

Historical Connections: Appreciating the Impact of the African Past on Its Present and Future through the '3 Cs' of the First World War¹

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Abstract

History is principally concerned with the accurate description and explanation of the causes, the courses and the consequences of past events. This view of history shows unequivocally that there are connections between past events (causes), on the one hand, and present (course) and future developments (consequences), which establish a process of change in continuity. These relationships indicate that past events influence present and future developments to a considerable degree. Relying on both primary and secondary data, this study uses the causes, course and consequences of the First World War to illustrate the connections between past (historical) events, present developments and future trends in Africa. It maintains that since all the causes of the war had already happened by July 28, 1914 when Austria declared war on Serbia, the First World War was fought largely on the basis of historical factors. It insists that certain developments that took place in the course of the war were either directly or indirectly related to the causes of the war. The paper further argues that the immediate and major consequences of the war were direct and indirect products of the causes and course of the war, and that certain developments that occurred long after the war were also influenced in one way or the other by the war and so were also either directly or indirectly related to the causes and courses of the war. The paper stresses that the First World War, thus, establishes a chain of connections between the African generations that lived before (past-causes), during (present-course) and after (future-consequences) the war, inasmuch as there were connections between the causes (past), the course (present) and the consequences (future) of the conflict. Finally, in the light of these observed connections and their implications, the paper concludes that it is crucial for the contemporary African generation to pay more attention to the systematic study and reconstruction of the past in order to understand the present and the future in their appropriate contexts.

Keywords and Phrases: *Causal Relationships, Historical Connections, Historical Determinism, Historical Events, Historical Factors, the First World War, the Future, the Past, the Present*

¹ We have arbitrarily chosen to label the *causes, course and consequences* of historical events as *the '3 Cs' of historical events*. Hence, *the '3 Cs' of the First World War* refer to the causes, course and consequences of the war.

Introduction

One would say that the past has no influence or does not play any role in the present and the future, but I beg to differ. The past is the foundation on which the present and the future are built. This is not to say that the past necessarily determines the present and the future, but it is to say that the past influences the present and the future in so many ways.²

Some people among the contemporary generation maintain that African history, understood as both the African past and a subject of study, or an academic discipline, is archaic and dead and, therefore, irrelevant to the African present and its future. No evidence for this impression could be cited than the several efforts some people have made to show the superfluous character of African history in an age of science and technology. There are also the various reductive interpretations that have been offered according to which belief in the contemporary usefulness of African history is a purely fanatic or nostalgic attachment to the African past by Africans who believe that their worth in the present world could be measured solely in terms of African past glories or references to the African past. This devaluation of African history has gone to the extent where some people have made concerted efforts to deny African history of any contemporary significance on the grounds that present and future issues in Africa can never be evaluated in terms of African past experiences. However, a critical evaluation of the role and uses of African history in our everyday lives, coupled with the issue of causation in African history or causal relationships between historical events, suggests that there are both direct and indirect connections between the African past, its present and its future. In a sense, these relationships highlight the concept of *historical connections*,³ and, thus, show that present and future events in Africa are either products of or related to past phenomena in Africa. The fact is that the African present contains its past in the sense that there are consequences or traces of the African past in its present. However, since the present is ever disappearing into the past, and the future becoming present, past events in Africa are often seen in the light of the new connections into which their consequences enter with the African present and its future.⁴

Several historical events⁵ could be used to illustrate this common and recurring historical trend. To say this is to imply that the reality of the concept of historical connections is not

² Telephone interview with Vanessa Amenenyowo Agbelorm, Aged 22 years, Learning and Development Specialist at Talentsmann Limited, Tema, October 19, 2015. Another interviewee also observed that there is a connection between the past, the present and the future because people act now in the present based on lessons learnt from the past. She also stressed that the conditions of the future are better understood when one looks into the past. She, however, maintained that this relationship does not mean that the past necessarily always *causes* the present and future, but a better understanding of the past could help shape the present and the future. Telephone interview with Esther Enyonam Diaba, Aged 33 years, Community Development Officer, National Board of Small-Scale Industries/Business Advisory Centre, Ejisu-Juaben Municipal Assembly, Ejisu, October 13, 2015.

³ In this study, the terms *historical connections* and *historical relationships* have been used interchangeably.

⁴ Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1934), p. 344.

⁵ When asked to mention any historical events, apart from the First World War, that could be used to illustrate the concept of historical connections, Matthew Nana Amoasi specifically referred to European colonisation of Africa and its effects on Africa's contemporary development, and the atomic bomb which the USA dropped in Japan in 1945 and its future biological implications on the people of Japan. Interview with Mathew Nana Amoasi, Aged 28 years, Third Year (Level 300) Student of African Studies (History Major), University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast,

doubted and that it is common to, or could be identified with, several historical phenomena.⁶ The First World War is also a very significant historical fact well-appreciated and preserved in our memories, books, artifacts, audio-visual materials, monuments, etc. In spite of this, some critical issues still remain to be addressed. One is that although several scholars have drawn our attention to the notion of causation and, for that matter, historical connections, it appears that no serious attention has yet been devoted particularly to a critical analysis and expatiation of the concept of historical connections. Again, no work has ever focused its attention on a reconciliation of this concept and the First World War for an analytical production of a scientific historical knowledge: the use of the war to illustrate the concept to help establish connections between the events that occurred and the generations that lived in Africa before (the origins or causes – the past), during (the course – the present), and after (the consequences – the future) the First World War and, thus, show the influence of the African past on its present and future.⁷

In view of the problems at hand, this paper first seeks to briefly appraise the concept of historical connections through a careful examination of the relationship between the past (yesterday), the present (today), and the future (tomorrow). Second, it attempts to use the factors generally accepted to have constituted the causes of the First World War, certain developments that took place in the course of the conflict, and some direct and indirect consequences of the war to illustrate and substantiate the authenticity and superiority of the concept of historical connections and, accordingly, demonstrate the influence of the African past on its present and future. In view of the existing connections between historical events and present and future developments, the paper maintains that in some cases, the African present and its future could be understood better in the context of the African past. The work then concludes that it is crucial for the contemporary generation of Africa to pay more attention to the systematic study and reconstruction of the African past in order to understand the present and the future of Africa in their appropriate perspectives.

Methodology and Data Sources

The problem and the objective of a study often determine the material to be selected in interpreting the facts, weaving the arguments, and establishing the conclusions of the work. Basically, the study set out to use the causes, course, and consequences of the First World War to establish connections between the past, the present, and the future and to show the implications of these connections on African life and history. As a result, the concepts of *historical connections* had to be clarified. The causes, course and consequences of the First World War

September 17, 2015. In 1964, Margery Perham noted that “Britain today is very different as regards her external power from the Britain of 1939 or even the Britain of 1945.” However, in saying that “... anti-colonialism ... condemns our past record; it weakens our present influence; it also threatens to harm our future relations with many of our former subjects and with other coloured peoples”, she was using a single historical event to link up the three disparate parts – the past, the present and the future – of the life of Britain. See Margery Perham, *The Colonial Reckoning*. London and Glasgow: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1964), p. 13.

⁶ This study does not claim in any way to be the first to put forward the notion of *historical connections*. We should recall Descartes’ observation, “There is nothing so absurd or incredible that it has not been asserted by one philosopher or another”, and its application throughout the realm of human thought and enterprise (Descartes is cited in Karl R. Popper, “What is Dialectic”, in E. von Goldammer, ed., *Vordenker*, Summer Edition (2004), p. 1, accessed on March 25, 2014, from www.vordenker.de). Indeed, several scholars, including Vico, Benedetto Croce, Hegel, R.G. Collingwood, Raymond Aron, E.H. Carr, etc. observed, have emphasised and re-emphasised the concept in one way or the other.

⁷ It is largely in these contexts that the justification for the study and its contributions to knowledge should be measured.

also had to be briefly examined and established. In view of this, two groups of literature had to be consulted: works that treat the causes, course, and consequences of the First World War, and those that examine the concept of historical connections, and highlight the *historical connections* between the past (the causes), the present (the course) and the future (the consequences).

The researcher also conducted interviews (face-to-face and on telephone) with some lecturers, researchers, teachers, graduates and students (postgraduate and undergraduate) of history who had adequate knowledge about the concept of time, and its division into the past, the present and the future, to find out their views about the concept of historical connections and the extent to which the causes, course and consequences of the First World War could be used to illustrate the concept. In all, the researcher interviewed 35 people who were considered appropriate for the study because, although they were engaged in activities in different fields of human endeavour at the time of the study, each of them pursued History during their undergraduate studies. However, because of the similarities in their responses, it was not every interviewee whose response was cited in the study.⁸ These interviews were organised not only with the view to getting empirical evidence to support the evidence gathered from the available literature, and to help establish the arguments and conclusions of the paper on a more concrete basis, but also to find out the extent to which historians and students of history among the present generation understood concepts in history and how they applied them in their everyday lives. The evidence gathered from both the secondary works and primary accounts were analysed and utilised to put the paper in its proper perspective, by way of providing the raw materials upon which the arguments, interpretations, and conclusions of the paper were based. The researcher was very much aware of the limitations of historical documents, as with all documents in all fields of study. He envisaged the likelihood of distortions of facts, exaggerations, understatements and other limitations normally associated with historical accounts. He, thus, deemed it necessary to carefully scrutinise and internally and externally critique all the data collected from the available documents in order to present only the accurate and reliable facts.

Change in Continuity: Chronological Dialectics and Historical Connections

Different scholars and schools of thought have assigned different definitions or interpretations to history, mainly as a result of the nature of the problems they investigate and, in effect, the objectives of their studies, their present needs, their understanding of the concept, etc. This is why Lynn Thorndike has argued that history has been defined severally as literature, as a body of facts, as delving in archives, as interpretations of the sources, as an art or a scientific subject of study, as an explanation of the present, or as a revelation and a realisation of the past.⁹ Generally, however, history is preferably defined as the science, art and practice of studying, interpreting and giving meaning to significant past human activities and events, through time and space, which help in our understanding of the present and give us a perspective of the future.¹⁰ This definition is premised on the fact that history is the continuous flow of time and growth of human civilisation, in the sense that developments of the past impact on present events, and these effects, which the present drags along with it, together with those of present occurrences, also

⁸ The author duly apologises to those whose names did not appear in the final list of the interviewees.

⁹ Lynn Thorndike is cited in Jacques Barzun and Henry E. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, Third Edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p. 44.

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of the different definitions or meanings or interpretations of history, see Adjei Adjepong, "What is History?: Searching for an Appropriate Definition for the Science of the Past", in Prince Adjei Kuffour, *Concise Notes on African and Ghanaian History*, Revised Edition (Kumasi: K4 Series Investment Ventures, 2014), pp. 1–16.

impact on the future by means of inheritance. In this context, we could also define history as the scientific examination of human society, where *society* is understood as the timeless continuity of generations which connects together those of the community now dead with the living and the still unborn generations.

The above definitions of history offer a basic understanding of the notion of historical connections. Indeed, the concept of historical connections is firmly founded on the concept of time, and its division into the past, the present, and the future, and the relationships between them. To be able to clearly explain this concept and establish the arguments of this paper on a sound foundation, therefore, first requires a clarification of the relationship between the three dimensions of time – the past (yesterday), the present (today), and the future (tomorrow). This relationship could best be described or explained in the context of what we may call chronological dialectics. The term *dialectics* comes from the Greek word *dialego*, meaning to discourse, to debate. In ancient times, dialectics was the art of arriving at the truth by disclosing the contradictions in the argument of an opponent and overcoming these contradictions.¹¹ In Hegelian philosophy, dialectics is broadly defined either as the logical subjective development in thought from *thesis* through *antithesis* to *synthesis*, or the logical objective development in history by the continuous reconciliation or unification of parts or opposites.¹² In other words, dialectics can be understood as the theory of the union of opposites consisting of a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. Accordingly, the dialectical method involves the notion that movement, or process, or progress, is the result of the conflict of opposites. The thesis, then, might be an idea or a historical movement which contains within itself incompleteness that gives rise to opposition, or an antithesis, a conflicting idea or movement. As a result of the conflict, a third point of view, a synthesis, arises to overcome the conflict by reconciling at a higher level the truth contained in both the thesis and antithesis and avoiding their limitations.¹³ This synthesis becomes a new thesis that generates another antithesis and gives rise to a new synthesis, and in such a fashion, the process of intellectual or historical development is continually generated.

As is clear, the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are all parts of the same process, evolving or emerging only at different times in a changing but continuous process. In the same way, the past, the present and the future are different but continuous parts of the same river of time. All peoples and societies have recognised the passage of time. However, our different cultures and perceptions have influenced our understanding of the concept of time. Also in science, the various specialists and their disciplines have different perceptions about the concept of time. Generally, however, there are two main concepts of time, cyclical and linear, which are usually applied in different situations and for different purposes.¹⁴ In both senses, some means are required to keep track of time. Aware of this, some authorities use the concept of time in a

¹¹ William Gorman, ed., *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World*, Volume I (Chicago et al.: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), pp. 345–352.

¹² Popper, “What is Dialectic”, p. 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ In measuring time, some societies focus on the periodic repetition of nature. Here, time is measured in terms of the alternation of day and night or the passing of the seasons through their annual progression. In this case, we have *cyclical time*, where a sequence of stages is seen as repeating forever. Other societies measure time in terms of the sequence of days, one following another throughout time in a long line. In this case, we have *linear time*, where time passes inexorably forward with no repetition or cycles. In practice, however, most people and societies apply both cyclical and linear concepts of time, often using them for special purposes. They apply linear time concepts in their use of numbered years and apply cyclical concepts in the repetition of days and months or seasons within a year.

holistic sense to refer to, among other things, the quantity of measurement using a clock; a particular moment of the day, measured on a clock; a period; a period in history; a period in someone's life; an occasion; an experience; a moment; a particular point when something happens; a particular moment that is suitable or not suitable for something; and for saying how often something happens.¹⁵ With specific regard to the linear concept of time, while some scholars maintain that time is a non-spatial continuum in which events occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future,¹⁶ others consider time as the continued progress of existence and events in the past, present and future regarded as one.¹⁷ Thus, in history, *time*, serving both as the agent of continuity and as the medium of real change, is apparently divided into three: *yesterday* or *the past*, *today* or *the present*, and *tomorrow* or *the future*.

The *past* has been variously explained as 'the time before the present, and everything that happened then'; 'the things that someone has done or the things that have happened to someone or something during the time before now', or as 'an earlier part of someone's life.'¹⁸ *Yesterday* is also understood as 'the day before today' or 'a time in the past.' In a simple sense, the past is the totality of all that has happened and gone, comprising all actions, all thoughts, all products of all human beings who have ever lived.¹⁹ Both the *present* and *today* are also defined as 'the period of time that is happening now'. And whereas the *future* is defined as 'expected to exist or happen during the time following the present time', *tomorrow* is explained as 'the day after today' or 'the future'. These definitions show that the *past* is only the already-gone part, or initiation or starting point, of time, the *present* the still or the *now* part, while the *future* is also only the expected part, or the yet-to-come aspect of time.

Aristotle argues that time, divided into the past, the present and the future, forms a continuous whole, and to maintain this continuity, the present, though seems to separate the past and future, must be seen as the end of the past and the beginning of the future.²⁰ Also considering the three divisions as a continuous process, St. Augustine has observed that time comes from the future, passes through the present, and goes into the past.²¹ On his part, George Gaylord Simpson maintains that the present is only a random point in the long flow of time, because life is one and continuous in space and time.²² Essentially, the present is a connection or a link between the past and the future. This view, coupled with the argument that there are enduring patterns and relationships in the succession of generations, emphasises that people and patterns live on in new generations, which makes it difficult to talk of major changes in history. Perceived this way, time is simply a composition of events which have occurred, those which are taking place now, and those which are to occur. Hence, the three *siblings* of time are the natural chronological divisions

¹⁵ Rebecca Adae et al., eds., *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, International Student Edition (London: Macmillan, 2009).

¹⁶ Google, "Time", accessed July 29, 2013, from www.google.com.gh.

¹⁷ The Free Dictionary, "Time", accessed July 29, 2013, from www.thefreedictionary.com/time.

¹⁸ Adae et al., *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*.

¹⁹ Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History*, Third Edition, (Hampshire and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 7.

²⁰ William Gorman, ed., *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World*, Volume II (Chicago et al.: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 897.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 898.

²² George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution*, A Special Revised and Abridge Edition (New York: The New American Library, 1955), p. 13.

of the same trend, and without one, the others cannot constitute the totality of time.²³ It is maintained that the concept of time has its root in the time-order of the experiences of the individual, and that this order must be accepted as something that is primarily given.²⁴ This implies that the order of the past, the present and the future is natural, and humans have no control over it. It is maintained that historians also establish causal links between events in the exact order in which they occurred.²⁵

Having identified the respective positions of the past, the present, and the future on the ladder of time, it is equally essential to appraise the nature of the relationship between them in order to appreciate how they are connected to one another. To be able to do this first requires an explanation of what scientists mean by an *event* and how they measure the relation between events. To some philosophers of science, an *event* is either anything that is earlier or later than something else, or something that precedes, or follows or overlaps something.²⁶ As our definition of history shows, historians study historical events in the contexts of space and time. The concept of space-time concerns the relation between two events. Formerly, there were two, distance in space and lapse of time, but now there is only one, which is called *interval*.²⁷ It is because there is only this one relation of interval, instead of distance in space and lapse of time, that we have the concept of space-time in place of the two concepts of space and time. But although scientists can no longer separate space and time, there are still two kinds of interval, one space-like and the other time-like. According to the Russell, the interval is space-like if a light signal, sent out by the body (or place) on which one event occurs, reaches the body on which the other event occurs after this other event has taken place. Conversely, it is time-like if a light signal sent out from one event reaches the body on which the other event occurs before this other event has taken place. An event is said to be time-like when one event may have an effect upon the other, or upon something in the same space-time region as the other; when this is not possible, the interval is space-like.²⁸

Since we are concerned with time-like events, which have past-causes, present-courses, and future-consequences, an analogy with a grandmother (A), a mother (B), and a daughter (C) and the process of procreation would help to make the relationship clearer. In this relationship, there is one grandparent (A), two mothers (A and B), two children (B and C), and one grandchild (C).²⁹ When the grandchild becomes an adult, she would also give birth to a child and, hence, becomes a mother. When the new child also grows up and produces a child, she also becomes a mother so that *the daughter* or *grandchild* in the original relationship now becomes a grandparent, and the process continues on and on. Obviously, the grandparent (grandmother) represents the past, the parent (mother) represents the present, and the daughter (grandchild) represents the future. According to the dictates of chronology, time and life constantly travel

²³ Interview with Mr. Isaac Indome, Aged 27 years, Teaching Assistant in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, September 9, 2015.

²⁴ Albert Einstein, "Space-Time", in Clifton Fadiman, ed., *The Treasury of the Encyclopædia Britannica* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1992), p. 381.

²⁵ G.J. Renier, *History: Its Purpose and Method* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), p. 180.

²⁶ Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, First Paperback Printing (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1962), pp. 270 and 275.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 288–289.

²⁹ A is the grandmother; the two mothers are A and B – the grandmother (A) is a mother to the mother (B) of the grandchild (C); the two children are B and C – the mother (B) is a daughter of the grandmother (A) and the grandchild (C) is a daughter of the mother (B), and the only grandchild is C – the daughter.

from the past to the present, which serves as a transit point, and continue the journey into the future. As this happens, the future becomes the present (or the future-present), the present becomes part of the past (and for that matter could be described as the present-past or immediate past), while the past (in the form of both immediate and remote) enlarges its confines by absorbing and adding more and more immediate pasts onto what it has already accumulated. In this sense, the past is the *mother* and *grandmother* of the present and future respectively. The present is also the mother of the future. When the future becomes the present, it gives birth to a new future, while the existing present now becomes a past or a grandparent. The process continues like that of procreation.

However we perceive the three dimensions of time and the three personalities on the scale of life, there is no doubt that there is a direct relationship between the grandparent – the past, and the parent – the present (the two mothers) and another direct one between the parent – the present, and the daughter – the future (the two daughters). We cannot say, however, that there is a similar direct connection between the grandparent, or the past, and the grandchild, or the future, since the parent – the present – impedes such a relationship. Indeed, it has been maintained that the present is not really so much a region of time as it is a *dividing line* between the past and the future.³⁰ Nevertheless, the same parent, or present, serves as an intermediary or an agent of connection between the grandparent – the past, and the grandchild – the future. This relationship is an indirect one; but irrespective of its nature, it still gives us evidence to believe that there is a connection between the past and the future. In fact, it is argued that the degree of the inseparability of the three reflects in the fact that the grandparent (the past or the cause) serves as the medium for the materialisation of the mother (the event or the course) which, in turn, produces the child (the consequence or the future).³¹ Even when we consider that often some grandchildren come to meet their grandparents and learn some habits and aspects of culture from them, and, accordingly, could be said to be contemporaries, we should understand that there are things the grandchild could learn directly from the grandmother without necessarily copying from the mother. It should, consequently, not be difficult for us to accept the tenability of the view that in most cases, the future, in its real sense, is the past modified.³² Whether we agree with this view or not, Carr helps us to understand that since the past and the future are part of the same time-span, the past and the future are interconnected.³³

Eventually, we are able to identify a connection between the past, the present and the future. In view of this, the past is the root of everything that exists today, and the root-of-the-root of everything that would survive into the future. Of course, if we place causes of events (causes), the events themselves (events) and the effects of these events (effects) in a parallel position against the past, the present and the future, the relationship that would be established would be one of past-causes, present-events and future-effects. In other words, we would have a parallel equation of past-causes – present-course – future-consequences. As historical events produce effects, the events, in turn, become causes of the effects they produce when the present becomes

³⁰ E.H. Carr, *What Is History?*, Second Edition, edited by R.W. Davies (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1987), p. 102; “Interlude I: Past, Present, Future, and Elsewhere”, Accessed on October 9, 2015, from <https://web.phys.ksu.edu/fascination/Interlude1.pdf>.

³¹ Interviews with Oliver Kofi Tasin, Aged 26 years, Postgraduate Student in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, September 22, 2015; Thomas Acquah, Aged 27 years, National Service Personnel at Institute of Chartered Accountants, Cape Coast, September 22, 2015.

³² “Jiddu Krishnamurti on Hope for the Future”. Retrieved July 29, 2012, from http://www.messagefrommasters.com/Mystic_Musings/Jiddu%20krishnamurthy/krishnamurti_on_hope.htm.

³³ Carr, *What Is History?*, p. 102.

the past and the future becomes the present. This seems to make some, but not all, future events fruits of the tree of the present whose seeds were sown in the past and, therefore, have historical roots. Meanwhile, another dialectical relationship would be established, so that the effects also become causes of other events, when the future, which now becomes the present, is also rolled down into the past for a new present and a new future to appear, enabling the dialectical course to continue indefinitely. This relationship gives credence to the view that causal chains are infinitely long. This is the reason why J.B. Bury insists that the conception of human history as a continuous, genetic, causal process means that the present condition of the human race is simply and strictly the result of a causal series, or a set of causal series, or a continuous succession of changes, where each state arises causally out of the preceding state.³⁴

Based on their observations, some scholars have described this relationship as one of determinism, where the past determines the present, and the future determined by the present and the surviving elements of the past in the present, thereby giving rise to the theory or concept of historical determinism.³⁵ The central thesis of determinism is the existence of causality, that is, a relationship of phenomena or events such that one phenomenon, *the cause*, necessarily gives rise to or produces, under definite conditions, a second phenomenon, *the effect*, so that the nature of an event is determined entirely by the nature of its cause or causes.³⁶ Hence, every event is the inevitable result of antecedent causes, or past events, which were themselves similarly determined by historical events. Historical determinism, thus, insists that historical, and by extension present and future, events, including human thoughts and actions, unfold according to predetermined sequences. In other words, past, present and future events are all determined exclusively by their antecedents. In its extreme sense, it assumes that given the same circumstances, people always behave in the same way.³⁷ In essence, human events generally occur under determinate and determining conditions, or that given historical occurrences are the inevitable effects of antecedent events beyond human control.

While not condemning historical determinism altogether, we are of the view that the doctrine is untenable in some respects because it is not in all cases that past events determine present and future developments. If the past determines the present and the future, then the outlook of the present and the future and the nature of the events that occur in them should not be far different from those of the past and its phenomena. However, it is believed that the past is significantly different from the present, and so the two could never be the same. Carr, for example, argues that “Nothing in history is inevitable ...”,³⁸ while John K. Roth strongly maintains that the present and the future are not contained in the past. He stresses that the future is open-ended, and our present actions are not exclusively determined by the past. He opines that we have autonomy and power in the present moment, and our use of this freedom is a vital factor in shaping the nature and quality of our lives and our world.³⁹ In fact, from historical investigations, we identify variations in human culture over time. We realise that there has always been a transition from the past to the present and from the present to the future. The mere identification of the past, the present and the future helps to accentuate the phenomenon of

³⁴ Cited in A.L. Rowse, *The Use of History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1946), p. 119.

³⁵ This theory is otherwise known as *Hegel's Wickedness*. See Carr, *What Is History?*, pp. 85–92.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁷ The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, “Determinism” (2013), accessed on April 29, 2015, from www.cc.columbia.edu/cu/cup/.

³⁸ Carr, *What Is History?*, p. 90.

³⁹ John K. Roth, “Introduction”, in William James, *The Moral Equivalent of War and Other Essays*, Edited by John K. Roth, First Torchbook Edition (New York et al.: Harper & Row, Publishers Inc., 1971), p. xxxiv.

change in human life. This implies that although some significant historical events can determine, and have determined, certain developments in the present and in the future, history is denied absolute deterministic power over the course of historical events.

What is not doubted, however, is the fact that there is a strong connection between the past, the present and the future. This idea of the continuity of history necessarily entails the fact that "... the past is of logical necessity the past-of-the-present, and the present is the-past-of-a-future-living present."⁴⁰ Those who subscribe to this view usually do so on the basis that most of our actions today are motivated by past events, and there is the likely that some of the actions of future generations would also be influenced by past and present developments.⁴¹ Nagel, for example, argues that the falsity of the concept of historical determinism in whatever respect does not negate the fact that there are causal connections in history.⁴² It is a fact that one cannot study history without observing and studying changes. Historians analyse major changes in the human experience over time. They explain why change occurs and what impact it has. They, however, do not end there; they also examine the ways in which those changes link the past to the present and the future. Ernst Breisach maintains forcefully that if history were a record of changes alone that would have denied the true nature of human life in which the experience of change is counterbalanced by that of continuity.⁴³ He stresses that individuals and groups have long since discovered that even in the aftermath of the most radical revolutions, the *new age* still carries many marks of the past. Alfred Grosser also maintains that complete breaks with the past are rare in history because even great political upheavals do not annihilate social and economic conditions or bring about a complete change in the ideas and beliefs of individuals.⁴⁴ Edmund Burke asserts that society is indeed a contract, and it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.⁴⁵

All these observations help establish that the past, the present and the future are connected in several ways. They show that there has never been, and there could never be, a complete discontinuity between the three parts into which time and life have been divided. In view of this, there are connections between the causes, course and consequences of the First World War which, thus, establish links between the generations that lived before, during and after the war. Since any theory of scientific history must arise from the nature of the material in order to be satisfactory, it is essential to interrogate the three component parts of the war to ascertain how connected they are.

The '3 Cs' of the First World War: Evidence of Historical Connections

⁴⁰ John Dewey, "Historical Judgments", in Hans Meyerhoff, ed., *The Philosophy of History in Our Time*, Anchor Books Edition (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 170.

⁴¹ Interview with Mr. Abdul Kuba, Aged 25 years, Postgraduate Student (M.Phil. History) in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, September 22, 2015.

⁴² Ernest Nagel, "Determinism in History", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Volume XX, No. 3 (March, 1960), p. 298. See also Carr, *What Is History?*, pp. 80–102; Renier, *History*, pp. 180–185.

⁴³ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval & Modern*, Second Edition (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 3.

⁴⁴ Alfred Grosser, *Germany in Our Time: A Political History of the Postwar Years*, Translated by Paul Stephenson (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Edmund Burke is cited in Anthony Jay, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 63.

As has been stated, the First World, like any other historical event, had three parts to it: the causes – the past, the course – the present, and the consequences – the future.⁴⁶ While the duration of the course or the event itself is clearly known, those of the causes and the consequences are not so clear. As a result, different scholars trace the origins of the war to different periods in European history, with some going as far back as the year 1815, as a result of the flaws associated with the 1815 Vienna Settlement and the problems they generated later. Hence, we would take the period from 1815 to July 28, 1914 as that of the past-causes of the war; from July 28, 1914 to November 11, 1918 as the era of the present-course of the war; and from November 11, 1918 and beyond as the age of the future-consequences of the conflict.⁴⁷ Generally, it is agreed that the causes of the First World War included the European system of alliances, colonial and economic rivalry, Anglo-German naval competition, militarism, rivalry in the Balkans, nationalism and the assassination of the Austrian Archduke, Francis Ferdinand, and his wife, Sophie, at Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital, on June 28, 1914, and the failure of diplomacy to resolve the crises that followed the assassination of the royal couple. In the course of the war, some of these factors, such as alliances, territorial clashes, nationalism, and killing, continued and even took on new forms that aggravated the already bad situation. The effects of the conflict were also numerous. They included the loss of over 16 million soldiers and civilians; over 21 million injured people; food shortages; outbreak of diseases; economic destruction and financial challenges; the collapse of old empires and the emergence of new nations; the redrawing of the map of Europe; the spread of democracy and nationalism; the spread of internationalism and the birth of League of Nations; the rise of dictatorship and the outbreak of the Second World War.⁴⁸

As stated above, there have always been causal relationships between the causes, the course and the consequences of events. Accordingly, direct connections could be established between the individual causes, the course and the individual consequences of the war to support the arguments of this study.⁴⁹ For example, it would only be logical to say that the spirit of militarism, war preparedness and arms race, which was generated by the mutual spite and fear of aggression of the various powers, led to the manufacture of more deadly weapons, before and during the war, that killed millions of soldiers and civilians in the conflict. Probably conscious of the fact that peace in military mouths today is a synonym for war expected,⁵⁰ the countries soon started rearming after the conclusion of peace, even though the various peace treaties signed after the war imposed limitations on the military might of the European powers, especially Germany. The resurgence of militarism after the war reflected in the programme of rearmament which

⁴⁶ This is not a study of the First World War itself. The war is only being used here as an illustration of historical connections. Hence, readers would not get the details of the causes, trends and effects of the conflict from this study. Readers can, however, refer to the works cited on the conflict for the specific details they require.

⁴⁷ July 28, 1914 was the date on which Austria declared war on Serbia, and November 11, 1918 was when Germany signed armistice with the Allies. See Gordon A. Craig, *Europe Since 1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp. 486 and 523; Peter Gay and R.K. Webb, *Modern Europe* (New York et al.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), p. 939; William Kelleher Storey, *The First World War: A Concise Global History*, First Paperback Edition (Lanham et al.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), p. 29.

⁴⁸ Craig, *Europe Since 1815*, pp. 523–552.

⁴⁹ Because of our purpose, we have decided to discuss the specific causes of the war with their associated developments during the course of the conflict and their consequences in order to establish the chains we hope to identify. Meanwhile, space constraints would not permit us to discuss the manner in which all these causes, course and consequences were connected. Accordingly, we have decided to identify the major causes and consequences of the war and select some of them for emphasis.

⁵⁰ William James, *The Moral Equivalent of War and Other Essays*, Edited by John K. Roth, First Torchbook Edition (New York et al.: Harper & Row, Publishers Inc., 1971), p. 6.

Hitler and the generals and admirals of Germany secretly carried on. To demonstrate his resolve to rearm Germany, Hitler recalled the German delegation from the 1933 Geneva Disarmament Conference and withdrew Germany from the League of Nations in October, 1933.⁵¹ The result was that the other powers also started serious rearmament programmes. Japan enlarged her naval force, especially from 1936, in order to achieve parity with Britain and the USA. Between 1937 and 1939, Britain also speeded up its rearmament, the USA increased the size and quality of its armed forces many times, while Italy and Russia also increased their land armaments.⁵² Thus, the inter-war years witnessed a general atmosphere of military imperialism on the part of the world powers for the purposes of destroying their enemies and for the exercise of despotic power over their own citizens.⁵³

Since conventional wisdom has always presupposed a link between rapid military build-ups and war,⁵⁴ it should be understood that this atmosphere of militarism and war feeling during the inter-war period contributed directly and significantly to the outbreak of the Second World War, which was longer in duration, wider in scope, and more disastrous in its consequences than the First because of the use of far more lethal weapons, notably the atomic bomb. As is well known, it was from the Second World War that the Cold War of 1946–1991 also evolved. And since World War II, the world has had two major power centres, the United States and the Russia, who have become particularly militaristic since 1945, and each now possess nuclear weapons sufficient to destroy all of civilisation. In fact, as a result of the increasing level of human bellicosity, violence around the world continued, and even increased in some cases, after the Cold War. At present, and as we look into the future, the threat of nuclear war remains because of tensions between several countries, the inability of the world nuclear powers to control their vast supplies of nuclear materials, and the high desire on the part of many countries to possess more nuclear weapons in order to have an edge over others in the arms competition. Apart from nuclear weapons, there are also numerous and widely available non-nuclear weapons – some biological and others chemical – that are, in some cases, more lethal than ever. These are some of the weapons used by terrorist groups in their inimical operations today which have made the present and the future highly unsafe for human survival. Considering the level of the desire on the part of the world’s leading powers to possess more weapons in order to keep up the arms race, the view that a well-armed country can deter potential aggressors, and the attempts to fight back terrorist groups, demand for weapons would certainly be higher in the future than ever before, and so would violence also certainly escalate.

Of course, in saying all this, we are not arguing that the spirit of militarism that led to the outbreak of the First World War *determined* the same phenomenon in the 1930s and led to World War II. Neither are we implying that it was the pre-1914 feeling of militarism that *determined* the same sentiments after World War II and led to the Cold War and the numerous violent clashes between countries and the upsurge of terrorist attacks in the twenty-first century. Our position is only that there were, and still are, connections, either directly or indirectly, between

⁵¹ Keith Eubank, “Introduction”, in Keith Eubank, ed., *World War II: Roots and Causes* (Lexington, Toronto and London: D.C. Heath and Company, 1975), p. x.

⁵² Norman Lowe, *Modern World History*, Third Edition (New York: Palgrave, 1997), p. 79; John Richard Alden, *Rise of the American Republic* (New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), pp. 801–802.

⁵³ Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties*, Revised Edition (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), pp. 14–18.

⁵⁴ Paul Diehl, “Arms Races and Escalation: A Closer Look”, in Joseph Fahey and Richard Armstrong, eds., *A Peace Reader: Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-Violence and World Order* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 31.

this series of feelings and their concomitant violence and instability. At any rate, after observing the outbreaks of violence almost everywhere after the formal fighting had ended, the historian Fritz Stern has remarked that the First World War ushered in a period of unprecedented violence, with 1919 signifying the continuation of war by different means.⁵⁵ This shows that when we do a critical study of international relations from the second half of the nineteenth century to the present, we would find a continuity extending through the thinking of the European and world powers, and, in fact, many people, that amount to an ideology of militarism and war feelings that are too deeply grounded.

William James has maintained that modern humans have inherited all the inborn belligerence and all the love for glory of their ancestors to the extent that the details of the irrationality and horrors of war do not even have any effect on their thinking.⁵⁶ Michael Howard has also observed that throughout history, war has been a normal way of conducting disputes between rival political groups because humans are inherently pugnacious.⁵⁷ These views, and the fact that wars in general did not begin with the Great War, seem to stress that the penchant for war is natural in humans and so humans can wage wars or engage in violent acts at any time. If this is so, then it would be wrong to draw any connections between the First World War and later violent conflicts and argue that the former influenced the latter. However, the lines of connections drawn here are legitimate in the sense that World War I was the first great modern and industrial war. The Industrial Revolution gave the Western and Central European countries tremendous power to produce goods, and in the course of the nineteenth century and during the war, the factories of the belligerent countries churned out vast quantities of repeating rifles, machine guns, artillery, ammunition, uniforms, trucks, food for the troops, poison gas, tanks, submarines, and fighting aircrafts. Thus, it was from the time of the First World War that war increasingly became a matter of competing technologies and developed to assume the dominant position it occupies in international power politics today.⁵⁸

Another cause of the war which could be tied directly to some developments that occurred during and after the war was the system of alliances. European politics and diplomacy towards the beginning of the twentieth century were characterised by the formation of secret and hostile alliances. These alliances, initiated by the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, created a favourable situation for war in the sense that by the beginning of the war, the alliances had divided Europe into two opposing camps – the Triple Alliance consisting of Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary; and the Triple Entente, comprising France, Russia and Britain. This is to say that the Central Powers fought on one side against the Allied Powers because of the influence of historical developments during the pre-war years. Since 1873, Austria-Hungary and Germany had been allies, being members of the First Three Emperors' League (1873), the Dual Alliance (1879), the Second Three Emperors' League (1881), and the Triple Alliance (1882).⁵⁹ The cordial relations or friendship between the two powers was maintained and even became stronger in the first decade of the twentieth century so that by the outbreak of the war in 1914, the two powers had historically been allies for over four decades. Turkey and Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in November, 1914 and October, 1915 respectively because of the intimacy between

⁵⁵ Fritz Stern is cited in Johnson, *Modern Times*, pp. 37–38.

⁵⁶ James, *The Moral Equivalent of War and Other Essays*, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Michael Howard, "The Causes of War", in Joseph Fahey and Richard Armstrong, eds., *A Peace Reader: Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-Violence and World Order* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁹ Craig, *Europe Since 1815*, p. 505; Lowe, *Modern World History*, p. 4.

them during the immediate pre-war years.⁶⁰ In effect, the decisions of Germany and Austria-Hungary to fight on one side, and of Turkey and Bulgaria to join them, were influenced predominantly by developments that occurred during the *past-causes* period of the war.

In the same way, the Allies or Triple Entente Powers, originally made up of France, Russia and Britain, and later joined by Serbia and Belgium, also fought on one side against the Central Powers as a result of important historical considerations. France was defeated and humiliated in 1871 by Prussia (Germany) and lost her provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to the Germans. Thus, from 1871, the French and the Germans remained enemies. Russia was a member of the First and Second Three Emperors' League, and the Reinsurance Treaty of 1887, the latter of which was made up of only Germany and Russia. In 1890, when Bismarck left office, the new German government refused to renew the Reinsurance Treaty, and this development paved the way for France and Russia to form an alliance, the Franco-Russian Alliance, in 1894. In April, 1904, Britain and France negotiated the Anglo-French Entente, otherwise known as the Dual Entente or the Entente Cordiale. Britain, France and Russia came together in 1907 and concluded the Triple Entente. By the outbreak of the war in 1914, therefore, the three powers had been allies for at least a decade.⁶¹ Also, when Austria declared war on Serbia, Russia ordered a general mobilisation on July 30, 1914 in support of Serbia and against Austria because for a long time, Russia and Serbia had enjoyed cordial relations, whereas the policies or interests of Russia and Austria in the Balkans had always clashed and created enmity between them.

In the case of Britain, she joined the war because France and Russia had been her allies since 1904 and 1907 respectively. It must be noted again that in going to the aid of France, Britain was, in another sense, continuing a policy she had been pursuing since the formation of the Anglo-French Entente in 1904. In the 1911 Agadir Crisis between France and Germany, for example, Britain quickly went to the aid of France, her ally.⁶² The British support for France in 1914, therefore, should be regarded as nothing new but a continuation of a policy she was already pursuing. There was yet another historical factor for which Britain entered the war against Germany. In their attempts to enter France, the German troops demanded a free passage through Belgium whose neutrality had been guaranteed by the powers in as far back as 1839. When the Belgians refused the German demand, Germany invaded Belgium. The violation of Belgian neutrality made Britain to send warnings to Germany to respect Belgian territory. Meanwhile, Germany was already in Belgium and had invaded it. On the refusal of Germany to comply with the British demand, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914.⁶³ Hence, it was not only historical alliances that motivated Britain to fight Germany in the war; she was also influenced by an agreement that had been concluded way back in 1839.

When we consider alliances alone, we observe that there were connections between the thoughts and deeds of the belligerents in 1914 and certain developments that occurred long before the beginning of the twentieth century. Also in the course of the war, Britain, France and Russia signed a series of secret treaties among themselves and induced other powers to join.⁶⁴ Moreover, the warring coalitions made serious efforts to win new allies. Interestingly, these new allies were also largely influenced by historical considerations in their decisions to join the

⁶⁰ Craig, *Europe Since 1815*, p. 505.

⁶¹ Lowe, *Modern World History*, p. 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Modern Times*, p. 21.

warring camps. Japan declared war on Germany in August 1914 and, thus, joined the Allied Powers because of the military alliance she had formed with Britain way back in 1902. Italy was originally a member of the Triple Alliance of 1882 and so was supposed to ally with Germany and Austria-Hungary. However, at the start of the war, she remained neutral and eventually joined the camp of the Allies in May, 1915 also as a result of historical factors. First, she was not on good terms with Austria even before the conclusion of the Triple Alliance in 1882. She had attempted, but failed, on several occasions to wrestle from Austria the territories of Tyrol, Trieste, Trentino and Istria, all of which were controlled by Austria. Secondly, liberal idealists and republican Italians who clung to the principles of historical figures like Mazzini and Garibaldi, the architects of the Italian unification, felt that the cause of Britain and France was the cause of civilisation and that Italy must not be absent from the ranks of the defenders of a good cause.⁶⁵ In the situation of Romania, she joined the Allies in August, 1916 because, historically, she had had poor relations with Austria and Germany.

The rigid alliance system dragged the USA also into the war in April, 1917. In fact, by early 1917, President Woodrow Wilson had arrived at the conclusion that America would have a bigger influence on the post-war settlement as a belligerent than as a neutral.⁶⁶ As a result, American interests, especially her position in post-war world politics, played a vital role in the American entry into the war. It must, however, be appreciated that the American entry into the conflagration on the side of the Allies was influenced more by historical developments than any other considerations. There had been commercial relations between the USA and the European powers long before the war started. These relations continued while the war was raging. The Americans, however, observed a slump in their trade with the Central Powers from \$169,289,000 in 1914 to \$1,159,000 in 1916 and a growth with the four great Allied countries of Britain, Russia, France and Italy, from \$824,860,000 to \$3,214,480,000 in the same period.⁶⁷ Then came the German unrestricted submarine warfare which sank several Allied war and merchant ships as well as vessels belonging to neutral countries, including the USA, and killed several people including many Americans. The withdrawal of Czarist Russia from the war, and the coded message the German Foreign Secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, sent to Mexico proposing that if war came between the USA and Germany, Mexico and Germany should form an alliance and persuade Japan to join also influenced the American entry into the First World War.⁶⁸

Considering that all these developments occurred before the USA entered the war, we should understand that the American decision to enter the war was influenced, in its entirety, by past developments. America entered the war in April, 1917, but the trend of trade imbalance spanned the 1914–1916 period, while the unrestricted submarine warfare was announced on February 4, 1915 and started to destroy ships and kill people from March 28, 1915 with the sinking of the British steamer *Falaba*; May 1, 1915 the American tanker *Gulflight*; May 7, 1915 the British Cunard Liner *Lusitania*; then the British ship *Arabic*, to March 24, 1916 the French ship *Sussex*.⁶⁹ Russia pulled out of the war in February, 1917, whereas the Zimmermann telegram was also intercepted in February, 1917 and released to the American press on March 1, 1917. Here, even the Revisionist historians who argue that America entered the war as a result of

⁶⁵ Craig, *Europe Since 1815*, p. 506.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Modern Times*, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Alden, *Rise of the American Republic*, pp. 677–678.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 677–683.

⁶⁹ Alden, *Rise of the American Republic*, p. 678–680; John M. Murrin et al., *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People*, Volume II: Since 1863 (Fort Worth et al.: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), pp. 725–726.

the pressure the big banks and businessmen mounted on the authorities would agree that these pressures and influences were mounted before America entered the conflict so that if they really played any role, then they did so as past events which influenced present thoughts and deeds.

Even more historical were the factors of heritage and old alliances. It has been established that out of the 92 million Americans in 1910, more than 32 million were *hyphenated Americans*, that is, they were first or second generation immigrants who retained ties with their old countries.⁷⁰ Among the more than 13 million Americans from the countries at war, by far the largest groups were 8 million German-Americans. 4 million were Irish-Americans who harboured deep-rooted enmity against Britain. This hatred was further heightened by the British suppression of the Irish Easter Rebellion of 1916 which was geared towards the attainment of independence from the British. These groups instinctively leaned towards the Central Powers.⁷¹ On the other hand were old-line Americans, largely of British origin, whose sympathies lay with the British and the Allied Powers. Some of these Americans even kept memories of the help France rendered to them during their struggle for independence from the British, and so wished that the Allies would defeat the Central Powers. Ultimately, it was past events that motivated American entry into World War I on the side of the Allied Powers.

At this point, we realise that the alliance systems which started in 1873 and contributed to the outbreak of the war continued in the course of the war. In the deeper sense, the formation of military alliances should even be regarded as one of the key developments of the inter-war period, if not one of the products of the war itself. Genuinely, the first of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points discouraged secret alliances and rather encouraged open covenants of peace openly arrived at.⁷² But no attempt was made to prohibit the formation of alliances altogether. Countries continued to relate to one another as friends and foes and, in some cases, signed secret treaties. France, for example, tried to increase its security by building a network of alliances, known as the *Little Entente*, first with Poland in 1921, and later with Czechoslovakia in 1924, Romania in 1926 and Yugoslavia in 1927.⁷³ The USA and Russia resumed diplomatic relations, though without cordiality. The American Congress also passed the Trade Agreements Act in 1934 and entered into economic agreements. By 1941, America had signed such agreements with 26 nations.⁷⁴ As a result, by the beginning of the Second World War, not only the European powers but the world powers in general had once again been divided into warring factions by these military alliances.

It may be argued that there was a change or a break in continuity because Italy and Japan left their Allies in the First World War to join Germany in the Second World War. It must be noted, however, that although the alliance system changed, the pattern remained the same; it was only the countries that switched camps, but the alliances remained and resulted in another catastrophic war just as the earlier ones had done in bringing about World War I. These alliances remained during the Cold War, although at this time, too, there were changes in the position of the countries and not really in the militaristic nature of the alliances themselves. Even the nature of alliances or relations among the world powers today could, in a certain sense, be traced to those which started the First World War. This long chain of alliances establishes a connection

⁷⁰ George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History*, Second Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), p. 89.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Edward Conrad Smith and Arnold John Zurcher, eds., *Dictionary of American Politics* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1955), p. 163.

⁷³ Lowe, *Modern World History*, p. 61.

⁷⁴ Alden, *Rise of the American Republic*, p. 678–680.

between the causes, course and consequences of the war and, for that matter, between the generations that lived before, during and after the war.

In much the same way, similar threads of relationships could be established between all the other causes of the war and developments during and after the war. Sharp commercial and colonial rivalries among the various European powers were among the causes of the war since they created acute tension in relations between the European powers. The French and the British clashed at Fashoda in the Sudan. In 1898, the British and the French clashed in the Northern Territories in Ghana over Wa, and in the same year, the British and the Germans clashed over Togoland.⁷⁵ Again, rivalry over Egypt and West Africa strained relations between Britain and France. There was also an acute tension between Britain and Germany and Britain and Russia in Central Asia. These rivalries increased tension in European relations, but, on the whole, Britain and France, who had already established colonies in various parts of Asia and Africa considered Germany to be their rival. Canada, Australia and New Zealand assured Britain of their support even before the war was declared because of the historical connections between these self-governing dominions and Britain.⁷⁶ The colonies of Britain, France and Belgium in Africa were also automatically at war with the Central Powers because of the same colonial-historical connections.⁷⁷ By the time of the war, only Ethiopia and Liberia remained sovereign and independent states in Africa. All the rest were under European colonial domination which had been imposed long before the start of the war. Colonial ties, founded on history, were, thus, responsible for Africa's involvement in World War I. All this shows that in the course of the war, colonial rivalries were still shaping relations between the European powers and their colonial territories. Interestingly, while the war itself led to the destruction of the German, Russian, Turkish and Austrian empires, the colonial rivalries specifically culminated in the seizure of German colonial territories in Africa and Asia by the Allied Powers.

Nationalism also played a major role in the outbreak of World War I in the sense that since 1815, it had caused dissatisfaction among some nationalities and, thus, created tension in Europe. At the Vienna Congress of 1815, the issue of nationalism was totally disregarded in the interest of the preservation of peace. The statesmen brought unwilling people together while separating those who wished to remain united. As a result, some *nations*, including Germany and Italy, were left divided. Consequently, potent nationalistic movements were launched everywhere in Europe with the view to unifying the divided nations.⁷⁸ The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, which ended in the unification of Germany, also resulted in France's loss of the province of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, and the French looked forward to regaining their lands. In addition, Austria-Hungary controlled many territories, particularly in the Balkans, which their neighbours felt belonged to them. Serbia, for example, wanted Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy wanted the regions of Trentino, Trieste, Tyrol and Istria, while the Czechs and Slovaks wanted independence from Austria-Hungary. Russia also contained several nationalities within its boundaries, and these nationalities were also demanding independence in the name of nationalism. Thus, there were disputes among the powers over the Balkan states. The rivalry between Austria and Serbia was actually the direct cause of World War I. The Slavs in the

⁷⁵ A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Second Edition, Reprinted (Accra: Sankofa Educational Publishers Limited, 2000), pp. 71–74.

⁷⁶ David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, Second Edition (London: Longman Group Limited, 1969), p. 514.

⁷⁷ Most of the other papers in this volume attest to this. Readers who are interested in the facts, figures and statistics can refer to the other papers.

⁷⁸ Craig, *Europe Since 1815*, pp. 2–3 and 12–32; Gay and Webb, *Modern Europe*, pp. 557–563; Storey, *The First World War*, pp. 12–19.

Austrian territories formed potent movements for their emancipation from the Austrian domination. These movements received direct and indirect assistance from Serbia. Some of the movements were actually secret and terrorist societies, such as the *Black Hand*.⁷⁹ It was these terrorists that made a sudden attack on the Austrian royal couple and killed them.

Here, too, there was continuity during and after the war, which establishes historical connections between the past-causes, the present-course and the future-consequences of the war. Let us note first that it was the feeling of nationalism that made the Balkan states who wanted independence from Austria to join the camp of the Allied Powers. In view of this, their conduct in the course of the war was influenced largely by the nationalist spirit which started in 1815. In addition, when the Tsarist regime in Russia collapsed in 1917 and Austria refused to make a separate peace with the forces, Britain and France began to encourage nationalism and self-determination.⁸⁰ The spread of democracy and nationalism has also been regarded as the most significant effect of World War I. By 1919, many European intellectuals subscribed to the view that the right to national self-determination was a fundamental moral principle.⁸¹ This phenomenon developed to the extent that nationalist movements gained in strength not only in the various countries of Europe, but also in Asia and Africa. Needless to state here the extent to which nationalism gained deep roots in all the colonial territories in Asia and Africa and contributed towards the recovery of independence from the middle of the twentieth century. George Padmore traces the evolution of Ghanaian nationalism from the foundation of the Asante Confederacy, but he insists that Ghanaian nationalism has deep roots and a long tradition founded in well-established political institutions which draw emotional inspiration from the ancient empire of Ghana.⁸² Adu Boahen also argues that nationalism and the process of nation-building occurred much earlier in Africa than in Europe and the USA.⁸³ But in saying that "... as a rule self-determination was accepted as unarguable for Europe [in 1919], just as in the 1950s and 1960s it would be accepted for Africa",⁸⁴ Paul Johnson is drawing a connection between African mass or radical nationalism and the recovery of independence, and the nationalism that evolved from the First World War. This point is authentic to the extent that proto-nationalism⁸⁵ in Ghana, for example, metamorphosed into radical nationalism, which, in turn, culminated in the eventual recovery of independence and sovereignty. In a sense, therefore, the attainment of independence in Africa could be regarded as one of the long-term and indirect outcomes of the First World War.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Gay and Webb, *Modern Europe*, p. 938.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Modern Times*, p. 21.

⁸¹ Reportedly, intellectuals like Karl R. Popper opposed the idea. They argued that self-determination was a self-defeating principle since 'liberating' peoples and minorities simply created more minorities. See *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸² George Padmore, *The Gold Coast Revolution: The Struggle of an African People from Slavery to Freedom* (London: Dennis Dobson Limited, 1953), p. 1.

⁸³ A. Adu Boahen, *Clio and Nation-Building in Africa* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1975), p. 7.

⁸⁴ Johnson, *Modern Times*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ The word *proto* means *first, original or primitive*. For our purpose, *proto-nationalism* should be understood as the first in an order or the first of its kind. Proto-nationalism, therefore, refers to the first or early phase of Africans' resistance to European domination. Several scholars use the term *proto-nationalism* to refer specifically to the various forms of protests the colonised peoples of Africa made in demand for institutional reforms and improved conditions of life during the twenty-year period of 1919–1939, usually referred to as the *inter-war years*. On the other hand, mass or radical nationalism refers to the militant style of African protests that developed after 1945 when the Second World War came to an end.

⁸⁶ Interview with Mr. Isaac Gyan, Aged 26 years, Teaching Assistant in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, September 9, 2015.

Analysis and Conclusion

This paper set out to examine, and to use the causes, the course, and the consequences of the First World War, to illustrate and to prove the legitimacy and superiority of the concept of historical connections. It was also intended to use the reality of the concept to highlight connections between the African past, present and future. The findings of the study have shown that what the concept of historical connections brings to the fore is the notion of a developmental or genetic relation among the three strands of time. They also emphasise that, indeed, there were and still are both direct and indirect connections between the past-causes, the present-course and the future-consequences of the war. What is important to us here is not the extent to which the individual causes contributed to the outbreak of the First World War. We are rather interested in the fact that by the beginning of the war, all these developments had occurred and, for that matter, were historical events. Hence, not only did the generation that fought in the war think and act in a historical context, but they also showed the extent to which the said factors connected them to the generations that produced the causes of the war. This realisation shows that although the two generations were separated by time, in some cases by several years, they were still connected to one another through the causes, the outbreak, and the fighting of the war. It is also clear that several developments that took place in the course of the war were largely influenced by past events, which were themselves the causes of the war or developments related to the causes. It could, therefore, be maintained that just as those who started the war thought and acted on the basis of past events, those who joined the conflict later also behaved in the same historical context. Hence, the past influenced the present a great deal during the 1914–1918 period when the war was raging and established relationships, both direct and indirect, with the present. In the same way, the consequences of the war and the generations that have lived since the end of the conflict are related in one way or the other to the course of the war and the generation that witnessed the conflict, and also to the causes of the war and the people who lived during the 1815–1914 period.

Indeed, in describing the First World War as “Confused in its causes, devious in its course, [and] futile in its result ...”, C.V. Wedgwood draws our attention to the fact that the causes, the course and the consequences of the war are, in the context of time, three separate aspects of the war, but are connected by being parts of the same historical event.⁸⁷ In the sense that the world of the twenty-first century is changing at a more rapid pace than ever before, it may be assumed that the present generation is absolved from all influences of the First World War. Such an assumption would be erroneous because we are still smarting under the effects of the Great War, although other wars have been fought since then. In 1920, Ernst Jünger, a front-line soldier in the war, published a widely read book entitled *Battle as an Inner Experience*. In this work, Jünger informed his readers,

What has been revealed here in battle will tomorrow be the axis around which life revolves ... This war is not the end, but the chord that heralds new power. It is the anvil on which the world will be hammered into new boundaries and new communities.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Craig, *Europe Since 1815*, p. 525.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Clearly, what the author predicted in 1920 has come to pass because all the generations from the 1920s to the present have experienced the consequences of the First World War in several ways.

Particularly, many of the political changes brought about by the war could still be heard today reverberating around the world. We are, for example, still feeling the impact of the war through the artificial boundaries the European imperialists powers imposed on some African societies. The division of Togoland between the British colonial administration of Ghana and the French colonial administration of Togoland in 1920 was one of the immediate political effects of the war. Today, people who historically belong to the same ethnic stock and speak the same language are divided and now belong to different sovereign nation-states, and movement from one area to another to visit neighbours is now considered as an international migration that requires travelling documents.⁸⁹ Cantonments, a suburb of Accra, Ghana, was established as a military base for the Allied forces in World War I.⁹⁰ The existence of this settlement and our use of it today obviously connect our generation to that of the First World War. Another issue that illustrates the connection between the First World War and the present generation and, therefore, the impact of the past on the present generation is the spread of internationalism as an upshot of the war. After the conflict, most of the countries showed their eagerness for international co-operation and assistance. This development ultimately led to the birth of the League of Nations. While the League itself proved to be ineffective, it was the precursor to the United Nations Organisation, a much more effective international organisation. The mere existence of this international association and our membership of it is an indication of contemporary Africans' connection to the generations of Africans that lived during the past-causes (1815–1914) and present-course (when the war was fought) periods.⁹¹ Because of the social, economic and political relations between North Africans and the Arab world in general, the Israel-Palestine conflict, as a political sequel of World War I, could be mentioned here. This never-ending conflict in the Middle East is traceable to 1917, if not earlier. In that year, the so-called *Balfour Declaration* promised the Jews a national home in Palestine to encourage them to desert the Central Powers.⁹² This promise was fulfilled in 1948 when the state of Israel was created. In the event, the Palestinians, in particular, and the Arabs, in general, came to perceive the Allied Powers and, ultimately, the Western world as their enemies.⁹³ These poor relations have affected the North African countries in the sense that they have influenced their relations with Israel and the Western powers. It could even be generalised that the nature of relations between all pro-Palestine African countries and Israel, on the one hand, and between all pro-Israel African countries and Palestine, on the other hand, is traceable to the First World War.

Socially, too, there have been developments that derived either directly and indirectly from the First World War. For example, some of the weapons used by the Ghanaian soldiers in

⁸⁹ Interview with Mr. Eric Sakyi Nketiah, Aged 39 years, Senior Lecturer in History at the Department of History Education, University of Education, Winneba, September 18, 2015. This is a clear indication that the colonial boundaries which divide Africans today were, in almost all cases, drawn by the imperialist powers without any regard to language or cultural divisions among the indigenous people. They rather reflected the political, economic and social requirements of the colonial powers.

⁹⁰ Interview with Mr. Kingsley Agyapong, Aged 26 years, Teaching and Research Assistant in the Department of History Education, University of Education, Winneba, September 18, 2015.

⁹¹ Interviews with Mr. Joseph Udimal Kachim, Aged 34 years, Principal Research Assistant in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, September 9, 2015.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹³ Interview with Mr. Nketiah; Telephone interview with Mr. Sahadu Hamdawaihi, Aged 29 years, Imports-Exports Executive of Weave Ghana Limited, Accra, August 28, 2015.

the war are still found at the Military Museum in Kumasi, Ghana, and have been serving not only as tourist attraction, but also as representations of the war.⁹⁴ Many Ghanaians today are proud not only of the participation of more than 11,000 of their predecessors in the First World War and how they distinguished themselves, but especially of the fact that a Ghanaian Sergeant called Alhaji Grunshi is reported to have been the first to fire a shot on the side of the British forces.⁹⁵ In addition, there are millions of people in Africa, and across the world, who still feel a connection with the Great War. They knew the people whose lives were changed by it. They remain moved by the enduring works of art that were created as a response to it. They live with its unresolved political legacies. If for nothing at all, we are all biologically connected to the generations of Africans who lived before and during the war because they are our predecessors and we are their descendants – one generation forms another.⁹⁶ It is also because of the same connection we feel with the war and the generations that lived before, during and after the conflict that the Department of History at the University of Cape Coast organised the conference at which the papers in this volume were originally presented. The organisation of this successful conference itself was a form of our remembrance of the war, and so did the issues discussed in the various presentations refresh our memories of the conflict and its immediate and remote effects on Africans.

Also in economic terms, Africa today still suffers from the consequences of the war. Generally, the war brought about economic dislocation, depression in the prices paid for the primary goods produced by Africa, rise in the prices of imported goods, agricultural decline, domination of the import-export trade by expatriate firms, and many other dire economic effects.⁹⁷ All this contributed towards making the African economy dependent on those of other continents. Hence, the dependence of our economy today could be blamed partly on the First World War and its disastrous consequences on Africa. The First World War, thus, created a common sense of history that, decades later, still links together people from many disparate nations and different generations. In view of this, it is essential for African students of the present and future generations to study the First World War in order to appreciate how the various disparate generations are connected to one another, and how they themselves are related to the generations that lived before, during and after the Great War.

At this point, it must be clarified that in saying all this, we are not insisting that the world has remained the same. As S. Hoffman emphasises, there are periods of history when profound changes occur all of a sudden.⁹⁸ Indeed, our own experiences show that the world in which we live is an incredibly fast changing one, and though the process of change has been proceeding

⁹⁴ Interview with Mr. Peter Essuman-Mensah, History Teacher and Deputy Senior House Master at Mpasatia Senior High Technical School, Mpasatia, July 17, 2015. Mr. Essuman-Mensah added that there are even some buildings in Kumasi, between the Okomfo Anokye Teaching Hospital and Bekwai Roundabout, which serve as memories and representations of the First World War. Readers should note that Kumasi was the base where the Ghana contingent was trained before being sent to battle.

⁹⁵ This is a fact well-known to many Ghanaians, historians and ordinary people who have adequate knowledge on Ghana's participation in the First World War.

⁹⁶ Interviews with Miss Gloria Adomaa Edusei, Aged 26 years, Graduate in Postgraduate Student at University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, August 21, 2015; Mr. Kenneth Tagoe, Aged 27 years, Teaching Assistant in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, October 2, 2015.

⁹⁷ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism 1850–1928*, Reprinted (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 48.

⁹⁸ S. Hoffman is cited in Kwame Boafo-Arthur, "The Liberal Ghanaian State and Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Change and Continuity", in Kwame Boafo-Arthur, ed., *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, CODESRIA Edition (Dakar: CODESRIA Books, 2007), pp. 227–250.

even more rapidly in recent generations, it is certain even now that the process is by no means complete. From all this, the conclusion we may draw is that human experience is like a stream; it is forever new and changing, never duplicating itself exactly. That is why Heraclitus has said, “You cannot step twice into the same river, for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.”⁹⁹ What he means is that if one steps into the River Volta, for example, today, and again tomorrow, one steps into the same River Volta, yet the water he steps into is not the same because the water that flowed in the river yesterday is gone, it has taken the lead, and so differs from the water that flows in the river today. Society has, therefore, never remained static because conditions have never been the same. It is obvious then that the African present is different from the African past, and the African future will also not be the same as the African present. Indeed, the African past is different and enables us to see the African present and the African future in new lights.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that even in the midst of sudden changes, elements of continuity could still be perceived, implying that elements of continuity move in tandem with the rapid changes. Moreover, no system is completely destroyed by its successor in the dialectical process. Consequently, the various stages of human life are connected by a natural chain that dictates that each generation should pay enormous attention to the study of the past in order to understand its position better in the chain of life. This statement emphasises that there is a great deal of connection and relevance between what exists in the past and present and what lies in the future. Genuinely, a critical examination of history shows clearly that the discipline is capable of providing an understanding of the whole range of time because history is a study of human behaviour both in the past and in the present and future. Ernst Breisach, for example, argues that history, as a reflection on the past, is never isolated from the present and future because it deals with human life as it *flows* through time.¹⁰⁰ The study of history makes us aware of the continuity of humankind as a river through time, and of the progress of civilisation, which helps us to understand and appreciate the continuous chain of connection between past and present generations. It is this chronological continuity of human life that makes it illogical for us to adopt an indifferent attitude towards what happened to our predecessors in the past. In Henri Louis Bergson’s estimation, “The present contains nothing more than the past, and what is found in the effect is already in the cause.”¹⁰¹ In fact, events have consequences in their future. The present, therefore, contains the past in the sense that there are consequences or traces of the past in the present. This is the reason why it is often argued that the *present* can be understood only in terms of the *past*. For example, in examining the military take-overs led by J.J. Rawlings – May 15, 1979; June 4, 1979; and December 31, 1981 – Kevin Shillington states,

In order to understand the nature and underlying causes of events in 1979, which led to the revolution of 1981, one needs to go back to the roots of Ghanaian political instability, social dislocation and economic decline, and it is wise to look for these in the early years of Ghanaian independence.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Bertrand Russell, *Wisdom of the West: A Historical Survey of Western Philosophy in Its Social and Political Setting*, Edited by Paul Foulkes (New York: Crescent Books, Inc., 1972), p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval & Modern*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Cited in “History Quotes”, retrieved June 7, 2013, from http://www.notable-quotes.com/h/history_quotes.html.

¹⁰² Kevin Shillington, *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992), p. 2.

The study or knowledge of the past is, therefore, declared to be prerequisite to a knowledge of the present. In this sense, the past is the gateway to all rational conduct in the present. We do not insist that the present state of Africa has no particular impact on our understanding of its past and the present itself. What we mean here is that to understand the contemporary situation of Africa, we have to inquire into its past. To gain a holistic understanding of the present socio-economic conditions of Africa, for example, we have to go back into the past to examine the position of Africa before her contact with Europe, how colonialism exploited both her human and natural resources, and the consequences of this indiscriminate exploitation on Africa today. Without a knowledge of how and where people were born and raised in childhood, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to gain a good understanding of their behaviour in adulthood.

Clearly, history in action has been a continuous process. If African history were a play, its theme would have been timeless, and its message ageless. Contemporary Africans are where we are today because we stand on the shoulders of those Africans who in their turn stood on the shoulders of the Africans of the remote past. Coming to terms with this conception of African history helps us to appreciate the course of the life and history of Africa in order to understand the inextricable link between its past, present and future, and enables us to develop a chronological frame for our knowledge and understanding of the significant developments in Africa today. Alex Thomson has stated,

The world does not radically reinvent itself on a continuous basis. It evolves. There are no total revolutions where all that has gone before is laid to rest, and a new polity is born enjoying a completely clean slate. Traditions, customs, institutions and social relationships will survive and adapt from one era to another. ... The same goes for Africa. ... there are lines of continuity that run from the pre-colonial period, through the colonial era, right into the modern age.¹⁰³

It was the pre-colonial period that produced the colonial era, while the post-colonial age was produced by the colonial era. This *connective* role of African history in relation to its past, present and future contributes to human life, in general, and African life, in particular, a sense of stability, security and even comfort. It makes us certain about the stability and durability of the African cultural context in which we live and gives us assurance of the certainty of the nature of our cultural universe. This will always help Africans to consider our future, and not only our present, in every decision we make and implement. In essence, Africans must never forget that there are *historical influences on the world we now live in*.

All this brings us to the point where the need to emphasise the serious scientific study of African history becomes crucial. Indeed, the foregoing analysis shows that an understanding of the African past is essential to our survival today and tomorrow. This needed understanding of the African past could only be obtained through a vigorous study of African history. Thus, contrary to the numerous tenuous impressions people have about African history, there is the need for more and more systematic historical research into African history and scientific utilisation of results. In the general sense, the American historian, George Bancroft, has argued

¹⁰³ Alex Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Second Edition (London, New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 7–8.

that “Of all pursuits that require analysis, history ... stands first.”¹⁰⁴ A.L. Rowse also has added that there can be no subject of study more important than history.¹⁰⁵ These observations underscore the significance of history in our everyday lives. Moreover, every society that places special value on its existence expects an interpretation of its past, which is relevant to its present, and a basis for formulating decisions about its future.

This expectation, no doubt, places an enormous demand on African historians. Genuinely, professional African historians are the only people qualified to equip African society with an accurate historical perspective and to save it from the damaging effects of exposure to historical myth. The fact is that if professionally trained African historians do not carry out these social functions, then others who are ill-informed and more prejudiced will produce ill-founded interpretations of the African past which will distort the reality of the African present and eventually misrepresent the image of the African future. In this important context lies the rationale for the unusually clear-headed, balanced, compassionate, and professional recovery, recording, and preservation of African cultural heritage for both the present and posterity, to make the experiences of the African past available for our judicious exploitation for varied purposes in the African present and its future.

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