THE EMERGENCE OF NEW STATES IN EASTERN EUROPE AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR:

LESSONS FOR ALL OF EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

1918 was a crucial year in the history of Europe. Its importance does not only stem from the end of the First World War, but also from the establishment of new states. Eastern Europe was particularly active, as many new states emerged after the dissolution of Tsarist Russia. The above-mentioned process was coincided with the outcome of the First World War (the defeat of the Central Powers on the Western Front and their victory on the Eastern Front against Tsarist Russia resulting in their protectorate over Eastern Europe) but simultaneously it was influenced by the Bolshevik Revolution originating from a structural crisis of Russia.

In fact, the process started before the end of the First World War with the declaration of independence of Finland, which was declared in December 1917, and internationally recognized in early 1918. In that year Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland also gained and managed to defend their independence. Unfortunately, other states which announced independent in 1918 gained at least partial international recognition (for instance, Austria, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine) were destroyed by the Bolsheviks between 1920 and 1921. Many more short-lived bids for independence or autonomy occurred at that time in former Russian Empire, but were crushed by the Bolsheviks. All of these states sometimes cooperated closely between themselves against common enemies (mostly the Bolshevik) but sometimes they fought ferociously against each other.

The legacy of nation-building processes taking place in the period of 1917-21 in the European part of Tsarist Russia - even when the states did not manage to survive - occupies a key role in historical memories of the citizens of these states. The importance of this legacy originates from the fact that these states offered the most progressive nation-building efforts in the world. The wider context of these developments and the important side-effect existing in the modern states of Eastern Europe today. Despite that, the state-building attempts undertaken in Eastern Europe between 1917-1921 had a huge impact on the trajectory of Eastern European history.
EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL CONTEXT OF THE POST-WAR PERIOD

The establishment of the new modern nation-states in Europe in 1918 is strongly correlated with the outcome of the First World War, which marked the culmination and end of the 19th century and the beginning of the end for European hegemony across the world. While the USA joined the status of the leading global superpower, the process of the decline of European powers (mostly the UK and France) had just started. The war also brought a dramatic reconfiguration of the international order accompanied by the fall of several empires (e.g. Germany, Austro-Hungary, Ottoman Empire) and the installation of new states between Russia and Germany. In line with the argumentation of the American historian, John L. Stackman, the demise of empires should be treated as the first major step in the process. By 1918, it was already clear that the post-war Europe a sharp tension emerged between the notion of nation-state and empire, and the newly-borne nation-states were considerably aware of their role in nationalizing themselves, and as Peter M. Josselin, a Dutch historian, points out: “...one could easily change the focus of discourse by redrawing the ‘self-defined nation-states simply as little empires’.”

The nation-states established after 1918 were less multilateral; than the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but they were characterized by a huge proportion of national minorities. The high-level ethnic heterogeneity is one of the newly-created nation’s soon became a serious challenge for their stability in the 20th century, exploited by external powers. Moreover, the new nation-states struggled to develop a sense of shared identity, even among people who claimed to belong to the same nation.

The First World War also contributed to the Constitutional Revolution in Russia, and, in consequence, to the creation of the Soviet Union. Immediately after the war, the Bolsheviks managed to recoup huge parts of Eastern Europe, strong and attractive independence by claiming the colonial part for the time. That partition constituted a moment to the creation of the Soviet Union which divided Europe for almost a century after the Second World War.

Several International treaties shaped the character of interwar Europe. As such, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918) resulted in Russian’s loss of Eastern Europe, and whose certain parts were regained by the Bolsheviks between 1918 and 1921. The Treaty of St. Germain, which ended the war in the south of the continent resulted in the establishment of Serbia, which was signed in 1919 and subsequently called the Versailles system. However, the treaties of Trianon, Neuilly, and St. Germain resulted in a new state system of Eastern Europe, the consequence of the Ottoman Empire’s fall. In 1919, the Treaty of Saint-Germain was signed between Monza and Belgium. The international order established in Europe during the interwar period should be called the Riga Versailles era.

France and the United Kingdom were seen as the winners of WWI in Europe, and, as such, the two countries were expected to remain the beneficiaries in the post-war period. They got involved in Eastern Europe in many ways by supporting the White forces that were fighting against the Bolsheviks and state-building policies oriented towards economic and political stability. However, the strategies and interests of the French and British in the region often clashed (particularly on the issue of Germany’s future) and the outcome of their engagement was, to a large degree, a disappointment for both countries.

The post-war period was unique in history of Europe due to an impressive number of attempts to create a single, independent state of the time. Some of them were based on the independence which achieved the recognition of the international community, but most of them failed, particularly in the former Ottoman territories. The nation-building processes were accompanied by wars, uprisings, invasions, revolutions, political coups, the utilization of international forces, and even economic crises. The situation in Eastern Europe was no exception. For example, the Allied and Soviet forces occupied the whole of Eastern Europe, which directly or indirectly affected the formation of the Eastern Bloc.

The most pressing issue after WWII for Eastern Europe was the Bolshevik Revolution and its implication to the region. This circumstance was inevitable due to the failure of the objectives of the Bolsheviks to initiate a “world revolution” and their support for the independence of the new nation-states in the region. This led to the formation of the Soviet Republic in the region. Moreover, the communist regimes in the former parts of the empire were established in the 1930s and 1940s. They were, in fact, the continuation of the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union under the guise of Western European countries that started to help Central and Eastern European in order to resist the expansion of the Soviet Union.

As a result, Western Europe and Eastern Europe were divided by the Iron Curtain and, with certain ideological convictions.
The First World War was the first global conflict in human history. It resulted in the death of between 50 and 90 million people, including casualties indirectly caused by disease.

The war ended with the defeat of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria), which fought against the Entente Powers (France, Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, the US, Romania, Serbia, and others). It resulted in the dissolution of multinational empires, radical changes of borders and the rise of many new states in Central Eastern Europe. Separated between the Atlantic, the Baltic, and the Black Sea, WWI in the Eastern Front had a radically different character from the one on the Western Front. Drift of the Eastern Revolution, Germany and Austria-Hungary contained a huge part of the Eastern Front. By the end of the war, Germany and Austria-Hungary contained a huge part of Eastern Europe, the other part being taken by the Soviet Union, Poland, and the new states of the Balkans.

In 1917, Germany gave clandestine support to the Bolsheviks which orchestrated the October Revolution. After the Revolution, the Central Powers continued their offensive and forced the Bolsheviks to sign the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3rd March 1918. By the terms of the Treaty, Soviet Russia lost around one-third of its population, one-third of its arable land, more than half of its industrial plant, and 90 percent of its coal reserves. The Central Powers gained control of territories stretching from the Arctic Sea to the Black Sea, including the Caucasus, inhabited by 80 million people. The region was turned into Middle Asia, the exclusive sphere of influence of the Central Powers under the uncontested leadership of Czar, Aman Hacioglu, Ottoman, Turkish, and German forces. The establishment of new states under their protection.

On the other hand, Tzarist Russia upon entering the war planned to expand its territory in Central Europe. Germany was supposed to be pushed substantially to the West. Russia claimed that a new border between the two countries should run along the Oder, Memel, and Danzig waters. In 1914, operations were launched in Romania, and the so-called "Balkan War" began. Russia was invaded from the West (in the Ukraine) and parts of Czech and Slovak lands. Russia intended to get large parts of Eastern Anatolia (defined by large Armenian communities) at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. This Bolshevik expansion into Central Europe between 1919 and 1923, besides ideological goals, was also, to a certain degree, an attempt to realize the war plans of Russia from 1914.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a sean song for the Central Powers. The entrance of the US into the war in April 1917 definitely changed the balance of power on the Western Front in favor of Entente and resulted in its final victory. On 11th November, 1918, Entente Powers defeated the German Empire in three battles, called the Battle of Arc, the Battle of the Marne, and the Battle of the Somme.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a decisive factor for the outcome of the war. It paved the way for the establishment of new states in Central Eastern Europe and the dissolution of multinational empires.
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR

The Russian Revolution constitutes one of the most important events in modern history and it greatly impacted the international order, political life, economic developments, and social structures almost everywhere, but especially in Eastern Europe. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Russia experienced various multi-ethnic and border changes arising from the very fast transformation of the Russian economy and society, which raised questions of the stability of the Tsarist regime. The national question represented a major test for Russia. Ethnic Russians made less than 60 percent of the population of the Empire in the late 19th century. The national question, especially the issue of the state's authority over the nationalities and their rights to self-determination, was critical. The revolutionaries, especially in the Ukraine, enjoyed a clear advantage on the Eastern front over Russia, inflicting on it several disastrous defeats. The war effort severely affected the Russian economy and thus provided social disfranchisement. This uncomfortable situation led to the February Revolution in 1917.

It resulted in the fall of Nicholas II and the establishment of the Russian Republic. For the first time in its modern history, Russia became a democracy. Political divisions emerged quickly between the democratic government and the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, who was among the Social Revolutionaries (February, peasant party) concerning the future of the revolution and, notably, the issue of the continuation of the war. The Bolsheviks and Daery paved a radical transformation of the country and a separate peace with the Central Powers.

Altogether, Russia entered a period of bloody civil war that lasted from 1917 to 1923 and involved around 15 million victims (including many deaths from starvation and disease). In fact, the civil war caused a substantially larger death toll in Russia than WWI. The civil war is often simplified as a conflict between the “Reds” (the Bolsheviks and the “White” (suppression of tsarist regime). However, the reality was much more complicated. The civil war was fought between the entire country - even the smallest Siberian villages - and had many aspects of generalized violence.

On the one side, the “Reds” were fighting for revolution and power. On the other side, the “Whites” - led by the former generals and admirals of the Tsarist armed forces - were eager to renew the Bolsheviks from power and to re-establish the Tsarist autocracy. Besides these two groups, many other formations fought in the civil war. Groups of nationalists fighting against both the Reds and the Whites, including: the monarchists, the Socialist revolutionaries, the anarchists, communistmasını, and various other nationalities, ethnic groups, such as Nestor Makhno's forces in Ukraine. Certain republics, liberal and social democratic forces, such as the Mensheviks, were also engaged in the conflict.

Finally, other countries got considerably involved. The Bolsheviks had to fight soldiers of the Entente from the US, the British Empire, France, Germany, Romania, Serbia, Italy, Japan and other nations. The Bolshevik police was interpreted as a third variant of Tsarist chauvinism. In fact, Bolshevik silvas were, from the very beginning, dominated by Russian-speaking politicians identifying themselves with Russian territories inhabited mostly by non-Russians. Yeltsin occupied, to a greater degree, certain levels of autonomy for certain non-Russian. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks fought against many non-Russian independent movements from Siberia to Siberia, and destroyed dozens of states. Peripherally, the Baltic states, which survived the Bolshevik's attack, where the five countries to internationally recognize Bolshevik Russia as an independent state (February in 1920), Lithuania in July 1920, and Latvia in August 1920).

Map: European part of the USSR in 1925, Image from wikipedia.org
In Eastern Europe, the Bolsheviks combined the fight for the group’s Russian territories with the exploitation of communism to Western Europe in order to overthrow the capitalist and democratic system. They invaded the neighboring countries and created Soviet Social Republics which received their financial, material and military assistance. The Bolsheviks were met with a variety of reactive anti-regime possibilities. The prominent representatives of the national elites joined them. For instance, Vincas Mickevičius, known under his pen name as Rapšys, the leader of Soviet Lithuania and Belarus before 1919, was an important element of the Lithuanian National Renewal, writing significant articles and editing publications. People originally from Eastern Europe played an important role in the communist elite circles in Russia. For instance, Julius Viskaitis, a Latvian, was the first commander-in-chief of the Red Army. Meanwhile, Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Polish nationalist, established and led the Cheka, a Soviet state security organization, a predecessor of the KGB and KGB.

The Ukrainian People’s Republic of Sovnia was the first republic established by the Bolsheviks in December 1917 in Kharkiv (Ukraine). The Bolsheviks then created the Odessa Soviet Republic (January 1918) and the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic (February 1918). The following month they merged the two republics into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, but it ceased to exist after a few weeks as a result of the loss of Ukraine to Germany. It was reestablished as the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic in March 1919 when most of Ukraine was again occupied by the Bolsheviks. The republic survived until 1919. Between November and December 1919, the Bolsheviks established the Committee of the Working People’s Soviets in Odessa and concentrated all social unrest into a single Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Soviet Ukraine and Belarus were united into the Ukrainian-Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (1920) in February 1919. This state was a sort of commercial continuation of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It existed de facto within the territories of modern-day Belarus and eastern Ukraine for approximately five months until the Bolsheviks were expelled from both countries by the Poles and Ukrainians. The ended Littor government was dissolved by the Bolsheviks in June 1920 in order to preserve the neutrality of Lithuania which the peace treaty was still being negotiated with. Immediately after the capture of Minsk in July 1920, the Bolsheviks reestablished the Soviet Belarusian Republic, which existed until the end of the Soviet Union. The galician Soviet Socialist Republic was a declared in July 1920 when the Red Army conquered parts of Eastern Galicia. Although it was short-lived, the republic was re-established in 1925 after the Bolsheviks expulsed the Poles from the Galician territories and established them outside of the former Russia. The same month the Bolsheviks also created the Provisional Peasants Revolutionary Committee with the goal of establishing a Polish-Soviet Socialist Republic. However, the Bolsheviks’ defeat in the battle of Warsaw aborted both initiatives.

The Bolsheviks attempt to conquer Poland was of crucial importance because it was the strongest state among the newly established ones and due to its central location. Indeed, General Michael Skoropadsky’s government was formed on the first day of great offensives, and launched at the beginning of July 1920, read: “To the West. Over the course of White Russia (the march) worldwide configuration. March on Vilnius, Vilna, Warsaw!” and moved to Berlin over the course of the Polish-Ukrainian War. Skoropadsky’s (also known as Skoropadski) was an anti-fascist, he but also a bolshevik. He called the Red Army to accept the 29-30-30 Peace of Riga on May 30, 1921, prepared to accept the terms of the Versailles treaty had been shattered, and the entire international system back up to the 1815 Congress of Vienna had been demolished.” But Larion Dvorkin, a Hungarian historian, seems to be right by pointing out that...
In March 1918, the Bolsheviks signed the peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Entente, in order to repulse the forces of the Entente and make the Bolsheviks withdraw the Bolsheviks. However, their engagement had a severe impact on the military situation in the Western theatre of war. The Allies fought against the Bolsheviks in the far East and Northern Russia, and they feared that the Bolsheviks might launch a counter-attack. Therefore, they were particularly important for the military situation in the Eastern theatre, the Baltic region and Eastern Europe.

In August 1918, the British troops arrived in Riga, marking the end of the Bolsheviks’ withdrawal from the Eastern Front. By this time, the Entente had already launched an invasion of the Baltic region and Eastern Europe. The Entente forces, consisting of the British and French armies, were supported by the American Expeditionary Force and the Entente forces in the Baltic region and Eastern Europe.

In November 1918, the Royal Navy launched the campaign “Operation Rose” in the Baltic Sea. The campaign played a significant role in repulsing the Bolsheviks and establishing the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Entente forces were able to move in support of these new states, and the Bolsheviks were forced to retreat.

For much of the period from 1914 to 1918, the Entente forces were able to maintain their military superiority over the Bolsheviks. However, the Bolsheviks were able to establish a number of independent states in the Baltic region and Eastern Europe.

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German presence in Central and Eastern Europe started in the 12th and 13th century with a phenomenon called Deutscher-Mark. German Eastern settlement. Pruss, Poles, and Ottomans imposed policies that sustained settlement regions inhabited by Baltic and Slavic peoples. Secondly, the Courland and Livonia Knights built their own state, in the Baltic region inhabited by German populations. German regions were considered autonomous in the empire, but under the Fiscal Order, their presence in the region shrank. By the end of the 16th century, for example, they only made up slightly more than 3% of the population of the region. In Russian areas of Poland and Ukraine, the presence of the population was even smaller. Nonetheless, due to the economic power of Germany, a geopolitical concept called Mitteleuropa was developed in the 19th century.

On the Eastern Front, Germany, as soon as the late summer of 1915, was successful in overshadowing the Russian army which was unable to improve strategic positions and had a lack of trained personnel. Germany established its own administration, most of the time under the military governments.

On the one hand, the German victory on the Eastern Front provided the nations of the Russian Empire with a window of opportunity to launch their independent movements. On the other hand, Germany gave financial and technical assistance in the war's early stages of the Balkan Revolution. Moving from the Russian Empire, the major objective was to bring the peace to the war on the Eastern Front. In 1918 Germany was one of the first states which recognized the independence of Finland, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Transcaucasian Republic of Armenia (Armenia) and the Moldavian Republic of Bessarabia.

By 1918, the collapse of the German Empire began. Germany was engaged in military campaigns in the Balkan region, occupying substantial territories in the Balkan region and establishing a new German empire in the region. The collapse of the German Empire led to the creation of new nations in the region, including Romania, Yugoslavia, and Poland.

On 19 October 1918, Germany signed the Treaty of Paris with the Eastern Front, agreeing to the creation of an independent state in the region. The German Empire collapsed, and the Treaty of Versailles was signed, establishing a new state in the region. The Treaty of Versailles established a new state in the region, including Romania, Yugoslavia, and Poland.

Flag of the Russian Volunteer Army. This flag was used by the Russian Volunteer Army during the Russian Civil War. The flag is orange with a yellow cross in the center. The red border around the flag symbolizes the Russian Revolution and the blood shed during the war.
POLISH INDEPENDENCE

Poland had a long tradition of nationhood and the union with Lithuania that distinguished itself by an ethnic and religious diversity. Most of the ethnic groups—Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians—were assimilated into Polish culture. The country was gradually dominated by the aristocracy, which gained the upper hand over numerous vassals. At the same time, Poland gradually expanded its territory and gained a sense of national identity. However, this national identity was not always strong, as the country was often divided among various foreign powers. Nevertheless, the Poles managed to maintain their independence, which was a great achievement for them.

Roman Dmowski was a prominent politician and a key figure in Polish national identity. He was a strong advocate of the idea of a united Poland and worked hard to achieve it. His efforts were instrumental in the formation of the Polish nation and the development of Polish statehood.

During WWI, Poland emerged as a significant political force in Eastern Europe. The Polish Legions, which were formed in Russia and led by the young Józef Piłsudski, played a crucial role in the fight for the restoration of Polish statehood. The Legions fought against the Bolsheviks and the Red Army, and their victory was a decisive factor in the formation of the Polish nation.

Between 1918 and 1921, Poland simultaneously ran several wars with almost all of its neighbors, including Latvia, and Lithuania. Poland fought with Bolshevik Russia, Latvia, and the Lithuanian People's Republic. The war against the Ukrainian Army, supported by Germany and Austria-Hungary, was particularly fierce. The Polish forces, led by Józef Piłsudski, managed to secure the independence of Poland.

The independence of Poland was recognized by several countries, including the United States and France. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, officially recognized Poland's independence. Poland's independence was a significant step towards the establishment of a stable and independent state.

The Polish and Lithuanian legions in World War I. The legions were formed in Russia and fought against the Bolsheviks and the Red Army. They were led by Józef Piłsudski, who later became the founder of the Polish nation.

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POLISH-RUSSIAN-BOLSHEVIK WAR 1919-1920

Since the Treaty of Versailles only defined the western border of Poland, its eastern border was a subject of constant and bitter conflict. But the conflict was not in the east of Poland but in territorial disputes. It was only in the war with Bolshevik Russia for the independence of Poland and the countries of Eastern Europe that the conflict also included the fate of the central part of the continent. The war was a clash between Poland's view of Eastern Europe, composed of new independent states under the leadership of Poland, federated with Lithuania and Belarus and closely allied with Ukraine and the Bolshevik vision of a Red East.

Polish-Soviet War

On 10 May 1919, the Polish Legation in Moscow submitted an ultimatum to the Soviet authorities demanding that the Polish legation be granted access to bycatholic and other religious leaders in Russia. The Poles were convinced that the Bolsheviks would accept the ultimatum.

Polish soldiers reach the Dnieper River. At the same time, the Polish army gained control over most of Volynia in Ukraine. During that time, the intensity of the confrontation in the northwestern sector began to wane as the Red Army was preoccupied with the Ucrainian front. The White movement had gained the initiative, and troops, under the command of Anton Deninkin, marched through Ukraine and onto Moscow.

Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920

The capture of Kiev by Polish/Ukrainian forces provoked the nationalistic backlash in Russia. On 35 May 1920 General Mikhail Tukhachevsky launched the final assault on Warsaw. The Red Army, supported by air attacks, forced the Polish army to retreat. Warsaw fell to the Red Army on 16 June. The Polish army retreated towards the western border of Poland, where it was surrounded by the Red Army. The Polish-Soviet War ended in a Polish defeat.

Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920

The Polish delegation was dominated by the National Democrats. In November, after the Polish victory in the Battle of Brest-Litovsk, the Polish delegation was eager to press the Soviets to accept a border running along the Neman River, which was located considerably to the south and west of the White Russian-Byelorussian border. This proposal was not acceptable to the Soviets, who insisted on a border running along the historic Bug River. The Polish-Soviet border issue remained unresolved for several years after the war.

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On the current territory of Ukraine, the Crimean Tatars undertook attempts to build their own state. At the end of the 20th century, they represented the largest ethnic community living on the Crimean Peninsula, but their share of the total population slightly exceeded 30%. Their rise was absolutely majority in the 19th and 20th centuries as a result of voluntary and forced migrations. Russians (around one third) and Ukrainians (around 10%) represented the largest non-Tatar communities. The Crimean Tatar community, despite their small size, was the avant-garde of the modernization of Muslim nations in Russia because they achieved the highest levels of literacy, substantially higher than the Ukrainians and the Belarusians. Quarterly the parliament of Crimean Tatars established an autonomous Crimean People’s Republic in December 1917. The declaration of autonomy stipulated the equality of all nations living on the peninsula.

Nevertheless by the end of January 1918, the Bolsheviks captured the whole of Crimea and abolished the Qarabaq. A crisis terror engulfed the peninsula based on class struggle and ethnic cleansing. The Bolsheviks established the Tavtik Soviet Social Republic on Crimean territory in March 1918 but the area was devastated by German and Ukrainian forces in cooperation with Tatar guerillas. The Germans established the autonomous Crimean Regional Government in November 1918 with some Russian cooperation.

There were efforts by Ukraine to wrest control over Crimea but, with German assistance, the regional government was restored and regained control of Crimea. However in September and October, there were advanced plans to effect a federation between the two countries. Crimea was again invaded by the Bolsheviks in April 1919. The Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic was established from 1921 on the principles of the 1917 Law of the USSR and the Bolshevist Conquest of the Peninsul in November 1921. The conquest was accompanied by mass relocations connected particularly against the Muslim and religious majority of Muslims, in consequence, Russians became the largest ethnic community on the Peninsula.

Noman Celebi Chah – the head of the Delegation of the Crimean Tatars People’s Republic, the author of the laws of the national parliament of the Crimean Tatars “Art Elerrson” (“I accurate”).

Mairie (Sultanbay) bay Sultanova - the descendant grand of the Russian Empress, Prime Minister of Crimea (1919) and Chief of General Staff of the Crimean Soviet Armed Forces. Was executed by the Bolsheviks after the invasion of Azerbaijan in 1920.
Ukraine was the largest nation in Europe without its own state. Ukrainians were the second largest ethnic group of the Soviet Union (after Russians). 25% of the population of the Soviet Union was Ukrainian. The Ukrainians lived predominantly in the western region, which was historically part of the Habsburg Monarchy (present-day Western Ukraine). The Ukrainian language was spoken by a majority of the population in cities. The majority of ethnic Ukrainians were peasants who were unable to read or write. Literacy rate was around 15% for ethnic Ukrainians at the end of the 19th century.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR) was proclaimed on November 24, 1917. The UPR was a revolutionary state proclaiming the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. The UPR declared its independence on November 24, 1917, and the Ukrainian flag was raised on the top of the Mariinsky Palace in Kyiv. The UPR was recognized by several European countries, including Germany, France, and Italy. The UPR was also supported by the United States, which provided financial and military aid to the UPR.

In December 1917, Bolshevik Russia invaded the UPR. The UPR was conquered by the Bolsheviks and the Red Army in January 1918, and the territory of the UPR was transformed into a soviet republic.

In February 1918, the UPR was dissolved and its territory was annexed by the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian People's Republic was established in 1918 as an independent state within the framework of the Ukrainian soviet republics. The Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed on December 22, 1918, and it was recognized by several European countries, including France, Italy, and Germany.

The period 1918-1921 is characterized as a state of permanent civil war and revolution in the Ukrainian SSR. The Ukrainian People's Republic was opposed by the Bolsheviks, who were supported by the Western powers. The Ukrainian People's Republic was eventually succeeded by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1922.

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BELARUSIAN INDEPENDENCE

As a result of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Congress of Vienna, the Belarusian territories passed under the rule of the Russian Empire. The next factor influencing the national process was Belarus in the 19th century - the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church by the Tsarist regime and the forced transfer of its believers into the Orthodox Church. In consequence, Belarusians were divided between the Orthodox Christian majority (mainly undisciplined peasants lacking any notion of national identity and educated classes leaning towards Russian identity) and the Roman Catholic minority (members of the petty-gentry and inhabitants of small cities affiliated to Polish culture). This situation resulted in a very limited number of publications in Belarusian, compared to the numbers published in Ukrainian. Only 2% of ethnic Belarusians were literate by the end of 19th century. The cities were generally small and dominated by other groups (Lews, Poles, and Russians).

The Belarusian national movement, as a political form, started very late (at the beginning of 20th century) when Vasily Hlynski, Leon and Amor (Gutnik) set up the Belarusian Revolutionary and the Social Assembly (Hryvnia). The national program was very strongly influenced by socialism. Catholics, who with noble background, were overrepresented in the Belarusian national movement. The nationalities treated the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the precocious Belarusian state, but they had to compete for the right to this state tradition with Poles and Lithuanians. During the First World War, the western part of the territory of modern Belarus from 1915 was under German occupation. Germany established for the first time in history a modern education on a grand scale in the Belarusian language. After the West-Prussian Treaty in March 1918, the entire territory of Belarus was occupied by Germany.

Belarus formerly announced the independent state as the Belarusian People’s Republic (1918). A new state raised its territorial claims to the northwestern parts of current Poland, Smolensk and Briansk in Russia and Vilna in Lithuania. But the BWR lacked its own army, police, judiciary, finances and, most importantly, international recognition.

In early 1918, the Soviet Red Army occupied most of Belarusian lands. The Belarusian elites divided themselves into three orientations: pro-Russian (Belayka), pro-Polish and pro-Lithuanian. In 1919-20, Belarus was an arena of a fierce struggle between Poland and Bolshevik Russia. The last attempt to gain independence in the name of BWR was undertaken in autumn 1920 by General Buzanov was sulametovich, who created the Slobodk Republic which was destroyed by the Bolsheviks after several weeks. Finally, under the terms of Riga Treaty, the territories of present Belarus were divided between Poland and Soviet Russia.

Belarus

Belarus

Belarus
LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

Lithuania, before its annexation into the Russian Empire in 1795, had a long tradition of statehood and independence as the Great Duchy of Lithuania which ruled in federation with the Kingdom of Poland. In this period, most of its states were gradually Protestant and the Jewish community gained a strong presence in large urban areas. There was also a large group of people, especially among petty gentry, with dual Polish and Lithuanian identity. The Lithuanian ethnic identity comprised a small part of the Great Duchy and they were inhabited by numerous non-Lithuanian minorities. The modern Lithuanian national identity developed in opposition to the state policy of Russification and the Polonization promoted by the Polish nobility movement. The prosperity, and in a lesser degree the petty gentry, represented the social base of Lithuanian nationalism. Lithuanian national identity was mostly defined in ethnic terms (i.e., language, folklore, etc.) but also Catholicism and the medieval tradition of Great Duchy. The free status of many peasants in Samogitia contributed to relatively high literacy levels. Almost half of the Lithuanian population at the end of 19th century was literate - higher than the rate among Poles living in Russia.

Meanwhile, the number of Lithuanians living in urban areas was lower than the number of Latvians and Estonians. Non-Lithuanians dominated major cities in Lithuania. The most contentious issue was the status of Vilnius, the national capital of Lithuania and its surroundings. It was mostly inhabited by Poles. The iOS project is one of the key elements in Lithuanian history. The Vilnius living in Vilnius who accepted the status of Vilnius as a free city of Lithuania contributed to the emergence of a political Lithuanian movement. The Lithuanian movement also created an alternative to Russian rule by proposing to return the Vilnius Governorate to Lithuania - the north-eastern part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in a smaller version. During the First World War, Russia had to retreat from Lithuania, leaving the country to be occupied by German forces in autumn 1915. In September 1917, Germany authorized the organization of the Vilnius Conference by the Lithuanian national movement which elected Juozas Teška, a 20-year-old State Council.

19 AUG 1918 - Teška proclaimed the Act of Reconstituting Independence of Lithuania

However, initially, Germany did not recognize the Act. Lithuania, trying to convince the Germans, decided to establish the Kingdom of Lithuania with Prince Władysław, son of the King of Württemberg. In July 1918, Mirambužs was elected King of Lithuania by the Seimas, but he never managed to get crowned as Germany was losing the war. The Kingdom of Lithuania, under German protection, included vast parts of central northern Poland and Belarus, thus making Lithuania the minority group in the country. On 11th of November 1918, immediately after the signing of the armistice in Compiegne, Lithuania finally elect its own government led by Antanas Smetona. In April 1919, Teška elected Antanas Smetona the first president of Lithuania. He would become the most important political figure of the Interwar period in Lithuania. He symbolizes the complexity of the Lithuanian Polish-German knot. His wife, Sylwia Smetona, was the cousin of Rózkowska.

The Bolsheviks invaded Lithuania in autumn 1918. They progressed rapidly and gained control of two thirds of Lithuania's territory. They captured Vilnius at the start of January 1919. Thanks to the German intervention, the Bolshevik's offensive was stopped and in the Lithuanian state had an opportunity to build its own military forces. Nevertheless, Inter Lithuanians had to fight against German irregular forces - the Bernstein's West Russian Volunteers Army - which invaded Lithuania from Latvia in summer 1919. However the Lithuanians defeated them in November 1919 at the Battle of Rudnikiškis.

Finally between 1918 and 1920 Lithuania had to fight the war against Poland. The war broke out because of a dispute over Vilnius and its surroundings, but for the Lithuanians it was also a defense of their independence. Part of the Polish elite wanted to establish a federation with Lithuania, while other Polonists wanted a political union of the two states. The Lithuanians were not open to the idea and the war broke out in 1920. However, the Lithuanians were successful and Vilnius became part of Poland which gained the town through “mutiny” of its armed forces. On January 20, 1920, Lithuania declared a truce and an agreement in the region of Kėdainiai (Memel) which was mostly inhabited by Germans, a substantial part of the region belonged to Germany before the First World War. After the short negotiation the region was unseized by Lithuania.

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LATVIAN INDEPENDENCE

Between the 13th century and the 14th century Latvia was under the rule of various German feudal political institutions which partly survived until the end of 18th century in the form of the Duchy of Courland, a vassal state of Poland. Latvian lands were conquered gradually by Russia in the 18th century due to the conflict with Sweden and the partition of Poland. Initially under the Partition Act, German nobility and bourgeoisie enjoyed a certain political autonomy, whereas Latvians (generally peasants) were considered second class citizens. However, due to the very high literacy levels (around 5% by the end of 19th century), the Latvian national movement was able to develop a distinct national awareness in the second half of the 19th century. Literacy levels were much lower in Latvia, on Eastern part of the country was inhabited mostly by the Catholic community. Moreover, urbanization and industrialization contributed to the emergence of the Latvian bourgeoisie and working class and the change in the ethnic structure of large cities in favor of Latvians, which constituted almost half of the population of Riga, on the one side of the way. Non Latvians besides Germans, Russians, Jews, and Poles accounted for around 30% of the population.

When the First World War broke out, the ethnic Latvians in order to defend their country against the German offensive organized themselves into the Latvian Riflemen and fought on with the Russians. The Latvian Riflemen played an important role in Russia’s victory against the Central Powers. They forced Austria-Hungary’s forces conquered Riga in September and occupied the whole country after the Tsarist Treaty (March 3, 1918). Meanwhile, in November 1917, Latvian parties established the National Council of Latvia. The Bolshhevik Revolution in Russia and the German defeat in November 1918 offered Latvia a window of opportunity to proclaim independence.

As such, on November 18, 1918, Latvian People’s Council (the People’s Council of Latvia), the successor of the National Council, declared the independence of Latvia, and a Latvian provisional government was then subsequently created. Kārlis Ulmanis was elected the prime minister. He would go on to be the president of Latvia during the interwar period.

The invasion of the Bolsheviks on 29 December 1919 showed that the Latvian society was politicized. Initially, many Latvians joined the Bolsheviks and established the Latvian Red Riflemen. The initial support for the Bolsheviks was explained by the fact that a high proportion of the Latvian population was made up of industrial enterprises and black workers. Many of them believed that the Bolshevik Revolution would bring about social reforms. By May 1919, the Bolsheviks had occupied the latter’s coastal cities. They gained control in Latvia, occupying Riga in January 1919. The national government maintained its West portion of territory under its control. It had to handle food to Liepāja. The Baltic German minority constituted another challenge to Latvian independence. After initial cooperation with Latvia, Baltic Landeswacht, a German entity under the command of Rudolf von der Goltz, orchestrated a coup against the Latvian government. The coup received the formal support of Germany. German forces took back Riga from the Soviets committing massacres against the local population and continued their advance to the north. Their objective was to expel Estonian in order to establish a German state in the Baltic region, which was supported as a modern version of the German-Russian cooperation. As the situation deteriorated, all allies, including the Bolsheviks in Russia, joined forces against Latvia in the Battle of Cēsis (June 1919) against Estonia and Latvian national forces. Finally, on 30 of January 1920, Latvian forces, together with the Polish Army, defeated the Soviet East Republic in the final battle of Daugavpils.

This victory led to the Treaty of Riga (August 11, 1920) in which Bolshevik Russia recognized the independence and the territorial integrity of Latvia.

Good to know: Latvia capital Riga is the city with the highest concentration of Art Nouveau architecture anywhere in the world. Built during a period of rapid economic growth, most of Riga’s Art Nouveau buildings date from between 1904 and 1914. Source: Art Nouveau in Riga, Latvia, Europeana Heritage Map: maps.google.com
ESTONIAN INDEPENDENCE

For centuries Estonian lands belonged to various countries (the Hanseatic League and Sweden); but the most important was the legacy of German rule after the Livonian Order. Estonia became part of Russia in the early 19th century after Russia’s victory against Sweden in the Third Northern War (1788-1792). In the 19th century the domination of political and economic life by the German nobility and bourgeoisie gradually eroded. The process was facilitated by the fact that, in comparison to Latvia, the Estonians contributed a substantially smaller part of the population. Generally, Estonia was considerably more ethnically homogenous than Latvia. In the early 20s Estonia was acknowledged by the League of Nations as a liberal democracy, and as a model of Western-style liberal democracy. The February Revolution in Russia acted as a window of opportunity for the Estonian national movement. At the initial stage, the Estonian political elite rejoiced at the arrival of a new era. In the context of the Russian Revolution, the idea of Estonian autonomy within the dominions of Russia became more acceptable. The Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government and occupied the country temporarily pushing the pre-Independence Estonians underground.

The military victory of the Estonian army against the Bolsheviks allowed Estonia to support the fight for Latvian independence. Finally, Estonia signed the Treaty of Tartu (February 18, 1920) with Russia, which recognized its independence and territorial integrity.

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The Estonian Army High Command in 1920. From left: General Major Ernst Riddle, Dr. Arthur Kuremets, General Major William Hutter, Count Kish, Count Major Viktor Collier, Jan Rite, Count Otto von Fritze, General Major Andrus Latte, General Major Jean Toot. Commander in chief General Governor Arne Pelgrom, General William Krebs and General Samuel Tõnisson.

Using the German offensive in winter 1919 and the retreat of Red Army as a window of opportunity, Majaar re-established itself and issued the Estonian Declaration of Independence on 24 February 1918. Nevertheless the first period of independence was extremely short-lived with the German forces entering Tallinn the following day and Germany did recognizing Estonia’s independence.

The Bolsheviks undertook a last attempt to conquer Estonia in autumn 1919 but the Estonians achieved a final victory against the Red Army in the battle of Krivosee (November-December 1919).


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New Eastern Europe

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Finnish independence

Finland after seven centuries of Swedish rule became a part of the Russian Empire in 1809. The Grand Duchy of Finland enjoyed a special, autonomous status in Russia. It was kept but all trace of the earlier and more developed empire of the Czar. The political and cultural autonomy helped to create a Finnish national identity as well as gain political experience through elections. Until the end of the 19th century, Russia did not recognize the autonomous development of the national identity and the stronger status of Finnish language and culture, which fueled the national awakening and cultural activity in Finland. This development was essentially supported by the Finnish Senate under the guidance of Lutheran culture and national romanticism created in the 19th century were from Finnish Swedish background.

1809: Senate in the development of Finnish culture, the creation of school system, which led to universal literacy rate as the end of the 19th century more equality between the Finnish, Swedish, and Sami minorities. Development of the Finnish-speaking middle class, its role in the political, economic, and cultural life. In consequence, the legacy of the time of autonomy (1809–1917) is preserved mostly today in the Finnish national literature and for example the statue of Alexander I (1777–1825), who was favorable to Finland, is still present in the Finnish Senate building. However, the idea of Finnish autonomy was for the Finnish Senate in 1859 when it abolished the Senate and reorganized the Senate House into the Finnish Senate Assembly in Helsinki and St. Petersburg. This foreign threat permitted a rapprochement between the Finnish Senate and the revolutionary ideologue Finnish-Swedish and development of a more inclusive Finnish civic nationhood.

Reformation and finally the beginning of WWI in 1914 encouraged different activist groups to unite and seek for independence from Russia. More than 1860s, mostly young right wing students, traveled to Germany to gain military training and formed the Jäger Movement and military colonies with Germany that later developed into a key role in the outcome of the civil war in Finland.

The political parties were split in two groups: the right-wing Swedish and the left-wing Finnish. The Finnish had the majority in the parliament and thus right-wing parties. They both had independence as a goal but looked at this differently. In the Jäger Movement was also the principle of national independence, and how should the relations to Russia be organized after the collapse of the Russian Empire.

The Russian Revolution changed the situation, when many non-congruently fit-faring classes to take over in Finland and just a few days later the Finnish People’s Union Federation declared national parliament. The political field was now two classes: the Reds and the Whites. The Reds saw the situation as opportunity for a socialist revolution in Finland and the Whites opposed the Reds as they wanted to return to the empire, and they were supported by Germany which already had interests in covering the Alger Movement and its influence over the political system of the state. The Whites were mostly supported by traditional and Catholic Finland, supporting monarchy and loyalty to the northern part of Germany and the conservative elements.

However political and internal policies were revolutionizing society collapsed and the civil war broke out. On January 27, 1918, the Red Guards seized power in Helsinki and declared the beginning of a revolution, forcing the White government to flee the capital. Under March 1918, the Red Guards were leading the conflict, occupying the industrial regions of the South, while the White forces were in the northern parts of the country. Then the movement led by the unions of Swedish workers and since April 1918 by German troops. After that the conflict ceased and the Reds were defeated by the Whites, who managed to establish a new government in Helsinki. The Reds were defeated and left the country, and the Whites took over the power. The civil war lasted for about 10 years and the number of people who experienced the civil war stood at about 500,000.

After the battle of the Finnish-German troops led by general Rodiger von der Goltz took over Helsinki on 14 of April. Von der Goltz practically became a military dictator of the country, and was appreciated by the Whites who wished to establish stability. In May 1918 the government was replaced and at October 1918 the Finnish National Diet established, the first post-war government in Finland. The government was led by Lauri Letonkoski and the goal was to form a new state. However, after the defeat of Germany in WWI, von der Goltz and the country a day July 1919 Finland ended the conscription which reintroduced a republican system.

The military war lasted for 14 months, and nearly 200,000 people died from various reasons, which made the population drop by about 20%.

The proposal of the Republic Day on the Red Day, which was taken over the Senate. The great majority of voters (70% of the population) on the side of the Reds and about 11,000 people died from revolution and government. After the confrontation came the republic was taken by the Whites.

On October Finnish independence was confirmed by the Senate and the Republic of Finland was established.

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GREAT FINLAND & GREATER ROMANIA

Romanian principalities (i.e. Moldavia and Wallachia) had experienced several centuries of intertwined as vassal states of the Ottoman Empire, which ended in 1848 and gained independence in 1878. However, many other Romanian areas such as Transylvania, Banat, northern Hungarian, and Bucovina fell under Austrian-Hungarian and Russian rule. In case of Russian-Romanian speaking communities inhabited Bessarabia (currently the Republic of Moldova) which belonged to the Principality of Moldavia and was annexed in 1822 after the Russian-Turkish War. The ethnic structure of Bessarabia changed dramatically by the 20th century, when the official Russian census, by the end of 19th century not Romanian-speaking majority. Ukrainians, Jews, Russians, Bulgarians, and others became the majority in the region, while Romanian speakers (slightly more than 40% of population) were relegated to the bottom of social ladder and experienced the policies of assimilation. The World War II and the 1940s saw a wave of national identity loss: less than 10% of the Romanian-speaking were able to read or write.

After the establishment of independent Romania, the idea of the unification of all Romanian-speaking populations into a Greater Romania (Romania Mare), gained popularity within the Romanian political elite. WWI offered Bucharest to open a new national project. Romania entered war on the side of Entente, helping in its allies’ promise of recognition of its territorial claims towards Austria-Hungary. Despite a disastrous military defeat, Romania found itself on the winning side at the end of the war and enjoyed the benefits of the Treaty of Trianon which allowed Romania to gain territories in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They seized Bessarabia, Banat, Transylvania, and parts of northern Hungarian. Although the Treaty of Trianon was promptly denounced by the members of the Council of Victory. After the 1930s, the period of poverty, the Soviet occupation of the Ionian counties, it continued Romanian-occupied territory.

In December 1971, 4 years after the Bolivian Revolution, Romans from Bessarabia established the Moldavian Democratic Republic (MDR) which was the 6th in a series of 8 independent movements. The MDR was a variant of Bessarabia aggrandization and survived mostly thanks to Romanian military occupation. After the Treaty of Brassov, on 18th of April 1941 the MDR voted for the unification of Moldova with Romania. However the Romans were overrepresented substantially in the National Council, and many among the ethnic Romanians are a considerable minority. Over time, political and economic changes in Romania and in the Soviet Union led to a decline in the motivation to maintain ethnic identity. As a consequence, Bessarabian Romanians have continued to identify primarily as Moldovans and Russians, reflecting the dominant ethnic landscape of Southern Moldova.

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KING OF RUMANIA

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In 1918 the South Caucasian nations such as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia differed deeply between themselves – as far as history, religion, social structure, culture, tradition and language are concerned. Nevertheless they created, through a short-lived, common state, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic, Georgians, mostly Orthodox Christians, possessed, from the ancient time to the beginning of 19th century, their own states; for 100 years, they were rebels of the Ottoman Empire and Persia. The states were led by dynasties whose powers were supported, directly or indirectly, by the Mamluk dynasty of Cairo. The states lived in relative isolation in the Middle Ages. The Armenians were definitely more urbanised and, in consequence, better prepared for the challenges of the modern era than other Caucasian communities. However, most of them were peasants, often subordinate to Muslim landowners or Circassian landlords. The idea of an Armenian nation-state – rather ethnically homogeneous Greater Armenia, particularly contended the ethnic walls. Indeed, the Armenians were among the South Caucasian communities, the most outward nation living in a territory stretching from Central Anatolia to the Caspian Sea. They were mixed greatly with Turkic peoples, Kurds and Georgians. The Armenian community also distinguished themselves with dialects grouped dispersed around the world.

The Azerbaijanis were mostly Shia Muslims, the Alans, but they spoke a language very similar to the Turkish from Anatolia. The Sunni Azeri minority living in the northern part of Azerbaijan were affiliated with confessions inhabiting North Caucasus, especially Dagestan. The Azerbaijanis lived under the Persian suzerainty for centuries and were greatly overpowered in Persian rule from time to time. But they were strongly influenced by Iranian culture. In the 18th century the Azeri people achieved autonomy (Khans) under Persian rule. In the first decades of the 19th century the South Caucasus was conquered by Russia. Nevertheless the majority of Azerbaijanis and Armenians, and a considerable number of Musulman Georgians remained in neighboring countries (e.g., the Ottoman Empire and Persia). Under the rule of the Caucasian peoples gained an increasing in certain sectors of the Russian empire. For instance, during WWI numerous Azerbaijanis served as policemen in the Russian army. At the time some Musulman Georgians represented an officer corps of the imperial Russian army. After the February Revolution of 1917 many Azeri people supported the Bolsheviks; the Georgians supported the Mensheviks. Nevertheless, the level of literacy among the Azeri was extremely low (around 20 percent) and among the Georgians was considerably higher (30 percent). Nationalism among the South Caucasian nations developed differently. Armenian nationalism gained firstly and Turkish-French with a strong revolutionary wing (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation – Dashnaktsutynkh). The Georgian nationalism movement was dominated by social democrats (Mensheviks) and was mostly led by petty genty. Azeri nationalism promoted the modernisation of the Azeri people simultaneously comprising with the definition of identity conflating between Pan-Turkism, Pan-Median and the Iranian world. Indeed, before the WWI Azeris were members of the Jund Islam. After the war they were isolated in Eastern and Ottoman Turkey, but the Islamic religious leaders were supported by the Iranian government. It is also worth mentioning that the Turkish authorities officially called them “Iranian.”

Several days after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Caucasian nations established the Transcaucasian Commissariat – a part of government, and in January 1918, the Transcaucasian parliament convened. It was named after the Polish-premonarch assembly that showed the impact of the small but influential Polish minority in the South Caucasus. Under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 2nd March, 1918 Bolshevik Russia ceded Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Ottoman Empire.

Through 1919 the Azerbaijanis provided a substantial financial, diplomatic and military assistance to the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus (MRNC). The Azerbaijanis and MRNC proposed to unite the whole territory of the former Transcaucasian Republic in the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. However the affairs of the Armenians as well as Georgia were frightened by the premonarchies of Muslims in such a pseudo-Caucasian state as a continuation of the previous Russian Empire. In fact, the Armenians, Georgians and Georgians did not agree with this proposal. Ultimately, differences between the South Caucasian nations turned out be so serious to the federation to survive, and the Transcaucasian Republic dissolved just a few weeks later.
ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA

26-05-1918

The Democratic Republic of Azerbaidzhan (ADR), under the leadership of the Musavat party (Equal Rights), succeeded mainly thanks to assistance from the Ottoman Empire whose military intervention allowed Azerbайджан to conquer territory lost to Armenia, the Whites and the Reds. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Azerbайджан found itself under the protection (and eventual military occupation) of Great Britain. Several countries established their diplomatic missions in Baku. However, as international recognition was concerned, the ADR was generally a de facto state pending its legal recognition. After the withdrawal of British forces in August 1918, the young republic did not receive international support, and in April 1920 Babriqov was secretly assassinated by a group of Armenian soldiers who had fled to Baku. This led to the formation of the local Armenian Bolsheviks in Baku. A blood and bloody uprising in Baku was put down by French forces in December 1918. The formation of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of Transcaucasia at the end of May 1918 was supported by the Red Army.

Independent Armenia, under the Dashnak government, from the very beginning had to face an axial threat from the Ottoman Empire. During the First World War, many Armenian volunteers fought on the Russian and Persian fronts. In 1918, a group of Armenian units fought against the Tsarist army under the command of Murat Zorayr, a young general, in Armenia. The Armenian units were instrumental in the capture of Van from the Turks.

10-06-1920

The Treaty of Stepanakert, signed by the Ottoman government in August 16, 1919, granted Armenian encomium territorial benefits in Eastern Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Georgia. Armenia was recognized as a sovereign state by the signatory powers. Great Britain, France and Italy. Nevertheless, the Turkish nationalists, under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, which struggled against the Ottoman government, repudiated the Treaty. In effect, the conflict between the Armenia and Azerbaidzhan broke out in September 1920.
EUROPEAN PARTS OF RUSSIA

We often forget that, in geographical terms, around 40 percent of Europe’s territory is located in current Russia. The February Revolution launched an attempt for autonomy and independence in European Russia. The conflicts between the different regions of European Russia distinguished themselves particularly by ethnicities, regional identities. Many of them were Muslims, Caucasians and Ukrainians. They differed greatly concerning their level of modernisation. For instance, at the end of 19th century, Vladi Tezer had with heavy taxes that were almost similar to the Islamic taxation. Mountainous, bordering rates were extremely high among the Muslim community of North Caucasus. Immediately after the October Revolution, Bashkirs, a Turkic nation living in Nogai region, proclaimed Bashkhorst in an autonomous region. Fighting firstly against the Whites, in March 1919 the Bolsheviks concluded an agreement with the Bashkirs and occupied the area of Bashkhorst Autonomous Soviet Republic within the borders of the Bashkir ASSR. Only in November 1919, a declaration of an independent autonomous republic located in Kaukasus that claimed to unite Vladi Tezer, Bashkirs and the Chuvash nation Turkic nation and aspire to recreate the Khanate of Kazan. The Male War was proclaimed on March 1 1919. However, the republic was destroyed by the Red Army in less than one month.

1917-1919

1919-1920

The Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus proclaimed independence in May 1919. Its territory covered the entire North Caucasus and surrounding areas. The Mountainous Republic was de facto recognised by the German, British, Austrian, the Ottoman Empire, Georgia, Aartibirk, Uruas, Bulgari and the Kuban People’s Republic. At the beginning of the Russian Civil War, the Mountainous Republic was occupied by forces against the invading General Denikin. Volunteer forces from the Ukrainian National Republic renewed the struggle, and were able to re-conquer the mountains by mid-1920.

1917-1920

The fight for independence in Russia also had an Asian context. The Kazakhs established the Atab Hungary, an autonomous republic government named after the legendary hero of the Kazakh people. It was aligned with the White Army and fought against the Bolsheviks. In 1919, when the Whites forces were losing, Atab Hungary launched negotiations with the Bolsheviks. In 1920, the Bolsheviks defeated the White Russian forces and occupied Kazakhstan.

1917-1918

Central Asian Muslims in 1918 organised the Basmach uprising against the Bolsheviks. Its name derives from the Turkish word "foot" because members of the movement were guerrilla fighters. The uprising decisively opposed the inversion of Central Asia by 1926. However, despite resistances continued until 1936. It was the longest lasting resistance movement against the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union.

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However in the Far East, the regions that were settled by the Ukrainian colonists in the area of the Amur River and the Pacific Ocean proclaimed the Ukrainian Republic of the Far East in January 1918 and its formal union with the Ukraine People’s Republic. However, its territory was occupied by Whites and then the Bolsheviks.

Cossacks of Don, Kuban and Terek regions, located in the southern part of European Russia, already in September 1917 proposed the unification of all European Cossacks, North Caucasus and Kazakhs the only Cossack nation in Europe within a democratic federalist autonomous republic. It was equipped with local volunteers who fought against the Bolsheviks. Later the Cossack nation started to emerge among proponents of the Southeastern Union. However, the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war, and the considerable support for the Whites among the Cossack, resulted in the union never materialising. Yet the Kuban People’s Republic was the only Cossack region to declare its independence. It was mostly inhabited by Ukrainians and Russians and it received de jure recognition from Germany, the Ottoman Empire, Georgia, Aartibirk, Uruas, Bulga and the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus. During its brief independence, the White forces tried to join a joint Cossack army to overthrow the Bolsheviks. In September 1920, it was occupied by the Bolsheviks. In February 1922, the Kuban People’s Republic was officially incorporated into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, while the Kuban region was incorporated into the Soviet Union.

The “Iron Curtain” was a political and economic division by the Soviet Union between the Eastern Bloc and the Western powers, and contributed to the spread of communism in Eastern Europe.

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COOPERATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Poland concluded an active policy regarding the cooperation of independent movements in Central Eastern Europe during the post-war period. In Poland's view, the independence of non-Russian peoples in the Russian Empire was an optimal way to consolidate its own independence. This was the principle which was later coined “Poniremnia” and was promoted by the Founding Father of the Polish independent, Marshal Piłsudski. This project aimed to permanently weaken the imperialistic tendencies of Russia (whether Turat or Soviet Russia) by offering support to non-Russian independent movements.

Another political project defended by Piłsudski and his supporters was the Mieroszewski-Ochotnicki project. This geopolitical project aimed to create political alliances between countries of the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. According to Piłsudski, the isolation of the Polish-Ukrainian Commonwealth (including Poland, Belarus, Lithuania and possibly Latvia) represented a crucial precondition for the survival of both geopolitical concepts. Lithuania was imagined as a buffer zone between the German and Russian Empires. Belarus was supposed to contribute to the “Eastern Wall” of the Polish-Ukrainian Commonwealth and to resist the temptation of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The proclamation was printed in the Lithuanian and Polish languages. It was then translated into Belarusian and Yiddish. Piłsudski pledged to...create an opportunity for settling your nationality problems and religious affairs in a manner that you yourself will determine, without any kind of force or pressure from Poland.

However, the federal project was impossible to implement due to Lithuania’s fear of Poland’s domination (the proportion of Lithuanians to Poles was more than 1.5:1 in Eastern Europe and because the Belarusian independent movement was weak).

Piłsudski also assumed that the Polish-Lithuanian federal government would help establish a very close alliance with Ukraine and support its fight for independence. The best practical example of this was the military cooperation between Poland and Ukraine within the framework of the Polish-Ukrainian Pact of 1916. In the same period, the Polish-Ukrainian forces under the command of Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski attacked the Bolsheviks which resulted in the liberation of much of Western Ukraine in late 1917 from Bolshevik rule. This was the “Poniremnia” of Ukraine, announced that the “Polish army would only stay as long as necessary until a legal Ukrainian government took control over its own territory”. However, many Ukrainians being Polish, and Bolshevik resentment the Polish advance. The Ukrainian peasants were particularly angry with the support the Polish army after gave Polish landowners possessing large estates in Central Eastern Europe. What is true, more important, the Polish-Ukrainian success was short lived because the Bolshevik counterattack repelled the Polish-Ukrainian forces to Warsaw where they were defeated by Piłsudski.

In spring 1920, Poland, within the framework of Polish-Ukrainian foreign policy, sent a special delegation to South Caucasus. The Polish diplomatic worked out the Treaty of Alliance with Georgia and started negotiations on a common military support for the Mountain areas from the North Caucasus. Then the delegation went to Azerbaijan, but during their visit the country was conquered by the Bolsheviks who arrested all Polish diplomats. In May 1920, the Commissar Tsetsos officially submitted an application to the League of Nations asking for the Polish protectorate over Crimea.

The army of the UNR was definitely the largest allied armed force fighting with Poland in the war with the Bolsheviks. Moreover in 1920 some Belorussians, Russians, Don and Kuban Cossacks, and Russian Muslims fought with the Polish army against the Bolsheviks. Poland even started to organize the Russian army under the political leadership of Boris Savitsky, a revolutionary socialist (leader). At the beginning of October, more than 40,000 former Soviet Russian soldiers served alongside the Polish army, including almost 30,000 Ukrainians. However, these military commitments did not remain in the expected result. Poland, by signing the Treaty of Riga with Russia, violated the terms of the military alliance with the UNR, which had explicitly prohibited a separate peace with Moscow. Ukrainian allies of Poland were interested by the Polish authorities, who then occupied the UNR and recognized the bankruptcy of the federal project. According to him, this was also the biggest failure in the whole political life.

Cooperation in the Baltic Region

The Baltic region was an area of close cooperation between nations on the right for independence. In 1919 during the Polish-Soviet War, the Swedish Brigade and the Polish Legion, established on the basis of Polish soldiers serving in the Twelfth Army, fought against the Red. Hundreds of Estonian volunteers crossed the Gulf of Finland and joined the White forces.

In response around 3,500 Finnish volunteers contributed greatly to the Estonian victory in 1919. They consisted of two groups: the Finnish Volunteer Corps and the Boys from the North. Yet Baltic German, Russian, Ingrians, Swedes, and Danes also participated in the war. The war for independence was intensively supported by the League of Nations. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania fought on the territory of Estonia. The Estonian army was equipped with German military units and sent reinforcements in order to stop the offensive of the German Poles. The Estonians fought on the Latvian side in the Battle of Cesis in 1919, which was symbolic evidence of the solidarity of the Baltic people. More than 11,000 Estonian soldiers took part in the fight for Latvia's independence; they constituted almost 20% of all troops. Five Estonian-armed trains, in particular, increased the offensive potential of the Baltic army. The Estonian troops in cooperation with the Latvian troops established Estonia from the Red Army in autumn 1919.

The Battle of Cesis was a decisive battle in the Estonian War of Independence and the Latvian War of Independence. After heavy fighting an Estonian force supplemented by Latvian units, repelled Baltic German attacks and went on counter-attack.

June 1919

Meanwhile, Poland intervened in favor of Latvia in the Baltic region. The common Polish-Latvian operation led to the liberation of the region in January 1920. The operation was commanded by Edward Rydz-Śmigły. The further Marshal of Poland.

January 1920

Battle of Drengau was the final battle of Latvian War of Independence. A joint Polish and Latvian force, operating under Polish staff, known as “Operation Winter”, defeated the Red Army.

In November 1918, Belarussian politicians agreed with Lithuania to cooperate. Belarussian politicians joined the Czarist (State Council). Lithuania also established the ministry for Belarussian affairs and invited several parties, the former prime minister of the RKP, to that post. One of Belarussian politicians joined the Lithuanian delegation participating in the Warsaw Peace conference. Various separated Belarussian military units (gendarmerie, border guards, squadron, company) operated at different times under the Lithuanian army fighting against the Bolsheviks and Poles.

Belorussia was established as a separate state of the Eastern Front and joined the Polish government of Belarussian People’s Republic in exiles headed by Victor Labudov.

Between 1919 and 1920, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania met several times to coordinate their actions and to create the issue of a regional union. Also in 1920, Poland joined three meetings, followed by delegations from Belorussia and Ukraine. Regional integration was at its highest point during a conference in Riga at the end of August 1920 when a secret political treaty was agreed upon between Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. According to the treaty, the participating states “found themselves to adjust entirely by peaceful means frontier disputes.” In this way, they agreed to protect in any way not to harm their territorial, activities or undertaking which may be directed against one of the participating states. The states also obliged that they would not conclude with another state any agreements whatsoever that may be in favor of the road, and agreed to close-up, without delay, a defense military convention. In addition, they guaranteed military rights to the citizens of the contracting states. However, because of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict and the conquest of Ukraine by Bolsheviks the treaty never entered into force.
CONFLICTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

POLISH UKRAINIAN WAR

Was held between the Second Polish Republic and Ukrainian forces (both West Ukrainian People’s Republic and Ukrainian People’s Republic).

1918-1919

During the Bolshevik offensive in 1920, Lithuania negotiated the Treaty of Moscow (July 12) which granted a free passage for the Red Army, as well as Bolshevik Russia’s recognition of Lithuanian independence and its territorial claims over Lithuania and its surrounding area. However, in case of the Bolshevik victory over Poland, Lithuania would have lost its independence. The successful Polish counteroffensive dramatically altered the balance of power. Under the mediation of Georgy V. Chicherin, the two sides signed the Soviet Agreement on 7th October 1920 which suggested that Visvaldis would be left with Lithuania. However the next day the Polish general, Stanisław Żeligowski, started invading.

LUČIAN ŽELIGOWSKI

A Polish general. Leader of the Republic of Central Lithuania

Also a publicist, military commander and a member of World War I. The Polish Senate for World War I. Żeligowski was chosen to command the 1st Lithuanian Division, representing a majority of volunteers and patriots from the territories of modern Poland and Lithuania. After the Soviet occupation under “White“ Guard, Żeligowski, the president of the Republic of Central Lithuania, was awarded the Honorary Cross.

POLAND

Policies formally recognized the incorporation of Vilnius Region in Poland. 1922. Image from the Polish national archives.

The fight for independence sometimes turned into military conflicts and interstate clashes between the two states, that became serious especially after the carve up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918-1919. After the war, the South-Carpathian Ukraine, on 1st November 1918. The ZWieM claimed all the territories inhabited by the Ukrainian majority in the former Austro-Hungary (Zaporozhye, Northern Bukovina, and parts of Carpathians on the Polish Slovak border) and especially in Eastern Galicia. This region was inhabited mostly by Ukrainians (more than 60%), while Poles accounted for about one-quarter of the population. On 22nd of January 1919, the ZWieM united with the Ukrainian People’s Republic. ZWieM instead was dissolved on 5th March 1919, after the decision of the Council of Poland and the Ruthenian Executive Committee. The choice was made by the Polish-Slovak government of the new Ukrainian state, which demanded the recognition of the division of Eastern Galicia between the Poles and Ukrainians (the Ruthenian Line and the Ruthu Line). The first proposal was rejected by Galicia Ukrainians and the second one by the Poles. In July 1919, Poland, thanks to the deployment of the Blue Army in Eastern Galicia, and contrary to the agreement with France (the Blue Army was supposed to fight the Bolsheviks), won its territorial claims against the ZWieM and took control of the entire region. In November 1919, was formed a new Polish-Ukrainian government in Galicia which shape was to last until 1925. The area of influence between the Polish and Ukrainian governments was further reduced and fiercely contested. The Ukrainian government took a strong stand against the Polish detachments in Galicia. The UPA forces engaged sporadically in a war against the Polish government and were forced to withdraw under the pressure of the Polish offensive and to accept the loss of Western Volhynia, where Poles accounted for just 10% of the population and Ukrainians made up more than 70%.

OLGA STANISZEWSKA

Vice-foreign minister of the Lithuanian government and one of the organizers of the November Act.

Poznanski, the Polish chancellor, attempted to impose an amnesties of Lithuania, while ethnic Lithuanian raised claims to the Polish control of the Polish-Lithuanian territories inhabited by Poles at the time of Poland’s Polandization. The Lithuanian government was simplified to 300,000 to 500,000 people. Poland was not fully satisfied with the situation. On August 15, 1922, Lithuania signed the Polish-Lithuanian pact, which aimed to replace the Lithuanian government with a pro-Polish cabinet that would accept the annexation of 1921 by Poland. The Polish army prolonged its offensive until spring 1923, crossing the Four Lines.

POLISH VILNIUS PROVINCE

use the image as an example of the Lithuanian family

Poles formally recognized the incorporation of Vilnius Region in Poland. 1922. Image from the Polish national archives.

Republic of the Lithuanian Autonomous Province (1920-1922)

The Tadeusz Komorowski government (October 1920 to December 1922). Image from the Lithuanian National and University Library.

GALICIA

The Polish University and Galician Ukrainians join forces during the Warsaw Bauernturm conference. Image from the Galician University Library.
CONFLICTS IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

Between 1919 and 1920 the South Caucasus faced three main interrelated conflicts: conflicts between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians, the Georgians and the Armenians, and between the Georgians and the Ossetians. The war between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis was often waged between guerrilla forces committing massacres and ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the conflict took place in a very ethnically mixed environment. The regions of Syunik and Nakhchivan were inhabited by the Azeri people (who were a slight minority) along with a large Armenian community from the city of Shusha. The Armenian community in the city of Baku was relatively small, but with a significant Azeri minority. Meanwhile, the population of the Kazakh and Tatar-Shiites, which had either limited contact or left the region during the 19th century, was equally split between both nations. The war in the region from 1918 to 1920 was characterized by the use of guerrilla warfare tactics.

In December 1918, in response to a border proposal presented by the British mission, which requested the withdrawal of the Ossetian liberation movement from the region, a major in the Cossack Army, headed by a local Ossetian, was arrested by the Armenians. The conflict between the Ossetians and the Georgians erupted in 1919 when a group of Ossetian soldiers rebelled against the Georgian government. The conflict lasted until 1920, when the Ossetian fighters were defeated and forced to retreat to the Caucasian mountains. The war between the Georgians and the Armenians was fought between 1918 and 1920, and it was characterized by the use of guerrilla warfare tactics. The conflict was triggered by the refusal of the Armenian authorities to recognize the independence of the Ossetian region. The conflict between the Georgians and the Turks was fought between 1918 and 1921, and it was characterized by the use of conventional warfare tactics. The conflict was triggered by the refusal of the Armenian authorities to recognize the independence of the Ossetian region.

The Armenian-Ossetian conflict (1918–1920) comprised of three uprisings, which took place in the Ossetian-inhabited zones of Georgia (South Ossetia), Dagestan (North Ossetia), and Kabardino-Balkaria (South Ossetia). The Ossetians demanded a degree of autonomy comparable to what was granted to the Abkhazians and the Abkhaz-Georgians. The Ossetians were restricted from demand because of the cooperation between the Ossetians and the Bolsheviks. The American involvement in the region was limited, and the conflict was eventually settled by the Bolsheviks.

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INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS AND MODERNITY

The fight for independence in the former Soviet Russia at the end of WW1 was often intertwined with the program of the progressive modernization of society pursued by national elites. For instance, the first government of independent Poland established an eight-hour working day, guaranteed the legitimacy of trade unions and the right to strike, introduced labor inspections, acknowledged the protection of tenants. Independent Ukraine promised Jews with an unprecedented level of political and cultural autonomy. It was the longest lasting arrangement in interwar Europe. The widespread participation of Jews in Ukrainian political life during the post-war period generated a brief and exceptional occurrence of Jewish national modern identity.

In fact, certain national movements, even before the war, were the avant garde of modernity. Poland was the first country in Europe (at that time under a Russian dictatorship and one of the first in the world where women gained universal voting rights) in 1917. After the 1917 February Revolution the new regime ordained the women’s suffrage. Poland confirmed it immediately after announcing its independence in December 1917. Between 1918 and 1919, Poland was followed by independent Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Armenia. The independence movements in the region were fuelled by the progressive intellectuals, who believed that the traditional society was too backward for modernization. The movements that led to independence were well articulated, with a clear program and agenda. However, the progressive movements allowed the untouched incorporation of women into political life in the newly established countries. For the first time, women started to recognize high political power. There were many female deputies: Jadwiga Piskorska in Poland, Emma Bendix in Norway, Olga Bloudek in Lithuania and in 1919 they chartered the first female representation of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania in 1919 and was able to elect their first free elections in the history of the country. Free women were elected to the German Constituent Assembly making up about 10% of its members, it was one of the highest proportions of women in any parliament in the world. One elected Ukrainian women, Kristina Shamshedin, joined the President of Constituent Assembly which consisted of 70% of people who were responsible for the preparation of drafting legislature in one of the most modern constitutions in the world. For instance, Georgia with the exception of Sam Nakhova was the first country in Europe to abolish the death penalty. At that time, capital punishment was abolished only in five Latin American countries.

The progress of the Ukrainian political elite was not accidental. In fact, Georgia was the first country in the history of the world to be ruled by a social democratic government until it was seen as a fascinating experiment and a positive alternative to the Soviet totalitarian Revolution. The future prime minister of Great Britain, Ramsey MacDonald, who visited Georgia in 1920, wrote:

I found myself surprised with its constitution, its social and economic reconstruction and what I saw there, I wish I could see in my country too.

In comparison with the bulk, which Soviet Russia represents, Georgia appears as a paradise.

The modernization efforts of Eastern European Muslims in the post-war period constituted a particularly significant phenomenon in 1917-1918. The Cretan War (1912-1918) resulted in the establishment of the secessionist Cretan People’s Republic — though it was swiftly invaded by the Ottomans — and granted the women’s vote on the first political level in the history of the Muslim world. The women’s war was a part of a broader process of modernization in the region, which included the efforts to create new educational systems and the establishment of Western culture ambassadors. This phenomenon was thus a part of the modernization of the region's culture in the wake of the defeat of the Ottomans and the establishment of the Turkish Republic as the main source of inspiration for all Turkish nation. The prime minister of Crete, General Mevle Sultani Sulaiman, a Turkish-Republican Turk, became the commander of general army in the area. Other prominent members of Sulaiman’s family were Aliakber, the general secretary of Polish Socialist Party (PSP) and best friend of Ptilfalt and his closest collaborator until the death on the battlefield in 1916, and Marjan, the father of the first secular Muslim High School in the world, the building of the school, designed by Ismail Baysal, is still a main attraction and a symbol of Turkish identity. In addition, the Republican of Azerbaijan was gathering for two years. At the time, Azerbaijan represented the first social democratic independent republic inhabited by a Muslim majority and granted voting rights to women.

The progressive progress of the newly established states was to a certain degree, a response to the social reactivation of communist Russia. The Bolshevics initiated the social revolution in Russia by oppressing Alexander Kolchak in 1917 to Petrovsk Russia which as the first woman in the world to become a government (the Commissar for Social Welfare). In addition, in Bolshevik Ukraine, Yegorov-Blok, an Ukrainian German, is considered to be the first woman to become leader of a national government, she occupied the positions of Minister of Interior and acting leader of the Provisional Ukrainian Soviet Government (1917-1918).

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LEGACY OF THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE 1918-1921:

20TH CENTURY

If Communist Russia had destroyed all of the Eastern European states it would have been able to dictate Europe’s future. Yet the world was shocked by the effects of the Russian Revolution that spread throughout Europe. In addition to the political instability, the effects of the war were massive on national culture and states. After the Second World War, the sphere played a prominent role in helping the Baltic states and Poland to maintain social cohesion under communist and successor-republican states’ regimes (Baltic states; sovereign Poland; democratic and the fall of Berlin).

Assessments of the interwar period often focus on Poland’s situation due to a number of factors. During the second world war Poland suffered massive losses and for several years was occupied by all the major powers. Its ability to recover and reform both its society and its political structure was not impressive. However, Poland was able to achieve unprecedented political stability before World War II.

In 1919, a new Prussian Czarist Empire became the most dominant power in Europe, including the Soviet Russia. This new empire was a direct result of World War I, which ended in 1918, and the Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty of Versailles was a peace treaty that ended the state of World War I and set the terms for the future of the nation.

The Soviet Union was established in 1917, marking the beginning of a new era in European and world history. This new state was founded on the principles of equality and justice, and was dedicated to the building of a socialist society. The Soviet Union was characterized by its commitment to the advancement of human rights and the protection of the rights of all citizens. The Soviet Union was also a major player in the international arena, and played a significant role in the development of the modern world.

The years 1918-1921 were a period of great change in Europe, as the first world war ended and the interwar period began. This period saw the rise of new nations and the dissolution of old ones, as well as the emergence of new ideologies and political systems. It was a time of great uncertainty and upheaval, as the world struggled to come to terms with the devastation of the war and the new realities of the post-war world.

The interwar period was not only a time of transition between the two world wars. For the Eastern European countries that emerged in the post-war period, the interwar years marked the period between the wars of independence (1918-1939) and the Second World War (1939-1945).

On the basis of the Kiel v. Germany protocol signed on the 27th November in 1929, the Soviet Union compiled and modernized: Relations with Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Turkey, Turkey and the United States.

The second world war was followed by the victory of the Soviet Union in the Second World War (1939-1945). This victory marked a turning point in world history, as the Soviet Union emerged as a major power and challenged the dominance of the United States.

Many of the territorial conflicts that took place between 1918 and 1921 were re-emerged during World War II (1939-1945) and throughout the 20th century. In many cases, the disputes that arose during the interwar period continued to simmer and eventually exploded into full-scale conflict during the later stages of the century.

The interwar period also saw significant changes in the political landscape of Europe. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I in 1918, called for the creation of a new political order in Europe. This order was characterized by the establishment of new nation-states, the recognition of the rights of minority groups, and the establishment of a new international organization, the League of Nations. However, the Treaty was unable to prevent the outbreak of World War II in 1939, and the interwar period ended with the rise of dictatorial regimes in Europe.

The interwar years were a time of great change and uncertainty. They were a time when the world was trying to come to terms with the devastation of the first world war, and when the foundations were being laid for the second world war. It was a time of great promise and great fear, a time of hope and despair, a time of progress and of decline.

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A century since the wars of independence (1918-1921): the division between the countries which succeeded in the fight and those that failed, is still noticeable. After the fall of Soviet Union, the only countries which managed to defend their independence between 1918 and 1921 became members of the EU. And even after almost a century, few countries in the region have a positive memory, as the Casanvii-Rhod-Ionian Jersey Britain showed even though the federalist program promoted particularly by Poland – did not prevail. It forced Russia to impose the 1913-1917 constitution of a federalist empire, which was renamed as the Constitution of ASR (1918) in the newly independent states of the Baltic region. The 1914-1921 period was a period of dramatic changes in Russia, with the so-called Red and White civil war, with the episodes of Cheka and NKVD. The legacy of this period is still felt in the region, with the influence of the Cheka and NKVD still visible. The 1918-1921 period was a period of dramatic changes in Russia, with the so-called Red and White civil war, with the episodes of Cheka and NKVD. The legacy of this period is still felt in the region, with the influence of the Cheka and NKVD still visible.