

2 CHAPTER

International Historical Context and World History for International Relations from Modern Times till the Onset of the Cold War

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- The reasons for rivalry of the European states
- Emergence of the USA and Germany on the global scene
- Rise of German and British rivalry in Europe
- Alliance formations as a hedge against rivalries
- Rise of Serbian nationalism, Austrian cautiousness and Russian urge
- Case study: Diplomatic crisis in Morocco
- Case study: Bosnian annexation and rise of Serbian hostility
- Case study: Crisis in port of Agadir and a victory of Entente
- Case study: The conflicts in the Balkans
- Analysis of the Balkan conflict
- Case study: Alliances executed leading to World War-I
- Analysis of treaties at the end of World War- I
- The treaty of Versailles, 1919; The Treaty of St. Germain, 1919; Treaty of Trianon, 1920; Treaty of Neuilly, 1919; Treaty of Sevres, 1920
- The rise of League of Nations; Sweden–Finland issue; Organizations under the League of Nations
- Rise of Mussolini in Italy
- German reparations and Weimer Republic
- Genoa Conference, Dawes Plan, Locarno Treaties and Kellogg–Briand Pact
- Rise of socialists and NAZI party in Germany
- Case study: Russia from Tsarism to Communism
- Case study: Japan—The power actor of Far East
- Lebensraum policy of Hitler and invasion of Poland and Czech—1939
- Outbreak of the World War–II
- German invasion of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France and Battle of Briton

- German Pact of Non-Aggression with Russia and Operation Barbarossa
- Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and Philippines
- The incident of Pearl Harbor and entry of US in the war
- Capture of Sicily and defeat of Mussolini
- Operation Overlord and opening of the Second Front
- Unconditional surrender of Germany, death of Hitler and conclusion of war in the European battleground
- US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and conclusion of the war
- League of Nations is replaced by the United Nations and the rise of the Cold War

SITUATION OF EUROPE IN THE MODERN TIMES

From the study of the previous chapter it is quite clear that the Renaissance, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution had put Europe on a path of recovery and rise. The time was not far for Europe to become one of the strongest contenders of world power. The Industrial Revolution had led many European nations to lead the search for resources and new markets. One of the manifestations of this was imperialism and colonialism. Africa and Asia were the new battlegrounds for an imperialist Europe. As Industrial Revolution progressed in Europe, it created stronger, more powerful economies back home. If the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 led to the emergence of strong political entities in the form of the nation states, then it is Industrial revolution that created strong economies in Europe. Some prominent economies by 1900 were France, Britain, Belgium, the Hapsburg Empire, Japan, Italy, USA and Germany.

A special mention of USA and Germany needs to be made here. In the previous chapter we studied that America undertook a successful revolution and declared independence in 1776. After Declaration of Independence it witnessed a mild civil war but overcome it soon and embarked upon a programme of economic recovery. America almost got a full century to undertake economic development without any external interference. From almost 1800 to 1900, as America was on a steady path to economic empowerment, this time Europe started witnessing revolutions. Also this was the time period (1800 to 1900) when Europeans also began Industrial Revolution, imperialism and colonialism. This gave USA an opportunity to emerge as a strong player during World War-I.

Similarly, if we see that Germany, after its unification by Bismarck, had embarked upon a programme of rapid industrialisation, as also a path of colonial acquisitions. Germany, by 1900, became a very strong economic contender for power in Europe and along with its new love for colonial conquests (Weltpolitik), it ended up outranking the British and French. Germany, empowered by its economic success, began to use its wealth for enhancing its military and naval power. Soon Europe witnessed a tremendous rise in Anglo-German naval rivalry.

Apart from this, the strong economies of Europe also began to feel extremely suspicious of each other's economic success. Everyone wanted to ensure that the other does not become so economically powerful as to threaten somebody else's existence. One consequence of this insecurity was alliance formation. It began in 1882, when German and Austria-Hungary formed an alliance which was subsequently followed by the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894 and, most importantly, the British and French Entente Cordiale of

1904. In fact, at the time of outbreak of the WW I, these alliances played a very important role. Some scholars, in fact, are of the view that it was these alliances and the bid to maintain the balance of power that led to the–WW I. But, it would be wrong to accept it as the sole cause of–the war, because there were many other immediate causes that–were responsible for it, of which colonial rivalry was certainly a much bigger contributory factor, along with the fervour of intense nationalism.

Serbian nationalism in this context needs to be elaborated. The root cause of Serbian dissent was over Bosnia. In 1878, the Territory of Berlin was signed and as per this treaty, Austria was allowed to control Bosnia even while Bosnia would continue to be a part of the Turkish Empire. On the other hand, Serbia had an aim of establishing a greater Serbia by uniting all Serbs and Croats living in the Balkans into large kingdom called Yugoslavia, for which it needed control over Bosnia. Austria did not support Serbian nationalism and wanted to put an end to it because Austria knew that if Serbia has its way of getting Serbs and Croats, it would endanger the stability of the–Austro-Hungarian Empire because of the large number of Serbs residing there. Serbians were supported by the Russians, on the other hand. For Russia, the Balkan was the only territory left where other European powers had not undertaken colonial expansion. The Russian support to Serbia was also not appreciated by Austrians at all.

Thus, to conclude, we may say that by 1900, Europe economically was able to assert itself, but was also in a very volatile situation because economic success ignited a race for colonialism which created intense inter-state rivalry threatening the European balance of power and to maintain this balance of power, alliances were formed which again made the outbreak of a war imminent. Apart from this, as we saw in case of Serbia, nationalism itself was one of the causes of rivalry, and eventually brought Europe on the verge of world war. Other reasons for unrest were the crisis in Morocco, the crisis in Bosnia, Agade and the war in Balkans. Some of these major sparks can be seen in the form of cases below.



Diplomatic Crisis in Morocco

Core Players, Treaties and Learning

Key Players: French, British, Moroccan sultan, Germans

Key Treaties: The 1904 British and French Entente Cordiale

Case Learning: Psychological Victory of Entente and the defeat of Germany

In 1904, the British and French had signed an *Entente Cordiale*. Germany was quite alarmed to witness the treaty between the two erstwhile rivals and wanted to see if this *entente cordiale* would genuinely hold fast under duress. It tried to test the entente in Morocco. Morocco was one area in Africa which was not yet fully colonised by any European power but the French were adamant to control the Moroccan police and its banking system. The Germans openly began to assert their support to the Moroccan Sultan. In order to put an end to the rivalry in Morocco, the

Germans organised a conference in 1906 in Algeciras in Spain. The British understood that in case the Germans are able to control Morocco through their support to the sultan, it would be a victory of German diplomacy and would ultimately strengthen German Weltpolitik. Realising this in the conference in Algeciras, British began to support the French. To Germany's surprise, the French also got support for their plan to control the bank and police of Morocco from Spain, Russia and Italy. This conference in Algeciras ultimately ended in support for the French by the majority and was not only a big diplomatic boost to the British and French cordialle but a big blow to Germany.

After the crisis in Morocco, in 1907, Britain and Russia also concluded an agreement. This was natural as Russia and France had already concluded an agreement in 1894 and British and French in 1904. After the defeat of Russia by Japan in Russo-Japanese War of 1905, Russia was badly in need of financial help. The British were not willing to help an autocratic Russia under the control of the Tsar. To ensure that British help Russians, the Tsar in 1905 had made certain concessions for the Russian society of which the most important was the freedom of speech. These little concessions enabled the British to conclude an agreement with Russia and enabled it to receive the much needed financial help. However, the Germans, witnessing the agreement between the British and the Russians, now became deeply concerned again. The British had signed agreements with the Russians and the French, both of them encircled Germany. The Germans now developed a fear of encirclement by the British and their allies. In the meantime, crisis broke out in Bosnia in 1908.



Bosnian Annexation and the Rise of Serbian Hostility

Key Features: Young Turks, Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Serbia

Key Treaties: Treaty of Berlin, 1878; Germany-Austria alliance, 1882

Case Learning: Germany becomes anti-British and Serbia becomes anti-Austria.

As we saw above, as per the Treaty of Berlin 1878, Austria would administer Bosnia. Let us elaborate it upon this situation a little more. Bosnia was a Turkish province. Turks administered Bosnia. But in 1878, the Treaty of Berlin clarified that Bosnia would remain a part of Turkey but would be administered by Austria. This upset the Turks but they were not in a position in 1878 to challenge the mighty Austro-Hungarian Empire. But in 1908, a small group of Turks called Young Turks emerged forcefully on the national scene and demanded that Bosnia be given back to Turkey and Turks be allowed to control and administer Bosnia and Austria. Seeing this, Austria decided to annex Bosnia. The annexation made Serbia very unrestful as Serbians had always wanted to annex Bosnia so that they could make Bosnia a part of Greater Serbia. As the Serbians saw the Austrians annex Bosnia, Serbs asked Russians for help. In the meantime, Germany openly supported Austrians in their annexation. Russia also had ambitions in Balkans and the Bosnian Crisis was an apt moment for Russia to fulfil its ambitions. But before Russia could respond, it

witnessed the response of the British and the French on Bosnian annexation. The British and the French avoided any direct confrontation with Austria as Germany had openly supported Austria. Both the British and the French wanted to avoid any confrontation with Germans and Austrians and that too over Bosnia. Russia also did not possess a very strong enough military in 1908 to openly support Serbia but it still tried to organise a conference in support of Serbia. The Serbs had wanted Russian military support which, due to the reasons explained above, was not offered. Thus, the issue concluded when Austria succeeded in annexing Bosnia. Russians felt deeply humiliated and in order to avoid such humiliation of their inability to support Serbia, they embarked upon massive military mobilisation. The Serbs became extremely hostile to Austrians and Germans for their support to Austrians. In the meantime, as the situation became more volatile, crisis emerged next in Agadir.



Crisis in the Port of Agadir and a Victory of the Entente

Key Players: France, Germany, British

Key Treaties: British- French Entente Cordiale 1904

Case Learning: Supremacy of British and Entente

The crisis of Morocco as discussed gave a free hand to the French in the control of Morocco banks and their police. The Agadir crisis emerged when the French moved its troops in Morocco primarily driven by an intention to keep the Moroccan Sultan under check. The movement of the French troops in Morocco was perceived by the Germans as an act of interference in the affairs of Morocco. The Germans responded to this by sending a gunboat called Panther to the port of Agadir. The basic intention of Germany was that the gunboat would exert pressure on France so that France would feel compelled to seek reconciliation and in turn, as compensation, the Germans would ask for French Congo. Seeing the gunboat in Agadir, the British became very concerned. The British thought that a German gunboat in Agadir means Germany was planning to further enhance its naval presence there. More German naval presence in Agadir was perceived by the British as a threat to its free passage in the seas nearby. The French on the other hand refused to toe the line as envisaged by Germany. In the end, Germany again ended up accepting Morocco as a French Protectorate.



The War in the Balkans

Key Features: Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Turkey, Britain, Germany, France, Macedonia and Albania

Key Treaties: Treaty of Bucharest, 1913; Settlement Plan, 1912

Case Learning: Emergence of a resurgent Serbia

Before we attempt to understand the Balkan wars and its consequences, we first need to remember that Balkan territory was a territory located in the East and was majorly a part of the old Ottoman or Turkish Empire. The major territory in Balkan region comprised of Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria. Now the situation by 1912 was that Turkey or Ottoman territory had drastically weakened. Taking advantage of a weakened Ottoman territory, the major Balkan states of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria established a Balkan League. The Balkan League launched an attack on Ottoman territory with an intention of undertaking territorial expansion. The British and the Germans were alarmed to witness this Balkan expansion. They organised a conference in London where they announced a settlement plan. The aim of the settlement plan was to put an end to the expansionist urges of the Balkan States. The British were well aware of the rise of Serbian Nationalism. To ensure that Serbia does not become a powerful player outright in the Balkans, they drew up a settlement plan in which they insisted upon having an independent Albania. An independent Albania made the Serbs extremely dissatisfied as they wanted Albania to be a part of Serbia, which would have given the Serbs an access to the sea, and would not only serve to make Serbia strong, but would have also put Austria in a weaker situation vis-à-vis Serbia. For that matter, this settlement plan also upset the Bulgarians who wanted Macedonia which was given to Serbia. Thus, Bulgarians attacked Serbia only to be defeated by Serbia in the war. Austrians wanted to support Bulgaria in their attack against Serbia as Austrians wanted to put an end to Serbian nationalism but, the Serbian-Bulgarian war ended in the Treaty of Bucharest and the British-German influence ended the Balkan conflict there itself without allowing Austria to further escalate the conflict.

Thus one thing is clear, Balkan crisis made the Balkan territory extremely volatile.



Alliances Executed Leading to World War-I

Key Players: Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Italy, USA, Austria-Hungary, Turkey.

Key Treaties: Entente Cordiale and Triple Alliance

Key Outcome: Balance of power and alliance concluded in the first total war.

As the Balkan wars of the previous case prove, the situation in the Balkans was very volatile. One of the reasons of volatility was the settlement plan which had upset

many Balkan states. On 28th June 1914, the Austrian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand, while on tour in Sarajevo, Bosnia, was shot dead by a Serbian terrorist, Gavrilo Princip. The Austrians blamed Serbia for this. On 28th July, 1914, Austria declared a war on Serbia. Serbia asked for military help from Russia. Russia obviously never wanted a repeat of its failure to help Serbia as earlier, and so, it ordered immediate military mobilisation. Germany ordered a halt to Russian mobilisation. The outright refusal by Russians to comply with Germany's request compelled Germany to declare a war on Russia. Germany went on to even declare a war on France as Germany thought that the Russians and the French have an agreement and Russia would eventually get French help. When Germany decided to attack France, it had to cross over Belgium, which had thus far remained a neutral state. Belgium had not formed any alliances. In fact in 1839, even Britain had assured Belgium that they respected, and would uphold, their neutrality. As Germany proceeded to attack France and entered Belgium, the British ordered Germany to withdraw. The Germany refused to comply, leading Britain to declare war on Germany. Towards 1917, the USA found out that Germany was trying to persuade Mexico to wage a war on the USA. In the entire duration of the war, Germany was reluctant to help Russia as it was under the rule of autocratic Tsar but by 1917 April there was a Revolution in Russia (to be explained ahead). The USA was already supplying men and material support to Britain and France and after the Communist revolution in Russia, it decided to become a proper supporter, thereby ending up in strengthening the allied section of Britain, France and Russia. The support of the US in the war wreaked an ultimate blow on Germany and Austria and helped to conclude the war. This European conflict, which later on became a global conflict, owed its origin to the alliances, mutual hostility and intense nationalism of the nation states. It involved not only the armies but also people on a large scale, making it truly the first ever modern, total and global war.

As the World War-I (WW-I) ended Britain, France and the USA emerged victorious. Russia and Italy were also amongst the victorious. Now it was time for the entente powers to take decisions about the central powers. The powers that lost the WW-I included Austria, Turkey and more importantly, Germany. The end of WW-I saw a rise of multiple treaties that gave birth to future conflicts, including the WW-II.



The Treaty of Versailles of 1919 emerged as one of the landmark treaties at the end of WW-I. The importance of Treaty of Versailles can be gleaned from the fact that it contained a league covenant which established an international body called the League of

Nations. This was followed by a specific demand by the British and the French to make Germany pay for war damages. The provisions for German reparations and compensation for damages was made a part of Treaty of Versailles and sowed the seeds for the WW–II. The treaty wanted to ensure that Germany would not emerge as a threat to Britain and France in the future. To ensure this, the Treaty of Versailles made Germany accept that it would lose its colonial possessions, have a very limited military cum economic built up and pay to the British and French not only reparations but also share its resources with the two. Germany lost 12% of its population and 13% of its territory. Alsace-Lorraine, which had been ceded to the German Empire by France after the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, was taken back by France, and proved one of the biggest losses for Germany to have borne. Germany was also split into two with the creation of the Polish Corridor, which gave Poland access to the Baltic Sea.

The Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1919, dealt with Austria where it ended up losing tremendous territory including Bohemia and Moravia which were given Czechoslovakia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were given to Serbia and was merged with Montenegro to form Yugoslavia. Thus, the Treaty of St. Germain undertook territorial division creating Yugoslavia. As per the treaty, Poland got Romania, Galicia and Bukovina from Austria while Italy received South Tyrol and Istria. Thus, the Austro–Hungarian or Hapsburg Empire finally broke up.

In 1920 came the Treaty of Trianon which divided the Hungarian territory whence Hungary along with Slovakia and Ruthenia was given to the Czech, creating Czechoslovakia with Hungary. Burgenland was given to Austria, Yugoslavia got Croatia and Slovenia while Romania received the territory of Transylvania. Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory after this treaty.

The Treaty of Neuilly was signed in November 1919 to divide Bulgarian territory. Western Thrace was given to Greece; Dobrudja was given to Romania and Northern Macedonia was given to Yugoslavia via this treaty.

The Treaty of Sevres came in 1920 to divide Turkey. The British got administrative rights over the territories of Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan while the French got Syria and Lebanon. This formalised the ‘Mandate system’. Some Aegean Sea islands, East Trace and Smyrna were given transferred from Turkey to Greece while Italy got Adalia and Rhodes from Turkey. Surprisingly, the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 gave Turkey East Thrace, Smyrna and Constantinople back. Saudi Arabia became independent.

The aim of the Treaty of Versailles through League Covenants was also to establish the League of Nations. But before the League was established, in the transitory period following up to the League, a body called a Conference of Ambassadors was established. The body had to cease once the League of Nations was finally created. The League of Nations was established on the principles of collective security but it certainly did fail to preserve peace. This failure is apparent in the sense that despite its existence, the WW–II did occur. It would be wrong to assert, however, that the outbreak of the WW–II can be attributed solely to failure of the League. There were other reasons contributing to the conflict as we will see ahead. The League of Nations also succeeded in some instances, for example,

■ **Instance 1:** There was a dispute that broke out between Finland and Sweden over the Åland Island. The League successfully arbitrated the dispute in favour of Finland.

■ **Instance 2:** Successfully established the sub-organisations under the League, like Labour organisation, Refugee organisation and Health organisation, which continued a sub-organisations of the United Nations after it was formed.

But largely, the League remained unsuccessful as the the US Senate refused to ratify League of Nations and Treaty of Versailles as it did not want to support the Article X of the League of Nations whereby it was proclaimed that members of the League agreed to use their powers to resist aggression wherever it might occur. The US did not sign the Treaty of Versailles, which had a huge impact on the League of Nations. The period after the treaties was not a relatively stable period as the treaties had sown seeds for deep resentment leading to future conflict. Germany and Italy were certainly the two most disgruntled parties after the Treaty of Versailles had been signed.

Italy had joined the WW-I with a hope that, after the war, it would receive some territory. However, Italy was not happy with the post-war settlement of lands. Also, its participation in the war led to its poor domestic economic performance and its unhappiness over post-war settlement led to the gradual rise of Mussolini in Italy who went on to establish the first ever Fascist State.

The issue for Germany was different. The German question deeply involved the British and French. When the World War-I ended, Germany had lost as a participant and as per the Treaty of Versailles, it was required to pay reparations. The French, before 1919, had already suffered two German attacks. France, being one of the victorious powers, wanted to teach the Germans a hard lesson. The French favoured a weak Germany. In contrast, the British never wanted a very weak Germany since they were of the opinion that German economy though weak enough, should still be able to purchase British goods and function as a ready market.

To resolve the issue, many attempts were made. Post Treaty of Versailles, the German economy found itself devastated. Several times did Germany convey its inability to pay such harsh reparations as were imposed upon it in the treaty. The French would not accept any leniency, though the British certainly were more sympathetic in this regard. In 1922, when Germany again expressed its inability to pay reparations, the French responded in 1923 by occupying the region of Ruhr from Germany. Ruhr was an important industrial base. The British wanted to ensure that some peace prevails between Germany and France as even the USA wanted the same. Certain attempts to cool down the situations are evident from the Genoa conference where British thought to end German-French disenchantment over reparations. The US also tried to help out by extending monetary assistance to Germany. Through the Dawes plan, it tried to enable Germany by giving it loans to ensure the payment of reparations to France. An attempt was again made in 1925 by the British through the Locarno treaties to put an end to territorial aggression. The execution of the Kellogg Briand pact in 1928 ensured that 65 nations, including the USA and France, renounced war.

However, all these attempts received a serious setback in 1929 when the economic crisis of the Great Depression occurred. All attempts by Germany to improve situations at

home and abroad received a setback. The German people were very angry with their government for not tackling inflation and unemployment at home. The economic crisis of 1929 gave an opportunity to the socialists.

A brief note on political situation of Germany may enhance our understanding. After the end of WW–I, the Germans adopted a new constitution in Weimer which gave it a new name—The Weimer Republic. The new Chancellor of Germany from 1923 was Gustav Stresemann, who later continued to be the Foreign Minister of Germany till his death in 1929. The major treaties and pacts that saw Germany's recovery and its induction into the League of Nations as a permanent member of the security council in 1926 is credited to the Nobel Peace Prize winning Stresemann. Stresemann died just as Germany was being hit by the economic crisis of 1929. Germany's inability to meet domestic economic pressures and its failure to pay smooth reparations led to the collapse of the Weimer Republic in 1932 but, the systematic weakness of the German society post 1929 paved way of rise of the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NAZI Party).

The Nazi party began a campaign of hope for the people. They pledged to the people that, if voted into power, they would work for the revival of the economy. By 1933, the Nazi party was able to secure a handsome electoral victory, paving the way for rise of Hitler. He not only defied the treaty of Versailles and began economic and military production but also began work to restore the German psyche by inculcating a spirit of fierce national pride.

He gave effect to his theory of racial superiority, propounded by his deputy Joseph Goebbels, which ultimately ended up causing the Holocaust. He also announced a special policy of Lebensraum, literally meaning the justified territory a nation believes is needed for its natural development. The basic idea of Lebensraum was to get more space for the German people, which, according to him, was, in the form of the existing territory less than what Germany needed to flourish, necessitating him to add extra territory by the conquest of war.

Before we proceed further to the events leading to the outbreak of the WW–II, a special emphasis needs to be put on Japan and Russia in the inter-war period. This is explained through case studies below.



Russia from Tsarism to Communism

Actors: Nicholas–II, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin

Treaties: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk 1918

Terms: Duma–The Russian Parliament, Bolshevik–Majority faction of Russian Socialist Democratic, Purges–processes of elimination, Gulag–Agency of the Government for labour management.

The situation of Russia relevant for our study commences from the year 1900. It was a time when Russia was governed under the autocratic rule of the Tsar Nicholas II. The Tsar ruled Russia without owing any responsibility to the Duma. When, in 1905,

a war started between Japan and Russia, Russia was defeated in the war. This also contributed in lowering the domestic prestige of the Tsar. This was followed by a gradual revival of socialist Democratic Labour Party with Bolsheviks and Mensheviks on the ground. The events of the World War I from 1914 did not go in Russian favour, necessitating reforms. Though Nicholas II had been already undertaking certain reforms, they still did not politically free Russia from Tsarist control. While the WW-I was still underway, in February 1917, the Russian Tsar brought about some reforms but as they were still ineffective, in October 1917, a second revolution happened (after February revolution of 1917) under the leadership of Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin. As the World War I ended, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was concluded whereby Russians lost the territory of Poland, Georgia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. As Lenin began the consolidation of power, he witnessed revolts from Mensheviks and also the Tsarists pushing Russia to the brink of a civil war. Lenin, however, emerged successful and began to assert communism as an alternate to Tsarist rule. He succeeded in establishing the world's first communist state called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The creation of the USSR created enormous suspicion amongst the western states. Lenin died in 1924, before the USSR could fully delineate its contours. The Russian system now came under the control of Joseph Stalin, who consolidated his position through the 'Purges' (aimed to end all opposition he may face) and the *Gulag*, the government agency that administered the Soviet forced labour camps. He also made attempts to bring the territories that had broken up away from Russia by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Stalin ruled till 1953.



Japan–The Power Actor of Far East

Actors: US Navy Commander Perry, Emperor-Meiji, PM-Inukai, Emperor-Hirohito

Treaties: Treaty of Versailles

The story of Japan goes back to 1890's when Europe was undertaking colonisation. At that time, the US, which itself was looking to colonise territories, reached Japan in 1853 and the US commander, Matthew C. Perry advocated that Japan open up its territory for trade. The US heavily used Yokohama for trade. The Japanese felt very humiliated at their territory being used by a colonial power for trade and its own sphere of influence. It was only in 1868 that Japan witnessed the Meiji restoration where Emperor Meiji re-established his grip on Japan and took on the path of economic recovery. Meiji also embarked upon an expansion to annex Korea and Manchuria, eventually bringing Japan into direct conflict with China in 1894–95 and with Russia in 1904–05. Japan very successfully defeated both China and Russia. Specifically after defeating Russia in 1904–1905, it emerged as a major power actor of the Far East. It was also in 1906 that Japan and Britain concluded a military pact. Japan effectively sided with the entente in the World War I and helped the British in launching attacks on the German bases in China. Japan was also present during the signing of Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and was also a founder member of the League

of Nations. The situation in Japan drastically changed after the world global economic crisis in 1929. The domestic economy witnessed severe crises. The Emperor was unable to control his empire as there was rampant corruption. Also Japan began to face problems in its territories in China, especially Manchuria. Gradually, due to all these factors, the army in Japan began to take control. Manchuria was a territory in China that was being controlled by Japan. Due to the economic crisis and the ensuing weakness of Japan to take on the crisis, China tried to put pressure on Japan for withdrawal. The Japanese army feared that Japan could lose an important outpost in Manchuria where they had significant interest. The Japanese army in 1931 attacked Manchuria. This was done by the army without the Japanese government's approval. The then Japanese Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi ordered a halt but the Japanese army was not keen on taking the Premier's advice. China took the matter to the League of Nation which ruled that both sides (China and Japan) are at a flaw and ordered Japan to withdraw from Manchuria. Japan refused to comply with the directives of the League and left the membership of the League. European states like Britain and France could not impose any economic sanctions on Japan as they were themselves crumbling under the economic crisis (of 1929). From then onwards, the Manchurian crisis clearly asserted the failure of the League of Nations to ensure compliance and Japan did remain a power actor till 1944, when the WW-II ended in its defeat.

WORLD WAR II (1939–1945)

Axis powers: Germany, Italy, Japan, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria

Allies: US, Britain, France, USSR, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Yugoslavia.

The situation by 1937–38 was very volatile again. Benito Mussolini was in power in Italy and Adolf Hitler in Germany. We also saw that in Germany Hitler had announced his famous Lebensraum policy.

To give effect to Lebensraum, in 1939, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland. This invasion again plunged Europe into conflict, ultimately leading to the World War-II, which was waged in the period between September 1939 and September 1945. Between September 1939 and December 1940 is the time when Lebensraum saw execution when Germany attacked Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Russians went to consolidate their positions in the territories they lost by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk specially Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland. Germans moved at lightning speed in attacking Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France. In September 1940, Germans fought the British in Battle of Britain but the British retaliated well. In June 1941, Hitler had concluded a Pact of Non-Aggression with Russia. But in October 1941, Hitler violated the pact of non-aggression, and after initial successes in the war, launched an operation called Operation Barbarossa and attacked Russia. Germany made inroads into Russia but could not reach Moscow and Leningrad due to hostile climate and an excessively harsh Russian winter. Emperor Hirohito of Japan wanted to stay out of WW-II initially, but after witnessing the success of Germany, he indulged in some military adventurism. The Japanese army captured Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and Philippines. Japan also concluded

a pact with Germany where the Germans assured the Japanese every support in the event of an attack from the USA.

The Japanese army, meanwhile, on 7 December, 1941, launched an offensive on the US naval base at Pearl Harbour. This brought the hitherto reticent USA into the conflict, and it entered the war against Japan. As per the Germany–Japan alliance, Germany declared war on the USA. Germans, on the other hand, continued to face Russian resistance. The US first defeated Japan by successfully destroying Japanese military, then its navy and finally its air power. The USA then moved to support the British, French and the Russians.

The entry of the US in WW– II was a game changer. Firstly, Britain, France and the US, having made inroads through Sicily, caused the downfall of Mussolini. Thereafter, the Allied powers used Sicily as a base to attack the Germans in the Balkans and Central Europe. It was on 6 June, 1944, that Operation Overlord was launched by the Allies leading to the opening of the second front. The combined forces landed in Normandy compelling the Germans to retreat from France and Russia. The conditions by May, 1945, were such that Germany surrendered unconditionally while Britain and the US continued attacking Japan. The US finally dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima (6 August, 1945) and Nagasaki (9 August, 1945) leading to a total Japanese surrender by 14 August 1945 thereby ending World War–II.

The end of the war saw the replacement of the League of Nations with the United Nations as a new, more effective arbitrator of peace. However, as the war concluded with the USA and Russia emerging victorious, the world entered a new phase of history called the Cold War. Before we study the Cold War, however, we have to analyse the post-war settlements. The history of each is elaborated in the next chapter.