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huge armed forces at the end of the war in November 1918. Those forces melted away surprisingly quickly in the succeeding months. The men themselves wanted to go home and their families wanted them back. Taxpayers were no longer prepared to pay the costs. By June 1919, Allied armies were down to about 1/3 of what they had been at the end of the war. Moreover the capacity or morale of those that remained was very much in question. The French army had never really recovered from the great mutinies of 1917. Parts of the French navy were to mutiny in the spring of 1919. The British Army was perhaps in better shape but it too was shaken by riots and demonstrations. Morale was still high in the American armed forces but the last thing the Europeans wanted was more American influence over Europe or further afield.

Projecting power was also a problem. When empires broke up and revolution had spread across Europe, economic and transportation structures had crumbled. The trains could not run if the coal were not available or the rolling stock had disappeared. Many ports were scarcely operating. When it came to Asia Minor or the Caucasus the logistical problems were even greater. Again and again in Paris the statesmen had confronted the need to do something and their own lack of capacity. One day, for example, the Big Four of Lloyd George, Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, Wilson, and Vittorio Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, discussed the small war that had broken out between Poland and Czechoslovakia over a rich coal area. All agreed that the two countries must be told to stop. It became clear however that there were no troops available to send. Lloyd George's final solution was to send a firm telegram. Discussions like this happened repeatedly.

There is a danger, it seems to me, for great powers in looking outwards from their great capitals at the world and imagining all the things you might do. The pieces out there in the rest of the world, however, are not as malleable as you might like and ordering them about may not be as easy as you think. There is perhaps a lesson for today in this. Of course, the world of 2003 is different in many ways from that of 1919 and the United States is much more powerful in relation to its enemies (as well as its friends) than any single power was then, but American policy makers can still fall into the same trap. Some