

# HISTORY



## In the previous class, we learnt ....

We learnt about world history up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Class IX. We learnt about the rise of nationalism in Europe and how constitutional monarchies and democratic forms of government were established. We also learnt how European states established their colonies in other continents of the world and what impact colonisation had on the people of those continents.

The process of industrialisation began in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in most of the major European countries, Japan and the United States of America (USA). These countries exploited their colonies to meet their growing needs for industrial raw materials. They also treated their colonies as captive markets for the industrial goods they produced.

The systems of government they established world-wide gave rise to unprecedented exploitation and inequality. But, at the same time, people were imbibing new values as new ideas of nationalism, democracy, independence and equality spread across the world. People's revolutions against inequality, exploitation and colonisation began gathering speed in all corners of the globe.

**To refresh your memory, choose the correct options to fill into the blank spaces below:**

1. Constitutional monarchy was established in England in 1688, while the ..... revolution took place in 1776 and the ..... revolution occurred in 1789. (French, Russian, American)
2. The 'Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen' was published during the ..... revolution. (American, French)
3. The industrial revolution began in ..... in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, while ..... began industrialising after 1850. (Japan, India, Germany, Africa, England)
4. .... and ..... became powerful nation-states following the consolidation of their territory after 1850. (Japan, Italy, India, Germany, France, England)
5. Constitutional monarchy was established in ..... after the Meiji Restoration, leading to the end of the feudal system as the country industrialised. (Japan, India, Germany, Africa, England)
6. The intense rivalry among the newly industrialised nations of Europe to establish their colonies in the continent of ..... began towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (South America, Australia, Africa, Asia)
7. .... became the most powerful colonial nation by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Spain)

## The First World War

*You learnt about the process of industrialisation and the development of democracy in the previous class. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the people of Europe were benefiting from the spread of industry and democratic ideas. They also benefited from the control they established over their colonies. But, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century dawned, their governments led them into a horrific war. We shall try to understand more about the developments that led these nations to get involved in this disastrous episode in world history.*

You may have heard about wars, seen films about wars and read about wars in the newspapers. In olden days, when two countries waged war, their armies confronted each other on the battlefield. Their warriors, mostly men, rode horses and fought each other with bows and arrows, swords, spears, lances and other such weapons. The victorious army would loot and pillage the villages and towns of the defeated country, carrying away and enslaving the women and children.

During the Mughal times, new weapons were used in battle, such as guns, cannons and gunpowder. But the way war was waged changed drastically after the industrial revolution in Europe. Cannons that could rain deadly bombs 20km away, automatic machine-guns, submarines and troop transport by vehicles and rail transformed the nature of war. Not just that. Where earlier two countries faced each other on the battlefield, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed world wars in which lakhs of civilian people were killed and countless were crippled.

**How does war disrupt the lives of people? Discuss in class.**

**Find out from the newspapers where wars are being waged in the world today and how they are affecting the lives of the people in the warring countries.**

### Some basic facts

**Countries which fought the First World War:** The German empire, Austro-Hungarian empire and Ottoman empire (Turkey) were on one side while Britain, France, the Russian empire and the United States of America were on the other.

**When was the war waged:** August 1914 to November 1918.

**How many people were affected in the war:** See the table below:

**Table 7.1: Human casualties in the First World War**

Country	No of soldiers	Deaths	Wounded	Prisoners/missing
Austria	78,00,000	12,00,000	36,20,000	22,00,000
Britain (with colonies)	89,04,467	9,08,371	20,90,212	1,91,652
France	84,10,000	13,57,800	42,66,000	5,37,000
Germany	110,00,000	17,37,000	42,16,058	11,52,800
Italy	56,15,000	6,50,000	9,47,000	6,00,000
Russia	120,00,000	17,00,000	49,50,000	25,00,000
Turkey	28,50,000	3,25,000	4,00,000	2,50,000
USA	43,55,000	1,26,000	2,34,000	4,500

**Which country suffered the most deaths?**

**Which country suffered the least casualties?**

**Thousands of Indian soldiers were killed in this war. In which country's figures would Indian casualties be included?**

**What do you think was done to the soldiers who were taken prisoner? How do you think the soldiers who were disabled lived their lives after the war was over?**

**How do you think the families who lost their young male members coped with life after the war?**

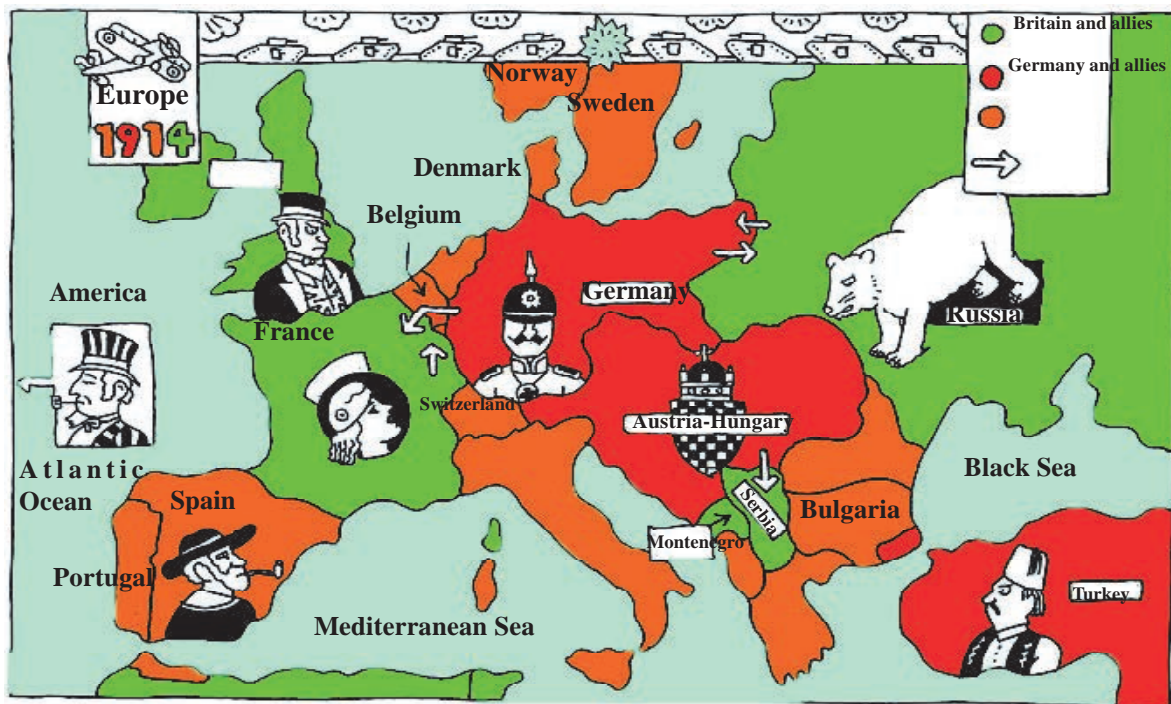
## Why do we call it a world war?

All European countries, barring a few like Switzerland, fought in the First World War, with America joining in 1917. But the impact was felt not just across these two continents but across almost the entire world. This was because the European countries deployed the people and resources of their colonies in all the continents on all battlefronts. For example, lakhs of Indian soldiers fought in the British army.

Identify Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Austria, Hungary, Italy and other countries on the map of Europe. Today, all these countries are industrially developed and have a democratic system of governance. That means their governments are run by representatives of the people who are elected in some way or the other.

**Trace the geographical boundaries of different countries at the start of the First World War in 1914 in Map 7.1. Identify Britain, France, the German empire, Austria-Hungary empire, Italy, Russian empire and Ottoman empire (Turkey). Can you guess which countries among these had democratic governments and gave their citizens the right to vote?**

Map 7.1: Europe in 1914



## How did the First World War begin?

A very minor incident led to the outbreak of the war. Austria-Hungary wanted to annex its small neighbour, Serbia. This angered the nationalistic Serbian people. They wanted to teach their bigger neighbour a lesson as a warning. One highly patriotic Serbian citizen assassinated the Archduke of Austria and his wife at a place called Sarajevo in June 1914. Austria launched an attack on Serbia to avenge the murder. Russia came to the aid of Serbia, while Germany sided with Austria in the ensuing battle. Soon, France, Britain and other countries found themselves drawn into the war.

Why did all these countries get involved in the conflict? We need to consider many factors when we look for the root cause behind such a momentous episode in world history.

One causative factor was the changing economic requirements of these countries. They were all industrialising rapidly so there was intense competition among them to become the most powerful industrial nation in the world. As you read in the previous class, the process of industrialisation began in Britain and, by the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany was striving to become Britain's equal, with Austria, France, Italy and Russia also making similar attempts.

Industrialisation required mineral resources, large markets and colonies. So there was a fierce competition between countries to gain control of mineral-rich regions in Europe and around the world. The older industrial countries like Britain had already established their control over many such regions. The newer industrialising countries wanted to capture these regions from Britain and other weaker countries. For example, Germany attacked France in 1871 and captured the mineral-rich Alsace-Lorraine region. It also annexed Polish territory.

In those days, Britain's industrial growth was helped, to a large extent, by its growing naval power.

The country ruled the seas so it was able to expand its trade across the world and also exercise total control over its colonies. Germany knew it would have to first challenge Britain's maritime dominance if it wished to industrialise and expand its trade. But the country had only one harbour in the North Sea. It needed to gain access to the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean to ensure free passage for its ships across the world. But to do so, it would have to build up its naval fleet to be in a position to confront Britain on the seas. So the country focused on building its maritime strength even as it kept expanding its territorial boundaries and sphere of influence.

**Why did a country need a powerful naval fleet to industrialise in those days? Discuss in class.**

**What methods could a country use to gain control over mineral-rich areas of its neighbour? Which of these methods would be acceptable to both countries?**

**Do you think that a country will have to enter into conflicts with other countries if it wishes to industrialise? Is industrialisation possible by any other method?**

## Complex international treaties

Tension was building up between European countries by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the powerful countries felt that, sooner or later, war was inevitable. None of them were keen to fight a war on their own, so they signed secret treaties with one another. A primary condition of these treaties was that if one country was attacked, its treaty partner would come to its aid. The following treaties laid the ground for the outbreak of the First World War:

**Triple Alliance:** This treaty between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy came into force in 1882. It stipulated that if any of the three signatory countries was attacked by France or Russia, the other two countries would come to its aid in the ensuing war.

**Triple Entente:** France and Russia were uneasy about Germany's growing might and belligerence and were also wary of the Triple Alliance. At the same time, Britain was worried about Germany's mounting naval strength. So the three countries entered into an agreement in 1907, the condition being that if any one of them was attacked by an enemy country, the other two would come to its assistance.

Apart from these two treaties, Germany also signed an agreement with the Ottoman empire in which Turkey promised to come to its aid if Russia attacked either Germany or Austria. Similarly, Russia entered into an agreement with Serbia that stipulated that Russia would come to Serbia's aid if it was attacked by Austria.

This complex web of treaties that the countries wove to protect themselves divided Europe into two camps. One alliance was led by Germany and the other by Britain. Tension kept building up between the alliances. It was in this volatile situation that the Archduke of Austria and his wife were assassinated. The assassination provided Austria with an excuse to attack Serbia. Russia entered the war to support Serbia while Germany came to the aid of Austria.





Figure 7.1: A cartoon published in 1914. It shows how all the European countries were drawn into the war

## Ultra-nationalist feelings and militarism

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many nationalist states were being established. Their governments promoted the spirit of patriotism among the people, encouraging them to make their nation states strong and powerful. They believed that whichever nation possessed the most territory and the largest number of colonies would be all-powerful while those that didn't would be crushed by their powerful neighbours.

At the same time, many new communities sharing the same language or religion began to see themselves as separate nations and launched struggles to establish their own independent states. Prominent among them were the Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Slav and Jewish people, none of whom had their own independent state.

Countless such groups in Central Europe, inspired by nationalist ideas, tried to break up the existing empires to build their separate, independent nation states. The German, Austrian, Russian and Turkish empires were the ones that felt the impact of these elements the most.

But there was one problem in establishing independent linguistic states. Many of the people speaking the same language were spread across different regions. It was difficult to consolidate all these regions

into a single state. Compounding the problem was the fact that these regions also had many people speaking a different language.

All these factors contributed to spreading political turmoil across Europe. Tension kept building up within and between countries. The feeling slowly grew among the people that the only way to resolve their problems was through war. Jingoistic nationalism, diplomatic intrigue, and economic self-interest soon made all talk of peace superfluous. Peace and harmony gave way to feelings of doubt, fear and malice among the people. In such a charged situation, nations found it extremely difficult to view what was happening in a calm and rational manner.

It was also during this time that many people were being influenced by Darwin's theories of natural selection. They believed in the principle of social Darwinism, which essentially meant that only the fittest and most capable nations would survive and progress. They saw struggle as a natural law of life and development. Many nations began to believe that it was their natural right to rule over weaker nations because their culture was superior. They did not consider it unethical to use armed force to achieve their ends, even going to the extent of justifying genocide.

**Was it possible then to avoid war? Could a nation that believed it had the right to rule over everyone else and propagate its culture/religion achieve its goals without clashing with other nations?**

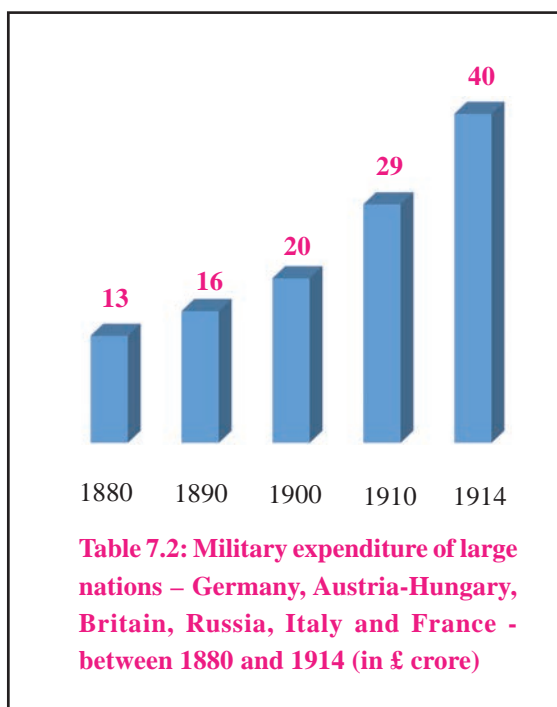
**In what way did political thinkers and diplomats misuse Darwin's theories? Does a country's progress depend on establishing its sovereignty over other countries?**

Newspapers play a key role in influencing public opinion. At the time of the First World War, many newspapers contributed to the spread of ultra-nationalism. They presented news of incidents in such a provocative manner that people were incited, making it difficult to enter into peace agreements. When British newspapers criticised the policies of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Germans began seeing Britain as their enemy. The German reaction, in turn, incited the people of England. Similarly, biased newspaper

reports led to a breakdown in relations between France and Germany. In Serbia and Austria, newspapers published inflammatory articles following the assassination of the Austrian Archduke, creating malice and distrust between the two nations.

Ultra-nationalism led to the rise of militarism. All nations focused on fortifying their armies and equipping them with the latest weaponry. Each competed with the other to display their military prowess. Who had the most battleships? Who had the most powerful cannons?

Militarism is not limited to building armoured might. A militarist mood grips the people. They believe in a disciplinary regime where everyone complies with orders uncritically and accepts state policy without asking questions. Democratic values are undermined but such a climate suits the agenda of military rulers. Autocratic regimes are thus strength-





ened even as democracy is weakened.

In short, militarism has two distinguishing features – it leads to a scaling up of armed forces and stockpiling of weaponry as nations seek to establish their military supremacy while it also moulds people's minds so that they begin to accept state policies unquestioningly.

Table 7.2 shows that military spending rose two-fold from £20 crore to £40 crore in the 14 years from 1900 to 1914. The military budgets of all large European nations rose steadily as they prepared for war. They set up factories exclusively to manufacture armaments and many capitalists invested in these ventures in the hope that the outbreak of war would increase demand for weaponry, thus maximising their profits.

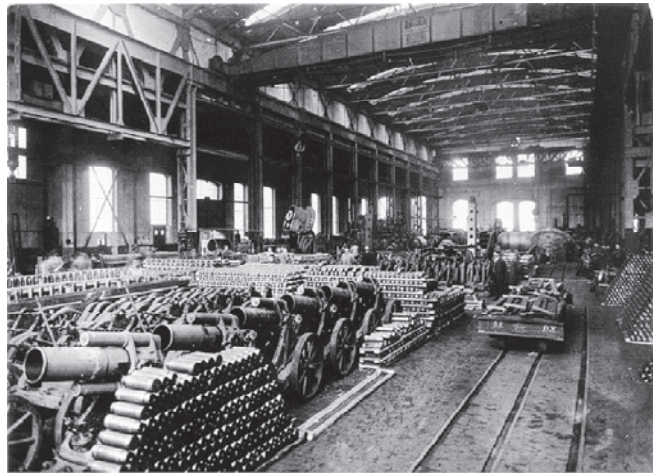


Figure 7.2: A German factory manufacturing cannons (1916)

**Do you think a humanist perspective should accompany investment in industry? State your views.**

However, it was not as if all the people in Europe were taken in by the claims of their militaristic governments and were in favour of waging war. Anti-war sentiments were slowly gaining ground, especially within the labour movement and the women's rights movement. These movements opposed war. They pointed out that war suited the designs of ruling governments but did not benefit the people. The women's movement also unequivocally stated that it is male pride that instigates the decision to wage war but the ones to suffer the most are women.

Prominent among the anti-war dissidents were Karl Liebknecht of Germany, Rosa Luxemburg of Poland, Vladimir Lenin of Russia and Sylvia Pankhurst of Britain. But their voices were swamped by the war hysteria of 1914. It was only after thousands of people were killed in the war and families saw a stream of disabled soldiers returning home that anti-war sentiments began to spread.

**Take a look at this poster published in Britain. It urges people to turn their silver into bullets. What is the message it conveys? Discuss in class.**

## Why did the First World War happen?

In brief, it can be said that the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment of nation-states that were not democratic, with power continuing to remain in the hands of the elite class. This was the time when all nations were industrialising rapidly, leading to intense competition between them. The newly emerging countries were trying to create their own space, which naturally upset the existing power balance between countries.

This was also the time when many communities in the established empires were struggling to gain independence and

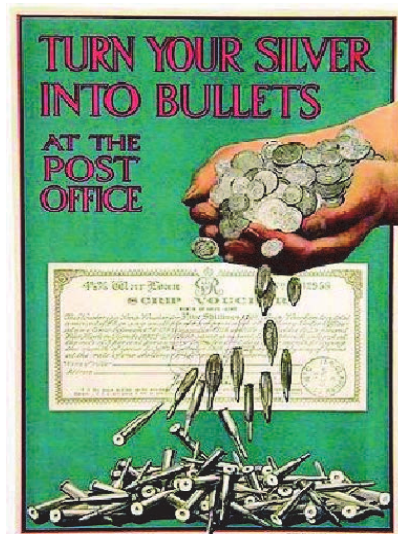


Figure 7.3: Turn your silver into bullets

establish their own nations, which posed threat to these empires. This, too, contributed to upsetting the international equilibrium.

When the outbreak of war seemed inevitable, many nations signed secret treaties with each other. But a minor clash between two nations soon escalated into a world war as the treaty signatories sprang to each other's defence.

These events happened in quick succession because ultra-nationalism and militarism had taken root and spread across Europe. People were ready for war. But, as the consequences of war became starkly apparent to them, their enthusiasm gave way to rage against their military rulers.

## Major episodes of the First World War

Following the assassination of their Archduke, Austria-Hungary launched an attack on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Russia rushed to Serbia's aid and attacked Austria while France announced its support for Russia. Germany declared war against Russia on August 1 and against France on August 3. Germany despatched its troops through Belgium to launch an attack on France. This led Britain to declare war against Germany on August 4.

In this way, all the major European countries and their global colonies were drawn into the war. Japan announced its decision to oppose Germany on August 23 while Turkey joined the war in October by bombing Russian ports. Italy was initially in the German alliance but joined Britain after signing a secret treaty in April 1915.

America was initially neutral. But it had strong trade ties with Britain and France, with its companies profiting by selling food and armaments to these countries. It also earned interest by extending war loans to them. But Germany used its powerful naval fleet to disrupt Britain's and France's contacts with other countries, severely affecting their trade and preventing USA from coming to their aid. German submarines also began attacking American ships carrying goods to Britain. Among them was an American passenger ship, which sank with all its crew and passengers. This act enraged America, leading it to declare war on Germany on April 6, 1917. In this way, all continents of the world were drawn into the war.

In the beginning of the war, Germany met with success on the battle-front. It succeeded in advancing towards France and repulsed the Russian attack. But France and Britain soon joined forces to arrest the German advances. In the east, Russia faced defeat. The repeated setbacks on the battlefield led to growing anti-war sentiment in the country and growing demands for democracy. This laid the ground for the October revolution in 1917, after which the revolutionary government signed an agreement with Germany to withdraw Russia from the war.



Figure 7.4: An idealised picture of life in a trench



Figure 7.5: A realistic picture of life in a trench

The war took a decisive turn after America joined the battle in 1917. The country's huge resources were used to mobilise troops against Germany. Within Germany, the people rebelled against Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm, forcing him to abdicate. A democratic government was established in Germany, which took steps to end the war. This led to America declaring an end of the war on November 11, 1918.

In this way, the war that had raged for four-and-a-half years came to an end. Around 80 lakh soldiers were killed while two crore soldiers were injured, many of them dying because of the hardships of war. The nations who fought the war collectively spent £4,000 crore on the war effort, disrupting their economies. It took many years for these countries to get their economies back on the rails after the war.

### **The Soldiers of war**

The governments of all countries went on a massive army enlistment drive once the war was announced. In most countries, enlistment of youth was compulsory. Most of them were poor farmers or labourers. The officers, on the other hand, belonged to the upper, elite classes. They saw these poor soldiers as so many herds of sheep who could be thrust into the jaws of death without a second thought.

Take for example, the Battle of Verdun, a small French city, which raged for 10 months. It claimed the lives of at least 2,80,00 German soldiers and 3,15,000 French soldiers. Similarly, the Battle of Somme, also in France, saw 20,000 British casualties in a single day, with another 35,000 badly wounded. Altogether, 4,00,000 British soldiers, 2,00,000 French soldiers and 6,00,000 German soldiers were killed in the year-long fighting.

The countries fighting the war used to dig long trenches in their territory. Soldiers in the trenches were protected from enemy fire and could fire at advancing enemy soldiers from them. The soldiers lived day and night in these trenches in pitiable conditions. They had to brave the biting cold and rain for months on end. They lived, ate and slept in slush-filled pits, with the dead lying in a pile, rotting, eaten by rats. The stench was unbearable, with lice and eczema compounding their misery.

Antibiotics had not been discovered in those days. So even a minor injury could get infected in these unsanitary conditions. Many of soldiers were exposed to cannon-fire for the first time, the shattering explosions of the heavy cannon balls disorienting them and even causing them to lose their mental balance. It took a long time for military doctors to understand this mental illness and look for a proper care. Many soldiers returning from the front suffered mental tension for years on end, leaving them prey to other illnesses as well.

The condition of prisoners of war (soldiers imprisoned by enemy countries) was equally inhuman. They were looked upon with hatred and their upkeep was considered a waste of resources. Most countries did not observe the international treaties which specified that prisoners of war should be treated humanely. Germany, which fought the war on many fronts, captured the largest number of prisoners, with around 25 lakh soldiers of different countries interned in their war camps. Britain and France had around 3,00,000 prisoners each in their camps.

Around 13 lakh Indian soldiers fought on the British war front in Africa, Iraq and France, with around 74,000 casualties.



## New techniques used in the First World War

**Machine guns:** Soldiers in the network of trenches usually used machine guns. This was the first time that such guns were used in a war. They could fire hundreds of rounds per minute. Their killing power was many times more than that of a rifle that had to be re-loaded after every shot.

**Cannons:** These were used on a large scale in the war. The heavy cannons could fire 50-60 rounds per minute. With their ability to fire rounds continuously on a target at a specified distance, they were a successful answer to the obstacle created by trenches. They could destroy the trenches along with the enemy soldiers, their weapons and other equipment.

**Tank:** In 1899, Britain developed an armoured car with bullet-proof plating that was equipped with a machine gun. Its tyres were then replaced with a chain track that enabled the vehicle to navigate through mud and undulating terrain. In this way, the tank was developed.



Figure 7.6: The first tank



Figure 7.7: A German submarine (u-boat)

**Submarine:** Germany developed the u-boat (submarine) that could navigate below the water surface and bomb enemy ships. Around 50% of Britain's trade ships were destroyed by u-boats in the First World War.

**Poison gas:** Germany, which had a flourishing chemical industry, experimented with poison gas to kill or blind the enemy. Soldiers on the opposing side were forced to wear masks to continue fighting. Seeing the devastating effect of such chemical weapons, all the countries of the world decided after the war that such weapons would never be used in war hereafter. This agreement is called

the Geneva Convention, which also specified several other important rules of warfare that were universally accepted.

**Railway trains:** During the First World War, soldiers, weapons, cannons running on rail tracks, and other war logistics were transported to distant outposts by train. This new transport facility established an important place for itself in war.

**Airplanes:** From the time the Wright brothers flew the first airplane in December 1903 to the start of the First World War in 1914, the technique and manufacture of airplanes was in its preliminary phase. In this stage, they were used mainly for air patrols to reconnoitre enemy positions. Most nations soon realised the strategic importance of airplanes. As a result, the technique of manufacturing aircraft saw rapid advances during the First World



Figure 7.8: An aircraft flying over a war front.  
Trenches can be seen on the ground

War. From 750 airplanes at the beginning of the war, the number rose to 10,000 on both sides of the conflict by the time the war ended. The war saw the development of more advanced aircraft that could remain airborne longer, fly faster, and were more sturdily built.

## How the war affected the people

The First World War was a Total War. It was the first war in which all the people of every country caught in its ambit were thrust into the conflict and suffered its consequences. People living in the battle front areas were the worst sufferers. They were looted, raped and subjected to atrocities by the enemy troops. Their homes and fields were completely destroyed, rendering them homeless. The most seriously affected countries were Belgium, France, Poland and Russia.

Every government stirred up war hysteria to win the support of their people. In promoting patriotism they also fanned hatred for the enemy. School textbooks, posters, plays and other cultural means were extensively used in the war propaganda, making a deep impact on people. In the early years of the war, the targets of the propaganda were mostly the religious and linguistic minorities living in the country. These people were evicted from their homes and jobs and forced to live in camps under strict police surveillance. The war hysteria inspired lakhs of young people to enlist and go to the front, where they killed and died for their country.

Gradually, the true reality of the horrors of war began to surface. Demands for peace and an end to war arose in all countries as the people rose in rebellion. Almost every family was affected, as their adult members enlisted and went to their death - or returned injured and disabled. They bore the brunt of the war – its cost and consequences - in some way or the other. One serious consequence was the threat of starvation as food became scarce. Governments procured foodstuff in huge quantities to feed their armies. Another reason for the scarcity of foodstuff in the market was the disruption of trade. The war conditions prevented the flow of foodstuffs that were traditionally imported. Countries began rationing food to ensure that everyone got at least the bare minimum.

On the industrial front, factories began gearing their production to meet the war effort. This led to an acute shortage of consumer goods that people required in their daily lives. Prices rose as both foodstuff and consumer goods became scarce, doubling and even trebling. But wages of workers did not rise in proportion. Factory and mill owners catering to the war needs earned handsome profits and enriched themselves, but the wages of workers remained the same. Public facilities like hospitals and dispensaries were also diverted to the war effort, inconveniencing the people and making them suffer.

As the war casualties and mortality figures rose, with every family reporting losses of their adult members, the people's anger turned on those who were responsible for whipping up war hysteria and leading their country into the conflict. The workers began agitating for more wages. People realised that it was the absence of democracy in their country that made it so easy for their war-mongering government to lead them into this horrible war. Had democracy been established, the government would have been forced to listen to the people and not wage war against their wishes.

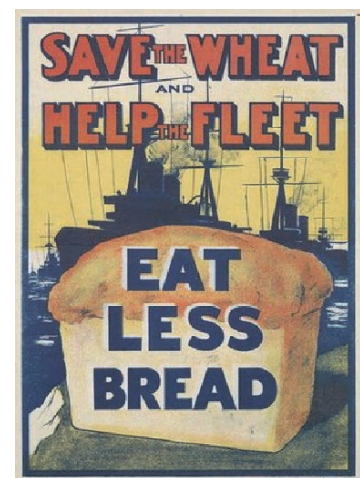


Figure 7.9: 'Eat less bread' says a First World War poster



By 1917, barely three years after the outbreak of war, anti-war sentiment became widespread in every country. The people of Germany, Russia, Turkey, Austria-Hungary and other countries rose in revolt against their own governments. The wave of democratic revolutions that lashed these countries saw their traditional empires disintegrating even before the war ended.

India, too, felt the acute impact of the war. The country had to send its soldiers to the war front and also bear a heavy tax burden as the British rulers increased taxes to raise money to pay for the war effort. With foodstuff and industrial goods being diverted to the army, prices rose manifold. The biggest sufferers were the common people but it was a golden opportunity for Indian industrialists who sold their goods at inflated prices to amass profits. This changing situation gave momentum to the national movement, catalysing the fight against the colonial government.

**Did the war have the same effect on the rich and the poor and were their reactions to the war similar?**

**Why did democracy spread after the war?**

## The war and women

As we saw earlier, the situation of women changed rapidly during the course of the world war. Since most male adults were conscripted in the war effort, the women had to venture out of their homes to work in the factories and farms to support their families. This was in addition to the daily household duties. The change in their routine and role left a lasting impression on them. They began to feel more independent as they became more aware of their social worth and rights. They developed a new understanding of their position and role in society. In many countries, it was the women who agitated to put an end to the war and restore peace because they were the ones most severely affected by its consequences. Their growing awareness led women's organisations to demand the right to vote in parliamentary elections. In 1918, Britain became the first country to give all propertied women above 30 years the right to vote.



*Figure 7.10: A woman being arrested by the police during a demonstration to demand the right to vote in London in 1914*



*Figure 7.11: Women working in a British armaments factory*

### How did the role of women in the family and in politics change after they began working in factories and offices?

## Peace treaties

In 1919-20, the victorious allied forces - predominantly Britain, France, America and Italy – signed peace treaties with the defeated nations. These treaties included the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with Austria, Treaty of Trianon with Hungary, Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey and the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine with Bulgaria. The most important of these was the Treaty of Versailles with Germany.

Discussions on a new post-war international order had been going on during the war. The first step (Declaration on Peace) was taken in November 1917 by the revolutionary government of Russia. It unconditionally declared that it was withdrawing from the war and appealed to all the war-torn nations to take immediate steps to broker a just and democratic peace.

The Russian declaration said that that no country or nation (in Europe or the colonies) would be forced to be part of another country without its consent, no country would be burdened with the cost of war reparations and governments should sign only publicly declared treaties between themselves, with the full consent of their democratically elected assemblies, in place of secret treaties.

These ideals did not find much favour with European governments but were welcomed by war-weary soldiers and workers. They were widely discussed by the people and demonstrations began to be held across Europe in their support. Seeing the popular wave in favour of universal peace, the American president Woodrow Wilson announced his 'Fourteen Points' in January 1918, outlining the principles for world peace in negotiating peace treaties to end the war. The influence of the Russian decree can be seen in this announcement.

Wilson, too, opposed secret pacts. Significantly he also asserted that all the nationalist were to get the right to self-determination and he was in favour of establishing democracy in all the war-torn countries. Wilson also advocated free and unhindered trade between all countries, opening the seas for all countries to allow unrestricted sea traffic. He also argued in favour of disarmament and the formation of a League of Nations that would adjudicate disputes between countries and encourage mutual co-operation.

Wilson's 14 points stipulated that Germany should return all the territories it had annexed since 1870 and Poland would become a free nation. On Russia, he welcomed the establishment of democracy to replace the tyranny of the Czar and respected the freedom of the Russian people to choose their own form of government. He did not hold any particular nation responsible for the outbreak of war so he felt that no demands should be made on any nation to pay war reparations. The new German government accepted Wilson's principles and signed the Armistice.

Each victorious country had its own vision and diplomatic needs. France, which suffered the most damage in the conflict, held Germany responsible for the war and wanted the Germans to pay war



Figure 7.12: Woodrow Wilson

reparations, thus effectively crippling Germany's economy so that it could never recover to wage another war. It also wanted Germany to return the French territory it had seized in 1871. This region was rich in coal and iron ore. By getting back the territory, France sought to put a brake on Germany's industrialisation. It wanted to damage the German economy to the extent that the country would never again think of attacking another country.

Britain, too, wanted to weaken Germany for strategic reasons, but not for economic reasons, since a strong German economy would benefit British trade. But Britain strongly opposed the right to self-determination of colonial and European nations and their freedom to choose democratic governments. It also opposed the open seas policy that allowed unrestricted sea traffic to all countries. These policies conflicted with its interests.

France, Britain and Germany hoped that the Russian revolution would fail because they feared that it would influence the poor workers and soldiers in their countries. They wanted to build a barrier of anti-Russian states between their countries and Russia. That is why they were not keen to include Russia in the peace talks. Their hope was that all countries would support the forces in Russia that were opposing the revolutionary government.

**What were the differences in approach towards Germany of Russia, America, France and England?**

**What were the differences between these countries on the question of colonies?**

**Why was Britain opposed to an open seas policy for all countries?**

## The Treaty of Versailles June 1919

The most important peace treaty was the Treaty of Versailles. Britain, France and America signed this peace agreement with Germany on June 28, 1919. It contained many terms that were unacceptable to Germany but the three countries threatened to mount a joint attack on Germany if it did not accept these conditions. A hapless Germany was thus forced to sign the treaty. Let us take a look at its main terms:

1. Germany and its allies had to accept the guilt for starting the war and the destruction it caused to other countries. Germany was held liable to pay war reparations for the damage caused, which included the cost of the residential areas, factories and mines destroyed by the German army. The country was to pay a sum of £66,000 lakh in instalments to France, Belgium and Britain.  
  
Many noted economists were of the opinion that this sum was beyond Germany's capacity to pay. They felt it would cripple the country's economic rehabilitation and jeopardise European interests. However, the victorious allies did not accept this argument because they had themselves taken loans from America to fight the war and wanted to repay their loans with the compensation they received from Germany. But when it became obvious some years later that Germany could never pay so big an amount the reparations were reduced to £20,000 lakh.
2. Germany was to return all the territory it had annexed from other countries like Belgium and France. Independent states were also established in all the territories Germany had annexed under an earlier treaty with Soviet Russia.
3. Germany was to return the Alsace-Lorraine region it had annexed in 1871 to France. Also, to

Map 7.2, Europe after 1919



compensate for the damage to French mines, Germany was to give the production of its mines in the Saar region to France for 15 years. The League of Nations would administer the region during this time, after which the resident people would vote to decide whether it should be merged with France or Germany.

4. A large portion in the eastern part of the German empire was ceded to the newly constituted country of Poland. It included the Danzig Corridor, which gave Poland access to the sea. As a result, the eastern portion of Germany was separated from the rest of the country.
5. In this way, around 65,000sq km of land was ceded by Germany to various countries after the war.

**Identify the territories in Map 7.2 that Germany annexed from France in 1871 and ceded to France after the war.**

**Find out where the Saar coal region is located.**

**Which portion of Germany was ceded to Poland to give it access to the sea?**

**Which new states were established between Germany and Russia?**

**Both Russia and America did not want war reparations to be taken from any country. What were their reasons for thinking so? Why do you think their views were ignored in formulating the Versailles Treaty?**

6. Germany's colonies in Africa were mandated to the League of Nations, which handed over their custody to Britain, France and Portugal. The Chinese territory that Germany controlled was transferred to Japan, not to China (because Japan had opposed Germany in the war). In this way, the colonies that Germany had acquired in the 19<sup>th</sup> century slipped out of its hands.



7. Several terms in the treaty effectively ensured the disarmament of Germany. The German army was limited to 100,000 soldiers. Its armoured vehicles, submarines, battleships and aircraft were dismantled. The Rhineland bordering France was demilitarised and the German army was forbidden from entering this strip of territory. The objective was to ensure that Germany could not build up the aggressive capability to wage war.
8. One term of the treaty specified that Germany and Austria could not merge without the permission of the League of Nations. Another treaty separated Austria and Hungary and the people of all the subordinate states of the empire were permitted to form their independent countries. The war thus affected Austria the most. It was left with only farmland and had no other resources for economic growth. A large chunk of the Austrian population spoke German so it was natural for the two countries to seek to merge. But the Allied Powers prevented this.

### **The consequences of the Versailles Treaty**

This treaty has been the most discussed of all modern treaties. Diplomats and politicians criticised it vehemently. First of all, it was not based on the principles of democracy and justice. It was a demeaning treaty that was forced upon the defeated by the victors. Germany was not invited to the discussions and negotiations. All its objections were ignored and the country was forced to sign on the dotted line.

The new elected government of Germany claimed their government was not responsible for the war, which was waged by the earlier emperor and his undemocratic government. So it was unjust to punish the new democratic government for their acts. In fact, punishment would be counter-productive since it would weaken democracy in the country because the German people would never support a government that accepted such humiliating conditions.

In stark contrast, the governments of the victorious countries stirred anti-German hysteria in their countries and came to the negotiating table vowing to squeeze Germany dry like a lime to ensure that the country could never raise its head again. That's why they could not behave in a just manner with Germany. Their claim was that the retreating German army had deliberately adopted a 'scorch earth' policy, destroying all the territories under its control. They also pointed out that Germany had itself imposed harsh conditions in the treaty it signed with the revolutionary government of Russia, annexing a large chunk of Russian territory.

It soon became clear to everyone that such a treaty would only increase the possibility of another war breaking out because Germany would never fully accept its terms. It also became clear that forcing a democratic government to accept such harsh terms would weaken it in the eyes of the German people. Humiliated, they would elect leaders in future who would discard the Versailles Treaty to avenge the insults heaped on the German nation.

**To what extent was the Versailles Treaty influenced by Wilson's principles and to what extent did it ignore these principles? Discuss in class.**

**How would Wilson's principles have affected the establishment of democracy and the economic rehabilitation of Germany?**

### **Establishing the League of Nations**

The idea of forming an international organisation to resolve the problems between nations in an impartial and objective manner had been playing in the minds of many political leaders from the end



of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the war, Wilson's Fourteen Points once again brought this idea into the limelight. Wilson tried hard to realise his vision. Eventually, the League of Nations was established in Geneva (the capital of Switzerland) in 1920.

It was hoped that the organisation would resolve quarrels between nations in a peaceful manner, help them in developing their healthcare systems, ensure their food security, improve the working conditions of labour and so on. One of the first tasks assigned to the league was implementing the international peace agreements signed after the First World War. For example, under the Versailles Treaty, it was given the administrative responsibility of the Saar region (given to France for its use) and the Danzig Corridor (ceded to Poland to permit it access to the sea).

Establishing the League of Nations was, itself, a process fraught with problems. To begin with, in those days, governments did not see their colonies as independent or autonomous countries. So the question of giving them a seat in this organisation did not arise. As a result, the colonies of Asia and Africa were not made members. Russia, too, was not invited because of its agenda of encouraging socialist revolutions across the globe. Also, in spite of Wilson's sterling efforts to set up the organisation, America did not become a member.

The League of Nations nevertheless continued to work with these handicaps and by 1930 appeared to be delivering its promise of peace and prosperity for the world. However, this optimism was short lived as we shall see in the following chapters.

## EXERCISES

1. Give brief answers to the following questions:
  - a) Name two prominent countries each in the two alliances that fought the First World War.
  - b) Why did Austria attack Serbia and which country came to the aid of Serbia?
  - c) Why did Germany attack Belgium?
  - d) What complaint did France have against Germany?
  - e) What is a secret treaty?
  - f) Why did the United States of America join the First World War?
2. How does militarism affect the life and thinking of people?
3. What links do you see between industrialisation and the outbreak of a world war? Discuss in detail.
4. What steps could have been taken to improve the plight of soldiers during the war?
5. What impact did the war have on factory owners and workers?
6. Describe the life of the women seen in Figure 7.11 during the war.
7. Why did revolutions take place in several countries before the war ended?
8. What are the similarities and differences between the Russian Decree on Peace and Wilson's Fourteen points?
9. What impact do you think the Versailles Treaty had on Germany?