

Grade 12 New Curriculum History

UNIT FOUR – Part 1

SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF WORLD WARS, 1914 - 1945

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4.1. World War I and Its Settlement

- World War I, also known as the First World War, the Great War, the War of the Nations, and the War to End All Wars, was a world conflict from 1914 to 1918.
- Chemical weapons were used for the first time. The first mass bombardment of civilians from the sky was carried out, and some of the century's first large-scale civilian massacres took place.

The Alliance Systems of World War I

- Despite Germany's power, its geographical position at the center of Europe was precarious, and Germany had to live with the permanent hostility of France.
- Bismarck wanted security for his country and demanded alliances to isolate France and tie other powers with Germany.
- In 1879, therefore, Bismarck made a Dual Alliance between Germany and Austro-Hungary.
- The Alliance committed each partner to support the other if attacked by Russia.

- This Dual Alliance became the cornerstone of German foreign policy up to World War I.
- In 1882, the Dual Alliance was expanded into a Triple Alliance, uniting Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Italy.
- Russia turned to France to escape isolation, and the Franco-Russian alliance was established between 1891 and 1894.
- Moreover, in 1902, Britain made an alliance with Japan, which strengthened Britain's position in East Asia and allowed Britain to concentrate more on Europe.
- In 1904, Britain and France also resolved their colonial differences in an Entente.
- Both Britain and Russia wanted an agreement because an agreement would strengthen them against German power.
- In 1907 Britain and Russia made an agreement called the 'Anglo-Russian Entente.'
- Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy; and the Triple Entente, or the Entente of France, Russia and Britain.

The Crises that Led to World War I

- In October 1908, Austro-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. The annexation set off an international crisis because Russia and Serbia were unwilling to accept the annexation.
- However, Austro-Hungary, backed by Germany, threatened Serbia with war if it did not publicly accept the annexation.
- However, Serbia did not forget its loss. Antagonism between Austro-Hungary and Serbia increased.
- Moreover, terrorist actions were carried out by individual Serbs.
- This terrorist activity eventually led to the assassination of the **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, heir to the **Austro-Hungarian Empire**, was shot to death along with his wife in **Sarajevo, Bosnia** during their visit on June 28, 1914.

➤ The assassination of **Franz Ferdinand** and **Sophie** set off a rapid chain of events: Austria-Hungary, like many in countries around the world, blamed the Serbian government for the attack and hoped to use the incident as justification for settling the question of Slavic nationalism once and for all.

➤ **Course of the War**

- ✓ Soon after the declaration of war by Austro-Hungary on Serbia, Russia decided to support Serbia, even at the risk of war with Austro-Hungary and Germany.
- ✓ This action caused Japan to declare war against the Allied Powers. Therefore, World War I broke out between the two armed camps, i.e., the Triple Alliance (Central Powers) and the Triple Entente (Allied Powers).
- ✓ In Europe, the war was fought on two major fronts: the Western Front (Germany against the Allied Powers) and the Eastern Front (Germany against Russia).

- ✓ Of the two fronts, the most important was the Western Front, where Germany put into practice the Schlieffen Plan.
- ✓ The **Schlieffen Plan** was created by **Alfred Graf von Schlieffen**, who was the chief of the German general staff from 1891 to 1905.
- ✓ The Schlieffen plan required an attack on France first by sweeping through Belgium.
- ✓ In the east, the Germans planned to stand on the defensive against Russia until France had been crushed, a task Germany planned to complete in six weeks.
- ✓ Thus, the Germans invaded Luxemburg on August 1 and Belgium on August 3.
- ✓ The latter invasion violated the treaty of 1839, in which the British had guaranteed Belgian neutrality. This factor caused Britain to abandon neutrality and to join the war against Germany.
- ✓ Germany then invaded France, and on August 4, 1914, Britain declared war on Germany.

- ✓ On 28 July, 1914 **Tsar Russia** declared mobilization. Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August and France on 3 August.
- ✓ As German troops moved south into France and the French and British troops moved north to meet them, the massive armies met each other in a **stalemate**.
- ✓ By September 1914, neither side could force the other to move, so each side began to dig **trenches**. For the next four years, troops would fight from these trenches.
- ✓ From 1914 to 1917, soldiers on each side of the line fought from their trenches. They fired **artillery** onto the enemy's position and lobbed grenades.
- ✓ However, each time military leaders ordered a full-fledged attack, the soldiers were forced to leave the "safety" of their trenches.
- ✓ The only way to overtake the other side's trench was for the soldiers to cross "**No Man's Land**," the area between the trenches, on foot.
- ✓ Out in the open, thousands of soldiers raced across this barren land in the hopes of reaching the other side. Often, most were hewn down by machine-gun fire and artillery before they even got close.

- ✓ Because of the nature of **trench warfare**, millions of young men were slaughtered in the battles of World War I.
- ✓ The war quickly became one of attrition, which meant that with so many soldiers being killed daily. By 1917, the Allies were starting to run low on young men.

❖ **Allied Power:**

- **Britain block leader, France, Russia until 1917, Belgium, Serbia, Italy joined 1915, USA joined in 1917, Japan**

❖ **Central Power:**

- **Germany block leader, Austria Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey**

1. **Western front:** Where Germany attacks France through Belgium, Luxemburg on Battle fields **Monsin**- August 1914 and **Marne**- September 1914. No resounding victory could be recorded (until 1917).

2. **The Eastern front:** Where German planned to attack Russia on Battle fields **Tannenberg** in Sep 1914. The **Russian October Revolution** 1917/ Nov. 1917/ and forced Russia to withdraw Signed armistice at **Brest- Litovsk** march /1918.
 3. **The southern front:** where Italy fought against Austria (but beaten)
- Italy joined the Allied owing to the Treaty of London 1915, and Italian broke the Austrian defense and compelled the Austrian force.
- The central power controlled largest part of Balkans by 1917 but not major victory scored over Italy
 - 1918 much of the Balkans war lost to Allied and Italian offensive forced Austro-Hungary to capture

U.S. Enter the War

- The U.S. had clung to their idea of **isolationism**. Plus, the U.S. just didn't want to be involved in a war that seemed so far away and that didn't seem to affect them in any great way.
- However, there was major event that changed American public opinion about the war.
- It occurred in 1915, when a **German U-boat (submarine)** sunk **Lusitania**.
- Considered by Americans to be a neutral ship that carried mostly passengers, Americans were furious when the Germans sank it, especially since 1915 of the passengers were Americans.
- On April 6, 1917, the U.S officially declared war on Germany.
- The war was felt in every corner b/c the continents contributed reinforcements both in terms of manpower and material (newly invented weapons; Dirigibles (motor cars, ship) Submarines, Giant artilleries, Tanks, Poison gas, Air plane- (used only for bombing and attacking) to the war fronts and Sea battles.