actions will produce the evil in question. And, finally, least culpable are those who neither desire nor intend nor foresee that their actions will or might result in an evil like a war, but they damn well should have foreseen how things would turn out because any reasonable person would have predicted that.²⁵

Also pertinent to the moral culpability of historical actors is the question of the closeness of fit I explored a moment ago. The closer is the fit (between the outbreak of World War I that actually occurred, and the representation of that war in the head of the actors who intended or foresaw that War), the more such actors bear the blameworthiness of ones who intended or foresaw the war that their actions caused.²⁶

For those interested in assigning blame to individuals for starting World War I, both the taxonomy of explanation organized around the kind of mental state involved, and the degree of fit between the content of the mental state and the action it explains, will hold moral as well as explanatory interest.

B. Taxonomizing Explanations of Intentional Actions by the Kinds of Relations Holding Between BDI Mental States and the Actions That They Explain

The second dimension to my taxonomy of mental state explanations will lie in the kind of relation(s) as may exist between the mental states²⁷ of individuals on the one hand, and the thing to be explained, the outbreak of the War, on the other. I earlier distinguished three kinds of relationships—causal, counterfactual, and probabilistic—and I now want to build on and to refine that taxonomy.

25. These well known gradations in culpability, as phrased in Anglo-American criminal law, are described in MOORE, *MECHANICAL CHOICES*, *supra* note 8, ch. 4. There is a lively dispute about the last of these being a true form of moral culpability. See Heidi M. Hurd & Michael S. Moore, *Punishing the Awkward, the Stupid, the Weak, and the Selfish: The Culpability of Negligence*, 5 CRIM. L. & PHIL. 147 (2011). The view that Professor Hurd and I there defend urges that the blameworthiness of negligence is an aretaic kind of blameworthiness (for bad character), not a deontic kind (for bad choices and bad actions); but in what follows I ignore this subtlety.

26. See Michael Moore, *Moore's Truths About Causation and Responsibility: A Reply to Alexander and Ferzan*, 6 CRIM. L. & PHIL. 445 (2012).

27. More exactly, the relationship will be between one mental state/action pair, and another mental state/action pair, the latter being the declarations of war. There are interesting complexities about such pairs themselves, such as the relationship between an intention to do some action A and the doing of A (usually one has to resort to a special, non-generic kind of causal relation existing between the two.) But these complexities are to the side of my interests here. What motivates the use of such mental state/action pairs is to the fact that the declarations of war stand in the relations I shall chart in the text, not directly to the mental states of certain actors but indirectly, through the actions immediately executed by one otherwise accompanying those mental states.

Consider any act other than the four historically salient acts of declaring war and ask, what is the relation between the former act (and its accompanying mental state) and the latter acts? The first possibility is that the former *caused* the latter. The second possibility is that the latter counterfactually depended on the former. The third possibility is that the latter probabilistically depended on the former, i.e., that the former increased the conditional probability of the latter.²⁸ (These three relationships do not exclude one another, so that more than one or even all three may exist in a given case.)

As to the first of these, the nature of the causal relationship that is the subject matter of causal explanations is of course an enormous topic. Indeed, I have myself killed more than a few trees exploring the question.²⁹ From that treatise-like treatment of causation, let me pick eight characteristics that are here salient. First, there is a distinction between the singular causal relation which relates tokens of events or states of affairs, on the one hand, and causal laws that relate types of events or states of affairs, on the other. Second, every singular causal statement presupposes that there are one or more causal laws (even though, contra Hume and his followers, singular causal statements are not to be reduced to statements of causal laws). On a deductive-nomological understanding as to the character of such laws, that means that singular causes “make” their effects happen in the sense that singular causes, together with other factors, are sufficient for their effects. Third, neither the singular causal relationship between tokens of events or states of affairs, nor the relationship of causal laws connecting types of events or states of affairs, is to be identified with either relations of counterfactual dependency (or to laws of such dependencies) or to relations of probabilistic dependency (or to probabilistic laws). Fourth, while I have argued for the primacy of states of affairs (states of affairs are the having of a property by an object over a temporal duration) over events as the relata of the singular causal relation,³⁰ nothing turns on that here, save the implication that it is idiomatic to speak of either as causes and effects and that no restriction to one or the other (say, to events like sparks) is defensible. Fifth, there can be no singular causal relations between absences of either events or states of affairs because an absence is no kind

28. I shall ignore David Lewis’ subtle distinction between conditional probability statements and conditional statements of probability. See Lewis, *Postscripts to Causation*, in his 2 PHILOSOPHICAL PAPERS 178 (1986).

29. Michael Moore, CAUSATION AND RESPONSIBILITY: AN ESSAY IN LAW, MORALS, AND METAPHYSICS (2009).

30. *Id.* at chs. 14–15.

of particular but is rather only a negative existentially generalized statement that nothing of a certain type exists; this implies three things, each of them rather significant: (a) an omission to prevent some event or state of affairs is not a cause (even though the event or state of affairs in question may counterfactually depend on the absence); (b) an act or other event that is said to prevent the occurrence of something is not the cause of that something because that “something” is an absence that doesn’t exist, so preventions, like omissions, are not what they are by virtue of being causal in nature; (c) acts that prevent other acts or events from themselves preventing the occurrence of some event or state of affairs (so called “double preventions”) also are not causal in nature. Sixth, the causes of any event or state of affairs are typically (and perhaps always) multiple, so that there are numerous causes for all historical events or states of affairs (such as declarations of war).³¹ Seventh, causation is a scalar relation, in the sense that something can be more-or-less a cause as a matter of degree; further, not all causes are created equal, so that the degrees of causal contribution to some outcome by one factor can be greater or lesser than the causal contribution to that same outcome by another factor (and will be, in that sense, “more important” in causally explaining the phenomenon). Eighth and finally, the degree of causal contribution of some factor can be so small as to be *de minimus*, making it in popular parlance not a cause (and thus, not causally explanatory) at all; such *de minimus* factors, however, if they are necessary to the occurrence of some event (think of the proverbial flapping of a butterfly’s wings in the Sahara and a hurricane months later in Florida) may explain the latter event via the relation of counterfactual dependence even if not via the relation of causation.

The second relation, that of counterfactual dependence, has generated almost as much literature and diversity of opinion as has causation.³² Salient here, however, are the following points. First, counterfactual statements relate only possible (rather than actual) events or states of affairs. That is, such statements imagine what Leibnitz called “possible worlds” and relate events in that world, one to the other. For example, suppose we say: “If Princeps had not killed Franz Ferdinand, World War I would not have happened.” Such statements describe a world that is only possible and not actual because in that world there was no assassination of the Arch-Duke, and in that world there was no World War I.³³ Second, because there

31. See *supra* note 4.

32. The two generations of literature in philosophy on counterfactuals are begun by NELSON GOODMAN, *FACT, FICTION, AND FORECAST* (4th ed. 1983), and DAVID LEWIS, *COUNTERFACTUALS* (1973).

33. For a fascinating, detailed description of four such possible worlds, see RICHARD NED LEBOW, *ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND LIVES! A WORLD WITHOUT WORLD*

are innumerable possible worlds, on the current scheme for counterfactuals derived from the work of David Lewis (and Robert Stalnaker³⁴), one tests the truth of counterfactual statements in a possible world that is closest to the actual world, save that in that possible world the event that did happen in the actual world did not happen in that close possible world.³⁵ Third, counterfactual dependence (unlike causation) relates absences as well as presences. This means that in the three kinds of cases above discussed—omissions to prevent, preventions, and double-preventions—it is the relation of counterfactual dependence and not causation that forms the basis of explanations framed in terms of these three notions.³⁶ Fourth, the relation of counterfactual dependence, like the relation of causation, is

WAR I (2014). There is an interesting difference in the focus of historians versus philosophers on counterfactuals. Each of the four possible worlds Lebow examines in his book are the same for the philosophical question of what possible world is close enough to the actual world for it to be a test of the counterfactual in the actual world. For in each scenario, Franz Ferdinand does not get killed, and World War I doesn't happen. What interests historians is what happens in such possible worlds *after* the non-occurrence of World War I, which is at it should be because that informs us of the significance of the assassination. But for technical reasons, what happens after World War I does not happen cannot enter into the closeness calculation needed to ascertain the truth of the counterfactual, “If Franz Ferdinand had not been killed, then World War I would not have happened.” See MOORE, CAUSATION AND RESPONSIBILITY 389, *supra* note 29.

34. Robert Stalnaker, *A Theory of Conditionals*, in STUDIES IN LOGICAL THEORY (N. Rescher ed., 1968).

35. This scheme sounds simpler than in fact it is. As Lewis was at such pains to point out, when one constructs a possible world where an event that happened in the actual world is not present in that possible world, other things also have to change besides the removal of the event in question: either the laws connecting that event to other events, and/or those other events themselves. Lewis thus invents a complicated similarity metric for measuring the closeness of possible worlds in terms of major versus minor “miracles” (i.e., breaches of true scientific laws) or in terms of numbers other events changed besides that stipulated to be changed by the antecedent clause of the relevant counterfactual. See David Lewis, *Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow*, 13 NOUS 455 (1979).

36. This oversimplified a bit. The counterfactual dependency relation in cases of prevention and double prevention itself depends on there being *some* causal relationship (although not a causal relationship to the event being explained.) *E.g.*, if Sazonov prevented the Tsar from ordering the cessation of Russian mobilization on July 30, then Sazonov's action of talking to the Tsar caused something—not the absence of a cessation order by the Tsar, but a state of mind in the Tsar (such as the Tsar's belief that demobilization was no longer possible) which state of mind was inconsistent with (could not co-exist with) both the Tsar intending to order demobilization and the Tsar's actually ordering demobilization. Nonetheless, despite the necessary existence of such a causal relationship in relations of prevention and of double prevention, it remains true that only the relation of counterfactual dependence exists between Sazonov's action and two absences: the lack of an intention to order, and the lack of an ordering of, demobilization by the Tsar.

scalar, again in the sense that it admits of degrees of strength. Although it is not very idiomatic in ordinary English,³⁷ one thing can be *more necessary* than another thing, to the happening of some third event. This scalar nature to counterfactual dependency stems from the scalar nature of the degrees of closeness of the possible worlds in which one tests counterfactual statements for their truth: necessity is stronger the further (“less close”) are the possible worlds in which a counterfactual statement remains true. For example: if in the absence of Germany’s “blank check” Austria would not have issued its unacceptable ultimatum to Serbia, and if this would be true despite virtually any other changes in the world (such as, e.g., Russia being less vehemently pan-Slavic), then Germany’s blank check was *strongly* necessary to Austria’s issuance of its war-provoking ultimatum. Or take another example, one much debated by historians:³⁸ if the counterfactual, “if Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated, then World War I would not have happened,” remains true in worlds quite distant from the actual world, then the assassination was strongly necessary to the happening of World War I. On the other hand, if something else would have sparked the War if the assassination had not, then the assassination was only weakly necessary to the happening of the War.³⁹

I understand causation and counterfactual dependence to be ontologically basic relations, in the sense that they are not to be identified with each other nor with some third kind of relation. Yet in combination they do produce a non-basic (or “constructed”) relation that is of considerable interest to historical explanations. This is the relation of inevitability. What do we mean when we say things like, “Once Austria invaded Serbia World War I became inevitable?” I think we mean two things: (1) In combination with other factors already in place on July 29, 1914, the Austrian invasion of Belgrade on that day was *sufficient* for World War I to become a reality over the next six days; and (2) There was no human action that could have

37. Although consider this bit of seemingly idiomatic English by Chief Justice John Marshall, who when discussing what Congressional powers were “necessary and proper” under the U.S. Constitution in *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 17 U.S. 316 (1819), had this to say about the ordinary meaning of “necessary:” “The word ‘necessary’ . . . admits of all degrees of comparison . . . A thing may be necessary, very necessary, absolutely or indispensably necessary.”

38. See, e.g., JACK BEATTY, *THE LOST HISTORY OF 1914: RECONSIDERING THE YEAR THE GREAT WAR BEGAN 194–200* (2012) (defending the view (although not in these terms) that the assassination of Franz Ferdinand was strongly necessary to the occurrence of World War I.).

39. The view, for example, of the British historian F.H. Hinsley: “If the Sarajevo crisis had not precipitated a particular great war, some other crisis would have precipitated a great war at no distant time.” Hinsley is so quoted in Richard Ned Lebow, *Franz Ferdinand Found Alive: World War I Unnecessary*, in *UNMAKING THE WEST: COUNTERFACTUAL THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS IN HISTORY* (Philip Tetlock et al eds., 2006).

been taken after that date that would have prevented that outbreak of the War. Statement (1) is of course the causal law implication of the singular causal statement that the Austrian invasion of Serbia caused World War I; statement (2) is a statement of counterfactual dependence, namely, the denial of there being such dependence of World War I on the absence of any post July 29 human action whatsoever.⁴⁰

Inevitability is a slippery notion. One might think that causes, insofar as they give sufficient conditions for the happening of the War, already make that War inevitable. After all, if factors X, Y, and Z are jointly sufficient for the War, that means that no other factor—human omissions of trying to prevent it included—were necessary. Sufficiency might seem to betoken inevitability, all by itself. Yet this is a mistake. Sufficiency is a highly context-sensitive notion. In this it is like the notion of similarity. One can sensibly judge one thing to be similar to another only when one specifies the respect(s) in which the comparison is to be made. Similarly, one can judge one factor to be sufficient for another only when one specifies the range of items being said to be not necessary. To say that X, Y, and Z were jointly sufficient for W is to say that nothing else *like them* (in certain relevant respects) was needed for W to happen.

The reason for this context-sensitivity is the same for sufficiency as it is for similarity: both are otherwise empty of distinguishing power if the context does not supply the respects in which one is to judge similarity or sufficiency. For, as I remarked earlier, everything is similar to everything else in some respect, dissimilar to everything else in some other respect. Likewise, no set of factors (short of a total state description of the universe) is sufficient for some event or state of affairs (W) if no boundaries are imposed on the class of factors alleged to be not necessary. To use a pertinent example, the combination of the intentions to declare war of the leaders of Austria, Russia, Germany, France, and Great Britain were not sufficient for the War to occur if one must take account of factors like the presence of oxygen in earth's atmosphere, the existence of gravity, the absence of a Martian invasion, etc., for all of these were surely necessary for the outbreak of the War, meaning that the intentions were not sufficient.

So when we say things like, “Austria's invasion of Serbia caused World War I,” the fact that we imply that that invasion (in combination with

40. Equivalently but more idiomatically for the counterfactual involved in statement (2): If any action within the realm of actions possible for the Kaiser and others after July 29 had been taken, such action would not have prevented World War I.

certain other factors) was sufficient for the War, we do not mean that the War was inevitable. The War became inevitable (because of facts like Austria's invasion of Serbia) only if that invasion was sufficient in a very special sense of "sufficient," viz, the sense that asserts that all omissions of an attempt at preventing the War were not necessary. It is only this special sense of sufficiency—a sense not generated by simply asserting causation—that yields the counterfactual needed for true inevitability (the counterfactual is: had any attempt been made to prevent the War, it would have been unsuccessful, i.e., the War would have occurred anyway).⁴¹

The upshot of this discussion is that to claim that some factor X caused the War, or to say that the War counterfactually depended on X, is not to say that X, when it occurred, made the War inevitable. Far from it. Many human choices were made not to stop the diplomatic and military chain reactions occurring in Europe June 28–August 4, 1914, and had those choices been made the other way many of them would have prevented the War. The War was not inevitable (in the sense that I have just analyzed) unless and until no human choice/action pair could have stopped it.⁴²

The nature of the third basic relation⁴³ out of which historical explanations are built, probabilistic dependence, is also a matter that has been extensively

41. The sense of "inevitability" just analyzed is confined to a human-centric perspective; things are inevitable in this sense only when there is nothing human beings can do to stop it. But there is a more general sense of "inevitability" that is to be used where one's interest is not about whether human actors could have prevented it. Thus, we might say that the destruction of a town by avalanche was *inevitable* and mean by that only that "it was going to happen sooner or later." Overdetermination cases are the clearest examples of such usage: if this avalanche from this mountain had not destroyed the town, the next avalanche following the first would have destroyed the town; as some Arabs would say of such cases, "so it was written then."

42. Some "hard determinists" (William James's term) would have us believe that those choices could not have been made differently than they were because those choices too were sufficiently caused by earlier factors over which the relevant actors had no control. And further: whatever those choices in turn caused (the War) was therefore inevitable once the causes of those choices had occurred. Yet the hard determinist makes the mistake of assuming that his is the only reading of, "could have chosen otherwise." On the compatibilist reading of the principle of alternative possibilities that I defend, the Kaiser and other actors could have chosen other than they did even though their choices were sufficiently caused by factors themselves unchosen. See Moore, *Compatibilism(s) for Neuroscientists*, in LAW AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION (Enrique Villanueva, ed., 2014) (revised and reprinted in MOORE, MECHANICAL CHOICES, *supra* note 8).

43. It is a contested matter whether probabilistic dependence is a basic relation, or whether it is instead merely an epistemic derivation of causation and counterfactual dependence. Modern micro-physics strongly suggests that there is a primitive relation of probabilistic dependence but that does not settle the issue for historians; for however objectivist the physics comes out about probability, there is plainly another sense of probability that is epistemic and derived from causal and counterfactual notions, and it is possible that it is only that epistemic, derived sense that historians intend when they speak of chance-raising in history.

explored. While there is considerable long-term agreement on the validity of the Kolmogorov axioms of probability and the theorems that follow from them, there is much less consensus on the semantics of the crucial terms (such as “chance”) in these axioms and their theorems (it is their semantics that tells us what the relation of probability is that is said to be raised in conditional probability statements). Is chance a primitive propensity, a relative frequency, a subjective estimation, etc.?⁴⁴ Prescinding away from these contested matters, the salient features of probabilistic dependence relevant here are two. First, like counterfactual dependence but unlike causation, probabilistic dependence can relate absences. Second, the relation is even more obviously scalar than is causation and counterfactual dependence: one event can raise the probability of another event more or less than can some third event, even though that third event is also a probability-raiser.

Like the first dimension used to develop a taxonomy of kinds of explanations (in terms of kinds of mental states), this second dimension is not without moral as well as explanatory interest. For as a crude generalization, people whose actions *cause* something bad (like a horrible war) are more blameworthy with respect to that bad thing than are those whose actions are only *counterfactually necessary* for that bad thing to occur (as by, say, failing to prevent it); and both are more blameworthy than those whose actions only make the bad thing *more likely*. As with mental state-based gradations of culpability earlier discussed, these relation-based gradations of blameworthiness are reflected throughout Western criminal codes; for these codes punish acts that cause some bad thing more than either failures to prevent that thing from occurring (omissions) or actions that prevent a would-be preventer from preventing that thing from occurring (double preventions).⁴⁵ And those who only raise the chance of others causing that bad result, are usually relegated to the lesser blameworthiness of accomplices (enablers) rather than principals (causers) even when the bad thing actually occurs.⁴⁶ So that again, as with the first dimension, those interested in

44. A well known exploration of the various objective and subjective possibilities for such a semantics for probability statements is DONALD GILLIES, *PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES OF PROBABILITY* (2000).

45. See MOORE, *CAUSATION AND RESPONSIBILITY*, *supra* note 29, ch. 18.

46. Such generalizations about degrees of blameworthiness are said to be “crude” in the text because of the scalarity of each of the three relations, and the proportionate scalarity in the moral blameworthiness attached to each such scalar relation. Being more strongly causal, more necessary, or more raising of conditional probability, each makes for being more blameworthy. This leaves open the possibility, often enough realized, that

questions of moral responsibility for World War I should have an independent moral interest in this second dimension of my taxonomy in addition to their presumed explanatory interest.

VI. APPLYING THE TAXONOMY OF KINDS OF EXPLANATIONS TO
“THE BOTTLENECK” CONSTITUTED BY THE EVENTS OF
JUNE 28–AUGUST 4, 1914

In this part I seek to apply the taxonomy of kinds of explanations to the actions explanatory of the War that were outlined in Part V above. Rather than following the chronology depicted in the timeline in Part IV as the organizing principle for this discussion, I shall rather organize this discussion by the categories of explanation distinguished in Part V above. My main criterion of distinction will be by the kinds of mental states involved (the first dimension of that taxonomy), and then secondarily by the kind of explanatory relation involved (the second dimension). Because of the heightened moral interest in such cases, I will begin with actions of those actors who intended the war, starting with those who may have intended the War as an end in itself (the object of a motivating desire) rather than as a means intended to secure some further end.

A. The Mental States of Those Whose Actions in Some Way (Causally, Counterfactually, or Probabilistically) Explain the War

1. Actions by Those Intending the War for Its Own Sake

Which actions and actors are within this category is of course a central bone of contention of those who wish to adjudicate the question of war guilt with respect to World War I. But it is also a central question of explanatory interest, because a straightforward explanation of the War is that such a war was precisely what was wanted and intended by those with the power to cause it. In this section I shall begin with those who desired the war for its own sake, as an end-in-itself, and not merely as a means to the attainment of some other end.⁴⁷

a strongly necessary action may be more blameworthy for something like the War than an only weakly causally efficacious action.

47. There are some issues lurking here in distinguishing those who desire a state of affairs for its own sake and those who intend that state of affairs as a means to obtain some further end. Suppose a statesman was motivated to his war-causing activities by the belief that wars exemplify the proper development of male virtue and for that reason intended to start a general European War—is that to desire war as an end in itself? I so classify it because the relationship said to exist between the War starting and the further thing that is thusly achieved—the attainment of the supposed virtue attaching to being in such a war—is non-causal. True enough, being in the War possesses (it is thought by such a person)

The psychology I have in mind here is well exemplified by Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a believer in the virtuous nature of war. As he said in his 1897 speech to the American Naval War College:

“No triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumphs of war . . . the minute that a race loses the hard fighting virtues, then . . . it has lost its proud right to stand as the equal of the best.”⁴⁸

Roosevelt’s connection of the manly virtues to war extended to individual behavior, and not just states (or Roosevelt’s “races”). As a perspicuous biographer of Roosevelt wrote, “Roosevelt yearned for conflict—for the ultimate conflict of war. . . . In his more bellicose moods it sometimes seemed that just about any war would do.”⁴⁹

Roosevelt meant what he said, for his actions matched his words. Rather than directing the Spanish-American War from the safety of Washington D.C. as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt famously volunteered to form and lead (to be sure, under the professional guidance of a real soldier, Col. Leonard Wood) his famous Rough Riders.⁵⁰ Part of his motivation for this was his openly expressed desire to personally kill an enemy soldier during military combat, a desire he fulfilled in his charge up San Juan Hill in 1898. Even the horrors of World War I and the death of his youngest (and perhaps dearest) son, Quentin, near the end of the War, did not dissuade Roosevelt from this view. Despite openly sobbing over Quentin’s death shortly before his own, Roosevelt said it was better that Quentin had died doing his manly duty than that he lived shirking it.

Roosevelt is here of interest mainly by way of illustration of the psychology in question (namely, desiring war as an end in itself). For Roosevelt was not one of the principal actors whose decisions directly brought on the War. True enough, Roosevelt met with Kaiser Wilhelm II at Edward VII’s funeral in London in 1910, and was Wilhelm’s guest to

this *desirability characteristic*, but this fact does not refer to a further event caused by the War that could then serve as its further end. What makes an end desirable (its “desirability characteristic”) is not itself some further event to which the end is a mere means but is only a property possessed by the end. See A.J. Watt, *The Intelligibility of Wants*, 81 MIND 553 (1972); MOORE, LAW AND PSYCHIATRY, *supra* note 18, at 19.

48. Quoted in CARTER, GEORGE, NICHOLAS, AND WILHELM, *supra* note 2, at 216. A contemporary of Roosevelt’s, William James, characterized this view of Roosevelt’s thusly: “Roosevelt believes in war as an ideal function, necessary from time to time for national health.” THOMAS, THE WAR LOVERS, *supra* note 17, at 90.

49. THOMAS, THE WAR LOVERS, *supra* note 17, at 59.

50. A bit of volunteering he was to repeat once America entered the War in his offer to President Wilson to form a troop to be sent abroad.

observe German war games shortly thereafter; and it may well be true that Roosevelt's "war-as-manly-virtue" view influenced the Kaiser to some imitation of that view. Also true enough, Roosevelt's persistent public criticisms of President Wilson's keeping America out of the War in its early years may have aided in precipitating America's eventual involvement in 1917.⁵¹ But despite this, Roosevelt's view that wars are desirable for both individuals and states had little direct impact on the outbreak of World War I.

Were any of the actions by those actors who did have a larger and more direct impact, motivated by a desire for the War for its own sake, as a state of affairs that was intrinsically desirable? If one were to believe the propaganda issued by the Allies both during and shortly after the War, the leading candidate would be the Kaiser, Wilhelm II; for such Allied (and particularly British) propaganda depicted the Kaiser as the chief villain of the War, an evil war-monger who valued war for its own sake.⁵² More specifically, the Kaiser was widely seen as one of those stereotypical Prussian militarists for whom war was as desirable as it was inevitable in the Darwinian struggle between peoples.

Certainly some of the Kaiser's public pronouncements made understandable this war-loving interpretation of his motivations. One of the best known of these—well known because so widely picked up in the international press at the time it was made and because it was so much used in later British wartime propaganda—was the Kaiser's 1900 "Hun speech." The Kaiser addressed departing German soldiers on the docks at Bremerhaven Harbor as they set off to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in China. Wilhelm told his soldiers to show "no mercy" to the Chinese rebels, to take no prisoners, to imitate "the Huns one thousand years ago [who] made a name for themselves to which their greatness still resounds. . ."⁵³

51. Roosevelt initially expressed sympathy for the German use of Belgium as an invasion route to France, a sympathy formed as a result of personal correspondence to him by the Kaiser on the subject. Roosevelt's sympathy here was short-lived, however; replaced by Roosevelt's fervent desire for America (and him personally) to take on the Germans. Years before Roosevelt had speculated that American troops would put on a good showing against the more militaristic Germans—as early as 1889 Roosevelt wrote to a friend that he did not "know that I should be sorry to see a bit of a spar with Germany" and that "while we would have to take some awful blows at first, I think in the end we would worry the Kaiser a little." THOMAS, *THE WAR LOVERS*, *supra* note 17, at 59. Roosevelt seemingly never lost that desire for such a test of American "virtue."

52. This view of the Kaiser is described briefly in John C.G. Rohl, *The Curious Case of the Kaiser's Disappearing War Guilt*, in *AN IMPROBABLE WAR: THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL CULTURE BEFORE 1914* 75–76 (Holger Afflebach & David Stevenson, eds., 2007). See also CHRISTOPHER CLARK, *KAISER WILHELM II: LIFE AND POWER* 359–60 (2009).

53. Speech at Bremerhaven Harbor, July 27, 1900, reported in CLARK, *KAISER WILHELM II*, *supra* note 52, at 234.

Yet in truth this image of a "Supreme Warlord" (the title Wilhelm gave himself around 1900 and proudly kept until Hindenburg appropriated it for himself late in the War) was just that, an image. Wilhelm had an image in mind as to what a Kaiser of the German Empire and a King of militaristic Prussia should look like, and his bellicose, threatening, war-welcoming image was just his playing out of the script he thought he was obligated by his role and his heritage to follow. Contrary to such an image, Wilhelm was a vain, weak, often depressed, insecure, physically handicapped,⁵⁴ image-conscious man who was out of his depth in the offices that he held and the power that he wielded in Germany's only half-democratic system of government. He vacillated in his opinions, his views at any given moment often depending on whoever it was with whom he last spoke. He was impetuous in his decision-making, and was typically more concerned with how he looked in making decisions than he was in making the right decision. He also was jealous of his prerogatives, once making his uncle, then Prince of Wales and only later King and Emperor Edward VII, cool his heels in Vienna while his nephew (Wilhelm), already an Emperor, preempted that uncle's visit with Emperor Franz Josef. And, in light of his vanity so extending to his personal appearance, he was a lover of uniforms, particularly military uniforms of other nations as well as of Germany.

As to the subject of war itself, Wilhelm saw military prowess as part of his role. He participated in the annual army war games, vainly enough that he did not detect his generals' annoyance nor their connivance in letting him do better than his talents would otherwise have produced. It is not clear whether his personal courage was ever tested in battle as it was for Roosevelt. But he was not oblivious to the obvious risks of war for his empire, drawing back from aggressive moves often enough that he was derisively tagged, "the Peace Kaiser" by some German military officials, some of whom even contemplated swapping such a "pacifist" for the more aggressive Crown Prince Ruprecht, Wilhelm's eldest son. Still, Wilhelm was always Bismarck's pupil (even after the pupil dropped the old master as Chancellor) in that war was seen as an instrument of national policy equally legitimate with peaceful alternatives such as diplomacy and economic hegemony.

54. Wilhelm had an atrophied left arm, a disfigurement that he saw as undercutting his masculine deportment and that he went to ridiculous lengths to disguise (with customized uniforms and carefully calculated camera poses).

So how should we characterize the state(s) of mind with which Wilhelm acted between July 5 and August 4 of 1914? What Wilhelm did or omitted to do we have already charted in Part IV. To summarize: he gave the Austrians their blank check on July 5; from July 5 to July 23 he continuously indicated support for Austria's desire to punish Serbia by military action (although when he heard the contents of the July 25 Serbian response to the Austrian ultimatum he thought it to be so conciliatory on Serbia's part that no such military action would need to be taken by Austria, and when such action was taken anyway on July 29, he on that same day authorized his Chancellor to urge the Austrians to stop their invasion of Serbia with the occupation of Belgrade); on or before July 26 he authorized his brother Heinrich to visit King George to sound out the British King about Britain's possible neutrality; between July 28 and August 1 he engaged in the extensive telegraph exchanges with Tsar Nicholas (the Nicky-Willy Correspondence) that generally urged Russian restraint on mobilization; on July 31 he consented to Germany's declaration of danger of imminent war, and on August 1 he ordered general mobilization of the German army, followed shortly thereafter by his signing of Germany's declaration of war against Russia, and on the same day authorized the ultimatum to the French to surrender their forts in exchange for not being attacked; on the evening of August 1 he ordered his armies not to attack France, but rescinded the order that same night; on August 2 he authorized the sending of the ultimatum to Belgium, and on August 3 he signed Germany's declaration of war against France; on August 4 he intentionally omitted to order a halt to the German advance already underway in Belgium, the order demanded by the British ultimatum of that date on pain of war being declared by Britain against Germany.

This is a lot of intentional action by the Kaiser, over an extended period of time. Given the vacillating nature of the Kaiser's mind, it is unlikely that we can isolate a consistent mental state (about the desirability or inevitability of a general European war) with which all of these actions were taken. Still, one common thread seems clear: at no point did the Kaiser think that a general European war was desirable for its own sake. He was never, in other words, motivated to his war-causing actions or omissions by setting his will towards such a war as an end in itself. He may have pretended to such a bellicosity at times; he may have wanted to look like a ruler who reveled in war like the Teutonic knights of legend; but the psychological reality was quite different.

A better candidate for a real admirer of war for its own sake was the still relatively young (just approaching 40 as the War broke out) Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty and doubtlessly the most vociferous war hawk in Asquith's Liberal Cabinet. Along with Edward Grey but not within the ken of most of the rest of the Liberal Cabinet, Churchill knew of the 1912 naval convention with the French that allowed the Royal Navy

to concentrate its modern battleships in the North Sea because the French would concentrate theirs in the Mediterranean, with the implicit understanding that in the event of war between France and Germany Britain would not allow the German High Seas fleet to bombard the channel coast of France. (This understanding, and the French reliance upon it, figured greatly in motivating Grey to put Britain into the War as soon as France was engaged.) Churchill also readied the Royal Navy for combat as early as July 26, as we have seen, putting it at its war-time station ahead of the mobilization of either the German or the French fleets; in light of the uncertain status of Turkey in the alignment of combatants at the outset of the War, Churchill also at this time (well before Turkey had declared for Germany) cancelled the Turkish contracts for the construction of two new dreadnoughts in British shipyards, transferring the almost completed battleships to the Royal Navy instead.⁵⁵

On July 28, after the Austrians had declared war on Serbia and after Churchill had ordered the Grand Fleet to its war station at Scapa Flow, Winston visited King George to inform him (in the King’s words) that “Winston Churchill came to see me [to tell me that] the Navy is all ready for War, but please God it will not come.”⁵⁶ By July 28 when he visited the King, and then between July 28 and August 4, plainly Churchill believed that a general European war was imminent and that his actions would help propel Britain into it. During this period, did he also intend his actions to help bring on the War? Did he so intend because he wanted such a war for its own sake, as an end in itself? The latter question is the relevant one for this subsection.

Like Teddy Roosevelt, Churchill as a young man relished the prospect of personal combat in wartime. Every study of Churchill’s life details (mostly via his letters to his mother, the famous Lady Randolph Churchill nee Jenny Jerome) his efforts to place himself in the harm’s way of personal combat during his 20’s.⁵⁷ This was true of his insertion of himself (when he was but 21) into the Spanish attempt to put down the rebellion in Cuba in 1895; it was also true of Churchill’s even more aggressively inserting himself on three other occasions while still in his 20’s where

55. One of the battleships was so near completion that its Turkish crew was already standing by in England to take possession of it.

56. CARTER, GEORGE, NICHOLAS, AND WILHELM, *supra* note 2, at 366.

57. A brief but highly readable account of this part of Churchill’s life is that done by his granddaughter, Celia Sandys. CELIA SANDYS, *CHURCHILL: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE* (1999).

combat beckoned somewhere in the British Empire even though his own regiment, the 4th Hussars, was never involved in such fields of operations: on the Northwest frontier of India where in 1897 Churchill joined the Malakand Field Force in its suppression of Pathan rebels; in 1898 in Kitchener's expedition against the Dervishes in the Sudan (and very much against Kitchener's wishes, Prime Minister Salisbury having interceded to induce Kitchener to change his mind about having what Kitchener regarded as an ambitious "medal-hunter" on his expedition); and most famously of all, in Churchill's 1899 taking himself to the Boer war in South Africa, where he was captured by the Boers but escaped.

One might well say of this younger Churchill what I earlier quoted from one of Teddy Roosevelt's biographers about Roosevelt: "In his more bellicose moods, it sometimes seemed that almost *any* war would do."⁵⁸ Moreover, like Roosevelt, Winston both wanted the thrill of being shot at and the accomplishment of shooting and killing someone in combat. As to the former: Winston was nearly killed in Cuba, a Cuban rebel bullet narrowly missing his head by less than a foot; in covering a retreat in Northwest India both of his immediate companions were killed by Pathan bullets, Churchill admitting to his mother that "here I was perhaps very near my end,"⁵⁹ in the Sudan Churchill was in the thick of the famous charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman⁶⁰ against the Dervish (often said to be the last great cavalry charge of the British Army before machine guns rendered such heroics ridiculous folly), where Churchill saved himself from upraised Dervish swords only by pistol work at very close range (three yards in one case, pistol muzzle against his opponent's body in the other).⁶¹ His granddaughter's conclusion from all this? "There is no doubt that he enjoyed the danger."⁶² In the young Churchill's own words, "Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result."⁶³ As to the latter: while there is no record that he killed anyone in Cuba, in the Northwest India campaign (as he bragged to his mother), he shot five Pathan rebels,⁶⁴

58. THOMAS, *THE WAR LOVERS*, *supra* note 17, at 59.

59. SANDYS, CHURCHILL, *supra* note 57, at 6.

60. A charge that confirmed Kitchener's disdain for medal-hunters like Churchill, Kitchener being annoyed at the combination of lack of reason or results to the charge, and the glory given it in the press nonetheless. See JOHN POLLOCK, *KITCHENER* 132 (2001).

61. Many of Churchill's companions in the charge were not so lucky; the Lancers suffered 51 casualties out of a complement of just over 300. ROY JENKINS, *CHURCHILL: A BIOGRAPHY* 41 (2002).

62. SANDYS, CHURCHILL, *supra* note 57, at 6.

63. WINSTON CHURCHILL, *THE STORY OF THE MALAKAND FIELD FORCE* 172 (1898).

64. Churchill's description: "I . . . fired my revolver at a man at 30 yards . . . Later on I used a rifle which a wounded man had dropped and fired 40 rounds at close quarters. I cannot be certain but I think I hit four men. At any rate, they fell. . . ." SANDYS, CHURCHILL, *supra* note 57, at 6.

and in the Sudan Churchill bragged about his personal bag in the famous charge as consisting of having killed “several—3 for certain—2 doubtful.”⁶⁵

Despite Churchill’s rather remarkable enthusiasm for war in his youth, it would be a mistake to characterize him as one who subscribed to the true war-lover’s ideology that combat was essential both for personal manly virtue and for a state’s rightful place amongst worthy nations. For Churchill’s youthful desire for combat was almost exclusively a function of his political ambitions. Responding to his father’s admonition about him, expressed to him in unmistakable terms—“you are not bright enough to take up either law or politics so you should aim at a military career”—the young Churchill saw success in the military as his stepping stone to entering politics, and he gauged such military success (as Lord Kitchener so plainly saw) in terms of medals and getting mentioned in dispatches for courageous accomplishments; that was his impetus to combat, not some belief that it was incumbent on any well formed man to take up arms.

Moreover, however much Churchill may have reveled in exposing himself to personal danger and in his ability to fight his way clear of such danger,⁶⁶ his later views on combat as a matter of state policy seem disconnected from any such risk-loving enthusiasms as may have survived his youth. Unlike Roosevelt, Churchill’s enthusiasm for his own personal participation in combat did not carry over to some judgment of the desirability of combat for the health of the state; unlike the Roosevelt who volunteered for a personal role in combat in both 1898 and again in 1917, Churchill did not give up his control of the making of war policy for the personal making of war.⁶⁷

Churchill’s decisions that contributed to Britain’s entry into the War in 1914 were seemingly motivated by matters of policy. As he was to write after

65. Quoted in JENKINS, CHURCHILL, *supra* note 61, at 41.

66. Even the fully mature Churchill never completely lost some of these characteristics of his youth. Witness the 66 year old Churchill arming his automobile with a Bren light machine gun in the trunk, and arming his person with a pistol, both during the Blitz in 1940: Churchill explained such actions with the grim thought that he personally could kill at least one or two Germans before they killed him in the expected German invasion of England. ERIK LARSON, *THE SPLENDID AND THE VILE: A SAGA OF CHURCHILL, FAMILY, AND DEFIANCE DURING THE BLITZ* 45 (2020).

67. At least Churchill did not give up such control willingly; after the disaster of Gallipoli was put on Churchill’s shoulders and he was accordingly forced from his position as First Lord of the Admiralty, he did then join British troops in combat in Belgium for a time (but only until he secured a consolatory policy-making position as Minister of Munitions for the rest of the War).

the War, “That the cause was good, that the argument was overwhelming, that the response would be worthy, I did not for a moment doubt.”⁶⁸ Somewhere in his four volume recollections of the War one might have thought that the “overwhelming goodness and worthiness” of the arguments that moved Churchill to war in 1914 would have been laid out by one who was, after all, one of the prime movers of the British towards war. But such arguments make little or no appearance because by 1914 the matter was settled in Churchill’s mind: of course Britain would have to join France in any war not of her own making with Germany. The honor of Britain would demand it. While the literal agreements of the Entente did not commit Britain to that course, the spirit of that agreement, the military arrangements made by the French in reliance on that spirit, and the benefits knowingly received by the British from those arrangements, all dictated that the only honorable course of action was to join the French against Germany. Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty had participated in the Anglo-French Naval Convention of 1912 (although not of the understandings of a like nature that had preceded that more formal Convention, and not as a prime mover in 1912, which was Sir Edward Grey on the British side). The French had concentrated their fleet in the Mediterranean in reliance on that Convention, leaving their northern coasts exposed to German aggression; and the British got the benefit of concentrating their fleet in the North Sea to maintain their numerical advantage over the Germans in first class battleships available in that theatre; the British also needed and accepted French protection of their trade routes in the Mediterranean and Suez and had assured the French a like protection of French interests in the Channel. How could an honorable country who had accepted such benefits not do what was promised to obtain them?

The honor of Britain motivated Churchill to his unswerving determination to bring Britain into the War alongside of France. Churchill was one of those who believed that states could have or lack something called honor, and that to lack it in one’s own state was unthinkable. In his eyes the Belgians had honor for refusing the German demand of free passage, even though so doing committed them to a hopeless resistance against overwhelming odds that cost many Belgian lives; by the same token, the Germans were dishonored by invading Belgium and the British had what was “indisputably an obligation of honor” to join “the heroic nation of King Albert” in resisting the German advance towards France—“it was on that ground that I personally, with others, took my stand.”⁶⁹ Likewise, the French had honor in refusing the German demand that France give up her frontier forts; as

68. CHURCHILL, 1 *THE WORLD CRISIS*, *supra* note 5, at 178.

69. *Id.* at 163–64.

Churchill praised France for this: “She did not beg.”⁷⁰ Finally and most crucially, Churchill concluded that Britain’s honor demanded that she use force to defend the French coast: “Whatever disclaimer we had made about not being committed, could we, when it came to the point, honorably stand by and see the naked French coasts ravaged and bombarded by German Dreadnoughts. . .?”⁷¹

This motivation of honor means that Churchill too, like the Kaiser, did not do what he did because he wanted a war for its own sake. Rightly or wrongly,⁷² Churchill thought that British honor demanded the War.

Other candidates for war-loving causers of the War could also here be examined in detail, the leading suspects here being Conrad, von Moltke, and Sazonov, three of the most bellicose war hawks in Austria, Germany, and Russia, respectively. But they too, although they may have intended the War early on, did so because they thought it would reap them other advantages that we shall shortly explore.

*2. Actions by Those Intending the War as a Means to Other
Ends (As Opposed to Only Foreseeing the War As a
Side-Consequence of What They Did Intend)*

Here the list of candidates is long, for at some point each of the actors we are examining came to form the intention to take his nation into the War. As we have just seen, none did so with the War as an end in itself; but at some point all the principal actors did so intend, with the War as a means. Two questions are salient about each of these actors: when were these intentions formed, and for what ends? Consider first one of the actors whose psychology we have already described, Kaiser Wilhelm.

70. *Id.* at 166.

71. *Id.* at 163. Such a view led Edward Grey to formally warn the German government that its High Seas Fleet of battleships would not be allowed to enter the North Sea or the English Channel in order to attack the coasts or the shipping of France. This was on August 2, before Germany had declared war on France (August 3) and before Britain itself had declared war on Germany (August 4). On that same day, August 2, British and French naval staffs began coordinating their command structure, assigned responsibilities in the Mediterranean and the North Sea, and coordinated joint use of naval bases.

72. Many of the young men who were lucky enough to survive the horrors of combat in World War I would no doubt agree with the assessment of those who took to mountaineering to distance themselves from their war-time memories: “Privilege and honor died in the trenches.” WADE DAVIS, *INTO THE SILENCE: THE GREAT WAR, MALLORY, AND THE CONQUEST OF EVEREST* (2011).

Allied wartime propaganda construed the Kaiser as having intended war all along, June 28–August 4. Wilhelm’s cousin, Nicholas II, came to the same view late in the evening on August 1, namely, that Wilhelm had all along intended war and was just pretending in their Nicky-Willy correspondence to care about avoiding war by negotiating mutual demobilization of their armies.⁷³ Yet the construal was pretty plainly wrong. On July 5 when Wilhelm gave Count Hoyos of Austria Germany’s “blank check,” it is not at all clear that he intended that Austria cash it by declaring war on Serbia (whether he foresaw that an Austro-Serbian war would result from his action is another matter, one we shall attend to shortly); later, when Wilhelm learned of the Serbian capitulation to the Austrian ultimatum on all points save one, Wilhelm neither intended such a war nor probably even foresaw it—in fact, he was genuinely pleased that now there wouldn’t have to be even such a limited war. Likewise on July 29 when the Kaiser authorized his Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, to urge the Austrians to stop at Belgrade and invade Serbia no further, he was probably sincere in not intending further war upon Serbia by Austria (whatever may have been the signalings to the contrary by his Chancellor and his Army Chief of Staff to the Austrians). August 1 appears to be the day on which Wilhelm formed his intent that there be a war between Austria/Germany and Russia but even then not with France if it could be avoided—thus his delight late in the day of August 1 at receiving the (what turned out to be) misinformation that Britain would guarantee French neutrality. At most Wilhelm’s intent with respect to war with France (at the time at which he authorized the German ultimatum to France) was only a conditional intent: if the French did not assent to surrender possession of their frontier forts, then there would be war between France and Germany. The evening of August 1 is also when he knew that war with Russia meant war with France, and that war with France meant war with England.

This conclusion about Wilhelm’s intentions presupposes a number of psychological assumptions that I shall now make explicit, assumptions that we would need to have in hand in order to examine the psychology of other actors as well. First, there is the basic assumption that I made in distinguishing intentions from predictive beliefs, viz, that a belief that one’s action will produce some result R is to be distinguished from an intention to produce R motivating that action. Jeremy Bentham, for one, disputed this assumption insofar as he classified such predictive beliefs about one’s own future actions as a kind of intention, what Bentham called an “oblique (as opposed to a

73. See ROBERT MASSIE, NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA at 272–73 (1967). Nicholas declaimed that night about the Kaiser: “He was never sincere, not a moment.” Nicholas claimed that upon having resolved this ambiguity about Wilhelm, “all was over forever between me and William,” and that this allowed him to sleep that night “extremely well.”

"direct") intention."⁷⁴ The common law of England has for centuries agreed with Bentham, insofar as that law classified results "substantially certain" to occur within the content of the actor's predictive beliefs as "general (as opposed to "specific") intentions."⁷⁵

Yet Bentham and the common law that followed him on this were wrong. Believing that something is the case is psychologically distinct from intending to make it be the case. The first explains a result in terms of the actor's willingness to tolerate such a result flowing from his actions; the second explains that result in terms of the actor's wanting the result to obtain, either as the end his action serves or at least as the means to attaining that end. And the moral difference in blameworthiness tracks this explanatory difference, as we have seen.⁷⁶

Even so, Wilhelm and the other principal actors of 1914 illustrate problems in psychology that threaten to undermine this crucial distinction between intention and predictive belief. One of these stems from the general problem of content individuation for intentional states like intentions and beliefs. To use an old example of mine:⁷⁷ suppose Herod wants more than anything to please Salome; this requires John the Baptist's head on a platter to be served to Salome; John therefore orders John's head to be severed from his body and served to Salome on a platter; and Salome is pleased, getting Herod what he wanted. Can Herod seriously say that he didn't intend John's death? Can he say that although he intended John to be decapitated and although he foresaw (predictively believed) that John wouldn't survive without his head, he still didn't need John to actually die (he only needed that Salome *believe* that John had died), and that he would have been enormously pleased if John somehow could have survived headless? So that if God, like the common law of attempts, punishes Herod only if he (specifically) intended the death of John, God must acquit Herod?

When most people are confronted with these kinds of examples, they reject the idea that Herod only predicted but did not intend the death of John.

74. JEREMY BENTHAM, AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND LEGISLATION (1789).

75. See Michael Moore, *Intention as a Marker of Moral Culpability and Legal Punishability*, in PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CRIMINAL LAW (R.A. Duff & S. Green eds., 2011).

76. Even the common law of crimes recognized this moral difference: for inchoate and accomplice liabilities at common law—crimes where the causal contribution to some bad result is non-existent or at least lesser and where culpability of mental state is thus of greater importance to overall blameworthiness—the common law required true intentions, intentions it called "specific intent," an intent that excludes predictive belief. See *id.*

77. Moore, *Intentions and Mens Rea*, *supra* note 23.

They say that the death of John is “too close” to the decapitation of John for someone to intend the one without intending the other. More formally, if an actor intends some result R, and if S is close to R, then the actor also intends S.⁷⁸ Such an indeterminacy in content attribution for intentions makes less clear historical conclusions about who intended the War and when. Conrad, for example, famously strode out of Berchtold’s office on July 6 shouting, “War, war, war!” Clearly Conrad intended war between Serbia and Austria; was war with Russia “close” to war with Serbia (because of the existing tie of perceived Russian interests to those of Serbia) so that one can say the Conrad intended a larger war on July 6? In this case, no matter what indeterminacy there may be to the idea of closeness, surely the answer is no. And that same negative answer is true for each of the actors who at some point formed the intent to wage a limited war only, including Wilhelm on the evening of August 1 (when he intended war with Russia but not with France or England). This same conclusion obtains even for actors who knew for certain that their actions would lead to war—as in Pasic’s decision to refuse one of the terms of the Austrian ultimatum on July 25, knowing full well that doing so would result in an Austrian declaration of war. Pasic’s was still only a predictive belief, not an intention, that the Austrians declare war on Serbia because the intended refusal of the ultimatum is not so close to the declaration of war by Austria that to have intended the first was also to have intended the second.

The state of mind of Sazonov on July 24 might seem to present a closer question. As we have seen, Sazonov, on hearing the terms of the Austrian ultimatum on July 24, famously exclaimed (in French) that this meant a general European war. When Sazonov ordered the secret, preliminary mobilization of the Russian army on that date, my reading of the evidence tells me that motivating that action was an intent that there be war between Russia and Austria. Did he also, on that date, intend war with Germany, with at least France if not England at Russia’s side? (Did he, that is, intend a general European war?)⁷⁹ Consider this fact, well known to Sazonov from his experience in 1912: both the geography of the Russian/Austrian border and the locations of Russian railroad lines were such that a “partial” mobilization of the Russian army against Austria but so as not to threaten Germany was impossible. Both factors (the border, and the railroads) dictated

78. MOORE, *MECHANICAL CHOICES*, *supra* note 8, at 118–27. As I there explore, it is a tricky business to spell out what the relation of “closeness” is in this context, but a lot of our common sense psychology depends on there being some such relation.

79. One reading of the historical record has it that Sazonov intended the War early on because such a general European war was Russia’s only means of being allowed (by France, Germany, and England) to acquire the Straits from Turkey. I am assuming here that this was not true of Sazonov, much as it seemed to be true of the even more hawkish members of the Council of Ministers such as Krivoshein.

that to mobilize against Austria required Russian mobilization against Austria to take place in Russian Poland, which was also where any Russian army mobilization against Germany would also take place. So when Sazonov intended mobilization of the army in Russian Poland, did he necessarily intend an anti-German mobilization (i.e., a mobilization that would be effective against the Germans) as much as an anti-Austrian mobilization? Was an anti-German Russian mobilization too close to an anti-Austrian Russian mobilization—because the exact same deployment of troops in Polish rail centers constituted each—for Sazonov to have intended the latter without also having intended the former? That answer might well be in the affirmative; but still, that would only mean that Sazonov intended *war* if declarations of war are “close” to general mobilizations, and this seems improbable.⁸⁰

Yet the Sazonov example of ordering mobilization on July 24 reveals another conundrum that must be solved in maintaining a distinction between what is intended versus what is only foreseen. This is the problem of whether an intention vis-à-vis some circumstance existing when the act in question is done (as opposed to the intentions vis-à-vis some future occurring consequence that we have been discussing hitherto) is anything more than a belief that that circumstance exists. That Russia’s rail lines were located where they were in 1914, and that the hub of those lines in Warsaw was equidistant to both the Russia/German borders as it was to the Russia/Austria borders (and thus equally suitable to a Russian invasion of Germany as a Russian invasion of Austria), were facts that the parties’ actions in July 1914 could not alter. They were thus *circumstances* in which Sazonov ordered Russian mobilization in Poland, not *consequences* of that action. Did Sazonov’s intention to mobilize Russian troops in the Warsaw District embrace as part of its content that such mobilization would be as available for an invasion of Germany as much as an invasion of Austria? Or did he only know this but not intend it?

This is an old conundrum in the philosophy of mind, ethics, and the criminal law. Jones intends to kill Smith who is a cop; if Jones knows that Smith is a cop, does he necessarily intend to kill a cop simply because of that knowledge? Or does Jones not only have to believe that Smith is a

80. Despite the belief held by many Germans that general mobilization meant war, these are too distinct a pair of states of affairs to infer an intent to declare the latter from an intent to do the former. The Tsar seemed to understand this pretty well in his last telegram to “Willy” on August 1: “these measures [mobilization] do not mean war.”

cop but have to be motivated by that circumstance—say by Jones being in a cop-killing contest where one “scores” only if one’s victim is a cop?⁸¹ There are three positions on this issue: (1) Intending to cause R believing that one is acting in circumstance C is to intend C as well as R; (2) Intending to cause R when that intention is formed by its holder only because he knows that C is present; and (3) an intermediate position whereby if C enters into the description of R that the actor does intend, will there be an intention with respect to C.⁸² On the first of these construals, Sazonov intended a German-vulnerable Russian mobilization because he knew that mobilizing the army in Poland was such a mobilization; on the second of these construals Sazonov intended a German-vulnerable Russian mobilization only if he formed the intention to mobilize Russian troops in Poland because such mobilization would have this characteristic; and on the third of these construals, whether Sazonov intended a German-vulnerable Russian mobilization depends on whether his description of the mobilization he ordered included “German-vulnerable.”

Few if any of the individuals we are considering, at the times we are considering, unconditionally intended a general European war. Rather, their intentions were conditional: if Serbia does not agree to all the terms of the Austrian ultimatum, then Austria will declare war on Serbia (Conrad, Berchtold, July 23); if Austria declares war on Serbia, Russia will declare war on Austria (Sazonov, July 24); if Russia does not cease general mobilization of its army, then Germany will declare war on Russia (Bethmann-Hollweg, July 30); if Germany invades France at all, and particularly if it does so through Belgium, Britain will declare war on Germany (Grey, Churchill, July 28); etc. Indeed, it is this interlocking set of conditional intentions that gives rise to the domino-like actions/reactions that produce the War.

Conditional intentions are still intentions, despite their partial dependence on there being beliefs about the conditions that make the intentions conditional. To explain: first distinguish a conditional intention from an intention on condition. The latter is where the actor knows that if some condition C is realized in the future, that he will then form an intention to do some action A. The condition, in other words, is not within the content of a present intention but is rather an external condition to there being an intention at all; the form is: if condition C occurs, then actor X intends (X do action A). By contrast, true conditional intentions are present intentions

81. Not an imaginary situation. *See* *Fountain v. United States*, 768 F.2d 790 (7th Cir. 1985).

82. The last position is articulated by GIDEON YAFFE, *ATTEMPTS IN THE CRIMINAL LAW AND IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION* (2010). All three positions are discussed in MOORE, *MECHANICAL CHOICES*, *supra* note 8, at 128–41.

that have a condition within their content; in such cases the actor, X, right now intends (A if C is realized in the future).

Conditional intentions are real intentions in that the actor possessing one has made a decision; she has resolved whatever conflicts may exist between her desires and between her beliefs, and she has formed an intention that is “sticky” with respect to the future in the sense that rationality dictates she act on her intention unless she changes her mind. That there is a condition precedent to so acting does not change the intention into anything else; it is still a projection into an uncertain future of one’s plans for action. It is, in Aquinas’ words, still a setting of one’s will towards evil, in cases where what is conditionally intended is bad.

Conditional intentions challenge the intent/belief distinction in the following ways: first, there can be uncertainty about whether an actor has a conditional intention (to do A if C) or only has a predictive belief (if C, then intend (do A)). Still, this is only an epistemic worry. Second, the more the actor believes the condition on which his intention depends is realized, the closer is his intention to an unconditional intention. Sazonov, for example, on July 24 intended Russia to declare war on Austria if Austria declared war on Serbia, and Sazonov believed that the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia was a virtual certainty after he read the terms of the Austrian ultimatum; whereas if Sazonov thought the Austrian declaration of war to be very unlikely or even impossible, then his conditional intention is far removed from a decision for Russia to declare war on Austria. So conditional intentions are in this sense belief-dependent: their commitment of the will (like an unconditional intention) is in proportion to the certainty of the belief about the relevant condition. Still, despite this belief-dependence, conditional intentions are still decisions, and they are still explanatory of the actions that they motivate.

The issue of moral culpability for conditional intentions is an interesting one. Here historians interested in the war-guilt question could take a page from the common law of crimes, which has explored this issue extensively. Some Anglo-American authorities of criminal law pretend that the moral issue is easy: conditional intentions render the actor who acts on them as fully culpable as the actor who acts on unconditional intentions.⁸³ Yet the

83. MODEL PENAL CODE § 2.02(7) (AM. L. INST., Proposed Official Draft 1962). The only exception the Code provides to this equation is when the condition inside the content of the actor’s intention negates the wrongfulness of his action, as in an attempted “rapist” who intends intercourse with a female *if she consents*.

actual case decisions are much more nuanced than this, and much more divided about equating a conditional intention to an unconditional one.⁸⁴ A line of cases of particular relevance to the present context are conditional intent cases where the condition attached is non-compliance by the victim of some demand made by the alleged perpetrator of some crime. For example, the actor points a gun at the victim and threatens to shoot the victim unless the victim releases his grip on the defendant's mules; if the victim does release his grip, was the defendant guilty of the crime of assault because he did the act of threatening someone with the intent to shoot that person? The common law cases hold that this depends on whether the actor who conditionally intended to shoot was entitled to make the demand he did, the demand non-compliance with which by the victim was a condition of his intention.⁸⁵

Applying this criterion (of when a conditional intention is culpable) to the earlier mentioned 1914 examples, makes the question of culpability for Berchtold, Pasic, Sazonov, Bethmann-Hollweg, and Grey turn on the legitimacy of their demands, non-compliance with which was a condition to their intentions to go to war. These are complicated historical questions the resolution of which is far from clear. Surely Austria was entitled to be outraged by the assassination of the heir to the Hapsburg throne on their own territory by paid agents of the Serbian state; did that righteous outrage extend to investigating the "threads that reach to Belgrade" by Austrian officials in Serbian territory (the sticking point in the Austrian ultimatum)? And perhaps Germany had some claim of necessity (and/or pre-emption of a like action by France) in demanding free passage of its troops across Belgium, as the Kaiser argued to an initially sympathetic Teddy Roosevelt early in the War. But I shall leave resolution of these and like questions about the other demands to the war-guilt historians.

The last issue about the 1914 actors' intentions needing resolution here is raised by the conflicting, contradictory, and vacillating nature of Kaiser Wilhelm's intentions. As stated earlier, Wilhelm was a weak man, indecisive, and susceptible to manipulation of his beliefs and intentions by the stronger willed officials who nominally served him. A fair construal of the Kaiser's state of mind between June 28 and August 4, 1914, is that he did and did

84. In the leading American case on conditional intentions, *Holloway v. United States*, 526 U.S. 1 (1999), Justice Scalia in dissent correctly points out that the Model Penal Code is far too simplistic on this point. See generally MOORE, MECHANICAL CHOICES, *supra* note 8, at 110; Gideon Yaffe, *Conditional Intent and Mens Rea*, 10 LEGAL THEORY 277-310 (2004).

85. The *Holloway* opinion relies on this line of cases to hold that the car-jacker who intends to shoot the owner of the car if she does not relinquish possession does have a culpable intention (even though conditional) because he was not entitled to make the demand that he did.

not intend that there be a war: between Austria and Serbia; between Austria/Germany and Russia/Serbia; between Austria/Germany and Russia/Serbia/France; and between those last parties and England too.⁸⁶

The psychological question of what the Kaiser intended during this period must revisit another well known conundrum about intentions: when does the lack of resolution in an intention make that mental state not an intention at all? The issue arises because the word, “intention,” is at least in part a functional term, a term that refers to something whose essential nature is given by the function(s) it can serve. A knife, for example, is a thing that cuts, making “knife” a functional term. On a functionalist approach to the nature of mental states, intentions are those states that: are causal intermediaries between background motivations (i.e., belief/desire sets) and actions; resolve conflicts between *prima facie* beliefs and conflicts between component desires to arrive at decisions about what to do; are parts of plans (hierarchies of intentions) that dictate how the ends that move actors will be achieved; are “sticky” in the sense that they preclude constant revisiting of the questions of why or how ends and means will be done; etc. A mental state that fulfills none of these functions cannot be an intention, given such a functional specification of what intentions are.

The Kaiser had his bellicose moments. In such moods he no doubt went along with Moltke’s calculation that since war with Russia was inevitable, better it be in 1914 than later when the French-financed railroad system was completed (allowing more rapid deployment of Russian troops), when the significant revamping of the Russian Army was also finished, and when the rapidly growing Russian economy was even stronger and its already huge population was even larger. Wilhelm no doubt also had his war-like intentions against the French, given the desirability of removing that constant threat to Germany’s western borders. And even vis-à-vis the English who Wilhelm admired so much, his was a love/hate relation. Yet more often the Kaiser feared war between Germany and any of these parties, and intended that there would not be such war(s). On this state of facts, how should we characterize the Kaiser’s intent with regard to the War?

The Kaiser’s mental instability is so pronounced as to call into question whether he had any intentions with respect to the War, at any times prior to his actually signing the declarations of war against Russia, France, and England. There is a vagueness here that is hard to eliminate; it is like the

86. The same conflicts, contradictions, and vacillations also exist for the Kaiser’s predictive beliefs about these matters; but in the text I shall only deal with his intentions.

question of when something that structurally resembles a knife becomes so dull that it is no longer just a dull knife but is no knife at all. The Kaiser's instability rarely took the form of actual conflict in his intentions—simultaneously holding two contradictory intentions is psychologically possible but is so extremely irrational as to be rare in sane individuals.⁸⁷ More common are where intentions conflict, not simultaneously, but over an interval of time. This is the problem of vacillating intentions.

A well known instance of this problem—a case that begins many abnormal psychology textbooks—is the case of Phineas Gage.⁸⁸ Gage was a railroad foreman working in New Hampshire in 1848. He was tamping down a railroad spike with a 5 foot iron tamping bar when an explosion sent the bar clean through his skull, taking much of his left frontal lobe with it. Remarkably this didn't kill him or even render him unconscious; but it did change him. Prior to the accident "he possessed a well-balanced mind, and was looked upon by those who knew him as a shrewd, smart businessman, very energetic and persistent in executing all his plans of operation."⁸⁹ After the damage to his frontal lobes Gage became "fitful, irreverent, indulging at times in the grossest profanity (which was not previously his custom), manifesting but little deference for his fellows, impatient of restraint or advice when it conflicts with his desires, at times pertinaciously obstinate, yet capricious and vacillating, devising many plans of future operations, which are no sooner arranged than they are abandoned in turn for others appearing more feasible."⁹⁰

Like Gage, the Kaiser probably suffered brain damage, although in his case this was due to a nine hour breech-birth delivery that deprived his brain of oxygen and almost killed his mother, Queen Victoria's daughter Victoria. This brain damage in turn may well have been responsible for Wilhelm's peripatetic vacillation in intention. Even his sympathetic biographers describe Wilhelm (and the "hairpin bends" in the foreign policy that he promoted) as due to "the contradictory nature of his character which bounced back and forth from left to right, black to white, like a shuttlecock

87. Contradictory intentions can be of several kinds: (1) External contradiction: the Kaiser at *t* intended war and at *t* it was not the case that he intended war; (2) Internal contradiction: the Kaiser at *t* both intended war and intended that there be no war; (3) Conflict of intentions without contradiction in their contents: the Kaiser at *t* intended war and he intended to maintain good relations with his English cousins, not seeing that these intentions conflicted in that both could not be realized. Like contradictory intentions in its irrationality is (4) Belief/intention inconsistency: the Kaiser at *t* intended that he prevent the War and yet believed that this was impossible.

88. John Fleischman, PHINEAS GAGE: A GRUESOME BUT TRUE STORY ABOUT BRAIN SCIENCE (2002).

89. The description of his attending physician, John Martyn Harlow. See MOORE, MECHANICAL CHOICES, *supra* note 8, at 365 n.11.

90. *Id.*

over a badminton net.”⁹¹ Another of his biographers described Wilhelm as:

a man of intelligence but of poor judgment, of tactless outbursts and short-lived enthusiasms, a fearful, panic-prone figure who often acted on impulse out of a sense of weakness and threat . . . a more fundamental problem was the Kaiser’s utter inability to devise or follow through a coherent political programme of his own. . . . [Wilhelm was a man] whose goals changed drastically from one moment to the next. He picked up ideas, enthused over them, grew bored or discouraged, and dropped them again. He was angry with the tsar one week but infatuated with him the next. He reacted with fury to perceived slights and provocations, but panicked at the prospect of genuine confrontation or conflict.⁹²

Such vacillation of intention makes it precarious to ascribe intentions—or at least any very serious intentions—to Wilhelm, any more than to Gage. Some of the functions of intentions were there, such as serving as a causal intermediary; but the two crucial functions of stability of plan and resolution of conflict were sadly deficient.

Explaining the War by the intentions to have such a war by Wilhelm, Nicholas, George V, Franz Josef, Poincare, Pasic, and their ministers, is thus a tricky business. These just surveyed problems in intention ascription—problems of content individuation (for both results of actions and the circumstances in which actions are done), conditional intentions, and contradictory and/or vacillating intentions—make the history complicated enough as to be philosophically interesting. My own conclusions? There are very few plausible candidates (amongst the actors playing significant causal/counterfactual/probabilistic roles in bringing about the War) for the opprobrium appropriate to those intending a general European war by their actions. Despite his bellicose moments, not the Kaiser until August 1, nor his Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg; perhaps Moltke and Falkenhayn with their twin ideas of inevitability of a general war and propitiousness of the occasion for war in 1914. Certainly not Nicholas until August 1; but perhaps his foreign minister, Sazonov, as early as July 24, and his agriculture minister, Krivoshein, quite a bit before that. Not George V until August 4, nor Asquith, Grey, or Churchill until that date too. Poincare is more of a question mark, for as a native of Lorraine, one of the two provinces of France ceded to Germany at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, he may well have egged on the Russians July 20–23 precisely to get the general war needed to return Lorraine (and Alsace) to France. Likewise, not Franz

91. MACDONOGH, *THE LAST KAISER: THE LIFE OF WILHELM II* 7 (2003).

92. CLARK, *KAISER WILHELM II*, *supra* note 52, at 361–62.

Josef or Berchtold, for despite their oft-quoted expressions that given its long decline the Empire might as well go out with a bang as with a whimper, never intended a general war, as much as they early on intended war with Serbia. The extremely bellicose Conrad is more ambiguous: it is often said that he wanted war to impress the love of his life who unfortunately was married to another; the war was supposed to give him heroic stature such that she would leave her spouse for him. Yet surely a limited war with Serbia would fulfill his romantic ambitions, if indeed that is what moved him; a general European war, the result of which must be much more in doubt than a war against tiny Serbia, surely wasn't needed.

Two things are constant with respect to the mental states of all of these actors, however. One I remarked on before: none were war-lovers who valued a general European war for its own sake. The other is the recklessness displayed by them all. All of them shared Churchill's view that Europe in 1914 was the proverbial powder keg waiting for the spark that would blow it up. Each of them, with each of the actions or omissions that we have detailed, knew there was a risk that they were helping to bring on a general war. And they each consciously took those risks for reasons that, while seemingly sufficient to them at the time, were woefully unjustified risks to have taken. Their reckless beliefs, and the actions they took in light of those beliefs, is the common denominator in explaining the War through the bottleneck of June 28–July 4, 1914.

B. Assessing the Causal/Counterfactual/Probabilistic Significance of the Actions of June 28–August 4, 1914

I come now to applying the second dimension of my taxonomy to explanations of the War in terms of the “bottleneck” of actions between June 28–August 4, 1914. (This dimension was drawn in terms of the kind of relations that held between what was intended and done by various actors, on the one hand, and the outbreak of the War, on the other.) Whose actions were the major causes of the War? Who had the best chance to have prevented the War but didn't? Whose actions or omissions made the War significantly more likely? Did anyone's actions or omissions make the War inevitable at some point?

Let us isolate the candidates for actions or omissions that significantly explain the outbreak of the War:

1. Sometime in early June Apis and the Black Hand supply Principes and other assassins with the means to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

2. Throughout almost all of June Serbian Prime Minister Pasic does not reveal to the Austrians all he knew of this plot prior to the assassination.
3. Princes' killing of the Archduke on June 28.
4. The collective decision of Franz Josef, Conrad, and Berchtold between June 28 and July 4 to make war on Serbia if German support could be obtained to forestall possible Russian intervention.
5. The Kaiser's blank check on July 5 and Bethmann-Hollweg's reiterated blank check on July 6 assuring the Austrians of full German support against Russia.
6. With the German blank check in hand, the initial decision on July 7, and the final decision on July 19, of Berchtold, Conrad, and Tisza for Austria to declare war on Serbia via an ultimatum to Serbia that the Serbs could not accept, and the delivery of that ultimatum to Serbia on July 23.
7. Poincare's assurance of French support of Russia in any war with Germany, given July 20–23.
8. With French support against Germany assured, Sazonov's assurance of Russian support to the Serbians on July 24.
9. Done only upon Sazonov's urging, the Tsar's secret "partial" mobilization of the Russian army starting July 24 and continuing unabated until a public, general mobilization order is issued July 30.
10. With Russian support of Serbia against Austria assured, the rejection of the Austrian ultimatum by Pasic on July 25; Pasic's order mobilizing the Serbia army on that same date.
11. The seeming assurance of the Kaiser by King George on July 26 that Britain would stay out of a general continental war.
12. The omission of the Kaiser and of Bethmann-Hollweg (both of whom had been absent from Berlin) to inform themselves of the terms of the Austrian ultimatum, or the terms of the Serbian rejection, until July 27; their resulting omission to restrain the Austrians from taking military action on that date.
13. The Austrian declaration of war against Serbia on July 28, followed immediately by the bombardment of Belgrade on July 29.
14. Berchtold's and Conrad's ignoring of the Kaiser's wish (expressed by Bethmann-Hollweg on July 29) that Austria not further invade Serbia beyond Belgrade.

15. The omission until July 29 by both Grey and George V to make clear to the Germans that Britain would not remain neutral in a war between France and Germany.
16. The Tsar allowing himself to be persuaded by Sazonov to go against his own misgivings and against the warnings of Wilhelm and Bethmann-Hollweg, to order general, public mobilization of the Russian army on July 30.
17. On August 1: (a) the Kaiser's order to mobilize the German army; (b) Viviani's order to mobilize the French army; (c) the Kaiser's declaration of war by Germany against Russia; (d) the order/remanded order/reinstated order for the German army to invade Luxembourg, preparatory to invading France.
18. On August 2: the sending of the German ultimatum to Belgium.
19. On August 3: (a) King Albert's decision to refuse the terms of the German ultimatum. (b) The Kaiser's declaration of war of Germany against France.
20. On August 4: (a) Moltke's order beginning the invasion of Belgium. (b) Grey's ultimatum to Germany to cease operations in Belgium else war is declared by Britain on Germany as of midnight Berlin time. (c) The Kaiser/Bethmann-Hollweg's/Moltke's omission to cease operations in Belgium before the expiration of the time set by the British ultimatum.

Even restricted to the actions, omissions, and decisions taking place during what I have been calling the bottleneck period of June 28–August 4, this is a dauntingly complex set of interlocking factors explaining why the War began. Let us start by asking after causes. Almost all of these items 1–20 are actions that helped to cause the War to start. The exceptions are items 2 (Pasic's omission to come fully clean about the assassination plot), 12 (the Kaiser's and Bethmann-Hollweg's omissions to learn enough to know that Austria needed restraining and to restrain Austria), and 15 (Grey's and George's omission to clarify the likelihood of British neutrality). I do not include items 14 and 20(c) as exceptions because these are not true omissions. As to item 14: ignoring something is often an omission; but not if the actor does his ignoring by positive action, say, by continuing the invasion of Serbia on July 29. The act of invasion is then an act of ignoring (the wish of the Kaiser) but it is still an act causing something, not an omission to prevent that thing. The fact that the Kaiser's wish is ignored is then but a circumstance that existed at the time the acts of invasion were being done; this makes it no more an omission than rape is an omission (because rape is the omission to obtain the woman's consent). As to item 20(c): an omission to cease some action one is continuing to do is an omission, yet it presupposes that the person so omitting is still doing

something. To omit to cease an invasion of Belgium presupposes one is still doing the actions that constitute invading Belgium.⁹³

As remarked on before, causation is a scalar affair, that is, a more-or-less relation admitting of degrees causal contribution varying along a smooth continuum. That being so, it makes sense to ask which of factors 1, 3–11, 13–14, 16–20, were the biggest causal contributors to the outbreak of the War? Was Baron Muslin, for example, correct in his braggadocio that he was the hoss that caused the loss (because he drafted the Austrian ultimatum)?

Scalarity of causation is not an easy notion to unpack. One thing that is clear is that a crucial mistake to be avoided is the infusion of moral notions into assessments of how much something was a cause of something else. Lawyers, philosophers of ordinary language, and others often enough think that greater blameworthiness of some action for some result makes that action a bigger cause of that result. This can lead to silly maxims like that of Anglo-American common law: “No result can be remote if intended.” In such maxims something that does matter to culpability—the intention with which an act is done—is made to matter to causation. This is simply double counting, blaming someone once for intending something and blaming them again for causing it because one intended it.

It is easier to say what scalarity of causation is not than to say what it is. But that is because what scalarity of causation is, depends entirely on what causation itself is; and that of course is a much debated question. On my own views about causation, we can put aside scalarity of causation based on either counterfactual dependence or probabilistic dependence; for although there are theories of causation that identify it with one or the other of these relations, I have elsewhere (and at least to my own satisfaction)

93. Conversely, one might question whether item 2 is truly an omission, on the ground that not telling all one knows (about some assassination plot, say) presupposes that one has said something, which is an action. Thus, some theorists of omissions have questioned whether examples of this kind can even be classified as acts or omissions. Thus Amit Pundik, *Can One Deny both Causation by Omission and Causal Pluralism? The Case of Legal Causation*, in *CAUSATION AND PROBABILITY IN THE SCIENCES* (Russo and Williamson eds., 2007) defies us to classify examples such as, “The nurse gave only one-half the infusion required to save the patient”—act of giving one-half, or omission to give the other half? Yet this is not the problem Pundik thinks it is. If the speaker knows that the patient died from an allergic reaction to the one-half given, then the statement is probably being used to refer to the act of giving one-half; if the speaker knows that the patient died because he needed the full dose, then he probably is referring to the omission to give the second half needed. Similarly, Pasic’s half-hearted warning to the Austrians didn’t mislead them with any false information given; he simply didn’t say enough to alert the Austrians to the real danger, an omission.

argued against these identities.⁹⁴ Indeed, that is what allows me to organize my discussion around these three *distinct* relations. More to the present point are physicalist and primitivist theories as to the nature of the causal relation. On a physicalist view, scalarity is presumably measured by the physical magnitudes posited by the particular theory to constitute the essence of the causal relation—degree of energy transference, clarity of mark preservation, etc. On a primitivist view, one doesn't quite know what to say, or even if there is anything much to be said. Generally speaking, if the nature of causation is a primitive then so can be the fact that it is scalar in its magnitudes.

Assuming that the singular causal relation is a scalar affair, which were the big causes of the four declarations of war that we seek to explain? The difficulty of answering this question is symptomatic of the divorce of the notion of explanatory importance from the degree of causal influence in the present context of enquiry. In other contexts there is no such divorce: if we are explaining why some victim died from loss of blood, the larger causal contribution of a large cutting (as opposed to the lesser causal contribution of a minor cutting) correlates with greater explanatory salience of the large cutting. The same is true for other causal scenarios involving simultaneously operating events with physical magnitudes, such as where two fires of different size join to burn down a house, two noises of different volume of sound coincide to scare a horse, two floods of different volumes of water join to flood a basement, two cars of different mass and speeds collide to the destruction of both cars.⁹⁵ But where as here there are no obvious asymmetries of physical magnitudes involved, and where some factors operate more remotely in time than others (and thus are non-simultaneous), we lose our grip on size of causal contribution just as we are unsure of degree of explanatory salience. I suggest that in these latter kinds of cases (including the one before us), four relations different than degree of causal contribution governs the explanatory importance of different factors. One is the degree of necessity (i.e., strength of counterfactual dependence) of the factor in question to the event to be explained: the greater the necessity the more important explanatorily. A second is the degree of chance-raising done by the factor in question: the more that factor raises the probability of the event to be explained, the more important is that factor in explaining that event. The third and fourth are what some would say form the limiting case of the second, chance-raising, namely, where the factor in question makes the event to be explained not just probable but *certain* to occur. Yet there are two different notions at work to generate such "certainty," and each is

94. MOORE, CAUSATION AND RESPONSIBILITY, *supra* note 28.

95. These are actual cases discussed in the legal literature of causation. *See id.*

both distinct and is itself a matter of degree. The third relation is that of sufficiency: how *sufficient* (in the sense explained earlier) for the occurrence of the event to be explained was the factor in question, the more sufficient being the explanatorily more powerful. The fourth relation is that of inevitability: how *inevitable* (in the sense explained earlier) did the factor in question make the event to be explained? I explore each of these four dimensions of explanatory importance seriatim, discussing the nature of these dimensions while applying each to the explanations of World War I.

The meaning to be given to there being degrees of necessity we have analyzed before: one event *e* is more and more strongly necessary for another event *f* if and only if *f* counterfactually depends on *e* in possible worlds that are more and more remote (less close) from the actual world. The example we previously used was the action of Princep in assassinating the Archduke: the declarations starting World War I only weakly depended on that act if those declarations would have occurred anyway even without the assassination in relatively close possible worlds (put another way, only in possible worlds very close to the actual world was the start of the War dependent on the assassination). My reading of the history (although it is a matter of some dispute) is that Churchill was right in his wartime reminiscences: Europe was a powder keg waiting to blow up and had there been no assassination it would have been something else that set it off.

Of the other nineteen acts or omissions in our earlier list, saliently explaining the War because strongly necessary are the following counterfactuals: (1) if Germany’s Kaiser and Chancellor had not issued the Austrians the famous “blank check” on July 5–6, then in possible worlds quite distant from the actual world the Austrians would not have drafted and delivered the war-provoking ultimatum to Serbia (put into English: in the absence of the German assurance there would have been no such ultimatum no matter what else transpired because in virtually no circumstances would Austria have dared to go it alone). (2) If Berchtold and his associates had not drafted such a war-provoking ultimatum to Serbia, the Serbians would have accepted the ultimatum and the Russians would not have secretly mobilized their army. (3) Even if Berchtold and his associates had drafted the war-provoking ultimatum to Serbia that they did, still the Serbians would have acceded to that ultimatum had they not received the assurances of Russian support that they did receive from Sazonov. (4) If Poincare had not assured Nicholas and Sazonov of French support of Russia June 20–23, then Sazonov would not have so steadfastly both reassured the Serbians and mobilized the Russian Army from July 24 onward, resisting even the

Tsar's misgivings about doing so. (5) If the Russians had not gotten the jump on mobilization by mobilizing their army first, the Germans would not have mobilized theirs nor declared war on Russia. (6) If the Germans had not declared war on Russia, it would not have declared war on France nor would France have declared war on Germany. (7) If the Germans had not declared war on France, they would not have invaded Belgium. (8) Had the Germans neither invaded Belgium nor declared war on France, Britain would not have sent its August 4 war-declaring ultimatum to Germany (because Britain would not have intervened in a purely German/Austrian/Serbian/Russian war).

These are all strongly necessary connections in the sense that events would have had to have been very different from what in fact they were for these counterfactual statements not to remain true. It is this fact, together with the strongly linked nature of these counterfactuals, that gives such a sense of the tragedy of World War I. Any one of these actors could have prevented the War by not taking the actions that individually were so strongly necessary for the War's occurrence. The fact that none of them did so is strongly explanatory of why the War occurred. (Turning from explanation to evaluation, it is also a moral indictment of each of them for the reckless culpability with which they did these acts that were so strongly necessary for this catastrophe to have occurred; there is blame enough for all concerned.)

From the list of strongly necessary acts or omissions above, one may have noted the absence of any mention of either the British assurances to France that were an implicit part of the Entente, or the omission of Sir Edward Grey or King George to make clear to the Germans just how firm those assurances to France in fact were. That is because, as far as one can tell, neither the making of British assurances to France nor the omission to communicate with the Germans as to what these were, were strongly necessary to the War occurring. True enough, Poincare relied on his hope that Britain was at France's back when Poincare assured the Russians of French support; and equally surely, the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg relied on the British staying out of the impending conflict at crucial times in their decision-making. And such reliances thus do enter in to explain why the War occurred. Yet the most one can say of such reliances is that they increased the likelihood of the War, not that they either made the war inevitable nor even that they were necessary (in any but a weak sense) for the War to have happened. For Poincare seemed willing to offer his assurances to the Russians even though he knew that he did not have a commitment from Britain; and Bethmann-Hollweg made his moves with the same lack of certainty as to British intentions (and Moltke made plain his disdain for

the threat posed by the intervention of the pitifully small British Army,⁹⁶ while the Kaiser joked about the irrelevance of the British fleet (“Dreadnoughts don’t have wheels”), indicating for both of them the non-decisive nature of British involvement).

The British assurances to the French and their lack of transparency about them thus explain the War only in the secondary sense that these factors increased the likelihood of the War. These factors do get a mention in explaining the War, but only in this secondary way.

The third relation, that of sufficiency, seemingly is all important in explicating the notion of explanatory importance. Yet as with the degree of causation, this is something of an exaggeration. To see this, we first must construct what might be meant by a notion of *strong* sufficiency. We should start by recalling the context-sensitivity of “sufficiency” alluded to earlier. For some factor *x* to be said to be sufficient for *y* is to say that no other factor *like x in the relevant respect(s)* was necessary for *y*, context supplying the respect(s) that is/are relevant in the typing of *x*. One ingredient in making *x* more or less strongly sufficient for *y* is the breadth of the respect(s) in which no other factor is necessary. The limiting case would be that no other factor of any kind is necessary for *y*—but nothing is this strongly sufficient for any *y* (because, e.g., things like the absence of a Martian invasion is often no doubt necessary for many variables called *y*). Another ingredient in making *x* strongly sufficient for *y* builds on the notion of strength of necessity earlier adumbrated: *x* is more strongly sufficient for *y* the weaker is the necessity in which it is said that no other factor was necessary for *y*. In more ordinary English: if nothing else beyond the Russian mobilization was even weakly necessary for the War to have occurred, then the Russian mobilization was strongly sufficient for the War.

Truly strong sufficiency is rare for single events; most strongly sufficient factors are *sets* of events and conditions, as John Stuart Mill famously argued.⁹⁷ None of the eight strongly necessary acts and omissions just discussed, for example, were strongly sufficient for the War—too many other things had to happen (for the War to have occurred) after Russian

96. Moltke like the rest of his German contemporaries no doubt grew up under the tutelage of Bismarck’s scorn of the British Army; when asked about the British Army invading the German homeland, Bismarck remarked that if they did so he would have them arrested by the Berlin police.

97. J.S. MILL, *A SYSTEM OF LOGIC* (1843). Mill’s insight here was taken up in H.L.A. HART AND TONY HONORE, *CAUSATION IN THE LAW* (2d ed. 1985), and in Richard Wright, *Causation in Tort Law*, 73 CAL. L. REV. 1735 (1985).

mobilization for even a strongly necessary event like that to also be a strongly sufficient event. Indeed, I would venture to say that the only very strongly sufficient events (for the four war declarations that we seek to explain) are the intentions of the Kaiser, the Tsar, King George, and Poincare to issue those very declarations; and as I noted earlier, these relations generate explanations of too limited an interest because they are too obvious.⁹⁸

In any event, often when historians speak of sufficiency of one event for another, they are thinking of inevitability more than of sufficiency (even including strong sufficiency). This is a confusion that is understandable and easy enough to make because as we have seen, inevitability *is* strong sufficiency in one particular dimension: where *x* ranges over human actions, to say that *x* makes *y* inevitable is to say that no other human action was even weakly necessary for *y* to have occurred. In more conventional English, to say that one event makes another event inevitable, is to say that there was nothing anyone could have done to have prevented that second event. In the context of human action, inevitability is the absence of preventability by any human action that could have been performed. And when one event makes another event inevitable in this sense, the first event becomes saliently important as an explanation of the second event.

Easily missed in this account of inevitability is the role of judgments of what actions *could have been done* to prevent things like World War I. I earlier urged the compatibilist reading of this crucial phrase; the compatibilist denies that just because some action was itself sufficiently caused by factors over which the actor had no control, that the actor could not have done other than he did. But this denial leaves open just what is required for actors to possess this ability. Clearly their actions have to have had the power to make a difference. But beyond that, how do we judge what actions were “possible” for actors like the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg? For example, was it open to him to ignore the command structure of Germany by ignoring his Kaiser’s refusal to let him, Bethmann-Hollweg, offer the British the German High Seas Fleet in exchange for British neutrality (which is what Bethmann-Hollweg desperately wanted to do but was refused permission to do so by the Kaiser, who loved his soon-to-be proven-useless boats)? Or consider Moltke’s assertion to the Kaiser that the German Army *could not* be turned around to fight the Russians rather than the French—was that impossible for him to decide to do because the Schlieffen Plan that he had inherited from his predecessor as Chief of Staff had not planned for it? When we judge whether any other action *could* have prevented

98. This was the observation that intentional actions are frequently enough (even though not always) caused by intentions to do those actions that mentioning such intentions in an explanation of those actions is otiose.

the War, we have to decide whether to bound what makes actions available by considerations beyond mere causal power to prevent.

What gives the outbreak of World War I its tragic sense is the seeming inevitability of the chain of events once the Archduke was assassinated. What makes the chronology of events earlier depicted chilling to many of us as we work through their sequence is the seemingly unstoppable doom approaching despite the sincere if not effective efforts of some to stop it. As we have seen, it does take considerable restrictions as to what was possible for each of the various actors to do to sustain this sense that we are watching a tragedy unfold that is inevitable in its tragic conclusion. Ultimately my own judgment is that none of the acts or omissions earlier recounted made the War inevitable in any strong sense of that word; but this analysis of inevitability is intended not just to justify that judgment but to explain why many of us also have the opposite intuition, albeit one using a much weaker sense of inevitability (in terms of a more restrictive notion of what was possible for each actor).

VII. CONCLUSION

I have concluded my explication of the most direct explanation of World War I, an explanation that recites what I have called the bottleneck of decisions and actions/omissions between June 28 and August 4, 1914. Yet this is incomplete as an explanation of World War I. Although the account is intended to be complete (more or less) as a description of the *immediate* causes of the conflict, it is far from complete as an overall explanation because undiscussed are the myriad of more remote factors that undeniably explain why the actors of July/August 1914 thought as they did and acted as they did. Indeed, this is where most of the historians of the War find their interests and spend the bulk of their time and energies. The makeup of the “powder-keg” is more complicated than is the nature of the “spark” that we have hitherto been examining. It will thus require an even longer and more complicated essay to examine it, an essay I hope to complete in the near future. Still, because the proverbial “spark”—the assassination of the Archduke and the reactions of European leaders to that—is indeed an explanatory bottleneck, knowing its nature is essential to organizing the more remote explanations that I shall pursue in that succeeding article. For each of those explanations in terms of more remote factors must operate through the factors we have been exploring as the bottleneck. The remote and the direct factors thus do not compete with one another as explanations of the War. Rather, when completely described,

they should each complement the other in forming together a complete explanation of World War I.

With regard to the moral responsibility for starting the War, it is of course possible that lurking in the more remote factors that motivated and bounded the choice sets of the leaders that we have been discussing, are explanations that also afford at least a partial excuse for these actors. That possibility is a further reason to pursue the more remote factors making up the “powder keg.” My own anticipated conclusion is that, interesting as are these more remote factors from the vantage point of historiography, morally they make very little difference to the *prima facie* case for responsibility for these actors that we have here explored.