

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (1871-1939)

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INTRODUCTION

The ideas of the enlightenment period pervaded throughout Europe in the 19th century. These culminated in the collapse of autocratic monarchies throughout the European continent as well as the formation of new nations in Western Europe. Along with these ideas of enlightenment, the concept of nationalism, as well as the logic of the industrial revolution, resulted in a great thirst among the European powers to gain more and more colonies to achieve Great Power status. It was this endeavour that governed international relations among the European powers in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Such a framework of international relations resulted in the European continent witnessing many tragedies.

The logic of the Industrial Revolution, as well as the expansionist policies of imperialist countries in the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century, culminated into the two most horrifying events in the history of humanity—the two world wars. How could such horrors have been allowed to occur? What part did Nationalism and Imperialism play in the perversion of enlightenment ideas? This book entitled ‘*International Relations, 1871 – 1939*’ will try to answer such questions.

The learning material in this book, *International Relations (1871–1939)*, has been presented in the self-learning format, wherein each unit begins with an *Introduction* to the topic followed by an outline of the *Objectives*. The detailed content is then presented in a simple, structured and easy-to-grasp style interspersed with ‘*Check Your Progress*’ questions to test the student’s understanding. At the end of each unit, a *Summing Up* and a list of *Key Terms* have been provided for recapitulation.

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UNIT 1 EUROPEAN ALLIANCES AND RIVALRIES (1871-1914)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The period from 1871 to 1914 is characterized by historians as one of the most significant periods in modern European history. The period not only witnessed the diplomatic maneuverings of the German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck, but was also marked by a peculiar system of defensive alliances that all the major European powers entered into, in order to contain each other and to prevent the outbreak of a war. The formation of such alliances undoubtedly led to increased tensions in Europe. However, their role in the outbreak of the First World War is debatable.

The onset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe led to the hunt for raw materials and markets for the purposes of trade, which in turn led to colonial and naval rivalries among the European powers. Almost all the imperialist nations in Europe desired to have more and more colonies in order to capture captive markets for their goods. This resulted in the struggle for supremacy among the European powers culminating in the First World War.

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1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Examine the system of alliances in Europe from 1871 to 1914
- Analyse the colonial and naval rivalries of the European powers between 1871 and 1914
- Assess various theories of Imperialism

1.2 RIVAL SYSTEM OF ALLIANCE IN EUROPE

The unification of Germany and the establishment of the German Empire in 1871 created a new power in Europe which altered the distribution of power among the colonial states and ushered in a new international order. The foreign policy of new Germany, dominated by Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, was primarily aimed at reassuring the other European powers that Germany was a satisfied country and had no intention of upsetting the delicate balance of power in Europe. This clever style of diplomacy secured a dominant position for Germany in European affairs through the formation of a delicate system of treaties and alliances which often contained secret clauses. Bismarck captured the urgency the European powers felt about the necessity of alliances, and the delicate nature of the balance of power itself: 'All [international] politics reduces itself to this formula: Try to be *a trios* (three) as long as the world is governed by the unstable equilibrium of five Great Powers' - Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Britain and France.

Bismarck's sole objective after 1871 was to stabilize Europe around the new German Empire. Among the European Powers, only France was not reconciled to the emergence of a united Germany, which had robbed it of the important provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. According to Bismarck's strategy, the inevitable desire of France for revenge was to be countered by depriving her of European allies through skilful diplomacy, and by encouraging her to embark on colonial expansion of Africa and Asia which could have the added advantage of involving her in a clash with Britain. In the meantime, Austria-Hungary and Russia had to be brought together with Germany in some diplomatic alliance to preserve order in Eastern Europe.¹ In response to these challenges, Bismarck tried to keep his options open as long as possible and he was also ready to make changes wherever necessary. He believed that 'in politics there are no such things as complete certainty and definitive results... Everything goes continually uphill, downhill.' The result was a period of great complexity in German diplomacy.²

1.2.1 *Driekaiserbund* or Three Emperors League (1872)

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 made Germany one of the foremost powers of Europe. Germany had defeated France in the Battle of Sedan in 1870 under the leadership of Bismarck and had brought certain French territories rich in natural resources under their control. Germany knew that France harboured feelings of revenge against her and thus needed to protect herself against any future French aggression. Thus, the League of the Three Emperors came into being. The League was not a written agreement but an informal understanding between three European monarchial powers, that is, Austria-Hungary, Czarist Russia and Germany. It was a means of fostering monarchial solidarity against the republican France and to preserve the status quo in Europe. In a sense,

Bismarck tried to resurrect the Holy Alliance of the Metternich era. Bismarck wanted to enter into an alliance with other European countries so as to isolate France. Bismarck used to say, 'as long as France has no alliance, she is not dangerous to Germany.'

Bismarck concluded that the only likely allies of France could be either Russia or Austria-Hungary. He ruled out any understanding between Britain and France. Britain was following a policy of splendid isolation and was interested in continental involvement. So Bismarck turned his attention towards Russia and Austria-Hungary.

Bismarck with his great efforts brought the three powers of Europe-Russia, Germany and Austria close to one another and in 1872, the League of Three Emperors (i.e. *Driekaiserbund*) was formed at Berlin. The rulers of these three countries agreed to cooperate with one another for the preservation of peace and to consult with one another in order to determine the common course of action in case of a threat of war. It also committed the three governments to cooperate in their measures against socialism and other radical influences.



Fig 1.1 *Driekaiserbund*

Source: <http://streamsandforests.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/leaders-ww11.jpg>

Bismarck's measures worked well till 1875. This alliance, however, was faced with sharp challenges when between 1875 and 1877 there were insurrections in Balkans by Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro against the hegemony of the Ottoman Empire. These resurrections were suppressed by the Ottoman Sultan which reactivated Russia's traditional claim of protecting the Balkan Christians which, in turn, aroused Austrian fears of Russian expansion into South-Eastern Europe. Relations between Austria and Russia deteriorated when Russian declared war on the Ottomans in 1877 and came out victorious. It forced the Ottoman Sultan to sign a humiliating treaty of San-Stefano on 3 March 1878. Bismarck apprehended that this was a dangerous situation which could land Europe in a war. He therefore offered his services as an 'honest broker' at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, playing a vital role in drawing up the eventual territorial compromise. Bismarck was on the horns of a dilemma. He had to choose between Austria and Russia. Although he wanted to maintain good relations with both the countries yet he thought that he had a definite advantage in leaning towards Austria because the understanding with the latter provided greater leverage. Also it was easier for him to wield his influence on the Hapsburg monarchy and thereby contain it from acting discreetly in the Balkans. This in turn would reduce friction between Germany and Russia. However, the outcome of the Congress was far from satisfactory. The enmity between Russia and Austria-Hungary over the Balkans continued to persist,

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while the Czar of Russia, Alexander II, severely criticized Bismarck's apparent support to Austria-Hungary at the Congress. The League was due for a collapse. Notwithstanding its renewal in 1881, it had lost much of its utility. Finally, it was allowed to lapse in 1887.

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1.2.2 Dual Alliance (1879)

G.P. Gooch opines that if the Berlin Congress meant humiliation for some powers and disappointment for others, its most far-reaching and outstanding result in the realm of high politics was the estrangement of Russia from Germany as Bismarck took the side of Austria-Hungary thereby displeasing Russia. In Russia, the condemnation of the Berlin Congress reached a high pitch of virulence. The Czar of Russia could not turn a deaf ear to this criticism. He himself was very annoyed with it and even declared that war could break out between the two countries (Germany and Russia) at any moment. Although Germany was indebted to Russia since German unification was made possible in part due to Russian neutrality, Germany still preferred the friendship of Austria to Russia. In view of the 'neurotic excitement' prevailing in Russia, Bismarck felt that Germany needed a defensive alliance. Great Britain and Italy were not worthy to be friends. Under these circumstances, Germany ran after Austria and concluded an alliance with her, which was signed on 7 October 1879, commonly known as the Dual Alliance. For the Russian Czar, this ingratitude of Bismarck was inexcusable. However, Bismarck had a variety of reasons for signing the Dual Alliance which were quite equivocal and sometimes misleading. He thought that it would please southern Germans who were infuriated by the *Kulturkampf*; that thereby German security had been underwritten; it supported his domestic economic preference of increasing the *Reich's* Danubian trade while allowing him to please Junker Prussian wheat producers by imposing huge tariffs on imported Russian wheat; and finally, it could be used by him as the stick with which to woo an isolated Russia back into the fold. A majority of Germans lived in Austria and Bismarck wanted to get their favour. In order to protect Germany in Central Europe, it was absolutely necessary to have friends around him. He reiterated that it was the lifelong policy of Germany to cultivate friendship of Russia but this did not mean that Germany should be exclusively bound to Russia.

Let us now examine the terms of the Dual Alliance. It was a five year renewable agreement. It was to be prolonged for three years, unless the parties wanted to stop it. According to the terms of the alliance, both countries would be neutral if attacked by a third country, unless it was Russia, in which case they would come to the help of the other party. The treaty was to remain secret and essentially defensive in character.

It is said that both Andrassy (the foreign minister of Austria) and Bismarck were happy at the completion of the negotiations. The German Chancellor was overjoyed. He said, 'The fear of war has everywhere given place to confidence in peace. It is the completion of my work of 1866'. This treaty was renewed in 1883 and at subsequent intervals. In 1902, it was agreed that it should be automatically extended at the end of every three years.

However, many historians do not agree with this optimism of Bismarck. Prof. A.J.P Taylor believes that this was the first instance when Germany became more vulnerable to attack because hence onwards the possibilities of alliance between Republican France and Autocratic Russia, which at once seemed remote, seemed near to probability. Bismarck seemed to have thought that by this alliance the possibility of understanding between Austria and France would completely be ruled out.

The conclusion of Dual Alliance was an event of great importance in the history of Europe. The new alliance was opposed to the Triple Alliance and Germany thus had a formidable enemy on either side. It augmented the diplomatic value of France and opened to her the field of political combinations from which she had been excluded. 'Hence Europe was divided into two armed camps, and entered on the path which led straight to the catastrophe of 1914. The triple Alliance remained stronger than its rival, and so long as it could count on the sympathy of Great Britain its position was unassailable. But if Great Britain could ever be compelled to transfer her support from the older to the younger group, the diplomatic situation would be transformed, and the balance of power would be tilted against the central Empires.'

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1.2.3 Three Emperors' Alliance (1881)

After concluding the Dual Alliance with Austria, Bismarck was determined not to antagonize Russia. Also, he was concerned about the possibility of an alliance between France and Russia. There were some Russian statesmen who opined that in the absence of any clashing material interests between Germany and Russia, the recent irritation generated by the Dual Alliance should not be allowed to plague Russo-German relations; and when the proposal came from Russia, Bismarck welcomed it readily. As a result, an agreement was signed between Germany, Austria and Russia on 18 June 1881 which re-established League of Three Emperors for three years. According to it, in the event of any of the three powers being attacked by a fourth power, the others would maintain benevolent neutrality and try to limit the conflict. All the three nations would respect each other's interests in the Balkans. A protocol was signed according to which Austria recognized Russia's interest in Bulgaria and reciprocally Russia recognized the right of Austria to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the League of Three Emperors established in 1881 differed in many ways from the league established in 1873. While the *Dreikaisebund* established in 1873, aimed at maintaining the principal of monarchical solidarity and the containment of the ideas of nationalism and democracy, the League of 1881 had no such aims. Instead, it had a definite political objective. Most of its provisions pertained to the Balkans.

However, by the mid-1880's this arrangement was on the verge of a collapse because of the revival of the Bulgarian crisis. The possibility of war between Austria and Russia was more serious than ever. The Austrian government objected forcefully to Russia's intervention in Bulgaria's internal affairs and her involvement in the abduction of the Bulgarian monarch. Thus, there was considerable disappointment in Austria. In a sense, it defeated the very purpose of Dual Alliance. Although Bismarck succeeded in renewing the League in 1884, he realized that the new *Driekaiserbund* would not last long.

1.2.4 Triple Alliance (1882)

The North African territories were gradually coming under the attention of the great powers. Britain was involved in Egypt and France in Tunisia-a situation which went in favour of Bismarck as it would distract French attention from the European affairs. In the Berlin Congress, France's claim to Tunisia was conceded. Italian representatives returned home from the Congress empty handed. The Italians were convinced that it was their isolation which had condemned them to suffer this humiliating fate. The Italian government had regarded Tunisia as being within its sphere of influence. Thus, Italy turned her longing eyes to the great powers. The Italian king, Humbert paid a visit

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to Vienna along with his Prime Minister in October, 1881. This had become necessary because Bismarck had told the Italian ambassador that the 'key to the door which leads to Berlin is in Vienna.' The response of Austria was not cool as she wanted guarantees and Italy hardly had anything to offer because she had no assets. Humbert, thus, returned home empty handed.



Fig 1.2 Triple Alliance, (From Left to Right), Germany, Italy and Austria, Hungary

Source: <http://www.historywiz.com/galleries/triplealliance.html>

The failure of the negotiations led Bismarck to arrive at the conclusion that it was necessary that these negotiations be re-opened. Although various explanations have been offered for this change in attitude of Bismarck, yet none seem quite convincing. Nevertheless, these negotiations were resumed and its outcome was the Triple Alliance signed on 20 May 1882 between Austria, Germany and Italy. It was a secret alliance originally valid for five years and renewable. According to the terms of the alliance, both Austria and Germany guaranteed to help Italy in the event of French attack on her. In case of war between Austria and Russia, Italy's commitment was limited to remaining neutral. Italy committed herself to come to the help of Germany in case the latter was attacked by France. Austria, was however, not obliged to do so. Apart from this, each of the three powers pledged to render help to the other, should one or both of these get involved in a war with the two great powers, but observe neutrality in case war was restricted to one only.

Bismarck used to call this treaty 'League of Peace' but later on Germany began to make use of this treaty in her favor for her selfish interests. Although the treaty implied that Italy had become a friend of Germany and Austria; however, in reality, the relations of Germany and Austria were not cordial due to many reasons. Firstly, Bismarck never regarded Italy worthy of confidence. In his opinion, the policy of Italy was that of a jackal whose object was to take advantage of the opportunity. Bismarck declared in 1880, 'We have a very little hope that Italy will continue to be our friend, contrary to this we hope that she will join hands with our enemies.' Secondly, Italy had certain ties with France as both were Latin countries. The Italian people hated Austria that had oppressed her Latin subjects. By the turn of the century, Italy and France had become extremely close. So much so that the French ambassador at Rome in 1902 declared, 'that a conflict between the two Latin countries was no longer possible.' Thirdly, Austria and Italy

both regarded Albania to be under their influence and Austria had not agreed to allow Italy to exercise control over the territory. Fourthly, Germany and the Ottoman Empire were on friendly terms, while Italy established her control on Tripoli after an attack on Turkey in 1911.

The Triple Alliance proved to be a boon for Italy as it could now be counted among the great European powers, thereby increasing her international influence. This removed the Austrian danger to Italy and she also gained an assurance of help from Germany and Austria in the event of any Russian attack on her. The alliance fitted Bismarck's purposes. He was able to kill two birds with one stone. The pact with Italy isolated France, since in case of war, the French would have to fight not only the Germans and the Austrians but the Italians as well. It strengthened Germany's alliance system, since the pact diminished the ill-will between his two allies, making it impossible for Italy to clamor for the 'unredeemed'.

Austria came under German pressure but she had a secret alliance with Rumania in 1883 where it was decided that both of them will help each other in case of Russian attack on any one of them. Italy and Germany gave their assent to this alliance. Thus, the Austrian position greatly improved. The alliance became a custodian of international amity of the time, because Bismarck was able to form a line of powerful defense across Europe. But the treaty disrupted the balance of power in Europe and it can also be held responsible for igniting war.

According to historian A.J.P Taylor, while this alliance, 'looked formidable and elaborate, its real aims were modest.' Ostensibly, it welded central Europe together and recreated the Holy Roman Empire at its most grandiose so far as foreign affairs were concerned. In practice, it merely propped up the Italian monarchy and secured Italian neutrality in an Austro-Hungarian war against Russia.

1.2.5 Reinsurance Treaty (1887)

The Three Emperors' League was renewed in 1884 and its renewal was an eye-catching triumph of Bismarckian diplomacy. The foreign policy of German Empire since 1871', wrote Bismarck 'has been the maintenance of peace and the prevention of anti-German coalitions and the pivot of this policy is Russia.' In 1887, Bismarckian diplomacy suffered a setback as the League was not renewed because of the clash between Austrian and Russian interests in the Balkan Peninsula. Bismarck, however, was determined to keep open wires to Petersburg.

Bismarck was apprehensive about the possibility of an understanding being reached between France and Russia. 'Thus, in 1887, he resorted to a series of controversial measures designed to neutralize the conflict and to provide Germany with a means of avoiding direct involvement should an Austro-Russian war actually break out. He signed a secret treaty with Russia known as the Reinsurance Treaty.

The following were the provisions of the Reinsurance Treaty concluded on 18 June 1887 between Germany and Russia:

- If one power was at war with a third great power (i.e. France or Austria), the other would maintain benevolent neutrality and try to localize the conflict.
- Germany recognized the influence of Russia in Bulgaria and agreed to prevent restoration of Prince Alexander.
- The principle of closing the Straits of Constantinople on the lines of the 1881 treaty was to be maintained.

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This treaty is considered to be one of the greatest political achievements of Bismarck. The treaty was kept secret from Austria and was a masterpiece of German statecraft. It has been said, 'The new friendship of Germany and Russia prevented an Austro-Russian War and Franco-Russian coalition.' Commenting upon it, Professor Ketelbey writes, 'Bismarck had secured Austrian neutrality in case of an attack, Italian support against a French attack, and Austro-Italian assistance against combined Russian and French attack. It was a complicated system of juggling that needed a Bismarck to work it.' Anyhow, Bismarck by making this treaty with Russia, displeased Austria because the latter had strained relations with Russia. Bismarck asserted that through his policy Russian activity has been curbed, and Austria would certainly profit by it. At that time, Austria and Russia had become rivals due to the problems arising out of the coronation of Prince Ferdinand in Bulgaria. Russia was opposed to the said Prince, but Austria was favoring his cause. When the situation became serious, Bismarck was compelled to interfere in the affair. In order to avert war, he revealed to Russia the terms of the treaty made in 1879 that he would not see Austria defeated or weakened by Russia.

The treaty no doubt averted war, but Russia became conscious of the fact that it had been deceived by Germany through the Reinsurance Treaty. Russia also came to know that Germany was essentially an ally of Austria and so was compelled to accept Ferdinand as the King of Bulgaria. Being disappointed, Russia had to cultivate friendship with France. In this way, the Reinsurance treaty did not succeed in checking Russia's inclination towards France. The failure of the Reinsurance Treaty led to the rise of many military pacts and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and France. Bismarck was compelled to resign in 1890.

Thus, it may be concluded that although Bismarck secured immediate peace in Europe, his policy of alliances were fraught with danger. In the long run, these secret alliances increased mutual suspicions and tensions between nations culminating in the formation of alliances and counter-alliances. Moreover, although Bismarck had temporarily isolated France, he failed to conciliate her, thereby compelling her to look for strong allies, leading to the formation of the Triple Entente between France, Britain and Russia in 1907. Thus, Bismarck's alliances designed to prevent war ultimately paved the way for the First World War in 1914.

1.2.6 Franco-Russian Alliance (1894)

After the resignation of Bismarck in 1890, the reigns of German government came effectively in the hands of the German emperor Kaiser William II. Although the German emperor did not have any skills in comparison to the diplomatic skills of Bismarck, yet he dreamt of making Germany a world power. He believed in the policy of 'world supremacy or downfall'. With the removal of Bismarck, the fragile connection with Russia was abandoned, resulting in the formation of Franco-Russian Alliance in 1894. Russia had begun to feel uneasy since 1878, and isolated since 1890. As a result, she turned to France. Russia wanted a specific guarantee against Austria. France was also feeling isolated and was in search of a friend. Hence, France extended her hands to Russia and the two became friends. This is called Cordiale Entente or Dual Alliance between France and Russia.

The following were the provisions of the alliance:

- The treaty would last as long as the Triple Alliance between Austria, Germany and Italy would continue.

- The treaty would be a secret.
- In the event of German attack with Austria's help, Russia would help France against them.
- If Russia is invaded by Austria with the help of Germany, France will support her friend Russia.

This treaty was signed by Czar Nicholas II of Russia and remained in force up to 1917. When the German Emperor Kaiser William II came to know of this treaty he was disturbed. He wrote to the Czar, 'I perfectly know that you do not dream of attacking us but you cannot be astonished that the powers get alarmed about how the presence of your officers and high officials in an official way in France fans the inflammable Frenchmen into a white-heat of passion and strengthens the cause of chauvinism. If you are allied for the better or worse with the French, then keep those damned rascals in order to make them sit still.'

The conclusion of this alliance was a significant event not only for Russia and France, but also for Europe. From the standpoint of European politics, the conclusion of this alliance signified the end of Bismarckian diplomacy. It was the first break in the Bismarckian system of assurance of the status quo. The nightmare of coalitions which haunted Bismarck had began to take concrete shape. After this, Europe was divided into two armed camps, i.e., the Triple Alliance and the Dual Alliance and entered upon the path which led straight to the First World War.

1.2.7 Anglo-Japanese Convention (1902)

In 1901, when all the efforts of England failed to win over Germany, the idea of establishing alliance with Germany was given up and England was forced to find allies for her in some other direction. She decided to establish friendly relations with Japan. Japan had also started expanding her territories in Asia by defeating China in 1895. She was planning to check the imperialistic policy of other European nations with the help of England. Under these circumstances, England and Japan entered into a convention or alliance in 1902 whose main points are given below:

- Both England and Japan declared that they had no intent of aggression in Korea or China. They will look after each other's interest in these two countries.
- England will remain neutral in the event of a war between England and Russia.
- If England and Japan are entangled with two or more countries, then they would help each other.
- Both England and Japan agreed that neither of them was to enter into a separate agreement with any other power to the prejudice of the interest of the other without consulting the other.
- The term of this convention will remain in force for five years. However, this convention was revised in 1905 and according to the revised agreement each country was to come to help the other if the latter was attacked by a single power. The alliance was to last for ten years. In 1911, the agreement was again revised in order to remove any danger of England being involved in war between USA and Japan. The alliance continued up to 1923.

The convention was very significant from several points of view in the history of Europe and Asia. The convention enhanced the prestige of Japan in the international sphere. The famous historian Hazen remarks in this respect, 'For the first time in

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history, an Asiatic power had entered into an alliance with a European power on a plan of entire equality. Japan had entered the family of natives and it was a remarkable evidence of her importance that Great Britain saw an advantage in an alliance with her.' It is rightly pointed out that there was no other treaty from which both the parties gained as much as did Japan and England from the treaty of 1902. Japan wanted an ally on whom she could depend on to put a check to the further advance of Russia in the Far East. This she got in England. Japan gained help from English navy and got an opportunity to expand her empire in Asia and organize her forces. Having secured herself by the treaty of 1902, there was no wonder that Japan chose her own opportunity to begin the war with Russia in 1904. Russia had to withdraw her forces from China and Japan gained control of Port Arthur. The old treaty of 1905 was revised as a result of this victory.

England also gained a lot from this treaty as well as if was interested in checking the further advance of Russia in the Far East as Japan herself. She wanted to help Japan in every way so that the latter would be to deal a blow to Russia. Moreover, England was getting worried over the naval progress of Germany. Germany was building her navy at a tremendous speed and that was liable to threaten the very existence of England. Under these circumstances, England wanted to withdraw her ships from the Pacific. This she could do after entering into an alliance with Japan which was a great power in the Pacific. The treaty signed by the two powers exercised an influence upon European politics. The relations between England and Germany started deteriorating and England started leaning towards Russia and France. As a result, the Triple Entente was formed between France, England and Russia in 1907. The possibility of a war became more imminent between the members of the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente.

1.2.8 Anglo-French Entente or Entente Cordiale (1904)

It was a series of agreements signed between England and France on 8 April 1904 that, by settling a number of controversial matters, ended antagonisms between England and France and paved the way for their diplomatic cooperation against German pressures in the decade preceding the First World War. The agreement in no sense created an alliance and did not entangle England with a French commitment to Russia.

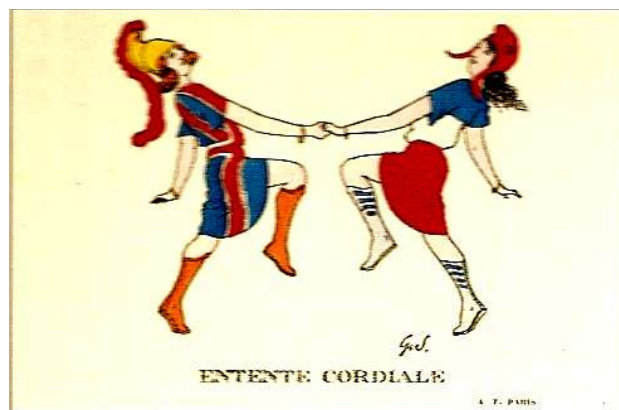


Fig 1.3 Entente Cordiale

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d0/Entente_Cordiale_dancing.jpg

It was the culmination of the policy of Théophile Delcassé, France's foreign minister, who believed that an understanding between France and England would give France some security against any German system of alliances in Western Europe.

However, the credit for the success of the negotiation belongs chiefly to Paul Cambon, France's ambassador in London, and to the British foreign secretary Lord Lansdowne; but the pro-French inclination of the British sovereign, Edward VII, was also a contributory factor.

The most important feature of the agreement was that it granted freedom of action to England in Egypt and to France in Morocco. Simultaneously, England ceded the Los Islands (off French Guinea) to France, defined the frontier of Nigeria in France's favour, and agreed to French control of the upper Gambia valley, while France renounced its exclusive right to certain fisheries off the Newfoundland. Furthermore, French and British zones of influence in Siam (Thailand) were outlined, with the eastern territories, adjacent to French Indo-China, becoming a French zone, and the western, adjacent to Burmese Tenasserim, a British zone; arrangements were also made to allay the rivalry between British and French colonists in the New Hebrides.

By this agreement both powers reduced the virtual isolation into which they had withdrawn—France involuntarily, Great Britain complacently—while they had eyed each other over African affairs: England had no ally but Japan (1902), useless if war should break out in European waters; France had none but Russia, soon to be discredited in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. The agreement was consequently disappointing to Germany, whose policy had long been to rely on Franco-British antagonism. A German attempt to check the French in Morocco in 1905 (the Tangier Incident, or First Moroccan Crisis), and thus upset the Entente, served only to strengthen it. Military discussions between the French and the British general staffs were soon initiated. Franco-British solidarity was confirmed at the Algeiras Conference (1906) and reconfirmed in the Second Moroccan Crisis (1911).

1.2.9 Triple Entente (1907)

The interests of England and Russia often clashed with each other in Balkans and in Central Asia. But after 1900 the political situation of Europe changed drastically. In 1904, Russia suffered defeat at the hands of Japan. In Russia, there were internal developments like the Revolution of 1905. A coalition was formed against Russia by Germany and Austria-Hungary. According to the treaty of 1904, cordial relations were established between England and France. France was also a friend of Russia but the relations between England and Russia were not cordial. Thus, in the event of a war between the two, France would be involved in a very precarious situation. She would have to make a decision as to whom she would lend her support. While Theophile Delcasse was in office, he tried his level best to bring Russia and England together. He felt that in the event of a war between England and Russia, the latter might join Germany thereby endangering the existence of France. It was in this background that the negotiations for the Anglo-Russian Convention started. The First Morocco crisis (1905-06) and the growing naval strength of Germany created a lot of anxiety in England and there was a genuine desire to come to an understanding with Russia so that in the event of a war with Germany, England's position might not be weakened. Due to these circumstances, England and Russia were drawn nearer and concluded an alliance in 1907. The following were the terms of this alliance:

- Russia would give up her interest in Afghanistan.
- Both the countries would not interfere in the affairs of Tibet.
- England recognized the position of Russia in Northern Persia (Iran). In these two spheres of influence a centre region was created within Persia in which

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neither England nor Prussia was to get any concession. It is to be noted that the King of Persia was not consulted with regard to the settlement concerning Persia.

All the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention were made public and there was no military obligation of any kind between the two countries. Both Russia and England came nearer to each other with the passage of time. It was felt that the danger of Germany was so great that they must forget their minor differences. On the basis of the Anglo-Russian Convention, a Triple Entente was made between England, France and Russia in the same year, i.e., 1907. By this alliance, the three countries decided to consult one another on international problems.

The Triple Entente was made for the safety of the three nations. However, there was no reference to the specter of Germany's rise. Still the three powers became free from the menace of Germany. There is no doubt that this Entente created friendly relations among the three countries and their position became stronger. France geared up her efforts to get back her provinces of Alsace and Lorraine from Germany. Russia again interfered in the Balkan affairs and opposed the expansion of Austria-Hungary. England's fear of Germany was also removed to a great extent. Germany became so apprehensive about the opposite bloc that she began opposing England openly. England was charged with making a ring around Germany of hostile forces and sought to curb the rising power of Germany by making alliances with Japan, France and even Russia. In fact, Triple Entente was in reply to the Triple Alliance of 1882. On the basis of these two military blocs, Europe was divided into two rivaled and armed camps. War became imminent due to feverish activity of increasing the military power, arms race and growing suspicion between countries. The bitterness between the two camps increased day by day. Ultimately, this prepared the ground for the First World War.

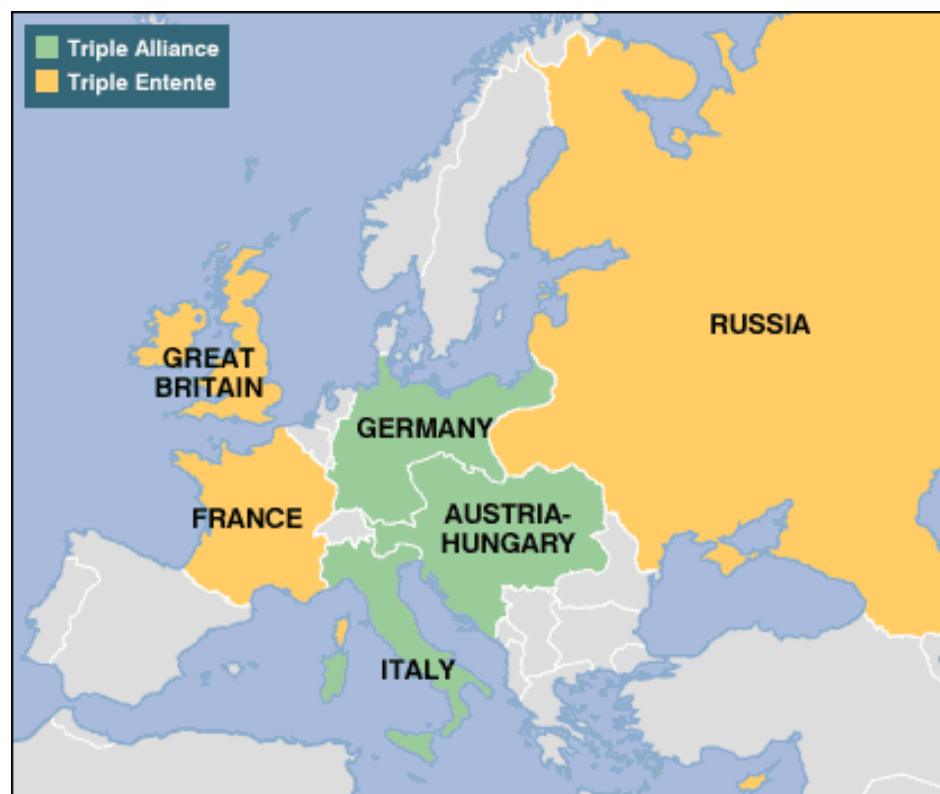


Fig 1.4 Triple Alliance and Triple Entente

Source: <http://www.tomatobubble.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/entente.gif>

1.3 COLONIAL AND NAVAL RIVALRIES OF THE EUROPEAN POWERS

After 1870, the major European powers rapidly expanded their colonial possessions in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Much of this activity was centered on gaining colonial possessions in Africa and it was commonly called the *Scramble for Africa*. Britain and France were arch rivals before 1900. Enmity also existed between Britain and Russia. However, these three nations ended up becoming allies in the First World War due to the circumstances discussed in the previous section. Colonial rivalries between the European powers was a crucial factor that led to the war. Let us now discuss the rivalries between different European powers.

1.3.1 Rivalry between European Powers over Africa

Before 1870, European powers had made little advance into Africa, either as conquerors or explorers, mainly because of their lack of resistance or immunity to Africa's tropical diseases. This left Africa in a shroud of mystery that earned it the title of the 'Dark Continent'. However, after 1870, the Europeans made rapid inroads into Africa. This became possible due to the industrial revolution which gave the imperialists two new weapons, i.e., vaccines for fighting the diseases and rifles and machine guns for combating the natives of the African continent. There was a 'scramble for Africa' between the great European powers. Between 1880 and 1900, a large part of Africa was colonized by them. England and France had a history of rivalry going back to the eighteenth century. In the 18th century, England had defeated France in India and Canada. France, in turn, had helped the thirteen British colonies of America to overthrow the British. By the late nineteenth century, the rivalry between the two nations centred on Asia and Africa. However, the mad scramble for colonial possessions was not restricted to England and France. All European powers tried to gain a toehold in the African continent. From 1879 to 1886, the rivalry between the European powers was at its height. To give an example, in 1881-1882, France had conflict with Italy when a French protectorate was asserted over Tunisia.

The interiors of Africa were almost unknown to the European powers right up to about the middle of the nineteenth century. While Africa's coastal regions were largely in the hands of the old colonial powers. Within a few years, a scramble for colonies began and almost the whole African continent had been cut up and divided among Europeans. Egypt was a part of the Ottoman Empire when the scramble for colonies began in the nineteenth century. Since the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte, France had been interested in Egypt, but France got a chance to fulfil its ambition only in the second half of the nineteenth century. A French company had gained a concession from Ismail Pasha, the Governor of Egypt, to dig a canal across the Isthmus of Suez. The canal was completed in 1869. Disraeli, the Prime Minister of England, purchased a large number of shares of the canal from the Egyptian Governor to ensure that the route to their prized possession in India was kept safe. The financial troubles of Pasha led to increased joint Anglo-French control over Egypt.

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Check Your Progress

1. What was the primary aim of the foreign policy of Bismarck?
2. What was the League of the Three Emperors?
3. What was the Reinsurance Treaty?
4. Who started controlling German foreign policy after the resignation of Bismarck?

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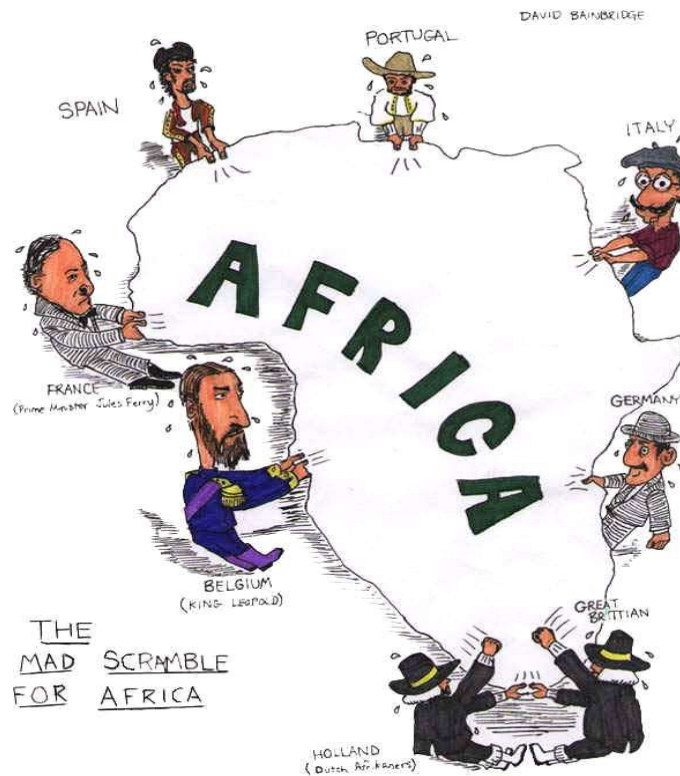


Fig 1.5 Scramble for Africa

Source: <http://www.ocone.k12.sc.us/webpages/keaddis/imageGallery/scramble%20for%20africa%20cartoon.jpg>

In 1882, there was a revolt against Anglo-French control in Egypt, but the revolt was suppressed by the British armies, who went on to conquer Egypt. England abolished dual control over Egypt with France, a move that was greatly resented by the French. The attitude of the British government under Lord Salisbury (1830-1903) towards France was cautious. However, the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain was interested in opposing the French, and in 1896, organized the West African Frontier force, a force of African troops and British officers to keep France ambition in Africa in check. Chamberlain was prepared to wage a war against France as he was keen to establish an alliance with Germany. However, in 1896-97, Germany embarked upon its plan to build a modern navy, a move that seriously jeopardized British supremacy of the seas. Thus, an understanding with Germany became increasingly unlikely.

In 1895, England declared that any French interference in the Nile Valley would be regarded as unfriendly action. In order to encourage England to negotiate over Egypt, a French expedition under Captain Marchand was sent to Fashoda on the Upper Nile. However, the British forces under General Herbert Kitchner, outnumbered the French forces who withdrew in 1898 and the war was averted. As a result of the 'Fashoda incident', England became more solidly established in the Nile and chances to abandon Egypt became even less. France had expected Russian support over the question of Egypt. However, France did not support Russia in its claims over Port Arthur in Asia, thus Russia refused any help to France in Africa.

The French established a protectorate over Tunisia in 1881. In 1912, they used the pretext of disturbances on the Algerian border to validate her involvement in Morocco. The French were determined to link Senegal, Algeria and Upper Niger by the railway,

but this did not happen. Moreover, the economic benefits of such an enterprise were very doubtful. During the 1880s and 1890s, the French colonial army created a huge empire in West Africa. French colonialism was based on a theory that French subjects in Africa or Asia could be turned into Frenchmen. The policies pursued by the French in her colonies were aimed at this end. Thus, it could be stated that the French left a deeper cultural mark on their colonies than any other European power.

The Belgian King, Leopold II, wanted to profit personally from Congo, although he pretended that the Belgian conquest of Congo was a scientific and humanitarian enterprise. To attain his objectives, he established an International Association in 1877, which directly challenged French interests in the region. Moreover, Leopold's ambition was not looked upon kindly by the other Europeans either. England countered Belgian designs by supporting Portugal's claims in the area. The tensions arising out of Congo led to an International Conference at Berlin in 1884, which laid down the 'ground rules' for partition. It required powers to be in 'effective occupation' of the territory and to be more precise about claims.

There was also a commercial rivalry between England and Germany over trade in East Africa. This resulted in a partition agreement in 1886 in which Germany supported England's claims for Egypt in return for recognition of Germany's claims in East Africa. But in 1890, Germany traded Zanzibar for Heligoland, as a result of the Anglo-German Treaty. The treaty was greatly beneficial to Britain as the possession of Zanzibar allowed Britain to consolidate control over East Africa. Germany had made formal claims on Togo, the Cameroon, German East Africa, and South West Africa. By emphasizing a claim to South West Africa in August 1884, the Germans were involving Southern Africa in the great power rivalries. Gold was discovered in Transvaal in 1886, a discovery that greatly interested the European imperialists. The prosperity in the Transvaal jeopardized the dominance of Cape Colony, which was the southernmost region of Africa. Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the Southern African territory of Rhodesia, opposed the extending of British rule to Rhodesia by obtaining a Royal Charter for his British South Africa Company to administer it in October 1889.

The ownership of colonies became a question of national prestige for Italy rather than a question of national interest or economic advantage. The Prime Minister of Italy, Crispi, called the possession of colonies 'a necessity of modern life'. The foreign policy of Italy was dictated by jealousy of France. They built an extensive navy and conducted a tariff war against the French. In 1882, the Italians acquired African territory along the Red Sea. The Italians occupied two desert areas in what is called the 'Horn of Africa' - Somaliland and Eritrea (Latin for 'Red Sea'). In 1893, the Emperor of Ethiopia denounced his agreement with Italy. The Italian army attacked Ethiopia in response, but suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Ethiopian army in 1896 at Andowa. The Ethiopians had been assisted greatly by the French and Russia. The defeat led to the fall of Crispi's government in Italy. However, the defeat also created the motive for Italian revenge for Andowa. In 1911, the Italians seized Libya from the Ottoman Empire after the Italo-Turkish War.

In Southern Africa, deteriorating relations with the Boers (descendants of Dutch settlers in Southern regions of Africa) made the British look for goodwill of the Germans. The British entered an agreement with Germany over the future division of Portuguese colonies. It was thought that the financial crisis in Portugal would force Portugal to give up Mozambique and Angola. The Second Boer War (1899-1902) fought between the Boers and the British Empire resulted in the Boer republics becoming converted into

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British colonies and directed European public opinion against Britain. But after 1900, Africa did not remain an important region of conflict between the great powers. The scramble for Africa was a quest for political influence and the economic factors were secondary. Many African possessions were unprofitable for the Europeans.

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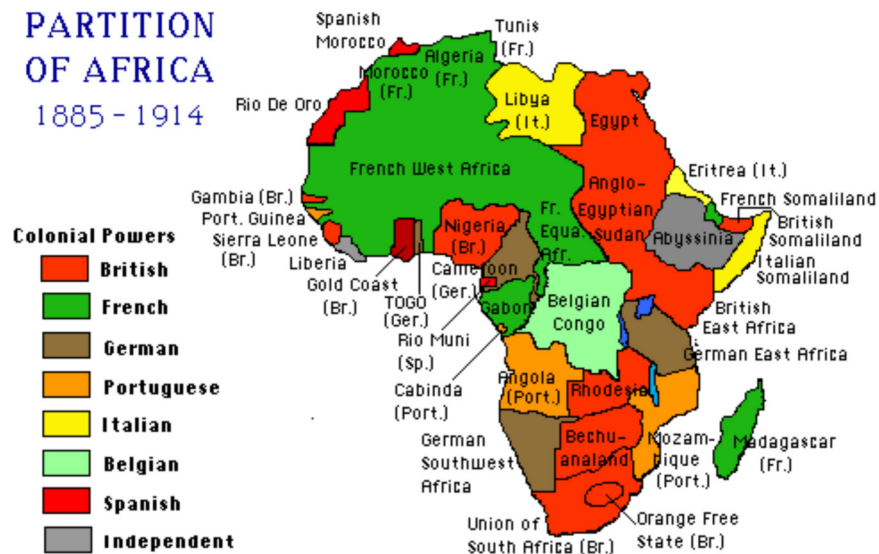


Fig 1.6 Partition of Africa

Source: <http://wfps.k12.mt.us/teachers/carmichaelg/africa2.gif>

1.3.2 Rivalry between European Powers over China

Just like Africa, China was also made a major target of the European powers during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, China was almost an isolated country. Foreigners were generally denied entry into its interiors by the Qing Dynasty that ruled over China. Only one port named Canton was open to foreign traders. In the late 18th century, the British imperialists in India began to encourage opium trade in China. The reasons for this were manifold. The primary reason was that the British did not have any item of trade that interested the Chinese and they were concerned that trading silver and gold for Chinese products like silk and porcelain would severely damage the British economy. The imperialists devised a plan to trade opium for Chinese goods. For this, they needed to turn a substantial portion of the Chinese population into opium addicts. They thus decided to swamp China with opium produced in factories in India. By the late 19th century, it is estimated that about 70 million Chinese were addicted to opium. In spite of the protests from China and even after two Opium Wars, this harmful but lucrative trade continued. In 1840, when China was defeated by the British armies, the doors of China were opened for the European influence for the first time. However, the last decade of the nineteenth century is a special part of Chinese history with respect to the European powers.

By the 1890s, British dominance started to diminish in China. Russia stretched eastwards towards East Asia. The Trans-Siberian railway across Manchuria to Vladivostok was completed in 1902. In its expansion eastward, Russia took over Moslem and pagan tribes in the region. In 1898, Russia got a lease of Port Arthur, which was an all-weather naval base in the Far East and also got control of the harbour of Talien-Wan.

During the last decade of the 19th century, Japan, which had been a Chinese protectorate for most of its history, also joined the ranks of exploiters of China. This was made possible due to the Meiji restoration that turned Japan from a feudal nation in the middle of the 19th century to one of the most powerful industrialized nations by the end of the 19th century. She easily annexed the Loo-Choo Islands. In 1895, Japan defeated China and by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, China was compelled to renounce her suzerainty over Korea. The defeat of China at the hands of the tiny Japan further intensified the campaign for partitioning of China among the European powers. There was a 'scramble for gaining concessions' in China which historians call the 'cutting of the Chinese melon', and it seemed that China would be partitioned. France, Germany and Russia intervened to protect the integrity of the Chinese empire. After 1895, the Far East became the centre of great power rivalry among the imperialists. Other European powers wanted to challenge Britain's domination of trade with China. The crisis lasted from Japan's defeat of China in 1895 to Japan's victory over Russia in 1905. In order to restrict Russian influence, the British entered into an alliance with Japan in 1902, which effectively ended Britain's foreign policy of 'splendid isolation'.

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Fig 1.7 Cutting of the Chinese Melon

Source: http://s2.hubimg.com/u/4952535_f260.jpg

In 1904, a war broke out between Russia and Japan over Korea. Russia's defeat in this war created internal unrest leading to the Russian Revolution of 1905. Russian defeat at the hands of Japan removed the threat of Russia in the Far East, and resulted in an agreement between Britain and Russia in August 1907. This also guaranteed the neutrality of Tibet and the withdrawal of the British mission there. Afghanistan was recognized as falling within the British sphere of influence. Persia was maintained as an independent state, and divided into the Russian and British zone of influence. After the 1905 defeat, the Russians looked towards expansion in the Balkans.

Germany, England and France had no strategic interests in China; their concerns were mainly economic. There were also investment opportunities in China - even in 1880, China had no railways, and there was competition among European firms for mining and railway 'concessions'. In reality, the conflict was probably motivated by the desire for political prestige. However, Russia sought political control over Manchuria, which gave them economic control of the region. In 1894, Japan claimed Korea from China and defeated China in the resulting war. The Russians compelled Japan to moderate their demands and simultaneously extended their economic control over Manchuria.

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China became dependent on foreign loans. The French concentrated on Southern China, next to their Indo-China colony. England was the principal force in central China and here her interests often clashed with Germany. It looked as if China was going to be dismembered and divided among the major nations, but some of the happenings saved her from further disruption.

The United States was alarmed by the fact that China would be completely divided into spheres of influence and that its trade with China would come to an end. The United States, therefore, suggested the policy known as the 'Open Door'. This policy is also described as 'Me too' policy. According to this policy, all countries would have equal rights to trade anywhere in China. The United States got support from England who thought that this policy would discourage the annexation of China by Japan and Russia, the two countries that could most easily send their armies to the mainland.

The reasons why China was not partitioned by the Europeans are as follows:

- It had a dynasty and was a single state.
- The Chinese prevented spheres of influence developing by the way they granted concessions.
- They allowed trade at over 30 treaty ports, thus political control was not essential for trade.
- The only regions worth controlling were Manchuria and Yangtze.
- The British were hesitant to add yet another huge colonial possession to their possession in India.
- The British actively followed the American policy of the 'Open Door' and negotiated with rivals to give up spheres of influence.

There was the 'Boxer rebellion' in Northern China in 1900 which led to a siege lasting seven weeks of European embassies in Peking. The movement was clandestinely supported by Tzu-His, the Dowager Empress. There was an outbreak of anti-European and anti-Christian riots. Scores of foreigners were murdered and hundreds of Chinese converts to Christianity were also brutally executed. An international force under a German commander retook Peking, which was sacked and looted by the imperialist troops. All the European powers and Japan contributed contingents to suppress the rebellion, and the French even agreed to serve under a German general for this purpose. The Germans seized Kiao-Chow, and the Russians took Port Arthur. The British took control of Wei-hai-wei. Since the railway system in Manchuria had been damaged, the Russians positioned many troops in the area. This threatened to create Russian control of Peking. The British sought German assistance and thought they had it when in October 1900 the Germans signed an agreement on China. But in March 1901, the Germans declared that Manchuria was not covered in the agreement. This forced Britain to sign the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. This alliance also helped China to retain her integrity. In February 1904, the Japanese attacked Russia in the Far East and gained decisive victories in 1905. Indeed, after this the Far East was no longer a source of rivalry. Whereas, in Africa imperialism took the form of possession of land, in China it was economically motivated. However, it often appeared to be a battle for prestige.

The revolution of 1911 resulted in China changing from a feudal monarchy to a republican democracy. As a result, the attitude of the European powers became favorable towards the new republican regime. Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the hero of the revolution, was a man of progressive ideas. He brought revolutionary changes in the political and economic

set up of China and was able to discard the old Chinese policy of isolation. However, instability soon reared its head in China, with the republican regime losing control over many of its territories to Chinese warlords.

In the Far East, small states like Cambodia, Cochin-China, Annam and Tonkin, were continuing to flourish under the lordship of the Chinese Emperor. Napoleon III was an ambitious ruler and he followed an intensive imperialistic policy in Indo-China. Cochin-China was annexed during his regime in 1868. The leaders of the Third Republic continued their policy and France managed to establish her protectorate over Annam, Tonkin, Laos and Cambodia. French rule in these territories was ruthless. French colonial policy was to 'gallicise' 'Frechify' their territories. French culture, literature and language were infused in the socio-political structure of these territories. In contrast, the British and the Dutch maintained traditional ways. The people of these territories reacted against the strong rule of the French and the nationalist movement raised its head in 1905.

In the early 20th century, although China was not partitioned, yet the foreign powers continued to impose heavy damages on China. Imperialism in China continued, with the cooperation of Chinese warlords. These military commanders were supported by the loans which they got from foreign powers in exchange for more privileges. Though China was not conquered and occupied by any imperialist country, the effects of these developments on China were the same as in areas which had been colonized. In a period of a few decades, China had been reduced to the status of an international colony.

1.3.3 Rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans

There was friction between Austria-Hungary and Russia as both the countries had territorial ambitions in the Balkans, which was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. Their ambitions in the Balkans raised the spectre of war in Europe. Austrian and Russian ambitions were precipitated by the Young Turk revolution of 1908 in Turkey. The Ottoman Empire was transformed into constitutional monarchy and was in a state of ferment. This tempted Austria-Hungary to fish in the troubled waters of the Ottoman Empire. Austria shook the world on 5 October 1908 by announcing the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Austrians were assured of Russia's moral support. The **Murzstag Agreement** between the two countries in 1903 had eased the tensions pertaining to the Balkans since it provided the maintenance of the status quo. Also, the Foreign Ministers of Austria-Hungary and Russia had already met and discussed issues pertaining to the Balkans in September 1908. This annexation undoubtedly evoked protests from France and England, but the severest condemnation came from Serbia. The Serbians were excited and agitated and stridently pleaded for war. The reasoning of the Austrians that the Habsburg monarchy virtually controlled Bosnia for thirty years and that the Austrian annexation of the territory was mere formality did not really satisfy the Serbians. Serbia was seized with war hysteria. Intense war preparations started. France and England believed that the Bosnian issue was not big enough and should not be permitted to disturb the peace of Europe. They exerted immense pressure on Serbia to soften its approach, which seemed to work, however, strangely enough, it was Russia that appeared to be difficult to placate. Russia was determined to stand by Serbia which had been by then been threatened with an ultimatum from Austria.

An Austro-Russian war seemed imminent. It was only because Germany intervened that Russia was forced to climb down abruptly. Under pressure from the other great powers and the realization that it was alone was incapable of doing anything

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to reverse the decision of the annexation, on 31 March 1909, Russia gave way and conceded that the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not entail any infringement of her rights. Thus, the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognized. The incorporation of these two areas within the Habsburg Empire was another blow to the Ottoman Empire which the Young Turks could not prevent. Rather, their helplessness was vividly highlighted. All their loud and tall claims of resurrecting the past glory of the Ottoman Empire were found to be a meaningless and even ridiculous boast. The Ottomans reaffirmed their position of being the 'Sick Man of Europe'.

1.3.4 Rivalry between England and Russia

'The Great Game' was a term for the strategic rivalry and conflict between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for supremacy in Central Asia. The period of this Great Game period is generally regarded as running roughly from the Russo-Persian Treaty of 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. From the British point of view, the expansion of Russian Empire into Central Asia posed a danger to the British Empire in India. The British feared that the Russian troops would one by one subdue the Central Asian tribes and Afghanistan might then become a staging post for a Russian invasion of India.

These apprehensions led the British to wage a war against Afghanistan in 1838 and an attempt was made to impose a puppet regime under Shuja Shah. The regime was short lived and proved weak without British military support. By 1842, there were attacks on the British by the civilians in Kabul and the British garrison was forced to abandon the city. The British thus restricted their ambition in Afghanistan following this humiliating retreat from Kabul. After the Revolt of 1857 in India, successive British governments saw Afghanistan as a buffer state. The Russians continued to move forward steadily southward through Central Asia towards Afghanistan and by 1865, Tashkent had been formally annexed. Samarkand became part of the Russian Empire in 1868.

In response to Russian expansion in Central Asia, the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli wrote a letter to Queen Victoria in which he proposed 'to clear Central Asia of Muscovites and drive them into the Caspian.' He brought in the Royal Titles Act in 1876, which proclaimed Queen Victoria as the Empress of India thereby putting her at the same level as the Russian Emperor.

The Russians sent a diplomatic mission to Kabul in 1878. However, Britain demanded that Sher Ali, the ruler of Afghanistan, should accept a British diplomatic mission. The British mission was turned back, and in retaliation a force of 40,000 men was sent across the border, initiating the Second Anglo-Afghan War. The war's conclusion left Abdur Rahman Khan on the throne who agreed to let the British control foreign affairs of Afghanistan, while he consolidated his position on the throne. He succeeded in suppressing internal rebellions and brought the country under central control to a large extent.

The policies of Russia in Central Asia brought about another crisis in 1884 known as the Panjdeh Incident when they seized the oasis of Merv. The Russians claimed all of the former ruler's territory and fought with Afghan troops over the oasis of Panjdeh. On the verge of war between the two great powers, the British decided to accept the Russian possession of territory north of the Amu Darya.

Without any consent taken from Afghanistan, a Joint Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission between 1885 and 1888 agreed that the Russians would surrender the farthest territory captured in their advance, but would retain Panjdeh. The agreement

delineated a permanent northern Afghan frontier at the Amu Darya, with the loss of a large amount of territory.

This left the border to the east of Zorkul lake in the Wakhan. Russia, Afghanistan and China laid their claims to the territory in this area. In the 1880s, the Afghans advanced north of the lake to the Alichur Pamir. Russia sent a military force to the Wakhan in 1891 and provoked a diplomatic incident by ordering the British Captain Francis Younghusband to leave Bozai Gumbaz in the Little Pamir. This incident, and the report of an invasion by Russian Cossacks south of the Hindu Kush, raised British suspicion regarding Russian involvement with the Rulers of the petty States on the northern boundary of Kashmir and Jammu. This was the reason for the Hunza-Nagar Campaign in 1891, after which the British established control over Hunza and Nagar. In 1892, the British sent the Earl of Dunmore to the Pamirs to investigate the matter. Britain was concerned that Russia would take advantage of Chinese weakness in policing the area to gain territory, and in 1893, reached an agreement with Russia to demarcate the rest of the border, which was finalized in 1895.

The Central Asian khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand had fallen by the 1890s, becoming Russian vassals. With Central Asia in the Russian Czar's grip, the Great Game now shifted eastward to China, Mongolia and Tibet. In 1904, England invaded Lhasa, a preventative strike against Russian maneuverings and secret meetings between the 13th Dalai Lama's envoy and Czar Nicholas II. The Dalai Lama fled into exile to China and Mongolia. The British were greatly worried at the prospect of a Russian invasion of the Crown colony of India, though Russia was not in a situation to afford a military conflict against England as it suffered defeat at the hands of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 and was weakened by internal rebellion.

Under the reign of Manchu Dynasty, the Middle Kingdom had weakened. The weaponry and military tactics of China had become outdated. Most of the regions in China were devoid of modern factories, steel bridges, railways and telegraphs. Natural disasters, famine and internal rebellions had further enfeebled China. In the late 19th century, Japan and the Great European Powers easily carved out trade and territorial concessions in China. These were humiliating submissions for the once all-powerful Manchus.

In 1906, Czar Nicholas II sent Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, a secret agent, to China to collect intelligence on the reform and modernization. Mannerheim proceeded through Xinjiang, Gansu, Shaanxi, Henan, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia to Beijing. He also met the 13th Dalai Lama at the sacred Buddhist mountain of Wutai Shan. However, while Mannerheim was in China in 1907, Russia and Britain entered into the Anglo-Russian Agreement, ending the classical period of the Great Game.

1.3.5 Anglo-German Naval Rivalry

On the whole, after the overthrow of Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, England followed a policy of isolation towards the European affairs. This policy was considered to be in the best interests of England. Though, during this period of supposed isolation, sometime England was forced to intervene in certain European affairs, but the English leaders felt that there was no reason for always interfering in European politics when the same purpose could be served by occasional interference. However, it became clear to British statesmen towards the end of the 19th century that it was impossible to continue to follow the policy of splendid isolation. England abandoned the policy of isolation when she concluded the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. This

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new orientation in the British policy was to some extent the result of the unwillingness of Germany to come to any understanding with England. The attitude of Germany in the Boer War (1899-1902) also irritated the British public. The prospects of Anglo-German understanding receded in the background. The German commercial rivalry challenged British position in the world markets. 'Made in Germany' posed a serious threat for England's global trade supremacy.

England had the biggest navy in the world in the 19th century, and so in accordance with Kaiser Wilhelm II's enthusiasm for an expanded German navy, and his own strong desires, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz (1849-1930), Secretary of State of the German Imperial Naval Office energetically carried out a relentless program of naval expansion to challenge England's naval superiority. British efforts to negotiate with Germany an understanding regarding naval matters in 1891, then in 1901, and again in 1912, were not acceptable to Germany. The Germans aimed at building a fleet that would be 2/3 the size of the British navy. This plan was sparked by the threat of the British Foreign Office in March 1897, after the British invasion of Transvaal that started the Boer War, to blockade the German coast and thereby cripple the German economy, if Germany would intervene in the conflict in Transvaal. From 1905 onwards, the British navy developed plans for such a blockade that was a central part of British policy. The British Royal Navy embarked on its own massive expansion from 1902 to 1910 to keep ahead of the Germans. This competition came to focus on the new ships based on HMS *Dreadnought*, which was launched in 1906.

By 1913, there was intense internal debate about the new ships due to the increasing influence of John Fisher's ideas and increasing financial constraints. Historians generally are in agreement with the view that in early-mid 1914, the Germans adopted a policy of building submarines instead of new dreadnoughts and destroyers but kept this new policy secret so that other powers would be delayed in following suit. The naval race between Britain and Germany generated huge public support on each side. The British public coined the slogan 'We want eight and we won't wait!' which referred to the number of dreadnoughts they wanted the British government to build. With the surge of public support, the government took to more shipbuilding.

Photo # NH 63367 HMS Dreadnought (British battleship, 1906)

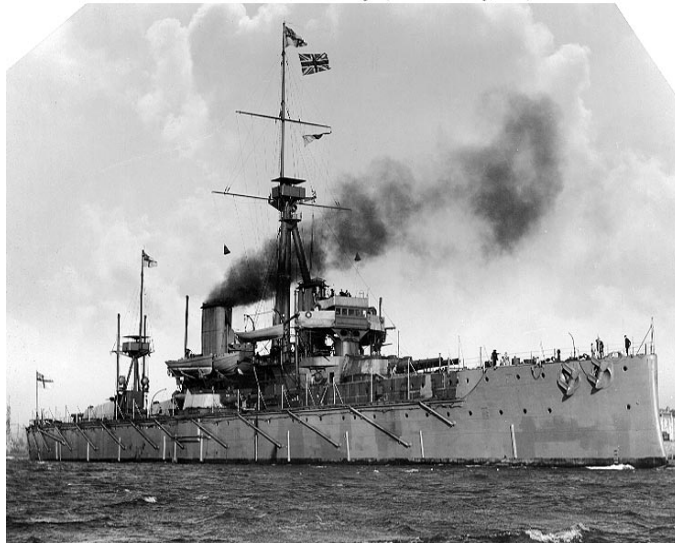


Fig 1.8 HMS Dreadnought

Source: <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/h63000/h63367.jpg>

Britain managed to build Dreadnought in just 14 months and by the start of the First World War, Britain had 49 battleships, compared with Germany's 29. Although the naval race continued, it was economically impossible for the Germans to close the gap before the war broke out. Bethmann Hollweg, the Chancellor of Germany, ended the naval arms race. His aim was to reach an understanding with the British to end the more and more isolated position of Germany. In addition to it, the increasing size of the Russian army forced the Germans to spend more money on their army than on the navy. A further step was taken when Haldane was sent to England. In 1912, he opened the negotiations and in this connection had long conversations with Bethmann Hollweg, Tirpitz and the Kaiser. These negotiations though carried out in a friendly atmosphere, did not yield any concrete results. Tirpitz secured another encouragement when another Navy Law was recently approved by the Reichstag, i.e., the German Parliament. This resulted in the British government continuing its own naval expansion. Britain built ships virtually in the ratio of eight for Germany's five down to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

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1.3.6 Theories of Imperialism

While the rivalries between the European powers were being waged, there were many historians and economists who were trying to understand the phenomenon of imperialism. Since Marxist theory influenced all the major intellectuals at the time, it was but natural for them to look for an economic explanation for the development of imperialism. J. A. Hobson, a British economist, in his work entitled *Imperialism* (1902), argued that there was a constant desire of the capitalist to maximize his profits. After successive rounds of investment and reinvestment, the capitalist would find it no longer profitable to invest in his own country and he would therefore be compelled to seek avenues for investment in other countries. He showed how, in countries which had seen the growth of capitalism, the distribution of national income was unequal. There was a large population with less income and the capitalist would soon find that he could not sell his products in his own country due to low incomes. He would then look for markets in other European countries but as those countries have also become industrialized, he would face competition there. As a result, he would turn towards those countries which had no industries of their own and could not protect themselves. Hobson reached the conclusion that it was in the nature of capitalism itself to create imperialism. He wrote, that 'the modern foreign policy of Great Britain is primarily a struggle for profitable markets for investment.' However, Hobson's theory is not generally held since most of Britain's surplus capital went to India, America and Australia.

R. Hilferding, a professional economist and banker of Vienna, was the next major theorist of imperialism. He wrote a book titled *Das Finanzkapital* (Finance Capital) in 1910. By this time, both Germany and United States had surpassed England in industrial production. Hilferding observed that in both these countries, banks played a major role in extending and controlling the industrial capital. Though the banks in England were not playing any such role, there was a growing tendency towards the merging of finance and industrial capitalism throughout the industrialized world. This created monopoly conditions. According to Hilferding, imperial expansion was preferred by monopoly capitalists because it would bring new areas under their control. These areas could be utilized for producing raw material and guarantee markets for their produce. He asserted that finance capital required a strong state to carry out a policy of expansion and to gather new colonies. In due course of time, conflicts between national monopolies would emerge. However, national monopolies may enter into temporary agreements which would be given up in

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the selfish interests of the monopoly. The economic rivalry of the great nation states was thus seen as leading inevitably to war.

Hilferding also assigned a positive role of the monopoly capital as he remarked, 'in the newly opened lands. . . The old social relations are completely revolutionized, and the agrarian thousand year old unity of the nations without history is rent as under. . . Capitalism itself gradually gives to the oppressed peoples the means and methods of achieving their own liberation.'

Another great theorist of imperialism was Rosa Luxemburg who was a German philosopher, a Marxist theorist, economist and revolutionary socialist. Her work titled *Accumulation of Capital* appeared in 1913 in which she described the process through which great powers wiped the markets of the still remaining non-capitalist world and left them poorer. She showed that export of capital to underdeveloped non-European countries did not lead to local industrial development. She further opined that there existed an artificial division of labour in the world whereby the underdeveloped lands were doomed to remain as primary producers forever. She shared with Hilferding the fear of nationalist economic rivalries leading to war.

V.I Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Party of Russia, in his pamphlet *Imperialism-The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) explained the reasons for the export of capital. He asserted that as long as capitalism remains capitalism, surplus capital will never be used for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses, for this would mean a decrease in the profits for the capitalists; instead, it will be utilized to increase profits by exporting capital abroad, to the underdeveloped countries. His work was intended to show that the First World War was an imperialist war, caused by rivalries triggered off by pressures of highly organized financial monopolies operating in different European countries.

These were the fundamental issues highlighted by the early twentieth century theorists of imperialism. However, the notion of the export of capital to the underdeveloped world to maximize profits was challenged later by intellectuals who found that, in actual fact, the industrialized nations were exporting most of their, surplus capital not to the underdeveloped world but to the more industrialized countries. This was especially true of England.

After the world wide economic depression of 1929, there emerged a new trend in the writings of imperialism. Joseph Schumpeter's work titled *Imperialism and the Social Classes* was published in 1931. Schumpeter was an Austrian American economist and political scientist. He initially lived and wrote in Germany but later on moved to United States. He was deeply impressed by the German Junker class which was a class of feudal landlords which had played an important role in the political and economic life of Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He also pointed out that the acquisition of empire in North America by England was the work of feudal aristocracy. Hence, he concluded that imperialism and capitalism were two distinct phenomenons. According to him, imperialism was generated by pre-capitalist social and economic forces. Capitalism, on the other hand, developed through innovation, through the combination of different factors of production in different ways. The logic of capitalism was the productive engagement of manpower. War, on the other hand, implied the withdrawal of manpower for unproductive activities. Moreover, for capitalism, it was not necessary to acquire territories as economic development could be attained without it.

Cambridge historians Jack Gallagher and R.E.R Robinson came up with their work *Africa and the Victorians* in 1961. It also contested the notion that capitalism led to imperialism. According to their view, imperialism was the consequence of European power politics, which was revealed in the policy of mutual deterrence followed in the countries of Asia and Africa. At times, they would mutually agree not to occupy a territory but to share it among themselves-as in China. While fighting among themselves, the European powers would occupy all vacant spaces in anticipation so that the rival power would not come in or get an unfair advantage. They also tried to prove that the economic interests of capitalism did not play a role in empire building. They argued that the British cabinet never had a businessman as a member. It was the aristocracy which ruled England, and that aristocracy had a dislike for business. However, Gallagher-Robinson's theory seems to be a clever polemical exercise. To indicate that the British cabinet had never a businessman is to prove nothing. Business interests have always functioned in a far more subtle fashion and business pressures were and continued to be exercised through groups which indirectly influence policy. Moreover, this kind of analysis only looks at the process of imperialism and not its causes.

Apart from the above discussed theories there were also contemporary Darwinian types of explanations for imperialism. Herbert Spencer used the phrase 'survival of the fittest' given by Darwin. This theory was applied to the nations. He maintained that an excess of population necessitated a constant struggle for survival. The fittest nations which win and were through victory were morally permitted to rule other nations. In 1853, Count Joseph-Arthur Gobineau, a Frenchman, wrote an *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, in which he put forward a view that 'the most important factor in development was race; and that those races which remained superior were those which kept their racial purity intact.' He also gave the idea of the Aryan race. This had an influence on Wagner.

More modern theories on imperialism have been given by people like Antonio Gramsci, one of the most important Marxist intellectuals in the West. Gramsci saw imperialism as an obvious manifestation of efforts to establish hegemony at the international level. For Gramsci, a 'great power' is a hegemonic power which is the "chief and guide of a system of alliances and of greater and minor agreements." He argued that the major characteristic of a great power is "its ability to impress upon state activity an autonomous direction, of which other states need to support the influence and repercussion."

1.4 SUMMING UP

- Between 1870 and 1914, treaties and secret agreements were signed, and threats of war issued and withdrawn, indicating alignments and realignments between the great powers of Europe.
- There were no permanent friends and foes and no country could rely on the support of another country. This confusion about who was whose enemy continued till the very outbreak of the First World War.
- In 1882, the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy was formed. Although Austria-Hungary and Germany remained friends, by 1890, it was evident that Italy's loyalty to the alliance would be uncertain.

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Check Your Progress

5. What is the 'scramble for Africa'?
6. Why was Africa called the 'Dark Continent'?
7. Who called the possession of colonies a necessity of modern life?
8. What was the primary reason for the opium trade in China?
9. What is known as the cutting of the Chinese melon?
10. What do you understand by the term the 'Great Game'?

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- Russia and France had signed secret agreements in 1894 which had brought them together against the Triple Alliance particularly against Germany and Austria-Hungary.
- England and France, who had been long term enemies and had often reached on the verge of war in their colonial rivalries, entered into an alliance called as 'Entente Cordiale' in 1904.
- The next stage in the process was an agreement between England and Russia who had long history of rivalries and hostility. With this was formed the Triple Entente comprising England, France and Russia in 1907.
- The formation of alliances, in spite of doubts about the loyalty of allies and friends in case war broke out, brought the First World War nearer and added to the suspicions and fear of each country against the other. The alliances also made it, in a way, inevitable that, when the war broke out, it would not be a local war restricted to one or two nations and that it would certainly assume wider proportions.
- According to Frank McDonough, the alliances were important but no European power really accepted that the alliance system consisted of two firm and balanced power blocs. The pre-1914 alliance system was a very fragile system.
- The desire and the policy of civilized nations to rule over economically weak and politically backward people has been termed Imperialism. One of the most significant feature of the nineteenth century has been the expansion of Europe beyond her own borders at a tremendous speed. The scramble for more and more colonies became intense and an age of new imperialism commenced.
- The main field for this new imperialism was found in Asia, Africa and Mediterranean. By the end of the nineteenth century vast areas in Africa and Asia were under one European power or the other. The naked imperialism, which aimed at occupying an underdeveloped area for the benefit of the mother country, became a universal policy.
- The partitioning of Africa was one of the most brutal and insensitive episodes in history. Europeans came in and carved up Africa along random boundaries that split up some tribes and threw others together. Europeans authenticated this by having the Africans sign treaties which they never understood. By 1914, practically all of Africa had fallen prey to European aggression.
- Just like Africa, China was also made a major target of the European powers during the last quarter of the twentieth century.
- In the late 18th century, the British imperialists in India began to encourage opium trade in China.
- The primary reason was that the British did not have any item of trade that interested the Chinese and they were concerned that trading silver and gold for Chinese products like silk and porcelain would severely damage the British economy. The imperialists devised a plan to trade opium for Chinese goods.
- Though China was not conquered and occupied by any imperialist country, the effects of European concessions on China were the same as in areas which had been colonized. In a period of a few decades, China had been reduced to the status of an international colony.

- The Great Game' was a term for the strategic rivalry and conflict between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for supremacy in Central Asia.
- The period of this Great Game period is generally regarded as running roughly from the Russo-Persian Treaty of 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.

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1.5 KEY TERMS

- **Boer War (1899-1902):** A conflict between the British and the Afrikaner population of South Africa caused by British interests in mining gold out of Afrikaner land.
- **Cutting of the Chinese Melon:** The division of China into spheres of influence by the European powers has often been described as the 'cutting of the Chinese melon'.
- **Gallicise:** To make or become French in language, character, etc.
- **Horn of Africa:** It is a peninsula which is in North-East Africa. It protrudes hundreds of kilometers into the Arabian Sea and lies along the southern side of the Gulf of Aden. It is actually the easternmost projection of the African continent.
- **Imperialism:** It is the practice or policy of a larger country or government increasing its power by gaining control over foreign countries or acquiring or holding colonies and dependencies.
- **Junker:** Members of landed nobility in Prussia.
- **Kaiser:** It is the German title meaning 'Emperor.'
- **Kulturkampf:** A name given to the struggle between Papacy and Civil State in Germany.
- **Open Door Policy:** It is statement of principles initiated by the United States in 1899-1900 for the protection of equal privileges among the nations trading with China and in support of Chinese territorial and administrative integrity.
- **Scramble for Africa:** It was the term used to describe Europe's rush to colonize and divide up the African continent in the latter part of the nineteenth century; this coincided with imperialism throughout Asia.
- **Splendid Isolation:** A term used to describe the general course of English foreign policy in the second half of the 19th century, exhibited in a refusal to conclude long-term international alliances.

1.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The foreign policy of new Germany, dominated by Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, was primarily aimed at reassuring the other European powers that Germany was a satisfied country and had no intention of upsetting the delicate balance of power in Europe.
2. The League was not a written agreement but an informal understanding between three European monarchial powers, that is, Austria-Hungary, Czarist Russia and Germany.
3. The Reinsurance Treaty was a secret treaty signed between Germany and Russia in 1887.

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4. After the resignation of Bismarck in 1890, the reigns of German government came effectively in the hands of the German emperor Kaiser William II.
5. After 1870, the major European powers rapidly expanded their colonial possessions in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Much of this activity was centered on gaining colonial possessions in Africa and it was commonly called the *Scramble for Africa*.
6. Before 1870, European powers had made little advance into Africa, either as conquerors or explorers, mainly because of their lack of resistance or immunity to Africa's tropical diseases. This left Africa in a shroud of mystery that earned it the title of the 'Dark Continent'.
7. The Prime Minister of Italy, Crispi, called the possession of colonies 'a necessity of modern life'.
8. The primary reason for the opium trade in China was that the British did not have any item of trade that interested the Chinese and they were concerned that trading silver and gold for Chinese products like silk and porcelain would severely damage the British economy. The imperialists devised a plan to trade opium for Chinese goods.
9. The scramble for gaining concessions in China by the imperialist powers is known as the 'cutting of the Chinese melon'.
10. The 'Great Game' was a term for the strategic rivalry and conflict between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for supremacy in Central Asia.

1.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the circumstances which led to the signing of the Triple Alliance in 1882.
2. What was the Anglo-French Entente of 1904?
3. Why was there a rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia between 1871 and 1914?
4. Why were England and France colonial rivals before 1904?
5. What were the reasons for the 'Great Game' between England and Russia in Central Asia?
6. Carefully examine the naval rivalry between England and Germany.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically evaluate Three Emperors' League or *Driekaiserbund*.
2. What led to the formation of Dual Alliance in 1879? Why did Italy join it in 1882? What were its main terms?
3. Explain the circumstances leading to the formation of the Triple Entente in 1907. What were its main provisions?
4. What is meant by the phrase 'the scramble for Africa'? Trace the growth of European Imperialism with special reference to scramble for Africa during the period of your study.

5. Discuss the circumstances and diplomatic forces which had contributed to the 'cutting of the Chinese melon'. How was the partition of China prevented?
6. Critically analyze various theories of Imperialism.

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UNIT 2 CONFLICT OF NATIONALITIES (1871-1914)

*Conflict of Nationalities
(1871-1914)*

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the fourteenth century, Turkish rule was established over vast areas of Eastern Europe. The Christian races living in the Balkans, a mountainous country between the Danube and the Aegean Sea, were ruled with an iron hand. The European countries were so involved in their internal squabbles that they could not take the threat from the Ottoman Empire seriously. The Christian races in the Balkans such as the Serbs, the Bulgarians, the Greeks, the Montenegrins, the Bosnians and the Rumanians; mainly belonging to the Slav family; often tried to throw off the yoke of Ottoman oppression. But they were no match for the strong Turkish rule. However, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the problem of the Eastern European races attracted the serious attention of their fellow Christians in Western Europe. During this time, the subject races were encouraged to assert their independence, partly on account of growing nationalism among them and partly because of the decline of the military power of the Turks.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Examine European interests in the Balkans
- Evaluate the rise of nationalism in the Balkan States
- Examine the rivalry between Austria and Russia
- Describe the rivalry between Austria and Serbia

2.2 EUROPEAN INTERESTS IN THE BALKANS (1871–1914)

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In the seventh century, Islam came into being in Arabia. The followers of Islam founded an immensely strong empire and started invading other regions in an effort to spread their faith. The Turks were converted to Islam in the 11th century. Some centuries later, the Ottoman state was founded in Anatolia in 1299 by the Oghuz Turks. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople (Istanbul) and transformed their state into one of the most powerful Islamic kingdoms in history. The Turks went on to conquer south-eastern Europe, i.e., the Balkans. The Balkan region was inhabited by a variety of people which included the Serbs, the Albanians, the Greeks, the Rumanians and the Bulgars. Most of these people belonged to the Slav group and most of them belonged to the Orthodox Church but some were Roman Catholics as well. Others, for example, the Albanians, were Muslims



Fig 2.1 The Balkans in 1870

Source: <http://althistory.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Balkans>

Throughout Turkish rule, the Balkans remained an underdeveloped region. Officials were corrupt, torture was legal, and no demonstrations against Turkish rule were permitted. By the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire began to decline due to a series of factors. The weakening of the Ottoman Empire corresponded with an increase in European interests in the Balkan region. In an effort to undermine the Turks, Russia clandestinely started supporting nationalistic feelings amongst the various peoples that inhabited the Balkan region. With their eyes firmly on the colonies of the Ottoman Empire which they coveted, European diplomats began to ponder over a series of questions which came to be known as the Eastern Question.

The basic issues of the Eastern Question were:

- What was to happen to the European territories of the crumbling Ottoman Empire?
- Who would benefit from Turkey's collapse?
- What was to take the place of Turkey in the event of its disappearance from Europe?

These were the central issues of the Eastern Question.

From the second quarter of the mid-nineteenth century nationalism became increasingly strong among the Balkan people who were united in their detestation of oppressive Ottoman rule. The story of the Eastern Question is not a simple tale of oppressed peoples rising against foreign rule. It was complicated by the ambitions and fears of European colonial powers—Russia, Britain, Austria, France and later Germany and Italy—and by the rivalry amongst the Balkan people themselves. So the Eastern Question led not only to revolts against the Turks but also to conflicts in which the great powers took part in wars between the Balkan people. The question took different shapes at different times but one of its constant factors was the ambition of Russia at the expense of the Ottomans. Now let us discuss the interests of various European powers in the Balkans.

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2.2.1 Russian Interest

If Turkey was considered the ‘sick man of Europe’, then Russia looked forward to the day when the ‘sick man’ died. Russia had already made considerable territorial gains in the eighteenth century. She further hoped to make the Black Sea a Russian lake and Constantinople a Russian city. In fact Russia was anxious to gain the warm-water year-round outlet, which was her only exit to the Mediterranean Sea. This required that Russia had freedom of movement throughout the straits of Dardanelles and Bosphorus, for her navy as well as merchant shipping. Russia wished to achieve her goal by championing the liberation of subject nationalities in Balkans from Turkish tutelage provided new states that emerged would be subject to her influence. There were obvious reasons and possible excuses for such an attitude of Russia. The majority of the Balkan peoples were members of the Orthodox Church, just like the Russian people. However, Russia had to move cautiously in the Balkans lest; she would unduly antagonize the other powers.

2.2.2 Austrian Interest

Austria’s interests were more vital than Russia or Britain. It was an almost landlocked Empire with only a short coastline at the head of the Adriatic Sea where her position was precarious. Thus, Austria was badly placed for sea borne traffic. Economically it was essential for Austria to secure an outlet to the sea and for this she needed to expand in the direction of ports. She was hence quick to take fright at any extension of Russian power or influence in the Balkans. Besides the importance of the Danube and the Black Sea as trading routes, there were other reasons for Austria to fear Russian ascendancy in the Balkans. The expansion of the Russian Empire to Austria-Hungary’s eastern borders would have seriously threatened her security. Moreover, Austria-Hungary feared the rise of nationalism among the people of the Balkans. Austria-Hungary itself was inhabited by diverse groups of people, many of whom were Slavs, and Austria felt that Balkan nationalism would eventually spread to her own empire. These factors led to Austria propping up Turkey. This was done by crippling and confining the leading Slav state of Balkans-Serbia. Austrian interests in the Balkans increased when Prussia displaced her as the leader of the German States. While the other Western powers were busy in the scramble of Africa, Austria pursued the policy of expansion in the Balkans which not only antagonized Russia but also thwarted national aspirations of the Serbs.

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2.2.3 British Interests

The British who had begun to think of the Mediterranean as 'our sea' had a large volume of trade with the Ottoman Empire. They saw a threat to that trade and to their Indian Empire, in the Russian advance in the Balkans and the Black Sea. Thus, the primary objective of British policy in the Balkans was to thwart Russian ambitions in the area. The anxiety and apprehension of Britain was compounded by the widespread and hearty dislike of the political system of Russia. Britain thus believed that a continued existence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire in Europe as a barrier against Russia was necessary to safeguard her interests-mercantile, military or imperial.

2.2.4 French Interests

France also maintained an interest in the Balkans. France had built up a prosperous trade route in eastern Mediterranean and had political interests in Egypt, neither of which she wished to see threatened by an expanding Russia. Moreover, France had long been recognized as the protector of the Roman Catholic clergy at the Christian holy places in Palestine. Thus, another motive of the French was the hope that they would be able to conquer a few colonies if the Turks were driven from power.

Hence, some of the western European powers tried to keep the Ottoman Empire integrated for their own interests and in the process ignored nationalistic aspirations and welfare of the Balkan people. They failed to find a permanent solution to long vexed Eastern Question because their mutual jealousies blinded them to the needs of the time. What guided their actions or policies most were the national and imperial interests, the possibility of reciprocal territorial gains, the need to maintain peace and the balance of power in Europe and, at times, belated sympathy for the suffering of the Balkan people.

2.3 RISE OF NATIONALISM IN THE BALKANS (1871–1914)

In the last quarter of the 19th century, there was increasing restlessness among the subject states of the Ottoman Empire due to growing nationalist aspirations and race consciousness among the people of the Balkans. The sight of the Serbs, the Greeks and the Rumanians winning their partial or complete freedom inevitably aroused the other non-Turkish inhabitants of the Balkans to attempt a similar movement for their freedom. This feeling was especially strong among the different Slav peoples of the Balkans, who now begun to be conscious of their racial kinship with the Slavs of Russia, Poland and the Austria-Hungary Empire. The emergence of Bulgarian nationalism was also closely related to the re-establishment of the independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1870. The pan Slavic feeling was also encouraged by Czarist Russia whose agents carried on an unceasing propaganda among the Balkan Slavs of the South to stir up racial consciousness and national hostility towards the Turks. Nationalism was thus becoming tinged with racialism. The leadership of the South Slav agitation was assumed by Serbia who began to dream of uniting under her rule all the Serbs and their close relations, the Croats, into her kingdom.

Besides Pan-Slavism and the growth of nationalist feeling, there was another factor in the Balkans which precipitated the Ottoman crisis. This factor was the extinguished hopes of Turkish revival and reform. The Ottoman Sultan had not carried

Check Your Progress

1. Who were the people who inhabited the Balkan region?
2. What were the basic issues of the Eastern Question?
3. What were the French interests in the Balkans?

out the promised reforms for his Christian subjects. Rather, his incompetence and extravagance had imposed upon them a burden which was almost past endurance. The peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina rose in revolt in 1875 to protest against the rapacity and grinding extortion of the Ottoman tax collectors. Fellow Serbs of Montenegro and Serbia sympathized with them and helped them. The Bulgarian revolt threatened to become widespread, and thus, the European powers attempted to localize the conflict lest the revolt jeopardize their interests in the Balkans. Austria, Berlin and St. Petersburg reached a joint understanding, and their views were embodied in what is known as the Andrassy Note. The Andrassy Note was named after the Austrian Foreign Minister Count Andrassy who sent it to Count Beust, the Austrian ambassador to the Court of St James. In the note the Count noted that despite the efforts of Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg to localize the revolt, there was a serious danger of the revolt becoming widespread, and thus, the Count asserted that there was a need for concerted action on the part of the three powers for the purpose of pressing the Sublime Porte, i.e., the central government of the Ottoman Empire, to fulfil its promises. The Sultan promised reforms but the rebels demanded more substantial guarantees. Thus, the three European powers jointly issued the Berlin Memorandum, which called upon the Sublime Porte to make concessions and threatened armed intervention in case the demands were not met. But since Britain refused to be a party to any measure of coercion against the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan was encouraged to ignore the protests of the three European powers.

As the Bulgarian rebellion had started threatening Turkish rule near Constantinople, the Ottoman's reacted by violently suppressing the revolt. The world was shocked by these atrocities and the conscience of the Christian world was shaken to the core. In Britain, the British Liberal politician William Gladstone denounced the unspeakable Turkish atrocities and urged that the Turks be expelled 'bag and baggage out of the provinces they had desolated and profaned'. He was joined in his outrage by other leading figures of the Western world. In spite of the strong protests by members of the public and leading intellectuals of the time, Benjamin Disraeli, who was then the Prime Minister, refused to intervene and called the whole affair a 'coffee-house bubble'. Disraeli showed more concern about what the Russians would do in the Balkans rather than the condition of the oppressed Christians of Bulgaria.

The Russian Czar saw the perfect opportunity for securing Russian interests in the Balkans after the revolt was suppressed. He wrote to the British Ambassador that, 'the affairs in Turkey were intolerable and unless Europe was prepared to act with firmness and energy, he should be obliged to act alone.' As the situation in Serbia and Montenegro was also worsening, Russia decided to declare war upon Turkey in April 1877. The Russo-Turkish War continued up until January 1878. The Russian forces crossed the Danube and besieged Plevna (Pleven) in July 1877. In spite of the strong resistance by the Turks under the leadership of Osman Pasha at Plevna, 43,000 Turkish soldiers eventually surrendered after being besieged for six months and thus, 'the backbone of Turkish resistance was broken'. The Turkish defeat was complete when Constantinople itself was threatened and the Ottoman Empire lay at the mercy of the Russian Czar. The Sultan sought peace and thus the Treaty of San Stefano was signed between Russia and Turkey in 1878.

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Fig 2.2 Russian Forces Crossing the Danube in 1870

Source: Wikipedia

2.3.1 Treaty of San Stefano March 1878

After capitulating against the Russians, the Turks were forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. The treaty shook the very foundations of the Turkish Empire in Europe. According to the treaty, the Sultan recognized the independence of Serbia and Montenegro. Serbia received vast territories to the South and Montenegro was ‘trebled in size and doubled in population’. Bosnia and Herzegovina, though still under Turkish protection, were to be given a better government. Rumania was recognized as the independent state. In addition, Russia obtained Batum and Kars. She also constituted a ‘Greater Bulgaria’ as a vassal state extending from the Danube to the Aegean and from the Black Sea to Albania and comprising eastern Roumelia as well as considerable part of Macedonia.

As a result of the treaty, Russia wiped out her humiliation at the Congress of Paris and gained what has been lost. Her influence in the Balkans was now at its zenith. As was expected, a treaty so helpful to Russia could not be tolerated by Britain and Austria. Britain feared that with the increase of Russian influence in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, the sea routes to India would not be secure. Strong resentment prevailed even in the other European states against the favourable terms to Russia. Thus, the British PM Disraeli sought for the revision of the treaty by a Congress of European powers. The situation became tense and, facing immense pressure from the other European powers, Russia agreed to a revision of the treaty at the Congress of Berlin.

2.3.2 Congress of Berlin

A Congress of European powers met at Berlin in 1878 under Bismarck’s presidency. It drew up the Treaty of Berlin by which the following arrangements were made:

- Montenegro, Serbia and Rumania were declared independent of Turkey.
- The ‘Greater Bulgaria’ envisioned by the Treaty of San Stefano was divided into two parts: one part was made a self-governing principality, subject to the payment of an annual tribute to the Sultan, while the other part (southern) was constituted as the province of eastern Roumelia with an independent administration

under a Christian governor but under Turkish suzerainty. A considerable portion of the Macedonian territories, which was formerly included in the “Greater Bulgaria”, was again restored to Turkey.

- Austria was allowed to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina, which nominally remained dependent on Turkey.
- Russia received Bessarabia and a number of territories in Asia Minor.
- Britain, by a separate treaty with Turkey, secured the control of Cyprus.

The Treaty of Berlin unfortunately provided no long lasting solution to the complex problems of the Balkan Peninsula. Some of the terms of the treaty blatantly violated all forms of justice and equity. Moreover, most of the decisions in the Congress were made in private meetings and hence never fully discussed in their details and depth. Most of the signatories of this treaty left Berlin ‘smarting under the sense of disappointment and humiliation which definitely boded ill for the tranquility of Europe’. The British historian Professor A.J.P Taylor called the treaty ‘a watershed in the history of Europe’, however, such a flattering appreciation of the treaty seems to be rather overdrawn. While it is true that in the next thirty six years or so Europe never witnessed war, but, it cannot be denied that some of the unpopular settlements of the treaty hampered understanding between numerous Balkan States. Rumania had a justifiable grievance when it was deprived of Bessarabia. Bulgaria found her dream of ‘Greater Bulgaria’ ending in smoke. Serbia’s lament that her southern Slav population in Bosnia and Herzegovina was transferred from ‘the nerveless grasp of Constantinople to the tighter grip of the Hapsburgs’ was substantially correct. Montenegro and Greece regarded that their rewards were inadequate. According to G.P Gooch, Russia also felt justifiably aggrieved that she was deprived of ‘her precious gains of her struggles and sacrifices’ by the wily manipulations of Disraeli with the assent, if not indeed the encouragement of Bismarck because Austria pocketed Bosnia and Herzegovina as a reward of her ‘inglorious neutrality’. It was the newly acquired position of Austria in the Balkans which gave a new edge to her long-nourished ambition to aggrandize in that area. It was this position of hers which was bound to clash with the equally expanding interests of the Russians, stimulated and strengthened by the predominance of their Slav kinsmen in the Balkan Peninsula. Both Austria and Russia set their longing eyes on the Balkans. Hence peace in that area hanged on a precarious threat which could be ended at any time on the slightest of pretexts.

According to Stanley Lane Poole, the British orientalist and archaeologist, ‘rightly or wrongly, in supporting the Christian provinces against their sovereign, the powers at Berlin sounded the knell of Turkish domination in Europe.’ Another expert on the matter, Allen, is highly critical of the Treaty of Berlin. He says, ‘It was concluded in a spirit of shameless bargain with a sublime disregard of elementary ethics, and in open contempt of the rights of civilized people to determine their own future. It was essentially a temporary arrangement concluded between rival Imperialist States. It sowed the seed of the crop of “nationalist” wars and risings in which the Balkan people were to be embroiled for the next half century.’ Thus, it can be stated that the Treaty of Berlin led to the partial dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire with the consent of European Powers. It also proved to be a temporary settlement because disorder grew at a very rapid speed in the Ottoman Empire and created an atmosphere of general unrest, which ultimately culminated in the disastrous events of 1912–18.

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Fig 2.3 Painting Depicting the Congress of Berlin by the German Painter Anton von Werner

Source: Wikipedia

2.3.3 Developments after the Treaty of Berlin

After the Treaty of Berlin, the so called 'Eastern Question' began to reveal new developments. The freed Balkan nations instead of being content with their independence wished to add to their realms those people of their nationality who still remained under Turkish rule. As their claims often overlapped, the Balkan region provided a spectacle of increasing unrest, frequent wars and growing ambitions. Turkey also began to be touched by the prevailing winds of nationalism and made a serious attempt at revival. But the movement of Turkish reform never had a chance. The Balkan States and other European powers took advantage of the opportunity provided by the 'Young Turk' revolution to aggrandize them at the expense of Turkey and to embroil her in international complications. The intrusion of Austria into the Balkans brought in new complications. Backed by Germany, Austria began to follow a course of action which antagonized Serbia and Russia and before long precipitated the start of the First World War. Germany was a newcomer in the Near Eastern politics and she looked for expansion for political and economic reasons. Under William II, Germany became a friend of the Ottoman Sultan in the 1890s, training the Ottoman army, posing as the protector of the Muslims throughout the world, and planning the Berlin-Baghdad Railway under German auspices.

Bulgaria was the first state to challenge the Treaty of Berlin. The people of Roumelia affected in 1885 a bloodless revolution and proclaimed their political union with Bulgaria. The Bulgarian king declared himself the Prince of the United Bulgaria. The Armenian subjects of the Turks were victims of periodic outrages throughout the nineteenth century. Such outrages reached their peak in 1894 and 1895. In 1896, in Constantinople itself, over 6,000 Armenians were killed in a single day. The great powers were not interested in the fate of the Armenians.

Greece received Thessaly and a portion of Epirus from Turkey in 1881. The acquisition of the Island of Crete next engaged the attention of the Greeks. The Cretans wanted to throw off Turkish suzerainty and to unite themselves with Greece. In 1896, a rebellion broke out in Cretan helped by the Greeks. Turkey declared war upon Greece, easily defeated her, and compelled her to abandon the project of annexing Crete and to cede a portion of Thessaly. After long negotiations between powers it was decided that Crete should be an autonomous state under Turkish suzerainty.

2.3.4 Young Turk Movement

The Eastern Question entered upon a new and startling phase in 1908. A reforming party had grown up in Ottoman Empire consisting of Turks mostly educated in the West. They wanted to modernize Turkey, to free her from the tutelage of foreign powers and to pursue a strictly national policy. These Young Turks effected a bloodless revolution on 24 July 1908, at Constantinople and forced the Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, to grant a constitution. The parliament was summoned for the first time since 1878 and many liberal reforms were promulgated. But Abdul Hamid attempted a counter-revolution for which he was deposed and his brother, Mehmed V, was proclaimed Sultan in 1909.

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Fig 2.4 Young Turk Revolutionaries entering Constantinople in 1909

Source: <http://coffeecuphistory.wordpress.com/2013/03/>

The Young Turk movement was not appreciated by European statesmen who had their own selfish interests in the Balkans. They rather began to violate the conditions imposed upon them by the Treaty of Berlin. Bulgaria declared her complete independence and Austria did not hesitate to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Austrian action flared up the sentiments of the Serbs who were already hostile to the Austrian domination over the Slavonic and Serbian brothers. Italy had long been looking for expansion to the northern shore of Africa and had marked out Tripoli as her share of Turkish spoils. Italy saw her chances threatened by the nationalist revival in Turkey and thus, suddenly declared war against the Sultan and compelled them to cede Tripoli in 1911.

Though professing constitutional principles, the Young Turks disappointed popular expectations in Turkey. Their policy was that of 'Turkification', i.e., they sought to maintain the uncontrolled domination of the Turks over the various people of their composite empire. The non-Turkish races were cruelly persecuted under their rule; especially cruel was their treatment of Macedonia and Albania. The result of this senseless policy of persecution produced widespread disaffection against the Turks which soon brought the Ottoman Empire to the point of extinction.

2.3.5 Balkan Wars

The destruction of the Ottoman Empire hastened after 1908. The policy of Turkification of the Young Turks harassed the Christians living under the Turkish banner. The activities of the Young Turks created far more enemies than friends for Turkey. Their reforming zeal had vanished before it could be put into practice. Encouraged by French successes in Morocco, Italy attacked Tripoli and was able to annex it without making much sacrifice. Since Italy had carefully secured the prior consent of all the great powers, its war

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against Turkey from 1911 to 1912 did not, by itself, cause any major crisis. It brought Italy its long coveted Northern African colony. The war over Tripoli however encouraged several small Balkan States to move against Turkey and thus to reopen the Balkan question.

The chief motive behind the **First Balkan War in 1912** was the desire of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece to gain further concessions at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Together with Montenegro these countries formed a Balkan League in early 1912. Taking advantage of the war over Tripoli, they invaded the Ottoman Empire in October of that year. Turkey was decisively defeated and was forced to sign the Treaty of London in May 1913. According to the treaty, the Ottomans lost all their European possessions except the region adjacent to the Straits.

The peace was less than a month old when the **Second Balkan War** broke out, this time among the victors over the distribution of the spoils. Under the arrangements made before the first war, Serbia was to receive an outlet to the Adriatic in Albania. This met with Austrian and Italian protests. However, as compensation for its loss, Serbia now demanded some of the territory that Bulgaria had received in Macedonia, and when the Bulgarians refused, war ensued between Bulgaria on the one hand, and Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, Rumania, and Turkey on the other. Against such an overwhelming coalition, the Bulgarians proved to be powerless. In the ensuing Treaty of Bucharest, signed in August 1913, Bulgaria kept only a small part of Macedonia, while the Greeks and the Serbs took the rest.

The Balkan Wars caused deep anxiety among the major European colonial powers. A conference of Ambassadors was convened in London to deal with the Balkan problem, especially the controversy between Austria and Serbia over the latter's aspirations in Albania. As in the past, Russia supported Serbia. Germany, on the other hand, served as a break on Austria's desire to intervene against Serbia. Since Britain and Italy also favored the independence of Albania, Russia finally withdrew its support of Serbia and peace was preserved. In the course of events, however, Austria and Russia, together with their allies, had again come close to war. Serbia had suffered another defeat, for which it squarely blamed Austria; even Serbian gains in Macedonia could not be consolation enough for her humiliation. Outraged Serbian nationalists sought revenge against Austria and succeeded in assassinating Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, at Sarajevo on 28 June, 1914. This proved to be the spark that ignited the First World War.

Check Your Progress

1. What was the Andrassy Note?
2. What was the Treaty of San Stefano?
3. What was the chief motive behind the First Balkan War in 1912?
4. What was the outcome of the First Balkan War in 1912?



Fig 2.5 The Balkans before and After the First Balkan War, 1912

Source: <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Tne%20Balkans/BALKANS%201909-1912.jpg>

2.4 AUSTRO-RUSSIAN RIVALRY

*Conflict of Nationalities
(1871-1914)*

Both Austria-Hungary and Russia were multinational empires which had expanded over a very long time on account of a combination of factors including military victory, diplomatic negotiation and marriage settlement. A number of languages were spoken in the vast Russian Empire, which occupied nearly one-sixth of the world's land with Russian nationals constituting less than half of the population. In Austria-Hungary, at least fifteen different languages were spoken, and the German speaking population struggled to maintain its supremacy against the challenges posed by the ten other racial groups.

In the nineteenth century, Europe was engulfed by the forces of liberalism and nationalism which spread rapidly and threatened to weaken both the states by undermining the absolute powers of the rulers and by feeding the nationalist sentiments of different groups of the subject peoples. The Habsburg Empire had by now bowed to Hungarian pressure for autonomy in 1867, and faced increasing demands for greater rights and freedoms from Czechs and southern Slavs. Both empires faced the same dilemma; modernization and industrialization were considered necessary to maintain military power, existing national frontiers and great power status, but both processes created opportunities for minority groups such as Jews, Poles, Czechs and Serbs to attain education and to increase their power. By the end of the nineteenth century, both the governments felt under pressure, both at home and abroad, and both, as a result, were strong willed to act with resolution to protect their important objectives. Their objectives clashed violently in some regions and neither power was prepared to see its influence weakened to the profit of the other.¹

Russia was interested in securing a free outlet for her ships from the Black Sea through the Dardenelles and establishing political influence and ultimately, military control over Constantinople. Strategic and military considerations were reinforced in the region through the significantly increased volume of Russian exports, especially grain, passing through the Straits annually. She was also concerned about the security of the borders of her vast empire in Central Asia and the Far East which were open to attack from Afghanistan, India, Persia and Manchuria. Besides this, as an ardent upholder of Russian Orthodox traditions and as a protector of the Slav heritage, the Russian Czar also regarded himself as bearing the full responsibility for the fate of the people of Balkans who might turn to him, in the event of an attack by the Muslim Turks or the Catholic and German Habsburgs.

The Habsburg Empire itself was bothered to keep its territories intact and to maintain its position as the great European power. However, this task was becoming more and more difficult, not only because of the growing nationalist pressures inside Austria-Hungary but also because of the failure of the Turkish Empire to maintain control of its European population. There was a series of crises in the nineteenth century generated by Turkey's decline into 'the sick man of Europe', and each crisis threatened to bring Austria-Hungary and Russia into military conflict. Both countries wanted to profit from Turkey's weak position and simultaneously minimize the threat of growing nationalism in the Balkans. As you learned in the previous unit, in 1878, Austria-Hungary captured two Balkan provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia tried to strengthen her position in the Eastern Balkans and at Constantinople. Both powers tried to calm the situation in the Balkans and the Near East to their own advantage, but as the Ottoman Empire grew weaker, the ambition of the Balkan States increased and threatened to destabilize the whole region and the Habsburg Empire itself.

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Check Your Progress

8. How did Russia and Austro-Hungary become multinational empires?
9. Why was the absolute power of the monarchy threatened in Russia and Austria-Hungary in the late 19th century?

2.5 AUSTRO-SERBIAN RIVALRY

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By the late nineteenth century, Austria-Hungary became concerned with the ambitions of Serbia. The Serbian rulers aimed at uniting all Serbs and Croats in a Greater Serbia. They also desired a union with Bosnia, which had been a part of old Serbia. Since there were twice as many Serbs in the Habsburg Empire and in Bosnia and Herzegovina as there were in Serbia itself, the aspirations of Serbia could only be realized at the cost of the territorial unity with the Habsburg Empire. This was supposed to open the way for the ambitions of other subject nationalities. Up to 1903, Serbia was a satellite state of the pro-Austrian dynasty, but the regime was overthrown and replaced by a pro-Russian dynasty.

Thus, this change of regime resulted in a great rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Austria-Hungary tried to economically pressurize Serbia by means of the 'pig war.' According to this war, the agricultural products of Serbia were not allowed in Austrian markets. However, Serbia found other European openings for its pigs and farm exports and concentrated on spreading its sway in the southern parts of the Habsburg Empire and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The decline of the Ottoman Empire was likely to offer Serbia substantial scope, and in an effort to stop Serbian expansion, Austria-Hungary took the possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. The news of this annexation did not evoke very pungent or adverse comments from Russia or Italy, but it certainly shocked Britain. It was, however, a bolt from the blue for Serbia and Montenegro and they considered this as a staggering blow to their position in the Balkan Peninsula. Thus, while Austria-Hungary expanded their empire, Russia got nothing. The Russians were hurt at this diplomatic defeat, more so when the German government made it clear in 1909 that if they declined to accept this arrangement, Germany would support her Austrian ally and impose agreement on Russia by force if required.

Serbia was more irritated at the Austrian action than Russia was and thus, intensified her campaign to appeal to Serbs and Croats beyond her borders to join in a Greater Serbia. Secret organizations linked Serbian patriots in Bosnia and Herzegovina with nationalists in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. The Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire also worked closely with other minority groups like Czechs. The severe repression of Serbs and Croats by Hungary ignited passions further and encouraged Serb hopes. The Serbs' appetites were whetted by the success of Italy in 1911 against Turkey in North Africa, especially Libya. It ultimately paved the way for the Balkans explosion with possibly catastrophic consequences. Kaiser William II commented in 1911 that this action of Italy might be the first step towards a 'world war with all its terrors.'

The Balkans began to stir with vengeance after 1911. With the help of the Russian ambassador, Serbia and Bulgaria signed a treaty which aimed at driving the Ottoman Turks out of Europe. Together with Greece and Montenegro, they formed a Balkan League. The foundations of this Balkan Confederacy were laid on 13 March 1912. The League declared war on Turkey in October 1912. By the end of November, the League had routed the Turkish armies and driven them out of Europe, with the exception of Constantinople, the Gallipoli peninsula and some scattered fortresses. The exit of Turkey from Europe appeared, at least on surface, a promising blessing for mankind as the complex Balkan problem seemed to have found its own solution by the astounding success of the four Balkan States which also brought each of them some useful territorial gains.



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Fig 2.6 The Balkan League

Source: http://mentalfloss.com/sites/default/files/Balkan-War-combatants_5.jpg

The victory of the League was disastrous for Austria-Hungary, as her rival Serbia had most competently demonstrated her military power. If at that point of time Russia had been prepared to support the claims of Serbia, a general European war might have broken out. Austria-Hungary was determined to put a stop to Serbia's maritime ambitions and would have appealed most vigorously for German help. The Russians made some preliminary military moves, but the Serbs did not pursue their claims and therefore, the Russians did not move forward to any formal measures of mobilization.

The crisis in the Balkans persisted as the Balkan League powers fought amongst themselves during the long-drawn-out peace negotiations with Turkey. In 1913, Bulgaria attacked her former allies and suffered a heavy defeat at their hands. The influence and territory of Serbia were further expanded, in spite of desperate attempts of Austria to keep a check on it by the establishment of the new state of Albania. By the beginning of 1914, the Austria-Hungarian government arrived at the conclusion that a military confrontation leading to the devastation of Serbia by Austrian troops was necessary for the survival of the Habsburg Empire. It was increasingly felt that the ambitions of Serbia, if not destroyed as soon as possible, were bound to lead to the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire due to the increasing intensity of the southern Slav movements for self-determination. The stubbornness of the Hungarians and the ambitions of other national groups within the empire seemed to obstruct a peaceful constitutional solution to the problem. Preventive military action against Serbia seemed to be the only solution.

The Government of Austria was well aware of the fact that in the event of any confrontation, Serbia would seek help from Russia and Russia would find it difficult to resist. However, the hope that German threats of military intervention would serve to keep Russia on the sidelines still continued. The Germans were worried about the worsening political and military position of its ally, whose ability to fight against, both Russia and Serbia simultaneously, was coming under scrutiny. The German leaders pressed on their Austrian counterparts the need to take significant steps to restore their strength and influence after the Balkan wars while simultaneously the German government tried its best to distance itself from any political or military obstacles arising from the situation in the Balkans. The Government of Austria decided to start military exercises

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in Bosnia in early 1914 with a view of preparing an army for invading Serbia. It was recommended that the Emperor's nephew Franz Ferdinand (heir to the Austrian throne) should visit the area, both to show his sympathy for the development of southern Slav aspirations within the framework of the Habsburg Empire, and to inspect the preparations for the military exercise. It was formally announced in March 1914 that as a part of the official visit to Bosnia, Prince Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie would visit the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. It was a significant date for the Serbs as it marked the anniversary of the Turkish victory at Kosovo which had ended the independence of Serbia. Extreme nationalist groups in Bosnia were looking forward to exploit this visit in the best possible way.

The visit of Prince Archduke Franz Ferdinand was bound to be viewed as provocative, yet the Habsburg authorities took no special precautions. The security arrangements were almost paralyzed by the enthusiastic masses. Travelling in a car through the streets of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, the royal party survived an early bomb attack. However, later in the day, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian teenager shot Franz Ferdinand dead. Thus, a showdown between Austria-Hungary and Serbia seemed inevitable. The murder of Franz Ferdinand became the immediate cause of the First World War which will be discussed in detail in the next unit.

Was the Balkan Nationalism the cause of the First World War?

Some studies on the origins of the First World War have focused on the obstinate nationality issues which caused a lot of conflict in Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Berndotte Schmitt, in his pamphlet, the *Origins of the First World War (1958)*, has argued that the primary cause of the First World War was the denial of self-determination to minority groups. 'More than any other circumstance', he maintained, 'this conflict between existing governments and their unhappy minorities was responsible for the catastrophe of 1914.'²

Gordon Martel has argued that the First World War grew out of a conflict between Slav Nationalism and the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire. The murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand was the final straw in this struggle for mastery over the Balkans. It offered the Austro-Hungarian government an ideal opportunity to incite public opinion in support of a war.³ This type of interpretation which sets the July crisis in the context of the long running Eastern Question, views the First World War as one which was fought for the future of Central and Eastern Europe.⁴

Table 2.1 Ethnic Composition of Austria-Hungary, 1910 (in millions)

Germans	12.0
Magyars	10.1
Czechs	6.6
Poles	5.0
Ruthenians	4.0
Croats	3.2
Romanians	2.9
Slovaks	2.0
Serbs	2.0
Slovenes	1.3
Italians	0.7
Total	50.8

Source: <https://vle.oakham.rutland.sch.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=3156>

According to Frank McDonough, only a few historians would object to the view that the struggle to displace the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans was a significant factor in the outbreak of war. The key players in this struggle were southern European nationalist groups, Russia and Austria-Hungary. In July 1914, the military leaders of Austria-Hungary were so determined to deal with Serbia that they lost their heads and ignored all plans for negotiation. According to Joachim Remak, the Hapsburg-Serb quarrel was a major issue which brought about the war.⁵ He argues that Austria-Hungary and Serbia both knew that they were on a collision course in 1914, and they did not care if the Balkan conflict triggered all the major European coalitions. Thus the primary responsibility for initiating the war in 1914 is shared between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.⁶

However, John Leslie opines that Austria-Hungary can be blamed for planning a local Austro-Serbian conflict which was associated to its fears about the Balkan Nationalism, but Germany which was not interested in this conflict quite intentionally used it as an opportunity to launch the European war which Austria-Hungary never desired. John Lowe perhaps puts the significance of Austro-Serbian quarrel into its proper perspective by stating, 'The crisis in the Balkans was the occasion, rather than the cause of the First World War.'⁷

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2.6 SUMMING UP

- The decline the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century gave rise to a series of crises known as the Eastern Question. It was complicated by the ambitions and fears of the European Powers-Russia, Britain, Austria, France and later Germany and Italy-and by the rivalry of Balkan people themselves.
- The question took different shapes at different times but one of its constant factors was the ambition of Russia at the expense of Turkey.
- The Balkan Wars were one of the most important causes of the First World War. Grant and Temperley opine that no single event influenced the outbreak of the war in 1914 more than the Balkan War of 1912-1913.
- However, the incident which took place on 28 June 1914, became the immediate cause of a world conflagration which began in the first week of August.
- An issue between Austria and Serbia had become an issue between all the Great Powers of Europe. Peace within Europe had hung so precariously on a thread, that it could not have been maintained for long.
- Thus in summing up, we can say that the clash of interests of various European powers in grabbing the territories of Ottoman Empire proved one of the main reasons for the First World War of 1914.

2.7 KEY TERMS

- **Balkans:** A Turkish word meaning mountains. As a term of political geography, it is applied to the mountainous region between the Danube and Aegean Sea. This region has been the meeting place of races from pre-historic times.
- **Habsburg Dynasty:** The reigning German family in Austria from 1278 to 1918.
- **Mobilize (military):** To assemble and make ready for war duty.

Check Your Progress

10. What was the pig-war?
11. What was the immediate cause of the First World War?

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- **Nationalism:** A sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations.
- **Ottoman Empire:** It was an empire created by Turkish tribes in Anatolia. It was one of the most powerful states in the world during the fifteenth and sixteenth century which spanned more than 600 years and came to an end only in 1922.
- **Self-determination:** It is the process by which a group of people, usually possessing a certain degree of national consciousness, form their own state and choose their own government.
- **Turkification:** It is the policy of assimilation of individuals, entities or cultures in the various historical Turkic states and cultures, such as the Ottoman Empire.

2.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The Balkan region was inhabited by a variety of people which included the Serbs, the Albanians, the Greeks the Rumanians and the Bulgars.
2. The basic issues of the Eastern Question were:
 - (a) What was to happen to the European territories of the crumbling Ottoman Empire?
 - (b) Who would benefit from Turkey’s collapse?
 - (c) What was to take the place of Turkey in the event of its disappearance from Europe?
3. France had built up a prosperous trade route in eastern Mediterranean and had political interests in Egypt, neither of which she wished to see threatened by an expanding Russia. Moreover, France had long been recognized as the protector of the Roman Catholic clergy at the Christian holy places in Palestine. The French hoped that they would be able to conquer a few colonies if the Turks were driven from power. Due to these reasons the French maintained an interest in the Balkans.
4. Austria, Berlin and St. Petersburg reached a joint understanding about the Bulgarian revolt, and their views were embodied in what is known as the Andrassy Note. The Andrassy Note was named after the Austrian Foreign Minister Count Andrassy. In the note the Count noted that despite the efforts of Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg to localize the Bulgarian revolt, there was a serious danger of the revolt becoming widespread, and thus, the Count asserted that there was a need for concerted action on the part of the three powers for the purpose of pressing the Sublime Porte, i.e., the central government of the Ottoman Empire, to fulfil its promises.
5. After capitulating against the Russians in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, the Turks were forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. According to the treaty, the Sultan recognized the independence of Serbia and Montenegro. Serbia received vast territories to the South. Bosnia and Herzegovina, though still under Turkish protection, were to be given a better government. Rumania was recognized as the independent state. In addition, Russia obtained Batum and Kars. She also constituted a ‘Greater Bulgaria’ as a vassal state extending from the Danube to the Aegean and from the Black Sea to Albania and comprising eastern Roumalia as well as considerable part of Macedonia.

6. The chief motive behind the First Balkan War in 1912 was the desire of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece to gain further concessions at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.
7. As a result of the First Balkan War in 1912, Turkey was decisively defeated and was forced to sign the Treaty of London in May 1913. According to the treaty, the Ottomans lost all their European possessions except the region adjacent to the Straits.
8. Both Austria-Hungary and Russia were multinational empires which had expanded over a very long time on account of a combination of factors including military victory, diplomatic negotiation and marriage settlement.
9. In the nineteenth century, Europe was engulfed by the forces of liberalism and nationalism which spread rapidly and threatened to weaken both Russia and Austria by undermining the absolute powers of the rulers and by feeding the nationalist sentiments of different groups of the subject peoples.
10. Austria-Hungary tried to economically pressurize Serbia by means of the 'pig war.' According to this war, the agricultural products of Serbia were not allowed in Austrian markets.
11. The murder of Franz Ferdinand became the immediate cause of the First World War.

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2.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. How did the growth of nationalism in the Balkans affect the Eastern Question?
2. What were the terms of the Treaty of Berlin?
3. What was the Young Turk movement?
4. Explain briefly the Austro-Russian rivalry
5. Write short notes on:
 - (a) Treaty of San Stefano
 - (b) Congress of Berlin
 - (c) Balkan Wars
 - (d) Young Turk Movement

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyze in detail the interests of various European powers in the Balkans from 1870 to 1914.
2. Critically examine the rise of nationalism in the Balkans between 1870 and 1914.
3. Analyze in detail the interests of various European powers in the Balkans from 1870 to 1914.
4. Discuss in detail the rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.
5. Was the Austro-Serbian conflict responsible for the First World War? Discuss this with reference to the historiography on the subject

2.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE FIRST WORLD WAR, THE PARIS PEACE SETTLEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH

*The First World War, The Paris
Peace Settlement and its
Aftermath*

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STRUCTURE

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- 3.1 Objectives
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 - 3.2.1 Causes of the First World War
 - 3.2.2 Course of the First World War
 - 3.2.3 Consequences of the First World War
- 3.3 Paris Peace Settlement and its Aftermath
 - 3.3.1 Founders of the Settlement
 - 3.3.2 Treaty Signed with Germany: Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919)
 - 3.3.3 Treaty Signed with Austria: Treaty of Saint Germain (10 September 1919)
 - 3.3.4 Treaty Signed with Bulgaria: Treaty of Neuilly (27 November 1919)
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- 3.4 Summing Up
- 3.5 Key Terms
- 3.6 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 3.7 Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 References and Suggested Readings

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The year 2014 is the centenary year of one of the worst catastrophes in modern history, i.e., the First World War. The roots of the First World War lay deep in the history of the nineteenth century and put the whole of Europe into turmoil in 1914. No single event had a greater impact on the course of the first half of the twentieth century than the First World War. The experiences of mass mobilization and industrialized violence brought by the conflict reshaped European societies, reordered international geopolitics, generated new extremist ideologies like Fascism and Nazism and gave birth to new institutions in the world. As a result of the war, established dynasties like the Ottomans and the Romanovs collapsed, Europe began to decline and America started to dominate.

The origin of the First World War is one of the most controversial and endlessly debated subjects in history. No other event has attracted the attention of so many historians, journalists, writers of memoirs, and military authors. For decades, its causes have been analyzed, and yet no end to the debate is in sight. Various explanations have been offered by the historians from time to time, but none seem adequate.

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The First World War had many firsts to its credit. It was the most widespread war than any that had been fought until then. The war also introduced new weapons of warfare that had not been seen before. For the first time in history, all the countries of the world were directly or indirectly involved in the war. The war was fought on land, sea and air; in Europe, East Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

The immense destruction caused by the First World War made people all over the world completely disillusioned by violence in general. Anti war sentiment rose in many countries which forced Western nations to think of ways to prevent future conflict.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse the causes and consequences of the First World War
- Examine the various explanations given by historians regarding the causes of war
- Describe the course of the First World War
- Explain and analyze various treaties signed at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-20

3.2 THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The twentieth century witnessed two destructive wars across the European continent, but due to European domination of the world, these became world wars. The First World War, also known as the 'First World War', the 'Great War', and 'The War To End All Wars', was the first large scale international conflict since the Napoleonic era. It involved all the European powers. The wars for national unity in Germany and Italy, Greek War of Independence, the Crimean War, the Russo-Turkish War, the Boer War, and the Russo-Japanese War, were more or less limited to few powers and did not lead into a general conflagration. But First World War was a total war¹, that is, fought not merely by professional armies, but as much by the civilian population engaged in producing for the war effort and being targeted in effect as combatants.

The war was sparked off by the assassination of Prince **Archduke Francis Ferdinand**, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, by a Serbian nationalist named Gavrilo Princip. But any attempt to understand the origins of the war must take account of a large number of long standing causes. It became one of the most controversial and debated subjects in history. For much of the nineteenth century, much of the major European powers maintained a balance of power. However, between 1871 and 1914 a wide variety of factors served to undermine international stability. The First World War was really the culmination of long-drawn-out crisis within the European system.



Fig 3.1 Europe in 1914

Source: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/maps/europe1914.htm>

3.2.1 Causes of the First World War

The causes of the First World War are deeply rooted within certain political and diplomatic developments in 19th century Europe. Let us examine these.

I. Bismarck's Legacy

The rise of Germany was the principal factor which produced anxiety among the major European countries. As you have learned previously, the victory of Prussia over France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 culminated in the unification of Germany and created a new power in the heart of Europe. The foreign policy of united Germany, dominated by Bismarck, the first Chancellor of Germany, was designed to reassure Europe that Germany was a satisfied country, with no intention of upsetting the delicate balance of power in Europe. This clever style of diplomacy secured a dominant position for Germany in European affairs through the formation of delicate system of treaties and alliances that often comprised secret clauses, which you have already studied in Unit 1 in detail. Bismarck captured the urgency that the European Great Powers felt about the necessity of alliances, and the delicate nature of the balance of power itself: 'All[international] politics reduces itself to this formula: Try to be a *trios* (three) as long as the world is governed by the unstable equilibrium of five Great Powers'-Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Britain and France. In 1872, the League of Three Emperors (*Driekaiserbund*) consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia was formed. Bismarck knew that France was Germany's irreconcilable enemy, so his diplomatic skill and political insight were engaged in building up alliances for protecting Germany. In pursuit of this policy, Germany entered into an alliance with Austria in 1879 with a promise of reciprocal protection in case of Russian aggression on either power. Three years later in 1882,

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Bismarck generated the Franco-Italian rivalry over Tunis (in Africa) and persuaded Italy to forget her enmity towards Austria. A secret Triple Alliance was formed in 1882 between Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary, in part against France, in part against Russia.

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It is now evident that Bismarck was never firmly committed to his Triple Alliance partner. In 1887, for example, he signed the secret Re-insurance Treaty with Russia without the knowledge of Austria-Hungary or Italy, which pledged Russia's neutrality in the event of a German attack on France, German neutrality in the event of a Russian attack on Austria-Hungary, and a promise that Germany would support Russia's attack in the Balkans. The nightmare of isolation haunted France. But after *Bismarck* ceased to be the German Chancellor in 1890, his successors abandoned his diplomacy. The German Emperor Kaiser William II insisted that his country must have 'a place in the sun' and tried to pursue the policy of *Weltpolitik* (namely that Germany as a Great power must play its legitimate role in the world or the desire for world power). He did not believe that Germany was a satisfied power and called for an ambitious policy of a World Empire. Some resentment arose between Germany and Russia at the Congress of Berlin over the settlement of Eastern Question. Taking advantage of this situation and proceeding cautiously, France successfully formed an alliance with Russia in 1891. This Dual Alliance ended the period of isolation of France and served as a counterbalance to the Triple Alliance. The renunciation of Bismarckian diplomacy by Germany forced Britain to come out of the state of '*splendid isolation*'.² The first move by the British government away from isolation was the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Convention (1902), which was designed to ease Britain's worry over trade in the region and to ease the fears over the Russian threat to India. In 1904, she made an agreement of *Entente Cordiale* with France resolving all mutual differences. This was followed by a similar agreement with Russia in 1907. Thus, France, Russia and Britain formed a separate political group called Triple Entente. As the Triple Alliance confronted the Triple Entente, the condition of Europe became one of 'armed peace'. The European powers, though at peace with each other, kept a jealous watch upon their neighbors and so an atmosphere of fear and suspicion prevailed in Europe.

The formation of such alliances undoubtedly led to increased tensions in Europe. But they could not automatically lead to war and conversely they could contribute to peace by acting as a deterrent against possible aggressors. It was the change in the nature of these alliances from defensive to aggressive that made a difference. A.J.P Taylor points out that the pre-1914 alliances were so unstable and delicate that they cannot be seen as a major cause of war. It seems that the alliance system raised expectations about the likely Allies³ in the future war, however, each nation seemed to base its decision for war on national interests. Thus, it is to this extent that a link can be drawn between the alliance system and the outbreak of the First World War.

II. Militarism and War Phobia

Militarism was a corollary to the secret alliances. The growth of militarism⁴, which was actually closely connected with the system of alliances, has also been assigned as a factor responsible for the war. The system of maintaining large armies actually began with the French Revolution and later continued under Napoleon. It was extended and efficiently developed by Bismarck during the Unification of Germany. Europe was observed as an 'armed camp' from 1870-1914. According to Michael Howard, each declaration of increased armaments expenditure by a European power before 1914 was perceived as a threat by its rival, and thus created an atmosphere of mutual fear and

suspicion which greatly contributed in creating the mood for the war in 1914. However, the idea that arms build up unavoidably leads to war remains doubtful and unproved. Niall Ferguson has claimed that the role of arms race in encouraging the First World War has been greatly exaggerated.

Many scholars believe that the considerations of the leading powers regarding the balance of power was a much greater influence than a simple build up of arms on policy during July crisis. The balance of power in the Balkans was turning sharply against Austria-Hungary and this was a critical factor which caused her to argue for a 'preventive war' to weaken Serbia. A.J.P Taylor argued that the outbreak of the First World War was caused entirely by rival plans for mobilization⁵ by the European powers. All European powers had developed detailed war plans in expectation of war. The famous German war plan, the *Schlieffen Plan*, relied on the quick movement of troops and the assumption that once Germany found itself at war with Russia, it would also be at war with France.

It involved:

- Concentrating German forces on an attempt to take Paris and so defeat France.
 - When that was accomplished, troops would be transferred to attack Russia.
- This is the most famous plan as it came very close to success.

It also meant that once Germany declared war on Russia in August 1914, she would also have to attack France. However, in invading France, Belgium's neutrality was violated and this brought Britain into the war. France had her own plan called Plan XVII (which Niall Ferguson described as a 'mad strategy') and so also did Russia (*Plan G*) and Austria-Hungary (*Plans R and B*). All these plans assumed the support of their respective allies. Once the first steps towards mobilization were taken, everyone assumed that it would be fatal to stand still while their possible enemies moved forward. However, the relationship between military plans and actual decisions for war is complex.

The roots of militaristic attitude of the late 19th and early 20th century has been seen by many as the crisis in the liberal, enlightenment and rational values which in turn was transformed into politics. The suppression of the revolutions of 1848 signified the climax of idealistic approach to society and politics which drew from enlightenment. The ideas of thinkers like Charles Darwin and Friedrich Nietzsche also contributed to the creation of militaristic environment in this period. Darwin's *Origin of Species* placed the origin of species in a competitive process of natural selection which was later applied to the society. Similarly, Nietzsche believed that life was a constant struggle, and existence fundamentally chaotic. These new ideas provide a rhetoric in which the international relations came to be argued, but this language did not create the war itself. The effect of these ideas can however be seen in the manner people were responding to the European situation. Militaristic ideas also explain the unnatural hysteria on the eve of the war. War-phobia was at its extreme. War was considered inevitable.

III. Intense Nationalism in Europe

Another very important factor responsible for the war was the wave of nationalism which swept all over Europe. It was, in fact, one of the legacies of the French Revolution. The success of nationalism in Germany and Italy invested it with a new vigour and made it a strong force in politics. The unification of Germany and Italy was achievable mainly because Bismarck and Cavour were successful in arousing the spirit of nationalism. In the process, it inflamed the racial pride of the people, encouraged them to laud their country above all others, and made them arrogant in their attitude towards their neighbors. It was the excessive zeal of nationalism that strengthened the rivalries of Germany and

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Britain and encouraged them to engage in vigorous naval and military competition. It was the aggressive nationalism that led the European powers to quarrel over their interests in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. It was the outraged nationalism of the French that kept alive their spirit of revenge for the loss of Alsace and Lorraine and made France the bitterest enemy of Germany. The ecstasy of nationalist upsurge, manifested in the outbreak of Franco-Prussian War in 1870, opened a new era of popular frenzy in international relations. The outbreak of war was greeted by cheering crowds in Berlin, Vienna and Paris. As *A. J.P Taylor* wrote ‘the people of Europe leapt willingly into war’.

There were dissatisfied national minorities along the western periphery of the Russian empire. Poles and Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Finns continued to exert a strong centrifugal pull on the empire after 1870. The Russian policy towards these nationalities was of intense ‘Russification’ which had the effect of turning the most extreme patriots of these minorities towards the Russian Social Revolutionaries. These local movements represented the spirit of radical nationalism which was in ascendancy during this period.

The responsibility of national self-determination⁶ in the origins of the war has been an important area of debate. Martel has argued that the First World War grew out of a conflict between Slav nationalism and the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire. The murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand was the final straw in this struggle for mastery over the Balkans. It offered Austro-Hungarian government an ideal opportunity to rouse the public opinion in support of a war. This type of interpretation which sets the July crisis in the context of long running Eastern Question⁷ views the First World War as one which was fought for the future of Central and Eastern Europe.

Only a handful of historians would object to the view that the struggle to supplant the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans was a significant factor in the outbreak of war. In July 1914, the military leaders of Austria-Hungary were so determined to deal with Serbia that they lost their heads and ignored all plans for negotiation. However, John Leslie opines that Austria-Hungary can be blamed for planning a local Austro-Serbo conflict that was associated with its fears about Balkan nationalism, but Germany, which was not interested in this conflict, quite intentionally used it as an opportunity to launch the European war which Austria-Hungary never desired. John Lowe perhaps puts the significance of Austro-Serbo quarrel into its proper context by stating that , ‘The crisis in the Balkans was the occasion, rather than the cause of the First World War.

IV. Economic Competition and Imperialism

The expansion of Europe overseas in the 19th century led to new imperialist rivalries among the great powers. The movement of imperial expansion has been explained by a number of factors and different theories which give varying importance to economic, social, cultural and strategic factors. Among the earliest theories explaining imperialism were those that linked new imperialism with economic factors and saw imperialism as arising out of modern capitalism. J.A Hobson, a British economist, advanced a theory that advanced capitalist societies in the West were marked by an unequal distribution of wealth and this concentrated surplus capital exerted pressure on their respective governments to search for outlets abroad for investment avenues. This need forced the European powers to divide the world between them in a struggle for new industrial markets and new areas in which to invest. The result was an increased rivalry. Lenin in

1916, in his pamphlet, *Imperialism-The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, portrayed the Great War as an imperialist war, caused by rivalries triggered off by pressures of highly organized financial monopolies operating in different European countries. He believed that German monopoly capital was behind German foreign policy. He argued that capitalism had reached its highest stage in the form of imperialism and that frenzied competition amongst commercial rivals for markets and for raw materials had inevitably brought about war.

Paul Kennedy, a leading diplomat historian, has recently suggested that economic interests are a key reality to diplomacy. In his opinion, politicians have autonomous freedom to pursue foreign policy, even make crucial decisions for war, without reference to economic interest groups within society. However, economic and industrial interests of each nation ultimately determine the success and failure of those decisions. This implies that politicians have primacy of political decisions for war but no control over economic consequences of such decisions. Hence, economics plays a vital role in deciding the fate of nations in an international system.

Carl Stirkwerda opines that the crisis of 1914 must be understood within the framework which examined whether all European leaders believed that political and military power are essential to economic success. He showed that there was a very high level of economic cooperation and integration in Europe before 1914. Most industrialists preferred mutually beneficial economic relations and many wanted greater economic integration within European trade and financial sectors. In other words, many German industrialists saw no need for war. However, it was not the industrialists who had the most significant influence over foreign policy, but the political leaders.

J.A Schumpeter, however, denies any link between capitalism and imperialism because two of the most aggressively imperialist countries of the late 19th century- Russia and Italy were severely capital deficit. We can therefore comprehend that capitalism played a critical role in imperialism but its effect cannot be generalized and no inevitable causative relationship between the two can be established.

Imperialism has also been seen in terms of extra-economic origins. C.J.H Hayes highlighted the political climate of Europe, which was one of mass-based nationalism. He also points to the importance of public opinion and sentiments. Others have stressed military and strategic factors, such as the need to secure defensive frontiers. James Joll has emphasized the idea of sub-imperialism. He argued that once colonies were launched, they took on their own momentum and developed vested interests which pushed for imperialism.

Many historians have also observed cultural factors in the rise of imperialism, in terms of the role of religion. In the 19th century, many colonial ventures started as missionary activity. The desire of Christian missionaries to convert the heathen led to imperialism. Imperialism was justified by civilizing mission of Christian faith and concepts of White Man's Burden. It however needs to be considered in its specific context, which varied from country to country.

V. Domestic Politics

Modern historians have drawn attention to the influence of domestic politics on the actions of the European Powers. Socialism had become a very popular political belief in Germany, Austria, Russia, Italy and France. The ruling class in some of these

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countries hoped that a short victorious war would put an end to class differences and reduce the support for socialism that threatened the existing order.

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In Germany, left wing parties, especially the Social Democratic Party (SDP) made large gains in the 1912 election. The German government at that time was still dominated by the Prussian Junkers who feared the rise of these left wing parties. Some authors feel that they purposely sought an external war to distract the population and whip up patriotic support for the government. Other authors feel that German conservatives were ambivalent about a war, worrying that losing a war would have disastrous consequences, and even a successful war might alienate the population if it was lengthy or difficult.

In France, the situation was quite the opposite, but with the same results. There was a fierce struggle between the left wing French government and its right wing opponents. A 'good old war' was seen by both sides as a way to solve this crisis. Everyone thought that the war would be short and would lead to easy victory. The left wing government thought that it would be an ideal opportunity to implement social reforms and the right wing politicians hoped that their connections with the army leaders could give them the opportunity to regain power.

British domestic politics had just the opposite effect, pulling Britain away from the war. The liberals, who had come to power in 1905, had long opposed the entangling of international alliances and large military expenditures and also the government was weighed down by a number of pressing political issues. While domestic factors mitigated against Britain's entry into an eventual European conflict, foreign policy considerations pushed Britain in the direction of war. Yet in Britain too, nationalism popularized the expectation that a major war was inevitable.

In Russia, the Czar's immediate circle was divided over the advisability of going to war. Some advisors saw war as a means of rallying the support of the entire people behind the Czar. Yet others remembered Russia's disastrous defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. This in turn contributed to the outbreak of the Revolution of 1905, which brought reforms, however short-lived. Here too it did not seem to be in Russia's interest to push Europe to war.

Underlying the assumptions of all the Great Powers during the *July Crisis* was the belief that if war did break out it would be a short one. Many in Britain felt that the war would be over by Christmas.

VI. Role of Newspapers, Press and Public Opinion

In the modern scientific age, newspapers and the press play a decisive role in moulding the public opinion and State policies. They have rightly been called as the fourth estate. They can make or mar a nation. Another essential cause of the war was the poisoning of public opinion by the newspapers in almost all European countries. Before the First World War, newspapers in all the major countries were busy in a war of wits. Newspapers were often tending to ignite nationalistic feelings by distorting and misrepresenting the situation in foreign countries. On a number of occasions, when peaceful solutions of complex international problems could be possible, the biased tone of newspapers in the countries involved in the conflict spoiled matters. Rumours were easily spread and they exaggerated over minor points of disputes. The popular press went very far sometimes to produce results in national and international

politics. In 1870, the publishing of the Ems telegram by Bismarck immediately inflamed and embittered the extreme nationalist opinion in Paris and precipitated into the Franco-Prussian War. This shows the inestimable harm the press could do in creating tension in Europe.

VII. Balkan Affairs

The dissolution of Turkey, the 'sick man of Europe' had brought many complications to the forefront. Ottoman oppression in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875 flared up the Christians throughout Europe. Austria-Hungary and Russia were determined to teach a lesson to the Turks. Though the interests of Austria-Hungary and Russia clashed, yet Bismarck, who claimed friendship for both, did not allow the situation to worsen. Russia had planned to dominate Turkey and had control over Black Sea, but Germany, France and Austria-Hungary were out to deceive her. Even in Austria, the Slavs and the Serbs were not happy under the Hapsburg monarchy. Their spirit of nationalism moved them towards Serbia. When Austria was allowed to administer and occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, the nationalist aspirations of Serbs suffered a serious setback. When these two areas were annexed by Austria in 1908, the situation became intolerable for the Serbs. The Serbs and the Slavs under the yoke of Austria were eager to get freedom and join Serbia. This deep rooted enmity between Serbia and Austria became a basic cause of war. The Treaty of Berlin had left roots of enmity between Germany and Russia and also between Serbia and Austria. The countries included in the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente were siding on the opposite sides in the Balkans. The Balkan countries like Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania were very ambitious.

The state of affairs in other Balkan states was far from satisfactory, but Austria and Serbia were much antagonized with each other. Actually the Balkan wars had already tightened the international situation. The small Balkan countries had a very unstable political condition. While Turkey was losing grip over the Balkan region, nationalities like Greece, Slavs, Bulgars and Serbs were so much intermingled that any one of them could be satisfied only at the cost of the other. After October 1912, when they had jointly gotten rid of Turkish influence, the European Powers interfered. Vast areas of the Turkish Empire in Europe were put under the Balkan League. A new trouble spot, Albania, was created as a new state and Constantinople was not taken away from Turkey. The creation of Albania was actively supported by Italy and Austria, but was equally resented by Serbia who hoped to secure it for dominating the Adriatic for economic reasons. In June 1913, when Serbia insisted on occupying a part of Macedonia mainly inhabited by Bulgars, but already occupied by Serbia, Bulgaria denied and attacked Serbia without warning, thereby starting the Second Balkan War. Bulgaria was attacked on all sides by the Serbs, Romanians and the Greeks and she had to lose Danube and Adrianople. The war gave a further fillip to Serbian nationalism. Serbia felt encouraged to work for 'Greater Serbia' at all costs. The Serbian leaders became reckless and ambitious. The Serbian Prime Minister openly declared at the Bucharest Peace Conference that, 'the first round is won; now we must prepare for the second against Austria.' A secret society named 'Black Hand' or 'The Union of Death' openly advocated violence against Austria, the possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the creation of Greater Serbia.

All this was very alarming to Austria who realized that the success of Serbia would doom her fate. She would also lose even other nationalities like Czechs, Poles, Slovaks and Romanians who would follow suit and she would crash into pieces. The Austrian leaders arrived at the conclusion that the only solution for this trouble was to

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finish Serbia once for all. Austria was inclined towards Germany for getting support in her plan to defeat Serbia and the German Emperor Kaiser William II gave a blank cheque to her. Relations between Austria and Serbia were worsening day by day and when it was found that the Serbian nationalists were plotting to murder Austrian officials, the Austrian patience reached its end. The Austrians decided that they would have to wage a preventative war against Serbia in order to destroy her growing power. They were waiting for the right pretext.

VIII. The Immediate Occasion and the Outbreak of the War

The war material was ready and only a spark was needed to ignite it. The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 provided the immediate occasion for the outbreak of the First World War. Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia which had been annexed by Austria-Hungary a few years earlier. The conspirator of the assassination was the 'Black Hand' of extremist Serbian nationalists whose aim was to unite all Serbians into a single Serbian state. Historians are generally agreed that the Serbian government was aware of the conspiracy to murder the Prince but did nothing to stop it. On 4 July 1914, Franz L Josef of Austria sent a letter to Kaiser William asking for German support to get rid of Serbia as a power factor in the Balkans. The Kaiser consulted with Bethmann Hollweg, the German Chancellor, to decide the German position. They decided that Austria should be a given free hand, known as the 'blank cheque', to start war against Serbia. The Russian and French governments met from 20 to 23 July 1914 to discuss their position in view of the mounting crisis. France offered full support to Russia in resisting any attempts by Austria to jeopardize the independence of Serbia. This is viewed as a second 'blank cheque'. Convinced of Serbia's involvement in the assassination, Austria served an ultimatum on 23 July making eleven demands on Serbia which were not accepted in its entirety. Serbia's reply of 25 July did not conciliate Austria, and Serbia knowing that it would not, had already ordered mobilisation of her troops. Austria rejected Serbia's reply and immediately ordered the mobilisation of her army for an attack on Serbia. On 28 July Austria declared war on Serbia. On 29 July, the Austrian army bombarded Belgrade, the Serbian capital.

The outbreak of the war between Serbia and Austria was soon followed by two other wars, and the three wars, militarily linked together, leading to the general war or the First World War. In order to pressurize Austria to abandon the war against Serbia, Russia ordered troop mobilization against Austria. Russia could not allow Austrian expansion in the Balkans, where it had her own ambitions which would suffer in the event of Serbia's defeat. As Germany would have come to the aid of Austria if Russia entered the war against Austria, Russia also prepared for war with Germany. Germany was convinced that in the event of a war with Russia, France would join Russia against Germany. This would mean that Germany would have to fight on two fronts, with France in the west and with Russia in the east. To be successful in the war, Germany had made plans to first defeat France in a quick war by mobilizing most of the troops for this purpose and then turn to Russia against whom a quick victory was not possible. Thus, the second war was fought between Austria and Germany on one side and Russia and France on the other. The British position was still unclear as the British government was divided on the issue of going to war. Britain responded to the French request for help by promising to defend the northern coast of France against the German navy. However, the German invasion of neutral Belgium finally ended Britain's indecisiveness, and Germany and Britain were at war. Thus, the rival alliances, formed

in the preceding years, had come into play. Only Italy, a member of the Triple Alliance, remained neutral on the ground that Germany was not fighting a defensive war.

Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914 and began to mobilise her troops. But the immediate German attack fell not on Russia but on Belgium and France. On 2 August, the German government presented an ultimatum to the Belgian government demanding a passage for German armies through neutral Belgium, which the Belgians rejected. The French government fully aware of the threat facing them, had already ordered mobilisation, and on 3 August, Germany declared war on France. German troops marched into Belgium to press on to France on 4 August and on the same day Britain declared war on Germany. In the meantime, the Serbo-Austrian war appeared to have become secondary. In the celebrated words of Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, as the Great War began, ‘The lights are going out all over Europe. They will not be lit again in our lifetime.’

Many other countries soon entered the war. Japan declared war on Germany. She had entered into an alliance with Britain but her main aim was to seize the German territories in the Far-East. Portugal, often referred to by Britain as her oldest ally, also entered the war. In 1915, Italy declared war against Austria. Britain and France had promised her Austrian and Turkish territories. Later, Romania and Greece also joined Britain, France and Russia, and these countries along with their allies came to be known as the Allied Powers. Germany and Austria were joined by Bulgaria having been promised territories in Serbia and Greece. Turkey declared war on Russia in November and joined the war on the side of Germany and Austria. These countries, i.e., Germany and Austria and their allies came to be known as the Central Powers. Various other countries in other parts of the world also joined the war. The United States entered the war in 1917 on the side of the Allied powers. In all, the number of belligerent countries rose to twenty-seven. Thus, the extent of conflict was widened.

IX. Historical Debate on the Responsibility of the War

The origins of the First World War have been a hotly debated topic among the historians just like the French Revolution of 1789. The historical debate on the origin of the First World War has been affected by the existing political climate and by the urge to find out as to who was primarily responsible. The official report on the origins of the war, written by victorious powers, and presented to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 concluded that the war was premeditated by Germany and resulted from acts deliberately committed in order to make it unavoidable. Germany and Austria-Hungary deliberately worked to defeat all the many conciliatory proposals made by Entente powers to avoid war. German War Guilt was enshrined in Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles.

During the inter-war years the Germans sought to reverse the verdict and released many official documents to accomplish this end. In 1927, Erich Brandenburg, a German historian argued that Germany did not plan the First World War. He blamed Russia for wanting control over the Balkans, and France for wanting revenge for the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. In 1930, Sidney Fay, an American historian, argued that no European power wanted war in 1914 and that all to greater and lesser degrees must share the blame. Fay attached some liability to each power involved in the *July Crisis* and came to the conclusion that the verdict of German War Guilt was defective. Thus, the idea of **collective responsibility** for the outbreak of the war came to become an orthodox interpretation. In 1938, G.P.Gooch, a British historian, reflected the prevailing

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orthodoxy by stating that ‘The belief that any nation or statesman was the arch criminal in 1914 is no longer held by serious students of history.’ Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, suggested that ‘all the nations of Europe slithered over the edge of the boiling cauldron of war in 1914.’ Slowly and slowly, the debate over the origins of the war began to move away from apportioning guilt towards an assessment of long-term causes.

Debate over German Responsibility for the War

The debate over whether Germany intended an offensive war or a war of territorial expansion is still a topic of debate. In 1961, Fritz Fisher, a German historian, published a voluminous book titled ‘Germany’s Aims in the First World War’ (1967) in which he apportioned chief responsibility to Germany for preparing and launching the First World War. According to him, the German desire for territorial expansion and to break free of its diplomatic encirclement culminated in the war. Fisher stated that Germany was ready to go to war at any cost in order to establish herself as a great power. He further alleged that Germany even went to the extent of provoking her allies into initiating war. He tried to show that Germany was following an aggressive policy inspired by economic interests and designed to achieve world power. He never deviated from his basic line of thinking that Germany was eager to make up for the disadvantage suffered as a result of entering late into world politics and this would have made the war inevitable. In his view, there was a continuity in German objectives from 1900 to the Second World War.

Fisher’s work was criticized by Gerhard Ritter, another German historian, who saw Fisher’s work as an act of national disloyalty. Ritter admitted that the German War Guilt Thesis needed revision but did not accept Fisher’s thesis. He also condemned Fisher for applying what he saw as basically a Marxist approach to history without actually being openly Marxist as this would have made him unpopular. According to him, Germany had no desire for world domination and its main aim was to support its ally Austria-Hungary. He also accused Fisher of ignoring the environment of the time and of not comparing different kinds of foreign imperialism including that of USA and Japan. In this sense, we can see that aggression was not the prerogative of any one country. The imperial objectives that Germany has been accused of were also experienced by the other Great Powers. The clearest example of this are the feeble pretexts on which Britain and USA entered the war.

There are many other views as well on the extent of responsibility that needs to be apportioned to Germany for the war. Immanuel Geiss, a supporter of Fisher’s thesis suggest that the main long-term cause of the war was the German desire for *Weltpolitik*⁸. John Rohl sees the origins of the war in the German government pursuit of a pre-existing plan to split the Triple Entente or provoke a European war. Most historians however reject the idea of a pre-planned German war. The argument of a defensive German war has been articulated by scholars like Egmont Zechlin and Karl Erdmann. They still reject the idea of Germany cold-bloodedly planning a war for vast territorial gains. They believed that German policy in 1914 decided on a preventive war born of desperation and with no master plan for vast expansion, designed to ensure the survival of Germany as a major European power.

Thus, to conclude, we can say that the anti-Fisher school of thought is willing to accept that Germany should take the major responsibility for the war but rejects the view of German policy being determined by domestic problems and the view that

Germany was planning an aggressive war of territorial expansion. Instead, it suggests that German leaders desired a localized European war, with a quick German victory to break free from its diplomatic encirclement.

3.2.2 Course of the First World War

The First World War began on 28 July 1914 with the Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia, which was followed by the German invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg and France and a Russian attack on Germany. After the German march on Paris was brought to an end, the Western Front settled into a static battle of slow destruction with a trench line that changed slightly until 1917. Although the Russian army was successful in suppressing the Austro-Hungarian forces, it was forced back by the German Army. More fronts opened after the Ottoman Empire entered the war in 1914, followed by Italy and Bulgaria in 1915 and Romania in 1916. The Russian empire came to an end in 1917 and later that year, Russia left the war after the October Revolution. After the United States entered the war, the allies started warding off the German armies. Germany finally consented to a ceasefire on 11 November 1918, which later came to be known as Armistice Day.

Miscommunication among the Central Powers

The Central Powers had a strategy to win the war but they suffered from miscommunication. Although Germany had promised to extend its support to the Austria-Hungary's invasion of Serbia, there was difference in the interpretations of what this meant. Austro-Hungarian leaders believed that Germany would cover its northern side against Russia. However, Germany envisaged Austria-Hungary leading the majority of its troops against Russia, while Germany dealt with France. This confusion compelled the Austro-Hungarian Army to divide its forces between the Russian and Serbian fronts.

The Campaign of Serbia

The Battle of Cer, which began on 12 August 1914, was fought between the Serbians against the invading Austro-Hungarians. The Serbian army occupied defensive positions on the south side of the Drina and Sava Rivers. Over the next two weeks, they were successful in making the Austrian army suffer heavy losses. This marked the first major Allied victory of the war and crushed Austro-Hungarian hopes to emerge as victorious. Consequently, Austria had to keep large forces on the Serbian front, weakening its efforts against Russia.

German Forces in Belgium and France

When the First World War began, the Germans executed a modified version of the Schlieffen Plan. This plan was designed to quickly attack France through neutral Belgium before turning southwards to surround the French army on the German border. The plan called for the German advance to converge on Paris, and initially, the Germans were very successful, especially in the Battle of the Frontiers (14–24 August 1914). By 12 September, with assistance from the British forces, the French prevented the German advance in the east of Paris at the first battle of the Marne (5–12 September 1914). The last days of this battle signified the end of mobile warfare in the west. The French attacks on Germany, which began on 7 August 1914, with the Battle of Mulhouse, had limited success.

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Check Your Progress

1. Which event sparked the First World War?
2. What were the roots of the militaristic attitude prevalent in Europe in the 19th century?
3. How did the idea of collective responsibility come to become the orthodox interpretation for the outbreak of the First World War?

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The German Army managed to defeat the Russian Army in a series of battles, which were collectively known as the Battle of Tannenberg (17 August–2 September 1914). Despite such successes, the German Army started having problems of insufficient speed of its advance, something that was not anticipated by the German General Staff. As a result, the Central Powers were unable to get a quick victory against the Russians and were forced to fight a war on two fronts.

Asia and the Pacific

On 30 August 1914, New Zealand occupied German Samoa (later Western Samoa). Later on 11 September, the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force settled on the island of Neu-Pommern (later New Britain), which formed part of German New Guinea. Japan captured Germany's Micronesian colonies, which was followed by the Siege of Tsingtao and the German coaling port of Qingdao in the Chinese Shandong peninsula. All the German territories in the Pacific were seized by the Allied forces within a few months; only isolated commerce raiders and a few holdouts in New Guinea remained.

Beginning of Trench Warfare

Due to the arms race between various European nations, there was a massive improvement in the development of weapon systems before the outbreak of the First World War. These improvements resulted in the manufacturing of remarkable defence systems. Among the defence systems, the barbed wire was a significant obstruction to the advances of massed infantry. As opposed to those in the 1870s, artillery was designed to be more deadly as it was now coupled with machine guns, which made it very difficult to cross open ground. Moreover, poison gas was used by both sides in the war. Although the use of poison gas had vicious effects as it caused a slow and painful death, it never proved to be influential in winning a battle. However, its use is still regarded as one of the most feared horrors of the war.

An important feature of the First World War seen on the Western Front was the concept of attrition warfare. Attrition warfare represented an attempt to grind down an opponent through superior numbers, using enormous amounts of artillery and other weapons. Many catastrophic battles were fought as a part of this 'War of Attrition'. One of which was the Battle of Verdun. In February 1916, Germany launched a massive attack on the French fortress of Verdun. The French in turn poured thousands of their soldiers into the battle. The battle resulted in about 700,000 soldiers killed or being wounded; the casualties were more or less equally divided between the two sides.

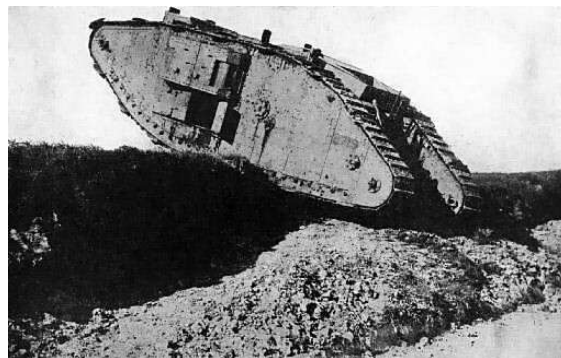


Fig 3.2 British Tank used in the First World War

Source: Wikipedia

Commanders on both sides were not successful in developing plans for infringing entrenched positions without incurring heavy casualties. However, eventually technology started to produce new violent weapons, such as the tank. Britain and France were the major users of tanks, while the Germans used captured Allied tanks and small numbers of their own design. After the First Battle of the Marne, both Entente and German forces started a series of outflanking operations, in the so-called 'Race to the Sea'. Soon entrenched German forces from Lorraine to Belgium's coast confronted Britain and France.

Britain and France sought to take the offensive, while Germany defended the occupied territories. German trenches were constructed in a much better way than those of their enemy since Anglo-French trenches were constructed to be 'temporary' in nature before their forces attacked the German defences. Both parties endeavoured to break the deadlock by using modern weapons. On 22 April 1915, for the first time, the Germans used chlorine gas on the Western Front at the Second Battle of Ypres. On being gassed, the Algerian troops retreated and a four miles long hole opened up in the Allied lines. This was in no less time exploited by the Germans who took Kitcheners' Wood. At the Second Battle of Ypres, Canadian soldiers closed the breach, while at the Third Battle of Ypres, Canadian and ANZAC troops seized the village of Passchendaele.

On 1 July 1916, the British Army suffered the bloodiest day in its history. It experienced 57,470 casualties, including 19,240 dead on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Most of the casualties took place in the first hour of the attack with British infantry men being mowed down by German machine guns. The entire Battle of Somme cost the British army almost half a million men.

The events of 1917 proved decisive in ending the war, although their effects were not fully felt until 1918. Once the United States entered the war, the collapse of the Central Powers came swiftly. Bulgaria was the first to sign an armistice on 29 September 1918 at Saloniki. On 30 October, the Ottoman Empire capitulated at Moudros (Armistice of Mudros). In November 1918, the Allies had ample supplies of men and materiel to invade Germany, yet at the time of the armistice, no Allied force had crossed the German frontier and Berlin was still almost 1,400 km from the Western Front. A formal state of war between the two sides persisted for another seven months, until signing of the Treaty of Versailles with Germany on 28 June 1919. Later treaties with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire were signed. Thus, the First World War ended with the defeat of the Central Powers and the victory of the Allies.

3.2.3 Consequences of the First World War

The First World War lasted for four years and three months. It began on 4 August 1914 and ended on 11 November 1918. It involved sixty sovereign states, overthrew four Empires (German Empire, Hapsburg Empire, Turkish Empire, Russian Empire), gave birth to seven new nations, took ten million combatant lives (another 30 million were wounded), and cost about £ 35,000 million. This war was in several ways exclusively novel in human history. It has been described as the 'primordial catastrophe of the twentieth century'. It was the largest global conflict yet seen, leading to the deaths of millions and the devastation of parts of Western Europe. There had been wars in Europe before, involving many states. This one, however, was a general conflict between highly organized states that had at their control all the resources of modern warfare and were well equipped to find new methods of destruction and defense. It was fought with determination and desperation by the nations because they believed that it was a war

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for survival and for high ideals; it was fought everywhere—on land, above land, on sea and under sea. Obviously any such conflict was bound to have enormous and far reaching consequences for Europe and rest of the world.

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I. Destruction of Human Lives

The destruction caused by war in terms of human lives lost was terrible. There had been nothing like the Great War in history. The figures of persons who fought in the war are shocking. About 6,000 people had been killed each day for more than 1,500 days. In more than four years of fighting, at least 65 million soldiers were mobilised. Out of 42 million men who served in the Allied armies, 22 million were casualties; thus making the war Europe's cruelest scourge. The Central Powers mobilised 23 million, and had 15 million casualties. The table below shows casualties (in millions) during the First World War in different countries.

Table 3.1

Country	Mobilised	Casualties	Percentage
Austria-Hungary	7.8	7	90
Russia	12	9.15	76
France	8.4	6	71
Germany	11	7	63
Italy	5.5	2.15	39
Britain	8.9	3	34
United States	4.35	0.36	8

Source: John Merriman: *History of Modern Europe, From French Revolution to the Present, Vol. II, 1996, p.1082.*

There was an unprecedented rate of casualties in the war. This massive loss of human lives affected the structure of population both in sex and in age groups. The loss of life among women was much lower. Thus, in Britain, in the year 1911, there were 1067 females to every 1000 males. However, in 1921, the sex ratio changed to 1093 females to every 1000 males. This disequilibrium led to many social complexities and other related problems in the society.

But sheer numbers do not tell the entire story. The psychic damage to the generation of survivors can hardly be measured. Of the wounded who survived, many were destined to spend the rest of their lives in hospitals. Soldiers who had lost their limbs or who were injured in other ways became a common sight in European countries after the war. The flower of European youth, or much of it, had perished. Europe seemed a continent of widows and spinsters. So many were killed in the prime of their life that the birth rate fell strikingly after the war. Support for families of the dead soldiers and the invalid strained national budgets. The bloodshed was not confined to Europe alone. In an outbreak of ethnic hostility and in response to Armenian demands for independent state, the Turks forced 1.75 million Armenians to leave their homes in Turkey; more than a third of them died without water in the desert sun on the way to Syria, their bodies consumed by animals. Furthermore, about 27 million people died in an influenza epidemic during the last years of and after the war.

II. Political Consequences

The First World War and Peace Treaty concluded after it transformed the political map of the world, particularly Europe. As mentioned earlier, four ruling dynasties were destroyed. It uprooted the hereditary autocracy and monarchy from almost all the European countries. The war had been declared ‘to make the world safe for democracy.’ There were some countries like England, Spain, Romania and Greece, etc., where the monarchy could not be uprooted. But nobody could deny the fact that the governments of these countries could not preserve the tone of monarchy in the real sense and democratisation of the governments became order of the day after the First World War which compelled the autocratic rulers to rule as constitutional monarchs or to abdicate. This war promoted the feeling of democracy all over the world.

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Fig 3.3 Europe in 1919

Source: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/maps/europe1919.htm>

Governments took on many new powers in order to fight the total war. War governments fought opposition by increasing police power. Authoritarian regimes like Czarist Russia had always depended on the threat of force, but now even parliamentary governments felt the necessity to expand police powers and to control public opinion. Britain gave police powers a wide scope in August 1914 by the Defense of the Realm Act which authorized the public authorities to arrest and punish rebels under martial law if necessary. Through later acts, police powers grew to include suspending newspapers and the ability to intervene in a citizen's private life in the use of lights at home, food consumption, and bar hours. Police powers tended to grow as the war went on and public opposition increased as well. In France, a sharp rise of strikes, mutinies, and talk of a negotiated peace raised doubts about whether France could really carry on the war in 1917. A group of French political leaders decided to carry out the war at the cost of less internal liberty. The government cracked down on anyone suspected of supporting a compromise peace. Many of the crackdowns and sedition charges were just a result of war panic or calculated political opportunism. Expanded police powers also included

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control of public information and opinion. The censorship of newspapers and personal mail was already an established practice. Governments regularly used their power to prevent leaking of military secrets and the airing of dangerous opinions considering war efforts. The other side of using police power on public opinion was the ‘organizing of enthusiasm’ through propaganda.

The First World War provided a place for the birth of propaganda which countries used with even more horrifying results during the Second World War. Governments used the media to influence people to enlist and to persuade them into supporting the war. The French Prime Minister used his power to draft journalists or defer them in exchange for favourable coverage. The German right wing created a new mass party, the Fatherland Party. It was backed by secret funds from the army and was devoted to develop propaganda for war discipline. By 1918, the Fatherland Party was larger than the Social Democratic Party. Germany had become quite effective at influencing the masses.

The war weakened the world’s centre, Europe, and strengthened the periphery—North America, Russia and Asia. The period after the war saw the beginning of the end of the European supremacy in the world. Economically and militarily, Europe was surpassed by the United States which emerged as world power after the war. The Soviet Union became the first socialist country and was also to come up as a major world power. Thus, Europe’s primacy was at the end and its future looked miserable.

The period after the war also saw the strengthening of freedom movements in Asia and Africa. The weakening of Europe and the emergence of Soviet Union which declared her support to the struggles for national independence contributed to the growing strengths of these struggles.

There was also a problem of redistribution of balance of power in the world. As a result of this war, there was military and political collapse of old empires. The pre-war German and Austrian dominance, for a time, came to an end. The supreme task before the peacemakers was to see that Germany is kept in check and also, weakened militarily. Another problem was the reshaping of eastern and central Europe in the light of newly emerging realities of national grouping, economic viability and military security.

III. Social and Cultural Consequences

European countries directed all of their resources into a total war which resulted in enormous social changes. This war had the effect of accelerating women’s emancipation wherever the movement started before 1914. Women over 30 years of age were granted parliamentary vote in Britain in 1918 because the war required a national effort and in modern warfare civilian morale and industrial production had become as important as the army. Moreover, conscription created labour shortages which had to be filled at once, and women soon dispelled many anti-feminist myths as they proved their ability to do hard jobs in factories and on the farm. Women participated in all activities and worked in factories, shops, offices and voluntary services, hospitals and schools. They worked hand in hand with men and won their claim of equality with them. It became easier for them to find work as traditional hindrances were eliminated. They undertook a variety of jobs previously held by men. They were also more widely employed in industrial jobs. By 1918, 37.6 percent of the work force in the Krupp armaments firm in Germany was female. In England, the proportion of working women rose strikingly in public transport. For example, from 18,000 to 117,000 bus conductors, banking (9,500 to 63,700), and commerce (505,000 to 934,000). Many restrictions on women disappeared during the

war. It became acceptable for young, employed, single middle-class women to have their own apartments, to go out without chaperones⁹, and to smoke in public. Even the barriers of class and wealth were weakened to quite a great extent by the ‘fellowship of the trenches’. If women edged nearer to some kind of equality, the same was even truer for organized labour in nearly all belligerent countries. For a government to mobilise manpower in war, cooperation of the trade union movement was essential and by the end of the war, unions were in a much stronger position after collaborating with the government.

The war also destroyed the cultural fabric of Europe. It caused widespread destruction of buildings. Old established values were questioned and often unthinkably repudiated. The void thus left, saw an alarming decline of moral standards.

IV. Economic Impact

The economic impact of the war was much disproportioned. At one end there were those who profited from the war and at the other end were those who suffered under the effects of inflation. The prospects of making enormous amounts of money in war manufacturing were ample. War profiteers were a public scandal. Fictional new rich had numerous real-life counterparts. However, government rarely interfered in major firms, as happened when the German military took over the Daimler motor car works for padding costs on war-production contracts. Governments tended to favour large, centralized industries over smaller ones. The war was a stimulus towards grouping companies into larger firms. When resources became scarce, non-essential firms, which tended to be small, were simply closed down. Inflation was the greatest single economic factor as war budgets were raised to astronomical figures and massive demand forced shortage of many consumer goods. Virtually every able-bodied person was employed to keep up with the demand. This combination of high demand, scarcity, and full employment sent prices soaring, even in the best managed countries. In Britain, a pound sterling bought in 1919 about one-third of what it had bought in 1914. French prices approximately doubled during the war and it only got worse during the 1920s. Inflation rates were even higher in other belligerents. The German currency ceased to have value in 1923. All of this had been foreseen by the economist John Maynard Keynes as a result of the Versailles Treaty. Keynes had stated, ‘The danger confronting us, therefore, is the rapid depression of the standard of life of the European populations to a point which will mean actual starvation for some (a point already reached in Russia and approximately reaching in Austria).’

Inflation affected different people quite differently. Skilled workers in strategic industries found that their wages kept pace with prices or even rose a little faster. Unskilled workers and workers in less important industries fell behind. Clerks, lesser civil servants, teachers, clergymen, and small shopkeepers earned less than many skilled labors. Those who suffered the most were those dependent on fixed incoming. The incomes of old people on pensions or middle class living on small dividends remained about the same while prices doubled or tripled. These dropped down into poverty. These ‘new poor’ kept their pride by repairing old clothes, supplementing food budget with gardens, and giving up everything to appear as they had before the war. Inflation radically changed the relative position of many in society. Conflicts arose over the differences in purchasing power. All wage earners had less real purchasing power at the end of the war than they had at the beginning. To make matters worse, some great fortunes were built during the wartime and post-war inflation. Those who were able to borrow large amounts of money could repay their debts in devalued currency from

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their war profit. It has been pointed out, that all the economic slogans of the post-war years, strangely enough, began with the prefix *re*: reconstruction, recovery, reparations, retrenchment, repayment of war debts, restoration of gold standard etc.

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V. Environmental Impact

In terms of environmental impact, the First World War was most damaging, because of landscape changes caused by trench warfare. This war was fought from trenches, dug from the North Sea to the border of Switzerland. In 1918, when the war was over, empires disintegrated into smaller countries, marking the division of what Europe is today. Over 9 million people had died, most of who perished from influenza after the outbreak of the Spanish Flu. The war did not directly cause the influenza outbreak, but it was amplified. Mass movement of troops and close quarters caused the Spanish Flu to spread quickly. Furthermore, the stress of war may have increased the vulnerability of soldiers to the disease. Digging trenches caused trampling of grassland, crushing of plants and animals, and churning of soil. Erosion resulted from forest logging which was done to expand the network of trenches. Soil structures were transformed severely, and if the war was never fought, in all likelihood the landscape would have looked very different today. Another destructive impact was the application of poisonous gas. Gases were spread throughout the trenches to kill soldiers of the opposite front. Examples of gases applied during the First World War are tear gas (aerosols causing eye irritation), mustard gas (toxic gas causing blistering and bleeding), and carbonyl chloride (carcinogenic gas). The gases caused a total of 100,000 deaths, most caused by carbonyl chloride (phosgene). Battlefields were polluted, and most of the gases evaporated into the atmosphere. After the war, unexploded ammunition caused major problems in former battle areas. Environmental legislation prohibits explosion or dumping chemical weapons at sea; therefore the cleanup was and still remains a costly operation. In 1925, most war participants signed a treaty banning the application of gaseous chemical weapons. Chemical disarmament plants were planned in France and Belgium.

3.3 PARIS PEACE SETTLEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH

The principal peace terms concluding the First World War were drawn up at a conference held at Paris in the first half of 1919. This conference was a greater representative body than the Congress of Vienna (in 1815). Although the representatives of many countries participated in the deliberations and were consulted in cases directly involving their interests, the peace terms were in large measure set by the big powers, the so called Council of Four, composed of the American President (*Woodrow Wilson*) and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain (*David Lloyd George*), France (*Georges Clemenceau*), and Italy (*Vittorio Orlando*). The defeated powers did not participate in the negotiations and had to accept conditions in the framing of which they had taken no part. Soviet Russia, which had dropped out of the war in March 1918 by signing the *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* with the Central Powers, was not represented either.

The Council of Four planned to lay the groundwork of lasting peace, but there was a considerable difference in opinion on how to go about it. Two general approaches were apparent: the hard line, advocated by the French, and the soft line, advanced by the United States. The Italians sided with France, while the British fluctuated between the two positions.

3.3.1 Founders of the Settlement

Out of the Council of four, only three men really mattered, *Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George*. The treaty was signed on 28 June 1919 after months of argument and negotiation amongst the so-called 'Big Three' as to what the treaty should contain. They had very different objectives.

- 1. Woodrow Wilson:** He was a high minded idealist, a bit doctrinaire, bent upon founding a new world order and so led greatest stress on establishing the League of Nations. The Allied victory, he believed, had provided an opportunity that mankind could least afford to slip out. The war had been a war to end all wars and the world must be made safe for democracy. When he first arrived in Europe, he had received tremendous welcome which convinced him that he was right, and in the negotiations, he proved very stubborn. He had virtually a single-tracked mind which seldom saw the other man's point of view. In the United States itself, support for his policies was receding and he became an increasingly lonely and hopeless figure.
- 2. Clemenceau:** He was nicknamed the 'Tiger'. He was the oldest and the ablest diplomat at conference. A stern realist in policies, he never lost sight of the goals he had set before. He was deeply suspicious about human nature in general and German nature in particular. His only concern was the security of France and France would only be secure if Germany was weak. He was a very clever person. He knew when and where to change his moods. He was very tactful and deployed extraordinary skills in negotiations. He was responsible for the insertion of certain provisions in the Treaty of Versailles which proved to be its undoing later on. He was responsible for the humiliation of the German delegates as they went to Versailles to sign the Peace Treaty in 1919.
- 3. Lloyd George:** Lloyd George was a great statesman. However, he often found himself in a difficult position as Wilson and Clemenceau differed from each other on many points. While Wilson wanted to base the peace settlement on idealism, Clemenceau wanted to base it on force and it was the function of Lloyd George to bring about a compromise between his colleagues. In many cases, that involved self-effacement on his part. However, that does not mean that he overlooked his country's interest at the peace conference. He agreed with Wilson that a harsh peace such as France wished for, was unlikely to bring lasting peace to Europe but he had just fought and won an election during which it became clear that, like the French, the British electorate wanted the enemy to be crushed. This anti-German feeling was amply demonstrated by the then popular slogans like 'Hang the Kaiser', 'Make Germany pay' and 'Home fit for Heroes' with which the sky of that country echoed loudly.

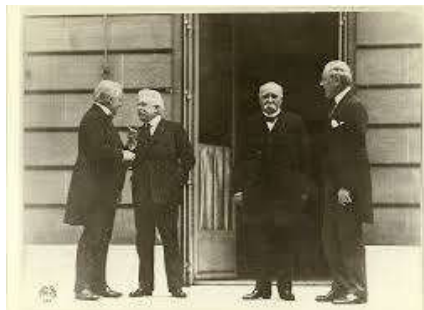


Fig 3.4 *The Big Four*

Source: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-UMRS__hEcL0/UrghJaJK-

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Check Your Progress

4. What was the Battle of Cer?
5. What was the 'war of attrition'?
6. What was the Defense of the Realm Act?

3.3.2 Treaty Signed with Germany: Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919)

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The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919, exactly 5 years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, one of the events that triggered the start of the war. Although the armistice signed on 11 November 1918 put an end to the actual fighting, it took six months of negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to conclude a peace treaty. The documents containing the terms of the Treaty consisted of 440 articles and many annexures. The victorious powers of the First World War (the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, and other Allied states) imposed punitive territorial, military, and economic treaty terms on defeated Germany. German representatives were not permitted to participate in the treaty negotiations and the terms were non-negotiable. The terms of the Treaty, which Germany had no choice but to accept, were announced on 7 May 1919. In the north, Northern Shlezwig went to Denmark and, in the west, Eupen and Malmady to Belgium, and Alsace and Lorriane to France. Memel, a small strip of territory in East Prussia along the Baltic Sea, was ultimately placed under Lithuanian control. Posen, the Polish Corridor and part of Upper Silesia went to Poland and the great port of Danzig became a free city within the Polish customs union. The Saar coalfields were also handed over to the French while Saar itself was to be run by the League of Nations (It was returned to Germany after a plebiscite in 1935). The Rhineland was to be occupied by the Allied troops for fifteen years. A strip of territory on both sides of the Rhine was forbidden to German troops and this area was known as De-militarised Zone (DMZ).

Wilson believed that there could be no lasting peace in Europe unless the principal of self-determination was implemented in Central and Eastern Europe¹⁰. The new map of Europe attempted to give some reality to this ideal of self-determination. The Poles, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the South Slavs (in Yugoslavia), the Magyars (in Hungary), the Latvians, Lithuanians, Finns and Estonians governed themselves in 1923 when in 1914 they had been governed by the foreigners. However, the pattern of racial settlement in Eastern Europe combined with the need to please the victors at the expense of the defeated caused rough justice to be done and many discontented groups were left under the rule of other races whom they despised and feared.

Germany lost all her colonies. The German African colonies were divided between Britain, France, Belgium and South Africa and her colonies in the Far East and Pacific north of equator went to Japan, south of the equator went to Britain, Australia and New Zealand. In addition to these considerable territorial losses, Germany was also forced to agree to make compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied Associated Powers and their property. These compensation payments or reparations had not been mentioned in the original Fourteen Points but had to be included in the armistice terms on the insistence of France and Britain. Germany also had to surrender all her merchant ships over 1600 tons and some smaller ships also; give free coal for ten years to France, Belgium and Italy; horses, sheep and cattle to France and Belgium.

Every effort was made to cripple the military strength of Germany. The total strength of the German army was limited to one lakh men. Conscription, tanks and armoured cars were all forbidden. Germany was allowed to have only six battleships, some smaller crafts but no submarines. Nor could she have an air force. Naval forces were limited to 15,000 men, 6 battleships (no more than 10,000 tons displacement each), 6 cruisers (no more than 6,000 tons displacement each), 12 destroyers (no more than 800 tons displacement each) and 12 torpedo boats (no more than 200 tons displacement

each). Apart from this, import and export of weapons and manufacture or stockpiling of poisonous gas was prohibited.

Germany had to admit full responsibility for starting the war. This was Clause 231 - the infamous 'War Guilt Clause' which read as follows: *the Allied and Associated governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated governments and their nationals (citizens) have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies. The Allies included this article to justify their demand for reparations. The Germans, however, read it to mean that they alone were responsible for causing the war and greatly resented it.*

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After agreeing to the armistice in November 1918, the Germans had been convinced that they would be consulted by the Allies on the contents of the Treaty. This did not happen and the Germans were in no position to continue the war as her army had all but disintegrated. Though this lack of consultation angered them, there was nothing they could do about it. Therefore, the first time that the German representatives saw the terms of the Treaty was just weeks before they were due to sign it in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles on 28 June 1919.

There was anger throughout Germany when the terms of the Treaty were made public. The Treaty became known as a Diktat (dictated peace) - as it was being forced on them and the Germans had no choice but to sign it. Many in Germany did not want the Treaty signed, but the representatives there knew that they had no choice as Germany was incapable of restarting the war. Germany was given two choices of either signing the treaty or be invaded by the allies.

They signed the Treaty as in reality they had no choice. When the ceremony was over, Clemenceau went out into the gardens of Versailles and said 'It is a beautiful day'. The Treaty seemed to satisfy the 'Big Three' as in their eyes it was a just peace as it kept Germany weak yet strong enough to stop the spread of communism; kept the French border with Germany safe from another German attack and created the organization, the League of Nations, that would end warfare throughout the world.

However, it left a mood of anger throughout Germany as it was felt that as a nation Germany had been unfairly treated. Above all else, Germany hated the clause blaming her for the cause of the war and the resultant financial penalties the treaty was bound to impose on Germany. Those who signed it became known as the 'November Criminals'. Many German citizens felt that they were being punished for the mistakes of the German government in August 1914 as it was the government that had declared war and not the people.

3.3.3 Treaty Signed with Austria: Treaty of Saint Germain (10 September 1919)

This treaty was signed between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria. It consisted of 14 parts and 381 Articles and several annexures. The treaty declared that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was to be dissolved. The new Republic of Austria, consisting of most of the German-speaking Alpine part of the former Austrian Empire, recognized the independence of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. The treaty included 'war reparations' of large sums of money, directed towards the allies, to pay for the costs of the war. Austria was reduced not only by the loss of crown lands incorporated into the states of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia

(the 'successor states') but by the cession of Trentino, South Tyrol, Trieste, Istria and several Dalmatian islands to Italy and the cession of Bukovina to Romania. In total, it lost land to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and Italy. Burgenland, then a part of Hungary, was awarded to Austria.

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An important article of the treaty required Austria to refrain from directly or indirectly compromising its independence, which meant that Austria could not enter into political or economic union with Germany without the agreement of the council of the League of Nations. Accordingly, the new republic's initial self-chosen name of German Austria had to be changed to Austria. The Austrian Army was limited to a force of 30,000 volunteers. There were numerous provisions dealing with Danubian navigation, the transfer of railways, and other details involved in the breakup of a great empire into several small independent states

3.3.4 Treaty Signed with Bulgaria: Treaty of Neuilly (27 November 1919)

This treaty with Bulgaria, another enemy of the Allies, was signed on 27 November 1919 at Neuilly. Strumnitza and a part of Macedonia were cut off from Bulgaria and were given to Yugoslavia. Dobruja was handed over to Romania. Thracian coast was given to Greece. Bulgaria had also to pay half a million dollars as war indemnity and army was limited to 20,000 men.

3.3.5 Treaty Signed with Hungary: Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920)

According to the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary was compelled to give non-Magyar population to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and the army was reduced to 35,000 men. Thus, Hungary was left with about 35,000 square miles for eight millions population.

3.3.6 Treaty Signed with Constantinople Government: Treaty of Serves (10 August 1920)

This treaty was signed between the Sultan of Turkey (who was at that time the prisoner of the allies who were also in occupation of Constantinople) and the Principal Allied and Associated Powers. The Arab state of Hedjar was freed and put under British occupation. Rumania which had declared her independence was created into a Christian Republic and put under an international guarantee. Mesopotamia, Trans-Jordan, and Palestine were taken away from Turkey and later on given as mandates to Britain. Syria, which was also grabbed from Turkey, was put under the French mandate. One condition, however was imposed regarding Palestine and this pertained to Britain's undertaking that in Palestine would be established 'a national home for the Jewish people' which was called as Balfour Declaration. This commitment ultimately enabled the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel.

3.3.7 Treaty Signed with Kemalist Government: Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923)

The terms of the Treaty of Serves were accepted by the Sultan, but not so by a parallel government headed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. He retired to Ankara and set up a rival government and also gathered a large army. Repeated attempts by the Greeks to defeat Mustafa Kemal failed and a large number of Greeks were killed and the remaining were expelled from Asia Minor. There was no one to enforce the terms of the Treaty of

Serves. The French and Italian forces were withdrawn from there. The small British army remained at its stations and instead of attacking it, Mustafa Kemal entered into negotiations which led to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne.

The treaty provided not only for the independence of the Republic of Turkey but also for the protection of the ethnic Greek minority in Turkey and mainly the ethnic Turkish Muslim minority in Greece. Most of the Greek population of Turkey was exchanged with the Turkish population of Greece. The treaty delimited the boundaries of Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey, formally ceded all Turkish claims on Cyprus, Iraq and Syria, and (along with the Treaty of Ankara) settled the boundaries of the latter two nations. The treaty also led to international recognition of the sovereignty of the new Republic of Turkey as the successor state of the defunct Ottoman Empire.

3.3.8 Criticism of the Treaty of Versailles

Having gone through the terms of this treaty, a question arises as to whether this was a fair settlement or not? There is a long standing argument that it was not. This originated from the forebodings of contemporary diplomats and observers like Norman Davies and Harold Nicolson¹¹, of economist J.M. Keynes, and historian W.H. Dawson and Ruth Henig.¹² Although the sympathy for Germany was subsequently diluted by the rise of Hitler, there emerged a feeling that the Treaty of Versailles could well have contributed to the destructive phenomenon of Nazism. It then became common question the wisdom of visiting the guilt of the Kaiser's Germany upon moderate Weimer republic which had been engaged in a desperate struggle for survival against the forces of extreme Right. The Germans constantly attacked the Versailles *Diktat*.

Using these sources, we can now build a composite criticism of the Treaty of Versailles. On the issue of territorial changes, there is some support for the implementation of national self-determination, but considerable criticism of the uneven use of plebiscite. Why, for example, this facility has been provided to the Danes of Northern Schlezwig and the Poles and Czechs of Southern Silesia, but not to the Germans of the Sudetanland or of Austria? Germany's frontier literally bled. Poland, in particular, was treated too generously at German's expense, a clear perversion of the thirteenth of President Wilson's Fourteen Points. As for the confiscation of German colonies, many observers point to the element of hypocrisy. Wilson's avowed reason for this was to protect the inhabitants from the proven harshness of the German rule.

The most influential critique of the economic provisions of the Treaty was J.M. Keynes¹³. He argued that the settlement lacked wisdom in its aim to destroy Germany's very means of subsistence. The coal and iron provisions, for example, were disastrous. Germany would be left with a capacity to produce only 60 million tonnes annually, whereas in 1913 she had consumed 110 million tonnes. Above all, the indemnity being considered by the Allies in 1919 was well beyond the German means to pay. According to Keynes, the real danger for the future lay not in boundary questions but rather in questions of food, coal and commerce. He remained convinced that 'The Treaty, by overstepping the limits of the possible, has in practice settled nothing.' The subsequent economic crisis suffered by the Weimer Republic, including the collapse of the mark in 1923, seemed to provide immediate evidence to support his prediction.

Why did a treaty of such severity emerge in the first place? The reason most commonly given was that the ideals of Wilson were heavily diluted by the ideals of Clemenceau and the practical approach of Lloyd George. Clemenceau influenced the whole proceedings because he knew only one goal: 'security for France'. The British

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delegation took a more moderate stance, but Lloyd George was, nevertheless, under heavy pressure from the public opinion at home to make Germany pay for all the damage caused during the war. The result was the triumph of expediency over ideals leading to a deterioration of moral awareness.

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There could be only one solution. The revision of the treaty was the necessary and inevitable first step forward. In 1924, the Dawes Plan modified the method of paying reparations, while the Young Plan of 1930 extended the deadline, and the Lausanne Agreement of 1932 cancelled outstanding reparations. Meanwhile, all occupation forces were withdrawn from the Rhineland by 1930 and League of Nations provided for the full return of the Saar to Germany by 1935. But critics of the treaty maintained that these concessions were too late to reconcile the Germans to a settlement which it bitterly hated.

However, in recent times, a different picture of the Treaty of Versailles emerged. By emphasizing three points it is possible to show that the treatment meted out to Germany was not unduly harsh. First, her territorial losses in 1919 were tiny compared with the alterations which the German victory would have brought. According to Fritz Fisher, Germany's war aims included economic dominance over Belgium, Holland and France; supremacy over Courland, Livonia, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland in Eastern Europe, and over Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey in the Balkans; unification with Austria and the creation of Greater Germany; and control over the entire Eastern Mediterranean and over dismantled Russia. In sharp contrast, the Allied ambassadors, far from humiliating a defeated country, showed considerable restraint in removing only those ethnic minorities who had clearly suffered inclusion in the German Reich. Second, some form of economic compensation was only to be expected, given the terrible French losses. German industries, by contrast, had largely escaped destruction since the Rhineland and Ruhr never came within the scope of Allied operations. There was, therefore, a clear-cut argument for transferring some of the wealth of a complete industrial economy to assist the reconstruction of a shattered one. Third, it has not been conclusively proved that the Treaty of Versailles crippled Germany in the process of compensating France and Belgium. The chronic inflation between 1919 and 1923 was due at least as much to the German government's unrestrained use of bank notes as to the heavy speculation by the Rhineland industrialists. There remains a strong suspicion that Germany could not meet the reparation because she had no intention of doing so. A general hike in taxation could have met all foreign debts. No ministry, however, was prepared to risk the internal opposition which this step would have brought; a short-term policy based on the reckless printing of paper money seemed a much easier choice.

The role of France and Britain at the Peace Settlement has also been extensively reassessed. It seemed that France had every right to consider itself the aggrieved party between 1919 and 1923. The French originally sought to accomplish two objectives only: economic reconstruction and military security. These could be attained most effectively within the structure of an Atlantic community which would perpetuate the unity of the war time alliance. Hence, the Minister of Commerce, Clemental, had in 1918 proposed an economic bloc which would operate the system of preferential tariffs and come to an agreement on currency matters. As for the future security of France, Tardieu, the French delegate, argued that a neutralized Rhineland would be the best guarantee against future German invasion. This should be related to a permanent pact between the Western powers. Once Western Europe had achieved a new strength and stability as a result of these agreements, Germany could be allowed to regain her economic and industrial status without the danger of future aggression and war. Unfortunately the

French scheme proved unsuccessful. Clemenceau's proposals were rejected by the United States, with the result that France had to depend entirely on German reparations for her economic recovery; worse followed when the US Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. This meant that the treaty of mutual guarantee between France, Britain and the United States also collapsed. The United States withdrew from all military commitments in Europe, while Britain, whose membership of the alliance had been tied to American involvement, considered her own obligation to France ended by the Senate's decision. France was by now virtually isolated and faced the prospect of containing, by herself, the inevitable revival of Germany. By 1923, moreover, it had become evident that the German government was doing its utmost to escape fulfilling the terms of the treaty. Was it surprising, therefore, that Poincare, the French President, should have tried to restore the French plan by ordering the occupation of Ruhr?

The British government was the main critique of this action. But, it has been argued, that the record of the British delegation at Paris was far from moderate or even consistent. The usual view that Lloyd George was a pragmatist, driven by occasional harshness only by pressure from the British public opinion, will not do. If anything, the British position was more extreme than the French. Lloyd George, for example, appeared just as revanchist as Clemenceau. In 1918, he told the Imperial War Cabinet, 'The terms of peace must be tantamount to some penalty for the offence.' In one of the sub-commissions, a British representative claimed that Germany could afford to pay reparations of 120,000 million dollars. Although Lloyd George appeared to have been won over to moderation, the British government still put the reparations figure almost twice as high as did the French, and then complicated the proceedings by demanding the inclusion of war pensions and separate allowances as war damages. Largely because of British stubbornness, the reparations figure had to be settled separately and was not announced until 1921. By this time, the German government had taken comfort from the evident disintegration of the alliance between the victorious powers and had begun to probe for weaknesses in the Versailles Settlement. The country most seriously affected by this was France, which had taken a consistently reasonable line on the whole reparations issue.¹⁴

Conclusion

It is difficult for anyone to seriously argue that the Treaty of Versailles was a success. Though the treaty's detractors maintained that the major need was fundamental review, some of its defenders have put the case for more effective enforcement. The settlement failed not because it was too harsh, but because the alliance which devised it fell apart with the withdrawal of the United States and Britain, and the isolation of France. Although the treaty was supported by Collective Security and the Locarno Pact (1925), it remained susceptible to any German refusal to implement it. The modification secured by the Dawes Pact (1924) was sufficient to win the temporary co-operation of moderate statesmen like Stresemann. But, in the long term, German public opinion continued to see the whole settlement as a Diktat and eventually supported its overthrow by the Nazi regime. Opponents of the treaty argued that Nazism was one of the legacies. Its defenders maintain that Hitler succeeded only because the treaty was not enforced. Germany did have grounds for complaint but the Treaty could have been more severe.

As stated by Norman Lowe, 'In conclusion it has to be said that this collection of peace treaties was not a conspicuous success. It had the unfortunate effect of dividing Europe into the states which wanted to revise the settlement (Germany being the main one), and those which wanted to *preserve it*. On the whole, the latter turned

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Check Your Progress

7. In the Paris Peace Conference, who were known as the Council of Four?
8. When was the Treaty of Versailles signed?
9. What was the Treaty of Saint Germain?

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out to be lukewarm in support... and it became increasingly difficult to apply the terms fully.' Hobsbawm argues that 'the Versailles settlement could not possibly be the basis of a stable peace. It was doomed from the start, and another war was practically certain.' The French politician Marshal Foch, as the Versailles Treaty was being signed, stated rather prophetically, 'This is not peace; it is an armistice for 20 years.' Gilbert White, an American delegate at the Conference, put it perfectly when he remarked that given the problems involved, 'it is not surprising that they made a bad peace; what is surprising is that they managed to make peace at all.'

3.4 SUMMING UP

- To sum up we can say that the First World War had several causes, with none alone standing as a sufficient cause. Any single explanation of this complex problem is likely to be too simple. While in the final crisis of July 1914 Germany acted in a way that made war more likely, the enthusiasm with which it was greeted in all the belligerent countries and the assumption by each of the governments concerned that their vital national interests were at stake, were the result of accumulation of several factors-social, intellectual, psychological, economic, political and cultural-which all contributed to the outbreak of the war.
- The First World War did not completely end with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, for its social, cultural, political, economic, environmental and psychological effects influenced the lives of people long after the last shot was fired. The Great War could not be relegated to the past. War became the continuing experience of the 20th century.
- The peace treaties of 1919-1922 have been bitterly criticized by most of the writers. The basic principles on which the Allied nations were fighting against Germany and other central powers were flouted.
- The treatment given to Germany and Austria was very harsh and most unreasonable. The vanquished were severely treated and their economic condition was reduced to the verge of bankruptcy. The victors were bent upon teaching a lesson to their enemies. In a way the defeated powers were forced to sign 'dictated peace.'
- Gilbert White, one of the American delegates at the conference while summing up the efforts of statesmen wrote, 'It is not surprising that they made a bad peace, what is surprising is that they made peace at all.'

3.5 KEY TERMS

- **Alliance:** An association to further certain common interests of the members.
- **Alsace-Lorraine:** Two provinces between France and Germany, which fall under France or Germany according to the fortunes of war.
- **Armistice (military):** Temporary suspension of hostilities by agreement between warring opponents.
- **Blockade (military):** The isolation of an enemy's ports by means of warships to prevent passage of persons or supplies.
- **Camaraderie:** Friendship or companionship

- **Front (military):** A zone of conflict between armies.
- **Hapsburg Dynasty:** The reigning German family in Austria from 1278 to 1918.
- **Mobilize (military):** To assemble and make ready for war duty.
- **Nationalism:** A sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations.
- **Versailles:** A suburb, north of Paris containing the traditional palace of the royalty.

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3.6 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The First World War was sparked off by the assassination of Prince Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, by a Serbian nationalist named Gavrilo Princip.
2. The roots of militaristic attitude of the late 19th and early 20th century has been seen by many as the crisis in the liberal, enlightenment and rational values which in turn was transformed into politics.
3. Sidney Fay, an American historian, argued that no European power wanted war in 1914 and that all to greater and lesser degrees must share the blame. Fay attached some liability to each power involved in the *July Crisis* and came to the conclusion that the verdict of German War Guilt was defective. Thus, the idea of collective responsibility for the outbreak of the war came to become an orthodox interpretation.
4. The Battle of Cer, which began on 12 August 1914, was fought between the Serbians against the invading Austro-Hungarians. The Serbian army occupied defensive positions on the south side of the Drina and Sava Rivers. Over the next two weeks, they were successful in making the Austrian army suffer heavy losses. This marked the first major Allied victory of the war and crushed Austro-Hungarian hopes to emerge as victorious.
5. An important feature of the First World War seen on the Western Front was the concept of attrition warfare. Attrition warfare represented an attempt to grind down an opponent through superior numbers, using enormous amounts of artillery and other weapons. Many catastrophic battles were fought as a part of this ‘War of Attrition’.
6. Britain gave police powers a wide scope in August 1914 by the Defense of the Realm Act which authorized the public authorities to arrest and punish rebels under martial law if necessary.
7. Although the representatives of many countries participated in the deliberations of the peace treaty and were consulted in cases directly involving their interests, the peace terms were in large measure set by the big powers, the so called Council of Four, composed of the American President (*Woodrow Wilson*) and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain (*David Lloyd George*), France (*Georges Clemenceau*), and Italy (*Vittorio Orlando*).
8. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919, exactly 5 years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, one of the events that triggered the start of the war.

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9. The Treaty of Saint Germain was signed between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria. It consisted of 14 parts and 381 Articles and several annexures. The treaty declared that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was to be dissolved. The new Republic of Austria, consisting of most of the German-speaking Alpine part of the former Austrian Empire, recognized the independence of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.

3.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the terms of the ultimatum that the Austria-Hungary Empire gave to Serbia after the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand?
2. Give a brief account of the causes of the First World War with special reference to the historiography of the event.
3. Write brief notes on
 - (a) Treaty of St. Germain
 - (b) Treaty of Serves
4. Discuss the various consequences of the First World War.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Give a brief account of the course of the First World War.
2. Do you think that Germany was responsible for the First World War?
3. Discuss the Paris Peace Conference that was held after the First World War.
4. The Treaty of Versailles was the major cause for the failure of maintaining peace after the First World War and the outbreak of the Second World War. Discuss.

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Endnotes

1. This term was first coined by German General Erich Ludendorff in 1918. It meant mobilization of all material as well as moral energies in the process of waging a modern war.

2. A term used with reference to the British policy of non-intervention in European conflicts during the late 19th century. *The First World War, The Paris Peace Settlement and its Aftermath*
3. A group of countries or political parties who are formally united and working together because they have a similar aim.
4. A policy of maintaining a strong military base.
5. A military term used for calling up troops for fight.
6. Right of a nationality to choose its future
7. A term related to the problem in the middle-east, like the problem of declining Turkish Empire, the struggle of European Nationalists for freedom in the Turkish Empire and the conflicting interests of European powers in Turkey.
8. For Geiss, Weltpolitik was a belligerent policy which invited a hostile reaction and ultimately raised the international temperature to a point at which peace became impossible to sustain.
9. An older person, usually a woman, who looks after a girl or a young unmarried woman on social occasions.
10. By this he meant that every person with a sense of common nationality based on a common language and history should have the right to govern themselves, to determine their own futures.
11. Harold Nicolson, author of the book *Peacemaking 1919*, wrote: 'The historian, with every justification, will come to the conclusion that we were very stupid men. We arrived determined that a Peace of justice and wisdom should be negotiated; we left the conference conscious that the treaties imposed upon our enemies were neither just nor wise.'
12. According to Ruth Henig, 'Compared to the treaties which Germany had imposed on defeated Russia and Rumania in 1918, the Treaty of Versailles was quite moderate. The Treaty of Versailles was not excessively harsh on Germany, either territorially or economically. However, the German people were expecting victory not defeat. It was the acknowledgement of defeat as much as the treaty terms themselves, which they found so hard to accept.
13. He argues that the German economy would be destroyed by the post-war Versailles Treaty. A series of treaties which overlooked the really important issues of economic recovery, food, fuel, and finance would further exacerbate the situation.
14. Stephan J. Lee, *Aspects of European History (1789-1980)*

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UNIT 4 THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY

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STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 The League of Nations and the Mandate System
 - 4.2.1 Structure of League of Nations
 - 4.2.2 Functions of the League
 - 4.2.3 Mandate System
 - 4.2.4 Achievement of the League
 - 4.2.5 Failure of the League of Nations
 - 4.2.6 Demise and Legacy of the League of Nations
- 4.3 System of Collective Security under the League
 - 4.3.1 Efforts Made to Strengthen the System of Collective Security
- 4.4 Breakdown of Collective Security
 - 4.4.1 Causes of the Failure of the System of Collective Security
- 4.5 Summing Up
- 4.6 Key Terms
- 4.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.8 Questions and Exercises
- 4.9 References and Suggested Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The League of Nations was established in 1919, mainly on the initiative of American President Woodrow Wilson. The Covenant was drafted at the Paris Peace Conference and subsequently was incorporated into all the treaties which made up the Versailles Settlement. It formally came into existence on 10 January 1920, with its headquarters at Geneva in Switzerland. You have already read in the previous unit that the Versailles Settlement presented many bitter pills to the Central Powers, especially Germany, but the most important offshoot of this Settlement was the provision for the creation of a League of Nations.

The League of Nations was an international association for the furtherance of cooperation among nations, the settlement of international disputes, and the preservation of the peace formed after the First World War. The Covenant of the League provided for the Mandate System. Earlier, the conquered territories were annexed by the conquerors. However, in 1919, a new device called the Mandate System was adopted under which the conquered territories were to be put under the guardianship of League of Nations and certain powers were to be put in charge of those territories to carry on their administration.

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Fig 4.1 Formation of League of Nations

Source: <http://www.gcsehistory.org.uk/modernworld/interwarperiod/league.jpg>

The League had two main aims. It aimed at the maintenance of peace through the system of Collective Security, i.e., if one state attacked another, the member state of the League would act together, collectively, to restrain the aggressor, either by economic or by military sanctions. It also aimed at encouraging international co-operation in order to solve economic and social problems. The League had many achievements to its credit; however, it ultimately failed to achieve its aim. This unit will discuss both its achievements and its failures.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the structure and function of the League of Nations
- Analyse the achievements, failure, demise and legacy of the League of Nation
- Describe the system of collective security under the League
- Examine the failure of collective security with special reference to the Manchurian and Ethiopian Crisis
- Analyse the causes of the breakdown of collective security

4.2 THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND THE MANDATE SYSTEM

The League of Nations was an international association for the furtherance of cooperation among nations, the settlement of international disputes, and the preservation of the peace formed after the First World War. The League is often spoken as being the brainchild of the American President Woodrow Wilson. Although Wilson was certainly a great supporter of the idea of international organization for peace, the League was in reality the result of a coming together of similar suggestions by many statesmen of the world. Lord Robert Cecil of Britain, Jan Smuts of South Africa and Leon Bourgeois of France put forward

detailed schemes as to how an organization was to set up. Wilson's great contribution was to insist that the League Covenant¹, which had been drawn up by an international committee, should be included in each of the separate peace treaties. It aimed at maintaining peace in the world through collective security and to encourage international co-operation in order to solve economic and social problems.

The League's creation was a centerpiece of Wilson's Fourteen Points for Peace. The Paris Peace Conference accepted the proposal to create the League of Nations on 25 January 1919. The Covenant of the League of Nations was drafted by a special commission, and the League was established by Part I of the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed on 28 June 1919. Initially, the Charter was signed by 44 states, including 31 states which had taken part in the war on the side of the Triple Entente or joined it during the conflict. Despite Wilson's efforts to establish and promote the League, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919, the United States neither ratified the Charter nor joined the League due to opposition in the US Senate. On 10 January 1920, the League of Nations officially came into existence with its headquarters at Geneva in Switzerland. The League held its first council meeting in Paris on 16 January 1920, six days after the Versailles Treaty came into force. In November, the headquarters of the League moved to Geneva, where the first general assembly of the League was held on 15 November 1920 with representatives from 41 nations in attendance.

The League of Nations had neither an official flag nor a logo. However, League of Nations used various logos and flags (or none at all) in their own operations. In 1939, a semi-official emblem emerged: two five-pointed stars within a blue pentagon. The official languages of the League of Nations were French, English and Spanish.



Fig 4.2 Logo of the League

Source: http://img1.wikia.nocookie.net/__cb20070126152352/uncyclopedia/images/8/83/LofN.png

4.2.1 Structure of League of Nations

The League had five principal organs: a Secretariat, a Council, an Assembly, a Permanent Court of International Justice and an International Labour Organization. The League also had numerous Agencies and Commissions. The Authorization for any action required both, a unanimous vote by the Council, and a majority vote in the Assembly.

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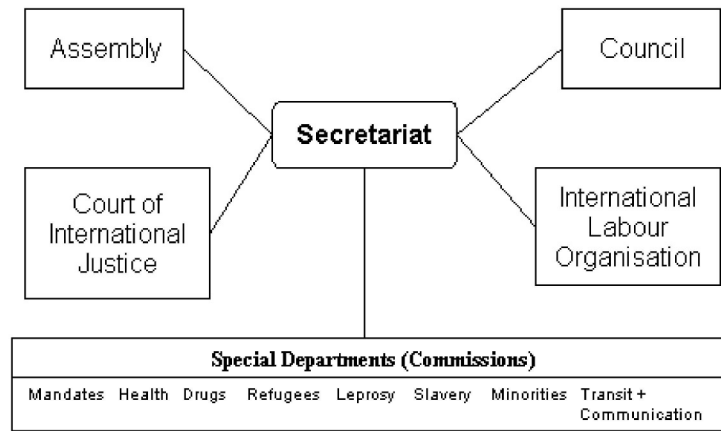


Fig 4.3 Structure of the League

Source: <http://betweenwars.wikispaces.com/file/view/image4.gif/307703300/image4.gif>

I. The Secretariat

The Secretariat of the League consisted of the Secretary-General (based in Geneva) who was appointed by the Council with the approval of the Assembly and such other staff as was required for its work. The other staff of the Secretariat was appointed by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Council. There were two Deputy Secretary-General and two Under Secretaries-General, subordinate to the Secretary-General. The member-states paid the expenses of the Secretariat. The Secretariat functioned throughout the year in contrast to the Council and the Assembly.

II. The League Council

The Council of the League comprised of permanent members, non-permanent members and ad hoc representatives. It began with four permanent members (the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Japan) and four non-permanent members, which were elected by the Assembly for a three year period. The first four non-permanent members were Belgium, Brazil, Greece and Spain. The United States was meant to be the fifth permanent member, but the United States Senate voted on 19 March 1920 against the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, thus, preventing American participation in the League. This prompted the United States to go back to policies of isolationism.

The initial composition of the Council was subsequently changed a number of times. The number of non-permanent members was first increased to six on 22 September 1922, and then to nine on 8 September 1926. Germany also joined the League and became a fifth permanent member of the Council on a later date, taking the Council to a total of fifteen members. Later, when both Germany and Japan left the League, the number of non-permanent seats was eventually increased from nine to eleven. The Council met on an average of five times a year, and in extraordinary sessions when required. In total, 107 public sessions were held between 1920 and 1939. Every member of the Council had only one vote.

The Council was required to deal with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world. The main function of the Council was the settlement of disputes among the various countries of the world. It was required to formulate plans for disarmament by various states. It was to recommend methods by which the territorial integrity of the states could be guaranteed.

III. The General Assembly

The League of Nations' Assembly was a meeting of all the Member States, with each state allowed up to three representatives and one vote. It was required to meet at least once a year. In case of necessity, there could be additional meetings of the Assembly. It was given the authority to deal with any matter within its sphere of action or which affected the peace of the world. It could not discuss those matters which were exclusively reserved for the Council. It could admit new members of the League by a two-third majority. Every year it elected a certain number of non-permanent members of the Council. The Judges of the Permanent Court of International Justice were elected by the Assembly for a certain number of years. The Assembly revised the budget prepared by the Secretariat and also supervised the work of the Council.

IV. The Permanent Court of International Justice

Provisions were made in the Covenant for the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ). This court, sometimes called the World Court, was the international court of the League of Nations, established on 15 February 1922 under Article XIV of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The PCIJ began its preliminary session in Hague in January 1922 and heard its first case, an advisory opinion, in May 1922. Between 1922 and 1940, the Court dealt with 38 contentious cases between States and delivered 27 advisory opinions. It was replaced in 1946 by the International Court of Justice when the United Nations was formed.

Technically, the PCIJ was not an organ of the League of Nations, although the Court's existence was closely connected to the League. The jurisdiction of this Court extended to all the cases which the party referred to it and all matters specially provided for in the treaties and conventions in force. The members were allowed to accept the optional clause by signing the separate protocol and that gave the Court jurisdiction in matters concerning the interpretation of any treaty, questions of international law, any dispute which involved a violation of international law etc. While making decisions, the Court applied the international convention recognized by the states in conflict, international customs, general principles of law recognized by the civilized states, judicial decisions, and the teachings of highly qualified publicists of the various states. The Court was also required to give its advisory opinion in certain matters. The judgment of the Court was final and there was no provision for appeal. However, the Court could review its previous decisions in the light of new facts brought before it, provided those facts were not known to the parties at the time of decision.

The Second World War marked the end of the Permanent Court of International Justice. The Court held its last wartime session in Hague in February 1940, before the German invasion of the Netherlands. With the search for a new post-war international order, delegates at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in Washington D.C. (August-October 1944) discussed the development of a new International Court of Justice, which would work in association with the new United Nations Organization. Delegates at the San Francisco Conference approved the new International Court of Justice (June 1945) as one of the principal organs of the United Nations (Article VII) and as the UN's chief judicial organization. In October 1945, the members of the PCIJ held their last session in Hague and on 31 January 1946, the judges of the Permanent Court of International Justice resigned.

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V. The International Labour Organization (ILO)

The International Labour Organization, popularly known as ILO, was a specialized body of the League. Like the PCIJ, this body was also patronized by the United Nations Organization, the League's successor. It fulfilled the important ideal of the League, 'To provide fair and humane considerations of labour for men, women and children of the world.' The body works through the International Labour Bureau manned by experts and officials recruited from all over the world. This vital limb of the League has immensely assisted in ameliorating the condition of the workers of the world and has focused the attention of the States towards them. By coordinating the activities of labour, capital and States, it helped a lot in creating a congenial atmosphere of industrial peace and social justice in the member States.

The tripartite constitution of the ILO is of special significance. While other organs were represented only by States, the ILO was managed by the representatives of the States, employers and the employees. It has three main organs i.e. the General Conference, The International Labor Office and the Governing Body. The chief executive head of the ILO is its Director General, who prepares the agenda for the General Conference and arranges many special studies of labour capital relations.

The members of the League were ipso facto members of the ILO. Each country sent four representatives, two by the government, one representing the employers and the fourth sent by workers through their associations. The General Conference met at least once a year, and if a convention or recommendation was passed by two third majorities of the members, the suggestion was to be put before the elected legislatures of the member countries within eighteen months. Its suggestions were not binding, but they had a sort of moral obligation. The member States sent annual reports of social and labour legislation enacted by them for the welfare of the workers.

The Secretariat of the ILO, called International Labour Office or International Labour Bureau, had its headquarters at Geneva, and its branches were scattered in different member countries and centers like Paris, London, Washington and New Delhi. It coordinated the activities of ILO as a whole and supplied information on labour capital relations in different countries.

The Governing Body had thirty two members, of which sixteen were representatives of the governments, eight elected by the delegates to the Conference sent by the employers and eight elected by the delegates of the worker's associations. The Director-General and his staff worked directly under the Governing Body. It nominated various expert bodies and committees for special duties and guidance for its proper working and specially acted as an advisory body.

In fact, the ILO has served a very useful purpose and has stood the test of time. In the words of Hazen, 'It had served the same purpose, as was being served by the League, namely the promotion of peace throughout the world.' It emphasised that war against want required an unrelenting effort, and healthy developments of labour capital relations were a basic necessity for world peace and progress. The ILO still strives for better wages, shorter hours and improved condition of work for the labour class.

VI. Other Bodies

Many other agencies and commissions were created by the League to deal with major international problems. These were the Disarmament Commission, the Health Organization, the Mandates Commission, the International Commission on Intellectual

Cooperation, the Permanent Central Opium Board, the Commission for Refugees, and the Slavery Commission. Several of these institutions were transferred to the United Nations after the Second World War.

The League's health organisation had three bodies, a Health Bureau, containing permanent officials of the League, an executive section the General Advisory Council or Conference consisting of medical experts, and a Health Committee. The Committee's purpose was to conduct inquiries, oversee the operation of the League's health work, and get work ready to be presented to the Council. This body focused on ending leprosy, malaria and yellow fever, the latter two by starting an international campaign to exterminate mosquitoes. The Health Organisation also worked successfully with the government of the Soviet Union to prevent typhus epidemics including organising of a large education campaign about the disease.

The League wanted to regulate the drugs trade and established the Permanent Central Opium Board to supervise the statistical control system introduced by the second International Opium Convention that mediated the production, manufacture, trade and retail of opium and its by-products. The Board also established a system of import certificates and export authorizations for the legal international trade in narcotics.

The Slavery Commission sought to eradicate slavery and slave trading across the world, and fought forced prostitution. Its main success was through pressing the countries who administered mandated countries to end slavery in those countries. The League also secured a commitment from Ethiopia, as a condition of joining the League in 1926, to end slavery and worked with Liberia to abolish forced labour and inter-tribal slavery. It succeeded in gaining the emancipation of 200,000 slaves in Sierra Leone and organized raids against slave traders in its efforts to stop the practice of forced labour in Africa. It also succeeded in reducing the death rate of workers constructing the Tanganyika railway from 55 per cent to 4 per cent. Records were kept to control slavery, prostitution, and the trafficking of women and children. Led by Fridtjof Nansen, the Commission for Refugees looked after the interests of refugees including overseeing their repatriation and, when necessary resettlement. At the end of the First World War, there were two to three million ex-prisoners of war dispersed throughout Russia, within two years of the commission's foundation, in 1920, it had helped 425,000 of them return home. It established camps in Turkey in 1922 to deal with a refugee crisis in that country and to help prevent disease and hunger. It also established the Nansen passport as a means of identification for stateless peoples. The Committee for the Study of the Legal Status of Women sought to make an inquiry into the status of women all over the world. It was formed in April 1938 and dissolved in early 1939.

4.2.2 Functions of the League

The primary function of the League was to maintain peace amongst its member nations and also to maintain it in the world at large. A limitation of armaments and a mutual guarantee of territorial integrity and independence were also to be secured. The Preamble to the Covenant containing thirty six articles stated the aims of the League. It stated, 'The High Contracting Parties, in order to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by prescription of open, just and honorable relations between nations, by the firm understanding of international law as the actual rule of conduct among governments and by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one another, agreed to this Covenant of the League of Nations.'

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Check Your Progress

1. When was the League of Nations established?
2. What were the five principal organs of the League of Nations?
3. Why was the Permanent Central Opium Board created?

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The main functions of the League may be summarized as below:

- (a) **Removal of the causes of war:** The members of the League recognized the importance of reducing armaments and enforcing a common code for international obligations. The principle of peaceful co-existence and mutual cooperation was to be recognised and there were normally to be no secret treaties. The League was to be consulted on all the matters of disputes among member nations. A mutual guarantee of territorial integrity and independence was to be given.
- (b) **Acceptance of Arbitration and Decisions of League Council:** The League was to make all possible efforts to eliminate the causes of war and all points of disputes were liable to be submitted for arbitration, judicial settlement or to enquiry by the League Council. The members were not to resort to war until the League bodies showed their inability to resolve the disputes.
- (c) **Sanctions against the Aggressor:** The members of the League were to punish the aggressor State, whether she was a member of the League or not, jointly, by imposing sanctions like ‘severance of all trade and financial relations, prohibition of all relations between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal dealings between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State and nationals of any other State, and also to help the oppressed country with effective military support.’
- (d) **Fair and Humane conditions of Labour and other such actions:** For the preservation of peace and social balance, the members also pledged to give ‘fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children,’ and also to ensure that there was no traffic in women, children, in opium or other dangerous drugs, in arms and ammunitions, and so on. The freedom of communication and equitable treatment for commerce and trade for all members of the League was also to be assured.
- (e) **Well-being of colonies by the mandate system:** The Central Powers had lost many colonies and territories in Asia and Africa as a result of the First World War. The League was supposed to entrust these areas to the care of some member states under its supervision. Efforts were to be made to secure better social, political and economic conditions for these areas.
- (f) **Creation of permanent institutions:** To carry on the work of the League and to maintain international peace and security, the necessity of establishing permanent institutions, especially, the League Assembly, the League Council, a Secretariat, the Permanent Court of International Justice and International Labor Organization, was also felt. ‘The government of the League was to be vested in an Assembly and a Council, and the administration of its affairs provided for, by the establishment of a permanent Secretariat’.
- (g) **International Welfare:** All together, the Covenant of the League emphasised on the policy of international welfare through peaceful and civilized methods. Articles 2-7, 10-16, 19, 22 and 23 elaborate this aim very clearly. The central theme of the League of Nations was to extinguish the burning desire for war, which destroyed the hard earned achievements of the humanity. The pioneers of the League of Nations conceived this idea to avoid war which had proved to be extremely detrimental to modern society. They paved the way for an international organization that could have an effective influence upon world politics.

4.2.3 Mandate System

The Covenant of the League provided for the Mandate System. The League of Nations' Mandates were established under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. According to the Mandate System, conquered territories of the central powers were to be put under the guardianship of the League of Nations and certain powers were to be put in charge of those territories to carry on their administration. While appointing a member country as a mandatory power, its resources, experience, and geographical positions were taken into account. The mandated territories were considered as a sacred trust of civilization. All of these territories were former colonies of the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire. The Permanent Mandates Commission supervised the League of Nations' Mandates, and also organized plebiscites in disputed territories so that residents could decide which country they would join.

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Types of Mandates

The exact level of control by the Mandatory power over each mandate was decided on an individual basis by the League of Nations. However, in every case, the Mandatory power was forbidden to construct fortifications or raise an army within the mandate and was required to present an annual report on the territory to the League of Nations. Despite this, mandates were seen as de facto colonies of the empires of the victorious nations. The mandated territories were divided into three distinct classes based on the level of development each population had achieved at that time.

1. **Class A mandates:** The first group or Class A mandates were areas formerly controlled by the Ottoman Empire deemed to '...have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.' Iraq, Palestine and Syria were put under this category. While Iraq and Palestine were placed under the mandate of Great Britain, Syria was placed under the mandate of France. By 1948, these mandates had been replaced by new monarchies (Iraq, Jordan) and republican governments (Israel, Lebanon, and Syria).

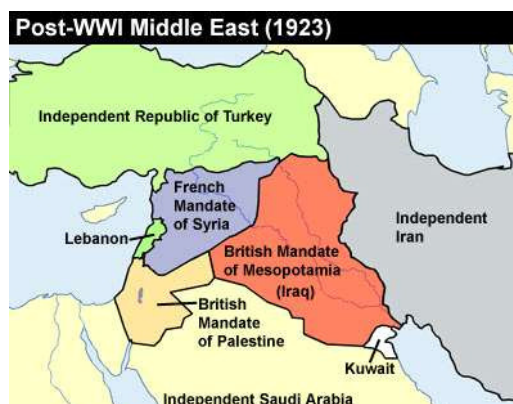


Fig 4.4 Map of the Mandate System

Source: http://www.worldology.com/Iraq/images/post_war_iraq.jpg

2. **Class B mandates:** The second group or Class B mandates were those parts of Germany's African possession whose population was deemed not yet fit

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enough to enjoy administrative autonomy in respect of which the mandatory powers were to be responsible for their administration. They were required to ensure freedom of conscience and religion, stop such abuses as slave trade and traffic in arms and liquor, prevent the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and secure equal opportunities of trade and commerce for other members of the League of Nations. Under this category, the colony of Tanganyika was put under the mandate of Britain. Congo was mandated to Belgium and the port of Kionga in the south was out rightly ceded to Portugal. In West Africa, both Cameroon and Togoland were divided between France and Britain.

- 3. Class C mandates:** A final group, the Class C mandates, including South-West Africa and certain South Pacific Islands, were those territories which on account of their small size, less population, remoteness from centers of civilization and their geographical contiguity to the territory of the mandatory power were considered to be 'best administered under the laws of the mandatory as integral portions of its territory.' Under this category, South-West Africa was put under the mandate of the Union of South Africa, Samoa under New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, North of the Equator under Japan and those in the South of the Equator under Australia. The mandatory power was required to submit a report on the mandated territory every year. The League of Nations could send its own nominees to see how much progress was made by the territories under the mandate system.

According to the Council of the League of Nations meeting of August 1920, 'draft mandates adopted by the Allied and Associated Powers would not be definitive until they had been considered and approved by the League ... the legal title held by the mandatory power must be a double one: one conferred by the Principal Powers and the other conferred by the League of Nations.'

Three steps were required to establish a Mandate under international law: (i) The Principal Allied and Associated Powers confer a mandate on one of their members or on a third power; (ii) the principal powers officially notify the Council of the League of Nations that a certain power has been appointed mandatory for a certain defined territory; and (iii) the Council of the League of Nations takes official cognizance of the appointment of the mandatory power and informs the latter that it (the Council) considers it as invested with the mandate, and at the same time, notifies it of the terms of the mandate, after ascertaining whether they are in conformance with the provisions of the covenant.

The fact is that the Allied Powers were anxious to make up for some of the losses suffered by them during the war and the mandate system was devised merely to satisfy the idealism of President Woodrow Wilson and the public opinion. The British government took steps for the creation of Israel in Palestine, whose effects the world continues to face even today. They also tried to suppress the aspirations of the people of Iraq for independence. A similar policy was followed by France in Syria. The people of Lebanon were exploited and allowed to suffer. The Mandate System was criticized as 'a hallow mockery', 'a hypocritical sham and designed to disguise old imperialistic wolves in new sheep's clothing'.

4.2.4 Achievements of the League

It has been asserted by many writers that the League of Nations totally failed in its mission and that it could not fulfill its basic aims like the preservation of world peace,

the promotion of international cooperation and the removal of the causes of war. Though it could not come up to the high expectations of some people, its wholesale condemnation is not justified. The League had some solid and long lasting achievements to its credit. In a way, it was the forerunner of United Nations Organization and supplied it with a basis for its political and welfare activities.

Many of the commissions and committees of the League achieved valuable results and much was done to foster international co-operation. One of the most successful one was the International Labour Organization under its French socialist director, Albert Thomas. Its objective was to improve the conditions of labour all over the world by persuading governments to fix maximum working day and week, specify adequate minimum wages and introduce sickness and unemployment benefits and old age pensions. It collected and published a vast amount of information and many governments were prevailed to take upon action. The Refugee Organization led by a Norwegian explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, solved the problems of thousands of war prisoners marooned in Russia after the First World War ended. The Health Organization did good work in investigating the causes of epidemics and was particularly successful in combating a typhus epidemic in Russia which at one time seemed likely to engulf the entire Europe. The Mandates Commission supervised the government of the territories taken away from Germany and Turkey, while another commission was responsible for administering the Saar to be returned to Germany. Not all were successful, however, the Disarmament Commission made no progress in the near impossible task of persuading member states to reduce armaments, though they had all promised to do so when they agreed to the covenant.

Many political disputes were referred to the League in the early 1920s; all but two of the League's decisions were accepted. For example, in the dispute between Sweden and Finland over the Aland Islands, the decision was in favour of Finland (1920); over the rival claims of Germany and Poland to the important industrial area of Upper Silesia, the League decided that it should be partitioned between the two (1921). When the Greeks invaded Bulgaria after some shooting incidents on the frontier, the League swiftly intervened: Greek troops were withdrawn and damages paid to Bulgaria (1925). When Turkey claimed the province of Mosul, a part of the Britain mandated territory of Iraq, the League decided in favour of Iraq. Even further afield, squabbles were settled between Peru and Columbia and between Bolivia and Paraguay. It is significant; however, that none of these decisions went against a major state, which might have challenged the League's verdict. In fact, during this same period, the League twice found itself overruled by the Conference of Ambassadors based in Paris, which was intended to deal with problems arising out of the Treaty of Versailles. First, there were the rival claims of Poland and Lithuania to Vilna (1920) followed by the Corfu Incident, a quarrel between Italy under Mussolini and Greece (1923). The fact that the League seemed unable or unwilling to respond to these affronts was not a promising sign.

4.2.5 Failure of the League of Nations

Although the League of Nations did much to be proud of, its failures were monumental. At the time of Corfu Incident in 1923, many people wondered what would happen if a powerful state were to challenge the League on an issue of major importance, for example, by invading an innocent country. How effective would League be then? Unfortunately, several such challenges occurred during the 1930s, and on every occasion the League was found wanting. The reasons ascribed for the failure of the League are discussed below:

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- An initial disadvantage of the League was that it was too closely linked with the Treaty of Versailles, giving it the air of being an organization for the benefit of the victorious powers. In addition, it had to defend the peace settlement which was far from perfect. Some of the provisions were bound to cause trouble- for example, the disappointment of Italy and the inclusion of Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia.
- The League was dealt a severe blow in March 1920 when the United States Senate rejected the Versailles Settlement and the League. There were many reasons behind this decision: many Americans wanted to return to a policy of isolation and feared that membership of the League might cause them to be embroiled in another war. The Republicans, now in majority in the Senate, strongly opposed Woodrow Wilson (a Democrat), but he refused to compromise over either the League Covenant or the terms of the treaties. Thus, the League was deprived of a powerful member whose presence would have been of great psychological and financial advantage.
- Germany was not allowed to join the League until 1926 and the USSR became its member only in 1934 (when Germany left), so for the first few years of its existence, the League was deprived of three of the world's most important powers.
- In the early years, the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris was an embarrassment. It was intended to function only until the League machinery was established, but it lingered on, and on several occasions, took precedence over the League. In 1920, the League supported Lithuania in her claim to Vilna which had just been taken away from her by the Poles, but then allowed the Ambassadors to award Vilna to Poland. A later example was the Corfu Incident (1923) which arose from the boundary dispute between Greece and Albania, in which three Italian officers working on the boundary commission were killed. Mussolini blamed the Greek Island of Corfu. Greece appealed to the League; Mussolini refused to recognise its competence to deal with the problem and threatened to withdraw from the League, whereupon the Ambassadors ordered Greece to pay the full amount demanded. At this early stage, however, supporters of the League dismissed these incidents as teething troubles.
- There were serious weaknesses in the Covenant making it difficult to ensure that decisive action was taken against any aggressor. It was difficult to achieve unanimous decisions. The League had no military of its own and through Article 16 expected member states to supply troops if necessary. A resolution was passed in 1923 that each member would decide for itself whether or not to fight in a crisis. This clearly made a mockery of the idea of collective security. Several attempts were made to strengthen the Covenant but these failed because a unanimous decision was needed to change it and this was never achieved. The most notable attempt was made in 1924 by the British Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in a resolution known as Geneva Protocol which pledged members to accept arbitration and help any victim of unprovoked aggression. With supreme irony, the Conservative government which followed MacDonald informed the League that they could not agree to the protocol. They were reluctant to commit Britain and the dominions to the defense of all the 1919 frontiers. Unfortunately, this left the League, as its critics remarked, 'lacking teeth'.

- The continued absence of the USA and the USSR, in addition to the hostility of Italy, made the League very much a Franco-British affair, but as their rejection of Geneva Protocol showed the British conservatives were never enthusiastic about the League, and preferred to sign the Locarno Treaties (1925) outside the League instead of conducting negotiations within it. None of these weaknesses necessarily doomed the League to failure, however, provided all the members were prepared to refrain from aggression and accept the League decisions. Between 1925 and 1930, events ran fairly smoothly but unfortunately dictators rose to power in Japan and Germany together with Italy. They refused to keep up the rules and pursued a series of actions which revealed the League's weaknesses.
- In 1931, Japanese troops invaded the Chinese territory of Manchuria. China appealed to the League which condemned Japan and ordered her troops to be withdrawn. When Japan refused, the League appointed a commission under Lord Lytton in 1932 which decided that there were faults on both sides and suggested that Manchuria be governed by the League. However, Japan rejected this and withdrew from the League (March 1933). The question of economic sanctions let alone military ones was not raised because Britain and France had serious economic problems and were reluctant to apply a trade boycott of Japan in case it led to war, which they were ill-equipped to win, especially without American help. Japan had successfully defied the League, resulting in the League's prestige being damaged.
- The failure of the World Disarmament Conference (1932) which met under the auspices of the League was a grave disappointment. The Germans asked for equality of armaments with France, but when the French demanded that this should be postponed for at least eight years, Hitler was able to use the French attitude as an excuse to withdraw Germany from the conference and later from the League.
- The most serious blow to the League was the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935. The League condemned Italy and introduced economic sanctions which, however, did not include a ban on exports of oil, coal and steel to Italy. So half-hearted were the sanctions that Italy was able to complete the conquest of Abyssinia without too much inconvenience in May 1936. A few weeks later, sanctions were abandoned with Mussolini openly flouting the League. Once again Britain and France must share the blame for the League's failure. Their motive was the desire not to antagonize Mussolini too much so as to keep him as an ally against the real danger-Germany, but the results were disastrous. Mussolini was annoyed by the sanctions anyway and began to draw closer to Hitler. In this way, the small states lost all faith in the League and Hitler himself was encouraged to break the Versailles Treaties. After 1935, therefore, the League was not taken seriously again.

The League rested on four pillars, viz., reduction of armaments, guarantees against aggression, peaceful settlement of disputes and a provision for peaceful change. The guarantees against aggression were made very strong, but the provision for the reduction of armaments and peaceful change were made relatively weak. The League suffered from an imbalance as the pillars were of unequal strength. There is no doubt that order is an essential condition of civilized life but no amount of force can maintain the *status quo* when a large number of people consider it to be unjust. Order and change are

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linked together as Siamese twins and one is impossible without the other. The Covenant of the League put too much emphasis on order and too little on change. No wonder the League failed.

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4.2.6 Demise and Legacy of the League of Nations

As the situation in Europe deteriorated into war, the Assembly transferred, on 30 September 1938 and 14 December 1939, enough power to the Secretary General to allow the League to continue to legally exist and continue with operations on a reduced scale. After this was completed, the headquarters of the League remained unoccupied for nearly six years until the Second World War ended. The final meeting of the League of Nations was held in April in Geneva. Delegates from 34 nations attended the assembly where their first act was the closure the twentieth meeting, adjourned on 14 December 1939, and opening of the twenty-first. This session concerned itself with liquidating the League. The Palace of Peace was given to the UN, reserve funds were returned to the nations that had supplied them and debts of the League were settled. Robert Cecil is said to have summed up the feeling of the gathering during a speech to the final assembly when he said, ‘aggression where it occurs and however it may be defended, is an international crime, that it is the duty of every peace-loving state to resent it and employ whatever force is necessary to crush it ... that every well-disposed citizen of every state should be ready to undergo any sacrifice in order to maintain peace ... I venture to impress upon my hearers that the great work of peace is resting not only on the narrow interests of our own nations, but even more on those great principles of right and wrong which nations, like individuals, depend.’

The motion that dissolved the League, stated that ‘The League of Nations shall cease to exist except for the purpose of the liquidation of its affairs’ passed unanimously. The motion also set the date for the end of the League as the day after the session was closed. On 18 April 1939 the President of the Assembly, Carl J. Hambro of Norway, declared ‘the twenty-first and last session of the General Assembly of the League of Nations closed.’ The League of Nations ceased to exist on 19 April 1939.

With the onset of the Second World War, it had been clear that the League had failed in its purpose – to avoid any future world war. During the war, neither the League’s Assembly nor Council had been able or willing to meet, and its Secretariat in Geneva had been reduced to a skeleton staff, with many offices moving to North America. At the 1943 Tehran Conference, the Allied Powers agreed to create a new body to replace the League. This body was to be the United Nations. Many League bodies, such as the International Labour Organisation, continued to function and eventually became affiliated with the UN. The League’s assets of \$22,000,000 were then assigned to the U.N.

The structure of the United Nations was intended to make it more effective than the League. The principal Allies in the Second World War (UK, USSR, France, U.S., and China) became permanent members of the UN Security Council, giving the new ‘Great Powers’ significant international influence, mirroring the League Council. The decisions of the UN Security Council are binding on all members of the UN; however, unanimous decisions are not required, unlike the League Council. Permanent members of the UN Security Council were given a shield to protect their vital interests, which has prevented the UN acting decisively in many cases. Similarly, the UN does not have its own standing armed forces, but the UN has been more successful than the League in calling for its members to contribute to armed interventions, such as the Korean War, and peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia. However, the UN has in some cases been

Check Your Progress

4. What was the primary function of the League of Nations?
5. What was the Mandate System of the League of Nations?
6. What were the four pillars the League of Nations rested on?
7. Which event can be considered the most severe blow to the League?

forced to rely on economic sanctions. The UN has also been more successful than the League in attracting members from the nations of the world, making it more representative.

4.3 SYSTEM OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY UNDER THE LEAGUE

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The Covenant of the League provided for a system of collective security. Its members were required to give an undertaking to respect and preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all the members of the League. In the event of any aggression or threat of danger of aggression, the Council was supposed to advise upon the means by which the above obligation could be fulfilled. It was declared that any war or threat of war, whether directly affecting any member of the League or not, was a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League was required to take any action that might be considered effective to maintain peace. In case of any emergency, the Secretary-General was required to immediately call a meeting of the Council on the request of any member of the League. It was the right of every member of the League to bring to notice of the Council or the Assembly any situation which jeopardised international peace or good understanding between nations upon which peace depended.

The members of the League decided among themselves that in the event of any dispute leading to a rupture, they would submit the same either to arbitration or judicial settlement or inquiry by the Council. They also agreed among themselves that they would in no case resort to war until three months after the award by the arbitrators, or the judicial decision, or the report by the Council. The award of the arbitrators, or the judicial decision was to be made within six months after the submission of the dispute. Apart from this, it was also consented that certain types of disputes were to be referred to PCIJ or to any Tribunal agreed upon by the parties to the dispute or stipulated in any convention existing between them. Then members of the League agreed to carry out in good faith any award or decision that might be given. They were not to resort to war against a member of the League which was in conformity with the award or decision. In the event of failure to carry out such an award or decision, the Council was required to suggest steps to be taken to give effect to the same. In case of any dispute between the members of the League likely to lead to a rupture, the members were supposed to submit the same to the Council. The Council was entrusted with the job of settling the disputes.

If the Council was successful, it was supposed to publish the terms of the settlement. If it was unsuccessful, it was required to issue a report containing the facts of the case and its recommendations. If any member of the League resorted to war ignoring the provisions of the Covenant, it was *ipso facto* deemed to have committed an act of war against all the members of the League and they were required to subject that member State to the severance of all trade or financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a member of the League or not. It was the duty of the Council in such a case to suggest to the several governments concerned what effective military, navy or air force they were supposed to contribute to the armed forces to be used.

The League members further consented that they would mutually support one another to minimize the loss as a result of financial and economic measures taken.

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They also agreed mutually to support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of the members by the Covenant-breaking State. They also undertook to take necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of those members of the League who were cooperating to protect the Covenant of the League. Any member of the League who violated the Covenant was to be declared to be no longer a member of the League by the vote of the Council.

In the event of disputes between a member of the League and a State which was not a member, the non-member State was to be called to accept the obligations of the membership of the League for the purpose of such a dispute. Acceptance of invitation required the Council to institute at once an inquiry into the circumstances of the dispute and recommend such action as might seem to be most effectual under the situations. In case the non-member State declined to accept the invitation, all the members of the League were required to take collective action against such a State. If both the parties to the dispute rejected the invitation, the Council was to take such measures and make such recommendations as could prevent hostilities and result in the settlement of the dispute.

4.3.1 Efforts made to Strengthen the System of Collective Security

Five major efforts were made to strengthen the system of collective security under the League of Nations. These were as follows:

- The first effort was when the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance was approved by the League Assembly in 1923. It stated that any aggressive war was an international crime and the contracting parties pledged themselves not to be guilty of its commission. It was provided that within four days of the outbreak of war, the Council of the League would name the aggressor and indicate measures of financial or military help to be given to the victim of aggression.
- The second effort was made by the Geneva Protocol of 1924. According to its preamble, 'a war of aggression constitutes a violation of the solidarity of the members of the international community and an international crime.' The members who signed the Protocol agreed 'in no case to resort to war' except in resistance to aggression or with the consent of the Council or the Assembly of the League of Nations. They also decided to 'abstain from any act which might constitute a threat of aggression against a foreign State.' An aggressor State was defined as one which went for war without following a procedure for the peaceful settlement of the disputes.
- The third effort was made by the signing of a Pact in 1925 at Locarno in Switzerland. Under the Locarno Pact, seven treaties were signed. There was a treaty of mutual guarantee of Franco-German and Belgo-German between Germany, France, Belgium, Britain and Italy. There were arbitration conventions between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia. There were also Franco-Polish and Franco-Czechoslovak treaties for mutual assistance in the event of aggression by Germany. The major treaty was referred to the western frontiers of Germany with France and Belgium and secured as well. Germany, France and Belgium agreed that they would in no case attack or invade each other or resort to war against each other. They resolved to settle by peaceful means 'all questions of every kind which may arise between them and which may not be possible to settle by normal methods of diplomacy.'

- The process of pacification by pacts was carried one stage further when the Kellogg-Briand Pact or the Pact of Paris or Treaty for the Renunciation of War was signed in 1928 at Paris. It was named after the French Minister Briand and US Secretary of state Kellogg. According to the Pact, the signatories declared that they condemned recourse to war for solving international disputes and denounced it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another. They also agreed that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts which might arise among them shall never be sought except by peaceful means. The Pact made no mention of any sanctions. It emphasised no positive obligations to seek a peaceful settlement. It did not outlaw war. It merely condemned and denounced war. This agreement among fifteen States was the high-water mark of interwar pacifism. Almost every other State in the world hastened to adhere to it. In all, sixty-five States signed it.
- The fifth effort was made by the General Act of 1928. Using the different Locarno Treaties as models, a committee of the Assembly of League drafted a series of agreements to serve as a standard multilateral system of conciliation for all disputes of arbitration in those disputes. The Assembly collected them into a General Act and opened it for accession by States. By 1935, twenty-two States had acceded to the Act which was considered to be the most important single effort of the League of Nations to establish a system of collective security.

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4.4 BREAKDOWN OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

Experience showed that the provision of the system of collective security within the League of Nations was not an effective one. Let us analyse the workings of this system with the help of examples given below:

- 1. Dispute between Poland and Russia:** The Republic of Poland was dissatisfied with its eastern frontier. As a result, Poland invaded Russia in 1919, but Poland suffered a defeat. The Russians invaded Poland and reached as far as Warsaw. The Poles also hit back and defeated the Russians in the Battle of Vistula in 1920 and drove them out of their country. Poland wanted to acquire the city of Vilna which had been marked as the capital of the new state of Lithuania. In 1920, the Poles captured Vilna and retained it despite the protest of the League of Nations. The matter was referred to a Council of Great Powers in Paris and that body approved of the retention of Vilna by Poland. By this action, statesmen like Clemenceau and Lloyd George proved that they had no faith in the League and only had belief in old diplomacy.
- 2. Dispute between Sweden and Finland:** A dispute ensued between Sweden and Finland on the question of Aaland Islands. The inhabitants of these Islands were of Swedish origin and spoke Swedish language though they were under Finland. They began to agitate for a merger with Sweden. The Swedish government stayed away from the movement but her people had sympathy with the agitators. The Government of Finland sent her troops and arrested the agitators. The people of Sweden demanded that their government help the people of Aaland Islands. Thus, there was every possibility of a war between the two countries and it was brought into the notice of the League of Nations. A meeting of the Council was held in London and both the parties presented their case. The Council gave its decision in June 1921 according to which Finland was given sovereignty over

Check Your Progress

8. What did the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance approved in 1923 state?
9. What did the Treaty for the Renunciation of War state?

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- the Islands but the people of those islands were guaranteed autonomy and protection of their political rights. In 1922, an International Convention guaranteed the neutrality of the islands.
- 3. Conflict between Italy and Greece:** In 1923, some Italian commissioners were murdered by bandits on Greek territory near the Albanian frontier. The contention of the Government of Greece was that the murderers were Albanians and the counter-charge of the Albanian Government was that they were Greeks. Since the crime was committed on the Greek territory, Italy held Greece responsible for this. Italy bombarded and seized the Island of Corfu. Greece appealed to the League of Nations but Italy refused to accept the mediation of the League, and as a result, the League took no action against Italy. Italy agreed to refer the matter to the Council of Ambassadors which ordered Greece to pay indemnity to Italy. This incident undermined the prestige of the League of Nations.
 - 4. Conflict between Greece and Bulgaria:** A border dispute started between the soldiers of Greece and Bulgaria in 1925. By way of reprisals, a Greek army marched into Bulgaria. As a result, Bulgaria appealed to the League. The Council met and asked the Greek Government to withdraw its troops. The Governments of France, Britain and Italy were directed to send military officers to the spot to see what was happening. This had the desired result. The Greek forces were withdrawn and Greece was asked to pay compensation to Bulgaria for the violation of her territory on a scale to be fixed by a commission of the League. Thus, the League was successful in this case which added to her prestige.
 - 5. The Mosul Boundary Dispute:** The frontier separating Turkey and Iraq could not be settled amicably as both Britain and Turkey claimed Mosul Vilayet which was rich in oil deposits. The situation became grave. An urgent meeting of the Council was called at Brussels. A provisional boundary line was drawn pending the final settlement. Turkey was required to maintain the border north of the Brussels line and Britain to the south of that line. A neutral commission of inquiry heard the parties and submitted its report to the Council in September 1925. The report established the sovereignty of Turkey over the Vilayet and explained that neither Britain nor Iraq had a right to claim it by conquest. However, the dispute was not resolved. Eventually, the Council gave its final decision on the issue by which the Brussels line was made the permanent boundary line between Turkey and Iraq. The decision was accepted by Britain and Iraq but not by Turkey. In 1926, another compromise was arrived at which a small part of the Vilayet was ceded to Turkey. As the boundary line was found to be defective, some royalties from the Mosul oilfields were given to Turkey.
 - 6. Conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay:** An armed clash occurred between Bolivia and Paraguay in December 1928. The issue was taken up by the Council and the parties were requested to act in accordance with the pledges given to them as members of the League. As both the states agreed to accept the good offers of the Pan-American Conference on Arbitration and Conciliation, the immediate quarrel between them was resolved, though the underlying causes of the dispute persisted. There was trouble again in May 1928, but as a result of a meeting at Washington, hostilities were suspended. When fresh trouble arose in 1932, all efforts to stop the war failed. A Commission of Enquiry appointed by the League of Nations reported that the struggle which was going on was inhuman and criminal. As all the endeavours to stop the war failed, it was decided to put an embargo on arms shipment to Bolivia and Paraguay. Some states cooperated with the League while others did not. Paraguay had the upper hand and refused

to compromise. She threatened to resign her membership of the League. The result was that the League did not take any further interest in the issue.

7. Manchurian and Ethiopian Crises: Case Study

(a) Manchurian Crisis

Japan had her eye on Manchuria for a long time and decided to invade it in 1931. After the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the Government of United States introduced tariffs to protect her industry from Japanese competition. The imposition of tariffs had a huge impact on Japanese industry and led to increased unemployment. As the economic situation got worse, army leaders suggested to the government that the only way in which Japan could solve its economic problems and show that it was still a strong nation was through expansion. The Japanese already possessed colonies in Asia and were highly influential in several areas, particularly in a Chinese province called Manchuria. China at that time was passing through a great crisis. Manchuria was the source of much of Japan's imported raw materials such as coal and iron ore. On the night of 18-19 September 1931, a Japanese patrol claimed to have discovered a detachment of Chinese soldiers near Mukden trying to blow up the South Manchurian Railway.

The Mukden Incident and the Invasion of Manchuria

The Japanese Imperial Army had the authorization of the Japanese government to launch retaliatory actions in the event of Chinese attack on any Japanese property in the area. Consequently, Japanese troops responded to the explosion at Mukden by attacking the nearby Chinese garrison and about 10,000 Chinese soldiers in Mukden were either disarmed or dispersed. Within four days, all the Chinese towns within the radius of 200 miles north of Mukden were occupied by the Japanese.

The incident was a masterstroke by Japanese officers who were resolute to begin the process of territorial expansion. The explosion at Mukden was very probably staged by Japanese troops to enable a retaliatory attack. Following the seizure of Mukden, Japanese troops began occupying other towns and cities in the area. By November 1931, the whole of Manchuria was under the control of the Japanese army.



Fig 4.5 Sino-Japanese Crisis or Manchurian Crisis 1931

Source: <http://www.ohwy.com/history%20pictures/maps/manchuria.jpg>

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Chinese Response to the Invasion of Manchuria

At the time of the Mukden Incident, the policy of Chinese Republican Government was one of non-resistance towards Japanese troops in that area. This was mainly because they wanted to focus their efforts on defeating communism in China and securing a strong and stable government. As a consequence, the small Japanese force was able to take control of much of Manchuria very easily, despite the presence of massive Chinese troops in the area.

In an effort to try and retain control of Manchuria, the Chinese Government appealed to the League of Nations. However, the Japanese delegate declared that his government had no intention of annexing Manchuria and that the Japanese troops would be withdrawn as soon as the lives and property of the Japanese in Manchuria were secure. The League of Nations passed a resolution saying that Japanese troops should withdraw and established a commission which would investigate the claims of both sides. As the League hesitated to take action against Japan, her attitude became all the more stiff. She resented the interference of other powers in Manchuria. The Japanese rejected the League of Nations resolution and insisted on direct negotiations with the Chinese Government. The League appointed the Lytton Commission to investigate on the spot 'any circumstances which affecting international relations, threaten to disturb peace between China and Japan.' The Commission submitted its report in November 1932 and recommended direct negotiations between China and Japan. The report avoided to name Japan as the aggressor. These negotiations failed and the Japanese proceeded, now against some resistance, to take control of the rest of Manchuria. Japan then proceeded to launch an attack on the Chinese city of Shanghai which was outside of the area of Japanese economic control.

The League of Nations response to the Manchurian Crisis

The initial response of the League of Nations was to follow its set process for arbitration. They listened to the complaints of the Chinese as well as the Japanese position and then the Council, without the representatives of China and Japan, discussed the issue before coming out with a Resolution. In this case, the resolution called for Japanese withdrawal from Manchuria whilst a Commission investigated the issue. The Japanese overlooked the wishes of the League of Nations and continued to expand even as negotiations and diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis continued.

When the commission produced its report on Manchuria, it stated that Japan should leave Manchuria. When the Special Assembly of the League of Nations was held and Lytton Report was being discussed, the Japanese delegation simply walked out of the League of Nations, and gave a notice of her withdrawal from the League.

According to the League of Nations rules, the failure of Japan to comply with a resolution should have been followed by the imposition of economic sanctions and / or collective military action to enforce the resolution. The League, in this case however, did neither. Countries could not agree on

what economic sanctions should be imposed and the major powers of Britain and France were unwilling to risk their armed forces in a conflict on the other side of the world. Moreover, such action may have placed British and French Colonies in the Far East at a risk of attack.

The failure of the League to take action against Japan was a great blow to the principle of collective security. It was bound to encourage persons like Hitler and Mussolini in their aggressive designs. The attitude of the League on the Manchurian question proved that even a slight danger of war was enough to scare away even its supporters. The action of the League killed any chance of disarmament and started the drift towards a world war.

(b) Ethiopian Crisis

The population of Italy in the early 1930s was growing steadily. The Italian leader, Benito Mussolini, was keen to expand the Italian empire. There were several causes for the desire for expansion. Firstly, an expanded empire would facilitate the much needed raw materials needed to help Italian Industry and military expansion. Secondly, an increased empire would send out a clear message of strength and increase national prestige. Thirdly, expansion would provide land for the expanding population to live in.

Italy already held a number of colonies in Africa. Eritrea and Libya were Italian colonies. Expansion of the empire would almost certainly be a violation of international agreements: Italy had signed the Kellogg's-Briand Pact which condemned warfare and as a member of the League of Nations was forbidden to act aggressively against another member nation.

The Crisis

By 1935, Mussolini was enthusiastic to go to war. He wanted glory and now needed additional raw materials for Italian Industry. Ethiopia had raw materials and was conveniently located next to Eritrea, which was an Italian colony. Encouraged by the failure of the League of Nations on the question of Manchuria and reports that neither France nor Britain was willing to go to war in defense of Ethiopia, he began preparations for an invasion.

The Wal Wal Incident

In 1930, the Italians built a fort at Wal Wal, inside the Ethiopian border. Despite this being in breach of the agreement of friendship with the Ethiopian government, both sides maintained that there was no aggression between the nations. Over the coming years, the Italians built up their military presence in the area.

On 22 November 1934, an Ethiopian force of some 1000 men arrived at the fort at Wal Wal and insisted that the fort be handed over to them. However, the garrison commander declined. The risk of armed conflict seemed to die down then and Anglo-Ethiopian border commission arrived at the fort the following day. Tensions however remained. On December 5 and 6 there was an encounter between the Ethiopian and Italian forces, both sides blaming the other for the fighting.

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Fig 4.6 Map Showing Ethiopia (Abyssinia)

Source: Wikipedia

Reactions to the Wal Wal Incident

Both sides demanded apologies and protested the actions of the other. The Emperor of Ethiopia then took the dispute to the League of Nations. The contention forwarded by the Italian delegate was that the Wal Wal incident was not likely to affect the peaceful relations between the two countries. Therefore, the League decided that no penalties should be applied to either party at this time. The main reason for this is perhaps because of ongoing diplomacy behind the scenes. The French and British were eager to maintain good relations with Italy. After the Ethiopian appeal to the League, they had sent their respective foreign Ministers to Rome to meet with Mussolini. At the meeting, agreements were made that cemented Italian authority in Tunisia and granted Italy lands in French Somalia. This was done in the hope of buying Mussolini's friendship whilst also easing the tension over Wal Wal and Ethiopia.

However, the hoped peace did not last long. Soon the Ethiopian army killed five Italian soldiers near the base at Wal Wal. Mussolini's response was to mobilise two divisions in the area and preparations began to send a large military force to the area. Ethiopia asked the League of Nations to arbitrate over the issue and noted the large number of Italian forces arriving in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Italy agreed to a neutral area along the border but continued to send more forces to the region. Ethiopia again wanted the help of League of Nations to solve the dispute.

Britain sent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, to try and negotiate a deal with Mussolini that would prevent war. Mussolini though was not in any mood to yield. An arms embargo was placed on both Italy and Ethiopia, but Britain also withdrew the Royal Navy from the Mediterranean which effectively enabled Italian ships to supply her armies preparing for war. There were a lot of discussions at the League of Nations and negotiations that might placate Mussolini. However, the League decided that neither side was to blame for the incident at Wal Wal. Sanctions and the arms restrictions were now reduced.

Invasion of Ethiopia

On 3 October 1935, Italian troops invaded Ethiopia from Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. This event sparked the beginning of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. The League of Nations stated that Italy were the aggressors and imposed limited sanctions. However, they failed to place sanctions on oil which was needed to

enable the continuation of war. Sanctions were not increased or universally applied even after it emerged that Italian forces were making use of chemical weapons against civilians. Instead of imposing sanctions, the British and French foreign ministers came up with the Hoare-Laval Pact. This pact would end the war but would grant Italy large areas of Ethiopia. When news of the plan was revealed to the press there was a public outcry and both men resigned and it was not implemented. The war continued until May 1936, when Ethiopia became part of the Italian Empire.

The League failed to save Ethiopia. It is contended that if all the countries had joined hands in the matter of enforcement of economic sanctions against Italy, the latter might have been brought to knees. The conquest of Ethiopia by Italy was a flagrant violation of the system of collective security established by the League of Nations. The League was completely paralyzed. Adolf Hitler could safely draw the conclusion that no action would be taken against him if he followed a similar policy. It was under these circumstances that Hitler annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia and the League took no action against him. As a result the Second World War started in which practically all the powers of the world were involved at one stage or the other. The system of collective security had failed miserably.

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4.4.1 Causes of the Failure of the System of Collective Security

The failure of the system of collective security has been attributed to several factors. The interests of various states clashed with one another. It was a type of coalition building strategy in which a group of countries do not engage in aggressive acts against one another and defend one another in the event of such an attack. The dependency of League on its members, including the lack of its own military force, and the absence of three main powers were the reasons why the league was unable to uphold collective security. The extent to which attempts failed can explicitly be extracted from the harsh outcomes.

The constitution of the League contained provisions for settlement of disputes between states and even for appealing to members to use force to protect the Covenants of the League. The problem, however, was that the League was much too dependent on the willingness of the members to cooperate and outlaw the war and the given aggressor. This shortcoming was witnessed in the League's inability to prevent the Japanese annexation of Manchuria in 1931 and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. These two crises highlighted the weakness of the League. The League was reliant on the great powers to stop the aggression. In 1931, the great depression was occurring and thus Britain and France were both unwilling to initiate a major military operation involving the invasion of Manchuria. Moreover, both Britain and France did not intervene in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Britain could have put her naval superiority to use and stop Italian soldiers in the Mediterranean. However, Britain decided to just set moderate sanctions with the League. This did not seriously affect Italy. In addition, the League's failure to uphold collective security was further more shown in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. A lack of a physical force once again hindered League from impacting and halting the invasion. Their manner of dealing with the Manchurian crisis and the invasion of Ethiopia revealed that other countries could do as they please. For instance, Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhineland or his annexations of Austria were both violations of the Treaty of Versailles. Not only did the League tolerate such invasions, but also gave Hitler the Sudetenland at the Munich Conference, thereby making the concept of collective security a failure.

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A further reason why the League failed to deliver was because of the absence of three major powers in 1920, which were Germany, America and the Soviet Union. The League of Nations imposed economic sanctions on Japan after they invaded Manchuria to condemn their act. However, such actions proved fruitless, as Japan's main economic trader was the United States of America, who was not a part of the League and therefore did not have to comply with the sanctions imposed upon Japan. This reveals that the lack of cooperation of the big three mentioned above was a significant factor that hindered the concept of collective security to succeed. In 1931, amid the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, both France and Britain were unwilling to launch a military offensive. The United States, the only country with bases in the Pacific, was not even part of the League. This was a problem as the U.S. was a strong and powerful country that could have blocked a Japanese invasion. In addition, cooperation with Germany might have prevented an Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The reason behind this was that Italy was confident that she would have German backing and therefore was not hesitant to invade. If Germany would have been the member of the League, it might have decreased Italian confidence, making Mussolini reluctant to invade. In retrospect, it looked as if a German membership could have prevented German annexation of Austria because she would have been tied to the rules of the League.

4.5 SUMMING UP

- On witnessing the destructive consequences of the First World War, the Western politicians felt the need of an international agency which might maintain world peace, stop wars, settle disputes among nations and maintain international security. Thus, the League of Nations was created at the initiative of US President Woodrow Wilson.
- The colonies of Germany, the Ottoman Empire and other defeated nations were divided among the victors according to the Mandate System, According to the Mandate System, every country had to submit annual report to the League about the economic and social condition of the people of their colonies. This system proved to be an effective measure to prevent the exploitation of the colonies.
- After some initial teething troubles, the League seemed to be functioning successfully during the 1920s; not only did it solve a number of minor international disputes, it also achieved valuable economic and social work.
- However, during the 1930s, the authority of the League was challenged several times, first by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and later by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. After 1935, respect for the League declined and its weaknesses became more apparent. After 1939, it did not meet again and was dissolved in 1946. The League was a complete failure, at least as far as preventing the war was concerned.
- The reason for the failure of the League of Nations to follow up on collective security between 1919 and 1939 included many more reasons than described.
- However, the League's dependency on its members to provide a military force was crucial to understanding the reasons for its failure. Britain and France had the largest military line up of the League's members and would more or less make the League's physical force. The lack of cooperation of these two western democracies revealed the weakness of the League, exposing its vulnerability to the aggressor.

Check Your Progress

10. What incident was used by Japan as an excuse to invade Manchuria?
11. Which two events in the 1930s highlighted the weakness of the League of Nations?
12. When did the Second Italo-Ethiopian War begin?

- Japan had her way with Manchuria and Italy's Mussolini was able to complete his conquest of Ethiopia in 1935. This was because Ethiopia had only sanctions as its barrier because Britain and France were not willing to launch a military offensive, and other nations such as America, Germany, and the Soviet Union were not even members of the League.
- The extent to which collective security failed in the given dates is the opposite of ambiguous. Due to its failure, all the mentioned invasions proceeded without even the slightest barrier, except lenient sanctions.

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4.6 KEY TERMS

- **Allied Powers:** The Allied powers were France, Russia, Britain and Italy and other belligerent nations fighting against the Central Powers in the First World War.
- **Central Powers:** They were a group of nations fighting against the Allied Powers during the First World War; its members included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and their territories.
- **Covenant:** It is a formal agreement of contract.
- **Ipso facto:** It is a Latin phrase, directly translated as 'by the fact itself,' which means that a certain phenomenon is a direct consequence, a resultant effect, of the action in question, instead of being brought about by a previous action.
- **Treaty of Versailles:** This treaty ended the First World War and created the League of Nations.

4.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The Paris Peace Conference accepted the proposal to create the League of Nations on 25 January 1919. The Covenant of the League of Nations was drafted by a special commission, and the League was established by Part I of the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed on 28 June 1919.
2. The League had five principal organs: a Secretariat, a Council, an Assembly, a Permanent Court of International Justice and an International Labour Organization.
3. The League wanted to regulate the drugs trade and established the Permanent Central Opium Board to supervise the statistical control system introduced by the second International Opium Convention that mediated the production, manufacture, trade and retail of opium and its by-products.
4. The primary function of the League was to maintain peace amongst its member nations and also to maintain it in the world at large.
5. According to the Mandate System, conquered territories of the central powers were to be put under the guardianship of the League of Nations and certain powers were to be put in charge of those territories to carry on their administration.
6. The League rested on four pillars, viz., reduction of armaments, guarantees against aggression, peaceful settlement of disputes and a provision for peaceful change.
7. The most serious blow to the League was the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935. The League condemned Italy and introduced economic sanctions.

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which, however, did not include a ban on exports of oil, coal and steel to Italy. So half-hearted were the sanctions that Italy was able to complete the conquest of Abyssinia without too much inconvenience in May 1936.

8. The Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance stated that any aggressive war was an international crime and the contracting parties pledged themselves not to be guilty of its commission.
9. The Treaty for the Renunciation of War declared that they condemned recourse to war for solving international disputes and denounced it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.
10. On the night of 18-19 September 1931, a Japanese patrol claimed to have discovered a detachment of Chinese soldiers near Mukden trying to blow up the South Manchurian Railway. The Japanese Imperial Army had the authorization of the Japanese government to launch retaliatory actions in the event of Chinese attack on any Japanese property in the area. Consequently, Japanese troops responded to the explosion at Mukden by attacking the nearby Chinese garrison and about 10,000 Chinese soldiers in Mukden were either disarmed or dispersed.
11. The League's inability to prevent the Japanese annexation of Manchuria in 1931 and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 highlighted the weakness of the League.
12. On 3 October 1935, Italian troops invaded Ethiopia from Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. This event sparked the beginning of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War.

4.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the structure of the League of Nations.
2. Write a short note on the Permanent Court of International Justice within the League of Nations.
3. What were the three types of mandates within the Mandate System of the League of Nations?
4. What was the notion of collective security within the League of Nations?
5. What was the Mosul Boundary dispute?
6. Write a short note on the invasion of Manchuria.
7. Write notes on:
 - (a) International Labour organization
 - (a) League Council
 - (b) The Permanent Court of International Justice

Long-Answer Questions

1. What were the objectives of the League of Nations? How far was it successful in achieving the objectives for which it was established?
2. What were the functions of the League of Nations?
3. 'The League of Nations was bound to fail.' Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

4. Briefly discuss the Mandate System of the League of Nations.
5. What was the system of Collective Security? Explain reasons for the breakdown of this system.
6. Account for the failure of Collective Security with special reference to Manchurian and Ethiopian Crises.

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4.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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Endnote

1. The list of rules by which the League was supposed to operate.

UNIT 5 THE SECOND WORLD WAR

STRUCTURE

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Causes of the Second World War
 - 5.2.1 Violation of Versailles and Locarno Treaties
 - 5.2.2 Nazi Preparation for War
 - 5.2.3 Stresa Front
 - 5.2.4 Rome-Berlin Axis
 - 5.2.5 The Spanish Civil War
 - 5.2.6 Annexation of Austria
 - 5.2.7 Dismemberment of Czechoslovakia
 - 5.2.8 Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact
 - 5.2.9 German Invasion of Poland: Outbreak of the Second World War
- 5.3 Course and Consequences of the Second World War
- 5.4 Historical Debate on the Second World War
- 5.5 Summing Up
- 5.6 Key Terms
- 5.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.8 Questions and Exercises
- 5.9 References and Suggested Readings

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5.0 INTRODUCTION

The First World War caused a lot of bloodshed on European soil and it was thought that it was 'a war to end all wars'. It was believed that this war would be followed by an era of peace, freedom, democracy and a better life for everyone. The developments during the next twenty years, however, belied these hopes. The Second World War from 1939 to 1945, was fought between the Allied powers of Britain, United States and the Soviet Union against the axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan, along with their respective allies and colonies. More than sixty million people, majority of them civilians, were killed in the war, making it the deadliest conflict in human history. Like the First World War, the Second World War was a total war.

The total cost of war has been estimated to be in many hundreds of billions of dollars. The statistics of destruction cannot really express the terrible catastrophe that it caused. Many historians consider that the First World War, which started in 1914, never ended and continued till 1945. Thus, they regard the period of wars from 1914 to 1945 as the Thirty Years War.

The Second World War in Europe began on 1 September 1939 with the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany, and concluded on 2 September 1945, with the official surrender of the last axis nation, Japan. However, in Asia, the war commenced earlier with Japanese involvement in China, and in Europe, the war ended earlier with the unconditional surrender of Germany on 8 May 1945.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse the causes of the Second World War
- Examine the course of the Second World War
- Discuss the consequences of the Second World War
- Assess the historical debate on the Second World War

5.2 CAUSES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

According to Georg Franz Willing, ‘one can only understand the origin, progress, and results of the Second World War if one considers both world wars as constituting one homogeneous, inwardly coherent era.’¹ The immediate roots of the Second World War lie in the termination of the First World War by the treaties signed at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 which you learned about in Unit 3. The causes of Second World War are easier to ascertain than those of the First World War. It was brought about by the man to whom the Germans in 1933 had entrusted their destiny. Some historians regard the Second World War as ‘Hitler’s War’. However, the deeper causes of war have to be sought in the industrialisation of our way of life, and in the capitalistic imperialism of the second half of the 19th century. The turmoil in economy and society caused by new technology, modern means of communication and transport, and the rapid growth of the European population led to the development of the modern capitalist economy. Let us now discuss the background of the Second World War.

5.2.1 Violation of Versailles and Locarno Treaties

At the end of the First World War, the economic condition of Germany was so weak that only a small part of the First World War reparations was paid in hard currency. However, even the payment of this small percentage of the original reparations (132 billion gold marks) was a considerable load on the German economy. Even though the causes of the destructive post-war hyper inflation in Germany are multifaceted and unclear, Germans blamed the near-collapse of their economy on the much maligned Treaty of Versailles. Some economists projected that the reparations accounted for as much as one-third of the hyper-inflation.

In March 1921, French and Belgian troops captured Duisburg, which according to the Treaty of Versailles, formed part of the demilitarised Rhineland. They also occupied the remaining Ruhr area in January 1923 as revenge after Germany failed to fulfill reparation payments stipulated by the Versailles Treaty. The German government responded with ‘passive resistance’, which meant that coal miners and railway workers declined to abide by any instructions of the occupation forces. Production and transportation came to a standstill, but the financial consequences contributing to German hyperinflation had completely ruined public finances in Germany. As a result, passive resistance was called off in late 1923. This allowed Germany to carry out currency reform and to negotiate the Dawes Plan, which led to the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops from the Ruhr Area in 1925.

In 1933, the leader of the Nazi Party **Adolf Hitler** rose to power in Germany based on a policy of virulent nationalism and racism and hatred towards minorities. The

Nazis were able to take advantage of the chaos facing the German economy in the 1920s as well as the humiliation most Germans felt in the aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles. The Nazis blamed the Jewish people living in Germany for all of Germany's ills, and Hitler promised to tear up the Treaty of Versailles if he came to power. Unfortunately, the German people believed him and voted the Nazis to power in 1933. After becoming the Chancellor of Germany, domestically, Hitler took steps to wipe out all opposition to him and his policies. This was most apparent in the event known as the 'The Night of the Long Knives'. The event was a purge that the Nazis undertook in June-July 1934 to murder all political opponents of Hitler and establish him as the supreme leader of the German people.

Internationally, Hitler began a policy of circumventing the Peace Treaties of the First World War. Hitler's policy was to conduct bilateral and not multilateral negotiations. Proposals in 1934 for an 'eastern Locarno' pact securing Germany's eastern frontiers foundered on German opposition and on Poland's insistence that its eastern borders should be covered by a western guarantee of her borders. The Locarno treaty was greatly undermined by the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance signed on 2 May 1935, which the German government claimed was a violation of its 'spirit'. Hitler officially rejected its Locarno undertakings by sending troops into the demilitarized Rhineland on 7 March 1936. The other Locarno powers never attempted to prevent these aggressions since they were yet unprepared for war and wanted to avoid the total war that everyone feared.

Some significant violations of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles by Germany are given below:

- Hitler destroyed the League of Nations Disarmament Conference in 1934 by demanding equality of arms with Britain and France. This violated the treaty because it had been established by the League with the objective of achieving disarmament. At first, Hitler broke the terms of the treaty by building up his army in secret, drilling volunteers with spades instead of rifles. Then, in 1935, he openly held a huge rearmament rally.
- In March 1935, Germany violated the Treaty of Versailles by launching compulsory military conscription in Germany and rebuilding the armed forces.
- Again, in March 1936, Germany violated the Versailles Treaty by reoccupying the demilitarised zone in the Rhineland.
- The Treaty of Versailles was violated yet again when in March 1938 Germany annexed Austria in the Anschluss.

Despite these blatant breaches of the Treaty of Versailles, the world powers essentially did nothing to stop Hitler.

5.2.2 Nazi Preparation for War

Almost all the political and economic studies of Germany before the Second World War agree on three points. These were: (i) that prior to 1939, Germany had succeeded in building a military machine whose comparative strength was massive; (ii) that virtually all of the increased production from the low level of depression was diverted into the construction of a huge war potential; (iii) that all the economic considerations were subordinated to the main mission of war preparation.² Thus, the German economy was directed towards war. The Germans certainly had the advantage of being the aggressor in 1939. They were the force which dictated when war broke out and as such had the

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distinct advantage of choosing to fight rather than being forced into war. This does not necessarily mean that the *Wehrmacht*, i.e., the United Armed Forces of Germany was fully prepared for war though.

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The German armed forces were divided into a number of sections. Mainly, these were the Luftwaffe, the Army, the Kriegsmarine and the SS. The Luftwaffe was a relatively modern air force. After the First World War, the development of the air force was severely reduced by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Following the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany in 1933, the air force was developed quite speedily as a matter of precedence. The Chief of Staff, Walter Wever, held that four engine bombers were an essential part of any attacking unit. These planes would bomb strategic targets in and around the battlefield and allow ground forces to make speedy advancements. Wever died in 1936; however, the German air force was able to position more than 2000 aircrafts on the western front alone in 1940, together with 898 bombers. This fighting force, unlike those of the Allies, had already gained wartime experience since they had fought in the Spanish Civil War.

The German army had 98 divisions in 1939 with 1.5 million trained men. Apart from this, there were 9 Panzer divisions developed in the late 1930s. Each of these divisions contained over 300 Panzer tanks and 6 supporting artillery batteries. Several of the German infantry divisions were motorised and were able to be deployed rapidly. German troops also had one of the world's first light machine guns, the MG34 and MG42. Likewise, German assault rifles, grenades and anti-tank weapons used by the army were very reliable and accurate.

The Kriegsmarine was the German navy. In 1939, the Kriegsmarine was not strong enough to seriously threaten the Allies. Naval development in Nazi Germany had expected a war not earlier than 1940, and it was hoped that it would not come until later than that. In 1939, the surface fleet had two battleships, two battle cruisers, twenty-two destroyers and nine cruisers and sixty submarines. Though these vessels were all modern, a program of expansion had been started.

The armed divisions of the SS fought along with the regular army. These troops were politically motivated, coming from the Nazi party ranks and having a great bond with the party leadership. The Waffen SS was the most feared component of the German army. It was well trained and equipped with the best that Germany could offer and utterly ruthless in completion of military tasks assigned to them. Thus, by the beginning of 1939, the Nazis had been able to rebuild the German military forces that had been devastated by the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles; Nazi Germany now had a formidable military force that threatened the security of other European countries and the world in general.



Fig 5.1 A German Panzer Division on the Move in Africa

Source: Wikipedia

5.2.3 Stresa Front

The Stresa Front was an agreement made in the Italian town of Stresa between France, Britain and the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini on 14 April 1935. Officially called the *Final Declaration of the Stresa Conference*, its objective was to reaffirm the Locarno Treaties and to announce that the independence of Austria ‘would continue to inspire their common policy’. The signatories also decided to oppose any future attempt by the Germans to change the Treaty of Versailles.

The Stresa Front was sparked off by Germany’s declaration of its intention to build up an air force, to expand its army which was much more than that prescribed by the Treaty of Versailles and to introduce conscription in March 1935. Mussolini believed that the signing of the Stresa Front would mean that Britain and France would not interfere in his invasion of Ethiopia.

In Stresa, Mussolini informally discussed with the British his plans to pursue the aim of making Italy ‘great, respected and feared’ through the invasion and conquest of Ethiopia and ultimately create an invincible Empire. However, he made sure not to discuss his plans of expansion within the limitations of the conference itself due to the likely risk of the Western powers, i.e, France and Britain, issuing a veto over it. Besides, Mussolini could not risk the conference being diverted from its main aim of reiterating Locarno and opposing any more violation of international agreements. He got his way with his plans for invading Ethiopia by keeping it a secret at the conference. He took the silence of the Western nations at the conference as acquiescence to his plan to conquer Ethiopia in October 1935. The importance of his invasion of Ethiopia cannot be underestimated as it was the turning point for Mussolini concerning his foreign standing as he drifted away from Britain and France, and into the camp of Hitler’s Germany.

The Stresa Front was a failure due to its vague terms and the fact that it was not clear how its aims should be enforced. It overlooked all references to Germany as Britain was adopting a dual policy and did not want to annoy Hitler. The assertion was provided by Mussolini, while Britain ‘kept the door open’ with Germany with the intention of obtaining agreements. Britain did not comprehend the advantage it had over the German Navy at the time and this advantage itself was lost with the signing of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.

A further reason for its failure was that Britain, France and Italy had no intention of invading Germany. The only real way in which German rearmament could be stopped was by a full scale invasion of Germany. However, the British government was reluctant to pursue this option as it perceived that anti-war feelings were extremely strong among the British public.

Thus, the Stresa Front proved unsuccessful. Within two months, Britain had signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, by which Germany was given the approval to increase the size of its navy. Britain had not discussed this with its Stresa partners and the front was seriously damaged. This showed that the signatories of the Stresa Front were pulling in different directions. The Front collapsed completely with Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia.

Mussolini had a desire of controlling Ethiopia for a long time. He was infuriated when Britain signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement without first informing him of its plans. He had held back on his invasion plans as Ethiopia bordered French and British Somaliland and he didn’t want to annoy his allies. Nevertheless, he felt that Britain had

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deceived him and this removed all doubts he had regarding the invasion. He also believed that Britain's actions ended the conditions that were agreed to in the Stresa Front.

On 6 January 1936, Mussolini informed German ambassador Ulrich von Hassell that he would not oppose Germany taking Austria as a satellite state provided that it maintained independence. On 22 February, he gave approval for Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland, stating that Italy would not honour the compulsion of the Locarno Treaty should Germany take such action.

5.2.4 Rome-Berlin Axis

The invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1935 permanently changed the geopolitical framework of Europe. After 1935, Mussolini was more and more inclined towards Hitler. Hitler also started to free Germany from the restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles and Anglo-French encirclement. The most significant step in the military features of the German plan was the signing of a treaty on October 25 and 26, 1936, between Germany and Italy, which laid the foundations of the famous Rome-Berlin Axis.

Before 1935, Italy had politically sided with Britain and France and was hostile to the German expansion in Austria. The situation, however, changed in 1935, when Italy got engaged in a war to conquer Ethiopia. Surprisingly, the British immediately showed great displeasure. For Italy, the alliance assured her support in case of a major war, and an end to her then political isolation. For Germany, it meant that her south boundary was protected. In that way, the alliance released German troops for use in other theaters of operation.



Fig 5.2 Hitler and Mussolini

Source: Wikipedia

On account of the Japanese conquest of Manchuria, Japan had been outlawed by the League of Nations. That created a lot of resentment in Japan against the Western powers. It was under these circumstances that Japan was attracted towards Nazi Germany. Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact on 25 November 1936 which was directed toward the activities of an organization known as the Communist International, or the Comintern. It was stated in the preamble that the government of the two countries recognised that the aim of the Communist International was directed at disrupting and violating the existing states with all means at its command. Both the

governments asserted that to tolerate the Comintern in the internal affairs of countries not only jeopardised their internal peace and social well-being but also threatened world peace at large. The Anti-Comintern pact echoed the anti-socialist ideology of both the Nazis as well as the Japanese Empire. The Pact provided that both the governments agreed mutually to inform each other concerning the activities of the Communist International, to consult each other concerning the measures to combat that activity and to execute those measures in close cooperation with each other. The Pact was to remain effective for five years and after that the two countries agreed to arrive at an understanding with each other concerning the new form in which cooperation was to take. A year later, Italy adhered to the Anti-Comintern Pact. This event actually extended the already-established Rome-Berlin Axis to Tokyo, and signalled the alliance of the three totalitarian powers.

The signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact by Italy on 6 November 1937, cemented the unity of Fascist ideology of Italy as well as Nazi ideology. This Pact, thus, highlighted the ideological union of Germany, Italy and Japan against the spread of communism. The United States was concerned by the signing of the alliance between Germany and her chief competitor in the Pacific – the Empire of Japan. Although the Anti-Comintern Pact was directed against the Soviet Union, the purpose of the alliance was much broader. By the end of 1937, the American President Roosevelt concluded that the Anti-Comintern Pact aimed at world conquest, while the Munich Pact convinced Roosevelt that there were no limits to Hitler's aims and that Nazi Germany could be stopped only by force. International events had created circumstances that made it increasingly improbable that a war between USA and Japan due to a flare-up in the Pacific could be limited to these two countries only. Threats or direct acts of aggression were the order of the day in Europe and Asia. Great Britain and France, due to their weak economic condition as a result of the Great Depression, remained inactive in the face of this threat, seeking to prevent armed conflict by a policy of appeasement of Hitler's Germany. As a reaction to foreign armament programs which seemed to threaten world peace, the American President called upon the Congress in 1938 to endorse a rearmament program at home.

Hitler, who was hardly known for his uncertainties of conscience or honesty, suddenly broke up the Anti-Comintern Pact and signed a surprise treaty with Soviet Union known as the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact in 1939. The treaty between Hitler, a known Communist basher, and the Soviet Union, shocked the world. For Japan, it was the worst diplomatic betrayal she had experienced in her modern history. Japan's chief apprehension was that if Soviet Union were relieved of anxiety in Europe, she would strengthen her East Asia front and would thus be a new and greater threat to Japan in the Pacific. The Soviet Union's reasons for signing the treaty was primarily defensive in nature; she did not trust the Western powers and believed that coming to some sort of understanding with Nazi Germany was the only way to secure security for her. Hitler's reasons for the treaty were opportunistic. By that time, Hitler had planned to make war in Europe, but knew that a two front war against Germany, i.e., against the Soviet Union in the East and France-Britain in the West, could be disastrous. Hitler always planned to invade the Soviet Union, but only after she secured her objectives in Western Europe.

On 22 May 1939, the German Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and his Italian equivalent, Count Galeazzo Ciano, signed the Pact of Friendship and Alliance, more commonly known as the 'Pact of Steel'. The Pact had a Preamble,

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seven Articles and a Secret Protocol. The world perceived this Pact to be an alliance set to dominate its neighbours. This totalitarian threat facing the world saw its final expression with the signing of the Tripartite Pact in 1940 between Germany, Italy, and Japan – known as the Axis powers. Superficially, the Axis powers seemed to be an alliance determined for world conquest. The Tripartite Pact relieved the anxieties of Japan over Soviet threats in the Pacific.

5.2.5 The Spanish Civil War

The first victim of joint German-Italian aggression in Europe was Spain. There was a civil war in Spain from 1936 to 1939 between those loyal to the newly established Republican government and those who favoured a conservative, militaristic system.

In 1931, there was downfall of Spanish monarchy and it was replaced by a democratically elected government which devoted to major social reforms. The newly elected government, called the Second Republic, was mainly composed of the middle class and endorsed the policies that attacked the traditional privileged structure of the Spanish society. Their reforms comprised the redistribution of large estate lands, the separation of church and state, and an antiwar, antimilitarist policy which aimed at undermining the power of the aristocracy, the Catholic Church, and the armed forces. The Right-wing in Spain (composed of the landed aristocracy, the Catholic Church, a large military faction, the monarchists, and the Spanish fascists, the Falange) opposed this attack on their authority, and united and rebelled against the government reforms. In the meantime, the government's reforms failed to satisfy the left-wing radicals or gain the support of workers, who increasingly engaged in protest movements against it. The Second Republic tried hard to stay in power by forming a number of weak coalition governments from the 1933 election until 1936.

In 1936, elections were held in Spain. The Popular Front (a coalition of Liberals, Socialists, and Communists and Anarchists) was formed to resist the fascist danger of the right-wing and emerged victorious in the elections. The new government started introducing reforms by restoring political liberties, meeting the demands of the peasants and improving the lot of miners and other industrial workers. A program of educational development was also taken up. The National Front (or Nationalists i.e. the rightist opponents of the Second Republic government) soon took up arms against the democratically elected left-wing government. The Falange and other right-wing parties and groups, (representing interests which had kept Spain a backward country) and their allies—the army generals—now made plans to overthrow the government of the Popular Front and establish fascist rule.

In July 1936, there were military uprisings all over Spain and General Francisco Franco led a revolt of Spanish troops in Spanish Morocco. By September, Hitler agreed to aid the National Front against the Spanish government. Franco and his troops returned to Spain. France and England decided to stay out of the war. The first International Brigade (a multinational group of volunteers largely organized by French groups and consisting of many Communists and American liberals) arrived to boost the strength of the defenders of the Second Spanish Republic. Three years of brutal war followed.

Check Your Progress

1. What event is known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'?
2. What was the Stresa Front?
3. What was the reaction of the German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact in Japan?



Fig 5.3 General Franco

Source: <http://i.telegraph.co.uk/telegraph/multimedia/archive/>

The effectiveness of political organisation and the fortunes of the Spanish Civil War were closely connected. The degree of political organisation influenced military performance, but, equally, military success or failure strengthened or weakened political coalitions. The National Front had the crucial advantage of assistance from Germany and Italy while the democratically elected Spanish Government received support from nobody. The Nationalists under Franco won major battles, consolidated their power, and appointed Franco as commander-in-chief and the head of the state. Germany and Italy quickly recognized the new Nationalist government and provided Franco's troops with planes, tanks, and other materiel. German military aid was of the highest quality. It comprised 16,000 military advisors and the latest aircraft. Italy provided even more assistance with 50,000 troops, 763 aircraft and 91 warships. Thus, the Civil War in Spain brought the two fascist countries of Europe, i.e., Germany and Italy together and they poured in vast quantities of arms and ammunition and aeroplanes as well as troops to support the Spanish fascists.

The rebels with foreign assistance captured many parts of the country and unleashed a reign of terror against the peasants and all those who were suspected of being supporters of the Republic. At the moment, Britain, France and USA followed a policy of non-intervention which meant that no aid could reach the Republicans while the German and Italian military aid to Franco continued unchecked. Unable to match the Nationalist forces, the Spanish republic sought outside support and turned to the Soviet Union for military support. However, there were many disadvantages. Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, was not in a mood to commit Russia fully in support of the Republican government in case he should leave Russia vulnerable to invasion by Germany. They thus provided only a limited number of weapons to the Republicans. The support of the Soviet Union increased internal divisions between the Communist and non-Communist supporters of the republic and the anti-Nationalists began to get fragmented into factions tied to differing political goals. The Republicans organised the defense of the Republic with the help of the citizens who formed their army and fought many fierce battles. In November 1936, they heroically defended Madrid, the Spanish capital, and prevented its seizure by Franco's troops.

The United States forbade exports of weapons to Spain in 1937. Germany conducted significant aerial bombings on vulnerable civilian targets and the Nationalists conquered the last Republican center in the north. In a series of attacks from March to June 1938, the Nationalists drove to the Mediterranean and cut the Republican territory in two. Late in 1938, Franco conducted a major offensive against the anti-Nationalist stronghold of Catalonia, and after months of fighting, Barcelona finally fell in January 1939.

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The Nationalist seizure of Catalonia sealed the Republic's defeat. Republican efforts for a negotiated peace failed in early 1939. By February 1939, most parts of Spain had fallen to the fascists and Franco's government was recognized by Great Britain and France and a little later by the United States. Finally, on 1 April 1939, the victorious Nationalists entered the final Republican stronghold of Madrid and received the unconditional surrender of the conquered Republican army in Madrid.

The Civil War in Spain aroused the conscience of the people of the world in a way no event previously. Anti-fascists from over fifty countries enrolled themselves as volunteers to fight in support of the Spanish Republic. The International Brigade with over 40,000 volunteers was formed and fought in Spain and thousands of them died on the Spanish soil. The volunteers even comprised anti-fascists of Germany and Italy. The battalion of the German volunteers was named after Thalman, the German Communist leader, who had been put in a concentration camp by the Nazis and later murdered. The American battalion was named after Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States who had outlawed slavery in the 19th century. The international solidarity with the Spanish Republic reflected the growing concern all over the world at the rise of fascism. The war in Spain also aroused the passions of many of the world's great writers and artists including the French author Andre Malraux, the Austrian writer Franz Borkenau, the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, the Anglo-American poet W.H. Auden, the English writers George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway, and so on. Many of them fought and died while fighting to save the Spanish Republic from the fascists including the Spanish poet Federico-Garcia Lorca.

The Spanish Civil War also shaped the whole course of international relations between 1936 and 1939 by causing many basic diplomatic trends to converge. The first of these trends was the growing understanding between Europe's two fascist leaders. During the 1920s, Italy was firmly aligned with France and Britain. However, a serious rift had emerged between them over the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The imposition of economic sanctions, however mild they may have been, against Mussolini's regime in response destroyed the ten year old system of collective security. Italy's involvement in the Spanish Civil War ensured that this alienation would be permanent and there will be no reconciliation with the Western powers. Adolf Hitler skillfully exploited Mussolini's resentment of France and Britain. Cooperation between Germany and Italy had far-reaching consequences. The most important of which was the removal of Italian restrictions on Hitler's policy of expansion in Central Europe. It also helped to condition Anglo-French response to the aggressive diplomacy of Hitler.

The war also had an important effect on the development of weapons and military strategy. The Civil War in Spain is often described as the 'Dress Rehearsal' of the Second World War in which the fascist countries tested their new weapons on the Spanish battlefields. Germany appeared to benefit most directly as the German experience derived from the war helped shape the Germany's *Blitzkrieg* tactics used against Poland in 1939 and France in 1940 which were extremely successful.

Finally, the Civil War in Spain demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations as an international organization. Although the Non-Intervention Committee was inspired by the League Covenant which insisted that member states should not interfere with internal affairs of each others, yet the committee itself was outside the immediate range of League's activity. The League was, in effect, cut off from international decision making by *ad hoc* bodies claiming to carry out its aims. The point was later taken by the United Nations Organization who took care to ensure that there was a more efficient

structure of contacts and referral between the different committees and the central institutions.³

5.2.6 Annexation of Austria

The restoration of German-Austria to the 'Great German Motherland' was one of the dearest aims of Hitler. Hitler himself was a German born in the Austria-Hungary Empire. Until the Nazi Party began to dominate Germany, a large number of Austrians did not desire political unity with Germany but rather wanted more of a commercial union. The signing of the treaties with Italy and Hungary, and the close friendship between Mussolini and the Austrian Chancellor Engelburt Dollfuss, had assured stability to Austria. With the rise of Hitler to power, however, the danger of Germany annexing Austria had surfaced. A Nazi movement had also started in Austria with the objective of bringing about an *Anschluss* (union with Germany). During the early 1930s, Dollfuss had established his dictatorship in Austria. He suppressed the socialist and Communist parties in Austria but was also opposed to union with Germany. He was supported by Mussolini, who at that time was not allied to Germany and was pursuing his own independent great power ambitions. In 1934, Dollfuss was assassinated and Austrian Nazis tried to seize power through a *putsch*, i.e., a violent coup. There were violent clashes between the Communists and the Nazis. The attempt at *putsch* failed. After that, the Austrian Nazis, supported by Germany, changed their tactics. Declarations were made by Germany that they had no designs against Austria. As a result, by 1936, a favourable climate was created in Austria for Germany. In July 1936, Hitler entered into a pact with Austria and the relations between Germany and Austria became cordial. Regardless of this, violent demonstrations were staged by the Nazis in Austria in 1938. They were inspired by the German Nazi government.

On 12 February 1938, Hitler summoned the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden to meet him. Here an interview took place which has been rightly described as 'agonizing'. Hitler threatened the Austrian Chancellor with the invasion of his country. He was forced to grant amnesty and full freedom of action to the Nazis in Austria. He was also forced to take Nazi leaders of Austria into his Cabinet. Thus, the Nazi leaders were appointed as Minister of Interior, Minister of Justice and Minister of Foreign Affairs. On 9 March 1938, in an effort to preserve the independence of Austria the Austrian chancellor announced that a plebiscite would be held on 13 March on the question of whether it was the will of the Austrian people that they should or should not continue to live in a free, German, independent, and united Austria. Hitler found the call for plebiscite in Austria unacceptable. On 11 March 1938, the Minister of Interior, on behalf of Hitler, presented to the Austrian Chancellor an ultimatum demanding his resignation and the postponement of the plebiscite. The Austrian chancellor was warned that in case he failed to do so, German troops would enter Austria. As a result, the plebiscite was cancelled and the Chancellor himself resigned. The Minister of Interior became the Chancellor and in that position he invited Hitler to save Austria from chaos.

Mussolini also moved his troops to the border with Austria since in the aftermath of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia and during the Spanish Civil War, Italy and Germany had become extremely close. Hitler, with Mussolini's support, marched his troops into Austria on 12 March 1938, and the Austrian Nazis captured power. Hitler announced that German troops had been sent to Austria 'to the help of these brother Germans in distress' who had been suffering under the misrule and oppression of the Austrian government. The *Anschluss* was achieved without any opposition from the Western

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powers, even though it was in total violation of the peace treaties. Bitter persecution quickly followed the annexation of Austria and all suspected of disloyalty to the new dispensation-especially the Jews - were either murdered or sent to concentration camps.

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Fig 5.4 Anschluss

Source: <http://homepage.mac.com/oldtownman/WW2Pics6/>

The Prime Minister of Britain, Neville Chamberlain, believed that the eastward expansion of Germany and the satisfaction of Germany’s ‘just territorial demands’ would help in safeguarding peace in Western Europe. Thus, once again, the Western powers were silent at the German annexation.

5.2.7 Dismemberment of Czechoslovakia

The state of Czechoslovakia had been created by the Peace Settlement of 1919-20. Czechoslovakia was one of the few states in Europe which had maintained democratic political system, while most other parts of eastern, southern and central Europe had fallen prey to the dictatorial or fascist rule. It was also the most industrialized country in Eastern Europe. However, it’s greatest weakness was that it had many minorities and the most important among them were the Sudeten Germans. A part of Czechoslovakia, called Sudetenland, had a large German population. Although the Germans in this region were nicely treated, they never forgot their separate German nationality in Czechoslovakia. They had been given seats in the Cabinet and were otherwise prosperous. With the rise of Hitler to power, the Sudeten Germans began to demand their absorption into Germany. Hitler backed their demands. Moreover, Sudetenland was important from the strategic point of view of Germany. In spite of all the concessions given by the Government of Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans were not prepared to be reconciled and the situation began to deteriorate. On 12 September 1938, Hitler demanded that the Sudeten Germans must be given the right of self-determination. He announced that if the right of self-determination was denied to them, they would be helped by Germany. The Soviet Union suggested to France, Britain and USA that collective action be taken against Germany in order to defend Czechoslovakia. However, the suggestion was not accepted.

Check Your Progress

4. In reference to the Spanish Civil War, what was the Popular Front?
5. List one significant impact of the Spanish Civil War on the people of the World.

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The situation became difficult for the Western powers. They were aware that if they decided to back Czechoslovakia, there was the certainty of war for which they were unprepared at that time and Czechoslovakia could not single handedly fight against Germany. Under these circumstances, the British PM Chamberlain decided to follow a policy of appeasement. Britain and France advised Czechoslovakia to agree to the immediate transfer to Germany of the areas inhabited by a population consisting of more than fifty percent Germans. Finding no other alternative, Czechoslovakia had to surrender. However, at this stage, Hitler put forward fresh demands which were considered unreasonable even by Chamberlain. The Western nations decided that if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia, the latter would be supported by Britain and war preparations were ordered. It was decided that Britain and Soviet Union would support France if she helped Czechoslovakia against Germany. Now the American President Roosevelt asked Hitler to settle the dispute amicably instead of going to war. However, Chamberlain was still unwilling to involve Britain in a war for the sake of Czechoslovakia. On 28 September 1938, he told Hitler, 'You can get the essentials without war and without delay.' Mussolini also suggested Hitler to amicably resolve the issue. On 29 September 1938, Chamberlain, the French Premier Daladier and Mussolini went to Munich, Germany, to meet Hitler. However, there was no representative of either Czechoslovakia or Soviet Union. After prolonged discussions, the Munich Pact was signed on 29 September 1938.

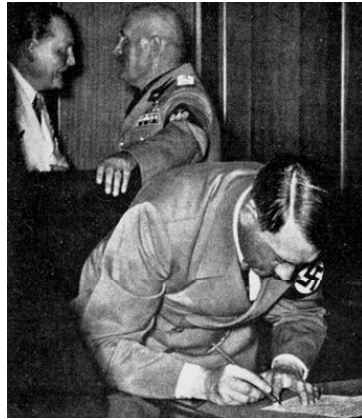


Fig 5.5 Signing of the Munich Pact

Source: <http://img.radio.cz/pictures/historie/>

According to the Pact, Germany was to get the whole of the territories inhabited by the Sudeten Germans and for that purpose, the evacuation by Czechoslovakia was to start on 1 October and completed by 10 October 1938. Critics of the Munich Pact have stated that 'the heart of the lamb of Czechoslovakia was butchered in the darkness in the midnight by a knife supplied by Chamberlain'. Winston Churchill described the situation after Munich as 'a disaster of the first magnitude'. According to Professor Schuman, 'The Munich Pact was the culmination of appeasement and warrant of death for the Western democracies.' At the meeting it was decided to hand over Czechoslovakia to Germany. Sudetenland was occupied by German troops and parts of Czech territory were also handed over to Poland and Hungary. In March 1939, Germany marched her troops into the remaining areas of Czechoslovakia and occupied them. On 16 March 1939, Hitler declared that 'henceforth Czechoslovakia would be known as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.' Hitler was 'invited' to become the Protector of Slovakia which he accepted and Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. Around the same time, Lithuania was forced to surrender the town of Memel on the borders of East Prussia to Germany.

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The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia had very unfortunate results. The Soviet Union was completely disgusted with the attitude of the Western democracies. A feeling prevailed in Soviet Union that the Western democracies were instigating Germany against her. As a result, Soviet Union could not rely upon her alliances with France in 1935. The system of collective security completely broke down. Romania and Yugoslavia began to realise the utter futility of their alliance with France. Chamberlain was shocked. On 23 March 1939, he admitted that probably the aim of Germany is world domination. There was a radical change in the policy of France and Britain. Instead of trying to appease Hitler, it was decided to resist him.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, who went on to become India's first Prime Minister, was in Europe at that time. He went to Czechoslovakia and 'watched at close quarters the difficult and intricate game of how to betray your friend.' He wrote an article titled *On the brink* a week before the signing of Munich Pact in which he said that Nazi aggression could have been stopped 'if England, France and Russia stood together'. But France preferred Hitler.

A variety of reasons had been attributed to explain the attitude of Western democracies at the time of crisis. One reason is that Hitler had assured Chamberlain that in case his demands on Czechoslovakia were conceded, he would follow a policy of peace. Another reason given is that there was a strong longing for peace in Western Europe where the people were still not prepared for a war with Germany. There was also a misconception in Britain and France that after getting whatever he wanted in Czechoslovakia, Hitler would direct his attention only towards Soviet Union and leave the others in peace.

5.2.8 Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact

As you have learned, shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union surprised the world by signing the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact on 23 August 1939. According to the Pact, the two countries agreed to take no military action against each other for the next ten years. With Europe on the verge of another major war, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin viewed the Pact as a way to keep his country on peaceful terms with Germany, while giving him time to build up the Soviet military. Adolf Hitler used the pact to ensure that Germany was able to invade Poland unopposed. The Pact also comprised a secret agreement in which the Soviets and Germans agreed on the terms to divide Eastern Europe. The German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact fell apart in June 1941, when Nazi forces invaded the Soviet Union.

On 15 March 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, breaking the agreement it had signed with Great Britain and France the year before in Munich. The invasion jolted the British and French leaders and convinced them that Adolf Hitler, the German chancellor, could not be trusted to honour his agreements and was likely to keep committing aggressions until stopped by force or a massive deterrent.

Earlier, Hitler had annexed Austria and had captured the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, his tanks rolled into the rest of Czechoslovakia. It appeared that he was determined to undo the international order set up by the Treaty of Versailles. It also seemed that Hitler was preparing to strike next against Poland. In order to stop him from doing so, France and Britain vowed to guarantee Poland's security and independence. Britain and France also stepped up diplomatic engagement with the Soviet Union, trying to draw it closer by trade and other agreements to make Hitler see

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he would also have to face Stalin if he invaded Poland. But Hitler was already aware of the fact that the Soviets would not support him if he tried to occupy Poland—an act that would extend the border of Germany right up to the Soviet Union. He also knew that France and the Soviets had entered into a defensive alliance several years earlier—a treaty that gave Stalin an additional reason to fight Germany if it ventured into Poland and triggered France’s pledge.

It was apparent during the tense spring and summer of 1939 that little, if anything could be taken for granted. In May, Germany and Italy signed a major treaty of alliance, and Hitler’s representatives had begun conducting important trade talks with the Soviets. Just two years prior, however, as Laurence Rees notes, in *War of the Century: When Hitler Fought Stalin*, Hitler had called the Soviet Union, ‘the greatest danger for the culture and civilisation of mankind which has ever threatened it since the collapse of the ... ancient world’.

Germany demanded the return of the Polish Corridor and the city of Danzig which separated East Prussia from Germany. After the First World War, the corridor had been given to Poland and Danzig had been turned into a ‘free city’. During the spring and summer of 1939, Hitler intensified his demands on the Polish government, and pushed for allowing Germany to regain the port city of Danzig (a former German city internationalized by the Treaty of Versailles). Hitler also desired to put an end to the alleged mistreatment of Germans living in the western regions of Poland. Simultaneously, he advanced his plans for attacking Poland in August 1939 if his demands were not met. However, Hitler’s eagerness for a war with Poland made his generals nervous. The Generals were apprehensive of a campaign that could easily lead to the nightmare faced in the First World War in which they would be fighting Russian troops in the east and French and British troops in the west.

In order to avoid such a situation, Hitler had cautiously begun exploring the possibility of cordial relations with Soviet Union. Many short diplomatic exchanges in May 1939 fizzled by the next month. But in July, as tensions increased across Europe, and all major powers were vehemently casting about for prospective allies, Hitler’s foreign minister dropped hints to Moscow that if Hitler invaded Poland, the Soviet Union might be permitted some Polish territory. This caught Stalin’s attention. On 20 August, Hitler sent a personal message to the Soviet Prime Minister, which stated: *War with Poland is imminent. If Hitler sent his foreign minister to Moscow for a vitally important discussion, would Stalin receive him?* Stalin said yes. The Foreign Minister of Germany, Joachim von Ribbentrop, flew from Berlin to Moscow on 22 August 1939 and met his Soviet counterpart Vyacheslav Molotov, who had been working with Ribbentrop to negotiate an agreement, and signed the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact.

The Pact provided that both the contracting parties put themselves under an obligation to abstain from any act of violence, any aggressive action and any attack on each other, either individually or jointly with other powers. If one of the High Contracting Parties became the object of belligerent action by a third power, the other high Contracting Party was not supposed to give its support to the third power. The German and Russian governments were to maintain constant contact with each other for the purpose of discussion in order to exchange information on problems affecting their common interests. Neither of the two High Contracting Parties was to participate in any grouping of powers whatsoever that was directly or indirectly aimed at the other party. If any dispute arose between the High Contracting Parties, both parties were to resolve the same exclusively

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through the friendly exchange of opinion, or if necessary, through the establishment of arbitration commissions. The treaty was concluded for a period of ten years. If it was not terminated within that period, it was to be extended automatically for another five years.

The Pact represented a bargain between enemies and each of them benefitted. Germany gained through the assurance that she would not face a Soviet attack from the east when she pursued her war aims. The Soviet Union felt that she was making the best of a bad bargain. She was not sure of the attitude of France and Britain towards Germany. The Pact freed her for the time being from the fear of involvement in war and increased her power in Eastern Europe. Germany was to be strengthened by the extension of her control over Western Poland but there was also the possibility of France and Britain fighting against Germany over Poland and thereby exhausting her. The Pact was a gamble and the leaders of Soviet Union were compelled to sign the Pact. The hopes of France and Britain for a joint action against Germany in association with the Soviet Union were dashed. The Pact created the suspicion that Stalin along with some leaders of the Soviet Union was always looking forward for rapprochement with Germany and made secret contacts with Hitler even during the period of collective security.

As a result of the Pact, there was collaboration between the two countries up to June 1941. Externally, the Soviet Union tried to maintain an attitude of friendship towards Germany but internally she was aware that Germany would attack her whenever she could. Consequently, secret preparations were made in Soviet Union day and night to meet the threat of Germany.

5.2.9 German Invasion of Poland: Outbreak of the Second World War

After the signing of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, the stage was now set for the invasion of Poland. Hitler was convinced that the Western powers would agree to her invasion. He told his commanders, 'Our opponents are little worms. I saw them in Munich.' Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 under the false pretext that the Poles had carried out a series of sabotage operations against German targets. Two days later on 3 September, France and Britain, followed by the fully independent Dominions of the British Commonwealth – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa – declared war on Germany. Italy joined the war on the side of Germany. Poland completely unaided by Britain and France in spite of the declaration of war was defeated in a very short time. Britain and France neither directly came to the aid of Poland nor launched any military operation against Germany in the West. The Second World War had started but it was confined to a small part of Europe in the east. For about seven months after the declaration of war, there was no active war between Britain and France, and Germany. This period in the history of the Second World War is known as the 'Phoney war'.



Fig 5.6 Declaration of the Second World War

Source: <http://www.freewebs.com/mrpoore1/>

5.3 COURSE AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Course

I. War in Europe and Africa

Shortly after the beginning of the Second World War, Denmark, Norway, and the Baltic States also fell under Nazi control. In May 1940, Germany shocked the world by defeating the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and a British Expeditionary Force that was helping France. Operations began on 10 May with attacks on Holland and ended on 25 June, when France signed an armistice that split the country into occupied and unoccupied zones. The Germans controlled the occupied zones, in the north and northwest, which included three-fifths of the country; a new French government established at Vichy administered the southern two-fifths. Italian leader Mussolini hoped to get in on the spoils and declared war on France on 10 June; Italian forces attacked southern France on 21 June.

On 10 July, an air war over England began, which British Premier Winston Churchill termed the **Battle of Britain**. The German air force was to hit the British Royal Air Force (RAF) in preparation for Operation Sealion, the planned naval invasion of Britain, or force Churchill to look for a negotiated peace. The Battle of Britain, however, ended on 30 September, after a heroic defense of British airspace by the Royal Air Force.

Britain was also opposing German and Italian forces in the deserts of North Africa and on the Atlantic waters. The Battle of the Atlantic was mainly fought between British surface craft and the German U-boats (submarines) that attempted to cut Britain's supply lines. The United States provided Britain with desired supplies after ratifying a lend-lease agreement in March 1941. After the United States joined the war in December 1941, its sea and air forces played an active role in the naval war of the Atlantic. German U-boats patrolled off the American east coast and in the Caribbean, sinking ships of the American Merchant Marines.

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Check Your Progress

6. What was Czechoslovakia's greatest weakness that was exploited by Nazi Germany?
7. What was the main clause of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact?
8. When did Hitler order the invasion of Poland?

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After failing to batter Britain, Hitler turned his attention from Britain to the Soviet Union. On 22 June 1941, Germany and its allies launched **Operation Barbarossa**, which was a huge invasion of the Soviet Union from the Baltic shores in the north and the Black Sea in the South. The Soviets were caught by surprise. Their military leadership had been reduced by Stalin's purges of the 1930s, in which he removed many of the most effective commanders and replaced them with political stooges. In the Finnish-Soviet War, also called the Winter War between 30 November, 1939 and 12 March 1940, tiny Finland repeatedly thwarted an invasion by the giant Soviet Union for months until finally forced to yield.

In the beginning, the German invasion of the Soviet Union was a spectacular success. The invading German army swept steadily eastward, reaching the gates of Moscow by the beginning of 1942. However, Soviet determination to defend their country, combined with the vast distances in the Soviet Union which put pressure on German supply lines, as well as the severe winter conditions in Soviet Russia stopped the invasion army in its tracks and forced Germany to retreat.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union was the most fiercely fought front of the war. In spite of losing millions of soldiers and civilians, the Soviet Union continued to fiercely resist the German army. The bitterest battles in the Second World War were fought during the invasion of the Soviet Union, the fiercest of which was the Battle of Stalingrad. The Battle of Stalingrad began in August 1942 and went on for more than five months, resulting in more than a million soldiers being killed or injured. Despite incurring heavy losses themselves, the Soviet Army managed to inflict catastrophic losses on the Axis powers, losses from which the Germans never recovered. Military historians rightly consider the Battle of Stalingrad as the turning point of the Second World War in Europe.



Fig 5.7 The City of Stalingrad in the Aftermath of the Battle

Source: Wikipedia

By November 1942, the Soviets had managed to launch a two-prong counter-offensive against the German invasion force that surrounded and ultimately captured the German Sixth Army. The Soviet Army forces moved westward rapidly until they were sopped in German Counter Attack in the Third Battle of Kharkov in Ukraine. In the spring of 1943, a bulge developed in the Soviet lines near Kursk. That summer, the Germans struck with their own two-prong assault, intending to isolate and capture Soviet forces within that bulge. Both sides committed large number of men and material.

However, the German offensive failed. From that time onwards, Soviet forces advanced westward, entering the German capital of Berlin in April 1945.

Britain and Commonwealth forces (Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and New Zealand) had been opposing the axis Powers in North Africa from the time when Italy's dictator Benito Mussolini declared war on Britain and France on 10 June 1940. Although the Italians had 250,000 troops opposing about 100,000 from Britain, the British Army was better equipped, better trained, better organised, and had better leadership. As soon as the Battle of Britain ended and the danger of an immediate German invasion of the Britain removed, Britain toughened its North Africa contingent, to protect its colonies there and particularly to protect the Suez Canal and shipping in the Mediterranean. Commencing on 9 December 1940, British forces started a drive capturing more than one lakh prisoners.

In February 1941, two German and two Italian divisions were sent to Libya; a third German division arrived later on. The celebrated German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was assigned to command the German Afrika Korps. He would win fame as the 'Desert Fox' for his daring exploits. Both sides faced significant supply problems in their operations in the North African deserts, and although Rommel accomplished some great victories against the allies, he could by no means deliver a deathblow.

The United States had technically remained on the sidelines until the end of 1941, although it had provided assistance to Britain and the Soviet Union. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the United States Congress declared war on Japan. Nazi Germany, honouring its pact with Japan, then declared war on the United States. Italy, Romania and other countries within the European Axis alliance did the same. An American officer, Major General Dwight Eisenhower was named supreme commander of operations of the allies.

American troops first saw land combat against the soldiers of Nazi Germany, Italy (and some Vichy French) after Britain and USA invaded Algeria and Morocco in North Africa during Operation Torch on 8 November 1942. They pushed east to Tunis and came within a dozen miles of their objective before German retaliation threw them back. In February 1943, at Kasserine Pass, Rommel inflicted on the American forces one of the worst defeats in America's military history but failed to achieve his strategic goals.

Allied preparations commenced for the invasion of Europe through Italy. Their first target was the island of Sicily. In this fight, the first large-scale use of gliders and parachute troops by the Allied Powers was used. British troops under General Montgomery and US troops under General Patton rushed forward to capture the city of Messina. Patton won the race, but his men arrived just hours after the last German troops had been evacuated to the Italian mainland. Nearly 140,000 Italian troops surrendered in Sicily. The Fascist Grand Council forced Mussolini to resignation from power on 25 July 1943, and a new Italian government signed a secret armistice with the Allies on 3 September.

The Germans took charge of resisting the invaders. Eventually, the Germans had to make a fighting withdrawal, but took control of northern Italy and re-installed Mussolini as head of a puppet government in that area. He and his mistress were killed by Italian partisans on 28 April 1945. The Italian campaign tied down many German divisions and gave the Allies lessons in amphibious warfare and in cooperation between the forces of the different nations.

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Joseph Stalin repeatedly pressurised the Western Allies to open a second front in Europe against the Germans; North Africa and Italy had not done enough to draw off German forces from the Soviet Union. On 6 June 1944, the Western Allies invaded the Normandy coast in France. The operation was called D-Day by the allies. On 15 August, a second invasion, **Operation Dragoon**, succeeded in southern France. The Allies enjoyed an enormous superiority in the number and quality of trucks during the war, an advantage that was as important as the fighting men and machines they kept supplied and mobile. German resistance strengthened as the Allies moved towards the Rhine River and Germany itself. In September 1944, **Operation Market-Garden** was launched to secure bridges across the Rhine in Holland, using three airborne divisions dropped near the town of Arnhem and an overland drive by 20,000 vehicles. It proved to be a costly failure.

To the south of the Hurtgen Forest, German troops were secretly mobilising a strong contingent of forces. Concealed by the Ardennes Forest, through which they had successfully attacked France in May 1940, they launched a surprise attack in the wee hours of 16 December against a lightly defended portion of the American line. Within three days, they destroyed many American divisions. The attack forced a bulge that was 50 miles wide and 70 miles deep into the American lines, giving it the name **Battle of the Bulge**. Strong defenses at St. Vith and Bastogne stopped the attack and by late January counterattacks had pushed the Germans back to their start line.

To the south of the Bulge, another German counterattack was playing out. Commencing in November, American and French forces began an operation to recapture the Alsace region. After initial successes, they were hit by strong German counterattacks. The Allies were driven back until 25 January when their rivals could no longer continue the fight. Six of the eight divisions in the German Nineteenth Army were ruined. Combined with the losses in the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler had sacrificed a significant amount of the strength that would be needed for fighting both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union as they invaded Germany.

On 2 May, the German capital of Berlin surrendered to the forces of the Soviet Union. On 30 April, Hitler had committed suicide in his secret underground bunker in Berlin. On 8 May, an unconditional surrender was officially approved. The war in Europe ended, but the war in the Pacific was still ongoing.

II. War in the Pacific

In the 1930s, isolationist feelings were widespread in America. Most American citizens were feeling the effects of the Great Depression and did not wish to entangle themselves in the affairs of Europe. However, these isolationist feelings were destroyed in the flames of American battleships burning at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, after an unprovoked attack by the Japanese Navy, on December 7, 1941.

In response to the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour, the Americans declared war on Japan and launched counter attacks on the Japanese Imperial Navy in the Pacific. After initial failures against the Japanese Navy, the Americans managed to defeat the Japanese decisively in the Battle of Midway in June 1942. Midway was the turning point of the War in the Pacific theater. After the battle, which resulted in the most potent naval ships of Japan being destroyed, the US continued gaining naval and air superiority over the Japanese in the Pacific. Such was the domination of the US Navy in the Pacific in the ensuing years that the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944 came to be known as 'the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' because US Naval pilots shot down

nearly 300 Japanese planes in a 12-to-1 loss ratio, and sunk three Japanese aircraft carriers. During 23-26 October, the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea, better known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf, was fought between Japanese naval and air forces and those of Australia and the United States. It is considered the largest naval battle of the Second World War and possibly the largest in modern history. The US lost six front-line warships while the Japanese lost 26. The battle was the final straw that broke the back of the Japanese Navy. The Allies were now unchallenged in their domination of the Pacific Ocean.

By that time, faced with defeats at the hands of the Allies, the Japanese began practicing a new method of attack known as 'Kamikaze' attacks. 'Kamikaze' pilots used their planes as guided bombs, committing suicide by flying directly into American and British ships. Such attacks by Japanese pilots imposed considerable damage and caused much terror among the Allies but were not adequate enough to turn the tide of the war.

As the Allies came closer to the Japanese home islands, they fought fierce battles to capture small islands nearby to use as air and supply bases. At the island of Iwo Jima, operations started on 19 February 1945, and lasted until 26 March 1945. Such was the ferocity of the Battle at Iwo Jima that only 300 out of the 21,000 Japanese defenders were captured alive. American losses on the islands were also extremely severe.

The last major battle for a Pacific island was fought from March to June 1945. An assault force of 180,000 was sent to wrest Okinawa. A large number of Japanese military and civilian personnel died, including women who threw their babies into the sea from cliffs, then jumped themselves because Japanese propaganda had convinced them the Americans would torture them. The Americans also suffered losses. Furthermore, kamikaze attacks sunk and damaged many American and British ships during the assault.

After the capture of Okinawa, Allied Powers started preparing for the invasion of the Japanese home islands. Based on their experience with the stubborn, fatalistic defense Japanese troops had displayed throughout the Pacific, they were aware that these operations would result in extremely high casualty rates among their forces. They also had the apprehension that a home front tired of war would demand a negotiated settlement if the war dragged on into 1946. Thus, the United States decided that the best way to make Japan surrender was to drop atomic weapons on Japanese cities. On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and on August 9, 1945, dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Historians have suggested that the dropping of the atomic bombs in Nagasaki and Hiroshima was also a way for the United States to demonstrate its superiority over other nations in the post-war scenario. The atomic bomb completely obliterated the cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima and caused over 200,000 civilian deaths. Many survivors continued to face the after-effects of the atomic explosions even decades later. The Soviet Union declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945. The Soviet army invaded and captured Japanese controlled areas including northern China, northern Korea and the Kuril Islands. Faced with the dreadful nuclear destruction of cities and the loss of Manchuria and other colonies, and also facing the prospect of the Soviet Military machine invading mainland Japan, Japan unconditionally surrendered on 14 August 1945, officially ending the Second World War.

Consequences

The Second World War had disastrous consequences that were unparalleled in the history of mankind. The war caused extraordinary destruction of life and property.

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Millions of people died and many more were permanently disabled. In addition, many more were left homeless. It is said that history repeats itself, which is what happened when Germany and its allies were beaten in the Second World War. If the effects of the First World War were horrible, those of the Second World War were a lot worse. It is estimated that around six million Jewish people were exterminated on the orders of Hitler in an event known as the Holocaust; many of those who survived spent years in concentration camps in inhuman conditions. Apart from Jews, non-Jewish Poles and Slavs, Romanian gypsies, and even homosexuals were killed in large numbers by the Nazis. The war also created an acute shortage of foodstuff, essential commodities and cloth. This led to record inflation. The standard of living around the world fell drastically. Since the prices shot up, life of millions became miserable.

As a result of Second World War, the three great Axis Powers namely Italy, Germany and Japan were leveled to dust. Germany, the chief architect of the war was utterly dishonoured and rebuked. At the Potsdam Conference, Germany was divided into four zones, each of which was placed under a major Allied victor. The Italian Empire vanished from the world map. The spoils of war, in terms of territory and reparation, were shared and enjoyed by the major victorious Allied powers.

England emerged from the war as a mediocre world power. It had suffered heavy losses during the war and was economically devastated. Britain no longer had the strength to control the colonies of the British Empire. Thus, one by one, colonies of the British Empire gained their independence. Another victorious ally France could not bear the strain of the war. Although it emerged victorious from the war, its status dropped considerably in the international field and it also became a second-rate power. Like Britain, it no longer had the military strength to control colonies far way.

The United States had played a vital role in winning the Second World War. After the war ended, the United States played a critical role in the financial, political and diplomatic sphere around the world. The war-torn countries of Western Europe turned their eyes towards the United States for physical and financial support. The United States thus emerged as the pre-eminent superpower at the end of the Second World War. However, the most important victor in the war was perhaps the Soviet Union. Despite losing almost 10 per cent of its population in the war, and incurring catastrophic losses against the Nazis, the power and prestige of the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War increased dramatically. It was due to the determined efforts of the Soviet military and her civilians that the Nazi military juggernaut was stopped. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during the War, rightly said at the end of the war that it was the Soviet Union that, 'tore the guts out of the Nazis'. Many nations in Asia and Africa looked towards the Soviets for guidance after gaining independence from colonial rule. Like the United States, the Soviet Union emerged as the second most important power at the end of the war.

During the war, Hitler started a movement that aimed at wiping out the whole race of Jews from the world. As you have learned, when trying to gain power in Germany, Hitler had blamed Jews for the ills of Germany. During the Nazi conquest of Europe, Jewish people living in all countries under Nazi domination were imprisoned in concentration camps and were subjected to inhuman tortures. The captives were even starved to death. Brutal experiments were performed on these helpless victims. The aged, the sick and the disabled were poisoned with gas. An estimated six million Jewish people living in Europe were exterminated by the Nazis. This is known as the Holocaust. The survivors of the holocaust continued to face the scars of their barbaric treatment for decades.



Fig 5.8 Jews being Shipped off to Concentration Camps by the Nazis in 1944

Source: Wikipedia

The war demonstrated the moral degradation of man, for he killed his own species without any consideration. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and militarist Japan caused indescribable cruelties upon their opponents, non-combatants, as well as on innocent men, women and children. However, cruelties were not restricted to only the Axis powers. The Allies indiscriminately bombed cities of their opponents. To give an example, the firebombing of the German cities of Dresden, Hamburg as well as the capital of Japan, Tokyo, killed an estimated 300,000 people, most of them innocent civilians. Moreover, the dropping of the two atomic bombs by the USA on Japan demonstrated how man was capable of wiping out the entire human race instantly. The invention of atomic weapons during the war resulted in the dawning of the atomic age; many other nations soon followed the United States in testing nuclear weapons. The world in the post-war years faced, and indeed, continues to face, the threat of nuclear annihilation.

At the end of the Second World War, the territorial borders of European countries were redrawn. Soviet Union benefitted the most from the redrawing of the boundaries. In the post-war situation, it controlled parts of Finland, Poland, Japan, Germany, and so on. Germany was the worst affected nation. It was divided into four parts; one each was held by France, United States, Soviet Union, and Great Britain.

After the Second World War, the Allied forces came together to form the United Nations Organisation (UNO). Like the League of Nations, it was formed to promote peace and security in the world. This organisation forbade wars of aggression to ensure that a third world war did not occur. The Paris Peace Treaty was signed on 10 February 1947, permitting countries like Italy, Bulgaria, and Finland to resume as sovereign states in international affairs and become members of the United Nations. The Treaty also comprised provisions for the payment of war reparations.

The Second World War also marked the end of dictatorship in Western Europe. While Mussolini was captured and shot dead on 28 April 1945, Hitler committed suicide on 30 April 1945. However, Emperor Hirohito of Japan was not prosecuted as General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, thought that his help was necessary for the administration of Japan. The Allied Forces held the Nuremberg trials in which the top brass of surviving Nazis were prosecuted and hanged.

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As far as the economic consequences of the Second World War are concerned, it did have some positives, but they were in no way a match for the chaos the war created. The numerous jobs created during the war as a result of increased production due to war demands, brought an end to the employment crisis during the period of Great Depression. While those industries that manufactured the products required during the war experienced boom, other industries suffered a major setback. The European economy was nearly brought to a standstill during the Second World War.

Most importantly, the Second World War put forth the USA and Soviet Union as the super powers of the world. In the ensuing years, the world came to be divided into two power blocs with the Capitalist bloc of Great Britain, the USA and their allies, and the Communist bloc of the Soviet Union and her allies. If the First World War laid the foundation for the Second World War, the latter laid the foundation for the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union which lasted for 44 years from 1947 to 1991.



Fig 5.9 Europe in 1945

Source: <http://www.freewebs.com/mrpoore1/>

Check Your Progress

9. What name did the Nazis give to the operation to invade the Soviet Union?
10. Which battle has been called the turning point of the Second World War in Europe?
11. Why was the United Nations established at the end of the Second World War?

5.4 HISTORICAL DEBATE ON THE SECOND WORLD WAR

From the end of the Second World War in 1945 till about 1960, there seems to have been a broad consensus among most political thinkers, and many historians, regarding the origins of the Second World War. They all agreed to call it ‘Hitler’s War’ since Hitler was obviously the dominant, or even the sole important cause of the war. According to this view, whose proponents were people like Churchill and Namier, Hitler planned the Second World War; his will alone caused it. The policy of appeasement which might just have worked in other circumstances was bound to fail when Germany was in the grip of a madman. Hitler not only destroyed democracy and liberty, he started a policy of

racial abuse and extermination, and established a totalitarian reign of terror. Within his realm, he aimed at not only great power status, but also world conquest for Germany.

In 1961, the English historian AJP Taylor sparked off fierce debates over Hitler that caused rumblings in the intellectual world, through his work *Origins of the Second World War*. Though this is a very persuasive and gripping book, Taylor's thesis has not found wide acceptance among historians, and proves to be untenable in its fundamentals. Taylor asserts that Hitler's foreign policy was essentially that of his predecessors in its aims- to free Germany from the restrictions of the peace treaty, restore the German army and make Germany the greatest power in Europe from her 'natural weight'. Hitler did not want to challenge the Western settlement; eastern expansion was his policy's primary purpose, if not the only one. In foreign affairs, he just waited for concessions. Even the Hossbach Conference, which was a meeting between Hitler and his military strategists in 1937 that outlined Hitler's future policies, shows that Hitler was gambling on some twist of fortune which would present him with success in foreign affairs; it was no concrete plan, no directive for German policy in 1937 and 1938. Hitler, in fact, made no plans for world conquest.

According to Taylor, the Austrian crisis of March 1938 was provoked by the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg, and not by Hitler. There had been no German preparations for the invasion of Austria— everything was improvised in a couple of days. With Czechoslovakia, in his threats of military action, Hitler bluffed everyone— a few preparations were made for even a defensive war with France. This bluff paid off. In the Munich pact, Hitler got concessions through a political settlement. His military directives in the subsequent period were measures of precaution, not plans for aggression. In March 1939, Germany's elimination of Czechoslovakia was the unforeseen by-product of developments in Slovakia, and Hitler was acting against the Hungarians rather than against the Czechs. With regard to Poland, Hitler's objective was alliance, and not destruction. According to Taylor, Hitler's seemingly warlike statements of 3 April and 23 May 1939 were simply to impress and simultaneously alarm the generals and through them the Western powers. Hitler became more confident of his position in Poland after the Soviet-German Pact on 22 August. The failure of the diplomatic maneuvers of the next few days, principally of Britain, Germany and Poland led finally to the declaration of war on Germany by France and Britain on 3 September, two days after Hitler launched the crucial attack on Poland. Thus, the Second World War, according to Taylor, 'far from being premeditated was a mistake was the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders.'

Foremost in the academic attack on Taylor was another English historian named Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper. Trevor-Roper pointed to one of Hitler's oldest and most often stated programs- 'creating a Lebensraum' (living space) through a war of conquest against the Soviet Union. This was not a traditional German aim of the past; and necessarily entailed the risk of, and hence preparation for, a war against the Western powers. According to Trevor-Roper, Taylor merely dismissed the evidence for this plan, and inadequately 'explained away' its execution in 1941. Trevor-Roper also suggested that Taylor's similar treatment of the Hossbach Memorandum was also without either sufficient clarification or substantive evidence. This 'cavalier treatment' of evidence was also apparent in Taylor's analysis of the Polish crisis. Further, the evidence for Taylor's own basic thesis is conspicuously absent.

A more rigorous critique of Taylor was provided by the British Marxist historian T. W. Mason who emphasised internal matters as foreign policy determinants. He

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argued that in the later 1930s, the Nazi movement was slacking, hence, had to either expand or decline. This expansionism was ‘dynamic, limitless and unprecedented’. Mason asserted that even without a comprehensive plan, Nazi Germany was the real force for change, and hence for the war. Besides, because of Germany’s overwhelming military-economic preponderance in Europe in 1939, important structural changes had occurred in her economy from 1929-39—the steadily growing predominance of the heavy industrial sector, the trend towards economic independence, and the great increase in public spending. Further, between 1937 and 1939, economic, social and political tensions resulted in an acute general crisis. The Nazi regime could effectively take measures for combating this only after an external crisis had provided the necessary justification.

Another British historian, Alan Bullock’s works provided a refreshing outlook on Hitler and his policies, aims and actions. His works helps us in moving beyond just a critique of Taylor’s ideas. He prefaces his main thesis by emphasising the need for a composite understanding of Hitler’s personality, at once fanatical and cynical, paralleled by his foreign policy which combined consistency of aim with complete opportunism in method and tactics.

Bullock states that after achieving German supremacy by mid 1934, Hitler did not take much interest in internal matters. He focused almost entirely on foreign policy and rearmament. He declared more than once that his most important task would be to rearm Germany, then revise the Treaty of Versailles, then conquer Lebensraum in the East- for the last, ‘short decisive blows to the West and then to the East might be necessary’. However, Hitler’s policy in 1933-34 remained cautious; his appeal ‘to Wilsonian principles of national self-determination and equality of rights’, and his use of ‘the language of the League (of Nations)’ succeeded to some extent in creating an illusion of righteous (and hence limited) aims.

Between 1935 and 1937 however, Hitler succeeded in removing the Versailles limitations, transforming Germany’s diplomatic positions and ending her isolation. He adopted new instruments for foreign policy inspired by his radicalism, viz. the Nazi groups among the Volksdeutsche living outside Germany, and personal gains for important diplomatic negotiations. The result was that by 1937, the ‘German national pride and self-dependence had been restored. Nazi propaganda now boasted of her growing military strength’. The Nazi aims were in fact quite widely believed. But as the evidence now shows, there was no full mobilisation of the army in the immediate pre-war years. Some say this indicates that Hitler was not preparing for, and indeed did not desire, a general Europe wide war. However, the proportion of the economy devoted to war purposes did not increase before or during the westward invasions of May 1940, nor even for the attack on Russia in June 1941. The overall weapon production in Germany in fact fell between July and December 1941. Thus, the limited German rearmament before the war is no proof that Hitler wasn’t planning war. Since Hitler realised that Germany would always be at a disadvantage in a long-drawn-out war, he was thinking in terms of a series of short Blitzkrieg-type campaigns- ‘and all the campaigns between 1939 and 1941 conformed to this pattern’.

Regarding the Hossbach meeting, Bullock says that while not constituting an irreversible decision for war, Hitler’s statements cannot be dismissed as ‘talking for effect’ especially considering that his stated resolve to overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria whenever possible, actually came to fruition within less than eighteen months. Thus, this conference reflected a gradual change in Hitler’s estimate of the risks he

could afford to take in achieving his goals. Bullock later makes the important point that since Hitler's two possible objectives in the pre-war aggression crises-political victory and a Blitzkrieg military campaign were not in conflict and preparations for them were in fact mutually reinforcing.

Bullock says that in the case of Poland, Hitler's preference was probably for a localised Blitzkrieg; yet, he had to weigh the risk of a general war. The reasons for Hitler's greater readiness to take this risk include the peaking of the armament program in Germany in the autumn of 1939, an increase in Hitler's confidence, and his belief that his negotiations with Russia would weaken his Western opponents' resolve. After the Soviet-Nazi Non-Aggression Pact was signed, Hitler finally decided on a 'solution by force' calculating that the Western powers would not intervene. None of Hitler's diplomatic man maneuvers between 25 August, 1939 and 1 September 1939 were serious efforts at negotiations; perhaps the delay was to see if under the strain, the Western powers might yet split with Poland. If not, he had 'steeled his will' to go through the attack on Poland, even if that risked war with Britain and France.

Bullock's account then distinguishes itself by going beyond 3 September 1939, up till the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany in June 1941, providing evidence that Hitler had not miscalculated or 'stumbled into war unintentionally'. Hitler proceeded to destroy the Polish State and set in train (in 1939 itself) his long avowed resettlement program in Eastern Europe. Further, the initiative in starting a real war with the West came from him in May 1940. Later in mid 1941, after having conquered all of belligerent Western Europe except Britain he dragged Russia into the war through an attack, with plans laid out for racial extermination of the 'inferior races' and the creation of Lebensraum, thus, underlining his own importance as an individual and ideologue in the war. We may further note that after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and the ensuing declaration of war between USA and Japan, it was Hitler (and then Mussolini) who declared war on the United States, and not vice versa.

Conclusion

Having examined some important samples of historical opinions on the origins of the Second World War, we may try to arrive at some conclusions, however inconclusive they may be. Firstly, we can hardly accept the view that expansionism (in particular Germany's) had no great role in causing the Second World War. The debate on scope and traditionality of these expansionist aims is necessarily mostly conjectural and also to an extent irrelevant. For instance, even if Hitler's expansionist aims were patterned on 'traditional' lines, how does it absolve him of responsibility for the war? In this sense, one can see some merit in Taylor's conception of how Germany's natural weight would inevitably lead a united, strong Germany to seek Great Power status in Europe. Some slight and indirect evidence for this can be noticed, for example, in the involvement of the various European Powers in keeping Germany disunited, in various periods of history. Further, we can note that often when a strong united Germany emerged, she did disturb the existing power equations in Europe, notable cases in point being Charlemagne's and Bismarck's First and Second Reich respectively.

On the other hand, even if we do not accept the view that Hitler was a traditional German statesman with traditional (and limited) aims, we can still see lines of continuity between Hitler and a certain Europe-wide tradition: these are especially visible with regard to the opposition he was faced with. Most important of these is the continued dominance of the concept of a balance of power, which had played an important role

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in European international relations right from the Vienna Congress in 1815. It can be argued that it is the internalization of this concept by Western historians as being ‘perfectly natural’ that made historians assert that Hitler’s Germany provoked the Second World War. It is important to note here that the Second World War did not begin on 1 September, 1939 when Hitler attacked Poland, which could have remained a localised affair, but on 3 September, when Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Thus, the understanding of causation of and responsibility for the Second World War by historians is basically a matter of perspective. Taylor is probably right about the role played by the imagination in historical judgment. Knowledge of the concentration camps and other atrocities carried out by Hitler’s barbaric regime undoubtedly played a role in shaping British and French public opinion and thus in influencing the decisions and actions of the statesmen of these countries. No doubt this knowledge also colours our perception of these regimes and reduces our ability to compare it objectively with the foreign policy of other European countries, with whom sympathies (perhaps subconsciously) of western historians generally lie. The responses, particularly of the Western Allied powers in favour of maintaining status quo, are equally important in the causation of the war.

If we try to take a balanced view, then the Second World War was really about some countries wanting to maintain the balance of power in Europe, and others challenging it. The reasons and justification for this challenge can no doubt be dated at infinitum. But the status quo of its relative moral superiority can be questioned. Firstly, one can point out that Britain and France had already committed their expansionist aggressions (during the period of colonisation) in a period when it was more acceptable – Germany was just late in catching up. In the present age, German expansion happened to be in Europe – one could ask how German aggression in Europe was any worse than British or French aggression against the people of Asia, Africa, etc. Secondly, the status quo powers naturally wanted to preserve the balance of power because it was in their favour, particularly in the case of Britain, also France. Germany and other revisionists if any were really just pointing to be like them. So the only way the Fascists and the Nazis were morally ‘worse’ than the other imperialist status quo powers of Europe, was in their policies of racial extermination. But in a strictly technical sense, all of these are internal matters. Hence, according to one understanding of the principles of the international relations, it was not technically any business of any other country what Nazi Germany did domestically.

Whether it is borne out by some pre-war documents (such as Hitler’s assertion that an alliance with Britain would be the cornerstone of Germany’s foreign policy) as well as to a limited extent by events, that Hitler did not want war with the Western Powers for its own sake (at least not yet). He was compelled to fight them largely because they would not tolerate his eastward expansion peacefully. A retrospective view of the Second World War would suggest that it was only the war with the East – Russia, Ukraine and Poland mainly – that Hitler really tried for its own sake, i.e., to establish a living space for the German people.

Thus, to conclude, we may state that while Hitler (and Germany’s) role in bringing about what came to be known as the Second World War was a very vital one, we cannot correctly term this conflict simply as ‘Hitler’s War’. Such a designation would obscure a whole range of historical specification and would do injustice to the role

played by other factors, countries and individuals. A fresh impartial inquiry, balanced geographically and ideologically, both in terms of its source material and its viewpoint would no doubt contribute much to a more even-handed objective understanding of these issues.

5.5 SUMMING UP

- Summing up we can say that the Second World War was perhaps the most significant period of the twentieth century. Its after effects shaped the world in the second half of the twentieth century.
- The primary combatants during the Second World War were the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, Japan and their smaller allies) and the Allied Powers, led by Britain (and its Commonwealth nations), the Soviet Union and the United States. The Allies emerged victorious. Two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, emerged from Second World War to begin a Cold War with each other that would define much of the rest of the century.
- The inter-war period (1919 to 1939) was a period of instability in Europe. It was also a time when some nations, including Germany, Italy and Japan developed intense nationalist feelings that led to a desire for expansion: Germany in Northern and Eastern Europe, Italy in Africa and Greece, and Japan in Asia and the South Pacific. Germany had the added intention of overturning (and ultimately avenging) the harsh terms forced on her at the end of the First World War by the humiliating Treaty of Versailles.
- Competing ideologies further ignited international tension. The Russian Revolution of 1917 had established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a sprawling Communist state. Western democracies and capitalists feared the spread of Bolshevism. In some countries, such as Italy, Germany and Romania, ultra-conservative groups rose to power, in part as a reaction against Communism. Germany, Italy and Japan entered into agreements of mutual support but, unlike the Allied nations they never developed a comprehensive or coordinated strategy.
- Historians have dedicated countless hours researching and theorising about the responsibility of the Second World War. There was a broad consensus among most of the political thinkers and historians regarding the origins of the Second World War immediately following the war. They all agreed to call it ‘Hitler’s War’. However, other historians have asserted that the Second World War was not caused solely by Hitler’s rise to power in Germany, but by a multiple factors that arose during the inter-war period. It was not caused by a single man’s actions. Hitler, while a contributing factor to the outbreak of war in 1939, was not the sole factor for the war.
- The assertion that Hitler was not the sole cause of the War seem convincing as there were other important causes of war that helped escalate inter-war tensions into a full-scale world war, namely the failure of the League of Nations, the ideological clash between the Allied Powers and the rest of the world, and the breakdown of collective security.

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Check Your Progress

12. What was the pre-eminent argument of APJ Taylor’s book *Origins of the Second World War*?
13. Which historian was the first to attack APJ Taylor’s arguments on the origins of the Second World War?

5.6 KEY TERMS

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- **Anschluss:** It is a German word meaning ‘joining together’ or ‘union’. The word was heard a great deal in the years preceding the Second World War. Germany and Austria were two separate nations but Hitler wanted to join them together as one nation.
- **Belligerent:** In wartime, a nation at war.
- **Blitzkrieg:** It means ‘lightning war’. It was an innovative military technique first used by the Germans in the Second World War and was a tactic based on speed and surprise.
- **Concentration Camp:** A jail within which people who pose danger to the state are detained so that they can be monitored and prevented from communicating with others outside the camp. Since the Nazi Holocaust, this term has been related to a particular place where people are deprived of food, forced to work, tortured, and murdered.
- **Fuhrer:** The German word for leader and Hitler’s title.
- **Lebensraum:** It is a German word for ‘habitat’ or ‘living space’. It was a pretext used by Hitler to justify his invasions of Eastern Europe. He claimed that Germany was overpopulated and he needed ‘living space’ for his people.
- **Munitions:** Arms and weaponry.
- **Operation Barbarossa:** The code name for the invasion of Soviet Union by Germany in 1941 which Hitler predicted would take only six months but ended up miring the German armies for more than two years.
- **Purge:** To get rid of people considered undesirable.
- **Phoney War:** This term was first used by American Senator Borah. It is the name given to the period of time in Second World War from September 1939 to April 1940 when, after the blitzkrieg attack on Poland in September 1939, nothing happened.

5.7 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The Night of the Long Knives was a purge that the Nazis undertook in June-July 1934 to murder all political opponents of Hitler and establish him as the supreme leader of the German people.
2. The Stresa Front was an agreement made in the Italian town of Stresa between France, Britain and the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini on 14 April 1935. Officially called the *Final Declaration of the Stresa Conference*, its objective was to reaffirm the Locarno Treaties and to announce that the independence of Austria ‘would continue to inspire their common policy’.
3. For Japan, the signing of the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact was the worst diplomatic betrayal she had experienced in her modern history. Japan’s chief apprehension was that if Soviet Union were relieved of anxiety in Europe, she would strengthen her East Asia front and would thus be a new and greater threat to Japan in the Pacific.

4. The Popular Front was a coalition of Liberals, Socialists, and Communists and Anarchists formed to resist the fascist danger of the right-wing in Spain. It emerged victorious in the 1936 elections.
5. The Civil War in Spain aroused the conscience of the people of the world in a way no event previously. Anti-fascists from over fifty countries enrolled themselves as volunteers to fight in support of the Spanish Republic.
6. Czechoslovakia's greatest weakness was that she had many minorities in her population, and the most important among them were the Sudeten Germans. A part of Czechoslovakia, called Sudetenland, had a large German population. Although the Germans in this region were nicely treated, they never forgot their separate German nationality in Czechoslovakia.
7. According to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the two countries agreed to take no military action against each other for the next ten years.
8. Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 under the false pretext that the Poles had carried out a series of sabotage operations against German targets.
9. On 22 June 1941, Germany and its allies launched Operation Barbarossa, which was a huge invasion of the Soviet Union from the Baltic shores in the north and the Black Sea in the South.
10. Military historians consider the Battle of Stalingrad as the turning point of the Second World War in Europe. The Battle began in August 1942 and went on for more than five months, resulting in more than a million soldiers being killed or injured. Despite incurring heavy losses themselves, the Soviet Army managed to inflict catastrophic losses on the Axis powers, losses from which the Germans never recovered.
11. After the Second World War, the Allied forces came together to form the United Nations Organisation (UNO). Like the League of Nations, it was formed to promote peace and security in the world. This organisation forbade wars of aggression to ensure that a third world war did not occur.
12. In *Origins of the Second World War*, Taylor asserts that Hitler's foreign policy was essentially that of his predecessors in its aims- to free Germany from the restrictions of the peace treaty, restore the German army and make Germany the greatest power in Europe from her 'natural weight'.
13. Foremost in the academic attack on Taylor was another English historian named Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper. Trevor-Roper pointed to one of Hitler's oldest and most often stated programs- 'creating a Lebensraum' (living space) through a war of conquest against the Soviet Union. This was not a traditional German aim of the past; and necessarily entailed the risk of, and hence preparation for, a war against the Western powers.

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5.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the Rome-Berlin Axis.
2. What was the Battle of Stalingrad?

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3. Write a short note on the German invasion of the Soviet Union.
4. What do you understand by the term 'holocaust'?
5. What were the economic consequences in Europe after the Second World War?
6. What was the Stresa Front?
7. Describe the course of the Second World War in the Pacific region.
8. Write a short note on the Munich pact.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Was the Second World War a continuation of the First World War? Explain.
2. In what ways was the Spanish Civil War a 'dress rehearsal' for the Second World War? How did it become part of 'the tide of Axis aggression'?
3. Briefly discuss the main events of the Second World War.
4. Give a detailed account on the consequences of the Second World War.
5. How far can the Second World War be termed as 'Hitler's War'? Discuss this with reference to the historiography.
6. Explain the reason why Germany was allowed to annex Austria and the Sudetenland? Was there any justification for Britain and France's policy of appeasement? Discuss.

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