World War I

Ken Webb

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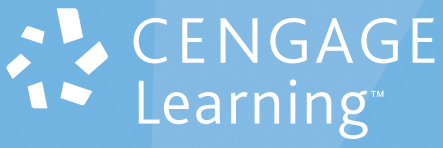

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CONTENTS

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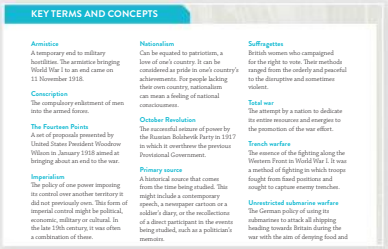
ABOUT THE BOOK

World War I

World War I has been developed especially for senior secondary students of Modern History in New South Wales. The book is based on the understanding that History is an interpretative study of the past by which you come to better appreciate the making of the modern world.

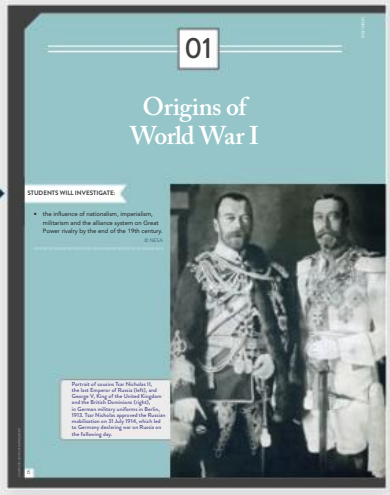
Developing understandings of the past and present in senior History extends on the skills you learnt in earlier years. As senior students you will use historical skills, including research, evaluation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability, to understand and interpret societies from the past.

BOOK INTRODUCTION provides a context to the issues that are addressed.



KEY FIGURES, KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS, AND KEY DOCUMENTS feature brief biographies, profiles, definitions and summaries of key documents as a ready reference for learning and revision.

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES are listed at the start of each chapter. These provide a focus for you as you read the chapter.



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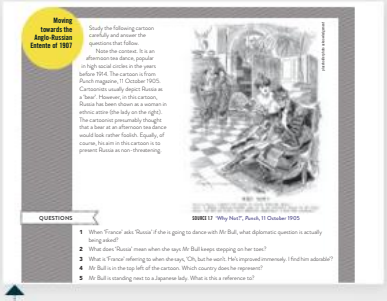
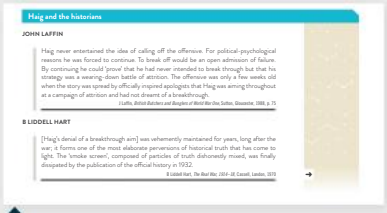


SOURCE STUDIES of visual and text primary sources and secondary literature appear frequently throughout the text and are combined with questions and activities to aid your evaluation and interpretation of evidence from the past.

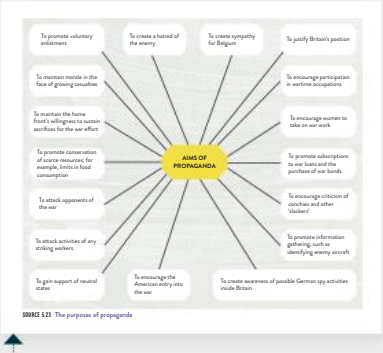
SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS BOXES contain biographical profiles and assessments of key historical figures and frequently include questions and activities.

INFORMATION BOXES contain extended discussions of key events, concepts and historical developments. Many also include questions and activities.

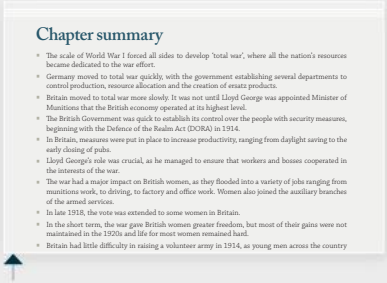


HISTORIAN BOXES introduce key historians and schools of interpretation as a way of making historiography clearer.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES are included throughout the text to consolidate content knowledge and hone examination skills.



DIAGRAMS AND TALKING SOURCES are used to visually summarise complex ideas and events.



CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CHAPTER REVIEW ACTIVITIES conclude each chapter. They include a brief precis of the topic, suggestions for further reading, and a range of learning activities that consolidate knowledge and understanding of the chapter's content. These tasks incorporate a range of historical understandings and skills.

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Ken Webb

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Getty Images/Imperial War Museum

Stretcher-bearers struggle in mud up to their knees to carry a wounded man to safety near Boesinghe at the Battle of Pilckem Ridge during the Passchendaele campaign, 1 August 1917.

WORLD WAR I

The century before 1914 had seen Europe largely spared the ravages of war. There had been short, localised conflicts, but these had never escalated into continent-wide war. However, by the late 19th century, tension and suspicion between the major powers were growing, and in response the nations of Europe sought allies and steadily built up their armaments. Yet the outbreak of war in 1914 came as a shock. In a short time, the European war became a global conflict. Historians have long debated the war's causes. Was it inevitable? Had the powers lost control of events and slid into war?

World War I was fought on an industrial scale. By the end of 1918, the dead, wounded and lost numbered in the millions. The early expectation that the war would be over by Christmas 1914 proved to be an illusion as the horror of trench warfare on the Western Front developed, while the scale of death and destruction was matched in the other theatres of war. Science and industry became key features of the conflict. Industry proved able to provide limitless supplies of ever more sophisticated weaponry, while science proved able to make these weapons ever more horrific. Yet, alongside such terrible developments, there were dramatic improvements in medicine, and communications had been revolutionised.

World War I was the first total war. Every aspect of civilian life became geared to the war effort. Conscription dragged millions of ordinary men to the front. The war had a dramatic impact on the lives of women and arguably changed the role of women in society forever. Censorship and propaganda mobilised thinking on the home front.

The war finally ended in 1918 as Germany's war effort collapsed. The failure of the Schlieffen Plan had resulted in Germany having to face a prolonged two-front war. Subjected to a naval blockade since 1914, and unable to match the resources of its enemies, especially once the United States had entered the war on the Allied side, the German home front collapsed. Its 1918 Spring Offensive brought Germany close to victory, but losses could not be replaced. The war was brought to an end with the armistice of 11 November.

Such was the catastrophe of World War I, it was often referred to as 'the war to end all wars'. A peace settlement was eventually signed between the combatants in June 1919 in Paris. The map of Europe was transformed as new nations appeared and four empires disintegrated. Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles, a treaty some said at the time made a future conflict almost inevitable. Russia had experienced two revolutions and was thrown into a bloody civil war. Outside of Europe, new powers arose and colonial people began to agitate for their independence. World War I's major legacy was to lay the foundation of many aspects of the modern world, many of which remain with us today.

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KEY FIGURES

KAISER WILHELM II (1859–1941)

Ruler of Germany from 1888 to 1918. His erratic behaviour, enthusiasm for naval construction and anti-British stance did much to harm Anglo-German relations before 1914.

TSAR NICHOLAS II (1868–1918)

Ruler of Russia from 1894 to 1917. His vacillation during July 1914 has been blamed for causing the July Crisis to escalate into war between Russia and Germany.

ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND (1863–1914)

Heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was his assassination on 28 June 1914 that provided the spark for the series of events that led to war.

GAVRILO PRINCIP (1894–1918)

A member of the Black Hand group that sought Slav independence from Austrian rule. He assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914.

HELMUTH VON MOLTKE (1848–1916)

The German Chief of Staff at the start of the war. His modifications to the Schlieffen Plan were arguably responsible for Germany's failure to achieve a quick victory in August 1914.

FIELD MARSHAL DOUGLAS HAIG (1861–1928)

The commander of British forces on the Western Front from December 1915 to the end of the war. Haig was responsible for the disastrous battles of the Somme and Passchendaele.

GENERAL PAUL VON HINDENBURG (1847–1934)

Led Germany to victory over Russia at the August 1914 Battle of Tannenberg. From August 1916, he was Chief of the German General Staff and with his deputy, Ludendorff, controlled Germany almost as a military dictator during the war.

GENERAL ERICH LUDENDORFF (1865–1937)

Germany's Quartermaster General from August 1916, a role in which he effectively co-ruled Germany with Hindenburg. His 1918 Spring Offensive brought Germany close to victory before it faded due to lack of manpower and resources.

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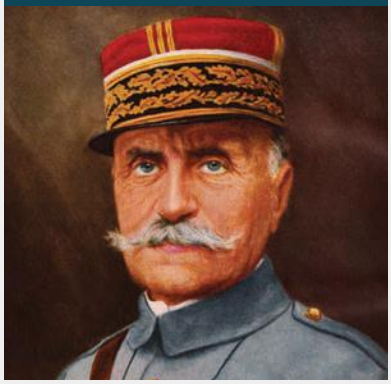
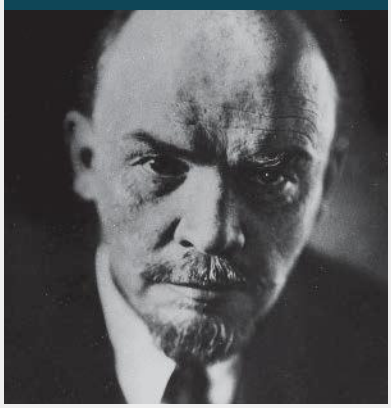
GENERAL FERDINAND FOCH (1851–1929)



Led French forces at the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914. In March 1918, he became Commander-in-Chief of Allied armies and is generally credited for his coordination of the Allied forces that led to victory in November 1918.

VLADIMIR LENIN (1870–1924)

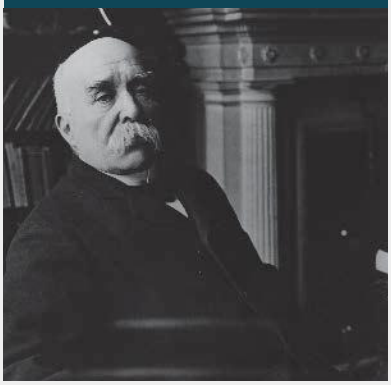


Leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party who led it to power in the October 1917 Revolution. Lenin initially sought world revolution, but by the end of the Russian Civil War in 1921, he had to accept that Russia was going to be the world's only socialist state.

EMMELINE PANKHURST (1858–1928)

Militant leader of Britain's prewar suffragette movement. At the outbreak of war, she called off the suffragette campaign and encouraged women to support the war effort and become involved in industrial production.

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU (1841–1929)

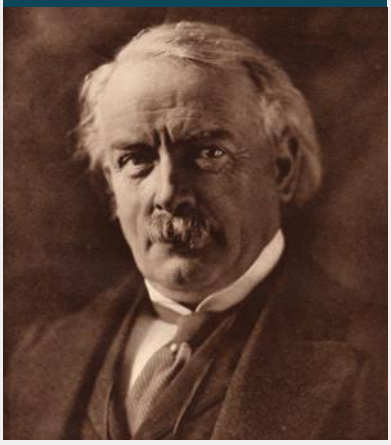


Prime Minister of France from November 1917 to January 1920. Known in France as 'The Tiger', he argued for Germany to be harshly treated in the Treaty of Versailles.

WOODROW WILSON (1856–1924)

United States President from 1913 to 1921. He took the United States into the war in 1917. He argued for a more idealistic, less punitive postwar settlement at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. He failed to persuade the US Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or join the League of Nations.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE (1863–1945)



British Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922. It was Lloyd George who transformed Britain's munitions industry. At the Paris Peace Conference, he sought to protect British economic and imperial interests.

Clockwise from top left: Alamy Stock Photo/ITPix ; Alamy Stock Photo/ITPix ; Getty Images/Hulton Deutsch ; Imagefolk/Mary Evans Picture Library/Alexander Meledin

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KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Armistice
A temporary end to military hostilities. The armistice bringing World War I to an end came on 11 November 1918.

Conscription
The compulsory enlistment of men into the armed forces.

The Fourteen Points
A set of proposals presented by United States President Woodrow Wilson in January 1918 aimed at bringing about an end to the war.

Imperialism
The policy of one power imposing its control over another territory it did not previously own. This form of imperial control might be political, economic, military or cultural. In the late 19th century, it was often a combination of these.

Militarism
The respect given to the military above all other groups in society. It can refer to a situation where the military plays the major role in developing government policy or where a government maintains a strong military organisation in preparedness for war.

Mobilisation
The placing of an army in a state of immediate readiness for war.

Modernity
The way the modern world is organised in terms of culture, social organisations, economics and politics.

Nationalism
Can be equated to patriotism, which is a love of one's country. It can be considered as pride in one's country's achievements. For people lacking their own country, nationalism can mean a feeling of national consciousness.

October Revolution
The successful seizure of power by the Russian Bolshevik Party in 1917 in which it overthrew the previous Provisional Government.

Primary source
A historical source that comes from the time being studied. This might be a contemporary speech, a newspaper cartoon or a soldier's diary, or the recollections of a direct participant in the events being studied, such as a politician's memoirs.

Propaganda
The deliberate presentation of a one-sided view of an issue. Its aim is to convince an audience of a particular point of view.

The Schlieffen Plan
The German strategic plan developed in 1905 by the Chief of the Imperial German General Staff, Count Alfred von Schlieffen. Its aim was to defeat France within six weeks, which would then allow Germany to focus on its potential Eastern Front.

Secondary source
A historical source that is constructed after the time being studied. This might be a textbook or a feature movie.

Suffragettes
British women who campaigned for the right to vote. Their methods ranged from the orderly and peaceful to the disruptive and sometimes violent.

Total war
The attempt by a nation to dedicate its entire resources and energies to the promotion of the war effort.

Trench warfare
The essence of the fighting along the Western Front in World War I. It was a method of fighting in which troops fought from fixed positions and sought to capture enemy trenches.

Unrestricted submarine warfare
The German policy of using its submarines to attack all shipping heading towards Britain during the war with the aim of denying food and resources.

War of attrition
A type of warfare in which each side seeks victory by attempting to exhaust its enemy. This was the nature of the war on the Western Front until the final months of the war.

Western Front
The line of trenches running from the English Channel to the Swiss border during World War I.

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The 'blank cheque', 6 July 1914

Following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, the Austrian Government was determined to punish Serbia, whom it blamed for the crime. However, knowing that any move against Serbia would probably involve conflict with Russia, Austria sought a guarantee of assistance from its ally Germany, should Russia move to defend Serbia against Austria. Germany's unconditional support for whatever action Austria decided to take was given on 6 July. This declaration on the part of Germany is referred to as 'the blank cheque'. Austria now felt free to take any action against Serbia, including war, knowing that it had Germany's support should Russia move.

Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, 23 July 1914

Once it had gained its guarantee from Germany in the form of the 'blank cheque', Austria sent a 10-point ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July. The ultimatum contained a series of stern demands for Serbia to take action against Slav terrorists and to allow Austrian officials into Serbia to enforce the terms of the ultimatum. From Austria's perspective, the purpose of the ultimatum was to ensure Serbia's rejection so that war could be justified. Serbia accepted nine of the 10 points. However, for Austria this was not good enough, and on 28 July it declared war on Serbia.

The 'scrap of paper', the Treaty of London, 1839

The 1839 Treaty of London guaranteed the independence and neutrality of the newly created nation of Belgium. The principal signatories to the treaty were Britain, France, the German Confederation (Prussia/Germany), Austria and Russia.

In August 1914, Germany invaded Belgium as part of its Schlieffen Plan. Britain ordered an immediate withdrawal of German forces, basing its position on the guarantee of Belgian neutrality given in 1839. Germany's refusal to leave Belgium became the pretext for Britain's declaration of war on Germany. The German chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, could not believe that Britain would go to war over a mere 'scrap of paper', as he dismissively called the Treaty of London.

The Fourteen Points, January 1918

In January 1918, United States President Woodrow Wilson addressed the American Congress. In his speech, he outlined a set of idealistic principles on which he hoped that peace could be brought about. The principles became known as the Fourteen Points.

His allies, Georges Clemenceau of France and David Lloyd George of Britain, were sceptical about Wilson's idealistic aims. However, Germany was later to embrace the Fourteen Points, even arguing that they had only signed the armistice in November 1918 in the belief that a postwar settlement would be based on Wilson's ideas.

The Treaty of Versailles

The victorious powers met in Paris in 1919 to work out a postwar settlement. The Paris Peace Settlement comprised several treaties, the most important of which was the Treaty of Versailles signed between the Allies and Germany. Germany was not allowed to enter into any of the treaty negotiations. Instead, it was ordered to accept the treaty terms or face a resumption of hostilities. The Treaty of Versailles proved to be a compromise that pleased few. France believed it had been cheated out of what it deserved, while Germany considered Versailles a slave treaty. Many historians have suggested that the seeds of World War II were sown in the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

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01

Origins of World War I

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- the influence of nationalism, imperialism, militarism and the alliance system on Great Power rivalry by the end of the 19th century.

Portrait of cousins Tsar Nicholas II, the last Emperor of Russia (left), and George V, King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions (right), in German military uniforms in Berlin, 1913. Tsar Nicholas approved the Russian mobilisation on 31 July 1914, which led to Germany declaring war on Russia on the following day.

Alamy Stock Photo/Ivy Close Images

Introduction

In the popular imagination, it is assumed that such a catastrophic war as World War I must have had many deep-rooted, long-term causes. Surely, an epic conflict that was to take the lives of millions and ravage an entire continent could not 'just break out', could not be 'an accident'? Surely Europe's leaders knew what they were doing? Indeed, there were several issues that had arisen during the last quarter of the 19th century that increased tensions and suspicions across Europe. The major European powers were involved in imperial clashes across the globe that on occasions came close to outright conflict. National fervour was rising in many countries. Militarist thinking combined with a developing arms race turned the minds of some political and army leaders to consider military solutions to their nations' problems. A system of alliances had developed that had the potential to drag all the major powers into a war if a minor incident was not controlled.

However, it would be wrong to think that the people of Europe were fearfully expecting a cataclysm in the middle of 1914. In June 1914, European leaders were not secretly planning invasions; they were on their holidays. The issues that created tensions and suspicions before 1914 did not cause the war of 1914; rather, these tensions and suspicions created an environment that made war possible. How this possibility became reality will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Nationalism, imperialism, militarism and the alliance system before 1914

1871	Under the leadership of Prussia, the various German states become one united empire dominating Central Europe. Bismarck is Chancellor of this new united Germany.
1879	Signing of the Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria
1881	Colonial disagreement between France and Italy in North Africa
1882	Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy created
1884–85	Bismarck attempts to regulate imperial activity in the Berlin Conference
1887	Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia
1888	Kaiser Wilhelm II becomes leader of Germany
1890	Bismarck resigns as Chancellor of Germany
1893	Signing of the Franco-Russian Alliance
1895	The failed Jamieson raid, aimed at overthrowing Transvaal President Kruger
1898	The Fashoda Incident
	Germany passes its First Naval Law
1899–1902	The Boer War
1900	The Boxer Rebellion in China
1902	Signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance
1904	Signing of the Entente Cordiale between Britain and France
1904–05	The Russo-Japanese War
1905	The Tangier Incident in Morocco
1906	The Algeciras Conference
	Britain launches its first dreadnought

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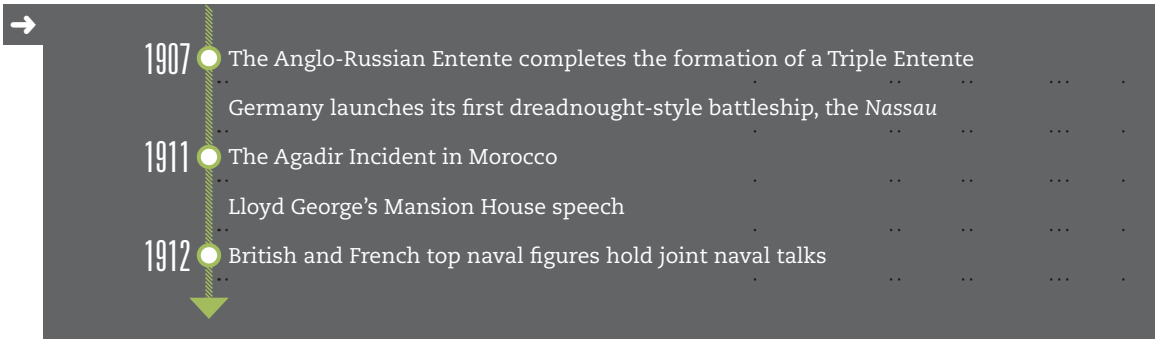

Imperialism before 1914

Empires had been a part of world history for thousands of years. There had been ancient empires controlled by Egypt and Rome, civilisations in Asia and the **pre-Columbian Americas** ruled vast areas, and in the first half of the 19th century Britain, France and the Netherlands owned colonies across the globe.

However, in the years between 1870 and 1914, there was a surge in imperialist activities as many European powers, plus Japan and the United States, sought control of vast areas of territory across the globe. Historian Eric Hobsbawm points out in his book *The Age of Empire* that the word **imperialism** did not come into general use until the 1890s.

pre-Columbian Americas
Central and South America before the arrival of Christopher Columbus and the subsequent European conquest of those areas

imperialism
The policy of one power imposing its control over another territory it did not previously own. This form of imperial control might be political, economic, military or cultural. In the late 19th century, it was often a combination of these.

Why imperialism?

In the years before 1914, political leaders wore the label 'imperialist' with pride. Art, music and literature presented a nation's imperialist activities as something of which to be proud. The heads of English schoolchildren were filled with stories of imperial adventures, of brave 'white' Englishmen defeating 'savages' in 'darkest Africa' while missionaries spread the Christian gospel. French imperialists claimed that they were motivated by *la mission civilisatrice* – the civilising mission.

The motivations for imperialism were varied. Source 1.1 summarises the main reasons for the growth of imperialism after 1870.

Imperial conflict

Imperial clashes were a feature of international relations in the decades before 1914. Some areas were uncontested, such as British India and French Indochina. In other areas, agreements were reached not to annex territory but rather to create concessions or **spheres of influence**, as happened in China. Central and South America had thrown off nearly all European colonial control.

However, the situation was different in Africa. As the 'dark continent' was opened up, European powers became involved in a 'scramble for Africa', each trying to gain territory and influence. Competition became intense as the most desirable parts of the continent were quickly seized. Source 1.2 shows the extent of European control of Africa before 1914.

Imperial conflict was the result of several factors:

- Those powers that were late into the 'imperial game', such as Germany and Italy, were jealous of those powers with established empires, such as Britain and France.
- Germany's ruler, Kaiser Wilhelm II, demanded that his nation deserved to have its 'place in the sun'. His insistence brought Germany into direct confrontation with Britain and France.
- As nations expanded their control, rival imperialisms 'bumped into each other', as happened with Russia and Japan in the Far East, and Britain and France in the Sudan.
- The drive to imperialism was a key factor that led to a naval arms race, particularly between Britain and Germany. This factor did much to poison relations between these two powers.

sphere of influence
A territory under the control or influence of a particular power that had not been annexed. Other powers would accept this situation.

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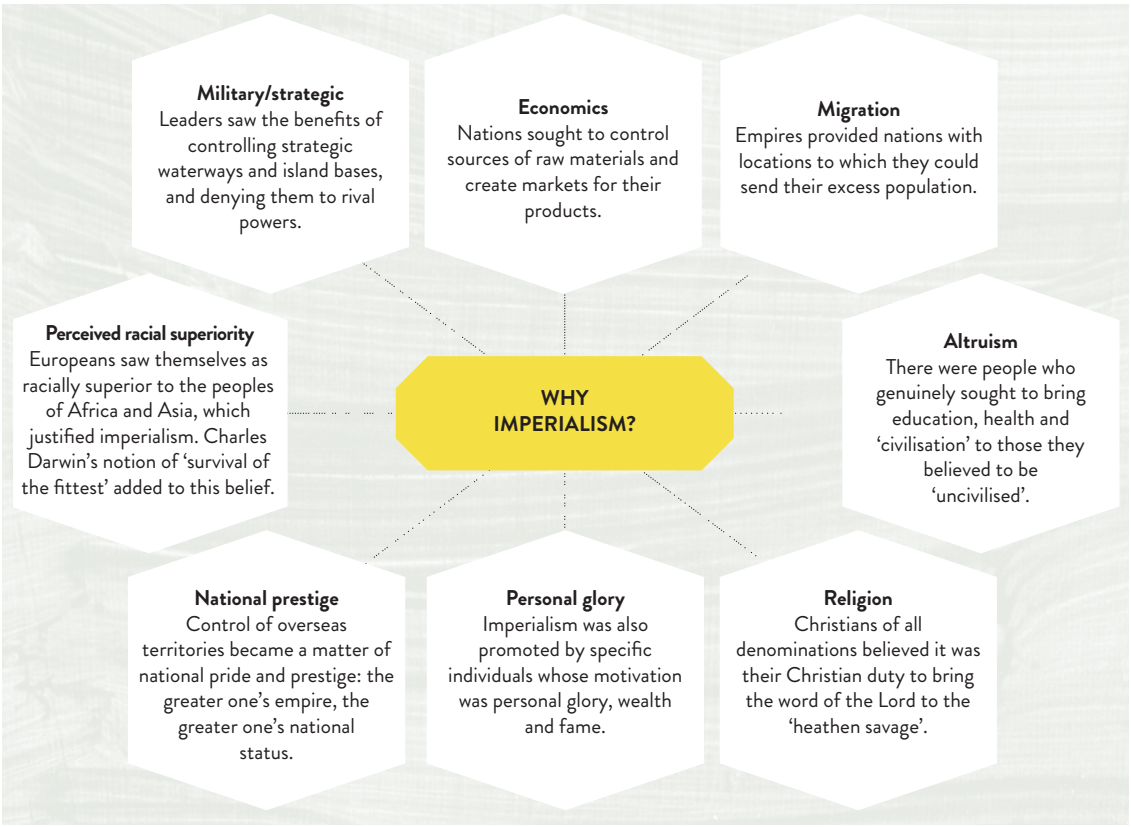
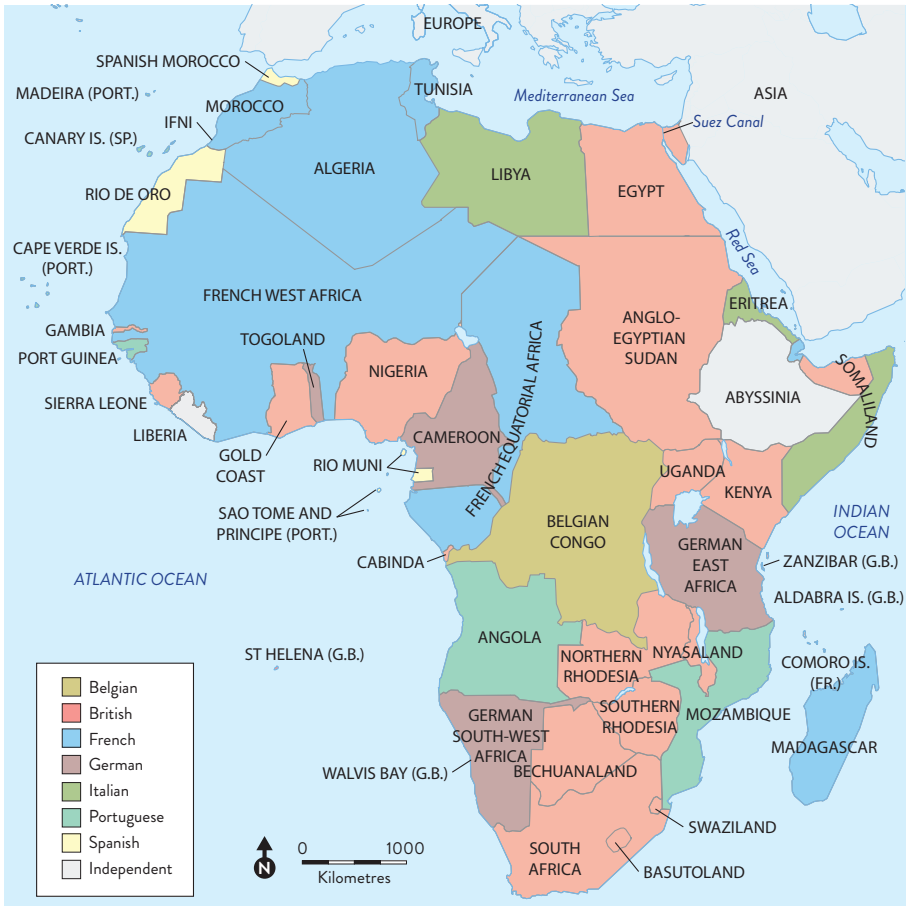


SOURCE 1.1 Reasons for the growth of imperialism after 1870



SOURCE 1.2 European colonies in Africa, c. 1914

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Imperial clashes sometimes came close to violent conflict, and occasionally resulted in actual war. Table 1.1 summarises some of the main imperial conflicts that occurred in the years before 1914.

TABLE 1.1 Imperial conflicts before 1914

REGION	POWERS INVOLVED	DATE	NATURE OF THE CONFLICT
Egypt/Sudan	Britain, France	1898	Britain and France had jointly run Egypt, but by 1882 Britain's sole control was complete. Britain and France now vied for control of the Sudan. Rival French and British forces met at Fashoda in 1898. An error by either commander would have brought on war. Public opinion in Paris and London was at fever pitch, but the politicians managed to calm things. Britain's position in the Sudan was accepted.
Southern Africa	Britain, Germany	1890s–1902	Rivalry between Britain and Germany was heightened with the discovery of precious metals in the Boer republics of Orange and Transvaal. In 1895, the prime minister of Britain's Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, supported the Jamieson raid on the Transvaal that aimed to overthrow its leader, Paul Kruger. The raid failed and Kaiser Wilhelm II openly supported Kruger. Between 1899 and 1902, Britain was at war with the Boers. Britain struggled to overcome the Boer forces. Germany's openly strong sympathies for the Boers and its publicising of British concentration camps further strained relations between Britain and Germany.
Morocco	France, Germany	1905, 1911	Morocco had become a French sphere of influence. With its Atlantic coastline and command of the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco was strategically very important. In 1905, the Kaiser arrived in Tangier and announced his support for Moroccan independence. This angered France (and Britain). In 1911, Germany sent a warship, the *Panther*, to the port of Agadir, following disturbances in the Moroccan town of Fez. This reckless action caused alarm across Europe, and Britain placed its fleet on a war footing.
The Far East	Russia, Japan	1904–05	Russia had steadily expanded its empire eastwards and by 1900 had reached the shores of the Pacific. Japan had fought and won a war against China in 1894–95 that gave it effective control of Korea. Russia and Japan now both greedily eyed Manchuria, nominally under Chinese control. Japan attacked the Russian port of Port Arthur in February 1904. Russia was decisively defeated in the war that followed and was forced to sue for peace. The Russo-Japanese War finally ended with the Treaty of Portsmouth in September 1905.
Persia	Britain, Russia	ongoing	Anglo-Russian tension arose because Britain feared for its Indian possessions as Russia expanded southwards. Potential conflict centred on Persia, a situation exacerbated by the discovery of oil in that country.

Boer War: Group work

1. Define the term 'imperialism'.
2. How was imperialism viewed by most people in Europe before 1914?
3. What was Kaiser Wilhelm's attitude to imperialism?
4. Why were Britain and France so concerned about Germany's interest in Morocco?

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The Russo-Japanese War

Japan achieved a decisive victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese war. After a siege of 11 months, Japanese forces captured Port Arthur. They were also successful at the Battle of Mukden in March 1905, a battle which utilised trench warfare extensively. Mukden was the biggest battle in history up to this point in time. The Russian Baltic fleet took several months to sail from its base in St Petersburg, around Africa, finally reaching the war zone in May 1905. The entire fleet was sent to the bottom by Japanese naval forces in less than an hour at the Battle of Tsushima. Following the intervention of US President Theodore Roosevelt, the two nations finally reached a peace settlement with the Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire, USA) in September 1905. Russia's humiliation as a result of the war was a factor that led to revolution in 1905, while, after its stunning victory, Japan now had to be accepted as a major power.

Alamy Stock Photo/INTERFOTO

SOURCE 1.3 Japanese depiction of the Battle of Tsushima

Was imperialism a cause of World War I?

Russo-Japanese War

The case 'for'

Imperialism can clearly be seen as a factor that harmed international relations before 1914 and so can arguably be seen as a cause of the war. Outright conflict was often only narrowly averted, as between France and Italy in 1881 over North Africa, Britain and France at Fashoda, in the Sudan, and Germany and Britain during the Boer War. Colonial conflicts stimulated the alliance system. Italy's decision to join Germany and Austria in 1882 was partly the result of its colonial disagreements with France. Improved relations between Britain and France were in large part the result of their mutual concerns over Germany. Imperialism both stimulated and was stimulated by the growing sense of nationalism of the period. Nationalism in turn stimulated aggressive behaviour on the part of nations in pre-1914 incidents such as the Kaiser's behaviour in Morocco. Imperialism made necessary the creation of large fleets. This was a key factor in stimulating the dangerous arms race that was such a feature of pre-1914 Europe. Thus, it can be argued that imperialism was clearly a strong factor behind the war of 1914.

The case 'against'

Imperialism clearly had little to do with the war of 1914. Europe's powers did not take the decision to go to fight in 1914 because of South Africa, Morocco or the Sudan. Powers that had had imperial disagreements often found themselves fighting on the same side in 1914, such as Britain and France.

WS

Lloyd George's Mansion House speech, July 1911

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Boxer Rebellion
An attempt by Chinese nationalists in 1900 to remove Western influence from their country. The Western powers worked together to suppress the rebellion and impose on China the Boxer Protocol of 1901.

In a real sense, imperialism, rather than leading to war, acted as a kind of safety valve delaying war. Colonial disagreements occurred far from Europe. By sapping the energies of the European powers, it made conflict in Europe less likely. Indeed, European tensions only began to rise substantially once the race for colonies had died down. There is also plenty of evidence to suggest that the European powers were able to settle imperial matters peacefully. The 1884–85 Berlin Conference helped calm matters in Africa, while the 1906 Algeciras Conference was able to settle affairs after the Tangier Incident of 1905. The **Boxer Rebellion** in China in 1900 shows how easily the various imperial powers were able to act cooperatively. Thus, it can be argued that imperialism clearly had little to do with bringing on war in 1914.

Niall Ferguson

Niall Ferguson is one of Britain's leading historians. His book *The Pity of War* attempts to challenge some of the widely accepted notions about the origins and nature of World War I. Ferguson argues that imperial rivalry cannot be seen as a cause of the war in 1914. He shows that there was intense rivalry between Britain and France from Fashoda to Siam, and between Britain and Russia from Constantinople to Afghanistan.

In the extract that follows, Ferguson explains how imperial rivalries were seen by people at the time.

> If there was a war which imperialism should have caused it was the war between Britain and Russia which failed to break out in the 1870s and 1880s; or the war between Britain and France which failed to break out in the 1880s and 1890s. These three powers were, after all, the real imperial rivals, coming into repeated conflict with one another … Few contemporaries in 1895 would have predicted that they would end up fighting a war on the same side within twenty years. After all, the collective diplomatic memory of the previous century was of recurrent friction between Britain, France and Russia …
>
> … Reflecting in 1888 on the challenges the British army might have to face in the future, the Liberal politician Sir Charles Dilke mentioned 'only Russia and France' as potential foes. 'Between ourselves and France differences are frequent, and between ourselves and Russia war is one day almost certain.' As late as 1901 the First Sea Lord, the Earl of Selborne, felt it necessary to warn that the combined battleship fleets of France and Russia would soon be equal to that of the Royal Navy.
>
> The idea of an alternative world war, with Britain fighting both France and Russia in theatres as far afield as the Mediterranean, the Bosphorus, Egypt and Afghanistan strikes us today as inconceivable. But at the time such a scenario was less implausible than the notion of British alliances with France and Russia, both of which had for years seemed impossible – 'foredoomed to failure', in [British politician Joseph] Chamberlain's phrase …
>
> N Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, Penguin, London, 1999, pp. 39, 45

QUESTIONS

1. In the 1890s, why would people in Europe not have expected Britain, France and Russia to be fighting on the same side in a future war?
2. Fear or concern of which country is noticeably absent from the thinking of Sir Charles Dilke and the Earl of Selborne?
3. What was Joseph Chamberlain's view of a possible alliance of Britain with France or Russia?
4. What events after 1900 might have changed the views of Dilke, Selborne and Chamberlain?

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Nationalism before 1914

Nationalism was a major factor that contributed to the environment that made war possible in 1914. History has shown that, along with religion, people are more willing to go off to war and kill other people for nationalism than for any other cause. It was in the 19th century that nationalism took on its emotional essence. This is not surprising when one considers the bloody struggles that were endured by people seeking their national independence in such nations as Greece, Germany and Italy.

What is nationalism?

For people in countries such as France and Britain, nations that had existed for hundreds of years, nationalism could be equated with simple patriotism, a love of one's country. Nationalism could also be seen as a pride in one's nation's achievements and unquestioning loyalty to one's nation. This would apply to a new nation such as Germany. However, nationalism also existed for people who lacked a country of their own, such as the Poles and the Slavs. For these people, nationalism meant a feeling of national consciousness.

The impact of nationalism

In pre-1914 Europe, nationalism could be either 'integrative' or 'disintegrative'. For nations such as Britain, France and Germany, nationalism was able to pull a country together, inspire the people for a common cause, and in 1914 it was successfully used to convince many young men to fight for God, king and country. However, in a nation such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, nationalism worked to pull a country apart. Austria was a multinational state that contained many national groups that did not wish to be under Austrian rule. Such groups included Poles, Czechs and the various Slav groups in the Balkans. The aim of nationalism here was to destroy a nation and create new ones. Nationalism in the Balkans was a fundamental issue in the environment that made war possible in 1914. (This will be covered in Chapter 2.)

Nationalism had a dangerous impact on prewar Europe:

- It was closely linked to imperialism. Nationalist fervour at home could be raised to fever pitch over conflicts in distant places. This was seen during the 1898 Fashoda Incident and during the Boer War.
- The spread of education in countries such as Britain made it easy for the government to promote nationalist thinking. Pride in nation and empire were essential parts of a child's education. The heads of children were filled with stirring stories of explorers, adventurers and heroic soldiers in *Boy's Own* comics and books. National churches were invariably nationalistic, seen most prominently during the war.
- A literate population was able to devour the popular tabloid newspapers, which had massive circulations by 1900. In Britain, newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* regularly used outlandish headlines and simplified stories to promote national pride and denigrate other nations and their leaders, especially the German Kaiser.
- In Britain and Germany, a 'penny press' grew. Serialised novels and stories about spies and possible enemy invasions added to the feeling that nations had natural enemies. One of the most popular novels of the time was Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903). Writers of such works were not interested in subtlety. Racial stereotyping presented Russians as uncultured barbarians and Germans as cold, cruel and humourless.
- In some countries, nationalism was closely identified with respect for the military and pride in military power. This was seen very clearly in the Anglo-German naval arms race that developed after 1900. This aspect of the impact of nationalism will be discussed on the next page in the section on militarism.

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- After 1900, nationalism took on a more extreme form in Britain, known as 'jingoism'. Jingoism had several elements. It argued that one's country could never be wrong. It promoted an aggressive foreign policy and accepted that the threat of force, or actual force, was a valid method for a country to use to achieve its objectives. It came to real prominence in Britain during the Boer War.

Nationalism cannot be seen as a direct cause of World War I. Europe's leaders did not commit to war in 1914 because they were nationalists. However, as with imperialism, nationalism contributed to an environment that made war possible.

Alamy Stock Photo/Chronicle

SOURCE 1.4 Displays of nationalist sentiment, such as this British float from around 1900, were common prior to World War I.

Nationalism

1. What was the nature of nationalism in prewar Germany?
2. How did nationalism manifest itself in Britain?
3. What was the attitude of Austria-Hungary to nationalism?

Militarism before 1914

In early 1914, United States President Woodrow Wilson sent one of his chief advisers, Colonel Edward House, to Europe to assess the European situation. House's report to Wilson contained pessimistic and, as it turned out, accurate observations. House told Wilson that Europe was a continent dominated by jealousies, hatreds and suspicions that threatened peace. He concluded:

> The situation is extraordinary. It is militarism run stark mad. Unless someone acting for you can bring about a different understanding, there is some day to be an awful cataclysm …
>
> Colonel EM House, Memo to President Woodrow Wilson, May 1914

A few years after the war, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Britain's former Foreign Secretary (1905–16), commented on Colonel House's mission in his memoirs.

> Earlier in the summer Colonel House had been in London and I had seen him then. He had just come from Berlin, and he had spoken with grave feeling of the impression he had received there; how the air seemed full of the clash of arms, of readiness to strike … House was a man of exceptional knowledge and cool judgment. What if this militarism had now taken control of policy [in Berlin]?
>
> Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years: 1892–1916*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1925, p. 323

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The term 'militarism' can refer to several things, all of which were prevalent in Europe in the years before 1914. A society might be considered to be 'militarist' if the military caste plays a major role in the development of government policy. Militarism can refer to a society in which the military is given respect and honour above other groups in society. The term can also relate to the sort of government that maintains a high level of military preparedness, and that might show a willingness to pursue its aims by military means or the threat of military means.

Germany

- Germany was arguably the most militarist society before 1914. The officer class was highly respected in that country and young men from upper-class families would not hesitate to pursue a military career above all else.
- The Kaiser frequently identified himself with the army and on more than one occasion stated that he placed his trust in the army. Army leaders were ultimately answerable to the Kaiser, who styled himself as the supreme war lord.
- Military figures were concocting German military strategy with only a cursory reference to civilian leaders. In 1905, the Chief of the General Staff, Count Alfred von Schlieffen, designed a strategy for future military action that involved a German attack on France by means of a rapid and massive advance through Belgium and the Netherlands. This 'Schlieffen Plan' was later modified by his successor, Helmuth von Moltke. Schlieffen and Moltke discussed the plan with their civilian 'masters' in only the most general terms.
- Naval policy was dominated by Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz. His influence led Germany into a costly naval arms race with Britain, which seriously harmed relations with that country (see page 16).

France

- France had a proud military tradition stretching back to the days of Napoleon. However, the influence of the military on French policy was far weaker than in Germany. The long drawn-out **Dreyfus Affair** had done much to lower the prestige of the army in France.
- In the years immediately before 1914, it seemed to be France's civilian leaders who displayed militarist tendencies, in particular President Raymond Poincaré. In July 1913, compulsory military service was increased from two to three years. In May 1913, the French Supreme War Council adopted Plan XVII, which laid out plans for a thrust into Germany in the event of war.
- If anything, French military leaders could be criticised for overconfidence. In late 1913, General Edouard de Castelnau had boasted that with 700 000 men he could conquer Europe.

Dreyfus Affair
Captain Alfred Dreyfus was a French Army officer who had been falsely accused of crimes against his country. It became clear that the only reason that charges had been laid against him was because he was Jewish. He was eventually exonerated after a long campaign to prove his innocence.

Other countries

- Austria-Hungary had a long and proud military tradition and its Chief of Staff, General Conrad von Hötzendorf, certainly had 'bellicose tendencies', as Winston Churchill once put it. However, Austria's willingness to fight in July 1914 had much more to do with its 'blank cheque' from Germany than any militarist influence in the Austrian Government (see Chapter 2).
- Russia too had a long military tradition. However, the humiliation of its defeat against Japan in 1905 had weakened the influence of the military. Russia's key military figures were the Minister of War, General Vladimir Sukhomlinov, and the Chief of the General Staff, General Nikolai Yanushkevich. Both were noted more for their incompetence and lack of experience than any influence on government policy. In Russia, it was Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov who was most influential (see Chapter 2).
- Britain was the least militarist of the major powers before 1914. Though it too could boast a proud military tradition, with past victories at Agincourt (1415) and Waterloo (1815), it had long been the practice in Britain for civilian leaders to maintain control over the military. Britain had only a small standing army and did not have conscription as in most other European countries. It was always assumed that if an army was required, volunteers would rush to fill the ranks.

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- Britain's strength lay in its navy, for which there was certainly national pride. When threatened by German naval construction after 1900, Britain was ready and able to forcefully maintain what it saw as its necessary naval superiority (see below).

Militarism should not be viewed as a direct cause of World War I. Rather, as with other developments before 1914, the presence of militarism did much to increase tension, suspicion and distrust among the powers, which made war possible.

The naval arms race before 1914

Imperialism, nationalism, jingoism and militarism came together in the naval arms race that was such a major feature of Anglo-German relations before 1914. Imperialists argued that the demands of empire protection required a strong navy. A strong navy became bound up with elements of national pride, and in Britain such feelings reached almost hysterical, jingoistic proportions. Military men in both countries argued that for reasons of national defence, naval expenditure could not be reduced.

In 1889, Britain introduced the two-power rule. This stated that its navy needed to be stronger than the combined strength of its two main rivals, who at that time were France and Russia. Britain's island security, economic prosperity and imperial power depended on a strong navy, and political leaders believed that an invasion of Britain would always be impossible as long as 'Britannia ruled the waves'.

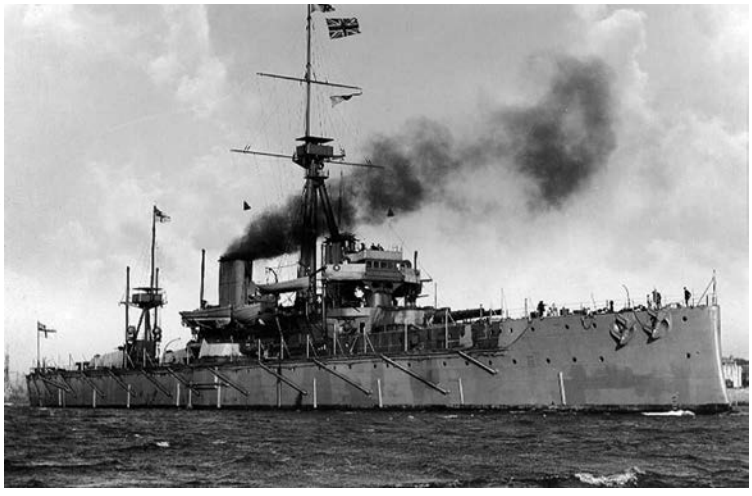
However, from the late 1890s, Britain's naval supremacy became threatened by Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II urged the policy of ***Weltpolitik***, and to this end he urged German naval construction. In 1898, Admiral von Tirpitz introduced Germany's First Naval Law. A Second Naval Law was introduced in 1900 that aimed to double the size of Germany's navy. Britain was now becoming alarmed at Germany's policies, a factor that led it to sign the **Entente Cordiale** with France in 1904 (see page 19).

Weltpolitik
German, meaning 'world power'. It refers to the Kaiser's desire for Germany to develop a global role.

Entente Cordiale
French, meaning the 'friendly agreement' between Britain and France that settled many longstanding colonial differences

In 1906, Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Fisher, initiated an expansion of naval forces. A key element in this was the introduction of a new type of battleship, the dreadnought. The dreadnought was faster than any other ship of its time, able to reach speeds of 21 knots (40 kilometres per hour) thanks to its steam turbine engines. It had 10 305-millimetre long-range guns and torpedoes. A year later, the German Navy started building its own dreadnought-style vessel, the *Nassau*. In 1908, a new German Naval Law proposed the construction of four dreadnoughts to be built each year between 1908 and 1911.

The press raised public feeling in Britain to fever pitch and there was a clamour for greater British naval construction. The popular slogan of the time was 'We want eight and we won't wait'. Britain sought a naval truce with Germany, but to no avail. In 1912, the two-power rule was dropped and British policy now became to maintain a navy that was 60 per cent larger than that of Germany. In 1912, agreement had been reached with France for Britain to concentrate its navy in the North Sea and for France to concentrate its navy in the Mediterranean due to the perceived threat from Germany.



Alamy Stock Photo/PJF Military Collection

SOURCE 1.5 HMS *Dreadnought* was the most powerful naval vessel of its day. Its development triggered a naval arms race between Germany and Britain.

By 1914, Britain had clearly won the naval arms race. It had 14 dreadnoughts, with another 13 under construction; Germany had 13, with seven under construction.

Can the naval arms race be seen as a cause of World War I? The worst of the naval competition was over by 1912; indeed, in the years immediately

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preceding the war, relations between Britain and Germany had improved. However, the hysteria that the arms race produced further added to the environment that was to make war possible. Britain and Germany now saw themselves as major rivals, if not enemies. It pulled Britain and France closer together due to their concerns over Germany. Naval expansion was accompanied by military build-ups across Europe. The massive growth in military and naval expenditures added a volatile factor to the international mix as each nation's feeling of strength, or concern at a rival's growing strength, might encourage reckless behaviour, as was to be seen in 1914.

HMS *Dreadnought*

1. In which European countries was militarism particularly strong before 1914?
2. What role did Tirpitz and Fisher play in the naval arms race?
3. How was British public opinion affected by the naval arms race?

The alliance system

The tensions and suspicions that were developing in the years before 1914 were made all the more dangerous because of the system of alliances that dominated European diplomacy. Military alliances had not been a feature of European diplomacy for most of the 19th century.

After 1871, the German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, endeavoured to maintain the peace of Europe, primarily so that he could set about developing his new country. Bismarck realised that there were two main threats to the peace of Europe, a vengeful France and **the Balkans**:

the Balkans
The region of south-eastern Europe bounded by the Black Sea in the east and the Adriatic Sea in the west

1. **A vengeful France.** France had been defeated in war by Prussia (now Germany) in 1871 and the call for *une guerre de revanche* (a war of revenge) was heard frequently in French political life. Germany annexed the two French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, but France was too weak to fight Germany alone. Bismarck knew that France would only act on its quest for revenge if it had an ally. Thus, Bismarck endeavoured to keep France diplomatically isolated.
2. **The Balkans.** Bismarck believed that if the peace of Europe was to be threatened, the source would come from the Balkans. Austria and Russia both ambitiously eyed the Balkans region. Bismarck aimed to prevent these two powers coming to blows over this region. (The Balkans situation is covered in detail in Chapter 2.)

The Triple Alliance

Creation of the Dual Alliance, 1879

In the mid-1870s, a Slav rebellion in the Balkans against Ottoman rule led to a war between Russia and Turkey. Bismarck called a conference of European powers in Berlin and managed to calm the situation.

However, Bismarck became concerned at the weakness of Austria. He feared that future Russian aggression in the region could lead to war between Russia and Austria, and Russian domination of the Balkans. It was this fear that led to Bismarck establishing the Dual Alliance of 1879 between Germany and Austria. By the terms of this treaty:

- each power agreed to defend the other if it were attacked by Russia
- each power agreed to defend the other if it were attacked by two or more other powers.

The treaty was clearly anti-Russian, but it was defensive in nature; no plans for war were being contemplated. However, though the treaty's existence was known, the details were secret, which caused concern and suspicion in Russia.

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From Dual Alliance to Triple Alliance, 1882

In 1881, France and Italy were in disagreement over control of Tunis in North Africa. Bismarck used this opportunity to persuade Italy to become an ally of Germany and Austria. Thus was born the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy in 1882. By the terms of this treaty:

- Italy promised to assist Germany if it were attacked by France
- Germany and Austria promised to assist Italy if it were attacked by France
- Italy would assist its allies if either were attacked by two or more powers.

This treaty was clearly anti-French, but again it was defensive in nature and no power was planning for war. In 1883, Romania joined the Triple Alliance. France's diplomatic isolation now appeared complete.

The Reinsurance Treaty, 1887

Bismarck realised that there was a danger with his diplomacy. France and Russia were now diplomatically alone; might they not decide to become allies? This would be a disaster for Germany, as in any future conflict Germany would face a war on two fronts. Bismarck skilfully dealt with this danger by persuading Russia to sign the Reinsurance Treaty of 1887. By the terms of this treaty:

- if either Germany or Russia became involved in a war with a third country, the other promised to remain neutral
- if Germany attacked France, or Russia attacked Austria, the other power did not have to remain neutral.

This was a defensive treaty and proved the brilliance of Bismarck's diplomacy. France was now totally isolated and he had ensured the Balkans would remain quiet. Neither Austria nor Russia would risk any aggressive action in the Balkans, as each could not guarantee on whose side Germany might fight. As a result, the peace of Europe was secured – at least in the short term.

Triple Alliance

The Triple Entente

Creation of the Franco-Russian Alliance, 1893

In 1888, the young Wilhelm II became German Emperor (Kaiser). Confident and ambitious, the young Kaiser was keen to play a key role in his country's affairs and be his 'own man'. Within two years, Bismarck had resigned. Bismarck was replaced as German chancellor by Count Leo von Caprivi. Caprivi lacked Bismarck's skills and he proved unable to control the Kaiser in the way that Bismarck had controlled Emperor William I.

In 1890, the Reinsurance Treaty was due for renewal. The Kaiser could not understand how Germany could have a defence treaty with both Russia and Austria, and he was also hoping to bring Britain into the Triple Alliance. However, Britain had no intention of joining an alliance, as it was preoccupied with imperial matters. As a result, the Kaiser allowed the Reinsurance Treaty to lapse.

Russia now found itself without an ally. This does not mean that Russia was expecting to be imminently attacked, but there was alarm in the Russian capital. As a result, Tsar Alexander III's advisers encouraged him to look to France. France was quite different from Russia; it was a republic and a democracy. However, Russia faced the potential of a joint German–Austrian threat in Eastern Europe while France faced the potential of a joint German–Italian threat. A series of lengthy, secret negotiations led to the signing of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1893. By the terms of this treaty:

- each promised to assist the other if it were attacked by Germany
- each promised to assist the other if it were attacked by two or more powers.

The Franco-Russian Alliance was anti-German, but it was defensive in nature. Now, however, France was no longer isolated and the possibility of trouble in the Balkans was increased. The 'Bismarckian nightmare' of the possibility of a war on two fronts had now become a reality for Germany. It also meant that if conflict between two powers arose, the creation of the rival alliances provided a mechanism that could drag in all the other powers.

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L'enfant terrible

Only two years into his reign, the young German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, was already being seen as a threat to the peace of Europe. This cartoon from *Punch* magazine provides a British perspective of the recklessness of the Kaiser and how his behaviour was being viewed. Study this cartoon carefully. The cartoonist uses the metaphor of a naughty boy dangerously trying to tip the boat, with various iconographic symbols to indicate who each person in the boat is.

The young Kaiser Wilhelm II is shown as being naughty, trying to rock the boat. His recklessness is seen as a possible threat to European peace.

The two men on the right wearing crowns represent Italy and Austria. The older man of the two, on the right, is the ageing Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria-Hungary. The younger man is King Umberto I of Italy.

The woman is Queen Victoria, representing Great Britain. The small child clambouring over her is her three-year-old grand-daughter Ena (Victoria Eugenie), who would later become Queen of Spain.

The young woman represents France. She is Marianne, a cartoonist's icon for representing that country, who is invariably presented as attractive. On her bonnet there is always a tricolour rosette – red, white and blue – again indicating that this is France.

The pleas of the people in the boat, taken literally, seek to stop the young man on the left from rocking the boat for fear they will fall in the water. In this cartoon, falling in the water is taken to mean Europe ending up in war.

SOURCE 1.6 'L'enfant terrible!', *Punch*, 10 May 1890

Creation of the Entente Cordiale, 1904

The rivalry between Britain and France stretched back centuries. As late as 1898, Britain and France had come dangerously close to war during the Fashoda Incident. However, in the early years of the 20th century this historical hostility was turned on its head as the two countries moved closer together.

Britain was becoming concerned at its diplomatic isolation, something that it had valued throughout the 19th century. After its disastrous performance in the Boer War, isolation was no

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Entente Cordiale

longer seen as an advantage but a danger. In 1902, Britain signed an alliance with Japan. Britain was becoming alarmed at the reckless and erratic behaviour of the Kaiser and felt threatened by Germany's decision to build up its navy. These factors pulled Britain towards France.

France was also becoming alarmed at Germany's behaviour and readily joined Britain in 1904 in the Entente Cordiale, or 'friendly agreement'. In regard to this agreement:

- Britain and France settled various imperial issues. Britain recognised French influence in Morocco; France recognised British influence in Egypt.
- This agreement was not an alliance. No promises had been made for any assistance in the event of war.

Creation of the Anglo-Russian Entente, 1907

In the same way that Britain and France had managed to bury their long-term differences, so too did Britain and Russia. They had been imperial rivals in central Asia, and Britain had long distrusted Russian naval ambitions. However, shared concerns at German behaviour brought them together.

This agreement was not an alliance. No promises had been made about providing assistance to each in time of war.

Moving towards the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907

Study the cartoon carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Note the context. It is an afternoon tea dance, popular in high social circles in the years before 1914. The cartoon is from *Punch* magazine, 11 October 1905. Cartoonists usually depict Russia as a 'bear'; however, in this cartoon, Russia has been shown as a woman in ethnic attire (the woman on the right). The cartoonist presumably thought that a bear at an afternoon tea dance would look rather foolish. Also, of course, the cartoonist's aim is to present Russia as non-threatening.

Punch Limited/Linley Sambourne

WHY NOT?

FRANCE (to Russia). "AREN'T YOU GOING TO DANCE WITH MR. BULL?"
RUSSIA. "I THINK I SHOULD RATHER LIKE TO, IF HE WOULDN'T TREAD ON MY TOES."
FRANCE. "OH, BUT HE WON'T. HE'S IMPROVED IMMENSELY. I FIND HIM ADORABLE!"

SOURCE 1.7 'Why Not?', *Punch*, 11 October 1905

QUESTIONS

1. When 'France' asks 'Russia' if she is going to dance with Mr Bull, what diplomatic question is actually being asked?
2. What does 'Russia' mean when she says Mr Bull keeps stepping on her toes?
3. What is 'France' referring to when she says, 'Oh, but he won't. He's improved immensely. I find him adorable'?
4. Mr Bull is in the top left of the cartoon. Which country does he represent?
5. Mr Bull is standing next to a Japanese woman. What is this a reference to?

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The Franco-Russian Alliance of 1893, the Entente Cordiale of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 had now created what increasingly came to be known as the Triple Entente. The Kaiser's recklessness, German interference in Morocco, the naval arms race and events in Bosnia in 1908 (see Chapter 2) had the joint effect of pulling the three powers ever closer together. By 1912, Britain and France were holding joint naval talks at the highest level. It was clear that Europe had become divided into two clear alliance blocs, as shown in Table 1.2.

Anglo-Russian Entente

TABLE 1.2 Alliance blocs in Europe, 1914

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE	THE TRIPLE ENTENTE
Germany	France
Austria-Hungary	Russia
Italy	Great Britain

SOURCE 1.8 Europe in 1914, showing the alliance system and German encirclement

Origins of World War I

1. Why might people a few decades before 1914 have been surprised at the formation of the Triple Entente?
2. What was the Bismarckian nightmare?
3. What was the great danger for Europe of the creation of the alliance system?

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Chapter summary

- Imperialism, nationalism and militarism created tensions and suspicions between the major powers before 1914. However, it would be incorrect to see these things as direct causes of the war that came in 1914. It would be more accurate to say that they created an environment that made war possible.
- Imperialism was pursued by most European powers before 1914 for a range of reasons, including economics, religion and national pride.
- As the imperialist powers pursued their interests across the world, conflicts arose, and occasionally even erupted into open warfare.
- The imperial conflicts were between Britain and France, Britain and Russia, and Britain/France and Germany.
- Though imperialism caused tensions before 1914, it can be strongly argued that it delayed European hostilities rather than caused them.
- Nationalism was a key feature of European life before 1914 and was often associated with imperialism and militarism. In Britain, it developed into a more extreme form known as jingoism.
- The popular media frequently encouraged nationalist feeling, often presenting complex issues in a simplistic way that inflamed popular feeling about certain issues, such as naval construction.
- Militarism was an important aspect of German society and government. Militarist influence was weaker in other European nations, and in Britain it was minimal.
- The Anglo-German naval arms race did much to poison Anglo-German relations in the years before 1914. Britain felt threatened by German naval expansion, while Germany was aggrieved at its apparent inferior naval status.
- Britain won the naval arms race and by 1912 the naval competition seemed to have died down.
- Anglo-German relations were often tense before 1914. This was the result of imperial rivalry, economic competition, the naval arms race and the often reckless and unpredictable behaviour of Kaiser Wilhelm II.
- By 1914, Europe had become divided into rival alliance blocs. The Triple Alliance comprised Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy; the Triple Entente comprised France, Russia and Britain.
- The main danger of the alliance system was that if a localised crisis occurred between two powers, there was a strong chance that other powers could be dragged into the conflict, even if they had no direct interest in the original issue.

Further resources

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who were the main imperial powers before 1914?
2. Give four reasons European powers were so keen to pursue imperialism before 1914.
3. Where did France and Britain clash over imperial interests in 1898? Why was this clash so serious?
4. How complete was Japan's victory over Russia in the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War?
5. What is Niall Ferguson's view of the importance of imperialism as a cause of World War I?
6. Give three reasons for the deterioration of Anglo-German relations in the years before 1914.
7. What was the difference between French nationalism and Polish nationalism before 1914?
8. Suggest two ways in which militarism was a key feature of pre-1914 German society and government.
9. Why did the launch of the first dreadnought in 1906 have such an impact on naval policy before 1914?
10. Outline the creation of the two rival alliance blocs in Europe before 1914.

Who and when?

Churchill's speech, February 1912

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISES

11. Explain how militarism, the naval arms race and the development of the alliance system combined to foment tension and suspicion in Europe before 1914.
12. To what extent was imperialism responsible for the worsening of European relations in the years before 1914?
13. Assess the role of nationalism in the heightening of tensions in Europe before 1914.

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02

The outbreak of war

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- the outbreak of war in 1914, the Western and Eastern fronts, and why it became the world's first global conflict.

A large crowd of British people celebrating the declaration of war on Germany, Trafalgar Square, London, 30 July 1914

Getty Images/Universal History Archive

Introduction

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was assassinated on 28 June 1914. Franz Ferdinand's murder set off a string of events that within six weeks had engulfed the continent in a war that involved all the major powers. By the time the guns fell silent at the end of 1918, over 30 nations had become involved in the war. The major theatres of war were the Western Front, the Eastern Front and the Balkans, but the war also became global, with hostilities spreading from Europe to the deserts of the Middle East, to China, New Guinea and Africa.

Few people in late June 1914 were expecting that the continent would be ablaze with war within weeks. Northern Europe was experiencing a golden summer and factory workers were contemplating a brief break at the seaside. Europe's leaders were not poring over maps and planning military strategy; instead, they were on holidays themselves. Only days before the assassination, top British naval officers were attending the annual German Navy regatta at Kiel and German Admiral Hans von Koester was describing Anglo-German relations as the best imaginable.

Two key issues need to be examined. First, why would a murder in an obscure Balkan town precipitate a war? Why was the Balkans such a powder keg? Second, how did a local political murder bring about a continent-wide war? For a hundred years, historians have debated how this happened. Was it inevitable? Did Europe's leaders lose control of the situation? Did war come about because of incompetence or deliberate calculation?

The outbreak of war in 1914

1878 Congress of Berlin. Austria now administers Bosnia-Herzegovina, though it remains nominally under the control of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey).

1908 The Young Turk Revolution

Austria annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina

Germany warns Russia not to make any moves, following Austria's action

1911 Italy takes control of the Ottoman (Turkish) province of Libya

1912 The First Balkan War

Montenegro declares war on Turkey

Turkey is defeated by the combined forces of Montenegro, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria

1913 **May** Treaty of London. Creation of the new state of Albania

June The Second Balkan War

Bulgaria attacks Serbia and Greece

Bulgaria is defeated by Serbia, Greece and Romania

August The Treaty of Bucharest

1914 **28 June** Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo

6 July Germany gives Austria 'the blank cheque'

21 July Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov tells Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold there must be no ultimatum sent to Serbia

23 July Austria issues a 10-point ultimatum to Serbia

25 July Tsar Nicholas II ratifies the decree for partial mobilisation

Serbia accepts nine of the 10 points of the ultimatum

26 July Russia begins its period 'preparatory to war'

28 July Austria declares war on Serbia

30 July Tsar Nicholas orders general mobilisation

31 July Germany gives Russia an ultimatum to stop general mobilisation

Russia rejects the ultimatum

1 August France orders general mobilisation

Germany orders general mobilisation

Germany declares war on Russia

3 August Germany declares war on France

British Foreign Secretary Grey argues in the House of Commons the case for war, if Germany violates Belgian neutrality

German troops enter Belgium

4 August British ultimatum to Germany expires

Britain declares war on Germany

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The Balkans

The Balkans region is situated in south-eastern Europe. For centuries, the region had been dominated by the Ottoman Empire (Turkey); indeed, in the 17th century, Ottoman control extended as far as Vienna. However, by the 19th century, Turkey was in steady economic, political and military decline, and had become known as the 'sick man of Europe'. Its hold on the region was lessening. By the early years of the 20th century, several new states had been created out of former Turkish territory. These included Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. The province of Bosnia-Herzegovina was still nominally Turkish but had been under Austrian administration since the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Turkey still precariously held on to territory bounded by Greece in the south, Serbia and Bulgaria in the north, the Adriatic Sea in the west and the Black Sea in the east.

As Turkey continued its decline, the Balkans region became the focus of rival ambitions.

SOURCE 2.1 The Balkans in 1908

Russian interest

Russia's main interest in the region was the acquisition of a warm-sea port.

- Russia's Baltic ports froze for several months of the year and a naval base on the Mediterranean beyond **the Straits** that would be ice-free all year round had long been a key aim of Russian foreign policy. The obvious location for such a port was the Balkans.
- The Balkans was populated by Slavs who sought their national freedom from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Slavs of the Balkans and the Slavs of Russia shared a similar culture, language and religion. Russia was always eager to support its fellow Slavs and, of course, in so doing, promote its own interests.

the Straits
The waterways linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The Straits comprise the Bosporus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles.

Austrian interest

The main interest of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, also known as the Hapsburg Empire after the ruling family and sometimes simply referred to as Austria, was national survival.

- The Hapsburg Empire was a multinational empire. Its population comprised a number of different racial and ethnic groups, including Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and Romanians. The dominant group was the Slavs.
- The Slavs sought their national independence and freedom from Austrian rule. By the late 19th century, Slav ambitions became centred on the small state of Serbia, and the desire for a south Slav kingdom, 'Yugoslavia'.
- However, the success of Slav nationalism spelt the destruction of the Austrian empire and so it had to be suppressed at every opportunity. This brought Austria into direct confrontation with Russia, which sought to assist its fellow Slavs for its own purposes.

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Slav nationalist interest

The desire of the Slav nationalists was national independence.

- Throughout the 19th century, their goal had been the removal of the Turks from the Balkans. This had led to some bloody confrontations with the Turks.
- The Slavs opposed the presence of Austria in the region. Those Slavs who were under Austrian rule sought to break away from the Hapsburg Empire and their ambitions became centred upon the growth of the state of Serbia.
- The Slavs were willing to accept whatever assistance their brother Slavs in Russia might be able to offer.

Turkish interest

Turkey's aim in the Balkans was survival and preventing any more loss of prestige.

- Its survival depended on the suppression of Slav nationalism. Turkish atrocities against its subject peoples had become a feature of its rule, and on occasion brought about the intervention of other powers to protect the Slavs, such as Russia in the late 1870s.
- Turkey clearly opposed Russian involvement in the Balkans, as that could only lead to its demise.
- Its attitude to Austria was ambivalent. The Austrians, too, sought the suppression of the Slavs, but at the same time they were eager to capitalise on the misfortunes of the Turks.

SOURCE 2.2 The rival positions of the key players in the Balkans region

The Balkans: A powder keg

The problems of the Balkans region became known as the Eastern Question. Leading figures of the time knew all too well how dangerous the Balkans region could become.

The Russian ambassador to London, Alexander Gorchakov, had commented as far back as 1875:

> There are two ways of dealing with the Eastern Question. A complete reconstruction or a mere replastering which would keep matters together for another term of years. No one could possibly wish for a complete settlement – everyone must wish to put it off as long as possible.
>
> A Gorchakov, quoted in AJP Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918*, OUP, London, 1971, pp. 228–9

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In the same year, the Austrian Foreign Minister, Gyula Andrássy, expressed the fears of his country:

> … if Bosnia-Herzegovina should go to Serbia or Montenegro, or if a new state should be formed there which we cannot prevent, then we should be ruined and should ourselves assume the role of the 'Sick Man' …
>
> G Andrássy, quoted in AJP Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918*, OUP, London, 1971, p. 231

Here is the essence of the dangerous situation in the Balkans. Once the Balkan Slavs began to assert themselves and seriously pursue their dream of national independence, Austria dared not allow them to succeed. Equally, Russia dared not allow them to fail. Slav restlessness in the Balkans spelt the very strong likelihood of a major clash between Russia and Austria.

The German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, was dismissive of the Slavs; he called them 'sheep stealers'. However, these 'sheep stealers' determined Bismarck's diplomacy. After the Balkan crisis of the 1870s, which had seen Russia go to war with Turkey in defence of its brother Slavs, Bismarck had to intervene to 'plaster over' the situation as he did at the Congress of Berlin. In his diplomacy, Bismarck had always tried to avoid having to choose an ally from between Austria and Russia. However, he realised that Austria was weakening and it is this that drove him to form the Dual Alliance with Austria in 1879, the first event in the eventual development of the alliance system.

The Balkans in crisis, 1908–13

The Young Turk Revolution, 1908

Since 1876, Turkey had been ruled by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Early in his reign, the young Sultan had displayed a desire to modernise and adopt some Western ideas, such as a constitution and educational reform. However, he soon reverted to the traditional autocratic ways of Turkey's rulers. Abdul Hamid became increasingly paranoid as time went on. He employed a widespread spy system across Turkey. Fearing his army officers, he steadily underfunded the army, which of course weakened the defence of the country.

Things came to a head in mid-1908 when a group of young army officers, known as the 'Young Turks', staged a revolution against the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The Young Turks wanted to modernise their country and restore the democratic reforms of the 1870s. However, they quickly proved inept as rulers and the Sultan attempted a counter-coup. This failed and he was overthrown, to be replaced by his brother Mohammed V. Nationalist groups within the Ottoman Empire had hoped that they might gain some autonomy from their new rulers, but the Young Turk regime proved to be just as brutal and tyrannical as its predecessor.

Austria annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina

As Turkey fell into chaos after the Young Turk Revolution, Austria seized the opportunity to formally annex the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Austria had been administering this region though it remained nominally part of Turkey. Turkey was helpless to do anything about Austria's action. Russia called for an international conference to discuss the issue, but other powers were not inclined to get involved.

However, the Slavs in the region were outraged. The population of Bosnia-Herzegovina was Slav and this was a slap in the face for Slav nationalism; more Slavs were now forced to live under foreign Hapsburg rule. Serbian national sentiment against Austria reached fever pitch and there were some in the Serbian Government who wanted to take action against Austria. However, there was no chance of Serbia acting against its stronger neighbour without a guarantee of military assistance from Russia.

The Balkan crisis

At first, it appeared that Russia might intervene. However, Russia was in a weak state at this time. It had not yet recovered from its humiliating defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905, and it was

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still dealing with the after-effects of the 1905 Revolution, which came close to toppling the rule of Tsar Nicholas II. More importantly, Germany made it clear that it intended backing Austria should Russia move against it. The possibility of war was very real. In March 1909, the German Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, issued an ultimatum to Russia. He told Russia that it must accept Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and force Serbia to do the same. He told the Russian Government:

> We expect a definite answer: Yes or No; any evasive, complicated or vague answer would have to be regarded by us as a refusal. We would then withdraw and let matters take their course.
>
> B von Bülow, quoted in G Pope, *The Origins of the First World War*, IBID Press, Victoria, 2002, p. 106

Russia had no choice but to back down, as it was simply in no position to take on Germany; this was the second international humiliation in four years.

The impact of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

This crisis in the Balkans passed. However, Austria's action in 1908 had several major results:

- Russia was determined that it would never be humiliated by Germany in this way again and it immediately embarked on a massive rearmament program. It would not leave its Slav brothers in the lurch in the future, an attitude that would have major ramifications in 1914.
- Austria became convinced that it could now always rely on German support. This increased its confidence, and some in the Austrian Government openly canvassed the idea of 'dealing with Serbia' before the Slav nation became too strong.
- Slav nationalism had been inflamed. Serbia was now a bitter enemy of Austria and its prime objective became the creation of a south Slav kingdom, which could only be achieved at Austria's expense. Acts of terrorism against Austrian officials by Slav nationalists increased.
- Germany was now fully embroiled in the Balkans, as it had committed itself to Austria. Britain and France were less concerned with the region. However, Anglo-French concern at German actions in other areas, such as Morocco, had already drawn those powers closer to Russia. Thus, should Russia become embroiled in a Balkans conflict, France and Britain might easily be dragged in.
- Meanwhile, Turkey's demise continued. In 1911, Italy was able to seize the province of Libya. Libya was of little value to Italy, but it was a further sign of the decline of the 'sick man'.

1. What was Russia's main interest in the Balkans region?
2. What was Austria's main concern regarding the Balkans region?
3. What happened inside Turkey in 1908?
4. How were Russia and Germany dragged into the 1908 annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina?
5. Why did Russia not back Serbia after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina?

The Balkan Wars

The next Balkan crisis centred on the region of Macedonia. Macedonia was a complex area, still nominally under Turkish rule, full of local rivalries, ethnic diversity and suffering from centuries of Turkish rule.

The First Balkan War, 1912

The new Turkish regime tried to impose a series of uniform Western-style reforms on the area, which included the use of a common language, and a common law, but which also involved conscription into the Turkish Army. Turkey's attempt at reform was met with fierce resistance, especially the

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conscription proposal, as the various national groups feared that one day conscripted soldiers might be used against them.

On 8 October 1912, Montenegro declared war on Turkey. Within a week, Turkey also found itself at war with Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. By the end of November, Turkish forces had been routed by this 'Balkan League' and Turkish rule on the European mainland was effectively at an end. Turkey now held on to just a small parcel of land west of the Straits.

Boiling point

Alamy Stock Photo/INTERFOTO

SOURCE 2.3 'The Boiling Point', *Punch*, 2 October 1912

QUESTIONS

1. Describe what is happening in the cartoon in a literal sense, without any reference to its political meaning.
2. The five men sitting on the cauldron represent European powers. Identify them.
   - Top left, the man wearing a top hat.
   - Top right, the man wearing a military uniform – his hat is unique to his country's army
   - Centre, the man in military attire – the Pickelhaube helmet is often used by cartoonists as an icon for this country
   - Bottom right, an ageing emperor
   - Bottom left, a generic figure, representing this eastern nation
3. The cauldron that is in danger of boiling over is called 'Balkan Troubles'. To what is this referring? (Consider the cartoon's date.)
4. Why do the men look so alarmed? What point is the cartoonist making? What is he predicting if 'the cauldron boils over'?

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The war was an unmitigated disaster for Austria. Slav nationalism had won a great triumph and the restraining influence of Turkey had been destroyed. If the Slavs could bring an end to Turkish rule, why not Hapsburg rule? However, this First Balkan War did not escalate into a bigger conflict, as might have been expected, such as the Bosnia incident in 1908. An armistice was signed between Turkey and the Balkan states in December 1912. A peace treaty was signed in London in May 1913 that saw the creation of Albania.

The Second Balkan War, 1913

The victorious Balkan League members soon fell out with each other. In June 1913, feeling that it had not received its just deserts in the peace treaty, Bulgaria attacked both Serbia and Greece. The war went disastrously for Bulgaria and it suffered defeat after defeat. Turkey was able to regain land it had lost around Adrianople, and Romania entered the war against Bulgaria, taking control of the region of Dobruja. After a brief and disastrous campaign, Bulgaria sued for peace. The Second Balkan War came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest in August 1913.

As a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, the political geography of the Balkans had changed dramatically: Serbia had doubled in size; a new state of Albania had come into existence; Greece now controlled southern Macedonia; Turkey had all but been driven out of Europe; and Romania had gained Dobruja. Where did this leave Austria, Russia and Serbia?

- For Austria, the situation was disastrous. Austria now feared Serbia more than ever and there was a growing 'war party' inside the Austrian Government that was eager to crush Serbia before it became too strong. The success of Serbian arms in the recent wars and the expansion of the Serbian state was proving to be a magnet for disaffected Slavs inside the Hapsburg Empire.
- With the collapse of Turkey, Russia realised that it had an opportunity in the Balkans. However, if a newly confident and assertive Serbia decided to move against Austria, would Russia support it or would it back down humiliatingly as in 1908?
- Serbia's military successes against Turkey and Bulgaria, and the doubling of its territory in such a short time, convinced many in the Serbian Government that the tide of history was on its side; a reckoning with Austria was due.

The increasingly aggressive stances of Austria, Russia and Serbia now meant that it would be very difficult to contain any future Balkan crisis.

SOURCE 2.4 The Balkans in 1914

Examine the maps of the Balkans in 1908 (Source 2.1) and the Balkans in 1914 (Source 2.4). Identify the ways in which the political geography of the Balkans had changed between these two years.

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28 June 1914

There had been growing tensions and suspicions in Europe in the decades before 1914. There had been clashes over imperial adventures; the Kaiser's reckless behaviour and the naval arms race had done much to sour Anglo-German relations. The alliance system had solidified by 1914. In 1912 and 1913, the Balkans region witnessed open warfare. However, it would be wrong to think that throughout the first half of 1914 the people of Europe were waking up each day expecting to read about the outbreak of a European war in their newspapers. Anglo-German relations had settled down after the excitement of the naval race and even the Balkans seemed quieter. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, in June 1914, Europeans from princes and presidents to factory workers and farmers were concerned about where they might spend their summer holidays, not about any impending crisis in the Balkans.

Imagefolk/Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans

SOURCE 2.5 Archduke Franz Ferdinand with his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, and their three children.

Sarajevo

Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. The current emperor, Franz Joseph, was 84 years old and had ruled the Hapsburg Empire since 1848, and so Franz Ferdinand's succession was expected imminently. The archduke had become heir in 1896. Franz Joseph's son Rudolf had committed suicide in 1889 and succession had passed to Archduke Karl Ludwig, Franz Ferdinand's father. On Karl Ludwig's death in 1896, succession passed to his son, Franz Ferdinand.

The visit to Sarajevo

Relations between Franz Ferdinand and the emperor were cool, and worsened when the archduke disobeyed the emperor and in 1900 married Countess Sophie Chotek. Franz Joseph deemed that Sophie's social status was too low for her to be the wife of the future emperor. The price Franz Ferdinand had to pay to marry the woman he loved was to accept the **morganatic** nature of his marriage.

Though Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne, his visit to Sarajevo in June 1914 was in his capacity as Inspector-General of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. This meant that Sophie was allowed to accompany him on his official duties, which she was not normally allowed to do because of her inferior social status.

The day of the archduke's visit, 28 June, had a special significance for Franz Ferdinand and Sophie. It was the fourteenth anniversary of the day the archduke had signed the 'Oath of Renunciation', acknowledging the morganatic nature of his marriage. It was also possibly one of the worst days that could have been chosen, from an Austrian perspective. The great Serbian festival, St Vitus Day, 'Vidovdan', was celebrated on that day and so nationalist feeling was high. Even worse, 28 June was the anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, when an Ottoman Army led by Sultan Murad had defeated Serbian forces, beginning almost five centuries of Ottoman rule. Memories in the Balkans are long.

morganatic
A marriage in which the children of the king or emperor are not allowed to succeed to the throne

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ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND, 1863–1914


ImageFolk/Mary Evans Picture Library

In the popular imagination, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the man whose death began World War I. That is arguably true. However, a closer look at the archduke reveals much more. Franz Ferdinand was born on 18 December 1863. By his early twenties, he was suffering tuberculosis and he was not expected to live a long life. His mother, Princess Maria Annunciata, had died of the disease at the age of 28. One 'advantage' of his condition was that Franz Ferdinand travelled extensively to warmer climates to improve his condition.

Franz Ferdinand's travels enabled him to satisfy his passion for hunting from the jungles of India to the outback of Australia. The archduke accumulated over 100 000 hunting trophies at his country estate at Konopischt. It is estimated that he killed 2140 animals in a single day, including pheasants, elephants and partridge.

In May 1893, Franz Ferdinand visited Australia. At first he showed amazement at the strange wildlife that he encountered. However, his curiosity was quickly overtaken by his desire to hunt. Soon after his arrival in Sydney, he was taken to inland New South Wales, where he targeted native animals. His tally included eight koalas, two platypuses and dozens of kangaroos.

> Over the course of his life, records show, the archduke managed to snuff the life out of 274 899 animals. Until, of course, that fateful day in Sarajevo a century ago, when he found himself at the wrong end of a gun.
>
> Those meticulous records also show that a number of exotic birds from numerous points of Franz Ferdinand's world tour completed the journey back to Vienna alive, where they found new homes in the royal menagerie at Schönbrunn Palace. Among them were souvenirs of the archduke's Australian travels: kookaburras and cockatoos, blissfully unaware just how lucky they were to be alive.
>
> Peter Monteath, *The Australian*, 14 June 2014

The Black Hand

The Black Hand and Gavrilo Princip

Terrorism was not unknown in the Balkans. During the early years of the 20th century, there had been several terrorist acts committed against Austrian officials by Slav nationalists and within Serbia against government and royal figures. Gavrilo Princip was a radical Serb nationalist from Bosnia. It was on his possibly romantic urging that a plot was concocted to assassinate the archduke. So amateurish were the preparations and so inexperienced the would-be assassins, at the time it seemed their plans had little chance of success. Princip had been a member of the Narodna Odbrana (National Defence), a Serb organisation that had been created in 1908 to oppose Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

By 1914, Princip, 18 years old but thin and in poor health, had slipped away from active involvement in anti-Austrian activities, but he was still in touch with some members of the Narodna Odbrana and its more extreme offshoot, the Ujedinjenje ili Smrt (Union of Death). This latter group were popularly known as the 'Black Hand'.

When Princip knew that the archduke was planning to visit Sarajevo, the idea of an assassination plot formed in his mind.


ImageFolk/World History Archive

SOURCE 2.6 Gavrilo Princip, after his arrest in 1914 following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand

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The assassination

By Sunday 28 June, the archduke and his wife had been in the Sarajevo region for three days and he was eager to return to more familiar Germanic surroundings. The final day of the visit would involve a drive through the town, down the Appel Quay, which ran parallel to the Miljacka River, functions at the Town Hall and the Governor's House and other minor formalities. There would have been no great mystery about the route that the archduke's motorcade would take; Sarajevo was a small town.

The mood in the town seemed surprisingly welcoming. On the previous Friday, Franz Ferdinand and Sophie had driven around in an open car and were welcomed by cheering, not assassins' bullets. The mayor of Sarajevo, Fehim Efendi, had encouraged his citizens to display their hospitality and they had responded. The archduke was met warmly at an impromptu visit to the bazaar on Friday evening, and on Sunday the streets were bedecked with flags, flowers and portraits of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie.

However, Sunday was different. The official itinerary, along with specific timings, had been published the day before. Princip and his six would-be assassins were ready. They struck as the archduke's car drove eastward along Appel Quay. AJP Taylor describes the amateurish nature of their attempts.

> As the archduke drove along, the first conspirator could not get his revolver out of his pocket because the crowd was too tight, and the second thought a policeman was looking at him, the third felt sorry for the archduke's wife. The fourth simply went home. The fifth threw his bomb which missed though it injured one equerry. The sixth, Gavrilo Princip, having heard the bomb go off, thought 'Ah, it has succeeded' and stepped aside. At the moment the procession drove by, Princip realised that it had failed. He sat down in a café, very gloomy.
>
> AJP Taylor, *How Wars Begin*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1979, pp. 102–3

The archduke was furious. The motorcade continued to the town hall for the reception. Afterwards, Franz Ferdinand demanded to be taken to the hospital to visit those who had been wounded in the earlier attack. This would have involved a quick drive westwards along Appel Quay. However, the driver had not been told of the change of plans and he slowed and turned right into Franz Josef Street, opposite the Lateiner Bridge. Sean McMeekin describes the scene that followed, which was to have such a dramatic impact on the history of the world.

> Realising the error, Potiorek ordered the driver to turn back just as they rounded the sharp corner in front of the spice emporium. After hitting the brakes, the archduke's chauffeur struggled for a fatal moment before he could shift the car into reverse gear. Gavrilo Princip thus found his target sitting motionless for a period of two or three seconds, just 2.5 metres (8 feet) away, with Count Harrach – acting as bodyguard – marooned helplessly on the wrong side of the car. Stepping in to point blank range, Princip fired two shots with his Browning pistol. The first pierced Franz Ferdinand's neck and the second Sophie's abdomen … By eleven thirty am on 28 June 1914, Ferdinand and Sophie were dead.
>
> S McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War*, Icon, London, 2014, p. 20

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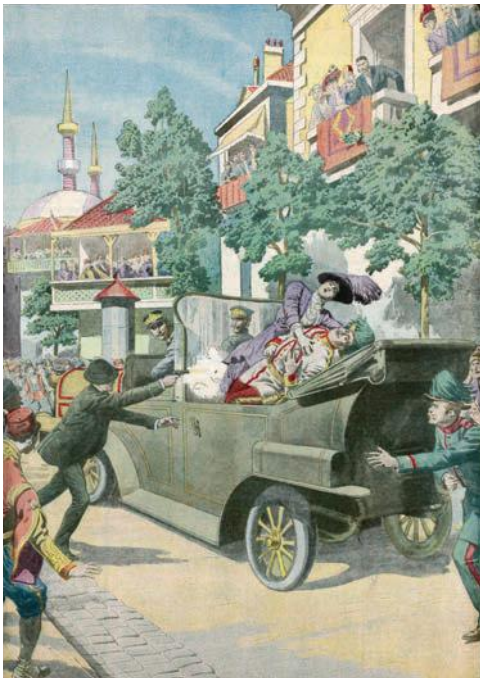
SOURCE 2.7 The site of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, taken from the Lateiner Bridge in Sarajevo



Imagefolk/Mary Evans Picture Library

SOURCE 2.8 A contemporary illustration of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand

The July Crisis: The road to war

Europe was shocked by Franz Ferdinand's murder, but violence in politics was not unknown, especially in the volatile Balkans region. Soon the continent returned to normal, which for many – leaders included – meant taking advantage of a glorious summer. Thoughts of war were not in the air – except, that is, in Vienna.

The view from Vienna

There had been a 'war' party within the Austrian Government for many years. These were men who firmly believed that the survival of the Hapsburg Empire depended on the destruction of Serbia before the Slav nation became too strong. Prominent among the war party was the Chief of the Austrian General Staff, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf. Conrad owed his appointment as Chief of the General Staff in 1906, and his reappointment in 1912, to Franz Ferdinand. However, his bellicosity after the assassination went well beyond feelings of personal loyalty.

Conrad took it for granted that Slav terrorists were behind the assassination, and accepted without question that they were acting under the direction of the Serbian Government. He called the assassination a declaration of war by Serbia on Austria-Hungary. Between January 1913 and June 1914, Conrad had urged the Austrian Government to go to war with Serbia on 25 occasions.

However, Austrian Government investigations showed that there had been no official Serbian Government involvement in the assassination. The former German Chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, later wrote in his memoirs that the evidence proved that Serbia had not instigated the assassination, nor did it desire it. Bülow's argument was that Serbia was exhausted after two wars in two years and the last thing it needed was a third war against Austria.

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The view from Berlin

Conrad and others in the Vienna war party were confident that they could quickly defeat the Serbian Army. However, they knew all too well that if Austria moved against Serbia, Russia was very likely to act in support of its Slav ally. As a result, Austria needed to know the attitude of its key ally, Germany. If Russia went to war with Austria in support of Serbia, would Germany come to Austria's aid?

From Germany's perspective, the ideal post-assassination scenario would be for Austria to deal with Serbia in a rapid, localised action without Russian intervention – in effect, a 'Third Balkan War'. However, there were those in the German Government, including Chief of Staff Moltke, who had their concerns about Russia. These men feared that as Russia (and France) steadily rearmed, the balance of power in Europe was turning against them. Perhaps Germany could use the current crisis to smash Russia before it became too strong. However, for Germany there was a major risk in all this. Its reliance on the military strategy contained in the Schlieffen Plan meant that war with Russia also meant war with France (and possibly even Britain).

The July Crisis

> The Sarajevo assassins had contrived a situation in which the decision-makers in both Vienna and St Petersburg [Russia] (and their associates in other capitals who believed their fate was tied to theirs) saw themselves as confronted with the stark choice between action that risked a European conflagration, and inaction that was tantamount to abdication from the ranks of the great powers.
>
> FR Bridge and R Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814–1914*, Pearson Longman, Harlow, 2005, p. 333

The 'blank cheque'

In early July, senior Austrian officials visited Berlin to gauge the attitude of the German Government should Austria move against Serbia. The German position was made clear to Austria by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg on 6 July, in what was to become known as 'the blank cheque'. The essence of the blank cheque comprised three key points: first, Germany stated that it was up to Austria what action it should take, if any, against Serbia; second, whatever action Austria took, Germany would stand by its ally; third, if Austria intended acting against Serbia, it was better to do it earlier rather than later. Indeed, a week later, Germany berated Austria for its vacillation in acting against Serbia.

Austria now knew that it did not need to fear any possible intervention by Russia. It would appear that the Germans did not realise the true significance of what they had done. The Kaiser acted without his army chief Moltke and navy chief Tirpitz on hand. Indeed, the next day, he left for a Baltic cruise, while Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg returned to his country estate at Hohenfinow.

The view from St Petersburg

Austria's intention was to deliver an ultimatum to Serbia that, if not accepted, would give Austria a justification for declaring war. The ultimatum was prepared in top secret. The Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Leopold Berchtold, wrote the ultimatum but did not show it even to Emperor Franz Joseph or the Germans.

However, it proved impossible to keep the ultimatum secret. Russian cryptographers had broken Austrian government codes, and so Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov was well aware of what Austria was planning. Sazonov warned Austria that Russia would back Serbia in any confrontation. On 23 July, Austria delivered its 10-point ultimatum to Serbia. Sazonov advised the Serbians to accept only the moderate terms of the ultimatum, but definitely not points five and six. He told Serbia on 24 July that Russia would back Serbia if attacked by Austria.

Austria's 10-point ultimatum to Serbia

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Sean McMeekin

Sean McMeekin comments on the frenetic activity of Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov on Friday 24 July. Sazonov's advice to Serbia is mentioned above. Here are McMeekin's conclusions regarding Sazonov's behaviour on that fateful day:

> In less than three hours, Russia's foreign minister had (1) instructed Serbia's minister not to comply with Austria's ultimatum and promised that 'Serbia may count on Russian aid' (although it is unclear whether he spelled out what form this 'aid' would take); (2) warned Germany's ambassador that Russia would go to war with Austria if she 'swallowed up' Serbia; and (3) informed France's ambassador about Russia's impending mobilisation measures. Making the performance still more remarkable, before making these moves Sazonov had not consulted with any of the three statesmen most directly involved with Russian policy. Tsar Nicholas II was sailing his yacht off the Finnish coast while most of this took place (although he had been ordered to return to Tsarskoe Selo in time for the next morning's Crown Council). President Poincaré was cruising the Baltic aboard the *France*. Serbia's prime minister, Pašić, had not even returned from the campaign trail in Belgrade. When these men awoke on Saturday, it would be in a different world.
>
> S McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War*, Icon, London, 2014, p. 190

QUESTIONS

1. What was the almost certain consequence of Sazonov's instruction to Serbia's minister? How do you think Serbia would respond to Sazonov's advice?
2. How did Russia's attitude towards Germany differ from that it had displayed in 1908? How might one account for this?
3. Why do you think Sazonov would have been so keen to tell the French that Russia had plans to mobilise?
4. What is McMeekin's view of Sazonov's behaviour at this crucial time? How does McMeekin make this clear?
5. What does McMeekin mean when he says: 'When these men awoke on Saturday, it would be in a different world'?

Headlong into war

In the wake of Austria's 10-point ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July 1914, international events escalated rapidly.

23 July: Austria delivers a 10-point ultimatum to Serbia. The points in the ultimatum relate to actions Serbia must take, and allow Austria to take, in light of the assassination. It is worded in such a way that Serbia cannot accept it, which will give Austria an excuse to declare war.

24 July: Russia begins partial mobilisation of its army.

25 July: Serbia announces that it is willing to accept nine of the 10 points in the ultimatum.

26 July: Russia begins its period 'preparatory to war'.

28 July: Austria rejects Serbia's response. Austria declares war on Serbia.

29 July: There is confusion in St Petersburg. Tsar Nicholas orders general mobilisation, but then almost immediately rescinds the order. There is discussion about the merits of partial and full mobilisation.

30 July: Russia begins general mobilisation.

31 July: Germany orders Russia to cease its mobilisation; Russia refuses the German demand.

1 August: Germany declares war on Russia.

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The issue of Belgium

The Schlieffen Plan

The development of the alliance system had convinced Germany that if war ever came, it would find itself fighting both France and Russia in a two-front war. German military planners assumed that France, with its modern industry and transport system, would be able to mobilise very quickly; Russia, with its poor system of communications, would mobilise much more slowly. However, it was also believed that France could be defeated quickly but that a war against Russia would be a long-term matter due to geography and Russia's vast resources. This thinking convinced Germany's military leaders that in a future war, Germany should rapidly attack France, knock it out of the war, and then focus on what was assumed would be a lengthy and difficult campaign against Russia.

However, a quick attack on France would be difficult because the common border between France and Germany comprises the Vosges and the Schwarzwald regions, and is quite mountainous and forested. Rapid movement of troops and supplies would be difficult, and so any element of surprise would be lost. The ideal terrain for a rapid and massive movement of troops is flat land. North-eastern Belgium and the southern Netherlands have the ideal terrain. Schlieffen made the fateful decision that any German invasion of France would proceed rapidly through Belgium and the Netherlands. The aim was for German armies to push with great speed through these two countries towards the French Channel coast, swing round to the west of Paris and then capture the French capital. English historian David Thomson described the thrust through Belgium as a giant hammer swing, while he refers to the German positions in the east, holding off a possible French attack, as the hinge of this swing.[1]

Schlieffen believed that the German advance would be so massive and so rapid, Paris and France's north-eastern industrial region would be captured in six weeks. France would be out of the war, and then Germany could focus on the more difficult battle with Russia.

The Schlieffen Plan modified

Schlieffen retired in 1906 and was replaced by Moltke. Moltke lacked Schlieffen's nerve and he feared a French move across the common border to the south, and so strengthened the 'hinge' at the expense of the hammer. This change was a crucial reason for the plan's eventual failure. For the Schlieffen Plan to succeed, the 'hammer swing' had to be massive and rapid; Moltke's change reduced both its size and speed.

SOURCE 2.9 The Schlieffen Plan as originally conceived by Count Alfred von Schlieffen in 1905

SOURCE 2.10 The Schlieffen Plan in action, August 1914 to September 1914

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Another change Moltke made was to send troops through Belgium only, leaving the Netherlands neutral. This meant that four giant German armies had to squeeze through a narrow gap between the Dutch border and the Ardennes mountains in south-east Belgium. This fact of geography had the effect of slowing down the movement of German forces.

1. Compare the maps in Sources 2.9 and 2.10. Identify the changes that Moltke had made to Schlieffen's original plan.
2. Examine the second map. What evidence is there that the Schlieffen Plan had failed?

The 'scrap of paper'

Treaty of London, 1839

For all its potential strategic brilliance, the Schlieffen Plan contained one major danger. In 1839, Britain had signed the Treaty of London, which guaranteed Belgian neutrality. A German invasion of Belgium would almost certainly involve war with Britain. German leaders referred to this treaty contemptuously as the 'scrap of paper' and did not take seriously the possibility of Britain fighting to honour it. According to German thinking, even if Britain did declare war, France's rapid defeat would preclude Britain's effective involvement in the west.

Britain declares war on Germany

3 August

Germany declares war on France.
German troops pour into Belgium.
Britain issues an ultimatum to Germany to withdraw its troops from Belgium.
One of the key figures in the British Government at this point was the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. He gave a major speech to the British Parliament at 3 p.m. on Monday 3 August. He made the following key points:

1. Britain had persuaded France to concentrate its fleet in the Mediterranean while Britain had its fleet in the North Sea. If a German fleet threatened France, Britain was honour-bound to use the Royal Navy to defend France.
2. If Germany controlled the French and Belgian ports, the Netherlands and Denmark would be next and soon Germany would control the entire coastline from the Atlantic to the Baltic. Britain would be at Germany's mercy.
3. Britain had to respect its treaty obligations to Belgium for the sake of its good name and reputation before the world.

4 August

By midnight of 3 August, Germany had failed to accede to Britain's demands.
Britain declared war on Germany.

Who was to blame? Group work

The war becomes a global conflict

By the end of 1918, there were over 30 nations fighting in the war, from all corners of the world. Japan joined the war in August 1914, China in 1917 and the United States in 1917. British and French colonies eagerly joined their mother country's war efforts. Along the Western Front were not just British, French and German troops; there were hundreds of thousands of troops from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, India, North Africa and French Indochina. Military action took place across the entire globe, from the tip of South America to the Far East, from the South Pacific to East Africa.

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Early global naval action

Germany's strongest naval surface force was the East Asiatic Squadron. Under the general command of Admiral Maximilian von Spee, this squadron wreaked havoc on Allied troops and supply ships. By the time its main cruiser, the *Emden*, had been sunk near the Cocos Islands, off the coast of Western Australia, on 9 November 1914 by the Australian cruiser *Sydney*, it had sunk 15 Allied ships. Spee's main squadron headed to the southern coast of Chile, where it outgunned a weaker British force, sending two British cruisers to the bottom. Spee's squadron was eventually destroyed when it decided to raid British facilities at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, in the South Atlantic. Unknown to Spee, there was a much stronger British force there, including the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible*. Spee and all but one of his vessels ended up at the bottom of the sea.

Empires at war

Within a very short time, the European war had become a world war. The involvement of Britain, France and Germany in war also meant the involvement of the empires of Britain, France and Germany. Within hours of Britain's declaration of war on Germany, the governments of Australia and New Zealand followed suit. Australian Prime Minister Joseph Cook stated:

> Whatever happens, Australia is part of the Empire right to the full. When the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war.
>
> 'Crisis of our fate', *Argus*, 3 August 1914

Within a month, British and French colonial forces had captured the German colony of Togoland in West Africa, though it took until July 1915 to dislodge German troops from the Cameroons. British forces soon took control of German South-West Africa, though a pro-German rebellion by South African **Boers** was not put down until February 1915.

Japan was an ally of Britain and entered the war in late August 1914. It attacked the German-controlled Chinese port of Tsingtao, capturing it on 7 November. Japanese forces also took the German Pacific island colonies of the Marshall, Caroline and Marianas islands. The German colony of Western Samoa was captured by New Zealand troops, and Australian troops had control of German New Guinea by the end of 1914.

German East Africa, comprising present-day Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania, proved much more difficult for Allied forces to take. Under the skilful leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Lettow-Vorbeck, German forces held out against superior Allied numbers, fighting a tenacious style of **guerrilla warfare**. Lettow-Vorbeck did not surrender until 23 November 1918, almost two weeks after the end of the war in Europe.

Boers
South Africans of Dutch descent. They fought against the British in the Boer War of 1899–1902. Many still resented Britain and were ready to support Germany.

guerrilla warfare
A style of warfare fought by troops who are outnumbered and outgunned by a superior supplied enemy. It takes advantage of rough terrain and avoids full frontal attacks, preferring to fight in small encounters, hit-and-run raids, ambushes and often at night. This style of fighting suited conditions in parts of East Africa.

Origins of World War I

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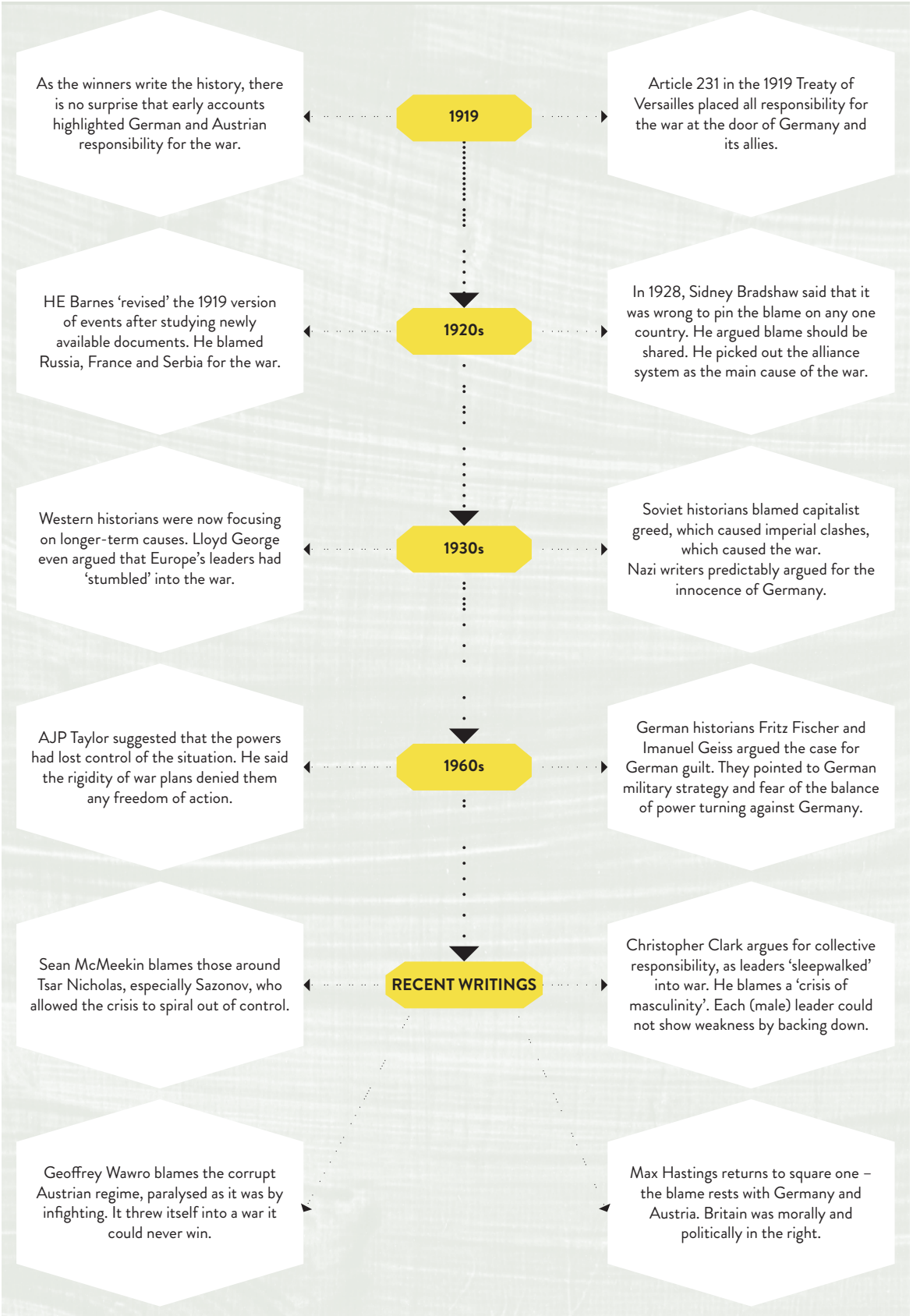
The historians have their say



SOURCE 2.11 The historians have their say

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Chapter summary

- Though there were tensions within Europe before 1914, it would not be true to say that political leaders were expecting the imminent outbreak of a major war in the summer of 1914.
- The Balkans region was 'a powder keg' as it became the centre of the rival ambitions of Austrian, Russian, Turkish and Slav nationalists.
- The development of the alliance system meant that a crisis in the Balkans might be able to drag the major powers into a local Balkan conflict.
- The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 gave Austria the opportunity to formally annex Bosnia-Herzegovina. This inflamed Slav nationalism.
- Germany forced Russia into withdrawing in a humiliating manner when it appeared that Russia was considering supporting Serbia in anti-Austrian action in 1908.
- The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 had the result of driving Turkey almost completely out of Europe. Serbia doubled in size. Some in the Austrian Government were eager to strike Serbia down before it became too strong.
- Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on 28 June 1914. Once the initial shock had passed, things settled down and few were contemplating the prospect of a war – except in Austria, where the 'war party' demanded action against Serbia.
- Austria claimed that Serbia was behind the terrorists who struck down their heir.
- Austria feared that if it went to war with Serbia, Russia would aid Serbia. Thus, Austria sought a guarantee of German assistance should this happen. It received this guarantee in 'the blank cheque'.
- Austria sent Serbia a 10-point ultimatum. Serbia's failure to accept all the terms of the ultimatum was used as an excuse to justify Austria's declaration of war on Serbia.
- Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov was keen to support Serbia and made sure that Russia would not back down in 1914 as it had in 1908.
- Serbia's rejection of the ultimatum led to Austria's declaration of war. Within a week, all the major powers in Europe were at war.
- The key issues for Britain were the neutrality of Belgium and pledges made to France. Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August.
- Within a short time, the war had spread to all corners of the world.

Further resources

- Clark, C, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, Penguin, London, 2014
- McMeekin, S, *July 1914: Countdown to War*, Icon, London, 2014
- Taylor, AJP, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918*, OUP, Oxford, 1971
- Wawro, G, *A Mad Catastrophe: The Outbreak of World War I and the Collapse of the Hapsburg Empire*, Basic Books, London, 2014

Endnotes

1 D Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1957, p. 554

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why was Austria so fearful of Slav nationalism in the Balkans?
2. Explain Russia's keen interest in the Balkans.
3. What happened in the Balkans in 1908? Why did a major war not eventuate?
4. What happened in the First Balkan War? Who were the main winners and losers?
5. What were the results of the Second Balkan War?
6. Describe the impact of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination on Austria.
7. What was the 'blank cheque'? Why was it so important?
8. Explain Russia's attitude to the July Crisis.
9. Why was it that Britain ended up being involved in a conflict that had its origins in the far-off Balkans?
10. Describe how the war became a world war.

Fact or opinion?

Chronology

Research questions

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISES

11. Explain how Europe moved so quickly from a state of peace in early June 1914 to a continent-wide war by early August 1914.
12. Explain why the Balkans had become such a volatile region by early 1914.

SOURCE EXERCISE

13. Answer the following questions in response to Source 2.12:
    - **a** From which perspective is this cartoon coming? At whom is it addressed? Explain its motive.
    - **b** What is the 'context' of the cartoon? Consider what was happening in early August 1914, including Sir Edward Grey's speech.
    - **c** Why are there sausages coming out of the pocket of the old man with the stick?
    - **d** List the types of symbolism that the cartoonist has used to transmit his message.
    - **e** How effective do you think this cartoon would have been in arousing anti-German feeling among those British people who saw it?

Alamy Stock Photo/AF Fotografie

SOURCE 2.12 'Bravo, Belgium!', *Punch*, 19 August 1914

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03

War, change and the experiences of soldiers

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- the changing nature of war to 1918: scientific and industrial developments in weaponry, the mechanisation of modern warfare, advances in medicine and communications.

German soldier and donkey wearing gas masks. World War I was the first war to use chemical weapons such as mustard gas, tear gas, chlorine gas and phosgene gas.

Introduction

World War I brought enormous change to the world. It could be argued that the world of the 19th century actually ended in 1914, not 1900. The war changed every aspect of European life, not only on the battlefield but on the home front, in the lives of women, in art and literature, and within the empires of the European powers that fought the war. It resulted in the redrawing of the map of Europe and led to the rise of communism. It could even be argued it sowed the seeds of a future, even more horrific war. In the midst of all this change, soldiers experienced a uniquely horrifying style of warfare involving not only how the war was fought but also the physical and psychological effects of battle.

Before 1914, most people assumed that a future war would involve brave soldiers sweeping across the battlefield in rapid offensives, many of them on horseback. There was an expectation that any future war would be over quickly. Indeed, one of the reasons for the enthusiasm of young men to volunteer for the army at the start of the war was the 'fear' that the war would be over by Christmas and that they would miss out on the excitement.

However, this was not to be. The war dragged on interminably and on a massive scale. This was made possible by the role that science and industry played in the exercise of war between 1914 and 1918. Warfare became highly mechanised and was fought on an industrial scale. Industrial and scientific advances provided ever more horrific ways to kill people. However, positive things also emerged from the role of science and industry during the war. Medicine and communications witnessed transformative developments by 1918.

Key battles and developments in technology

1914	**September**	First Battle of the Marne
	November	First Battle of Ypres
		Use of sodium citrate as a blood coagulant for wounded men at the front
1915	**January**	First zeppelin raid on mainland Britain
	April	First wartime use of gas by the German Army, at the Second Battle of Ypres
	April–December	The failed Gallipoli campaign
	May	Lloyd George heads newly formed Ministry of Munitions
		Marie Curie organises cars to be turned into mobile X-ray units at the front
1916	**February–November**	Battle of Verdun
	June	First British use of tanks
	July–November	Battle of the Somme
	December	Lloyd George becomes Prime Minister
		Discovery of heparin as a superior form of blood coagulant for dealing with wounded men at the front
1917	**February**	Germany resumes policy of unrestricted submarine warfare
		Revolution in Russia
	March	Abdication of Tsar Nicholas II
		Zimmermann Telegram, earlier intercepted by British intelligence, is published

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		Queen's Hospital in London commences plastic surgery work on wounded soldiers
		By now the Thomas splint is widely used for femoral fractures at the front
1918	August–November	Flanders offensive, culminating in the Battle of Passchendaele
	October	Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
	November	British mass tank attack at the Battle of Cambrai
	March	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
	November	Signing of the armistice brings the war to an end

A world at war

no-man's land
The area of land between the German and the Allied trenches. In places, no-man's land could be several kilometres wide; in other places, it could be as narrow as 50 metres.

race to the sea
Refers to the outflanking efforts of Allied and German forces as they tried to encircle opposing troops. As each outflanking movement failed, each side dug defensive trench positions. This outflanking process ended with the Battle of Ypres in November 1914, by which time each side had completed their line of trenches.

war of attrition
A type of warfare in which each side attempts to exhaust the other rather than achieving a clear victory

Following the entry of German troops into Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany. Things did not proceed as Germany's commander, Helmuth von Moltke, had planned and the German advance was halted at the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914. Both sides began to construct trench positions opposite each other, separated by what came to be known as **no-man's land**, and as each tried to outflank the other in the **race to the sea**, the trenches followed. This period of the war ended with the inconclusive First Battle of Ypres. By the end of 1914, trenches stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss border. This was the 'Western Front'.

Germany was more successful on the 'Eastern Front' and it won major victories against Russia at Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. Russian forces were more successful against Austria. In November 1914, Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, which eventually comprised Germany, Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria, which entered the war in October 1915.

Throughout 1915, the war remained deadlocked on the Western Front as battle after battle was fought in a deadly **war of attrition**. Casualties were often in the hundreds of thousands; land gained was often in the hundreds of metres. A new front opened up in the Alps when Italy entered the war on the Allied side in May 1915 (see Chapter 4). An Allied attempt to take Turkey out of the war was fought in the Dardanelles and along the Gallipoli peninsula between April and December 1915. It was a total failure, though the evacuation of Allied troops in December was successful.

In 1916, the fighting continued to be as futile as it had been the previous year, only this time the losses were much greater. Between February and November, the Germans tried to 'bleed the French white' at Verdun (see Chapter 4). Verdun achieved nothing except massive casualties and destruction on each side. Between July and November, Allied and German forces fought each other to a standstill in the Battle of the Somme (see Chapter 4).

In February 1917, Germany recommenced its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, which it had earlier employed in 1915 but suspended due to American protests. Its aim was to sink as many ships heading to Britain as possible in the hope of starving Britain into submission. Germany's efforts failed and resulted in the United States entering the war on the side of the Allies (see Chapter 6). In February 1917, revolution swept Tsar Nicholas II from power (see Chapter 7). Meanwhile, land warfare continued to produce massive casualties for no perceived gain. The Brusilov Offensive in the east collapsed after some early Russian gains and the Italians suffered large losses at Caporetto. Worst of all was the bloody carnage in the mud of the Battle of Passchendaele (see Chapter 4), also called the Third Battle of Ypres, between August and November.

In March 1918, Russia formally withdrew from the war. Within two weeks, Ludendorff launched his massive Spring Offensive, which broke through Allied lines and which briefly had the Allies

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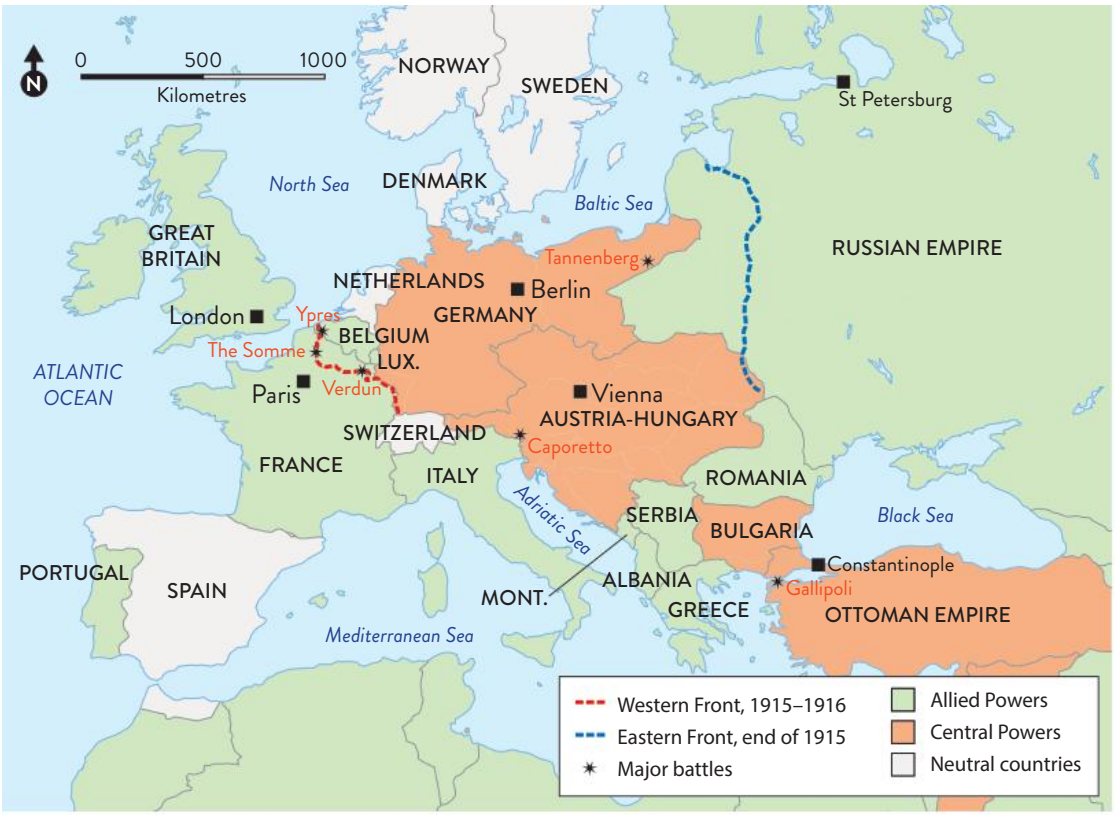
teetering on the brink of defeat. However, Ludendorff's offensive lost steam as he could not make up German losses and the arrival of large numbers of US troops turned the tide in the Allies' favour. The Allied counteroffensive pushed the Germans back. By November, the German home front was falling apart. On 11 November, Germany signed an armistice.



SOURCE 3.1 Europe at war

Science, industry and the mechanisation of warfare to 1918

Few military leaders of the time had any understanding of the true nature of the war upon which they had embarked in August 1914. Feelings of elation and excitement and hope for glory dominated both popular and official feeling. Military strategists believed that the conflict would be a war of rapid movement and it would all be over by the end of 1914. Leaders on both sides envisaged Napoleonic-style battles of a century earlier. This would involve a quick artillery barrage of the enemy followed by a rapid infantry advance over open ground, and having cracked the enemy lines, the cavalry would charge through.

Commanders on both sides were steeped in the tradition of 'the offensive'. French military theory taught that anything but offensive warfare would lead to poor morale and inevitable defeat. As late as 1914, British infantry training manuals were instructing young officers that success could only come with offensive warfare.

The quick end to mobile warfare

The aim of the Schlieffen Plan had been to defeat France in six weeks, which would allow Germany to then focus its attention on fighting Russia in the east. However, Moltke's modifications to the plan (see Chapter 2) had a disastrous effect on the movement of German troops through Belgium.

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The decision not to advance through the Netherlands meant that German troop trains had to converge on Aachen, and they faced a further bottleneck at Liège. Belgian forces put up much stiffer resistance than was expected and British troops were able to slow the German advance despite their defeat at the Battle of Mons in late August. The overall effect of these developments was that the movement of German troops into France was slowed. The German advance was finally halted at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914. Over the next two months, both German and Anglo-French forces

SOURCE 3.2 The Western Front, 1914

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were involved in a 'race to the sea' that culminated in the First Battle of Ypres in November. By the end of 1914, German and Allied troops had established lines of trenches facing each other across no-man's land, which stretched from the Swiss border to the English Channel. This was the Western Front. As time went on, these trenches became increasingly complex, were strengthened and became permanent fixtures.

The immediate objectives of the Schlieffen Plan had not been achieved. The French (and British) had had time to mobilise; Paris had been saved; and Germany now found itself involved in a two-front war. The early expectations that military leaders had had of a war of rapid movement had been dashed and the era of trench warfare had arrived.

The Battle of the Marne, September 1914

The Battle of the Marne is one of the most important battles in modern European history. Tactically, the Allied victory over Germany was a disappointment because it was not fought out to a final conclusion. However, strategically it was of the greatest importance. It saved France from defeat and ensured the development of the trench warfare that would continue on the Western Front for the next four years.

There were five German armies pouring into France during August. Moltke realised that the hammer-swing could not make it to the west of Paris and so ordered his forces to move east of the French capital. Consequently, General Alexander von Kluck's First Army was vulnerable as its right flank was exposed. The French commander, General Joseph Joffre, ordered General Joseph Gallieni to launch an attack on Kluck's army. When Kluck saw the danger he was in, he decided to retreat. However, this created a gap between his First Army and General von Bulow's Second Army.

British troops prepared to move into the gap and encircle Kluck's army. The Germans were now in trouble. Their Sixth Army, under General Ruprecht, had been defeated by the French and rumours were now spreading that British and Russian troops had landed in Belgium. It was known that these troops were Russian because they still had snow on their boots! Faced with this situation, the German High Command ordered a general retreat from the River Marne to the River Aisne. The German troops now began to 'dig in'.

Trench warfare

As the front stabilised at the end of 1914 into 1915, trenches were seen as temporary expedients. They were dug to house the men before the big offensive that would achieve the knockout blow. However, as the weeks turned into months, the trenches took on an air of permanency. They were strengthened. German trenches eventually used concrete and were built to a depth of up to 12 metres. British trenches were never as solid as their German counterparts because the British maintained a firm belief in the cult of the offensive. If the men were going to break through the German lines at any time, why waste time building long-lasting trenches?

As time went on, the trenches became more complex. Compartments were created for supplies of ammunition. There were dugouts in which the men would try to sleep. German trenches had rooms going off the main trench. Officers' conditions were always better than those of the ordinary soldier, and some German officers' trenches captured later in the war had electricity and wallpaper!

Both Allied and German trenches developed into a complex network that stretched back many kilometres from the front line. The more complex the trench networks became and the further back they stretched, the more difficult it was going to be to break through. The front-line trench was where troops positioned themselves for launching an attack on the enemy, or awaited an enemy attack. These were supported with observation posts and machine-gun nests. Further back were the reserve trenches where reinforcements would wait to be called up to the front line. Connecting the trenches was a series of communications trenches that stretched back even further to first-aid posts and supply depots.

Trench warfare

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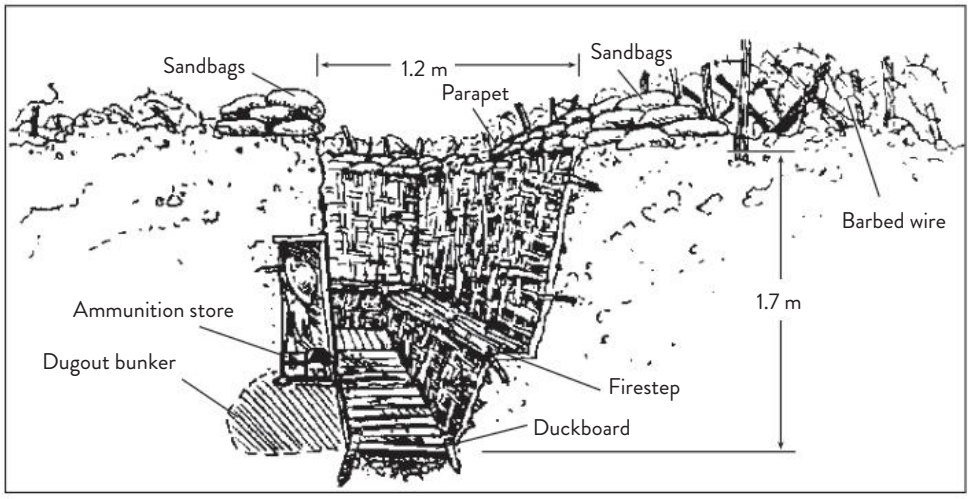
Life in the trenches



SOURCE 3.3 Cross-section of a trench

Australian War Memorial/ James Francis (Frank) Hurley E00824

SOURCE 3.4 The reality of the trenches

QUESTIONS

1. What do you think was the purpose of the barbed wire immediately in front of the trench?
2. What were sandbags used for?
3. Why do you think it was necessary to have a duckboard (wooden plank laid across the ground) at the bottom of the trench?
4. What was the aim of the firestep (elevated ledge)?
5. What are the main differences between the trenches shown in the diagram and the photograph?
6. Why do you think these differences exist? Why was the idealised trench so difficult to maintain?

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No-man's land

No-man's land presented a nightmare scenario for most soldiers. Leaving one's trench and 'going over the top' into that area made one an easy target for enemy machine guns. No-man's land was usually full of deep craters, and the combination of mud, heavy rain and artillery bombardment made it a fearful quagmire, through which it was difficult to walk, let alone fight. No-man's land was often mined, so a wrong step could mean oblivion. At night-time, flares were sent up into the air, which made any soldiers who were there to raid an opposing trench an easy target.

One of the greatest fears for ordinary soldiers was to be stranded in no-man's land, either wounded or stuck on the barbed wire and left to die.

Later in the war, concrete pill-boxes were constructed. Their aim was to control a wide area of land with minimum resources. A group of well-armed men holed up in a pill-box could achieve the same purpose as a line of men in a front-line trench.

The trenches and no-man's land

United Kingdom Government

SOURCE 3.5 An aerial reconnaissance photograph of the opposing trenches and no-man's land between Loos and Hulluch in Artois, France, taken at 7.15 p.m. on 22 July 1917. German trenches are at the right and bottom; British trenches are at the top left. The vertical line to the left of centre indicates the course of a prewar road or track.

QUESTIONS

1 What impression of the battlefield is presented in the photograph above?

2 How does the photograph help us to understand the problems faced in attempting to achieve a breakthrough?

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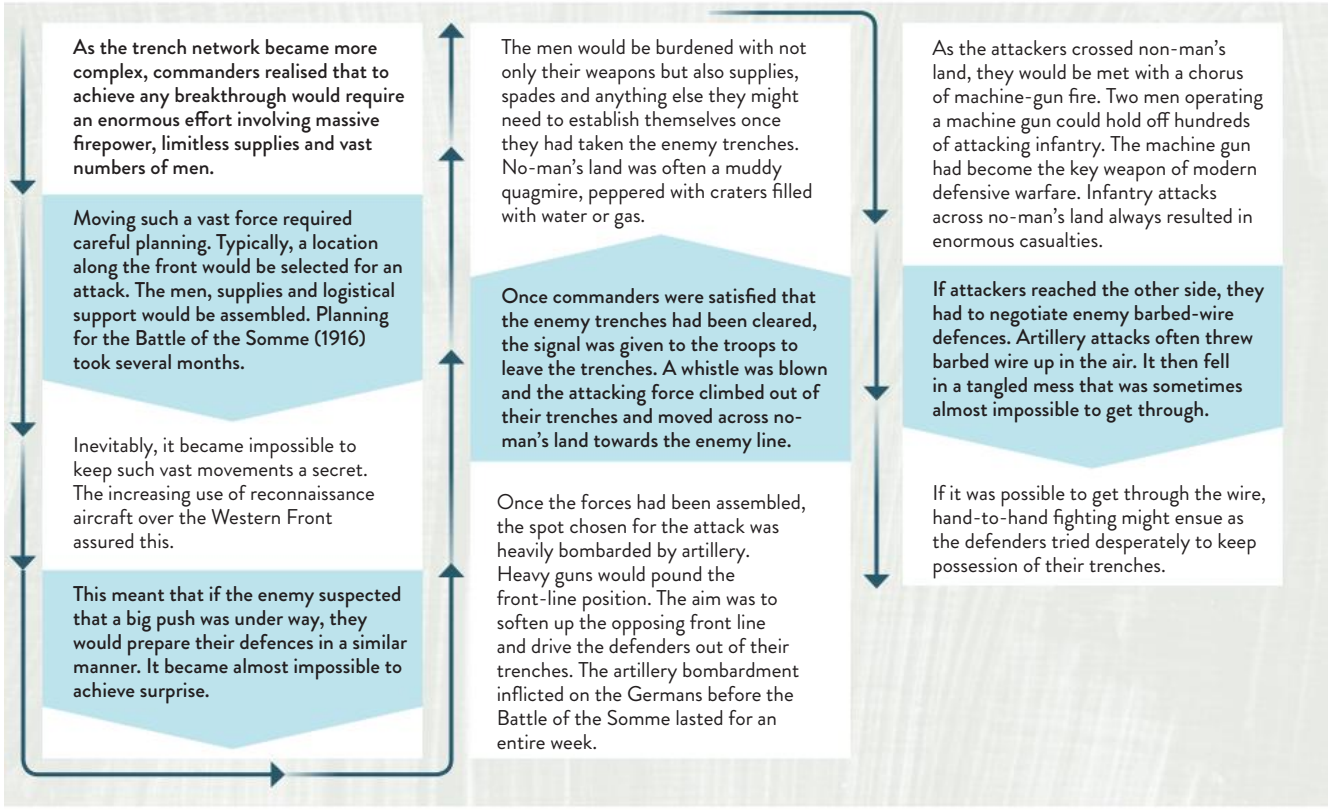
The basics of battle

Blackadder Goes Forth

In war, all soldiers can justly claim that there is no such thing as a typical battle. Every situation is unique, determined by the lay of the land, the weather, the timing of the battle, the skills of the commanders and a host of other human factors. However, Western Front battles did have some common features. Source 3.6 summarises those common features. Attacks like these might continue for months. There would then be a pause in the fighting until the commanders decided on another attempt to achieve a breakthrough.



SOURCE 3.6 The basics of battle

The weaponry of World War I

Science and industry were to play a greater role in World War I than in any previous conflict in history. The belligerents were not only major military powers, they were also major industrial powers. Science was able to improve the 'efficiency' of existing weapons, to develop new weapons and to create totally new ways of killing one's enemies. The industrial might of the major powers, such as Germany, Britain, France and Russia, was able to produce weapons in numbers and size unimaginable only a few years earlier.

Early in the war, Britain's economic attitude was 'business as usual'. However, industry's failure to adequately supply the army with munitions led the government to move to a 'total war' economy similar to that in Germany. Lloyd George's appointment as Minister of Munitions in 1915 galvanised British industrial munitions production. Table 3.1 gives an idea of the ability of British industry to supply its armed forces.

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TABLE 3.1 British munitions production, 1914–18

WEAPONRY	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Artillery guns	91	3390	4314	5137	8039
Tanks	–	150	1110	1359	
Aircraft	200	1900	6100	14700	32000
Machine guns	300	6100	33500	79700	120990

I Cawood and D McKinnon-Bell, *The First World War*, Routledge, London, 2001

The rifle

The rifle had long been a staple weapon of the infantry. However, by 1914 it had become deadly in the hands of trained troops. Most rifles had a range of about 500 metres; however, if they were used en masse, such as a group of soldiers firing simultaneously at enemy troops attacking across no-man's land, they could be accurate up to 1000 metres. The staple German rifle was the Mauser 1898 pattern rifle, which was a magazine rifle, loaded from five-round chargers. The British Lee Enfield rifle contained a magazine with 10 rounds, and a trained soldier could fire 15 rounds per minute. When the German Army faced the British Expeditionary Force at Mons in August 1914, they reported that they were hit with light machine-gun fire. In fact, the British troops were only using rifle fire.

Australian War Memorial (REL/11561)

SOURCE 3.7 The Lee Enfield rifle was standard issue for British and Imperial troops during World War I. In major attacks, a bayonet was frequently attached.

The machine gun

The key weapon on the Western Front was the machine gun, an excellent defensive weapon. With a range of anywhere between 500 and 1000 metres and a cone of fire – the term used to describe the varying trajectory of a machine-gun burst – a single weapon could wipe out hundreds of advancing troops. The principal German gun was the Maxim, while the British had the Vickers. Each could fire more than 450 rounds per minute. The machine gun was heavy; therefore, it was not easy to move it to aid advancing troops. Later in the war, lighter versions were introduced, such as the British Lewis light machine gun. German industry developed its own light machine gun, the Bergman. By 1918, almost 40000 Bergman machine guns had been produced.

Imagefolk.com/©Robert Hunt Library/Mary Evans

SOURCE 3.8 Two British machine-gunners near Ovillers during the Battle of the Somme, northern France, in July 1916. They are using a Vickers gun and wearing gas helmets.

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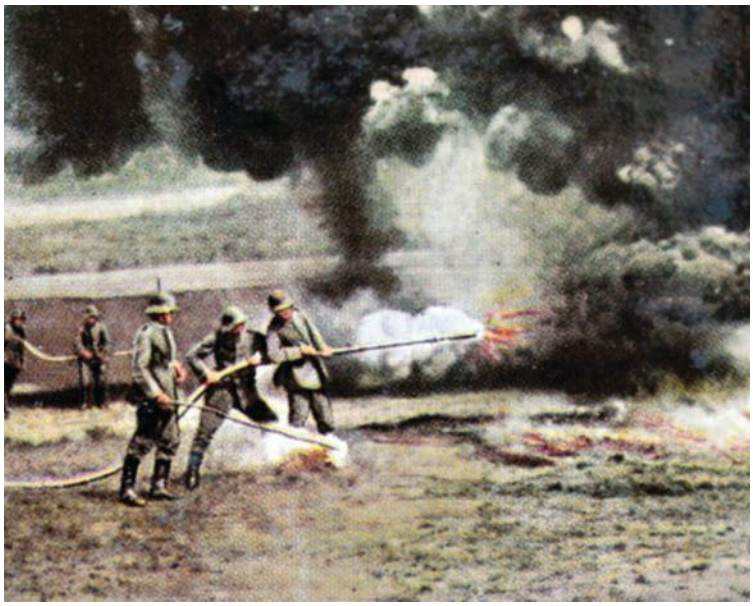
Artillery

Industrial strength enabled the production of thousands of artillery pieces used by both sides. The prime purpose of artillery was to soften up enemy trenches and attack heavily fortified positions. Early in the war, most armies had light artillery, such as the 75-millimetre field gun with a range of about 8 kilometres. These had the advantage of mobility but had a limited impact unless used in groups. Corps artillery included 200-millimetre guns with a range of up to 20 kilometres; army artillery included 250-millimetre guns with a range of more than 20 kilometres. The most famous German artillery piece was Big Bertha, a 420-millimetre Howitzer. The range and destructive power of such guns were enormous, but their effectiveness was limited, as their immense weight meant that rail transport was needed to move them.

Alamy Stock Photo/dpa picture alliance



SOURCE 3.9 A contemporary colourised German propaganda photo shows German soldiers with flamethrowers.

Alamy Stock Photo/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd.

SOURCE 3.10 British aircraft engaged in a dogfight with German opponents

Artillery tactics increased in sophistication as the war progressed. 'Creeping barrages' attempted to protect troops as they moved forward by providing an advancing screen of cover. 'Box barrages' were used to support trench-raiding teams by creating a safe area into which advancing troops would move. The advancing troops would raid a specific section of an enemy trench and then quickly retire.

Other weapons

Grenades were favoured by attacking forces because of their portability. Grenades were small bombs that could be thrown easily. In 1915, the Germans started using the flamethrower, or *flammenwerfer*. It caused terror in opposing troops, but its effectiveness was limited by its short range and limited duration capability. Mortars were commonly used. Mortars were small bombs launched from metal tubes. They had a high trajectory and a limited range, and their use was restricted to limited attacks on close rival trenches.

Aircraft

Aircraft played an increasingly important role during World War I. Aircraft proved very useful for reconnaissance of enemy positions, though effective bombing was a generation away. As trench formations became more complex, commanders needed accurate reconnaissance information and it was here that the aircraft

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came into its own. By 1916, aerial **dogfights** had become common as the flimsily built planes tried to maintain air supremacy. The gallant one-on-one contests soon gave way to team fighting. The best known team was the German Richthofen Circus led by Manfred von Richthofen, the 'Red Baron', who allegedly shot down more than 80 Allied aircraft during the war. Allied **aces**, as these heroes of the air became known, included British Captain Albert Ball, Canadian Billy Bishop and Frenchman Capitaine Georges Guynemer.

dogfights
Aerial battles between opposing pilots. In the early days of aerial warfare, dogfights were often seen as a modern version of chivalrous battle between medieval knights. However, gallantry soon gave way to a 'kill at all costs in any manner' approach.

aces
The term used to describe successful fighter pilots. These men became the tabloid celebrities of their day.

The zeppelin

As well as aircraft, rigid, hydrogen-filled airships were also developed as weapons of war. They became known as 'zeppelins', after Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who had pioneered their development in the last quarter of the 19th century. Airships began commercial flights in 1910.

Zeppelins had certain advantages over aircraft. They could fly at greater altitudes to escape artillery fire, they could carry a greater amount of bombs and they had a much greater cargo capacity. However, the greater impact of zeppelins was in the fear they generated in British and French civilian populations rather than their military effectiveness. Over 500 English civilians were killed as a result of zeppelin raids. The first German attack with zeppelins came in January 1915. The target was Humberside, but poor navigation and visibility meant it was parts of East Anglia that were hit. Zeppelins were also used at sea for spotting submarines.

Getty Images/ullstein bild

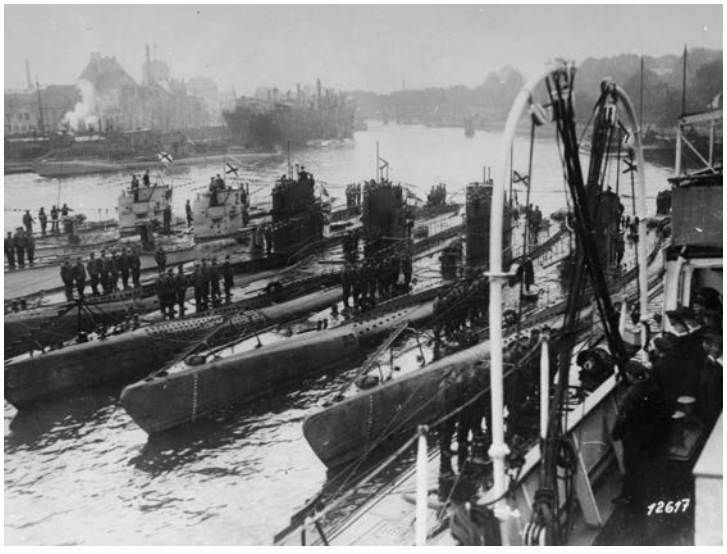
SOURCE 3.11 Damage caused by the last zeppelin attack on London in 1918

U-boats

Submarine warfare during World War I was very effective but also extremely hazardous for crews. At the beginning of the war, German submarines – U-boats – were developed to protect ports and harbours from British naval attacks. However, within a short time, U-boats had developed an ocean-going capacity with a range of up to 8000 nautical miles. U-boats had a capacity to submerge and remain undetected, and their torpedoes could be extremely effective. During the war, German U-boats sank over 2600 vessels. They also developed a mine-laying capacity to hinder British shipping leaving port. Once Germany resumed its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, it came close to crippling the British home front.

However, the U-boat would not have a decisive impact on the war (though its use brought the United States into the war on the Allied side in April 1917). Of Germany's 375 wartime U-boats, 202 were lost, either sunk by enemy action or lost through mechanical failure or accident. Allied naval forces gradually got the measure of U-boats with the development of depth-charge technology and the use of convoys.

Serving on a U-boat was extremely dangerous; a third of all German U-boat crew died. A U-boat's



Imagefolk.com/Windmill Books\UIG

SOURCE 3.12 German U-boats in port during World War I

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Weaponry

electric batteries were limited and so the vessel would usually leave port at night on the surface and only submerge if spotted. The storage batteries generated gas and a ventilation failure could cause an explosion. If seawater managed to enter the battery cells, poisonous chlorine gas was produced.

Science plays its role

It was not only industrial might that was able to make warfare ever more horrific. Science played its role too. Major companies such as the German firms Bayer and Badische Anilin spent a lot of time and effort developing new chemical and biological weapons. The most 'successful' result of these companies' efforts was the introduction of gas to the battlefield.

Gas

Gas was the most fearful of all weapons introduced during the war. Germany was the first nation to use poison gas, at the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. However, it did not take long for other nations to imitate and try to improve on the German prototype. Gas canisters were fired into enemy positions. On impact, they exploded and allowed the gas to escape. The aim of using gas was to clear the trenches, thus allowing attacking troops to advance and take the enemy position. Gas often caused real panic among the troops. However, it was not a reliable weapon, as changes in wind direction could blow it back onto the attacking side.

There were several types of gas, including chlorine, mustard, phosgene, chloropicrin and prussic acid. Gas could have horrific effects on the men at the front; it could burn, blind and suffocate.

- Mustard gas was first used in 1917. It could burn bare skin and make it blister. A foam would form in the lungs, causing breathing problems, leading to suffocation.
- Phosgene gas, first used at Ypres in 1915, destroyed the lungs. This gas was especially dangerous due to its delayed action; it could cause sudden death 48 hours after exposure.
- Prussic acid gas attacked the nervous system.

World War I and literature

'Dulce et Decorum est' by Wilfred Owen

Gradually, defences against gas were developed. In 1915, a urine-soaked piece of cloth sufficed, but by 1918 effective gas masks had rendered gas a much less formidable weapon of war. The future Nazi dictator, Adolf Hitler, was blind for several weeks at the end of World War I following a British gas attack on German positions.

One of the most powerful poems to come out of the war was Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum est', in which he describes his experience of a gas attack.

Imagefolk.com/©Robert Hunt Library/Mary Evans

SOURCE 3.13 American soldiers advancing during a gas attack

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Science and industry combine: The tank

Arguably the key technological development of the war was the tank. The tank and its increasingly effective use were important factors in turning the tide of war in 1918. German commander General Erich Ludendorff pointed to the Allies' effective use of mass tank formations and Germany's lack of tanks as key factors in explaining the German collapse in 1918.

Nevertheless, it took several years for the tank to achieve its potential and to be accepted by wartime commanders. General Douglas Haig had great doubts about its capability, while Lord Kitchener, Britain's War Minister, described it as a pretty, mechanical toy.

The first tank, the British Mark I, appeared early in 1916. Initially, it terrified defending German troops, but for nearly two years the tank proved ineffective. The 'willies', as they were called, were too slow, moving at only 6 kilometres per hour, which made them easy targets. Their engines were not powerful enough to move through the mud of the front and they broke down frequently.

Not only were the early tanks ineffective, they were also hell to work in. Tank crews reported that conditions were hot, claustrophobic and incredibly noisy. If fire broke out, it was almost impossible to escape the burning wreck.

In 1916, tanks were used singly or at best in twos or threes. However, by late 1917, Allied commanders were beginning to better understand the potential of the tank. At Cambrai, on 20 November 1917, a massed Allied tank attack led by Brigadier General Hugh Elles broke through German lines, creating a 4-kilometre gap. Elles had almost 400 Mark IV tanks under his command. However, lack of supporting infantry prevented a consolidation of the breakthrough and, by early December, Ludendorff's counterattack had forced Haig to withdraw British forces.

Imagefolk.com/©Robert Hunt Library/Mary Evans

SOURCE 3.14 A wrecked tank on the newly captured Fampoux Road, during the Battle of Arras on the Western Front in France in April 1917

Imagefolk.com/©Robert Hunt Library/Mary Evans

SOURCE 3.15 American troops riding in tanks to the battle line in the Forest of Argonne, France, on 26 September 1918. These later-model tanks proved far more effective than their earlier counterparts.

Tanks

1. In what major way did the war on the Western Front not turn out as the generals had expected?
2. What was 'no-man's land'?
3. What impact did industrial power have on the way the war was conducted?
4. Why were zeppelins so feared?
5. What was arguably the most fearful impact of science on the war? Why?
6. Science and industry came together with the tank. Why was the tank so significant?

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Advances in medicine in World War I

For centuries, a soldier's greatest fear was not so much being killed as being wounded, and having to face a quick amputation or suffering the effects of infection, shock and psychological trauma – none of which was fully understood at the time. The new heavy artillery and machine guns of World War I could destroy flesh and bone. Shrapnel could cause disfiguring facial injuries. Even if a soldier survived being killed instantly, the chances of the dirt of the trenches causing painful and deadly infections were high.

Despite the horrors of the war, for many soldiers it was often the incessant and all-pervasive nature of the mud that affected them most. It affected their whole existence: what they ate, what they drank, how they breathed, how they walked and their health.

Mud

The following extract from Denis Winter's *Death's Men*, highlights the impact of the mud on combatants.

> Mud ... enveloped men of the front line. As a farm labourer at 'Akenfield', Davie was a man used to hardship, but he was in no doubt about the importance of the mud. 'Did you kill men Davie?' 'I got several.' 'What was the worst Davie?' 'Why, the wet of course.' Where rain met bare earth or shelled earth, it spawned feet of mud. Boyd Orr reckoned that forty Englishmen a night were drowned in it. Nicholson on the Somme saw a man stuck fast for sixty-five hours, with two men pulling on ropes finally freeing him though with his clothing sucked down by the mud.
>
> D Winter, *Death's Men*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 96

QUESTIONS

1. How does Davie's background highlight the severity of the conditions?
2. Why might the men fear the mud more than actual battle?

Sickness and disease

gangrene
The decay of body tissue, which can necessitate amputation to avoid the decay spreading through the body

It was not uncommon for the men in the trenches to have to stand for days at a stretch in knee-deep water. The lack of drainage and the often incessant rain meant that the trenches were often full of water. This led to the condition of trench foot. Trench foot was a painful swelling of the feet caused by constant immersion in water. In some cases, the toes could rot off and the condition often progressed to **gangrene**, which would frequently lead to amputation.

Image courtesy of Army Medical Services Museum/Keogh Barracks/Wellcome Images

SOURCE 3.16 An extreme case of trench foot

It was not only water that filled the trenches. The water at the bottom of a trench soon developed into a putrid concoction of human and military detritus. The stench of the trench and the smell of cordite (an explosive) and gas often induced vomiting. At the height of battle, men had no choice but to urinate and excrete where they stood. Diarrhoea and, even worse, dysentery were common ailments suffered by the troops. Decomposing bodies were allowed to float on the surface of the water until a safe time could be found to deal with them. At the height of summer, these corpses attracted swarms of flies. The combined effect of this effluent was to create ideal conditions for disease.

Historian Denis Winter makes the point that common diseases of the time, such as measles, mumps and diphtheria, occurred at

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rates no worse than in civilian life. However, the troops experienced far higher rates of ailments such as frostbite, meningitis, tuberculosis and venereal disease.

Poor sanitation and often limited medical facilities led to a high rate of infection. In that pre-antibiotics age, an inability to deal adequately with infection frequently caused gangrene.

All Quiet on the Western Front

Erich Maria Remarque had been a front-line soldier throughout the war. In the late 1920s, he wrote a novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In this extract from his novel, he describes the difficulties faced by medical teams trying to deal with the effects of battle.

> On the next floor below are the abdominal and spine cases, head wounds and double amputations. On the right side of the wing are the jaw wounds, gas cases, nose, ear and neck wounds. On the left the blind and the lung wounds, pelvis wounds, wounds in the joints, wounds in the testicles, wounds in the intestines. Here a man realises for the first time in how many places a man can get hit.
>
> Two fellows die of tetanus. Their skin turns pale, their limbs stiffen, at last only their eyes live stubbornly. Many of the wounded have their shattered limbs hanging free in the air from a gallows; underneath the wound a basin is placed into which pus drips. Every two or three hours the vessel is emptied. Other men lie in stretching bandages with heavy weights hanging from the end of the bed. I see intestine wounds that are constantly full of excreta. The surgeon's clerk shows me X-ray photographs of completely smashed hip-bones, knees and shoulders.
>
> A man cannot realise that above such shattered bodies there are still human faces in which life goes its daily round. And this is only one hospital, one single station; there are hundreds of thousands in Germany, hundreds of thousands in France, hundreds of thousands in Russia.

EM Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Little Brown, Boston, 1929, pp. 265–6

QUESTIONS

1. What impression is Remarque trying to convey in the above extract?
2. What do his observations suggest about the problems faced by medical staff during the war?
3. Why do you think he also refers to France and Russia, not just Germany?
4. Remarque's work is a novel. Does this detract from its value for a historian? How useful would this extract be to a historian studying the physical impact of the war on soldiers at the front? Comment on its nature, the perspective of the author, its reliability and its usefulness.

Representing war experience: Group work

The soldier's torment continues

There was not a soldier in the trenches during the war who did not have lice. Winter describes them thus:

> They looked like little translucent lobsters and fed twelve times daily by holding on to clothing fibres with their six feet as they drank blood.

D Winter, *Death's Men*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp. 96–7

Once embedded in a man's uniform, lice had the ability to torment their host day and night. They bred voraciously and proved resistant to all forms of control. The men never became used to lice and their constant biting forced the men to scratch continually. Lice were more than just irritants. Constant scratching caused the skin to break and sores to develop. In the trenches' unhygienic conditions, this was not just uncomfortable but dangerous. Boils, impetigo and ulcers could develop.

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If lice were the constant unseen companions of the men in the trenches, rats were their constant visible companions. The rats that infested the Western Front were unlike anything the men had seen before. Known as 'trench rats' or 'corpse rats', these vermin were often the size of small dogs. They favoured no nationality, being willing to feast on the corpse of a Frenchman or a German.

Rats did not limit their interests to the dead. A sleeping soldier was as equally good a target as a dead soldier. Food could never be left out, as it would attract rats. Yet rats could bring out the humour of the men in the trenches. There are many accounts of soldiers describing their competitions to kill rats and the ingenious ways in which they worked at this. Some soldiers even developed some affection for 'their rats' and gave them names.

The soils of northern France contain manure that has a bacillus in it. A bacillus is a bacterium that produces spores (germ cells) in the presence of oxygen. If this bacillus came into contact with a wound, which was quite easy in the trenches given the constant mud, it caused a condition referred to as gas gangrene. This ailment has nothing to do with weaponry gas; rather, it refers to the gas in the tissue of the human body.

> After forty-eight hours the edges of the wound begin to swell up … The cut surface takes on a curious half-jellied, half-mummified look: then the whole wounded limb begins to swell up and distend in the most extraordinary fashion, turning as it does, first an ashy white and then a greenish colour. This is because the tissues are being literally blown out with gas.
>
> RE Ringer, *2 Unit Modern History Outlines*, Core Study, Pergamon, Sydney, 1989, p. 73

The cold was another hardship faced by the men. France and Belgium do not experience a winter as cold as Russia's; temperatures do not regularly fall to –40 °C, but they can reach –15 °C. For the soldier forced to spend weeks on end in a trench, the cold caused unbelievable hardship. Denis Winter describes cold as the soldier's greatest enemy. It was impossible to escape and no amount of additional clothing was able to keep it out. The combination of cold and wet made life particularly unbearable. The intense cold brought its own problems. Frostbite affected many men and often led to infection, gangrene and later amputation. The cold made sleep almost impossible.

Medical science moves forward

Though the hardships of World War I were enormous, and the casualty rate in some battles was horrendous, it is also true that far fewer men died of their injuries than had been the case in previous wars. This was partly due to well-organised medical management and improvements in transportation. Many lives were saved by the rapid movement of the injured by courageous stretcher-bearer teams. Medical and surgical units were moved closer to the front line. Motor transport enabled the most serious cases to be moved quickly away from the front for more involved surgery. The fact that the wounded could receive rapid treatment was often a crucial factor in saving a life. However, of vital importance were the rapid developments in medical technology that had been spurred on by the war. Some of these existed before the war, but were improved; others came directly out of the war. Table 3.2 summarises many of the major developments in medical science during World War I, including blood transfusions, artificial limbs, facial reconstructions, X-rays and fighting infection.

Medical advances

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TABLE 3.2 Wartime advances in medical science

Blood transfusions	Before the war, transfusions were not common due to the risk involved, but the need for blood transfusions during the war drove the practice on. It was discovered that anticoagulants made it easier to store blood. In 1914, sodium citrate was shown to be an effective anticoagulant; in 1916, Jay McLean discovered heparin, which is still used as an anticoagulant today. By being able to store blood, it meant that doctors did not have to rely on person-to-person transfusions, which were particularly hazardous in a war situation. Blood transfusion techniques were moved forward by two North American surgeons. Major LB Robertson of the Canadian Army Medical Corps developed new techniques that made transfusions easier, such as the syringe-cannula technique. Captain Oswald H Robertson of the US Army Medical Officer Reserve Corps pioneered ways of storing blood. This made possible the developments of 'blood banks'. The availability of stored blood greatly increased the chances of an injured soldier being able to survive. However, it would not be until the 1930s that transfusions from blood banks became widespread.
Thomas splint	Distinguished World War I military surgeon Sir Henry Gray stated that during one particular battle in spring 1917, when the Thomas splint was used for nearly all femoral fractures, the death rate at the casualty clearing stations was 15.6 per cent in 1009 cases. This was a notable reduction in mortality from earlier in the war when Gray estimated that the death rate from gunshot fracture of the thigh was 80 per cent. Some military surgeons had previously suggested that more lives would be saved if amputation was carried out in all cases of femoral fracture. However, only 17.2 per cent of patients required amputation in the particular battle quoted by Gray.
Facial reconstruction	If a soldier's facial injuries were too severe, facial prostheses were developed. This included the development of an artificial eye by dental technician Archie Lane. Between 1917 and 1921, over 5000 servicemen went through the wards at Queen's Hospital in London. An American sculptor, Anna Coleman Ladd, developed a form of paper-thin tin mask, based on a prewar portrait of a soldier. These were enamelled and coloured to match each injured soldier's complexion.
Artificial limbs	Between 1914 and 1921, over 41000 British servicemen lost at least one limb. To meet the demand for good-quality limbs, Queen Mary's Hospital in Roehampton in London was opened. The limbs were made in on-site workshops. However, it was not until the 1920s that significant advances were made in this area. New metal alloys were employed, men could attend classes in how to use their artificial limbs and they were also provided with a spare second limb. The work of Queen Mary's Hospital was replicated in the United States at the Walter Reed Hospital and at the Test Centre for Replacement Limbs in Berlin.

Getty Images/Science & Society Picture Library

A Thomas splint

Getty Images/Science & Society Picture Library

Facial reconstruction surgery was usually completed over numerous operations, as shown in this example.

Getty Images/Science & Society Picture Library

A British soldier with two artificial legs

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X-rays	The prewar development of X-ray technology proved to be invaluable during the war. The ability of doctors to locate precisely where a bullet or a piece of shrapnel had penetrated a man's body was crucial to his chances of survival. However, the surgery involved in dealing with such cases had to be done quickly. The Nobel Prize–winning discoverer of radium, Marie Curie, organised for cars to be turned into mobile X-ray vans. French soldiers called these vehicles 'petites Curies'. The presence of X-ray facilities close to the front line saved many men's lives and prevented disability for others.
Fighting infection	Even the basic efforts at sanitation, and the widespread use of vaccinations for such diseases as typhoid, did manage to keep down the number of deaths from sickness. Medical staff used iodine and tissue-removing debridement to clean wounds and help keep infection at bay. Sepsis was able to be dealt with due to the invention of antiseptics. The efforts of medical teams to stave off infection brought results. During the Boer War (1899–1902), of the 22 000 British soldiers who died, two-thirds died from disease rather than on the battlefield. During World War I, the majority of fatalities were the result of battlefield actions.
Skin grafts	British surgeon Dr Harold Gillies pioneered a method of grafting skin and tissue from various parts of the body to restore chins, noses and cheeks. To ensure a flow of blood to the area being treated, Gillies invented the pedicule tube graft, a method still in use today. However, despite the valiant and skilled efforts of surgeons, for many soldiers their facial disfigurement remained severe and permanent.

SOURCE 3.17 A still from the film *Paths of Glory*

Shell shock

The suffering of the men in the trenches was not only physical. The effects of the nature of battle and the conditions in which they had to fight had major short-term and long-term psychological effects. This was hardly surprising. The vast majority who fought along the Western Front were men for whom the violence and savagery of battle was totally alien to everything they had ever experienced. Farmers, clerks, machine operators and students had been taken from their fields, offices, factories and colleges. After a short – and often impersonal and brutal – period of training, they were transported to France and thrown into the trenches. These ordinary men suddenly had to cope with the incessant din of an artillery barrage, the sight of human flesh torn apart and the stench of the sickening cocktail of the trenches' contents. Many were unable to cope and cracked under the strain.

One of the great films made about World War I is the 1957 Stanley Kubrick classic *Paths of Glory*, starring Kirk Douglas. There is a powerful scene in which a French general is inspecting the men in the trenches on the eve of going over the top. He is there to raise morale and he attempts to buoy up the troops with tidbits of small talk. He approaches one soldier and attempts to talk to him. The soldier has a glazed look and is clearly unaware of what is going on, what is being said and even who is talking to him. The captain explains that this soldier has **shell shock**. The general explodes, insisting that there is no such thing as shell shock and orders the sick soldier to be removed.

shell shock
The psychological effect on soldiers subjected to long periods of artillery bombardment

The scene is instructive, as it highlights the official attitude early in the war to shell shock. The military authorities adamantly refused to recognise shell shock and accused those who displayed symptoms of malingering and, worse, cowardice.

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Shell shock was caused by the stresses created by the nature of the war at the front. It manifested itself in a variety of ways:

- Some men became violent and angry and had to be physically restrained.
- Some men turned inwards and totally refused to communicate.
- Some would gaze out blankly as if in another world.
- Others might shake, mumble and drool.

For some men, the psychological scars of war remained with them forever. In 1938, there were still 32 000 World War I veterans being treated in psychiatric hospitals. Fortunately, military authorities today are more aware of the psychological effects of warfare. The condition is referred to as PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder.

Shell shock

Denis Winter

Denis Winter is one of the leading historians on various aspects of World War I. Winter pioneered research into the fighter pilots of World War I. In 1991, his reassessment of General Haig ignited debate on the controversial career of Britain's commander-in-chief. However, Winter is still possibly best known for his classic 1978 book *Death's Men*. Winter's treatment of the war in *Death's Men* headed in a new direction. He did not focus on the major figures of the war, the grand strategies and diplomatic moves. He concentrated on the ordinary soldier in the trenches – what he ate, how he slept, how he felt, how he survived, what he did on leave and a whole range of important aspects of the ordinary soldier. In this extract, Winter describes the impact of shell shock on a range of soldiers.

> When men did crack, they often showed the most diverse responses to identical pressures. Myers noted one incident in which a shell had hit a dugout. Only two men survived. One wandered in the open with his clothes off, believing that he was going to bed. After just four days at a field ambulance station he was back in service. The other man was in a coma for a fortnight with rigid limbs. On the seventeenth day he sat up and said, 'Did you see that one, Jim?' then relapsed, remaining deaf and mute. In a final hysterical seizure he shouted battlefield orders, then came round to his normal condition. Another man who came under Myers was a soldier who had seen his closest friend killed at his side. He went into a tearful semi-stupor, showed no reflexes and took no notice of pinpricks. After two days, however, he got out of bed and talked to his orderly quietly about his old civilian life but retained no memory whatsoever of anything in his war hitherto.
>
> D Winter, *Death's Men*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 136

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the differences in the men's psychological reactions to the stress of war.
2. In the extract above, the first man was back at the front within four days. What does this suggest about the nature of treatment for shell-shock victims during the war?
3. What does the third victim seem to have done to escape the horror of war?
4. Why do you think soldiers' experiences of shell shock were so varied?

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Dealing with shell shock

cognitive therapy
A form of psychology treatment where a person's negative thought patterns are challenged to change behaviour or to treat a mood disorder such as depression.

Early treatment of men with shell shock displayed the lack of understanding of the condition at the time. It could involve solitary confinement, electric shocks, and severe emotional and physical re-education. Up to 300 British soldiers were executed who were almost certainly suffering from shell shock.

However, by 1917, thanks in part to the work of psychologists such as Charles Myers and WH Rivers, more humane treatments took precedence. Special institutions were established to help psychologically damaged soldiers, such as Craiglockhart Hospital. Treatment was often based around **cognitive therapy**, talking through the issues.

1. Apart from the terror of battle, what horrors did the soldiers also have to face?
2. Why were soldiers more likely to survive injury in World War I than in earlier conflicts?
3. Identify five significant medical advances that had a major beneficial impact on wounded soldiers.
4. What was the official attitude towards shell shock during most of the war?

Advances in communications in World War I

As with medical science, advances were made during the war in the area of communications, and commanders in the field were to make significant use of telephones, radio and wireless. However, the vagaries of conditions at the front meant that recourse was often taken to non-technological methods, such as visual signalling. Signalling flags were usually blue and white. Using silk or other lightweight flags, a skilled flag operator could send 12 words a minute. Dogs were also used for sending messages across the trenches, and a military dog-training school was established in Scotland. Carrier pigeons were also used widely for sending messages. In Britain, it was a crime to harm or kill a carrier pigeon. One wartime poster announced that a £5 reward would be paid by the National Homing Union for information that led to the conviction of a person harming a homing pigeon. Men were also used as trench runners to deliver messages when communications broke down; the future Nazi dictator, Adolf Hitler, performed this role on the Western Front.

Telephones

At the start of the war, military communications were carried out primarily by means of electric telegraph. Civilian-style telephones were soon pressed into service, but they did not function well in the awful conditions of the trenches. Wires were frequently broken because of artillery fire or simply by troops trampling them with their boots. In the later war years, the field magneto telephone for voice transmission and buzzer telephones for morse code were introduced. Eventually, the Telephone D Mark III was used across the British Army. By 1918, the Fullerphone telegraph was able to stop German interception of Allied messages.

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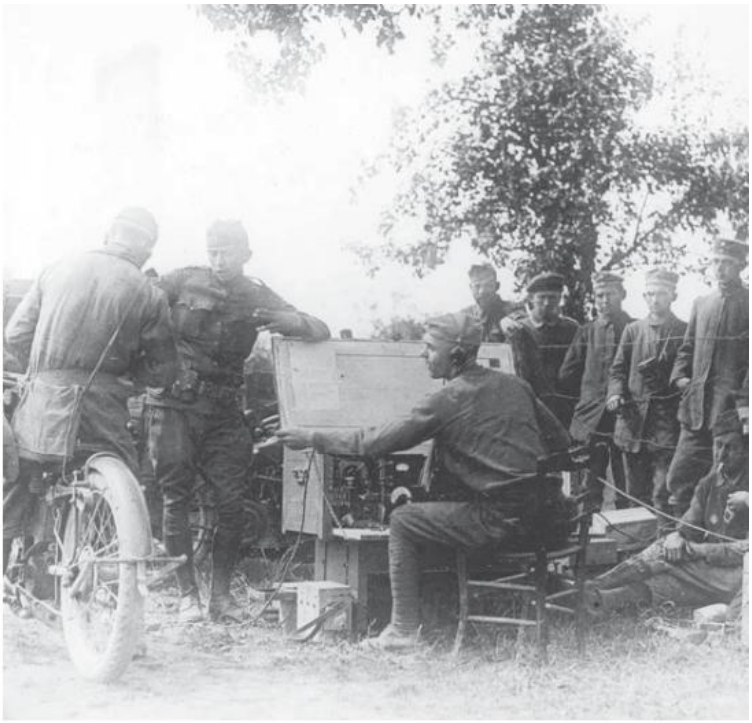
Radio and wireless technology

Radio was being used before the outbreak of the war, with ships often using it to send morse-code signals. Early long-wave radio sets were fragile, heavy and expensive, and radio transmissions could sometimes be intercepted by the enemy, and so codes had to be used, which slowed down communications. When the British Government took control of the Marconi telecommunications and engineering company, it began to concentrate on improving the radio for war use. An immediate improvement was the creation of lighter, more portable radio kits.

Improvements in radio technology soon made it possible to move from morse code to voice communication, which offered great speed and accuracy. Radio technology gradually became more reliable with developments in oscillators, amplifiers and the electron tube.

The German military used radio transmissions for guiding their dirigibles during bombing raids. This technology also began to be used in aeroplanes.



Getty Images/Print Collector

SOURCE 3.18 Members of the United States Army Signal Corps in France operating a field radio station, July 1918. To the left of the image is a motorbike dispatch rider, while on the right, German prisoners of war look on.

Drawbacks

Technology certainly improved battlefield communications, but they were not always reliable. The destructive power of weaponry could easily destroy cabling. One of Britain's first actions during the war was to send out the Post Office cable ship, the *Alert*, to cut the telecom cables that linked Germany to France, Spain and the Azores Islands (in the Atlantic) and, through them, to America. Post Office vessels also cut cross-channel cables that linked Britain and Germany just hours before Britain's declaration of war. The Germans were less successful at severing British cables.

These actions meant that Germany could now communicate only by wireless, which made it possible for Britain to listen in to German communications. An important example of this came in early 1917, when British listeners were able to intercept and decipher a coded message from the German ambassador in Mexico to the Mexican Government. This was the famous Zimmermann Telegram. The Zimmermann Telegram became a significant factor in persuading the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

1. What was the main result of the improvement in radio technology?
2. Why could new communications technology not always be relied upon?
3. When modern communications failed, what did armies fall back on?

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Chapter summary

- The expectation on both sides at the start of the war was for mobile warfare and a quick result.
- The failure of the Schlieffen Plan and the Battle of the Marne ended mobile warfare, and complex trench formations were gradually created.
- The war on the Western Front became a war of attrition.
- Warfare developed into a futile toing-and-froing across no-man's land.
- Industry played a large role in the war, as it was able to provide almost limitless amounts of artillery, arms and ammunition to the men in the field.
- Zeppelins were used to attack British cities, but their effectiveness was limited.
- German U-boats came close to crippling the British home front in 1917, but Allied countermeasures and the dangers of submarine service limited the effectiveness of the U-boat.
- Science played a key role in the war, as it was able to develop new and frightening weapons, including gas, flamethrowers, tanks and aircraft.
- The horrors experienced by men involved not just the danger and terror of actual combat but also the prevalence of sickness and disease.
- The demands of war led to medical advances in areas such as blood transfusions, artificial limbs and plastic surgery.
- The men's suffering was not only physical but also psychological, and many men suffered shell shock.
- The war brought on rapid improvements in communications.

Further resources

- Cross, T, *The Lost Voices of World War I*, Bloomsbury, London, 1988
- Remarque, EM, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Little Brown, Boston, 1929
- Winter, D, *Death's Men*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978
- Film: *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1979, directed by Delbert Mann

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Outline the expectations of most generals at the start of the war.
2. Why was the Battle of the Marne so important?
3. What is a 'war of attrition'?
4. How had modern industry made modern warfare so horrific?
5. 'Science had produced the soldiers' most feared weapon.' Explain this statement.
6. Why is Wilfred Owen remembered?
7. Why were tanks not particularly effective when they were first introduced?
8. What was trench foot?
9. Outline the improvements in blood transfusions that occurred during the war.
10. Outline the early treatments for shell shock.

True or false?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

11. Briefly outline the role of naval warfare in World War I. You might refer to blockades, specific battles and the use of submarines.
12. Industry had managed to produce weapons of great power that could fire from great distances. This would put civilian targets within range. How were Paris and the eastern coast of England affected by this development?
13. How was the issue of shell shock dealt with in World War II? Had military leaders learnt from the experience of World War I?

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISES

14. 'World War I produced more and more terrible ways for soldiers to die or be injured; yet it also provided a greater chance of surviving injuries than in previous wars.' Explain this statement.
15. What was more important during the war on the Western Front: human decision making or the influence of science and industry? Justify your answer.
16. To what extent did new technology affect the course of the war?

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04

Key battles: Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- the varying experiences of soldiers in key battles: Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele.

Dawn rising on the muddy, horrific battlefield of Passchendaele, as soldiers tend to the dead

Getty Images/Time Life Pictures

Introduction

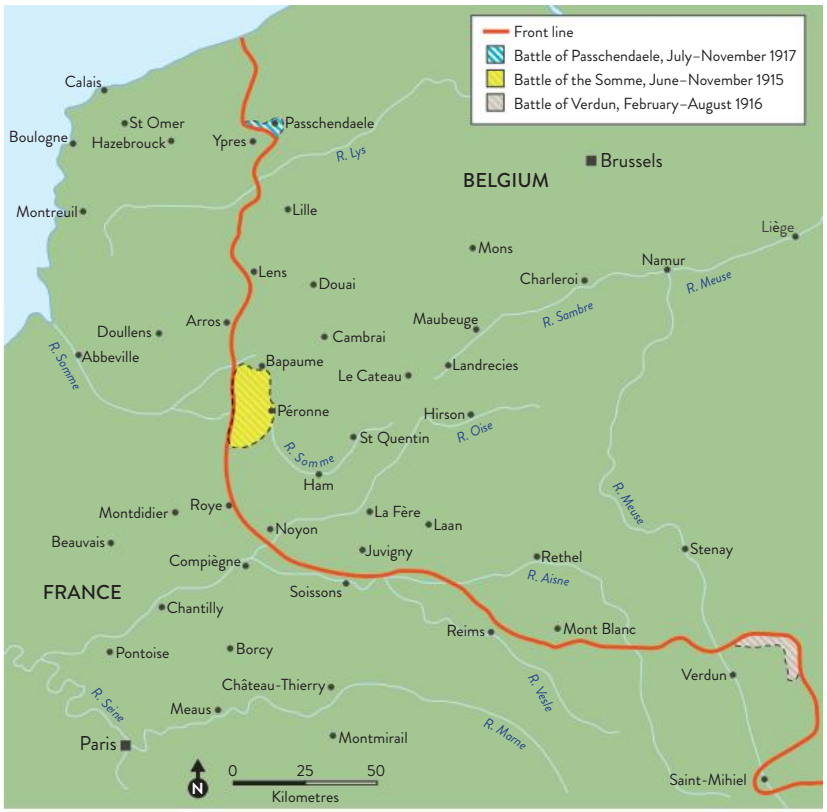
As the war dragged on into 1915, even the most optimistic of observers realised that the conflict was not going to be over quickly. Each campaign attempted by either side led to thousands of casualties, often for virtually no gain in territory. The war had become a war of attrition, which involved wearing down the enemy to a state of exhaustion.

Nevertheless, there were still attempts to break the stalemate. These attempts came in various forms:

1. On the Western Front, both Allied and German generals still nursed visions of a dramatic breakthrough to end the deadlock. Between February 1916 and November 1918, a series of bloody campaigns was launched to achieve such a breakthrough.
2. There were attempts to break the deadlock on the Western Front by launching attacks in other theatres of war, in the hope of weakening the enemy's overall war capability.
3. Germany attempted to break the deadlock by launching its unrestricted submarine campaign, which aimed to starve Britain into submission. Britain pursued the same aim with its blockade of Germany.
4. There were efforts from various quarters to bring hostilities to an end by promoting peace negotiations.

None of these efforts succeeded. In fact, the war remained evenly poised as late as mid-1918. Germany was finally defeated as a result of the Allied naval blockade, strains on the home front, the intervention of the United States and the use of tanks. Nevertheless, there were numerous attempts to break the deadlock on the Western Front.

World War I was a global conflict drawing in the great powers and their empires and was fought across much of the globe. Three key battles, each fought on the Western Front, however, stand out as symbolic of the conflict: Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele.



SOURCE 4.1 The main campaigns of 1916–17

Key battles

1914
- **August** Imposition of Allied naval blockade on Germany
- Battle of Mons
- Battle of Tannenberg
- **September** First Battle of the Marne
- Battle of Masurian Lakes
- **November** First Battle of Ypres

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1915 **February** Turkish attack on the Suez Canal
April–December The Gallipoli campaign
May Sinking of the *Lusitania*
Battles of the Isonzo
October Allied landings in Salonika
1916 **February–November** Battle of Verdun
May Battle of Jutland
June Start of the Brusilov Offensive
July–November Battle of the Somme
1917 **February** Germany resumes policy of unrestricted submarine warfare
October Battle of Caporetto
November Battle of Passchendaele
1918 **June** Battle of the Piave
September Battle of Megiddo
Fall of Damascus to Lawrence's Arab forces

Verdun, February–November 1916

In 1916, the Chief of the German General Staff was General Erich von Falkenhayn, who had taken over from Moltke in 1914, following the failure of the Schlieffen Plan. Falkenhayn, born in 1861, had been the Prussian Minister of War since 1913. He shared the view of most British generals that the war would be won or lost on the Western Front. He did not expect a quick breakthrough, but rather placed his trust in the policy of attrition. His strategy was to wear down the French to the point of exhaustion.

Falkenhayn decided to attack the French position at Verdun. Verdun had no strategic value for Germany or France. General Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of French forces on the Western Front, had in fact removed most of its guns in 1915. However, it was of great symbolic importance to France, having been the site of great battles in the past. Falkenhayn knew the French would not give up Verdun, and so his stated aim became to 'bleed the French white'. He told one of his officers at the time that his aim was not to defeat but to annihilate France.

The battle raged from February to November, during which time both sides hurled 10 million shells at each other. The land around Verdun became like a lunar landscape. On 21 February, the Germans fired a million shells at the French; on 25 February, Fort Douaumont was taken; on 29 March, the village of Vaix fell; and Fort Vaux fell on 9 June. However, Germany failed to take Verdun.

Getty Images/Hulton Archive

SOURCE 4.2 The 1916 Battle of Verdun as recreated for the 1929 film *Verdun, visions d'histoire*

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Verdun

On 26 February, Marshal Philippe Pétain was placed in charge of the French forces and he pledged *'Ils ne passeront pas'* ('They shall not pass'). Verdun became a symbol of French resistance, the epitome of the national will not to surrender, a sacred city. Hindenburg called the Verdun campaign the beacon light of German valour.

French Prime Minister Aristide Briand's comments to Joffre indicate the seriousness with which the French took the defence of Verdun:

> If you surrender Verdun, you will be cowards, cowards! And you needn't wait till then to hand in your resignation. If you abandon Verdun, I sack you all on the spot.
>
> Prime Minister Briand to General Joffre

As Falkenhayn had expected, the French were willing to sacrifice everything to save Verdun. Pétain rotated 259 of France's 330 divisions through the meat grinder of Verdun. Nevertheless, as French resistance increased, Falkenhayn increased his determination to take Verdun. The Germans came close to breaking through the French lines in late June, but from then on German efforts were directed at simply repelling French attacks. Verdun had become the killing fields not only for French soldiers but also German soldiers. The battleground became a tragic cocktail of fog, smoke, confusion, carnage and destruction. It saw the introduction of new weapons such as phosgene gas and flamethrowers. Dogs were used as messengers, thousands of which died.

SOURCE 4.3 The Battle of Verdun

On 24 October, the French retook Fort Douaumont, and by 2 November, Fort Vaux had been retaken. By mid-December, the battle was over and Verdun remained French. Falkenhayn's failure at Verdun spelt his demise, and in August 1916 he was replaced by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. There had been more than 500 000 French casualties and more than 400 000 German casualties.

WS
Verdun source study

1. What was Falkenhayn's aim at Verdun?
2. Why did the French resist so strongly at Verdun?
3. Why did Verdun become such a horrific battle?
4. What were the results of the Battle of Verdun?

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The Somme, July–November 1916

British generals held an unwavering belief in 'the offensive'. It was firmly ingrained in their collective psyche that defensive warfare was unmanly, bad for morale and pointless. They stubbornly stuck to the idea that, despite all the evidence, the only way the war on the Western Front could be won was by launching massive attacks on the German positions. The main gist of British tactics was to hammer enemy positions with artillery, send the infantry over the top to force a gap in the German lines and then send in the cavalry. Nowhere were these ideas more clearly seen in practice than in the Battle of the Somme.

The Battle of the Somme appears in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the battle with the greatest number of casualties in history. Allied casualties were more than 1 million, while German casualties were more than 400 000. British casualties on the first day of the campaign were almost 58 000, including 19 240 killed.

Aims of the Somme campaign

The Somme campaign was the brainchild of General Haig, supreme British commander. Historians continue to debate Haig's motives at the Somme. It is clear now that Haig's original intention was to break through the German lines decisively. However, within only a few weeks, Haig and his colleagues realised that they had no chance of achieving such a breakthrough.

In his dispatch dated 23 December 1916, Haig argued that the Somme had been a great success because his three original aims had been achieved. He said that he had launched the Somme campaign to relieve pressure on the French at Verdun, to prevent Germany from transferring troops to the east to fight the Russians, and to wear down German forces in the west. In other words, Haig claimed that his intention all along had been one of attrition.

However, we now know that Haig changed his diary entries for later publication to cover up his failure. The publication of the official history of the war in 1932 shows that Haig's original aim had been for a breakthrough. General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Haig's principal senior co-planner, ordered that battle advice notes be called in and destroyed in early 1917. Members of the Fourth Army staff took away the army war diary and substituted it with another when the blunders of the campaign had become all too apparent.

The following two extracts highlight further the extent of the failure of the Battle of the Somme and Haig's duplicity.

Haig and the historians

JOHN LAFFIN

> Haig never entertained the idea of calling off the offensive. For political-psychological reasons he was forced to continue. To break off would be an open admission of failure. By continuing he could 'prove' that he had never intended to break through but that his strategy was a wearing-down battle of attrition. The offensive was only a few weeks old when the story was spread by officially inspired apologists that Haig was aiming throughout at a campaign of attrition and had not dreamt of a breakthrough.
>
> J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 75

B LIDDELL HART

> [Haig's denial of a breakthrough aim] was vehemently maintained for years, long after the war; it forms one of the most elaborate perversions of historical truth that has come to light. The 'smoke screen', composed of particles of truth dishonestly mixed, was finally dissipated by the publication of the official history in 1932.
>
> B Liddell Hart, *The Real War, 1914–18*, Cassell, London, 1970

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QUESTIONS

1. In the first extract, Laffin uses the phrase 'officially inspired apologists'. What does this suggest about his attitude towards Haig?
2. In the second extract, what does Liddell Hart mean when he refers to the 'smoke screen'?
3. Explain Liddell Hart's opinion of Haig. Justify your answer with reference to the extract above.

Getty Images/UniversalImagesGroup

SOURCE 4.4 General Douglas Haig

Preparations for the battle

Haig, Rawlinson and others in command would not accept any criticism of their plans. There was no room in the top levels of the British Army command for differing points of view or disagreement.

There was a belief that the pre-battle artillery barrage would be so effective that the troops would be able to simply walk across no-man's land and take the German trenches. Rawlinson in fact gave orders that his men should 'walk' towards the enemy lines at 100 yards (91 metres) a minute with a one-minute interval between each battalion. This order indicates the upper-class view that the recruits of Kitchener's new army were of a lower class and incapable of anything but strictly obeying basic instructions from 'their betters'.

Getty Images/Hulton Archive

SOURCE 4.5 The village of Mametz after the July bombardment, Battle of the Somme, 1916

Imaginary rehearsals for the battle were carried out. Hectares of land had been cleared well behind the lines in France. Troops were ordered to imagine gas and artillery shells, to imagine they were carrying their equipment and to imagine they were taking enemy lines, marked with pieces of red tape. The cavalry was held in readiness to ride through the German lines.

The pre-battle bombardment of the German positions was enormous:

- More than 1.6 million shells were fired during the last week of June.
- On 30 June, 400 000 shells were dropped.

Despite its extent, the artillery bombardment was totally ineffective. Most of the shells were shrapnel shells that, though capable of maiming soldiers, did little to harm the barbed wire. Many of the shells failed to explode. The German dugouts were so deep and so sturdy that they were able to withstand the bombardment. This meant that when the artillery barrage came to an end, the German soldiers were simply able to resume their positions behind their machine guns and await the predictable infantry advance.

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The Battle of the Somme begins

General Haig's diary for 30 June was optimistic despite all the evidence.

> The men are in splendid spirits. Several have said that they have never before been so instructed and informed of the operation before them. The wire has never been so well cut, nor the artillery preparation so thorough. I have personally seen all the corps commanders and one and all are full of confidence.
>
> General Haig's diary, 30 June 1916, quoted in J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 67

A German machine-gunner recalls his experience of the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

> We were surprised to see them walking, we had never seen that before. The officers went in front. I noticed one of them walking calmly, carrying a walking stick. When we started to fire we just had to load and reload. They went down in their hundreds. We didn't have to aim, we just fired into them.
>
> German machine-gunner, quoted in J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 68

QUESTIONS

1. What seems to be the attitude of the German machine-gunner?
2. What can be said in favour of the British officers?
3. What conclusion might be drawn from the behaviour of the officer walking across no-man's land with a walking stick?

The battle

The Somme was an unmitigated disaster, despite what Haig's apologists later tried to maintain. The British attack began at 7.30 a.m. on 1 July. It was a perfect summer's day, sunny with a clear sky. These were ideal conditions for the German defenders, who had quickly resumed their trench positions and who wasted no time opening up heavy machine-gun fire on the advancing troops. By the end of the day, there were 60 000 British casualties, including 20 000 dead.

The carnage did not end on 1 July. For five months, Haig pressed on with the offensive. However, the battle should not be seen as simply one of suicidal British advances. It was a principle of German defensive warfare to retake any lost ground immediately. Thus, German counterattacks followed quickly if any territory was lost, with casualties equally as tragic as those suffered by the British forces.

In September, tanks were employed in the British advance, but with little success, as the extract below highlights, although nine of the 49 tanks used did reach the German lines.

> Rawlinson was sceptical about the tanks. On 29 August he told the king's assistant private secretary that: 'We are puzzling our heads as to how best to make use of them and have not yet come to a decision.' … The attack [of 15 September at Delville Wood] was successful, though the tanks broke down or moved too slowly to keep up with the infantry … The tanks could help break into the German position but, short-ranged, slow, prone to breakdown and ditching, bone-cracking and nauseating for their crews, they could not yet assist with the breakout.
>
> R Holmes, *The Western Front*, BBC, London, 1999, pp. 137–8

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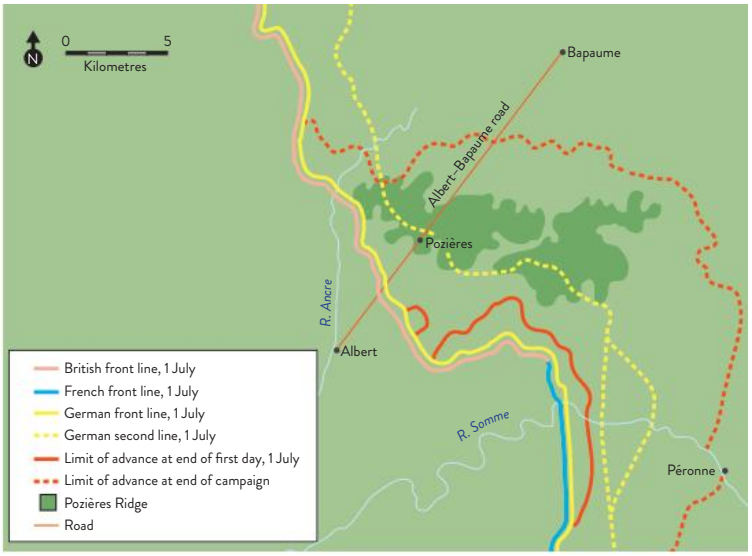
When Allied leaders met at Compiègne in November and decided to call a halt to the battle, it was clear that the Somme had achieved little. At the cost of enormous casualties, the British had advanced the line only 8 kilometres. Even this gain proved to be of little use as, in March 1917, General Hindenburg, the new German commander, withdrew to the more easily defended line east of Bapaume and north of Soissons, which became known as the Hindenburg Line. The Germans had given up 2.6 million hectares of land, but had reduced the length of the line they were defending by 50 kilometres. Haig claimed this proved the Somme had been a victory. French historian Marc Ferro instead suggests that the Somme was 'almost useless from the military point of view and merely revealed the vainglory of the generals'.[1]



SOURCE 4.6 The Battle of the Somme

The Somme

Evaluating images

How useful would the photograph in Source 4.7 be for a historian assessing the impact of the Battle of the Somme on the actual battlefield? Is it a reliable source?

Australian War Memorial P00105.044

SOURCE 4.7 French soldiers on the way to Longuevue

USEFULNESS AND RELIABILITY

Photographs are valuable sources for understanding the nature of the war on the Western Front. However, there can be problems using photographic sources. In answering the questions for Source 4.7, you might consider the following points:

- The photograph in Source 4.7 is a primary source.
- It appears to be a candid shot of troops making their way across a quiet area of the Somme. There appears to be no evidence that the scene has been specially staged for the camera.
- The reality of the battle conditions can clearly be seen in the photograph. These include the mud, the wet, the destruction, and the elimination of the natural environment with just tree stumps left of the original wooded areas.
- Photographs need careful assessment. Sometimes they can be set up for a specific purpose; they can be cropped in order to exclude part of a scene. Thus, it is necessary to consider the photographer's motive in taking the picture, if that is possible.
- Photographs present only a limited view of a battle area. Does the presence of utter devastation in this picture mean that the whole battlefield looked like this? Photographic evidence needs to be backed up with other sources; it can, of course, also back up other evidence itself.
- Some photographs in World War I had another photograph superimposed over them to give the impression of fighting.

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1. In the extract on page 74, what reasons are suggested for the failure of tank warfare on the Somme?
2. What was needed in the future for tank warfare to be more effective?
3. What had been Haig's original aim at the Somme?
4. What aims did Haig later claim to have had?
5. In what ways could it be argued that the Battle of the Somme was:
   a a success?
   b a failure?

The Passchendaele campaign, July–November 1917

The year 1917 was eventful. Revolution in Russia in February led to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March, and a second revolution in October led to the establishment of a Bolshevik government under Lenin, who sought an immediate end to Russia's involvement in the war. In April 1917, the United States entered the war on the Allied side, but it would not have a major military impact until well into 1918.

The Third Battle of Ypres took place during the second half of 1917. However, this battle has become known as Passchendaele, culminating as it did with the attack on this small Belgian village in November 1917. Allied artillery bombardment of German positions took place during July and left the area beyond the British trenches full of massive craters. When the summer rains came, these shell holes filled with water. The land became a quagmire of sticky mud. Men and horses risked being sucked down into a virtual quicksand of oozing slime. For soldiers weighed down by their weapons, supplies and greatcoats, a fall into the mud or a crater could mean death.

Haig insisted that the advance continue, and in early November ordered the capture of the village of Passchendaele. This was achieved on 6 November.

The aims of the Passchendaele campaign

The Passchendaele campaign had several objectives. Haig hoped to relieve the French, who had suffered major losses in 1917 and were still reeling from the mutinies of that year. There was also a plan to try to capture the Belgian ports of Ostende and Zeebrugge, which were being used by German submarines. Haig would also have hoped for a further wearing down of the German Army.

Alternative aims for the Passchendaele campaign

Winston Churchill, whom Lloyd George had appointed Minister of Munitions in July, had a more realistic idea than Haig about how the war should – and should not – be conducted. During 1916, as a Lieutenant Colonel, he had been CO of the 6th Royal Fusiliers on the Western Front, so he knew something of the war at the front. In October 1917, as the Australians and New Zealanders were falling in thousands on the slimy slopes of Broodseinde, Churchill wrote that the available strength should not be wasted in 'bloody and indecisive siege operations'. This was his perception of Haig's methods: 'The power of the defensive has produced a deadlock, and the British army is destined to be a holding force throughout 1918 until the Americans can become a decisive factor.'

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Here was a concise and accurate assessment of the British predicament and an equally concise solution to it: Sit tight and wait for the Americans. But Haig had no intention of sharing the 'glory' of victory with the untried Americans.

J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 116

QUESTIONS

1. By late 1917, what did Churchill believe was the most appropriate strategy for the British to follow into 1918?
2. Why did he hold these views?
3. Why might it be argued that Churchill is a reliable source in this matter?
4. What does Laffin suggest was Haig's real purpose in persisting with the Passchendaele campaign?

The conditions at Passchendaele

Australian War Memorial H08795

SOURCE 4.8 Part of the quagmire at Passchendaele

He [Haig] was proposing to push his men through a slimy, corpse-filled swamp so dreadful that infantry units took five hours to cover one mile [1.6 kilometres], even without having to fight. Supplies and ammunition could only be taken forward by donkeys or men, who collapsed under the effort. Up to a dozen bearers were needed to get one stretcher case to the rear.

J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 115

QUESTIONS

1. Examine the photograph and the extract above. How would these conditions have affected the ability of troops to engage in offensive warfare?
2. How do you think these conditions might have affected troop morale?
3. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of relying on photographs as evidence of battlefield conditions. (See the information box on page 75 for advice on using photographs.)

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Passchendaele

The results of Passchendaele

Casualty figures for Passchendaele are disputed by historians. This is hardly surprising considering the terrible conditions under which the men fought. Churchill and Lloyd George claimed Allied casualties reached up to 400 000. Holmes suggests the figure might be closer to 260 000 on each side.

The Belgian ports had not been captured. The Allies had taken territory and so could technically claim a victory, but the Germans could afford to concede land and the gains provided no opportunity for further advance.

An alternative view

The following extract provides an alternative view of the outcome of Passchendaele. Rifleman 'Archie' Groom fought throughout the campaign.

> After the few first days abortive attempts at a breakthrough nothing of value could be achieved. It became another bloody battle of attrition where so many wounded died lingering deaths in the mud. Third Ypres was a military crime. Haig's diary and the official accounts are monuments of understatement.

WHA Groom, *Poor Bloody Infantry: The Truth Untold*, Kimber, London, 1976, quoted in J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, pp. 119–20

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Groom's emotional reaction to Passchendaele.
2. How does his language show his reaction?
3. How reliable is Groom's account for gaining an understanding of the battle?

Paul Ham

Paul Ham is an Australian historian, journalist and publisher. He has written extensively on aspects of World War I, World War II and the Vietnam War. In his book on Passchendaele, Ham castigates the tactics and strategy of Britain's commander, General Douglas Haig. He does not pander to recent revisionist works that have tried to argue that Haig deserves credit for having done his best and for having learnt lessons with each battle. However, Ham says blame also lies with Prime Minister Lloyd George, who allowed Haig to maintain command despite his knowledge of the horrific failure of Passchendaele.

> Passchendaele village had no strategic importance in its own right; the ridge was merely the first stage of a vast offensive that aimed to liberate Belgium, realising Britain's original case for entering the war. The Flanders Offensive would be a distinctly Commonwealth campaign. In 1917, the exhausted and mutinous French Army were reduced to playing a defensive role on the Western Front; the Russians were in the throes of revolution; and the Americans had not yet arrived. So the British Army and their Australian, Canadian and New Zealand allies (with small French, South African and Belgian units in support) would confront the most powerful concentration of German troops on the Western Front, who were then being reinforced with fresh troops from the east. On British orders, they were to capture Passchendaele Ridge within weeks, seize Roulers and swing north to the Belgian coast, to fulfil one of the chief aims of the offensive: to destroy the German submarine bases at the ports of Ostend, Zeebrugge and others, whose U-boats were waging unlimited war on Allied shipping.

➜

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This would be the prelude to the total rout of the German forces in Belgium, a war-winning scenario dependent on a run of incredible victories, daunting in their ambition even with the help of brilliant command, fine weather and a lot of luck (none of which was forthcoming or guaranteed). The great French marshal Ferdinand Foch was not the only commander who had little faith in what he called a 'duck's march' through the Flanders mud …

The lessons of the immediate past might have counselled against the offensive. This would be Third Ypres. The First was a defensive battle fought in October and November 1914, in which the Franco-British forces just held the city, though at a huge cost in blood. The Second, from 22 April to 25 May 1915, ended in a stalemate, with Allied casualties of 87 000 against German casualties of 35 000. By the war's end, there would be five battles of Ypres. With the exception of a single day in 1914, the British and their allies would never yield the once-beautiful mediaeval town of Ypres itself to the Germans. And not until October 1918, at the Fifth Battle of Ypres, would they remove the German forces from the edges of the city's eastern hinterland, the 'immortal salient' – a blister of Allied-controlled territory that swelled up and subsided, but never burst, during four years of war. Hundreds of thousands would be killed or wounded defending or attacking the Ypres Salient; many more would live to remember marching past Ypres' shell-cratered streets, past the ruins of the thirteenth-century Cloth Hall and cathedral, to the front. In time, defending 'Wipers', as the Tommies rejoiced in mispronouncing it, became a rite of passage more terrible than the Somme. The Germans, too, would remember this place with special loathing.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Passchendaele campaign a distinctly Commonwealth affair?
2. What was the alleged purpose of Passchendaele?
3. How does Ham's use of language betray his attitude towards General Haig?

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TABLE 4.1 Other theatres of war

THE EASTERN FRONT	THE ITALIAN FRONT	SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE	THE MIDDLE EAST	THE WAR AT SEA
• German forces inflicted over 3000 casualties on Russian forces at Stallupönen in early August but were matched by the Russians at Gumbinnen. • Despite some early success, Austrian forces were driven back and had lost Galicia to the Russians by early September. • Russian forces were divided between Generals Samsonov (Second Army) and Rennenkampf (First Army), intense rivals and both incompetent. In contrast, Hindenburg and Ludendorff were ruthlessly efficient. • At Tannenberg in August 1914, Samsonov's First Army lost over 120 000 men, killed or captured. • Rennenkampf's Second Army lost 125 000 men at the Battle of Masurian Lakes. Russia never recovered from these defeats. • In 1916, General Brusilov inflicted major losses on the Austrians. However, lack of supplies and German reinforcements prevented him from consolidating his position. • Though Brusilov had some success in 1917, revolution at home led to mutiny and desertion in Russia's armies. • Once the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, Russia withdrew from the war.	• In April 1915, Italy signed the Treaty of London. Having been promised territorial gains after an Allied victory, Italy declared war on Austria in May 1915. • Though numerically stronger than the Austrians, the Italian Army was poorly equipped and led. The Battles of the Isonzo in 1915 proved to be costly, futile failures for the Italian Army. • Italy's greatest defeat came in October 1917 at Caporetto. • Italian forces had some success at the Battle of the Piave in June 1918 but failed to consolidate their advantage. • With British, French, US forces helping the Italians, Austria was finally forced out of the war on 4 November 1918.	• Turkey joined the Central Powers in November 1914. It launched an attack on the Russian Caucasus, only to suffer a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Sarikamish. • Serbia managed to drive Austrian forces out of its country by the end of 1914. • Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in September 1915 and joined German and Austrian forces against Serbia. • Anglo-French forces landed at Salonika but failed to help Serbia, which by the end of 1915 was occupied by Austria. • In March 1915, Allied naval forces bombarded Turkish positions in the Dardanelles but failed to make headway. • In April, Allied forces launched an attack on the Gallipoli peninsula with the aim of reaching Constantinople and taking Turkey out of the war. • After eight months of futile, bloody conflict, Allied forces were finally evacuated from Gallipoli in December 1915. • In September–October 1918, a multinational Allied force led by General Franchet d'Espèrey knocked Bulgaria out of the war.	• In February 1915, Turkish forces attacked the British-controlled Suez Canal. It was a failure but did tie down large numbers of British troops. • Indian colonial troops succeeded in protecting the Anglo-Persian pipeline at Qurna. However, Major-General Townshend's British forces had failed to make any progress up the Euphrates valley by the end of 1915. • Following an Anglo-Arab agreement of 1915 and vague promises of future independence, Arab forces launched attacks on Turkish positions in Arabia. With advice from British Captain Lawrence (of Arabia), Arab forces carried out guerrilla actions against the Turks. • Led by General Allenby, the British won a brilliant victory at Megiddo in September 1918. Lawrence led Arab forces into Damascus in September. • Turkey agreed to an armistice on 30 October 1918.	• Though the naval arms race had been a significant cause of prewar tension, naval conflict played a relatively small part in World War I. • Britain immediately enforced a naval blockade of Germany, which in the long term placed great strains on the German home front. • German U-boats targeted vessels trying to reach Britain. In May 1915, the German sinking of the *Lusitania* nearly brought the United States into the war against Germany. • Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare policy of February 1917 caused major pain on the British home front. However, it also brought the United States into the war on the Allied side. • Surface conflict was limited. The Battle of Dogger Bank in January 1915 was inconclusive but forced the German fleet home. • There were minor skirmishes in the colonies (see Chapter 2). • In May 1916, a major naval battle occurred in the Battle of Jutland. Though a German tactical victory, it was a strategic victory for the British Navy, which maintained control of the sea and kept the German fleet in home waters.

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Chapter summary

- The Battle of Verdun was fought between February and November 1916.
- Verdun was a German attempt to bleed the French Army 'white', but ended up also leading to massive German losses.
- Verdun was a horrific battle that ended inconclusively, though the French held on to Verdun.
- The horrors of Verdun arguably led to French Army mutinies the next year.
- The Battle of the Somme was Haig's ill-fated attempt to force a breakthrough of the German lines. It lasted for five months, achieved nothing and caused massive casualties on both sides.
- The following year, General Hindenburg withdrew German forces to a more defensible position – the Hindenburg Line – which further exemplified the futile nature of the Battle of the Somme.
- Passchendaele was fought between July and November 1917. It is sometimes referred to as the Third Battle of Ypres.
- The rain and the mud brought on the worst possible conditions for advancing troops; thousands drowned in the mud. Against all advice, Haig insisted that the offensive continue.
- The village of Passchendaele was eventually captured, which meant Haig could claim a 'victory'.
- Major battles also took place in other theatres of the war, such as the Middle East, the Eastern Front and the Italian Front. However, it was on the Western Front that the war would be won or lost.

Further resources

- Ham, P, *Passchendaele: Requiem for Doomed Youth*, Penguin, Sydney, 2016
- Kaufmann, JE, and Kaufmann, HW, *Verdun: The Renaissance of the Fortress*, Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2016
- Sebag-Montefiore, H, *Somme: Into the Breach*, Viking, London, 2016

Endnotes

1 M Ferro, *The Great War 1914–18*, Editions Gallimard, Saint-Amand, 1969, quoted in J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 98

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Who was the German commander at the time of Verdun?
2. What was Germany's purpose in attacking Verdun?
3. Why did the French fight so tenaciously to hold Verdun?
4. Why might Haig have been optimistic at the start of the Battle of the Somme?
5. Why was the British artillery barrage at the Somme ineffective?
6. Why is 1 July 1916 such an important day in British military history?
7. What was the Hindenburg Line?
8. Why was the Passchendaele campaign launched?
9. How successful was the Passchendaele campaign?
10. Why does Paul Ham blame both Haig and Lloyd George for Passchendaele?

Chronology and place

Key battles: Group work

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISES

11. Describe the ways in which each side tried to break the deadlock in the war. In your answer, you might refer to other theatres of war and attempts at achieving peace.
12. To what extent does General Haig deserve the criticisms that have been aimed at him by historians and critics?

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05

War on the home fronts

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- the impact of the war on civilians, including women's lives and the changing role of women (ACHMH064)
- the scale of recruitment, conscription, censorship and propaganda in World War I
- the idea of 'total war'.

Women munitions workers finishing small arms cartridges in Small Arms Cartridge Factory No. 3 at Woolwich Arsenal, London, May 1918

Getty Images/Imperial War Museum

Introduction

The impact of World War I on the home fronts of both Britain and Germany was immense. European wars had usually been affairs between armies and navies, but World War I changed this. The enormous scale of the war meant there was a need to constantly keep up the level of armaments and reinforcements. Even Britain resorted to conscription. Life could not go on as usual. The civilian population could no longer be isolated from the carnage of the battlefield. The era of total war had arrived.

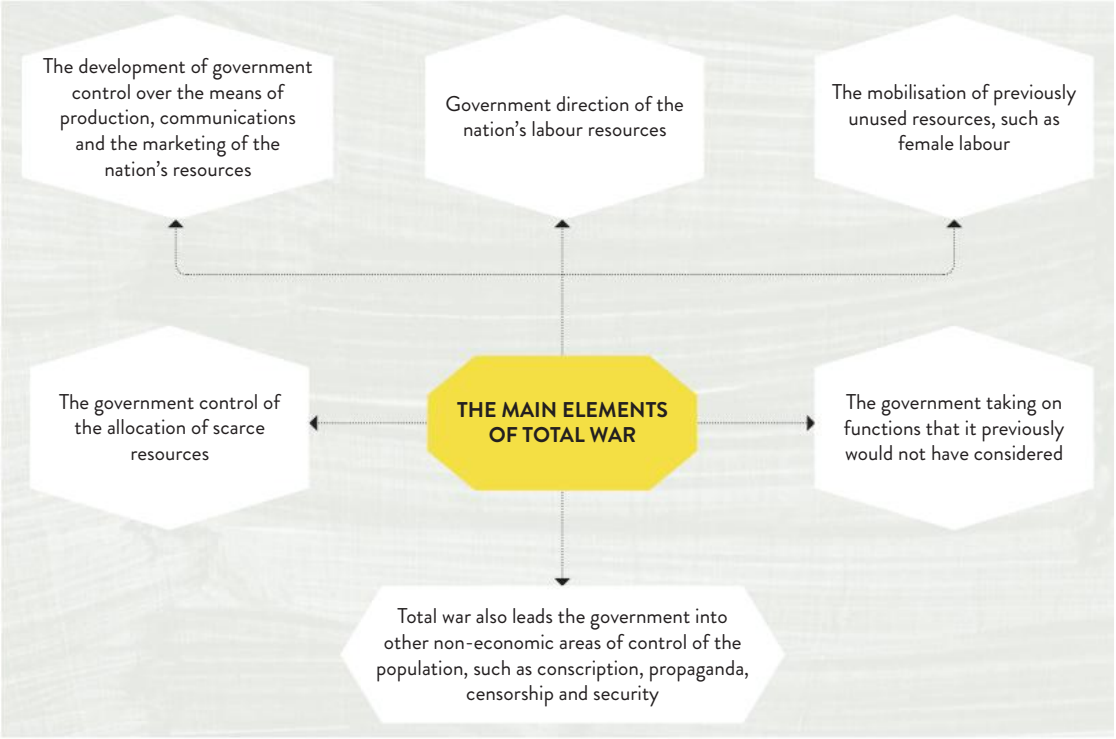
World War I was the first conflict in which military power was systematically aimed at civilian targets. The war also had a major impact on the lives of women. In the short term, women proved themselves to be invaluable to the war effort in all the major European countries. However, the war also had longer-term effects on how women were viewed by society, on social attitudes and on the role they could play in society.

World War I was also the first true propaganda war. The populations of most of the major European powers were literate, if only at a basic level, and they were consumers of a tabloid-style press. In addition to this, in some countries the general population could vote. As a result of these two factors, it became incumbent upon governments to persuade and cajole their peoples to support the war effort. As the war dragged on, and as the human and economic cost of the war kept increasing, propaganda and censorship became crucial weapons of war. British propaganda proved to be far more effective than German propaganda.

What is total war?

Total war

The term 'total war' refers to the complete dedication of a nation's resources and people to the war effort. Source 5.1 summarises the main aspects of total war.



SOURCE 5.1 The main elements of total war

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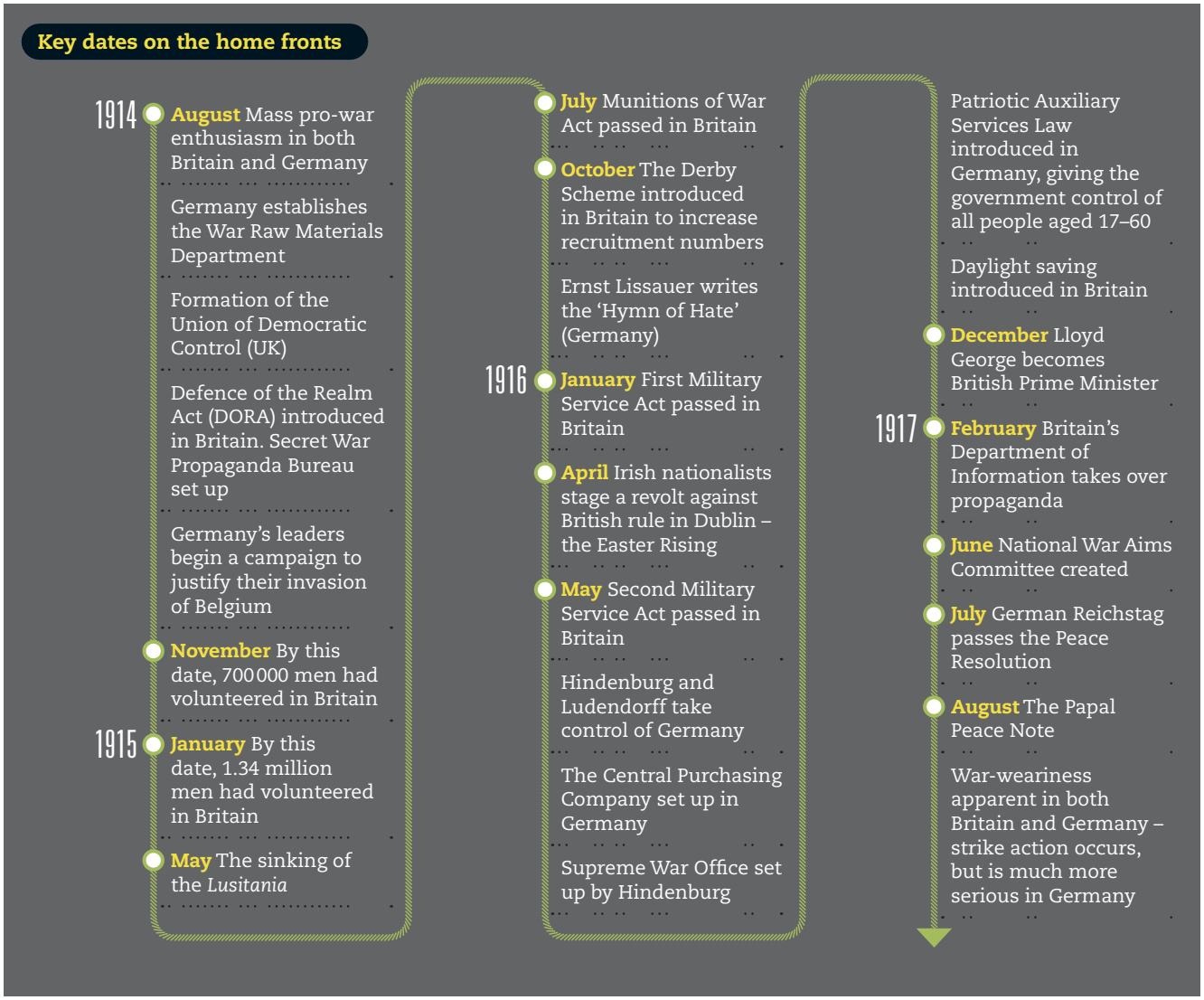

Germany and total war

Despite having to fight a two-front war, having weak allies and facing Allied economic and military superiority, the German military machine remained in the field for over four years. Germany itself was never invaded and as late as the (northern) spring of 1918, the German Army was in striking distance of victory. At the time of the armistice in November 1918, no German territory contained enemy forces. Many factors account for the ability of Germany to keep going, but of key importance was its ability to organise for war on the home front. Germany accepted the need for 'total war' right from the start of the conflict.

German war organisation

The driving force behind early German war organisation was Walter Rathenau, head of the electrical company AEG. By 3 August 1914, Rathenau had persuaded the War Ministry to set up a War Raw Materials Department, the KRA (*Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*). Rathenau became its director. The KRA

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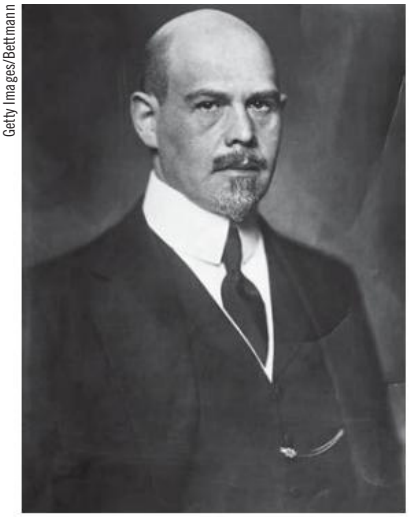

Getty Images/Bettmann

SOURCE 5.2 Walter Rathenau

ersatz goods
Substitute goods that were produced when regular goods could not be obtained

determined war production. Key raw materials were declared emergency materials and placed under KRA control. The KRA also controlled labour. Later in the war, Germany used forced labour from occupied countries to meet its labour shortages. Prisoners of war were forced to work in agriculture.

Shortages were met by using the resources of occupied countries or by producing substitute or **ersatz goods**. Textiles were made from wood pulp and attempts were made to extract oil from seeds and shale deposits. Aluminium was extracted from clays and replaced copper in electrical fittings and munitions. By 1918, Germany was producing synthetic rubber. Nitrogen was extracted from the atmosphere to produce nitrates essential for the production of explosives and fertiliser.

The following extract highlights how the work of some German scientists helped to make up the gap in German war supplies.

> Scientists rallied to the war effort … Fritz Haber invented a system for extracting nitrogen from the air, thereby alleviating the Reich's prewar reliance on Chilean saltpetre (nitrates). Ersatz became the rage. Nitrate crepe paper made from wood cellulose took the place of gun cotton; synthetic camphor replaced imported natural camphor; glycerin was manufactured from sugar rather than fats; gypsum yielded sulphur; a host of flowers and weeds were processed to produce alcohol for ammunition; and rosins and gums were extracted from a plethora of coal derivatives.
>
> HH Herwig, *The First World War*: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–18, Arnold, London, 1997, p. 256

Evaluating HH Herwig

Kriegswirtschaftsgesellschaften (war economy companies) were set up and the bosses of Germany's top firms were asked to lead them. The purpose of these companies was to commandeer raw materials and allocate them to manufacturers working on government contracts. These companies built on the large cartels that were already a feature of German industrial life. For example, there was no need for a war coal company because the coal cartel was already doing the job. In September 1914, the major industrial firms joined to form the War Committee for German Industry to look after their own interests and advise the government.

The British naval blockade, imposed on Germany from the beginning of the war, severely hurt the German economy. Prewar Germany depended on international trade. Germany imported more than 50 per cent of its raw materials and 33 per cent of its food needs. The blockade took away 80 per cent of Germany's export market.

To combat this, in 1916 the War Ministry set up the Central Purchasing Company, the ZEG (*Zentraleinkauftsgesellschaft*), to purchase goods in neutral countries. Nevertheless, this could not prevent shortages arising. The following extract illustrates an aspect of the problem of shortages in the area of transport.

> Transportation perhaps was the most vexing problem … Roughly 400 000 horses were killed by hostile fire and 500 000 died of illness due to malnutrition. As a result Germany turned to motorised transport … But it possessed neither rubber plantations nor oil fields. Petrol and rubber on hand in 1914 quickly ran out. By 1915 the monthly need of 15 000 rubber tyres and 25 000 pneumatic tubes could no longer be met … By 1917 wooden tyres were prescribed. Attempts to produce synthetic rubber (*Kautschuk*) proved slow and unrewarding … by 1917, no amount of ersatz could hide the Reich's painful shortages of oil and rubber.
>
> HH Herwig, *The First World War*: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–18, Arnold, London, 1997, pp. 256–7

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To cope with shortages, government agencies were established. In 1915, the Imperial Grain Office (*Reichsgetreidestelle*) was set up. Using this office, the government took control of the grain and milling industry, controlling supplies and setting up a system of rationing. There was also an Imperial Potato Office. In 1916, the War Food Office was established and by 1918 there were 258 laws that imposed restrictions on everything from restaurant hours to the length of women's dresses.

Scarcity and the severe demands of war led the government to intervene directly in the economy. The government built two plants of its own to produce nitrates needed for agriculture. These plants were soon also producing nitrates for explosives.

In 1916, the German supreme commander, Hindenburg, demanded control of all war matters, and so the Supreme War Office (*Kriegsamt*) was established. Hindenburg also forced through the Reichstag the Patriotic Auxiliary Service Law (1916), which gave the government power to call up all men aged 17–60 for labour service. Workers could now be directed on the orders of the ***Kriegsamt***.

Kriegsamt
War Office set up by General Hindenburg in 1916 to bring all matters relating to the war under his control

In October 1916, the Weapons and Munitions Procurement Agency (WUMBA) was set up. Sections of the War Ministry disappeared as WUMBA took control of the country's coal, iron and steel. In August 1916, Hindenburg ordered the implementation of a program aimed at massively increasing armaments production – aircraft production was set at 1000 per month. When asked how long this program would remain in force, Hindenburg replied that it would last no later than June 1917, as he expected the war would have ended by then.

Australian War Memorial H18214

SOURCE 5.3 Hungry German children forced to cross the border to the Netherlands to seek food

1. How useful would the photograph above be for a historian studying the impact of the war on the German home front? Comment on its nature, reliability and content.
2. Why do historians need to be careful using photographic evidence from World War I?

Historians discuss the effectiveness of Germany's organisation for total war

Historians do not agree on the effectiveness of Germany's wartime organisation. Some are impressed with the ability of the German economy to keep the massive war machine going for so long in the face of enormous obstacles such as the Allied blockade and the strength of the enemy. Such a view is held by Roger Chickering, as outlined in the following extract.

ROGER CHICKERING

> The effectiveness of this hastily improvised effort stood out in the annals of Germany's economic mobilisation for war. Despite the anxieties of the War Ministry, the German armies did not collapse in late 1914 for want of weapons or munitions; and in this respect at least, German soldiers were well supplied for the duration of the conflict. There was no munitions crisis in Germany.
>
> R Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–18*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 39, quoted in I Cawood and D McKinnon-Bell, *The First World War*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 56

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war socialism
The control of the economy by the government during the time of war

DAVID THOMSON

David Thomson's account of the effectiveness of Germany's wartime planning and economy suggests that Germany's total war organisation was admired by future governments, both German and non-German.

> The scion of capitalist enterprise and big business, Walter Rathenau, created what came to be called, quite correctly, '**war socialism**' (*Kriegssozialismus*). A special agency controlled prices and rationed food. It decreed two meatless days a week and fed Germans on war bread in which turnips and potatoes were mixed with flour … Trade unions allied with military leaders to militarise the country's economic life. Rathenau's achievement in thus creating a novel type of pure 'war economy' (*Kriegswirtschaft*) was well enough described in his own words: 'In its methods it is closely akin to communism, and yet it departs essentially from the prophecies and demands resulting from radical theories.' Germany's 'war economy' became an exemplar of economic planning for the whole of the postwar world.
>
> D Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1957, p. 576

Other historians, however, paint a different picture of German wartime organisation. They argue that Finance Minister Helferrich was irresponsible in the manner in which he raised funds for the war. They point to the growth of German indebtedness and the rise of inflation in Germany.

However, these criticisms are hardly justified. All governments (except the United States Government) relied on deficit financing and ended the war in debt. Germany was not the only country with an inflation problem in 1918. A German victory in 1918, with its imposition of reparations on France and the preservation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, would have resulted in a more healthy German economy after the war and consequently a glowing assessment of the German wartime economy.

Nevertheless, by intervening in such a major way, the German Government left itself open to criticism if things went badly. William Carr highlights this point in the extract below.

WILLIAM CARR

> These measures undoubtedly helped Germany weather the crisis of war to the summer of 1916. But 'war-time collectivism' … was the undoing of the German government in the long run. Precisely because the state was intervening so actively in the regulation of the economy ordinary Germans began to blame it for its manifest failure to protect their living standards in the second half of the war. No longer did discontented people in town and countryside vent their anger on an imaginary socialist 'enemy' but openly criticised state officials for their inability to cope with the situation, a crucially important psychological development which prepared the way for the revolutionary situation of 1918–20.
>
> W Carr, *A History of Germany, 1815–1945*, Edward Arnold, London, 1969, pp. 220–1

QUESTIONS

1. What is the fundamental reason for Chickering's admiration of German wartime organisation?
2. According to Thomson, what methods did Rathenau use to keep Germany going?
3. According to Carr, why was it politically dangerous for the German Government to be so active in wartime organisation?

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Britain and total war

Britain did not gear itself up to total war as quickly or in the same manner as Germany. In fact, Britain did not proceed far down that path until mid-1915. There were several reasons Britain organised for total war more slowly than Germany. These are explained in Source 5.4.

SOURCE 5.4
Britain's failure to immediately adopt total war

Government controls

Although the government in Britain was slow to move to organisation for total war, like other belligerent governments it was quick to assume controls. On 8 August 1914, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was passed. This suspended civil rights and put Britain under virtual martial law. Police were given the right to stop and question citizens, and suspects could be imprisoned immediately.

During the war, DORA's scope was gradually increased to encompass control over a wide range of activities. In 1917, activities such as kite-flying and feeding bread to animals became illegal. Official permission was needed to buy binoculars. DORA also gave the government the power to buy goods at rock-bottom prices and to requisition all forms of transport, ranging from ships to cars and horses.

The government used DORA to restrict British drinking habits. It was believed that war production was suffering because of alcohol, a point made by King George V in a statement from March 1915.

> From the evidence it is without doubt largely due to drink that we are unable to secure the output of war material indispensable to meet the requirements of our army in the field, and that there has been such serious delay in the conveyance of the necessary reinforcements and supplies to aid our gallant troops at the front.
>
> Statement of King George V, quoted in D Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, Nicholson & Watson, London, 1933–36

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Employers began to echo the King's sentiments. Increased take-home pay and an 'eat, drink and be merry' attitude, not all that surprising during a war, were causing increasing alcohol-related absenteeism. The government took several measures to deal with the situation. In 1915, pub opening hours were limited, beer prices were increased and the alcohol content of beer and spirits was reduced. The numbers of arrests for drunkenness fell to below prewar levels.

In 1916, the government introduced daylight saving in the hope of increasing the number of daylight working hours. Many measures were introduced regarding the workforce, censorship, and government information campaigns.

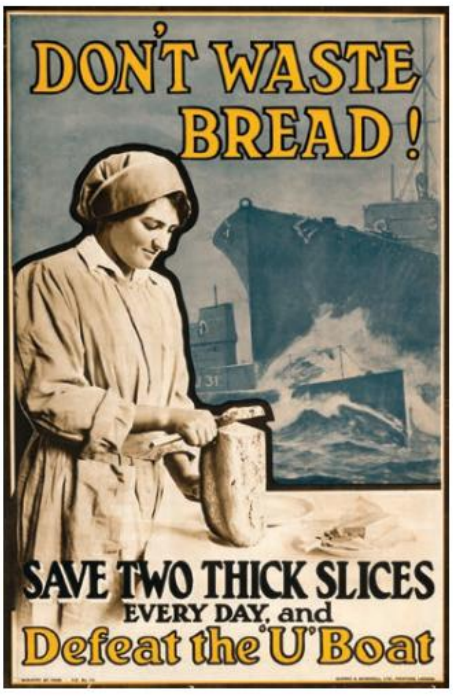
Government controls over food

British living standards did not collapse as they did eventually in Germany and, for many, nutrition and diet actually improved during the war. This was partly due to direct government intervention in employer–union relations, which maintained wage levels.

The government aimed to keep the workers happy and thus prevent disruptions to war production that might have been brought about by striking workers. Food supplies remained fairly plentiful, but a poor harvest in 1916, panic buying and the impact of Germany's submarine campaign made the introduction of food restrictions necessary. In December 1916, Lord Devonport, the new food controller, exhorted the British people to restrict their food intake voluntarily. He asked people to limit their consumption per week to 115 grams of sugar, 1.8 kilograms of bread and 1.1 kilograms of meat.

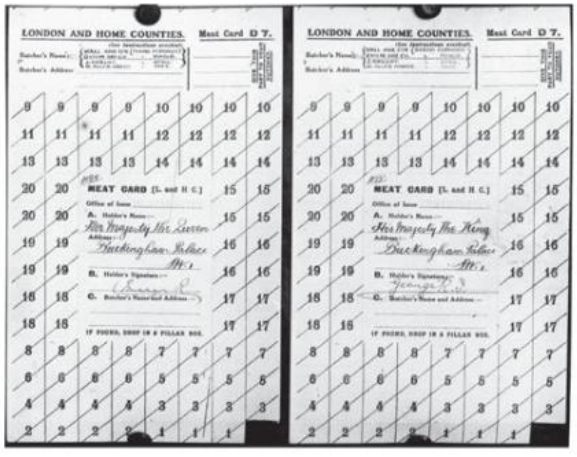
By April 1917, wheat stocks had fallen to 10 days' worth of supplies. The situation was saved as a result of the bread-economy campaign and increasingly successful anti-submarine activity. Source 5.5 shows an example of a poster from this campaign.

Rationing



Australian War Memorial ARTV00378

SOURCE 5.5 British waste-minimisation propaganda poster



Imperial War Museum negative number Q30521

SOURCE 5.6 The King's and Queen's meat ration cards from 1918

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QUESTIONS

1. What is the poster in Source 5.5 trying to encourage people to do?
2. Why do you think it is aimed at women?
3. The ration cards of the King and Queen in Source 5.6 were printed in national newspapers. Why do you think the government took this step?
4. How do you think the British would react to the imposition of rationing?

The Board of Agriculture established a special Food Production Department that, by 1918, led to 30 000 hectares of land being brought over to additional wheat production.

Devonport's successor, Lord Rhondda, introduced more stringent controls in 1918. In February, rationing was brought in for several products. It became illegal to throw rice at weddings and to feed the pigeons at Trafalgar Square.

Munitions

By the spring of 1915, the British Government realised that it was desperately short of artillery shells, a fact highlighted by the difficulties the army faced at Neuve Chapelle. At this time, Britain was producing 700 shells per day, compared to the 250 000 per day coming out of German factories. There were demands from all quarters – press, army, parliament – for greater government direction of the economy.

David Lloyd George was the politician who pushed Britain towards total war organisation. Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions in the Asquith government in May 1915. In July, parliament passed the Munitions of War Act and Lloyd George proceeded to mastermind war production and extend government control. Private firms were given subsidies; the government established its own munitions factories and shipyards; private companies were urged to amalgamate; and research and development began to be carried out on an unprecedented scale.

Nevertheless, it took time for Lloyd George's work to bear fruit. Supplies did not flow through in significant numbers until 1916 and it was 1917 before a real impact was felt. Between August 1914 and June 1915, the army was sent 110 artillery pieces; between July 1915 and July 1916, it received 5006. In the same period, grenade production increased from 68 000 to 27 million.

Lloyd George sought to reduce the great industrial relations tension that existed in Britain before 1914. He tried to bring bosses and trade union leaders together. Men such as Sir Eric Geddes, chief manager of North Eastern Railways, became senior administrators of his ministry.

In order to maximise production in the munitions industry and elsewhere, Lloyd George needed to prevent strikes and limit the strict rules that unions placed on working practices. He wanted semi-skilled workers to be allowed to work in the munitions factories. He also sought to break down complex tasks into simpler ones, a process called dilution. This would allow less-skilled workers, such as women, to work. Lloyd George needed union cooperation. He explained the reason for this in his memoirs:

> The factories and workshops of Russia were seething with discontent. The German worker was showing symptoms of the querulousness of overstrain [complaining about the strains they were suffering]. In neither of these two countries did the rulers bring the spokesmen of Labour frankly into active partnership, and the failure to do so ended in disaster for both … I deemed it essential to forestall trouble by bringing the Labour leaders into more active and effective cooperation with the government.
>
> D Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, Nicholson & Watson, London, 1933–36

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Munitions

Alamy Stock Photo/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd.

SOURCE 5.7 A British munitions factory

Australian War Memorial H08119

SOURCE 5.8 Workers at a British munitions factory

Getty Images/Hulton Archive

SOURCE 5.9 Munitions recruitment poster

QUESTIONS

1. During the war years, which groups of people often gained jobs working in British munitions factories?
2. Do the photographs in Sources 5.7 and 5.8 suggest there was any danger in this sort of work?
3. How does the recruitment poster in Source 5.9 try to encourage work in munitions factories?

Imagefolk/Mary Evans Picture Library

SOURCE 5.10 Lloyd George visiting workers

The unions did not like the idea of dilution, as they feared it could lead to a long-term fall in wages. Dilution was resisted in the shipyards. To allay union fears, Lloyd George promised that dilution would last only for the duration of the war. To further bring the unions onside, he urged employers to pay bonuses and encouraged the process of collective pay bargaining between employers and unions. He supported pay awards and set up arbitration tribunals to sort out possible industrial disputes. To keep the unions onside, the government tried to control food prices and in 1915 parliament passed the Rent Restrictions Bill, which pegged rents to 1914 levels.

The unions did not have it all their own way. In 1915, Lloyd George said: 'a perfectly democratic state has ... the right to commandeer every resource, every power, life, limb, wealth and everything else, for the interest of the state'.[1]

'Delivering the Goods' source study

9780170402071

Men could be fined or even imprisoned for lateness, absenteeism and striking. Working hours were increased, leisure activities outside of work, such as professional football matches, were curtailed and there were restrictions on where people could work.

The impact of the war on women's lives and the changing role of women

One of the lasting icons from the era of World War I is the image of the female munitions worker, the munitionette. From 1915, women poured into the munitions factories and were responsible for much of Britain's armaments output. At first the government was not keen to mobilise women and women had to satisfy themselves with what were considered the more appropriate pursuits of nursing and voluntary work. However, women eventually became active in many other areas of economic life, including transport, agriculture and clerical work. World War I also saw the creation of women's auxiliary organisations within the armed services.

Women's wages and conditions did improve during the war, but they were still generations away from achieving equality with male workers. Inequalities were a reason for the increase in female trade union militancy. Some women did receive the vote at the end of the war, but it is highly debatable whether or not this was as a result of their efforts during the war.

Some historians have argued that, socially, the war brought significant and long-lasting change in the lifestyles of women. Again, however, this is a debatable point, as the second-class status of women in British society was not seriously challenged for another 50 years.

Some historians have argued that the war had a revolutionary effect on the lives of women and society's perception of them. It will be seen, however, that this so-called revolutionary impact of the war has been greatly overplayed and the evidence does not seem to support such an idea.

Women and the munitions industry

In July 1914, there were 3.22 million women in the workforce; by January 1918, this number had increased to 4.8 million. By far the major part of the increase in the female workforce occurred in the munitions industry following David Lloyd George's appointment as Munitions Minister in 1915.

Getty Images/Library of Congress

The work was very dangerous and during the war more than 200 munitionettes were killed. In January 1917, an explosion at the Silvertown factory in London's East End claimed 69 lives.

Shifts were 12 hours long and at first there was no time off on Sunday. In 1915, one Yorkshire munitions factory made its women work a continuous 25-hour shift.

Many women contracted TNT poisoning. Their skin often developed a yellow tinge because it was affected by the chemicals with which they worked. Munitionettes were sometimes called 'canaries' because of this.

SOURCE 5.11 Conditions facing female munitions workers

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In 1914, there were 212 000 female munitions workers; by 1918, this number had increased by more than 700 000 to 950 000. By July 1918, 80 per cent of all British munitions were being produced by female munitions workers – the munitionettes, as they were affectionately called at the time. Female munitions work was taken very seriously by the government.

Conditions in the munitions factories were tough, particularly for those women who had left jobs in domestic service and were entering a factory for the first time. This aspect of female work is summarised in Source 5.11.

Despite the dangers and the harsh working conditions, there was no shortage of women willing to take their place in the munitions factories. The pay was two to three times what could be earned in domestic service. Most munitionettes were young, working-class women, although some educated middle-class women also entered the factories.

Munitions work

Getty Images/Hulton Archive

SOURCE 5.12
Propaganda poster from World War I encouraging women to work in the munitions industry

QUESTION

How does this poster try to persuade women to do their bit?

Women outside of the munitions factories

Because of the authorities' reluctance to let women serve or their belief that women were not capable of contributing, at first the female contribution to the war came in the form of voluntary work. Many middle- and upper-class women provided comforts for men on leave, such as free buffets at railway stations, tea parties in private homes and car trips. Concerts and sales were organised to raise funds.

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Table 5.1 lists some of the contributions of voluntary organisations during the war.

Nursing was seen as the most acceptable form of war work for middle- and upper-class women. However, at first female requests to volunteer for nursing assignments were not accepted by the government. When Mrs St Claire Stobart offered the services of the Women's Convoy Corps to the Red Cross, she was rejected. Similarly, Dr Elise Inglis's Scottish Women's Hospital Units were also denied the chance to serve overseas. Dr Inglis eventually took her teams to Serbia and Romania.

As the danger of food shortages became acute due to the German submarine campaign, it was increasingly important to both maintain and increase agricultural production. As farm workers left for the front, some women chose to work on the land. By 1918, the Women's Land Army numbered more than 16 000. The Land Army was not a popular choice of work for women. Farmers often resented having female workers. The pay was low and the accommodation poor. Most working-class women preferred to work in the cities where there were opportunities to spend the extra pay they were earning.

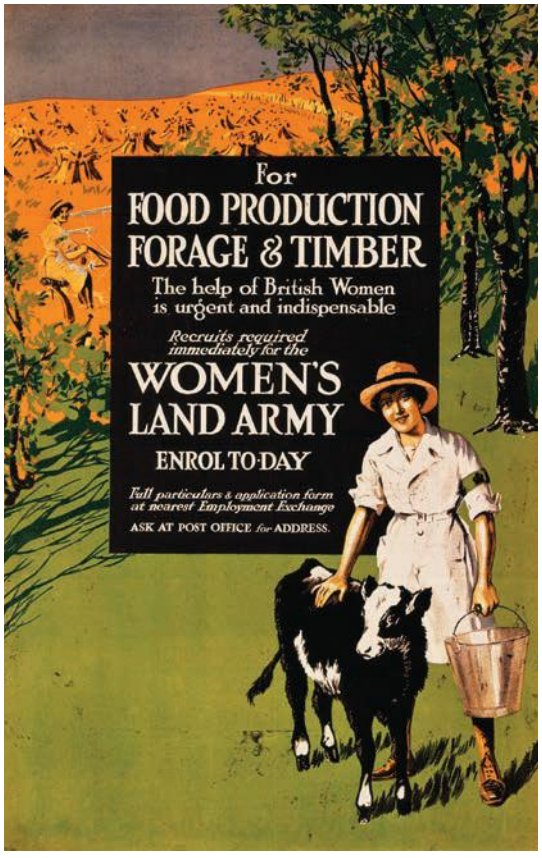
Women entered a variety of other jobs, working as blacksmiths, gravediggers, managers and ambulance drivers. They took on a variety of transport roles, ranging from tram drivers to ticket collectors to rail guards – jobs vacated by men who had left for the front. Women moved into offices and banks and worked as clerks and tellers, jobs that previously had largely been filled by men.

However, there was not a wholesale replacement of men. Some areas remained almost totally off limits to women. Women tended not to work as train drivers, or in the iron and steel industry. They rarely worked in shipbuilding, accounting or architecture.

TABLE 5.1 Voluntary organisations' contributions

ITEM	NUMBER
Mufflers	1 742 947
Mittens (pairs)	1 574 155
Socks (pairs)	3 607 059
Hospital bags	6 145 673
Bandages	12 258 536
Dressings	45 503 001
Books	16 000 000
Cigarettes	232 599 191
Pounds of tobacco	256 487

T Barker (ed.), *The Long March of Everyman, 1750–1960*, Penguin, London, 1975, p. 188



Getty Images/Hulton Deutsch

SOURCE 5.13 Women's Land Army recruitment poster

Women in the armed services

During the war, women's branches of the armed services were created: the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) and the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). This enabled almost 100 000 women to take on non-combatant jobs, which freed up men for the front.

Women in the WAAC took on a variety of roles, including working as clerks, telephonists, waitresses, cooks and drivers. However, they were not given full military status. Women were enrolled in the WAAC, not enlisted. If they broke the rules, they were disciplined in civil courts, not military ones. They were not given ranks but were called officials; for example, they were known as forewomen, assistant forewomen and workers rather than sergeants, corporals and privates.

Women also became part of the police force during the war. They were involved in crowd control, dealing with 'inappropriate behaviour in pubs and parks' and assisting during air raids. The Ministry of Munitions used women police to ensure that the munitionettes were obeying factory regulations.

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SOURCE 5.14 Recruitment poster for female fruit pickers

SOURCE 5.15 WRNS recruitment poster, 1918

Women and the trade unions

Trade union representatives were not keen on the idea of women entering the workforce. They disapproved of Lloyd George's ideas of dilution and feared that if unskilled women entered the factories, the status of skilled workers would be permanently damaged.

They also were ambivalent about the issue of pay. Unions took it for granted that women should be paid less than men and fought attempts at equal pay. However, the existence of lower female pay made women more attractive to employers seeking to reduce costs. Unions further took for granted the notion that once the war was over women would leave their jobs and return home where they belonged, which was the prevailing view of society at the time.

However, some women did unionise and did go on strike for better pay. Mary Macarthur, the British union leader, fought for better pay for the munitionettes. By 1918, there were 383 trade unions that contained female members and there were 36 unions for women only. The war had stimulated women's consciousness of their value.

The war and female suffrage

Before the war, women had been campaigning hard for the right to vote in parliamentary elections. The suffragette movement had at times become violent. However, as soon as war was declared, the main suffragette movements suspended their campaign for the vote and threw themselves into the war effort.

Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, key figures in the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), encouraged men to enlist, sought the internment of aliens and demanded harsh treatment of conscientious objectors. Lloyd George supported Mrs Pankhurst in her efforts to encourage women into the munitions factories.

As a result of the vital role women played in the war, some argue that the government rewarded them by granting the vote to women in the Representation of the People Act of 1918. However, this view is not really supported by the evidence:

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- Those factors that had prevented the vote being given to women, such as WSPU violence and the opposition of Prime Minister Asquith, had been removed by 1918.
- From 1916, Britain had a coalition government and so **female suffrage** was no longer a party issue.
- There was a worldwide trend towards female suffrage. Some women already had the vote in New Zealand and Australia and in many American states. They could already vote in British local elections.
- The Act of Parliament that gave women the vote in 1918 was a very conservative measure. Women over the age of 30 who were householders (local government electors) or the wives of householders were given the vote. Thus, the women who were enfranchised were generally middle-class, married and not young. Yet the majority of female war workers, especially in the vital munitions factories, had been working-class, single and young. Thus the vote was hardly a reward for female war service.

female suffrage
The right of women to vote

The social impact of the war on women

The war certainly improved the position of women in society. Many had gained greater self-assurance through work and their contribution to the war effort was lauded by people from Lloyd George down. The press also played up female patriotism. Nevertheless, it is difficult to generalise about how women's position in society changed as a result of the war.

Differences in age, class and geographical location all affected the impact of the war on women. Most war workers were working class, but the majority of these women had been working before 1914 and so long hours and physical hard work were nothing new to them.

The war had freed many middle-class women from the restraints of the home. For these women, the war had a major impact. Middle-class women were far more literate than working-class women, and thus after the war it was their accounts of wartime experiences that tended to get into print. For them the war had been revolutionary, but this gives a misleading impression because for working-class women life had remained as hard and demanding as it always had been. In fact, it was probably worse, with male family members at the front, longer working hours and the traditional female domestic roles still to fulfil, made harder by the interminable queuing that became part of the wartime way of life for many women.

The war certainly did leave many women with a restless feeling. They wanted to continue enjoying the better pay and the greater freedom they had known during the war. The loosening of attitudes in the 1920s reflects this, though again it must be remembered the Roaring Twenties only really roared for the better off.

The traditional view of the impact of the war on British women argues that the war was a time of great opportunity and freedom for women. It took them out of the confines of domesticity, made higher pay

Imperial War Museum negative number Art.IWM PST 13171

SOURCE 5.16 WAAC recruitment poster

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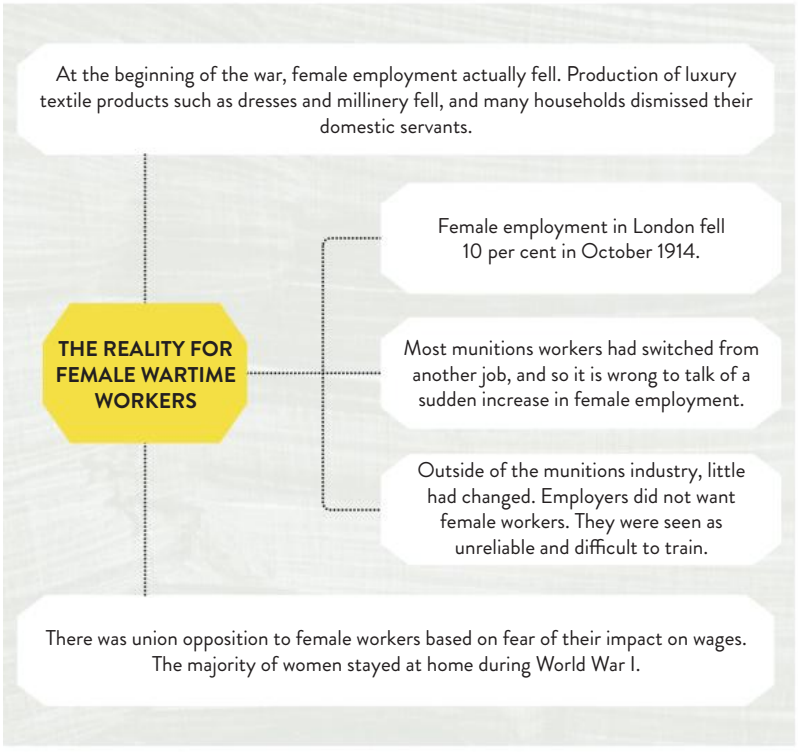
possible and finally the government was convinced to give them the vote. Women became recognised as an essential part of the nation's economy. The perception of women had changed and there was a view that they were now irresistibly moving along the path towards gender equality. Such a view is echoed in the following extract.

> It was the war, in creating a proliferation of government committees and departments and a shortage of men, which brought a sudden and irreversible advance in the economic and social power of a category of women employees which extended from the sprigs of the aristocracy to the daughters of the proletariat.
>
> A Marwick, *The Deluge,* Bodley Head, London, 1965, p. 92, taken from I Cawood and D McKinnon-Bell, *The First World War*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 65

However, the view that the war had a revolutionary impact on women's lives is far too simplistic. The point has already been made that the extension of the vote was a limited measure that benefited mainly middle-class women. Those women who worked outside the home were still burdened with domestic chores.

British women and war

Regarding the increase in work for women, most attention is placed on women's work in the munitions industry, but this is misleading. Source 5.17 identifies factors that suggest things had not really changed much for the better.



SOURCE 5.17 The reality of female wartime work

The media might have lauded the efforts of the munitionettes, but their attitude always remained patronising. The *Daily Mail* of 23 June 1916 referred to men's 'amused contempt' for their female colleagues. On 30 March 1916, the same paper described women workers as: 'Overalled, leather-aproned, capped and goggled – displaying nevertheless woman's genius for making herself attractive in whatsoever working guise'.[2]

After the war, women were encouraged to return to the home or to traditional female jobs. In 1921, female employment rates were no higher than they had been in 1914. The Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act of 1919 actually tried to take jobs from working-class women. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 did make it easier for women to work in the professions, but this benefited only middle-class women.

1. What sorts of activities were British women restricted to during the early months of the war?
2. Why was munitions work so dangerous?
3. Despite the dangers, why were women so keen to enter munitions factories?
4. Why did trade unions have mixed feelings about the issue of equal pay for women?

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Recruitment and conscription in Britain

Early recruitment efforts

In August 1914, Britain had a modestly sized professional army of 20 divisions compared to a French Army of 74 divisions and a German Army of 94 divisions. Much of Britain's small prewar army was overseas defending the British Empire. There was no historical tradition of a large standing army in Britain and, in August 1914, it was assumed that voluntary signing up would ensure an enlistment rate of 100 000 per month.

Recruiting committees were established around the country. The London Parliamentary Recruiting Committee announced early in the war: 'There are three types of men. Those who hear the call and obey, those who delay, and – the others'.[3] During the early months of the war, such committees had little problem encouraging men to join up. The reasons for enlisting so enthusiastically varied. For some, it was romantic ideas of adventure and excitement; for others, it was an acceptance of one's duty to defend King, country and empire. Many saw the war as an escape from their dreary existence, and for some, joining the army provided their first full-time job for years. Peer pressure from pals and a desire to impress women would also have been factors. All shared the belief that the war would probably be over by Christmas and so there was a need to volunteer quickly to avoid missing the action.

By mid-November 1914, 700 000 men had volunteered; and by January 1915, 1.34 million men had answered Lord Kitchener's call.

Recruitment posters 1

Getty Images/UniversalImagesGroup

SOURCE 5.18 Early British recruitment poster

Getty Images/Buyenlarge

SOURCE 5.19 The Kitchener poster

QUESTIONS

1. To what emotions and values does Source 5.18 appeal?
2. What is the significance of the flags and the Latin phrase *Pro Patria*?
3. At whom is the Kitchener poster (Source 5.19) directed?
4. Why do you think Kitchener's image was used?
5. Why do you think Kitchener's face is looking straight out?

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In the early months, there was great competition to enter the ranks. The army set high physical standards, so entry implied one was part of an elite. Many young men wanted to prove that they were good enough for the army. However, as losses at the front mounted, enlistment declined – it was down to 22 000 per week by mid-1915. The tough physical standards were gradually removed. In July 1915, the height requirement was reduced from 168 centimetres to 157 centimetres and the acceptable age bracket was widened from 19–30 years to 19–40 years.

propaganda
The deliberate presentation of one side of an issue with the aim of convincing a person to accept that point of view

As enlistment numbers fell, recruitment campaigns became more radical. **Propaganda** posters aimed specifically at women were produced. Women were encouraged to pressure their sweethearts, brothers and husbands to enlist. Failure to enlist was seen to imply cowardice or lack of patriotism, and what kind of woman would want to associate with a coward or a man who turned his back on his King? Source 5.20 shows an example of one such poster.

Posters that attempted to shame men into enlisting were also produced. One of the most famous of these is shown in Source 5.21. In it a man's children ask him what he did in the Great War. The man's face is meant to indicate embarrassment at having done nothing, while his young son plays with his toy soldiers. Bob Smillie, the Scots miners' leader, said that his response to the poster's question would be to say that he had tried to stop the bloody thing.

Recruitment posters 2

Getty Images/DEA Picture Library

SOURCE 5.20 British recruitment poster

Alamy Stock Photo/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd.

SOURCE 5.21 British recruitment poster

QUESTIONS

1. At whom are these posters directed?
2. In what ways does the poster in Source 5.20 try to manipulate young women into pressuring men to volunteer?
3. How does the creator of the poster in Source 5.21 use imagery and words to create the greatest embarrassment for the man?

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Conscription

Despite the efforts, it was becoming clear that the voluntary system was failing and that compulsory enlistment would be needed. This was certainly the view of the right-wing press, such as Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, the Conservative Party and the National Service League. *The Times* of 6 May 1915 stated: 'The voluntary system has its limits and we are fast approaching them.'

Lord Derby was the Director of Recruitment. In 1915, he introduced the Derby Scheme, aimed at boosting numbers. Using a newly completed national register, all men aged 18–41 were asked to enlist when called upon. Men would be divided into single and married groups, with each of these further divided into 23 age groups. The plan was for each group to be called up, starting with the single-men groups. Men in reserved occupations, such as munitions, coalmining, the railways and some farming work, would be exempt. The Derby Scheme was a failure and closed in December 1915.

The desperate need for numbers led to the First Military Service Act of 1916, which called up all single men and childless widowers aged 18–40. Men in essential services, clergymen, Irishmen, the medically unfit and conscientious objectors were excluded. However, there was great confusion and trouble over whom should be called up and anger over the exempting of married men. Finally, in May 1916, **conscription** was introduced with the Second Military Service Act, whereby all men were liable for service, regardless of marital status.

conscription
The compulsory enlistment of men into the armed forces

Herbert Asquith, the Liberal Prime Minister, had difficulty introducing conscription because many of his fellow Liberals opposed the measure. They argued that it went against their belief in the freedom of the individual. Eventually, though, only one of Asquith's colleagues, Sir John Simon, resigned over the issue.

Conscientious objectors

Some 16 000 men registered as **conscientious objectors** during the war. These men stated that for reasons of conscience, such as strong religious belief or a moral revulsion at the taking of human life, they would not submit to being conscripted. A vast majority of the population either supported the war or were at least willing to accept the demands the war made upon them for the good of King and country. To them, conscientious objectors, or '**conchies**' as they were known, were either at best slackers and cowards or at worst traitors who deserved to be treated severely. The government certainly went along with this view, as it could not risk any threat to the conscription process.

conscientious objector
A person who refused to accept their call up to the army on moral grounds

conchie
A slang term used to describe conscientious objectors. It was meant to be insulting.

Conchies were dealt with at local tribunals. There was great inconsistency in the manner with which they were dealt, but generally their treatment was severe. Most conchies were allowed some exemption, but if their claim for conscientious objection was turned down and they failed to report for duty, they would be court-martialled and imprisoned. In prison they were badly treated and had no recourse to the legal system.

Some conscientious objectors were willing to take on non-combatant roles within the army, such as stretcher-bearers, but some refused to have anything at all to do with the army. They were called absolutists. Lloyd George expressed his hatred for such people. These people received particularly harsh treatment, even to the point of being taken to the front and tied to posts in no-man's land if they still refused to submit to army control.

A parliamentary statement of the time described another form of treatment for objectors. It reported that men suffering from organic ailments such as heart trouble were to be housed at a Woolwich hospital with venereal disease patients, with defective sanitation and no protection from infection.

British recruitment

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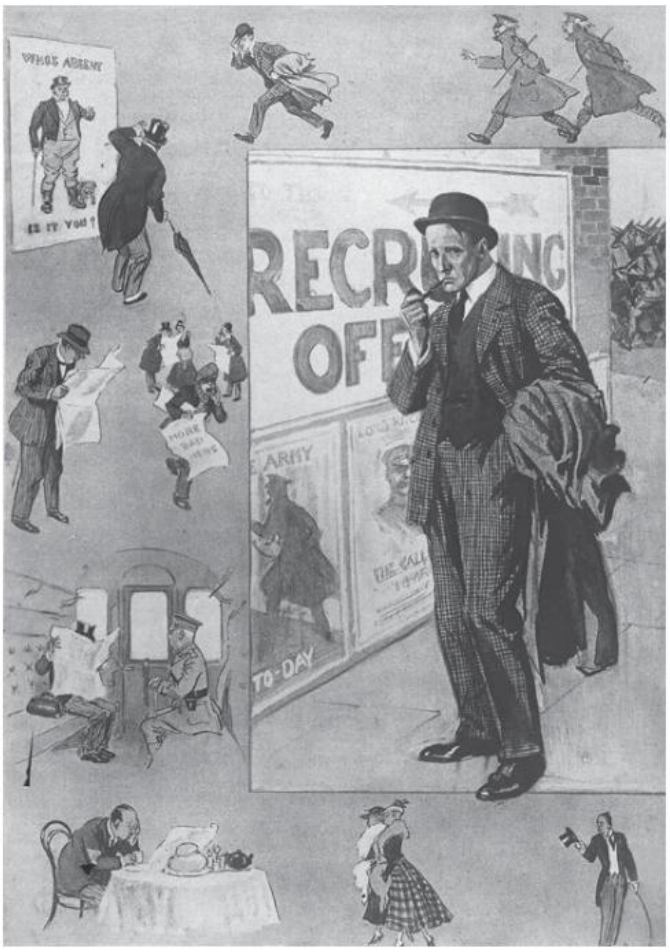
Recruitment posters 3



SOURCE 5.22 A poster showing the negative portrayal of non-recruits

QUESTIONS

1. How are the men avoiding recruitment being portrayed?
2. Why do you think the cartoonist has portrayed them in this way?

Censorship and propaganda

Propaganda is the deliberate presentation of a one-sided view of an issue. Its aim is to convince the audience of a particular point of view. It is not trying to be balanced, fair or rational. The partner of propaganda is **censorship**, which can be thought of as a form of negative propaganda. If propaganda aims at presenting an accepted view of an issue, censorship aims at preventing the other side of the issue being presented.

censorship
The policy of preventing the publication of unacceptable views or of information the authorities wish to keep secret

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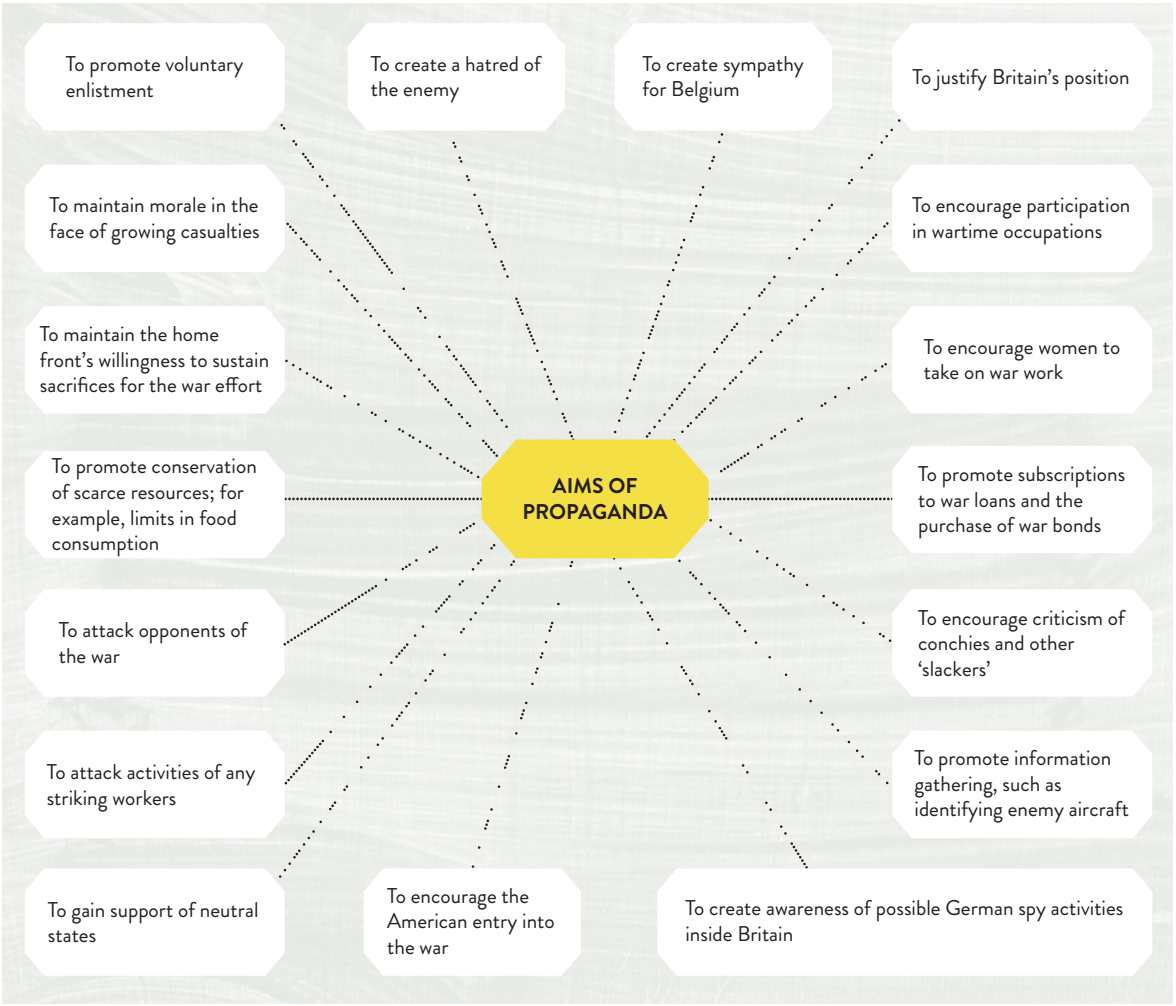
The purpose of British propaganda

At the start of the war, the main purpose of propaganda was to promote patriotic support for the war and to encourage men to enlist. Early propaganda emphasised German responsibility for the war, concentrated on the plight of poor Belgium and made much of alleged German war atrocities. British soldiers were thus defending civilisation against German barbarism. From 1916, the tone of propaganda changed, with greater emphasis placed on the need to maintain national sacrifice and unity on the home front in the face of growing war-weariness.

Source 5.23 summarises the various aims that propaganda sought to achieve.



SOURCE 5.23 The purposes of propaganda

The methods of propaganda

For propaganda to be successful, it needs to obey certain fundamental rules and the British quickly learnt these rules during World War I. Propaganda has to be simple and appeal to a low intellectual level. It does not need to be logical or informed. The main methods of propaganda are summarised in Source 5.24.

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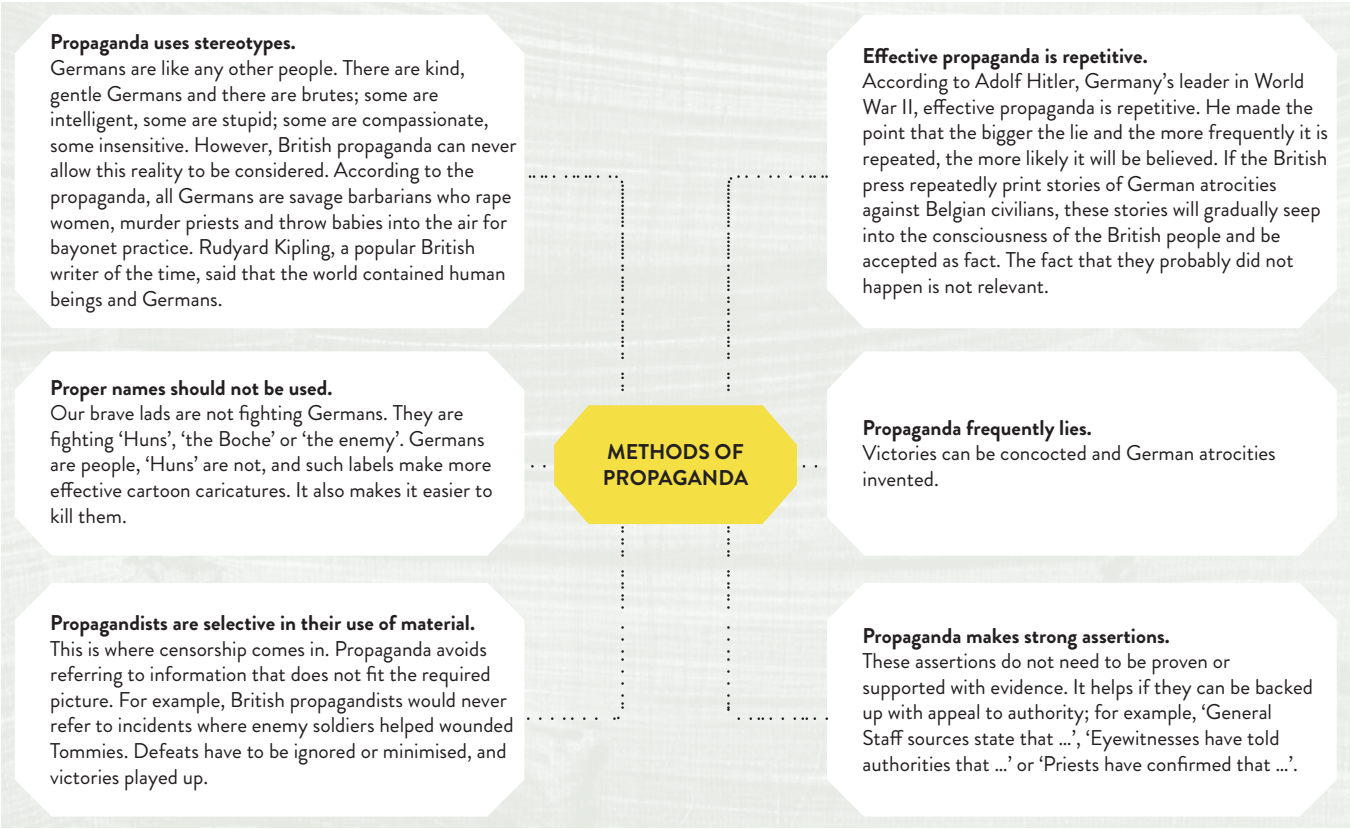

SOURCE 5.24 The methods of propaganda

The organisation of propaganda

The official government branch responsible for propaganda at the beginning of the war was the War Propaganda Bureau. From February 1917 to February 1918, this function was passed on to the Department of Information. From February 1918 to the end of the war, it became the job of the Ministry of Information created by Lloyd George. The Ministry of Information was headed by the newspaper tycoon Lord Beaverbrook, with another newspaper giant, Lord Northcliffe, as its director of propaganda to enemy countries.

In June 1917, a National War Aims Committee was created. Its aim was to produce propaganda that, it was hoped, would overcome potential war-weariness that the government feared might develop as the war dragged on. Equally, it sought to limit bad news with censorship. Films such as *The Battle of the Somme*, which the government thought would raise morale, were never again allowed to be shown, as the savage reality of conditions at the front had shocked the people on the home front. The British Government realised the value of propaganda, and its interest and involvement in promoting propaganda increased as the war went on.

Newspapers

In the pre-radio and pre-television age, newspapers were of vital importance for disseminating the news and, during the war, for spreading propaganda. All the various aspects of the newspaper were used to build up the propaganda message.

Cartoons were very powerful. The old adage 'a picture tells a thousand words' was no more true than during World War I. Cartoons could present the war in a heroic and adventurous manner. Germans could be stereotyped most effectively with a propaganda cartoon. German soldiers were made to appear as inhuman brutes or as stupid buffoons.

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Propaganda cartoons

Examine the following five cartoons.

Punch Limited/Bernard Partridge

SOURCE 5.25 'The Triumph of "Culture"', *Punch*, 26 August 1914

Punch Limited/Bernard Partridge

SOURCE 5.26 'The Two Voices', *Punch*, 27 December 1916

Australian War Memorial ART02265

SOURCE 5.27 Anti-German propaganda

Donald McGill Museum copyright © Greaves & Thomas

SOURCE 5.28 British cartoon, 1916

SOURCE 5.29 A British soldier's postcard, 1916

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QUESTIONS

1. In what way are the cartoons in Sources 5.25 and 5.26 trying to be ironic?
2. What is the cartoon in Source 5.27 trying to say?
3. Do you think humour works in propaganda? Answer with reference to Source 5.29.
4. Why do you think the government encouraged postcards such as that in Source 5.28 when they clearly conveyed a negative message?

Photographs were also used in the propaganda campaign. Shots could often be rigged; for example, battlefront scenes were set up to give a positive view of the front line. A photograph in the *Daily Mirror* of 25 July 1915 showed German cavalry officers gloating over their spoils following an episode of pillaging in Belgium. They are seen laughing and holding valuable silver items, obviously plundered from an innocent Belgian villager's home. In fact, the same picture had appeared in the *Berliner Lokanzeiger* on 9 June 1914, two months before the war. It was actually a picture of German officers who had just won an equestrian competition.

Newspaper writers were very careful to use inspiring language: friends became comrades, the enemy became the foe, and men in danger became men in peril. War stories were written up in a *Boy's Own Annual* adventure style by people who often had never even left England. The aim was to make light of the dangers of war and maintain home-front support. Following are some examples of the sorts of things found in wartime newspapers:

- 'Our troops laugh at machine guns now; nobody pays the slightest attention to them.'
- 'My wound? It doesn't matter.'
- 'We had to shout insults at them [the Germans] to make them come out and fight.'

Needless to say, men home on leave were angered to read that such levity was being attributed to them.

During World War I, British newspapers developed the atrocity story into an art form. No crime was seen as too awful for 'the Hun' to commit. The story of the martyred Belgian priests illustrates how atrocity stories developed. A Cologne newspaper announced that after the German Army had captured Antwerp, bells were rung throughout Germany. This story became 'Belgian priests were ordered to ring the bells'. *The Times* then reported the story as 'Belgian priests who refused to ring bells were arrested'. Then the Belgian priests were reported to have been given hard labour for their refusal. Finally, newspapers reported that Belgian priests were tied to the bells upside down and used as human clappers.

However, the Germans often made it easy for British newspapers to develop their propaganda stories with incidents such as the execution of British nurse Edith Cavell, the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the German Army's first use of gas.

Billboard posters were a potent form of propaganda, especially in the pre-television age. Their message was always kept simple and aimed to play on the emotions. Their basic messages gradually seeped into the popular consciousness.

Though there was no television, there were movie theatres and film became a new medium of propaganda. Documentary films showed British troops in training, at camp or being shipped to France. The image was always one of enthusiasm, efficient leadership and excellent organisation. The aim was to convince people on the home front that the lads were being well looked after. There were no pictures of Passchendaele. Artists, such as the Australian Norman Lindsay, were commissioned to produce short, simple animation films for the purposes of propaganda.

Propaganda leaflet, 1917

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The church and propaganda

Established churches, such as the Church of England, supported the war effort and backed the government's appeals to patriotism. Selfless self-sacrifice was seen as a sure way to salvation. In Sunday sermons, the German was depicted as a monster and, worse still, as unchristian. God was clearly 'on our side'.

Winnington-Ingram's sermon on war

One of the most notable Christian exponents of the pro-war religious propaganda message was Arthur Winnington-Ingram, Bishop of London. Always eager to be seen wearing both his clerical collar and a military uniform, Winnington-Ingram gave frequent fiery pro-war sermons.

> And first we see Belgium stabbed in the back and ravaged and then Serbia, and then the Armenian nation wiped out – 500 000 at a moderate estimate being actually killed; and then as a necessary consequence, to save the freedom of the world, to save Liberty's own self, to save the honour of women and children, everything that is noblest in Europe, everything that loves freedom and honour, everyone that puts principle above ease, and life itself beyond mere living, are banded in a great crusade – we cannot deny it – to kill Germans: to kill them not for the sake of killing, but to save the world; to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young men as well as the old, to kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded as well as those fiends who crucified the Canadian sergeant, who superintended the Armenian massacres, who sank the *Lusitania*, and who turned the machine gun on the civilians of Aerschott and Louvain – and to kill them lest the civilisation of the world should itself be killed.
>
> A Winnington-Ingram, quoted in J Winter, *The Experience of World War I*, Macmillan, London, 1988, p. 169

QUESTIONS

1. What arguments does Winnington-Ingram use to justify killing Germans?
2. Explain how he makes his sermon emotive.
3. Is this effective propaganda? Give reasons.
4. Explain how Winnington-Ingram's position in society affects this piece of propaganda.
5. What is your view of a 'man of God' speaking in this manner?

Emotive language used by influential people such as Winnington-Ingram did much to fuel violent anti-German actions across Britain. German shops were attacked, Germans' homes were firebombed and German residents in Britain were attacked on the street. Anti-German feeling led to petty actions, such as changing the name of German shepherd dogs to Alsatians. Even the royal family was affected, changing its family name from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to Windsor. Prince Louis of Battenberg changed his name to Mountbatten.

British propaganda was far more effective than its German counterpart. General Ludendorff seemed to accept this when after the war he said that Germany had been hypnotised by Allied propaganda as a rabbit by a snake. He said it had been exceptionally clever and conceived on a grand scale, and that in the neutral countries Germany had been subject to a sort of moral blockade.

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Recruitment and conscription in Germany

Recruitment propaganda was not necessary in Germany. Conscription had been an accepted part of the German way of life for decades. In 1914, Germany already had 94 divisions and, with millions in the reservists, a ready source of reinforcements.

martial law
Military rule imposed on a civilian society

On 31 July 1914, **martial law** was declared in Germany and the Siege Law of 1871 was invoked. This created 24 army districts, headed by generals, who had unlimited power over all matters. The government later increased its control over the population with a series of other laws, including the Auxiliary Services Law in 1916.

In the early days at least, Germany did not need to resort to conscription to fill its armed forces. Enormous enthusiasm swept Germany at the announcement of war. The reasons so many young men wished to head to the front are similar to those of their British counterparts. The search for adventure and excitement, patriotic duty, peer pressure, a desire to impress women and the chance to have a full-time job were among the reasons. Young German men were also convinced that the war would be over by Christmas 1914 and thus they did not want to miss out on the action. Trains crowded with German troops left stations across the country emblazoned with the words 'to Paris' or 'to London'.

Getty Images/ullstein bild

SOURCE 5.30 Young German men cheering as they are called up for war service in August 1914

The photograph in Source 5.30 gives an idea of the feelings of the time.

Another possible reason for the massive pro-war response in Germany was the tight hold that had been kept on the press before 1914. Newspapers had not been allowed to openly discuss the reasons for war and so, when it came, there were few dissenters, as even those on the left accepted the call to defend the fatherland.

Like their counterparts in Britain and all over Europe, German men and women had no understanding of the reality of war. Fed romantic notions of service and chivalry for decades, they did not comprehend the horrors of modern warfare.

Australian War Memorial ARTV00127

SOURCE 5.31 German poster, 'It's their fault'

German propaganda

German propaganda in many ways echoed British propaganda, but it had its own special features. The first major difference was that German propaganda did not have to promote recruitment. Thus, there were no calls on men to do their duty and not to let their mates down. There was no need to invoke the support of women for shaming young Germans into obeying the call.

An anti-British tone

Early German propaganda took on a severely anti-British tone. The German people were encouraged to hate the English and to drive things English from their lives. This campaign extended to all aspects of life. There was to be no speaking of English. English names were changed; for example, the Hotel Westminster in Berlin became the Hotel Lindenhof. When good Germans met each other, they were expected to utter the greeting *'Gott strafe England'* ('God punish England').

Source 5.31 shows a poster of the time putting the blame squarely on England.

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'Hymn of Hate'

In October 1915, Ernst Lissauer wrote a poem called 'Hymn of Hate'. He was serving as a private in the army at the time and his poem earned him an Iron Cross. As life became increasingly difficult on the home front, the German authorities were keen to promote such anti-English feeling and blame hard times on the impact of the British naval blockade.

The following are extracts from Lissauer's poem.

Come, hear the word, repeat the word,
Throughout the Fatherland make it heard.
We will never forgo our hate,
We have all but a single hate,
We love as one, we hate as one,
We have one foe and one alone –
ENGLAND!

...

We will never forgo our hate,
Hate by water and hate by land,
Hate of the head and hate of the hand,
Hate of the hammer and hate of the crown,
Hate of seventy millions, choking down.
We love as one, we hate as one,
We have one foe, and one alone –
ENGLAND!

Translated by B Henderson, *New York Times*, in *Times History of the War*, Vol. 5, taken from D Stewart and J Fitzgerald, *The Great War*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1988, p. 180

Defensive German propaganda

Although German propagandists had the advantage of not having to worry about persuading young men to join up, they did face a problem not encountered by British and French propagandists. Germany had invaded the neutral nation of Belgium and had invaded France. British propaganda was able to make much of this apparent German aggression and had a fairly easy job of convincing the British people of the justice of defeating the invaders of small, innocent Belgium.

German propaganda worked to justify the actions of the German Government. The line it followed was to argue that Germany's invasion of Belgium and France, according to the Schlieffen Plan, was a defensive response to the aggression it was facing from Britain, France and Russia. Much was made of the alleged encirclement of Germany by the Entente Powers – Russia in the east, France in the west and Britain at sea. German propaganda argued that this encirclement sought the destruction of German power and that Germany's pre-emptive actions in August 1914 were defensive responses to aggressive Allied intentions.

German soldiers were thus presented as heroes, defending the fatherland from invasion and destruction. They were shedding the blood of heroes, dying the death of heroes, for the sake of the fatherland. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor, argued the defensive line as early as 4 August 1914, as the following quotation illustrates.

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> Gentlemen, we act in self-defence. Necessity knows no law … We have broken the law of nations. The French government has indeed declared that it will respect the neutrality of Belgium, so long as its enemies do likewise. But we know that France is ready to invade us. The French can wait: we cannot. A French invasion on our flank in the Lower Rhine would be fatal to us. We have been forced to disregard the just protests of Belgium and Luxembourg.
>
> T von Bethmann-Hollweg, quoted in D Stewart and J Fitzgerald, *The Great War*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1987, p. 170

1. What were the twin themes of early German propaganda?
2. Explain how Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg tried to overcome the difficulties the German Government faced in justifying Germany's position at the beginning of the war.

Censorship

German propaganda was not always as effective as British propaganda, but what the German authorities lacked in propaganda skills, they made up for in censorship. When the German people discovered the scale of German losses in 1918, there was genuine shock.

It was not only information from the front that was tightly controlled. The authorities also tried to ban any discussion of peace moves in the press. The German people were never told about the peace demonstrations in Berlin in December 1915. Similarly, news of any international efforts to broker peace were also censored. The government did not want its people to hear about the Stockholm Peace Conference of 1917 or the Papal Peace Note of the same year. News was blacked out about the International Socialist Conferences in London and Kienthal. The German people were also denied information about low troop morale, casualties and desertions.

However, when the war seemed to be turning against Germany in 1918, there were no such impediments placed on Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. Germany would later claim to have surrendered only on the assumption that peace would be based on the Fourteen Points.

The organisation of propaganda and the press

One of the reasons German propaganda was never as effective as that of the Allies was the failure of the German authorities to properly organise it. In a long drawn-out war of attrition, such as World War I, which places increasingly intolerable burdens upon the people, both at home and at the front, the maintenance of morale is crucial.

The British understood the importance of propaganda and the government set up bodies to regulate it. However, the German Government failed in this regard. There was no German ministry of propaganda. Instead, the military had its own service called German War News (*Deutsche Kriegsnachrichten*).

The British had a tradition of a freer press and the government realised quickly the value of co-opting the newspaper bosses into the propaganda war. Men such as Northcliffe and Beaverbrook pushed anti-German propaganda from the start and later took on official government roles. This did not happen in Germany. The military preferred to exclude the middle-class newspaper proprietors.

However, the German press was generally pro-war. Even the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*, which had attacked the German establishment as much as it could in prewar Germany, now came out patriotically supporting the government. The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, a progressive liberal newspaper, also supported the German military High Command and attacked defeatism in its columns.

Like their British counterparts, German newspapers indulged in the atrocity story:

- British soldiers were accused of using dumdum bullets. A dumdum bullet causes a small round wound when it enters the head but then explodes and shatters the skull on exiting. Warfare is always horrific, but the use of these weapons was considered particularly terrible.

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- Belgian priests were accused of firing from behind their altars when German troops entered churches.
- There were also stories of Belgian civilians mutilating the bodies of wounded German troops.

The effectiveness of German propaganda

German propaganda often differed in tone from its British counterpart. British propaganda was able to connect with the ordinary citizens who were being asked to go without at home or risk their lives in France. German propaganda, on the other hand, tended to use elitist figures such as intellectuals and military authorities to transmit its message. Thus the tone of German propaganda did not always connect with the ordinary German worker or the non-Prussian.

Source 5.32 shows an example of an early German wartime poster. It comes from a medieval wood carving of St George on horseback in which the saint is praying for God's help before entering battle. It is a beautiful picture, but it is hardly likely to appeal to the Ruhr steelworker labouring 12 hours a day, seven days a week. It is complex and highbrow in nature compared to the simple brutality of a British cartoon such as 'The Triumph of "Culture"' (see Source 5.25 on page 105).

German propaganda was not effective in influencing international opinion. The defence of German culture was often mixed with racial prejudice. Statements along the lines 'it was not Germany who let loose a black army on the white people of Europe' were made. An example of such propaganda was the *Manifesto of the Ninety-Three German Intellectuals to the Civilised World*. This document attempted to justify Germany's invasion of Belgium, claimed that it had had to fire the town of Louvain 'as punishment' and referred to wild hordes from Russia.

German propaganda posters

Propaganda posters

Getty Images/Swim Ink 2 LLC

SOURCE 5.32 German propaganda poster using a medieval woodcut of St George

Getty Images/UniversalImagesGroup

SOURCE 5.33 German war bonds propaganda poster, 1918

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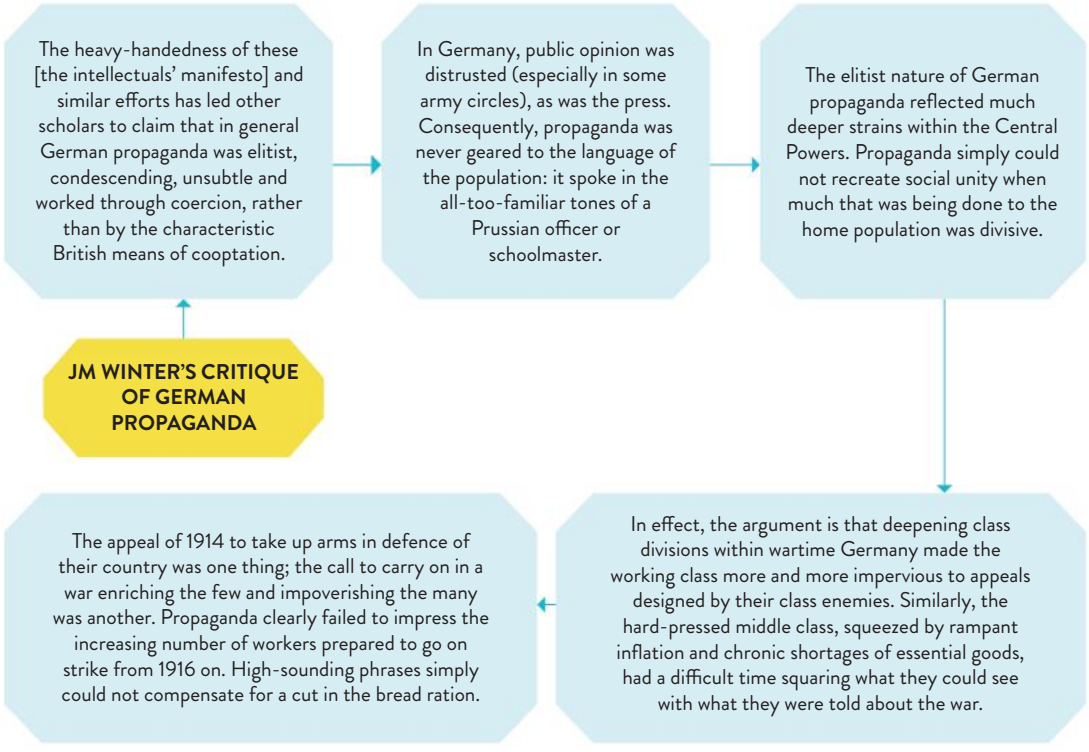
QUESTIONS

1. Compare Sources 5.25 (page 105), 5.32 and 5.33 as pieces of propaganda. In what ways are they different?
2. One of the sources is crudely anti-German, one uses a medieval image and one plays on the idea of the perfect 'Aryan' family. Which do you think is likely to be more effective? Give reasons.

German wartime propaganda

Source 5.34 analyses the nature of German wartime propaganda. This diagram uses an extract from JM Winter's book *The Experience of World War I* (Macmillan, London, 1988, p. 186).



SOURCE 5.34 JM Winter's views on German propaganda

QUESTIONS

1. What criticisms does Winter make of German propaganda?
2. Why were the middle classes not seduced by propaganda?
3. Why did the workers reject propaganda appeals?
4. What is Winter saying was the fundamental reason for the failure of German wartime propaganda?

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Opposition to the war at home

Britain

The vast majority of British people welcomed the war, and the government had little difficulty encouraging men to enlist. Support for the war was almost universal, with the only opposition early on coming from committed socialists such as Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald and a few determined pacifists. The euphoria that swept the country in 1914 meant that opponents of the war stood little chance of airing their views. Home-front support remained strong into 1915, especially as the government was placing few extra demands on the domestic population at that time.

It was not until the slaughters of 1916 and 1917 that any real doubts about and opposition to the war appeared. By then, both the men in the trenches and the home-front population were beginning to express their frustrations. This growing opposition is summarised in Source 5.35.

SOURCE 5.35 Growing opposition to the war in Britain

Despite the casualties and home-front hardships, opposition to the war in Britain never achieved the level it did in the other European belligerents. In Russia, the Tsar's government had lost all support by early 1917 and it collapsed in the face of the February Revolution of that year. The regime of the Kaiser disintegrated in Germany in the face of revolution and mutiny before the war ended in November 1918.

The British Government did not have to concern itself with increasing dissent during the war. Early opposition to the war came from groups such as the Herald League and the Workers' Socialist Federation. Espousing the doctrine of the international brotherhood of man, socialist groups such as these tried to argue that British workers had no business killing German workers. Rather, both working classes should unite against their capitalist enemies.

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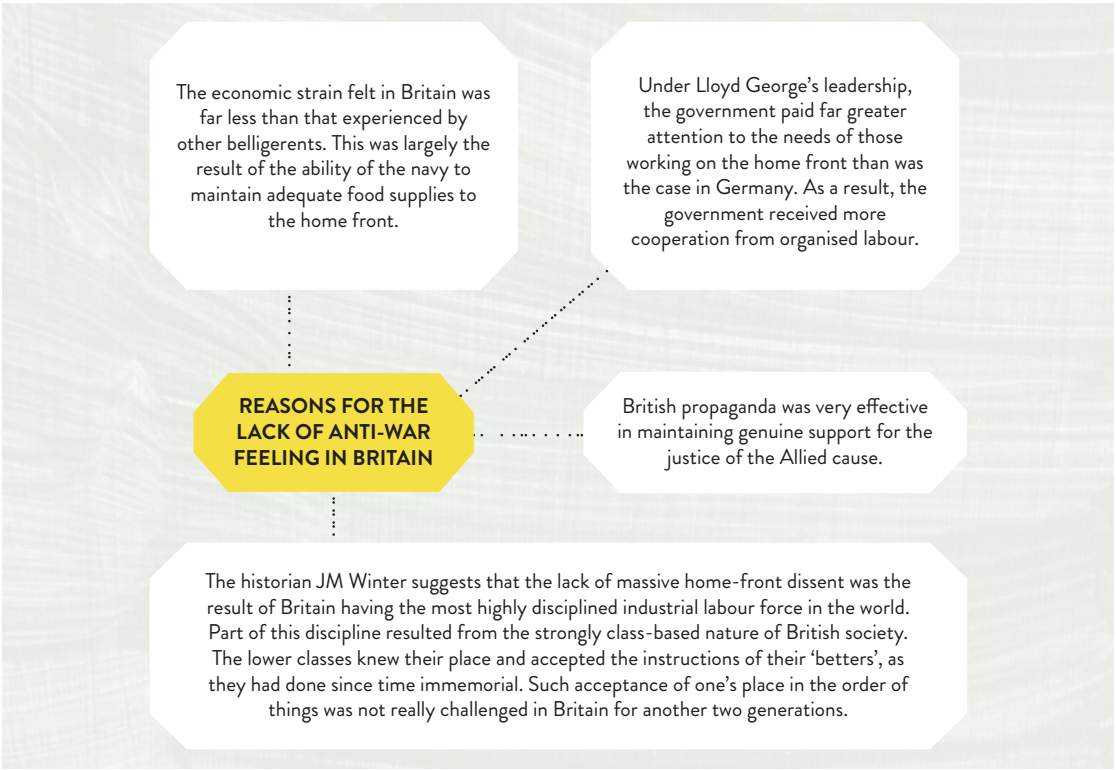
Some groups did form that opposed the war or conscription, such as the Union of Democratic Control and the No Conscription Fellowship. However, such groups were not influential. Even the suffragettes ended their campaign for the vote for the duration of the war.

Britain never experienced the convulsions against the war that destroyed Russia and Germany and nearly brought the French Army to its knees. Source 5.36 outlines the factors that might have accounted for this.



SOURCE 5.36 Reasons for the lack of anti-war feeling in Britain

Germany

There was an eagerness on the part of young men in Germany to volunteer and prove themselves, a genuine patriotic support of the government and a feeling of euphoria across the country at the prospect of war. The belief that it would all be over by Christmas was certainly partly responsible for this feeling.

In 1914, opposition to the war inside Germany was limited and mute. This was partly due to the fact that most people supported the war, but was also due to the authoritarian nature of the government, which kept a tight lid on dissent. From the start, the middle-class German Peace Society opposed the war. However, this group suffered repression and quickly disappeared. There was some religious and intellectual opposition – for example, from George Grosz, who opposed conscription – but opponents of the war soon ended up in prison.

Like many socialists in the rest of Europe, most German socialists dropped their prewar pacifist sentiments and belief in the international solidarity of the working class. They quickly joined the patriotic rush to support the government. Like the British Labour Party, many in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) hoped to become partners in government. Under the 1916 Auxiliary Services Law, the state and employers now gave the workers official recognition, which meant they would recognise unions.

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The German home front suffered far more than the British and, not surprisingly, the feeling of war-weariness was both quicker to develop and far stronger in Germany than in Britain. War-weariness was the result of many factors: longevity of a war that was supposed to be over in a few months, the endless casualties and the apparent futility of the whole business.

There were shortages of almost everything and decreasing quality in those goods that were available. Wages did rise, but wartime inflation was rampant and, as a result, the level of real wages dropped dramatically, so the standard of living was much lower.

However, not all Germans made the same sacrifices. The better-off in society who had access to the black market had a far easier time of things. Working-class mortality rates, in contrast, rose steadily.

Alamy Stock Photo/dpa picture alliance

SOURCE 5.37 A contemporary colourised German propaganda photo showing men, women and children queuing in front of a food bank for the needy in Berlin-Friedrichstadt around 1915

There was also anger at the deterioration of working conditions and the growing demands of the authorities on the workers. Unlike in Britain, the German authorities paid little attention to the workers' welfare. They lacked a Lloyd George figure who understood the necessity of creating a genuine partnership between the state and the unions.

The severity of the German home-front situation can be seen in the report by James Gerard, the American Ambassador to Berlin, in which he describes the situation in Germany in late 1916.

> In the third winter of the war, owing to a breakdown of means of transportation and want of labourers, coal became very scarce. All public places, such as theatres, picture galleries, museums and cinematograph shows were closed in Munich for the want of coal … Light was economised. All the apartment houses (and all Berlin lives in apartment houses) were closed at nine o'clock. Stores were forbidden to illuminate their windows, and all theatres were to be closed at ten … Of the three lights in each [street] lamp, only one was lit …
>
> J Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany,* Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1917, taken from C O'Brien and A Merritt, *1914–1918: The World at War*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1991, p. 188

Gerard's view is echoed in the extract below, a letter from Ethel Cooper, an Australian woman living in Germany during the war, describing the situation on the German home front to her family at home.

> 11 February 1917
>
> My dear Emmie,
>
> We have got through a queer week – the worst week that the German people has had to face up to the present. No coal, electric light turned off, the gas power turned down so that it is not easy to read and write by such a light, and practically no food – there seems to be no more potatoes …
>
> I was disgusted to come in at six this evening, and find that Willy had been here, just back from Belgium, and more disgusted at his card which said that he had been called back for military work and goes into uniform tomorrow! He has such a weak heart the Red Cross could use him no longer, and his lungs are by no means sound – but I suppose the authorities think him good enough for the trenches …
>
> D Denholm (ed.), *Behind the Lines: One Woman's War, 1914–18*, Collins, Sydney, 1982, pp. 181–2

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Despite growing war-weariness and increasing casualties, large-scale opposition did not crystallise until the second half of 1918. It seems that the German people were willing to put up with a great deal as long as there was a chance of victory. Ethel Cooper suggests another reason for the lack of opposition: 'Any other people on earth would rise against a government that had reduced it to such misery, but these folk seem to have no spirit left'.[4]

What does the story of Willy, recounted in the extract from the letter on page 115, suggest about the state of the German war effort in 1917?

The strike movement

Germany experienced far more and far larger strikes during the war than did Britain. A 60 000-strong anti-war protest on 1 May 1916 led to the arrest of Karl Liebknecht, a radical socialist who had broken with the SPD over his opposition to the war. His arrest led to an immediate protest strike. Other socialist opponents of the war, such as Rosa Luxemburg, were also arrested during the war.

Turnip Winter
The winter of 1916–17 during which, due to the failure of the potato harvest, Germans were forced to eat turnips, a vegetable normally used only for animal feed

The strike situation worsened during the **Turnip Winter** of 1916–17. In April 1917, 300 000 workers were on strike and there were violent disturbances in Leipzig, Halle and Magdeburg. In 1917, there were 562 strikes involving 668 000 workers. January 1918 saw 1 million workers on strike. The authorities responded by imposing martial law and giving the ringleaders front-line duties. Many strikes involved women and young workers whose lack of union membership perhaps prevented them from attempting protest action other than the quick strike.

Since 1916, Germany had effectively been a military dictatorship under the control of Ludendorff and Hindenburg. By September 1918, it was clear to Ludendorff and the rest of the top military brass that the war was lost. The decision was thus taken to hand over power to a civilian government that had the support of the Reichstag. Ludendorff had not suddenly become converted to democracy. The aim of his move was to leave Germany's democratic leaders with the work of reaching a peace with the enemy. The stigma of defeat and the predictably harsh peace settlement would, Ludendorff hoped, thus be their responsibility and not the military's.

On 1 October, Prince Maximilian of Baden, a liberal, became Chancellor. By the end of October, Germany had asked for an armistice, the Kaiser had become a constitutional monarch and Ludendorff had been dismissed.

Part of Ludendorff's rationale for handing over power to the democratic politicians was the hope of avoiding a full-scale social revolution as had occurred in Russia. By November 1918, however, Ludendorff's hopes seemed to have been dashed. On 3 November, the sailors at Kiel mutinied and workers' and soldiers' councils, based on the model of the revolutionary soviets that had grown inside Russia during 1917, spread across Germany. On 9 November, the Kaiser abdicated and fled to the Netherlands. Within two days, a republic had been declared and the imperial regime was gone. A revolutionary government, the Council of the People's Deputies, was in power. On 11 November, Germany signed the armistice.

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Chapter summary

- The scale of World War I forced all sides to develop 'total war', where all the nation's resources became dedicated to the war effort.
- Germany moved to total war quickly, with the government establishing several departments to control production, resource allocation and the creation of ersatz products.
- Britain moved to total war more slowly. It was not until Lloyd George was appointed Minister of Munitions that the British economy operated at its highest level.
- The British Government was quick to establish its control over the people with security measures, beginning with the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in 1914.
- In Britain, measures were put in place to increase productivity, ranging from daylight saving to the early closing of pubs.
- Lloyd George's role was crucial, as he managed to ensure that workers and bosses cooperated in the interests of the war.
- The war had a major impact on British women, as they flooded into a variety of jobs ranging from munitions work, to driving, to factory and office work. Women also joined the auxiliary branches of the armed services.
- In late 1918, the vote was extended to some women in Britain.
- In the short term, the war gave British women greater freedom, but most of their gains were not maintained in the 1920s and life for most women remained hard.
- Britain had little difficulty in raising a volunteer army in 1914, as young men across the country were eager to join up.
- In Britain, as numbers began to fall, government propaganda campaigns were needed to encourage men to join up.
- Eventually, the British Government found it necessary to introduce conscription in 1916.
- In Britain, those who refused to join up on moral or religious grounds were called conscientious objectors and were often treated badly by the authorities.
- British propaganda was employed to vilify the enemy, encourage economy at home and maintain morale.
- In both Britain and Germany, the church was generally pro-war and supported its own side from the pulpit.
- Conscription already existed in Germany, but enthusiasm for war was as high as in Britain and many young men joined up before being summoned.
- German propaganda was decidedly anti-British, took on a defensive tone, due in large part to Germany's invasion of Belgium, and was run by the military.
- German propaganda proved to be less effective than that of the Allies, as it tended to be too intellectual, elitist and at times racist.
- Opposition to the war in Britain was muted and usually centred around conditions and pay at home, issues ably dealt with by Lloyd George.
- Opposition to the war in Germany was more strident, led to massive strikes by 1917, and by the end of the war Germany was in the throes of revolution.

Endnotes

1 Quoted in J Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War and State in Twentieth Century Britain*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 40

2 Quoted in C O'Brien and A Merritt, *1914–18: The World at War*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1991, p. 170

3 Parliamentary Recruiting Committee poster, 1915

4 D Denholm (ed.), *Behind the Lines: One Woman's War, 1914–18*, Collins, Sydney, 1982, pp. 181–2

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. In what ways might a neutral observer have been full of admiration for Germany during the war years? In your answer, refer to the problems that Germany faced and its ability to maintain the war effort for so long.
2. Make a chronological list of the various measures the German Government introduced to deal with Germany's supply problems.
3. What is 'war socialism'?
4. Give three examples of ersatz goods produced in Germany during the war.
5. What range of powers did DORA give the British Government?
6. Why did the British Government try to restrict the people's consumption of alcohol?
7. What was the wartime purpose of daylight saving?
8. Why did the British Government not adopt total war immediately?
9. List some of the jobs that women moved into during the war.
10. What was the extent of the introduction of votes for women in 1918?

Additional short-answer questions

Home front: Group work

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

11. How did Germany finance the war?
12. Inflation became a key problem for the German Government during the war. After the war, inflation became completely out of control. What happened to German inflation in 1923?
13. Compare the behaviour and activities of Britain's suffragettes before and during the war.
14. Outline the role played by women in the German war effort on the home front.
15. Which organisations and significant individuals opposed the war in Britain? What arguments against the war did they present?
16. What was the position of Ireland during the war? What was the attitude of most Dubliners to the Easter Rising? How successfully did the British authorities deal with the Easter Rising?

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISES

17. Debate the topic 'To what extent did World War I have a revolutionary effect on women?'
18. Explain how the role of government changed in Britain during World War I.
19. It is sometimes said that 'truth is the first casualty of war'. To what extent might it be argued that this was the case during World War I?

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06

Allied victory

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- an overview of the reasons for the Allied victory.

Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, end of World War I. People celebrating at 11 a.m. in Whitehall, London, after hearing that hostilities had ceased

Introduction

There was nothing pre-ordained about the defeat of Germany and its allies in 1918. At the end of 1916, the Western Front was still in a state of deadlock following the horrendous battles of Verdun (February–November) and the Somme (July–November). In February 1917, Germany resumed its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, which came close to bringing Britain to its knees. However, it was that same policy that brought the power of the United States to the side of the Allies. Revolutions in Russia in February and October 1917 led to the withdrawal of Russia from the war, which ended Germany's nightmare of a two-front war. As late as the opening months of 1918, the war was very evenly poised. The Germans were still entrenched in Belgium and north-eastern France and the Allies had no way of removing them. The Passchendaele campaign at the end of 1917 had shown that World War I was still a bloody war of attrition with no end in sight. The massive German Spring Offensive of 1918 brought the Germans to the brink of victory. In April, Allied leaders believed the war was on the point of being lost. However, by early August the German offensive had been thwarted and an Allied counteroffensive was in full swing. The final collapse of the German Army was now rapid. Within two months, the Germans were seeking an armistice, which was finally signed on 11 November 1918.

The defeat of Germany and its allies

Late 1916 Deadlock on the Western Front

Russian Army falling apart amid mutinies and desertions

1917 **February** Germany resumes its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare

Revolution in Russia leads to the establishment of the Provisional Government

March Publication of the Zimmermann Telegram

Tsar Nicholas II abdicates

April Russian Bolshevik leader, Lenin, returns to Russia and calls for an end to the war

The United States declares war on Germany

October The Bolsheviks seize power in Russia and issue the Peace Decree

1918 **March** Russia and Germany sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, formally ending Russia's involvement in the war

Ludendorff launches the German Spring Offensive, Operation Michael

April Haig's 'backs to the wall' statement

July US troops involved in the Second Battle of the Marne

August Allies launch the counteroffensive

Ludendorff calls 8 August the 'black day of the German army'

September US troops involved in the attack on the Saint-Mihiel salient and in the Meuse-Argonne battle

British forces attack the Hindenburg Line

Bulgaria signs an armistice

October Ludendorff resigns

Turkey signs an armistice

November Austria and Hungary sign an armistice

Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates

Germany signs the armistice bringing World War I to an end

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The withdrawal of Russia from the war

The main result of the failure of the Schlieffen Plan in 1914 was that Germany had to fight a two-front war. This division of resources was a major factor that weakened the German war effort on the Western Front. Two revolutions in 1917 led to Russia's formal withdrawal from the war in 1918 following the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. This development gave Ludendorff his chance to launch Operation Michael in March 1918.

The impact of the war on Russia, leading as it did to revolution in that country, will be examined in Chapter 7.

The impact of the Russian withdrawal from the war

Though America had been in the war for eight months, it had yet to make any significant military contribution. Equally, there seemed little likelihood of a German breakthrough. The war was still a stalemate.

However, Ludendorff knew that it would not be long before the American presence would be felt. Once hundreds of thousands of young, fresh US troops started arriving, Germany would face defeat. Therefore he knew that the only chance Germany had of victory was to strike before the Americans arrived in great numbers. The withdrawal of Russia from the war gave him his 'window of opportunity'. He no longer had to worry about a war on two fronts. With Russia on its knees and descending into civil war, he was able to transfer troops and supplies from the Eastern Front to the Western Front.

In his account of the Great War, Winston Churchill, writing both as a historian and a key player in the Lloyd George government, was in no doubt about the seriousness of the Russian withdrawal for Britain and France:

- Throughout the winter of early 1918, 'the movement of divisions and guns from the Eastern to the Western Front, and to a lesser extent against Italy, was unceasing …'
- Intelligence reports informed Churchill that there was 'an unending flow of men and material to the west …'
- It was clear that by the spring, the Germans would have for the very first time a 'a large numerical preponderance along the Western Front'.
- Not only that, many of the troops moving west had not had any serious fighting for almost a year and had had time 'to recuperate and train …'
- In addition to manpower, the Germans had captured at least 4000 Russian guns and 2000 Italian guns.[1]

Brest-Litovsk thus gave birth to Operation Michael, the giant German Spring Offensive of 1918. The Russian withdrawal led to Ludendorff's great gamble to finish the war with one more mighty offensive. The following extract suggests what might have been going through the mind of Ludendorff.

Operation Michael

> Ludendorff's thoughts, as he planned his campaign for 1918, ran somewhat as follows: '… we still have a chance of victory. Russia is at last out of the war, and the whole forces of Germany can be turned against France. Nearly forty divisions and 400 000 men can reinforce the western front. With these we have at last a superiority of force which will last for about four months. We will strike for victory at the point of junction of the Franco-British forces, separate their armies and win the war. Once we have done this, no American reinforcements can affect the issue.'
>
> AJ Grant and HWV Temperley, *Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Longmans, Green and Co, London, 1946, p. 526

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The following extract suggests an alternative view of the impact of Russia's withdrawal.

> The Central Powers placed their greatest hopes and expectations in Ukraine. Visions of abundant grain depots and bountiful future harvests danced before their eyes … But the 250 000 Hapsburg (Austrian) and 400 000 Hohenzollern (German) soldiers stationed in Ukraine daily consumed 300 railroad cars of food. Grain exports amounted to barely one-tenth of expected volume.
>
> In fact, Ludendorff's megalomania required that 1 million troops remain in Russia to enforce the peace and to exploit its resources. The German official history of the war claims that 52 000 tons of grain and feed, 34 000 tons of sugar, 45 million eggs, 39 000 cattle, 53 000 horses and 48 000 hogs and sheep were removed from former Russian territories by October 1918. It studiously refused comment on whether the million soldiers might have been put to better use in France.
>
> HH Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–18*, Arnold, London, 1997, p. 386

QUESTIONS

1. How do you think the withdrawal of Russia would have affected morale inside Germany and among the Allies?
2. Summarise the difference of opinion between the writers of the two extracts.

The entry of the United States into the war

The United States had tried to avoid being involved in European conflict ever since it had gained independence from England at the end of the 18th century. When war broke out in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made it clear that he sought to maintain American neutrality. One of the factors that earned him re-election in 1916 was his declaration that he would work to maintain the country's continued non-involvement in the war. However, events were to force on him a change of policy. The issue that brought the United States into the war was Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare.

However, it was not inevitable that the United States would enter the war, or even that it would enter on the side of the Allies. Indeed, both Allied and German propaganda tried to influence American public opinion to support their case. However, as the war continued, German actions and more effective British propaganda were turning the Americans against Germany.

Reasons for the US entry into the war

On 1 May 1915, the British Cunard liner *Lusitania* set sail from New York with passengers and cargo bound for England. On 7 May, it was attacked by a German submarine, the *U-20*, off the southern coast of Ireland. The ship sank within 20 minutes, with the loss of 1198 civilian lives, including 124 Americans. The United States was outraged. The *New York Times* of 8 May stated: 'In the history of war, no single deed is comparable in inhumanity with this horror.' The *Lusitania* was not an isolated incident. On 1 May, an American tanker, the *Gulflight*, had been sunk off the Scilly Isles, with the loss of three Americans.

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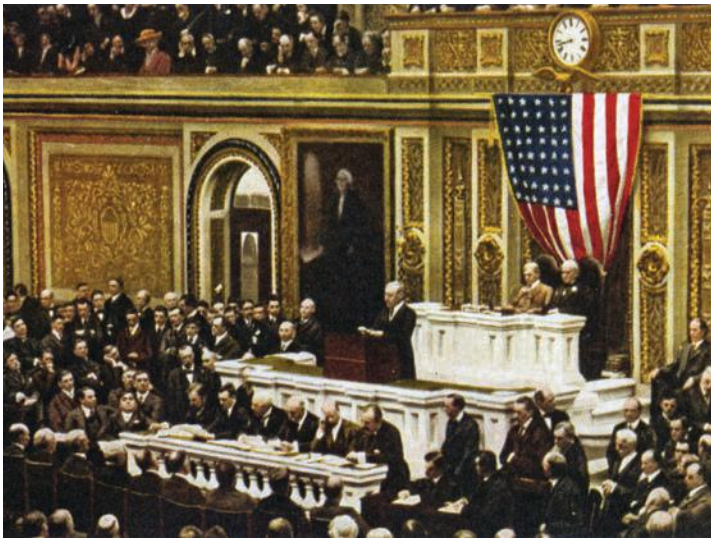
The British hoped to use the *Lusitania* incident to force the United States into the war. The United States was not ready for war in 1915 and Wilson's cabinet was not united in its response to the German attacks. By September, tempers had calmed and the German Government announced an end to attacks on non-enemy vessels. However, in 1916, Germany renewed attacks on armed merchant vessels. The United States threatened to break off diplomatic relations and again Germany backed down.

The issue that finally forced President Wilson into the war was the announcement by the German High Command in February 1917 of the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. This was a desperate move on the part of the Germans. They knew that if American ships were sunk, the United States would be forced into the war, but they gambled that Britain could be broken before the American presence could be felt. On 26 February, the British steamship *Laconia* was sunk with the loss of eight American lives. In late March, three more ships heading towards the United States were sunk, with a loss of 35 Americans.

In mid-January, the German Government committed an act of gross stupidity that further pushed the United States into declaring war on Germany. The German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmermann, sent a secret note to the German ambassador in Mexico suggesting joint German–Mexican action against the United States. Mexico was offered the possibility of German assistance in recovering Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

The 'Zimmermann Telegram' was intercepted by British intelligence and passed on to the Americans. Its publication in March caused outrage. The combination of the telegram and unrestricted submarine warfare led Wilson to seek a declaration of war from the Congress. On 6 April, the United States declared war on Germany. War was not declared on Austria-Hungary until 7 December 1917.



Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd.

SOURCE 6.1 President Woodrow Wilson addressing Congress four days before the American declaration of war in 1917

The impact of the US entry into the war

The United States did not have an immediate military or economic impact on the war. The Allies had long relied upon US industry for maintaining its war effort. French and British industry was still largely mid-Victorian and it lacked the machine tools necessary for developing an effective munitions industry. In 1915, a third of all shells used by the British Army were made in North America. Much of Lloyd George's reorganisation of munitions depended on US machine tools. During the first three years of the war, American exports of iron and steel to Europe increased fourfold; US explosives production increased tenfold.

By 1917, the Allies were no longer reliant on American imports. Britain was able to send supplies to France and Italy, and provided much for the US forces once they were in Europe. It was the arrival of fresh American troops that was to be of the greatest importance to the Allied war effort.

At the beginning of 1917, the United States had only a small army of about 160 000, 25 000 of whom were stationed overseas. However, the US Government soon succeeded in creating a massive military force. In May 1917, the Selective Service Act was passed through Congress.

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- By mid-summer 1917, over 9 000 000 men had registered.
- Eventually, over 24 000 000 men aged between 18 and 45 had registered for service, and of these 3 000 000 were inducted into service.
- Including national guardsmen, volunteers and navy personnel, the United States had 4 800 000 men under arms by the end of 1918.
- Some US troops took over part of the quieter sector of the French front as early as October 1917.
- From July 1918, 10 000 troops a day were leaving the United States for Europe.
- By October 1918, over 2 000 000 US servicemen had been transported to France and about 1.3 million were actually at the front.

The United States did not have an immediate impact on the fighting. The first US troops marched through Paris in June 1917 and there were almost 200 000 in France by the end of 1917, but few saw action until mid-1918.

However, the US entry into the war had an immediate impact on morale. Allied morale jumped. The French crowds in Paris were joyous at the sight of the Americans. American troops were at first spread across British and French units along the quieter parts of the front. There was a feeling that the war would now be won. Conversely, feeling on the German side was the opposite. The Kaiser's armies now had to face the might of the world's strongest economy, which would eventually be able to send unlimited numbers of fresh men to the front to relieve the battle-hardened French and British forces. This is something the Germans would not be able to do.

Though the impact of the US Army would not be felt for a long time, the US Navy had an immediate effect on the course of the war. Rear Admiral William S Sims was sent to London to liaise with Royal Navy officers. The influence of Sims and others and the friendly and effective cooperation between the British and American staffs were to have an enormous impact on the war at sea.

War at sea

> Sims found, to his surprise, that the allies had not yet adopted the convoy system of operating merchant ships in groups so that they could be protected from submarine attack by an escort of cruisers and destroyers. Sims threw his influence on the side of convoys, and they were promptly adopted … the convoy system, more than any single factor, enabled American troops and supplies to cross the Atlantic safely … destroyers experimented successfully with listening gear that detected submarines' propellers, and with depth charges which could destroy a submerged U-boat if properly placed … A fleet of 120 SCs (subchasers) … proved their value against the Austrian navy in the Adriatic … by the end of the war the United States had some 500 planes and three blimps on 27 different European bases reporting U-boats … it was the US Navy that initiated, planned and executed the colossal mine barrage across the North Sea which, beginning in June 1918, practically closed that exit to enemy submarines … Without the work of the US Navy, the allies might have been defeated before American ground forces could have arrived.
>
> SE Morison, HE Commager and WE Leuchtenburg, *The Growth of the American Republic*, Vol. II, OUP, 1969, pp. 388, 389, 390

QUESTIONS

1 List the ways in which US naval forces assisted the Allied naval effort.

2 What was the crucial importance of US naval action?

3 Present a case that without the entry of the US Navy, the Allies might well have lost the war.

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The mine barrage across the North Sea was incomplete at the time of the armistice. However, 56 000 of the 70 000 mines laid were American. So effective were Sims's convoy tactics, not a single troop ship was sunk by German submarines. US naval construction was spectacular. For every ship sunk by a German submarine, two new ones were built. The Emergency Fleet Corporation, established by Congress in April 1917, succeeded in increasing the navy's available tonnage from 1 million to 10 million. The miracle of naval transportation had, arguably, turned the tide of war.

By mid-1918, US forces were becoming fully involved in action along the Western Front and played a key role in the Allied counteroffensive of that year. At first, the Americans placed their forces at the disposal of General Ferdinand Foch, who added them to the Allied armies where they were needed. In late May and June, US forces helped to hold back the final surges of Ludendorff's attacks. Commenting on American action in June 1918, Winston Churchill later wrote that the French felt that they were present at 'the magical operation of the transfusion of blood'.[2] In mid-July, over 275 000 US troops took part in the Second Battle of the Marne. Germany's defeat here marked the end of the German offensive.

In August, under the command of General John J Pershing, US forces finally began to act as an independent entity. In September, US troops destroyed the Saint-Mihiel **salient**, capturing 16 000 prisoners and 400 guns. American troops fought alongside Belgian and British troops in the north.

salient
A protruding section of an army's front line

The American First Army was involved in a massive action further south near Verdun and helped bring about Germany's calls for an armistice. On 26 September, the Meuse-Argonne battle began. It was to last until early November. The Hindenburg Line was broken and the Germans suffered 100 000 casualties, had 25 000 prisoners taken, lost 874 cannon and 3000 machine guns. By early November, the German Navy was mutinying and revolution was spreading across the country. Germany signed the armistice on 11 November.

American historian John Blum makes this comment about the impact on the war of US military forces:

> The Yanks had reached France just in time. The allies needed the new manpower to stop the Germans' gamble for victory – a gamble that probably would have succeeded had reinforcements failed to appear. Yet the Americans, indispensable during the last months of the war, and gallant and effective then, arrived only after the Allies had held the Germans for almost four terrible years. Over 50 000 Americans died in France but the war took the lives of 3 million English, French and Russian soldiers …
>
> JM Blum, 'War and Its Sequel', *The National Experience*, HBJ, New York, 1978, p. 599

The USA and World War I

Ludendorff's Spring Offensive

Ludendorff's decision

The war was still in a stalemate at the beginning of 1918. However, General Ludendorff, the German Commander, believed that the longer the war dragged on, the better the Allied chance of victory would be. The United States had entered the war in April 1917, but it was only in 1918 that its presence on the battlefield was felt. Ludendorff knew that Germany would achieve victory only if≈it acted before the full power of the United States could be brought to bear.

Germany was also showing strains on the home front. There were shortages, made worse by the continuing Allied naval blockade, and increasing industrial and political unrest. These difficulties could only worsen as 1918 wore on.

Early 1918, however, also gave Germany an opportunity. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in October 1917 led to the withdrawal of Russia from the war. In March 1918, Russia was forced to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which formally ended hostilities between the two countries. With the

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problem of a war on two fronts now gone, Ludendorff could transfer hundreds of thousands of troops to the Western Front. In the spring of 1918, he decided to launch a massive attack on the Allied lines in a last-gasp attempt to achieve a breakthrough before it was too late.

The German attack

The German attack, Operation Michael, began in the early hours of 21 March 1918, starting with the Battle of Picardy against the British. A German artillery barrage launched more than 3 million rounds on that day. The British suffered 38 000 casualties, including 21 000 prisoners on that first day.

As the German advance continued, Pétain informed Haig that he could not send assistance because the French Army was preparing to fall back and defend Paris if necessary. Haig wrote that he was holding off the German Army single-handedly.

SOURCE 6.2 The German Spring Offensive of 1918

The following extract is a vivid account of the scale of the German attack.

> The greatest artillery barrage the world had ever known – nearly 6000 guns – opened fire along a 65 kilometre stretch of the Western Front, from just east of Arras to the Oise River south of St Quentin. For over four hours they pulverised the British front line, killing sheltering troops and wrecking trenches, dugouts, headquarters, artillery batteries, communication centres and telephone wires. Then, at 9.40 am, the infantry climbed over the top and charged the Allies with machine guns, rifles, stick bombs and flame throwers. And they kept coming, wave after wave, throughout this longest of days, capturing position after position and village after village as they pushed westward, penetrating the allied lines.
>
> J King, *The Western Front Diaries*, Simon & Schuster, Pymble, 2008, p. 394

The German attack of 21 March had been extremely well planned and it was clear that the attackers had identified their target with great skill and accuracy. The following extract provides an impression of the enormity of the German attack.

> And everywhere gas drenched wide areas, and lines of coughing, vomiting and blinded men congregated at the aid posts.
>
> At times the fire grew so intense that the very laws of nature seemed in abeyance. The air vibrated with shock, black layers danced in the fog, fixed objects flickered to and fro, and in the light of the mounting flame and fire the mist became a crimson, yellow-shot effervescence. The thunder and crash of explosion became a norm which was heard no longer, as senses numbed and violence and horror increased.
>
> Then, after fifty minutes, the barrage abruptly shifted to the front line and the known infantry positions were systematically swept for ten minutes. Trenches caved in, and machine-gun posts were obliterated, wire belts blown apart, men blown to fragments …
>
> B Pitt, *1918: The Last Act*, Corgi, London, 1962, p. 81

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Haig met senior commanders at the Doullens Conference on 26 March. A document was produced that gave the French General Foch the authority to coordinate all Allied forces. Although the Allies were now under a united command, and even though the German advance was showing signs of slowing, many Allied leaders believed they faced the real possibility of defeat.

The Germans launched another attack at the Battle of Lys in the British sector of Armentières. On 11 April, Haig announced that no ground must be given. He stated: 'With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end'.[3]

Getty Images/Hulton Deutsch

SOURCE 6.3 German troops in action, spring 1918

By late April, Ludendorff's offensive had captured 1000 guns and almost 100 000 prisoners. The Germans had captured more land than all the Allied attacks of the war had managed.

On 27 May, the Third Battle of the Aisne began in the French sector along the Chemin des Dames. The following day, American forces fought at the Battle of Cantigny. The Germans continued to advance as late as June, but by then their supplies were running short and the presence of American troops was beginning to be felt. The first American victory came at Belleau Wood in late June, but at the cost of 5000 men. In the following extract, historian Richard Holmes comments on the significance of this first American victory.

> Yet their victory was a portent of the future. The Americans were inexperienced. Their logistics were clumsy. Their commander [General Pershing] was not blown along by Foch's enthusiasm. Still, they had won one battle, and would win more. Henri de Pierrefeu coined a simile which many felt to be absolutely appropriate: the Americans were like a transfusion of blood arriving to reanimate the pallid body of France. The French Captain Desagneux's heart lifted when he saw his first Americans, 'twenty strapping great fellows, sappers, admirably turned out with brand new equipment.'
>
> R Holmes, *The Western Front*, London, 1999, p. 203

On 9 June, the Germans attacked at the Battle of Matz in the French sector between Noyon and Montdidier. The final phase of the German offensive came in mid-July when the Second Battle of the Marne began.

The Germans had advanced, but they had made only tactical gains, not strategic ones. By late July, it was clear that the German advance was petering out. Ludendorff had suffered a million casualties, but his gamble had not paid off. Lacking reserves of men and supplies, facing ever-growing, fresh American forces, he now had to face an Allied counteroffensive. In late July, Allied forces recaptured Château-Thierry, just 70 kilometres north-east of Paris; and in early August, the Allies crossed the Somme. Paris had been saved. In just a few weeks, the Allies had taken 130 000 German prisoners, 2000 heavy guns and 14 000 machine guns. These were losses that Ludendorff could not replace.

'A German "Peace"' source study

The Ludendorff offensive

1. Explain why Ludendorff felt that March 1918 was the perfect time to launch his massive offensive along the Western Front.
2. Describe the scale of the first German attack.
3. What was the significance of the Doullens Conference?
4. Why did the German advance begin to slow down?
5. Ludendorff made only tactical, not strategic, gains. What does this mean?

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AAP Images/Berliner Verlag/Archiv/PA

SOURCE 6.4 General Ludendorff

The Allied counteroffensive, August–September 1918

On 8 August, the Allies launched a massive counterattack on the Germans at Amiens. Taking the Germans by surprise, Allied tanks and infantry swept forward. Even though they achieved a victory, British losses were high, with more than 180 000 casualties between 8 August and 26 September.

Ludendorff realised the significance of what was happening, as the following quote from his memoirs indicates.

> 8 August was the black day of the German army, the worst day I ever went through. We had to resign ourselves now to a continuation of the enemy's offensive. Their success had been too easy. Their wireless was jubilant, announcing with truth that the morale of the German army was no longer what it had been.
>
> E Ludendorff, quoted in J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 148

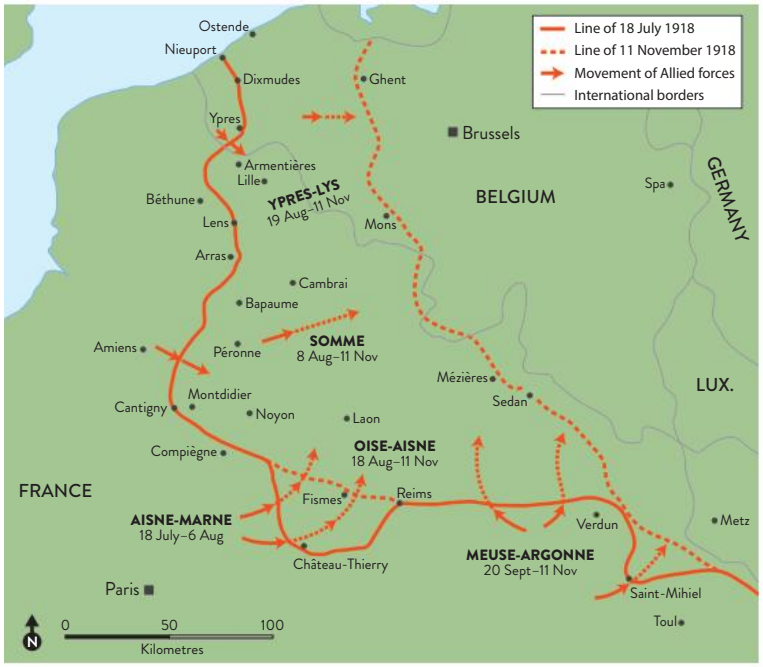
Allied counteroffensive

Evaluating Ludendorff's memoirs

An address to the Reichstag

The German advance had not progressed evenly, and by September a large salient, or bulge, had formed on the German side. The Allied commander, General Foch, ordered French troops under Mangin to attack the salient near Soissons. The Germans were forced to withdraw at the cost of 30 000 prisoners taken. Foch realised that the Germans were fully stretched. His tactics now were to hit the enemy at different points on the front, one after the other, never giving the Germans a chance to recover.

- In August, Haig attacked near Amiens, taking 20 000 German prisoners.
- On 12 September, American forces hit the salient of Saint-Mihiel, near Verdun.
- On 26 September, American forces launched a successful campaign in the Meuse-Argonne area.
- From 27 September to 17 October, Haig followed this up with attacks on the Hindenburg Line's strongest points.
- From 28 September to 14 October, the Belgians attacked near Ypres.
- The French, under General Castelnau, struck German positions in the Ardennes.
- During September, Foch aimed to surprise the Germans tactically, with concentrated use of tanks, and strategically, with coordinated, simultaneous attacks against the exhausted, retreating German forces.



SOURCE 6.5 The Allied counteroffensive, showing the extent of the roll-back of German forces in the final stages of the war

Source 6.5 illustrates the extent of the roll-back of German forces.

Unable to match the increasing number of fresh American troops, strangled by the blockade and facing unrest at home, Ludendorff advised the government to put out peace feelers. (His explanation to the Reichstag, the German Parliament, in early October of the true state of the German position can be found in the worksheets for Chapter 6.)

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The end of the war: Reasons for the Allied victory and German collapse

As late as the opening months of 1918, the war was very evenly poised. The Germans were still entrenched in Belgium and north-eastern France and the Allies had no way of removing them. The Passchendaele campaign at the end of 1917 had shown that World War I was still a bloody war of attrition with no end in sight. The massive German Spring Offensive of 1918 brought the Germans to the brink of victory. In April, Allied leaders believed the war was on the point of being lost. However, by early August, the German offensive had been thwarted and an Allied counteroffensive was in full swing. The final collapse of the German Army was now rapid. Within two months, the Germans were seeking an armistice, which was finally signed on 11 November 1918.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is all too easy to see why Germany lost the war. A list of reasons might include:

- Germany was forced to fight a two-front war.
- Germany could never match the combined economic and military might of the Allies.
- The German economy could not keep its army supplied.
- The entry of the United States in April 1917 meant that Germany had to face the strength and wealth of the greatest power on Earth.
- The Allied naval blockade ensured that the longer the war went on, the more difficulty Germany had supplying its army and feeding its people.
- Germany's allies were liabilities.
- Strains on the German home front lowered morale.

Each of these points is significant and might suggest that Germany's defeat was inevitable. However, nothing in history is inevitable and it needs to be remembered that as late as mid-1918, Germany was within striking distance of victory. Had this happened, none of the above points would have been seen as important. Yet it is true that the longer the war dragged on, the less chance Germany had of winning. Thus, to explain why the Allies won the war and why Germany collapsed, it is necessary to ask two questions:

1. What were the long-term factors that gave the Allies the advantage in fighting a war of attrition?
2. What factors caused the rapid collapse of Germany towards the end of 1918?

What were the long-term factors that gave the Allies the advantage in fighting a war of attrition?

Source 6.6 summarises the long-term factors leading to the defeat of Germany in the form of a flow diagram. The sections that follow provide some detail on each of the points raised in the diagram.

The failure of the Schlieffen Plan

It could be argued that the source of Germany's eventual defeat can be found within the first three months of the war. Germany's master strategy, the Schlieffen Plan (see pages 38–9), aimed to knock France out of the war within six weeks. Germany would then be free to take on Russia in the east. It nearly succeeded. However, Germany's failure at the Marne and the subsequent 'race to the sea' (see page 46) meant that France and Britain survived and were able to keep fighting in the west. Germany was thus burdened with a two-front war, and its armies, supplies and transport were always divided. It could never bring its full weight to bear on the Western Front. The extract on page 122 suggests that, even after the defeat of Russia and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, this could not happen, because

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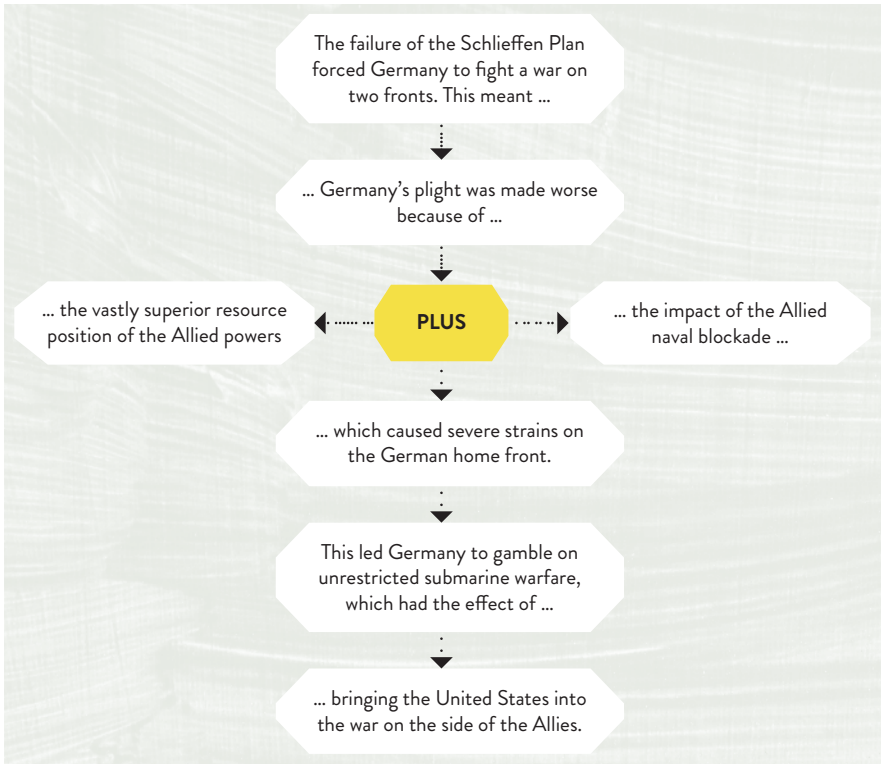

SOURCE 6.6 Long-term reasons for the defeat of Germany

an army of occupation had to be kept in the east. The Schlieffen Plan was a gamble that failed. German resources were stretched throughout the war to fight across the whole continent. Britain and France, and later the United States, never had this problem.

The superiority of Allied economic and military resources

The failure of the Schlieffen Plan and the advent of trench warfare ensured that the war would drag on for a long time.

- Allied and German economic strength were evenly matched during most of the war.
- Each side had generals who had little understanding of the nature of modern warfare and who saw little alternative than to continue with futile, bloody attrition warfare.
- The longer the war went on, the greater the casualty rate, the more resources were thrown into the conflict and the greater the strains placed on the home fronts, the more likely it was that the Allies would win.
- At one stage, the Allies were able to call on the combined economic and military strength of the British Empire, the French Empire, Russia, Italy and the United States, plus a host of minor powers. Germany had only its own resources, plus those of its three minor partners.

The Allied blockade

Despite the economic and military inequality, Germany managed to maintain an army in the field for four years. Germany's ability to keep going was astounding. It managed to do this as a result of superb organisation on the home front, government controls, exploitation of occupied territories' resources and the development of ersatz products (see Chapter 5). However, no amount of ingenuity or administrative brilliance could sustain such a war effort without the essential imports that Germany relied on. In 1914, the Allies imposed a tight blockade on Germany. No blockade can be 100 per cent effective, but the Allied blockade caused enormous hardship for the German economy. The lack of key imports put severe limits on the ability of the German economy to supply its armies and placed enormous strains on the home front.

Strains on the German home front

By 1916, major strains were apparent on the German home front.

- Queuing became a way of life, inflation was rampant, there were shortages of essentials and the evidence of inequality of suffering was causing great resentment.
- These factors, combined with the ever-lengthening casualty lists, created disillusionment and war-weariness.
- Major strikes occurred, war production was further weakened and domestic morale was dropping.

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- People suffered far more on the German home front than on any of the home fronts of the Western Allies.

Faced with this situation and the long-term Allied economic superiority, the German High Command resumed its unrestricted submarine warfare campaign in February 1917 in the hope of bringing the war to a swift conclusion.

The entry of the United States into the war

The aim of the unrestricted submarine warfare campaign was to prevent any supplies reaching Britain, particularly those coming from North America.

- Food, ammunition and munitions from the United States and Canada had been essential in sustaining the Allied war effort. Ludendorff believed that if this crucial lifeline could be broken, then Britain would soon be on its knees.
- France would be dealt with easily and all the evidence of the time suggested that Russia was about to collapse. The campaign came very close to achieving its goal.
- However, the submarine campaign had one major impact that the Germans were expecting. It brought the United States into the war on the Allied side. Ludendorff was gambling that his submarines could finish off Britain before the power of the United States could have an impact on the conflict. It was a gamble that failed.

The American impact on the war was enormous (see pages 123–5). Allied morale lifted, while German morale fell. American naval policies had a serious impact on the German effort to continue fighting (see the extract in the box 'War at sea' on page 124), and American military forces played a major part in the Allied counteroffensive of August–November 1918 (see page 128).

Gordon Corrigan

Military historian Gordon Corrigan published a book in 2003 titled *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*. Corrigan's aim in writing his book was to smash what he believed were widely accepted but grossly inaccurate views of World War I. His book contains praise for British military tactics and glowing descriptions of General Haig; views rarely found in most books on World War I. When dealing with the reasons for the Allied victory in 1918, he attempts to break down another 'myth', as he sees it, about the war: the minimal contribution of the Americans. The British view of America's role, as Corrigan sees it, is 'America entered the war at the last minute, contributed nothing, and became the only power to make money out of it'. Corrigan argues strongly that the American role was major, decisive and, had the war stretched into 1919, would have been the only factor that mattered in deciding the outcome of the conflict.

> America was vital to the United Kingdom's prosecution of the Great War almost from Day One; she helped the allies in a way that far exceeded the obligations of a neutral. By the middle of 1918 there were as many American soldiers in France as there were British, and they held a longer sector of the front. While America's casualties were slight compared to those of the French and British, what she did was done well and undoubtedly helped to shorten the war ...
>
> Britain relied on America as the provider of all manner of war materials that British industry could not itself produce. For horses, rifles, artillery pieces, ammunition of all types, aircraft, aero-engines and motor vehicles, the British government placed contracts with American suppliers and manufacturers, to say nothing of the thirty per cent of British foodstuffs that by 1916 were being imported from the United States ... American industry and American governmental tolerance were essential to the British war effort long before the United States entered the war, and while Britain might still have won the war without them, it would have taken far longer and would have cost many more lives ...

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AEF
American Expeditionary Force

BEF
British Expeditionary Force

By [April 1917] British losses due to U-boat attacks had soared to 875 000 tons and Admiral Beatty calculated that Britain would run out of foodstuffs and essential supplies by July. In May the convoy system was instituted and the results were spectacular. British, and increasingly American, escort vessels were able to ensure the safe passage of more than enough supplies, and to sink more U-boats, which were now deprived of easy victims ...

The first American division arrived on 28 June 1917 and thereafter the build-up of the AEF [reached] in October 1918 1 867 623 men. By way of comparison, the strength of the BEF [on the Western Front] on 31 October 1918 was 1 859 246 ...

It is a sadness, and unfair, that her [US] contribution to the war on the Western Front has been all but forgotten – even in America.

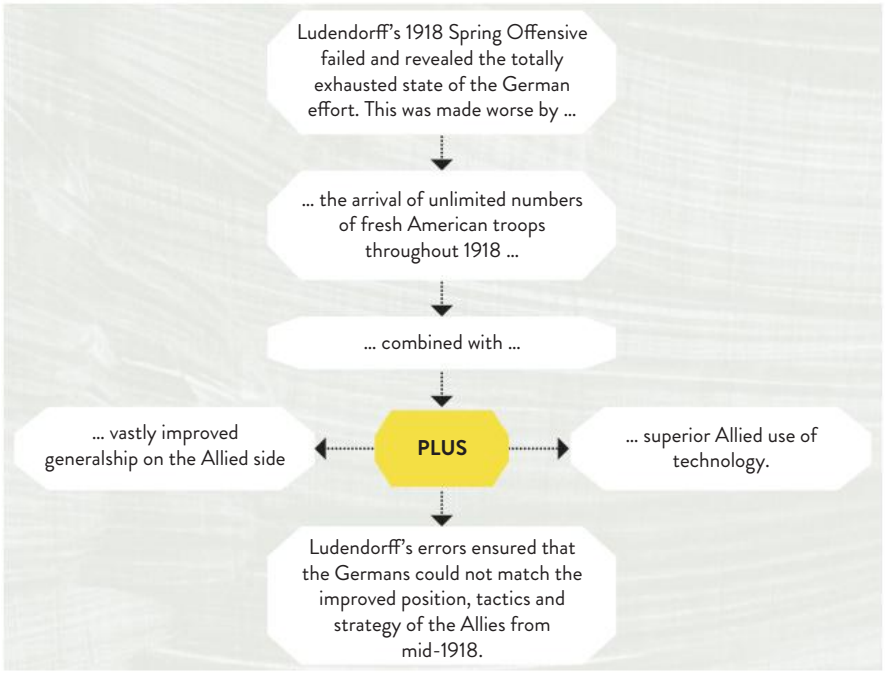
G Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*, Cassell, London, 2003, pp. 359–60, 362–3, 369, 373–4, 397

QUESTIONS

1. Construct a mind map that summarises the main points raised by Corrigan regarding the US contribution to the Allied victory in World War I.
2. Why do you think British people have often been keen to play down the significance of the American contribution to the war?
3. How do you account for the failure of Americans to recognise their efforts in World War I?

What factors caused the rapid collapse of Germany towards the end of 1918?

Source 6.7 summarises the factors that caused the rapid collapse of Germany towards the end of 1918 in the form of a flow diagram. The sections that follow provide some detail on each of the points raised in the diagram.



SOURCE 6.7 Factors causing the rapid collapse of Germany towards the end of 1918

The exhaustion of the German Army

Ludendorff's massive offensive in the spring of 1918 caused near panic among Allied commanders. He took more territory in this action than the Allies had managed in three and a half years. Gaps appeared in the Allied lines and Paris was under serious threat. In July, Foch said that if the German attack at Reims succeeded, the war would be lost.

- However, Ludendorff's final, desperate 'throw of the dice' did not break the Allied forces. With 'their backs to the wall', as Haig dramatically put it, the Allies just held on. The Germans had thrown all they had at the Allies in the Spring Offensive.

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- The British and the French were able to take advantage of the fresh American troops who were landing in France in increasing numbers, whereas the Germans had no reserves and were resorting to conscripting young boys and old men.
- Lloyd George's work in the Munitions Ministry was coming to fruition with Allied forces now bountifully supplied, whereas German industry was nearing a state of collapse.
  The German Army was literally exhausted.

The arrival of the Americans

By July 1918, American forces were becoming a major factor in the fighting on the Western Front. Since March the Germans had had numerical superiority over the Allies, but this was disappearing as American troops arrived. The entry of the United States had a major effect on the Allied war effort (see pages 123–5), and American forces played a significant part in the Allied counteroffensive of August–November 1918 (see page 128). Ludendorff acknowledged the importance of American forces in his address relayed to the Reichstag in October 1918 (see page 128 for worksheet).

Improved Allied generalship

By 1918, many of the Allies' poor-performing generals had been removed and replaced by junior officers who had gained their experience in the field.

- Men such as the Australian General John Monash skilfully combined shrewd tactics with logistical planning and technological know-how. In his memoirs, Lloyd George described Monash as the most resourceful general in the whole of the British Army.
- From early 1918, Allied forces fought under the united command of the French General Foch. Up until August, even American forces came under his jurisdiction.
- Allied commanders seemed to have learnt some lessons from the years of slaughter. In particular, they now knew how to make better use of tanks, the one weapon that could break through trench lines. They also learnt to combine various elements of warfare, such as tanks, aircraft and artillery.
- As Ludendorff points out in his address to the Reichstag, the Germans lacked both the technological and industrial know-how and the military expertise to make use of tanks. Allied use of mass tank formations proved to be a crucial factor in the final months of the war.
  This tactic helped break German morale and gave the Allies a distinct edge during the counteroffensive.

Ludendorff's role in the defeat

Ludendorff's failure to develop tank warfare was not his only error. Foch considered that tactically – that is, in individual battles – Ludendorff was brilliant. However, he lacked 'after plans' – he had no contingency plans should the offensive fail. Foch argued that Ludendorff had no large-scale strategic plan. During 1918, his 'buffalo tactics', as Foch called them, lessened the impact that his grand offensive could have. Foch compared the German Army to a wild, blindly charging buffalo that gored its enemy with its horns. The buffalo struck out wildly in one place, then another, but without any careful thought. The buffalo was too strong to defeat all at once, but as time went on the buffalo became exhausted. It was then that the beast was attacked. Foch's buffalo analogy well describes how the German offensive was turned around. As explained in this section (see pages 129–31), the German forces quickly broke down while the home front collapsed into violence, mutiny and revolution.

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Chapter summary

- The Tsar was forced to abdicate in March 1917. In October, the Bolsheviks under Lenin seized power and immediately sought to leave the war.
- Russia formally pulled out of the war following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.
- The withdrawal of Russia from the war ended Germany's nightmare of a two-front war and made possible Ludendorff's Spring Offensive in 1918.
- The United States tried to stay out of the war, but Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare campaign from February 1917 and the publication of the Zimmermann Telegram finally brought it into the war in April 1917.
- It took over 12 months before the US Army made a difference on the Western Front, but US naval and economic power had an immediate impact in strengthening the Allied cause.
- US forces played a major part in the Allied counteroffensive in 1918.
- In March 1918, Ludendorff launched Operation Michael, a massive offensive against Allied forces in the west. In the early weeks, it was spectacularly successful and caused real panic among Allied leaders. However, lack of manpower and resources meant the offensive could not be maintained.
- German forces were decisively beaten on 8 August 1918, on what Ludendorff called 'the black day' for the German Army.
- Long-term factors leading to Germany's defeat included the failure of the Schlieffen Plan, Allied economic superiority, the naval blockade and home-front strains.
- Short-term factors in 1918 leading to Germany's defeat included the exhaustion of the German Army, the entry of the United States into the war, improved Allied generalship and Ludendorff's errors.

Further resources

- Churchill, W, *The World Crisis 1911–1918*, Free Press, New York, 2005 [1931]
- Keegan, J, *The First World War*, Hutchinson, London, 1998
- Kitchen, M, 'The Ending of World War One, and the Legacy of Peace' http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/war_end_01.shtml
- Strachan, H, *The First World War*, Viking, London, 2004

Endnotes

1 W Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911–1918*, Free Press, New York, 2005 [1931], p. 796. Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of The Estate of Winston S. Churchill. © The Estate of Winston S. Churchill

2 W Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911–1918*, Free Press, New York, 2005 [1931], pp. 753-4. Reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown, London on behalf of The Estate of Winston S. Churchill. © The Estate of Winston S. Churchill

3 Quoted in J Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Sutton, Gloucester, 1988, p. 144

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What brought about the withdrawal of Russia from the war?
2. What was the main impact of Russia's withdrawal from the war on German military strategy?
3. Why did the United States finally and reluctantly enter the war?
4. In what ways did the US entry into the war have an immediate impact?
5. When did the issue of US manpower become a decisive factor on the Western Front?
6. Outline the early success of Operation Michael.
7. Why was Ludendorff unable to sustain the German Spring Offensive?
8. How significant were the Allied actions of 8 August 1918?
9. What issue ensured that Germany would be forced to fight a two-front war?
10. What immediate Allied action was to place extreme pressure on the German economy?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

11. The decision of the Bolshevik leader, Lenin, to leave the war greatly helped the German war effort. How was Lenin able to get from his Swiss exile to Petrograd in early 1917?
12. What were the details of the Zimmermann Telegram? How did British intelligence manage to use it to great propaganda effect?
13. Allied generalship had improved greatly by 1918. What role did General John Monash play in the Allied military leadership?

GROUP WORK

14. Divide into groups (or pairs, if the class is small). Each group is to examine the role of one of the following people and argue the case that they played a major role in the eventual outcome of World War I, either in a negative or a positive way.
    - General Foch
    - General Ludendorff
    - General Haig
    - Prime Minister Lloyd George
    - General Pershing
    - General von Moltke
    - Marshal Pétain

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISES

15. 'The Allies did not win the war; the Germans lost it.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
16. To what extent can it be argued that the Allied victory in World War I was the result of American involvement?
17. How do you account for Germany's rapid collapse during the second half of 1918?

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07

Legacies of World War I

STUDENTS WILL INVESTIGATE:

- the effects of World War I in giving rise to the Russian Revolution
- the end of 'empire' and World War I as 'the war to end all wars'
- the nature and legacy of World War I and its influence on modernity.

A French military cemetery

Getty Images/Galerie Bilderwelt

Introduction

When the guns finally fell silent in November 1918, there was an immediate sense of relief across Europe. However, any exaltation did not last long. The war had left a legacy of enormous death and destruction that had to be faced. Many people optimistically believed that so terrible had World War I been, it would be 'the war to end all wars'. There were the immediate problems of hunger, refugees, the repatriation of prisoners of war and the spread of **Spanish influenza** to be dealt with. The leaders of the victorious powers met in Paris to try to rebuild and reorder a shattered continent. The aims of the various leaders ranged from the pursuit of an idealistic reordering of the world, to a desire for revenge, to the need to return to business as usual.

Spanish influenza
A pandemic that spread across the world throughout 1918 and 1919 and killed millions of people

A key legacy of the war was the Paris Peace Settlement of 1919, a compromise that satisfied none. It left an atmosphere of bitterness and resentment that did much to hurt international relations and German political stability in the years to come.

Empires had fallen; new states had arisen. Britain and France soon ruled empires far larger than those they controlled in 1914, but as insurgent nationalism reared its head across the world, many were predicting an end to 'empire'. The Bolshevik success in seizing power in October 1917 spread fear across the continent and led to a bloody civil war across Russia. Technically, the war did not really finish until 1923, when matters were finally settled with the new state of Turkey.

The legacy of war went beyond the physical, military and political impact to the technological, social and cultural. A modern type of society had arrived; World War I made the modern world, at least for Europe.

Legacies of World War I

1917	February	Revolution breaks out in Petrograd and soon spreads
	2 March	Tsar Nicholas II is forced to abdicate. A Provisional Government now rules Russia, though it shares power uneasily with the Soviet.
	October	The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, seize power and immediately call for peace
1918	8 January	Wilson delivers his Fourteen Points speech to Congress
	March	Russia signs the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and formally withdraws from the war
	9 November	The German Kaiser abdicates and flees to the Netherlands
	10 November	A new 'democratic' government appears in Germany
	11 November	Germany signs the armistice to bring the war to an end
		Civil war is raging in Russia
		Spanish influenza is spreading around the world
1919		Vietnamese nationalist figure Ho Chi Minh addresses the Paris Peace Conference
	June	Germany scuttles its fleet at Scapa Flow
	28 June	The Treaty of Versailles is signed with Germany
	September	The Treaty of St Germain is signed with Austria
	November	The Treaty of Neuilly is signed with Bulgaria
		The US Senate rejects the Treaty of Versailles

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1920	January	Founding of the League of Nations
	June	The Treaty of Trianon is signed with Hungary
	August	Turkey signs the Treaty of Sèvres
1921	28 April	Germany is given its reparations bill – £6.6 billion or $US40 billion
1923	July	Turkey signs the Treaty of Lausanne

The immediate legacy of war

Europe at the start of 1919

The end of the war was greeted with relief and even exhilaration. Few soldiers wanted to fight on after the years of horror on the Western Front. People on the home front relished the chance to return to some form of normality. Some saw in American President Woodrow Wilson the hope for a new and better world. Yet this elation was to be short-lived. The world that faced the peacemakers at Paris was one of death and destruction, chaos and confusion, hatred and fear. Source 7.1 describes the enormous problems facing the peacemakers in 1919.

SOURCE 7.1 Problems facing the peacemakers in 1919

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Not only had people suffered physically during the war, but their minds had been manipulated by government and media in ways history had never seen before. By 1914, the vast majority in Britain, France and Germany were literate, if only to a limited degree. Most people had at least a primary school education. This had made possible the development of a tabloid press. This press proved more than willing to support their government's call to demonise the enemy during the war. The infant movie industry did likewise. Wartime propaganda was simplistic and crude but effective.

The Allied governments had whipped up hatred for Germans for years and it was unlikely that these passions could now be turned off. France's Georges Clemenceau and Britain's David Lloyd George were well aware of what their people expected them to do to Germany at Paris.

German behaviour at the end of the war did not help matters, as David Thomson illustrates:

> Nor had the Germans, even at the eleventh hour, behaved in a way likely to diminish hatred of them. Not only did they wantonly destroy mines and buildings in France and Belgium during their retreat, but on 16 October 1918 – eleven days after Prince Max of Baden had first approached Wilson to mediate – they torpedoed the Irish mail steamer *Leinster* and drowned 450 men, women and children. Such brutal behaviour in defeat left intense feelings of resentment.
>
> D Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1957, pp. 613–14

Making peace

The peacemakers' hands were tied

When the delegates assembled at Paris, they arrived with fixed ideas about how to organise the peace. However, to a great extent, the hands of the peacemakers were tied. A key legacy of the war comprised decisions that had already been taken or promises made. These greatly limited what the delegates could do.

- The end of World War I saw the collapse of the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. For decades, the subject peoples of these empires had sought their national freedom. As the war drew to a close, and as the imperial governments collapsed, the various national subject groups moved to set up their own governments, seize territory and draw their own frontiers. Short of taking military action, there was no way these new national governments could be removed.
- During the war, treaties had been signed to encourage neutral states to enter the war. These treaties often promised grants of land after the war. Once the war was over, states expected the treaties to be honoured. Italy had signed the 1915 Treaty of London and now came to collect the promised territories – South Tyrol, Trieste and the Dalmatian coast.

The Big Three – Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson – were also bound by their domestic situations. They may have had strong ideas, but they were subject to their electorates, the level of political support they enjoyed and the strength of their national economies.

The functioning of the peace conference

The magnitude of the war and the urgent need to rebuild ensured that the peace conference began soon after hostilities ended. The closeness of the conference to the war meant that the emotions and hatreds of the war were still fresh.

Paris was chosen for the conference. However, the choice of Paris for the conference was ill-advised. It allowed Clemenceau to dominate proceedings as president of the conference, which meant that the tough French line towards Germany predominated. Clemenceau's command of both French and English (neither Wilson nor Lloyd George spoke French) gave him added advantages. A neutral venue such as Switzerland or Sweden might have enabled a calmer atmosphere.

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The peace delegates were criticised for dawdling. This is unfair considering the magnitude of the task facing them. Thirty-two nations had to work through 58 committees and commissions, although all the major decisions were made by Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson. However, as the conference dragged on, decisions began to be made in haste. There was a desire to finish up and go home. Minor issues predominated. In the early stages, too much time was spent dealing with the claims of minor belligerents and on the League of Nations. Arthur Balfour, a British delegate, referred to the conference as a rough-and-tumble affair.

Harold Nicolson, another British delegate, wrote of his concerns on 8 March 1919:

> It was a period of unremitting strain … And behind it all [the conference work] the ache of exhaustion and despair … Many there suffered a loss of idealism … [Many began to feel] better a bad treaty today, than a good one four months hence … Very tired, dispirited and uneasy. Are we making a good peace? Are we? Are we?
>
> H Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, Constable, London, 1933

1. What impression does Nicolson's writing give you about the actual process of peacemaking?
2. How might Europe's human problems have affected the attitude of the peace delegates at Paris?
3. Why might it be argued that Allied wartime propaganda had been too effective?
4. Construct a mind map that illustrates how difficult recovery would be for the postwar European economy.

The Big Three

The Paris Peace Conference lasted from January to June 1919. Thirty-two 'Allied' nations were present, but the proceedings were dominated by those who became known as 'The Big Three' – US President Woodrow Wilson, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. These three men had widely differing views about how Germany and the other defeated members of the Central Powers should be treated. In his Fourteen Points speech of January 1918, Wilson had laid the groundwork for an idealistic postwar settlement in which nations could look forward to peace and cooperation and discard the hatreds and animosities of the past. Clemenceau sought a tough settlement in which Germany would be harshly treated and prevented from ever again starting a war. Lloyd George had no intention of letting Germany off lightly, but his prime aim was the maximisation of British national interest.

The Fourteen Points

Source 7.2 gives a flavour of how each of the Big Three approached the peace settlement.

Wilson's role at Versailles

Woodrow Wilson may have arrived in Paris an idealist, but he left bitter and disillusioned. Wilson should not have come to Paris at all. He was inexperienced in diplomacy and he proved to be no match for the tough Clemenceau or the wily Lloyd George. He had little understanding of the nature of European politics and what the war meant to Britain and France. Lloyd George said, in a remark aimed at Wilson, that only men who had visited the battlefields were ready for the conference task at hand. Wilson further did not realise that many decisions had already been made by the people on the ground; for example, nationalists who had claimed land they believed to be theirs.

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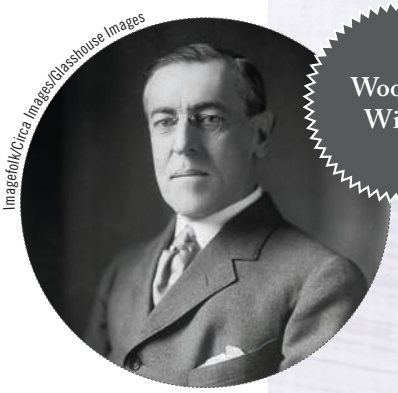
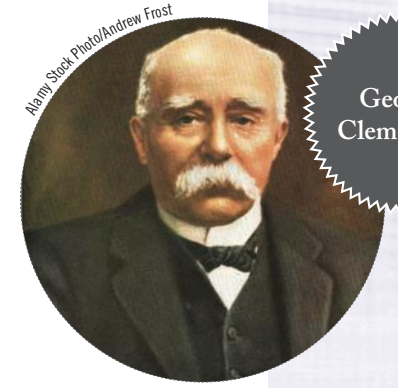


Imagefolk/Circa Images/Glasshouse Images

Woodrow Wilson

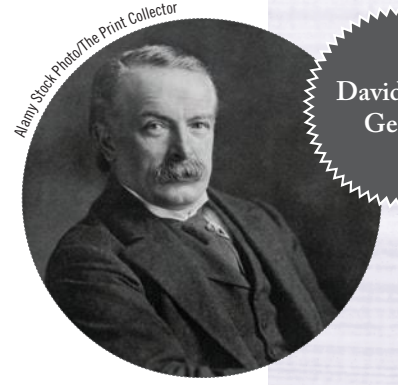
It is important that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. We must create a new Europe based on principles of tolerance and respect, free of the rancour of years gone by. Let us be guided by the spirit of internationalism in which nations put the common good above selfish national interest. Let the principle of self-determination allow peoples to rule themselves rather than being controlled by a foreign power. I call for a League of Nations to be created where nations can meet to sort out differences peacefully and never again have to resort to war.



Alamy Stock Photo/Andrew Frost

Georges Clemenceau

The people of France demand revenge. Twice in my lifetime – in 1870 and in 1914 – I have seen German troops lay waste my country. The flower of French manhood has been decimated by Germany, and Germany will pay. Remember, the war was fought in my country and I demand that Germany, having caused the war, must pay France compensation for the destruction it has caused. France demands future security. Germany must be disarmed and dismembered, and never again be able to inflict a war of aggression against the peace-loving people of France.



Alamy Stock Photo/The Print Collector

David Lloyd George

Of course the people of Britain will not allow Germany to be let off scot free for having started this terrible war. However, above all else I have to secure what is best for the long-term interest of Great Britain. We need Germany to recover economically as soon as possible, for Europe's, and therefore Britain's, economic wellbeing depends on a prosperous Germany. I am determined to maintain British naval supremacy, for on this the security and wellbeing of our people are dependent. I will also be steadfast in ensuring that Britain's imperial interests are not endangered.

SOURCE 7.2 The Big Three and their thoughts on the peace settlement

Wilson's nature was not suited to the hurly-burly of international diplomacy. He was obstinate, arrogant and unwilling to bend.

A major reason for Wilson's failure at Paris was the paradoxical nature of his position.

- He was the leader of the strongest nation in the world and was internationally respected. Yet his political position was far weaker than that of Clemenceau, who had recently won the backing of the French Chamber of Deputies, or Lloyd George, who had won an election referred to as the Coupon election in November 1918.
- Wilson's Democratic Party had lost the Congressional elections of November 1918. This meant that the Republican Party now controlled both the American House of Representatives and the Senate.

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- In the American system, a president may sign a treaty, but it does not become law unless it is ratified by the Senate.
- Wilson's party no longer had the numbers in the Senate.
- His refusal to include Republicans in the American delegation further alienated Republican senators.

- Wilson's absence from the United States meant that he was losing touch with American public opinion. Between 1918 and 1920, the United States became increasingly isolationist. Americans wanted their troops back home from Europe.
  - They certainly did not want to be in a League of Nations and dragged into future European conflicts.
  - Wilson's failure was confirmed when the American Senate refused to ratify the Paris Peace Settlement, and the United States never joined the League of Nations.

1. Explain the paradox of Wilson's position at Paris.
2. Why was Wilson likely to fail?

Clemenceau's role at Paris

The traditional view of Clemenceau at Paris presents him as a tough, no-nonsense old man with a volcanic temperament. During a heated exchange at the conference over the issue of Belgian claims to Limburg, Clemenceau accused Lloyd George of lying. The two men almost came to blows and Wilson had to pull them apart. Clemenceau then offered to fight a duel with the British Prime Minister, with either pistols or swords.

Clemenceau certainly fought hard and tried his best to impose on Germany a punitive settlement. However, the description of him as an intransigent French nationalist needs to be qualified. Clemenceau might have laughed at the Fourteen Points but, unlike many French extremists, he knew that he could push Britain and the United States only so far.

The following extract describes Clemenceau's behaviour at the conference.

> At times he could be coarsely satirical and cynical, at others he showed a literary and artistic insight. But he knew when and where to indulge his moods. He had judged the limits of British and American concession, and was strong and wise enough to restrain his extremists. Moreover in debate he had a readiness and even a tact and delicacy which were at times invaluable.
>
> AJ Grant and HWV Temperley, *Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Longman, London, 1940, p. 537

Alsace-Lorraine
French provinces that Germany had taken from France following its victory in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian (German) war. The French bitterly resented the loss, and the recovery of the provinces became a key aim of future French foreign policy.

Ultimately, Clemenceau failed to gain his goal of security.

- He had hoped to separate the Rhineland from the rest of Germany, but both Wilson and Lloyd George would not allow that. They could see the creation of another **Alsace-Lorraine** in reverse.
- In its place they had the Rhineland demilitarised and offered France an Anglo-American guarantee of support should Germany ever again invade France.
- The guarantee collapsed after the United States refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and Britain used this as an excuse to pull out also.
- Allied troops had left Germany by 1930 and by 1936 Hitler was able to march his army into the Rhineland and meet no opposition.

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Lloyd George at the Paris Peace Conference

Most historians have presented Lloyd George as acting as a conciliator between the idealistic Woodrow Wilson and the uncompromising Georges Clemenceau, while at the same time making sure British interests were looked after. Lloyd George was in a much more difficult position than either Wilson or Clemenceau. Wilson did not have his country hounding him to punish the Germans and Clemenceau fully shared his people's desire for revenge and security.

Lloyd George was looking to the future. British interest demanded that the European and world economy should be rebuilt as soon as possible. Britain's economy was closely interlinked with the international economy. He knew that the powerhouse of the prewar European economy had been Germany. It was thus in Britain's interest to revive the German economy as soon as possible.

The British needs were not as acute. Britain had not been invaded and suffered only minor bombing damage along the eastern coast. Britain's naval supremacy was preserved, a point further enhanced when the Germans **scuttled** their fleet at **Scapa Flow** in June 1919. As a result, Lloyd George saw it in Britain's interests not to punish Germany too severely. As he said later: 'Was it sensible to treat her [Germany] as a cow from which to extract milk and beef at the same time?'[1]

scuttle
To deliberately sink a ship

Scapa Flow
A sheltered body of water in the Orkney Islands, Scotland, that was used by Britain to base some of its fleet

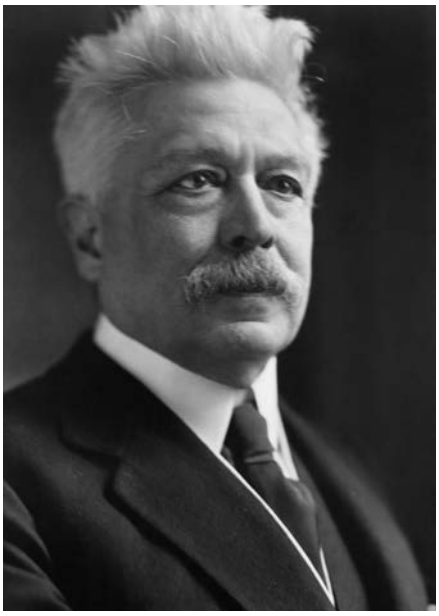
He was not happy about the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles that Germany was forced to sign and sought to moderate them, although with only limited success. He managed to prevent the separation of the Rhineland from Germany as Clemenceau wanted, but he failed elsewhere. Lloyd George was worried about forcing Germans to live under non-German rule. He opposed separating Danzig from Germany and giving German territory to Poland. He feared that 'we shall strew Europe with Alsace-Lorraines'. His view at the time was tinged with an element of racism. He argued that the Germans were 'proud, intelligent, with great traditions' and that they would not appreciate being put under 'races whom they regard as their inferiors, and some of whom, undoubtedly for the time being, merit that designation'. [2]

Other leaders at the Paris Peace Conference

The major decisions at Paris were made by Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson. However, 32 nations were represented at the peace conference and each came with its own demands. Vittorio Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, expected the 1915 Treaty of London to be honoured.

Italy had entered the war on the Allied side in the hope of gaining territory, including areas around Gorizia and Trieste and areas of Slav land in the northern Adriatic. Italy's role in the war had been a major one; half a million Italians had died. However, Orlando achieved little. He left Paris in April and Italy was left a dissatisfied nation.

The end of the war brought into existence several new nations that arrived at Paris demanding a share of the spoils. This inevitably brought them into conflict with each other. The following extract highlights some of these disagreements.



Getty Images/Historical

SOURCE 7.3 Vittorio Orlando

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> Signor Orlando's claims soon brought him into conflict with M Pasic – representative of the new independent Yugoslavia. There was M Bratianu of Romania, with claims to press against Hungary, against Bulgaria, and against Russia. There was M Benes of the new Czechoslovakia, 'full of professions of moderation, modesty and restraint' but with claims which brought conflicts, among others, with Hungary and Poland – the latter now represented by the world-famous pianist, Paderewski. The question of Poland's new frontiers brought conflicts with all her neighbours. Then there was M Venizelos, arguing the historic rights of Greece against Turkey. The Emir Feisal of Arabia had similar rights to assert, equally historic.
>
> J Terraine, *The Mighty Continent*, BBC, London, 1974, p. 165

Outside of Europe, nations intended holding on to any former German possessions they had taken. South Africa had no intention of giving up South-West Africa, just as New Zealand wished to hold on to German Samoa. When Billy Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, made it clear that Australia aimed to hold on to German New Guinea, Wilson asked Hughes if he intended ignoring the opinion of the civilised world, profiting from Germany's defeat, taking over the mineral reserves and imposing Australian rule on the native peoples. Hughes replied that that was about it.

Japan sought to take German possessions in China, including the port of Tsingtao. The other peacemakers forced Japan to give up Tsingtao, but Japan did manage to take most of Germany's former North Pacific empire.

Nationalism had been a major cause of World War I. One of the main legacies of the war was the survival – indeed, the strengthening – of nationalism. As the map of Europe changed, another legacy of the war was the proliferation of nationalisms.

Indicate which Allied leader you think was most likely to have made each of the following statements in 1919:

- 'I will not rest until I am assured my country will not be invaded again.'
- 'Let us not enter this conference with hate in our hearts.'
- 'My government expects the Allies to honour the promises made in 1915.'
- 'I foresee a new world order taking over from the old.'
- 'It is imperative that the German economy be allowed to revive.'
- 'I demand that Germany pay to rebuild our shattered land.'
- 'German naval strength must be diminished.'
- 'I feel the press will make me accept a harsher treaty than I would have liked.'

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The Paris Peace Settlement of 1919

The Paris Peace Settlement comprised five treaties. Each treaty was named after the area in which it was signed. These are indicated in Source 7.4.

The Treaty of Versailles
signed with Germany
28 June 1919

The Treaty of Sèvres
signed with Turkey
10 August 1920,
later replaced with
The Treaty of Lausanne
signed with Turkey
23 July 1923

The Treaty of St Germain
signed with Austria
10 September 1919

The Treaty of Neuilly
signed with Bulgaria
27 November 1919

The Treaty of Trianon
signed with Hungary
4 June 1920

SOURCE 7.4 The Paris Peace Settlement

The Treaty of Versailles

Treaty of Versailles
Treaty of St Germain
Treaty of Neuilly
Treaty of Trianon
Treaty of Sèvres
Treaty of Lausanne

Germany was not allowed to participate in the Paris negotiations at any time. It had a chance to respond to the treaty terms in May, but the treaty-making process was a case of sign or else face invasion. Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles on 28 June 1919. The location of the signing was significant, for it was here in 1871 that the German empire had been declared following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. The Treaty of Versailles aimed to weaken Germany territorially, economically and militarily.

The territorial provisions

Germany lost approximately 13 per cent of its territory in Europe, which included 103 600 square kilometres of land and 7 million people. Germany's losses included the following:

- Eupen and Malmédy were granted to Belgium.
- Northern Schleswig was granted to Denmark following a plebiscite.
- The port of Memel became Lithuania's access to the sea.
- Danzig was placed under League of Nations control to provide a port for the new Polish state.
- Posen, part of West Prussia and part of Upper Silesia were handed to Poland, which now gave Poland a corridor to the sea. This meant that East Prussia was now separated from the rest of Germany.

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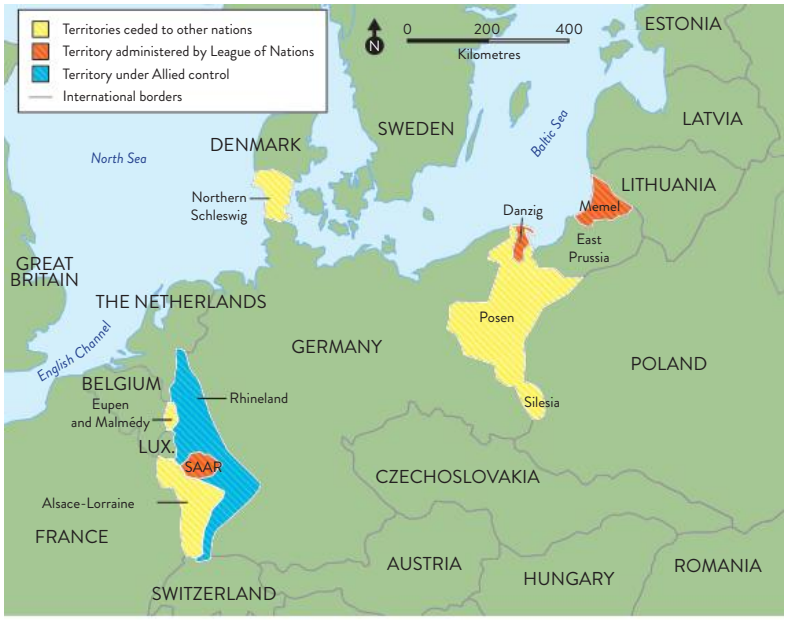

SOURCE 7.5 Germany's territorial losses at the Treaty of Versailles

- A small area near Troppau was granted to Czechoslovakia.
- Germany was forbidden from ever uniting with Austria (*Anschluss*) under Clause 80 of the treaty.
- Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France.
- The Saar region was placed under League of Nations jurisdiction for 15 years, after which time the people would vote on whether to join France or Germany. Until then, France was given full and absolute possession of its coalmines.
- The Rhineland region was to be demilitarised for a distance of 50 kilometres east of the River Rhine. The Allies would administer the territory west of the Rhine for 15 years. This meant that Germany was not allowed to have any military personnel in this area.

Wilson had promoted the principle of national self-determination. However, through German eyes this seemed to be a principle granted to all nationalities except Germans. The Versailles settlement forced Germans to live under Czech, Polish, French and Lithuanian rule, and forbade union with Austria.

Source 7.5 shows the location of Germany's losses.

The military provisions

The Treaty of Versailles attempted to break German military power and thus prevent it from ever again launching another 1914-style invasion. The main military provisions included the following:

- The army was reduced to only 100 000 people.
- Germany was not allowed any tanks or heavy artillery.
- Germany was denied an air force.
- Germany's navy was greatly reduced. It was not allowed to have submarines; all ships over 16 256 tonnes were banned; only six battleships of 10 160 tonnes were allowed; and there could be only six light cruisers, 12 destroyers and 12 torpedo boats.
- The naval base of Heligoland was to be destroyed.

The economic provisions

The Treaty of Versailles also sought to break Germany's economic strength. The main economic provisions of the treaty included the following:

- Massive reparations were to be paid by Germany to the Allies for the damage inflicted on the Allies by Germany.
- Belgium and France were to receive large amounts of German machinery, locomotives and rolling stock.
- Germany had to supply the Allies with large amounts of coal. The coal measures included 20.3 million tonnes per annum for five years to France, thereafter 8.1 million tonnes per annum to France indefinitely; 8.1 million tonnes per annum to Belgium for 10 years; and 6.1 million tonnes per annum to Italy for 10 years.

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The colonial provisions

Germany was deemed unworthy of having colonial possessions. They were given to other powers as mandates. Australia received New Guinea; South Africa received South-West Africa; Britain received German East Africa; and Japan received Germany's North Pacific colonies. The aim was to prepare these ex-German colonies for eventual statehood.

War guilt

The clause of the treaty that angered Germany most was Article 231, the war guilt clause, which blamed Germany for the war and all the damage that the war had brought. The German people found this clause to be totally humiliating. It stated:

> The Allied and associated governments confirm and Germany accepts the responsibilities of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and associated governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.
>
> Treaty of Versailles, Article 231

Reparations

The Treaty of Versailles did not contain an actual total for reparations that Germany was to pay. This was to be left to a Reparations Commission to work out. With emotions running high and politicians and the press demanding compensation, the expected reparations bill continued to rise. Negotiations between Germany and the Allies failed to reach an agreement on a sum. It was left to the Reparations Commission to determine the amount. The commission was meant to comprise Britain, France, Italy and the United States plus a fifth representative brought in from time to time. However, the United States was not represented on the commission because it failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles.

The Reparations Commission informed Germany of the final amount on 28 April 1921. The total amount demanded was £6.6 billion or US$40 billion.

- France was to receive 52 per cent, Britain 22 per cent, Italy 10 per cent, Belgium 8 per cent and other participants 8 per cent.
- The commission further stated that the amounts Germany had already paid had not been enough to pay for the Allied control commissions or armies of occupation, so nothing it had paid so far could be credited against the reparations bill.
- An ultimatum was sent to the German Government: agree to the sum and sign, or an Allied force will occupy the industrial Ruhr area immediately. Germany accepted the reparations bill on 11 May 1921.

Germany simply did not have the capacity to pay the sum demanded. It had no chance of borrowing from overseas; its trade balance was in serious deficit, which meant that gold reserves were draining from the country; and there was a flight of private capital from the country, with businesses fearing their assets might become used for reparations. On top of this, the German economy was still ravaged from the effects of the war.

John Maynard Keynes, a prominent British economist who was involved in the negotiations, argued that not only were the reparations demanded of Germany unfair but that it would be impossible for Germany to pay them.

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> At 5 per cent compound interest a capital sum doubles itself in fifteen years. On the assumption that Germany cannot pay more than $750 million annually until 1936, the $25 billion on which interest is deferred will have risen to $50 billion dollars, carrying an annual interest charge of $2.5 billion. That is to say, even if Germany pays $750 million annually up to 1936, she will nevertheless owe us at that date more than half as much again as she now does … It is my judgment, as certain as anything can be … that Germany cannot pay anything approaching this sum. Until the treaty is altered, therefore, Germany has in effect engaged herself to hand over to the Allies the whole of her surplus production in perpetuity.
>
> JM Keynes, 'The Peace of Versailles', *Everybody's Magazine*, 43, September 1920, p. 39

Keynes was proven right. Germany made its first reparations payment in 1921 thanks to a loan from London. In late 1922, it announced it could not pay the next instalment. Failure to deliver a consignment of timber to France gave the French Government an excuse to invade and occupy the Ruhr. Throughout the 1920s, reparations were gradually scaled down in the Dawes Plan (1924) and the Young Plan (1929). They ended finally in 1932 at the height of the Depression.

The reparations issue did much to poison the international environment during the 1920s. The rationale behind reparations was that Germany was to blame for all the damage of the war (the war guilt clause), which of course few Germans accepted.

The legacy of Versailles for the future

It is too simplistic to say that the cause of World War II was the Treaty of Versailles. Such a view suggests a degree of inevitability and nothing in history is inevitable. However, it is clear that the Paris Peace Settlement, and the Treaty of Versailles in particular, created feelings of anger, frustration, bitterness and humiliation that would poison the political situation inside Germany and affect international relations more broadly.

Much has been written about the Paris Peace Settlement since 1919. It has been viewed as being too harsh, too soft, too idealistic, not idealistic enough, the best that could have been done in the circumstances, and the main cause of another inevitable world war.

Paris Peace Conference, 1919

Evaluating the Treaty of Versailles

Examine the following sources and answer the questions that follow, and then consider what you believe the legacy of the peace settlement was.

AJP TAYLOR, BRITISH HISTORIAN

> At the end the French felt swindled; and the Germans felt robbed. Reparations had kept the passions of war alive … Reparations counted as a symbol. They created resentment, suspicion and international hostility.
>
> AJP Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1961, pp. 70–1

The following two extracts present two differing views of the severity of the Versailles Treaty.

RUTH HENIG, BRITISH HISTORIAN

> 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 acknowledgment of defeat, as much as the treaty terms themselves, which they found so hard to accept.
>
> R Henig, *Versailles and After*, Methuen, London, 1984, pp. 27–8

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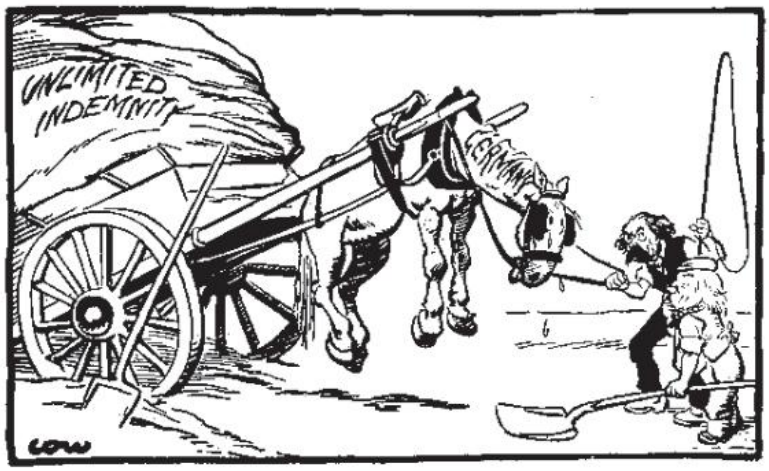
ADOLF HITLER, LEADER OF THE NAZI PARTY

When in the year 1919 the German people was burdened with the peace treaty, we should have been justified in hoping that precisely through this instrument of boundless repression the cry for German freedom would have been immensely promoted … What could have been done with this peace treaty of Versailles? … In the boundlessness of its oppression, the shamelessness of its demands, lies the greatest propaganda weapon for the reawakening of a nation's dormant spirits of life …

A Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by R Manheim, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1943

DAVID LOW, BRITISH CARTOONIST



British Cartoon Archives/Solo Syndication

'Perhaps it would gee-up better if we let it touch earth'

SOURCE 7.6 The cartoon 'Unlimited Indemnity' from the early 1920s by David Low provides his view on the reparations situation facing Germany. The two men on the right are British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and French Prime Minister Aristide Briand. Lloyd George is speaking.

PAUL BIRDSALL, BRITISH HISTORIAN

The territorial settlement in Europe was by no means the wholesale, iniquitous and cynical perversion of Wilson's principles of self-determination which has been pictured … The populations of central Europe are hopelessly mixed and therefore Simon-pure self-determination is impossible. Any boundary will leave national minorities on one side or the other …

P Birdsall, *Versailles Twenty Years After*, Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1941

ERIC HOBSBAWM, BRITISH HISTORIAN

In fact, in Europe the basic principle of re-ordering the map was to create ethnic-linguistic nation states according to the belief that nations had the 'right to self-determination' … The attempt was a disaster, as can still be seen in the Europe of the 1990s [and 2000s]. The national conflicts tearing the continent apart in the 1990s were the old chickens of Versailles once again coming home to roost …

E Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, Michael Joseph, London, 1994, p. 31

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QUESTIONS

1. What is Henig's view of the severity of the treaty? Using your own knowledge, provide evidence to support this view.
2. What is Hitler's view of the severity of the treaty? Using your own knowledge, provide evidence to support this view.
3. What did Hitler see as the value of the treaty for his political purposes?
4. Why did the Germans find defeat so hard to take? Refer to the events of 1918.
5. What does the term 'unlimited indemnity' in Source 7.6 refer to?
6. In Source 7.6, what appears to be Lloyd George's attitude?
7. What appears to be Briand's attitude?
8. In what way are the Hitler extract and the Low cartoon in agreement?
9. What is the main point of disagreement between the Birdsall and Hobsbawm extracts?
10. Using information in this chapter, does the evidence tend to support Birdsall or Hobsbawm?
11. What recent conflicts does Hobsbawm allude to? (He is writing in the mid-1990s.)

Peace with Turkey

Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. Within 12 months, treaties had also been signed with Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. However, the remaining member of the Central Powers, Turkey, proved more difficult to deal with. Two Turkish governments were vying for power: the Sultan's regime based in Constantinople, and that of Mustafa Kemal based in Ankara.

On 10 August 1920, the Sultan was presented with the Treaty of Sèvres, which, like the rest of the Paris Peace Settlement, was punitive in nature. Kemal's revolution quickly invalidated the Sèvres Treaty. As Kemal's forces gained control of Turkey, Allied armies were pushed out of the Straits region and the Greek force that had occupied Smyrna in Anatolia was defeated. By 1922, Kemal controlled all of Turkey and demanded a rewriting of the Treaty of Sèvres.

Kemal was a Turkish nationalist, not an Ottoman imperialist, and this was reflected in the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 23 July 1923.

- Turkey retained all of Anatolia, Constantinople and Eastern Thrace (the area in the south-east corner of Europe).
- All claims to Arab territories were dropped: Egypt became a British protectorate; Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan became British **mandates**; Syria and Lebanon became French mandates.
- The Straits were demilitarised.
- Turkey had no limits placed on its military and did not have to pay reparations.

mandate
An area that would be looked after by a developed power until the people of that area were considered able to rule themselves

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AJP Taylor and the legacy of Versailles

British historian AJP Taylor caused enormous controversy with his book *The Origins of the Second World War*, published in 1961. Hitler's guilt and evil nature were never questioned at this time, and the accepted orthodoxy was that responsibility for World War II was solely Germany's. Taylor argued that Hitler had not plotted war but was an opportunist and very popular at home. Taylor placed the blame for the outbreak of war on British diplomats and politicians who should have accepted Hitler's 'justifiable' demands over Danzig and the Polish Corridor in 1939. Taylor concluded that the war was wanted by nobody, dismayed Hitler and was an accident.

In the following extract, Taylor examines the legacy of the Treaty of Versailles. Far from being too severe on Germany, Taylor argues, the treaty could, and would be, soon shaken off.

> The [Versailles] treaty was designed to provide security against a new German aggression, yet it could work only with the cooperation of the German government. Germany was to be disarmed; but the German government would arrange this – the Allies only provided a Control Commission to see that the disarmament had been carried out. Germany was to pay reparations; again, the German government would collect the money and pay it over – the Allies merely received it. Even the military occupation of the Rhineland depended on German cooperation. The civil administration remained in German hands; and a German refusal would produce a state of confusion for which the peace treaty made no provision. In the immediate situation of 1919 the peace treaty seemed crushing and vindictive; a *Diktat* or slave treaty as the Germans called it. In a longer perspective, the most important thing in the treaty is that it was concluded with a united Germany. Germany had only to secure a modification of the treaty, or to shake it off altogether; and she would emerge as strong, or almost as strong, as she had been in 1914.
>
> AJP Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1961, p. 47

QUESTIONS

1. Why would Germans see the treaty as 'crushing and vindictive' in 1919?
2. What is the gist of Taylor's argument that counters the slave treaty idea?

The end of empire

Empire before 1914

The imperialist urge had reached a fever pitch level before 1914. In the years between 1848 and 1914, the major powers embarked on a process of massive imperial expansion. These powers included not only Britain and France, but also new players such as Germany, Italy and Belgium, and eventually Japan and the United States. There were many motivations behind this explosion of imperial activity, ranging from economic necessity and greed, to strategic military issues, to idealism or the desire for power and prestige. By the end of the 19th century, the great powers had succeeded in imposing their control over vast areas of the world, from South America to Africa, to Asia and the Pacific.

The map on page 21 of Chapter 1 illustrating the pre-1914 alliance blocs shows clearly how Europe was dominated by the empires of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia before the outbreak of war. Source 7.7 illustrates the extent to which the empires of the European powers (and Japan and the United States) dominated the globe.

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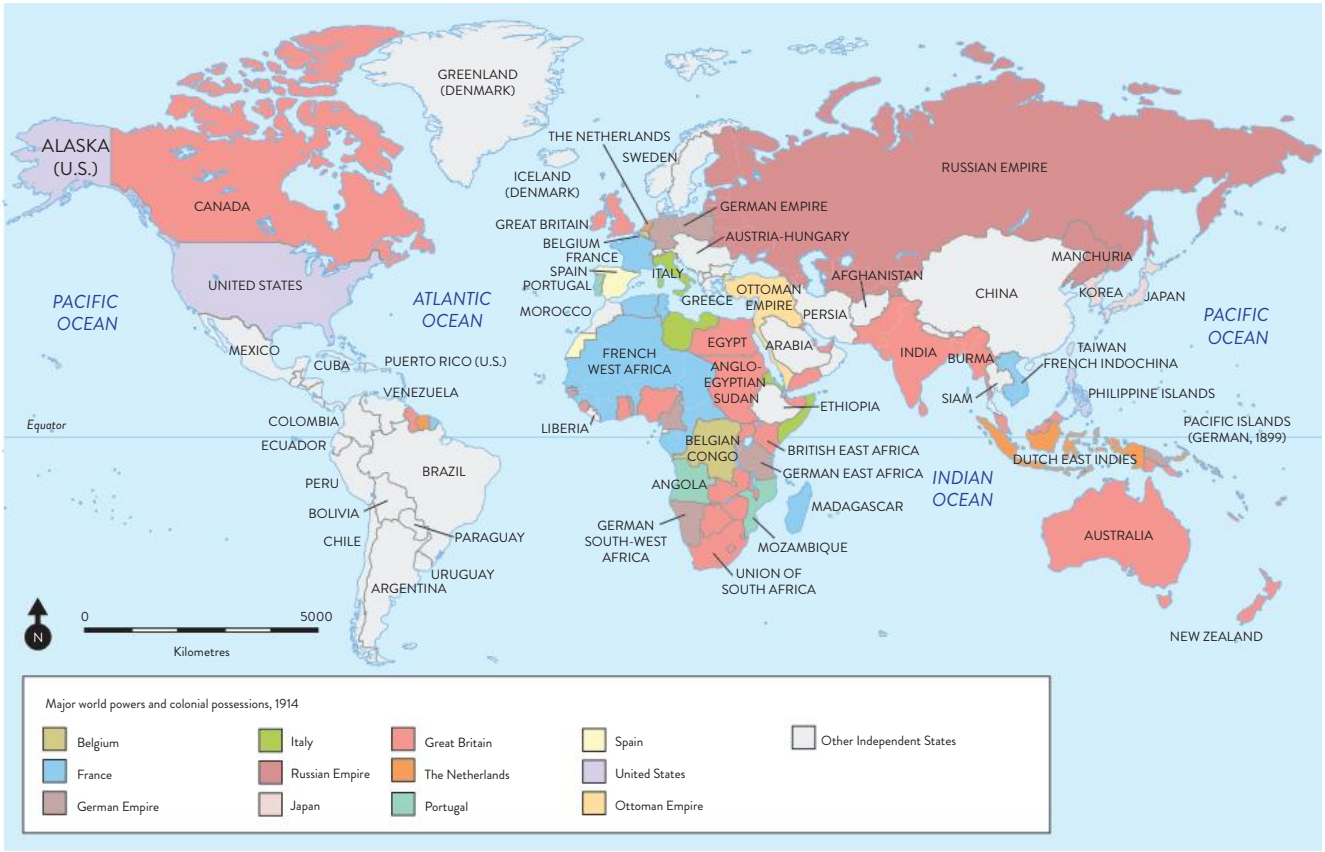

SOURCE 7.7 Major world powers and their possessions, 1900

The legacy of World War I for empire

The war and its aftermath had a massive impact on the notion of empire. Within Europe, the empires that had dominated the continent disappeared.

- Following defeat, revolution and civil war, Russia had lost much of its European empire, including Poland and the Baltic states.
- The Austro-Hungarian Empire ceased to exist as new states were created and others gained territory at the empire's expense, including Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.
- Germany lost about 13 per cent of its territory, but as time would tell, it had suffered much less than was felt at the time of the Paris Peace settlement.
- The Ottoman Empire collapsed and evolved into the modern state of Turkey (see the information box on page 150).

By the early 1920s, the map of Europe was unrecognisable compared to that of 1914.

Germany's imperial possessions were taken from it in the Treaty of Versailles and handed over to various powers around the globe, including Britain, Japan and Australia. British and French imperial control actually increased immediately after the war. This was the result of the acquisition of former German colonies and secret wartime agreements such as the 1916 Sykes–Picot agreement.

However, this apparent surge in empire was misleading. The main legacy of World War I was not to be a revival or strengthening of imperialism but rather the beginning of the end of empire. European empires would not disintegrate until the years after World War II when Britain was forced out of India, the French out of Indochina and the Dutch out of the East Indies. However, the signs were already apparent in the 1920s that European imperial control was being threatened.

Sykes–Picot agreement

Sykes–Picot agreement
A secret Anglo-French agreement of 1916 that divided up parts of the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence

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SOURCE 7.8 Europe in the early 1920s

Anti-Western feeling had been growing slowly in the years before 1914, but not to a point where European imperial control was seriously threatened. However, the combination of the weakening of the imperial powers during the war and Woodrow Wilson's championing of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference stimulated nationalist activity in the colonies. Wilson had argued that in Europe it was wrong for one national group to be under the control of another. Hence, Poles should rule Poles, Czechs should rule Czechs and so on. However, if this principle was good enough for Europe, surely it should apply to peoples all across the world?

The 29-year-old Ho Chi Minh, future president of North Vietnam, said as much when he addressed the conference in 1919 on behalf of the Vietnamese people who sought their freedom from French control. It was in response to this spirit that independence-orientated nationalist movements emerged in French Indochina. Similarly, in British India, the campaigns of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League openly and often violently demanded national independence. In both cases, independence was not achieved until after World War II.

1. Compare Source 7.8 with Source 1.8 on page 21. List the new countries established in Europe following World War I.
2. Define Wilson's concept of national self-determination.

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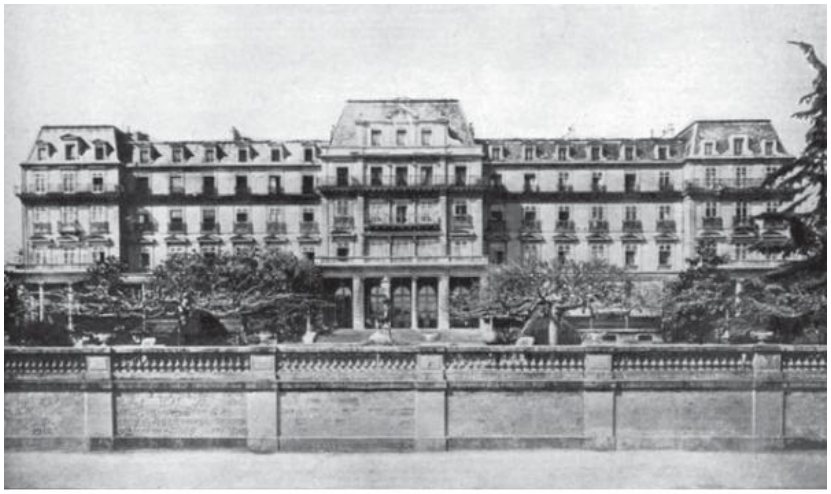
The war to end all wars

The phrase 'the war to end all wars' is generally believed to have been coined by President Wilson, though the British writer HG Wells had written a book a few years earlier called *The War That Will End War*. Wilson was moved to use the phrase due to the catastrophic destruction and loss of life that World War I brought about and his desire to establish a new system of international relations to prevent future conflicts. However, the phrase soon fell into disrepute as within a very short time the world was to witness war across the globe in the former Ottoman Empire, Russia, the Far East and Spain, then finally World War II in 1939.

The creation of the League of Nations

One of the immediate legacies of World War I was the creation of the League of Nations. The League of Nations originated in the fourteenth of Wilson's Fourteen Points. Wilson argued that war might have been avoided if the nations of Europe had had a means of meeting and talking through issues before a crisis was allowed to develop. Out of this thinking came his idea of the League of Nations.



SOURCE 7.9 Headquarters of the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland

At its inception, the League of Nations had 42 members and at its height would boast 58 nations. Each member had an equal vote in the Assembly, but the key decision-making body was the Council, which comprised the great powers: Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The United States was to be a member of the Council, but the US Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or allow membership of the League. The League also had a secretariat that dealt with a host of non-political issues such as health, culture and transportation. In a sense, the League of Nations was a precursor to the United Nations.

The failure of the League

Though the League had some success in defusing some minor conflicts during the 1920s, it ultimately failed to prevent the aggression of Germany, Japan and Italy in the 1930s that would culminate in World War II. There were several key factors that led to the failure of the League. These included:

- its failure to reflect the true balance of power, as the League never comprised all the major powers
- its reliance on the principle of internationalism at a time when a belief in national self-interest was paramount
- its lack of military forces
- its insistence on the principle of unanimity, which meant a single nation could prevent the League taking action over an issue.

League of Nations

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World War I and the Russian Revolution

For Russia, the legacy of World War I was profound. For this country, the war was a military catastrophe that brought about a total political and economic collapse. It brought down the **Romanov Dynasty**, which had ruled the country for over 300 years. Eight months of political confusion were ended when the Bolsheviks seized power late in 1917. Three years of bloody civil war followed.

Romanov Dynasty
The royal family that ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917

Historians still debate the issues surrounding the collapse of the regime of Tsar Nicholas II. Was the regime doomed to ultimate demise due to its failure to adapt to a fast-changing world? Or was it in fact showing signs of developing into a modern Western-style state with the possibility of a constitutional monarchy and a modern economy, developments halted only by the impact of the war? Or perhaps the war was merely the occasion for the collapse of the Romanovs. Was it internal decay, epitomised by the weakness of the Tsar, the influence of Grigori Rasputin and the archaic nature of the regime that was responsible for the collapse of the Romanovs? In any interpretation of the collapse of the Romanovs, World War I figures prominently.

Russia at war

The Russian Army proved to be no match for the professional, efficient and mechanised forces at German's disposal, though it did experience more success against Austria. Within two months of the start of World War I, Russian forces had suffered two major defeats at Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. General Aleksei Brusilov had some success against Austrian forces in 1916. However, by the beginning of 1917, the Russian military was in a state of total disarray. Lack of equipment, lack of food, lack of boots, and corrupt and incompetent leadership bred sentiments that soon led to desertion, mutiny and attacks on officers.

The Provisional Government that took over following the Tsar's **abdication** in March 1917 made the fateful decision to continue the war. Defeat followed defeat and by the end of the year, the Russian Army had virtually disintegrated. The first decision of Lenin following the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 was to issue the Peace Decree. Peace was formally signed with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

abdication
The giving up of all rights to one's throne and the right to rule

The economic impact of the war on Russia

Russia lacked an economy capable of fighting a modern war. Since the 1890s, the country had witnessed some significant developments in industry, transportation and mining, but it was still decades behind Western countries in terms of economic development. Russian agriculture was even more backward. This was a country incapable of fighting a 20th-century war, especially when its main opponent was a modern industrial giant like Germany. The war was to have a catastrophic impact on the Russian economy and this in turn was a major factor that led to revolution in 1917. Source 7.10 summarises the socioeconomic impact of the war on Russia.

The political impact of the war on Russia

When Germany declared war on Russia, the country was swept with a wave of genuine, patriotic enthusiasm. Millions of peasants willingly marched off to fight in support of Mother Russia, the church and their Tsar. However, feelings of disillusion and contempt soon took over as the incompetence of the military and political leadership became apparent. Just as the war broke down Russia's economic system, so too did it break down the political system.

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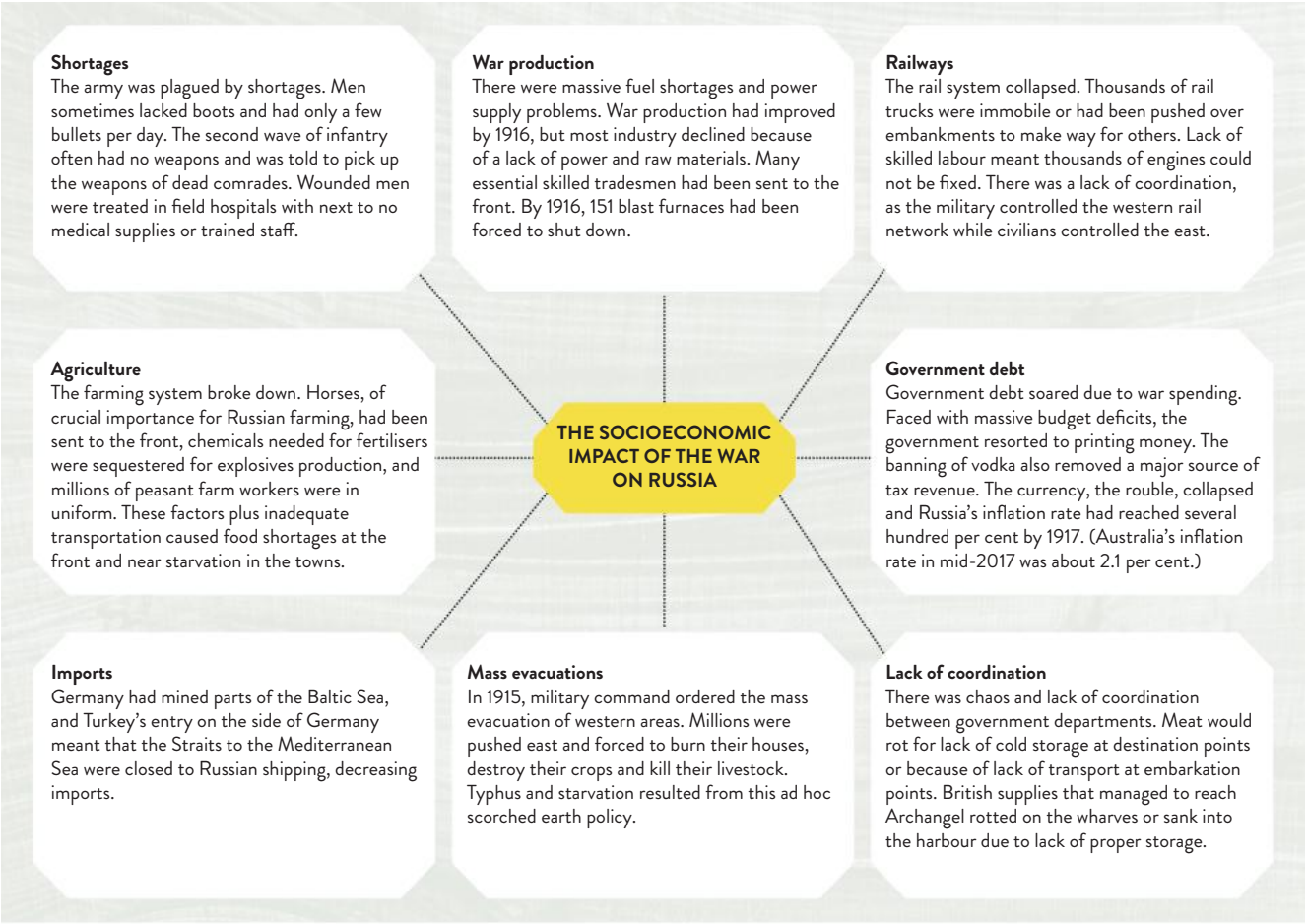

SOURCE 7.10 The socioeconomic impact of the war on Russia

The Bolsheviks seize power

By the beginning of 1917, the Russian Army was in a state of collapse. Lack of supplies, food, ammunition and even boots led to indiscipline, attacks on officers and mutiny. As the situation worsened on the home front, there was widespread desertion.

- By March, the Tsar's forces had lost control of the capital, Petrograd. Faced with complete social, economic and political breakdown, and most importantly the loss of military support, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate.
- A Provisional Government took power in early March, comprising members of the former Duma, or parliament. However, the Provisional Government effectively had to share power with the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. These two bodies coexisted uneasily for the next eight months.
- The government was led by Prince Georgy Lvov, but its most effective member was Justice Minister Kerensky, who became Prime Minister in July. The fundamental mistake made by this new government was to continue the war against Germany.
- The Russian people were desperate for peace and bread and the peasants sought land. These were sentiments fully understood by Lenin's revolutionary Bolshevik Party. On his return to Russia in April, Lenin called for an end to the war and land for the peasants.
- Increasing Bolshevik popularity led to them gaining majorities in many soviets across the country.
- In October, the Bolsheviks took the decision to overthrow the Provisional Government.

The Russian Revolution

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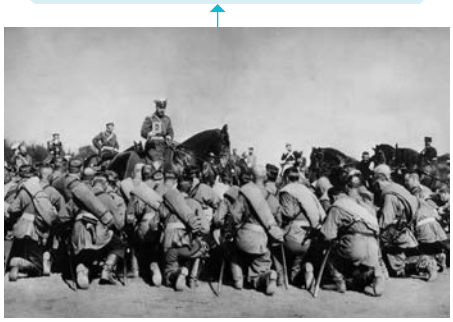
Though the Duma supported the war in August 1914, Nicholas quickly suspended its sittings. It met rarely during the war. In August 1915, a Progressive Bloc calling for a 'government of confidence' was formed, but this was rejected by the Tsar, and he again suspended the Duma. The Provisional Government that came to power in March 1917 came from the Duma.



Getty Images/Apic

In September 1915, Nicholas took over from Nikolay Nikolayevich as army Commander-in-Chief.

Nicholas had no military expertise and in fact the key military decisions were taken by his leading officers, such as his Chief of Staff Mikhail Alekseyev. However, by taking on this role, the Tsar now had to shoulder personal responsibility for military failures. Before, Nicholas had been able to stand above day-to-day military matters and it was his generals who received the blame for military setbacks.

Nicholas's presence at the front left his wife, Alexandra, in charge in Petrograd and it was soon clear her will was law. Alexandra's obsession with Rasputin allowed him to interfere with the business of government. This resulted in great governmental instability, as ministers were randomly sacked and appointed in a game of ministerial leapfrog. From autumn 1915 to autumn 1916, there were five ministers of the interior, four ministers of agriculture and three ministers of war.

Rasputin's influence was probably not as great as legend would have it. However, people believed it was, and even that he was sleeping with the Tsarina. Rasputin was murdered by a noble, Count Felix Yusupov, in December 1916. However, by then the regime was doomed and whether Rasputin was alive or dead made little difference.

By the beginning of 1917, the Tsar had lost the support of all groups in the country. Above all, he had lost the support of his demoralised and disillusioned armed forces. There were food riots, widespread mutinies and an increasing number of calls for the Tsar to abdicate.

SOURCE 7.11 The political impact of the war on Russia

- Organised by Lenin's able lieutenant Trotsky, Bolshevik Red Guards took control of the key points of the capital Petrograd on 25 October and seized power in the name of the Congress of Soviets.
- The first action of the new Bolshevik government was the Decree on Peace.
- Germany and Russia formally made peace at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Russia was out of the war.

Alamy Stock Photo/Granger Historical Picture Archive

SOURCE 7.12 Stalin, Lenin and Trotsky in 1919. Lenin led the Bolsheviks to power in the October Revolution of 1917, with Trotsky as his able lieutenant. After Lenin's death, Stalin would come to dominate Russia.

Modernity in relation to the nature and legacy of World War I

World War I marked a watershed in history: after the war, the world was very different. The forces of modernity that had been evolving since the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution seemed to come to fruition as a result of the legacy of World War I.

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This is how historian Richard Overy describes the process:

> When historians describe the whole network of changes that transformed Europe and the wider world from predominantly agrarian or small-town communities, governed by ancient religions and a customary tradition-bound culture, to a more urban, industrial, secular society, they use the term 'modernisation' …
>
> R Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2017, p. 27

The process of modernisation was accelerated as a result of World War I. Between 1913 and 1929, European industrial production doubled and industry was appearing in places it had not before. Accompanying the spread of industry was the growth of a white-collar workforce. Faith grew increasingly in the benefits of education and planning, from the make-up of towns to the make-up of families.

There were other aspects of modernism that were stimulated by the war. Large-scale government intervention in the life of the nation became accepted. The concept of mass society, which was developing in the late nineteenth century, was cemented by the war. This was seen in such areas as trade unionism, mass media, mass consumerism, spectator sports and mass politics. There was no going back as all of these things continued to grow. Hereditary rule was replaced by secular rule, often based on an ideology such as liberal democracy, communism or fascism. It could be argued that the rapid expansion of modernisation brought on by the war made it all the more easy for the rise of interwar totalitarian regimes.

However, modernity did not arrive and replace what was formerly there; it existed side by side with the old though becoming dominant. There is also an implication that modernity implied progress, but many did not perceive it that way. People living in rural areas and skilled artisans in particular were often hostile to the forces of modernity. Older communities had become increasingly marginalised.

> In the years after the Great War, the European peasantry was particularly affected by these changes. The war itself shook up rural society, taking large numbers of villagers and transporting them to distant fighting fronts, while an army of officials descended on the farms, seizing horses and oxen for the army, requisitioning foodstuffs, imposing new taxes and controls.
>
> R Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2017, p. 30

Modernity and World War I

Modernity was accompanied by a steady increase in rural poverty. Peasants could no longer fall back on their skilled crafts as city factories took over. Rural indebtedness became a major issue in many countries. In Germany only a few years after the war, a villager's income was only one-sixth that of a skilled city factory operative.

> It is hardly surprising, therefore, that modernisation should be seen as 'Janus-faced'. This description applies to three countries in particular [Germany, Italy and Russia], where modern technologies were used to achieve and implement state control while, at the same time, the systems from which modernisation had arisen were roundly condemned …
>
> SJ Lee, *European Dictatorships 1918–45*, Routledge, Glasgow, 2010, p. 19

The legacy of the war was apparent not only in the material and political elements of life. For many, the rejection of rationality, certainty and religious belief was reinforced by the horrors of World War I. It shattered many of the traditional values and beliefs that had for so long been accepted and unquestioned. This saw the advent of modernism. In the arts, the impact was to lead many to abandon traditional tastes and techniques. Artists, for example, divorced themselves from society. Their art became ever more esoteric as they decided to reject simple understanding of their work for experimental technique. Others did the same to achieve a kind of spiritual hygiene, away from their terrible reality, as they sought relief from their inner torments.

Legacies of war

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Chapter summary

- The peacemakers of 1919 faced monumental problems, including the impact of the war's destruction, economic dislocation and the spread of Spanish influenza.
- Hatreds that had been promoted during the war were not easily dampened.
- Agreements had been made between powers during the war that complicated the peacemaking process.
- The Big Three had differing agendas at Paris: Clemenceau wanted a punitive peace, Wilson sought an idealistic settlement, while Lloyd George was primarily concerned with securing British interests.
- The creation of a host of new nations in central and eastern Europe produced a series of new potential conflicts.
- The Treaty of Versailles was viewed by many as being very harsh on Germany in its territorial, military, economic, colonial and war guilt clauses.
- Germany was to pay massive reparations to the victorious Allies, an issue that would poison the international environment for years to come.
- Some historians have argued that the seeds of World War II can be found in the Treaty of Versailles.
- Though Britain and France increased the size of their empires after 1919, there were signs that the glory days of empire were coming to an end.
- The League of Nations came into being as a hopeful means of preventing future crises escalating into war, as had happened in 1914. This hope proved to be misplaced.
- The economic impact of the war was disastrous for Russia, and its backward industrial, transport and agricultural systems could not meet the demands of the army and the home front.
- By early 1917, the Russian army was disintegrating as it faced mass desertions and mutiny.
- In March 1917, the Tsar was forced to abdicate. The new Provisional Government took the fateful decision to continue the war.
- In October 1917, Lenin's Bolshevik Party seized power, and its first decision was to issue a Peace Decree. Russia formally left the war with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.
- World War I cemented the process of modernisation that had been developing for some time and which would influence much of the 20th-century world.
- The destruction and trauma of war affected intellectual and cultural movements, ranging from art to music and literature, as artists, composers and writers rejected traditional thinking and forms and pursued modernist techniques.
- Technically, World War I did not finally end until Turkey agreed to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

Further resources

- Kershaw, I, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949,* Penguin, Milton Keynes, 2015, Chapter 3
- Lee, SJ, *European Dictatorships 1918–45,* Routledge, Abingdon, 2010, Chapter 1
- Mazower, M, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century,* Penguin, London, 1998, Chapter 2

Endnotes

1 Quoted in M Gilbert, 'The Treaty of Versailles', in AJP Taylor (ed.), *Purnell's History of the Twentieth Century,* Vol. II, Purnell, New York, 1971

2 Quoted in M Gilbert, 'The Treaty of Versailles', in AJP Taylor (ed.), *Purnell's History of the Twentieth Century,* Vol. II, Purnell, New York, 1971

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Name the four empires that had collapsed by the end of World War I.
2. Who were the Big Three?
3. What were the Fourteen Points?
4. What was self-determination, in the context of the 1919 Peace Conference?
5. Why was Germany so angered by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles?
6. What was the League of Nations?
7. How was the British Empire under threat after World War I?
8. What were the results of Russia's two revolutions in 1917? Explain how these revolutions can be understood as a consequence of World War I.
9. How had World War I affected traditional beliefs and values?
10. Why did it take so long to formally establish peace with Turkey?

EXTENDED-WRITING EXERCISE

11. 'The world of 1914 was gone forever.' To what extent do you agree with this statement about the legacy of World War I?

SOURCE EXERCISE

12. This Will Dyson cartoon appeared in mid-1919. Study it carefully and answer the questions.

Alamy Stock Photo/Chronicle

SOURCE 7.13 'Peace and Future Cannon Fodder' by Will Dyson

a Identify the figures in the cartoon. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
b Comment on the perspective, motive and audience of the cartoonist.
c Why might the British Government have been pleased to see the publication of such cartoons at this time?
d Do you think that Will Dyson was being incredibly 'prescient'?

RESEARCH QUESTION

13. In what ways did modernism after World War I affect art, music and literature?

Chronology and explanation

Paris Peace Conference: Group work

Research questions

The Fourteen Points

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