

World War I

by Ken Webb

Here it is: the factual detail, the historiography, revision exercises and advice on how to construct written responses on World War I



eBook

"Everything you wanted to know about World War I, but were afraid to ask."

World War I

by Ken Webb M.A. (Oxon), C.Ed

*“Everything you wanted to know about World War I,
but were afraid to ask.”*

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About the author

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"World War I" is one of fourteen titles in the "Everything you wanted to know about... but were afraid to ask" series *written specifically* for the new NSW Modern and Ancient History syllabuses commencing 2018-19. Other titles in this series include:

- The Decline and Fall of the Romanov Dynasty
- Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946
- Russia and the Soviet Union 1917-1941
- Conflict in Europe 1935-1945
- The Cold War 1945-1991
- Conflict in Indochina 1954-1979
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Author's note

The purpose of this book – as with all titles in the “Everything you wanted to know about... but were afraid to ask” series – is to make life easy for students and teachers working their way through the ‘Shaping of the Modern World’ section of Year 11 Modern History. It is not intended to be the final word on *World War I*; nothing beats wide-reading and going back to the primary sources!

However, neither teachers nor students always have the time for such luxuries. Teachers have several other classes to worry about, not to mention a growing multitude of administrative and bureaucratic tasks to fulfill! Students have other subjects to study, and may also be burdened with a series of major works. Thus, “Everything you want to know...” steps in to make life easy.

The principal aims of this book are to:

- provide the essential factual detail needed to understand the topic;
- provide some experience in dealing with sources;
- provide references to major modern written and visual sources;
- provide an introduction to the essence of historiographical debate;
- provide ideas for approaching the types of questions that might appear when examined on *World War I*.

Rationale for the structure of this book

“*World War I*” is topic 5 in ‘The Shaping of the Modern World’ section in the Year 11 section of The Modern History syllabus. The syllabus divides the topic into three sections:

- the historical context
- the nature of World War I
- the nature and legacy of World War I and its influence on modernity

These broad headings have been used to structure the book and have been broken down into sections to make the topic more accessible to students. An additional section has been included on approaching questions that could be set on the topic.

Suggestion for scope and sequencing of this topic

The length of time spent on a topic such as *World War I* is at the discretion of the individual school. What follows are suggestions based on past experience and the construction of the new NSW Modern History syllabus commencing in 2018-19.

- The “Investigating Modern History” section has two parts: “The Nature of Modern History” and “Case Studies”. Integrating the “Nature” topics into the “Case Study” topics would probably work best.
- Thus, teachers could choose three case studies for study. NB: One of the three case studies has to be a non-western, non-European topic.
- Integrate into each case study one of the “Nature topics”.
- Thus, by the end of term two of Year 11, students should have completed three case studies/ nature of modern history topics, plus the individual research project.
- This will allow all of term three for dealing with World War I which would provide a great basis for Year 12 study which will probably commence in term four with the “*Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946*” topic.

Section One ■ The historical context

Chapter One

Great Power Rivalry before 1914: alliances, imperialism, nationalism, militarism

“An introductory explanation”

In June 1914, the people of Europe were not living in despair waiting for the entire continent to explode into a catastrophic war (as might be argued for the summer of 1939). Many working class people were beginning to enjoy summer holidays at the seaside. Swindon railway workers were not pouring over maps of the Balkans; they were checking the times of trains to Weston Super Mare or Weymouth. The upper classes were heading to the country, the south of France or a cruise. Indeed in the middle of June 1914, most of Europe’s political leaders were not darting from meeting to meeting, conferring with their military chiefs. They were taking advantage of the glorious summer weather and planning trips away.

Yet, within six weeks of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Europe was at war. Within six months millions of men had been killed or wounded on the battlefields of Europe. How can this be explained?

1. Issues such as the development of the alliance system, the arms race and the growth of nationalism did cause tensions in the years leading to war in 1914.
2. However, in a very real sense, none of these things actually “caused” the war.
 - a. Britain did not go to war with Germany in 1914 because Germany had been building up its navy.
 - b. France did not go to war with Germany because it wanted Alsace-Lorraine back. ¹
 - c. Russia did not mobilise its forces in July because it was seeking a warm sea port in the eastern Mediterranean. ²
3. No nation was planning a war in early June 1914.

If these points are true, then what is the significance of the alliance system, imperialism, nationalism, militarism and other pre-1914 developments?

***None of these factors can be said to have caused the war of 1914.
However, combined, what they did was to create an environment that
made war, a ‘great’ war, possible.***

As a result of the international environment which existed in Europe by mid-1914, an assassination in a distant town in the Balkans was to have the potential to create a crisis that could lead to war.

¹ Alsace-Lorraine had been taken by Germany from France at the conclusion of The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

² Russia’s Baltic ports were often frozen for several months of the year.

This begs obvious questions:

1. What developments before 1914 had created such a dangerous environment?
2. What was the nature of this crisis that developed after Sarajevo?
3. Why did events move so quickly?

Figure 1.1 outlines factors that were developing before 1914 which helped create this environment that was to make war possible.

Figure 1.1 Factors that created an environment that made war ‘possible’

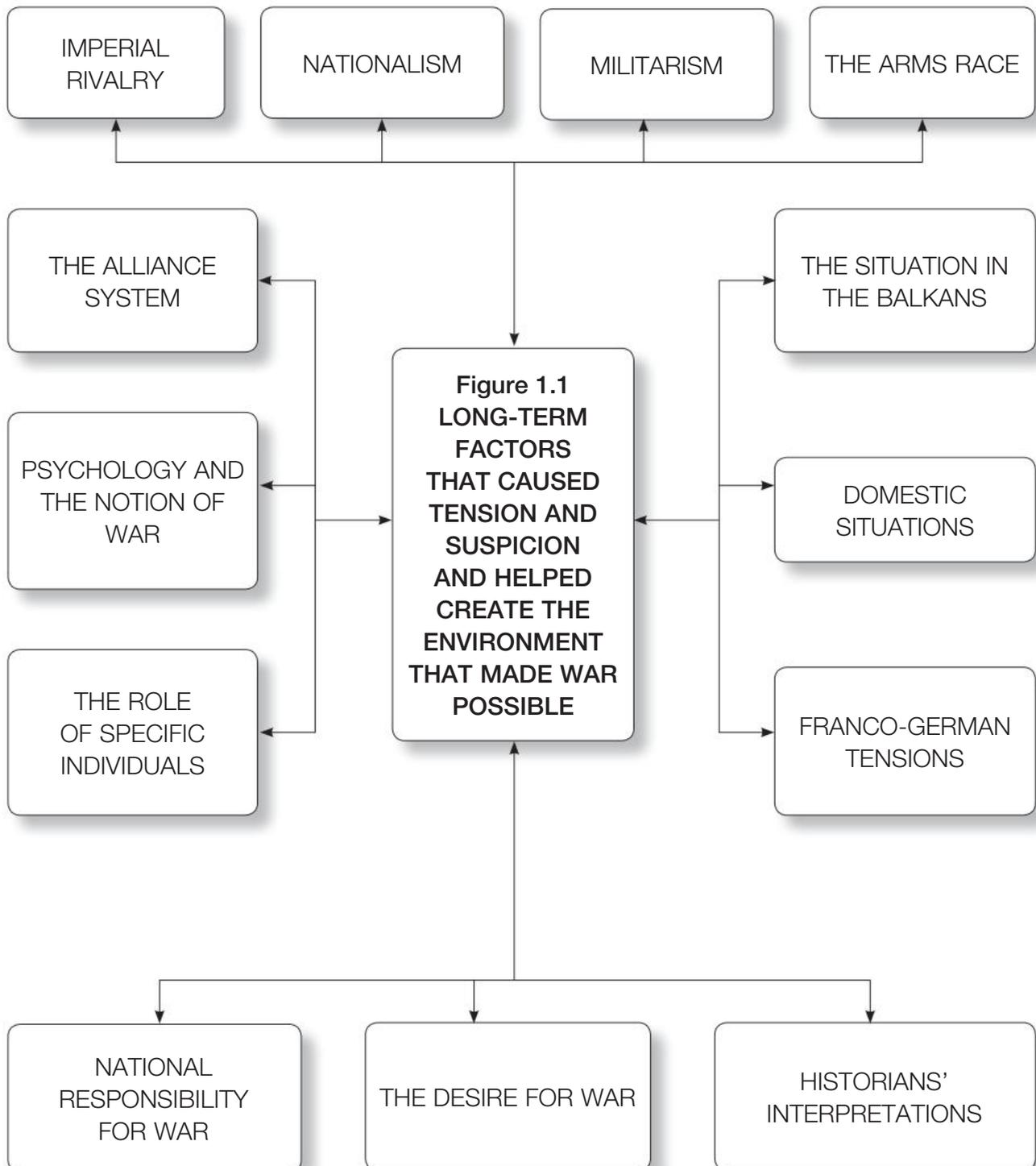
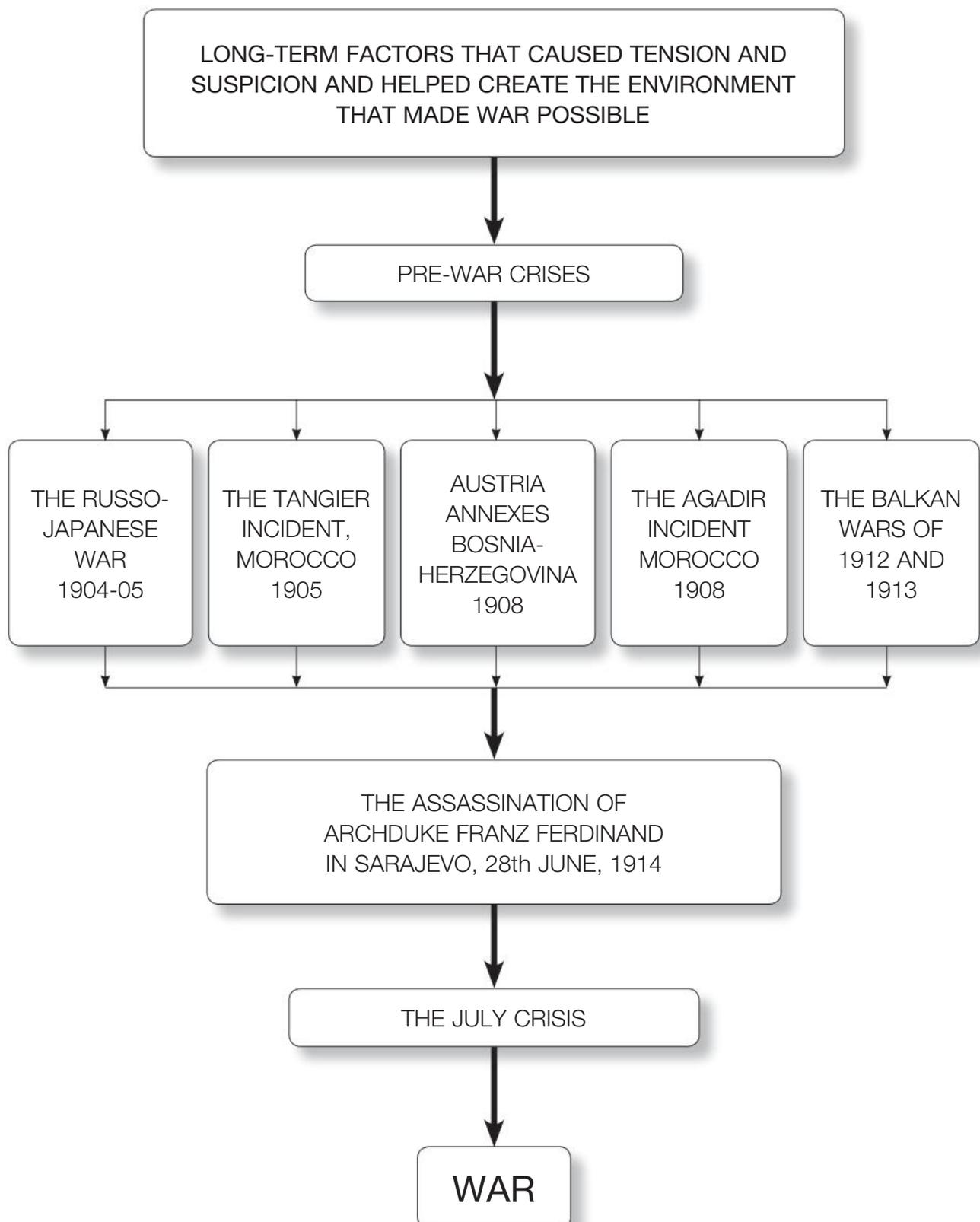


Figure 1.2 Edging towards 1914

The factors which created an international environment containing suspicions and tensions led to several crises before 1914 but Europe's statesmen always managed to pull the continent back from the brink of war. In 1914 they were unable to do this.



THE ALLIANCE SYSTEM

Throughout the nineteenth century, Europe had been spared a major war that involved more than two powers.³ There had been short, localised conflicts but otherwise Europe experienced an uncharacteristically lengthy peace. The major powers cooperated on a range of issues and saw no need to become involved in alliances that could lead to them being dragged into another nation's wars. However, by the early 20th century this had all changed. The major powers had become entangled in a series of alliances which obliged them to go to war to honour promises made to their allies. This meant that an incident in one part of Europe had the potential to drag in all the major powers very quickly. In essence, this is what happened in 1914.

Creation of the Triple Alliance

The leading statesman of Europe in the late 19th century was the German Chancellor, Bismarck. The German Empire had come into being in 1871 and Bismarck's prime concern was to maintain European peace in order that his new German nation could develop its potential. Bismarck realised that there were two major possible threats to peace after 1871:

1. France might seek revenge against Germany which had defeated it in a war in 1870-71. France was forced to hand over to Germany the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. It became a matter of honour for French politicians to call for "un guerre de revanche"⁴ against Germany and recover Alsace-Lorraine.
 - a. However, France was too weak to take on Germany alone.
 - b. Thus, Bismarck aimed to keep France diplomatically isolated and minus an ally so that it would never risk another war with Germany.
2. Bismarck believed that the second main threat to European peace was in the Balkans region of south-eastern Europe.
 - a. The two main rivals in that area were Austria-Hungary and Russia.
 - b. Bismarck thus sought to maintain peace between these two powers as he believed (correctly) that the Balkans had the potential to produce a conflict that could spread far and wide.⁵

Bismarck did not want to create an alliance but events in Europe in the late 1870s forced him to ally with Austria-Hungary. Growing Russian influence in the Balkans meant he had to choose between Austria and Russia to prevent conflict there. He chose the weaker power, Austria, as an ally, to deter Russian ambitions in the Balkans. This led to the 1879 Dual Alliance of Germany and Austria.



³ The Crimean war of 1853-56 saw Britain and France lined up against Russia but this was localised conflict.

⁴ A war of revenge

⁵ The Balkans situation will be discussed in Chapter Two.

By the terms of the Dual Alliance:

- Each power agreed that if either was attacked by Russia, the other power would defend its ally.
- Each power agreed that if either was attacked by two or more powers, the other power would defend its ally.

This treaty was clearly anti-Russian but it was defensive. No power is planning a war. When a treaty is signed, it is a public event but its contents remain largely secret. This can lead to tension and suspicion amongst other powers. Russia knew that a treaty had been signed, but could only guess at its contents. Bismarck was taking a risk here. Might not a concerned Russia seek out an ally of its own? Might Russia be tempted to ally with France perhaps?

In 1882, Bismarck was able to further isolate France. Italy and France were in conflict over control of Tunis in North Africa. Bismarck took advantage of this to make Italy an ally of Germany and Austria. Thus was born “The Triple Alliance”.

**By the terms of the Triple Alliance:**

- If Italy was attacked by France, Germany and Austria agreed to support Italy.
- If either Germany or Austria was attacked by two or more powers, Italy would assist its allies.

The treaty was clearly anti-French but again it was defensive. No power is planning a war. In 1883 Romania joined the Triple Alliance. France’s isolation was complete.

The Re-Insurance Treaty: 1887 (Germany and Russia)

Bismarck’s diplomatic skill was most clearly seen with the *Re-Insurance Treaty of 1887 between Germany and Russia*.

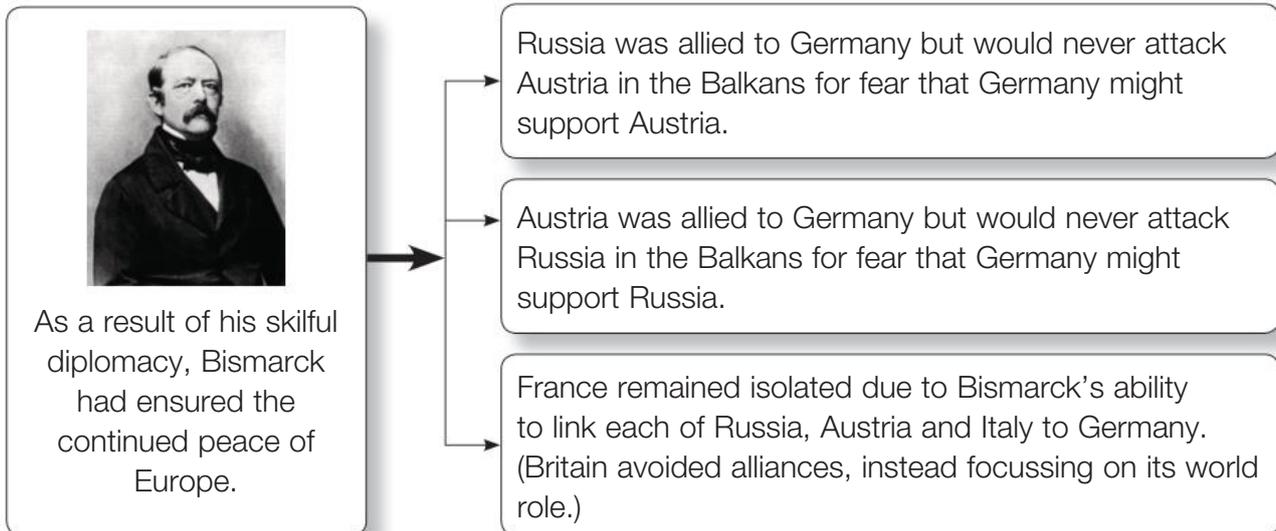
The Triple Alliance was renewed in 1887 but Russia refused to renew the Three Emperors’ League ⁶ following another crisis in the Balkans which had seen relations between Russia and Austria deteriorate. Might Russia be tempted to move towards France and seek an alliance?

Bismarck’s solution to this was to sign an alliance with Russia. The principal terms of the Re-Insurance Treaty were:

⁶ The Three Emperors’ League was a non-binding, friendly agreement between Germany, Austria and Russia.

- If Germany or Russia became involved in a war with a third country, each promised to remain neutral in the conflict.
- However, if Germany attacked France, or if Russia attacked Austria, then the other power did not have to remain neutral. This was a defensive treaty.

Figure 1.3 The genius of Bismarck



Creation of the Triple Entente

In 1888, Germany had a new young emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II. The Kaiser was not content to let Bismarck run things which resulted in the latter's resignation in 1890. The Re-Insurance Treaty was due for renewal in 1890, but the Kaiser could not understand Germany being allied to both Austria and Russia and so he allowed it to lapse. Russia was now anxious about being diplomatically alone while Germany was now under the control of a new young, unpredictable leader.

This does not mean that Russia was expecting to be attacked. However, a nation's leaders always have to be prepared for future possible eventualities and Tsar Alexander III's ministers encouraged him to look towards France. In some ways, France was an unlikely choice of ally for Russia. It was a republic, had democratic institutions and a long history of revolutions.⁷ However, the two nations shared identical strategic concerns:

- Russia potentially faced combined German-Austrian forces to its west.
- France potentially faced combined German-Italian forces to its east.

In 1891, Russia and France began a series of secret military and political negotiations. These negotiations resulted in the signing of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1893. Like all such agreements, its existence was public knowledge but its terms were top secret.

⁷ There had been revolutions in France in 1789, 1830, 1848, and had a brief revolutionary government, The Paris Commune, in 1871.

1893: FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

FRANCE

+

RUSSIA

By the terms of the Franco-Russian Alliance:

- Both powers agreed to assist the other if either was attacked by Germany.
- Both powers agreed to assist the other if either was attacked by two or more other powers.

Significance of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1893

Clearly the treaty was anti-German. However, like the arrangements of the Triple Alliance, it was defensive in nature. Neither France nor Russia was planning to attack Germany. However, the signing of the Franco-Russian Alliance was a momentous moment in European history.

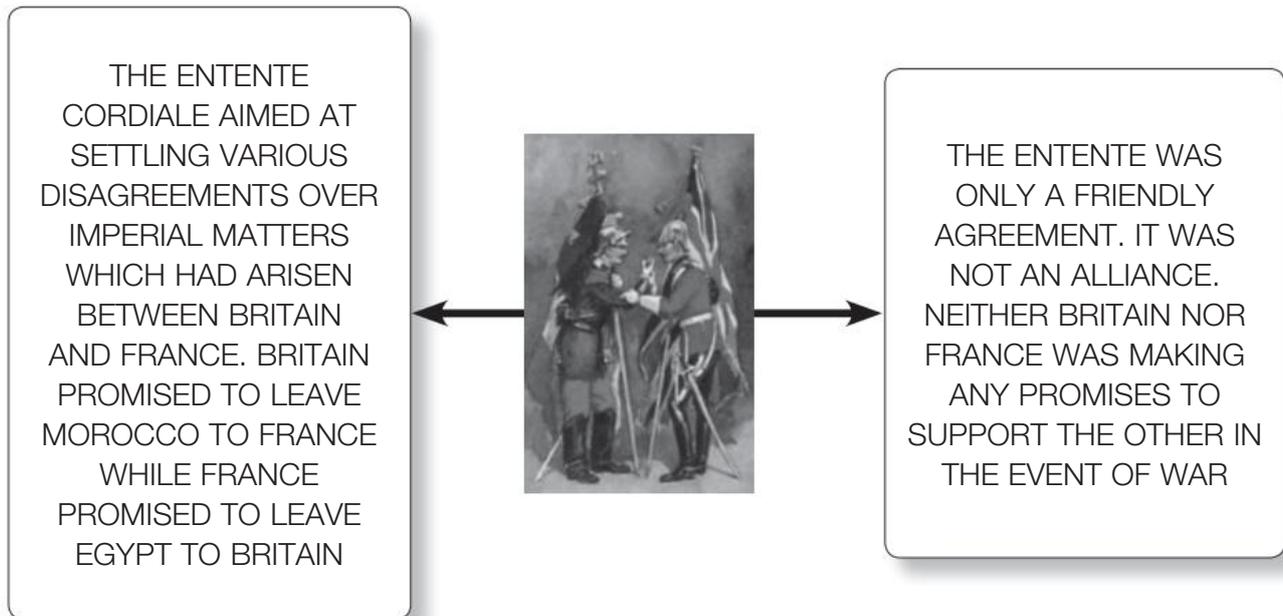
- The Bismarckian system had been destroyed:
 - France was no longer isolated;
 - the possibility of conflict in the Balkans had been increased.
- A dangerous milestone had been reached.
 - It now meant that if any of Russia, France, Austria, Germany or Italy was brought into a military conflict, the alliance arrangements had the potential to drag in the other powers.
- What has been called “the Bismarckian nightmare” had now become a reality. If ever Germany went to war, it would face a war on two fronts: against Russia in the east, and against France in the west. This had been the frightening scenario that Bismarck had always tried to prevent.

The Entente-Cordiale: 1904

Throughout the 19th century, Britain had avoided alliances. It did not want to become involved in European conflicts as its interest was centred on its worldwide empire. However, Britain’s “splendid isolation” was being seen as a liability in the early years of the 20th century. In 1902 it signed an alliance with Japan, directed principally against Russia. However, of greater significance was the “Entente Cordiale”, which it signed with France in 1904.

Britain and France had been rivals for hundreds of years and though they had not fought each other since 1815, they were still major imperial rivals. In 1898, the two countries came dangerously close to war over control of Egypt/ Sudan. (see below). However, despite this long history of enmity, in 1904 the two nations signed the agreement known as “**The Entente Cordiale**”. The term “entente cordiale” means “friendly agreement”.

Figure 1.4 The essence of the “entente cordiale”



Significance of the Entente Cordiale

Though the entente was not an alliance, its significance was not lost on anyone. Two traditional enemies had buried their differences.

- Both powers were becoming ever more concerned at German actions in Europe and around the world.
- In particular they were alarmed at the growing reckless behaviour of Germany’s leader, Kaiser Wilhelm II.
- Over the next decade, the entente would strengthen into what was effectively an alliance.

The Anglo-Russian Entente: 1907

Just as Britain and France were becoming concerned at Germany, so too was Russia. Russia already had an alliance with France, signed in 1893. In 1907, Russia and Britain signed an entente, a friendly agreement, not dissimilar to that between France and Britain. Britain and Russia had long been imperial rivals and Britain had a distrust of potential Russian naval power. However, these differences were settled in the **Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907**.

Significance of the Anglo-Russian entente

- This agreement was not an alliance. Neither Britain nor Russia was promising to help the other in the event of hostilities.
- However, it clearly signalled that Russia and Britain – and France – seemed to be working together due to their anxieties over Germany.

- The Franco-Russian alliance of 1893, the entente cordiale of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907 had now created what came to be referred to as The Triple Entente.

**THE THREE AGREEMENTS OF 1893, 1904 AND 1907
HAD CREATED THE TRIPLE ENTENTE OF**



Europe divided

By 1914, Europe was divided into two alliance blocs – The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. The entente was technically a less cohesive grouping than the alliance. However, developments such as the naval arms race, German interference in Morocco and tensions in the Balkans had the effect of cementing ties between the entente powers as they viewed German behaviour with anxious eyes. Other smaller nations also had ties to the larger powers.

- The growth of the alliance system was a dangerous development in the history of Europe in the early twentieth century.
- A conflict between two powers had the potential to drag in many other powers.
- These other powers may well have little interest or involvement in the original cause of conflict.

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE	THE TRIPLE ENTENTE
Germany Austria-Hungary Italy	France Russia, Great Britain
Romania (1883)	Serbia (close ties to Russia)

Figure 1.5 Europe divided: 1914

The Triple Alliance nations “encircled” by the Triple Entente nations



Exercise 1.1 Place the following events in the correct chronological order.

1st event		THE RE-INSURANCE TREATY
2nd event		ENTENTE CORDIALE
3rd event		THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR
4th event		THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE
5th event		ANGLO-RUSSIAN ENTENTE
6th event		BISMARCK RETIRES
7th event		ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE
8th event		THE DUAL ALLIANCE
9th event		ROMANIA JOINS THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE
10th event		FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

Exercise 1.2

Match the description on the left with the agreements listed on the right.

1	Defensive treaty between Austria and Germany, 1879		FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE
2	Defensive treaty between Austria, Germany and Italy, 1882		TRIPLE ENTENTE
3	Defensive treaty signed in 1893		DUAL ALLIANCE
4	1904 agreement between France and Britain		ANGLO-RUSSIAN ENTENTE
5	Settlement of British and Russian imperial differences, 1907		TRIPLE ALLIANCE
6	This was effectively established by 1907.		ENTENTE CORDIALE

IMPERIALISM

Definition: "Imperialism is the practice of one power imposing its control over territory it did not previously own. This form of "imperial control" might be political, economic, military or cultural. In most cases it is a combination of these things."

Today, the term imperialism is banded around as a term of abuse.

- United States involvement in the Middle East is attacked as another example of "American imperialism".
- President Putin's behaviour in Eastern Europe is described as his attempt to revive "the former Soviet empire".

Yet in the years before 1914, politicians wore the label "imperialist" as a badge of honour. The European powers basked in the glory of their empire. School children were indoctrinated with the idea that their nation, their "race", was bringing civilisation and Christianity to heathen savages across the globe. Much of European art, music and literature was proudly imperialist.

The motives for imperialism varied. There were obvious economic gains to be made controlling overseas territories and new lands could be settled by a nation's growing population. Military men saw strategic value in controlling locations while individuals sought personal fame and wealth from imperial adventures. A nation's prestige and power were seen to be enhanced by the ownership of a great empire, and similarly a nation was diminished if it had no empire. Religious

people supported imperialism as a means of bringing the Christian faith to heathen savages. At the back of all these motives was the generally accepted view that white Europeans were racially superior to African/ Asian/ Pacific people and that this justified imperial control.

Imperial conflict before 1914

Between about 1870 and the outbreak of war in 1914, the major European powers, and the United States and Japan, eagerly sought the acquisition of new colonies. Indeed the interest shown by European powers in Africa has been referred to as “the scramble for Africa”.

However, this rush for imperial possessions brought the various powers into conflict. Some powers went to the brink of war over their imperial rivalry; some powers actually went to war.

Figure 1.6 summarises the key imperial conflicts that occurred before 1914.

Was imperialism a cause of World War I? Can imperialism be considered as a cause of World War I? The answer is almost certainly no.

- None of the powers went to war in 1914 over the Sudan, Morocco or Korea.
- Imperial differences had been largely settled before the war and the powers which had clashed around the world before 1914 often ended up fighting on the same side in the war.
- In fact imperial expansion had acted as a kind of safety valve for European tensions. Once imperial adventures had come to an end, the powers focussed on Europe and that was when tensions really increased.

NB: However, though imperialism was not a direct cause of the war, imperial conflicts added to tension and suspicion. It encouraged naval expenditure and the pursuit of allies. It was a factor that promoted extreme nationalism.

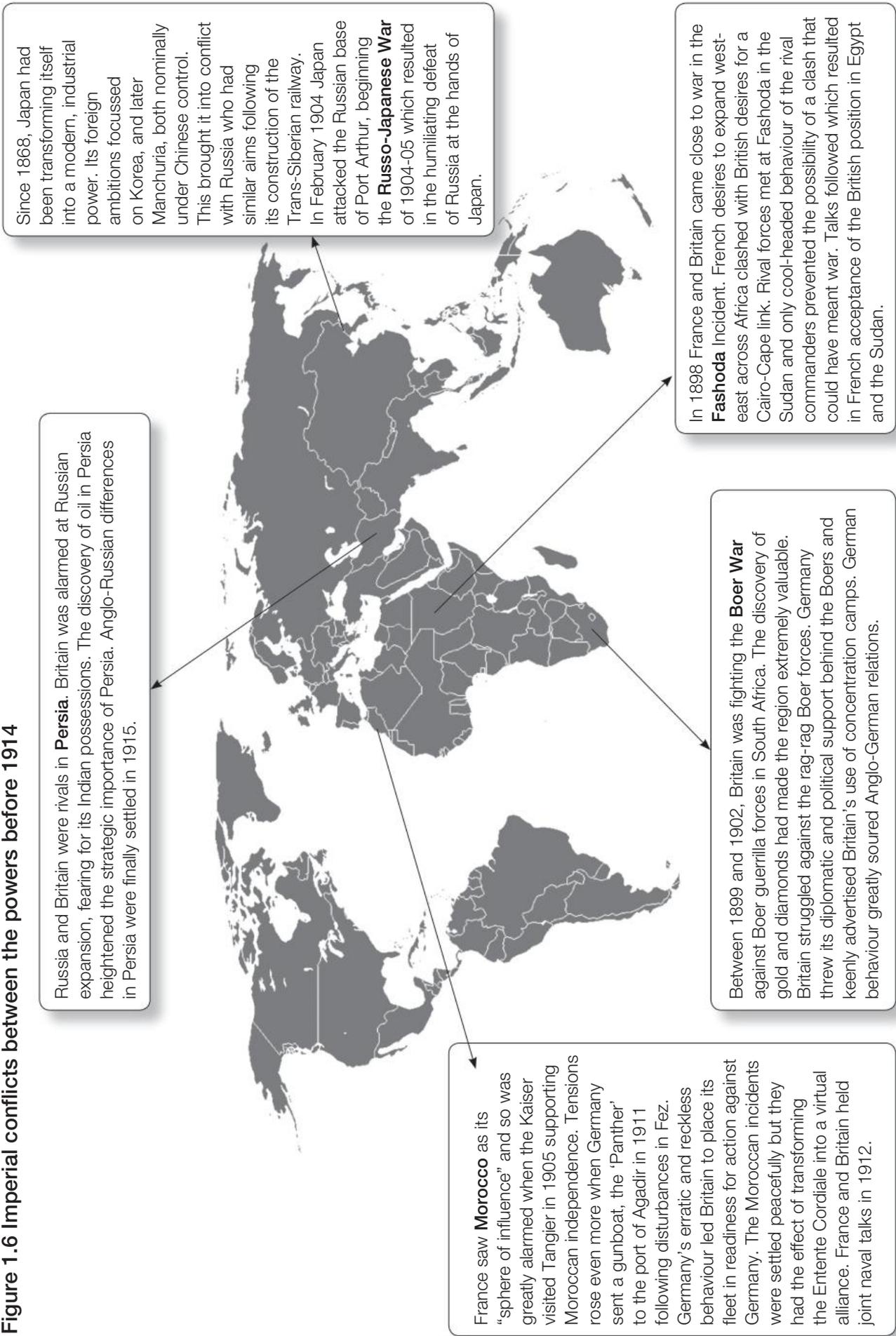
In these ways “*imperialism added to the environment that made war possible*”.

Exercise 1.3 Answer the following questions.

1	Identify three motives for imperialism.	
2	How was imperialism viewed by governments and the public at the turn of the 20th century?	
3	How did the Boer War harm Anglo-German relations?	
4	What was the impact of the Moroccan incidents?	
5	How did imperial conflict add to the environment that made war possible before 1914?	

SECTION 1 ■ The historical context

Figure 1.6 Imperial conflicts between the powers before 1914



NATIONALISM

Nationalism was a strongly-felt emotion in Europe before 1914. It and imperialism were interconnected. Strong national feeling at home spurred the desire to build up an empire; imperial success strengthened feelings of nationalism at home. Governments were eager to promote national feeling to create support for their policies and often to distract their populations from domestic problems. Nationalism cannot be seen as a cause of war in 1914; again, it was a factor that helped create an environment that made war possible. Along with religion, people are more willing to go off and kill other people in the name of nationalism than for any other reason.

Definition:

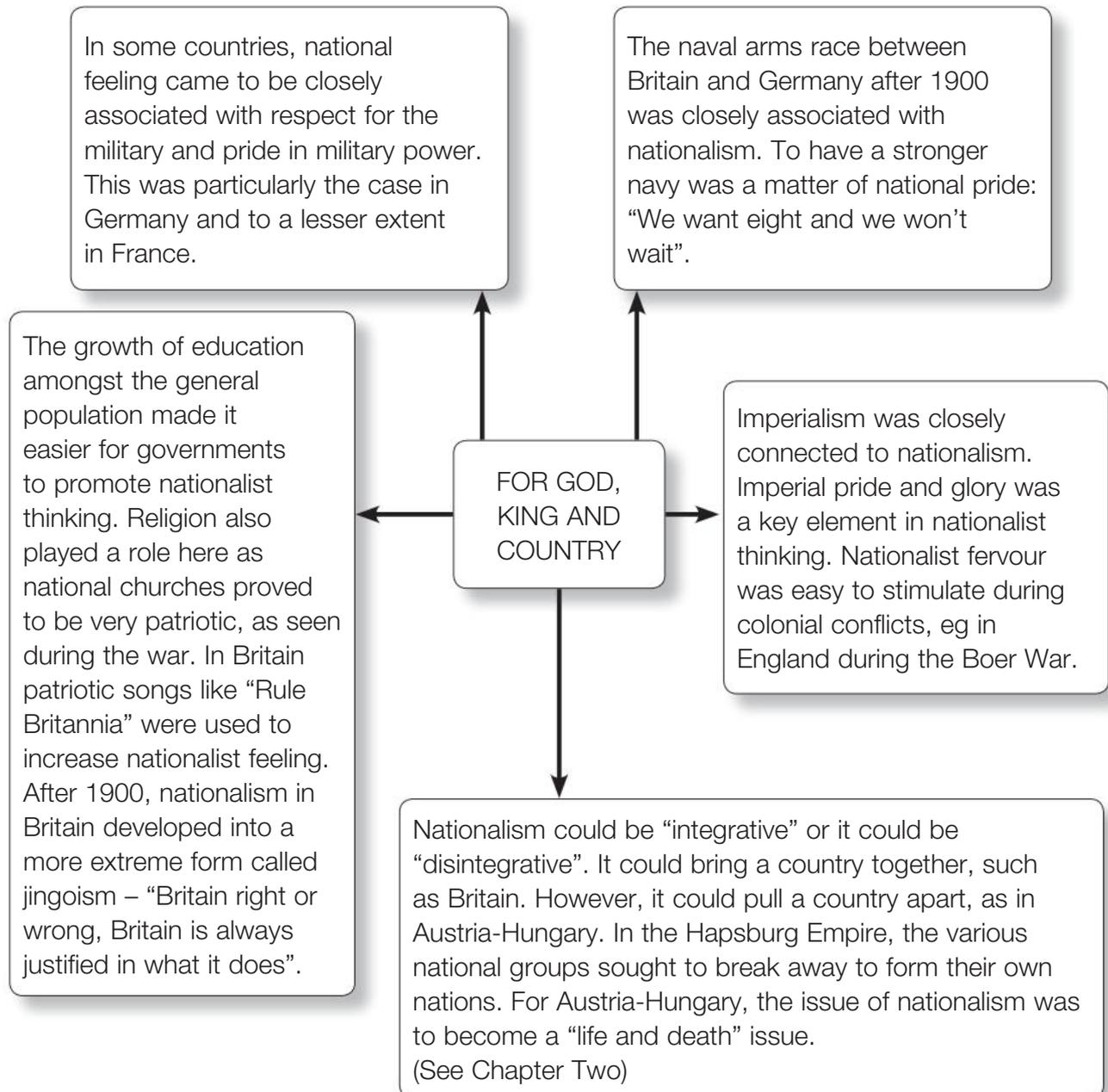
Nationalism came to mean different things to different peoples.

1. In Western Europe, nationalism was associated with the nation state. In this sense, nationalism can be equated with **patriotism**, a love of one's country. This explanation could be applied to France, Spain and Britain.
2. Nationalism could be seen as a **pride** in one's country's achievements and an unquestioning loyalty to that country. This was the case in Germany.
3. Nationalism also existed for people who did not have a country, eg Slavs, Poles, Czechs. For these groups nationalism meant a feeling of **national consciousness**, a feeling of belonging to a national group, race or culture.
4. From the 1880s, the Pan-German movement appeared in Germany. This movement sought to bring all German speaking peoples together. In the east, the Pan –Slav movement sought to do the same for the Slav peoples, under the leadership of Russia.
5. In the twentieth century, nationalism would become closely associated with notions of racial superiority in some countries, notably Germany.

The impact of nationalism

Figure 1.7, below, summarises how nationalism was able to affect the environment of Europe in the years leading up to the outbreak of war in 1914.

Figure 1.7 “For God, King and Country”



Exercise 1.4 Indicate if the following statements are either true or false.

1	Patriotic feeling was not felt particularly strongly in Britain in the years before 1914.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	A feeling of national consciousness could be experienced by peoples who lacked their own independent nation.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	The Pan-Slav movement sought the unity of Slav peoples and looked towards Russia for leadership.	TRUE/ FALSE

4	Austria-Hungary was strongly supportive of the nationalist impulses within the Hapsburg Empire.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	There was little connection between the feeling of nationalism and pride in empire.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	The development of basic education amongst the general population made it easier to promote national feeling.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	In Germany, nationalism was closely tied to that nation's pride in its military values and history.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	Germany promoted pride in its pre-war naval expansion by the use of the patriotic song "Rule Britannia".	TRUE/ FALSE

MILITARISM

Militarism can mean several things. A society might be militarist if its military caste is accorded the highest prestige. A government might be militarist if its military is able to dominate decision-making. It can also refer to a regime that maintains a high level of military preparedness and has a willingness to pursue its aims by military means. Table 1.1 summarises militarist influence in each of the major European powers.

Table 1.1 The major powers and the influence of militarism

Germany	Germany was the most militarist of all European countries. The military class was highly regarded and 'men of breeding' desired a career in the officer class. The Kaiser made his feelings clear when in 1891 he stated: <i>"The soldier and army, not parliamentary majorities and decisions have welded the Empire together. I put my trust in the army."</i> Army figures like Count von Schlieffen dictated future military strategy while Admiral von Tirpitz was able to recklessly push German naval construction.
France	There was a strong military tradition in France but its generals had far less influence on policy and status in society than their German counterparts. Arguably it was French civilian leaders who were the more bellicose. France's Supreme War Council developed Plan XVII in 1913 which set out plans for an advance into Germany if war came.
Russia	Russia had a long military tradition. Memories of its defeat of Napoleon in 1812 were always close to the surface and officers enjoyed high social status. However, the army's prestige had suffered after its humiliation against Japan in 1905 and government policy before 1914 was dominated by men such as Foreign Minister Sazanov rather than military figures.

Austria	Austria-Hungary too had a long military tradition and its Chief of Staff, Conrad von Hotzendorf, was enthusiastic about dealing with Serbia in a military fashion (see Chapter Three). However, militarist influence was held in check by the ageing Emperor Franz-Joseph and Austria would only ever consider a military option to its problems if it had a military guarantee from its German ally.
Britain	Britain was proud of its military past but was the least militarist of all the European powers. It did not have a standing army and the military did not enjoy the status granted to it in other nations. There was no conscription and its army relied upon volunteers. However, Britain had a long naval tradition and possessed the world's strongest navy. Civilian control was always maintained over the military in Britain.

The Anglo-German naval arms race

Britain had been the world's pre-eminent naval power for over two hundred years. Its security, its empire and its prosperity owed much to its naval strength. So confident was Britain in its naval superiority, it never developed the kind of militarism that most other European powers pursued. Britain's leaders believed that invasion was impossible as long as 'Britannia' ruled the waves, and Britain had no territorial ambitions on the continent of Europe. However, in the early years of the twentieth century, Britain's naval superiority was being threatened.

The German Kaiser had dreams of establishing an overseas empire and building a navy to protect it. This comprised his policy of *Weltpolitik* – world power. His naval chief, Admiral von Tirpitz introduced a series of naval laws in 1898, 1900 and 1908 aimed at doubling the size of Germany's navy. This threat to its naval supremacy greatly alarmed Britain and it responded with an increased naval construction program of its own. In 1906 Britain launched the world's most advanced battleship, the 'Dreadnought'. Germany followed in 1907 with the 'Nassau'. The naval arms race had run its course by 1912 with Britain the clear winner.

The naval arms race between Britain and Germany, that was such a feature in the years before 1914, has often been cited as a cause of World War I.

- It certainly raised temperatures inside both countries and stimulated anti-British and anti-German propaganda in Germany and Britain respectively.
- Public feeling in both countries reached hysterical levels. The popular slogan in Britain became "we want eight and we won't wait".
- The naval arms race, along with the Kaiser's sometimes rash behaviour such as his interference in Morocco, did much to harm Anglo-German relations.
- However, as with so many of the developments in Europe before 1914, the role of Anglo-German naval rivalry in bringing on war can be contested. By 1912, the hysteria over the naval arms race had died down. Relations between Britain and Germany were actually improving. Europe's concerns in the next couple of years became focussed on the Balkans region. Indeed, when war did break, major naval engagements proved to be rare events.

What have the historians had to say about Great Power Rivalry before 1914?

1. Eric Hobsbawn: *The Age of Empire*

Hobsbawn argues that the development of the alliance system showed that internal friction before 1914 was “global and endemic”. He says that attempts were made to improve relations across the power blocs, for example between Britain and Germany, between Russia and Austria, but that these efforts came to nought.

*“...The blocs (alliances), reinforced by inflexible plans for strategy and mobilisation, grew more rigid, the continent drifted uncontrollably towards battle, through a series of international crises, which, after 1905, were increasingly settled by ‘brinkmanship’ – ie by the threat of war...”*⁹

2. Niall Ferguson: *The Pity of War*

Ferguson argues that imperialism had nothing to do with the outbreak of war in 1914. The major imperial conflicts of the 19th century, he points out, were between Britain and France, and Britain and Russia. However, these powers ended up fighting on the same side. Indeed he further states:

*“...Few contemporaries in 1895 would have predicted that they would have ended 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...”*¹⁰

3. P M Krebs: *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*

Jingoism became prevalent during the Boer War at a time when Britain was struggling against the Boers. British forces had been besieged for many months in the town of Mafeking. When the siege was finally brought to an end in May 1900, the country witnessed an explosion of hysterical nationalist relief which had an impact on attitudes towards the notion of jingoism.

*“...Mafeking Night made jingoism safe for the middle classes by blurring the distinction between jingoism which had been seen a working-class over-enthusiasm for empire, and patriotism, that middle-class virtue of support for one’s country against foreign opposition...”*¹¹

9 Hobsbawn, E, *The Age of Empire*, Abacus, London, 1994, pp 320-1

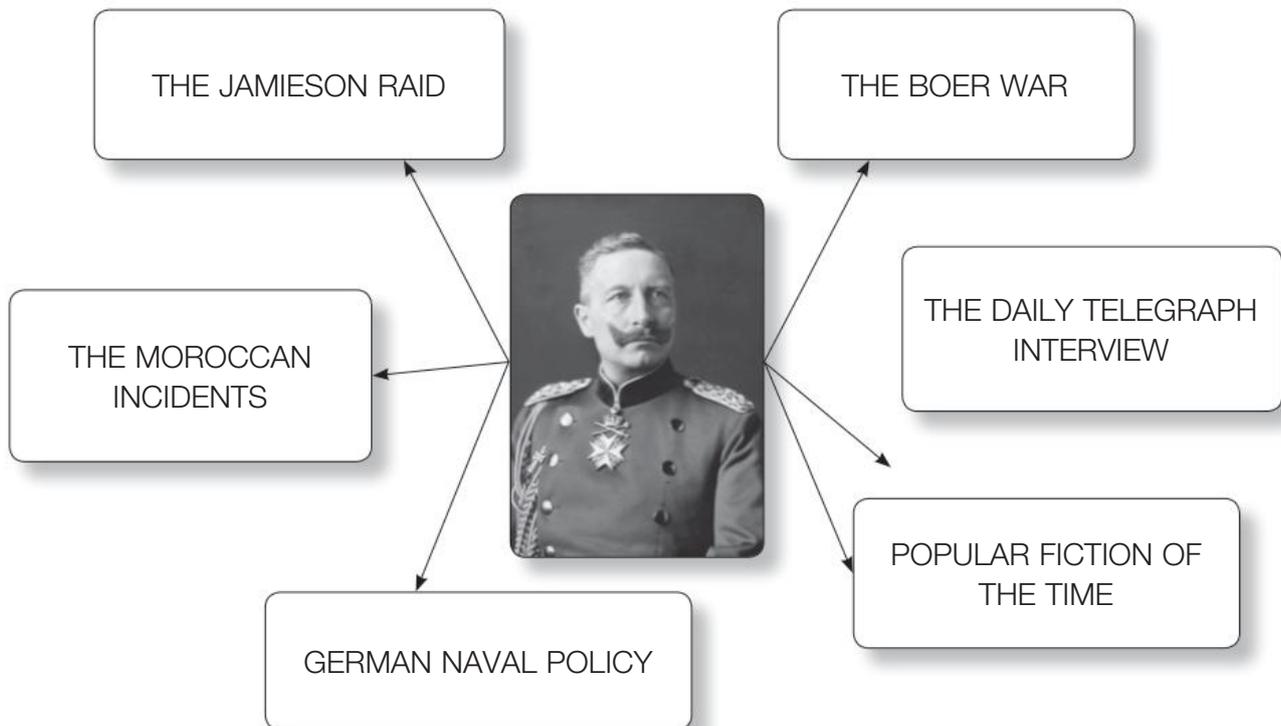
10 Ferguson, N, *The Pity of War*, Penguin, London, 1999, p 39

11 Krebs, P M, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War*, CUP, 2004, p 2

In October 1908, the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, gave an interview to the English newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*. It caused a furore and angered many in Britain, both within the government and the general population. This is part of what he said at that time.

“...But, you will say, what of the German Navy? Is not that a menace to England? Against whom but England is it steadily being built up? My answer is clear. Germany is a young and growing Empire. She has a world-wide commerce which is rapidly expanding, and to which the legitimate ambition of patriotic Germans refuses to assign any bounds... Germany must have a powerful fleet. It may even be that England herself will be glad that Germany has a fleet, when they speak together on the same side in the great debates of the future...”

- i) Why do you think the Kaiser’s comments were so poorly received inside Britain?
- ii) Research: Examine the behaviour of the Kaiser in the years before 1914.
 - a. You might consider the following issues: such as “The Jamieson Raid”, The Boer War, Morocco, the Daily Telegraph Interview, naval policy.



- b. To what extent might the Kaiser be blamed for the worsening of international relations before 1914?

Chapter Two

The Balkans and Sarajevo

Where is the Balkans?

The Balkans region is situated in the south eastern part of Europe. Today it comprises the countries of Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and the states that used to comprise the old Yugoslavia, eg Serbia. ¹ However, at the turn of the 20th century, the political map of the Balkans looked quite different. Figure 2.1 shows the political geography of the Balkans in about 1900.

Figure 2.1 The Balkans in about 1900



Why did the Balkans matter?

One of the dominant diplomatic issues of the 19th century had been what became known as “the Eastern Question”. This centred on the steady decline of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey). At the end of the 17th century, Turkish power stretched into the heart of Europe but Turkey had fallen into steady economic, political and military decline, so much so that Turkey became known as “the sick man of Europe”.

Turkey’s decline had major implications for the region. The development of the alliance system meant that its decline also was to have major implications for the peace of Europe as well.

¹ Yugoslavia was created at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. In the early 1990s, it disintegrated and descended into period of bloody conflict, the worst seen in Europe since WWII. In its place are now the independent states of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There were four main players in the region: Austria, Russia, Turkey and the Slav Nationalists.

- **Austria-Hungary** was a multi-national empire.
 - It contained not only German-speaking Austrians and Hungarians, but also Czechs, Poles and Slavs. These national groups sought their national independence and freedom from Austrian rule.
 - Austria's main aim was to suppress Slav nationalism as its success meant the disintegration of the Austrian (Hapsburg) Empire.
 - The Slavs were supported by Russia and so Austria found itself in direct confrontation with Russia.
- **Russia's** long-term aim had been to gain a "warm-sea" port in the Balkans region.
 - It was also a Slav state. The Slav nationalists and Russia had a common religion (Orthodox Christianity), language, culture and racial origin.
 - Russia was eager to support its brother Slavs and perhaps gain its warm sea port.
 - Thus, Russia found itself in direct confrontation with Austria.
- **Turkey's** aim was national survival which as will be shown below became ever more precarious.
 - By 1900, the independent states of Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia had been created out of its European possessions.
 - Austria administered Bosnia-Herzegovina.
 - Britain, France (and later Italy) were taking its North African territories.
- The **Slav nationalists** sought national independence and freedom from Austrian (and Turkish) rule, and the creation of an independent south Slav state, Yugoslavia.
 - The Slavs had the support of Russia and were in direct confrontation with Austria.

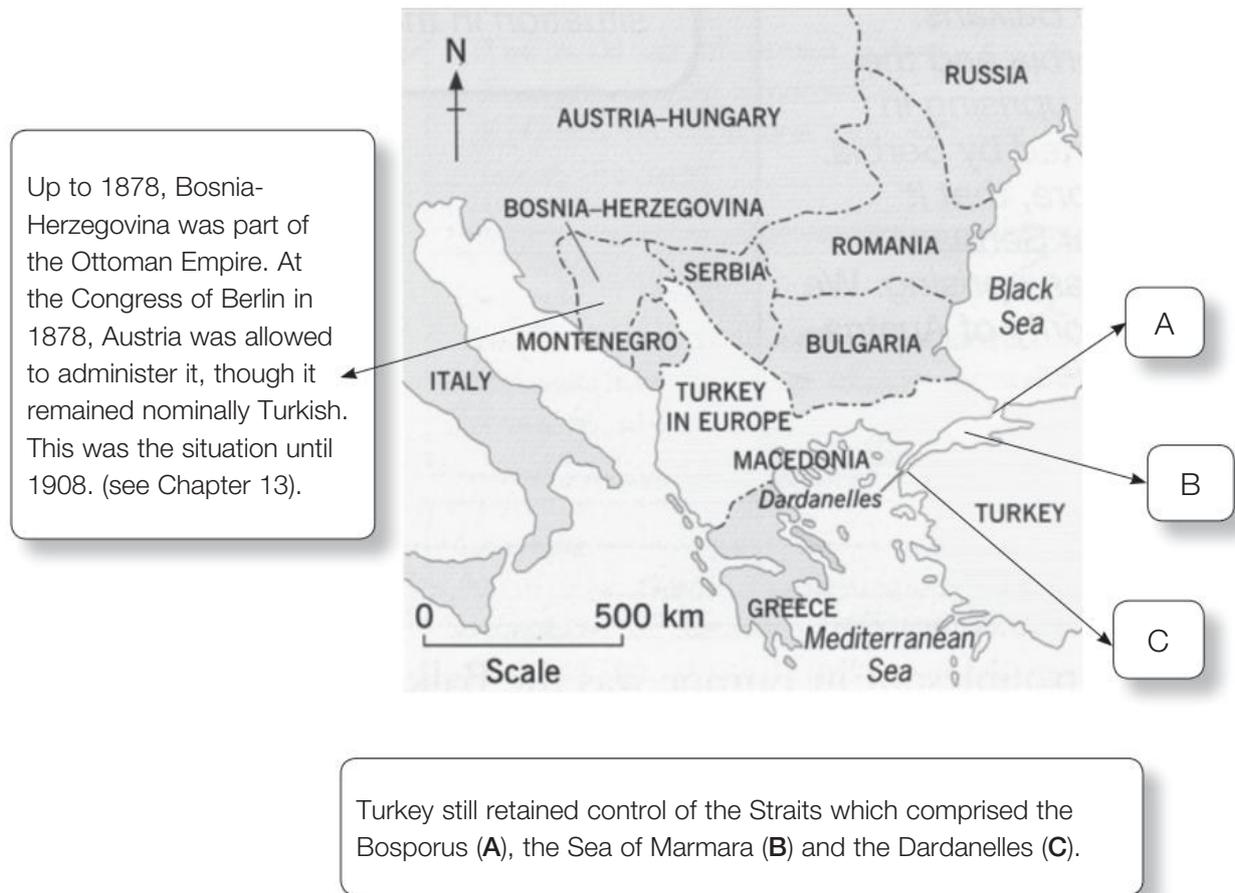
Bismarck had tried to maintain peace in the Balkans by acting as an "honest broker". In 1879, Germany signed the Dual Alliance with Austria because Bismarck had recognised Austrian weakness and sought to bolster it against a stronger Russia. However, by the early 20th century, Bismarck was long gone, the Slavs were restive and the creation of an alliance system meant that any conflict in the Balkans had the potential to drag in all the major European powers.

The Balkans by 1908

However, weak though it was, Turkey remained pivotal. It still controlled the Straits – the waters of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus – which connected the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. This was the situation at the time of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

² Russia's Baltic ports froze up for several months a year.

Figure 2.2 The Balkans in 1908



Exercise 2.1

Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false.

1	Throughout the nineteenth century, Austria was referred to as “the sick man of Europe”.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Turkey maintained a geographical presence in the Balkans region until the early years of the twentieth century.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	Russia and Austria shared common interests in the Balkans.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	The Balkan Slavs were opposed to the presence of any outside power in the Balkans region.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Europe’s leaders were well aware of the potential explosive politics of the Balkans region.	TRUE/ FALSE

6	Russia's interest in the Balkans region was entirely altruistic and extended no further than helping its brother Slavs.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	The possible weakness of Austria in the Balkans was a key reason why Bismarck decided to sign the Dual Alliance with Austria in 1879.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	In the early years of the twentieth century, it was Turkey who maintained control of "the Straits".	TRUE/ FALSE

1908: The Annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

In 1908, Turkish army officers staged a revolt against the Sultan, Abdul-Hamid II, in what became known as the Young Turk Revolution. Hopes for reform from the new regime soon faded as the Young Turks proved as inefficient and oppressive as the Sultan's government. Austria took advantage of Turkey's troubles by annexing the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina.³

Austria's action caused an international crisis.

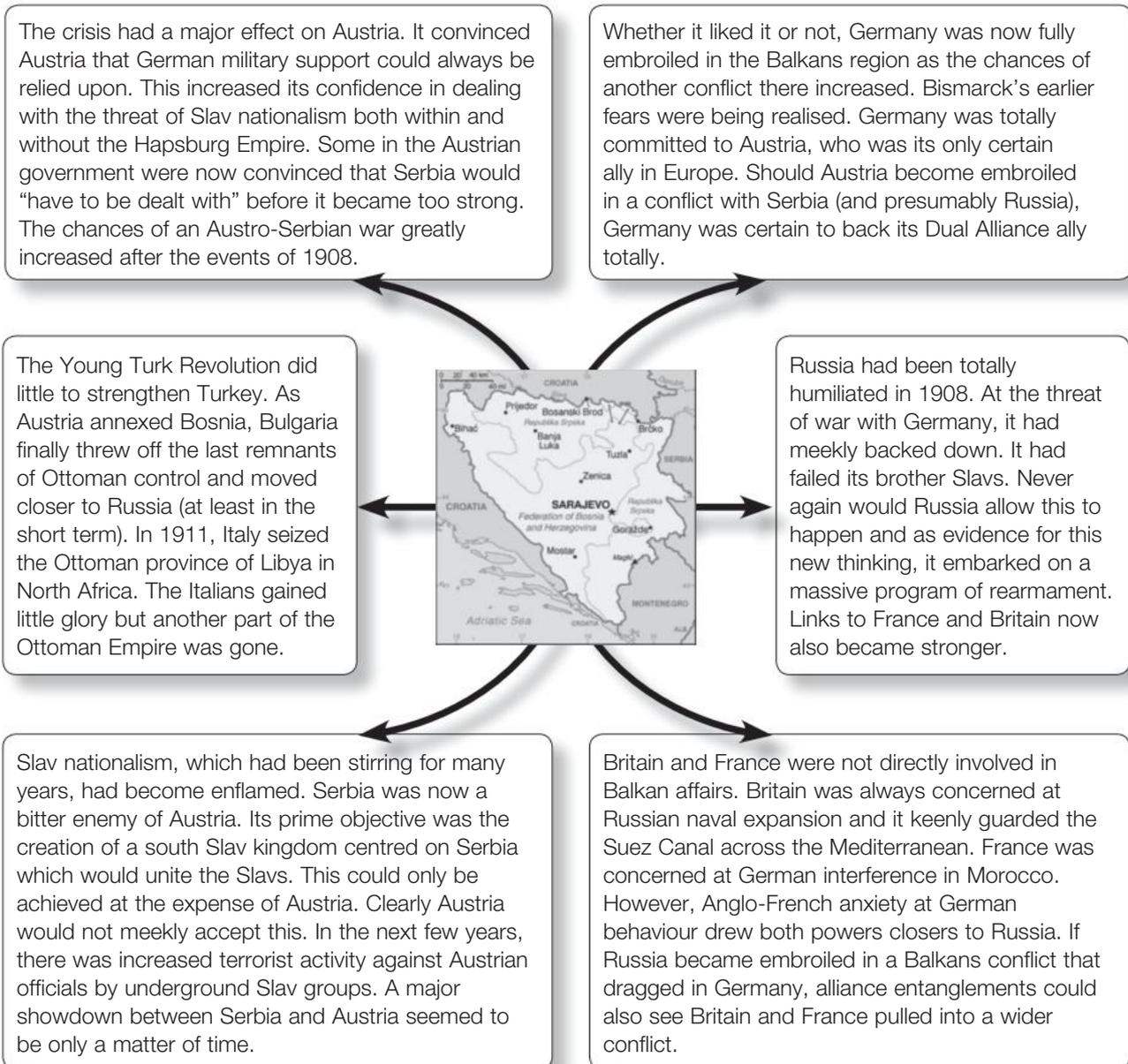
- Slav nationalists were outraged as a million of their brothers were now forced under foreign rule. The Slav state of Serbia was eager for military action against Austria but realised that it could not act without Russian assistance.
- At first it seemed that Russia might act.
- However, Germany gave Russia a blunt warning. The German Chancellor, von Bulow, sent Russia an ultimatum: "*accept Austria's action or face war with Germany*".

Russia was in no position to fight Germany. It was still recovering from its disastrous performance in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. In this war its army had been humiliated in a series of battles and its Baltic fleet annihilated at the Battle of Tsushima. In 1905, Tsar Nicholas II's regime had almost been overthrown in the revolution of that year.

As a result, Russia had to meekly back down. This was an enormous humiliation. From this moment on, Russia embarked on a massive program of rearmament. Never again would it allow itself to be pressured into backing down with the threat of war. In the next Balkan crisis, Russia would not leave its Serbian ally on its own. This thinking would have disastrous consequences in 1914!

³ Austria had been allowed to administer Bosnia-Herzegovina following the 1878 Congress of Berlin but it up to 1908 it was still nominally Turkish territory.

Figure 2.3: Main results of the events of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina



Exercise 2.2

Rewrite the following passage so that each of the sentences follows on from each other in a logical and chronological manner.

At first it appeared that Russia might support Serbia. In 1908, there was a revolution in Turkey led by young army officers known as “the Young Turks”. Since 1878, Austria had been allowed to administer the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Buoyed by German support, Austria looked forward to finally dealing a blow to its Slav enemy, Serbia. Austria’s action outraged Slav nationalists, especially in Serbia. Taking advantage of Turkey’s chaos following the revolution, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. Having been humiliated, Russia embarked on a rearmament program, keen not to be forced to back down again. Some in the Serbian

The situation in Macedonia came to head when the Turkish government tried to impose a series of western-style reforms on the region.

- These included the introduction of a common law, a uniform language and conscription into the Ottoman army.
- These are the sorts of things that Ataturk⁴ would bring into the modern state of Turkey after World War I.
- However, to attempt such things in the polyglot region of Macedonia was asking for trouble.
 - All the various national groups in the region bitterly resented what Turkey was attempting.
 - The various nationalities feared that their conscripted troops could be used against their own people.

The First Balkan War: 1912

The war began on 8 October when Montenegro declared war on Turkey. By the end of the week, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria had also declared war. Within a month, the Turks had been massively defeated, pushed out of Macedonia and now held on precariously to their only mainland European possession, a small area of territory to the west of the straits.

*The First Balkan War was extremely bad news for **Austria**.*

- Slav nationalism was exultant. It had won a great nationalist triumph by virtually pushing Turkey out of Europe.
 - Austria was a multi-national empire which could only continue to exist if the nationalism of its subject peoples was repressed.
 - For Austria, the success of Slav nationalism meant its disintegration.
- Ironically, at this point Austria now became a champion of nationalism.
 - It spoke up for Albanian nationalists and supported the creation of a new independent state of Albania.
 - Austria did this because it wanted to prevent Serbia gaining territory on the Adriatic Sea which could lead to Russia using a future Serbian port.

If the First Balkan War had led to strange Austrian behaviour, it had a similar effect on the behaviour of Russia.

- Russia's ambitions in the Balkans were still alive but it had not fully recovered from its defeat at the hands of Japan several years earlier.
 - Russia was also again facing internal strife.
 - Two hundred striking miners had been massacred on the Lena goldfields.
- As a result, Russia was not keen to jump to Serbia's assistance this time.

⁴ Ataturk, otherwise known as Mustapha Kemal, was the Turkish commander who was to defeat Anzac/ Allied forces at Gallipoli in 1915. He would become President of Turkey, and today, Turks see him as the father of Modern Turkey.

- As evidence of this (temporary) restraint on Russia's part, it prevented Bulgaria from seizing Constantinople (which might have allowed Russia a foothold in the Straits).

The Balkans saw the strange sight of Austria and Russia working together to curb the Balkan states' ambitions. An armistice was signed between Turkey and the Balkan states in December 1912. The war was finally resolved with the Treaty of London in May 1913. The main result of that treaty was the establishment of the new independent state of Albania.

Exercise 2.3 The Vortex, Punch Magazine cartoon, January 1912

Go the following link and answer the following questions:

<https://i.imgur.com/cO3Ayzu.jpg?fb>

1. Identify the two men fighting in the whirlpool. The man on the right is wearing a fez with the Islamic crescent.
2. The "angel of peace" is trying to prevent the five men on the outside of the whirlpool from being sucked in. Name them. You can work out who each is from the iconography the cartoonist is using, eg the man in the middle is wearing a bowler hat, the man second from the left is clearly a much older man.
3. From what perspective is this cartoon coming and at whom is it aimed?
4. The whirlpool has the word "complication" on it. What is the cartoonist suggesting is going to happen to Europe if the men get sucked into the whirlpool?

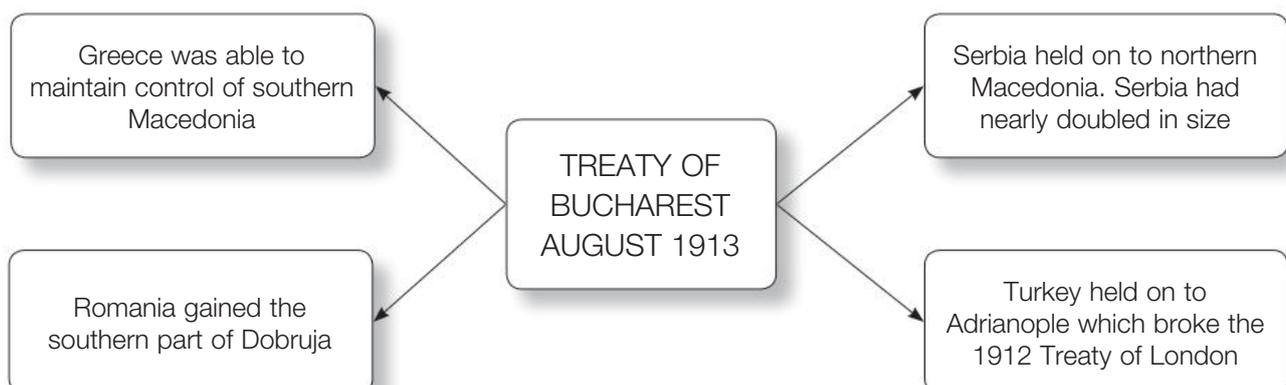
The Second Balkan War: 1913

The members of the Balkan League who had just defeated Turkey soon fell out with each other, believing that each had not gained as much as it deserved. In June 1913, a Second Balkan war began when Bulgaria attacked both Serbia and Greece. Things went very badly for Bulgaria.

- Turkey recovered land it had lost the previous year around Adrianople.
- Romania attacked Bulgaria seeking to take control of the area of Dobruja.

Hopelessly outnumbered, Bulgaria quickly sued for peace. The Second Balkan War came to a quick end with the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest in August 1913 signed between Serbia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria.

Figure 2.4 The Treaty of Bucharest: August 1913



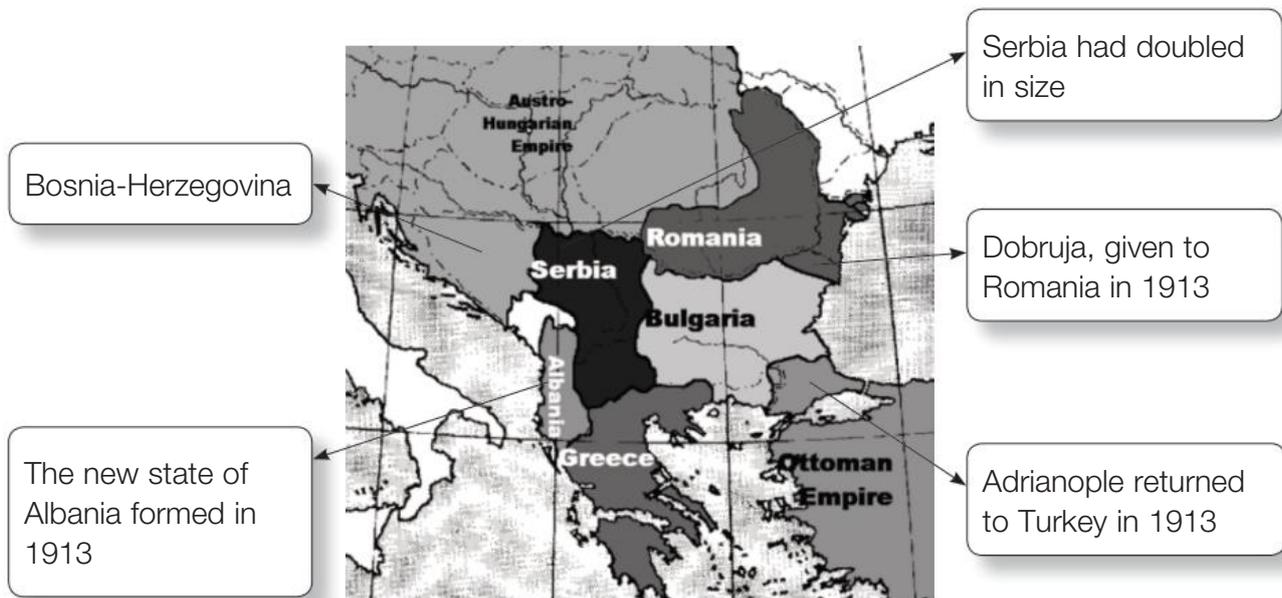
The Balkan Wars had left the region – and Europe – in a dangerous position.

- Balkan nationalism had been triumphant. Serbia had doubled in size, was confident and ready to free its brother Slavs in neighbouring Austria.
- Turkey's rapid demise prompted Russia to now look hungrily on the region. It was unlikely that it would not support its brother Slavs in a future conflict (as it had failed to do in 1908).
- Austria feared Serbia more than ever and the feeling was growing in Vienna that if Serbia was not crushed soon, it might be too late. The success of Slav nationalism would mean the death of Austria-Hungary.
- Bulgaria sought revenge against its former allies and began to consider that Austria and Turkey might be useful future allies.

It was highly likely that the next crisis in the Balkans would drag in the major powers. Would this lead to a Europe-wide war?

The Balkans map had changed dramatically since the beginning of 1912. The new boundary arrangements are shown in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5 The Balkans in early 1914



28th June, 1914: Sarajevo



Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. He had earned the disfavour of Emperor Franz-Joseph because he had insisted on marrying Countess Sophie Chotek. The emperor deemed her of too lowly a status but Ferdinand refused to give up the woman he loved. As a result, the marriage was declared morganatic – any children from the marriage would not be allowed to succeed to the throne after their father's death.

Figure 2.6: Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Countess Sophie

In late June, 1914, Ferdinand was to visit Bosnia, with a planned visit to Sarajevo on 28 June. He was visiting the region not as heir to the throne but as Inspector-General of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. This meant that Sophie was able to accompany him on all official duties, something which was normally denied her due to her 'lowly' status. Franz-Ferdinand's decision meant that his wife would effectively be treated as his royal equal. This would include her being allowed to drive in an open car through the streets of Sarajevo, seated next to her husband.

The Black Hand

There were ardent Slav nationalists who were eager for violent action against their Austrian oppressors. Random acts of terrorism had been taken against various Austrian officials before 1914. In 1909, a secret society called *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, 'Unity of Death' was formed. It became better known as the 'Black Hand'. It was headed by Serbian Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijevic, known as Apis (the bull).⁵ Apis was a militarist who shared the desire of many for Serbia to rule the south Slavs. He approved the delivery of arms to a group of young Bosnians just prior to the visit of Franz Ferdinand to Sarajevo.

Figure 2.7 Gavrilo Princip



In 1914, Gavrilo Princip was a sickly eighteen year old. Born in Bosnia, he had briefly flirted with anti-Austrian activities. When Princip learned of the archduke's planned visit to Sarajevo, the idea of assassination formed in his mind. He and some associates, including his friend Nedeljko Cabrinovic and Trifko Grabez, managed to obtain some small arms, ammunition and explosives and they were smuggled across the border into Bosnia. Apparently some members of the Serbian government learned of the plot and tried to stop it. Colonel Apis was put under surveillance. It would seem that the assassination plan was almost abandoned at the last minute.

⁵ Apis was chief of the intelligence department of the Serbian general staff.

The assassination

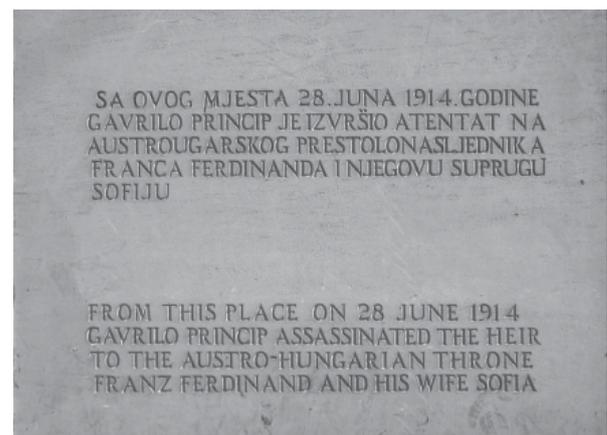
Franz Ferdinand had not chosen the best of days to visit Sarajevo. The 28 June is St Vitus' day, Vidovdan, a great Serbian festival. It was also the anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo when an Ottoman army, led by Sultan Murad, had defeated the Serbian army and instituted almost five hundred years of Ottoman rule. It was almost as if Franz Ferdinand had wanted to deliberately anger the local Slavs.

However, the Archduke and his wife had been well-received in the region. They had driven in an open car two days earlier and were met by cheering crowds.

The attempt on the Archduke's life was amateur in the extreme.

- A bomb was thrown at his car as it was driving along Appel Quay but it missed.
- The car continued to the Town Hall where a reception for the Archduke was held.
- Angry, Franz-Ferdinand ordered a change of plan and demanded to be driven to the military hospital where victims of the bombing were being attended to.
- However, his driver did not know of the change of plan, slowed down at Franz Josef Street opposite the Lateiner Bridge to turn left. Informed of his error, the driver stopped to reverse.
 - At this moment the car was in front of Schiller's café where Gavrilo Princip was sitting.
 - He stepped forward to the car and fired. Both Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Countess Sophie were killed instantly.

Figure 2.6 The modern museum on the site of the assassination



Exercise 2.4

Place the events listed on the right in the correct chronological order.

1st event		Treaty of London
2nd event		Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria join the 1st Balkan War
3rd event		Bulgaria attacks Greece and Serbia
4th event		Turkey introduces western reforms into Macedonia
5th event		Treaty of Bucharest
6th event		Assassination of Archduke Franz-Ferdinand
7th event		Albania comes into existence
8th event		Montenegro declares war on Turkey
9th event		Bulgaria defeated in 2nd Balkan War
10th event		Turkey defeated in 1st Balkan War

Section Two ■ The nature of World War I

Chapter Three

The outbreak of war in 1914

Introduction

Europe was stunned by the news of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. A major state funeral was held in Vienna to which several of Europe's leading political and royal figures came. However, once the funeral ceremonials were completed, once the shock of Franz Ferdinand's death had passed, Europe began to return to normal. After all, political assassinations had happened before. The Balkans had often been the scene of political violence. And the summer of 1914 was promising glorious weather. Holiday planning pre-occupied those who could afford such things, including many of Europe's leaders. There would have been few in Europe predicting that within less than six weeks, there would be war across the continent of Europe.

The mood in Europe in mid-1914 was not one that suggested war was imminent.

- After the war, some writers, perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, suggested that 'war was in the air' in 1914. Winston Churchill later wrote:

...There was a strange temper in the air. Unsatisfied by material prosperity the nations turned restlessly towards strife internal or external...¹

- However, others writing before the war saw things differently. The English historian, G P Gooch, had written a book in 1911 called *History of Our Times 1885-1911*. Gooch did not gloss over the size of Europe's armies nor did he omit the crises that had affected Europe in recent times. However, the final sentences of his book saw Gooch in full optimistic flow:

...we can now look forward with something like confidence to the time when war between civilised nations will be considered as antiquated as a duel and when the peacemakers will be called the children of God...²

Serbia: guilty or innocent?

Gooch might have believed that war could not happen again in Europe. However, there was one place in Europe where thoughts of war were most definitely in the air: Vienna. There was a 'war party' within the Austrian government which had long sought a pre-emptive war against Serbia. They believed that Austria needed to strike Serbia down 'before it was too late'. The death of Franz Ferdinand was a tragedy that to them was a godsend.

¹ Churchill, W, *The World Crisis 1911-1918*, Charles Scribner, London, 1931, p 92

² Gooch, G P, *History of Our Time*, Williams and Norgate, 1911, p 248

- For **Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf**, Chief of the Austrian General Staff and other members of the ‘war party’, Sarajevo provided them with the perfect opportunity to deal with Serbia ‘once and for all’.
- Conrad took it for granted that the Serbian government was behind the assassination and demanded immediate action.
- Later investigations by both the Austrian and German governments would prove that this was not the case.

However, none of this mattered to the war party in Vienna. The assassination provided the opportunity for settling affairs with Serbia and securing the future of the Hapsburg Empire. Once Austria had decided on following this path, history would show how easily and how quickly Europe followed the road to war.

The “blank cheque”

As was explained in Chapter Two, Austria had good reason to fear Serbian ambitions. The Balkan Wars had resulted in Serbia doubling in size and Slav nationalism was at an all-time high. Serbia’s long-term nationalist goal of uniting the Slavs at the expense of the Hapsburg Empire was never in doubt but it was unlikely that Serbia was itching for war in mid-1914 having recently fought two wars.

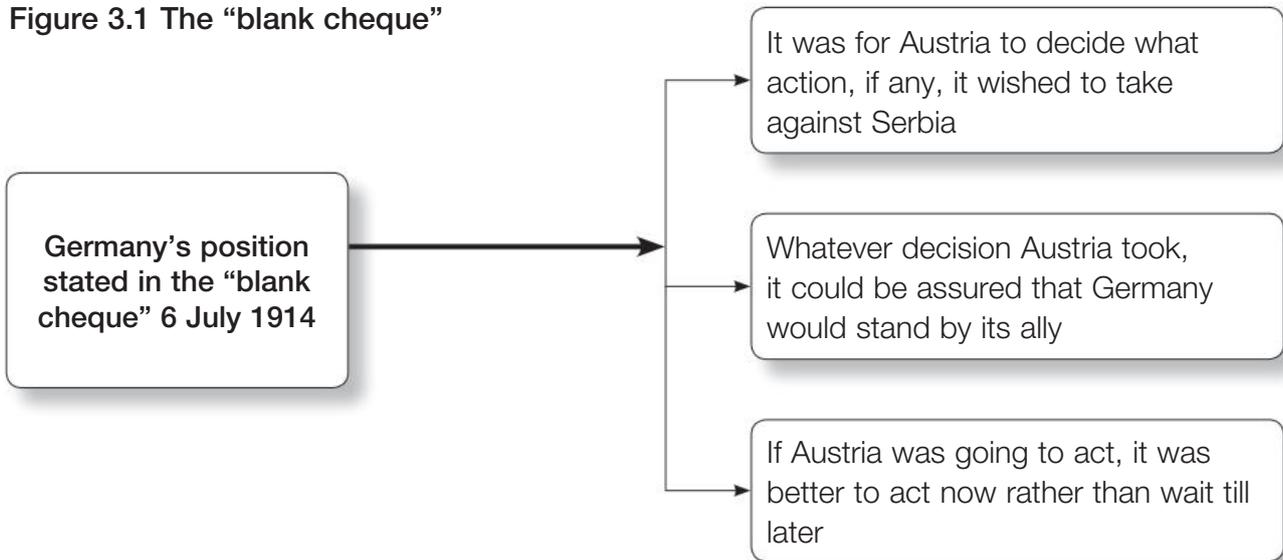
Austria believed that Serbia could only get stronger and that it had to be dealt with sooner rather than later. Austria had little doubt that it could defeat Serbia but it also knew that if it attacked Belgrade, the Serbian capital, Russia would almost certainly act to support its brother Slavs. Defeat for Austria was likely against combined Serbian-Russian forces. Thus, Austria would act only if it could be assured that Germany would support it against possible Russian action.

The attitude of Germany was all important.

- The Kaiser was a personal friend of Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie.
 - It appears that the Kaiser had great sympathy for the bad way that the Austrian royal family had treated his friend’s wife.
 - The German Emperor’s relations with Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph were not good and so he looked forward to the succession of his friend.
- Thus, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand affected the Kaiser both personally and politically.
 - His initial reaction was one of anger but as the days passed, Germany was keen to calm things down in the Balkans.
- For Germany the ideal situation would be for Austria to deal with Serbia quickly without Russian intervention, ie keep the conflict localised.
 - A ‘third Balkan War’ in effect.
- However, Germany’s military leaders, like Chief of Staff Moltke, were alarmed at the steady rate of rearmament of Russia and France.
 - His advisors were predicting that within a couple of years the balance of power in Europe would have clearly moved against Germany.
 - Here was a chance to deal with Russia before it became too strong.

In early July, Austria sent officials to Berlin to find out Germany's attitude should it take military action against Serbia. On 6 July, the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg made clear to the Austrians Germany's position. This was to be known as the "blank cheque". Its key points are summarised in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 The "blank cheque"



The July Crisis

18 July

The Russian Foreign Minister, Sazanov, learns of Austrian plans to send Serbia an ultimatum.

21 July

Sazanov warns Austrian Foreign Minister, Berchtold, that there must be no ultimatum sent to Serbia.

23 July

Austria does not immediately take military action against Serbia. Instead, a ten point ultimatum is handed to the Serbians. The inference is clear: accept the ultimatum or war will follow. The ultimatum is worded in such a way as to make it almost impossible for Serbia to accept it.

24 July

Russia calls for partial 'mobilisation'.

25 July

Serbia responds to Austria's ultimatum, accepting nine of the ten points.

26 July

Russia begins its period 'preparatory to war'.

28 July

Austria rejects Serbia's response to its ultimatum. Austria declares war on Serbia.

29 July

Tsar Nicholas II of Russia orders general mobilisation³ and then changes his mind.

30 July

Russia begins general mobilisation.

31 July

Germany orders Russia to stop its mobilisation. Russia refuses.

1 August

Germany declares war on Russia.

3 August

Germany declares war on France.

Thirty six days after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand Europe was at war from the Balkans to France to Russia. The only major power not been sucked into the war was Britain. The issue of Belgium would determine Britain's decision.

Exercise 3.1 Using the terms in the box below, complete the following passage.

Archduke _____ was assassinated in _____, Bosnia, on 28 June 1914. Austria immediately blamed _____ for the murder, and the ___ party inside the Austrian government, led by Chief of Staff, _____, were keen to deal with their Slav neighbour. In fact, Serbian _____ in the assassination was almost certainly missing, though Colonel _____ was suspected of involvement, though his aim seemed to have been to harm Serbia Prime Minister Pacis. Austrian officials visited _____ in early July. The German Chancellor, _____, and the _____ promised Austria Germany's total support if it acted against Serbia. This promise became known as the _____. On 23 July _____ sent Serbia a 10 point _____. The Russian Foreign Minister, _____, had warned Austria not to do this. On 24 July, Russia started _____. Serbia accepted _____ of the points but this was not enough for Austria and so on 28 July it _____ war on Serbia. On 30 July, _____ commenced _____ mobilisation. On 31 July _____ ordered Russia to stop mobilisation but Russia _____. On _____ Germany declared war on Russia; on _____ Germany declared war on _____.

³ Partial mobilisation for Russia meant mobilisation against Austria only. General mobilisation meant mobilisation against both Germany and Austria.

KAISER - REFUSED - APIS - BETHMANN-HOLLWEG -
 SERBIA - RUSSIA - BERLIN - BLANK CHEQUE - FRANZ FERDINAND
 FRANCE - DECLARED - NINE - HOTZENDORF - ULTIMATUM
 SAZANOV - 1 AUGUST - 3 AUGUST - WAR - GERMANY - FULL
 SARAJEVO - AUSTRIA - COMPLICITY - PARTIAL MOBILISATION

Table 3.1 The powers in July 1914

The following table suggests what could have been decided by each of the powers in the summer of 1914 to prevent a Europe-wide war. It also shows why those decisions were not taken.

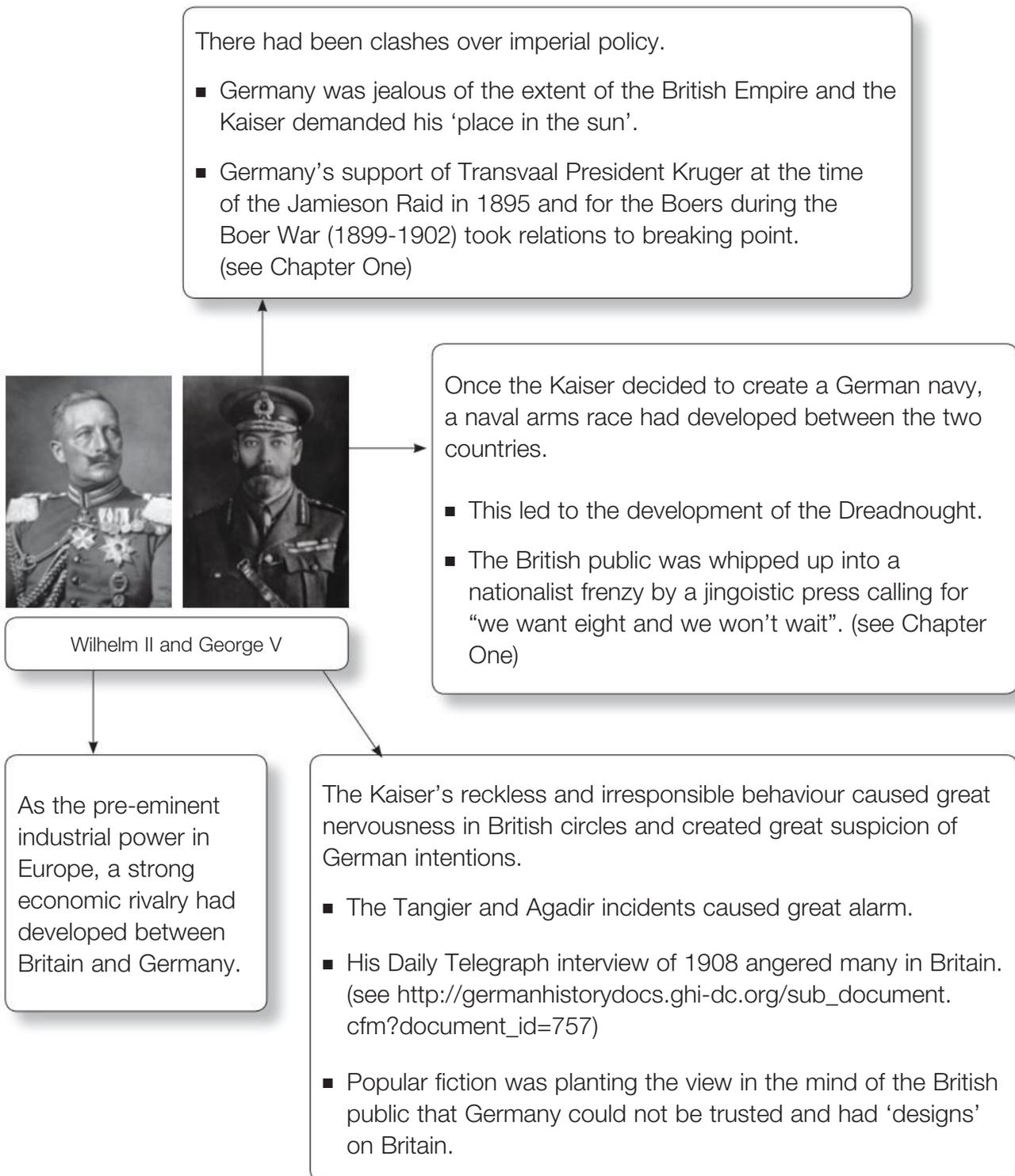
Power	“wise policy options”	“why wisdom did not prevail”
AUSTRIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ accept Serbia’s claims of innocence in the assassination ■ accept Serbia’s promises to deal with anti-Austrian elements ■ not send Serbia an ultimatum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ genuine anger at the assassination ■ Serbia could only get stronger in the future ■ it was now or never to crush Serbia
RUSSIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ accept Austria’s need to punish Serbia ■ no intervention ■ no mobilisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Russia would not be humiliated again as in 1908 over Bosnia ■ would mean accepting second rank status ■ possibly lose France as an ally
GERMANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ refuse to back Austria in its action against Serbia ■ make it clear Austria would receive no help if Russia entered to help Serbia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Austria was Germany’s only reliable ally ■ fear of Franco-Russian power overwhelming Germany in the future
FRANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ make it clear to Russia that it would not back it if it took action in the Balkans ■ accept Germany’s demand for neutrality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ losing Russia as an ally would make France isolated and vulnerable ■ memories of 1871 and the desire for revenge

The issue of Belgium

Anglo-German relations before 1914

Relations between Britain and Germany had been difficult in the years before 1914 and there had been several areas of disagreement as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 Strains in the Anglo-German relationship



Concerns over German policy, and the behaviour of the Kaiser were major factors that led Britain to abandon its long-held policy of ‘splendid isolation’ and to develop close ties with its former rivals, France and Russia.⁴ Indeed, by 1914, the Triple Entente was developing the appearance of an alliance. From 1912, British and French officials had been engaged in military talks about the disposition of each other’s forces in the event of war.

However, these factors did not mean that a conflict between Britain and Germany was inevitable.

- There were close ties between Britain and Germany. They may have been economic rivals but each provided a large export market for the other.
 - There some optimistic commentators at the time who suggested that such was the economic interdependence of the major powers by the early twentieth century, war between them was inconceivable.
- There were close family links between the British and German royal family. Kaiser Wilhelm was the grandson of Queen Victoria, making him the nephew of King Edward VII (1901-1910) and the cousin of King George V (1910-35).
 - However, recent research has suggested that the Kaiser was not popular with his British relatives.⁵
- In the years immediately preceding the war, the issues that had divided Britain and Germany had largely been settled. Britain had won the arms race, imperial rivalry had settled down and neither power had anything to gain from stirring up trouble in the Balkans.

Belgian neutrality

Planners in the German military had long accepted that if a European war came, Germany would face a two-front war: against Russia in the east and against France in the west. As a result of this, in 1905 the German Chief of Staff, Count von Schlieffen, developed a strategy that was to bear his name. The “Schlieffen Plan” would first involve a quick, massive attack against France in the west. Having knocked France out of the war, a longer campaign would follow against Russia.

(The details of German strategy will be dealt with in Chapter Four.)

Schlieffen’s strategy involved German troops moving rapidly through the flat terrain of Belgium and the Netherlands.⁶ *Britain believed that any threat against Belgium was a threat against its own national security.*

For several hundred years, British foreign policy had been remarkably consistent. Britain had always tried to avoid involvement in European conflicts. There had been several conflicts on the European continent between the defeat of Napoleon (1815) and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Britain never became involved.⁷ Britain’s interests were global – trade, the empire, the navy.

4 See Section Two

5 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2552270/Royal-Cousins-War-tells-family-rift-saw-George-V-Tsar-Nicholas-against-German-cousin.html>

6 Schlieffen’s plan was modified by his successor von Moltke so that German troops would not go through the Netherlands.

7 The exception was the Crimean War 1854-56.

Britain only ever became involved in European entanglements if one or both of the following developments occurred:

- If one single power threatened to dominate the entire continent, Britain believed its interests would be threatened, and so it would fight.
- If an enemy power gained control of the ‘low countries’ (Belgium and the Netherlands), Britain would fight as control of this area would make possible a direct attack on Britain.
 - The region of Belgium had long been considered by British governments as “a dagger pointed at the heart of England”.

Britain had fought Spain at the end of Sixteenth century, France at the start of the eighteenth century and France again at the beginning of the nineteenth century for these reasons. Britain’s decision not to become involved in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 followed Bismarck’s promise not to invade Belgium.

Consequently, any movement of German troops through Belgium would be viewed by Britain as a direct threat to its security.

- In 1839, Britain had signed **The Treaty of London**.
 - This guaranteed Belgian neutrality.
 - Britain promised to defend Belgium if its neutrality was threatened.
- Following Germany’s declaration of war against France on 3 August, German troops began pouring into Belgium as part of the Schlieffen Plan.
- Britain gave Germany an ultimatum to withdraw.
 - Germany refused.
 - As a result, on **4 August Britain declared war on Germany**.

Did Britain really go to war over the issue of Belgian neutrality?

Germany’s abrogation of the Treaty of London provided Britain with wonderful propaganda. It could paint Germany as a bully, an aggressor nation attacking a poor defenceless country. Britain could argue it was fighting to uphold its promise to Belgium. For Britain it was a matter of honour. The German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg called the Treaty of London ‘a scrap of paper’. The term ‘the scrap of paper’ became a potent symbol of early British propaganda.

However, was Britain’s decision to go to war simply to honour its promise to Belgium? The answer is of course no.

- As explained above, Britain could not let Belgium fall into enemy hands as this was seen as a direct threat to its security.
- German control of ports in Belgium (and northern France) would be disastrous for British security.
- Many in Britain believed that the Kaiser had megalomaniacal pretensions of controlling the continent.

- Since the Entente Cordiale of 1904, relations between Britain and France had become very close and by 1914 the entente had almost become an alliance.
- Since 1912, Britain and France had been discussing joint action in the event of Germany launching a war. It was unlikely that Britain would desert its 'ally' once Germany invaded Belgium.

The role of the **British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey**, was of crucial importance at this time. Grey spoke to the British parliament at 3.00 pm on Monday 3 August. In his speech he made the following points.

1. Britain could not abandon France having persuaded it to direct its fleet to the Mediterranean. If a German fleet threatened the French Channel ports, Britain had an obligation to assist the French.
2. If Germany controlled the French ports and Belgium, the Netherlands would be next, followed by Denmark. Germany would control the entire coastline from the Atlantic to the Baltic and would have "England at her mercy".
3. Britain had to respect its treaty obligations to Belgium otherwise it would "*sacrifice our respect and good name and reputation before the world.*"

Exercise 3.2 Examine the cartoon below. It is from August 1914.



1. What is the scrap of paper referred to in the cartoon?
2. What is the treaty that the large dog is standing on?
3. Whom does the large dog represent? Whom do the small dogs represent? What is the cartoon calling for at the start of the war?
4. Describe the dog's attitude to the (German) eagle.
5. The flags represent (from top left clockwise) Belgium, Britain, France, Japan and Russia. Why have they been included in the cartoon?
6. How might this cartoon be used to explain Britain's attitude to going to war in August 1914?

Exercise 3.3

Place the following events in correct chronological order.

1st event		Germany declares war on France
2nd event		Austria receives the blank cheque
3rd event		Austria declares war on Serbia
4th event		Britain declares war on Germany
5th event		Assassination of Franz-Ferdinand
6th event		Austria issues the ultimatum
7th event		Germany declares war on Russia
8th event		Russia orders general mobilisation
9th event		Serbia accepts nine of the ten points of Austria's ultimatum
10th event		Germany orders a stop to Russian mobilisation

Few classes would have the time to investigate the numerous interpretations of the causes of World War I that have appeared over the past century. Here are some ideas that historians have suggested. Students studying Extension History in Year 12 might consider World War I historiography as a possible area of investigation for their Research Essay.

1	Britain was morally right to fight the war and the blame for causing the war needs to be placed squarely on Germany and Austria.	Max Hastings
2	No one country deserves the blame for starting the war. The key factor bringing about the war was the growth of the alliance system.	Sidney Bradshaw Fay
3	It was the group of officials surrounding Tsar Nicholas II, especially Foreign Minister Sazanov, who should be held to account for bringing on the war.	Sean McMeekin
4	A close examination of the documents in the post-war period clearly showed that blame for the war should be equally shared between France, Russia and Serbia.	Harry Elmer Barnes
5	A study of the personal papers and diaries of David Lloyd George show he was key in Britain's willingness to wage war on Germany to stop its domination of Europe.	Gilbert Bently
6	War came about because Europe's leaders lost control of the situation due to complex mobilisation plans. Germany's plan was particularly inflexible.	AJP Taylor
7	Germany accepted its responsibility for bringing on the war in 1914 and took the blame for all the loss and damage suffered by the nationals of the allied nations.	Treaty of Versailles
8	It was Austria-Hungary's internal paralysis and delusional belief about its own strength that brought on the war in 1914.	Geoffrey Wawro
9	The war was Germany's fault. Germany's leaders pushed Austria into action and sought war believing the international balance of power was turning against them,	Fritz Fischer
10	Europe's elites were suffering a crisis of masculinity and each felt the need to prove their virility and not back down in the crisis.	Christopher Clark

Chapter Four

From European war to global conflict

Introduction

The causes of the World War I were focussed on Europe: the situation in the Balkans, Germany's fears over a two-front war, and Britain's concern over the issue of Belgium. Between 1914 and 1918, millions would die on the battlefields of the Western Front, the Eastern Front and in the Balkans. In 1915 an Italian front would open when Italy joined the allies. Turkey's entry into the war took hostilities to the Gallipoli peninsula and into the Middle East.¹

However, World War I also took on a global dimension.

- Military actions between the allies and Germany occurred across the continent of Africa, in China and the north Pacific and in the south west Pacific.
- Naval actions took place in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and in the south Atlantic.
- Even the brief clash between US and Mexican forces in Arizona in August 1918 could be seen as part of the war.

The armies that took part in the war were not only European. Japan entered the war in 1914; China in 1917. The United States entered the war in April 1917. Britain and France were able to draw upon their extensive empires for forces. 1.5 million Indian troops joined the allied war effort. 1.3 million troops from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa fought for the allies. France used the Zouaves and the Spahis light infantry and light cavalry forces respectively from North Africa. Tens of thousands of Indochinese were also employed by the French.

The war had become truly global.

The war in the Balkans

Austria bombarded the Serbian capital early in the war but throughout 1914 the war did not go well for Austria. Serbian forces led by Radomir Putnik defeated the Austrian army at the Battle of Jadar in August 1914. The Serbs managed to hold off the Austrians throughout 1914, including at the Battle of Kolubara River in December.

Serbia's success came at a price and by 1915; its forces were facing exhaustion. Soon men over sixty and even women were brought in to fight.

- In October 1915, British and French forces landed at Salonika, a Greek port on the Aegean coast in an attempt to bolster the Serbs.
- There were significant German and Bulgarian troops in the area (allies of Austria) and so French commander Sarrail and British General Milne turned Salonika into an entrenched zone.

¹ Turkey's role in the war will be examined in Chapter Six.

- The arrival of allied troops could not help Serbia and it was overwhelmed by an Austro-German-Bulgarian invasion in October 1915. Over 150 000 Serbians had to be evacuated to Corfu.
- It was not until late 1918 that Serbian and allied forces were successful in the Balkans when Bulgaria was defeated during the Vardar Offensive in September 1918 and soon sued for peace.

The Western Front

The Schlieffen Plan

In 1905, the German Chief of Staff, von Schlieffen, developed a military strategy that was to bear his name. Though there were modifications to the plans over the next few years, the Schlieffen Plan remained the cornerstone of German military strategy and it was this that would inevitably bring Britain and Germany to war and lead to the creation of The Western Front.

The thinking of the Schlieffen Plan was as follows:

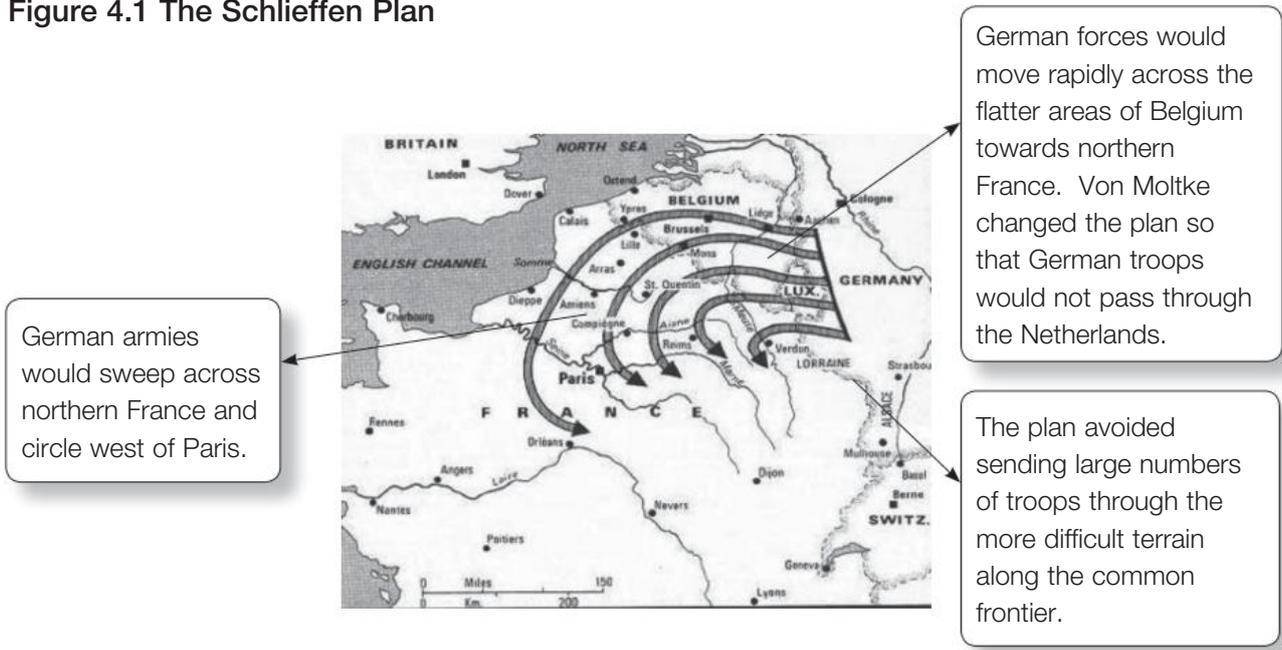
- In the event of war, Germany knew it would have to fight on two fronts: in the west against France, and in the east against Russia.
 - Germany assumed that France could mobilise in a short time. However, Germany believed that France could be defeated quickly.
 - Germany assumed that Russia could not mobilise quickly. However, it believed that Russia could only be defeated over a longer period of time.
- Thus, the rationale of the Schlieffen Plan was for Germany to attack France quickly, defeat it in six weeks, and then turn its attention to the east where it would take longer to defeat Russia.
 - As a result of this, Germany would not have to fight a two-front war.

However, geography intervened to complicate the simplicity of this strategy. The common frontier between France and Germany is the moderately mountainous and forested area of the Vosges and the Black Forest. A quick, surprise attack through this region would be next to impossible. However, to the north, the land was flat and ideal for rapid movement of troops. Unfortunately, this flat land was in the neutral countries of *Belgium and the Netherlands*.

- Consequently, von Schlieffen's plan was for masses of German troops to move rapidly through Belgium and the Netherlands.
- Some of Germany's armies would circle to the west of Paris, while the rest would approach from the east.
- Paris and the industrial north east of France would be captured by the Germans. France would be knocked out of the war.
- Germany could then focus on what von Schlieffen believed would be the longer more difficult campaign against Russia.

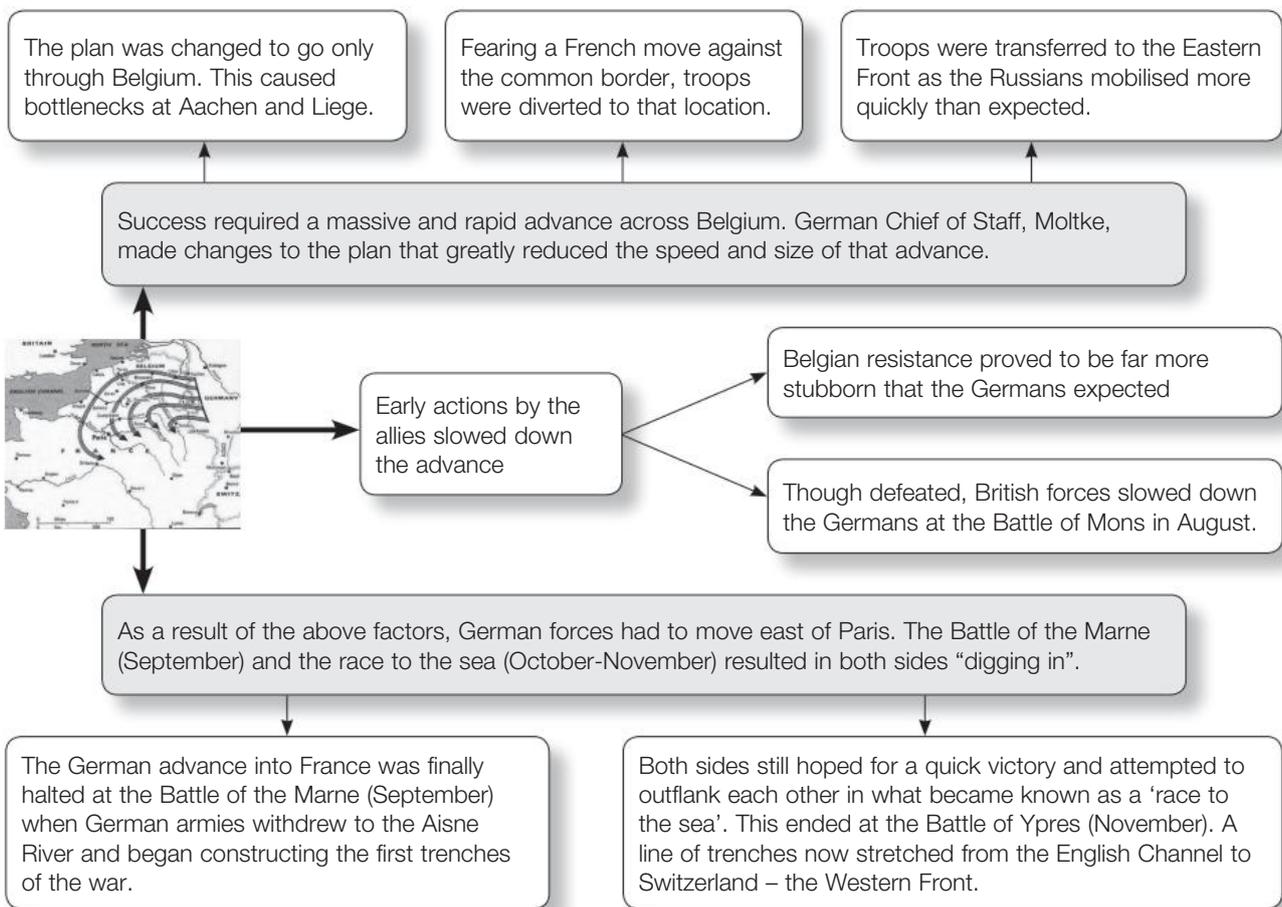
Figure 4.1 summarises the overall aims of the Schlieffen Plan.

Figure 4.1 The Schlieffen Plan



Had the Schlieffen Plan succeeded, the war in the west could have been over very quickly. It failed. Figure 4.2 summarises the reasons for its eventual failure.

Figure 4.2 Why the Schlieffen Plan failed



By early 1915, the war on the Western Front had become bogged down in a 'war of attrition'. The front line would vary little for the next three years. Each side would hurl its forces against the enemy in the vain hope of achieving a breakthrough only to be repulsed with frighteningly high casualties.² There were hundreds of engagements during these years of deadlock. The principal ones – Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele will be examined in Chapter Six. The campaigns of 1918 will be examined in Chapter Ten.

The Eastern Front³

The war on the Eastern Front was fought over a much larger geographical area than it was in the west. The Russian 2nd Army advanced into East Prussia in August. Despite some early minor successes and outnumbering the German forces, Russia suffered a disastrous defeat in late August at the Battle of Tannenberg (see Chapter Six). Another major Russian defeat followed soon after at Massurian Lakes.

Russia had greater success against the Austrians. In June 1916, an offensive led by General Brusilov achieved significant success and made an advance of 80 kms, capturing 200 000 prisoners. German reinforcements were sent to bolster the Austrians and the Russians were pushed back.

By now Russia was falling apart.

- Its economy had collapsed and the home front was in chaos.
- By early 1917, there were widespread mutinies and desertions, and food riots on the streets of Petrograd (St Petersburg).
- In March 1917, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate.
- The new Provisional Government, eventually led by Alexander Kerensky, continued the war and in July 1917 another offensive led by Brusilov pushed into Galicia. Advances were made and 10 000 prisoners were taken.
 - However, German reinforcements and the collapsing Russian home front slowed the offensive which was brought to an end in late July.
 - Brusilov was replaced as supreme commander by General Kornilov.
- Kornilov attempted to move against Prime Minister Kerensky's Provisional Government.
 - Kerensky was forced to seek the help of Bolshevik Red Guards to save his government.
 - The Bolsheviks eventually seized power in October 1917 and signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with Germany March 1918 which formally took Russia out of the war (see Chapter Eleven).

The Italian Front

Italy was part of the Triple Alliance but it had not entered the war in 1914. In 1915, following the Treaty of London in which Italy was promised certain territories after the war, Italy entered the war on the side of the allies. Italy fought Austria along a front centred very much on the

² The methods of fighting and conditions along the Western Front will be examined in Chapter Six.

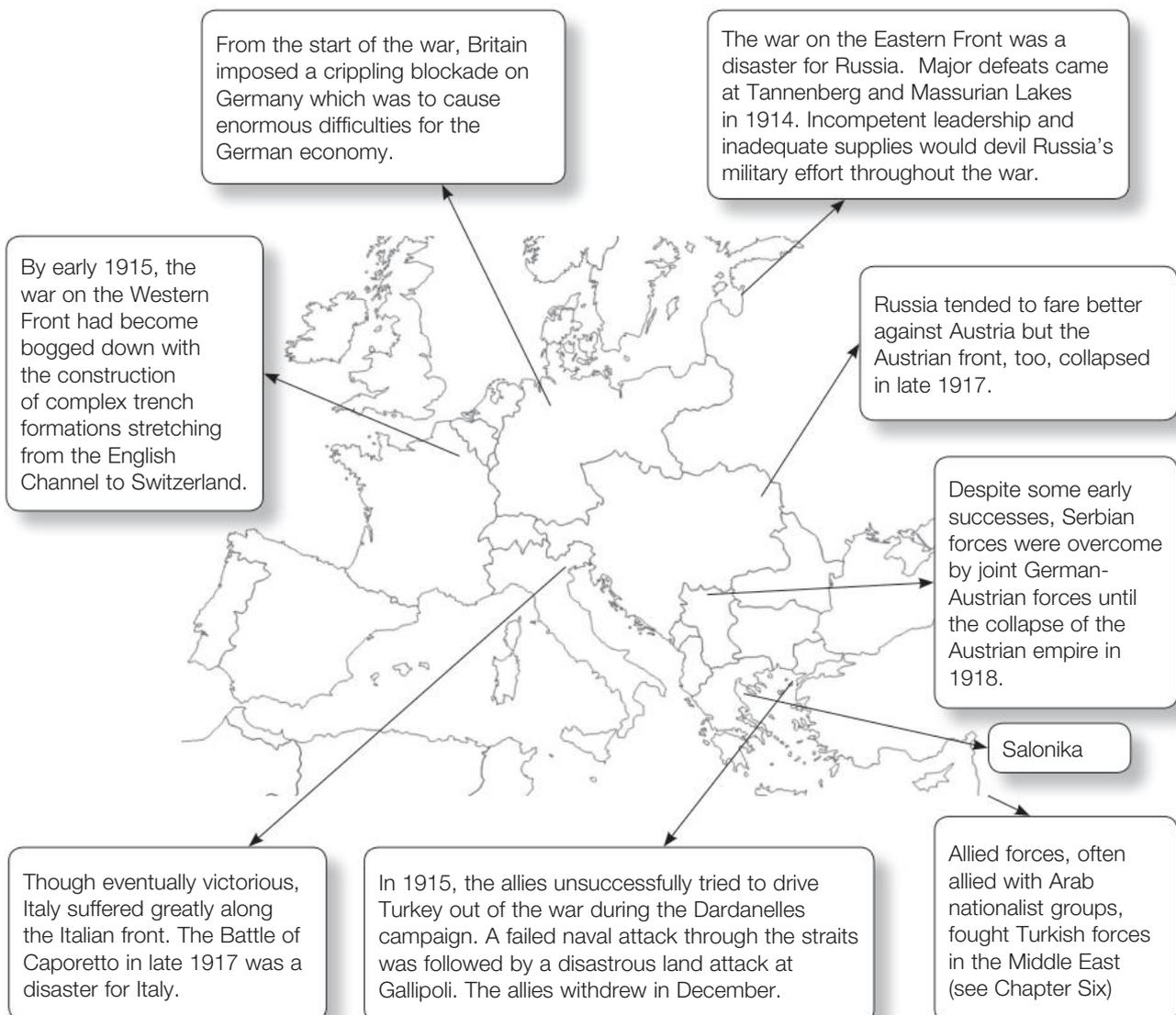
³ The impact of the war on Russia will be examined in Chapter Eleven.

alpine regions. Though Italy would end up on the winning side, the war was a disaster for the Italians. Between June 1915 and March 1916, Italian forces launched a series of attacks on Austrian positions in the Isonzo region. By the start of 1916, Italy had lost 60 000 men. There would be eleven separate battles in this region which would cost the Italians 130 000 lives.

By late 1917, the situation on the Italian Front was desperate. Austria was reinforced by troops it had been able to withdraw from the east following Russia's revolution, and with German reinforcements. In October 1917, 400 000 German and Austrian troops attacked the Italians at Caporetto, north of Trieste. By the time the battle was over in late November, the Italians had lost 11 000 men and a quarter of a million had been taken prisoner, many of whom surrendered voluntarily.

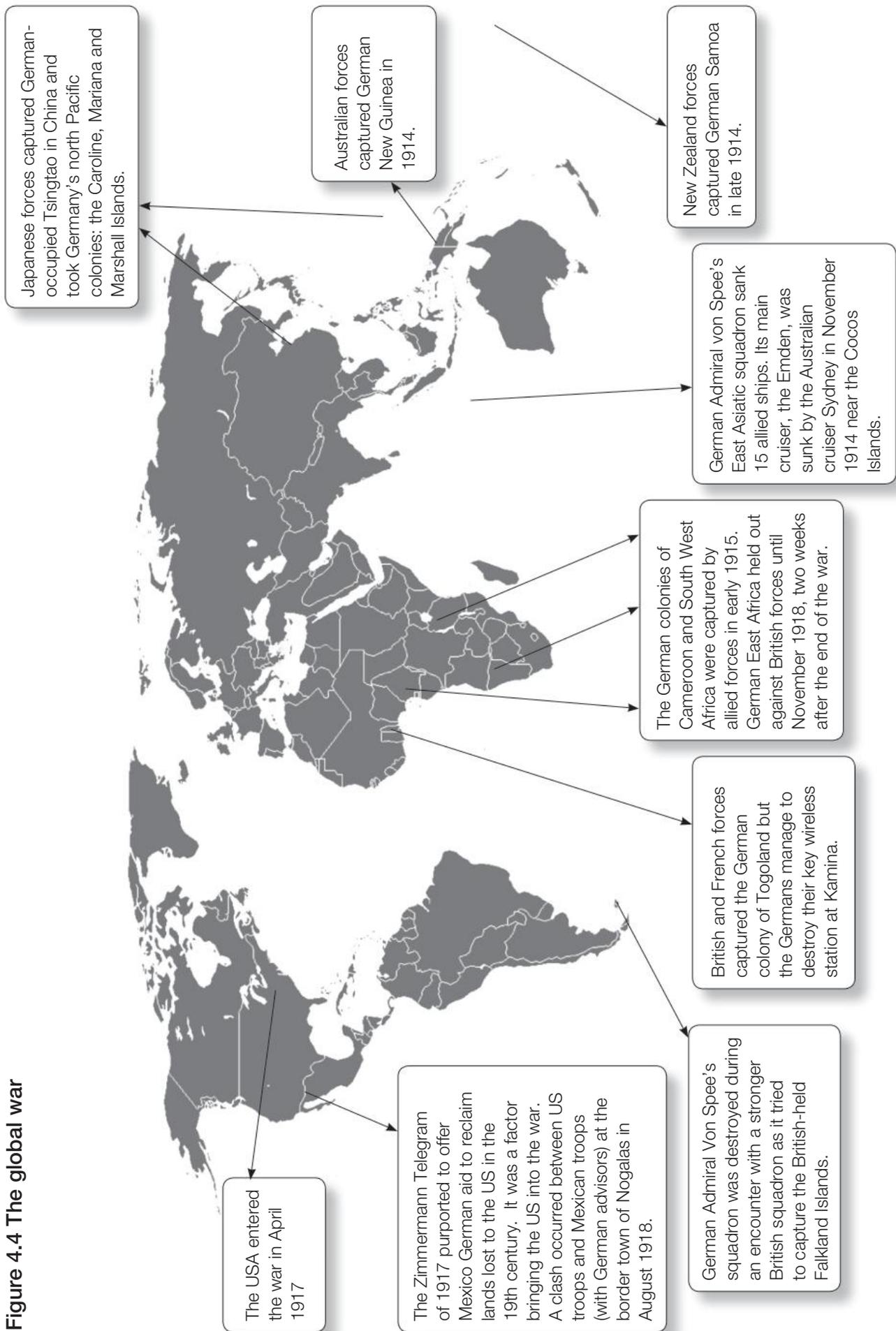
Italy was able to repel a smaller Austrian offensive in mid-1918 and was able to successfully counter-attack as the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed.

Figure 4.3 The war in Europe



In a short time, the war spread far and wide with actions across the globe. These are summarised in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 The global war



Exercise 4.1 Where did the following actions take place?

1	Italy suffered its most disastrous defeat here in late 1917.	
2	Japanese forces took these north Pacific islands from Germany early in the war.	
3	Admiral von Spee's squadron was finally sent to the bottom of the sea here.	
4	The Australian cruiser, Sydney, sank the German cruiser Emden, near here in 1914.	
5	Serbian forces led by Radomir Putnik defeated an Austrian army in August 1914.	
6	Anglo-French forces took this German colony but only after the Germans destroyed its key wireless station.	
7	German forces held out here until two weeks after the formal end of the war.	
8	Australian forces captured this piece of the German Empire in 1914.	
9	Allied forces remained in this entrenched Greek port for much of the war.	
10	Russia suffered a massive defeat against Germany here in August 1914.	

What do the historians have to say about “From European war to global conflict”?

Rather than give a list of different historians here, students are encouraged to visit the following website.

<http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/1-2014/ID%3d5009>

It comprises a discussion between leading historians about the “global” nature of World War I. For decades, World War I has usually been studied and written about from a “national” perspective. Thus, we get the “British” view of the war, or the “Australian” or “German” or “French”. There has been a trend in the historiography of World War I in recent times to view the war from an international/ global perspective rather than a purely national one.

This extract comes from the American historian Jay Winter.⁴

“...Most of us recognize that we have moved into a phase of writing about the Great War which is transnational and global in character. The term ‘global’ describes both the tendency to write about the war in more than European terms and to see the conflict as trans-European, trans-Atlantic, and beyond. Here was the first war among industrialized countries, reaching the Middle East and Africa, the Falkland Islands and China, drawing soldiers into the epicentre in Europe from Vancouver to Capetown to Bombay and to Adelaide. Here was a war that gave birth to the Turkey of Ataturk and to the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin. Demands for decolonization arose from a war that had promised self-determination and had produced very little of the kind. Economic troubles arose directly out of the war, and these were sufficiently serious to undermine the capacity of the older imperial powers to pay for their imperial and quasi-imperial footholds around the world...”

- How does Winter justify his argument that World War I should be seen as “transnational and global in character”?

⁴ Jay Murray Winter is a leading expert on World War I and its impact on the world. He is currently the Charles J Stille Professor of History at Yale University. His books include *Remembering War: The Great War between History and Memory in the 20th Century* and *War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present*.

Chapter Five

The Soldier's experience

Introduction

It is dangerous to generalise about the kinds of experiences that soldiers underwent during World War I. The nature of such experiences would depend on the psychology of the individual soldier, the care and efficiency (or lack thereof) provided by commanders, geography, climate, one's position along a front, how well supplied one's army was, when in the war one was at the front and a host of other factors.

There is a mountain of literature that has been produced about the experience of the front-line soldier. What follows makes no claim to better what a first-hand account can offer or what a forensic historian such as Denis Winter ¹ can present. However, for the purpose of this chapter, these experiences will be considered under four general headings:

- The nature of battle
- The physical impact
- The psychological impact
- "other experiences"

In the space provided, it is also impossible to provide detailed accounts of the experience of a Russian soldier as opposed to that of an Italian or a Serbian. Thus, this chapter will focus only on the Western Front, though many of the comments that will be made can apply to other fronts.

1. The nature of battle

An article appeared in the British 'Economist' magazine (January 2018) discussing the possible nature of warfare in the near future. It warned that making any predictions was fraught with dangers. Its reference to World War I is revealing.

"...In the 19th century the speedy victory of the Prussian army over France in 1870 convinced European general staffs that rapid mobilisation by rail, quick-firing artillery and a focus on attack would make wars short and decisive. Those ideas were put to the test in World War I. The four years of trench warfare on the western front proved them wrong..."

Allied and German commanders expected the war to be over by Christmas. Had the Schlieffen Plan succeeded, this would have been the case, certainly on the Western Front. However, as was explained in Chapter Three, for a variety of reasons the plan failed. From the Battle of the Marne in September 1914, one of the key activities of a front-line soldier – British, French, German – was digging trenches.

¹ Denis Winter's book "Death's Men" remains one of the best accounts of how ordinary soldiers were affected by their time in the trenches.

Trenches (1)

The line of trenches which comprised the Western Front, stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss border. However, there was not a single allied trench stretching that distance on the allied side, and a similar one stretching along the German side. From the air, the trenches were seen to have quickly taken on the appearance of a complex patchwork. There were front-line trenches, communication trenches, reserve trenches. Behind the front line were observation posts, first-aid posts, signal depots, ammunition dumps and so on. The maze of trenches behind the front-line could stretch back for kilometres. This was the same on both sides. Figure 5.1 gives an idea of how this might look from the air.

Figure 5.1 Trenches lines as might be seen from the air



In between the allied front line and the German front line was an area called **no-man's land**. In places, no-man's land could be several kilometres wide; in other places it could be as narrow as fifty metres. At Zonnebeke in 1915, German and British troops were about ten metres apart. No-man's land was a fearful place.

- It was often mined.
- It could contain shell craters which could be several metres deep.
 - Falling into a shell crater could be fatal especially if it was full of water or even worse poison gas.
- Men of both sides feared being trapped in no-man's land, perhaps caught on barbed wire which was placed before the front line to protect it.

Later in the war, each side might try and construct concrete pill-boxes in no-man's land. A few men manning machine guns in a pill box could control a wide area of no-man's land.

Trenches (2)

Early trenches were casually constructed affairs. Commanders on both sides believed that they would again soon take the offensive and drive on to Paris/ Berlin, and so why bother with complicated trenches? However, as the **war of attrition**² took hold and it became apparent that no breakthrough was coming, trenches became more elaborate as each month passed.

German trenches in particular were often very complex.

- Perhaps the fact that they occupied enemy territory might explain this – occupation implied some sort of victory.
- When allied soldiers eventually broke through German lines in 1918, they were amazed to find trenches that were sometimes twelve metres deep and reinforced with concrete.
- Some were wallpapered and even on occasions supplied with electricity.
- Suffice to say, officers' conditions were always better than those of the humble infantry soldier, on both sides of no-man's land.

The average trench was about 1.7 metres deep and 1.2 metres wide. There would be a wooden duckboard on the floor to cope with damp and mud. There was a fire-step which soldiers would mount to fire. Timber was sometimes used to reinforce a trench. At the top were sandbags to absorb the shock of artillery blasts and barbed wire to protect against the possibility of enemy troops reaching one's trench.

Figure 5.2 shows a reconstructed German trench at Bavaria Wood in Belgium. In the picture it is solid, well-built, clean and dry. British authorities actually built trenches like this in London's Hyde Park to show the civilian population that the men were being well looked-after.

² A war of attrition is a 'war of exhaustion' and involves each side attempting to wear down the other side rather than achieving an immediate clear-cut victory.

However, this was not the reality of the trenches. Artillery bombardment and heavy rain, common in north Western Europe, would often turn such trenches dilapidated quagmires. Figure 5.3 gives an idea of the reality.

Figure 5.2
Reconstructed German trench



Figure 5.3
Reality of the trenches after a bombardment



“Over the top”

Before the war, generals on both sides had been planning for battles that involved rapid, mass movement of troops. There was a belief in the ‘knockout blow’. They were certainly not expecting to be sat in trenches for years on end. ³ The experience of most generals by 1914 had been in various colonial conflicts. ⁴

Any soldier who has ever fought in a war, whether it be World War I, Vietnam or Afghanistan, would agree that there is no such thing as a typical battle. However, the battles of World War I did have certain common characteristics. (Specific battles will be examined in Chapters Six and Ten.)

In essence, the purpose of any battle along the Western Front was to break through the enemy's line of trenches.

- A location would be chosen, resources gathered and a massive artillery bombardment would be launched on the enemy position. The aim was to “soften up” the enemy position and force the defenders out of the trenches.
- The whistle would blow and the infantry would climb out of their trenches, go “over the top” and rush across no-man's land to attack the enemy trenches.
- They would do this in the face of enemy machine guns.
 - Such attacks were repeated time and time again, had little chance of success and rarely succeeded.
 - The casualty rates were, not surprisingly, horrendous.

³ Not that the majority of generals ever got to experience the trenches. Britain's General Haig much preferred life in a French chateau some way behind the front line.

⁴ However, the American Civil War (1861-65) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) had given some idea of what war could be like fought from fixed positions.

- When it was all over – and some battles could last for months – another would be planned.

Not until late in the war, when skilled generals such as Australia's John Monash were able to bring their expertise to bear, were such suicidal battle plans avoided.

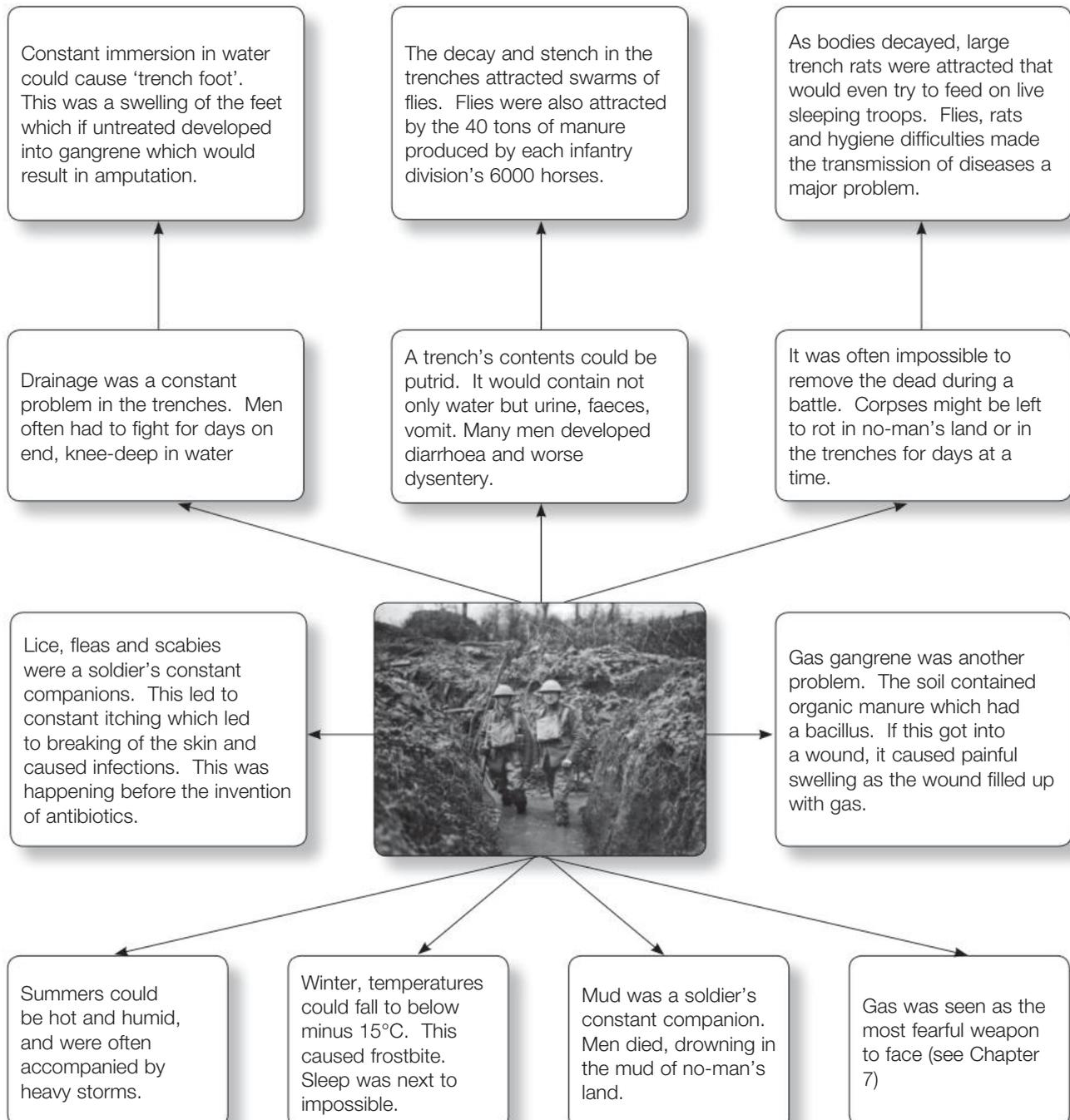
Exercise 5.1 Indicate if the following statements are either true or false.

1	Both allied and German commanders were expecting a long-drawn out war of attrition.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Trench formations on either side were complex and could stretch back for many kilometres.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	No-man's land could vary in width considerably.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	Most soldiers at the front would have been eager to leave their trenches and move into no-man's land.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	The early trenches that were built at the start of the war were often slap-dash constructions not meant to last a long time.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	The men at the front were able to maintain their trenches in a solid state throughout the war despite battle and weather.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Offensive artillery barrages would always be commenced once the men had gone "over the top".	TRUE/ FALSE
8	Generals on both sides were slow to learn the folly of the methods they used during the early years of the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Machine guns were very effective weapons of defence.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Despite the difficulties of battle, casualty rates along the Western Front remained quite low.	TRUE/ FALSE

2. The physical impact

The physical suffering of the men at the front goes beyond our imagination. We will never know exactly how many men died during the war, but the figure of ten million is widely accepted. In addition, there were millions who were wounded, lost limbs, were gassed, blinded or suffered psychologically (see below). However, it was not just the weapons of war that had a physical impact on the men. Figure 5.4 summarises some of the realities of trench life on the Western Front.

Figure 5.4 The realities of trench life



3. The psychological impact

Men who served at the front often described their existence there as ranging from utter boredom to utter terror.

- Weeks could go by with no action; some lucky soldiers might find themselves on sections of the front where there was no action.
 - The issue in these instances was one of boredom.
- However, they also experienced the opposite extreme: indescribable terror.
 - They would have to face artillery barrages which could last days, the horrors of no-man's land, the fear of having to run into enemy machine gun fire and the gas.

The vast majority of soldiers during World War I were conscripts. They were not professional soldiers but ordinary men who had been taken from their everyday lives as farmers, factory hands, office workers, teachers, carpenters. After a short period of often hard, impersonal training, they were thrust into the trenches – from an often mundane but peaceful life to one sheer horror. Some men coped with this dramatic change in their lives easily. However, for many the trauma of war was simply too much for them and they suffered a psychological breakdown.

Today, we are well aware of the traumas experienced by soldiers who have been in battle. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an accepted and increasingly better understood medical condition. However, during World War I, there was little understanding of such things. Many men could simply not cope with the stresses and extremes of life at the front. They developed what became known as shell shock.

Shell shock could take many forms. Some men might become violent, others went into a 'personal shell', some could not shut up while others never uttered a word, some kept reliving their experiences, while for others it escaped their consciousness altogether. Shell shock often never left a man. In later life, sounds or images could easily bring back memories of the war and they could lose control.

Such things are sometimes referred to in TV/ film dramas. Two examples can illustrate.

- In episode one of the 1970s BBC series "When the Boat Comes in", there is a scene where a man suddenly throws himself on to the ground. A motor cycle passes by. Motor cycles of that era often made a noise reminiscent of the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun. He thought he was back in non-man's land.
- More recently, episode one of the 2013 series "Peaky Blinders" has a scene where a man runs into a bar and runs amok. The other men restrain him until he is calm. All recognise that he is suffering from shell shock.

Military authorities were at first at a loss as to how they should deal with shell shock. Often even the existence of the condition was denied. There were many cases of men who were suffering from shell shock who were executed for cowardice. Denying the existence of shell

shock, the authorities believed that any man who would not go 'over the top' was a coward, and had to be dealt with accordingly, as a lesson to others who might be so tempted. ⁵

4. "Other experiences"

The length and extent of World War I meant that the matter of prisoners-of-war (POWs) became a prominent issue.

- It is estimated that between eight and nine million soldiers became POWs between 1914 and 1918.
- The majority of POWs were taken on the Eastern Front.
 - The main reason for this was that the war in the east was more mobile in nature.
 - Sweeping advances and encircling movements were possible in the east that did not occur in the static warfare of the Western Front.
 - This made it easier to capture enemy troops.
- There were about 2.4 million POWs in Germany, spread through 300 camps.
- The extent of prisoner capture took the authorities by surprise and arrangements for POWs early on were very ad hoc without clear planning.
 - Conditions were harsh, primitive rather than deliberately cruel.
 - The early camps experienced outbreaks of typhus and other ailments.
- About 90% of POWs in German camps were set to work. It was not until 1918 that POWs in Britain were so employed.

One of the more controversial aspects of World War I was the use of *military courts-martial and the execution* of men at the front. In Britain, campaigns are still conducted to rehabilitate the reputations of servicemen who were executed.

- The British authorities sentenced about 3000 men to death.
 - Only 300 were actually executed; the rest had their sentences commuted to hard labour or prison terms.
 - Men were accused of a range of offences from sleeping on duty to murder to cowardice.
 - It is believed that many men shot for cowardice were actually suffering from shell shock. ⁶
- Rates of execution varied from country to country.
 - In France the figure was over 700.
 - In Germany it was just over 200.

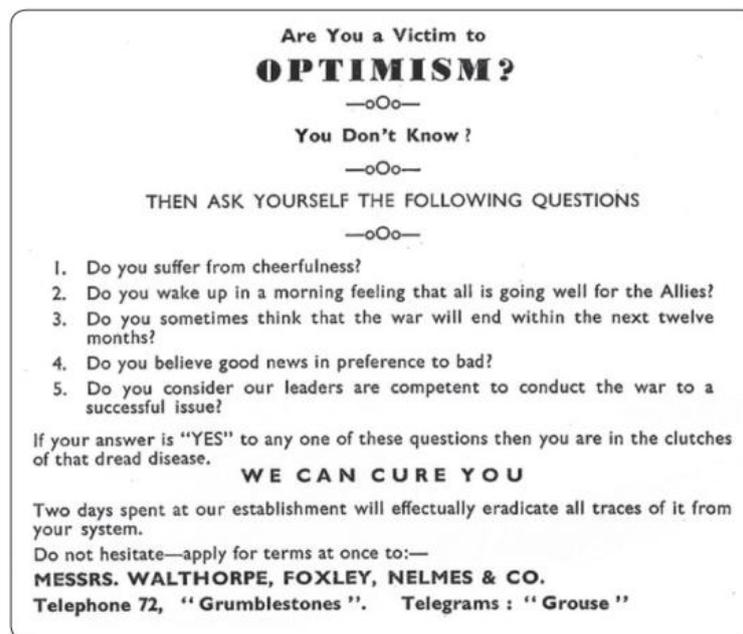
⁵ One of the great WWI (and anti-war) films is the Stanley Kubrick-directed film of 1957, "Paths of Glory". The insensitivity of the generals is highlighted, particularly as it relates to the denial of shell shock.

⁶ One of the great films made about WWI is the 1964 British film "King and Country", starring Dirk Bogarde and Tom Courtney, directed by Joseph Losey. It tells the story of a young private arrested for desertion and later executed. Shell shock is one of the issues covered in the film.

Ordinary soldiers at the front often handled the stresses they faced with *dark humour*.

- Their humour often satirised officers and demonised the enemy as seen in many postcards of the time.
- Earlier in this chapter, the issue of trench rats was mentioned. These were a menace, at the least annoying, at worst life-threatening. However, the issue of rats highlighted the dark humour of the men at the front.
 - In quiet moments they would have rat hunt competitions.
 - Some men even became fond of 'their rat', fed it and gave it a name.
- Lice were an ever-present irritation. The men even squeezed humour out of this with makeshift signs "selling" lice, described in lots of awful detail.
- The British 'tommy' referred to the town of Ypres in Belgium as 'Wipers'. Later in the war the men even managed to get out a makeshift paper which became known as the 'Wipers Times'. An example of the ironic humour of the soldiers can be seen in this extract from the paper shown in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5 Are you a victim to Optimism



An issue which became a concern for military authorities was the *sexual behaviour of the men and the spread of venereal disease (VD)*. The British Minister of War, Lord Kitchener, had exhorted the men to desist from 'wine and women'. With life expectancy at the front predictably short, many men chose to ignore Kitchener.

- Both the French and German military authorities opened official brothels for the men in the trenches.
 - These were segregated on the basis of rank: a brothel with a blue light was for the use of officers; those with a red light for the lower ranks.
 - There were many women who worked on an amateur basis as well.

- The concern for the authorities was the spread of VD which resulted. Thousands of men became incapacitated having contracted a sexually-transmitted disease (STD).
 - It is estimated that about 60 000 Australians who served in the AIF ended up with VD.
 - In 1916, one in five British field hospital admissions was for VD.
- Condoms had been around for some time as birth control devices and for preventing the spread of STDs.
 - Most countries provided their troops with condoms, though the United States refused as did Britain at the start of the war.
 - It is estimated that the American military had diagnosed up to 400 000 of STD infection by the end of 1918.

Exercise 5.2 Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What was the main danger caused by water in the trenches?	
2	What were trench rats?	
3	Why was shell shock such a problem during the war?	
4	What was the authorities' attitude towards shell shock?	
5	What is PTSD?	
6	How many men became POWs during WWI?	
7	Why were there more POWs taken on the Eastern Front rather than the Western Front?	
8	Why might a soldier be executed by his own side?	
9	Why is the issue of WWI executions still discussed today?	
10	How serious was the spread of STDs during WWI?	

Chapter Six

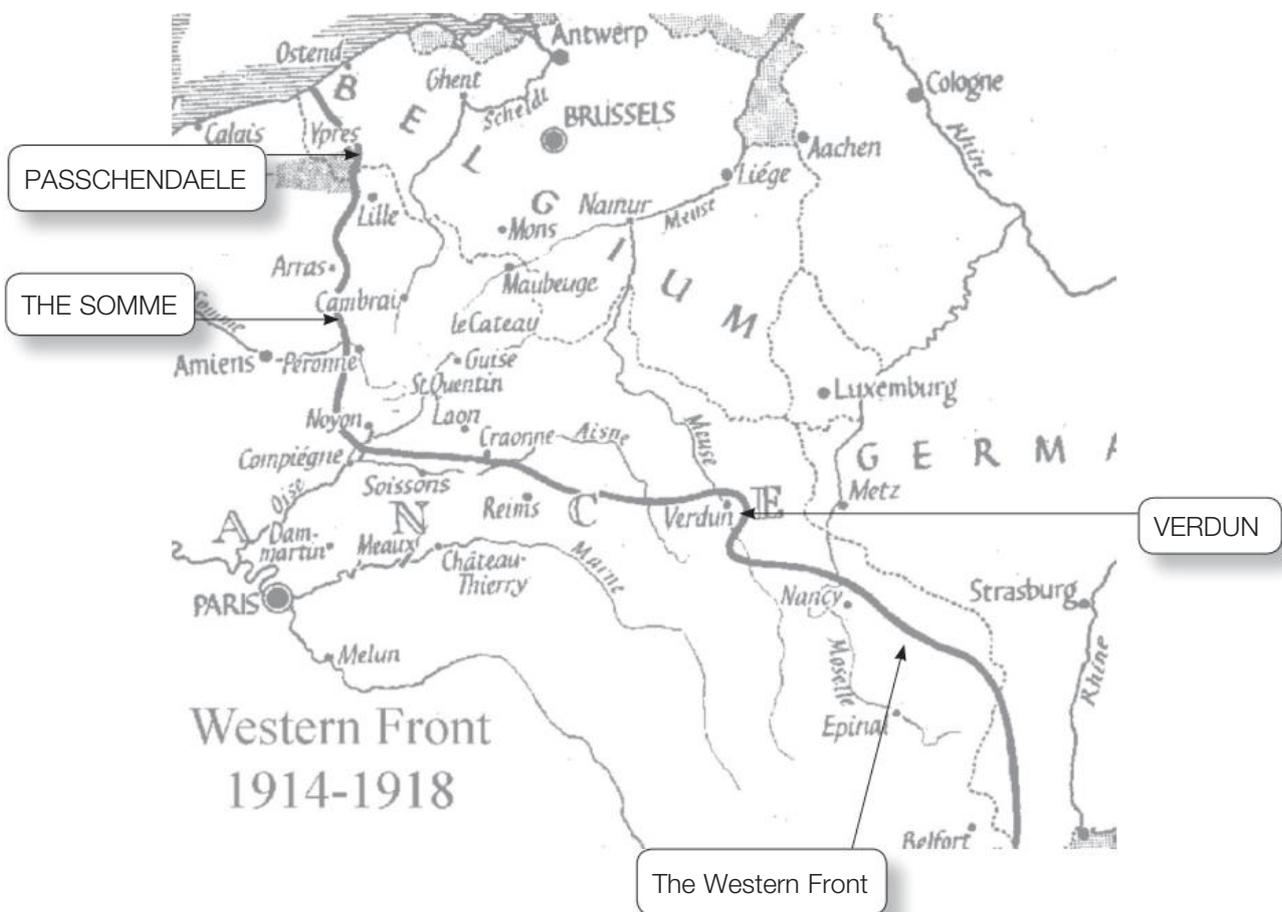
Key battles: Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele, Tannenberg, Beersheba

Introduction

World War I was fought over a vast area as was explained in Chapter Four. There were hundreds of engagements on the various fronts between 1914 and 1918. Some of them were brief while others lasted for months. The attack on the town of Hamel in July 1918, masterminded by the Australian general, John Monash achieved its objective in 93 minutes.¹ The Battle of Verdun in 1917 ended inclusively after nine horrific months.

What follows is an examination of five battles. Three of them were fought on the Western Front – Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele; one on the Eastern Front – Tannenberg; and one in the Middle East – Beersheba.

Figure 6.1 Locations of Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele.



¹ Monash had estimated that it would take 90 minutes..

The Battle of Verdun

When did the Battle of Verdun take place?

The battle of Verdun began in February 1916. The campaign finally came to a close in November/ December 1916

Where did the Battle of Verdun take place?

Verdun was situated roughly half-way south along the Western Front. It is approximately 225 kms east of Paris and 55 kms west of Metz and south west from the border with Luxembourg.

Who were the commanders at the Battle of Verdun?

German forces were led by General Erich von Falkenhayn. French forces were led by Marshal Philippe Pétain.

What was the aim of the Battle of Verdun?

Verdun had no great military significance; in fact the French had removed much of Verdun's artillery to what were considered more sensitive sections of the Western Front. However, Verdun had symbolic importance for the French: it had been the site of 'heroic' struggles in the past:

- Verdun had featured in struggles against Barbarian tribes in the 9th century BC;
- it had been the site of a French defeat against Prussia during the French Revolutionary War in 1792;
- and it had featured during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

The German commander, von Falkenhayn, knew that the French would not want to lose Verdun and would probably fight to the death to save it. Thus, his aim was to hurl the power of the German army against Verdun in order to force the French to defend it, 'no matter what'. Falkenhayn was not aiming at a breakthrough; he was aiming to 'bleed the French army white', exhaust and demoralise it.

What happened during the Battle of Verdun?

Both sides were to hurl millions of artillery shells at each other, with neither side willing to relent. The land around Verdun became dotted with thousands of craters. Veterans would later refer to the 'hell of Verdun'. At first Germany made good progress, capturing several French forts around the town. However, from late June, German casualties began to mount as the French counter-attacked. Falkenhayn's aim had been to bleed the French army; Verdun resulted in the bleeding of both sides. By November the French had recaptured the forts it had lost earlier in the campaign.

What were the results of the Battle of Verdun?

Verdun was a classic example of attrition warfare. Months of horrific, bloody fighting had resulted in the situation at the end of the battle not much changed from what it had been back in February.

- Precise figures of the losses at Verdun will never be known. The generally accepted figure of dead, wounded or captured is anywhere between 700 000 and 900 000, about 55% French.
- Pressure on the French at Verdun was one factor that led to the Battle of Somme (see below).
- Falkenhayn's failure at Verdun led to his end. He was replaced by Generals Ludendorff and Hindenburg.
- The French commander, Pétain, became a national hero.²
- Soldiers allowed on leave to Paris during the battle reported that the rest of the country seemed ignorant about what was going on. This, combined with the horror of Verdun and poor conditions of French soldiers along the front, combined to produce debilitating mutinies in the French army in 1917.

The Battle of the Somme

When did the Battle of the Somme take place?

The Battle of the Somme took place between July and November 1916.

Where did the Battle of the Somme take place?

The Somme battlefield was situated in northern part of the Western Front, about 40 kms east of Amiens and about 140 kms north east of Paris. It covered an area of about 20 kms.

Who were the commanders at the Battle of the Somme?

British forces were led by General Douglas Haig. The German commander at this time was General Erich von Falkenhayn but he would soon be relieved of command following the failure at Verdun.

² Pétain's heroic status was destroyed during WWII. He was the head of the Vichy government (1940-44) which collaborated with the Nazis.

What was the aim of the Battle of the Somme?

Controversy has surrounded the Somme. Haig's original purpose was for a breakthrough. However, evidence now exists that he altered his diaries to argue that his aims were in fact to relieve the French at Verdun, prevent a transfer of German troops to the east and to wear down the German army.

What happened during the Battle of the Somme?

The Battle of the Somme was preceded by a week-long artillery bombardment of German positions. Over 1.5 million shells landed on the German trenches. However, the bombardment proved ineffective as many shells did not explode and by now the German trenches were so deep that they could withstand such an attack.

Believing that the enemy had been adequately softened up, British troops were ordered over the top on 1 July. They headed straight into German machine guns that had been able to get back into position. British casualties on the first day were 60 000; almost 20 000 men died.

The battle continued for another four months with predictably enormous casualties. A meeting of allied leaders in Compiègne in November decided to end the battle.

What were the results of the Battle of the Somme?

The Battle of the Somme had been a total failure; it was another classic example of futile attrition warfare.

- British losses did not end on that first tragic day.
 - By the end of November, allied casualties had reached over one million.
 - German casualties were over 400 000.
- Allied forces had managed to push their front line forward about 8 kms.
 - However, even this gain proved pointless because in March 1917, German General Hindenburg decided to pull the German position back to what became known as the Hindenburg Line.
 - His purpose was to straighten the German lines and this resulted in his forces having to defend about 30 kms less of front line.



Figure 6.2 General Douglas Haig

Despite Haig's claims that the German action had proven the success of the Somme, Hindenburg's decision had really shown how pointless the Battle of the Somme had been.

The Battle of Passchendaele

When did the Battle of Passchendaele take place?

The Third Battle of Yprès (Passchendaele) took place between 31 July and 6 November 1917.³

Where did the Battle of Passchendaele take place?

The Battle of Passchendaele took place in an area of a few kilometres north east of the Belgian city of Yprès at the northern part of the Western Front. Two earlier major battles had been fought in the area earlier in the war.

Who were the commanders at the Battle of Passchendaele?

British forces were commanded by General Douglas Haig. By this time, German forces were under the command of Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Germany's 4th Army Chief of Staff at Passchendaele was General Lossberg.

What was the aim of the Battle of Passchendaele?

Haig believed that the German army was on the point of collapse and that one final push was all that was needed to achieve this. He was spurred into action by the disastrous French Nivelle Offensive in May and by the British capture of the nearby Messines Ridge. Haig also hoped that the offensive could result in the capture of German submarine bases at Ostende and Zeebrugge.

What happened during the Battle of Passchendaele?

On 18 July, the attack began with an enormous artillery bombardment on the German positions. On 31 July, the infantry were sent over the top but the German resistance was greater than expected and little ground was gained.

- In August the area suffered its heaviest rainfall in decades. The battlefield became a hideous, muddy quagmire.
 - Men and horses became stuck in liquid mud; we will never know how many men actually drowned in the mud.
- A temporary halt was called but Haig resumed the attack on 20 September. German resistance was stiff and they also unleashed mustard gas.
- Despite all the evidence that the battle was a catastrophe, Haig refused to pull back and ordered further assaults.
 - The village of Passchendaele was finally captured on 6 November, enabling Haig to claim success.

³ The battle became known as the Battle of Passchendaele after the French village whose capture became the objective by November 1917.

Figure 6.3: Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, about 2 kms south west of Passchendaele village.



What were the results of the Battle of Passchendaele?

- German casualties were about 260 000; allied casualties reached almost 400 000 and included tens of thousands of Australian, New Zealand and Canadian troops. ⁴
- Passchendaele was another example of futile attrition warfare. The submarine ports had not been taken but some ground had been gained and so Haig claimed victory.
 - German forces had pulled back but their loss of territory was minimal and did not allow for any further allied progress.
- The dreadful nature of the muddy quagmire that was the reality of this battle has made the word Passchendaele the symbol of the horrors of the Western Front.

As 1918 opened, the deadlock on the Western Front remained in place.

The Battle of Tannenberg

When did the Battle of Tannenberg take place?

The Battle of Tannenberg took place in late August 1914.

Where did the Battle of Tannenberg take place?

The Tannenberg battlefield was located in East Prussia. It was roughly 170 kms north of Warsaw and about 130 kms south of the Baltic coast. ⁵

Who were the commanders at the Battle of Tannenberg?

German forces were led by General Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff, Ludendorff. The Russian 2nd army was led by General Samsonov. The Russian 1st Army, defeated shortly after, was commanded by General Rennenkampf.

⁴ The 2008 film *Passchendaele* presents a story around the battle from the Canadian perspective.

⁵ Tannenberg today is known as Szkotowo.

What was the aim of the Battle of Tannenberg?

The main purpose of the Battle of Tannenberg for the Germans was to regain the initiative in the east following a couple of small Russian successes in East Prussia.

What happened during the Battle of Tannenberg?

Two Russian armies – the 2nd under Samsonov, and the 1st under Rennenkampf – invaded East Prussia in mid-August 1914. After a couple of minor Russian successes, the German 8th Army under Maximilian Prittwitz retreated, a decision for which he was sacked.

- Hindenburg and Ludendorff replaced Prittwitz.
 - They ordered offence, managed to stabilise the front by 22 August and by 29 August had surrounded Samsonov's forces.
- Poor communications, German intercepts of Russian messages and personal rivalry between Samsonov and Rennenkampf combined to produce a disastrous Russian defeat.
- Rennenkampf failed to link up with Samsonov and his 1st Army was also heavily defeated a few days later at the Battle of Massurian Lakes.

What were the results of the Battle of Tannenberg?

Germany had suffered between 12 000 and 15 000 casualties. However, they gained a substantial victory.

- For Russia the Battle of Tannenberg was a major catastrophe.
 - Russia suffered 78 000 casualties and 92 000 men were taken prisoner.
 - Only 10 000 managed to get back to Russia.
 - Almost 500 artillery guns were captured by the Germans.
- Russian morale was shattered, and though it would continue fighting for a few years more, the Russian army never really recovered from Tannenberg.
- Its only positive effect was that the German High Command had transferred troops from the Western Front to fight in the east, and this may have prevented a decisive German victory at the Battle of the Marne in September.

General Samsonov felt so shamed that he committed suicide.

The Battle of Beersheba

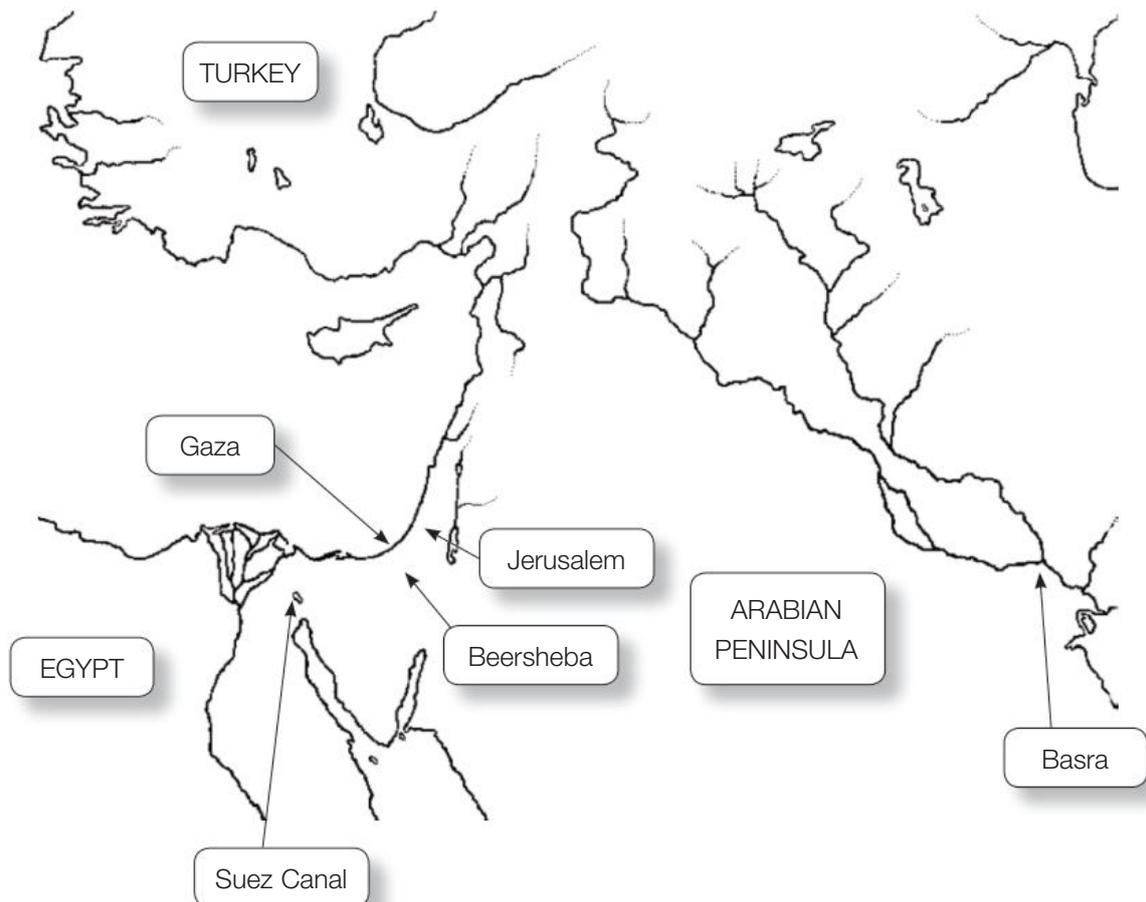
When did the Battle of Beersheba take place?

The Battle of Beersheba took place on 31 October 1917.

Where did the Battle of Beersheba take place?

Beersheba was a fortified town in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire (modern day Israel). It was about 45 kms south east of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast and about 65 kms south west of Jerusalem.

Figure 6.4 Location of Beersheba



Who were the commanders at the Battle of Beersheba?

British forces in the area were under the control of General Allenby. The Australian Commander of the Desert Mounted Corps was Lieutenant General Chauvel; in charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade was Brigadier General Grant.

What was the aim of the Battle of Beersheba?

Turkey had entered the war on the side of Germany in November 1914. This made its extensive empire in the Middle East, from Palestine to the Persian Gulf a new theatre of war.

- Britain was concerned about its oil supply route and immediately landed forces in Basra on the coast of the Persian Gulf (modern day Iraq).

- The Central Powers attempted an attack on the British-controlled Suez Canal in February 1915 but this failed.
- Between April and December 1915, allied forces fought a disastrous campaign on the Gallipoli Peninsula in an attempt to take Turkey out of the war.
- In 1917, British forces from Egypt, moved into the Sinai Peninsula and then attempted in April to take the Turkish-controlled port of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast. This attempt failed.

The command of British forces switched from General Murray to General Allenby. Allenby's more energetic leadership brought on a new attack. The aim was to outflank Gaza by capturing Beersheba and so breaking the Gaza-Beersheba line.

What happened during the Battle of Beersheba?

The British 20 Corps attacked Beersheba on the afternoon of 31 October but made no headway to the town and its important wells.

The Australian commander of the Desert Mounted Corps, Chauvel, ordered Grant, commander of the 4th Light Horse Brigade, to launch a mounted attack on the town.

- The defending Turks attempted to repel the Australians with shrapnel and machine gun fire but they were largely silenced by British artillery.
- Many of the Australians were holding bayonets in their hands.
- Some dismounted and attacked the Turks with bayonets and rifles, some rode through to the rear trenches while others continued on to Beersheba itself.
- The momentum of the Australian mounted attack carried them through.

What were the results of the Battle of Beersheba?

The 4th and 12th Light Horse casualties were light : 31 dead and 36 wounded. 700 Turkish troops were taken prisoner.

The capture of Beersheba was achieved within an hour. It had a significant impact on the Middle East theatre of the war:

- The wells of Beersheba were now in allied hands and secured valuable water supplies.
- The Gaza-Beersheba line was now broken which now meant that allied forces could resume their attack on Gaza.
 - On 6 November, Turkish forces began to evacuate Gaza.
 - Within a week Gaza had been taken.
 - On 9 December British troops entered Jerusalem.

Exercise 6.1 Match the term on the right with the definition on the left.

1	British commander at the Somme		
2	France's hero at Verdun		Verdun
3	He was in charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade at Beersheba		Haig
4	French village captured on 6 November 1917		Yprès
5	The new German defensive position created three months after the Somme		Tannenberg
6	British commander in Palestine at the time of the Battle of Beersheba		Hindenburg
7	Germany's attempt to bleed the French dry.		Beersheba
8	German commander at the Battle of Tannenberg		Falkenhayn
9	Britain suffered 60 000 casualties on the first day of this battle		The Somme
10	German 4th Army Chief of Staff at Passchendaele		Lossberg
11	Site of Russia's disastrous defeat in August 1914		Samsonov
12	German commander at Verdun		Pétain
13	Cavalry victory here on 31 October 1917		Passchendaele
14	Russian military commander who committed suicide after Tannenberg		Allenby
15	Passchendaele was the third major battle at this location		Hindenburg Line
			Chauvel

What do the historians have to say about the key battles?

1. W S Churchill: *The World Crisis*

Writing in August 1916, Churchill explains by means of an imagined conversation with German High Command, what the German purpose was at Verdun. A march on Paris, the taking of Verdun or even marching through Verdun were all discounted. Placing himself in the position of German commanders, he wrote this.

*“...We seek to wear down an army, not to make a gap, to break the heart of a nation, not to break a hole in a line. We have selected Verdun because we think the French will consider themselves bound to defend it at all costs; because we can dispose our cannon around this apex of their front as to pound and batter the vital positions with superior range and superior metal, and force our enemy to expose division after division upon this anvil to our blows...”*⁶

2. Gordon Corrigan: *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*

Corrigan takes a positive view on the Battle of the Somme. He praises Haig and argues that the Somme had achieved much and in fact was a key factor preventing a German victory on the Western Front. Corrigan argues that the Somme was crucial for relieving pressure on Verdun. Had it not been for the Somme, half of the 69 German divisions engaged there could have been moved to Verdun.

*“...the Germans could have attacked on both banks of the River Meuse simultaneously, and there can be little doubt that the French army would have been defeated. Such a defeat could well have led to a complete collapse of the French military will, and to a German victory in the west...”*⁷

3. *The Canadian Encyclopaedia*

For Canada, Passchendaele is as momentous as Gallipoli and Fromelles are in the Australian memory. The online Canadian Encyclopaedia provides a clear and concise description of the pitiful conditions with which troops at Passchendaele had to contend. It is also merciless in its description of the battle's utter futility.

*“...The campaign was not followed by an advance to the coast and the liberation of Belgium's coastal ports... Although the fighting at Passchendaele did occupy and wear down German armies on the Western Front through the summer and fall of 1917 – perhaps diverting the enemy's attention from the internal strife and weakness among French forces – it also depleted the British armies. Britain's future wartime prime minister Winston Churchill called Passchendaele “a forlorn expenditure of valour and life without equal in futility...”*⁸

6 Churchill, W S, *The World Crisis: 1911-18*, Four Square Books, London, 1964 ed, pp 656-7

7 Corrigan, G, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*, Cassell, London, 2004, p 297

8 <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/battle-of-passchendaele/>

Chapter Seven

Changing nature of war: science, industry, medicine, communications

Introduction

No matter in what era war occurs, whether it is the armies of Julius Caesar rampaging across Gaul or the Crimean War or Iraq in 2003, it brings with it death, injury, disease and destruction. World War I was no different, and of course in many ways a lot worse.

However, the conduct of war is not limited to the battlefield. As war came to be conducted on a larger and more sophisticated scale throughout the 19th and into the 20th century, it was fought well beyond the front.

- During World War I, what happened in the scientific laboratories of Germany and the factories of Britain were to be of profound significance.
- Both sides learned ever more innovative ways of killing each other and on an ever grander scale.

Trench warfare presented problems to military commanders which required scientific expertise in areas such as artillery, chemical warfare, cartography, reconnaissance, logistics, communications and military medicine. In addition there were technological developments in naval warfare and the growth of air power which required responses on an industrial scale.

Science and industry

The armies of the belligerents did not enter the war ignorant of modern weaponry. By 1914, experts in all nations had become familiar with the basic principles of propellants, explosive and shell manufactures. Organic chemistry had developed in the 19th century as had ideas on ballistics. Machine guns and field guns were part of most armies' arsenals.

Though mobile warfare remained a feature of fighting on the Eastern Front, it would be totally lacking on the Western Front from the end of 1914 until early 1918. As the war became dominated by the power of defensive technology, early developments included:

- the development of a range of machine guns:
 - the British Vickers and the German Maxim guns were effective but were heavy and cumbersome;
 - by the end of the war new, lighter models dominated;
- early on trenches were built with human labour (often colonial) but mechanical digging machines were used later on;
- horse transport was crucial for all sides but by 1916, light-rail networks using small cars were in evidence;

Trench warfare brought with it new weapons systems:

- mortars were developed for sending lightweight shells short distances;
- the war saw the development of hand grenades, well-suited to trench warfare conditions;
- a simple but important innovation was the development of steel helmets:
 - the French had the Adrien model from 1915;
 - in 1916 the British “tin hat” and the German “coal scuttle” appeared;
- as positions became fixed, allied forces followed the German example of developing higher calibre artillery pieces, like howitzers, that could fire larger high-explosive shells in high arcs:
 - the number and scale of such weapons grew enormously;
 - the most well-known examples of such new weapons were the German “Big Bertha” 420 mm gun and the long-range “Paris-gun” in 1918.

Figure 7.1 British 18-Pounder Mark II Field Gun – 9244 were produced in British and American factories between 1914 and 1918



The demand for such weaponry had major industrial implications. Industry was now expected to produce massive quantities of metal shell-casings and explosives. All sides were challenged by this, Germany in particular. The allied naval blockade imposed from the start of the war placed severe limits on Germany's ability to import key raw materials such as nitrates, cellulose and glycerine, crucial for explosives manufacture. This forced Germany to develop ersatz (substitute) products (see Chapter Eight).

Science intervened with the development of gas warfare.

- Germany was the leader in the development of gas warfare until 1918.
 - The Germans used more gas shells than the allies, partly due to its problems with explosive.
 - The Fritz Haber Institute collaborated with research-intensive dye to keep the German lead in this area.
- Mustard gas appeared in 1917 and caused temporary blindness and severe burns. A foam form was able to cause suffocation.
- Phosgene gas was first used in 1915 and attacked the lungs; prussic acid gas was designed to attack the nervous system.

- By 1918, the United States was fully engaged in the war and its production of chemical weapons threatened to totally overwhelm the Germans.
 - The US was ready to deluge the Germans with mustard gas and lewisite which combined the properties of mustard gas and arsenicals.
 - The armistice was signed before the Americans were able to use these weapons.

Science and industry came together in the development of aviation warfare. At the start of the war, airplane development was still in its infancy. Before the war, Germany had focussed on the development of dirigibles (airships) as pioneered by Ferdinand von Zeppelin, after whom these airships became named. Zeppelins could fly higher than aircraft and carry greater bomb loads but they lacked accuracy. However, zeppelin attacks on British civilian targets gave a foretaste of what was in store for home front populations in the next war.

Aircraft were of crucial importance for reconnaissance. However, their use as bombers was another war away.

- Aircraft development occurred more as a result of empirical trial and error methods rather than systematic scientific research.
- One problem aircraft had was “how was a pilot to fire at an enemy aircraft with guns mounted on the front fuselage without shooting off the aircraft’s propeller?”
 - A solution came in 1915 with the German Fokker E 1 monoplane which used a mechanically synchronised propeller and machine gun. This became known as the “Fokker scourge”.
 - British and French planes had developed a similar system by 1916.
- Bombing by aircraft might work as a terror tactic but it had little strategic importance. The lack of accurate navigational equipment, precision bombsights and the development of anti-aircraft guns served to limit any possible effectiveness of bombing.
- However, by the end of the war, both sides were developing larger bomber aircraft such as the British Handley Page V/1500 four-engine bomber which was capable of reaching Berlin.

Figure 7.2 The Snipe (foreground)



The Snipe entered RAF service in September 1918.

In October 1918, 24 year old Canadian Major William Barker was flying a Snipe when he single-handedly fought off 15 Fokker D.VIIs.

For this action he received the Victoria Cross.

Arguably the most important scientific/ industrial innovation was the tank. Tanks first appeared on the Somme in 1916 but proved unreliable and were not used in sufficient numbers. Britain's traditional commanders seemed at a loss as to what to do with them though Britain's Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, was a strong supporter of mechanised warfare.

- In November 1917, tanks proved their worth at Cambrai when they achieved a breakthrough but other factors intervened that prevented this success being followed up on.
- However, by mid-1918, tank technology had advanced, and the allies were using tanks in large numbers. They proved to be a major factor in the eventual allied success in the counter-offensive of 1918.
- The French developed the “char d’assaut”. French tanks, such as the Renault FT, were lighter and faster than British tanks but suffered greater losses and breakdowns.
- German tank development was limited.

Figure 7. 15 inch naval guns from WWI, positioned in front of the entrance to London's Imperial war Museum.



One of the main issues which bedevilled Anglo-German relations before 1914 was the naval arms race (see Chapter One). The British developed their Dreadnought while the Germans responded with the Nassau. However, naval battles played only a small role in the war; the only major naval encounter was the indecisive Battle of Jutland in 1916. Of much greater significance than surface naval warfare, was sub-surface warfare.

German submarine warfare was used to counter the allied blockade and to prevent supplies reaching Britain.

- The submarine was the epitome of modern technology of its time.
- It was driven by internal combustion and electricity, and its torpedoes were delivered by compressed-air motors and guided by gyroscopes.
- Counter-measures against German submarines included the use of depth charges and minefields.
 - Following the entry of the US into the war, convoys were employed effectively against submarine attacks.
- Towards the end of the war “asdic” or “sonar” was being developed to detect submarines under water though this innovation was only in its infancy.

Exercise 7.1 Match the term on the right with description on the left.

1	a German machine gun		ZEPPELIN
2	lightweight shells used in the trenches		ADRIEN
3	French soldier's steel helmet		SNIPE
4	420 mm German artillery gun		MUSTARD GAS
5	German substitute goods		BIG BERTHA
6	weapon that caused blindness and severe burns		MORTARS
7	US manufactured gas weapon		CHAR D'ASSAUT
8	German airship		MAXIM
9	British fighter plane from 1918		LEWISITE
10	French tank		ERSATZ

Communications

A fundamental problem of fighting on all fronts, whether the static Western Front or the more mobile Eastern Front, was communications. Once an action began, it became next to impossible for commanders in the rear to maintain contact with their forward units. Several methods existed at the start of the war:

- both sides' trenches contained field telephones but these were easily cut during an artillery bombardment or even by men rushing about;
 - any attempt to lay down wires during an advance across no-man's land was hazardous in the extreme;
- visual signalling was common using flags but such a method invited an enemy sniper's bullet;
- begbie lamps – which concentrated light and could be used over a great distance – were used until 1915.

- many units used trench runners; ¹
- dogs and carrier pigeons were also used.

The Royal Signals Museum in Dorset, UK, provides one touching story of one pigeon's contribution to the war effort.

"...Pigeon 2709 was a typical example of the bravery of these birds. In 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele Pigeon 2709 was despatched from the front line to carry a message back to Headquarters some 20 minutes flying time away. Shortly after setting off Pigeon 2709 was hit by enemy fire. The bullet broke a leg and passed through his body, leaving the small metal message cylinder embedded in his side. Although it took him a further 21 agonising hours he successfully completed his mission only to die of his injuries the following day..." ²

The solution was obviously wireless communication. By the outbreak of war, it had become possible to transmit voices using a wave with continuous amplitude modulation (AM). However, even this brought its own problems:

- such radio sets were heavy;
- their fragile vacuum tubes were easily broken;
- batteries were either too heavy or underpowered;

Early in the war, civilian telephones were brought into military use. However, these were not suited to the conditions of the trenches. Later the telephone D Mark III was to become the standard army field telephone. This model had its own buzzer unit and could also be used to send Morse code messages if it was too noisy for voice transmissions, quite likely at the front.

Figure 7.4 German troops using a field telephone in the trenches in 1915



Both sides in the war paid much attention to the development of wireless technology. By the end of the war, radio sets had become lighter and more portable. It soon became possible to move from using Morse code to voice communication. Technical developments saw the use of amplifiers and the electron tube which greatly added to wireless reliability. It became possible to guide zeppelins and aircraft with radio transmissions during the war.

Connected to the development of wireless communications was the development of the ancient art of cryptography. During the early months of the war, both sides had been able to intercept enemy messages. It is believed that this had greatly assisted the German victory at Tannenberg in August 1914 and the French at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914.

¹ Hitler was a trench runner on the Western Front.

² <https://www.royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk/ww1-ww2-communications/>

- As a result military authorities had to pay great attention to ensuring the secrecy of their communications by using ever more elaborate codes. The use of codes, though necessary, slowed down communications.
- As codes became used more and more, decoding equipment was developed. However, real success in this area was another war away.

The use of electricity had made possible the development of powerful searchlight and projection equipment that became commonly used by the navy and gradually by civil defence units against aircraft. Later projectors were fitted with remote control systems so an operator could work up to twenty metres away and not be blinded by the light.

At the front, troops often used a Trench Signalling lamp. This was battery operated. Its bullseye lens was able to concentrate light which could be picked up by a neighbouring trench where an operator would use a periscope to read the signal. This lamp had a Morse key which could switch the lamp on and off and so send Morse messages. It was a dangerous device as it also invited enemy sniper fire.

Medicine

Many of the young men who rushed to enlist when war broke out in 1914 did so with their heads full of romantic notions of glory and heroism. They were to discover that there is nothing romantic about war. Ten million deaths at the front prove that and far more men were wounded than killed. However, due to advances in medicine, surgery and the logistics involved with medical evacuation, wounded soldiers had far more chance of surviving during World War I than had been the case in any previous conflict.

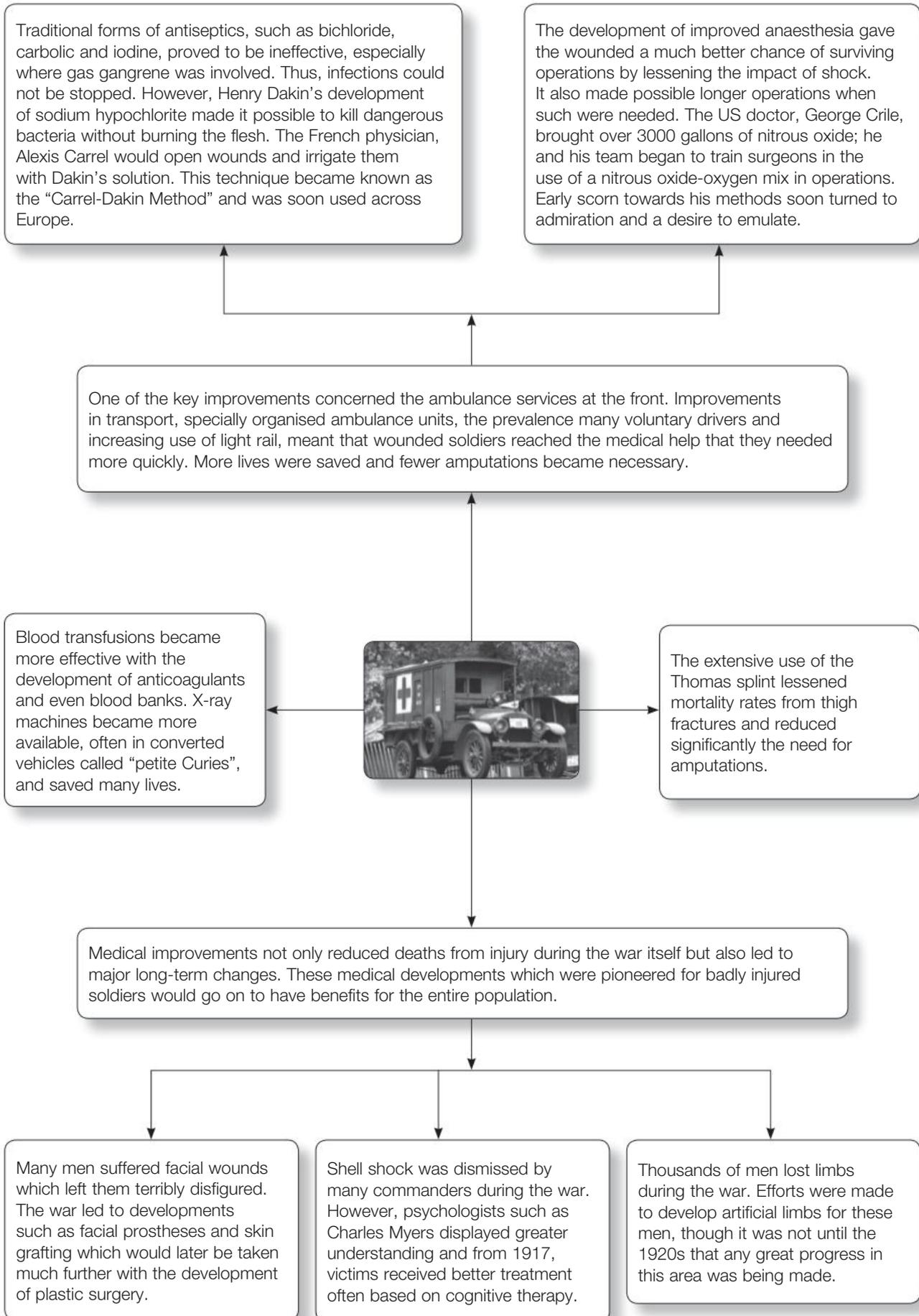
It was not like that in the early stages of the war.

- Within a few weeks of the start of hostilities, there were over 300 000 wounded French soldiers.
- They would be taken to the railway depot, placed in a cattle car full of straw and if lucky taken to the nearest town.
 - Many had to wait in the open with no water, no food, no bandages.
- French medical services were totally overwhelmed by the carnage at the front.
 - The lack of competent surgeons led to thousands of often unnecessary amputations.
 - Ignorance and the paucity of hygienic conditions increased the dangers of infection which in turn could lead to gangrene and the need for amputation.

However, by the end of the war, there had been a series of significant advances in medical science, treatment and logistics which made possible the survival of many more injured soldiers than had ever been possible in earlier conflict.

Figure 7.5 summarises some of these developments.

Figure 7.5 Medical advances during World War I



Exercise 7.2 Answer true or false to each of the following statements.

1	Field telephones were an effective form of trench communication.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Pigeons were used for communications throughout the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	The standard of wireless technology improved steadily throughout the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	It proved impossible to intercept and decode enemy messages.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Trench signalling lamps were widely used and safe to operate.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Medical authorities were totally overwhelmed by the number of wounded early in the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	The Carel-Dakin method did much to prevent the spread of infection.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	There was little improvement in blood services during the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	“Petite Curies” were used to deal with thigh fractures.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Charles Myers was responsible for a more enlightened approach to shell shock.	TRUE/ FALSE

Chapter Eight

Total War and the changing role of women

Introduction

The expectation in most countries in August 1914 was that the war would be over by Christmas. This in fact was one reason why many young men were so eager to join up for fear that they 'might miss out' on the action. However, by early 1915 such thoughts had been shown to be delusional. A war of attrition had settled in on the Western Front, and even the Eastern Front had more than two years to suffer. The Italian front would limp on for over three years from mid-1915.

The combatants were major economic, financial and military powers. This meant that nations had almost unlimited resources as their factories were able to churn out more and more weapons and munitions. Industrialists were all too ready to profit from fulfilling their patriotic duty by supplying the armies at the front. Chapter Seven provided a glimpse at how industry and science also played a key role in the war. The combined population of Britain and France was over 80 million; Germany's population was about 70 million, and Russia twice that. Therefore, the generals knew that they had unlimited manpower.

The scale of the war was unique in history (up to this point). This fact had major implications for how governments were to conduct themselves on the home front.

- The economy had to be placed on to a war footing.
 - The transport system, merchant shipping, mining, agriculture all had to be mobilised in support of maintaining the enormous war effort.
- The population had to be brought under government control.
 - The needs of a war economy at home had to be satisfied and troop numbers at the front had to be maintained.
- As the war placed ever greater strains on the population, governments needed to convince their people of the justice of their cause and of the need to maintain sacrifice. ¹

World War I was also to have a major impact on women.

- Women were to play a major role in the war effort.
- Attitudes to women began to change; they gained self-respect and arguably their war role brought them the vote in Britain.
- However, real moves towards female equality were still a couple of generations away.

For perhaps the first time in history, civilian targets were specifically targeted by enemy military forces. Mass bombing of cities was another war away but German submarines and zeppelins

¹ The issues of recruitment, conscription, propaganda and censorship will be examined in Chapter 9.

were able to target London and Britain's east coast while German artillery was able to hit targets in Paris.

Figure 8.1 Evidence of German bombing of London in September 1917.



The obelisk and the sphinx statue referred to are on London's Thames embankment.

Thus, in terms of economics, mobilisation of the people, the role of women, the manipulation of people's minds and direct attack, the era of total war had arrived.

Total War

The term 'total war'² first appeared in general use in France about 1916. When Georges Clemenceau became Premier in 1917, he said this to the National Assembly:

"...We present ourselves in the single aim of total war. My policy has one aim: to maintain the morale of the French people in this, the worst crisis of its history... My foreign policy and my home policy are the same. At home I wage war. Abroad I wage war...I shall go on waging war..."

There were several elements to the nature of total war.

- Populations – male and female - came increasingly under the control of the state.
- The economic resources of the nation were at the disposal of the war effort.
- Freedoms normally taken for granted in peace time were restricted in the name of national security.
- Governments became involved in activities that they had previously had left to private business.

¹ Study of the home fronts in World War I regularly employs this term but it was not until World War II that the term was widely used. Joseph Goebbels famously used the term in his speech of early 1943.

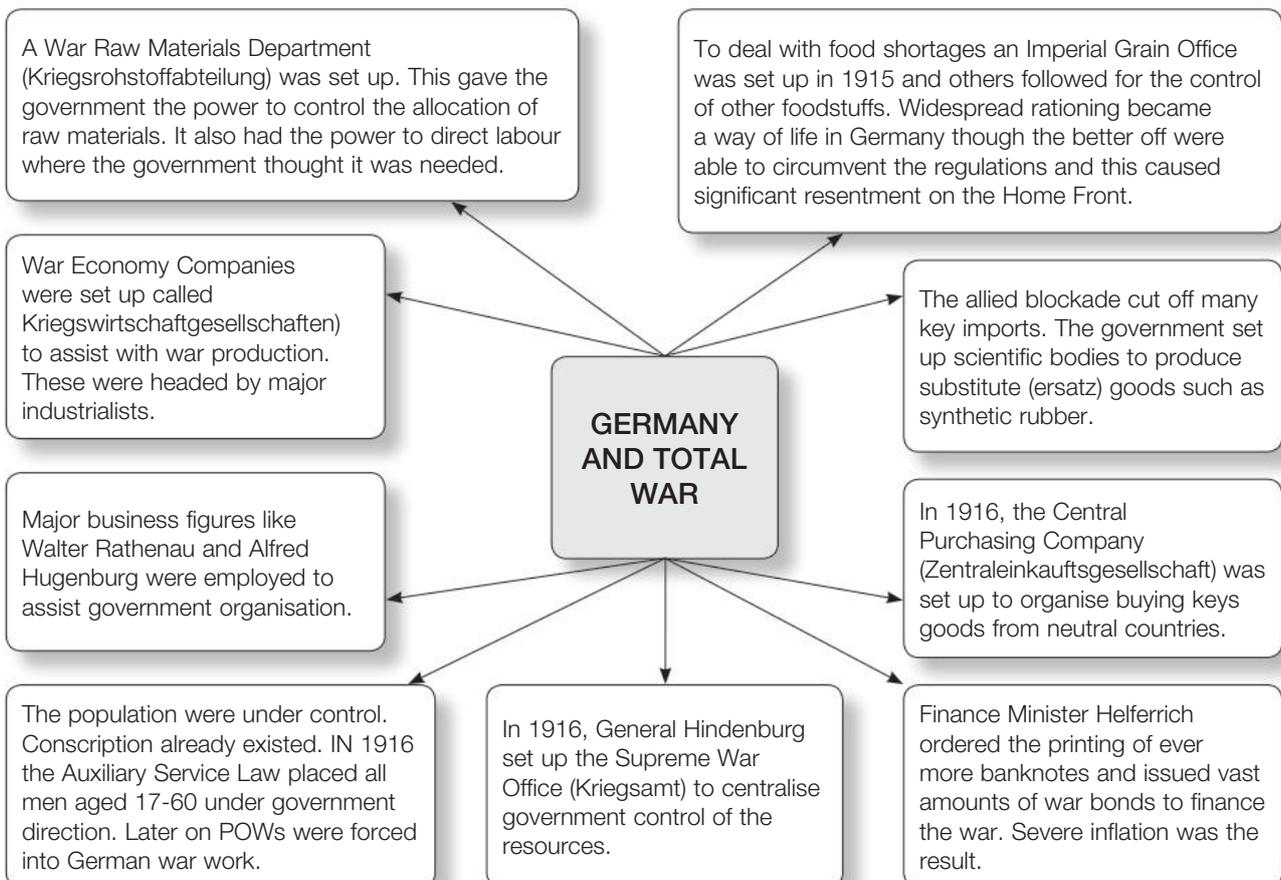
Germany adopted ‘total war’ measures almost immediately. Conscription was already a part of German life and so the forced mass mobilisation of men for the army was quickly accepted. The patriotic outpouring in Germany at the start of the war meant that many men volunteered even before being called up. Women were mobilised for the work forces from the start and government intervention in the economy was immediate.

However, this was not the case in Britain.

- Germany’s authoritarian-style government made it easier for Berlin to assume controls which took longer in democratic Britain.
- There was no conscription in Britain and it was assumed that patriotic fervour would be enough to ensure the ranks at the front would be filled.
- Britain believed that the war would soon be over and that it would involve rapid movements of men which would not demand a massive industrial input.
- Thus, industry continued in a “business as usual” manner and despite their enthusiasm to become involved in the war effort, women were not immediately mobilised as they were in Germany.

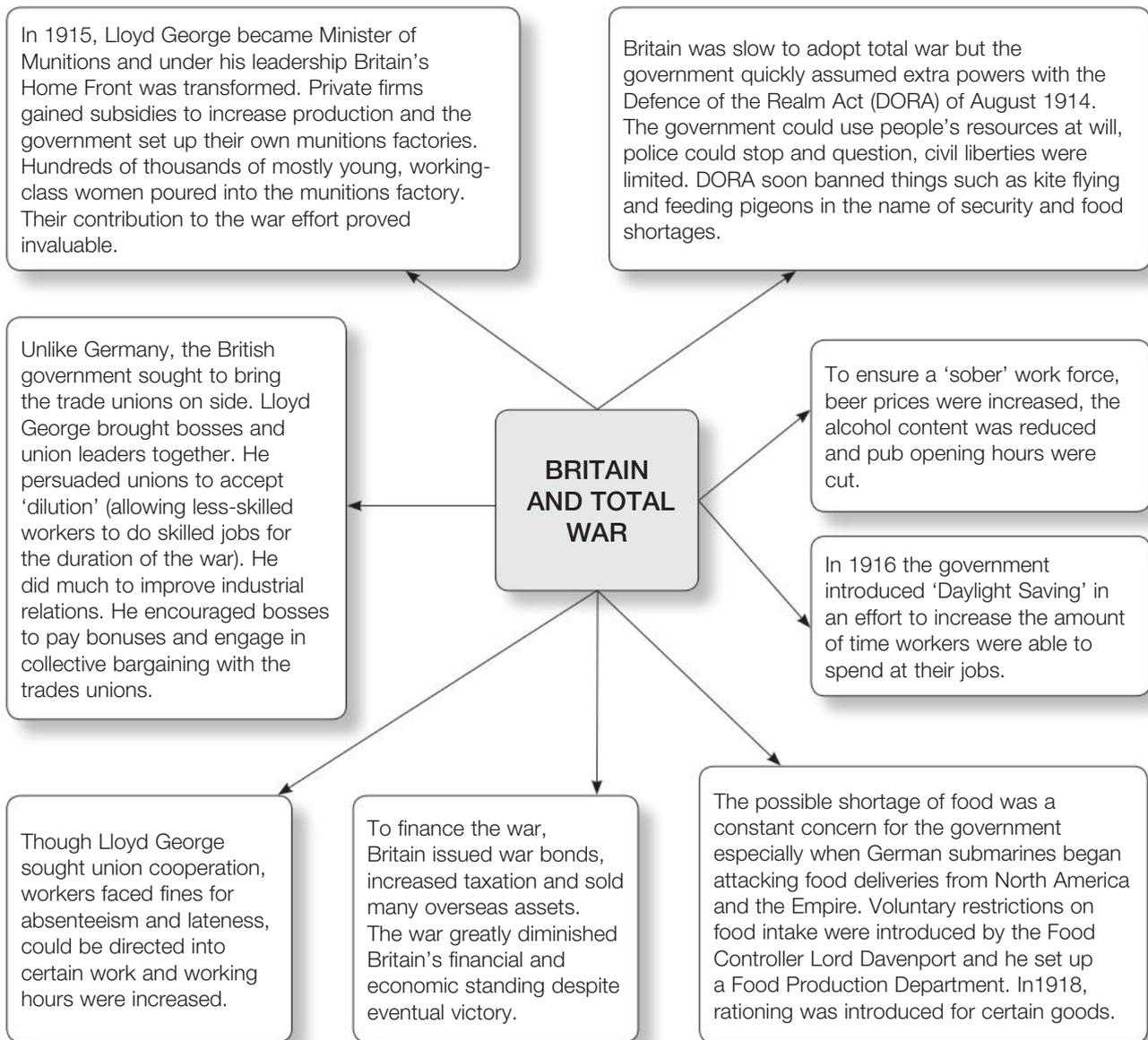
Germany and total war

Figure 8.2 summarises the key elements of German total war organisation.



Britain and total war

Figure 8.3 summarises the key elements of British total war organisation.



Exercise 8.1 Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What was the general expectation about the war shared by most leaders in August 1914?	
2	What was the essence of total war?	
3	How were Britain and Germany different in their adoption of total war?	

4	Why was Britain's attitude to wartime organisation different to Germany's in 1914?	
5	What were ersatz goods?	
6	What was the War Raw Materials Department set up in Germany?	
7	What did the Auxiliary Service Law of 1916 introduce?	
8	What was DORA?	
9	Why was Lloyd George so crucial to the British war effort?	
10	Why was German submarine warfare so serious for Britain?	

The changing role of women

It is undeniable that the war had a major impact on the lives of women. However, claims that this impact was revolutionary and changed the lives of women forever are rather overplayed.

- Certainly during the war, the profile of women was greater than it had ever been, they were respected for the often dangerous work that they did.
- Even Lloyd George was quick to compliment them on their contribution to the war effort.
- Socially things certainly changed for women, not always in ways that the more conservative members of society were pleased about.

However, such changes were not as significant and as long-lasting as might be thought at first glance.

- In Britain women would receive the vote but it can be argued that this had little to do with their war work.
- As for changing social conventions and moves towards female equality, such things would take another war and a later generation of feminists to bring about.

The situation was not dissimilar in Germany.

- Women's suffrage in the Weimar Constitution had more to do with post-war upheavals in Germany rather than a simple recognition of the value of women.
- The greater freedoms that many women experienced in the 1920s would be pulled back by the Nazi regime in the 1930s.

Women at the outbreak of the war

When war broke out in 1914, women enthusiastically offered their services to the war effort:

- In Germany, the government was keen to make use of female labour on the Home Front from the start and women quickly replaced men in a whole range of occupations.
 - German women even made up a significant proportion of the labour force constructing the Berlin subway system.
- However, the offers of women to work were rejected in Britain.
 - This was partly the result of the ingrained male view that women should be at home – though working class women had been slaving away at home and at work for many decades.
 - It was also due to the prevailing notion that the war would soon be over and so women were simply not needed.
- Many nurses were sent to the front immediately but volunteer women's nursing units were often denied permission to serve with British troops.
 - Some of these women successfully offered their services to the French army.
 - Dr Elise Inglis' Scottish nursing unit ended up at the Serbian and Romanian fronts.
- Unable to contribute as they would have liked, many middle and upper class women did voluntary work ranging from looking after troops on leave, providing essentials for the men in the trenches via the Comforts Fund to knitting millions of gloves and socks for the troops.

Munitions and beyond

By 1915, it was becoming clear that the war was not going to be over soon. It was also clear that British forces were being outgunned by the much better-resourced German military. A shortage of shells had become a major issue for Britain, both militarily and politically.

In 1915, Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions and immediately set about trying to expand munitions production. Women had been working in munitions factories at the start of the war but by 1918 there were almost 900 000 female munitions workers. Most of these were young, working class women; they came to be referred to affectionately as 'munitionettes'.

Figure 8.4 Female munitions worker inspecting hand grenades



- Munitions work was dangerous. There were deaths on occasions due to explosions, something that was accepted as an occupational hazard.
- Many women contracted TNT poisoning which caused the skin to take on a yellow tinge. Those suffering from this came to be called 'canaries'.

- Despite the dangers, there was no lack of young women eager to enter the factories. Pay was significantly better than in other occupations, and certainly better than in domestic service. This gave working class women a novel degree of independence.

It was not only in the munitions industry that female labour was important.

- Women replaced men in a whole range of occupations from bus conductors to drivers to clerks.
- Many women joined the police force.
- There was a branch of the police for female officers whose function was to maintain order amongst the munitionettes, to make sure they obeyed factory rules.

As many agricultural workers ended up in the army, there were labour shortages on the land. By the end of the war, there were up to 16 000 women in the Women's Land Army. Working on the land was not as popular as munitions work – the pay was less, living conditions were poor and the women on the land lacked the social diversions that existed for female city munitions workers.

During the war, over 100 000 women became members of the auxiliary sections of the armed forces. They carried out tasks ranging from communications to driving to office work to food services. Their effort meant that a large number of men who would otherwise have been doing these tasks, were freed for service at the front. There were three main auxiliary branches of the armed services:

- the WAAC – Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
- the WRAF – Women's Royal Air Force
- the WRNS – Women's Royal Naval Service.

Social change for women

From what has been described above, it is clear that women played a crucial role during the war as nurses, factory workers, farm labourers and as part of the armed services. However, to what extent did this indicate that there had been real social change in the role of women, their position in society and how they were perceived in society?

Table 8.1 summarises some of the arguments both for against the case that World War I had brought about real and lasting change for women.

Table 8.1 Change for women: real or illusory?

The appearance of social change for women	The reality of social change for women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Women flooded into the work force and became a key element in munitions production. They took over the jobs of men in a variety of occupations. ■ Women proved that they were as competent as men. ■ Society's perception of women began to change as their value came to be appreciated. ■ The perception that many women had of themselves also became more positive. ■ In many industries women's wages increased though parity with men was never considered a realistic option. ■ Due to their war work efforts, women were given the vote in 1918. ■ Women became freer. Shorter skirts, smoking, use of cosmetics, drinking in pubs became common. ■ Pre-marital sex became more common. With so many casualties in the war, for many women sex became both precious and unimportant. A feeling grew that sexual experience might elude women forever because of the war. "Khaki fever" was common as many young women as 'hovered around army camps'. ■ The marriage rate increased sharply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At the start of the war female work numbers actually fell. ■ Though numbers of women working increased, the main change was in what working women did with a switch from domestic work to factory work. ■ Most memoirs written about war work came from educated middle class who went to work, often for the first time. Long tough working hours were nothing new for working class women. ■ There was great pressure on women to give up their jobs after the war when the men returned from the war. ■ Female employment rates in 1921 were no better than in 1914. The 1919 Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act tried to force women out of work. ■ The greater independence women had gained from war work soon evaporated. ■ Female wages remained less than a man's even for the same work. It would be half a century until this was seriously addressed. ■ Only older, middle-class women received the vote, few of whom worked in munitions factories. Female suffrage was a worldwide phenomenon and would have come sooner or later. Women could already vote in local elections. ■ Women did enjoy greater freedoms during "The Roaring Twenties" but such pleasures were restricted to middle class women. For working class women, life remained as tough as it had ever been. ■ Real sexual freedom for women would have to wait for the widespread use of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s. ■ Rates of illegitimacy increased. ■ Many marriages did not last. The divorce rate in 1920 was three times what it was in 1910.

Exercise 8.2 Answer true or false to each of the following statements.

1	In Britain, women were denied any real participation in the war effort for the entire duration of the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	The gains and prestige which German women gained from their efforts during the war remained permanent and long-lasting.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	In Germany, women were mobilised for the war effort right from the start of hostilities.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	In Britain, it was the issue of munitions which had the effect of galvanising female participation in the work force during the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Munitions work was unpopular and women only entered such work with the greatest reluctance.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Women preferred to join the Land Army rather than work in munitions factories because of the healthier lifestyle.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Thousands of women had joined the auxiliary branches of the armed services by 1918.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	The efforts of women during the war were greatly respected by the government and society as a whole.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Due to their incredible efforts during the war, working class women received the vote in 1918.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Women experienced far greater social and sexual freedom during the war than had been the case before 1914.	TRUE/ FALSE

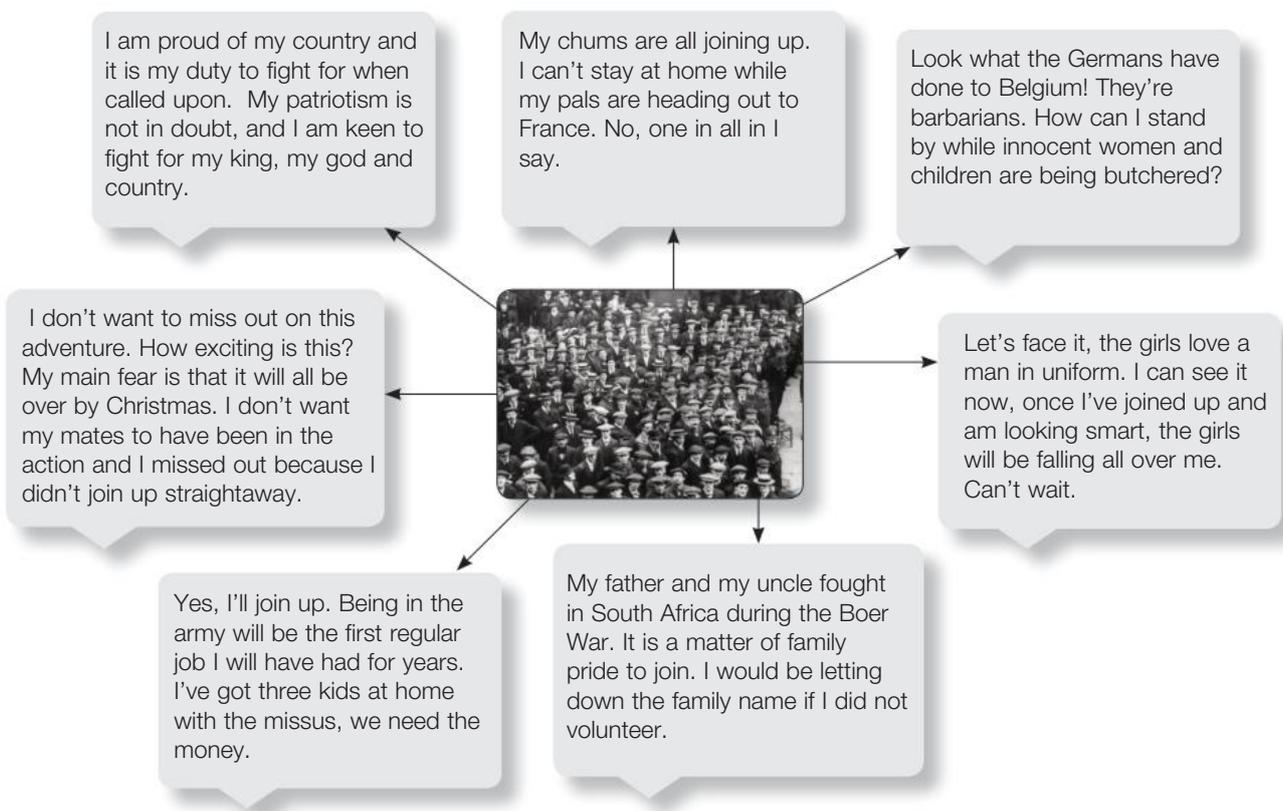
Chapter Nine

Recruitment, conscription, censorship and propaganda

Recruitment and conscription in Britain

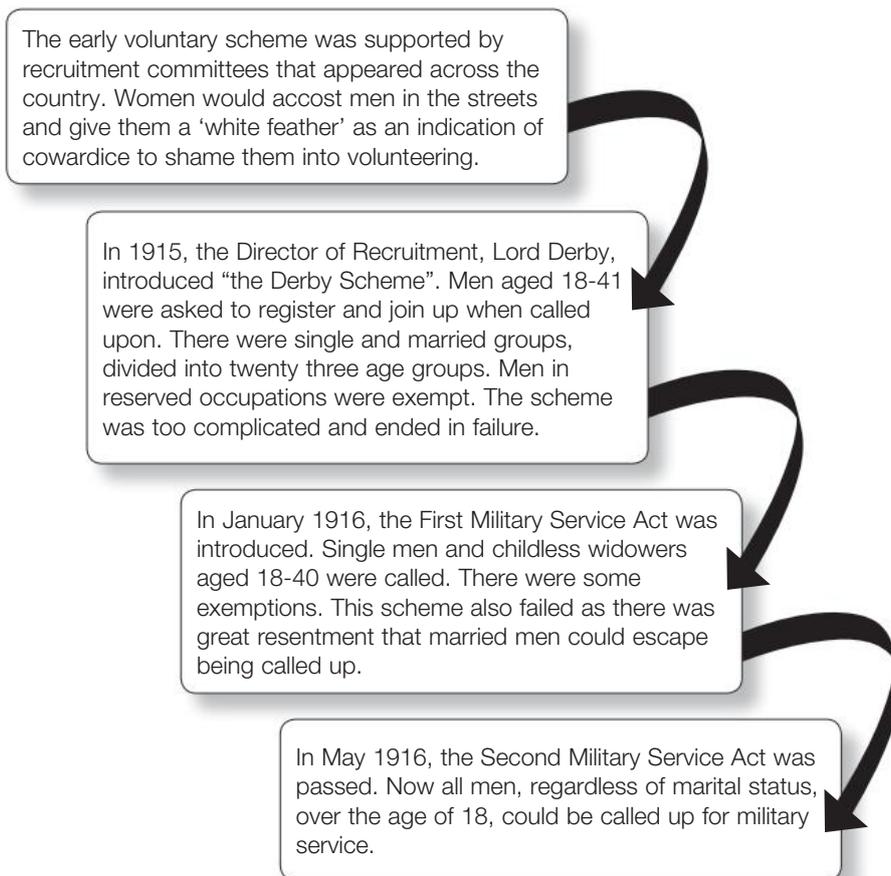
Britain did not have a militarist tradition; conscription was not part of the British way of life and it was assumed that when war broke out, the army ranks would be filled with enthusiastic, patriotic volunteers. This proved to be the case in the early years of the war. By November there were 700 000 volunteers; by early 1915 that figure had doubled. Why were so many men eager to rush to the war? Figure 9.1 presents some of the reasons for this.

Figure 9.1 Why so many men were keen to volunteer for war in 1914



However, the early enthusiasm did not last. Once it became apparent that the war was not going to be over by Christmas, and once the casualty lists began to fill up the front pages of the newspapers, recruitment numbers fell. Early on, physical standards had been set high for entry into the army; these were now eased. It soon became clear that in Britain, voluntary recruitment was not working.

Figure 9.2 shows the steps taken on the road to conscription in Britain.

Figure 9.2 The introduction of conscription in Britain.

Men could avoid military service by claiming to be "*conscientious objector*".

- If a man had a sincere religious or moral objection to fighting (and killing), he could be exempted from service.
- However, the authorities made life extremely difficult for "conchies" as they were called.
- They generally viewed as being slackers or cowards, refusing to do their duty while other brave men went to the front.
- Treatment of conchies varied across the country but it was generally harsh. If imprisoned they were mistreated and even placed with men who had infectious diseases.
- There were about 16 000 conscientious objectors in World War I.

It took quite some courage to stand up as a conscientious objector in wartime Britain.

Recruitment and conscription in Germany

Conscription was not the controversial issue in Germany that it was in Britain (and Australia). It was accepted as part of the German way of life. In 1914, apart from its regular army, Germany had millions of trained reservists who had already served some time in the army.

- As in most countries, young German men rushed to volunteer before their call up, for essentially the same reasons - adventure, peer pressure, patriotism, a fear that the war would be over by Christmas.
- The German press was much more tightly controlled in Germany than Britain, and so the issues of the war were never fully discussed.
- Germans believed they were fighting in their nation's defence against the encirclement of the entente powers (Britain, France and Russia).
- There had been major industrial unrest in Germany in the years before 1914 (as there had been in Britain) but internal social and political divisions disappeared in a wave of patriotism.
 - Even the Social Democratic Party supported the government at the time. The Kaiser declared on 4 August:

"...I recognise parties no more; I recognise only Germans... We are threatened with the horrors of invasion..."
- The Siege Law of 1871 was put in force which divided Germany into twenty four districts under military control.
- In 1916 the Auxiliary Services Law was introduced which placed all men aged 17-60 under military control (see Chapter Eight).
- Germany also created ersatz units which comprised men not fit for military duty who could replace home front workers for the front.
- Later in the war, Germany also conscripted foreign workers for war work.

Exercise 9.1

Students might attempt one or more of the following tasks and then ask their teacher to have a look at them.

Letter-writing was much more prevalent a hundred years ago than it is today. Place yourself in the position of any or all of the following people and write a letter "from the perspective" of that person.

1. You are an under-age boy who has run off to join up in August 1914. You write a letter to your parents explaining your motivation.
2. You are a conscientious objector. You write to a newspaper in an attempt to justify your refusal to join the army.
3. You are a front-line soldier writing home to friend about whether or not he should volunteer for the army.
4. You are a German citizen in August 1914 writing to a newspaper explaining why all Germans should immediately support the government's war effort.

Propaganda and censorship

Propaganda:

- the presentation of an argument or an idea which aims to convince a person of the justice of that idea;
- it refuses to accept the possibility of another point of view;
- it is intentionally one-sided and unbalanced.

Censorship:

- the deliberate policy of denying people information;
- governments might do this to enhance their propaganda or to simply keep bad news from the public.

World War I was not only unprecedented because of its scale and the carnage that it would lead to. It was also the first war where governments had to take account of their civilian populations.

By the early 20th century, the populations of the major industrial countries had become literate; this was not the case one hundred years earlier when the Napoleonic Wars were fought.

- However, for most of the population, this level of literacy was at a basic level, about Year Six level.
- In addition to this, newspaper sales were very high.
- This enabled governments to spread their messages about the war but that message had to be generally given at a basic level, what we today would call a tabloid style.

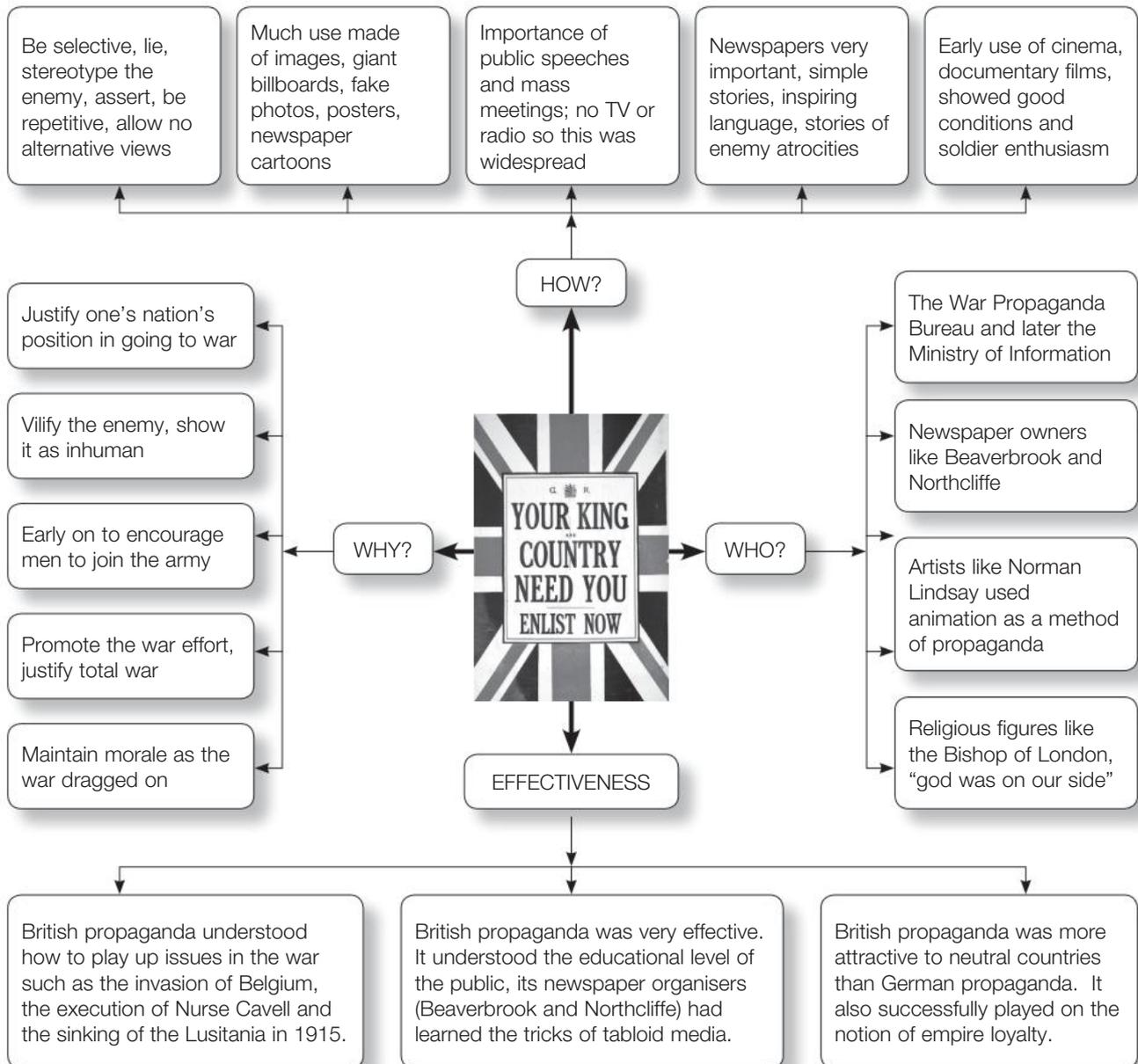
Populations now also had a political voice.

- In Britain there was almost manhood suffrage;
 - even in authoritarian Germany, there were elections and political parties.
- This meant that governments could not simply take their public for granted;
 - the public had to be convinced of the justice of the reasons for war and for the policies of their government in that war.
- Public expectations of what should happen after the war and how the defeated powers should be treated also had to be taken into consideration by the government of the day.

There were some similarities in the ways propaganda was carried on the allied side and in Germany but also some significant differences which ultimately led to the greater effectiveness of allied propaganda.

Figure 9.3 summarises the exercise of propaganda in Britain.

Exercise 9.3 The exercise of propaganda in wartime Britain



Germany's propaganda aims differed little from those of Britain. It too sought to maintain morale, promote the war effort and vilify the enemy; German propaganda quickly took on a strident anti-British tone. As conscription was already in place, recruitment propaganda was of course unnecessary. However, German propaganda was also more defensive in tone. Its invasion of Belgium was a violation of an international treaty and at the time, even Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg admitted as such and then tried to justify Germany's action by emphasising the encirclement of his country by the entente powers.

However, German propaganda was to prove to be far less effective than its allied counterpart.

- There was no tradition of a free and open press in Germany.
 - The British government was willing to allow its newspaper proprietors a great deal of latitude in its coverage of the war which they took up with great fervour.
 - Newspapers like the Daily Mail, the Daily Mirror and the Daily Express had no hesitation in pushing the government line when dealing with Germany.
 - However, German newspaper proprietors, some of whom were Jewish, did not share the same element of trust from its government. Control remained much tighter.
- British propaganda understood its public whereas German propaganda did not seem to.
 - German propaganda often tended to be elitist and aimed a high intellectual level. An example of this was the “Manifesto of the Ninety-Three German Intellectuals to the Civilised World”. This did not resonate with a public, most of whom had received only an elementary education, or the outside world.
 - German propaganda often contained racist overtones which alienated overseas opinion.
- From the start of the war, war information was strictly controlled by the military. Germany had no propaganda ministry but rather the rather heavy-handed German War News.

Exercise 9.2

Students might attempt one or more of the following tasks and then ask their teacher to have a look at them.

Propaganda posters were widely used by both sides during the war. Go on to the internet and check the following sites. Then answer the questions that follow.

<http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/german-ww1-propaganda-posters>

<http://www.ww1propaganda.com/world-war-1-posters/british-ww1-propaganda-posters>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/first-world-war-recruitment-posters>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/11-incredible-german-first-world-war-posters>

1. Identify some of the themes of British propaganda.
2. Select four British wartime posters. Explain what you think the propagandist is trying to achieve. Do you think these are successful examples of propaganda? Give reasons.
3. Identify some of the themes of German propaganda.
4. Select four German wartime posters. Explain what you think the propagandist is trying to achieve. Do you think these are successful examples of propaganda? Give reasons.

Exercise 9.3

Bringing the issue up to date.

Possible questions for class discussion.

1. Do governments employ the same techniques today? Provide examples from both Australian and internationally.
2. Has the impact of social media today changed 'the rule and practices' of propaganda from what it was during World War I or are the fundamental principles the same? Explain your answer.

Notes

Chapter Ten

Reasons for allied victory

Introduction

Hindsight can be a wonderful thing. When looking back to the past with the benefit of hindsight, it is very easy to identify those factors which were responsible for what happened, to recognise poor decisions that had been made or decisions that should have been made, to see how inappropriate it was for certain people to have been given responsibility when more able people were overlooked. Looking back, everything seems to be so clear.

However, in order to fully understand the past, it is necessary to place oneself in the situation that faced the decision-makers of the time. This is certainly the case when explaining the eventual victory of the allied powers in 1918. For the purpose of this chapter, certain factors will be highlighted to provide some understanding of the result of the war but it is important to remember that this is not how things might have seemed at the time.

- The failure of the Schlieffen Plan was a crucial factor in Germany's eventual defeat. However, as 1915 wore on, allied commanders were not contemplating inevitable victory.
- Germany's home front eventually collapsed. Yet, in 1918 its armies were still a major threat to the allies.
- The role of the United States would be crucial. However, it was far from likely that that country would ever enter the war.
- Germany's army and economy collapsed in the last months of 1918. However, in March and April of that year, allied commanders believed they were staring defeat in the eye.

It is also important to consider this question from different perspectives. Did Germany lose the war or did the allies win it? Overlapping issues of course but not necessarily the same thing.

In order to explain the defeat of Germany and its allies in 1918, two questions need to be asked:

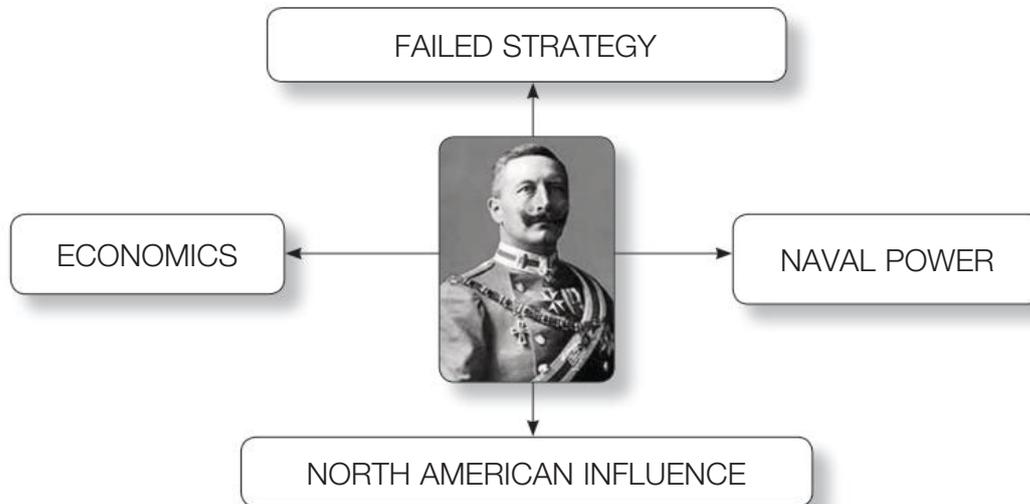
1. Why did Germany lose the war/ why did the allies win it? In other words, what were the *long-term* factors that led to the result?
2. Why did Germany collapse in the second half of 1918? In other words, what were the *short-term* factors that led to the result?

The role of Russia will be referred to in only the most cursory manner as Russia's fate and its journey to revolution will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

The long-term factors that led to allied victory

Historians can identify dozens of long-term factors to explain Germany's defeat. Let us narrow it down to four as shown in Figure 10.1.

Figure 10.1 Long-term factors in Germany's defeat



1. Failed strategy

Germany's great strategic fear had always been the possibility of having to fight a war on two fronts: against France in the west and against Russia in the east – the Bismarckian nightmare. The Schlieffen Plan had been designed to cope with this dilemma. A rapid and massive advance through Belgium and the Netherlands into France, a western encirclement of Paris and within six weeks France's capital and its north eastern industrial areas would be captured, France would be out of the war and Germany could then deal with just one enemy – the Russian bear in the east.

Schlieffen's successor as German Chief of Staff, von Moltke, introduced a series of modifications to the plan which reduced both the size and speed of Germany's advance through Belgium. ¹

- The result of Moltke's decisions was the failure of Germany to achieve its planned six week defeat of France.
- As a result, Germany was forced to fight a prolonged two-front war. This was a disaster for Germany in a conflict that had become a war of attrition as it could never focus its resources on a single front.
- Even though Russia proved to be an inferior enemy, the failure of 1914 still meant that Germany was forced to split its forces on two fronts. ²

¹ See Chapter Four.

² Austria's weakness often resulted in Germany also having to divert resources and men to the Balkans and the Italian Front..

- Had Germany had only one front to fight, the result could have been dramatically different.
- The closeness to which Ludendorff came to victory in 1918 in the German Spring Offensive once Russia had left the war is evidence of this.
- Germany's desperation in a war of attrition forced it to adopt unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 which ultimately forced the United States into the war against Germany.

2. Economics

A war of attrition, which is what the Western Front became, required a continuous flow of men and resources to sustain it. If a breakthrough was never going to occur, logically it meant victory should come to the side with the superior resources.

- The allied forces had obvious advantages:
 - The allies could call upon the peoples of Britain, France, Russia, Italy (from 1915), Romania (from 1916), the United States (from 1917) and a host of other smaller powers.
 - The British Empire could call upon Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and India; the French Empire could also call upon its empire.
 - The allies eventually had two of the world largest economies on their side: the US and Britain.
 - The world's two largest navies were lined up against Germany: the US and Britain.
- Germany faced obvious disadvantages from this perspective:
 - It really had only its own power as it was burdened with three weaker allies: Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey.
 - The allied blockade denied the German economy essential war-related imports such as nitrates (for explosives). Ersatz production could only go so far.
 - The economic strains for Germany brought about by the war and more specifically the allied blockade, would eventually lead to the collapse of the Home Front in 1918.

3. Naval power

The pre-war naval arms race between Britain and Germany was a key issue that caused tensions between those two powers. However, naval warfare did not play a significant part in the war.³ However, naval power played its part in Germany's defeat in other ways.

- From the start of the war, the allies placed a naval embargo on Germany which sought to prevent imports coming in and exports leaving.
 - No blockade can ever be one hundred per cent effective but the allied blockade succeeded in placing enormous strains on the German Home Front.

³ The only major naval battle of the war was Jutland in 1916 which ended inconclusively.

- The naval power of Britain, its empire partners and also Japan, was a key factor in the quick takeover of Germany colonies which further eroded the potential economic/ population strength of Germany.
- German submarines played havoc with allied shipping.
 - So successful was it at one stage that Britain faced the real possibility of being starved into submission.
 - However, Germany's submarine warfare would bring the US into the war on the allied side with disastrous consequences for Germany.

4. North American influence

The United States did not enter the war until April 1917, and in military terms played no major role on the Western Front until mid-1918. Canada entered the war immediately as a loyal member of the Empire. However, the influence of North America was to be crucial for the outcome of the war.

- Considering its small population, Canadian forces played a significant role on the Western Front. Canadian grain supplies played arguably an even more important role.⁴
- Up to 1917, the steady flow of American munitions, ammunition and food were essential for the allied war effort.
- Germany's Unrestricted Submarine Warfare policy forced the United States to enter the war in April 1917. The American influence on the eventual outcome of the war was of fundamental importance.
 - In the short-term, it led to a major boost in allied morale.
- The US navy was able to have an immediate impact on the allied war effort.
 - US convoy methods played a significant role in thwarting the damaging German submarine threat.
 - US naval forces reinforced the allied blockade;
 - Anglo-American control of the Atlantic ensured the steady transfer of men and food supplies across throughout 1918.
- However, the US military presence would not be of any significance until the middle of 1918.

The short-term factors that led to the collapse of Germany in 1918

Despite the entry of the US in 1917, at the start of 1918, the war remained evenly poised. The promise of American military involvement augured well for the allies. However, the Russian war effort had collapsed.⁵ General Ludendorff was now able to transfer men and equipment to the Western Front and launch a major offensive on allied positions.

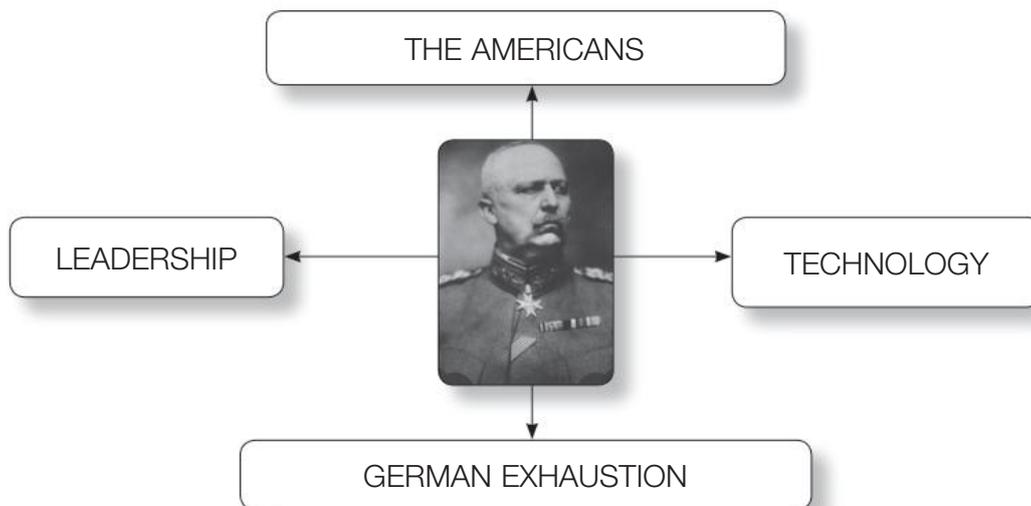
⁴ The last soldier of the British Empire to be killed during the war was a Canadian, George Lawrence Price. He died at 10.58 am on 11th November 1918.

⁵ See Chapter Eleven.

- This was to be Operation Michael, launched in March 1918.
- Ludendorff threw everything he had against the allies in the west and came very close to success.
 - In April, Britain's General Haig referred to the allies as "having their backs to the wall".
- However, by May, Ludendorff's offensive was weakening. Within six months the German war effort had collapsed.

Figure 10.2 summarises the reasons for the rapid German collapse.

Figure 10.2 Short-term factors that led to Germany's collapse



1. The Americans

By the middle of 1918, the Americans were beginning to play a real role on the Western Front. American troop numbers were limitless and there were thousands arriving daily in French ports. At first, US troops fought under General Ferdinand Foch's command but by August, the Americans were operating independently under the command of General Pershing.

- In mid-July, 275 000 US troops took part in the 2nd Battle of the Marne. It was this battle which finally brought the German offensive to a close.
- US actions in the St Mihiel salient near Verdun resulted in the allied capture of 16 000 German prisoners and 400 guns.
- In late September, American forces were successful in the Meuse-Argonne campaign. By now the German Home Front was reeling, and the Germans were putting out 'feelers' for an armistice.

In his speech to the German Reichstag of 2 October, General Ludendorff said Germany no longer had any chance of “forcing peace on the enemy”. One of the decisive factors he mentioned was the arrival of US troops. He said they were not any better than German troops but they were fresher and could relieve the battle-hardened British and French troops.

2. Leadership

Much criticism had rightly been aimed at the allied military leadership throughout the war. However, by 1918, errors were being made less often and lessons had been learned.

Figure 10.3 General Monash



- General Foch proved to be an effective allied commander.
- New generals were now being given their opportunity. Notable amongst was the Australian general, John Monash.
 - Monash was a master of logistics as well as tactics. He understood how to coordinate infantry, artillery and air power.
 - Mention was made of his 93 minute success at Hamel in July 1918 (see Chapter Six).

By 1918, Germany’s generals were hampered by issues of supplies of munitions and manpower. Despite this, Ludendorff was able to seize the opportunity to launch his massive offensive in March 1918, taking advantage of Russia’s demise. The first decision of the new Bolshevik leader in Russia, Lenin, was to issue a Peace Decree.

However, there was a major flaw in Ludendorff’s military leadership.

- General Foch considered that in terms of tactics – ie individual battles – Ludendorff was brilliant. He was adept at seizing opportunities, taking advantage of surprise and maximising the use of available resources.
- However, Ludendorff, Foch argued, failed at a strategic level. Foch believed that Ludendorff lacked any overarching strategic plan.
 - Foch talked about Ludendorff’s “buffalo tactics” in 1918.
 - Like a wild buffalo, the German army charged, caused damage, sometimes broke through but there were no contingency plans about what to do next or what to do if specific plan did not work out.
- However, the buffalo would gradually become exhausted.

This is essentially what happened to the German army.

3. Technology

The importance of industry and science to the war effort of each side was examined in Chapter Seven. By 1918, each side had a greater array of technologically more efficient weapons on land, on the sea and in the air.

Arguably, the crucial technological development which turned the tide in the allies' favour in 1918 was the tank.

- The tank was no longer the unwieldy, unreliable death trap that it had been two years earlier.
- Men like Monash and Foch now understood how the tank could be used effectively. Operated in mass numbers, tanks could break through the enemy lines. There was a sign of this at Cambrai in 1917; in the allied counter-offensive launched from early August 1918, the tank came into its own.
- The allies had put much into tank production and so were able to employ hundreds of them in 1918. The breakdown of the German economy meant that it was impossible for the Germans to match the allies in tank warfare. This was to be a crucial factor.

Interestingly, it was a specific factor that Ludendorff highlighted in his speech to the Reichstag on 2 October.

4. German exhaustion

After the war, right-wing German politicians and leading military figures would argue that the German army had not been defeated in the field but that it had been “stabbed in the back” by socialists, democratic politicians and Jews at home. This myth took hold in Germany in the 1920s. However, it was simply that: a myth.

- Nobody ever doubted the courage or tenacity of the German army.
 - However, even the best trained army cannot survive when its Home Front cannot supply it with what it needs to fight, and while its enemy has the benefit of limitless supplies.
 - By 1918, young boys and old men were being conscripted into the German army. The allies had millions of fresh Americans. Germany was exhausted.
- By mid-1918, the German Home Front was in a state of collapse.
 - Its industry was seriously lacking in essential raw materials; the allied blockade had done its job.
 - There were major food shortages, far worse than anything in Britain. Starvation in some parts of Germany was real. The outbreak of Spanish Influenza in 1918 only served to worsen the situation.
- Political support had broken down.
 - The Reichstag had already passed a Peace Resolution earlier in the war.

- By late 1918, Germany was facing the real prospect of revolution as Workers and Soldiers Councils appeared, seeking to take control (as had happened in Russia in 1917).
- Desertion rates were increasing and there was a series of naval mutinies in north German ports.
- Bavaria would later briefly become a Soviet republic.

Germany was exhausted and its Home Front had collapsed.

What do the historians have to say about the reasons for allied victory?

1. AJ Grant and HWV Temperley

Writing shortly after World War II, the English historians Grant and Temperley argued that the crucial factor in the allied victory was naval power. The allied naval blockade had resulted in hunger and a lessening of Germany's material power.

*"...Breaking point had been reached because of the strain imposed by the navy at the time of the armistice negotiations..."*⁶

2. W Carr:

Carr suggests that the crucial factor was Germany's inferiority in terms of manpower. He argues though that it was not simply numbers, and the arrival of the Americans. He says that there was another reason why Ludendorff's March offensive in 1918 ran out of steam, and that was decisions made on the Eastern Front.

*"...The Supreme Command had chosen to keep one and a half million men in the east controlling, directly or indirectly, vast territories from the Baltic to the Crimea..."*⁷

3. General Ludendorff:

General Ludendorff offered the following reasons for Germany's collapse in his speech to the Reichstag on 2 October 1918.

*"...Two factors above all are decisive for this development: Tanks. The enemy is using these in expectedly large numbers... We are not able to oppose the enemy with an equal number of German tanks... The enemy is in a position to make good his losses with American help... (the Americans provide) almost inexhaustible reserves..."*⁸

6 Grant, AJ, and Temperley, HWV, *Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Longman, London, 1946, p 534

7 Carr, W, *A History of Germany 1815-1985*, Edward Arnold, London, 1989, p 233

8 Ludendorff did not deliver the speech himself. It was given by major von dem Bussche of the General Staff.

Exercise 10.1 Using the terms below

The failure of the _____ Plan in 1914 meant that Germany had to fight a _____ war. This would stretch Germany's resources, a situation made worse by the imposition of the allied naval _____ which prevented the importation of crucial _____ materials. The Western Front was a war of _____ and as a result the side with the superior supply of resources and _____ would always have a long-term advantage. North American supplies of _____ and _____ proved to be of crucial importance.

Revolution in _____ led to that country leaving the war. This meant that General _____ was able to transfer men and supplies to the _____ Front for a final big push. This was to be Operation _____ in March 1918. The Germans came close to victory but lack of men and munitions saw the slowing down of the offensive. Allied _____ superiority and the arrival of millions of _____ troops spelled the end for Germany as its _____ Front collapsed. By November 1918, Germany was facing naval _____ and the possibility of _____.

AMERICAN - FOOD - BLOCKADE - REVOLUTION - TWO-FRONT - RUSSIA -
MICHAEL - HOME - SCHLIEFFEN - MUTINIES - MANPOWER - ATTRITION
- TANK - WAR - LUDENDORFF - WESTERN - MUNITIONS -

Exercise 10.2 Match the description on the left with the person on the right/

1	Germany's key military commander in 1918		PERSHING
2	Commander of American forces during World War I		MOLTKE
3	British military commander in 1918		LENIN
4	Russian Bolshevik leader who issued the Peace Decree		LUDENDORFF
5	Author of Germany's original military strategy in the west		MONASH
6	Allied Commander in Chief in 1918		SCHLIEFFEN
7	Outstanding Australian general in 1918		HAIG
8	German Chief of Staff in 1914		FOCH

Chapter Eleven

Russia: War to Revolution

Introduction

Historians still debate the role of Russia in the lead up to World War I.

- Traditionally, Russia has been seen as stumbling into the war, with a focus on Tsar Nicholas, unable to decide on no mobilisation, partial mobilisation and total mobilisation. His decision to eventually select the last option led directly to Germany's declaration of war against Russia on 1 August. ¹
- There is the view that Russia was left with no choice: back Serbia in its conflict with Austria or accept relegation to second rate power status. ²
- Recent historians have suggested that Russia was eager to be involved in the war, and point to the aggressive role of Foreign Minister Sazanov. ³

The outbreak of war was received rapturously inside Russia. Domestic unrest had been on the increase in the previous two or three years. Two hundred miners had been shot by troops on the Lena goldfields in 1912. Strike action was widespread in early 1914. A repeat of the revolutionary events of 1905 was a distinct possibility. However, domestic unrest evaporated in a surge of patriotic enthusiasm as Russian peasants and workers marched to defend god, tsar and mother Russia.

The war went disastrously from the start, as was seen in the Battle of Tannenberg. ⁴

- Though Russia had some success against the Austrians, its overall performance in the war was a litany of disaster, marked by inefficiency, lack of supplies and incompetent leadership.
- By late 1916 and early 1917, the army was falling apart and the Home Front was in chaos.
- In March 1917, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate.

From February to October 1917, Russia was nominally under the control of the Provisional Government, formed from the ranks of the Fourth Duma that had been elected in 1912. However, it was forced to share power uneasily with the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

By October, the Bolshevik Party, led by Lenin and Trotsky, felt confident enough to seize power from the Provisional Government. This was achieved in a carefully-planned coup in Petrograd (St Petersburg). During its first six months, the Bolshevik regime held on to power by a thread. By mid-1918, Russia was ablaze with civil war as the Bolsheviks' enemies combined to bring down the new regime.

Figure 11.1 summarises Russia's path from war to revolution.

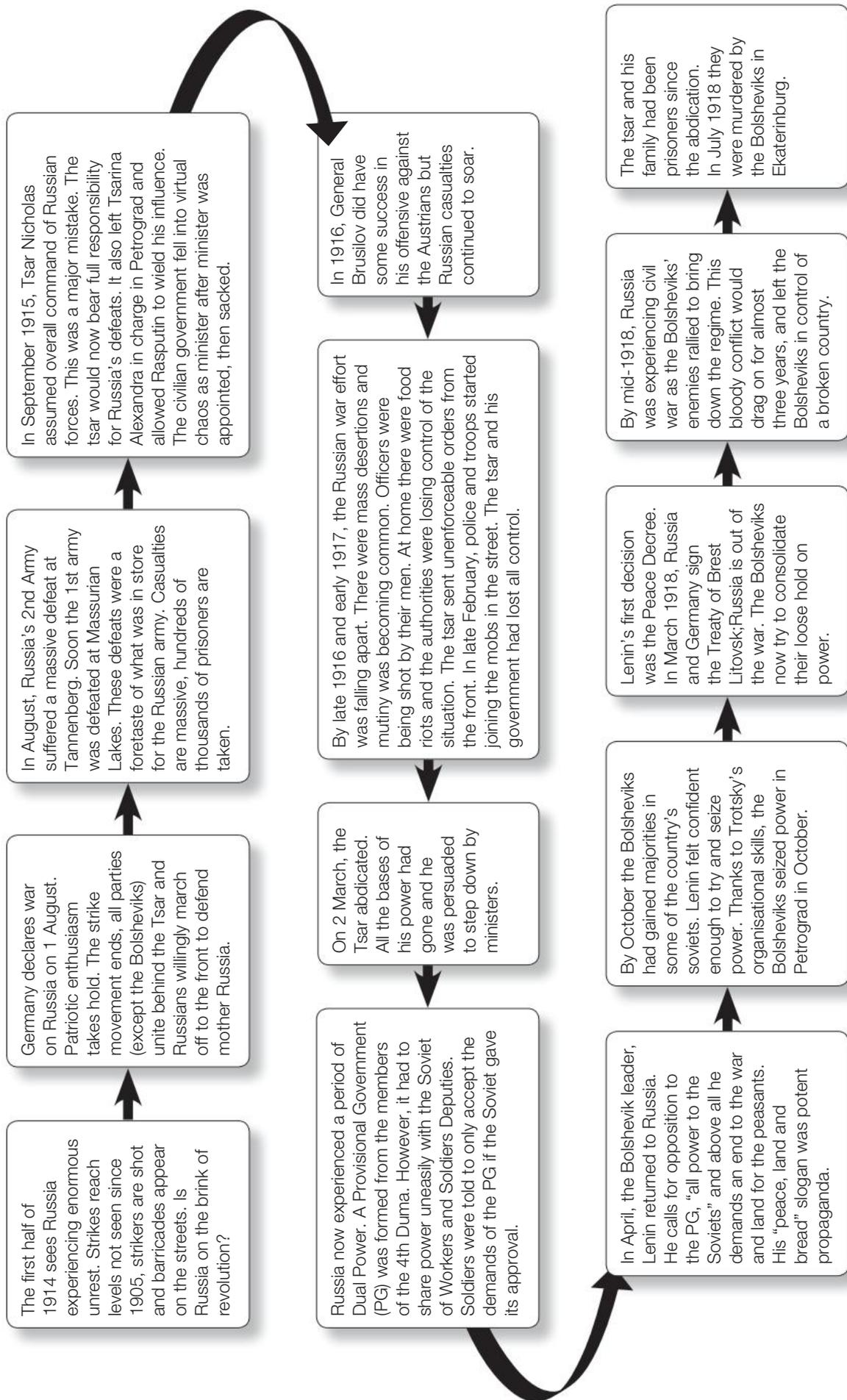
¹ See Chapter Three.

² Russia had been humiliated in 1908 for failing to support Serbia following Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. See Chapter Two.

³ See Sean McMeekin, "July 1914: Countdown to War"

⁴ See Chapter Six..

Figure 11.1 Russia's path from war to revolution



The impact of the war on Russia

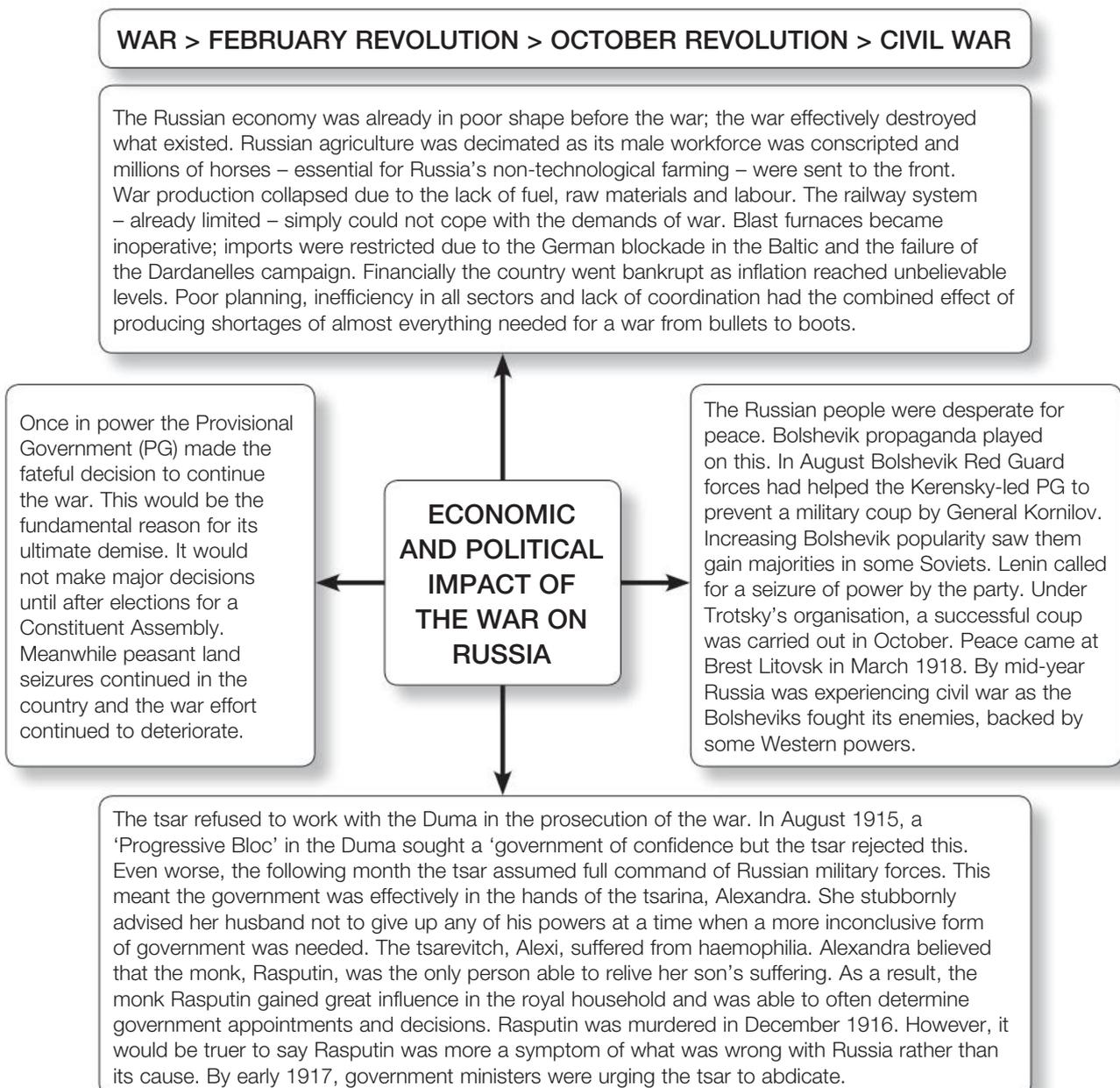
The legacy of World War I was felt no more acutely than in Russia.

Though Russia had experienced some significant industrial development since the 1890s, it was still a country far behind the western powers in terms of economic development. It was essentially an 18th century power trying to fight a 20th century war. The economic impact of the war on Russia was catastrophic.

The Romanov dynasty had been in control of Russia since 1613. The dynasty had celebrated its tercentenary in 1913. The war was to tear the Romanov regime apart and ultimately result in its utter destruction. World War I would introduce to the world its first communist regime.

Figure 11.2 summarises the impact of the war on Russian politics and economics.

Figure 11.2 Economic and political impact of the war



What do the historians have to say about “Russia: War to Revolution”?

1. Orlando Figes: *Revolutionary Russia 1891-1991*

Figes highlights the major problems Russia experienced with a lack of supplies and poor transportation. The major shortage was that of munitions. Figes explains that the War Ministry had run down the armaments industry in the belief that it could make do with existing stocks. This was a major error and so armaments had to be brought in from overseas but Russia soon found itself cut off from its allies.

*“...By the spring of 1915, whole battalions were being trained without rifles, while many second-line troops were relying on rifles picked up from the men who had been shot in front of them...”*⁵

2. Richard Charques: *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*

Charques describes the chaos that had enveloped Russia’s government by the middle of 1916. He suggests that each new appointment proved to be even more incompetent and more corrupt than the previous. Ministers came and went in a “dizzy and grotesque succession”.

*“...During the last months of all, when not a single figure of note was left to whom those of good will in the Duma could rally, the sequence of change was even more kaleidoscopic.”*⁶

3. Richard Pipes (1994)

Richard Pipes takes quite a different line to the other historians. Most historians argue that it is the war which brought about the revolution and the abdication of the tsar. Pipes argues instead that the move against the monarchy was not a result of hatred of the war, but rather a desire to conduct the war in a more effective manner. Pipes suggests that the idea of workers and soldiers bringing down the regime is a myth. Rather the tsar’s abdication was the result of pressure from politicians and generals who sought his removal for the good of Russia.

“...The social revolution followed rather than preceded the act of abdication...”

⁵ Figes, O, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, Pelican, London, 2014, p 77

⁶ Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 230

Exercise 11.1

Place the events listed on the right in the correct chronological order.

1st event		TREATY OF BREST LITOVSK
2nd event		BATTLE OF TANNENBERG
3rd event		ESTABLISHMENT OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SOVIET
4th event		MURDER OF THE TSAR
5th event		TSAR ABDICATES
6th event		MURDER OF RASPUTIN
7th event		START OF THE CIVIL WAR
8th event		OUTBREAK OF WWI
9th event		LENIN RETURNS TO RUSSIA
10th event		LENIN ANNOUNCES PEACE DECREE
11th event		TSAR ASSUMES COMMAND
12th event		BOLSHEVIKS SEIZE POWER
13th event		BOLSHEVIKS GAIN SOVIET MAJORITIES IN SOME SOVIETS
14th event		ATTEMPTED KORNILOV COUP

Section Five ■ The legacy of World War I

Chapter Twelve

Peace and ‘the war to end all wars’

Introduction

The war finally came to an end on 11th November 1918, though peace would not be finally agreed with Turkey until July 1923. An armistice came into effect on the Western Front at 11.00 am on 11th November. However, it would take close to three months before any serious deliberations took place to organise a peace settlement. There were five treaties that comprised the Paris Peace Settlement, signed with each of the defeated Central Powers, though a sixth would eventually be signed with the new state of Turkey four years later. These are listed in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1 The Post-war peace settlement

Germany	The Treaty of Versailles: 28 June 1919
Austria	The Treaty of St Germain: 10 Sept 1919
Bulgaria	The Treaty of Neuilly: 27 Nov 1919
Hungary	The Treaty of Trianon: 4 June 1920
Turkey (1)	The Treaty of Sèvres: 10 August 1920
Turkey (2) ¹	The Treaty of Lausanne: 23 July 1923

The most important treaty was the Treaty of Versailles with Germany which will be dealt with in detail below. However, the combined impact of the treaties was to produce one of the key legacies of the war: a totally changed map of Europe as new countries appeared from the Baltic to the Balkans. Four empires and four royal houses came to an end.

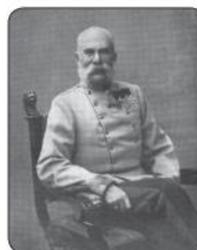
Figure 12.1 The end of European empires



Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated. He fled to the Netherlands. This was the end of the Hohenzollern dynasty.



Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in March 1917. He and his family were murdered in July 1918. This was end of the Romanov dynasty.



Austrian emperor Franz-Joseph died in 1916. Charles I ruled till 1918. This was the end of the Hapsburg monarchy.



Mehmed VI was the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire which by the early 1920s had disappeared.

¹ The new nationalist regime of Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) refused to accept the Sèvres treaty, previously signed with the Sultan's government. Ataturk's modern Turkish state replaced the Ottoman Empire.

During and after the war, people sometimes referred to the conflict as “the war to end all wars” such was its traumatic effect. Steps were taken to create a mechanism to avoid a future conflict – the League of Nations – though this would prove to be a failure. Indeed, a strong argument can be presented to suggest that seeds of the Second World War were sown in the arrangements that brought the First World War to an end.

Europe at the end of the war

The immediate legacy of the war was the catastrophic state of Europe.

- Accurate figures can never be known, but certainly close to 25 million people had died as a result of World War I, either direct military deaths, civilians or those who perished as the Spanish Influenza pandemic took hold in 1918-19.
- The deaths did not end in November 1918. Russia would experience civil war until early 1921, and there were outbreaks of violence across the world from Ireland to Poland to Turkey to India in the years after World War I.

Figure 12.2 World War I cemetery in Belgium



As well as the vast numbers of dead, there were even more who had survived the war as shell-shock victims, gas casualties, were blinded, maimed, or who had lost limbs. Begging injured veterans would be a sight on the streets of many European cities for years to come.

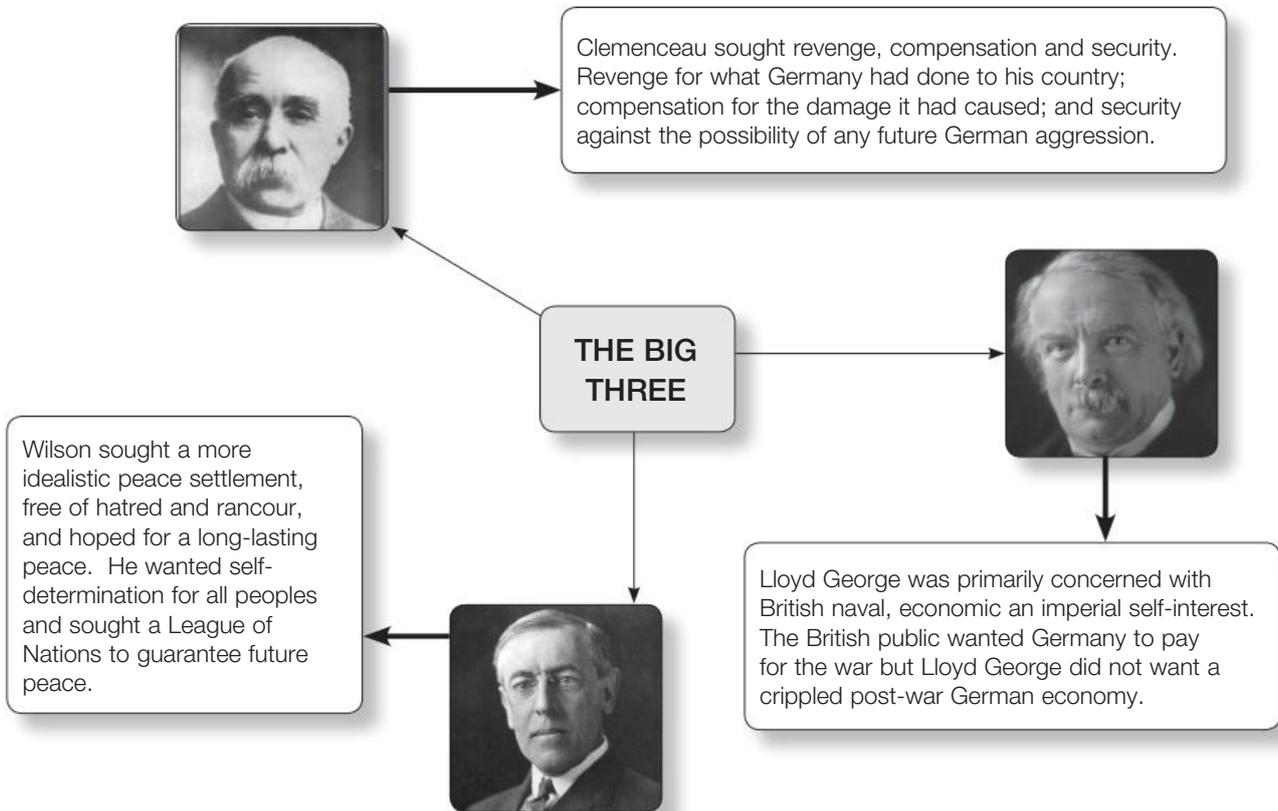
It was not only people who had been destroyed but also economies.

- France suffered the most economic destruction as most of the Western Front was in France.
- However, all economies had suffered, and continued to suffer, from post-war unemployment, inflation, debt repayments and the destruction of infrastructure.
- The United States came out of the war stronger than ever.
 - It had managed to capture the markets of belligerent powers, and was now owed vast sums of money.
 - The United States' economic supremacy would not be in a question for a century.

The other immediate legacy of the war was an emotional one. For years, the people of Britain, France and Germany had been brainwashed into hating the enemy. Wartime propaganda had been successful in manipulating the minds of the population. The emotions of hatred and a lust for revenge could not simply be turned off. The horrors of the war only served to intensify the desire of allied populations for revenge on Germany while the Germans were convinced that they had not lost the war but had been “stabbed in the back”, and worse still had been treated unfairly in the Treaty of Versailles (see below).

It was against this background that the delegates to the Paris Peace Conference assembled in 1919. Over thirty nations attended the conference but it was dominated by what became known as “the big three”: President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, Premier Georges Clemenceau of France and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. They came to Paris with vastly different intentions as Figure 12.3 summarises.

Figure 12.3 The Big Three



The Treaty of Versailles

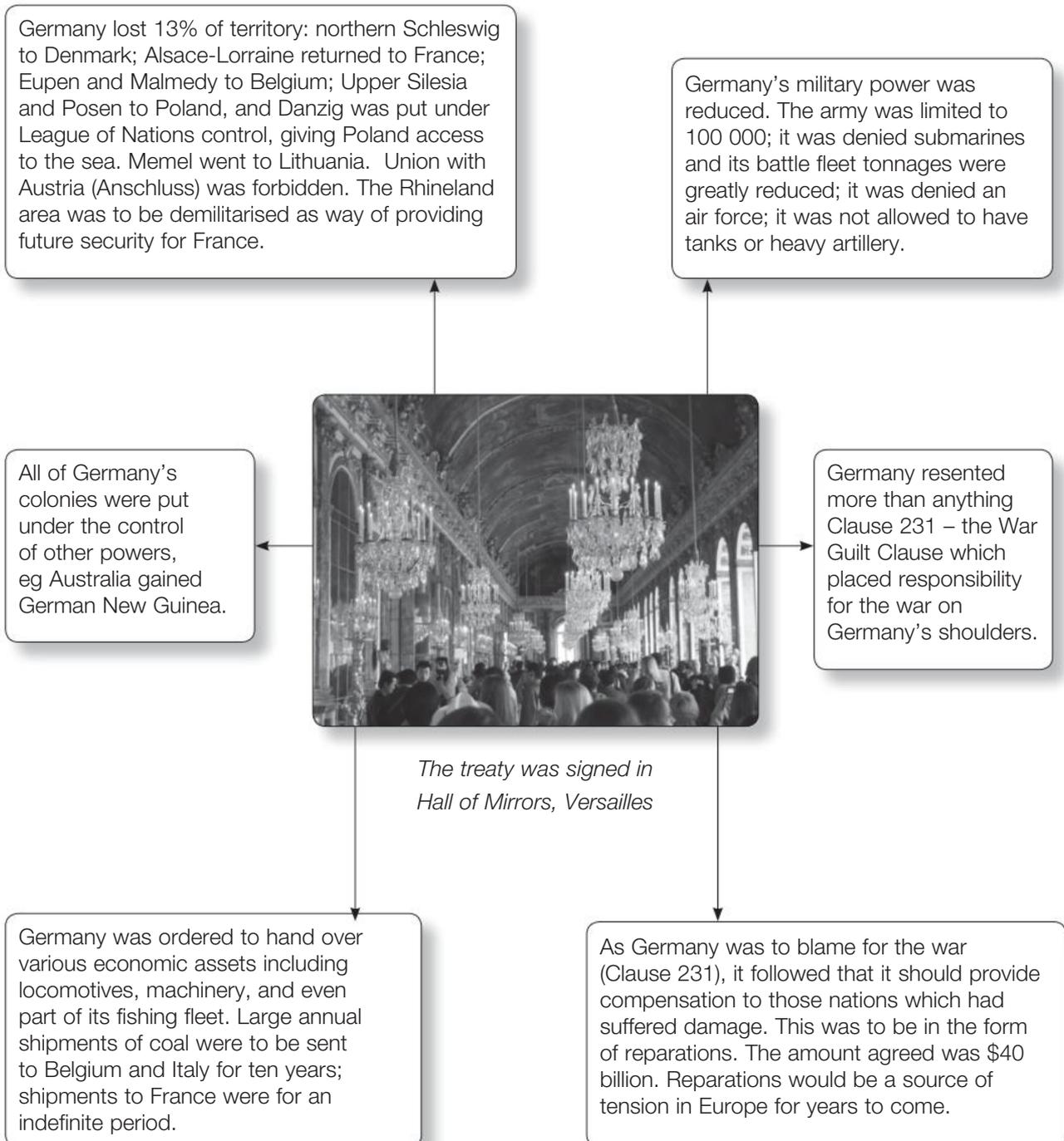
On 28 June 1919, Germany and the victorious allies signed the Treaty of Versailles. Germany had not been allowed to negotiate any of the peace terms – a normal practice for a defeated nation in previous centuries – and had instead been presented with the terms in late May and effectively told to sign or face a resumption of hostilities. Versailles ended up being a compromise which pleased no one.

- **Germany** would forever reject the justice of the treaty and referred to it as a ‘diktat’. All political parties in post-war Germany from the Communists to the Nazis would be pledged to destroy this ‘stain’ on German honour.
- Germany may have felt the treaty was too harsh; **France’s** Clemenceau thought Germany had been let off too lightly. Clemenceau would have liked to have seen the German state dismembered and returned to an agricultural state but his fellow peacemakers were never going to allow that to happen.

- For **US** President Wilson the treaty was lacking in idealism, try though he did to use his influence as the leader of the strongest power in the world.
- **Britain's** Lloyd George had secured his country naval and imperial interests but he opposed the ultimately harsh economic treatment of Germany.

The key elements of the Treaty of the Versailles are summarised in Figure 12.4.

Figure 12.4 Summary of the Treaty of Versailles



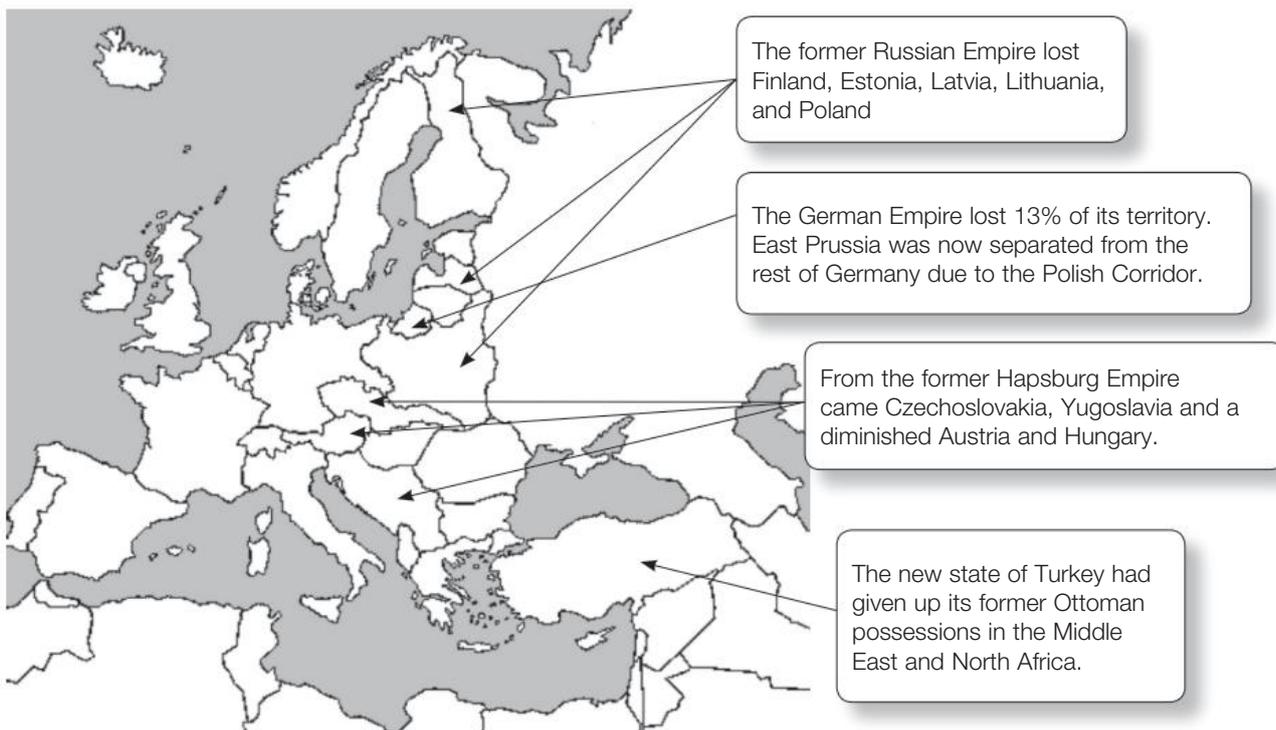
The changing map of Europe

A fundamental legacy of the war was the impact it had on the political geography of Europe. Four empires disappeared – the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman. In their place came some countries who increased their territories, some countries that 'reappeared' and some totally new countries. Figure 12.5 shows Europe as it was before the war. Figure 12.6 as Europe emerged after the war.

Figure 12.5 Political geography of Europe before the war



Figure 12.6 Political geography of Europe after the war.



The 'war to end all wars'

Such was the devastation of World War I and the incomprehensible scale of casualties, the world was swept with the notion that such a catastrophe must never be allowed to happen again. In other words, this war should be “the war to end all wars”.² This was certainly the ultimate goal of US President Wilson. Human history had been punctuated by frequent wars; perhaps this could be a moment to stop this terrible pattern of human behaviour.

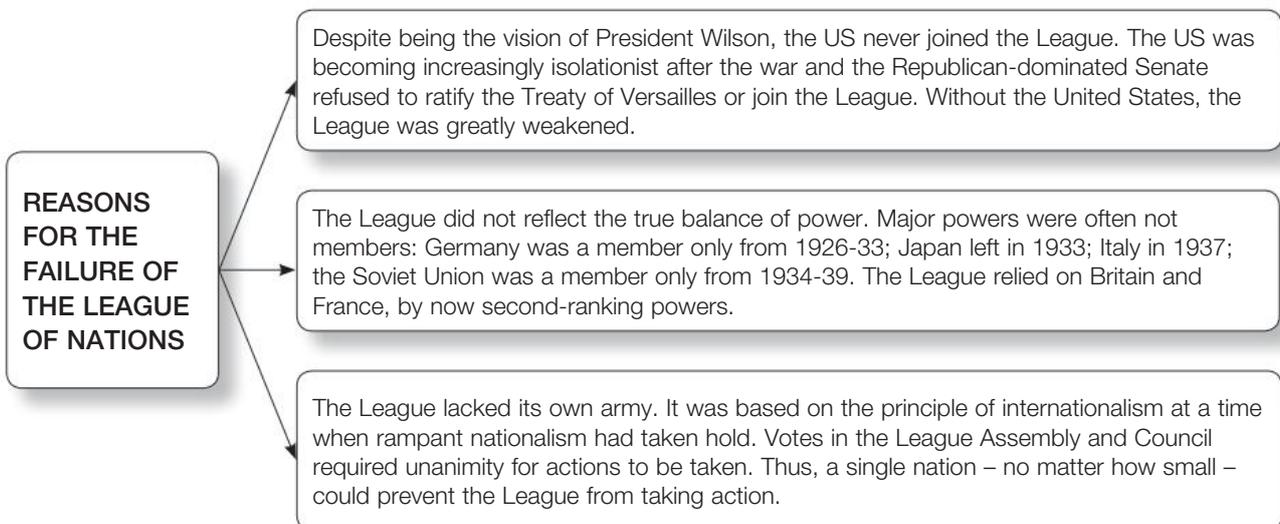
History would show the futility of such a sentiment but Wilson does at least deserve credit for trying to achieve his vision.

- Wilson believed that if an organisation had existed in 1914 where the powers could meet to discuss their differences, and if there was a systematic effort at disarmament, war might have been averted.
- From this thinking came his notion of a League of Nations.
- The creation of such a League was enunciated as the fourteenth of Wilson's “14 Points”, announced in January 1918.

The headquarters of the League of Nations was Geneva in Switzerland. At its height the League had 58 member states, up from 42 when it was created. During the 1920s, the League was able to defuse several conflicts that had the potential to develop into full-scale war, eg the Greco-Bulgarian border dispute of 1925. It was also able to carry out a valuable range of non-political work in areas such as health, communications and refugee policy.

However, in its primary of preventing another war it was ultimately to fail. In the 1930s, the League was ignored by those powers that sought radical change to the post-World War I peace settlement. The League proved incapable of preventing Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan from pursuing their aggressive policies. Figure 12.7 suggests some key reasons for the ultimate failure of the League of Nations.

Figure 12.7 Reasons for the failure of the League of Nations



² Though Wilson is credited with the phrase, the writer H G Wells had written a book a few years earlier called *The War That Will End War*.

The post-war settlement left several nations disgruntled and eager to revise the treaties. In the 1930s, these nations would be willing to use force to achieve these revisions. This does not mean that the peace settlement sowed the seeds of a future war, or that another war was inevitable. However, with the passing of time, anger at the terms of the peace settlement persisted.

- Germany always resented the fact that it had not been allowed to take part in the treaty negotiations.
 - It bitterly resented having the blame for war placed on its shoulders, with the resultant reparations bill that followed.
 - The principle of self-determination³ which had been championed by Wilson, seemed to apply to all nations except Germany. Germans were forced to live under Czech rule and Polish rule, and Germans in Austria were not allowed to be part of Germany.
 - These were issues that would be taken up by Hitler in the 1930s.

Historians from AJP Taylor in the early 1960s to Jurgen Tampke in 2017 have shown that Germany was in fact not treated as harshly at Versailles as its politicians tried to make out. Alas, it is usually the case that it is not the truth that counts in history but what people perceive the truth to be.⁴

- Italy had made enormous sacrifices in the war.
 - Yet, its demands had been largely ignored at the Paris Conference.
 - The future Fascist leader, Mussolini, would seek revision of the peace settlement as well as imperial expansion in the 1930s.
- Japan was angered by the failure of a racial equality clause to be enshrined in the principles of the peace settlement.
 - Later dissatisfaction with the 1922 Washington Naval Agreement, and domestic pressures caused by the onset of the depression after 1929, would see it too pursue aggressive policies in the 1930s.

In 1919, *General Foch*, who had been the allied Commander in Chief in 1918, is alleged to have said of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference:

"...This is not peace. It is an armistice for twenty years."

In mid-1919, on inspecting the new frontier between Germany and Poland in – the Polish Corridor which gave the new state of Poland access to the Baltic sea – Foch is also alleged to have predicted that the next war will begin here. If indeed he did say this, his skills of foretelling the future matched his skills as a general.

³ Self-determination referred to the right of a people to rule themselves, eg Poles should rule Poles.

⁴ AJP Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*; Jurgen Tampke, *A Perfidious Distortion of History*

Exercise 12.1 Answer true or false to each of the following statements.

1	The conclusion of the 1919 peace settlement after World War I left the political geography of Europe remarkably similar to that of 1914.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	World War I left every nation that took part in it far worse off economically than each had been at the start of the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	At the end of the war, emotions were still running high which made the achievement of a moderate peace settlement very difficult.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	Clemenceau and Wilson had widely divergent ideas on what sort of peace terms should comprise the peace treaty with Germany.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Germany felt reasonably satisfied with the Treaty of Versailles, especially considering that it realised it was to blame for the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Clemenceau was unhappy with the final terms of the Treaty of Versailles, believing that Germany had been let off too lightly.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	The League of Nations could claim several successes in both political and non-political work in the 1920s.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	During its entire existence, the membership of the League of Nations never reflected the true balance of power.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	The United States became a keen member of the League of Nations despite the hesitation of President Wilson in joining the organisation.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Historians AJP Taylor and Jurgen Tampak are in agreement that the peace settlement was unjustifiably harsh on Germany.	TRUE/ FALSE

Exercise 12.2

Match the description on the left with the correct term listed on the right.

1	German port placed under the control of the League of Nations		GENEVA
2	Treaty signed between Austria and the victorious allies		YUGOSLAVIA
3	The union of Germany and Austria		ANSCHLUSS
4	Small Baltic state formed from the previous Russian Empire		POLISH CORRIDOR
5	Treaty signed between the Sultan of Turkey and the victorious allies		ESTONIA
6	Location of the headquarters of the League of Nations		DANZIG
7	Compensation that Germany was forced to pay to the victorious allies after the war		SELF-DETERMINATION
8	Term used to describe the area between Germany and its region of East Prussia		HOHENZOLLERN
9	The royal dynasty that ruled Germany until the end of the war		ST GERMAIN
10	The area returned to France by Germany as stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles		ALSACE-LORRAINE
11	The principle that each national group should be allowed to govern itself		SEVRES
12	State created partly from the remnants of the Hapsburg Empire		REPARATIONS

Notes

Chapter Thirteen

The 'end of empire' and the impact on modernity

The impact of World War I on the notion of 'empire' was full of paradoxes. An examination of empires in Europe suggests that the war had had a devastating effect on empire. Four empires disintegrated to be replaced with a host of smaller nations.

However, an examination of overseas empires suggests a rather different picture. With the obvious exception of Germany – whose empire was taken from it and handed to various victorious powers – it appeared that there had been a strengthening of European (and Japanese) imperialism after the war. The British Empire had never been any larger.

However, this apparent strengthening of European empires was misleading. Major problems were beginning to beset the European empires and their gradual demise awaited them rather than their further strengthening.

1. The 'end of empire' in Europe

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, four major empires collapsed inside Europe following World War I:

- the Hohenzollern Empire of Germany
- the Hapsburg Empire of Austria-Hungary
- the Romanov Empire of Russia
- the Ottoman Empire of Mehmed VI

These empires were either significantly reduced in size or disappeared altogether.

As was explained in Chapter Twelve, Germany's territorial possessions inside Europe fell by about 13%. It lost various pieces of territory on its periphery, often returning lands that it had taken control of as a result of previous military conflict.

- Denmark regained Northern Schleswig taken in 1864.
- France regained Alsace-Lorraine that had been taken in 1871.
- Belgium was given the territories of Eupen and Malmedy.
- The Saar region was put under League of Nations control. France was allowed to administer for fifteen years, after which time the region could vote to either join France or Germany. Germany's main losses were in the east where it lost Posen and Upper Silesia to the new state of Poland, thus allowing Poland access to the sea in what became known as the Polish Corridor.
 - The German port of Danzig was placed under League of Nations control for the use of Poland.

¹ The Saar voted to rejoin Germany in January 1935.

The new Bolshevik regime in **Russia** actually supported the right of subject peoples to rule themselves – at least at first.

- Finland became an independent state, having been part of the empire since 1809.
- The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania gained their independence.
- The new state of Poland gained a significant portion of what had previously been part of the Russian Empire.
- However, other national groups were not able to free themselves from Russian/ Soviet control for another seventy years.

The great fear of **Austria-Hungary** before 1914 had been nationalism. Its success would end the existence of the multi-national Hapsburg Empire. This is precisely what happened after the war.

- Austria and Hungary were reduced to two small, land-locked states.
- The Slavs gained their 'south Slav kingdom' of Yugoslavia which had long been the dream of Serbia.
- Romania almost doubled in size at the expense of the empire.
- The new state of Czechoslovakia came into being.
- Poland also gained land in its south from the former empire.

The **Ottoman Empire** disintegrated and from it came the modern state of Turkey. The new leader of Turkey, Mustapha Kemal, was a Turkish nationalist not an Ottoman imperialist. Once he had overturned the Treaty of Sevres and removed foreign forces from Turkey, he set about his task of modernising Turkey, free of the burden of imperial possessions in the Middle East and North Africa.

- In 1916, Britain and France signed the *Sykes-Picot Agreement* which effectively divided what were to become former Ottoman possessions into British and French spheres of influence.
- This would be formalised by the League of Nations in the form of mandates.²
 - The French mandate covered Syria and Lebanon.
 - The British mandate covered Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine. Palestine was divided into mandated Palestine and the Emirate of Transjordan.
 - In 1917, Britain had promised the Jewish people a national home in Palestine in the Balfour Declaration. This decision and the inflow of Jews into Palestine would cause major conflict in this region in the years to come.
- Most of the Arabian Peninsula would evolve into Saudi Arabia with Britain claiming protectorates on its periphery of small states like Bahrain.

² A nation like Britain might be granted a mandate over a former colony. British control would continue until that area if controlled was deemed able to rule itself. The mandate power was supposed to prepare such a colony for self-government and eventually independence.

2. The 'end of empire' around the world

Germany's small empire was taken from it in the Treaty of Versailles. Former German colonies were shared amongst the victorious powers in the form of mandates. Examples included:

- South Africa took South West Africa
- Britain took German East Africa
- Japan took German concessions in China and its north Pacific colonies
- Australia was given German New Guinea
- New Zealand received Samoa.

There had been a major surge in imperialism in the years between 1870 and 1914. European interest in Africa became known as the 'scramble for Africa'. Following the post-WWI arrangements, the British and French empires were now bigger than ever. However, this apparent imperial strengthening was illusory. The European empires were facing major internal problems.

- Nationalist feeling in places like India and Indochina were already increasing before the war as colonial peoples resented European control and sought to determine their own futures.
 - This push for freedom was often led by men who had been educated by the colonial powers.
- Woodrow Wilson's championing of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference only served to exacerbate this tendency.
 - Figures like Gandhi in India and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam were pressing for an end of imperial rule.
 - Ho Chi Minh actually spoke at the Paris Peace Conference. His argument was essentially 'if self-determination is appropriate for the people of Europe why not for the people of Asia?'
- Violent protest against the ruling imperial powers was becoming increasingly common in the years after 1919.

It was clear that the European imperial powers faced major problems Britain had been weakened by the strains of World War I and had lost its economic ascendancy yet it was trying control an empire stretching across the globe.

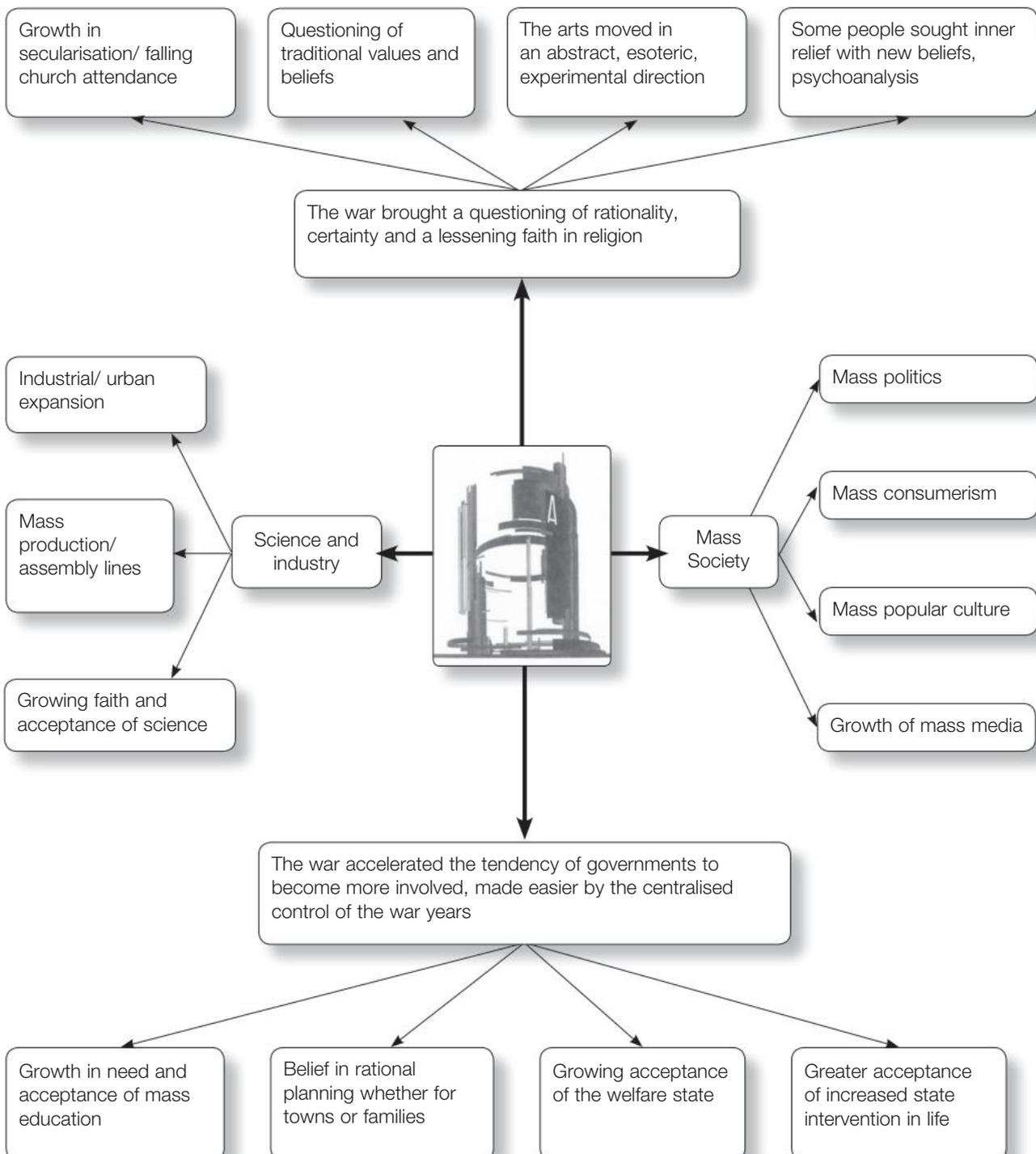
- British troops massacred hundreds in Amritsar (India) in 1919. It faced serious trouble in Ireland immediately after the war and Palestine would cause it major headaches for the next thirty years.
- French forces pursued a repressive policy as it sought to counter growing nationalism in Indochina.
- Both powers would fall easily to Japan at the start of World War II.

However, it would take another war to finally break European imperial control. Within two decades of the end of World War II, European empires would be swept away in a wave of assertive nationalism from Indonesia to India to North Africa.

Modernity and World War I

The forces of modernity had been developing across Europe for some time. Ideas from the enlightenment in the 18th century, the thinking of the French Revolution and the wholesale transformation of life as a result of the modernising influences of the Industrial Revolution seemed to be unstoppable. The impact of World War I was to accelerate these tendencies. The war also had the effect of pushing intellectual thinking in new directions. As a result of the complexity of this concept, modernity is a term writers sometimes interchange with modernisation and modernism. These developments are summarised in Figure 13.1.

Figures 13.1 Modernism in relation to the nature and legacy of World War I



Exercise 13. Answer the questions in the spaces provided.

1	Name the four European empires which disappeared from the map after World War I.	
2	Why would Poland have been keen to gain the German territories of Posen and Upper Silesia?	
3	In what way was the Bolshevik attitude to national self-determination ambiguous?	
4	Why had the Austro-Hungarian Empire been so fearful of the rise of nationalism?	
5	Which two powers gained control of much of the former Ottoman Empire in the Middle East?	
6	What happened to the German Empire after World War I?	
7	When had the British Empire reached its greatest ever extent in history?	
8	Why was the British and French hold on their empires under threat after 1919?	
9	What impact could it be argued did Woodrow Wilson have on 'the end of empire'?	
10	Why was Britain having such difficulty controlling its empire as time went on?	

Exercise 13.2 Answer true or false to each of the following statements.

1	There was a significant increase in religious feeling and church attendances in Europe after World War I	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Many artists, writers and musicians began to experiment with abstract forms of expression after World War I.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	The war years had the effect of spreading mass media and mass popular culture.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	One impact of World War I was the diminishing faith in science and technology which been increasing throughout the nineteenth century.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	A significant aspect of the legacy of the war years was the growing belief in rational planning at a personal and societal level.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	The centralised and at times authoritarian controls of wartime governments led to a growing acceptance of state intervention in people's lives.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Despite the development of mass society and the mass media, there was not an equivalent belief in the need for mass education.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	The traumas of the war led to a general reaffirmation of traditional values in beliefs across society.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	The origin of ideas associated with modernity can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	The importance of science and mass industry which was a feature of the war years was unlikely to continue.	TRUE/ FALSE

Advice on constructing written responses on World War I

World War I used to be the core topic in the HSC. In previous years (up to the HSC for the class of 2018), there was a specific structure to questions that could be set on the war.

These could comprise:

- multiple choice questions
- source-based questions:
 - “Using sources A and B, and your own knowledge: Outline the role played by British women during World War I”
- source analysis questions:
 - “How useful would Sources C and D be to a historian studying the role of women on the British Home Front?”
In your answer response, consider the perspective provided by BOTH sources and the reliability of EACH source.”

However, now that World War I is a Year 11 topic (probably studied in term three of Year 11), teachers are now longer restricted to this format for this topic. It is possible that some schools may choose to use some or all of the above format in a Year 11 examination or assessment, though as this format is unlikely to appear in the HSC, it is probably not an option many teachers will take.

In any possible examination in World War I in Year 11, teachers have a variety of approaches they could use.

- Multiple choice questions are a possibility. However, such questions take an eternity to prepare and most teachers do not use this method if they can avoid it.

The Daily Telegraph interview given by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1908:

- a) *Was well-received in Britain as it clarified the Kaiser’s thinking on a range of issues*
- b) *Was very badly-received in Britain as it displayed his reckless approach to Anglo-German relations*
- c) *Was generally ignored by the people and government in Britain as they were preoccupied by the Balkans*
- d) *Was considered to be a positive contribution to the possibility of a future alliance between Britain and Germany*

Tip – Do not agonise over multiple-choice questions. Read carefully, think, go with your response. As soon as you start thinking “*it could be (a) but then (c) looks good, but maybe they are tricking me...*”, you will be in trouble.

- Another alternative is to present an essay question. Essays will certainly appear in the HSC exam on certain topics (such as the National Study). However, teachers might steer away from this more challenging sort of question in Year 11.

To what extent was the entry of the USA into the war the decisive factor leading to the defeat of Germany?

Tip: Such a question requires an argument to be presented in the introduction. The essay then seeks to prove that argument. Avoid the temptation of simply telling a story or listing facts. Analysis is the key.

- You might argue that the US entry was crucial and point to its impact on manpower in 1918, naval issues, economics and morale.
- You might argue that the entry of the US was important but suggest other factors were also significant. If you do this, be sure that your coverage of the US is about 40-50% of your answer.
- However, do not argue that the US entry was irrelevant, Germany's defeat was due to all these other factors. You must address the issue in the essay question.

A question on World War I might appear as a combination of short-answer and longer answers. Such questions might involve the use of a source. This approach may be more popular as it makes it possible to cover more aspects of the war (whereas an essay could only focus on one). The following are some possible examples:

1. How were many men affected psychologically by their experiences on the Western Front? (3)

Tip: This is worth three marks – do not write a page. However, one sentence will be insufficient. A paragraph is advised, perhaps 6-8 lines average size writing.

- It is essentially a descriptive question, seeking facts not a detailed analysis.
- Refer to the type of warfare at the front, how it affected men differently – some not at all, others traumatized with shell shock.
- Describe how shell shock could affect the men in a variety of ways.
- You might make mention of the authorities' approach to shell shock.

2. Outline the differences and similarities in the approaches of Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson to the peace-making process. (6)

Tip: A six mark question – probably a quarter of the WWI total, assuming it is 25 mark question. It requires a more substantial response with significant detail.

- It is again a descriptive question.
- However, in outlining the differences students would almost certainly drift into explaining why these men had different approaches.

3. *Compare Sources A, B and C as evidence of the use of propaganda during World War I.*
(8 marks)

Tip: Be careful not to simply give a description of wartime propaganda.

- The question is expecting a discussion of the three specific sources.
- You would certainly want to describe what each is and what its aim is.
- However, the key word is “compare”. Therefore, you would want to clearly show differences and similarities in both the means and purpose of each piece of propaganda, and possibly comment the possible effectiveness of each compared to the others.

4. *Examine Source D. How do you account for the perspective that this source is presenting?*
(5 marks)

Tip: It is clearly not enough to simply describe the source, nor is it enough to simply explain its perspective, though you might certainly open with that.

- The question wants you to go further than a simple recount of the source.
- Let us assume it is a German reaction to the Versailles Treaty, appearing in a Berlin newspaper. Predictably it would be critical of the treaty; indeed the writer is likely to be outraged by it.
- Why is this the case? Think of the context of the time. Germany was expecting victory, it had been told as much by the authorities, yet it ended up with the armistice and Versailles. Anger and disillusionment would be present.
- Germany had not been allowed to negotiate treaty terms. This would have been seen as unjust. Germans certainly rejected the idea that they were solely to blame for the war.
- The “stab in the back” legend took hold quickly after the war and would certainly have affected how people viewed the treaty.

5. *Examine Sources E, F and G. To what extent do these sources provide evidence of the conditions faced by men in the trenches?* (10 marks)

Tip: Be careful to not simply write all you know about the men’s conditions in the trenches. The question is expecting specific reference to each of the sources.

- However, it is not a simple comprehension question.
- You might open with a general statement about the trench conditions.
 - You can indicate that the sources provide evidence about these conditions.
 - However, indicate that there are other aspects of trench conditions which the sources do not consider, and explain those.
- You could then talk about each source in turn.
- Then you could bring in other aspects which the sources have not alluded to.

Another type of question that could be used is what is called a “structured essay question”. This is a question which might have three parts of different values, eg part (a) – five marks; part (b) 8 marks; and part (c) 12 marks.

- In such a question, time allocation is crucial.
 - Do not spend 25 minutes on part (a) which is worth only five marks, and then spend only 8 minutes on part (c) which is worth twelve marks.
- Also, be aware of the text types as the greater the mark value, the more demanding is the question.
 - A five mark question is likely to expect a simple description. Such a question will probably begin with “Outline” or “Describe”. This question is simply seeking relevant, accurate factual detail.
- An eight marks question is likely to seek more than just description and head in the direction of explanation, and so demand some understanding of cause and effect.
- A twelve mark question will be almost a mini-essay, and expects analysis and the development of an argument. Though this would only be a 20/25 minute response, normal essay rules would apply. A part (c) might also ask students to use a source that has been provided to answer the question.

Here is an example of a structured essay style question.

- a) Describe the reaction of most men in Britain and Germany to the announcement of war in 1914. (5 marks)
- b) Explain the establishment of the Western Front by the end of 1914. (8 marks)
- c) To what extent were the lives of women transformed as a result of the World War I? (12 marks)

Timeline

- 1879 – Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria
- 1882 – Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy
- 1887 – Re-Insurance Treaty between Germany and Russia
- 1888 – Wilhelm II becomes Kaiser of Germany
- 1890 – Resignation of Bismarck
- 1893 – France-Russian Alliance
- 1898 – The Fashoda Incident
- 1899-1902 Boer War
- 1902 – Anglo-Japanese Alliance
- 1904-05 Russo-Japanese war
- 1904 – Entente Cordiale between Britain and France
- 1905 – The Tangier Incident
- 1906 – Launching of the Dreadnought
- 1907 – Anglo-Russian Entente
- 1908 – Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- 1911 – The Agadir Incident
- 1912 – First Balkan War
- 1913 – Second Balkan War
- 1914 – 28 June: Assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo
The July Crisis leads to European war by early August
August: DORA is passed in Britain
The Battle of Tannenberg; The Battle of Massurian Lakes
September: The Battle of Marne
November: Turkey enters the war on the side of Germany
November: The First Battle of Yprès
- 1915 – April: The Second Battle of Yprès – German first use of gas
April-December: The Gallipoli Campaign
Italy enters the war on the side of the allies
Lloyd George placed in charge of the Ministry of Munitions

-
- 1916 – February–November: The Battle of Verdun
July–November: The Battle of the Somme
Lloyd George becomes British Prime Minister
Germany passes the Auxiliary Service Law
- 1917 – February: Germany resumes Unrestricted Submarine Warfare
March Revolution: Abdication of Nicholas II
April: USA enters the war
The Battle of Beersheba
August–November: Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele)
The Battle of Caporetto
October Revolution: Bolsheviks seize power in Russia
- 1918 – March: The Treaty of Brest Litovsk
March: Ludendorff launches the Spring Offensive (Operation Michael)
Civil war breaks out in Russia
August: launching of the allied Counter-Offensive
October: Ludendorff’s speech to the Reichstag
11 November: The armistice ending the war is signed
- 1919 – January–June: Paris Peace Conference
28 June: Signing of the Treaty of Versailles
- 1920 – Founding of the League of Nations
Treaty of Sevrès
- 1923 – The Treaty of Lausanne

Glossary

abdication	a monarch's act of giving up the throne
alliance	agreement whereby powers agree to support each other in time of war
annexation	the takeover of a territory by an outside power
anschluss	union of Germany and Austria
armistice	agreement bring an end to hostilities; it is not a final treaty
Balfour Declaration	1917 promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine announced by British Foreign Secretary Balfour
Big Bertha	German 420 mm artillery gun
Bismarckian nightmare	Germany's fear of having to ever fight a two-front war
Black Hand	terrorist/ nationalist Slav group operating against Austria in the Balkans
blank cheque	German guarantee of support to Austria given 6 July 1914
censorship	deliberate policy of denying people information
conscientious objector	a man who refused to join the army on moral or religious grounds
conscription	forcible enlistment of men into the army
dilution	practice of allowing less-skilled workers into skilled work
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
dreadnought	British battleship first launched in 1906
Dual Alliance	1879 alliance of Germany and Austria
entente	friendly agreement between countries; not an alliance
entente cordiale	1904 friendly agreement between Britain and France
ersatz	substitute product
Fourteen Points	President Wilson's idealistic basis for peace announced in January 1918
Franco-Russian Alliance	1893 alliance between Russia and France
Hapsburg	dynasty that ruled the Austro-Hungarian Empire
Hohenzollern	ruling dynasty in the German Empire
howitzer	artillery gun
imperialism	policy of one country imposing its control over an area it did not own
jingoism	an extreme form of nationalism
League of Nations	Post-WWI organisation aimed at maintaining peace
mandate	control given to an advanced power as it prepared a less advanced region for independence
maxim	German machine gun
mobilisation	immediate preparation of an army ready for war
morganatic marriage	a royal marriage that denies succession to the throne to the children of that marriage
Nassau	German style Dreadnought, first launched in 1907
no-man's land	area between enemy front-line trenches

pill-box	concrete structure built in non-man's land to control part of the front
POW	prisoner-of-war
propaganda	presentation of an argument or an idea which aims to convince a person of the justice of that idea
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
race to the sea	outflanking movements of allied and German forces in late 1914
Re-Insurance Treaty	agreement between Germany and Russia in 1887
reparations	compensation payments defeated Germany was to pay to various victorious allies
Romanov	dynasty that ruled the Russian family
Sarajevo	town where Franz-Ferdinand was assassinated
Schlieffen Plan	Germany planned military strategy in the event of war
scrap of paper	Germany's contemptuous description of the 1839 Treaty of London
self-determination	the right of a people to rule themselves rather than be under foreign control
shell shock	psychological trauma suffered by soldiers during the war
sick man of Europe	term used to describe a declining Turkey
sphere of influence	an area dominated by one particular power
STD	sexually-transmitted disease
Sykes-Picot Agreement	1916 Anglo-French agreement to create mutual spheres of influence in the Middle East
Triple Alliance	1882 alliance of Germany, Italy and Austria
Vickers	British machine gun
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
war of attrition	type of warfare in which each side tries to exhaust the other
western front	line of trenches stretching from the English Channel to the Swiss border
WRAF	Women's' Royal Air Force
WRNS	Women's Royal Naval Service
zeppelin	German airship

Dramatis Personae

Abdul Hamid II, Sultan	ruler of Turkey at the time of the Young Turk Revolt, 1908
Alexander III	Tsar of Russia 1881-1894
Alexandra	Tsarina, wife of Nicholas II
Allenby, General	British army commander in the Middle East at the time of Beersheba
Apis	chief of the intelligence department of the Serbian general staff
Ataturk	formerly Mustapha Kemal, father of modern Turkey
Beaverbrook	British newspaper tycoon employed to support the war
Berchtold, Count Leopold	Austrian Foreign Minister in 1914
Bethmann-Hollweg, Theobald von	German Chancellor 1909-1917
Bismarck, Otto von	Chancellor of Prussia/ Germany 1862-1890
Brusilov, General	Russian general
Bulow, Bernhard von	German Chancellor 1900-1909
Charles I	Emperor of Austria-Hungary 1916-1918
Chauvel, General Harry	ANZAC commander at Beersheba
Clemenceau, Georges	French Premier 1917-20
Derby, Lord	Director of recruitment
Falkenhayn, General	German commander at Verdun
Foch, Ferdinand	Supreme allied commander in 1918
Franz-Ferdinand, Archduke	heir to the Austrian throne; assassinated 28 June 1914
Franz-Joseph, Emperor	Emperor of Austria-Hungary 1848-1916
Grey, Sir Edward	British Foreign Secretary in 1914
Haig, Douglas	British army commander during the war
Hindenburg, General	German commander at Tannenberg
Hotzendorf, Conrad von	Austrian Chief of Staff
Lenin, Vladimir	Leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party
Lloyd George, David	British Prime Minister 1916-22
Lossberg, General	German 4th Army Chief of Staff at Passchendaele
Ludendorff, General	German Chief of Staff at Tannenberg
Mehmed VI	Last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire
Moltke, Helmuth von	German Chief of Staff, 1906-1914
Monash, Sir John	Australia's outstanding general
Nicholas II	Tsar of Russia 1894-1917
Northcliffe	British newspaper tycoon employed to support the war
Pershing, General	US troops commander in 1918
Petain, Marshal	French commander at Verdun
Princip, Gavrilo	assassin of Franz-Ferdinand
Rasputin	mystical monk with great influence in the Russian royal court
Rennenkampf, General	Russian commander at Massurian Lakes
Samsonov, General	Russian commander at Tannenberg
Sazanov	Russian Foreign Minister
Schieffen, Count von	German Chief of Staff, architect of German military strategy
Tirpitz, Admiral von	promoter of German naval expansion
Trotsky	Leading figure in the Bolshevik Party
Wilhelm II	Emperor (Kaiser) of Germany 1888-1918
Wilson, Woodrow	US President 1913-21

Answers

Exercise 1.1

1st – Franco-Prussian/ German War; 2nd – Dual Alliance; 3rd – Triple Alliance;
4th – Romania joins the Triple Alliance; 5th – Re-Insurance Treaty; 6th – Bismarck retires; 7th –
Franco-Russian Alliance; 8th – Anglo-Japanese Alliance; 9th – Entente Cordiale;
10th – Anglo-Russian Entente

Exercise 1.2

1 – Dual Alliance; 2 – Triple Alliance; 3 – Franco-Russian Alliance; 4 – Entente Cordiale;
5 – Anglo-Russian Entente; 6 – Triple Entente

Exercise 1.3

1 – economics, prestige, strategy, religion, feelings of racial superiority; 2 – pride, popular,
exciting; 3 – Germany supported the Boers and embarrassed Britain; 4 – drew Britain and
France closer together almost as allies; 5 – increased tensions, spurred naval armaments,
encouraged the pursuit of allies

Exercise 1.4

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – true; 8 – false

Exercise 2.1

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true

Exercise 2.2

Since 1878, Austria had been allowed to administer the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1908, there was a revolution in Turkey led by young army officers known as “the Young Turks”. Taking advantage of Turkey’s chaos following the revolution, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. Austria’s action outraged Slav nationalists, especially in Serbia. Some in the Serbian government wanted to take action against Austria but they realised they could only do so with Russian support. At first it appeared that Russia might support Serbia. However, Germany made it very clear that if Russia acted, it would most likely face with Germany. Russia was too weak at this point and so it backed down. Having been humiliated, Russia embarked on a rearmament program, keen not to be forced to back down again. Buoyed by German support, Austria looked forward to finally dealing a blow to its Slav enemy, Serbia.

Exercise 2.3

1 – the Balkan League (left), Turkey (right); 2 – Russia, Austria, Britain, France, Germany;
3 – a British perspective, aimed at an educated, British audience; 4 – there will be a Europe
wide war

Exercise 2.4

1st – Turkey introduces western reforms into Macedonia; 2nd – Montenegro declares war on Turkey; 3rd – Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria join the 1st Balkan War; 4th – Turkey defeated in 1st Balkan War; 5th – Treaty of London; 6th – Albania comes into existence; 7th – Bulgaria attacks Greece and Serbia; 8th – Bulgaria defeated in 2nd Balkan War; 9th – Treaty of Bucharest; 10th – Assassination of Archduke Franz-Ferdinand

Exercise 3.1

Franz Ferdinand – Sarajevo – Serbia – war – Hotzendorf – complicity – Apis – Berlin – Bethmann-Hollweg – Kaiser – blank cheque – Austria – ultimatum – Sazanov – mobilisation – nine – declared – Russia – full – Germany – refused – 1 August – 3 August – France

Exercise 3.2

1 – Britain's commitment to Belgium neutrality; 2 – the 1839 Treaty of London; 3 – Britain; British colonies (India, South Africa, Australia, Canada); calling for the Empire to support Britain, 'the mother country'; 4 – defiant; 5 – displaying Britain's alliance commitments, joint action against Germany; 6 – Britain honours its treaty promises, matter of honour, the world shares Britain's outrage

Exercise 3.3

1st – assassination of Franz-Ferdinand; 2nd – Austria receives the blank cheque; 3rd – Austria issues the ultimatum; 4th – Serbia accepts nine of the ten points of Austria's ultimatum; 5th – Austria declares war on Serbia; 6th – Russia orders general mobilisation; 7th – Germany orders a stop to Russian mobilisation; 8th – Germany declares war on Russia; 9th – Germany declares war on France; 10th – Britain declares war on Germany

Exercise 4.1

1 – Caporetto; 2 – Caroline, Mariana, Marshall Islands; 3 – Falkland Islands; 4 – Cocos Islands; 5 – Battle of Jadar; 6 – Togoland; 7 – German East Africa; 8 – German New Guinea; 9 – Salonika; 10 – Tannenberg

Exercise 5.1

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – false; 8 – true; 9 – true; 10 – false

Exercise 5.2

1 – trench foot; 2 – large rats that roamed the trenches; 3 – scale/ extremes of war such as artillery bombardments; 4 – it did not exist/ was a feint for cowardice; 5 – post traumatic stress disorder; 6 – 8-9 million; 7 – Eastern Front; 8 – cowardice, desertion; 9 – those executed for cowardice may have been suffering shell shock; 10 – in some cases affected up to 20% of men

Exercise 6.1

1 – Haig; 2 – Pétain; 3 – Chauvel; 4 – Passchendaele; 5 – Hindenburg Line; 6 – Allenby; 7 – Verdun; 8 – Hindenburg; 9 – The Somme; 10 – Lossberg; 11 – Tannenberg; 12 – Falkenhayn; 13 – Beersheba; 14 – Samsonov; 15 – Yprès

Exercise 7.1

1 – maxim; 2 – mortars; 3 – Adrien; 4 – Big Bertha; 5 – ersatz; 6 – mustard gas; 7 – lewisite; 8 – Zeppelin; 9 – Snipe; 10 – char d'assaut

Exercise 7.2

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – false; 10 – true

Exercise 8.1

1 – over by Xmas/ swift war of movement; 2 – all nation's resources dedicated to the war effort; 3 – Germany adopted total war immediately/ Britain not till 1915; 4 – felt it was business as usual/ democratic traditions/ no conscription; 5 – substitute goods produced in Germany; 6 – government organisation to control allocation of scarce raw materials; 7 – German law that placed all men 17-60 under direction of the government; 8 – Defence of the Realm Act; 9 – munitions/ secured good industrial relations; 10 – potential to cause major food shortages

Exercise 8.2

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true

Exercise 10.1

Schlieffen – two-front – blockade – war – attrition – manpower – food – munitions – Russia – Ludendorff – Western – Michael – tank – Americans – Home – mutinies – revolution

Exercise 10.2

1 – Ludendorff; 2 – Pershing; 3 – Haig; 4 – Lenin; 5 – Schlieffen; 6 – Foch; 7 – Monash; 8 – Moltke

Exercise 11.1

1st – outbreak of WWI; 2nd – Battle of Tannenberg; 3rd – Tsar assumes command; 4th – murder of Rasputin; 5th – establishment of Provisional Government and the Soviet; 6th – tsar abdicates; 7th – Lenin returns to Russia; 8th – attempted Kornilov coup; 9th – Bolsheviks gain majorities in some Soviets; 10th – Bolsheviks seize power; 11th – Lenin announces Peace Decree; 12th – Treaty of Brest Litovsk; 13th – start of the Civil War; 14th – murder of the tsar

Exercise 12.1

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – false

Exercise 12.2

1 – Danzig; 2 – St Germain; 3 – Anschluss; 4 – Estonia; 5 – Sèvres; 6 – Geneva;
7 – reparations; 8 – Polish Corridor; 9 – Hohenzollern; 10 – Alsace-Lorraine;
11 – self-determination; 12 – Yugoslavia

Exercise 13.1

1 – German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman; 2 – it gave Poland access to the sea;
3 – they supported it at the start of their rule but opposed it in future years; 4 – the success
of nationalism spelt the end of the empire; 5 – France, Britain; 6 – it was handed to various
powers in the form of mandates; 7 – shortly after World War I; 8 – the rise of nationalism in its
colonies; 9 – Wilson promoted the idea of national self-determination; 10 – economically weak,
its empire was too extended

Exercise 13.2

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – false

Some resources

It has been estimated that over 25 million books have been written about World War I. How on earth are students (and teachers) able to keep abreast of this mass of scholarship?

What follows are some references which the author has found useful and manageable on this topic. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list, neither is it meant to reflect the depth of up-to-date university scholarship. Teachers and students do not have the luxury of spending their lives buried in books (pleasant though that might be). Thus, here are a few useful references. Teachers can do some of the hard research and select specific readings for their students.

Jonathon Dallimore: Contesting the Great War: An Introduction to the key debates of the First World War (History Teachers' Association of NSW, 2017)

An excellent coverage of some the debates regarding the lead up and course of WWI written in a clear, easy to understand style.

Sean McKeekin – July 1914: Countdown to War (Icon, London, 2014)

This is a great study of the July Crisis and reads almost like a thriller. McKeekin's anti-Russian thinking comes through but definitely worth giving the time

Christopher Clark – The Sleep walkers – How Europe went to war in 1914 (Penguin, London 1914)

One of the best of the recent works on looking at the coming of war. Clark refuses to point the finger at any one nation and instead focusses on the "mechanics" of the international system of the time. His take on gender issues is thought-provoking.

Niall Ferguson – The Pity of War (Penguin, London, 1998)

Ferguson enjoys identifying myths and trying to break them down. He has his critics but the first six chapters of this book are a fascinating read and certainly challenge some of the long-accepted ideas of pre-1914 Europe.

Susan Johnston – Experiences of the Great War (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1990)

Johnston's book used to be a staple text in NSW for students studying the core. It contains some great sources. In her appendix section (2), there is a section called "The historians' debate – extracts from their work". In this section can be found short extracts from seven historians ranging from the 1920s to the 1980s.

David Thomson – Europe Since Napoleon (Penguin, London, 1966)

When the author was in Year 12 (UK) long ago, Thomson's book was the standard text for European history. It is still in print. For detail, argument and readability it is still hard to beat. However, few students today will venture here. However, Part Six: "Imperial Rivalries and International Alliances 1871-1914" provides an excellent coverage of the lead-up to the war.

The **internet** is absolutely crammed full of excellent material but students are advised to tread wearily. **YouTube** also has masses of brilliant material and clips on all aspects of the lead-up to the war are available with some digging.

There is the "Great War" channel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f11CKYB2FCA&list=PLB2vhKMBjSxMMg8xHeY2K0ap9srl_zx7&src_vid=3LOaNzQbi00&annotation_id=annotation_2702771343&feature=iv

The First World War (BBC – 2006)

Many schools will have this series in their resource centre but it is also on YouTube.

John Green's Crash Course History

Green's frenetic and detailed account of historical events is well worth a look. However, he goes at a hundred miles an hour and so some preliminary work on the background to the war is advisable.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd2ch4XV84s>

Back in the 1970s there was a BBC series called "*The Mighty Continent*" written and narrated by John Terraine and Peter Ustinov. It is difficult to get hold of but well worth the effort if it can be found.

