

Trench Warfare on the Western Front, 1914-1918:

Why did the war on the Western Front change from a war of movement to one of attrition?

Attrition warfare is a military strategy in which a belligerent attempts to win a war by wearing down the enemy to the point of collapse through continuous losses in personnel and materiel. The war will usually be won by the side with greater such resources.

Mobilisation:

- First World War began with movement: a series of mobilisations in countries that were bound by treaty obligations.
- Process was caused by the assassination in Sarajevo in June 1914 of an Austrian archduke by a Serbian nationalist.
- Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia (28th July)
- 31st July, Russia mobilised its army to help Serbia.
- Russia lacked railways and so Germany predicted it would take weeks to ready their army.
- French were fearful of being outnumbered in a war with Germany, and so mobilised fast.
- Using Russian immobility as an excuse, Germany declared war on Russia on the 1st August and France on the 3rd.
- Belgium decided to not allow Germany through its borders to get to France.
- Germany declared war on them.
- Britain, who was allies with France and was bound by treaty to defend Belgium, declared war on Germany on the 4th August.

Entrenchment and the building of defensive systems:

- German plan of attack in the west had been first drawn up in 1905 by Alfred von Schlieffen, who was the chief of the army General Staff.
- This plan was further modified by Helmuth von Moltke, and the plan aimed to defeat France in 6 weeks.
- Part of the German army would tie down the French along the border in Alsace-Lorraine, while the main German force attacked in the west, through Belgium and into France to encircle Paris.
- Plan aimed to avoid the strong French defences.
- Campaign of movement would use roads, and railways.
- German railways were extensive, and key line were aimed at France.
- Germany might have to fight on two fronts, but hoped Russia would be slower to mobilise.
- Russians attacked within three weeks and lost to Germany at the battle of Tannenberg.
- French also planned to attack:
 - 800,000 soldiers were to advance into Alsace-Lorraine into Germany.
 - Small British Expeditionary Force took up a position in Belgium around the town of Mons.
 - Its role was defensive.
 - However, the French wanted a Napoleonic style, surge to victory.

Failure of movement:

- Germans moved through Belgium, taking Brussels on the 20th August.
- Masterplan required the German 1st Army to cover 15 miles a day for the first 3 weeks.
- This was too fast even for Germany.
- Troops pushed too fast ahead of their railway-supply.
 - The further they pushed, the worse the supply problems became.
 - Field kitchens could not keep up; men and animals went hungry.

- In 1914, armies heavily relied on horses and the British took to France roughly as much hay and oats as ammunition.
- The Germans became starved and so the advance faltered.
- Both sides hampered by poor communication and lack of intelligence.
- Resulted in poor decision making + lost opportunities.
- German high command lost radio contact with its army by only having one receiver.
- New technology of wireless communication not well understood by the military.
- After the BEF landed in France on 13th August 1914, for more than a week the Germans did not know about their movements.
- Most generals relied on cavalry patrols for intelligence, and bicycles horses, carrier pigeons for visual signals.
- Cars were used where there were passable roads.

Attrition and stalemate:

- War of movement quickly became a war of attrition and defensive entrenchment.
- Germans swung away from Paris in September 1914:
 - This allowed the Allies to launch a flank counter-attack at the Battle of the Marne.
 - Both armies attempted to outflank each other in a series of battles: "Race to the sea"
 - As part of the manoeuvring, using railways to shift reserves along the line, the Germans attempted to push the British out of the Belgian town of Ypres.
 - After 4 weeks, the Allies held Ypres, but France and Britain had lost 100,000+ doing so, + 20,000 Belgians.
 - Race ended in a stalemate.
- Once again ground movement halted.
- As winter closed in, both sides went defensive in trenches.
- The problems of Trench warfare had been considered in the Russo-Japanese War.
 - The issue was how infantry would overcome the new firepower.
 - This was theorised by Sir Horace-Dorrien,
 - He said that the individual initiative and intelligence was more important than classic warfare.
 - Sacked by Sir John French.
 - However, commanders on both sides assumed that in a war of attrition, the side that won would be the one that held out the longest with the most soldiers.
- Many commanders stuck to old ideas of warfare and trained new recruits, conscripts and volunteers as such.

The need for military adjustment:

Adjustments were vital.

- Entrenchment war involved constant construction and reconstruction.
- Trench building took six hours for 450 men to dig 250 yards.
- Required huge labour, barbed wire, timber and sandbags.
- First trenches were shallow, made in a hurry and easily collapsed.
 - As the Western Front stabilised, through the winter of 1914-15, both sides constructed complex, deep-trench systems.
 - This was not just trenches, but field kitchens, first-aid posts and casualty-clearing stations, hospitals, command posts, ammunition dumps, artillery parks, and telephone lines.
- Trench systems complex.
 - Fire trenches ran in one direction, communication trenches criss-crossing them.

- A trench was never straight for long.
- Had sharp bends so that an enemy invading it could not shoot through the entire length.
- Forward trench nearest the enemy was the front line attack point.
- Behind this was the support trench.
- Behind this was the reserve trench.
- Soldiers were rotated between these trenches.
- Miles of barbed wire were laid out in front of the trenches.
- Between the two sides was called "No Man's Land"
- Army had to adjust its manning arrangements, to rotate men through the front line, usually for one or two weeks at a time.
- Constant flow of regiments, exhausted units replaced by fresh casualties shipped out, new men brought in.
- Railways were busy, bringing in supplies and troops.
- French sent more than 800 trainloads of reinforcements to Verdun in three weeks.
- Trenches, mules and horses were used more often than motor vehicles.
 - They often break down or become stuck in mud.
- Movements normally done at night, so the new troops could be settled in before daybreak.
- Battles lasted weeks or months rather than days.

Trench fighting:

- Armies had to adjust fighting tactics following the failure of movement, and the war became a series of attacks and counter-attacks.
- Enemy trenches were the target, for artillery, rifle and machine-gun fire.
- Putting your head above the trench was fatal, snipers can pick you off.
- Trench was usually 8 feet down.
- A soldier had to stand on a fire step to rest his rifle to shoot.
- Periscopes gave a better chance at a view.
- British high command was worried that soldiers were becoming passives.
- A raiding party would sneak into the enemy trenches to hurl grenades or take prisoners.
- Soldiers in the trenches often had to eat and sleep in miserably poor conditions.
- Latrines, which were holes dug in the ground, were very basic.
- Washing was a luxury/
- Rats were everywhere.
- Soldiers reported rats as big as cats, feeding on the corpses as well as army rations.
- Scratching was a familiar symptom of infestation with lice.
- Trench foot was common caused by wearing wet, dirty socks.
- Eventually soldiers were ordered to change socks 3 times a day.
- In trench warfare, the two sides were at times close enough to observe one another, and even at times allow burial parties to retrieve bodies.
- On rare occasions, soldiers met to fraternise.
- During the Christmas truce of December 1914, British and German troops emerged from their trenches to meet in No Man's Land.
- Fraternisation was widely condemned by the authorities, still happened.
- Communications were erratic.
 - Officers based in dugouts and trenches could use buried telephone landlines to give and receive orders.
 - They often relied on runners who risked being shot as they carried messages.
 - Attacking from the trenches, soldiers communicated using shots, horns and whistles.
 - They also had very little idea of progress. As a result, generals tried to plan for every possible outcome which made battle plans very complicated.

New fighting techniques and technologies:

- By January 1915, the war of movement was over.
- British army Field Marshal Kitchener realised as much, writing in a letter to Sir John French that he supposed they must recognise the French army was not making a significant enough breakthrough to force a retreat of the German Forces from Northern France.
- He set about recruiting a new army to bolster the BEF.
 - One necessary adaptation was the issuing of metal helmets.
 - Another was getting rid of colourful uniforms and introducing a khaki or grey.
 - The cavalry sword and lance were relegated to history.
 - The Breakthrough, achieved by cavalry rushing through gaps in the enemy lines created by artillery and infantry, never happened on the Western Front.
 - This is because entrenchment and barbed wire made horses big targets for machine guns.
 - They made cavalry dismount to fight as infantry.
 - Mechanised cavalry, was there in the form of armoured cars, and were not used much on the Western Front.
 - Tanks, which were slow, were also not used until late in the war, where they proved to be effective shock weapons.
 - From 1915-early 1917, despite improved tactics, generals often persisted in frontal attacks by infantry.

Rifles and attack strategies:

- The most common firearm used by infantry soldiers was a rifle.
- A 1914 rifle could fire 15 rounds a minute in skilled hands.
- Hit targets 800 yards away.
- Smokeless powder in cartridges meant no tell-tale puff to giveaway a sniper's position.
 - Entrenchment changed rifle tactics.
 - Soldiers did not just stand in lines and fire volleys, but shot from their trenches or from whatever cover they could find.
 - An officer had little control over riflemen's fire once the order to open fire was given.
 - Other weapons like grenades and knives were given to infantry to use, officers carried revolvers.
- To the French, German trench lines on French soil seemed a humiliation.
- French policy remained to attack using the new "fire and move" tactics.
- In such an attack, one group would rush forward under covering fire by supports.
- Groups would switch roles when necessary.
- Such tactics required high levels of training and led to attacks on a narrow front.
- British preferred "wave and flow", attacking on mile-wide fronts, with hundreds of men in waves leaving the trenches.
- Artillery bombardment preceding the attack was supposed to blast holes in the wire.
- Each wave would advance in four lines by companies – 500 men to a company.
- The men would be 2-3 yards apart and each line left a gap of 50-100 yards between it and the line of men behind.
- Once in the German front trenches, the first wave would hold them until the next wave arrived.
- The second wave would push through to capture the next German trench and so on.
- The attack would flow in waves.

- The advance would also be steady and not at a run, given the churned-up state of the ground after artillery bombardment, and the fact that every soldier carried up to 60 pound of equipment and rations.

Machine guns:

- Troops in the open were exposed to machine gun fire.
- A machine gun had a greater killing power than a rifle.
- A rifleman required a high degree of skill.
- All a machine gun team had to do was feed ammo into the guns and spray bullets in an arc.
- Typical fire rate was 60 rounds p/m
- Machine guns were sited in pairs, or in batteries of four-eight.
- Some were hidden in dugouts or pillboxes which made them hard to destroy except at close range.
- Pre 1914, tests showed that one machine-gun had the same value as 50 rifles in terms of spraying at infantry and cavalry.
- British Lewis machine gun could be carried by one man, and so could be used in attacks as well as defence.
- Heavier Vickers gun needed three gunners.
- In 1914, an infantry regiment had 12 times as many rifles as machine guns.
- (12:1) which changed to (2:1) in 1917
- This shows that the army learnt the value of the machine gun.
- This made cavalry and infantry obsolete.

Grenades, flamethrowers and mortars:

- For hand-to-hand combat, troops used the bayonet and grenades.
 - Such as the British Mills bomb, and the German stick grenade.
- Germany tried flamethrowers in 1915, but they were not used much as they were bulky and the soldier carrying it became a slow target.
- Mortars were more effective: small artillery weapons that lobbed small bombs to drop on a trench.
- British troops came to dislike, the German Minenwerfer mortar.
- In 1915, the British got their own Stokes trench mortars that could fire 25 bombs a minute over 800 yards.

Artillery and the creeping barrage:

- Generals clung onto the idea that stalemate could be broken by artillery.
 - This is because quick-firing field guns like the French 75mm gun were capable of firing 15 shots p/m.
 - Also heavier weapons such as the howitzers could pulverise enemy trenches.
- BEF first commander-in-chief believed that winning was a question of high explosives.
- Artillery was supposed to destroy trenches, flatten barbed wire and machine guns, and demoralise enemy troops which would then open the way for the advance.
- By 1916, artillery guns on the Western Front ranged from light 18-pounders to heavy howitzers firing high-explosive shells of up to 1400 pounds over 10,000 yards.
- The largest guns were used to reduce forts and hit long-range targets.
- Gun accuracy improved, using flash spotting (judging the distance from the flash of an exploding shell)
- Aeroplanes flew above enemy lines to spot where shells landed and relay information to the gunners, though communication was at first primitive from the air.

- Confident of accuracy, artillery could lay a creeping barrage of shells ahead of advancing infantry; the barrage moved forward as the infantry did, tons of high explosives destroying opposition and blasting gaps in wire and trenches.
 - This only works if communication is good and the gunnery was accurate.
 - If the artillery fell short, it risked hitting its own troops; if shells fell too far ahead the barrage did little to support the advance.
- These difficulties can be judged from the Battle of the Somme in 1916, when the British encountered German barbed wire defences 30 feet wide and too deep to be destroyed.
- German positions were obliterated, dugouts survived and German troops emerged.
- New technology helped to improve artillery effectiveness late in the war.
- Pre-1914 artillery guns fired two types of shells, timed-fused and high explosive:
 - Timed: exploded in the air and sprayed shrapnel – weak to those in trenches and barbed wire.
 - High explosive: Meant to penetrate defences before exploding, were also ineffective in clearing barbed wire.
- British fuse 106:
 - A sensitive device that caused shells to explode sideways.
 - This stopped them from burying themselves in mud.
 - This also created a smokescreen.
 - Tried in 1916, but used in 1917.
 - Used in the Battle of Arras.
 - Troops saw an improvement in artillery support.

Poison gas:

- Chemical weapons, were first used on the Western Front by the Germans in April 1915 at Ypres, though commanders pointed out that prevailing westerly winds would blow the gas back at the Germans.
- They used 6000 canisters of chlorine gas set on the ground, gas clouds made French troops retreat, but German soldiers without gas masks were unable to take advantage.
- By June 1915, the first gas masks were issued to allied troops.
- In September 1915, the French used gas.
- Phosgene gas, first used by the Germans in December 1915, then by both sides, were six times more toxic than chlorine gas.
- They caused 80% of gas casualties.
- In July 1917, the Germans were the first to use mustard gas. Which caused lung and skin damage, and blindness.
- Gas Masks for troops improved from primitive fabric helmets.
- Special artillery shells to deliver gas were developed.
- Gas caused relatively few deaths, 8000 in the British forces.
- Therefore gas was claimed to be more humane.

- Although at home, people were shocked by photos and newsreel films showing gas attacks.

The tank and the return to movement:

- The arrival of the first American troops in 1917 coincided with the first battle won by tanks.
- Americans were aggressive, but inexperienced at trench warfare; their commander, Pershing, believed in mobility and rifle fire.
 - He made little use of tanks.
- Tanks had little value on their own or in small groups.
- The British used over 380 tanks at Cambrai in November 1917.
- Tanks crossed three German lines and advanced 5 miles.
- Within two weeks the Germans had regained the lost ground.
- Nearly 10,000 tanks on the Western Front.
- Had a psychological effect on German soldiers, for whom every tank was an enemy.
- Germans, fighting mainly on the defensive, opted for a very heavy tank and so used only a few.
- Tanks offered commanders an artillery gun that did not need horses to pull it as it could move on its own.
- Caterpillar tracks helped it crawl over most land and trenches.
- At the Battle of Amiens in August 1918, allied tanks advanced nine miles in one day.
- With tanks and aircraft now supporting infantry on the ground, the Western Front became mobile with armies advancing miles rather than yards.
- Part of this was due to German exhaustion.
- Fighting methods had evolved.
- “New all arms attacks” combined with infantry with artillery, tanks, aircraft and engineers.
- Old waves of infantry with rifles and bayonets had evolved into smaller combat groups with machine guns and tanks.
- German Spring Offensive of 1918 was driven back, and allied superiority in numbers, equipment and morale began to pay off.
- 4th October, the Germans abandoned the Hindenburg Line in France and began to withdraw.
- German High Command asked for an armistice on the 8th October and the ceasefire was set for 11 am on the 11th November 1918.

How did reporting of the western front battles influence government policy and public opinion?

Public perception of the Western Front:

Public mood:

- War began in a mood of patriotic optimism.
- 1914, anti-government groups were largely suspended protests, without abandoning their aims.
- Labour and TUC supported the war until victory, public opposition came only from anti-war socialists (Ramsay MacDonald) and any pacifists against war entirely.
- Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the militant Women's Social and Political Union, called on the government to allow women equal status in munitions factories.
 - Many women joined the workforce.
- Took on new roles, such as nurses.
- Public remained supportive and demanded victory.
- Little sign of revolutionary unrest (unlike Russia)
- Despite casualties, Haig's reputation remained normal.
- Only after the war that people questioned what he had done.
- Any conscientious objectors were sent to non-combatant work like medical or agricultural service.
 - Refused to do this were sent into the army or jailed.

Government control and censorship:

- There were no opinion polls or focus groups for the government to judge the public mood.
- They did so by looking at reactions to news that came from the front, reactions expressed to MPs, in letters to press or in public meetings.
- British government let newspapers censor themselves, but controlled direct war reporting by the official correspondents through censors at the front and agreement with the newspapers.
- Soldiers' letters home were read by the army censors who removed all references to plans, battles or unit names.
- Many papers published casualty lists in full from the summer of 1915.
- Provincial newspapers printed more letters from soldiers.
- Somme battles were reported and a film was made about it.
- Some parts were staged and not live.

Changing attitudes:

Eyewitness reports:

- The public were frustrated by what Prime Minister Asquith called the "patriotic reticence of the press".
- In September 1914, the War Office began issuing its own reports.
 - Some headlined "eyewitness", they written by Colonel Ernest Swinton, but were too technical for readers.
 - Swinton commented that he tried to tell as much of the truth as was safe.

Propaganda:

- Former MP Charles Masterman, headed the War Propaganda Bureau, which was set up in 1914.
- Propaganda at home focused on "war aims" and not just defeating the Germans but social reform – a better world for all.
- Propaganda was also focused at foreign countries.
- Especially America.
- A 1915 children's book told readers that, while German gas killed soldiers, British gas would only render the Germans unconscious.
- Propaganda posters were patriotic with women waving troops goodbye.

- Some were very anti-German with crude cartoons showing innocent people in Belgium being menaced by hordes of “Huns”.
- Alleged German atrocities included rape and child murder were reported luridly and the shooting by the Germans of the British nurse Edith Cavell in 1915 caused national outrage.
- Some people attacked shops with German names.
- Times and Daily Mail were very anti-German, they helped bring about the resignation of the Admiralty of Prince Louis of Battenberg because of his family ties in Germany.
- Royal family also changed their name to the House of Windsor in 1917.

Restricting direct reportage by journalists:

Managing the media:

- By 1917-18, both the government and the army had learned that it was more useful to direct reportage than denying it.
 - This also kept the press on side.
- PM Lloyd George knew the value of a “good press”.
- Government propaganda machine now had a Cinema Division, a Political Intelligence Division, and a News Division to manage publicity both at home and abroad.
- Long lists of casualties were stopped as they seemed to be demoralising.
- Haig was more ready to explain his plans, although he left press briefings mainly to Charteris.
- Before the Battle of Messines Ridge (June 1917), the press corps was briefed on the “surprise” attack by General Hubert Plumer, with maps and details and the huge explosives in the 30 mines.
- Phillips Gibbs later concluded that, on the whole, his job as a war correspondent had been worth doing so that people at home knew the best parts of what was happening, despite being protected from the worst.
- There were no opinion polls to sample public feelings about the war.
- Initial optimism was replaced in many homes by sorrow at bereavement and in most by frustration and anger at the mounting casualties in the army.
 - This was particularly among the volunteer “Pals” battalions formed by friends, neighbours and workmates around the country.
- Losses at the Somme were horrible, yet the will to win was still strong.
- Germany’s imposition of a punitive peace treaty on Russia in the spring of 1918, and its apparent willingness to keep attacking on the Western Front, stiffened British resolve.

Controlling war imagery:

- Cameras called the Box Brownie and Vest Pocket Kodak were small enough to carry.
- Many soldiers took photos.
- Some taken at Christmas 1914 of British and German troops meeting in No-Man’s-Land, which worried the authorities.
- Pictures of “Tommy” and “Fritz” sharing a drink did not fit the stereotype of a bloodthirsty Hun.
- Sir John French banned soldiers from taking photos which came into effect on the March of 1915.
- Daily Mirror was popular for its photographs and offered £1,000 for the best Western Front “snapshot”.
- Daily Sketch (rival) published in July 1915 an “untouched action” shot of the Second Battle of Ypres.
- Magazines such as The War Illustrated and the Illustrated London News relied on drawings by artists.
- Magazine illustrations portrayed heroic incidents which usually avoided the scary realities of the trenches.
- First War photographer was Ernest Brooks in 1916.

- By the war's end, there were 16 cameramen, all of whom had censored war photos.
- They were published as to show that there was a positive side of the army being in action.

War artists:

- The British Expeditionary Force took official war artists to the Western Front, at the instigation of Charles Masterman of the War Propaganda Bureau and the painter William Rothenstein.
 - He went to the front himself.
- The first war artist was called Muirhead Bone, in May 1916.
- Others included William Orpen and Paul Nash.
- The Bureau tried to control what the artists painted, which was usually unsuccessful.
- War paintings often showed a more realistic portrayal of the front.

Trench Humour and literature at home:

- In Britain, in 1915, Masterman commissioned John Buchan to produce an official war history in the form a monthly magazine: Nelson's history of the War and it proved to be very popular.
- Buchan had close links with the army.
- Rudyard Kipling, who lost his only son at the Battle of Loos in 1915, also worked on propaganda.
- Government had no control over trench humour.
- Soldiers on the Western Front produced a newspaper, the satirical and usually cheery Wipers Times, which first appeared in 1916.
- A cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather created "old bill" – a grumpy infantryman.
- Army disapproved of Old Bill as vulgar, but he was so popular.
- Black humour abounded in the trenches, while at home music-hall songs made light of the dangers. (Hush, Here Comes A Whizzbang was the most popular
- Government struggled to censor war poets writing about the Western Front.
- Most were not published until after the war.
- Some notable examples:
 - Edward Thomas, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, John McCrae and Robert Graves.
- Reflective memoirs after 1918 helped to shape.

What was the significance of Haig's major offensives for the conduct of the war and attitudes to it?

Haig as commander-in-chief:

Haig in charge:

- Among the many problems facing the British army on the Western Front in 1914, not the least was the antipathy between its top generals.
- The commander of the BEF, Sir John French, was criticised for indecision, and also argued with his second-in-command, Haig.
- Haig was critical of the French, who was ignorant of the "essential principles of war"
- After the Battle of Loos, when a British offensive failed after reserves were not committed promptly, French resigned and was replaced by Haig.

Haig's offensive strategy:

- Haig was a former cavalryman and a believer in attack.
- On the Western Front, he set out to regain the initiative.
- His army was not as well-trained as he would like.
- His soldiers were brave, but they were largely a volunteer army.

- Believed therefore that they needed detailed orders to maintain the continuous forward flow of the textbook attack.
- British offensives were supposed to be planned alongside those of the French.
- A conference in November 1915 agreed on joint offensives in 1916.
- French were drawn into a long struggle at Verdun, where the Germans made an attritional attack during most of 1916.
- Haig sought to relieve pressure on the French with a major offensive, to break through the German defences and restore the war of movement.
- By June 1916, Haig's army had 56 infantry divisions (4 in 1914)
- Government had brought in compulsory military service to maintain numbers.
- Haig was more ambitious and believed in a direct attack.

The Somme, 1916:

- The Somme battles in 1916 coloured Haig's reputation.
- The year began with the German onslaught on Verdun.
 - This was an attempt to bleed the French army to death.
 - Battle for Verdun cost the French 300,000 killed/wounded.
 - Germans suffered equally.
- To relieve pressure on Verdun, a joint French-British offensive began on the River Somme in June 1916.
- Haig faced big German defences, but experience at Neuve Chapelle and Loos had convinced him gains could be made with enough artillery.
- Haig expected 40,000 casualties in 3 days.
 - The British lost 58,000 on the first of July alone.
 - 20,000 killed.
- Total British Empire losses in the battle mounted to over 400,000.
- German losses were even higher.
- Haig believed he had shaken the enemy hard.
 - Despite little ground being taken.
 - Battle ended in November 1916.
- Those who survived the battle emerged battle-hardened.
 - There was experience of a new type of warfare:
 - The "fire and move" doctrine using light machine guns, creeping artillery barrage, tanks and the better use of aircrafts.
- At the Somme, British attacks failed because:
 - Germans were too well entrenched, unbeknown by the British.
 - British had not enough big guns and about 1/3 shells did not explode.
 - German troops survived the barrage and were still full of fight.
- Somme cost 420,000 British casualties and 194,000 French.
 - Plus half a million Germans.
 - Thirty million artillery shells were fired by the opposing armies.

Active front theory:

- Haig continued to mix attrition and offensive in his attempt to achieve the elusive breakthrough.
- Believed trench warfare might make soldiers passive and inactive in between offensives.
- To maintain "attacking spirit", and an active front, he ordered frequent small raids on the German lines.

Passchendaele, 1917:

- By 1918, Haig's army had power over Germany in terms of armaments supply and the Americans had entered the war in April 1917.
- Russia accepted peace early with Germany in 1918, following the October Revolution.
- America brought in good resources whilst German strength was ebbing with industrial output falling to under 60% of the pre-war level.
- A new French commander Robert Nivelle planned ambitious offensives in April 1917.
 - These were disasters.
 - Nivelle was replaced by Petain and the French Army was hit by mutinies.
- Undeterred, in June 1917, Haig went to London to explain his plan for a new attack.
 - He believed Germany would be exhausted in 6 months.
 - Passchendaele was the third Battle at Ypres.
- Haig's optimism was based on a report by the American Relief Committee to attack Belgium on German morale.
- He took it to London and it suggested that:
 - German troops knew that they were beaten.
 - There was a deterioration in uniform and equipment of German troops.
 - Rations of troops not in the fighting line had been much reduced.
 - Rolling stock was also reduced.
- Haig aimed to push west to the sea and drive the Germans out of Belgium.
- There were plans for an amphibious landing to help secure key ports such as Ostend.
- Passchendaele began with a set-piece attack using tunnel-mines to explode German defences at Messines Ridge.
- The offensive stalled.
- German artillery proved more formidable than expected and heavy rains turned the ground to deep mud.
- Transport became hard.
- General Gough's army struggled and so he was replaced with Plumer who used the "bite and hold" tactic of infantry.
 - This meant that infantry only advanced as far as artillery could fire and reach.
 - Therefore they would hold what was gained and then they would move forward together.
- Despite casualties adding up to a ¼ of a million on each side, there was still hopes of the breakthrough with The Times reporting "German defence broken" and Haig claiming that 135/147 of German divisions had been pushed back.
- This meant that the Germans would run out of fit men by June 1918.
- Passchendaele ended with disappointment:
 - Heavy losses for limited gains.
- Haig was rarely pessimistic but Lloyd George now distrusted Haig's optimism.
- Haig wanted to urge for offensives on a massive scale whilst the French wanted to wait for the US to fully build their armies.
- Despite Lloyd George's issues, he could not simply remove Haig, as the general was still widely regarded as the man who would win the war.
- Haig often complained that the army was overstretched.
- The Director of National service, Auckland Geddes, insisted that the home economy could spare no more men.
- Munitions minister, Winston Churchill suggested tanks might compensate for manpower shortages if the war went into 1919.

The tank goes to war:

- Haig was excited by the new technology of tanks, but tank project mastermind, Colonel Ernest Swinton, wanted to wait before committing tanks to battle.
- Haig sent 49 tanks into battle on the 15th September 1916, only three got more than a mile from the start line and the element of surprise was gone.
- Churchill was annoyed that the new weapon was revealed just to take over a couple of small villages.
- Haig used more than 400 tanks and gained 5 miles which was a significant advance.
- Tanks had weaknesses: slow and easy targets.
- Still, if they were used properly, they could break through.

The Hundred Days' Offensive, 1918:

- In 1918, German supreme commander Ludendorff planned the last great attack by the German army.
 - He had 1.6 million men and 16,000 guns.
- He was hoping to force a peace settlement before US reinforcements tipped the balance in the Allies' favour.
- Offensive drove a deep wedge into the British front.
- In July, the Allies counter-attacked.
- Haig was now working under the new allied supreme commander, the French general Marshal Foch, and they got on well.
- Second Battle of the Marne saw the French and the US forces pushing back the Germans.
- Battle of Amiens in August 1918, Haig deployed 500 tanks in secret and used aircraft to drown the noise of the tanks' engines.
- Haig's Royal Flying Corps' aircraft outnumbered the Germans despite weak ground support.
- Hundred Day Offensive was a full-scale Allied advance.
 - Haig's army was better equipped:
 - 6,500 guns and howitzers in 1917, 10,700 more in 1918;
 - 4000 tons of gas shells in 1915; reached 65,000 tons in 1918.
 - Technology and preparation weakened the German artillery through aerial reconnaissance, flash-spotting, and sound-ranging.
- At the Battle of Amiens, 95% of German guns were identified and hit by artillery in support of the advancing infantry.
 - This meant that each British battalion now had 30 machine guns instead of 4, and 8 trench mortars instead of one or two.
- Troops advanced miles in a day, and captured thousands of German prisoners and guns as they crossed the St Quentin Canal and broke through the Line.
- These successes were thanks to Haig's improved infrastructure, experienced commanders and fresh divisions.
- By October, the end was in sight and Haig's army was able to celebrate victory in November 1918.