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# The Coalition Government as a New Form of Government

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## DEDICATION

To my beloved mother « YAMMA » and my father

« ZIDANE » for their patience and sacrifices.

To my sisters "ROUNA and FATMA ZOHRa" and

Brothers "BAHR and BELLE" for

Their support and love

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

With the decline of her great empire, Great Britain was fighting to end and solve her many crises. However, the level of these crises increased with the coming of the “Great War” or “The First World War”. Disaster almost led to the collapse of the state and division especially with the failure of the liberal government.

In order to follow the recent events, a new government called “the coalition government” was formed with a change in politics.

This work deals in details with the issue of this new government as a new development in Great Britain’s politics. Also, it is an analysis of the role of the coalition government as a means that could protect the nation and try to finish the war as soon as possible with the least damages. Further, this work focus on the case of the national unity during the war since the coalition government gathered most of the political parties in the U.K.

## **RESUME**

Après le déclin de son empire, la Grande-Bretagne a lutté pour mettre fin au désordre qui étouffait. Toutefois, le niveau de ces crises a augmenté avec l'arrivée de la «Grande Guerre» ou «La Première Guerre Mondiale". Cette guerre a presque mené à l'effondrement de l'État et la division en particulier avec l'échec du gouvernement libéral.

Dans le but de suivre les événements récents, un nouveau gouvernement a été formé. Le nouveau gouvernement a été appelé "le gouvernement de coalition".

Ce travail traite en détail de la question de ce nouveau gouvernement comme nouveau développement dans la politique de Grande-Bretagne. En outre, il s'agit d'une analyse du rôle du gouvernement de coalition comme un moyen qui pourrait protéger la nation et essayer de terminer la guerre rapidement avec le moins dégâts possible. En outre, cette étude est orientée sur le cas de l'unité nationale pendant la guerre depuis que le gouvernement de coalition qui a réuni la plupart des partis politiques au Royaume-Uni.

## ملخص

لقد كانت بريطانيا تعاني وتصارع من أجل الخروج بأقل الأضرار من أزماتها الداخلية. تلك الأزمات زادت حدتها مع بداية الحرب العالمية الأولى بحيث مستها أسوء الكوارث آنذاك. كوارث كادت تؤدي الى انهيار الدولة و انقسامها، خصوصا مع فشل الحكومة الليبرالية في معالجتها. كتغيير جديد في سياستها الداخلية في معالجة الأزمات، تم الإعلان عن إنشاء حكومة ائتلافية.

لذا فان هذا العمل يتناول مسألة إنشاء الحكومة الائتلافية كتغيير جديد في سياسة بريطانيا العظمى. بالإضافة الى الدور الذي لعبته في الحفاظ على استقرار البلاد وقدرتها في إخراجها من الحرب العالمية الأولى بأخف الإضرار. كما يركز على قضية الوحدة الوطنية إبان الحرب بما إن الحكومة الائتلافية تضم كل الأحزاب السياسية في المملكة المتحدة.

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## **General Introduction**

Britain was a world power, and the centre of an enormous empire that spread all over the world. She had colonies in all the continents from east to west. She was the leader of the world. However, the British power started to decline with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. New countries stronger than Britain emerged.

The political life had changed especially with the coming of the Great War. The summer of 1914 was a turning point in the history of all Europe and Britain. It was the beginning of a military conflict named the “Great War”, later, “The First World War”. Many European countries were involved and Europe was the field of the majority of the battles.

In that time, Britain was on the edge, lot of crises (political and economical crises). The government was unable to fight all the crises. Usually, the British political system followed the British constitution. As part of this system the British government was influenced by the coming of the Great War. More over, there was a conflict between the political parties. The liberal and the conservative parties had different views and methods in ruling the country. In addition to these two political parties, there was a third party “the labour” in its beginning. Since Britain was in the wartime, the government should be strong to solve all the crises.

In Peace time, the government was formed only with one political party. The party that got the majority of seats in the general election could form the government. The liberals were the leaders of the government. However, in the wartime a new type of government was formed. The new government was called “the coalition government”. This new government included all the political parties in the United Kingdom.

In this work, we are going to analyse the most important event and facts that help to answer some specific questions but the most important question in this work is, does the formation of the coalition government mean a national unity? Or did Asquith and Lloyd George succeed, when they gathered all the political parties in one government, in uniting the country during the wartime?

In order to answer this question, we are going to deal with the following points:

The first chapter will be an overview about the political life in Britain at the eve of the First World War. We are going to focus on the period from 1910 to 1914. This period was a turning point in the British political life. It includes the most important events that changed the history of British politics starting from the 1910 general election. This election was considered as the beginning of the decline of the liberal party after its golden age in the British government. Then, we will move to the crises of the liberal government as a second reason of the decline of the liberal party. The decline of the liberal party affected a lot the political life in Britain and British society. The last point in this chapter will be the declaration of war on Germany. Britain declared the war on Germany after hot debates. This decision has also its effect on British political life as well as the British society.

The second chapter will be about the formation of the first coalition government as a result of the previous events. In this chapter, we will explain and analyse the reasons behind this decision. We will talk also about the pressure of the war as the most important event that changed the minds of the politicians in Britain to help the Prime Minister "Asquith". The next point is Asquith's first coalition government as a new type of government and we will focus and analyse the reasons behind this decision because there are many different views about this decision. The most

important issue of the different views was national unity which was considered through the gathering of the different political parties. The finale point will be the fall of Asquith. In this point we try to cover the reasons behind this event, which was a turning point in the British history especially during the war.

In the last chapter, we are going to talk more about the new changes in the British history which is include in the second coalition government under the leadership of Lloyd George. We will focus on the most important issue which is the national unity. The role of the government in the wartime and how did the government deal with the troubles and save the nation unity especially at the end of the Great War?

In order to answer these questions that are related to coalition government and the national unity, we will use different references including books, diaries and online articles especially previous works dealing with the subject.

## **Introduction**

The golden age of the British Empire started to vanish. With the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C, Britain fell in a circle of endless crises. The government tried to use all the most useful methods in order to deal with these problems. No one in Britain expected such troubles. These crises had a big influence on the British society and especially the political life. The political life started to change slowly. However, the outside crises increased the situation in Britain and led to serious collapse of the old style of life.

### **1. The 1910 General Election**

1906 was the year of the liberals. They won the election with great victory in the British politics. Four year later, the liberal party continued its policies and entered in the election. The 1910 general election was from January 15<sup>th</sup> to February 10<sup>th</sup>. All the political parties in the U K were involved: the liberal party, the conservatives, the labour, and the Irish party.

Campaigning was rather relaxed. Arthur Balfour, the leader of the conservatives, and Herbert Asquith, the leader of the liberal and the prime minister, were fighting for one position- the next prime minister- but they worked slowly (Roland White).

The struggle between the liberals and the conservatives started before the 1910 general election. In 1909, the House of Lords rejected "People's Budget" of Lloyd George<sup>1</sup> because the house of lords was under the conservatives' majority. Asquith wanted to stop and to reduce the majority of the conservatives in the House of Lords after the

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<sup>1</sup> David Lloyd George (1863-1945) the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908-1915.

election of 1910. However, the situation for the liberals was different from the former election of 1906. So, they joined the labour party and the Irish.

The result was the following:




### UK General Election January 1910

Party	Candidates				Votes				
	Standing	Elected	Gained	Unseated	Net	% of total	%	No.	Net %
Conservative and Liberal Unionist	594	272			+ 116	40.6	46.8	2,919,236	+3.4
Liberal	511	274			- 123	40.9	43.5	2,712,511	-5.4
Labour	78	40			+ 11	6.0	7.0	435,770	
Irish Parliamentary	85	71	0	11	- 11	10.6	1.2	74,047	+0.6
All-for-Ireland	10	8	8	0	+ 8	1.2	0.4	23,605	
Independent Nationalist	10	3	3	2	+ 2	0.5	0.3	16,533	
Social Democratic Party	9	0	0	0	0		0.2	13,479	-0.1
Independent Conservative	4	1	1	1	0	0.1	0.2	11,772	
Free Trader	4	0	0	0	0		0.2	11,553	
Independent Labour	6	0	0	1	- 1		0.2	9,936	
Independent Liberal	3	1	1	0	+ 1	0.1	0.1	5,237	
Scottish Prohibition	1	0	0	0	0		0.0	756	



*All parties shown.*

### Voting summary

**Popular vote**

Liberal		43.51%
Conservative and Liberal Unionist		46.82%
Labour		6.99%
Irish Parliamentary		1.19%
Independent		0.7%
Others		0.79%

**Seats summary****Parliamentary seats**

Liberal		40.9%
Conservative and Liberal Unionist		40.6%
Labour		5.97%
Irish Parliamentary		10.6%
All-for-Ireland		1.19%
Independent		0.75%

(Wikipedia)

The liberals and their allies fought against the conservatives not only to win the election but also to reduce the majority of the conservatives in the House of Lords. One historian had summed up the situation for the winning party as follow:

“In its actual outcome, the result of January 1910 general election made the tactical situation as bad as it could be for the unionists, for the liberals lost their majority and could now continue to govern only on Irish MPs votes, which ensured that battle would be rejoined with the lords as the

prelude to achieving home rule as well as the budget”  
(Norman mc cord 438)

The result of the election was for the conservatives, but the union between the liberal, labour and Irish gave the liberal the majority of 124. The union of the three parties went into the election 1910 under the slogan “the peers against people” which gained for them the votes of the aristocracies (Roland, White). The votes of the aristocracies were the problem for the conservatives. Then, the liberal party under the leadership of Herbert h. Asquith called for another election in the same year.

A second election was in the end of the year. The election was from 3<sup>rd</sup> December to 19<sup>th</sup> December. The same parties were involved with small change. The labour party was led by George Nicola Barnes after the resignation of Arthur Henderson. The result of that election was not so different from the previous one. The liberals won again with Asquith who became the prime minister for the following years.

The whole result was as in the following tables:

#### UK General Election December 1910

Party	Candidates				Votes				
	Standing	Elected	Gained	Unseated	Net	% of total	%	No.	Net %
Conservative and Liberal Unionist	548	271	28	29	- 1	40.4	46.6	2,270,753	-0.3
<b>Liberal</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>- 2</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>2,157,256</b>	<b>+0.7</b>
Labour	56	42	5	3	+ 2	6.3	6.3	309,963	-0.6
Irish Parliamentary	81	74	5	2	+ 3	11.0	1.9	90,416	+0.7

All-for-Ireland	21	8	2	2	0	1.2	0.6	30,322	+0.2
Social Democratic Party	2	0	0	0	0		0.1	5,733	-0.1
Independent Conservative	4	1	1	1	0	0.1	0.1	4,647	
Independent Labour	4	0	0	0	0		0.1	3,492	
Independent Liberal	1	0	0	1	-1		0.0	1,946	
Scottish Prohibition	1	0	0	0	0		0.0	913	
Independent Nationaliste	4	2	0	1	-1	0.3	0.0	911	
Independent	2	0	0	0	0		0.0	57	

## Voting summary

### Popular vote

Liberal	44.23%
Conservative and Liberal Unionist	46.57%
Labour	6.36%
Irish Parliamentary	1.85%
Independent	0.23%
Others	0.78%

## Seats summary

### Parliamentary seats

Liberal	40.6%
Conservative and Liberal Unioniste	40.45%



Labour		6.27%
Irish Parliamentary		11.04%
All-for-Ireland		1.19%
Independent		0.45%
(Wikipedia)		

## 1-2 The Liberal Government and the Crises

After the general election of 1910, the liberals won again and formed the government. However, the result was not good, the liberals lost their majority and they had only a minority government.

Asquith as the prime minister of that liberal government started to face many problems especially in the House of Lords. In order to solve that issue, Asquith introduced the parliament bill again to postpone the power of the lords.

In the beginning the bill was rejected by the lords. However, Asquith in his second leadership reintroduced it after he took a promise from the king Edwards's vii. King Edward promised Asquith that if the lords rejected the bill, he would create some liberal peers to produce the majority for the liberal (Roland White). King Edwards died in May and he was succeeded by the king George V. this was a problem for Asquith. He was thinking about the new sovereign and the political life in Britain and especially his bill.

The king George V agreed on a "contingent guarantee"<sup>1</sup> (Norman Mc cord.439) after much searching and consultation. Later, the conservative leader advised his peers to allow the pass of the bill. He thought that if they rejected the bill the king did his promise, so the conservatives would lose the majority of lords for the liberal. So, to avoid that

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<sup>1</sup> If another general election confirmed the government in power, the king would –if necessary, to protect the national unity- creat sufficient liberal peers to ensure the passage of The Parliament Bill.

situation, Balfour advised also the conservative to leave the house before the vote. Most of them did, and only small number fought until the end. At the end, the parliament bill was passed on august 10<sup>th</sup>, 1911 with 131 to 114 votes. By the passing of the parliament act a constitutional crisis was ended and the liberal were free (Norman Mc cord.439).

The end of the constitutional crisis was not the end for liberals. Asquith and his cabinet were facing another problem which was considered as serious as the Parliament Act. It was known as “the labour unrest” or “the industrial unrest”

The “labour unrest” was a wave of strike action, especially during the period from 1911to1912. These strikes were over the UK in all the industrial fields such as the strikes in the Southampton docks and London docks, strikes of 2 million men in the miners’ confederation (1911-12) (Paul Adelman 2). From 1913-14, the strikes spread to all of the country. Miners’ strikes in the midlands spread to Ireland. Moreover, the liberal government faced a threat of the collective strikes under the “triple alliance”.<sup>1</sup>

The main causes of the unrest were a lot but there were two main causes. The first one was the impact of the economic problems. In that time, Britain was in the process of the industrial decline which was followed by a period of slump. The slump affected trade and increased unemployment. The second cause was the influence of syndicalism.

In order to solve these problems, the liberal government was working on two sides. (Friendly and using power):

Lloyd George was the chief conciliator in the government. He used conciliation boards to set up the negotiations on basic issues such as hours of workers and wages. In

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<sup>1</sup> The “triple alliance” was the national union of railway men, transport workers’ federation, and miners’ confederation.

1912, the government stopped the coal strike by sponsoring Minimum Wage Act<sup>1</sup>. That's in one hand, in the other hand, Asquith and Churchill favoured the use of power, for instance, troops were used in Wales to stop the railway strike of 1911.

The problems continued with the liberal government in Ireland and women's suffragette movement.

During the 1910 general election, Asquith announced that if he were in power, he would make sure that women with property would get the right to vote. However, Asquith changed his mind in november1911 and announced legislation that would enable all adult males to vote. The women's social and political union (WSPU) organised a window breaking campaign including an attack on Asquith's home (Wikipedia).

Ireland was also an important issue during the liberal government. As supporters of Asquith, the Irish nationalists waited Home Rule for Ireland.

The third home rule bill was introduced in 1912. It was a revival of Gladstone's second home rule bill. However, the split between the Irish made the Home Rule impossible. The Ulster unionists refused the negotiation and they were prepared for the revolution. Whereas, the Irish nationalist were against revolution and they supported peace (Paul Adelman3).

Some historian linked between the conservatives and the Ulster unionists. The Ulster unionists opposed the home rule and the conservatives as the majority in The House of the Lords promised to reject the bill, or to make the home rule bill late as long as possible. However, The Parliament Act 1911 stopped the Lords (Paul Adelman 3).

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<sup>1</sup> The Minimum Wage Act (Miners) 1912 or the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Act 1912 was an Act of Parliament which gave minimum wage protection to Miners

It was an anarchy both sides were in struggle. The liberal government was unable to deal with the crisis. Asquith preferred his policy “wait and see”. Though, the tension in Ireland increased and took new way.

The Ulster unionists organized a volunteer of 100.00 men in private armies in the north and the south of border. This would drive the country into civil war. Asquith tried again to solve the problem. In March, he offered them an amending bill. Asquith suggested the home rule to Ulster would be postponed for six years. The proposal was refused by Edward Carson<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, Carson threaded the government.

Even though, the liberal government continued its efforts to find a solution for this problem. The problem was taken to Buckingham palace conference in July which also failed to solve it. The problem continued for two years later without any solution and the tension increased more and more until the out break of the First World War. The whole question was frozen.

Not only the Irish question was frozen with the out break of the First World War, but also the main crises that faced the liberal government such as the struggle with the House of Lords, labour unrest and women suffragette movement were frozen and delayed.

### **1- 3. The Declaration of the War**

By the beginning of the Great War most of the problems that faced the liberal government were frozen. However; the beginning of the Great War was the beginning of the most harmful crisis in the history not only for Britain but also for the whole of Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Henry Carson, (1854- 1935). An Irish and British barrister, judge and politician. He was leader of the Irish Unionist Alliance and Ulster Unionist Party between 1910 and 1921.

Britain was far away the German armies; Asquith -as the prime minister of the government and the leader of liberal party- was facing a big problem. British involvement in European war was against the liberal tradition. As Dr Michael Lynch said:

” British political parties each possess a set of attitudes or beliefs that help to define their character. The working principles on which the Liberal party had been based may be broadly summarised as peace, non-intervention in foreign affairs, financial economy, free trade, social reform, home rule for Ireland and the preservation of the liberty of the individual. It was these concepts that the Liberals found impossible to maintain when burdened by the responsibility of waging total war”. (Dr Michael Lynch)

These principles were headache for all the British. The German moved from east to west of Europe and the war was near for Britain. The British government was divided into two groups. The first group supported the involvement. Whereas; the second not. Grey<sup>1</sup>, Asquith<sup>2</sup>, and Churchill<sup>3</sup> supported the involvement and the most important reason for them was the secret agreement with France. The second group was known as the “wavers”, they were under the leadership of Lloyd George. This group opposed the war because the British participation in the war was against their values.

The division between Asquith and the wavers continued till august. In the second of august the German army invaded Belgium. This invasion helped Asquith to gain Lloyd George and his supporters’ support to go to the war.

At 10:30p.m, on august 4<sup>th</sup>, 1914. The king George V held a privy council at Buckingham palace, which was attended only by one minster and two court officials. The

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Grey, (1862 –1933), British Liberal statesman, served as Foreign Secretary from 1905 to 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Henry asquith (1852-1928) prime minister of liberal government 1908-15

<sup>3</sup> Winston Spencer Churchill (1874-1965) first lord of admilarity1911-1915. Chancellor of the duchy of lancaster1915.

council sanctioned the proclamation of a state of war with Germany. With the support of the king and the government the declaration of the war against Germany came at 11p.m. on August, 4<sup>th</sup>, 1914.

Moreover; the whole country was united behind the decision of the declaration of the war. For Paul Adelman in his book “The Decline of the Liberal Party 1910-1931” this was a victory for Asquith. (10)

After he gained the nation’s support for the war, Asquith had new crisis to handle. For Adelman there was no change in Asquith’s job during the war. He thinks that Asquith would solve the crisis as he was in peacetime, if he would be handling in “the well-trying ways”. (10)

After the declaration of the war, the British government planned some emergency measures. Asquith believed that as a prime minister his role was to supervise the war not to run it. So, he chose Lord Kitchener as secretary for war.

More measures were brought after the proclamation. Military areas were closed to aliens; trade with the enemy was forbidden; merchant ships were requisitioned (some 250 at once, and later over a thousand) for the transport of the armed forces.

“This reliance on the prerogative was in part a quaint, and convenient, survival; a reminder that Great Britain had advanced towards democracy, and empire towards Commonwealth, without any open break in the tradition constitution.” (Taylor 4)

Also, Taylor thinks that the war was an act of prerogative, with which citizens had small job to do. Britain would fight in the war with armed forces which she possessed at the outset. The navy would fight a great engagement with the German high seas fleet in

the North Sea, while the armies of the continental allies defeated Germany on land. The citizens would be little affected. Grey said in the house of commons on 3 august:” if we are engaged in war, we shall suffer but little more than we shall suffer if we stand aside.” Also, no preparation had been made for changing civilians’ life. The duty of the civilian was to carry on normally; in Churchill’s phrase “business as usual”, this notice was used by a shopkeeper after a fire. (28)

A financial fear was widely expected to follow the outbreak of the war. So, the government took over responsibility for bills on neutral and enemy countries. The government also took over the insurance of war risks on shipping. Moreover, the fear was because of gold. the government feared that people might take to hoarding gold sovereigns, then the general currency, and the treasury was empowered to issue paper notes for 1£ and 10s. These improvisations were the first wartime act of Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The railways were taken over by the government, and guaranteed their 1913 dividends<sup>1</sup>. A committee of railway managers ran the railways for the board of trade. The companies were not coordinate; and, as late as Easter 1916, leave trains from France were stopped for five days so as not to interfere with holiday traffic. There was one foreshadowing of future developments. War cut off British supplies of sugar, two-thirds came from Germany and Austria-Hungary. On 20<sup>th</sup> August, a royal commission was set up to buy and sell sugar, and regulate its distribution. All these arrangements were made primarily for the benefit of the traders concerned—bankers and bill brokers, railways mangers and sugar refiners. Otherwise the state stood aside.

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<sup>1</sup> The government paid 95£ million to the railways during the war. Their traffic would have cost 100£million at prewar rates.

Naval plans had long been settled by the admiralty. The Grand Fleet was already mobilized on the outbreak of war, and at its battle stations in the North Sea, twenty British battleships facing thirteen German, tens for the Armageddon which Fisher had prophesied for September 1914. No decision on the use of the army had been taken before the war. The plans which Sir Henry Wilson, director of operations, had elaborated with French staff officers carried no commitment. On the afternoon of 5<sup>th</sup>, August, Asquith, as secretary for war, held a council of war. Sixteen men, 'mostly entirely ignorant of their subject', said Wilson, agreed that the fourteen territorial divisions could protect the country from invasion (Callwell. 159). The B.E.F<sup>1</sup> was free to go abroad, but where? Wilson explained that railway time-tables, could not be changed. There could be no question of helping the Belgians, though this was why Great Britain had gone to war. The B.E.F had no choice; it must go to Maubeuge on the French left, as he had long planned.

On the following days the cabinet insisted that two divisions must stay at home. Meanwhile, Lord Kitchener<sup>2</sup> had no expert advice – the imperial general staff were all off to France with expeditionary force. Nor did he consult the civilian ministers, whom he distrusted. He ran strategy by occasional flashes of genius. Kitchener foresaw the great German advance through Belgium. Maubeuge seemed to him too dangerous and exposed. On his prompting, the cabinet changed the destination of the B.E.F to Amiens (Taylor, 32).

Later, Britain entered battles in different places such as the battle of Mons, Antwerp. By the end of the year, war at sea begun. German ships were arrested and neutral ships were brought to British ports and their cargoes checked.

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<sup>1</sup> British Expeditionary Force: the British army sent and fight in France

<sup>2</sup> Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916) secretary for war 1914-16



This was the beginning of the Great War for Britain; the liberal government tried to be on the top and solved the entire crises. They took over some emergency measures. However, the beginning was not as Asquith and his cabinet hoped. The war seems longer and harmful.

## **Conclusion**

By the end of the era from 1910-1914 Britain fell to the bottom. The government was in front of dilemma in which never expected. British people still living in the old Victorian values. They were interested only in their usual life with their routine and problems. By the coming of the Great War, their life changed because of the government reactions to the war. Moreover, the result of these crises would appear in the future. Hard times were waiting the British people as well as the liberal government as the leader of the nation.

## **Introduction**

Britain started a new era in her history, an era which was considered as the difficult era for all British. The Great War started in the east but in the following month came the western front. Britain was not well prepared for this new change. The coming of the war to western front affected a lot Britain. The effects of the war came through the important changes that happened in the following months.

### **2.1 The Pressure of the War**

The war raised month after month, at the same time the pressure on Asquith's government raised too. Even, the government took over all the possible emergency measure; they failed to hold the problem. Moreover, the crises rose and the cabinet watched, at the end they recognized that the war would be longer.

In the cabinet meeting, Kitchener announced that the war would last three years, not three months (Warner). The old army was in France and after Kitchener's announcement the government agreed for voluntary recruiting.

Later, Kitchener asked for one hundred thousand men, but the number of the voluntary men was more. It was about 175,000 men and the number rose in the coming months. This was good solution but in fact, this was the beginning of scandal for Asquith's government. The war office was equipped only to supply small army. At the outbreak of the war there were twenty clerks in the army contacts department. In other words, the number was insufficient comparing with the number of the volunteers, that's in one hand, in the other hand; the German army was well equipped and huge number of soldiers, whereas, Britain was not prepared for long war. In

addition, Kitchener put some condition that complicated the issue more. For instant, he refused Lloyd George's offer of finance for expansion. Also, the war cabinet refused to extend its list authorized firms and deluged these firms with orders which they could not fulfill. It insisted that only experienced firms knew how to produce munitions of satisfactory quality, and this was conformed when the first shells ordered form a wider list by ministry of munitions. There was a shortage of shell. At the end the blame fell on the war office and so on Kitchener (Taylor 49).

Later, the liberal government faced new problem or as historians named it a disaster. When Asquith's cabinet recognized that the war would be longer, so, they agreed that the war should be out of Europe territorial. In other words, the British wanted to defeat the Germane army by transforming the war from British' allies lands -France and Spain- to the German' colonies. So, the idea was transformed to the war council. In that council, Lloyd George suggested an expedition to Salonika (Greece) or the Dalmatian coast (southern Croatia). Hankey, secretary of the council, suggested an attack on turkey<sup>1</sup>. This was favoured by kitchner because of his experience of service in the east especially in the Sudan.

This was the beginning for the Dardanelles campaign. Historians consider it as the beginning of the military and naval disaster. The campaign became a crisis for the liberal government and the war council. There was no planning, lack of cooperation between the army and the navy and poor intelligence as Hankey<sup>2</sup> said: "... no one in this country who knows or has access to, all the information, naval, military and political, on which future plans must be based." (Hazlehurst). Also, there was

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<sup>1</sup> Turkey had entered the war against the allies in October.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Hankey (1877-1963) secretary to the committee of imperial defence 1912-38

continual bickering between Churchill, first lord of the admiralty, and first sea lord, admiral Fisher. Later, he resigned on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

After the resignation of Fisher, the "Times" published an article about the shell shortage on the western front, which named it as 'the shell scandal'. Asquith found himself in front not only the Great War but also huge number of crisis which should be solved immediately.

### **2-2 Asquith's First Coalition Government:**

The government of Asquith was rocked by a "Shell Scandal" of 1915 and to some this was a clear indication that the liberals were unable to the governing of the country in its hour of need. Some historians viewed it as the end of 'the liberal government'. Also, the failure of the Dardanelles campaign was blamed on the government and many viewed the resignation of first sea lord Jackie Fisher as assign of his frustration of working with the government.

Asquith as the prime minister of the liberal government was the responsible for finding a solution for this problem especially that Britain had no victory in the war. If Asquith could not find a solution for these crises, he would give Bonar Law, the conservative leader, a chance to attack him. So, Asquith should reconstruct his government before that happened (Lord Beaverbrook 17).

Most of people thought that Asquith would ask for new election. However; he surprised the public and his followers, when he announced for "a coalition government" on May, 26<sup>th</sup> 1915. According to the encyclopedia of parliament of Britain the coalition government is parties unite and secure a majority in Parliament

over other groups; this may happen when the winning party has a small majority at the General Election.(5)

The idea of the formation of the coalition government made the Historians divided into two groups. The first group viewed that Asquith's decision was just a mask for the decline of the liberal party and of course he would lose his position as prime minister. Also, he was incapable man of war; they neglected his views about the role of the prime minister at the war (Kenneth Morgan 10).

They also refused his attitude during the beginning of the war. He rarely asked the war council for meeting and giving reports of the battles. Paul Adelman thought that Asquith fought a lot in order to declare the war and he succeed to unite the nation on his decision, but he escaped and his decision was the last success for him. (10)

Moreover, Asquith should ask for a national government and not for a coalition government. In the encyclopedia of parliament the national government was defined as "...representatives all the political parties; usually in times of war when political attachments give way - national necessity and an electoral truce is declared." (5) For them Asquith was working alone and just for his personal profits.

The second group of historians agreed that his decision was a successful one. Asquith succeeded again in uniting the nation especially during hard time. They thought that the scandal of the shell shortage on the western front, the disaster of the Dardanelles, lord fisher' resignation as first sea lord put Asquith between two choices "confrontation or coalition" as Professor Shannon said. (1)

Since Asquith chose the coalition, so, he chose the security of the country especially during that time. It was wartime and the country should be strong and the

unity of the political parties brought the security of the nation. Asquith thought that if he entered in confrontation with the conservatives, he would lose and the country would be dividing.

Whatever the reasons for Asquith's decision or the name of the government, national or coalition, both types of governments included all the political parties in the country, for instance the coalition government of Asquith was formed from different persons from different political parties; Bonar Law was the colonial secretary. Balfour took Churchill's place at the admiralty. Arthur Henderson joined the cabinet in charge of education; he was from the labour party. Henry Carson, the former Ulster rebel, became attorney general. The only one that Asquith faced with him problem in joining the government was Redmond, the Irish nationalist leader. All these facts represented gestures of national unity. (Blake20)

Even though, the most important thing was the role of Asquith's new government. The government should be strong in order to gain the war and reduce the casualties. Also, it should be as great as the old British Empire to return the whole world as the Great Britain and not the weak Britain. The national effort grew steadily this was imposed from outside, by the enemy by popular pressure, not by any coordinated direction. (Blake21)

### ❖ **The Members of the First Coalition Government:**

First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons **H. H. Asquith** 25 May 1915 – 5 December 1916 Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer **Reginald McKenna** 25 May 1915 Liberal Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury **John Gulland** 30 May 1915 – 5 December 1916 Liberal Joint Government Chief Whips in

the House of Commons **Lord Edmund Talbot** 30 May 1915 – 5 December 1916  
 Conservative Financial Secretary to the Treasury **Edwin Samuel Montagu** 26 May  
 1915 Liberal entered cabinet 16 January 1916 **Thomas McKinnon Wood** 9 July 1916  
 Liberal Junior Lords of the Treasury **Geoffrey Howard** 30 May 1915 – 5 December  
 1916 Liberal **George Henry Roberts** 30 May 1915 – 5 December 1916 Labour  
**William Bridgeman** 30 May 1915 – 5 December 1916 Conservative **Walter Rea** 30  
 May 1915 – 5 December 1916 Liberal Lord Chancellor **The Lord Buckminster** 25  
 May 1915 Liberal Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords  
**The Marquess of Crewe** 25 May 1915 Liberal Lord Privy Seal **The Earl Curzon**  
**of Kedleston** 25 May 1915 Conservative Secretary of State for the Home  
 Department **Sir John Simon** 25 May 1915 Liberal **Herbert Samuel** 10 January  
 1916 Liberal Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department **William Brace** 30  
 May 1915 Labour Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs **Sir Edward Grey** 25 May  
 1915 Liberal created **Viscount Grey of Fallodon** 27 July 1916 Parliamentary Under-  
 Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs **Lord Robert Cecil** 30 May 1915 Conservative  
 in cabinet 23 February 1916 Secretary of State for the Colonies **Andrew Bonar Law**  
 25 May 1915 Conservative Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies **Arthur Steel-**  
**Maitland** 30 May 1915 Conservative Secretary of State for War **The Earl**  
**Kitchener** 25 May 1915 **David Lloyd George** 6 July 1916 Liberal Under-  
 Secretary of State for War **Harold Tennant** 30 May 1915 Liberal The Earl of Derby  
 6 July 1916 Conservative Financial Secretary to the War Office **Henry Forster** 30  
 May 1915 Conservative Secretary of State for India **Austen Chamberlain** 25 May  
 1915 Conservative Under-Secretary of State for India **The Lord Islington** 30 May  
 1915 Liberal First Lord of the Admiralty **Arthur Balfour** 25 May 1915  
 Conservative Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty **Thomas**

**James Mac Namara** 30 May 1915 Liberal Civil Lord of the Admiralty The Duke of Devonshire 9 June 1915 Conservative also Joint Government Chief Whip in the House of Lords **The Earl of Lytton** 26 July 1916 Conservative President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries **The Earl of Selborne** 25 May 1915 Conservative **The Earl of Crawford** 11 July 1916 Conservative Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries **Francis Dyke Ac land** 30 May 1915 Liberal Minister of Blockade **Lord Robert Cecil** 23 February 1916 Conservative President of the Board of Education **Arthur Henderson** 25 May 1915 Labour **The Marquess of Crewe** 18 August 1916 Liberal also Leader of the House of Lords Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education **Herbert Lewis** 30 May 1915 Liberal President of the Local Government Board **Walter Long** 25 May 1915 Conservative Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board **William Fisher** 30 May 1915 Conservative Chief Secretary for Ireland **Augustine Birrell** 25 May 1915 – 3 May 1916 Liberal **Henry Duke** 31 July 1916 Conservative Vice President of the Department of Agriculture for Ireland **Thomas Russell** 30 May 1915 Liberal Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster **Winston Churchill** 25 May 1915 Liberal **Herbert Samuel** 25 November 1915 Liberal **Edwin Samuel Montagu** 11 January 1916 Liberal **Thomas McKinnon Wood** 9 July 1916 Liberal Minister of Munitions **David Lloyd George** 25 May 1915 Liberal **Edwin Samuel Montagu** 9 July 1916 Liberal Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions **Christopher Addison** 30 May 1915 – 8 December 1916 Liberal **Arthur Lee** 11 November 1915 – 9 July 1916 Conservative Paymaster-General The Lord Newton 9 June 1915 Conservative **Arthur Henderson** 18 August 1916 Labour Minister without Portfolio **The Marquess of Lansdowne** 25 May 1915 Conservative Postmaster-General **Herbert Samuel** 26 May 1915 Liberal **Joseph Pease** 18 January 1916



Liberal Assistant Postmaster-General Herbert Pease 30 May 1915 Conservative  
 Secretary for Scotland **Thomas McKinnon Wood** 25 May 1915 Liberal **Harold**  
**Tennant** 9 July 1916 Liberal President of the Board of Trade **Walter Runciman** 25  
 May 1915 Liberal Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade **Ernest George**  
**Pretyman** 30 May 1915 Conservative First Commissioner of Works **Lewis**  
**Harcourt** 25 May 1915 Liberal Attorney-General **Sir Edward Carson** 25 May  
 1915 Conservative **Sir F. E. Smith** 3 November 1915 Conservative Solicitor-  
 General **Sir F. E. Smith** 2 June 1915 Conservative **Sir George Cave** 8 November  
 1915 Conservative Lord Advocate **Robert Munro** 8 June 1915 Liberal Solicitor  
 General for Scotland **Thomas Brash Morison** 8 June 1915 Liberal Attorney  
 General for Ireland John Gordon 8 June 1915 Conservative **James Campbell** 9  
 April 1916 Conservative Solicitor General for Ireland **James O'Connor** 8 June 1915  
 Irish Nationalist Lord Steward of the Household The Lord Farquhar 9 June 1915  
 Conservative Lord Chamberlain of the Household The Lord Sandhurst 9 June 1915  
 Liberal Vice-Chamberlain of the Household **Cecil Beck** 30 May 1915 Liberal  
 Master of the Horse The Earl of Chesterfield 9 June 1915 Liberal Treasurer of the  
 Household **James Hope** 30 May 1915 Conservative Comptroller of the Household  
**Charles Henry Roberts** 30 May 1915 Liberal Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms  
 The Lord Colebrook 9 June 1915 Liberal also Joint Government Chief Whip in the  
 House of Lords Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard The Lord Suffield 9 June 1915  
 Conservative Lords in Waiting The Lord Herschel 9 June 1915 Liberal The  
**Viscount Allendale** 9 June 1915 Liberal The Lord Stanmore 9 June 1915 Liberal.  
 The Lord Ranks borough 9 June 1915 Liberal. The Viscount Valentia 9 June 1915  
 Conservative..The Lord Hylton 9 June 1915 Conservative Joint Government Chief  
 Whip in the House of Lords from 26 July 1916. (Wikipedia)

## 2-3 The Role of the 1<sup>st</sup> Coalition Government

The government was strong and facing big problem which was the Great War. Asquith was asked to reconstruct the political life in Britain, if they wanted to win the war. The government should find the appropriate ways and methods to run the nation during the wartime. In order to reach that point the new cabinet created a new programme. All the ministers started their works rapidly, because Britain was in dangerous zone.

Lloyd George, the ministry of munitions, provided the great exception. His year of office there transformed British economy and his own national standing also. For instant, when he entered the requisitioned hotel, he found nothing, no tables, no staff, and too many mirrors. Later, the ministry was employing a staff of 65.000 and had more than 3 million workers under his direction.

Then, in order to avoid his previous mistakes, Asquith set up a committee to control the ministry of munitions. That ministry turned from the source of problems during the liberal government to source of success during the coalition government. It provided munitions far exceeding the demands of the war office. Also, at the beginning of the war, the army used 1330 machines guns. But after the order, 240.506 were manufactured. The war office turned down stokes light mortar, one of the best weapons of the war (Tylor.35). Stokes' design was initially rejected in June 1915 because it was unable to use existing stocks of British mortar ammunition. (Wikipedia)

The new government, also, focused on the workers. They started receiving high wages, which was considered as the first wages in their lives. One of the union leaders

complained.” we have made sufficient progress now to have crossed the earth ...” (Taylor 38), improvement of working conditions did more to reduce absenteeism. However, workers wanted from the government to avoid military service, to a lesser extent, and the return of wounded men from the army.

The shortage of labour let a gap between the government and the workers. In July 1915, Christabel Pankhurst and thirty thousand women marched down white hall with the slogan “we demand the right to serve”. The demand was soon granted because the government used women to fill the gap. About 200.000 entered the government departments and more women in other fields (Taylor 38).

Lloyd George continued his conciliation with workers during strikes or resistance to dilution in the munitions industry, even though they could be punished in the courts.

After Lloyd George’s success in his department, Mc Kenna introduced an effective war budget. The new government tried to solve another problem which was the shortage of ships. So, the requisitioning for naval and military purposes took nearly a quarter of the British shipping out of ordinary service in the course of 1915.

## **2-4 The Fall of Asquith**

During the first months of the new government, Asquith succeeded to achieve political solidarity within his new government. This solidarity of parties helped Britain to gain time and to return to the war stronger and faced the German. However, the unity of the nation changed when the unity within the cabinet turned too little. Mc kenna turned against Lloyd George. Runciman, at the board of trade, opposed every

creative suggestion. Also, Curzon wrote off loyalty to Law. Each minister ran his department alone.

By 1916, the coalition government moved from crisis to crisis. The beginning was with the voluntary system. At the end of 1915, Kitchener changed his mind on the way in which Britain formed the army especially after the Somme<sup>1</sup>. This operation was considered to be the end of the war. However, the Somme became famous for the huge number of casualties on all sides. Kitchener passed a limited measure, obliging single men of eighteen to forty-one 'attest'; i.e., agree to serve when called upon. This new measure caused a division within the government (Blake, 38). Sir John Simon resigned then followed by three liberal ministers. Lloyd George welcomed this new suggestion. Bonar Law hesitated to the law and asked the army council to convince him. Then, Asquith introduced the bill on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, only thirty-seven MPs voted against it.

Another problem, in fact, that problem was returned; the Irish question. Before the beginning of the war the question was frozen, later, it came to front again.

At that time, the problem took other ways. There were many casualties and both sides of the conflict used bloodily methods. This new war put Britain in dangerous position. A war outside the country, Britain failed to that time to win it and then a war inside the country. This war would divide the country; in order to avoid this Lloyd George suggested negotiation with Redmond and Carson. The negotiation would be on home

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<sup>1</sup> The **Battle of the Somme** (French: *Bataille de la Somme*), also known as the **Somme Offensive**, took place during the First World War between 1 July and 18 November 1916 in the Somme department of France, on both banks of the river of the same name. The battle consisted of an offensive by the British and French armies against the German Army, which since invading France in August 1914 had occupied large areas of that country. One of the largest battles of the First World War, by the time fighting had petered out in late autumn 1916 more than 1.5 million casualties had been suffered by the forces involved. It is understood to have been one of the bloodiest military operations ever recorded.

rule bill, he suggested that:” a plan for the suspended home rule bill to come into force at once the... Ulster counties being excluded till the end of the war” (Blake 39). Both sides (the northern and southern leaders) felt that they were had been fairly treated.

According to Robert Blake the main cause of Asquith’s falls not because the previous crisis but it was because of the complex secret negotiations in december1916 between Lloyd George, Bonar Law, and Carson. These negotiations came after the failure of the attempts of Milner, a great proconsul, Carson and Northcliff, the baron of the media. The three men thought that Asquith should go, because he did not give soldiers more freedom. No one from the government agreed with them even there were some leaders believed so, such as Lloyd George.

By the mid of November, sir max Aitkin, MP, and owner of the daily express , brought Lloyd George , Bonar Law , and Carson together. They agreed on proposal that would give to Asquith to agree. The proposal was a change in the ‘decision-making process’ (Blake, 42). In other words, they wanted to create a war council with small number (the final version was three) and the prime minster would be out the council because he would be too busy with other things and no one said what as Blake said. But, he would be entitled to call in any decision to which he objected and refer it to the cabinet.

One historian saw it as a taken control of the war from Asquith, as the prim minister. Asquith refused and he insisted that the prim minister should be the chairman of the council (Dockrill 68). Not only Asquith refused the proposal, the

“three C’s<sup>1</sup>” also refused it. Taylor said that the three leaders refused the proposal because they wanted to put an end to the conflict even that, both Lloyd and Law insisted on their proposal and after five days of complicated manoeuvres, Asquith resigned on 6 December with the hope that the king would ask him to form a new government which did not happen. Later, the king asked Lloyd George to form the government (38).

By this end Asquith lost his power and his supporter followed him. This was the fall of one of the political leaders in Britain and a new beginning in the political life in Britain in that hard time.

### **Conclusion**

The end of this era was the beginning of a new era. Asquith’s fall had his impact on the British history. The impact of this fall appeared especially on the Liberal Party. The fall of Asquith was the beginning of the Liberal Party which happened later. Even though, the next era was the most important for Britain to come back to the world.

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<sup>1</sup> The three C’s were Robert Cecil, Austen Chamberlain, and Curzon. Three leaders from the Conservative Party

**Introduction:**

The political life in Britain was on the edge. Germany and her allies were moving too fast to gaining the war, Whereas, Britain was looking for new prime minister. The new prime minister would have special skills in order to join the events. The British and their king put a happy end for their sufferance by the coming of the prime minister, who was Lloyd George.

**3-1 Lloyd George as Prime Minister**

After only one year, Asquith's coalition government fell. The government faced many crises that led to an immediate change in the British politics. A new change came with the coming of Lloyd George.

During the first coalition government, Lloyd George was a minister of munitions. He succeeded to reorganize the ministry. He was the manger of the war because of his capacity, energy, self confidence and his capacity to work and dynamism. Paul Adelman saw him as "politician of genius" (20)

After Asquith resignation from the first coalition government, the king asked Lloyd George to form a new government. This was his chance to be the prime minister and achieve his goals especially to save the nation from the German army attacks and won the Great War. Professor Chris Wrigley thought that Lloyd George wished to be a prime minister before Asquith's resignation. David Lloyd George for him was "asquith's crown prince". In addition, he thought that Lloyd George was a responsible of Asquith resignation. The alliance between Lloyd George and the leader of the conservatives was betrayal of Asquith. (History world)

Lloyd George did not only betray Asquith but also the liberal party. Most of his supporters were conservatives.

Unlike Asquith, half of the liberal party was against Lloyd George. They took the opposition benches. However, the role that Asquith's followers took as the opposition was not effective in reality. They were the opposition but they did not work against the government. The most important issue for them was to keep the national unity during wartime. (Mc Gill).

Some historians agreed that the time of Lloyd George coming was important because Britain was on the edge. Asquith formed the coalition government with the hope to unite the nation and the same time to cover his weakness as a leader in the war. Lloyd George was a successful minister during his first year at the war council. He was the only person who could take Britain from bottom to the top and keep the national unity. He had the capacity to run a coalition government; Government of two or three political parties with different views.

However, Lloyd George's ambition to form a new government was based only on 120 liberals mps. Moreover, Lloyd George was a prime minister without political party since Asquith was still the leader of the liberal party. Lloyd George ability to find a solution to such problems was clear. He appointed his "coalition liberal chief whip" captain "Freddie guest". Later, he started to create his own party. In addition he created the "daily chronicle" as pro-"Asquithian" "liberal press.

The split of the liberal party was yet hidden. The two groups were not anti and pro government groups (Adelman 22). The most important issue for both Asquith and Lloyd George was the national unity during the war. Moreover, Adelman believed



that the real split of the liberal party was until the end of the First World War. This explains why Asquith and his followers did not attack the new government.

After these entire crises, Lloyd George only job was to form a new government that could achieve a national unity and won the war. As the prime minister of the new government Lloyd George continued in the same line of his procedure by creating a second coalition government.

### **3-2 The New Government**

After The fall of Asquith, the king asked Lloyd George to form a new government. Lloyd George started his work as a prime minister; he introduced a war cabinet in December 1916 of five ministers:

Prime minister: D. Lloyd George. (The Liberal Party)

Lord President: Earl Curzon. (The Conservative Party)

Chancellor of exchequer: A. Bonar Law. (The Conservative Party)

Minister without portfolio: Arthur Henderson. (The Labour Party)

Viscount Milner. (The Conservative Party)

This small war cabinet included all political parties in Britain. Later, the war cabinet was about six, and for a few months, seven. The war cabinet was the combination of the war council and the cabinet. Lloyd George's cabinet was mainly set up of conservatives (such as Curzon and Bonar Law) while Arthur Henderson was the only labour representative. He was the only liberals especially after the veto the conservatives against Winston Churchill (Chris Trueman).

When Asquith's government fell, there were about thirteen liberals, nine conservatives, and one of the labours. The new cabinet was led by eight liberals, twelve unionists and two labour men.

A huge work was waiting the government to complete or to finish. But the most important work was the winning of the war and saving the national unity.

### **3 -3 The Role of the New Government**

Lloyd George was well prepared as a new prime minister. For the first time, as Robert Blake said, a regular agenda was put. Lloyd George was listening to other cabinet members before getting a decision; some times for some historians he was considered as dictator. Other historians considered him as a man of the impossible mission. He could do things no other way, in other words, he used his own methods, Methods from his nature. In his "War Memoirs", he defined his methods using the following sentence: "I never believed in costly frontal attacks either in the war or politics, if there were a way round" (Lloyd George 17-18)

Even Robertson's view was predictably critical of Lloyd George's tenure at the War Office. He wrote in his memoirs:

"Of the results of Mr. Lloyd George's six months reign at the War Office there is nothing of much interest to record, for he was connected with no measure having any special influence on the course of the war. . . . He preferred his own strategical ideas to those of the General Staff, and of administrative work . . . he left as much as possible to be done by the Under-Secretary of State, Lord Derby. He was, in fact, so much occupied with political activities, especially during the two or three weeks which preceded Mr. Asquith's resignation, as to devote considerably less than undivided attention to the affairs of the Army." (Robertson, 179)

Lloyd George's new government, or as it was known the war cabinet, met every day-300 times in 1917- the goal of all these meeting was to control the government

The new government focused on the main issues the economy and the war especially that Britain did not won any victory yet. New departments were created: shipping, labour, food, national service and food production. The function of all these departments was to provide the national needs. Some historians viewed the creation of these departments evolved a "system of war socialism" (Taylor 113).

The job of these departments was not easy and need skillful persons. So, Lloyd George selected new men –businessmen- to run them. However, the new ministers had no interest or relation with politics as A. J. P. Taylor said: "they have no political interest; their goal was to do vital jobs, not to carry on parliamentary government" (114).

Even though, they focused on their jobs. They had unlimited power to carry on their mission. They created a list of all the cooperation of producers and owners. The aim of this operation was to put control on all the economic fields in the country. By controlling the sources of products, they could control the prices. It was a hard time and all people wished for stability and safety. The economic stability led to national stability.

One of those ministers who supported the idea was Sir Douglas Haig. He was chief of the expedition force, field marshal. Later, he became Lord Haig. He was a businessman and not a politician. Some historians thought that his relation with the king and his allies in the conservative party helped him to join the war cabinet as minister. Even though, he was the right man in the right place, his success during that era covered his weakness. (Webb 491)

Although, the economy was declining more and more and a labour unrest began again. The beginning was with coal miners. According to Taylor, the mines were nationalized but no one tried to reorganize or to modernize the pits (115).

A second problem was the cotton. It was less than 60% of the level of the prewar. However, people who worked in it, tried to remain in that job better than unemployment and war work.

The war cabinet tried to keep the production of all the industrialists stable and the “control of rents” to control and to stabilize the economy (Taylor 115). Wheat was not rationing or limited on the staff of life. The war cabinet agreed that the wheat should be provided to all people with a stable price even if it was cheap flour.

The war cabinet was moving from crisis to another, but the most important one was gaining a victory in the Great War. Lloyd George and his cabinet knew that another lose in the war would lead to the decline of the government and the nation. Germany was gaining a victory after another and Britain did not.

The small war cabinet put planes for gaining the war and defeated the German. Especially; it was not easy for them to finish the old commitment. Lloyd George and his war cabinet faced troubles in putting new strategies because the influence of Kitchener vision even after his death. One of these strategies was introduced by the late months of the war. They transferred the war from West to East. The war cabinet recognized that the war was stronger in the western front and Britain need a victory as soon as possible. Few months after starting their war in east, British forces finally won a war. It was a success in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and the Middle East; the British army wore down Turkish resistance, with the help of charismatic scholar-warrior T E Lawrence. He succeeded raising the Arabs against their Ottoman rulers. Moreover,

Lloyd George and his cabinet thought that the collapse of Germany's allies, Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey, was the only method in which they could defeat the German forces. (Andrew Suttie, 152)

### **3- 4 The End of the War**

The beginning of the war for Britain was not the same as the end. Britain started under the pressure of the outside factors. She got small success in the battle field. However, the entire crises were controlled by the new government. Lloyd George formed his new coalition government with the hope of gaining a victory and defeating the Germans.

The idea of gaining the war started to vanish until Lloyd George decision to fight Germany's allies instead of fighting Germany directly. By the end of 1916, Germany suggested a treaty of peace with Britain and her allies. Though, Britain and France refused the proposal. McDowall thought that both Britain and France refused the proposal because of national feeling that spread during that time. Both governments in Britain and France used the press to encourage the people to hate Germany and her allies. So, if Britain and France accepted the offer of Germany, it would be a betrayal of the nation (160). During that time, Britain had an army of over five million men, but over 750,000 had died, and another two million had been seriously wounded. About fifty times more people had died than in the twenty-year war against Napoleon (McDowell 161). Public opinion demanded no mercy for Germany.

Winning a war became national obligation. All people believed in the capacity of Lloyd George not only gaining one victory but also winning the whole war and defeating Germany. The hope of gaining the war increased with the coming of U.S.A

to help Britain and her allies. It was a turning point in the war, Germany who was the stronger country became the weaker. The coming of American troops in France ended Germany's wishes of the treaty of peace with Britain and France as the case of Russia<sup>1</sup>. Germany surrendered in November 1918.

By the surrender of Germany in the late 1918, Lloyd George won the challenge and he was the man of the war as all people agreed and supported (Webb, 491). After that, Britain and France met to discuss peace at Versailles in 1919. They did not invite Germany but they obliged her to accept the treaty.

### **Conclusion**

By the end of the Great War, Britain won important challenges during that period under the leadership of Lloyd George. He was considered as the man of the war. Unlike Asquith, he was able to deal with the several domestic challenges and imposing his ideas on the other. The era of Lloyd George's coalition government was a successful one in spite of the entire crises and especially taking Britain from bottom to the top.

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<sup>1</sup> Russia signed a treaty with Germany after the beginning of the Bolshevik war. 1917

## **General Conclusion**

The Great War had a real impact on the United Kingdom. It was the beginning of new era in the European continent. As many European countries, Britain suffered a lot during that period. It was a hard time on the British people as well as the British politicians. The country was moving from crises to another, and the politicians tried to take her from that circle of problems.

Before the war, the liberals were the masters of the British political life. Most of the people followed their values and principles. The liberal party took the majority of seats in the general election. 1906-1910 was considered by historians as the golden era for them.

However, at the eve of the First World War, Britain was changing as well as the political life. The liberal government drowned in a sea of crises, sometimes there was no solution as in the case of Ireland or even some economic problems. The liberal government under the leadership of H. Asquith suffered a lot because of these crises. The government was unable even in foreign policy; the liberal party was not able interfering in the world conflict like the crisis of Bosnia, Herzegovina 1908. Austria annexed Bosnia Herzegovina the liberal party did not react; this was not the case 1856 during the Caucasus crisis.

The main job of each government was to provide people needs and also their safety. However, Asquith's liberal government failed to keep the people safety with the beginning of the Great War. The system of living in Britain was different from other European countries. People could move from place to another without using identity cards. Moreover, there were no recruiting system obliging people to join the

army. People were living in peace, but the Great War had its impact on the British society as well as the political life.

The most important issue was the government. The liberal government failed to solve its problems before the war and during the first year. Even when Britain declared the war on Germany, there was a big debate. The country was divided into anti and pro of the war. Asquith and some liberals supported the declaration of the war on Germany, While, Lloyd George and others did not. One of the most important reasons was the liberals' values. Lloyd George and his followers thought that the declaration of the war was against their values. They had a treaty of peace in their tradition.

Asquith started fighting to gain all the country support in order he could ask the king to declare the war. It was not an easy task, the German forces were leading the war with specific plans, and Britain could not take a decision. However, the German massacres during the invasion of Belgium, Asquith succeed in gaining the support of the whole nation to honor their promise of 1839<sup>1</sup>. Lloyd George and his followers also announced their support, and in meeting with the king Britain declared the war on Germany.

With the beginning of the war the most important crises were frozen and delayed. The only thing that all people followed was the safety of the national unity and the security of the people. The national unity appeared within the declaration of the war. Asquith succeeded to gain the support of all political parties and the common people.

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<sup>1</sup> The **Treaty of London**, also called the **First Treaty of London** or the **Convention of 1839**, was a treaty signed on 19 April 1839 between the European great powers, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Belgium. The European powers recognized and guaranteed the independence and neutrality of Belgium and confirmed the independence of the German speaking part of Luxembourg.



The job of Asquith was to save the national unity and support in order to defeat Germany. However, the first year of the war was so hard for Britain. Britain was not well prepared yet for a long war. This led Britain to lose a lot, and people started losing confidence. The country was in a big problem, it was the declining of the United Kingdom as a big nation.

After a huge speeches on the British situation and the people distrust, Asquith surprised all the British with his successful decision. It was the formation of the coalition government; Asquith announced that he wanted to form a new government which included all the political parties in the country.

It was a successful decision because Asquith was able to make all the political parties in one government under his leadership and gained again the trust of the British and realizing their hopes to take the country out of the big problem, the great war. All the political parties were involved in the new government (the liberal party, the conservatives, and the labour). The only obstacle was the Irish. Though, during that year the Irish did not make any troubles for the government. All people were thinking in one issue "gain the war". The new government gained the support of the people and followed all the decisions that came from it.

The coalition government made a big change in the political life in Britain. The ministers were from different parties and each party had its vision. It changed the idea of one single party government. All people had to show and share the nation troubles. With more than one party in the government, the prime minister could listen to different views and chose the appropriate one.

The coalition government helped a lot Asquith, because without the helpings of all people, he could not correct the previous mistakes. The government was working

in the right way and gaining success. Though, Asquith resigned after only one year as prime minister of the first coalition government. The causes of his resignation were a lot but historians agreed that the death of his elder son defeated him a lot and he lost morally.

With the resignation of Asquith from the government, the country was on the edge the sense of the national unity was declining. The king asked Lloyd George to form a new government. The new prime minister had the support of the conservatives and the labours. However, few numbers of the liberals supported him because the majority of them viewed him as a betrayer of the party.

However, Lloyd George succeeded in forming a new coalition government. After short period all people agreed that he was the best one for the position of the prime minister. Lloyd George had specific characteristics that made him the man of the war. After few months, he succeeded to reorganize the government agenda for gaining the war. All his projects gained the support of the cabinet, in spite of the hot debates.

Lloyd George knew that the nation would lose the war if they were separated. He tried his best to keep the nation unity and used different planes for the security of the people.

The war did not come to Britain, while Britain went to the war. Britain and her allies won the war after a hot struggle with Germany and her allies. The most important as historians agreed is the national unity. Britain would never gain the war without the support of all political parties and people.

When people helped the government and supported it in hard time. The government's job would be easy to solve any problems because it was so stronger of any problem as the great war or the first world war.

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