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Devoted to Anniversary of Great War

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The world is marking the 100th anniversary of WWI. As the events unfold in different parts of the planet from Ukraine to Nigeria, from the Middle East to the South-China Sea, those days should be remembered today. The lessons the history taught us are to still to be learnt.

Today's world bears a number of striking similarities with the build-up to the First World War. As the WWII approached an average European felt the clouds gather over his head, the ideological contradictions got exacerbated to the utmost, international trade was chained by multiple tariffs, levies and other barriers. But a hundred years ago globalization, no matter this term was not used back then, appeared to be overwhelming, just like today... The economic interdependence was strong, as well as the interests of bankers and industrialists, and a war seemed to be an unimaginable thing.

That's how Herbert Wells described the views prevailed among his generation those times in his «New World Order» (1940), *«I think that in the decades before 1914 not only I but most of my generation – in the British Empire, America, France and indeed throughout the whole civilized world – thought that war was dying out. So it seemed to us. It was an agreeable and therefore readily acceptable idea. We imagined the Franco-German War 1870-1871 and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 were the final conflicts between Great Powers that now there was a Balance of Power sufficiently stable to make further major warfare impracticable. A Triple Alliance faced a Duel Alliance and neither had much reason for attacking the other. We believed war was shrinking to mere expeditionary affairs on the outskirts of our civilization, a sort of frontier police business. Habits of tolerant intercourse, it seemed, were being strengthened every year that the peace of the powers remained unbroken.»*

Archibald Cary Coolidge (March 6, 1866–January 14, 1928) was an American educator, a Professor of History at Harvard College and editor-in-chief of the policy journal Foreign Affairs wrote that in the first half of 1914 the world looked quite. True, two big wars had just ended at the Balkans and worrisome news was still coming from that region. It was tense those days in Mexico, the US troops just landed in Veracruz, unrest was raging in China and the situation in Ireland was critical. But in general terms it quite in the world and people had enough of goodwill. The First World War came striking like a thunder...Perhaps statesmen were full of premonition, military expected a war to spark soon as their profession presupposes but common people felt nothing to raise concern. When the crisis set in, five out six leading European countries were immediately swept by the fire of conflict.

The First World War was triggered on 28 July 1914 as Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, were shot by Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo. In less than a month Austria-Hungary delivered an ultimatum to the Kingdom of Serbia. It knew the demands were unacceptable. Austrians were sure that Serbia would reject the ultimatum to give it a pretext for a limited in scope military operation to reduce the Serbs impact on other Slav nations of the empire. Serbia rejected just one point of the ultimatum, but it was enough.

On July 29 Nicolas II sent a telegram to his third cousin German Kaiser Wilhelm II offering to refer the case to the international court in Hague. It could have prevented the situation creeping to the world war. But the Kaiser, as others, had no idea it was about a world war so he did not bother to reply. Then the events turned the wrong way.

Austro-Hungary wanted a rapid victory in a limited war. Tied by a bilateral treaty, Russia started mobilization to protect Serbia. Germany had a military aid treaty with Austro-Hungary; it declared war on Russia on August 1. The action brought into force the military treaty between Russia and France, so France joined the war on the side of Russia. On August 4 Germans invaded Belgium to get to Paris as fast as they could. It made Great Britain enter the war as it had a treaty with Belgium. Europe sparked like a matchbox in a blink of an eye.

Suppose one of the parties did not want the war. In August 1914 nobody could imagine what it would be like. One country dragging in another and the situation was drastically changing in hours. As a result the old world was covered by the fire which burnt four empires and took 22

million of human lives, bringing great devastation on European soil.

Today some regional conflicts smoulder, some spark. It's hard to imagine anybody who wants a real hot global war with the world saturated by nuclear weapons to annihilate the humanity, including the aggressor. Still there are those who pour fuel on fire hoping the conflict will be managed to keep it inside the geographic limits. The matter is at some stage conflicts get beyond control and the situation evolves in an unpredictable way.

The situation in Ukraine reminds it is the anniversary of WWI. When a few hundred people went on Maidan square on November 21, 2013 to stage the first action of protest, its participants could hardly expect to see the heart of Kiev burnt, Crimea becoming part of Russia and phosphorous bombs used in Donbass while the coffins coming to Western Ukraine. The students allegedly beaten up by Berkut soldiers on November 30, the event that sparked the conflict, would like to be beaten up again just to prevent the chain of events that followed. The voices of horror were raised, self-defense units started to form on Maidan to seize administrative buildings and toss Molotov cocktails. Now Ukraine has plunged into a real large-scale war with no guarantees it will not affect other countries.

Europe appears to understand where the reckless policy of Kiev government could result in. The United States like to make others do the job so it continues to push Europe deeper into the fray hoping to make it a belligerent. This purpose even justifies bringing down a civil airliner.

The armed conflicts are on the rise in the Middle East encompassing Iraq, Syria and the Gaza Strip, so the prospect for a world war being sparked again does not seem to be that inconceivable.