

- **First**, Britain's newly privatised military-industrial complex - the forerunner of GCHQ today - heightened frictions with Germany, even if it didn't cause them.
- **Second**, the Entente between Britain and France was based on fear not just of Germany, but of losing colonies everywhere. The First World War was, in tendency at least, a global war. It was as much about Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America as it was about Verdun, or America's eventually decisive role in Germany's defeat.
- **Third**, class relations before, during and after the war were much more polarised than they are today. The 'social question' was key to the very fate both of Russia, and of Germany. In the final stages of the war and after it, France, Italy, the US and even Britain encountered significant strikes and militant class struggles.

Today, some see the US guarantee of Japan's security against China as the potential trigger for a dangerously titanic conflict. In this scheme, a rising China today is analogous to an ascendant Germany before the First World War. The re-emergence of Russia as a world power, two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, also suggests parallels with developments 100 years ago.

It may however not be accurate to see contemporary conflicts in the East and South China Seas, and nearby, through the lens of 1914. Nor may it be helpful to view Myanmar as a new Serbia. In this discussion, we will explore the parallels and the differences between 1914 in Europe and 2014 in East Asia. He will ask whether a 'pointless' war over the Senkaku Islands might in fact emerge as the extension, by other means, of today's anxious, precautionary politics.

## Some background readings

[Summary of World War One](#) , BBC

[A Seminal Panic about Defence IT: The Marconi Scam, 1913](#) , James Woudhuysen, IDG Connect, 9 August 2013

[China Media: US Diplomacy](#) . BBC, 5 December 2013

[The Great War: a battle for meaning](#) , by Frank Furedi, spiked 8 January 2014

[The infantile diplomacy behind demonising Russia](#) , by Frank Furedi, spiked 24 March 2014