Factors leading to the defeat of Germany and the other Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria)

THREE MAIN STAGES (but these are not official names):

1. Attack (1914)
2. Stalemate (1915-17)
3. Endgame (1918)

ATTACK! (1914)
- take aggressive action against a place, or enemy forces, with weapons or armed force, typically in a battle or war: German forces attacked in August.

WESTERN FRONT
- Germany executed its Schlieffen Plan while France launched its Plan 17 offensive, producing the epic ‘Battle of the Frontiers’ in August. But the ‘Battle of the Marne’ and ‘Race to the Sea’ led to trench warfare well short of Paris.

EASTERN FRONT
- Russia managed to invade Eastern Germany in late August to help spare France, but suffered epic defeats (Tannenberg, Masurian Lakes) and lost two whole armies. But the Russians dominated Austria-Hungary in the Battle of Galicia.

OTHER FRONTS
- Serbia survives three different Austro-Hungarian offensives (none of them large forces) and fights on into 1915. Meanwhile, colonial armies in Africa begin fighting in August and Japan seizes German colonies in the Pacific, but some ships escape.
Factors leading to the defeat of Germany and the other Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria)

### Stalemate

A situation in which further action or progress by opposing or competing parties seems impossible: *the war had again reached stalemate.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1917</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With the Western Front deadlocked, both sides look to new technologies &amp; different battlefields to make gains, but find little success.</td>
<td>Epic campaigns on land and at sea set this year apart, but it all feels futile as nothing breaks the logjam. Meanwhile, the combatant nations move more decisively into ‘total war.’</td>
<td>Germany goes for it with another big gamble - unrestricted submarine warfare - only to see Britain counter it with its convoy system and the US join the Entente Powers. Russia is in doubt after the Tsar’s rule collapses.</td>
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6. European diplomacy and the First World War, 1870-1923

Factors leading to the defeat of Germany and the other Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria)

ENDGAME (1918)

- the final stage of a game such as chess or bridge, when few pieces or cards remain: the knight was trapped in the endgame

EARLY 1918
With American soldiers finally due to arrive on the Western Front in March, Ludendorff rolls the dice on a massive ‘Spring Offensive.’

Germany ‘wins’ the East (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia).

MID-1918
As Austria-Hungary begins to fade against Italy & Bulgaria faces pressure from Allied invasion, the German offensive is halted by late July, short of Paris.

Meanwhile, the ‘Spanish influenza’ becomes a pandemic.

LATE 1918
Entente Powers begin so-called ‘Hundred Days Offensive’ in early August & breach ‘Hindenburg Line’ in September. Ludendorff urges Wilhelm II to begin an exit strategy, but it does not prevent a ‘German Revolution’ in Nov. 1918.
6. European diplomacy and the First World War, 1870-1923

- The entry and role of the United States
6. European diplomacy and the First World War, 1870-1923

Germany’s overall strategy: a quick war that will avoid protracted, multi-front war

1914: The Schlieffen Plan: one front at a time (focus upon France)

1915: Focus upon Russia

1915: U-boats, zeppelins, gas warfare

1916: “Bleed France white” (Falkenhayn = Verdun)

1916: Hindenburg Line; new German High Command w/ focus upon Russia

1917: Unrestricted submarine warfare resumes

1918: “Spring Offensive” in West / protecting gains in East

Entente Powers made errors too. Why the focus on Central Powers? Because they lost. But did they lose because of strategic errors?

- Strategic errors; economic factors

**ECONOMIC FACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Powers = 4 nations; Entente Powers = MANY by end</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outnumbered? Outproduced? Outspent? (Britain, later USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany only prepared for short war (economically &amp; diplomatically)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British blockade led to hunger in Germany, Austria-Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade partner imbalance; USA late entry as a factor</td>
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