WAGING WAR WITH BLINDERS ON:

Cognitive Bias and British Decision-makers in the Gallipoli Campaign

by

Martha S. H. VanDriel

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in the Department of Political Science.
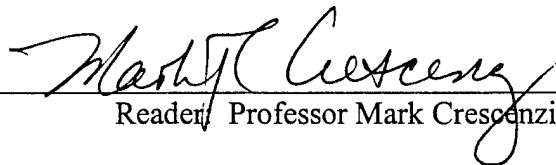
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2000

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AØ M00-08-2029

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	May 2000	Final

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

Waging War With Blinders On: Cognitive Bias and British Decision-makers in the Gallipoli Campaign

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)

CPT Martha S. H. VanDriel

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

USMA
Dept. of Social Sciences
West Point, N.Y. 10996

10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Masters Thesis, completed at University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.

12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

A: Approved for public release.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*

During World War I, British national policymakers often did not seek, accept, or use information in an apparently rational manner when they made decisions concerning their campaign at Gallipoli. Using a cognitive psychology approach, I conclude that the presence of systematic cognitive biases among British leaders may have had a dramatic adverse impact on the quality of their decisions in the Gallipoli campaign. A cognitive psychology explanation is consistent with the historical facts of this case, but such an approach has been overlooked in the past. Therefore, this approach can contribute to the existing historiography of the Gallipoli campaign by providing a fresh, plausible explanation that is consistent with the campaign's events.

14. SUBJECT TERMS

Gallipoli   cognitive bias   Dardanelles
World War I   cognitive psychology

15. NUMBER OF PAGES

69

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UL

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Block 16. Price Code. Enter appropriate price code *(NTIS only)*.

Blocks 17. - 19. Security Classifications. Self-explanatory. Enter U.S. Security Classification in accordance with U.S. Security Regulations (i.e., UNCLASSIFIED). If form contains classified information, stamp classification on the top and bottom of the page.

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ABSTRACT
Martha S. H. VanDriel
WAGING WAR WITH BLINDERS ON:
Cognitive Bias and British Decision-makers in the Gallipoli Campaign
(Under the direction of Professor Stephen D. Biddle)

During World War I, British national policymakers often did not seek, accept, or use

information in an apparently rational manner when they made decisions concerning their

campaign at Gallipoli. Using a cognitive psychology approach, I conclude that the

presence of systematic cognitive biases among British leaders may have had a dramatic

adverse impact on the quality of their decisions in the Gallipoli campaign. A cognitive

psychology explanation is consistent with the historical facts of this case, but such an

approach has been overlooked in the past. Therefore, this approach can contribute to the

existing historiography of the Gallipoli campaign by providing a fresh, plausible

explanation that is consistent with the campaign's events.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I. Introduction

"The British lost the Gallipoli campaign not on the beaches or in the gullies of the peninsula but in London."[1]

--Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Defeat at Gallipoli*

War is tragedy. Few people would disagree with this statement, for the suffering, death, famine, and pestilence that accompany war leave a lasting impression of sorrow, misery, and loss. However, for the soldier, war at its worst is tragic in a slightly different sense. The soldier's worst fear is not that he will die or be defeated in war, for there is often glory and honor in "fighting the good fight" and dying for a noble, though lost, cause. Instead, war in a soldier's nightmares closely resembles the formula of the Greek tragic drama: the hero carries a flaw he cannot see, experiences suffering he cannot avoid, and is doomed to a fate he cannot escape, no matter how hard he tries to set things right. In the same way, a soldier fears the military campaign that is riddled with correctable but unnoticed flaws at his higher levels of command, which negate all of his valiant attempts from the start. It is war unwinnable, and worst of all, the soldier cannot see, control, or correct the flaws--he vaguely realizes that something is wrong with the conduct of the war, but he is powerless to change its course, no matter how hard he fights.

For the Australian, New Zealander, and British soldiers who fought in World War I, the Gallipoli (or Dardanelles) campaign of 1915 was the war of their nightmares. Much has been written about the campaign's incompetent leadership, incoherent military planning, loss of surprise, lack of essential resources, and horrific living conditions. Flaw after flaw at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels vastly magnified the soldiers' suffering and doomed their efforts to failure, no matter how hard they fought. Several times, victory seemed to be

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[1]Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Defeat at Gallipoli* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 420.

incredibly close, and even today, military historians examine the missed tactical opportunities at Achi Baba and Suvla Bay and wonder, "If only . . ." Such missteps mock the valor and sacrifices of the Allied troops at Gallipoli, and one can quickly be filled with righteous indignation against the British commanders who supervised such a vain slaughter. However, a closer look reveals that these flaws were not solely military; they also resided at the highest levels of decision-making in the British government.

Although the campaign's execution was flawed, the British War Council, which decided to undertake the Gallipoli campaign, made a number of poor decisions that contributed to the debacle at the Dardanelles.[2] This is not a new perspective; much has been written about Winston Churchill's irrational exuberance, Admiral Fisher's initial silent acquiescence, Lord Kitchener's miserly provision of military resources to the Dardanelles, Prime Minister Asquith's spineless leadership, and the non-existent input of the British Imperial General Staff.[3] These accounts shed a great deal of light into the workings of the War Council, and they point to many of the basic reasons why the Gallipoli campaign failed.

However, beyond the clashing personalities and diverging agendas is a greater underlying puzzle. An examination of the War Council's grand strategic deliberations in

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[2]The members of the War Council were the Prime Minister (H. H. Asquith), the Secretary of State for War (Lord Kitchener), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Lloyd George), the First Lord of the Admiralty (Winston Churchill), the Lord Chancellor (Lord Haldane), the Foreign Minister (Sir Edward Grey), the Secretary of State for India (Lord Crewe), the leader of the Unionist (or Opposition) Party (Sir Arthur Balfour), the Home Secretary (Reginald McKenna), the Secretary of State for Colonies (Lewis Harcourt), and Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, who was employed at the Admiralty in an unofficial capacity throughout the war. Lieutenant Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey was the secretary, and the First Sea Lord (Admiral Sir John "Jackie" Fisher) and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir James Wolfe Murray), also attended meetings to offer their technical advice when asked. See Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli* (New York: Harper, 1956), 42-43; Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 18; Geoffrey Miller, *Straits: British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire and the Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1997), 535-551.

[3]See George H. Cassar, *Asquith As War Leader* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994); Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1990); John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); Trumbull Higgins, *Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles, A Dialogue in Ends and Means* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); and Geoffrey Miller, *Straits: British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire and the Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign.*

1915 reveals a disturbing phenomenon: the members of the Council frequently failed to use relevant information to help them make their judgments. They discussed the advantages of undertaking the naval attack on the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli campaign, but never asked about the drawbacks; they repeatedly failed to look at conflicts between national means and ends and the concomitant value trade-offs involved; and they failed to examine or re-examine the underlying assumptions upon which the campaign was based, even when several proved to be fundamentally flawed. They also didn't re-consider the overall wisdom of continuing the campaign, despite obvious signs that it was failing, that the costs of continuing were rising to unacceptable levels, and that its originally promising payoffs had diminished significantly. Even when the campaign's top military commanders repeatedly recommended evacuation, the War Council still could not reach a decision to evacuate for over a month.

What can explain this strange lapse in judgment? With national survival and the lives of hundreds of thousands of its soldiers at stake, one would expect that the British War Council would have researched, analyzed, and weighed each grand strategic decision with the utmost care.[4] Yet many observers have commented on the Council's puzzling lack of discussion about national ends and means, and its feeble attempts to assess the feasibility of the Gallipoli campaign, both before and during its execution. These lapses in judgment have been variously attributed to the influence of individual Council members, inept leadership, domestic partisan politics, infighting between 'Easterners' and 'Westerners,' and the nearly total omission of the British Imperial General Staff from the decision-making process.[5] Such

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[4]Ole R. Holsti, "Crisis Decision-Making," in Philip E. Tetlock et al, eds., *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 16. Rational choice theories, taken from political science, predict that when the stakes are high, key decision-makers will use intelligence in their decision-making and will attempt to weigh all the costs and benefits of each option more carefully than when the stakes are lower.

[5]See Cassar, 61, 91, 140; Cohen and Gooch, 136-138, 156; C.R.M.F. Cruttwell, *The Role of British Strategy in the Great War* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 41, 44; Gooch, 312, 314; Paul Guinn, *British Strategy and Politics: 1914 to 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 57, 61, 71, 75-76, 86-87, 178; Geoffrey Miller, 381, 400, 413; Moorehead, 40; Steel and Hart, 7, 12, 16, 32, 148, 167-169, 214, 419; Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Polity Press, 1986), 108-110, 113-115, 118-121, 137; Denis Winter, *25 April 1915: The Inevitable Tragedy* (St.

explanations are indeed supported by substantial evidence. However, there is another possible explanation that can help explain why the Council failed to ask for information about potential campaign drawbacks, why it ignored or rejected information that indicated British national means were being stretched to the limit, and why it avoided information that indicated the campaign required either total national commitment or abandonment.

This new explanation comes from a tool borrowed by political scientists from psychology--cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychology is a theoretical framework that can help explain apparent anomalies in high-level decision making. While one might expect policymakers to make decisions rationally, cognitive psychology asserts that decisions are often distorted by systematic biases. Such findings are supported by various laboratory studies and detailed historical case studies of national decision-makers during state crises.[6] The existing historiography of the Gallipoli campaign does not include a cognitive psychology perspective, but such an approach can contribute to this historiography by providing a fresh, plausible explanation that is consistent with the campaign's events. While cognitive bias in the decision-making process does not necessarily lead to bad outcomes, *ceteris paribus*, it does tend to reduce the quality of the resulting decisions.

What are high quality decisions, and how does one discern them from low quality ones? A good way of answering these questions is to ask, "How would one want a rational person to use information when making an important decision?" In general, one would want a rational person to gather the best information available, carefully examine each possible course of action's underlying assumptions, weigh the merits of each possible alternative, determine if the cost in resources conflicts with any other priorities, confront trade-offs squarely, and then choose the best course of action. If the stakes are high, a rational person would take special care to make a good decision and be open to new information that might

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Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1994), 60-63, 217-218.

[6]Chaim D. Kaufmann, "Out of the Lab and into the Archives: A Method For Testing Psychological Explanations of Political Decision Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 38 (1994), 557-558.

contradict it; personal interests would not matter. In addition, if a setback occurred, he or she would re-visit the decision and make changes, abandoning the course of action if the costs of continuing outweighed the benefits.[7] Many believe that this is how high-level policymakers use information to make weighty national decisions.

However, according to cognitive psychology, two broad classes of perceptual biases often cause people to diverge from rational decision-making processes.[8] The first type, *unmotivated* (or *cognitive*) *bias*, is based on the concept that people must often deal with complex and ambiguous information about their environment, but they are limited in how much information they can mentally handle or understand. Therefore, in order to make sense of such complex information, people unconsciously adopt mental "shortcuts" that simplify their perceptions.[9] One example of an unmotivated bias is *salience bias*, in which information that is highly salient (i.e., vivid, concrete, immediate, emotionally interesting, or exciting) is unconsciously given more attention and greater weight than it really deserves.[10] This distorts rational decision-making by causing policymakers to have a skewed view of reality.

The second class, *motivated bias*, is based on the concept that people will subconsciously seek to minimize internal conflict and psychological distress, which includes feelings of fear, shame, anxiety, and guilt. *Motivated biases* arise, for example, when decision-makers discover that there are no acceptable courses of action, all choices will threaten important values, or that any decision will require at least one value trade-off. Such difficult decisions evoke feelings of internal conflict, especially when the stakes are high.

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[7] Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 101; Kaufmann, 563.

[8] Kaufmann, 559.

[9] Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 18.

[10] Kaufmann, 563.

Policymakers will often unconsciously cope with these feelings by ignoring or not energetically gathering adverse information, avoiding the contemplation of value trade-offs, or refusing to examine alternative courses of action closely enough. Policymakers may also subconsciously try to minimize their psychological distress by ignoring or rejecting significant information that indicate the decision was flawed.[11] These are only a few of the possible reactions psychological distress can produce; additional details are covered in subsequent chapters. However, it is clear that *motivated biases* can greatly detract from the quality of rational decision-making.

The purpose of this study is not to determine whether the Gallipoli campaign was a sound idea or a mistake; whether the naval attack or the military campaign could have been successful or not; or who, if anyone, within the War Council should bear primary responsibility for the campaign's failure. Rather, the purpose of this study is to apply a cognitive psychology approach to help explain the apparent divergence between the War Council's actual, deeply flawed deliberations and the true rational ideal one might have expected to observe in such a weighty situation. The historical record reveals that systematic cognitive biases may have reduced the quality of the War Council's decisions, for Council members often did not seek, accept, or use information in a rational manner when they made their decisions about Gallipoli. This, in turn, may have resulted in low-quality decisions and added to the Gallipoli campaign's many flaws, which negated the soldiers' efforts, no matter how hard they fought.

As Martin Van Creveld notes in *Command in War*, "To look at old facts through new glasses, then to make use of the facts in order to gain a better understanding of those glasses--that, after all, is just what makes history worthwhile."[12] Cognitive psychology not only looks at the Gallipoli campaign's policymakers through new glasses, but also yields insights into

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[11]Lebow, 107-8; Kaufmann, 559.

[12]Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 5.

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how powerful this approach can be in explaining why national policymakers often fail to make high-quality, sensible decisions. In short, cognitive psychology provides new insight into a major flaw of the Gallipoli campaign--the decisions of the British War Council, which helped undermine its soldiers' extraordinary efforts and contributed to their frustration, sorrow, and defeat.

II. Historical Overview

At the end of 1914 the western Allies and Germany were locked in a bloody trench stalemate on the Western Front. The British War Council, tasked to advise the Cabinet on the war's higher conduct, faced a situation of limited manpower, costly offensives, and no military breakthrough in sight in France.[1] In this atmosphere, several members of the War Council began to advocate that the war effort be shifted to another theater in the hope of finding a less costly way to victory. While it was clear that defeating Germany was the key to winning the war, a pre-war emphasis on the importance of allies had also left the impression that Germany could be mortally wounded if its allies were defeated. The "Easterners," who advocated a switch to a new theater, included the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill; Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George; and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John "Jackie" Fisher. Lloyd George suggested a strike against Austria-Hungary, perhaps through the Balkans, while Fisher favored a landing in the Baltic for a drive into Germany. Meanwhile, Churchill preferred an amphibious attack to protect the Channel ports and flank the German lines, but also suggested a joint naval and ground assault against the strategic Dardanelles straits, which was controlled by Turkey, a Central Powers ally.[2]

On 2 January 1915, Russia's Grand Duke Nicholas requested that the British government take action against Turkey to help divert Turkish forces away from the Turko-Russian front in the Caucasus. Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, immediately told

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[1] Moorehead, 42-43; James, 18; Geoffrey Miller, 535-551. The War Council did not meet regularly, and Asquith called it only when a crisis demanded a new policy. Originally comprised of eight members, the War Council had unfortunately grown to an unwieldy thirteen by the end of 1914.

[2] Fred R. van Hartesveldt, *The Dardanelles Campaign, 1915: Historiography and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 18. Also see Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli*; Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*; and Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918*.

the War Council that "the only place that a demonstration might have some effect in stopping reinforcements going east would be the Dardanelles," but there were no troops available for such an operation.[3] Churchill, who had originally preferred a joint naval and ground attack on the Dardanelles, had been under increasing fire because his celebrated Royal Navy had contributed next to nothing since the beginning of the war.[4] This provided the impetus for his next step. In January 1915, a British naval squadron was already standing guard over the entrance to the Dardanelles.[5] On 3 January, Churchill wired the admiral on the scene, Sir Sackville Hamilton Carden, and asked what some historians have called a leading question: "Do you consider the forcing of the Dardanelles by ships alone a practicable operation?" Carden vaguely replied that a systematic step-by-step destruction of the shore fortifications and sweeping of the mines in the channel were feasible.[6] This was good enough for the First Lord and some of his advisers, and at a War Council meeting on 13 January, Churchill proposed a purely naval assault on the Dardanelles.[7]

Churchill asserted that old pre-dreadnought battleships of the Royal Navy could force the Straits alone, without detracting from the strength or resources of the Grand Fleet in the North Atlantic. He eloquently argued that the appearance of British ships off Constantinople would cause the Turkish government to collapse, and if the western Allies captured the Dardanelles, not only could they send Russia needed munitions in exchange for grain, but Turkey would also be forced out of the war. In addition, a victory in the region would

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[3]Winter, 55.

[4]Wilson, 109-110; Steel and Hart, 9; James, 21-22.

[5]The squadron had been stationed there to intercept the German battleships *Goeben* and *Breslau*, in case they tried to emerge from the Black Sea and move into the Mediterranean. See Winter 55.

[6]Winter, 55. During his testimony before the Dardanelles Commission, Churchill stated that although he had always believed that a combined attack was needed, he had decided to pursue a purely naval option because he had observed heavy howitzers destroy the land fortresses of Liege and Antwerp. Thus, he implied, if such new artillery could reduce land fortresses, then naval guns would probably be able to reduce land fortifications as well. See Geoffrey Miller, 344.

[7]Geoffrey Miller, 379.

impress the nearby Balkan states, thereby keeping them neutral, or possibly even causing them to join the Entente.[8]

To a frustrated and overwhelmed War Council with no palatable options, the idea was extremely attractive. The politicians were delighted with a plan to escape the hopelessness of the Western Front, especially if it could be done without committing troops. Churchill's eloquence even initially persuaded Admiral Fisher, who had openly opposed a purely naval assault on the Dardanelles during a separate crisis ten years earlier, on grounds of impracticability.[9] It promised to be a cheap and easy way to win the war. Lloyd George pointed out that if the Balkan states sided with the Entente, it would facilitate a flow of aid to Serbia and put pressure on Austria, thus "knocking the props from beneath Austria-Hungary."[10] Churchill also assured the Council that if the attack did go badly, the British could claim that the operation was merely a demonstration and thus could abandon it without loss of face. Kitchener approved of the general concept, and after some further discussion in subsequent meetings, the Council gave its final approval on 28 January. However, several observers have noted that no one "asked the searching questions that the undertaking seemed to demand." For example, what would the Fleet would do if it successfully made it through the Dardanelles, but the Turkish government still refused to surrender when it arrived at Constantinople?[11] The War Council never addressed such adverse possibilities.

Yet even before the naval bombardment started on 19 February, the plan began to

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[8]Geoffrey Miller, 380; Steel and Hart, 7-10.

[9]Cohen and Gooch, 134, 136; Winter, 58. By the end of January, however, Fisher and the Admiralty were expressing second thoughts about the wisdom of forcing the Straits with ships alone. In fact, Fisher almost resigned in the midst of a Committee meeting on 28 January, when Churchill pushed for the approval of a purely naval assault. Dissuaded by Kitchener, who took him aside, Fisher sat in stony silence for the rest of the meeting. Although he later argued that he was never asked for his military opinion, the Dardanelles Commission later chastised him for not expressing his misgivings at that meeting. See Geoffrey Miller, 398-402.

[10]Cohen and Gooch, 133.

[11]Geoffrey Miller, 400; van Hartesveldt, 4; Wilson, 110, 119.

change. Admiral Fisher and the rest of the Admiralty, which had initially given their approval, began to express misgivings about the prospects of a purely naval operation. As Sir Henry Jackson of the Admiralty wrote: "The naval bombardment is not recommended as a sound military operation unless a strong military force is ready to assist the operation." Fortunately, this dim assessment occurred at about the same time that the Turkish Army withdrew from its attacks on the Suez Canal. With the diminished threat to the Canal and to Egypt, Lord Kitchener directed that the Australian and New Zealander (ANZAC) corps stationed in Egypt be diverted to support the Dardanelles assault. If the naval attempt failed, the ANZACs were to land on the Gallipoli peninsula to take the channel forts from the rear, enabling the navy to pass through the Straits. If the naval attempt succeeded, the ANZACs were to hold the peninsula with a light garrison and then advance directly upon Constantinople. Kitchener did not expect the Turks to put up a fight, believing that they would crumble easily in the face of qualitatively superior British naval and military forces.[12]

On 19 February, Admiral Carden began shelling the fortifications at the entrance to the Dardanelles. In London, the War Council was thrilled at the diplomatic repercussions. The Turkish government seemed to be panicking; the Bulgarians broke off alliance talks with the Central Powers; the Greeks offered three divisions for an attack on the Gallipoli peninsula; and the Italians suddenly became very friendly. The fruits of victory seemed to be within reach, and the payoff promised to be very high indeed.[13] Yet the intense international interest in the bombardment also indicated that it would be extremely difficult to withdraw in the event of a setback.[14] At a War Council meeting on 24 February, Prime Minister Asquith asserted that the Dardanelles situation "present[ed] such a unique opportunity that we ought to hazard a lot elsewhere." Even Kitchener was strongly influenced by this prospect, and

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[12]Winter, 58-59, 61-62; James, 54; Moorehead, 82-83.

[13]Geoffrey Miller, 414; James, 42; Moorehead 71-73.

[14]Steel and Hart, 15-16.

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wrote, "If the fleet did not get through, the army ought to see the business through."[15] With

this in mind, Kitchener added the 29th Division, the last of the British regular divisions, to

the ANZAC corps already in the theater, and then hastily appointed General Sir Ian Hamilton

as commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force on 12 March.

The *ad hoc* planning that would characterize the entire Gallipoli military campaign

was beginning to manifest itself. Kitchener told Hamilton that he could not depend on

receiving any troop reinforcements, and then ordered him to leave immediately for the

Dardanelles, without any time to select his staff. The tactical information that Hamilton

received was grossly insufficient--the few maps supplied were out of date and inaccurate, and

Hamilton never saw a 1906 Imperial General Staff evaluation that asserted that a storming of

the Straits was impossible.[16] When Hamilton's chief of staff, General Walter Pipon

Braithwaite, asked the War Office for additional information, the Intelligence Department

gave him "an out-of-date textbook on the Turkish army and two small guidebooks on western

Turkey."[17] Kitchener's instructions to Hamilton reveal that he still did not think that land

forces would be necessary, and even if they were used, he doubted they would meet much

Turkish resistance. In parting, Kitchener said to Hamilton, "If the Fleet gets through,

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[15]Winter, 60-61.

[16]Winter, 11-13. However, Winter argues that Hamilton could not have been surprised or uninformed about the possibility of a military operation at the Dardanelles, as he professes in *Gallipoli Diary*. In 1910, Hamilton was the Commander in Chief, Mediterranean, whose area of operations included Turkey and Egypt. This would have required him to maintain a good working knowledge of the current military state of Turkey. Also, according to the private papers of Lord Esher, a member of the Committee of Imperial Defence (forerunner of the War Council), there was a special conference on 17 January 1915 at the War Office to discuss troop landings for a possible attack on the Dardanelles. Three men were present at that conference--Kitchener, Hamilton, and Wolfe Murray. Therefore, according to Winter, Hamilton could not have been fully ignorant of the situation at the Dardanelles.

[17]Cohen and Gooch, 137. This situation is especially ironic, because at a War Council meeting on 19 February, Asquith and Hankey had circulated an eight-year old Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.) paper that Hankey had located. The paper stated that the General Staff recommended against any naval and/or military attempt to force the Dardanelles, "in view of the risks involved." Apparently, Kitchener never passed this study on to Hamilton; therefore, the War Council had access to more tactical information about the theater than both the new theater commander and the generals in the War Office! See Geoffrey Miller, 413; and Guinn, 61.

Constantinople will fall of itself and you will have won, not a battle, but the war."[18]

By 16 March, the fleet seemed to be on the verge of success. Long-range shelling had so quieted resistance that parties of marines were able to land to destroy artillery positions.[19] The navy's major effort to force the Dardanelles was scheduled for the 18th. However, Carden suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be replaced by his second in command, Admiral John Michael de Robeck. His squadron included seventeen pre-dreadnought battleships (three of them French), which were regarded as expendable, plus assorted smaller vessels. He also had at his disposal H.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*, a brand new super-dreadnought, which would complete her sea and gunnery trials during the bombardment. The plan was for three lines of battleships to engage the inner fortresses (the outer ones supposedly having been reduced already) at increasingly short range, with mine sweepers clearing the Straits as the defenses were destroyed. However, the forts were not as disabled as originally thought. German General Otto Liman von Sanders, active with the Turkish forces before the war began, was in charge of Gallipoli's defenses and had improved the forts considerably with modern artillery and mobile howitzers. Therefore, the British fleet was about to receive a rude awakening.[20]

As the second line of ships advanced into the Straits, fire from the Turkish forts increased, signaling that the month-long bombardment had not been as effective as previously thought. Several ships were hit and damaged, but the minefields were especially

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[18]General Sir Ian Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), Volume I, 16; Moorehead, 82-83; Wilson, 114-115.

[19]van Hartesveldt, 4.

[20]van Hartesveldt, 4-5. Several historians, including Moorehead, assert that the British ships had indeed inflicted serious damage on the Turkish defenses by 18 March. The Turkish and German gunners were running out of ammunition, the minefields in the channel were not a great obstacle by themselves, and there were no other defenses beyond the Narrows. Therefore, they argue that the British attack would have succeeded if de Robeck had pressed the attack. However, Wilson argues that the Turks had enough shells for at least two more attacks, and that both their mobile howitzers and minefield defenses were still effective. Steel and Hart, and James agree, stating that early signs of success from the long-range bombardment were deceptive. See Moorehead, 74-75; Wilson, 116; Steel and Hart, 14-15; and James, 15-16.

deadly. In quick succession, the French *Bouvet*, H.M.S. *Inflexible*, H.M.S. *Irresistible*, and

H.M.S. *Ocean* all hit mines and sank. The French *Gaulois* also hit a mine and sustained

serious damage. Even worse, the civilian mine sweeping trawlers were not powerful enough

to move with any speed against the current, so they were easy targets for the Turks.

Although there were no serious casualties, the civilian crews had no desire to do their jobs

while under fire, and they quickly abandoned their attempts to clear the channel. By the end

of the day on the 18th, de Robeck was discouraged about the prospects for success. Although

Churchill exhorted him to press the attack, de Robeck demurred and the Admiralty War Staff

Group adamantly supported de Robeck's judgment as the commander on the spot.[21]

Hamilton arrived at the Dardanelles just in time to witness the assault on 18 March.

After the battle, he met with the naval commanders and advised that a joint naval and ground

approach was necessary. Whether from a desire to escape responsibility or from sincere

concurrence, De Robeck agreed. Hamilton cabled to Kitchener the next day, "If the army is

to participate, its operations will not assume the subsidiary form anticipated." Kitchener's

return cable agreed: "The passage of the Dardanelles must be forced. If large military

operations on the Gallipoli peninsula are necessary to clear the way, these operations must be

undertaken and carried through."[22]

However, Hamilton could not attack immediately. The inadequate intelligence he

had received in London was mirrored in the campaign's inadequate logistics and support

planning. One naval officer noted, "The slipshod manner in which the troops have been sent

out from England is something awful."[23] The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force transports

had been loaded with no thought about the combat priorities for landing their contents.

Facilities at Mudros, the harbor from which the actual assault was to be mounted, were

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[21]James, 60-68; Wilson 121.

[22]Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 125.

[23]Rear-Admiral R. E. Weymss, in James, 78.

limited, so the ships had to be sent to Egypt to be unloaded and appropriately repacked. The Allies therefore lost any element of operational surprise, since the attack could not take place until the end of April. After the war, General Liman von Sanders said that the delay was decisive for the Turks, since it gave the defenders enough time to prepare for the land invasion.[24]

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[24]van Hartesveldt, 6; Steel and Hart, 29-30.
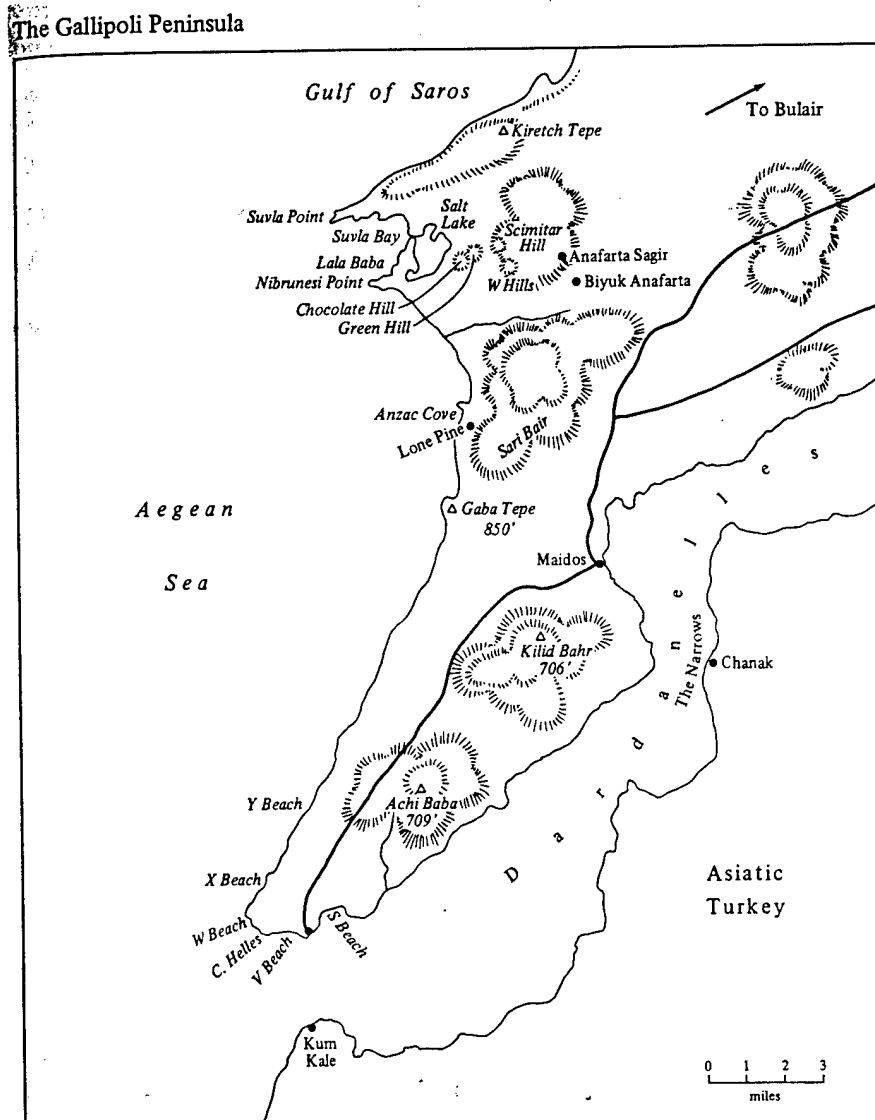
Figure 1: The Gallipoli Peninsula[25]

Because no single beach on the Gallipoli peninsula was large enough to allow all of

the forces to land at once, Hamilton had to construct a complex plan. He chose Cape Helles,

the tip of the Gallipoli peninsula, to be the main effort, where the 29th Division would land at

several points--the S, V, W, X, and Y beaches. Further up the coast, just north of Gaba Tepe,

the ANZAC Corps would land at an area that later became known as Anzac Cove. The small

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[25]Cohen and Gooch, 135.

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French contingent would land at Kum Kale on the Asiatic side of the Straits as a diversion, but because Kitchener had forbidden extended operations in Asia, it would be quickly withdrawn and moved to Cape Helles. The Royal Naval Division would also make a diversionary attack and then withdraw to form the reserve. The concept was that while the Turks tried to determine the main axis of the attack, the British forces would drive up from Helles and the ANZACs would push across the peninsula to cut off both reinforcement and retreat. Naval forces would provide both logistic and artillery support.[26]

On 25 April 1915, the British and ANZAC units conducted the largest amphibious landing in the history of war up until that point. But the fog of war was in full swing. Ships lost their way; troops were landed in the wrong place; leaders failed to take advantage of tactical opportunities; and supporting firepower was either inadequate or non-existent. In addition, the Turks defended and counterattacked with unexpected ferocity. Despite the heroism of the men, the assault at Cape Helles quickly bogged down into trench warfare reminiscent of the Western Front, with no significant progress. The landings at Anzac Cove, between Gaba Tepe and Ari Burnu, also went badly and likewise bogged down in trench warfare.[27] When the first day at Gallipoli ended, the Allies had established beachheads at three places on the mountainous peninsula, but they could not break out.[28] By 8 May, when Hamilton's last offensive petered out, the British had incurred nearly 20,000 casualties.[29]

On 13 May, a Turkish destroyer torpedoed H.M.S. *Goliath*, and then, toward the end of the month, a U-boat sank H.M.S. *Majestic*. The increased German submarine activity

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[26]Moorehead, 120-121.

[27]The Turkish defenses at Anzac Cove were commanded by Mustafa Kemal, who was able to get his troops to counterattack and force a stalemate, even though he was badly outnumbered. He eventually became Ataturk, the leader of modern Turkey. See van Hartesveldt, 8; R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the Present (Second Revised Edition)* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 954.

[28]Cohen and Gooch, 138.

[29]Cassar, 89.

caused the Admiralty to pull the Fleet's battleships out of the area, including the *Queen Elizabeth*. Although the capital ships were quickly replaced by monitors that were less vulnerable to torpedoes, morale plummeted as the troops on the ground watched the mighty capital ships steam away. In London, things were also not going well, especially for Churchill. Kitchener felt betrayed at the departure of the capital ships, and he railed at Churchill and Fisher at a War Council meeting on 14 May. He had sent army troops to support a navy operation, and now that the navy had failed, it was abandoning the army. The next day, Fisher's and Churchill's volatile working relationship exploded, causing Fisher to resign. Fisher's resignation, added to newspaper reports that accused the Liberal government of mismanaging shell supplies on the Western Front, brought the government down, and Churchill lost his position as First Lord of the Admiralty.[30] The new coalition government tried to streamline the War Council by cutting down on the number of members, but its replacement, the Dardanelles Committee, still remained large and unwieldy.[31]

The next three months at Gallipoli were characterized by death, pestilence, and suffering. Repeated attempts to break out of the beachheads resulted in savage fighting with heavy casualties, but little progress. There was only one truce to bury the dead in late May, so as the weeks went by, the stench of thousands of unburied corpses in the incredible heat of the Turkish summer was overpowering. A plague of flies exacerbated the situation by feeding on the dead and spreading disease to the living, especially dysentery. Evacuations of 1,000 men a day were not uncommon, drinking water was in very short supply, and theater medical services nearly broke down under the strain.[32]

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[30]Moorehead, 167-172. Churchill was replaced by Lord Balfour, and Sir Henry Jackson became the First Sea Lord.

[31]Steel and Hart, 214. The Dardanelles Committee considered policy not only for the Dardanelles but for all British theaters of war. Its thirteen members included many of the members of the previous War Council, but it also now reflected the nature of the new Coalition government. Its members were Asquith, Balfour, Kitchener, Crewe, Lloyd George, Grey, Churchill, McKenna, Bonar Law, Selborne, Curzon, Lansdowne, and Carson. See Cassar, 111.

[32]van Hartesveldt, 9; Moorehead, 185-188, 219-220, 224-226.

Concerned that the prestige of the empire would suffer if the campaign failed, and in the hope that victory could be snatched from the jaws of defeat, the War Council sent Hamilton five more divisions. With the new reinforcements, Hamilton planned a new attack: a landing just above Anzac Cove at Suvla Bay, where the terrain would allow a drive across the narrowest point of the peninsula. This would trap the Turkish forces on the peninsula and enable the British to capture the high ground commanding the Straits, thus allowing the navy to sail into the Sea of Marmora. Diversionary attacks were also planned at the existing beachheads of Helles and Anzac Cove.[33] However, Gallipoli's status as a secondary theater once again sabotaged its chances for success. Kitchener rejected Hamilton's request for a youthful, energetic general from France to command the offensive. Instead, basing his choice solely on seniority, he sent General Sir Frederick Stopford, who at sixty-one had never commanded troops in battle and only been recently recalled from retirement.[34]

The next landings took place on 6 August 1915. At Suvla Bay, the British achieved complete surprise, but Stopford did not press the attack, and a large window of opportunity swung slowly shut as Turkish troops rushed in to defend against the landings. A British artillery officer at Suvla Bay later recorded that he was "struck by the restfulness of all around. There appeared to be little going on, a good many infantrymen sitting about or having a bathe."[35] At the key summit of Chunuk Bair, a British unit nearly reached its undefended objective, but stopped a few hundred yards short to have breakfast and to await a supporting column. By the time it resumed the attack, Turkish forces had reached the summit first, and they repulsed all attempts to take the high ground. Poor logistics and a lack of naval support also caused the attack to founder, and by 10 August, it was clear that the

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[33]Moorehead, 238-239; van Hartesveldt, 9.

[34]van Hartesveldt, 10; Steel and Hart, 220.

[35]Cohen and Gooch, 139, 143-144.

Turks had won.[36]

After the failure at Suvla Bay, the Gallipoli campaign became a never-ending stream of bad news. Hamilton reported to Kitchener that he needed at least 95,000 more troops to renew the offensive.[37] Three times as many men were reporting sick now than before the August battles, indicating shaken morale.[38] And, to make matters even worse, several newspaper correspondents evaded the war censors and published damning reports about the campaign in London and in Australia.[39]

Confronted with a deteriorating situation and a Greek request for British troops to help Serbia, the Cabinet reconstituted the Dardanelles Committee into a smaller War Committee, from which the devotees of the Dardanelles operation (especially Churchill) were excluded.[40] On 11 October, the War Committee requested Hamilton's views on the possibility of evacuation. Hamilton reacted emotionally: "If they do this they make the Dardanelles into the bloodiest tragedy of the world . . . I won't touch it." After he had calmed down, Hamilton replied that he would probably lose half his men and all of their guns and stores in an evacuation.[41] Faced with this dismal reply and with the fallout from the negative newspaper reports, the Committee insisted that Hamilton be relieved of command.[42]

By late October, Hamilton was replaced by General Sir Charles Monro from the Western Front. He quickly assessed that the British guns were down to a ration of two shells a day, no winter clothing had arrived, and many units had dwindled to half their strength.

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[36]van Hartesveldt, 10.

[37]Moorehead, 300.

[38]Gammage, 76.

[39]James, 312-315.

[40]Guinn, 101; Wilson 274.

[41]Moorehead, 303-304, 314-315; James, 317.

[42]Moorehead, 314-315; Wilson, 274.

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With no reinforcements forthcoming, Monro recommended immediate evacuation, but he also estimated losses of between thirty and forty percent--some 40,000 men.[43] Kitchener was appalled at the report and hastened out to the theater to inspect the beachheads himself, but was forced to agree. On 22 November, Kitchener recommended that Suvla and Anzac be evacuated, but that Cape Helles be held "for the time being."[44] The War Committee finally agreed and recommended evacuation.

However, it was now the British Cabinet's turn to bicker and procrastinate. Even after sudden winter storms at Gallipoli inflicted 16,000 cases of frostbite and exposure, the Cabinet still could not reach a definite decision, fearing the heavy losses, the damage to British prestige, and the apparent abandonment of Russia. The infighting between those in favor of evacuation and the "stayers" might have continued indefinitely if external influences had not forced the Cabinet to finally take action. The "stayers" argued that the Gallipoli campaign could be continued if British troops were diverted from Allied operations in Greece, but, at the beginning of December, the French and the Russians made it clear that this was not an option. In addition, after Bulgaria entered the war against the Entente, German artillery and supplies began to flow freely into Turkey, meaning that the poorly-supplied British position at Gallipoli would soon become untenable. On 7 December, nearly six weeks after Monro's first recommendation to evacuate, the Cabinet finally decided to leave Anzac Cove and Suvla Bay; Cape Helles would be retained to facilitate British submarine operations against the Turks.[45]

The evacuation progressed incredibly well. By 19 December, despite initial fears of massive losses, gradual withdrawals by night and imaginative ruses resulted in a complete evacuation with no casualties. The withdrawal was ironically the triumph of the campaign,

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[43]Moorehead 314-315.

[44]Moorehead, 312, 314-316, 319-320, 323-326; James 336-337.

[45]James, 337-338, Wilson 274.

hailed at the time as "an achievement without parallel in the annals of war."[46] As for the
navy, there was little left for British submarines to do in the area now that the land operations
had been scaled back.[47] The Committee finally agreed to evacuate Cape Helles on 27
December, and once again, all troops were successfully evacuated without loss by 8 January
1916. Instead of being a fearful blow to British prestige, the evacuations' success actually
constituted a mild form of face-saving.[48] But the reality could not be denied: the Allies had
sent half a million men to Gallipoli, and over half--252,000--had become casualties, with
nothing to show for their efforts. The failure of the Gallipoli campaign marked the
ascendance of the "Westerners" in Britain, turning the country's major military efforts back
to France and the Western Front.

Prime Minister Asquith later lamented, "If we had succeeded . . . in my judgment it
would have produced a far greater effect upon the whole conduct of the war than anything
that [had] been done in any other sphere of the war."[49] However, the Dardanelles
Commission, established in August 1916 to investigate the failure of the Gallipoli campaign,
disagreed. It issued scathing reports that criticized the foolishness of launching a purely
naval attack, without adequate consultation with professional naval officers; the
indecisiveness about the provision of troops; the lack of staff work; the excessive concern
about the impact of withdrawal at the War Office; and the campaign's poor tactical
leadership. Its overall conclusion was that the campaign was a mistake, and that even with

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[46]*Special Order of the Day*, 21 December 1915 by Sir Charles Monro (Commander in Chief,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force), in Gammage, 112.

[47]Wilson, 275.

[48]James, 344-347. General Liman von Sanders expressed admiration for the professional skill with
which the two evacuations were conducted, but he also thought that the British were wise to leave when they
did, since he already had twenty-one divisions on hand, with fresh units and ammunition arriving constantly.
See Higgins, 238.

[49]Cohen and Gooch, 133.

better luck and better management, it hardly could have succeeded.[50] The campaign in

concept that had promised to be a cheap and easy way to win the war had, in execution,

tragically squandered Britain's precious resources. As one Australian sergeant at Anzac

Cove wrote, "The whole business has been a very sorry mess up and a sheer waste of men

and material."[51]

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[50]Moorehead, 359-360; van Hartesveldt, 4-13; *Dardanelles Commission, The Final Report, Parts I-II* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1917), 86-88.

[51]Gammage, 82.

III. Blinders We Are Born With: Cognitive Limitations

The historical account of the Gallipoli Campaign clearly reveals that the British War Council made a number of questionable decisions. These decisions were questionable not because they ended badly, but because they seemed to have been made without following rational decision-making processes. As noted in the Introduction, one would expect that when making an important decision, rational people would, among other things, gather the best information available, consider many possible alternatives, weigh the merits of each alternative, and then choose the course of action that would maximize the criteria they value most.[1] However, as the Dardanelles Commissioners reported in 1917, "It is impossible to read all the evidence, or to study the voluminous papers which have been submitted to us, without being struck with the atmosphere of vagueness and want of precision which seems to have characterised the proceedings of the War Council."[2]

What can explain this vagueness? While some historians have railed against the War Council's poor judgment and organizational deficiencies, cognitive psychology offers an additional plausible answer to this puzzle. According to this perspective, the world is an infinitely complex sensory environment. To make sense of this environment, people must use mental simplifications or "shortcuts." Most of the time, these perceptual shortcuts serve us well, but under some conditions, they can give rise to misperception. Such misperceptions are examples of *unmotivated*, or *cognitive, bias*.[3]

One of the consequences of unmotivated bias is a natural restriction on the number of options, issues, or considerations that individual decision-makers can process simultaneously.

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[1]Lebow, 101.

[2]Moorehead, 40; Dardanelles Commission, *First Report and Supplement* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1917), 21.

[3]Jervis, Lebow, and Stein, 18; Lebow, 102.

Although real problems are often infinitely complex, people possess a limited ability to process information and cannot mentally weigh an infinite set of possible solutions using infinite criteria. In fact, experimental studies of decision-making suggest that people can only consider a maximum of six to eight concepts at any one time before they become confused. This unconscious limitation can restrict the number of choices that policymakers actually consider, as well as the range of criteria policymakers use to evaluate them. For example, once policymakers have considered six to eight possible solutions to a problem, they will often not seek or gather information about additional alternatives, even when given ample time and resources. In addition, although policymakers may believe they are paying attention to many important criteria, they actually often reach their decisions on the basis of the one or two criteria most salient to them, thus unconsciously neglecting or sacrificing other important but non-salient criteria. Overall, unmotivated bias can cause real decision-making to diverge radically from the procedurally rational model we might otherwise expect.[4]

Although guiding Britain through the war was obviously an extremely complex task, the War Council in January 1915 considered only six possible policy options, using two salient criteria to evaluate them. Notice that the combined total of options and criteria is eight, which is consistent with the expected limitations of unmotivated bias.

A. A limited view in a world of unlimited options

At the beginning of 1915, the British War Council began to consider its options for carrying on its ever-expanding war. At a meeting on 7 January, Churchill proposed an

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[4]Jervis, Lebow, and Stein, 31-32; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) 137; George A. Miller, "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits On Our Capacity For Processing Information," *Psychological Review* 63 (March 1956), 90; Baruch Fischhoff, "Nuclear Decisions: Cognitive Limits to the Thinkable," in Philip E. Tetlock et al, eds., *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, Vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 122; Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk," *Econometrica* 47: 2 (March 1979), 275.

operation against the Belgian port of Zeebrugge, but it met with little support. Admiral Fisher proposed a plan for an amphibious operation at Borkum in the Baltic, but admitted that it first required at least two or three months of detailed planning. Lloyd George advocated a plan to attack Austria through Serbia, but the Council rejected it because the plan required a friendly Greece and a neutral Italy and Bulgaria--conditions that could not be relied upon and which were not forthcoming. Meanwhile, Kitchener mentioned that a military operation at the Dardanelles would relieve pressure on Russia, but then rejected it outright because no troops were available. Instead, he proposed a subsidiary attack on Alexandretta to strike at Turkish communications, but this idea was also not met with any enthusiasm. The following week, General Sir John French proposed an offensive in Flanders, arguing that if he had enough artillery munitions and support from the Belgian Army and the Royal Navy, he could break the German line.[5] Variations of these six cheerless proposals would dominate the deliberations of the War Council and its successors throughout 1915.[6]

What is unusual about this list is what is not included here. In a world of potentially unlimited options, why did the War Council limit its view and only discuss variations of six? Why didn't the War Council consider more possible alternatives --a dozen, or even two dozen--to give itself a wider menu from which to choose?

This perspective becomes more interesting when one considers that several other credible options did exist--options that were based on prevailing ideas with which the War Council would have been acquainted. Realistically, the Council should have brought up and discussed these possible courses of action, but it never did. Unmotivated bias can therefore

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[5]Geoffrey Miller, 370-371; Victor Bonham-Carter, *Soldier True* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1963), 105.

[6]The 1915 British campaign in Mesopotamia is not mentioned here because the British government did not initiate this course of action. Rather, while the War Council was preoccupied with operations elsewhere, the British military authorities in India and the commander in Mesopotamia, Sir John Nixon, committed the Indian Army to this campaign well before seeking approval from London. See Wilson, 276-278; Higgins 110-114; Wilson, 112-113.

provide a plausible explanation for these glaring omissions--i.e., once the main six options had been placed on the table for consideration, the Council turned its full attention to debating them. In turn, this crowded out the kind of tireless search for alternatives that a procedurally rational model of decision-making would prescribe. For example, the War Council might have discussed the following alternatives:

1). The British War Council was surely familiar with Alfred Thayer Mahan's maritime strategy, for the British elite had lauded Mahan's book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, when it was published in 1890.[7] According to Mahan, Britain had traditionally used its naval strength to blockade an enemy country, thus crippling the enemy's economy and inflicting severe economic hardships on their civilian population. This eventually weakened the enemy's morale and collapsed its will to fight.[8] Therefore, a Mahanian-type option would dictate that Britain should impose a naval blockade against the Central Powers and then patiently wait for them to starve. In the meantime, to satisfy its allies on the Continent, Britain might send only enough troops to prop up the French and keep them in the war. Basil Liddell Hart, one of the British government's most vociferous post-war critics, later argued that the Royal Navy was "the decisive agency" in World War I, for its blockade of Germany caused the enemy to starve at home. In turn, this caused the German home-front to collapse and brought the war to an end.[9] Britain had already imposed a naval blockade against the Central Powers; therefore, one might reasonably have expected

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[7]Philip A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 446-447.

[8]Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Commerce Destroying and Blockade," in Allan Westcott, ed., *Mahan on Naval Warfare* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942), 92-95; John J. Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 93.

[9]See Basil H. Liddell Hart, *The Real War: 1914-1918* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1930), 475.

the War Council to have considered as a viable option the Mahanian prospect of waiting for the enemy's economic collapse.[10]

2). The War Council also failed to consider the option of assuming a defensive posture in France while making Gallipoli (or some other alternative arena) its primary theater of operations. According to Liddell Hart, Britain's military effort should have shifted away from the Continent once the original invasion had been checked in France. Instead of sending more soldiers to Europe, he argued that the British government should have focused on sending its allies munitions and supplies. Meanwhile, British forces should have established a primary theater elsewhere, as opposed to the series of auxiliary side-shows that Gallipoli, Salonika, and Mesopotamia turned out to be. Starting a primary British theater outside of France would have forced the enemy to counter the threat there and would have diverted resources away from German defenses in the West. Even if the result was a stalemate, a negotiated peace would have still left Britain in a good bargaining position, with much of its strength.[11]

3). A controversial option that the War Council also might have discussed was negotiating an end to the war--i.e., reaching a compromise peace with Germany. After the war, one of Liddell Hart's greatest criticisms was that Britain had paid such a staggering national price for victory that the subsequent peace was hollow: "A State which expends its strength to the point of exhaustion bankrupts its own policy, and future."[12] By the armistice in 1918, Britain had suffered over 900,000 dead and over 2 million wounded, lost an entire generation of its young men, paid a crushing economic cost of nearly $52 billion, and

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[10]Wilson, 77.

[11]Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart: A Study of his Military Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1977), 69; Liddell Hart, *The Real War*, 471-472. Liddell Hart argues that the "turning point" that psychologically convinced the Germans the situation was hopeless "came not from the western front, but from a despised "side-show," Salonika . . . With Bulgaria's collapse, the back gate to Austria, as well as to Turkey, and through Austria to Germany, stood ajar."

[12]Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), 366.

permanently compromised its preeminent financial position in the world banking system.[13]

In retrospect, an agreement between Britain and Germany to end the war might have left both sides better off than incurring the war's full costs. Of course, in 1915, the War Council could not have known that the war would eventually become so costly. But even by mid-year, war costs were already beginning their meteoric rise. Reports of munitions shortages had brought down the Liberal government in May, the ugly specter of conscription loomed closer and closer, and continued bloody stalemates at Gallipoli and in France did not promise any progress at all.[14] If "the object in war is to attain a better peace . . . hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire," it is not so farfetched to believe that even at this early stage in the war, the War Council should have identified its war aims, identified the Central Powers' war aims, and then ascertained if there were any common grounds for negotiation that might have left both sides better off than if they continued to fight.[15] Therefore, the War Council should have at least broached this subject, but the topic was never seriously considered.[16]

4). The War Council also overlooked the option of assuming a defensive stance everywhere. Churchill advocated this view after the war, claiming that Britain should have adopted a defensive strategy in the West, thus forcing the German army to exhaust itself by conducting fruitless offensives against a well-entrenched British army. British forces could still initiate surprise attacks with limited objectives, which would bait the Germans into launching offensives while keeping British casualty levels low. Once the Germans had been

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[13]Depuy and Depuy, 990.

[14]Wilson, 166-167, 203-204, 209.

[15]Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 366. Motivated biases may also be involved here, since any concessions to the Germans would have been painful for the War Council to contemplate. Therefore, it would have been psychologically easier for the Council to not consider or debate this issue at all.

[16]In February 1915, when the U.S. tried to act as an impartial mediator to end the war, Asquith summarily rejected the attempt, convinced that the Germans were no more interested in peace without victory than the British. Yet neither Asquith nor any other member of the Council attempted to analyze Germany's war aims to reach this conclusion. See Cassar, 173.

worn down by years of failed offensives, the Allies could then launch a major offensive to decisively defeat the German Army. Since a decisive breakthrough did not seem possible in early 1915, and because an attacker generally suffers more casualties in battle than a defender, this was a plausible course of action that the War Council might have debated.[17]

B. Making decisions with only two things in mind: low troop cost and high payoffs

With the costly, protracted slaughter in France, manpower became the salient value of the day--Council members discussed its limited nature, its best use, and its relentless consumption in battle. As Asquith noted at the beginning of January, "I am profoundly dissatisfied with the immediate prospect--an enormous waste of life and money day after day with no appreciable progress."[18] Lloyd George agreed, writing on 1 January, "If this superb [new volunteer] army is thrown away upon futile enterprises, such as those we have witnessed during the last few weeks, the country will be uncontrollably indignant at the lack of prevision and intelligence shown in our plans."[19] And as Kitchener wrote on 2 January, "The feeling is gaining ground that although it is essential to defend the lines we hold, troops over and above what are necessary for that service could be better employed elsewhere."[20]

As noted above, the Council discussed six possible options in early January, but all were met with considerable skepticism and were rejected in quick succession.[21] In contrast, on 13 January, the War Council *unanimously* decided "that the Admiralty should prepare for a naval expedition in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli Peninsula with

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[17]Mearsheimer, 66. Also see Sir Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1923), Volume 3, chapter 2.

[18]Asquith, quoted in Guinn, 48.

[19]Gooch 312.

[20]Cruttwell, 35-36.

[21]Geoffrey Miller, 370-371; Bonham-Carter, 105.

Constantinople as its objective." What caused this unusual consensus? Simply put, the War

Council approved the Dardanelles naval operation because it appeared to not require any of

that most salient value--troops. Several historians have noted this. For example, Moorehead

observes that Kitchener was satisfied because none of his soldiers would be engaged.[22] Steel

and Hart also comment that "the operation . . . represented an ill-considered snatch at a cheap

option."[23] And Cassar notes,

> There was . . . a crying need to escape from the slugging-match in France and find a new theatre in which decisive results could be obtained. The Dardanelles operation was the only plan, among a number under consideration, that did not require military forces . . . The plan . . . seemed to rule out the danger of serious losses, either in manpower or material.[24]

Clearly, the issue of manpower loomed prominently in the minds of the War Council when it

decided to pursue the Dardanelles naval operation. However, another criterion--the promise

of high payoffs--also dominated the War Council's decision.

In early January, the war in France was becoming more costly than anyone ever

imagined, and yet the gains there were minimal--a mile or two of ground at the most, at the

cost of thousands of lives. The War Council was looking for something that promised

progress in the war, and lots of it. As Lloyd George put it, Britain needed a victory

"somewhere."[25] Therefore, Churchill's depiction of the Dardanelles as a victory with high

payoffs was "irresistible" to a tired, frustrated War Council with no good options.[26] It clearly

promised immense political and military advantages.[27] According to Lieutenant Colonel Sir

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[22]Moorehead, 41.

[23]Steel and Hart, 12.

[24]Cassar, 61-62.

[25]Wilson, 108-109.

[26]van Hartesveldt, 19.

[27]Cassar, 61-62.

Maurice Hankey, the War Council secretary,

> The idea caught on at once. The whole atmosphere changed. Fatigue was
> forgotten. The War Council turned eagerly from the dreary vista of a
> 'slogging match' on the Western Front to brighter prospects, as they seemed,
> in the Mediterranean.[28]

On 28 January, when the War Council gave its final approval, Council members continued to dwell on the tantalizing rewards of the Dardanelles operation. The leader of the Unionist (or Opposition) Party, Sir Arthur Balfour, concluded, "It is difficult to imagine a more helpful operation."[29] Grey also saw great political prospects, and Prime Minister Asquith "was so attracted by the political benefits that would accrue from victory that he minimized or ignored the practical difficulties that stood in the way."[30]

In short, the War Council "brushed aside" the practical difficulties of the Dardanelles operation and did not gather or seek information about any other important criteria that might have affected their decision. These actions are consistent with the presence of unmotivated bias, for by using only two salient criteria to evaluate their options (i.e., low cost in troops and high potential payoffs), the War Council unconsciously omitted other relevant criteria (such as practical difficulties) that could have been used in an overall cost-benefit analysis. By not considering how a policy would affect many criteria, the Council unwittingly forfeited some values in order to gain others.[31]

What other criteria ought to have been considered? For one, the Council should have judged their options by asking, "Is this course of action tactically feasible?" Ideally, what is

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[28]Geoffrey Miller, 379-380. Geoffrey Miller notes that Hankey's description of the meeting may seem over-enthusiastic because he was already an advocate of an attack on the Dardanelles. Hankey's contemporary minutes recorded that Lloyd George merely "liked the plan" while Kitchener "thought it was worth trying. We could leave off the bombardment if it did not prove effective."

[29]Geoffrey Miller, 400.

[30]Moorehead, 41; Cassar, 140.

[31]Jervis, 137-138.

tactically feasible should shape the selection of strategic objectives and plans, but the War

Council failed to rigorously inquire into the tactical feasibility of the Dardanelles operation

(or of any of the other proposed military operations, for that matter).[32] Another relevant

criterion should have been, "Besides troops, how expensive will this option be in other

resources, such as munitions, shipping, and money? Does the country have the resources

available to undertake this option?" If the War Council had asked this question, they might

have realized that Britain didn't have the munitions to sustain naval or military operations in

a second theater. But because the Council didn't consider this criterion when making its

decision, the success of the naval operation (let alone of subsequent ground operations) was

endangered from the start.[33]

One could enumerate a number of other criteria, such as, "Is this option logistically

feasible?" "Will this option's resource requirements conflict with other national

commitments already undertaken?" "What would be the domestic and international impact if

this option fails?" and "What are the political, diplomatic, economic, and military

disadvantages of this course of action, in comparison to other options?" However, the War

Council did not ask many of these questions and thus failed to address these relevant criteria.

Wilson notes, "So long as the questions were not asked, then it apparently did not matter that

such an operation was being instituted without an exhaustive staff appreciation of the

obstacles to be surmounted and the resources needed to overcome them. The obstacles

would be less than they appeared."[34] The result was an apparently puzzling lapse in

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[32]Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," in Millett and Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness*, Vol. I (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988) 20. Although Churchill implied that the operation was tactically feasible, the only person attending the War Council meetings who was actually qualified to make this assessment was the First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher. Several members of the War Council knew of Fisher's opposition against the purely naval operation, but they attributed his animosity to the fact that the Dardanelles operation diverted attention away from his favored course of action of an amphibious landing in the Baltic. Nevertheless, no one on the War Council asked for Fisher's professional opinion as to the tactical feasibility of the operation. See Geoffrey Miller, 398-402.

[33]Wilson, 113.

[34]Wilson, 108-109.

judgment, amply documented by multiple historians and observers. As Van Hartesveldt put it, the "shimmering prospects of a major victory . . . blinded the politicians to the difficulties of turning the theory into practice."[35]

C. Conclusion

Overall, the British War Council's behavior in 1915 is consistent with the presence of unmotivated cognitive bias. War Council members did not consider a large number of options, did not use multiple assessment criteria, and did not conduct careful cost-benefit analyses in their decision-making. Instead, the War Council considered only six courses of action throughout 1915, ignored several other options that realistically should have been addressed, and made its decision largely on the basis of two salient criteria, low troop cost and high potential payoffs. As a result, decision-makers unconsciously ignored or sacrificed other important criteria. Overall, these cognitive limitations, or "blinders we are born with," may have caused the War Council to have a limited view in a world of unlimited options and to reach decisions with only one or two criteria in mind. And thus, in this blithe, unassuming way, the first tragic flaws of the Gallipoli campaign may have been born.

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[35]van Hartesveldt, 19.

IV. Stacking the Deck: Refusal to Examine Underlying Assumptions, Belief System Overkill, and Refusal to Confront Value Trade-offs

When the British War Council approved Churchill's proposal to conduct a naval attack on the Dardanelles, it was optimistic and pleased with its decision.[1] However, as noted in Chapter 3, although the members of the Council discussed the advantages of the Dardanelles attack at length, they asked hardly any questions about the operation's possible disadvantages. No one asked either Admiral Fisher or Admiral Wilson, the two naval members of the Council, for their opinions, even though Admiral Fisher had expressed his opposition privately to several Council members.[2] And besides troops and ships, no one asked about what resources might be required for the operation to succeed, let alone if such requirements conflicted with other commitments.[3] The same process repeated itself after the March naval attempt failed and the campaign had shifted to planning the resource-intensive amphibious assault. By the beginning of April, Bonar Law wrote to Wilson that he was certain that "the Government had jumped into all this without at all counting the cost."[4]

Why didn't the members of the War Council ask "the hard questions"? Why did they concentrate only on the positive aspects, while not seeking or ignoring the negative?[5] In Chapter 3, we noticed how unmotivated biases may have contributed to the War Council's apparently puzzling behavior by restricting the number of choices the Council considered and by limiting the number of criteria the Council used to evaluate its options. However, a

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[1]Moorehead, 41; Cassar, 140; Geoffrey Miller, 400.

[2]Higgins, 129; Geoffrey Miller, 400; Wilson, 110.

[3]Wilson, 108-109.

[4]Higgins, 174.

[5]Wilson, 110.

second form of bias may have also contributed to this same failure to consider downside risks and potential disadvantages.

In this complex world, certain decisions are incredibly stressful because of the high stakes involved, such as those that involve situations of life-and-death or the fate of a nation at war. When decision-makers face these stressful decisions, discover there are no acceptable options, and realize that any decision will require sacrificing at least one important value, they experience feelings of psychological distress, including fear, shame, anxiety, and guilt. People try to minimize this internal conflict by subconsciously focusing on the advantages of a chosen course of action; by avoiding, ignoring, or not energetically gathering information that might reveal its disadvantages; and by instinctively refusing to recognize that they must choose between conflicting criteria or options. Such actions are examples of *motivated bias*. The more stressful the decision, the more likely it is, *ceteris paribus*, that motivated biases will affect decision-making processes.

Unquestionably, the British War Council in early 1915 was confronted by stressful decisions with extremely high stakes and no apparently acceptable alternatives to a costly war. Therefore, one would expect to observe behavior consistent with motivated bias, such as policymakers not fully examining basic underlying assumptions; believing that the chosen option is not just better than other alternatives, but is superior in every way (i.e., "belief system overkill"); and unconsciously refusing to confront value trade-offs.[6] In the end, the presence of motivated biases may significantly lower the quality of rational decision-making.

A. Refusal to Examine Underlying Assumptions

At the War Council meeting of 13 January 1915, Churchill had eloquently argued that the appearance of British ships off the coast of Constantinople would cause the Turkish

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[6]Lebow, 106-8; Kaufmann, 559; Jervis, 128-143.

government to collapse.[7] The War Council readily accepted this argument, and Asquith directed the Admiralty to "prepare for a naval expedition in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli peninsula, with Constantinople as its objective." Hankey later explained that this statement meant that the successful passage of the Royal Navy would presumably cut off and starve out the Turks on the Gallipoli peninsula.[8]

In retrospect, did the War Council seriously believe that the mere appearance of the British fleet off the Golden Horn would "cut off and starve out the Turks on the peninsula," as well as cause the government to surrender immediately? Geoffrey Miller and Wilson correctly point out that only military troops can take and hold ground, while navies cannot.[9] Therefore, only ground troops would have been able to besiege the Turkish forces on the peninsula--a fact that should have been obvious to Hankey, an Imperial Army officer, as well as to Lord Kitchener.[10] In addition, even if a squadron of British ships succeeded in reaching Constantinople, there was nothing to prevent the Turkish government from relocating inland.

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[7]Geoffrey Miller, 380; Steel and Hart, 7-10.

[8]Higgins, 115.

[9]Wilson, 113; Geoffrey Miller 381. However, Moorehead defends this assumption as justifiable. He argues that in 1915, Constantinople "had a reputation of being a hysterical place," and Turkish governments were known to be very unstable. Most of Constantinople's buildings were constructed of wood, and therefore they would have been susceptible to fires once the fleet's guns started shelling the city. Turkey also only had two munitions factories in the entire country, both located on the shoreline at Constantinople, so they would have been extremely vulnerable to enemy shellfire. In addition, Constantinople was the center of Turkish economic, political, industrial, and military affairs, so the Turkish government would have found it difficult to find an alternate place to effectively re-group. Therefore, Moorehead argues that the fall of Constantinople would have necessarily meant the fall of the Turkish state. Moorehead also notes that after the start of the bombardment in February, the Turkish government did in fact start to evacuate the city. Nevertheless, the point I wish to make here is that the War Council did not explicitly examine or discuss any of these details during this meeting. Instead, they may have implicitly factored some of these presumptions into their thinking and thus assumed that Constantinople would fall immediately if the Fleet got through. See Moorehead, 40-41, 71-73.

[10]In 1914, Lord Kitchener was a retired Field Marshal and was hailed as Britain's most acclaimed soldier. According to Gooch, Kitchener did not raise any objections to the Dardanelles naval operation because he was "confronted by strong political demands for this course of action." Therefore, "Kitchener was prepared to accept it and then try to justify it afterwards." Gooch's interpretation lends credence to the argument that motivated biases may have been at work here, for there were no viable options except for this one, which seemed somewhat palatable because it did not require troops. Therefore, Lord Kitchener might not have probed for information that would have revealed this operation's disadvantages, in order to minimize his psychological distress because he had no good options from which to choose. See Wilson, 37; Gooch, 312.

What would the British fleet (possibly a good deal battered and short of supplies and munitions) do if the Turkish government refused to surrender? Presumably the fleet would shell Constantinople, but would it have enough ammunition left after forcing the Narrows? The fleet would run out of shells at some point, and if the Turks still didn't surrender, there were no friendly ports nearby where the fleet could take on food, fuel, and ammunition. The British squadron would be forced to return through the Straits, most likely suffering high losses from Turkish guns along the way.[11]

Clearly, the Council failed to energetically seek information that might have revealed this option's disadvantages or that would have questioned the option's underlying assumptions. This behavior is consistent with the presence of motivated bias, and the historical record of the Gallipoli campaign abounds with other similar instances. For example, on 28 January, when the War Council approved the naval operation, the Council clearly believed that no ground troops would be necessary if the navy succeeded. However, as the Dardanelles Commission pointed out in 1917, "the War Council . . . were, in reality, committed to military action on a large scale in the event of the attempt to force the Dardanelles by the Fleet alone proving successful."[12] In other words, if the fleet succeeded, large numbers of troops would be necessary to occupy, at a minimum, Constantinople and both sides of the Dardanelles. Even more troops would be needed if Turkey was divided up among the victors, which the War Council eventually planned to do.[13] It is striking that although the Council fully expected success, none of its members thought about the troop requirements that an ensuing victory would demand.

Another assumption that the War Council made was that if the western Allies captured the Dardanelles, shipping between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean would open

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[11]Wilson, 118-119; Higgins, 10; Moorehead, 40-41, 71-73.

[12]Higgins, 115.

[13]Wilson, 118-119; van Hartesveldt, 4.

up, thus allowing the western Allies to supply the Russians with much needed military equipment in exchange for grain. However, according to Wilson, not only was the shipping not available, but Britain and France couldn't meet their own requirements for equipment and ammunition, let alone anyone else's.[14] In fact, Carden's operations orders for his naval attack exhorted him not to use "a large quantity of [the *Queen Elizabeth*'s] valuable ammunition," and warned him that "wasteful expenditure of ammunition" by his other vessels "may result in the operations having to be abandoned before a successful conclusion is arrived at."[15]

In addition, the Gallipoli land campaign were based upon the premises that Turkish soldiers were inept, could be easily pushed off the peninsula, and would surrender quickly.[16] It was taken for granted that British troops were inherently superior; after all, some Council members reasoned, Constantinople had nearly been lost in the Balkan Wars just a few years earlier, and any adversaries other than the Germans had to be "easier" to defeat.[17] Because the War Council held Turkish fighting capabilities in such low esteem, "lengthy military preparations, such as would have been required against a first-class military power, were deemed unnecessary." And since success was virtually assured, given the perceived frailty of the enemy, neither Asquith nor Kitchener gave serious thought to what would happen next if British forces did not succeed.[18]

Finally, the War Council made two especially large presumptions: 1) when the Turkish government collapsed, a new neutralist regime would come to power and take Turkey out of the war; and 2) after the surrender, the Allies could begin dismembering the

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[14]Wilson, 118; Steel and Hart, 7.

[15]Wilson, 113.

[16]Cohen and Gooch, 137; Winter, 60.

[17]Wilson, 108-109; Winter, 60.

[18]Cassar, 61, 91. Charles Callwell, Kitchener's Director of Military Operations, commented, "Kitchener did not expect the Turks to put up a fight, believing they would give way when they saw we meant business." See Winter, 61-62.

Turkish empire "to their hearts' content." For example, in January, while contemplating the naval attack, the War Council agreed that Russia could have both Constantinople and the Dardanelles, provided that "both we and France should get a substantial share of the carcase of the Turk." Even the naval failure of 18 March did not undermine the War Council's aspirations, for, in a meeting the next day, the War Council discussed what Britain's share of the Turkish spoils would be 'after the Straits had been forced.'"[19] The War Council's discussions vitally depended upon both assumptions, but its members never asked for evidence that Turkish neutralists were strong or numerous enough to take over their government; nor did they question whether or how this anticipated government might be compelled to submit to the Allies' desire to divide its territories.[20]

In retrospect, these assumptions seem absurd, especially coming from a group of policymakers with extensive education, foreign experience, and at least some military background. However, the truly remarkable aspect here is not the assumptions themselves, but that the War Council did not question or examine the validity of any of them in their discussions. The War Council could have easily called in expert testimony, or, as Wilson comments, could have asked "the hard questions" of each other and of Churchill, Fisher, Wilson, Kitchener, and Wolfe Murray.[21] But the Council did not take these actions, and the presence of motivated biases in the decision-making process may be a reason why. The overall result was a consistent refusal to examine the underlying assumptions upon which the decisions were based.[22]

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[19]Cassar, 75; Wilson, 118-119.

[20]Wilson, 118-119. It is interesting to note here that although the Russian government was overthrown by revolution in 1917, the subsequent provisional Russian government did not leave the war. In fact, it took a second revolution in November 1917 by the Bolsheviks for Russia to finally leave the war. See Dupuy and Dupuy, 972-973.

[21]Wilson, 110. In 1917, the Dardanelles Commission criticized the Prime Minister and the War Council for not actively soliciting the opinions of the naval experts who attended their meetings. See Higgins, 130.

[22]Lebow, 107-8; Kaufmann, 559.

B. Belief system overkill

Belief system overkill is a motivated bias that is linked to the unmotivated bias of making decisions using only one or two salient criteria, which was addressed in Chapter 3. After policymakers have made their decision using only one or two salient criteria, belief system overkill causes policymakers' perceptions of other criteria to be brought into line to minimize psychological distress.[23] Belief system overkill may thus harden opinions to the point where policymakers will attack opposing courses of action as ill-conceived in every way. Advocates for a policy begin to advance multiple, independent, and mutually reinforcing arguments in its favor.[24] As a result, instead of being an impartial assessment of possible options, policymaking may become a standoff between opposing sides, thus delaying decisions and preventing policies from being changed in a timely manner.[25] The conflict between the "Easterners" and the "Westerners" in the British government at this time is a classic example of belief system overkill. Fundamentally, the two sides disagreed about the prospects for a breakthrough in France and the potential gains of other auxiliary theaters.[26] By mid-1915, their differences had begun to take on the acrimonious nature it would assume for the rest of the war.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Easterners believed that the war effort should be shifted to another theater in the hope of finding an easier way to victory. The most vocal Easterners at this time included Churchill, Fisher, Lloyd George, and Hankey, although Asquith, Kitchener, and most of the War Council were also initially swept up by the Eastern

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[23]Jervis, Lebow, and Stein, 32; Jervis 129.

[24]Lebow, 106; Jervis, 128-143.

[25]Jervis, 140; Lebow, 108, 115-117.

[26]Jervis 130.

tide of enthusiasm at the beginning of 1915.[27] They believed that a breakthrough in France was unlikely; therefore, war on the periphery would cost substantially less in lives and would result in substantial gains.[28]

The Westerners disagreed, asserting that the defeat of the German Army on the Western Front was the main strategic objective, and that all of Britain's efforts should be focused there. If the Allies could beat the Germans in France, they would win the war, and it mattered little what happened on other fronts. Germany could not be materially weakened by "side-shows," so offensives conducted elsewhere would simply waste lives and resources. The Westerners began to gain prominence in the middle of 1915, and its most prolific members included the commander of the British Expeditionary Force, General Sir John French; Hamilton's replacement, General Sir Charles Monro; the Chief of the Imperial General Staff from December 1915, General Sir William Robertson; and the rest of the Imperial General Staff. Interestingly, most of the Westerners were not members of the War Council when it initially decided to undertake the Dardanelles operation; therefore, they had not been subjected to the same circumstances that had led the War Council to adopt its "low cost in troops, high potential payoff" decision-making criteria in January. For example, because of the benefit of hindsight in late 1915, Robertson could point to the Gallipoli campaign "as an operation without an object" and a drain upon resources.[29]

The antagonistic conflict between the Easterners and the Westerners was consistent with belief system overkill and the presence of motivated bias. For example, after the War Council was reconstituted as the Dardanelles Committee in June, it included new members that had not participated in the original Dardanelles decision in January. During its discussions of the Gallipoli campaign, Guinn notes that "opinions were almost

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[27]Gooch 311.

[28]Cassar, 199.

[29]Gooch, 319, 324; Cassar, 199-200.

irreconcilable." He added, "The disagreements on strategic policy were so many and so tenacious that the major decisions of the Dardanelles Committee usually had to be discussed all over again in a Cabinet composed of the leaders of three parties."[30] And although the Committee did agree in June to send Hamilton the reinforcements he had requested, the Cabinet and Dardanelles Committee still remained divided.[31] As Cruttwell observed, "Everyone knows . . . that if your mind is already committed to one course it will always be fertile in conclusive arguments to show the impossibility of taking another."[32]

The conflict between the two sides became even worse after the newly streamlined War Committee recommended evacuation in November, for the Easterners and the Westerners in the Cabinet could not agree on approving a withdrawal.[33] Logically, one might expect in a rational discussion that at least a few Cabinet members might assume a middle ground, acknowledging that both sides' arguments held some merit on different points. However, neither side would acknowledge that the other side's view held any value whatsoever. Debates were acrimonious, and the Cabinet's divided members frequently threatened resignation instead of seeking solutions.[34] Cabinet member Lord Curzon led the opponents of evacuation, requesting and obtaining a delay so he could prepare formal arguments that evacuation would severely damage Imperial prestige.[35] The new assertive Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Murray, strongly disagreed, arguing that British prestige would suffer much more if the units remained, for they certainly would be driven off

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[30]Guinn, 84. The Dardanelles Committee now consisted of Asquith, Balfour, Churchill, Crewe, Curzon, Lloyd George, Grey, Kitchener, Lansdowne, Bonar Law, McKenna, Selborne, and Carson after August 1915.

[31]Guinn, 87.

[32]Cruttwell, 15.

[33]Guinn, 110; Cassar 135.

[34]Cassar, 131, 138.

[35]Moorehead, 330; Guinn 110.

the peninsula without reinforcements.[36] Even after sudden winter storms at Gallipoli from 26 to 30 November inflicted 16,000 cases of frostbite and exposure, the Cabinet still could not reach a definite decision.[37] The infighting might have continued indefinitely, if external influences had not forced the Cabinet to take action. The Easterners had argued that Gallipoli could be continued if British troops were diverted from Allied operations at Salonika, but at the beginning of December, the French and the Russians made it clear that this was not an option. In addition, after Bulgaria entered the war against the Entente, German artillery and supplies began to flow freely into Turkey, threatening to drive the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force into the sea. On 7 December, nearly six weeks after Monro's first recommendation, the Cabinet finally decided on evacuation.[38]

In short, neither the Easterners nor the Westerners on the Dardanelles Committee could make an impartial assessment of their own views or the arguments of the other. Both sides focused on the advantages of their chosen course of action, becoming convinced that their option was not just better than the other side on balance, but was superior in every way. Motivated bias therefore may have left little room for compromise, blinding each side to the possibility that some aspects of the other's argument might be feasible or correct; delaying decisions; and preventing timely policy changes.[39] This is vastly different from rational decision-making processes, where one would expect policymakers to make timely decisions, while being open to all the merits and drawbacks of possible alternatives without the blinders

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[36]Gooch, 321.

[37]Steel and Hart, 378-381.

[38]James, 337-338, Wilson 274. The initial decision to evacuate included Anzac Cove and Suvla Bay; Cape Helles would be retained to facilitate British submarine operations against the Turks. But even after Anzac and Suvla had been successfully evacuated, the CIGS, now General Sir William Robertson, had to push the Committee to evacuate Helles. Cape Helles was still being held, partly to satisfy the navy, partly in the hope of tying down a substantial body of Turkish troops in the peninsula. Robertson rejected both these pretexts outright: "To continue hanging on to the place merely because we were afraid to leave it, was not only a waste of men, but . . . a constant source of anxiety." He therefore swayed the Committee to authorize an evacuation of Helles at the end of December. See Bonham-Carter, 154.

[39]Lebow, 108, 115-117.

of preconceptions. One of the sad consequences of this belief system overkill was that "The army at the Dardanelles . . . was in effect allowed to moulder until threatened with destruction from either the enemy or the elements," even though "the inevitability [of evacuation] had been generally recognized" since October.[40]

C. Refusal to Confront Value Trade-offs

Higgins notes, "As in any art, a successful War Council or war policy has to reconcile inherently incompatible ends and means."[41] But when Kitchener first sent troops to Gallipoli, he only sent 75,000 men--half the force of 150,000 that, a few weeks earlier, he had told the War Council would be necessary.[42] According to Kitchener, the demands of the Western Front made it impossible to release more, but except for Hankey, no member of the War Council asked whether these limited resources were enough for success.[43] Not until 14 May, after the first Gallipoli offensive had failed, did Kitchener wire to Hamilton that "the War Council would like to know what force you consider would be necessary to carry through the operations on which you are engaged." Hankey later observed that this question "ought to have been put to him before ever a man was landed."[44]

In short, the War Council refused to recognize that the resource demands of the Western Front and the resources needed for success at Gallipoli might not be compatible. As a result, the forces and materiel that went to the Near East were whatever could be spared from France, not what was independently judged to be adequate to gain victory. This behavior is consistent with motivated bias, for the War Council appeared to unconsciously

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[40]Guinn, 117.

[41]Higgins, 251.

[42]Wilson, 115.

[43]Steel and Hart, 16.

[44]Guinn, 75-76; Cassar 91.

avoid information that indicated it would have to make a painful value trade-off and choose between the two theaters. Instead, the Council simply assumed that the means available would be sufficient to accomplish whatever ends were required.[45] As a result, Kitchener "consistently balked at assigning enough troops and resources to give [the campaign] any real chance of achieving success."[46]

For example, by 6 April, Hamilton's intelligence section had estimated that there were 100,000 Turks on the peninsula. Bearing in mind the military rule of thumb that an attack needs a three to one numerical advantage to succeed, these numbers meant that when Hamilton's force of 75,000 assaulted the peninsula, it only had a quarter of the troops necessary for success.[47] Kitchener also refused to provide the extra troops normally allotted for battlefield losses, because it would divert too many soldiers away from France. The Allies therefore could not field any replacements, despite having suffered about 12 percent casualties in first three days of the ground offensive.[48] In addition, although British divisions at the time should have had 304 guns, Hamilton's only had 118, and there was an almost total lack of howitzers, trench mortars, grenades, and high-explosive ammunition.[49] Because of this shortage, British artillery cover during the first ground offensive was poor, and by 4 May, the stock of British artillery ammunition had already been reduced by half. Although Hamilton urgently tried to procure more artillery shells, the War Office was recalcitrant and only sent him a small amount that would not arrive until the end of May. Naval gunfire was able to provide some artillery cover, but the ships were likewise short of ammunition.[50]

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[45]Wilson, 115, 120-121.

[46]Steel and Hart, 419.

[47]Winter, 217-218.

[48]Cohen and Gooch, 138, 156.

[49]Cohen and Gooch, 136.

[50]Steel and Hart, 148.

Overall, motivated bias may have encouraged the War Council to unconsciously avoid information which indicated there were not enough national resources to successfully conduct operations at both France and Gallipoli. Although it was generally understood that whatever could be spared from France went to Gallipoli, no one asked whether these limited resources were enough for success in either theater. The Council therefore may have unconsciously refused to confront value trade-offs, leading to the chronic under-provisioning of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in 1915.

D. Conclusion

Unmotivated biases were not the only forms of cognitive bias that may have been at work in the deliberations of the War Council in 1915. In a world of stressful decisions and unsatisfactory options, motivated biases may have had a significant impact on the Council's decision-making processes as well. Council members focused on the advantages of the Dardanelles naval operation; avoided, ignored, or didn't energetically gather information about its disadvantages; and instinctively refused to contemplate value trade-offs. As a result, they failed to examine the fundamental assumptions upon which their decisions were based and fell victim to belief system overkill. In short, the presence of motivated biases in the decision-making process may have encouraged the War Council to "stack the deck" heavily in favor of undertaking the Dardanelles naval operation and the Gallipoli campaign. Unfortunately, the resulting muddle may have caused the tragic flaws of the Gallipoli campaign to accumulate, increase, and build upon each other.

V. "I Don't Want to Look!": Premature Cognitive Closure

In February 1915, Sir Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the War Council, was a strong advocate of the British naval attack on the Dardanelles. However, he soon became concerned that the Royal Navy would not be able to accomplish its mission unaided. To help build a case that ground troops were necessary, Hankey located an eight year-old Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.) paper which emphasized that any attack on the Dardanelles would require both naval and ground forces. He presented this study to the War Council on 19 February, after the naval bombardment of the Dardanelles had started. The Council reviewed the paper with interest, but noticed that the paper also stated that the General Staff recommended against any attack, "in view of the risks involved." Hankey quickly intervened and explained away the recommendation, pointing out that the Turks had been weakened by "severe defeats" in the Balkan Wars over the past few years. In addition, the Turks were currently engaged on three fronts (the Caucasus, Egypt, and Mesopotamia), British submarines could interfere with enemy lines of communication, and aerial reconnaissance was a new innovation that would enhance the British naval bombardment. The Council accepted this explanation, and thus treated the C.I.D. paper's final conclusion as an anomaly.[1]

This incident was one of the first in a long string in which key members of the War Council brushed aside warning signs that their decision to undertake the Dardanelles naval operation and the Gallipoli campaign might have been unwise. Even when basic underlying assumptions were knocked down, one by one, and even when tightly stretched resources begged for a determination of priorities, the War Council never considered re-opening its decision.

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[1]Geoffrey Miller, 413; Guinn, 61.

For example, at the end of February, Kitchener ordered Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood, commander of the ANZAC corps in Egypt, to go to the Dardanelles and assess the situation from a military point of view. At the time, Kitchener believed that the ANZACs would only be a garrison force, and a military landing would not be necessary. But after inspecting the theater of operations, Birdwood's evaluations, sent on 4 and 5 March, demolished several of the War Council's initial assumptions. Not only did Birdwood believe that the navy would not be able to successfully force the Dardanelles on its own, but large numbers of troops would be needed from the start.[2] Likewise, on 17 March, Vice Admiral De Robeck reported that there were a hundred thousand Turks on the peninsula and all landing places were strongly entrenched. By 18 March, Hamilton wired to Kitchener, "You were under the impression that the ground between Helles and Krithia was clear of the enemy. Not a bit of it!"[3]

Yet in spite of this adverse information, the Council stubbornly maintained its decision to undertake the Dardanelles operation and the Gallipoli campaign. Kitchener had already committed the army "to see the business through" on 24 February, and even after receiving Birdwood's adverse report, he refused to re-visit the wisdom of the decision. On 12 March, before the end of the naval operations, Kitchener wrote, "Having entered on the project of taking Constantinople, there can be no idea of abandoning the scheme . . . The passage of the Dardanelles must be forced, and if large scale military operations are necessary, these operations must be undertaken and carried through."[4]

Likewise, when the War Council met on 19 March, after the naval attack's failure, it did not re-open its decision, never considering the option of withdrawing the fleet and

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[2]Steel and Hart, 16-17.

[3]Winter, 63.

[4]Winter, 62-64.

claiming that it was all a demonstration.[5] Although Admiral Fisher and Hankey made

separate, repeated requests to Asquith that the Council examine the Dardanelles operation in

the light of the naval setback, "before the final plunge is taken and the troops are landed,"

Asquith ignored these pleas. In fact, after 19 March, Asquith refused to convene the War

Council until 14 May, after the failure of the first amphibious landings. Therefore, Council

members never actually discussed or sanctioned a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula, but

none challenged the adoption of this course of action either. Instead, the Council went along

with Kitchener's decision to "come to the Navy's rescue," and it did not re-evaluate the

operation's radically altered costs. As Guinn notes, "the drastic change from primarily naval

to exclusively military operations had been decided in a matter of moments without the strain

of taking thought."[6]

Why did the War Council refuse to re-open its decisions to undertake the Dardanelles

operation and the Gallipoli campaign, even though adverse information received after the

initial decisions indicated much higher costs and difficulties than previously believed? In

retrospect, Council's behavior is consistent with the presence of certain forms of motivated

bias. As mentioned in Chapter 4, when policymakers encounter high-stake decisions under

conditions of severe stress, with no acceptable options, they will experience feelings of

internal conflict. People will attempt to escape this internal stress by unconsciously avoiding

fear-arousing warnings and by refusing to contemplate or confront the problem.[7]

This avoidance manifests itself in several different forms. In "premature cognitive

closure" (PCC), policymakers subconsciously avoid adverse information about the policy, or

reject indications of policy failure as anomalous. As a result, policymakers subconsciously

refuse to re-open the decision, fail to re-evaluate flawed underlying assumptions, and fail to

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[5]Cassar, 80.

[6]Cohen and Gooch, 147; Cassar, 77; Guinn, 70-71; C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, *History of the Great War: Military Operations, Gallipoli* (London: Heinemann, 1929), Volume I, 101-102.

[7]Lebow, 108, 115-117.

confront trade-offs. In fact, if the policy seems to be failing, premature cognitive closure may cause policymakers to work even harder to achieve success because they desperately want to believe that their policy was worth the resources already sacrificed.[8] Overall, the presence of motivated biases in the decision-making process may cause policymakers to maintain a course of action long after its costs have outweighed its benefits.

A. Manifestations of PCC: Policymakers refuse to re-open the decision

When April's amphibious landings failed and degenerated into bloody trench warfare, Gallipoli's costs rocketed to unanticipated proportions. By the middle of May, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force included four British and two ANZAC divisions; when the Council added five more divisions in June, the total came to eleven--a total that nearly equaled half of the British manpower in France.[9] Meanwhile, the promised rewards began to fade as well, being replaced by arguments to continue fighting in order to "save face." In the midst of this quagmire, the members of the War Council seemed to avoid the implications of this negative information and did not re-open their decision. With no acceptable alternatives, it became easier for the Council to continue the same policy, put in more effort to make the policy work, and hope for the best.

For example, at the War Council meeting on 14 May, Kitchener was "transfixed by gloom."[10] All attempts to achieve breakthroughs in France and Gallipoli had failed utterly. Kitchener admitted that he had underrated the Turkish defenses at Gallipoli, and he did not believe that Hamilton, facing a reported 150,000 Turks, could make any real progress. Plainly, the War Council had to make a decision about what to do next. Kitchener laid out

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[8]Jervis, 382-399; Kaufmann, 562-563; Lebow 108.

[9]Moorehead, 238. Hamilton also had two French divisions under his command. At this time, the British had 24 divisions on the Western Front.

[10]Gooch, 314.

the options: Council members could either abandon the military campaign on the grounds that it could not be adequately supported, or they could continue it.[11]

At this point, the Council could have re-opened the decision and made a fresh analysis of the costs and benefits of both options. But this did not happen, for Kitchener dismissed abandonment from the start as unacceptable. Evacuation would "irreparably damage" British prestige in the Muslim world, particularly in the eyes of the Empire's Muslim subjects, and might lead to widespread insurrection and revolt.[12] In contrast, Kitchener spoke at length about the reasons why the campaign should continue, such as helping Russia and gaining an asset to bargain against "any gains on the Continent which Germany may still hold" in future peace negotiations. As Kitchener put it, continuing the campaign "avoids any immediate blow to our prestige; it keeps the door open to Balkan intervention; [and] it . . . rivets the attention of the Turks and in all probability limits active operations on their part against Egypt, or in Mesopotamia, or the Caucasus."[13] The rest of the Council agreed with Kitchener that Britain could not afford to abandon the campaign. Although Lloyd George and Fisher were doubtful about the success of a renewed attack, no one explicitly presented any arguments in favor of evacuation, so the Council redoubled its efforts to save the flagging expedition. Kitchener wired Hamilton that "the War Council would like to know what force you consider would be necessary to carry through the operations on which you are engaged. You should base this estimate on the supposition that I have adequate forces to place at your disposal."[14]

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[11]Guinn, 75-76; Cassar 91; Steel and Hart, 168.

[12]Guinn, 86-87. These dire predictions did not materialize when the British finally left Gallipoli at the end of 1915. However, the significant point made here is that the Council did not regard evacuation as an acceptable option, thus causing them to not re-open their decision to undertake the Gallipoli campaign.

[13]Gooch, 314.

[14]Guinn, 75-76; Cassar 91; Steel and Hart, 168.

It is interesting to note this palpable shift in the War Council's perception of Gallipoli's costs and benefits. Tactical victory and a quick end to the war were no longer the "high payoffs" of the operation; these were now substituted by nebulous arguments about bargaining assets, avoiding blows to national prestige, possible but fading diplomatic effects in the Balkans, and diverting Turkish troops from other fronts in the Middle East. Clearly, the benefits of this policy had diminished significantly. But to gain these so-called benefits, the Council was now prepared to devote more troops than ever to the theater, despite Kitchener's pessimism about the prospects for tactical success. It would have been enlightening if someone on the War Council had tried to re-open this decision afresh, asking, "Are all of these resources, applied to a tactical situation with little chance of victory, really worth these purported benefits?" But because the other option--withdrawal--was dismissed without serious analysis as unacceptable, it was psychologically much easier for the Council to not re-open its decision, to continue the same policy, and to expend more effort in the hope of gaining some kind of success.

B. PCC: Policymakers fail to re-evaluate flawed underlying assumptions

At the end of May, after the new Coalition government came into power, Churchill circulated a paper to the newly formed Dardanelles Committee. In this paper, Churchill argued that while the Allies had neither the men nor the ammunition to achieve victory on the Western Front, a comparatively small addition to Hamilton's forces would make a huge difference at Gallipoli. If the Army could advance just a few miles up the peninsula, the fleet could reach the Sea of Marmora and all the old promised payoffs could still be achieved. With no other palatable options, the Dardanelles Committee agreed and sent five more divisions to Gallipoli at the beginning of June.[15]

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[15]Moorehead, 238.

However, the concept of this operation continued to be based on flawed assumptions that had already been refuted by the amphibious landings at Gallipoli in April. For example, the Committee still assumed implicitly that the Turkish government would collapse if the fleet reached Constantinople. Yet Admiral de Robeck reported in May, " The temper of the Turkish Army in the Peninsula indicates that the forcing of the Dardanelles and subsequent appearance of the Fleet off Constantinople will not, of itself, prove decisive."[16] Hamilton's report also concurred with this assessment, which commented ten days into the April landings that "all our Turkish experts are surprised at the Germanisation of Turkish tactics. . . they seem to have behind them some of the German energy, enabling them to assume the offensive even after a pretty severe handling."[17] There is no evidence that the Dardanelles Committee took any of these assessments into account when it decided to send more troops to the theater.

The Dardanelles Committee also continued to assume implicitly that an Allied capture of the Dardanelles would open up shipping and allow the western Allies to provide Russia with munitions and equipment in exchange for grain. However, as noted in Chapter 4, not only was the shipping not available, but Britain couldn't even meet its own requirements for equipment and ammunition. The Committee must have been aware of this problem; after the April landings at Gallipoli had failed and Hamilton had requested more munitions, Kitchener's reply mentioned that the shortage of merchant shipping would be a problem.[18] This strange behavior is consistent with the presence of premature cognitive closure, which may have caused the Committee to not re-evaluate key assumptions in the face of ample adverse evidence.

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[16]Wilson, 140.

[17]Winter, 218-219.

[18]Higgins, 184.

C. PCC: Policymakers fail to confront trade-offs

When the April landings at Gallipoli failed, it became clear that success would require a great number of troops, much more war material, and the further diversion of scarce shipping assets. These resources could only be obtained at the expense of the Western Front, which Kitchener was loath to do. Meanwhile, the situation had reached frustrating proportions for Hamilton, whose appeals for more munitions at the beginning of May had been denied by the War Office: "The ammunition supply for your force was never calculated on the basis of a prolonged occupation of the Peninsula. It is important to push on."[19]

At a meeting on 14 May, the War Council considered Hamilton's evaluation that he needed significant reinforcements to continue. According to Aspinall-Oglander,

> This was the acid test. There could be only one decisive theatre. Either it lay in the Dardanelles, in which case, owing to the limited means available, the strategical defensive should have been temporarily imposed upon the Army in France; or, if a spring offensive on the Western Front . . . was held to be of greater importance . . . every available man and gun should have been concentrated in France, and the landing in Gallipoli should not have been undertaken. But neither of these courses had been adopted . . . With barely enough ammunition for one theatre, an offensive campaign was sanctioned in two, and both ended in failure.[20]

In short, in spite of the increased demands of Gallipoli and its obvious clash for limited resources with France, the War Council did not discuss the relative merits of Gallipoli versus those of the Western Front.[21] At the beginning of July, the British Cabinet did appear to confront the problem, concluding, "We regard the Western theater as, for the time being, the dominant one, and we shall support the allied army there, with all the available strength we can command."[22] However, this conclusion was never fully translated

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[19]Wilson, 137.

[20]Aspinall-Oglander, Vol. I, 354.

[21]Steel and Hart, 167-168; Aspinall-Oglander, Vol. I, 354.

[22]Cassar, 116; Geoffrey Miller, 266.

into policy, for Kitchener never instructed Hamilton to assume the defensive at Gallipoli. In fact, Hamilton continued to plan for a new offensive in August(!).

Apparently, although the Cabinet had given priority to the Western Front, Kitchener, as well as other members of the Dardanelles Committee, still believed that Gallipoli could be won with the large number of troops already there. The result was a strange amalgam of contradicting signals and actions, for although Hamilton was permitted to undertake his offensive with all the troops he had been given, his petitions for other war necessities were often denied because they conflicted with France's new "primary theater" status. Thus, the British government was right back where it started, with two inadequately supplied operations and no decision between them.

For example, despite providing more divisions to Gallipoli, Kitchener did not replace the cadre losses of the divisions that had fought in the April assault. Kitchener also rejected Hamilton's request for an experienced corps commander from the Western Front to command the August offensive, sending instead the elderly and battle-inexperienced General Stopford.[23] And, perhaps worst of all, despite Kitchener's assurances that "we are most anxious to give you everything you can possibly require and use," Hamilton's request for a temporary priority over the Western Front in ammunition supply was refused contemptuously by the War Office. High explosives were dispatched from Marseille only in response to pressure from Churchill. The M.E.F.'s 53rd and 54th Divisions also did not have their complement of artillery, and despite Hamilton's urgent requests, Kitchener refused to allot him any more howitzer batteries or shells.[24] This lack of artillery and shells essentially doomed the August offensive, for as the earlier Western Front battles of Neuve Chapelle and Aubers Ridge had proved, prolonged artillery bombardments were crucial to any sort of successful attack against strongly-held enemy trenches. Since light machine guns and trench

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[23]Steel and Hart, 220, 225; Guinn, 88.

[24]Guinn, 91-92; Hamilton, Vol. I, 307-310, and Vol. II, 10-13.

mortars had not yet been invented, extremely heavy artillery barrages were the only tool that the advancing infantry had to suppress the enemy before and during their assault.[25] The tragic results of these half-measures were only too predictable--hobbled in part by poor leadership and a shortage of guns and munitions, the August offensive at Gallipoli foundered.

Overall, the Dardanelles Committee's actions were consistent with the predictions of premature cognitive closure, for the Committee failed to choose between the two theaters, resulting in a lack of sufficient resources for Hamilton's August offensive. As Guinn put it, "The Dardanelles campaign was wrecked . . . [in large part] by the inability of the various ministers . . . to agree on its scope and nature and supply adequate support."[26]

D. Conclusion

At the end of 1915, as the Gallipoli campaign's drawbacks and failures mounted, the British government literally seemed to be hiding its eyes at times, afraid to look at or deal with the difficulties of the deteriorating situation. War Council members appeared to avoid or reject indications that the campaign was failing, resulting in their refusal to re-open the decision, re-evaluate flawed assumptions, or confront necessary trade-offs. Overall, this behavior was consistent with the presence of motivated biases (i.e., premature cognitive closure) in the decision-making process. As a result, British policymakers persisted in continuing the Gallipoli campaign long after its costs had outweighed its benefits. As a disconcerted Bonar Law expressed his frustration at the beginning of December: "I hope that my colleagues will agree with me that the war cannot be carried to a successful issue by methods such as these."[27]

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[25]Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 41-43; 77, 94.

[26]Guinn, 178.

[27]Higgins, 234.

VI. Conclusion

According to Cruttwell, "The Great War was the first of its kind in which all information on all fronts was--at least in its broad outlines--available for everyone practically simultaneously . . . Every move on the chess-board could be made in reliance on up-to-date information."[1] Unfortunately, in 1915, the British War Council apparently didn't use that up-to-date information very much or very well. In fact, the Council frequently failed to seek, accept, or use relevant inputs to help it make its judgments. Although some might say that the Council did not seek relevant facts because it knew that political or other constraints would force it to pursue a particular policy, regardless of the likelihood of success, this is not a strong argument. In reality, policymakers care deeply about the prospects of success and will rarely follow policies which they expect to fail.[2]

As noted in Chapter 1, the British government's lapses in judgment have been variously attributed to a number of different influences. However, cognitive psychology offers another possible explanation, asserting that stressful, complex decisions are often distorted by unmotivated and motivated biases. While cognitive bias in the decision-making process does not necessarily lead to bad outcomes, *ceteris paribus*, it does tend to reduce the quality of the resulting decisions. Indeed, the presence of such biases among British leaders may have had a dramatic adverse impact on the quality of their decisions in the Gallipoli campaign. This paper attempts to show that a cognitive psychology explanation is consistent with the historical facts of this case, but such an approach has been overlooked in the past. Therefore, this approach can contribute to the existing historiography of the Gallipoli campaign by providing a fresh, plausible explanation that is consistent with the campaign's events.

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[1]Cruttwell, 6.

[2]Kaufmann, 578.

This paper does not claim that cognitive psychology is the best explanation for the decisions of the British government in the Gallipoli campaign; nor does this paper attempt to prove the validity of cognitive theory. For obviously, not all of the mistakes in the War Council's decision-making processes were due to cognitive bias; there are also plausible group, organizational, and bureaucratic explanations as well. However, this study does attempt to demonstrate that British decision-making in the Gallipoli campaign was consistent with the expected characteristics of unmotivated and motivated biases. Therefore, this study adds to our existing knowledge by providing an additional historical case study that is consistent with cognitive theory. This paper's findings also imply that future research on this topic might focus on conducting a comparative analysis of these different theories, including group dynamics, organizational theory, rational choice, and cognitive psychology, in order to determine which is most consistent in explaining the events of the Gallipoli campaign. By assessing each theory's predictions, looking for differences between the predicted outcomes, and then examining the historical evidence, one should be able to see which theory or theories explain the behavior of the British War Council in 1915 most accurately.

Perhaps most importantly, this study is a cautionary tale for policymakers, for the Gallipoli campaign is an exemplary account of how highly educated and able decision-makers can reach very poor decisions. For although the campaign's execution was flawed at the tactical and operational levels, national decision-makers clearly also made a number of poor decisions that had a major adverse impact on the conduct and outcome of the campaign. Policymakers discussed the advantages of courses of action, but not the drawbacks; repeatedly failed to look at conflicts between national means and ends and the accompanying value trade-offs involved; failed to examine or re-examine underlying assumptions; and refused to re-consider the overall wisdom of continuing the campaign, despite obvious signs of failure. Therefore, the tragic story of Gallipoli urges leaders today to guard themselves

whenever possible against these inborn tendencies, especially when they are faced with extremely stressful, complex decisions with no palatable alternatives.

Many of the negative effects of cognitive bias can be mitigated through education, reorganization, and the adoption of procedures that incorporate the scientific method of inquiry. For example, if decision-makers become aware of the possible effects of cognitive bias, they may be able to avoid or compensate for them. Decision-makers might think in advance about what evidence would tend to refute their views, so when adverse feedback does arise, they will be more likely to consider it and not brush it aside.[3] Likewise, if decision-makers know that their belief systems are prone to cognitive bias, they might examine the evidence that support their beliefs more closely. Policymakers might also suspend their judgment for longer periods than they otherwise would, or consult people who are less psychologically involved with the issue.[4]

Decision-making procedures can also be designed to counteract or guard against the effects of bias. For example, to counteract the tendency to neglect significant options or consequences, policymakers might use decision aids, such as checklists that force users to consider unpleasant issues, to periodically revisit painful subjects, or to list reasons why an option should not be undertaken.[5] Decision-makers also might draw up contingency plans, which would allow planners to study potential problems extensively, solicit competing schools of thought, and choose the best responses without the adverse effects of time pressure and psychological stress.[6] Moreover, policymakers might appoint a staff member to play "devil's advocate" to challenge group decisions, raise alternative options, or suggest

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[3]Jervis, 409-410, 413-414.

[4]Jervis, 423.

[5]Fischhoff, 152.

[6]Fischhoff, 164-165.

reasons why leaders' favored beliefs might be wrong.[7] In addition, if a variety of analysts with different perspectives are allowed to consider the situation, decision-makers can learn what perspectives they are rejecting, what evidence they should examine more closely, and what assumptions need further thought. As a result, fewer important questions may be overlooked. Large organizations may have an easier time facilitating these kinds of debate, since they often possess within their decision-making organizations an intrinsic divergence of interests, goals, training, and information.[8]

Obviously, none of the above measures can completely eliminate poor decision-making practices. Long checklists might reduce the attention paid to individual options, leading to broad but superficial analyses.[9] Decision-makers may still feel unable to express dissent because of fear of recrimination. Too many divergent views in the decision-making process can lead to a loss of control, where participants fight for their parochial objectives instead of working toward a common goal.[10] And political or interpersonal pressures may drive away opposing voices or keep them from ever being solicited.[11] Nevertheless, because cognitive bias can significantly undermine the effectiveness of crucial decisions, policymakers should be concerned about its adverse impact and attempt to compensate for it. Therefore, governments should seriously consider adopting the above measures in order to reduce the negative effects of cognitive bias and improve the efficacy of their decision-making processes.

In conclusion, cognitive biases may have been present in the decision-making processes of the British government in 1915, possibly resulting in a large number of

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[7]Fischhoff, 163.

[8]Jervis, 415-417.

[9]Fischhoff, 152.

[10]Lebow, 294.

[11]Fischhoff, 165-167.

correctable but unnoticed flaws at the Gallipoli campaign's highest levels of command. Although Churchill later blamed the campaign's failure on fate and bad luck, it is telling that, at the end of 1915, Sir Henry Wilson began to refer to the most powerful, venerable decision-making body of the British Empire as "the Cabinet of all the Indecisions."[12] The tragic outcome was war at its worst for the soldier, with poor national-level decisions frustrating his valiant efforts on the ground and leading him inexorably to defeat.

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[12]Churchill wrote, "The slightest change in the fell sequence of events would have been sufficient to turn the scale." Churchill quoted in Cohen and Gooch, 161; Wilson quoted in Higgins, 233.

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