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William Mulligan

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It could be argued that the very first analysis of the origins of the First World War was the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum presented to the Serbian government at 5 p.m. on 23 July 1914. Even before the conflict began, participants were busy constructing their own narratives of international history in the early twentieth century. The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum read like a charge-sheet, presented to an allegedly criminal state. The Serbian government duly penned a defence. From the beginning of the war, participants fused historical analysis, political interest, moral judgement and legal rhetoric into their accounts of the conflict's origins. This

conflation of different explanatory modes continued into the post-war period. Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles held Germany and its allies solely responsible for the outbreak of the war, while the lesser known Article 227 arraigned William II for 'a supreme offence against...

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