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The Great War 1914–1919

Stage 6 Topics in Modern History FOURTH EDITION

PETER LAURENCE, DAVID THOMAS & PHILIP CUMMINS

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Introduction

War is not, of itself, 'great'. It represents the failure of the means by which we seek to live together at peace in our societies and communities. It brings with it death and destruction that no reasonable person could or would welcome. Yet all too often, for various reasons that can combine noble intentions with less honourable motives, nations decide that they must fight and that they must win. From this conflict comes changes that may bring great benefit or strife to many; and in the very size and scale of a war, these changes can alter the course of human history. Thus, 'the Great War' holds an enduring place in the panoply of events that modern historians must consider when seeking to understand our world and how it works.

The origins of the war help us to see how and why the collapse of the old world order – and the empires on which it was based – was a watershed in the way our political, social and economic structures work, especially with regard to the rise of popular movements based on serving the inherent dignity and lives of ordinary people. At the same time, we learn as much from our analysis of the historians and their primary sources about causation in history as we do the specifics of why an assassination of an obscure European aristocrat accelerated so quickly into war.

Victory to the forces supporting the original Entente, and the subsequent imperfect peace, causes us to reflect upon its relationship with the events of world history in the decades following. This is particularly true in the way that such an apparently similar world conflict occurred less than twenty years after what was ironically considered to be 'The war to end all wars'. At the same time, we must be mindful of the legacy of the Great War and how it impacted the culture of communities around the globe and affected the notion of a 'modern' world.

In a similar fashion, our study of the course of the Great War adds much to our depth of understanding about human nature and the character of people under the enormous and often cruel pressures that modern conflict brought to people in the trenches, at sea and at home. We can also use our developing knowledge of strategy and tactics to understand how these many wars we encounter as historians are fought, won and lost.

Our book is now in its fourth edition. Since the late 1990s, senior students have used it to help them structure their thinking about the Great War and to help prepare them to demonstrate what they know about modern history and how they can apply that knowledge. We have focused this edition specifically on the requirements of the NESA Modern History course to be implemented from 2018 onwards. In recognition of this topic's discussion in the Year 11 course, we have honed in on the skills of the historian in each chapter.

If this book contributes to the development of your knowledge and understanding of the Great War, your capabilities as a historian, and your capacity to think and feel as an engaged citizen of our modern times, we will be honoured to have played a part in your learning.

Refer to *Cambridge GO* for a downloadable 'Introduction to historical inquiry', with notes on examining sources and studying personalities.

DIGITAL

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A general chronology of World War I

1870	Creation of the Third French Republic
1871	Proclamation of the German Empire
1875	Emergence of labour/socialist party in Germany Great Britain gains partial control over Suez Canal and the sea route to India
1878	Treaty of Berlin grants independence to Serbia, Romania and Montenegro, and autonomy to Bulgaria
1879	Creation of the Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria–Hungary War of the Pacific between Chile, Peru and Bolivia Great Britain gains control over Afghanistan
1882	Great Britain occupies Egypt
1883	Germany occupies South West Africa, Togoland and Cameroons
1885	Belgium acquires Congo
1886	Germany and Great Britain partition East Africa Great Britain annexes Burma
1890	Otto von Bismarck dismissed as German chancellor
1891	Construction of the trans-Siberian railway begins
1893	Emergence of labour/socialist party in Great Britain
1894	First Sino–Japanese War begins Franco–Russian alliance formed
1898	Beginning of German naval construction – Kaiser Wilhelm II embarks on *Weltpolitik* Hundred Days reform in China Fashoda incident between France and Great Britain
1899	Boer War begins
1900	Boxer Rebellion in China
1901	Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia formed
1903	United States gains control of Panama Canal
1904	Russo–Japanese War begins Anglo–French entente formed
1905	Revolution in Russia
1906	Revolution in Persia
1907	Anglo–Russian entente formed
1908	Young Turk Revolution deposes the Ottoman sultan Bulgaria becomes independent Austria–Hungary annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina
1910	Japan annexes Korea Union of South Africa formed
1911	Revolution in China
1912	Balkan War begins

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1914	
Jun. 28	Assassination of Franz Ferdinand
Jul. 28	Austria–Hungary declares war on Serbia
Aug. 1	Germany declares war on Russia Mobilisation of the French Armies with Joseph Joffre as Chief of Staff
Aug. 2	Helmuth von Moltke appointed commander of German armies
Aug. 3	Germany declares war on France
Aug. 4	Germany declares war on Belgium Great Britain declares war on Germany Sir John French appointed commander of the BEF
Aug. 7–16	BEF lands in France
Aug. 23	Battle of Mons Battle of Galacia (Aug. 23–Sep.11)
Aug. 24	Main German armies enter France
Aug. 26–30	Battle of Tannenberg
Sep. 5–10	First Battle of the Marne – German advance halted
Sep. 7–14	Battle of Masurian Lakes
Sep. 14	Resignation of von Moltke – replaced by Erich von Falkenhayn
Sep. 15	First trenches are dug
Sep. 17–Oct. 19	The Race to the Sea
Oct. 19–Nov. 22	First Battle of Ypres
Nov. 2	Russia declares war on Turkey
Nov. 6	Great Britain and France declare war on Turkey
Dec. 17–Jan. 13 1915	First Battle of Artois
1915	
Jan. 3	Germans use gas-filled shells for the first time
Jan. 24	Battle of Dogger Bank
Feb.–Sep.	First period of intensive German submarine warfare
Feb.–Nov.	Allied campaign in Mesopotamia
Mar. 10–13	Battle of Neuve Chapelle
Apr. 22–May 25	Second Battle of Ypres
Apr. 25–Jan. 9, 1916	Allied operations at Gallipoli
Apr. 26	Italy and the Allies sign the Treaty of London
May 9–Jun. 18	Second Battle of Artois
May 7	Sinking of the *Lusitania*
May 9–10	Battle of Aubers Ridge
May 15–25	Battle of Festubert
May 23	Italy declares war on Austria–Hungary

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Aug. 23	Italy declares war on Turkey
Aug. 26	Italy declares war on Germany
Sep. 5	Tsar Nicholas II takes personal charge of Russian armies
Sep. 25–Oct. 6	French offensive in Champagne
Sep. 25–Nov. 4	Third Battle of Artois
Sep. 25–Oct. 8	Battle of Loos
Oct. 14	Bulgaria joins the Central Powers
Nov. 30	France, Great Britain, Russia and Japan sign the Pact of London
Dec. 19	Douglas Haig appointed commander of BEF
1916	
Feb. 21–Dec. 18	Battle of Verdun
Mar.–Apr.	Second period of German submarine warfare
Apr. 24–29	Easter rising in Dublin, Ireland
May 31–Jun. 1	Battle of Jutland
Jun. 4–Sep. 20	Brusilov offensive
Jun. 5	Lord Kitchener killed when HMS *Hampshire* is sunk
Jul. 1–Nov. 18	Battle of the Somme
Aug. 29	Paul von Hindenburg appointed commander of German armies – Erich Ludendorff appointed Quarter-Master General
Nov. 7	Woodrow Wilson re-elected President of the USA
Dec. 6	David Lloyd George becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain
Dec. 12	Robert Nivelle replaces Joffre in command of the French armies
1917	
Feb. 1	Germans recommence unrestricted submarine warfare
Mar. 15	Tsar Nicholas II of Russia abdicates
Apr. 6	The USA enters the war
Apr. 16–29	Chemin des Dames offensive
May 10	John Pershing appointed commander of the US forces
May 15	Ferdinand Foch appointed French Chief of Staff Petain appointed Commander-in-Chief of the French northern and north-eastern armies
Jun. 4	Alexei Brusilov appointed commander of Russian armies
July 1–19	Kerensky offensive
Jul. 31–Nov. 10	Third Battle of Ypres
Oct. 24–Nov. 19	Battle of Caporetto
Nov. 7	Bolsheviks overthrow Russian Government
Nov. 16	Georges Clemenceau becomes Prime Minister of France
Nov. 20–Dec. 7	Battle of Cambrai
Dec. 15	Bolsheviks sign armistice with Germany

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1918	
Jan. 8	Woodrow Wilson issues 14 Points as the basis of a peace
Jan. 15	Bolsheviks establish Red Army
Mar. 3	Russia and Central Powers sign Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
Mar. 21–Jul. 18	German Spring offensives
Apr. 14	Foch appointed commander of most Allied forces
May–Oct. 1920	Allies intervene in Russian Civil War
Jul. 18–Nov. 10	Allied counter-offensive
Sep. 29	Bulgaria signs armistice
Oct. 27	Ludendorff resigns
Oct. 28	Mutiny of German sailors at Kiel
Oct. 30	Turkey signs armistice
Nov. 3	Austria–Hungary signs armistice
Nov. 11	Armistice takes effect between Germany and Allies
1919	
Jan. 4–15	Spartacist revolt in Germany
Jan. 18	Peace conference begins at Paris
Jun. 21	German fleet scuttled at Scapa Flow
Jun. 28	Treaty of Versailles signed (between Germany and the Allied and Associated Powers)
Aug. 11	Weimar Constitution adopted in Germany
Sep. 10	Treaty of St Germain signed (between Austria and the Allied and Associated Powers)
Sep. 12	D'Annunzio occupies the port of Fiume
Nov. 27	Treaty of Neuilly signed (between Bulgaria and the Allied and Associated Powers)

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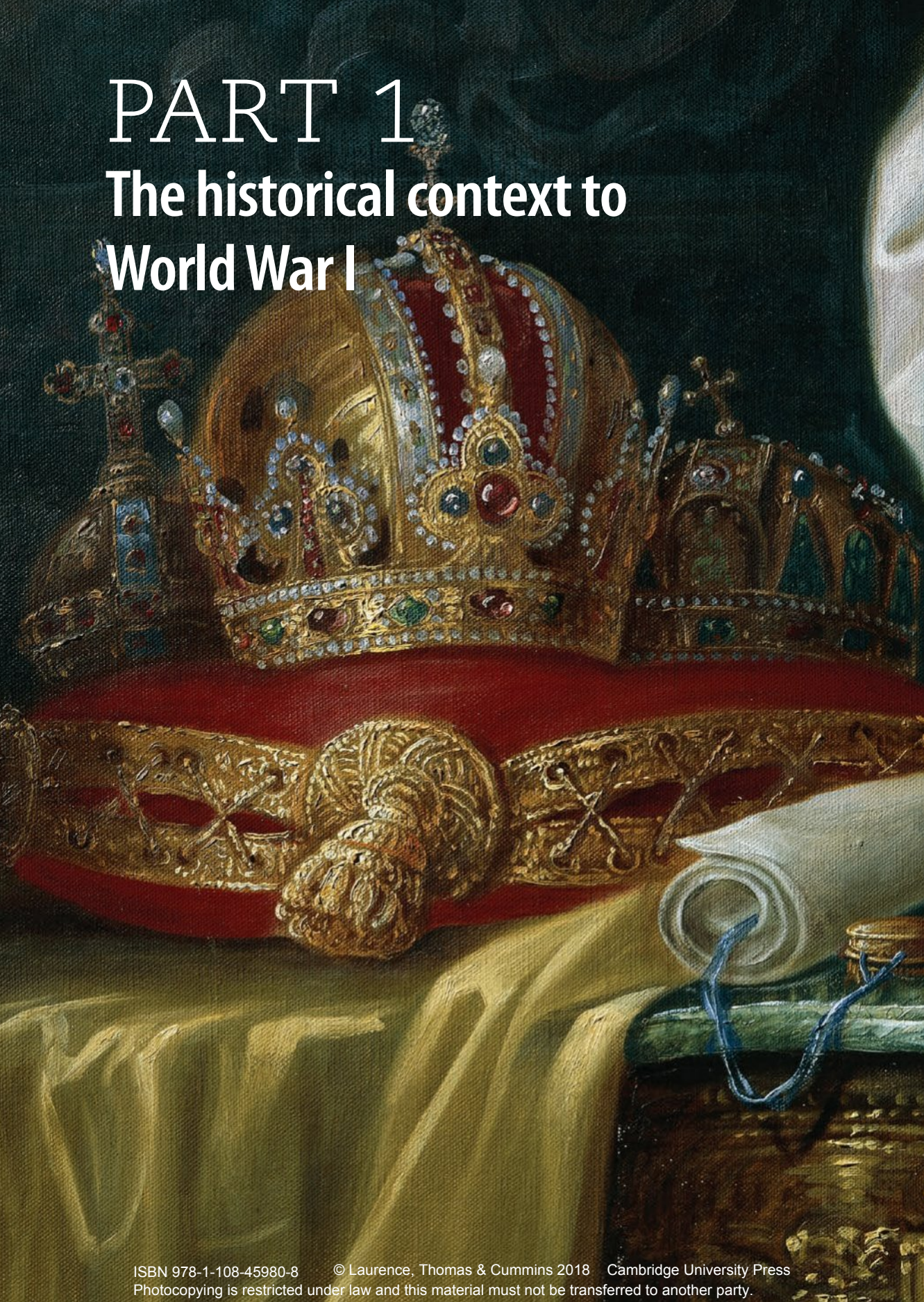

PART 1
The historical context to World War I

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1 The Great Powers: nationalism and imperialism

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the nature and leadership of eight world powers at the start of the twentieth century
- about nationalism at the start of the twentieth century
- about the major imperial rivalries that existed at the start of the twentieth century
- to identify different perspectives in historical sources
- to carry out a historical investigation into the nature of the world at the start of the twentieth century
- to locate and analyse information from visual sources.

1.1 The Great Powers

The world at the start of the twentieth century was centred on Europe, which was a continent of empires and autocrats. **Austria–Hungary**, France, Germany, Italy, the **Ottoman Empire** and Russia each claimed the title of 'Great Power'. However, the greatest power was Great Britain. The strength and influence of Britain and its Empire was shown in the 1897 Diamond Jubilee, which celebrated the 60 years of Queen Victoria's reign. This public display of wealth and power by the world's leading industrialised nation marked the high point of cultural and economic **imperialism**. It also demonstrated the disparity between the nations of the world – there were the Great Powers and there were the rest of the nations. Ironically, this type of division also existed between and within each of the Great Powers themselves. There were small groups with wealth and influence, and there were large groups with little wealth and no influence. Thus, just as the Great Powers were international rivals with tensions growing out of their conflicting ambitions, so too did each Great Power face internal frictions between their classes, political groups and nationalist movements.

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Austria–Hungary

Figure 1.1 Map: Austria–Hungary in 1914

Key personalities

Head of State: Emperor Franz Josef I (born 1830, enthroned 1848)

Lord Chancellor and Foreign Minister: Count Leopold von Berchtold

Prime Minister of Hungary: Count István Tisza de Borosjëno

Minister of War: General Alexander Baron von Krobatin

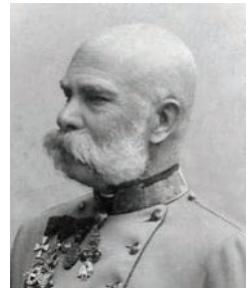

Figure 1.2 Emperor Franz Josef I

Key points

- population: 52 million
- land area: 675 000 square kilometres
- this dual monarchy was created in 1867 – Austria and Hungary maintained separate parliaments, but were linked by a common head of state (the emperor), common ministries and bureaucracies, and common armed forces
- relatively undeveloped economically – Austria (predominantly industrial) was dependent on Hungary (predominantly agricultural) for its food and raw materials
- the diverse population (made up of many different ethnic, religious and language groups) made Austria–Hungary difficult to govern
- the ruling aristocracy was determined to reassert Austria–Hungary's international position
- racial tensions with the southern Slavs created continual conflict with Serbia and Russia.

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France

Figure 1.3 Map: France in 1914

Figure 1.4 Raymond Poincaré

Key personalities

Head of State: President Raymond Poincaré (born 1860, elected 1913)

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister: René Viviani

War Minister: Joseph Noulens

Key points

- population: 40 million + 58 million in colonies
- land area: 500 000 square kilometres on continental Europe + 11 million square kilometres in colonies
- the Third Republic replaced the monarchy in 1875 – it was politically conservative and dominated by middle-class interests; a series of scandals and lack of social welfare reform led to the government becoming increasingly discredited
- economically stagnant, with large-scale investment in its Asian and African colonies
- foreign policy was dominated by a desire to avenge France's defeat in the Franco–Prussian War (1870–71) and to overcome the isolation created by the German Chancellor Bismarck's foreign policy by forging a friendship with Russia.

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Germany

Figure 1.5 Map: Germany in 1914

Key personalities

Head of State: Kaiser Wilhelm II (born 1859, enthroned 1888)

Chancellor: Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg

Foreign Minister: Gottlieb von Jagow

Minister of War and Head of the Admiralty: Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz

Figure 1.6 Kaiser Wilhelm II

Key points

- population: 65 million + 15 million in colonies
- land area: 485 000 square kilometres on continental Europe + 2.5 million square kilometres in colonies
- Germany held the dominant economic and geographic position on continental Europe
- the German states had unified in 1871 to form a German Empire that was dominated by the Prussian aristocracy – while a parliament (Reichstag) existed with the Social Democrats as the largest political group, policies were largely determined by the personal, and sometimes irrational, desires of Kaiser Wilhelm II
- following its unification, Germany had undergone rapid industrial expansion and colonial acquisition
- tension existed between Germany and Great Britain due to Germany's program of naval expansion.

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Italy

Figure 1.9 Map: Italy in 1914

Key personalities

Head of State: King Victor Emmanuel III (born 1869, enthroned 1900)

Prime Minister: Antonio Salandra

Foreign Minister: Marquis Antonio Paternò Castello di San Giuliano

Minister of War: General Domenico Grandi

Figure 1.10 King Victor Emmanuel III

Key points

- population: 35 million
- land area: 300 000 square kilometres in continental Europe + 3.6 million square kilometres in African colonies
- the Italian states had unified in 1870 but pretensions to Great Power status were not supported by economic or military strength
- widespread illiteracy and rural poverty, inefficient government agencies, and a lack of cooperation between the political system and the Catholic Church
- foreign policy was seen as a way for Italy to reassert its position in the Mediterranean region, particularly to reclaim Italia Irredenta (the territories with large Italian populations under the rule of Austria–Hungary)
- support for Germany but suspicion of Austria–Hungary made Italy a potentially unreliable member of the Triple Alliance.

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Ottoman Empire

Figure 1.11 Map: The Ottoman Empire in 1914

Figure 1.12 Sultan Mehmed V

Key personalities

Head of State: Sultan Mehmed V (born 1844, enthroned 1909)

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister: Prince Said Halim Pasha

Minister of War: General of Brigade Enver Pasha

Key points

- population 25 million
- land area: 1.2 million square kilometres
- the Ottoman Empire was in decline, having lost territory to Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia and Austria–Hungary
- economically backward, with little modern infrastructure such as railways, radios or telegraph systems
- the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 had overthrown the autocracy, but the resulting constitutional monarchy of Mehmed V was dominated by the army
- the 'war party' within the cabinet sought to reassert Ottoman power through a closer relationship with Germany and a continuation of war in the Balkans.

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Russia

Figure 1.13 Map: Russia in 1914

Key personalities

Head of State: Tsar Nicholas II (born 1868, enthroned 1894)

Prime Minister: Ivan Longginovich Goremykin

Foreign Minister: Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov

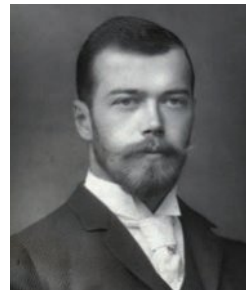

Figure 1.14 Tsar Nicholas II

Key points

- population: 170 million
- land area: 22.8 million square kilometres
- Russia's ruling regime was autocratic, bureaucratic and out of touch – attempts at reform in the 1860s, and following the 1905 Revolution, had brought little change and led the revolutionary movements to increasingly target the emerging urban working class
- its friendship with France was founded on large-scale French economic assistance for industrial projects such as the Trans-Siberian Railway
- a desire to influence events in the Balkans had led to tension with Germany, Austria–Hungary and the Ottoman Turks
- Tsar Nicholas II was ill-suited to deal with the international and domestic crises confronting his country.

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United States of America

Figure 1.15 Map: USA in 1914

Figure 1.16 Woodrow Wilson

Key personalities

Head of State: President (Thomas) Woodrow Wilson (born 1856, elected 1913)

Vice-President: Thomas Riley Marshall

Secretary of State: William Jennings Bryan

Key points

- population: 98 million
- land area: 9.4 million square kilometres
- although reluctant to develop its own empire, the USA had emerged as an important power in the Pacific region, particularly after its victory in the Spanish–American War in 1898
- the construction of the Panama Canal (opened in 1914) was central to its economic expansion and philosophy about the its role in the region (**Monroe Doctrine**)
- prodigious economic development and population growth (aided by European immigration) had taken place since the end of the Civil War in the 1860s
- since 1900, the progressives had dominated politics – the aims of this movement were increased social welfare, and enlargement of government control over big business, finance and trade

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- Woodrow Wilson had been elected president in 1913 with a progressive policy known as 'New Freedom' – he was an idealist who also believed that the president should shape public opinion and personally determine foreign policy.

Summary

- Europe was a continent of empires and autocrats at the start of the twentieth century, with tensions growing out of their conflicting ambitions.
- There were eight Great Powers including the USA.
- Great Britain was the world's leading industrialised nation.
- Each Great Power faced internal frictions between classes, political groups and nationalist movements.

Activities

Thinking historically 1.1

1. a Write a definition of the term 'Great Power'.

b To what extent did each of the following countries deserve the description 'Great Power' in 1914?

- Austria–Hungary
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Italy
- Ottoman Empire
- Russia
- the USA.

2. Examine these statistics about five European powers and answer the questions that follow.

The strength of powers in 1914					
	Austria–Hungary	France	Germany	Great Britain	Russia
Population	52 million	40 million	65 million	41 million	170 million
Population of colonies	–	58 million	15 million	390 million	–
Size of army	800 000	3.7 million	4.2 million	700 000*	1.2 million
Size of navy	67 ships	207 ships	181 ships	388 ships	166 ships
Annual coal output	47 million tonnes	40 million tonnes	277 million tonnes	292 million tonnes	37 million tonnes
Annual steel output	5 million tonnes	4.6 million tonnes	14 million tonnes	11 million tonnes	3.6 million tonnes

* While the British Army numbered 700 000, fewer than 100 000 were available for use as a British Expeditionary Force – the rest were stationed in various parts of the Empire.

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a Which nation was the strongest power in 1914? Give reasons for your choice.
b Which power had the greatest potential strength in 1914? If your choice is different from your previous answer, give reasons.
c What possible combination of these powers would ensure there was a balance of power in Europe in 1914? Explain why you have made these choices.

3. Based on the information in this section, what possible sources of conflict existed within and between the Great Powers at the start of the twentieth century?

Working historically 1.1

Research the methods of diplomacy that operated during the late nineteenth century. Find examples of foreign policies in which war was used to:

- protect a country's interests
- expand a country's interests.

1.2 Nationalism

Nationalism is arguably the most powerful force in modern history. Put simply, it is the feeling of loyalty that exists within a group of people who are united by race, language, territory or history. Emerging from the French Revolution and the idea that the 'people' rather than a single person (such as a monarch) constituted the 'nation', nationalism encouraged attempts at independence among the subject peoples of the European empires. However, for much of the nineteenth century, these independence movements were unsuccessful. Even the unification of the German and Italian states in the 1860s and 1870s owed more to an imposition of national status from above than to the strength of popular sentiment. In this same period, governments – albeit unintentionally in the initial stages – fostered the growth of a nationalist spirit among their populations, with three common features of the new nation state beginning to emerge: mass education, a centralised bureaucracy and an army of conscripts. Each one of these fostered the feelings of loyalty, identity and patriotism that are central to any feeling of nationalism.

Influence of nationalism

The development of nationalism had a significant influence on the relationships between countries, and in the way in which they viewed and reacted to each other. Governments attempted to shape and direct the attitudes and feelings of their general populations through the popular press, rallies and associated forms of propaganda. There was also the development of national symbols and icons.

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In the late decades of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing number of problematic instances where the nationalist spirit was taken to an extreme and took on a mood of aggression towards other states, often associated with mass hysteria. This sentiment is known as **jingoism** and, while it gave unity to the British Empire and German Empire by reinforcing their populations' perceptions of themselves, it undermined the unity of the autocratic Austro–Hungarian and Ottoman empires. In these two regions, nationalism led to the growth of independence movements among the subject peoples and created internal pressures that would eventually cause these empires to disintegrate.

Summary

- Nationalism became a powerful force in the nineteenth century.
- The emergence of nationalism led to the decline of the autocratic empires of Europe.
- If taken to an extreme, nationalism could create tensions and the possibility of international conflict.

Activities

Thinking historically 1.2

1. Give a one-sentence definition of 'nationalism' and 'jingoism'.
2. Discuss the contention that the rising belief in nationalism led to tension between individual countries?

Working historically 1.2

Examine the following two historical sources:

Kaiser Wilhelm II, quoted in P. Vansittart, *Voices 1870–1914*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1984. Source 1.A

> The only nations that have advanced to greatness have been those who do not flinch from war.

Lord Milner, British High Commissioner for South Africa between 1897 and 1905, quoted in P. Vansittart, *Voices 1870–1914*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1984. Source 1.B

> I am a Nationalist and not a cosmopolitan. A Nationalist believes that competition between nations is the Divine Order of the World, a Law of Life and Progress … If I am also an imperialist, it is because the destiny of the English race has been to strike fresh roots in distant parts of the world. My patriotism knows no geographical but only racial limits.

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Questions

1. What is the point of view and tone of each of these sources?
2. What additional information might be required for a historian to make an accurate assessment of the reliability and usefulness of these sources?

1.3 Imperialism

The 100 years following 1815 saw tremendous social, economic and political change in Europe. Greece, Belgium, Italy and Germany emerged as new states, in the modern sense of the term, and **industrialisation** flourished. The last third of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of the forces of **liberalism**, nationalism and socialism. These dynamic philosophies were translated into a spirited, and sometimes aggressive, imperialist desire to expand a state's interests and influence through the acquisition of land. Although some people at the time questioned the economic benefit of this type of colonisation, few denied the positive impact of this process on the national identity.

The 'grab for colonies' became particularly frantic and competitive in Asia and Africa from 1870, and tensions between imperialist powers increased as the amount of unclaimed territory grew smaller. The tables below show the colonial interests in these regions.

Colonial interests – Asia–Pacific	
Great Britain	Burma, India, Afghanistan, Penang, Singapore, Malacca, Fiji, Papua, Solomon Islands, Gilbert Islands, Hong Kong, Cook Islands, Tonga
France	Laos, Indochina, New Caledonia, Tahiti
Germany	New Guinea, Samoa, Mariana Islands, Caroline Islands
USA	Samoa, Philippines, Hawaii
Japan	Korea, Formosa, Pescadores Islands
Netherlands	Dutch East Indies

Colonial interests – Africa	
Great Britain	Union of South Africa, Bechuanaland, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, British East Africa, Uganda, Anglo–Egyptian Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Gold Coast (region in west Africa), Sierra Leone, Gambia, British Somaliland
France	Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, French Somaliland, Madagascar
Germany	German South West Africa, German East Africa, Cameroons, Togo
Italy	Tripoli, Eritrea, Italian Somaliland
Portugal	Port Guinea, Angola, Mozambique
Spain	Rio de Oro, Rio Muni
Belgium	Belgian Congo

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Summary

- In the late nineteenth century, the major European powers engaged in a race to acquire colonies.
- Asia and Africa witnessed the most intense colonial rivalry.

Activities

Thinking historically 1.3

1. Assess the reasons why the major world powers embarked on a quest for colonies in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.
2. Construct a table clearly showing the colonial interests of Great Britain, France, Germany and the USA in Asia and the Pacific, and in Africa in 1914.
3. Copy and complete the following table:

	Benefits obtained from an empire	Costs of maintaining an empire
Trade and economics		
Military and strategy		
Diplomacy		
Politics		
Society		

1. Do you believe that the benefits of having an empire outweighed the costs? Debate this proposition.
2. In what ways would imperialism contribute to a nation's view of its own status?

Working historically 1.3

1. Examine the tables in this section. Refer to a map and identify the regions in Asia and Africa that could be a source of tension between colonial powers.
2. While China had not become the colony of any single power, it was an area of interest for Great Britain, Russia, the USA, Germany and Japan. Refer to a map to explain why each of these powers would seek special influence in China.

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2 Militarism and alliances

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the naval arms race between Great Britain and Germany
- about the international alliances that developed in Europe at the start of the twentieth century
- to analyse the nature of tensions between the Great Powers at the start of the twentieth century
- to pose historical questions about the nature and significance of the alliance system.

2.1 The arms race

Between 1871 and 1914, the major European powers built up an enormous amount of military technology and personnel. Many of these increases were linked to the rise of nationalism and colonialism, and resulted in an almost childish refusal by any of those involved to back down from competing for military supremacy. The size of a Great Power's army and navy was a symbol of national pride, and an indication of a nation's potential to dominate a region or the world. The embodiment of this attitude for supremacy was the HMS *Dreadnought*, a British battleship launched in 1906.

Improvements in naval technology

During the naval battles fought between Napoleon's French fleet and Nelson's British fleet at the start of the nineteenth century, **ships of the line** were great wooden constructions. They relied on sails for their propulsion and were armed with banks of smooth-bored, muzzle-loading cannons. The cannons fired either solid shot or a variety of grapeshot using gunpowder as the propellant. The range of these guns was usually no more than a few hundred metres, so ships engaged at close range.

Through the nineteenth century, a series of technological developments occurred that changed the design and capacity of the ships and their guns. This in turn altered the nature of naval warfare. By 1914, steel-armoured ships driven by turbine engines were capable of speeds of over 20 knots. They had hydraulically assisted, shell-firing, breech-loading guns with rifled barrels, and they engaged in gunnery duels at ranges of several kilometres.

The naval arms race between Great Britain and Germany

The naval race between Great Britain and Germany grew out of the new German foreign policy adopted from the 1890s. The British (and to a lesser extent the French and Belgians) had by this time accumulated a vast empire.

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Approximately one quarter of the world's land surface lay under the rule of Queen Victoria and her parliament. Germany sought to play an equal role on the world stage by acquiring its own empire. Organisations such as the *Kolonialverien* pressured the German government to begin a program of expansion. In the 1870s and 1880s the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, wished to avoid the acquisition of colonies, believing such a policy would bring conflict with Great Britain. However, this changed with the accession of Wilhelm II to the German throne in 1888.

Kaiser Wilhelm II's policy of ***Weltpolitik*** aimed at turning Germany into a major imperial power: if Great Britain possessed an empire on which the sun never set, Germany was now intent on demanding its place in the sun. The way to achieve this was for Germany to develop a navy to compete with that of Great Britain. At a meeting of the Colonial Society in 1896, Wilhelm II stated, 'The future of Germany is on the sea'. Great Britain's decision not to allow this to happen led to the development of the **arms race**. In 1897, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz was appointed Germany's Navy Minister. He advised a policy of constructing 19 capital ships over a period of seven years. In a very secret memorandum to the Kaiser in June 1897, he wrote:

> For Germany, the most dangerous naval enemy at the present time is England … The military situation against England demands battleships in as great a number as possible … A German fleet … built against England [requires]: 1 fleet flagship, 2 squadrons of 8 battleships each, 2 reserve battleships for a total of 19 battleships … This fleet can be largely completed by 1905.

German Naval Laws

The First German Naval Law of 1898 put the secret memorandum into operation. At the same time, Great Britain began to experiment with new technology, such as turbine-driven propulsion and heavier guns. Tirpitz introduced a Second Naval Bill in 1900 aimed at increasing the number of German capital ships to 36. Realising that it would take at least 15 to 20 years for Germany to match Great Britain's industrial strength, and acknowledging that the size of the German fleet would therefore be smaller than that of Great Britain, Tirpitz included his 'Risk Theory' into this Naval Bill so that

> the defeat of a strong German fleet would so substantially weaken the enemy that, in spite of a victory he might have obtained, his own position in the world would no longer be secured by an adequate fleet.

The British response

The basis of German policy was to intimidate Great Britain. Between 1901 and 1902, Lord Selbourne, First Lord of the Admiralty, sent the following pieces of advice to the British Cabinet:

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> The naval policy of Germany is definite and persistent. The Emperor seems determined that the power of Germany shall be used all over the world to push German commerce, possessions and interests. Of necessity it follows that German naval strength must be raised so as to compare more advantageously than at present with ours … The more the composition of the German fleet is examined, the clearer it becomes that it is designed for a possible conflict with the British fleet.

In 1904, Admiral John Arbuthnot Fisher was appointed First Sea Lord. He immediately set out to regain the initiative from Germany by building more, and bigger, ships than Germany. Hundreds of naval officers were retired, training programs were updated, and Great Britain's naval strategy was re-evaluated; for example, in 1904 Great Britain positioned eight of its capital ships for Channel defence, where the German threat was most immediate. In 1905, this number was increased to 17, with defence of other parts of the Empire being left to smaller ships.

The dreadnought

From 1905 Fisher's aim became the development of a new class of battleship that would overwhelm the ships being constructed by Germany in size and firepower. The solution was the class of battleship known as the **dreadnought**. HMS *Dreadnought* was launched in February 1906. It carried ten 12-inch guns – more than twice as many as any other battleship. It was the first turbine-driven battleship, and could attain speeds of 21.6 knots, two knots faster than any other. It was protected by up to 11 inches (28 cm) of steel plate. It made every battleship in the world obsolete. Other navies had to respond to the British design or face annihilation. Germany attempted to match Great Britain in the construction of dreadnoughts, but as the statistics show in the table below, they could never achieve superiority.

Dreadnought construction				
	British dreadnoughts		German dreadnoughts	
Year (July–June)	Total completed	Under construction	Total completed	Under construction
1905–1906	0	1	0	0
1906–1907	1	3	0	2
1907–1908	1	6	0	4
1908–1909	5	3	0	7
1909–1910	7	7	4	6
1910–1911	8	10	4	9
1911–1912	13	9	8	8
1912–1913	17	12	11	6
1913–August 1914	22	12	13	5

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Figure 2.1 HMS *Dreadnought*

The *Daily Telegraph* Incident

In October 1908, Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Great Britain and gave an interview to the *Daily Telegraph* about Germany's naval and foreign policy. Despite his assurances of German friendliness, his answers caused widespread concern:

> Germany is a young and growing empire. She has a world-wide commerce which is rapidly expanding and to which the legitimate ambition of patriotic Germans refuses to assign any bounds. Germany must have a powerful fleet to protect that commerce and manifold interests in even the most distant seas. She expects those interests to go on growing, and she must be able to champion them manfully in any quarter of the globe. Her horizons stretch far away. She must be prepared for any eventualities in the Far East. Who can foresee what may take place in the Pacific in the days to come, days not so distant as some believe, but days at any rate, for which all European powers with Far Eastern interests ought steadily to prepare? Look at the accomplished rise of Japan; think of the possible national awakening of China; and then judge of the vast problems of the Pacific. Only those powers that have great navies will be listened to with respect when the future of the Pacific comes to be solved; and if for that reason only, Germany must have a powerful fleet. It may even be that England herself will be glad that Germany has a fleet when they speak together on the same side in the great debates of the future.

British naval scare

Admiral von Tirpitz used Wilhelm II's comments as a justification for increasing the level of dreadnought production. The British Government then responded in like fashion. This was known as the 'naval scare'.

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With public pressure for an increase in dreadnought production rallying behind the slogan 'We want eight and we won't wait', the Admiralty convinced the government to increase its expenditure on dreadnoughts.

Policy directions

In 1912, Great Britain abandoned the 'two-power standard'. This had been the traditional policy of maintaining a navy capable of dealing with the combined threat of the two next most powerful navies, namely those of Germany and the United States. Henceforth, Germany alone was targeted. This policy also led Great Britain to alter its strategic naval deployment in the Mediterranean – France was to provide the ships for the defence of that region so that the British could concentrate its forces in the Atlantic and North Sea.

On 8 December 1912, at a meeting of Germany's top defence officials, most military and naval advisers believed that war in Europe was inevitable. Wilhelm II particularly felt that Great Britain had become the enemy:

> Britain could not allow Germany to become the leading power on the Continent and it to be united under Germany's leadership. Unscrupulous, brutish and typically English! Britain disposes of the continent and our future as though it were a bundle of rags and does not care one whit about our interests. This is a moral declaration of war on us. My departments are all informed and our military preparations are now made on the assumption that Britain is our enemy.

Germany's initiation of a naval arms race did have an impact on the actions and attitudes of the rest of Europe in preparing for war. Competition and aggressive attitudes carried the participants to the point where they believed they had little choice but to continue this rivalry. As Winston Churchill said to the House of Commons in March 1914:

> We are witnessing this year increases of expenditure by Continental Powers in armaments beyond all previous experience. The world is armed as never before.

The following tables show the breadth and size of Great Britain and Germany's fleets and their spending on naval defence during this time.

Total figures for British and German fleets – 4 August 1914

	British navy		German navy	
Class of ship	**Total completed**	**Under construction**	**Total completed**	**Under construction**
Dreadnought	22	12	13	5
Battleship	55	11	33	7
Battle cruiser	7	3	3	3
Cruiser	51	0	9	0

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Total figures for British and German fleets – 4 August 1914				
	British navy		German navy	
Class of ship	Total completed	Under construction	Total completed	Under construction
Light cruiser	77	9	45	4
Destroyer	191	38	123	9
Torpedo ship	137	1	80	0
Submarines	64	22	23	15
Totals	604	96	329	43

British and German defence spending				
	Great Britain		Germany	
Year	Average yearly defence spending	% of national income	Average yearly defence spending	% of national income
1886–1890	626	2.35	510	2.35
1891–1895	664	2.29	586	2.59
1896–1900	820	2.3	637	2.4
1901–1905	1966	5.33	848	2.69
1906–1910	1220	2.93	1294	3.23
1911–1913	1071	2.12	1468	3.1

(Figures given in millions of German Marks)

This climate of **militarism** took its toll. In 1914 governments were sinking more money into preparing their armies and navies for the war that many believed was soon to come (refer to the tables below).

Great Power navy spending				
Year	Great Britain	France	Germany	Russia
1890	13.8	8.8	4.6	4.4
1900	29.2	14.6	7.4	8.4
1910	40.4	14.8	20.6	9.4
1914	47.7	18.0	22.4	23.6

(Figures given in millions of German Marks)

Great Power army spending				
Year	Great Britain	France	Germany	Russia
1890	17.6	28.4	24.2	24.6
1900	21.4	27.8	33.6	32.1
1910	27.6	37.6	40.8	53.4
1914	29.4	39.4	88.4	64.8

(Figures given in millions of German Marks)

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Military programs of the Great Powers	
Year	**Actions**
1912	German military budget – regular army to increase 30% to 665 000 in 1913 – plans to exceed 750 000 in 1914
1913	French **conscription** law – length of conscription service increased from two to three years – aim to provide 700 000 regular soldiers
1913	Russian military reform – attention switched from the navy to the army – four-year program introduced to increase army numbers by 40% and to increase **artillery** capacity to match Germany's by 1917
1913–1914	British General Staff hold discussions with French High General Headquarters to coordinate possible expeditionary force to assist France against Germany

Summary

- The arms race was an expression of the development of nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century.
- The naval rivalry between Germany and Great Britain was the clearest example of the arms race.
- The arms race led to the development of an atmosphere of aggression, competition and militarism in Europe.
- This atmosphere of tension eventually came to overwhelm the strategic aims that had led to the arms race in the first place.

Activities

Thinking historically 2.1

1. Explain why the nations at the start of the twentieth century believed that the possession of a large military force was an indication of national strength.
2. **a** How important was the Royal Navy to the national identity of Great Britain?
   b What was the purpose of Great Britain's 'two-power' policy?
   c Why did Great Britain resent the growth of German naval strength?
3. **a** Explain why Germany embarked on a policy of naval expansion at the end of the nineteenth century?
   b What was the impact of Germany's naval policy on its relations with Great Britain?

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Working historically 2.1

1. Examine the following two charts.

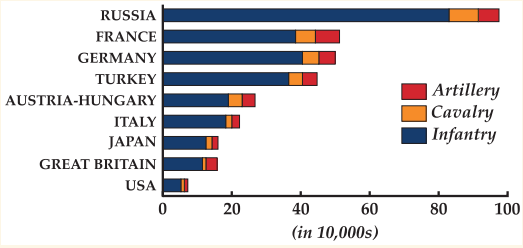

Figure 2.2 Strength of the world's armies, 1906

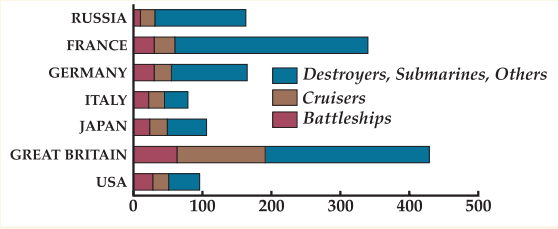

Figure 2.3 Strength of the world's navies, 1906

a Explain why the relative strength of Great Britain's army in 1906 was so weak, while the relative strength of its navy was so dominant.

b Based on the trends shown in these charts, which nation do you regard as the world's leading overall military power in 1906? Give your reasons.

c What conclusions can you draw from the charts about the military strength of France and Germany?

2. Examine the following two historical sources.

A statement by Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, to the Committee of Imperial Defence, 11 July 1912. Source 2.A

The ultimate scale of the German Fleet is of the most formidable character … The whole character of the German fleet shows that it is designed for aggressive and offensive action of the largest possible character in the North Sea or the North Atlantic … The structure of the German battleships show clearly that they are intended for attack and for fleet action … I do not pretend to make any suggestion that the Germans would deliver any surprise or sudden attack upon us. It is not for us to assume that another great nation will fall markedly below the standard of civilisation which we ourselves should be bound by; but we at the Admiralty have got to see, not that they will not do it, but [that] they cannot do it.

Extract from the personal diary of Maurice Paléologue, French diplomat and writer, c. 1908, published 1947. Source 2.B

At seven o'clock in the evening, in the Rue Royale, I saw a **regiment** of the line march past, the 104th, the band at its head. It was returning from a camp at Châlons, after a month of marches and manoeuvres. Their uniforms dusty from the road, the men were marching well in excellent rank and file, sunburned, in fine fettle: the classic type of French soldier. From a military point of view, our nation had not degenerated.

What is no less satisfactory, as a spectacle, is the crowd lining the pavement, standing on benches, watching the soldiers marching past.

continued…

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continued…

Plenty of emotion there, vibrant warmth, cheers when the colours passed, and repeated cries of 'Long live France! Long live the Army!' There is no doubt that the national sentiment is reawakening. This morning my tailor was saying to me, 'Ah, monsieur, how much longer are these Germans going to be allowed to bother us? Why don't we give them one on the nose, eh? A good hearty one. If they declare war, well, we'll fight.'

'And how do your men feel about it?'

'Every working man will say exactly what I have said, monsieur.'

a From Source 2.A, what was the purpose of German naval expansion?
b What was the purpose of Great Britain's naval policy?
c What evidence in Source 2.B indicates the popularity of the French Army?
d Using these sources, what conclusions could a historian make about military expansion in the decade before 1914?
e Which nation or nations appear/s to be adopting the more aggressive, non-compromising stance?
f What additional sources would need to be examined to produce a more balanced view of militarism in this period?

3. Write an extended response to the following question: in what ways and for what reasons did the naval race create tension between Great Britain and Germany in the period of 1890–1914? (Use primary and secondary evidence from this section to support your answer.)

2.2 The alliance systems

Since Napoleon's defeat in 1815, European diplomacy had been through a system known as the **Concert of Europe**. It was designed by Klemens von Metternich, the Chancellor of Austria–Hungary at that time, to stabilise European affairs and to maintain the supremacy of the old, conservative rulers. Under this system, countries avoided entering into separate agreements with other powers, for fear of compromising their own positions or committing themselves to an overseas conflict. Great Britain was one of the best examples of this policy. It used the power of its industrial, commercial and geographic empire to maintain a policy known as **splendid isolation**. Great Britain therefore became involved in the affairs of other nations or regions only at times of its own choosing.

1815: the Congress of Vienna

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Great Powers (Great Britain, Russia, Austria–Hungary, France and Prussia) met in Vienna to re-establish their authority and re-assert their legitimacy. This meeting was known as the Congress of Vienna. The Great Powers restored the rulers deposed by Napoleon and, in some cases, nullified the laws enacted by the revolutionary forces in operation since 1789. The aim had been to create a traditional and stable government in each European country, and to reinforce this situation

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through the combined action of all powers. It was believed that, with no single power being in the ascendancy, this would restore a **balance of power** to Europe. Some countries (Prussia and Russia) gained significantly from the Vienna settlement; others, such as France, were left as they had been, or, like Austria–Hungary, gained and gave up some areas. This settlement provided Europe with four decades of international peace, but it did not prevent the outbreak of internal discord in many countries.

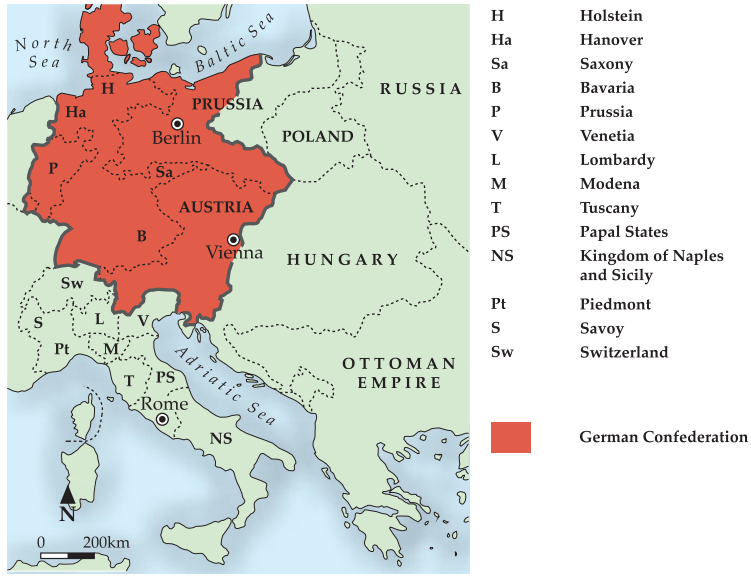

Figure 2.4 The 1815 settlement

The Concert of Europe faced its greatest test in 1848, a year of revolutions throughout Europe, and had been found seriously wanting. At no stage was there an attempt at concerted action by the Great Powers to prevent the emergence of nationalist agitation in the German and Italian states. With the rise of a united Germany and united Italy in the 1870s, the nature of European diplomacy was radically altered; the Concert system ended, and individual nations moved increasingly to secure their own alliances and establish their own 'balance' of power.

The abandonment of the Concert of Europe approach to foreign policy resulted in the **alliance system**, whereby one or more countries would enter into agreements of mutual support, cooperation and/or neutrality with the aim of restricting the possible offensive action of a perceived enemy state. Notable examples of alliance system treaties are discussed below.

1873: *Dreikaiserbund*

The unification of the German states and the Italian states led Austria–Hungary to attempt to expand its influence and control over the Balkan region. At the same time, the German Chancellor Bismarck was determined to protect the newly created Germany against any French attempt at revenge for its defeat in the war of 1870–1871.

The result in 1873 was an alliance between Germany, Austria–Hungary and Russia, known as the ***Dreikaiserbund*** (the Three Emperors' League). Under this agreement, although not a formal alliance, the emperors of the three nations agreed to consult each other on major problems and to remain neutral if one of the members was attacked by any other nation. Bismarck hoped that this agreement would diffuse Austro–Russian animosity in the **Balkans** while maintaining the isolation of France. However, events quickly overtook Bismarck's strategy and the agreement broke down under the pressure of events in the Balkan region.

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Figure 2.5 The *Dreikaiserbund*

1879: the Dual Alliance

In 1875, Christian peasants in the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina revolted against their Muslim rulers from the Ottoman Empire. The revolt spread further in 1876 to Bulgaria, also part of the Ottoman Empire. This uprising brought Russia and Austria–Hungary into conflict: Russia was concerned for the safety of Orthodox Christians in the region and wanted to gain naval access to the Black Sea through the Straits (the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosporus); and Austria–Hungary felt that instability among the Slav population on its southern borders would have repercussions for its own security.

As part of his desire to maintain cordial Austro–Russian relations, Bismarck sought the assistance of Great Britain to pressure Russia to quickly settle the dispute. However, Great Britain feared that the Sultan's downfall would be too much to Russia's advantage – concerns that were confirmed in the 1878 **Treaty of San Stefano** between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Under the terms of this treaty, Russia gained large areas in the Caucasus and the Danube, the Turkish lands in Europe were greatly reduced, Bulgaria was enlarged and placed under Russian influence, Serbia and Montenegro were enlarged, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were granted autonomy under joint Austro–Russian control.

Great Britain demanded an immediate revision of the Treaty of San Stefano, and Austria–Hungary was alarmed at the prospect of a Slav state on its southern border, so Bismarck called an international conference in Berlin. Under the terms of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, Bulgaria was greatly reduced, Russia gained Bessarabia and the port of Batum, Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under Austro–Hungarian control, Great Britain gained Cyprus and was given permission to send warships into the Black Sea whenever it felt necessary, and France extended its influence in northern Africa.

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Unfortunately, this treaty postponed rather than solved the problems in the Balkans. In fact, the major impact of its clauses was to reaffirm the notion that the fate of the Ottoman Empire was the concern of all European nations. Also, relations between Russia and Austria–Hungary soured. The power of Germany as a diplomatic influence was reinforced, as was the preparedness of Great Britain to intervene only when it felt that the outcome would prove to be in its interests.

Austro–Russian tensions consequently undermined the strength of the *Dreikaiserbund*. Russia was concerned by the support Germany gave to Austria–Hungary. On the other hand, Bismarck continued to be concerned about the security of Germany and, given Russia's hostility, he sought to establish a system of alliances that would keep other countries allied to Germany, but not with each other. Out of this emerged the secret treaty of 1879 known as the Dual Alliance. Under this treaty, Germany and Austria–Hungary agreed to support each other in the event of an attack by Russia. If one of the two was attacked by any other country, the non-involved power would remain neutral. This increased the influence of Germany in the affairs of Austria–Hungary and it signalled a warning to the Russians that Germany also had an interest in the Balkans.

1881: the renewal of the *Dreikaiserbund*

While the Germans were secretly negotiating the Dual Alliance with Austria–Hungary, the Russians renewed the *Dreikaiserbund* in 1881. Under the new terms, Germany, Austria–Hungary and Russia would remain neutral if attacked by any other nation state; they would consult each other over territorial changes in European Turkey; and they would consult each other over the Balkans. It was also agreed that the Straits would be closed to all warships, that Austria–Hungary had the right to annex Bosnia, and that Bulgaria could be re-united with Rumelia. Germany had again gained security against a possible French–Russian alliance, while keeping both Austria–Hungary and Russia in a position of dependence.

1882: The Triple Alliance

Also, in the early 1880s, Italy was concerned about the increasing French control in north Africa, so sought an alliance with Germany and Austria–Hungary. Bismarck accepted this overture for two reasons: he had encouraged Italy to increase its involvement in north Africa to drive a further wedge against France; and he remained concerned about the possibility of a strong southern Slavic state. The terms of the Triple Alliance signed in 1882 obliged Germany and Italy to come to each other's aid in the event of an attack by France. All three powers undertook to help each other should one be attacked by two or more states. It was also agreed that Italy would remain neutral in the event of a Russian attack on Austria–Hungary. Italy was now drawn into Germany's anti-French coalition.

1885–7: The collapse of Bismarck's system

However, the 1885 revolt in Rumelia placed this Bismarckian alliance system under immediate pressure. The Bulgarians resented Russian interference in Rumelia, while Russia was hostile to Bulgaria's attempts at independence and union with this province. Germany and

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Austria–Hungary supported Russia, but Great Britain sided with the pro-unionists in another attempt to decrease Russian influence in the Balkans. France and Italy supported Great Britain. Austria–Hungary then changed its view, fearing Russian influence, and warned the Russians not to become involved. The dispute continued until 1887, by which time the *Dreikaiserbund* was dead and the inadequacy of Russia's resources and its inability to impose its will on a weaker, subservient neighbour had become clear.

Bismarck's first concern was to bring Russia back into the fold through a renewal of the *Dreikaiserbund*. The terms of this new agreement, known as the Reinsurance Treaty of 1887, show Bismarck's determination to maintain the isolation of France. Germany accepted Russia's influence in Bulgaria, Germany agreed to Russian control of the Straits, and the two countries undertook to remain neutral in a war – unless it was Austria–Hungary or France who was under attack. Bismarck convinced Russia to agree to these measures by publicly releasing the secret terms of the Dual Alliance. It was now clear that any Russian attack on Austria–Hungary would involve Russia in a war with Germany. However, the terms of the Reinsurance Treaty made it clear to Austria–Hungary that Germany felt it should back away from the Bulgarian issue. While the terms of the Reinsurance Treaty seemed to undermine the anti-Russian nature of the Dual Alliance, Germany's purpose in each of these agreements was defensive – Bismarck was doing no more than protecting German interests.

Bismarck's second concern was to limit the amount of influence wielded by Russia in the Balkans. In early 1887, Bismarck renewed the Triple Alliance and his control over Russian ambitions was bolstered by the 1887 decision of the British, Austrians and Italians to join in an agreement to maintain the status of those nations bordering the Mediterranean. This further deterred the Russians, for the time being at least, from interfering in Bulgaria. Thus, by early 1888, Bismarck had successfully protected Germany from the possibility of a joint Russo–French treaty or an attack from any other power.

However, the accession of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1888, Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, and the influence of a strong anti-Russian clique in the German imperial court led to the abandonment of Bismarck's delicately balanced system.

Furthermore, just prior to his dismissal, Bismarck took a decision that would prove crucial to the future pattern of alliances. In 1887, under pressure from German military leaders, he closed the German stock market in an attempt to cut financial assistance to the Russian war machine. This decision, known as the *Lombardverbot*, undermined Russo–German relations.

After Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, the new German chancellor, Caprivi, chose not to renew the Reinsurance Treaty.

1894: the Franco–Russian Alliance

The way was thereby left open for Russia to seek money from other sources for its rapidly expanding industries. French financiers were more than willing to fulfil the void left and, in 1894, France formalised an alliance

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with Russia to protect itself against Germany. In 1891 Russia and France had signed a political agreement to protect each other from Great Britain in colonial disputes, and in 1892 they had reached a military agreement promising support if either was attacked by Germany and **mobilisation** if the Triple Alliance powers mobilised. These conditions were brought together in a single agreement signed by the Tsar in 1894.

The signing of this Franco–Russian Alliance had major ramifications for Europe: France was no longer isolated; Europe was divided into two distinct camps; Germany and Great Britain were beginning to drift apart; the emphasis of German military preparedness had to counter the possibility of a two-front war against Russia and France; and it removed much of the anti-Russian feeling that had been present in other European powers. This did not, however, spell the immediate end of cordial relations between Russia and Germany. Indeed, in the same year, the two countries signed a tariff agreement, and by 1902 Germany was taking more than 41% of Russia's exports and was supplying 35% of its imports; these figures exceeded what was provided by Russia's trade relationship with France.

Throughout all, Great Britain remained non-aligned. Germany was convinced that Great Britain needed the protection of the Triple Alliance, but failed to understand the psychology of the British nation: it sought friends, not alliances. During the 1890s, Great Britain stood on the sidelines as the other Great Powers made decisions that would have a direct impact on their own strength and prestige: France and Russia become allies; Germany embarked on naval expansion; Germany and the USA began rapid and extensive industrialisation; no countries outside of the British Empire assisted Great Britain during the Boer War; and Russia expanded its influence in Asia and the Middle East. In 1902 the British Government decided to formally end its policy of splendid isolation.

1902: the Anglo–Japanese Alliance

To limit Russia's growing power in the Far East, Britain signed the Anglo–Japanese Alliance in 1902. Under the terms of this agreement, each power promised to come to the other's aid in the event of an attack by more than two aggressive powers in eastern Asia. Not only was splendid isolation ended, but henceforth Great Britain became increasingly entangled in European affairs.

1904: the Anglo–French entente

The continuing expansion of the German Navy – a navy that was aimed at deployment against Great Britain – led Great Britain to change its attitude to the Franco–Russian Alliance. In 1904, Great Britain and France signed an **entente**, called the *Entente Cordiale*, which aimed at settling many of their colonial differences. France recognised Great Britain's dominant position in Egypt, while Great Britain acknowledged France's control of Morocco. Siam was seen by both as an independent buffer between British Burma and French Indochina. The New Hebrides were placed under joint administration and Great Britain abandoned its claims to Madagascar. While this entente was in no way designed to be a binding military alliance of the type existing between Germany and Austria–Hungary, the perception

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Figure 2.6 The Triple Alliance (1882) and the Triple Entente (1907)

of other nations was quite different. It now appeared that Great Britain had taken sides in Europe, and Germany was forced to reappraise its policy. No longer could it act with the previous degree of freedom that came with the assumption of Anglo–French antagonism.

1907: the Anglo–Russian Entente

British anxiety over Germany's navy also led it to put aside its animosity towards Russians, a situation that was welcomed by the Tsarist government, weakened as it was by the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–05 and the 1905 Revolution. As with the *Entente Cordiale*, the 1907 Anglo–Russian Entente was not an alliance and did not commit either side to support the other in the event of war, rather it was a settlement of colonial disputes. Persia was to be divided by a central zone of neutrality, with Russia dominating the north and Great Britain controlling the south. Both powers withdrew from interference in Tibet, while Afghanistan was to remain under British influence. Again, the German perception was that Great Britain had strengthened its commitment to the Franco–Russian Alliance. To them, and many others, it seemed that the Great Powers of Europe had drawn themselves up into two armed camps: the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente of France, Russia and Great Britain (Figure 2.6).

Summary

- The purpose of each of the alliances and friendships between the Great Powers was defensive.
- Bismarck's alliances had been designed to protect Germany by isolating France.
- The collapse of Bismarck's system led to Germany being surrounded by Russia and France.
- Great Britain's policy of splendid isolation was abandoned under the pressure of its desire to maintain a balance of power in Europe in the face of German naval expansion.

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Activities

Thinking historically 2.2

1. Classify each of the alliances or agreements mentioned in this section according to the following criteria:
   - membership
   - terms and nature of commitment
   - international reaction.
2. Consider the following extract and answer the questions that follow.

Robert Wolfson, *Years of Change: European History 1890–1945*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991. Source 2.C

> Countries sought and made allies ostensibly for defensive purposes and the settlement of outstanding disputes between them. An examination of the major alliances made during the period will demonstrate that they were not, openly, formed for offensive purposes to harm or attack other countries. Two factors led to the translation of these defensive alliances into warring factions in the summer of 1914. Firstly, formal treaties of alliance were accompanied by military discussions in which the generals of the countries concerned sought how best to combine their forces. In such circumstances they inevitably had to decide on the most likely enemies and their most effective ways of defeating the most likely attacks of such enemies. Such hypothetical discussions in fact had the effect of determining who would be enemies, who friends, and how the war would be fought. Complex military plans were drawn up so that troops and materials could be moved with the greatest speed to the most crucial points. These plans in turn fulfilled the second precondition for the translation of defensive alliances into attacking groups – namely, the existence of unalterable mobilisation plans that forced politicians into action quickly to name their enemies as aggressors and so justify the mobilisation they needed. Thus, in the summer of 1914, each power sought to name the other as aggressor and so justify their own declaration of war. It was the military discussions and the mobilisation plans, and not the treaties themselves, that were the crucial elements.

a According to Wolfson, what was the purpose of the alliance system?

b Write an extended response on the following: how important was the alliance system in bringing about war in 1914?

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3 Prewar tensions

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the war plans of the European powers
- about a series of international crises faced by the Great Powers at the start of the twentieth century
- to pose historical questions in relation to the war plans of the European powers
- to analyse the different perspectives and attitudes held by the Great Powers towards one another in 1914.

3.1 War plans

By 1914 each of the Great Powers had developed detailed operational plans for the deployment of their military forces. Even though Europe had been at peace for over 40 years, systematic war plans were in place. Why? Much of the answer lies in the changing nature of the modern world. Industrialisation had not only led to massive technological innovation, but the pace of change was such that any military force which did not keep up with its possible protagonists would be defeated. The new techniques of mass production and transport via railways also called for more efficient military organisation. It was now possible for armies to number in the millions. Similarly, the size of the forces meant that an armed force no longer would be able to live off the land it was invading. Planning became essential in order to provide the necessary resources and support for these huge war machines to enable them to function smoothly. In these circumstances the entire military organisation had to become more professional; for example, officers had to be familiar with the latest developments in technology and strategy, they had to be able to organise their subordinates to achieve pre-determined goals, and they had to have a knowledge of foreign lands and languages. The benchmark by which other nations' General Staffs came to be measured was that of Prussia. Its successes in the wars of German unification had shown the other powers how a modern war should be conducted: using universal military service; instituting a planned deployment of vast numbers of reservists in the **front lines**; and employing railways to transport troops, equipment and supplies.

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Germany: The Schlieffen Plan

- The Schlieffen Plan was devised by Count Alfred von Schlieffen (German Chief of Staff, 1891–1906).
- It was assumed that Germany would have to face two powerful armies (France and Russia) in a two-front war.
- The plan's original form was approved in 1899 – Germany would launch a pre-emptive attack on France immediately on Russian declaration of war; due to differences in the speed of deployment of troops (15 days for Germany and France, as against 42 days for Russia) Germany would defeat France before it would have to face the Russian invasion.
- German forces would avoid the heavily defended French fortresses along the border by advancing across neutral Belgium (it was assumed that Belgium would either cooperate or be easily defeated).
- The plan had been fine-tuned by 1906: 34 **divisions** would advance through Belgium while a small German force would engage the border fortresses to divert the attention of French forces.
- By 1914, the plan had been modified by Helmuth von Moltke so that there would be fewer troops advancing through Belgium and more forces attacking the fortresses.
- For the plan to succeed, it needed close adherence to a detailed timetable – rapidity of troop movement was the key.

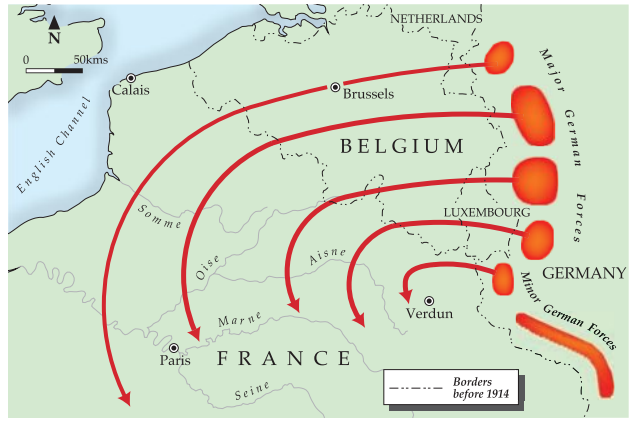

Figure 3.1 Germany's Schlieffen Plan

France: Plan XVII

- Plan XVII was devised by Ferdinand Foch and adopted by Joseph Joffre in 1913.
- It aimed to invade Germany from the border fortresses – the main forces would advance across the territories of Alsace and Lorraine, with a diversionary force launched towards either Belgium or Luxembourg.
- Earlier French plans had responded to the Schlieffen Plan by concentrating major French forces along the Belgian border. Joffre, however, believed Germany had neither sufficient manpower to implement the Schlieffen Plan nor the tactical will to violate Belgian neutrality.

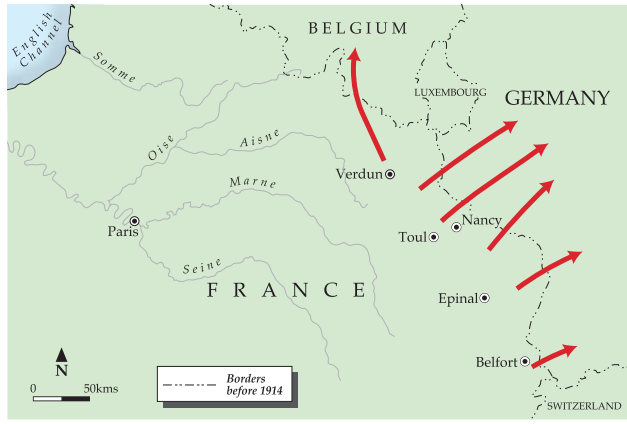

Figure 3.2 France's Plan XVII

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- The plan was more flexible in timing and tactics than the Schlieffen Plan, and had 'attack is the best form of defence' as its underlying principle.

Austria–Hungary: R Staffel and B Staffel

- Two war plans were drawn up by Count Conrad von Hötzendorff in 1909, each based on the premise that Russia would be the major threat to Austria–Hungary if war broke out in the Balkans.
- R Staffel (Plan R) deployed most of Austrian forces towards Russia via Galicia, with a smaller force directed against Serbia.
- B Staffel (Plan B), like the Schlieffen Plan, relied on a slow Russian mobilisation and deployed a larger initial force against Serbia.
- B Staffel was the preferred plan in 1914.

Figure 3.3 Russia's Plan XIX and Austria–Hungary's R Staffel and B Staffel

Russia: Plan XIX

- Plan XIX was formulated in 1909 by General Yuri Danilov.
- It assumed Germany would use the Schlieffen Plan and, therefore, would be vulnerable to a massive Russian assault into East Prussia.
- The plan was changed in 1912 because of the belief that Austria–Hungary was the major threat: the force to attack East Prussia was halved, with 47 divisions mobilised against Austria–Hungary via Galicia.

The fact that the Great Powers became engaged in a series of imperial conflicts and alliance agreements in the late nineteenth century simply accentuated the need for the existence of these detailed war plans. They were not for the purposes of launching an attack on another nation, but as part of a defensive preparedness in the event of being attacked by another power.

Great Britain

Unlike the other Great Powers, Great Britain did not possess specific and detailed plans for the deployment of its troops in the event of war. This was largely due to geography, and Britain's historical reliance on naval supremacy for national and imperial defence.

The shortcomings of the British army had been shown in the Boer War and had prompted a series of reforms by the War Minister, Lord Haldane. These changes had concentrated on producing a relatively small yet highly trained home defence force that could be rapidly mobilised on the continent should there be the need for intervention in a European dispute.

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This British Expeditionary Force (**BEF**) was made up of one **cavalry** and six **infantry** divisions, and supported by a reserve force of 14 divisions. All personnel were volunteers skilled in rifle use and trained for a war of movement. However, the BEF remained the junior arm of the services, with most of Great Britain's financial and technical commitment being given to the Royal Navy.

Summary

- Each of the continental Great Powers possessed detailed military plans.
- The General Staff of each of the Great Powers believed that attack was the best form of defence.
- Each of the military plans devised involved the movement of enormous numbers of soldiers, supplies and equipment and was, therefore, governed by precise timing and logistical requirements.
- The war plans assumed that the alliances would prove to be binding.
- The inflexibility of Germany's Schlieffen Plan meant that a Russian mobilisation would lead to a German invasion of France via Belgium.

Activities

Thinking historically 3.1

1. Explain why the Great Powers of the continent possessed war plans, and Great Britain did not?
2. In what ways were the war plans of the Great Powers linked to the system of alliances that had developed on the continent?

Working historically 3.1

In what ways is it possible to argue that the existence of such detailed war plans meant that, at some stage, diplomatic negotiations would move out of the hands of the politicians and into the hands of the military commanders?

3.2 International crises, 1900–1914

The period between 1900 and 1914 saw the development of a series of international incidents that involved one or more of the Great Powers. Some of these disputes involved military action and others the threat of military action. A few of these disputes involved the strengthening of commitments, while others saw the breakdown of relations. It should be recognised that each crisis on its own did not directly cause the outbreak of war in 1914, but, in combination, the crises produced an atmosphere of international tension from which alliances, military plans and attitudes emerged that made a Great Power conflict possible.

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Morocco

Figure 3.4 Locations of the Moroccan crises

1905: The first Moroccan crisis

In 1905, with Russia's power diminished by defeat at the hands of Japan and diverted by revolution at home, Germany seized the opportunity to test the strength of its treaty agreements. In an attempt to limit the spread of French influence in Morocco, Kaiser Wilhelm II travelled to Tangier and pledged German support for Moroccan claims for independence. The Germans called for an international conference to determine the fate of Morocco, believing that support for Moroccan independence by Great Britain and Russia would humiliate France and bring the entente to an end. In a major diplomatic setback for France, the conference went ahead without its approval. The 1906 Algeciras Conference in Spain, however, did not run to German plans. Russia refused to join Germany and undermine its commitment to France, and Great Britain gave a clear statement that it would not remain neutral in the event of a German attack on France. The independence of Morocco was affirmed, but France was given control over the Moroccan financial institutions and police force. Of its Triple Alliance partners, only Austria–Hungary stood firm with Germany, Italy siding with

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the entente powers. It was Germany, not France, that emerged humiliated from Algeciras.

1911: The second Moroccan crisis

In 1911 the Germans again interfered in the internal affairs of Morocco. The French, at the request of the Sultan, sent troops to the Moroccan capital, Fez, to help put down a revolt. Germany argued that this was merely the first stage in a French annexation of the country, and in July sent a gunboat, *The Panther*, to the Moroccan port of Agadir. The German aim was to intimidate the French into granting substantial territorial concessions in the Congo in return for German recognition of French rights in Morocco. This provocative move by the Germans again did not bring the responses they expected. France refused any form of negotiation or compromise, while the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, made it clear that Great Britain would not tolerate any form of German aggression. Instead, Britain began preparations to send the British Expeditionary Force to Europe and the Fleet was placed on war alert. Great Britain and France were drawn closer together.

The **Moroccan crisis** was defused in late 1911 when France agreed to cede to Germany two small parcels of territory in the Congo. Austria–Hungary and Italy refused to support their Alliance partner, and Germany had to back away again, much to the outrage of German public opinion.

The Balkans

Central to the stability of international relations in the period 1870 to 1914 was the situation in the Balkans. This region was a polyglot mixture of races, religions and cultures that, through the centuries, had come under the control of neighbouring Empires, particularly the Austro–Hungarians and the Ottoman Turks. With the weakening of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, the region became the focus of attention for Austria–Hungary, Russia and Balkan nationalist groups. Austria–Hungary saw the Balkans as a way of strengthening its domination of south-eastern Europe; Russia saw its support for the Slavs as a means of diverting attention from problems at home, while at the same time moving towards securing control of the Straits; and the Balkan nationalists, under the leadership of Serbia, were determined to achieve some form of independence and unity.

1908: The first Balkan crisis

Following a decade of relative calm in the area, conflict between Austria–Hungary and Russia re-emerged in 1908 with the first **Balkan crisis**. Russian expansion into China had been halted by the Japanese, while the entente with Great Britain limited its ambitions in Persia and Afghanistan. Russia turned to the Balkans to restore the flagging international prestige of the Tsarist regime and to appease increasing Pan-Slavic agitation. It was also in 1908 that Austria–Hungary decided to take a more decisive line against the Serbian-led nationalist movements within its Empire. It had the choice either to allow the Slavs to leave, or to reassert its authority by expanding

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Figure 3.5 The Balkans 1870–1914

its borders to include Serbia and other troublemakers. Austria–Hungary chose the latter option.

The opportunity for action by Austria–Hungary and Russia was provided by the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. A group of army officers, fearful of the continuing collapse of the Ottoman Empire, overthrew the government of Sultan Abdul Hamid, and introduced democratic reforms and a program of modernisation. Austria–Hungary and Russia moved quickly to secure concessions in the region, believing that once a strong and modern government was established in Constantinople, such opportunities would end. At a secret meeting, the two countries agreed that Austria–Hungary would annex the states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Russia would be granted freedom to use the Straits to move its warships to and from the Mediterranean.

The agreement fell apart over the timing of these developments. Russia was convinced that Austria–Hungary would not attempt the annexation until after Russia had secured the support of the other Great Powers for its use of the Straits. However, Austria–Hungary moved immediately to announce the annexation, and when this brought protests from Turkey, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, the Tsarist government denied all knowledge of the secret agreement and instead moved to support the Serbians.

In 1909 Turkey accepted the Austrian annexations in return for £2 million compensation, but the Serbians remained prepared for war and looked for a guarantee of Russian support. The position of Germany then proved crucial. For the first time, the Germans promised their Austrian allies a definite public commitment of military support. The prospect of war against Austria–Hungary and Germany provided Russia with the excuse it needed to extricate itself from the crisis and, temporarily, to withdraw its support of Serbia. Unable to face another humiliating defeat so soon after its debacle against Japan, Russia accepted the legitimacy of the annexations, and this gave Russia the way out it had been seeking. With Russia in retreat, Serbia too backed away. The entire incident left Russia humbled and Serbia (which had hoped to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina) frustrated.

1912–1913: The second Balkan crisis

An uneasy peace was maintained for three years. In 1911 Italy took advantage of the second Moroccan crisis to take control of Tripoli in northern Africa. This successful seizure of the last African outpost of the Ottoman Empire encouraged the Balkan states to again openly agitate for the partition and independence of the remaining Ottoman provinces in Europe.

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In March 1912 Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro joined to form the Balkan League. In October the League attacked and defeated the Turks. Arguments then arose over the distribution of the newly conquered territory. France and Russia supported Serbia's claims to Albania – claims opposed by Italy and Austria–Hungary, who both feared the emergence of a strengthened Serbia with an Adriatic coast. Germany supported Austria and, again, Russia backed away rather than risk war.

In May 1913 the Treaty of London was signed and, significantly, its terms were decided not by the nations involved in the dispute, but by the Great Powers who negotiated among themselves and imposed the decisions on the Balkan states. European Turkey was reduced to the area around Constantinople, with the old Ottoman Empire divided between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria. Albania was established as an independent state. Bulgaria and Serbia immediately found themselves at odds over the division of Macedonia. Serbia aligned itself with Greece, and in June 1913 the Second Balkan War broke out. Bulgaria was surrounded and defeated by a coalition of Serbia, Greece, Romania and Turkey. The 1913 Treaty of Bucharest brought even further territorial changes to the region. Buoyed by their success, Serbia and Greece then invaded Albania and only withdrew due to the threat of Austro–Hungarian intervention.

These events in the Balkans brought more than border changes to the map of Europe. The policies of Austria–Hungary and Russia had to undergo serious revision. The emergence of expanded states and a strengthened Serbia meant that the desire of either of these Great Powers to dominate the region would be more difficult to achieve. Yet, they did not view the Balkans issue as being settled and continued to manoeuvre to acquire a more favourable diplomatic influence; for example, Austria–Hungary desired a firmer link with Turkey, and Russia attempted an agreement with Romania.

Diplomatic talks were under way again in June 1914, with Austria–Hungary and Germany seeking a solution to the Balkan problem. Germany argued that a solution would be best achieved through a friendship or rapport with Serbia, Greece and Romania; and Austria–Hungary believed that it needed an accord with Turkey and Bulgaria. No decision was reached and events in Sarajevo soon took control.

Summary

- The years 1871 to 1914 were marked by a series of international disputes, none of which resulted in open conflict between the Great Powers.
- These disputes contributed to the creation of an air of tension between nations.
- These disputes strengthened commitments to the alliance system.
- The Balkan region brought together the interests of Austria–Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Russia.

continued…

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…continued

- The rise of nationalist agitation in the Balkans led to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Austria–Hungary was determined that the same would not happen to it.
- Serbia emerged as the focal point of nationalist agitation in the Balkan region.

Activities

Thinking historically 3.2

1. Copy and complete the following table:

International crises, 1900–14				
Crisis	**Year**	**Countries involved**	**Main events**	**Result**
First Moroccan crisis				
Second Moroccan crisis				
First Balkan crisis				
Second Balkan crisis				

a In what ways did the alliance system work to prevent war in each of the international crises between 1900 and 1914?

b In what ways was the alliance system strengthened by each of the international crises between 1900 and 1914?

c How did the international crises of 1900–14 contribute to the atmosphere of tension that existed in Europe in 1914?

d Why was it so difficult for Austria–Hungary and Russia to reach any agreement about the situation in the Balkans?

Working historically 3.2

Debate the proposition that by mid-1914 a European war had become inevitable.

Exercises in historical inquiry

DIGITAL

Refer to *Cambridge GO* for downloadable historical inquiry exercises on the historical context of World War I.

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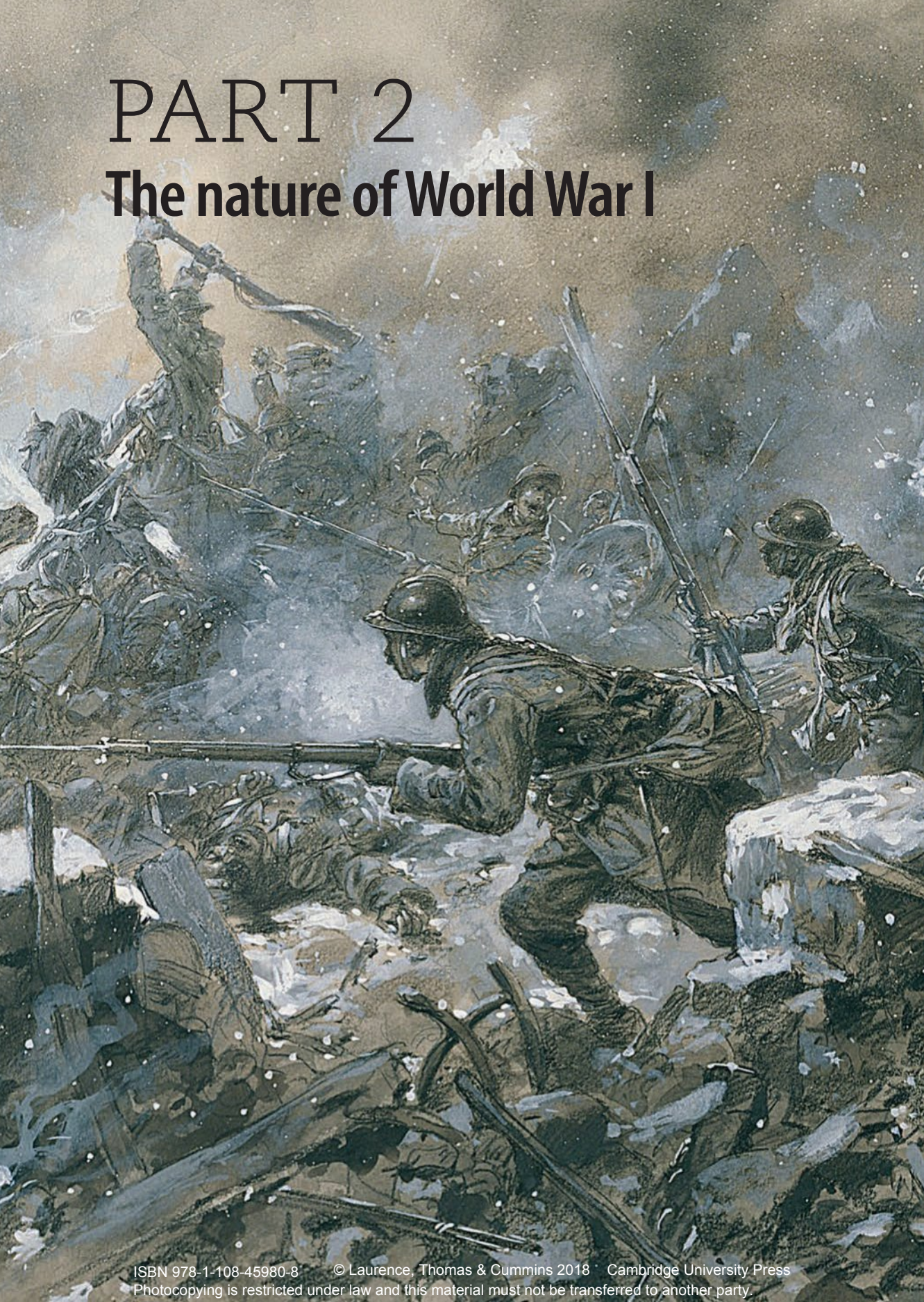
PART 2
The nature of World War I



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4 The outbreak of war

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about what happened at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914
- about the diplomatic events that followed the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand
- about the major schools of historical opinion about the causes of World War I
- to classify, analyse and evaluate a variety of historical sources
- to identify and analyse the role played by key individuals in the days before the declaration of war in 1914
- to assess and analyse a variety of historical opinions and perspectives about the causes of World War I.

4.1 The assassination at Sarajevo

Figure 4.1 Archduke Franz Ferdinand, his wife Sophie and their three children

On 28 June 1914, the heir to the throne of Austria–Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife, Countess Sophie, were assassinated while on a tour of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. The teenage assassin was Gavrilo Princip, a member of an anti-Austrian organisation known as the **Black Hand**. The consequence of this assassination was a series of actions and reactions that, in just over a month, would plunge the world into the conflict that became known as the 'Great War'.

On 28 June 1900, Franz Ferdinand married the Czech Countess Sophie Chotek. However, she was not seen as possessing the necessary status for an imperial marriage and Franz Ferdinand had been forced to sign away the inheritance rights of their children. The Countess was never accorded the title Archduchess, nor was she treated as her husband's equal at state occasions. The exception was when Franz Ferdinand acted in a military capacity such as Field Marshal and Inspector General of the Austro–Hungarian armed forces. At these times his wife was able to appear at his side in public ceremonies.

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Why is 28 June a significant date?

An occasion when the Archduke was acting in a military capacity was on 28 June 1914. He and his wife were in Sarajevo; it was their wedding anniversary and since the purpose of the visit was to inspect imperial troops in the city, Franz Ferdinand and Sophie could travel side by side. However, their anniversary celebrations were doomed since the Feast of St Vitus, the most sacred day in the Serbian calendar, is also on 28 June. Given the on-going tensions between Austria–Hungary and Serbia, it could be argued that for the heir apparent to visit Bosnia on this date was an unnecessary provocation. Accounts indicate that warnings of anti-Austrian protests had been given to the royal party before they embarked on the journey, but they felt that a cancellation would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and would encourage further Serbian promotion of **Pan-Slavism**.

The Black Hand

Pan-Slavism and revolutionary activity were actively promoted in the Balkan region of the Austro–Hungarian Empire. The most notable groups were Young Bosnia, the *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defence) and the *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* (Unity or Death, also known as the Black Hand). The Black Hand was a Serbian secret society founded in 1911 with the aim of freeing all Serbs living under foreign domination and incorporating them into an enlarged Kingdom of Serbia. The head of the society was Colonel Dimitrijevic (codenamed 'Apis'), who also happened to be Head of Intelligence in the Serbian General Staff. He had formed links with the Young Bosnia organisation and had trained their members in terrorist methods. Dimitrijevic had positioned a group of these trainees in Sarajevo. They included Danilo Ilic, who was a school teacher from Sarajevo and worked out the details for the assassination, Milan Ciganovic, a Serbian that provided six bombs and four pistols, and Gavrilo Princip, a 19-year-old Bosnian student.

Activities

Thinking historically 4.1

What happened?

Using all the source material in this section, and your own research, describe in about 300 words what happened on the day of the assassination in Sarajevo.

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Figure 4.2 The route followed by the royal procession

Figure 4.3 Problems of visual evidence these two photographs regularly appear in history texts with the caption 'The Archduke and his wife just before the assassination'. What differences can you see in the images? How would you identify the image that was taken just before the assassination?

Summary

- Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria–Hungary, and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia, on 28 June 1914.
- The assassination was carried out by Gavrilo Princip who was a member of the Black Hand, an anti-Austro–Hungarian organisation based in Serbia.

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Activities

Thinking historically 4.2

1. **a** Explain why the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.
   b Why did the Black Hand, Young Bosnia and *Narodna Odbrana* organisations wish to assassinate the Archduke?
2. Explain why the Austro–Hungarian Government believed that the Serbian Government was directly involved in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. Based on the evidence you have seen, to what extent was this belief justified?
3. Given the nature of the Great Powers in 1914, what was the reaction to news of the assassination in each of the major countries?

Working historically 4.1

The following primary and secondary sources will assist you in putting together a more detailed picture of the events on 28 June 1914.

A translation of the transcript of Gavrilo Princip's statement, given 45 minutes after the assassination. Source 4.A

> When the second car arrived, I recognised the heir-apparent. But as I saw that a lady was sitting next to him I reflected for a moment whether I should shoot or not. At the same moment I was filled with a peculiar feeling and I aimed at the heir-apparent from the pavement – which was made easier because the car was proceeding slower at the moment. Where I aimed I do not know. But I know that I aimed at the heir-apparent. I believe that I fired twice, perhaps more, because I was so excited. Whether I hit the victims or not, I cannot tell, because instantly people started to hit me.

Gavrilo Princip, shortly after the assassination. Source 4.B

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Source 4.C **Extract from Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, Macgibbon and Kee, London, 1967.**

Franz Ferdinand was dressed in the ceremonial uniform of an Austrian cavalry general, with a blue tunic, a high collar with three stars, and a hat adorned with pale green feathers. He wore black trousers with red stripes down the sides and around his waist a bauchband, a gold-braided ribbon with tassels …

Source 4.D **Extract from the official court proceedings – the charge laid against Gavrilo Princip.**

I open against you the preliminary judicial investigation of the crime of murder which you committed today through shooting treacherously from the closest distance from a Browning pistol at the heir-apparent and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, with the intention of killing them, and hitting them both, which caused their deaths a short time afterward.

Source 4.E **Extract from the official court proceedings – an account by a detective stationed along the route.**

I stood about ten steps from the assassin. I had instructions not to look at the car, but to watch the crowd. Standing like this and doing my duty, I heard a revolver shot. I turned my head to the left, there was nothing. I looked to the right; a second shot was echoing. I plunged through the crowd, overtaking everybody else, and charged at the assassin, grabbing him by the arm; then somebody ambushed me and landed a fist in my stomach.

Source 4.F **Newspaper report of the assassination in *The New York Times*, 29 June 1914.**

HEIR TO AUSTRIA'S THRONE IS SLAIN WITH HIS WIFE BY A BOSNIAN YOUTH TO AVENGE SEIZURE OF HIS COUNTRY

Sarajevo, Bosnia, June 28 ... Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria–Hungary, and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, were shot and killed by a Bosnian student here today. The fatal shooting was the second attempt upon the lives of the couple during the day, and is believed to have been the result of a political conspiracy.

This morning, as Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the Duchess were driving to a reception at the Town Hall, a bomb was thrown at their motor car. The Archduke pushed it off with his arm. The bomb did not explode until after the Archduke's car had passed on, and the occupants of the next car ... were slightly injured ...

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[After the ceremony of welcome] the Archduke and his wife left the Town Hall ... when a schoolboy, 19 years old, named [Gavrilo] Princip ... fired a shot at the Archduke's head. The boy fired from the shelter of a projecting house

... The Duchess was shot in the body. The boy fired several times, but only two shots took effect. The Archduke and his wife were carried to the Konak, or palace, in a dying condition.

Statement by Gavrilo Princip at his trial. Source 4.G

No, I am not sorry. I have cleared an evil out of the way. He [Franz Ferdinand] is a German and an enemy of the South Slavs. He treated them badly ... Every day a high treason trial. Every day it went worse with our people. They are impoverished ... I killed him as an energetic man who as ruler would have carried through definite ideas and reforms which stood in our way ... For union [of the Southern Slavs] one must sacrifice many lives, and it was for this reason that Franz Ferdinand fell. Nevertheless, the main motive which guided me in my deed was: the avenging of the Serbian people …

DIGITAL

1. Refer to the downloadable 'Introduction to historical inquiry' on *Cambridge GO*, and use the visual template to analyse the reliability and usefulness of Sources 4.A–4.G for a historian studying the events in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.
2. **a** What evidence exists in Source 4.A to suggest that Princip hesitated before carrying out the assassination?
   b In what ways is the tone of Source 4.A different from the tone of Source 4.G? How do you account for this difference?

4.2 Countdown to war

The days following the assassination at Sarajevo were a flurry of diplomatic reactions and manoeuvrings. The European telegraph system ran hot as ambassadors, prime ministers, foreign ministers, war ministers, kings and emperors became drawn into an increasingly tangled web of messages.

The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand gave the Austro–Hungarian Government its long wished-for opportunity to act against Serbia and resolve the so-called 'Slavic problem'. The Austrian military had an understanding of support from its German colleagues, and the Austro–Hungarian **Chief of Staff**, Baron Conrad von Hötzendorff, had urged for action against the Serbians for some time. As this was the case, Franz Josef wrote to Kaiser Wilhelm II to seek support for Austria's moves against Serbia. In his reply, the Kaiser put no limitations on the Austro–Hungarian

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actions, neither did he seek clarification of their designs or plans. Indeed, the margin of a note from the German ambassador in Vienna, Count Heinrich Leopold von Tschirschky, to the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, dated 30 June 1914, contains the Kaiser's handwritten comment that the Serbians needed to be dealt with 'now or never', and should be dispensed with 'right soon'.

The go-ahead for military action

One week after the assassination, the Austrian Ambassador to Germany, Szögyény, set into motion the process by which Germany presented Austria–Hungary with its final go-ahead for military action, the so-called 'blank cheque'. After visiting the Kaiser, Szögyény sent the following message to the Austrian Chancellor and Foreign Minister, Berchtold:

> Telegram 237 — Berlin, 5 July 1914
> Strictly Confidential — D. 7.35pm
>
> After lunch, when I again called attention to the seriousness of the situation, the Kaiser authorised me to inform our gracious Majesty that we might in this case, as in all others, rely upon Germany's full support. He must, as he said before, first hear what the Imperial Chancellor has to say, but he did not doubt in the least that Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg would agree with him. Especially as far as our action against Serbia was concerned. But it was his [Kaiser Wilhelm's] opinion that this action must not be delayed. Russia's attitude will no doubt be hostile, but to this he had been for years prepared, and should a war between Austria–Hungary and Russia be unavoidable, we might be convinced that Germany, our old faithful ally, would stand at our side.

The following day, the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, added to the situation by issuing a statement that many historians see as the key diplomatic move in the countdown to the **war**. He sent a message to the Austro–Hungarian Government giving the strongest possible assurance of German support. He wrote:

> as far as concerns Serbia, His Majesty, of course, cannot interfere in the dispute now going on between Austria–Hungary and that country, as it is a matter not within its competence. The Emperor, Francis Joseph may, however, rest assured that His Majesty will faithfully stand by Austria–Hungary as is required by the obligations of his alliance and of his ancient friendship.

This statement heartened the desires of those within the Austro–Hungarian regime who wanted to take military action against the Serbs. Even Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, eventually agreed to the sending of an **ultimatum** to Serbia, which would be delivered on 23 July 1914.

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The ultimatum set out 10 clauses:

1 The Serbian Government was to suppress anti-Austrian publications.
2 The Serbian Government was to outlaw anti-Austrian societies.
3 Anti-Austrian education was to be banned.
4 The Serbian military was to be purged of anti-Austrian elements.
5 Austrian officials were to be permitted to take part in the investigations within Serbia.
6 An inquiry was to be established into the assassination.
7 Specified Serbian officials were to be arrested.
8 There were to be stricter controls placed on the common borders of Serbia and Austria–Hungary.
9 Serbia was to account for the anti-Austrian sentiments of its officials.
10 Serbia was to agree that each of these measures had been put into place without delay.

A Serbian reply in the affirmative was to be received by the evening of 25 July 1914 or a declaration of war would follow.

The delivery of this ultimatum began the **July crisis**. France, Russia and Great Britain each warned that it could lead to more than a localised Balkan war. They insisted that Austria–Hungary provide Serbia with an extended period in which to reply. However, both Austria–Hungary and Germany refused. In fact, Germany made efforts to hasten the Austrians into war, believing that this was the best way to minimise the involvement of the entente powers. The Germans also believed that the French and the Russians were not yet ready to begin hostilities.

On 25 July 1914, to the astonishment of many, Serbia accepted all but one of the conditions in the ultimatum. Fearful of Austria–Hungary's reaction to its non-compliance, Serbia mobilised its army. Austria–Hungary did likewise on receiving the reply. This sparked an intense period of diplomatic activity as politicians from the Great Powers strove to limit the conflict to the Balkan area. France and Great Britain were anxious to arrange an international conference to settle the issue. Germany viewed Serbia's reply as acceptable but stated that the intentions needed to be translated into deeds, and at the very least the Austrian Government was entitled to compensation. In a handwritten note to his Foreign Minister Jagow, Kaiser Wilhelm II wrote:

> I propose that we say to Austria: Serbia has been forced to retreat in a very humiliating manner, and we offer our congratulations. Naturally, as a result, every cause for war has vanished. But a guarantee that the promises will be carried out is unquestionably necessary. That could be secured by means of the temporary military occupation of a portion of Serbia, similar to the way we kept troops stationed in France in 1871 until the billions were paid …

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Austria–Hungary dismissed all such entreaties and declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914. The bombing of Belgrade began that same day. This military action brought negotiations between Russia and Austria–Hungary to an end, and prompted an exchange of telegrams between the two royal cousins, Wilhelm II of Germany and Nicholas II of Russia. One of the last of these telegrams, shown below, clearly indicates how the Kaiser is suggesting that the Tsar was responsible for the outbreak of hostilities.

Wilhelm II to Nicholas II — Berlin, 31 July 1914
Telegram (unnumbered) — D. 2.04pm
D.D. 480

On your appeal to my friendship and your call for assistance I began to mediate between your and the Austro–Hungarian governments. While this action was proceeding your troops were mobilised against Austria–Hungary, my ally. Thereby, as I have already pointed out to you, my mediation has been made almost illusory. I have nevertheless continued my action. I now receive authentic news of serious preparations for war on my eastern frontier. Responsibility for the safety of my Empire forces preventive measures of defence upon me. In my endeavours to maintain the peace of the world I have gone to the utmost limit possible. The responsibility for the disaster which is now threatening the whole civilised world will not lie at my door. In this moment it still lies in your power to avert it. Nobody is threatening the honour or power of Russia who can well afford to await the result of my mediation. My friendship for you and your Empire ... has always been sacred to me and I have honestly often backed up Russia when she was in serious trouble, especially in her last war. The peace of Europe may still be maintained by you, if Russia will agree to stop the military measures which must threaten Germany and Austria–Hungary.

Russian mobilisation

Behind these exchanges was Russia's decision on 29 July to mobilise its army. Initially Nicholas II ordered a general mobilisation against Germany and Austria–Hungary, and then attempted to change the order to a partial mobilisation against Austria–Hungary only. The military logistics of mobilisation forced him to return to a full mobilisation on 31 July. As seen in the telegrams, Wilhelm II was able to exploit this action as evidence of Russian culpability if war broke out while seizing the moral high ground for himself as the peacemaker of Europe.

In fact, from 30 July, Wilhelm II no longer had influence over events. Mobilisations and military plans had given control to the General Staff. On this day, the German Chief of Staff, von Moltke, sent a note to his Austrian counterpart, Conrad, to mobilise his troops against Russia. If the Schlieffen Plan was to succeed, Germany would have to act quickly.

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Austro–Hungarian mobilisation

On 31 July, Wilhelm II, at the urging of his military commanders, issued a statement that Germany was in a 'situation of imminent danger of war' and messages of inquiry were sent to St Petersburg and Paris. The note to Russia was in the form of an ultimatum demanding the immediate cessation of mobilisation; the note to France sought an assurance of French neutrality. On the same day, all German attempts to restrain Austria–Hungary were abandoned and Austria–Hungary announced the general mobilisation of its army.

Germany declares war

On 1 August, France announced the mobilisation of its army. Germany responded by announcing its mobilisation and declaring war on Russia. Italy immediately pronounced its neutrality, stating that the terms of the Triple Alliance did not apply in what, it argued, was a war of 'Austrian aggression'. On 2 August, Germany sent an ultimatum to Belgium, which the Belgians rejected the following day. Germany then declared war on both Belgium and France.

Great Britain's response

The attitude of Great Britain then became central to the future course of events. The violation of Belgian neutrality, which it had guaranteed to defend in 1839, finally swayed the wavering British Government to take the decisive step of military support for France. On 4 August 1914 Great Britain declared war on Germany, prompting the following telegram to be sent by the British Ambassador in Germany, Goschen, to British Foreign Minister, Grey:

Telegram 137 — Berlin, 4 August 1914
B.D. 667 — R. 13 August

My interview with the Chancellor was very painful. He said that he could not but consider it an intolerable thing that because they were taking the only course open to them to save the Empire from disaster, England should fall upon them just for the sake of the neutrality of Belgium. He looked upon Britain as entirely responsible for what might now happen. I asked him whether he could not understand that we were bound in honour to do our best to preserve a neutrality which we had guaranteed. He said: 'But at what price!'.

The world's first global conflict

In late July, the Austrian government rejected the Serbian reply to their ultimatum and declared war. A couple of days later, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia ordered a general mobilisation. When Russia refused to accede to German demands to cease mobilisation, Germany declared war. In line with the conditions of the Schlieffen Plan, Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium. When Germany refused to withdraw its troops, Great Britain declared war. Hoping to gain advantage in the East, Japan joined the war almost immediately, and later, in 1917, the United States declared war to protect its citizens from German attacks. With Great Britain and France

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at war, many of their colonial allies eagerly sent troops to help with the military effort, so that by 1918 there were over thirty nations in the conflict. Some of these allies immediately sought to capture German possessions in their regional spheres.

The war had been global well before the entry of the USA into the conflict in 1917. The outbreak of war in 1914 meant that war affected all parts of the globe as the European states were imperial powers. So, the fighting spread outside Europe in order to fight the war in Europe! It could be argued that the entente powers sought to maintain their imperial possessions by keeping the war in Europe – British policy was certainly geared towards this possibility. However, the nature of warfare after August 1914, and the demands required to prosecute the war effectively, meant that overseas resources had to be mobilised as fully as domestic resources were.

To put pressure on the entente powers, Germany further extended its influence outside Europe by encouraging the Ottoman Empire, with which it had an alliance, to wage a series of rebellions throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. The purpose was to disrupt British rule in these areas and destabilise its control over India. However, the weakness of the Ottomans, and the supremacy of the British navy, thwarted these efforts.

Summary

- Sections of the Austro–Hungarian Government were keen to fight a war with Serbia to end the Slavic problem within their empire.
- Germany played a leading role in urging the Austro–Hungarians to go to war against Serbia.
- The entente powers moved slowly and separately to stop the possibility of a local war becoming a world affair.
- With the announcement of a Russian mobilisation, control over events moved out of the hands of the diplomats and into the hands of the military commanders.

Activities

Thinking historically 4.3

1. Study the actions taken by the German Government during the period 28 June to 28 July 1914. What conclusions do you draw?
2. Copy and complete the following table:

The countdown to war, 1914		
Date	**Event**	**Effect**
28 June		
5 July		

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The countdown to war, 1914		
Date	**Event**	**Effect**
20 July		
23 July		
25 July		
28 July		
29 July		
31 July		
1 August		
2 August		
3 August		
4 August		

3. a What effect did the war plans of the Great Powers have on their actions during the July Crisis?

b At what point in the above chronology did war become a certainty? Provide reasons for your answer.

c What was the role of the alliance system in the events of the July Crisis?

Working historically 4.2

DIGITAL

1. Refer to the downloadable 'Introduction to historical inquiry' on *Cambridge GO*, and use the visual template to analyse the reliability and usefulness of each of the personal messages from the leaders presented in this section for a historian attempting to understand the role of individuals in bringing war to Europe in 1914.

2. Who or what do you believe should bear primary responsibility for the course of events between 28 June and 4 August 1914?

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4.3 Historians' views

Donald Kagan

D. Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, Doubleday, New York, 1995.

After the Franco–Prussian War, Bismarck judged it to be in the interests of Germany to exercise restraint and maintain the peace of Europe. For 20 years under his guidance Germany accepted the major burden of keeping the peace by maintaining a powerful military force and using it to help avoid war. When William II and his ministers abandoned that role and became the chief menace to the status quo and the peace of Europe, the only power capable of taking its place and checking the movement toward war was Great Britain. Reluctantly, slowly, and ultimately inadequately, the British assumed some part of that burden. They undertook just enough responsibility to avoid defeat narrowly but not enough to deter war.

James Joll

J. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, Longman, New York, 1986.

The continuing international tension had created a feeling, especially in Germany, that since war was inevitable, sooner or later the important thing was to choose the right moment, before the Russian rearmament program was complete, for example, or the French had carried out their military reorganisation or the British and Russians made an effective naval agreement. Once war was accepted as inevitable by the German leaders, as it was by December 1912, whether because they thought that what would now be called a pre-emptive strike was the only way of defending themselves against encirclement by hostile powers or because they thought a war was the only way to achieve the world power at which some of them were aiming, then, as the development of the July crisis showed, their strategic plans became all important and these had more immediate military consequences than those of any other power.

L.C.B. Seaman

L.C.B. Seaman, *From Vienna to Versailles*, Routledge, London, 1988.

Finally, the historical tradition of the Reich knew no principle other than that of the exercise of power for its own sake. The very phrases *Weltpolitik* and ***Flottenpolitik*** reveal in their purposelessness that the Reich had no aim but to be powerful for the sake of being powerful. To have an aim implies a readiness not merely to take action but also to limit action to what is essential to the achievement of the aim. To have a principle necessarily involves the exercise of restraint whenever action threatens to contradict the principle. Thus, all the other powers could point to specific ambitions which they would like to satisfy. France could point to Alsace-Lorraine; Russia could point to Constantinople; England to the defence of the seas and her

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empire; Austria–Hungary to the destruction of Serbia. But nothing could satisfy the Germans, because they had no aims to satisfy; and nothing could satisfy the principles Germany stood for, since Germany did not stand for any. Thus, diplomacy could not settle Germany's problems, because there were no problems which could be solved. There was only blind incoherent force, with which nobody could negotiate because it had no coordinating brain or directing intelligence. The Germans stampeded into the war, the mindless and purposeless victims of their own monstrous history.

R. Henig, *The Origins of the First World War*, Routledge, New York, 1989. Ruth Henig

Countries went to war because they believed they could achieve more through war than by diplomatic negotiation and that if they stood aside their status as great powers would be gravely affected. That was their greatest miscalculation. The balance sheet in 1918 showed how wrong they had been; by that time the status of all Europe's major powers had been greatly diminished and virtually none of the objectives of the European ruling elites had been realised.

G. Martel, *The Origins of the First World War*, Longman, London, 1984. Gordon Martel

The First World War was not inevitable. Although it is essential to understand the underlying factors that formed the background to the July crisis, it is equally essential to see how the immediate circumstances fit into this background in a particular, and perhaps unique, way. Europe was not a powder keg, waiting to explode; one crisis did not lead necessarily to another in an escalating series of confrontations that made war more and more difficult to avoid. Europe had successfully weathered a number of storms in the recent past; the alliances were not rigidly fixed: the war plans were always being revised and need not necessarily have come into play. It is difficult to imagine a crisis in the far east, in north Africa or the Mediterranean that would have unleashed the series of events that arose from the assassination in Sarajevo. The First World War was, in the final analysis, fought for the future of the near east; whoever won this struggle would, it was believed, be in a position to dominate all of Europe. Germany and her ally made the bid for control; Russia and her allies resolved to stop them.

A.J.P. Taylor, *War by Timetable: How the First World War Began*, Macdonald and Co, London, 1969. A.J.P. Taylor

When cut down to essentials, the sole cause for the outbreak of war in 1914 was the Schlieffen Plan – product of the belief in speed and the offensive. Diplomacy functioned only until the German demand that

continued…

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…continued

France and Russia should not mobilise. No power could have accepted such a demand in the circumstances of the age. Yet the Germans had no deliberate aim of subverting the liberties of Europe. No one had time for a deliberate aim or time to think. All were trapped by the ingenuity of their military preparations, the Germans most of all. In every country, the peoples imagined that they were being called to a defensive war, and in a sense, they were right. Since every general staff believed that attack was the only form of defence, every defensive operation appeared as an attack to someone else.

There is no mystery about the outbreak of the First World War. The deterrent failed to deter. This was to be expected sooner or later. A deterrent may work 99 times out of a hundred. On the hundredth occasion it produces catastrophe.

Sidney Bradshaw Fay

S. Bradshaw Fay, *Origins of the World War*, Macmillan, London, 1928.

Nevertheless, a European War broke out. Why? Because in each country political and military leaders did certain things which led to mobilisations and declarations of war, or failed to do certain things which might have prevented them. In this sense, all the European countries, in a greater or lesser degree, were responsible. One must abandon the dictum of the Versailles Treaty that Germany and her allies were solely responsible. It was a dictum exacted by victors from vanquished, under the influence of the blindness, ignorance, hatred, and the propagandist misconceptions to which war had given rise. It was based on evidence which was incomplete and not always sound. It is generally recognised by the best historical scholars in all countries that the responsibility for the War is a divided responsibility. But they still disagree very much as to the relative part of this responsibility that falls on each country and on each individual political or military leader.

Fritz Fischer

F. Fischer, *Germany's War Aims in the First World War*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1967.

It must be repeated: given the tenseness of the world situation in 1914 – a condition for which Germany's world policy, which had already led to three dangerous crises (those of 1905, 1908 and 1911), was in no small measure responsible – any limited or local war in Europe directly involving one Great Power must inevitably carry with it the imminent danger of a general war. As Germany willed and coveted the Austro–Serbian war and, in her confidence in her military superiority, deliberately faced the risk of a conflict with Russia and France, her leaders must bear a substantial share of the historical responsibility for the outbreak of a general war in 1914.

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P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Unwin, London, 1988. Paul Kennedy

While each of the Great Powers in this crisis acted according to its perceived national interests, it was also true that this decision to go to war had been affected by the existing operations plans. From 1909 onwards, the Germans committed themselves to Austria–Hungary, not just diplomatically but militarily, to a degree which Bismarck had never contemplated. Furthermore, the German operations plan now involved an immediate and massive assault upon France, via Belgium, whatever the specific cause of the war. By contrast, Vienna's military planners still dithered between the various fronts, but the determination to get a first blow in at Serbia was growing. Boosted by French funds, Russia pledged itself to an ever-swifter mobilisation and westward strike should war come; while, with even less cause, the French in 1911 adopted the famous Plan XVII, involving a headlong rush into Alsace-Lorraine. And whereas the likelihood that Italy would fight alongside its Triple Alliance partners was now much decreased, a British military intervention in Europe had become the more probable in the event of a German attack upon Belgium and France. Needless to say, in each of the general staffs there was the unquestioned assumption that speed was of the essence; that is, as soon as a clash seemed likely, it was vital to mobilise one's own forces and to get them up to and over the border before the foe had a chance to do the same. If this was especially true in Berlin, where the army had committed itself to delivering a knock-out blow in the west and returning to the east to meet the slower-moving Russians, the same sort of thinking prevailed elsewhere. If and when a really great crisis occurred, the diplomats were not going to have much time before the strategic planners took over.

G. Greenwood, *The Modern World: A History of Our Time – From Early European Expansion to the Outbreak of World War II*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1973. Gordon Greenwood

The basic causes of the war are not to be found in the incidents and diplomatic negotiations immediately preceding its outbreak, though these were not unimportant in themselves. The reasons for the struggle may be found in the system of national sovereign States under which each nation acted in accordance with what appeared at the time to its rulers to be its own best interest. The dangers of the system were increased by the growth of an emotional national sentiment which in part was the outcome of the prevailing educational systems, a sentiment which could easily be inflamed by the press and by propaganda. The growth of alliances increased the danger of European as against local conflict, for once two great powers became involved the obligations of the alliances were set in motion. The alliances, which had originally been designed for protection, aroused

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…continued

national fears and stimulated an arms race on sea and land which, in turn, heightened the tension between the powers. National rivalry ceased to be confined to Europe. It assumed the form of commercial conflict and financial competition, and so European rivalry became transformed into the rivalry of national imperialisms.

Summary

- Some historians argue the responsibility of Austria–Hungary for World War I: it took the initiative and its actions brought in the other powers; it had no clear proof of Serbian involvement in the assassination; it took an extreme attitude to Serbia from the start; and it was prepared to run the risk of Russian involvement.
- Some historians argue the responsibility of Germany for World War I: it gave unconditional support to Austria–Hungary during the 1914 crisis; and it had been the major instigator of international tension in the decades before 1914.
- Some historians argue the responsibility of Russia for World War I: it encouraged Serbian nationalism; and it ordered a general mobilisation of its army.
- Some historians argue the responsibility of France for World War I: it did not do enough to limit Russia; and it was determined to avenge the losses of 1870–1871.
- Some historians argue the responsibility of Great Britain for World War I: it did not adopt a definite position; and it was eventually forced to take sides in order to maintain a traditional balance of power.
- Some historians argue the responsibility for World War I to the system: all contributed to the conflict.

Activities

Thinking historically 4.4

1. **a** Which of the historians in this section argue that the actions of Germany caused the war?
   b What evidence is used to support this argument?
   c How convincing do you find this argument? Give reasons for your answer.
2. **a** Which of the historians in this section argue that the actions of a country other than Germany caused the war?
   b What evidence is used to support this argument?
   c How convincing do you find this argument? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Why is it important to know nationality and time of writing when judging the validity of a historian's opinion?

Working historically 4.3

Given the opinions presented in this section, and your own knowledge of events in 1870–1914, write an extended response to the following question: who or what should bear primary responsibility for the outbreak of war in 1914?

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The Western Front

5

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the major events on the battlefields of western Europe
- to analyse and evaluate the reasons for the development of the stalemate on the Western Front, and the strategies used to attempt to break it.

Refer to *Cambridge GO* for a downloadable summary sheet on the key commanders on the Western Front. **DIGITAL**

5.1 The development of a stalemate

Between August and October 1914, the Great Powers of Europe began their expected war of movement in the region that later became known as the Western Front. By mid-November, the war had developed into a defensive **stalemate**. Why did this happen? Put simply, the Great Powers held faulty expectations about the nature of war; there were errors in the war plans and these flaws were exacerbated by the poor decisions made by the generals who were entrusted with executing the plans. Further, the offensive strategy and tactics needed to win on a battlefield when faced with defensive firepower were not fully understood.

Initial engagements

August 1914: The German advance

Within 24 hours of the declaration of war, Germany launched its Schlieffen Plan. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Armies poured into Belgium while the 4th and 5th Armies moved through Luxembourg. From 6 August, 550 trainloads of German soldiers were crossing the Rhine daily. Between 4 and 19 August, the First Army, commanded by Alexander von Kluck, drove the Belgian Army back to Antwerp. The Belgians offered stiff resistance and, as they withdrew, continued to harass the German right and rear. By 20 August, German forces occupied Brussels and began to move towards Mons and the River Sambre.

Meanwhile, Karl von Bülow's 2nd Army occupied Liège by 7 August, but had been slowed by fierce resistance from the forts surrounding the town. It required savage bombardments from the Krupp 420 mm and

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Skoda 350 mm heavy siege howitzers (nicknamed 'Big Berthas') before the last of the forts fell on 16 August. The 2nd Army then advanced to Namur and Charleroi on the line of the Rivers Sambre and Meuse.

At the same time, the 3rd Army proceeded through the south-east of Belgium, mopping up all Belgian and French resistance along the way, and reached the River Meuse around 21 August. The 4th and 5th Armies advanced through Luxembourg towards the French region, protected by the fortresses of Verdun and Sedan. Their advance had been planned to be less ambitious than the three armies of the right wing because they had to cover less territory and at a slower rate. Nevertheless, encouraged by their early successes against the French 3rd and 4th Armies, Crown Prince Wilhelm, commander of the 5th German Army, began a large offensive. However, this did nothing but push the French armies back to a position where their reinforcements could reach them more quickly, while also crowding the armies that were advancing through Belgium. Germany's Chief of Staff, Helmuth von Moltke (the younger), did nothing to stop this deviation from the Schlieffen Plan; he did not seek to guide the centre's route away from the right wing, nor did he reinforce the 4th and 5th Armies with the reserve troops, which may have given them enough strength to break through the French line.

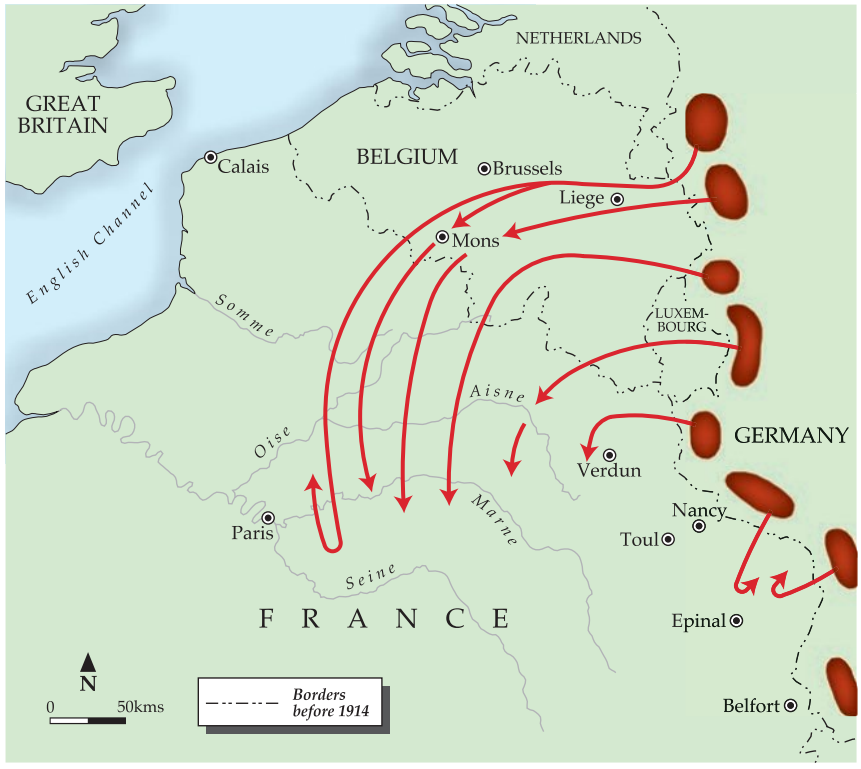

Figure 5.1 The Schlieffen Plan in operation, 1914

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The German 6th and 7th Armies remained on the Alsatian border, acting as the pivot in accordance with the intended 'swinging gate' action of the Schlieffen Plan. However, their strength was almost twice that of which Schlieffen had originally intended – fearful of a large French outbreak into German territory through Alsace-Lorraine, von Moltke had reduced the size of the 1st and 2nd Armies. Crown Prince Rupprecht's 6th Army, for example, had almost as many men at its disposal (220 000) as von Bülow's 2nd Army (260 000), so it was too strong to achieve one of the main objectives of the plan, which was a slight withdrawal and holding action that would trap the French armies on the border beyond their forts. Subsequently, when the French attacked, the German forces were able to immediately push them back over the French border, which resulted in yet another alteration of the Schlieffen Plan and went directly against von Moltke's initial orders. The French, suffering heavy casualties, were close to their own forts and were able to defend against the Germans more effectively with fewer men; they were able to reorganise their forces and send reinforcements to halt the advance of the German right wing. The actions of von Moltke and Prince Rupprecht allowed the French to regain some of the initiative and the consequences upset the strategic balance of the German offensive.

21–23 August 1914: The battles of Mons and Charleroi

Meanwhile, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), commanded by Sir John French, had landed in France. Just over 100 000 strong, Kaiser Wilhelm described it as a 'contemptible little army' – from which the soldiers derived their proud nickname 'The Old Contemptibles'. Despite its relatively small size, the BEF consisted primarily of regular troops and were the best trained riflemen in Europe. They possessed a very high standard of marksmanship, were skilled in skirmishing and, unlike other European armies, were trained in rapid deployment from marching columns into irregularly spaced fighting positions using cover and concealment.

Figure 5.2 Troops from the Royal Fusiliers resting in Belgium, on 22 August 1914

Moving into position to the left of the 5th French Army, the BEF encamped along the canal at Mons from 20–23 August. The communications between Sir John French and the commander of the French Army, Charles Lanrezac, were strained: neither trusted the other and their memos were vague in detail and sarcastic in tone. All up, 350 000 British and French troops faced the 510 000 of the 1st and 2nd German Armies, with the 180 000-strong 3rd Army bearing down on them from the east.

The German plan was to trap the British and French against the 1st and 2nd Armies, and then envelop them with the 3rd. However, von Bülow launched his attack on 21 August before the 1st and 3rd Armies were ready. Von Bülow forced his way across the Sambre near Charleroi on 21 August and

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Lanrezac's attempts to counter-attack were defeated. Nevertheless, Lanrezac was able to maintain the defence of Namur for two more days and to reorganise his forces on the southern banks of the Rivers Meuse and Sambre.

In danger of being encircled by the German 2nd Army, the BEF put up an amazing resistance to the German 1st Army at Mons on 23 August; the six German divisions attacked in densely packed waves and were decimated by the accuracy of the British riflemen and machine-guns deployed by General Horace Smith-Dorrien. However, the BEF lacked the heavy artillery to turn this defence into a rout of the attackers. Furthermore, Sir John French mistrusted Smith-Dorrien and did not believe his reports of success.

On 24 August, Lanrezac ordered the retreat of his forces and Sir John French, fearing the isolation of the BEF, did likewise.

The Germans won the Battle of the Frontiers, but at a significant cost; the official casualty figures were never released, however, it is estimated that some 220 000 Germans died. The French also lost enormous numbers: 210 993 regular soldiers, as well as an unknown number of territorial and garrison troops. The BEF lost 14 409 men and the Belgians lost 12 330 soldiers. The total number of casualties is nearly half a million men in three weeks. For those who survived, the cost in physical and emotional strength was tremendous – the loss of comrades and the enormous distances the men had to march took their toll. For each army, the loss of experienced officers, non-commissioned officers and regular troops proved decisive to future success on the battlefield. France's Plan XVII had been demolished and Germany's Schlieffen Plan was coming apart.

24 August to 3 September 1914: The Great Retreat

The response of the French Chief of General Staff, Joseph Joffre, was to draw together his troops in Alsace and order them to consolidate around the line of forts. He then moved men away from the area and sent them to Paris to prepare for a possible counter-offensive. Joseph Galliéni, Joffre's deputy, was ordered to organise the defence of Paris and provide for the revitalisation of the French forces. The 3rd and 4th French Armies were ordered to withdraw to the River Marne, and the 9th Army was formed, under the command of Ferdinand Foch, to augment their position. Lanrezac was ordered to slowly withdraw his forces to the Marne, a move which would support the BEF's retreat from Belgium and provide time for a new French line (stretching from Verdun to Paris) to be organised. The BEF was not strictly under Joffre's command, and Sir John French had a reputation for detesting the French, particularly French generals, but when Joffre requested that the BEF continue its withdrawal and assume a position between the 5th and 6th Armies on the Marne, he complied. This sense of order contrasted with the confusion that developed among the German forces.

Between 24 August and 14 September, von Moltke virtually surrendered control of his forces to the commanders of the individual armies. Each had conflicting views as to what the overall German strategy should be, and each was eager to be the general whose army broke through the French line.

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In fact, von Moltke's sole decisive action was to divert soldiers away from the advance in France and reposition them on the Eastern Front against Russia. Even though von Schlieffen had envisaged the possibility of a rapid Russian advance, he had been prepared to accept the temporary loss of some German territory while France was being defeated. The nervous von Moltke could not tolerate such a possibility. Fearing a rout of the German forces by the Russians, he sent two corps from the 2nd and 3rd Armies to the armies in East Prussia. This weakened his assaulting armies and created the possibility of too few troops being available to achieve the encirclement of Paris.

From 24–28 August, the Allied left wing withdrew under fire from the German armies. The BEF moved faster than the French 5th Army and drew level with it, but was caught by von Kluck at Le Cateau on 25–26 August. Here the BEF suffered a large, but not complete, defeat. Sir John French had been reluctant for the BEF to stand and fight, but Smith-Dorrien had insisted that, even though defeat was likely, precious time could be bought. He proved to be correct since most of the BEF managed to escape and continue withdrawing to the Marne. Joffre ordered Lanrezac to wheel to the west to support the withdrawal of the BEF. On 29 August, Lanrezac counter-attacked both von Kluck and von Bülow successfully at Guise, delaying the Germans for one more day, before he was forced to withdraw under the threat of encirclement by the 3rd German Army.

Despite successfully achieving the objectives of the battles of Le Cateau and Guise (delaying the Germans and ensuring the survival of the BEF), morale in the French and British armies dropped rapidly because of their forced retreat in the face of the superior German numbers. Nonetheless, the battles proved crucial, because they created certain attitudes among the German commanders. First, von Kluck believed that his victory at Le Cateau had been so crushing that the BEF had been wiped out, and that the French 5th Army was the furthest right of the Allied forces. This information was transmitted throughout the German forces – consequently none were aware of the survival of the BEF, and the formation and concentration of the French 6th Army around Paris. Second, the French counter-attack at Guise compelled von Bülow to ask von Kluck for assistance because he did not have enough men to stretch his forces west in accordance with the Schlieffen Plan. Von Moltke's weakening of the right wing was starting to tell.

Von Kluck wanted to support von Bülow, even though it would mean swinging south-east and not surrounding Paris. It was at this point that von Moltke finally gave in to the pressures of his generals and abandoned the central precept of the Schlieffen Plan: the encirclement of Paris from the west. On 3 September, he ordered von Kluck in very vague terms to prevent the French from escaping and to protect von Bülow's right wing.

Ambitious to be the general responsible for the final defeat of France, von Kluck pursued the French 5th Army south-east over the Marne, but failed to adequately reconnoitre his right wing. This exposed his right

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flank to the French 6th Army of Paris – even though he was not aware of its existence – and he allowed a small gap to develop between his left and von Bülow's right. Added to these problems was the overall crowding of the German right wing; five German armies – the bulk of their forces – were now squashed into a front, 320 kilometres east of Paris, far more compressed than the Schlieffen Plan had dictated. This presented a relatively compact target against which the Allies could launch a counter-offensive.

5–10 September 1914: The First Battle of the Marne

On 3 September, Galliéni sought Joffre's permission to attack von Kluck's right wing with the French 6th Army from Paris. Joffre was uncertain and a gloomy Sir John French was considering withdrawing to England via the Channel ports, but Galliéni won them both over and Joffre ordered all forces west of Verdun to prepare for a counter-attack. On the afternoon of 5 September, the 6th French Army thrust itself into von Kluck's exposed right wing. From 6–9 September, von Kluck responded with a vicious westward counter-attack towards Paris. This was repelled only after reinforcements were rushed to the front by a huge convoy of Parisian taxis. In turning westwards, von Kluck further widened the gap between himself and von Bülow. By 9 September, the BEF had driven into the hole that had developed in the German lines.

Despite von Kluck's successes in his sector of the front, von Moltke ordered a general withdrawal of Germany's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Armies to a defensive line on the River Aisne, some 60 kilometres north of the River Marne. The Battle of the Marne cost the French around 80 000 lives and the British 1701. The official German losses are not available, but a safe estimate is well over 100 000. The Schlieffen Plan had failed, and on 12 September the armies were left facing each other, encamped on the line of the River Aisne. Joffre had succeeded through a combination of factors: his ability to rapidly redeploy his forces, his capacity to maintain a calm demeanour while von Moltke panicked, the Allied generals' superior appreciation of strategy in a war of movement, and the fierce resistance of the Allied soldiers on the battlefield. In addition to this, another attack by Crown Prince Rupprecht's 6th Army against the French forts around Verdun failed. A devastating artillery barrage had almost broken the French resolve, but once again von Moltke's inability to commit himself to one plan worked against the Germans; his diversion of troops denied Rupprecht the reserves he needed to complete his assault. The uncertainty and indecision of von Moltke was excessive, and on 14 September he was sacked and replaced as Chief of Staff by General Erich von Falkenhayn.

12–15 September 1914: The First Battle of the Aisne

Another battle was fought at the Aisne River between 12–18 September when the BEF and the 5th Army attempted to drive a wedge between von Kluck and von Bülow. They managed to cross the Aisne but Von Falkenhayn swiftly brought the 7th Army from Lorraine to plug the gap between von Kluck and von Bülow. A stalemate was reached.

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Both sides pondered their next move. Frontal offensives were apparently impossible – the generals had learned that from their previous six weeks of fighting – so both sides sought to move their forces to a flank of the main battle front of the Aisne. An eastern approach was not possible because the mountains of the French Alps prevented movement, so the western flank, towards the English Channel, seemed the only option; control over the Channel ports was seen as the key to success.

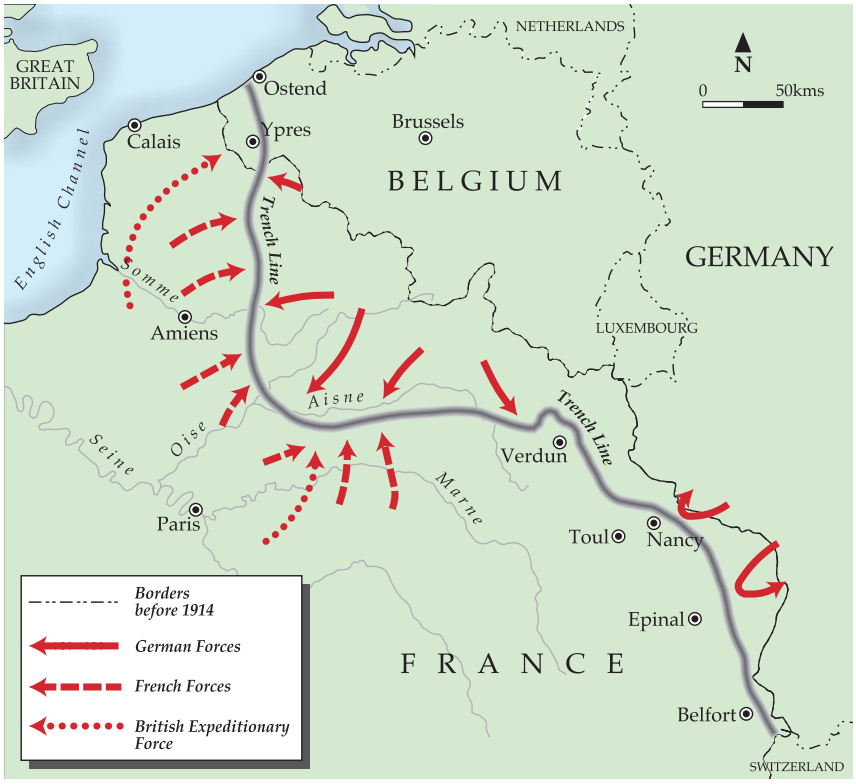

Figure 5.3 The development of the stalemate, 1914

17 September to 19 October 1914: The Race to the Sea

Control of the Belgian town of Antwerp also became significant; the Belgian Army was still there and was a source of harassment behind the German lines. Von Falkenhayn sent the 4th Army to capture the town; despite the efforts of Great Britain's Royal Marines and the 6th Infantry Division, the German heavy artillery and infantry assaults proved to be too strong. Antwerp surrendered on 10 October, but the British and Belgian forces were able to withdraw the bulk of their troops before the town was captured. The Belgians established a defensive line stretching from the Channel at Nieuport on the French–Belgian border inland to Ypres. The 4th German Army then moved down the coast from Antwerp, establishing German control of the coast up to Nieuport.

Simultaneously, both sides shuffled their armies on the Aisne and in the east to drive the gap between Compiègne and Ypres. This movement

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of forces, and the series of engagements between 17 September and 19 October, has been termed the 'Race to the Sea', even though reaching the sea was not the prime objective – each side hoped to penetrate the gap and attack the side and rear of its opponent's front line. Von Falkenhayn shifted the 6th Army from Verdun, then the 2nd Army and finally the 4th Army, in a series of overlaps to attempt to pierce the hole. Joffre countermoved his 2nd Army, then the newly formed 10th Army and finally the BEF. A series of small battles were fought at Noyon, Roye, Bray, Arras, La Bassée and Hazebrouck, but neither side was able to gain a decisive victory. Frontal wave attacks proved futile and so both sides began to **dig in**.

19 October to 22 November 1914: The First Battle of Ypres

One last chance remained for the German armies. A perceived weak link in the Allied forces was the Belgian Army, which, although competent as a fighting force, was too small to withstand a major offensive. Von Falkenhayn sent the 4th Army against the Belgians and the BEF on 18 October. The Belgians retired a few kilometres, which in turn forced the BEF to move back in sympathy to the outskirts of Ypres. On 22 October, units of the French 10th Army arrived to reinforce the Ypres **salient**, a line of trenches jutting out from the rest of the trenches and presenting targets to the enemy on three sides.

Between 22 October and 12 November fighting was continuous. The Germans seemed to have the best chance of winning because they had heavy artillery bombardments and outnumbered their opponents two to one. The conditions were cold, wet and muddy, and communications were difficult – artillery fire cut the telephone wires and the mud made the runners' jobs virtually impossible. Decisions were left to the commanders to make on the spot. For the British, French and Belgians, the circumstances meant a grim defence. The Germans launched four major offensives, the last of which was on 10 November where they broke through, but the confusion and casualties of the battle worked against them. Their soldiers were exhausted and, when faced with the prospect of another line of British defenders, their advance slowed, and they were not able to consolidate their gain. The British plugged the gap and brought the battle to a halt. French soldiers were supplied to fill the depleted British ranks and by 22 November the First Battle of Ypres was over. Germany had lost its best opportunity to break the stalemate of trench warfare.

Figure 5.4 Damage to the cloth hall in Ypres, 1914

Ypres cost the British 58 000 men, the French lost 50 000 and the Germans lost 130 000. The outcome of the battle was new for European armies. There was no clear winner or loser; both sides lost vast numbers of men and achieved some of their objectives. A few miles of territory were gained, but the attack was ultimately halted. This was to be the face of battle in Europe for the next four years.

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Stalemate

By November 1914, the armies stretched from the French Alps to the English Channel. From mid-October to mid-December, all along the Western Front, the nature of the fighting changed from attack to defence. At first soldiers hid in any holes they could find: drainage ditches, the banks of canals, or small dips in the ground. As their positions appeared to become more permanent, they began to dig their own holes; small rifle pits at first, which essentially was a scrape in the dirt just large enough to hold one man. Then the commanders in the field, the junior officers and non-commissioned officers began to coordinate this protection into coherent lines of trenches. Finally, the high commands of both sides admitted that they had to adopt a defensive attitude, and that digging in would be the only real salvation for their armies. This was ordered in November, but always with the proviso that the turn to defence was only temporary, and the armies would be on the move and attacking again as soon as possible.

The reasons a stalemate developed

Faults in the Schlieffen Plan's strategies and implementation

1 There was too much reliance on the speed of movement in the Schlieffen Plan; there was unexpectedly strong resistance by the Belgians and British; there was desperate defence by the French in some sectors; and there was a failure to realise that, once off the railways, the speed of the army would be determined by foot. The strict deadline of 42 days for the conquest was inflexible and unrealistic. In addition, the Germans did not expect the Russians to attack in under eight weeks.
2 Neither von Moltke nor his subordinate commanders were prepared to commit themselves fully to the implementation of the plan: von Moltke weakened the right wing and strengthened the left; troops were diverted from the Western to the Eastern Front; army commanders in the centre and left wing launched major offensives rather than holding their positions; the commanders on the right moved towards Paris from the east rather than the west. This exposed the right wing at the Battle of the Marne and the German withdrawal to the Aisne River effectively ended the Schlieffen Plan.
3 The invasion of Belgium led to the involvement of the British, whose forces provided key resistance at Mons and Ypres, and assisted in penetrating the gap at the Marne.
4 By failing to secure the Channel ports below Nieuport, the lines of communication between Great Britain and France remained open throughout the war.
5 By ordering their troops onto the defensive, the German commanders introduced a strategy for which the German army was not trained.
6 The Schlieffen Plan relied on numerical superiority, gained from reserve troops, to outflank the French. However, the reserve soldiers and their officers lacked the levels of physical fitness and tactical skill which Schlieffen had anticipated.

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Problems with the implementation of Plan XVII

1. The French underestimated the number of soldiers available to the Germans and assumed that the Germans would not launch their main offensive through Belgium. When France launched their own offensive through Alsace-Lorraine, it was insufficiently organised and not strong enough to penetrate the German left wing.
2. Insufficient forces were initially allocated to the French left wing. The failure to coordinate effectively with the British and Belgians, in training exercises or during the Battle of the Frontiers, meant that the attempted offensive was too weak and disjointed to hold back the German advance.
3. Too much attention was paid to the doctrine of the offensive, even after the Germans began inflicting heavy losses and defeats. Local commanders were forced to fight repeated counter-attacks that were doomed to failure. The French were not able to achieve numerical superiority on the battlefield until the Battle of the Marne, where Joffre deployed 27 Allied divisions against 13 German divisions. This lasted only until the Aisne, where the Germans were able to reshuffle their forces to match the French numbers and force a stalemate.
4. The level of officer training was poor. Officers were unable to coordinate their artillery to protect their infantry against the defensive fire of the German machine-guns and artillery. Most were unable to control their troops in battle and most senior officers were unable to liaise with neighbouring units. Joffre himself admitted in mid-August, 'Our troops are not good at attacking in open country.'
5. Belgium and Great Britain maintained only small professional armies, and had not been considered vital to the overall French strategy. Although they were too small to conduct major operations on their own, they played a vital role in the delaying of the German advance. Failure to consider the potential role of the British and the Belgians was an important implementation flaw in Plan XVII.

Tactical and strategic problems

1. A rapid rate of advance by rail was possible only in areas where track had been laid. Problems arose where no rail was installed (as with the reinforcement of the French 6th Army by taxi) or where movement was necessary beyond the railway stations (as on most battlefields). The soldiers were also delayed because of inefficient track and station management. Guerrilla-type operations resulted in the sabotage of track and rolling stock, but, on the other hand, the presence of rail did permit the swift movement of troops to plug gaps in the front lines, which further reinforced the stalemate.
2. Beyond the railway lines, troop movement depended on horse or foot. The muddy conditions of October–November slowed horse-drawn wagons and cavalry considerably, and cavalry reconnaissance and supply support were difficult. On the battlefield, the use of machine-guns and artillery made progress virtually impossible. The era of cavalry mobility on the battlefield was over.

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3 The quick pace required by the war plans took its toll on the soldiers. Hundreds of kilometres had to be travelled as the generals moved their armies at a forced march of around 30 to 40 kilometres a day. Two to three months at this pace, along with the effect of battles, death and injury, exhausted most of the soldiers, especially the reservists. The generals were forced to rest their men and the chance of a swift counter-attack diminished when troops welcomed the opportunity to dig in.

4 The nature of the modern battlefield made attack more likely to fail than the commanders believed. They felt that morale could overcome the advantages of defensive fire. The commanders underestimated the ability of machine-guns and defensive artillery. They abandoned tactics of movement that used cover and concealment because they believed that mass armies lacked the ability to make them work. Also, they believed this tactic was a dishonourable way to fight and that once men lay down on the battlefield they would not get up again. The commanders believed that by crowding the men together in densely spaced assault lines, they could concentrate their rifle fire, improve the morale of the soldiers and gain tighter discipline.

5 The education and training of the generals had convinced them that simple strategies and moral fortitude would overcome any obstacles. Tradition was everything and innovation was nothing. All were prepared for huge casualties, but they also expected the war to be over quickly. The initial success of the Schlieffen Plan bore out to the Germans the correctness of their prewar assumptions, even though the casualties were much higher than anticipated. It was not until the failure of the First Battle of Ypres – the first true offensive against a prepared trench-line defence – that the German generals began to think about new tactics. The French quickly learnt some lessons from their August disasters: Joffre saw the necessity for numerical superiority before launching an assault, the importance of coordinating infantry and artillery, and the need to avoid throwing the full force of an attack against a prepared defensive position. The soldiers learned to use cover and concealment in defence and attack. However, once the Germans had taken up their defensive positions on the Aisne, a new way had to be found.

6 The High Commands of both sides were located many kilometres behind the fighting, and communication difficulties could be extreme. Secure military telephone lines were regularly cut by artillery, and the other options – runners (on foot, horseback or motorbike) and carrier pigeon – were slow and subject to casualties. On the battlefield itself, the unreliability of field telephones meant that word of mouth and signal flags were necessary for communication.

The role of the commanders

1 The commanders on all sides proved incapable of successfully pursuing an offensive. However, they could organise a counter-attack leading to a successful defence. The recipe for a stalemate was set.

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2 Joffre's calm and deliberate approach was an advantage to the French. He reinforced the left wing, soothed the nerves of his own commanders and Sir John French, presented a public image of defiance and confidence, and trusted the judgement of Galliéni. This led to the success of the Marne counter-attack and the matching of the German offensives during the Race to the Sea. While by no means the ideal commander – Joffre's mistakes contributed to the failure of the initial French offensive – his resolve was a key factor in the success of the French defence.

3 Sir John French, although prone to bouts of depression and gloominess, also produced resolute decisions. There was serious conflict between him and his subordinate generals, Haig and Smith-Dorrien, who both detested Sir John French and took every opportunity to defy him. At Mons, Le Cateau and Ypres they stood and fought, despite Sir John French's pessimism for success. Almost by default, Sir John French proved to be a commander who could defend British honour and defy the enemy. His weakness was in not providing an effective offensive strategy. Similarly, Albert, King of the Belgians, showed himself capable of using his forces to resist a numerically superior enemy.

4 Helmuth von Moltke's many errors show his unsuitability for the pressures of command and his lack of trust in the Schlieffen Plan. He permitted alternative plans, but would not provide the manpower nor the **materiel** to ensure their success. There was little coordination of German forces once attacks began, and he was keen to pass responsibility to his subordinates, even trusting a junior officer with the decision to withdraw from the Marne. He was aided by the actions of von Kluck, von Bülow and Prince Rupprecht, each of whom was unable to view the situation beyond the perspective of his own army command and reputation. Moltke's replacement, von Falkenhayn, took the view that the war would be a drawn-out affair and that Germany needed to engage in a long period of defence while preparing for a great offensive; at least one year would be needed to accumulate the necessary resources.

Summary

- The development of a stalemate grew out of the failure of the Schlieffen Plan.
- The Schlieffen Plan was flawed in its design:
  - it depended on a strict timetable
  - the timetable was dependent on the speed of railways rather than the speed of soldiers on foot.
- German military commanders departed from the Schlieffen Plan, further undermining its possibility of success.
- The armies of both sides relied too heavily on the notion of the offensive, and failed to effectively coordinate infantry and artillery to combat the defensive capabilities of machine-guns.
- After the Battle of the Marne and the Battle of the Aisne in 1914, both sides dug in.
- Both sides expected the trench lines to be temporary and that the war would again become based on movement and the offensive.

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Activities

Thinking historically 5.1

1. Compile brief notes on aspects of the stalemate by answering the following questions.

The German offensive to 21 August 1914

- **a** What contributed to German progress?
- **b** What mistakes did von Moltke make in this period?

The French offensive and the deployment of the BEF to 23 August 1914

- **c** What are the factors that hindered French progress?

In the battles of Mons and Charleroi

- **d** What were the strengths of the BEF at Mons?
- **e** What were the problems with the implementation of the Schlieffen Plan and Plan XVII that had emerged by 24 August 1914?

The Great Retreat

- **f** What kinds of qualities did Joffre display?
- **g** What were weaknesses displayed by von Moltke?
- **h** What were the mistakes that the Germans made?

The First Battle of the Marne and the First Battle of the Aisne, 1914

- **i** Why were the French and British able to turn potential defeat in the Great Retreat into a victory at the Battle of the Marne?
- **j** Why were French and British soldiers unable to follow up the Battle of the Marne with success at the Battle of the Aisne?

The Race to the Sea

- **k** What were the aims of the armies during this period?
- **l** How were the Germans able to move troops quickly during these manoeuvres?
- **m** How did the British and French manage to match German mobility?

The First Battle of Ypres, 1914

- **n** Why did the Germans fail to win the First Battle of Ypres?

Stalemate:

- **o** Why had the soldiers of both sides been forced onto the defensive by November 1914?

2. Consider the nature, attitudes and actions of the German, French and British commanders in 1914.

- **a** How did von Moltke negate the advance of his own forces?
- **b** How did Joffre contribute to the French and British defensive effort?
- **c** Why did Sir John French's unsuitability for command not adversely affect the defensive efforts of his forces?

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3. **a** Explain why neither the Germans nor the British and French were able to achieve a decisive victory on the Western Front in 1914?
   b Why did the expected war of movement become a stationary war in the trenches?

Working historically 5.1

1. Read the following sources and answer the questions that follow.

Source 5.A **Diary of General Hache, French III Corps, 4 September 1914.**

> It's mad. The troops are exhausted. They don't sleep or eat – they've been marching and fighting for two weeks! We need arms, ammunition, equipment. Everything is in terrible shape. Morale is bad. I've had to replace two generals of division. The Staff is worth nothing and good for nothing. If we had time to refit behind the Seine …

   a How useful is this diary extract to a historian studying the problems of fighting in 1914? (Refer to the perspective of the source as well as its content.)

Source 5.B **Memo from Marshal Foch to Sir John French, 31 October 1914.**

> It is absolutely essential not to retreat; therefore, the men must dig in wherever they find themselves and hold onto the ground they now occupy. [Any retreat] by any considerable body of troops would lead to an assault on the part of the enemy and bring certain confusion among the troops. Such an idea must be utterly rejected.

   b How useful is this memo to a historian studying the problems of fighting in 1914? (Refer to the perspective of the source as well as its content.)

Source 5.C **Diary of a French soldier, 1914.**

> There is no use of an attack from the front. We'd be mowed down by machine guns.

   c How accurately does this statement summarise the tactical problems of the first months of the war?

Source 5.D **Extract from the memoirs of German General von Kuhl, 1928.**

> It was not the system which failed us, but the directing personages … We suffered continually from the defective liaison between General Headquarters and the commands of armies. The new telephone systems were much too weak and were not sufficiently equipped with new apparatus.

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d What motives might be behind the ideas von Kuhl expresses?
e How reliable is this source when considering communications problems in the first months of the war?

2. Read the downloadable summary sheet on the key commanders. As a military historian you are asked to assess the performance of each of the key commanders on the Western Front.

DIGITAL

a Rank (from most important to least important) the commanders based on their responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of the stalemate on the Western Front.
b Identify the personal and tactical characteristics shared by those commanders to whom you have given the greatest responsibility.
c Identify the personal and tactical characteristics shared by those commanders whom you have given the least responsibility.
d Compare your answers to b and d. What similarities and differences can you observe? How does this information add to your understanding of the fighting on the Western Front during World War I?

3. Research and summarise the opinions of three of the following historians in relation to the development of the 1914 stalemate on the Western Front:

- John Keegan, *A history of warfare*, Hutchinson, London, 1993
- Sir Basil Liddell-Hart, *The history of the First World War*, Pan, London, 1972
- James Joll, *The First World War*, Longman, New York, 1986
- Martin Gilbert, *The First World War*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1994
- J.M. Winter, *The experience of World War I*, Macmillan, London, 1988
- A.J.P. Taylor, *An illustrated history of the First World War*, Macdonald & Co, London,1969
- John Terraine, *White heat*, Book Club Associates, London, 1982.
- Paul Ham, *1914*, published 2013
- David Reynolds, *The long shadow: The Great War and the twentieth century*, published 2013

5.2 Attempts to break the stalemate

The fighting on the Western Front was in a state of deadlock between November 1914 and July 1918. Policies of **attrition** aimed at grinding down the enemy's personnel and supply reserves were the norm. Attempts to break the trench lines were spectacularly unsuccessful and, despite the advent of new weapons and tactics, offensives were halted after the capture of only a few kilometres of territory. Many offensives did not even achieve this. It was not until July to November of 1918 that the Germans, and then the Allies, were able to conduct more effective mobile offensives.

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Nibbling tactics, weak point strategy and major offensives, November 1914–1915

After the bloodshed of the first few months of the war, the chances of gaining quick, decisive success on the Western Front were slim. While most generals were convinced that a breakthrough would be possible with an increase in firepower, men and resources, the politicians, especially those in Great Britain and France, did not agree. They urged their soldiers to seek alternatives.

20 December 1914 to 17 March 1915: The First Battle of Champagne

This was made even more clear by the failure of Joffre's First Battle of Champagne. Launched on 14 December 1914, by 24 December its aim of removing German soldiers from French soil had failed, yet was maintained until the end of March 1915. Although the British had some success at Neuve Chapelle between 10–12 March 1915, poor Allied coordination and rapid German counter-attacks meant that territory won could not be consolidated and was quickly recaptured.

Following the emergence of the stalemate, the Allied generals employed a strategy of attrition that involved grinding down the enemy through large wave assaults. This strategy, referred to by Joffre as 'nibbling', resulted in the Allies suffering substantial casualties.

The alternative strategy employed by the Allies was **weak point strategy**. This aimed to stabilise fighting on the Western Front while attacking perceived weak points in the **Central Powers** in Turkey and Austria–Hungary. Major offensives were launched via the Dardanelles, the Middle East, Serbia and Italy, Lord Kitchener, Great Britain's Minister for War, began a program for recruiting a mass army of volunteers. However, few alterations were made to the tactics that had led to the slaughters of the Western Front, and, by the end of 1915, the fighting in the Dardanelles, Italy, Serbia and the Middle East had also ground to a series of stalemates.

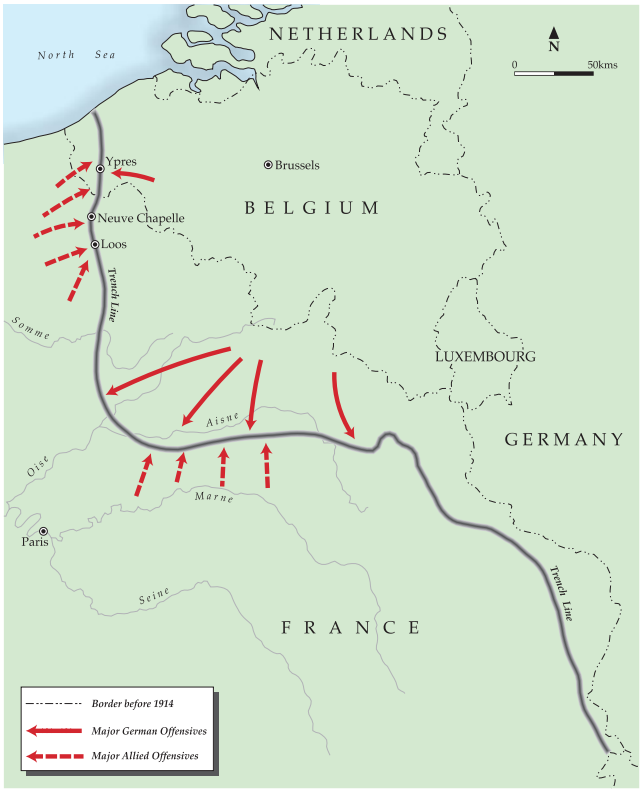

Figure 5.5 The Western Front in 1915

The Germans also sought an alternative to a mass offensive on the Western Front. In January 1915 they launched the first of many offensives on the Eastern Front, achieving some degree of success. Emboldened by this and encouraged by the potential of poison gas – used for the first time at Bolimov on 31 January – von Falkenhayn attacked the British on the Western Front.

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22 April to 25 May 1915: The Second Battle of Ypres

The Second Battle of Ypres began on 22 April and some British units collapsed from the effects of the poison gas used. However, the drain of German manpower to the Eastern Front and the reorganised British defence, meant that the Germans could not exploit their advantage and the offensive stopped on 25 May. A similar offensive on the Meuse–Argonne in June suffered a similar fate.

The German armies on the Eastern Front began another assault on the Russians on 2 May 1915. This attack became the major objective of German strategy for the remainder of 1915, and by December they had advanced about 500 kilometres, winning back the territory seized by the Russians in 1914, and driving deep through Poland and into Russia itself.

The Allied offensives on the Western Front continued between March and June 1915. These operations were part of Joffre's belief that a series of smaller operations was still required while the troops awaited the accumulation of resources and new British mass army. The Allied offensives included the battles of Neuve Chapelle, Wöevre, the Second Battle of Artois, Aubers Ridge and Festubert, and were designed to eat away at the German line, to smooth out salients and to grind away German personnel, but they had the same effect on the Allies as the Germans, and by June no substantial gains had been made. Infantry attacks were suicidal because of a shortage of artillery shells and breakthroughs were not followed up because the reserve troops were held back in preparation for the anticipated future major offensive.

The first **big push** came in September 1915, but the concentration of arms and men made little territorial impact; the French efforts in the Third Battle of Artois and the Second Battle of Champagne, and the British at Loos were just as fruitless as earlier smaller-scale attempts. The offensive was cancelled in November 1915 and Sir John French was replaced by Sir Douglas Haig who, with Joffre, began planning for even greater offensives in 1916.

Major battles on the Western Front, 1915

Battle	Date	Offensive
First Battle of Champagne	20 December 1914 to 17 March 1915	Allied
Battle of Neuve Chapelle	10–13 March 1915	British
Battle of the Wöevre	6–15 April 1915	French
Second Battle of Ypres	22 April to 25 May 1915	German
Second Battle of Artois; the battles of Aubers Ridge and Festubert	9 May to 18 June 1915	Allied
Second Battle of Champagne and Third Battle of Artois, Battle of Loos	25 September to 8 October	Allied

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Attrition and mass attacks, 1916

The Allies returned to the **westerner** strategy in 1916. Joffre intended the main effort to take place on the Western Front in the middle of the year. The other fronts would be coordinated to support this main attack. The big push was to feature more men, weapons and equipment than had so far been deployed. The objective was attrition.

Verdun

Von Falkenhayn planned a similar approach for the Germans. On 21 February he launched a major offensive at Verdun and, at first, was very successful. Verdun was defended by a series of forts, which were in turn surrounded by a French trench salient. Using small group **infiltration tactics**, the Germans captured Fort Douaumont on 25 February and began a series of attacks from March to July to force the issue further. However, von Falkenhayn soon realised that a quick victory was impossible and adapted his objectives, hoping to 'bleed the French white'. Fort Vaux fell to the Germans on 7 June, but the French survived. The resolve of Joffre and the appointment of General Philippe Pétain to reorganise the defences of Verdun proved to be crucial; Pétain made the French defences deeper and repositioned artillery that had been removed in 1915.

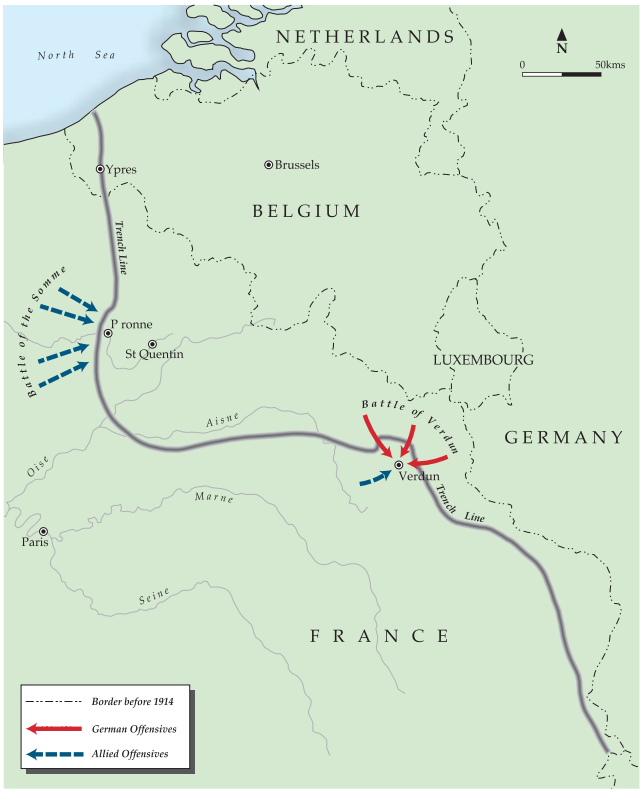

Figure 5.6 The Western Front in 1916

Figure 5.7 Convoy of troops heading to Verdun in 1916

Pétain's order was *Ils ne passeront pas* ('they shall not pass'). He maintained the supply road to Verdun by diverting battalions of fighting troops to repave the surface that was pounded daily by the German artillery. Meanwhile, Joffre scrounged thousands of French troops to reinforce those lost at Verdun – it has been estimated that almost the entire French Army served in the defence of the town at some point during 1916.

The defence of Verdun was symbolically important for France, and by July the German offensive was largely over. On 28 August, von Falkenhayn was replaced by Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff,

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who moved back to the defensive as they realised that the Germans had been bled even more than the French. Pétain counter-attacked, recapturing Fort Douaumont on 24 October and FortVaux on 2 November. By 1917, almost all the German gains had been won back, but the French were too weak to carry the attack any further.

The Somme

Joffre convinced Haig to launch a British assault on the Western Front that would act in support of the defence of Verdun. The target was the German line at the Somme River. Beginning on 24 June 1916, the seven-day preliminary bombardment fired 1.7 million artillery shells at the Germans. However, the results were negligible. Most of the British guns were too small in calibre to penetrate the hard chalky ground where the Germans had established deep bunkers to protect their troops. On 1 July, the British began their big push at Gommecourt–Thiepval. As successive waves of soldiers walked calmly over the top into **no man's land** in extended file, 100 German machine-gun nests were waiting; there were 57 000 British casualties on the first day.

From July to November, repeated attacks were made along a 25-kilometre front. General Henry Rawlinson's surprise attack on 14 July at Bazentin Ridge, and then the following day at Delville Wood, almost achieved a breakthrough, but German reserves plugged the gap. General William Birdwood's ANZACs distinguished themselves with the capture of Pozières Ridge on 27 July, but suffered 23 000 casualties in the process. Between 3–6 September the French I Corps successfully attacked Guillemont.

Figure 5.8 British troops resting after a tour of duty in the trenches, 19 July 1916

The Battle of Flers–Courcelette

Tanks were used for the first time on 15 September 1916 at the Battle of Flers–Courcelette. They were deployed only as single units and either became bogged in the mud or isolated and destroyed. Yet, the psychological impact of this new weapon was impressive and the Allies became convinced that they could be used more effectively in the future.

Thiepval was captured on 27 September and, in November, Gough's 5th Army captured Beaumont-Hamel, but the British could not afford any more loss of life and equipment; the advance could not be sustained, so the offensive was over.

Most of the gains at the Somme could be measured in hundreds of metres only; the furthest extent of the British advance was just 12 kilometres, with four kilometres of this achieved on the first day. Millions of soldiers were committed to the battles, and hundreds of thousands became casualties. Haig may have brutalised the German Army, but it was at an enormous cost to his

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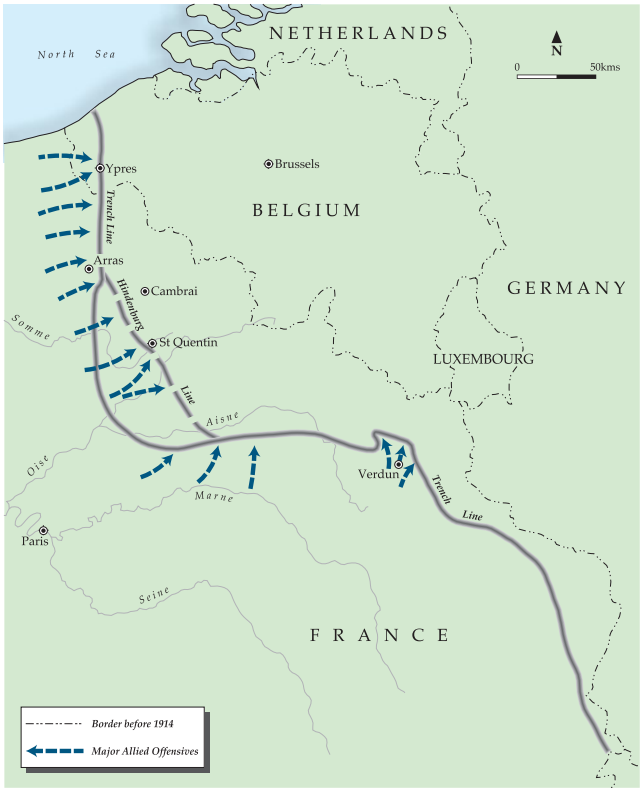

Figure 5.9 The Western Front in 1917

own men; he was prepared to pay to the price for eventual strategic victory.

Attrition continues, 1917

Germany's strategy changed in 1917. Von Hindenburg and Ludendorff realised that victory on the Western Front would not be easily gained. The Somme and Verdun had demonstrated the strength of the British and French resistance, and Germany did not possess the human and material resources to counter the Allied attrition strategy. So, the German commanders decided to defend the Western and Eastern Fronts, attack the British war effort through unrestricted submarine warfare, and destroy the Italian war effort with concerted offensive action.

The abdication of King Constantine I of Greece and the accession of King Alexander saw the Greeks join the Allies on 27 June 1917. In Italy, the 9th Battle of Isonzo was fought in May to June, with no success, but the Allies eventually broke through in the 10th Battle of Isonzo in August to September. This was negated at the 11th Battle of Isonzo, also known as the Battle of Caporetto, when the Italians broke in panic at the violence of the German attack and were driven back 80 kilometres, losing 300 000 men to the Central Powers' 20 000. Only British and French reinforcements, and the German inability to move quickly, saved the Allies. The year ended with a resumption of a stalemate; the Germans believed they had achieved the objective of destroying the Italian effort and withdrew, leaving the debilitated Austrian Army to handle the front alone.

The Nivelle Offensive

The German defence on the Western Front began in February and March with a planned 30-kilometre withdrawal to a prepared defensive position known as the Siegfried or **Hindenburg Line**. These emplacements of ferro-concrete bunkers, **pill boxes** and trenches, protected by kilometres of barbed wire obstacles, proved to be a major impediment to the Allied assaults of 1917. The German defences held firm all year, but with significant casualty and equipment losses.

The Allies, supported by Russian and Italian offensives, continued the attrition strategy. Again, no battle proved decisive. The new French Commander-in-Chief, General Robert Nivelle, announced with great conviction that he had developed tactics that would ensure a decisive victory

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'within 48 hours'. This gained him the support of the British and French governments, and the BEF was placed temporarily under his control. As a preliminary support to the French offensive, the British attacked at Arras between 9 April and 16 May. Despite Canadian success in capturing Vimy Ridge, the battle followed the same pattern as those of 1916, albeit on a smaller scale: poor coordination, a failure to exploit gaps with the swift redeployment of reserves and an eventual breakdown of the assault.

The Nivelle Offensive was launched on 16 April. By 9 May it had completely failed. The French Army was broken and for two weeks in May was wracked by mutinies. Nivelle's replacement, Pétain, restored order before Ludendorff could drive through the French lines, but the role of the French soldiers was significantly reduced from this point. French commanders could not risk further offensive action for at least a year – they could only guarantee that their soldiers would hold the line.

1917: The Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele)

Haig took this as his opportunity to achieve victory on the Western Front. He believed that he could succeed by 1918 through further application of attrition in 1917, so he planned a major offensive at Ypres for July 1917.

The preliminary attack at Messines Ridge on 7 June sought to divert attention away from the disorganised French lines. It began with an innovation: 17 days of intensive bombardment, followed by the coordinated explosion of 19 huge mines. However, withdrawal of German forces to their prepared defensive positions meant that even though the British gained territory, the stalemate was resumed.

The Third Battle of Ypres (commonly known as the Battle of Passchendaele), began on 31 July after another 12 days using 4 250 000 artillery shells. The effect of this on the ground, coupled with the heavy rains, made progress nearly impossible. General Hubert Gough, commanding the 5th Army, wanted to call off the advance, but Haig agreed only to a delay. The first phase of assault on 16 August saw the British incapable of overcoming the interlocking machine-gun nests and concrete bunkers of the Germans. The second phase began with a successful British assault on Menin Road, and the third phase saw the ANZACs capture Polygon Wood. Heavy rain fell throughout October, so that the ground became impassable; mud became the major fear of the soldiers, overcoming even their concerns about enemy fire. Haig pushed on. The offensive was called off after the capture of Passchendaele village on 6 November. There were over 300 000 British casualties for an advance of eight kilometres.

Figure 5.10 Chateau Wood, part of the battleground on the Ypres salient

The Battle of Cambrai

Haig ignored the increasing pressure from home to limit his actions and again attacked at Cambrai on 20 November. He hoped to further grind down the Germans while relieving pressure on the French. The Battle

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of Cambrai was planned by the Tank Corps and was the first real sign of British tactical innovation. It began without any intensive preparatory bombardment. Instead, as the guns began firing, the troops attacked immediately, covered by the shells of a **creeping barrage**. In addition, massed tanks were used for the first time; 476 tanks rolled forward in front of the infantry, gaining nine kilometres of territory in one day.

However, the losses of the year prevented the British from inserting enough reserves to hold the gap they created. Also, Major General Montague Harper, whose 51st Highland Division was in support of the tanks, refused to train his soldiers in the new infantry-tank tactics, so 179 tanks were either knocked out by German artillery or became bogged or broken down on the first day. During the following week, the British tried further attacks, but the Germans used gas shells, high explosive bombardments and infiltration tactics to recapture most of the British gains. The year of 1917 ended with an indication of how future battles might be won, but three developments, away from the battle front, now came into play.

The United States enters the war

The USA declared war on the Central Powers on 6 April 1917. Significantly, the US commander, General John Pershing, would not allow US troops to be committed to battle until 1918, fearing that too few numbers and too little training would lead to unnecessary slaughter. Therefore, for the rest of 1917, the USA provided increasing amounts of materiel and equipment to the Allies, and began to transport troops to France.

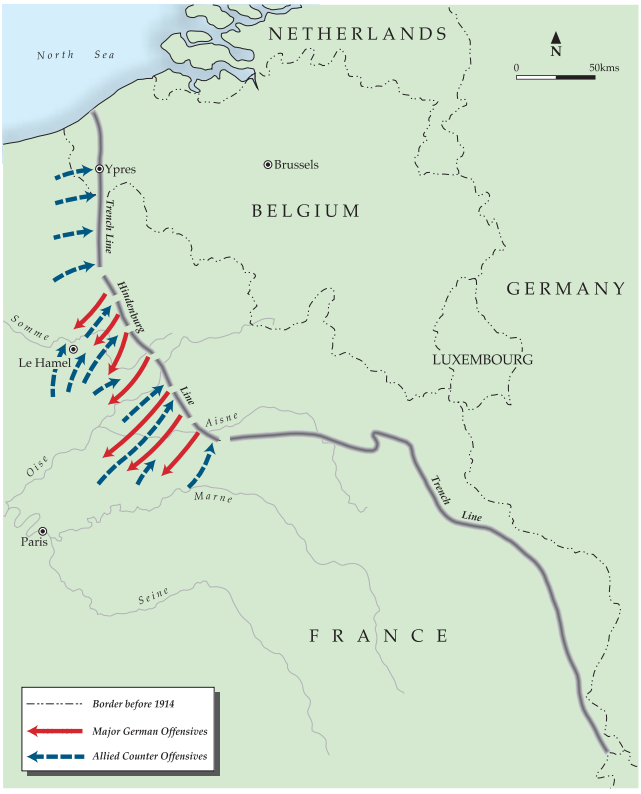

Figure 5.11 The Western Front in 1918

Offensive and counter-offensive, 1918

In 1918, several dilemmas faced the belligerents. Neither side possessed the resources nor determination to indefinitely continue fighting. Any prolongation of the fighting would increase support for socialist-led anti-war movements and each of the major powers feared the possibility of a Russian-style Bolshevik revolution. The demise of the Italian, Russian, Serbian, Persian and Middle Eastern Fronts meant that the war would be decided on the Western Front.

Thus, each side had to, for the first time in the war, carefully consider offensive strategies that would overcome the effectiveness of the defensive lines. Yet, by 1918, these defensive systems had become very

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complex. The Hindenburg Line had proved impregnable to all attacks except for the tank advance at Cambrai. The British and French had, by 1918, also begun to adopt the German principles of **flexible defence**. The German offensive response was to use the infiltration tactics developed on the Eastern Front. The Allied approach was to coordinate the cooperation of all arms more effectively in their assault: infantry, artillery, communications, aircraft and tanks. Both methods proved successful, but the degree of success was determined by the size of the support available to each side. Ultimately, the Allies had too many men and too much equipment.

1918: The German offensives

Ludendorff knew that the US presence would prove decisive for the Allies unless the Germans acted quickly. He prepared a massive assault on the Anglo–French lines, attempting to break their resolve quickly. In March to April, German Operation Michael almost split the French and British forces; it smashed Gough's 5th Army and it established a 65-kilometre salient across Flanders.

However, the Allied defensive response was coordinated for the first time with the appointment of Marshal Ferdinand Foch as the Commander-in-Chief of all Allied Forces on the Western Front. Eventually the Germans had to halt their offensive because their supply lines were hampered by the mud of the four-year-old battlefield.

In April, the Germans launched Operation Georgette against the Lys sector. Despite a 16-kilometre German advance, the British, employing Haig's 'backs to the wall' order, held on and denied the Germans access to the Channel ports.

The next German offensive, Operation Blücher-Yorck, struck at the French. The Third Battle of the Aisne saw the French driven back 32 kilometres to the Marne, but US and French reinforcements managed to slow down and halt the advance by 6 June. The fourth and fifth German offensives (Gneisenau and Friedensturm) sought to break through at the salients created by the first three offensives, but, again, fierce resistance and counter-attack by the French and the USA proved to be the stumbling block.

By 19 July, the Spring offensives had failed. Ludendorff had gambled on a decisive breakthrough, but the adoption of the German principles of flexible defence by the Allies meant that they were able to absorb loss of territory at the cost of roughly the same numbers of men lost by the Germans. The Germans could not replace soldiers at the same rate as the Allies, so while the Germans solved the problem of penetrating the defence, they were unable to supply their soldiers with enough ammunition or transport to quickly follow up their advances.

1918: The counter-offensives

The counter-offensive by the **Allied and associated powers** began at Belleau Wood in June 1918. The Battle of Hamel on 4 July, planned and executed by the Tank Corps, Rawlinson and the Australian general, John Monash, while only small in scale, acted as a demonstration of the tactics that could be used to ensure victory. By that time, sufficient data had been

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accumulated to accurately predict where artillery fire would fall. Attacks were freed of the haphazard process of estimation; the fire of the artillery could quickly and accurately be trained to where it was most needed. Aircraft were used to strafe and bomb the enemy front and reserve lines. Massed tanks were combined with specially trained infantry. It was a complete success – a combination of the tactical advances made by the Allies during the war, effective staff work and the cooperation of British, Australian and US forces.

These tactics formed the basis of the remaining Allied operations on the Western Front. In August, the **'freeing' offensive** began. The USA attacked the Saint-Mihiel salient, France launched a counter-attack on the Marne, while Great Britain pushed ahead in Amiens; Haig's assault on Amiens, begun on 8 August, which Ludendorff termed the 'black day of the German Army', broke the back of the German resistance.

By September 1918, the Bulgarian Army had been routed in the Balkans, the British forces had almost completed the defeat of the Turks in the Middle East, and the British had pushed forward in Mesopotamia. The Italians, British and French drove back the Austrians in Italy in October. The Turks surrendered on 30 October and the Austrians surrendered on 3 November 1918. The Central Powers were collapsing.

Marshal Foch launched the final general offensive on the Western Front in September 1918. The British drove back up into Flanders, and the French and the USA attacked the Germans in the Meuse–Argonne region. With the collapse of their allies, and faced with increasing revolutionary activity at home, the Germans sought an **armistice** on 6 October. On 27 October, Ludendorff resigned and on 9 November Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated. The new republican government, anxious to halt the war before the Allies could advance onto German soil, completed negotiations for the armistice, which came into effect at 11am on 11 November.

Summary

- The fighting on the Western Front was in a state of deadlock between November 1914 and July 1918.
- Attempts to break the trench lines were unsuccessful, with offensives capturing only a few kilometres of territory.
- The Allies returned to the westerner strategy in 1916, with an objective of attrition.
- Germany's strategy changed in 1917; it was defensive at the Western Front, and offensive at sea and against the Italian war effort.
- Between July and November of 1918, the Germans, and then the Allies, managed to conduct more effective mobile offensives.

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Activities

Thinking historically 5.2

1. Copy and complete the following chart.

Year	Action on the Western Front	Attacking army	Purpose of offensive	Result of offensive	Reasons for result
1914–1915	First Battle of Champagne				
	Second Battle of Ypres				
1916	Verdun				
	The Somme				
1917	Nivelle Offensive				
	Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele)				
1918	Spring offensives				
	Counter-offensives				

2. Explain why the Allied forces launched the Dardanelles campaign in 1915?
3. Discuss why the focus of Allied efforts shifted back to the Western Front in 1916?
4. Write an extended response on the following question: analyse the strategies used by the Allied forces and the German High Command in 1917 and 1918, and account for their success or failure.
5. Read the downloadable summary sheet on the key commanders, and then answer the following questions. **DIGITAL**
   - **a** To what extent did the actions and decisions of the generals on both sides of the Western Front prolong the war?
   - **b** The Allied generals have been characterised as 'donkeys'. Do you think this is a fair representation of their attitudes and achievements?

Working historically 5.2

1. Read the following source.

Memo from General von Falkenhayn, 1916, outlining aims of the attack on Verdun. Source 5.E

> The essential question is not to take Verdun … but to pin down the French, pull them towards the battlefield, and since they will have to defend it shoulder to shoulder, we shall bleed them white by virtue of our superiority in guns.

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a According to this source, what were von Falkenhayn's initial aims at Verdun?

b From your own knowledge, how did these aims change during 1916?

2. Read the following source.

Source 5.F **Poem by British poet Siegfried Sassoon, published in 1917.**

The General

'Good-morning, good-morning!' the General said,
When we met him last week on our way to the Line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
'He's a cheery old card,' grunted Harry to Jack,
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

Using this source and your own knowledge, what was the human cost of the Battle of the Somme in 1916?

Exercises in historical inquiry

DIGITAL Refer to *Cambridge GO* for downloadable historical inquiry exercises on the Western Front.

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6 The other fronts and the Russian Revolution

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the major events on the battlefields of eastern Europe
- about Russia's revolution
- about the other fronts in the war
- to carry out a historical investigation into the nature of the world at the start of the twentieth century
- to research and analyse a variety of historical opinions and perspectives about the Eastern Front.

6.1 The Eastern Front

In 1914, the German Socialist Party voted for war credits (a form of war bonds) to raise money to support the war effort against Russia. This was partly due to their hatred for the Russians and their more autocratic political system, and partly to support their East Prussian countrymen, who were suffering from the incursions of the Tsarist invader. However, once the Russian Army was moving westwards, supply problems led the soldiers to seek provisions, which resulted in warfare with the civilians whom the Russians treated severely. A German staff officer wrote at the time, 'There has never been such a war as this, and never will be again … waged with such bestial fury.'

The failure of France's Plan XVII, the late arrival of the BEF and the faults in the implementation of the Schlieffen Plan, ultimately led to the stalemate at the Western Front. The resulting compromised war plans adopted by the Russians prior to 1914, and the immediate supply issues (including an inadequate rail system), meant that the Russians would fight a defensive war. Nevertheless, the German miscalculation of the Russian mobilisation enabled General Alexander Samsonov, the commanding officer of the Russian 2nd Army, to place pressure on the German units that were there under the command of General Maximilian von Prittwitz.

The Battle of Tannenberg

Due to the geography of the land, the Russian 1st and 2nd armies were separated earlier than planned and almost immediately by the 100 kilometres of the Masurian Lakes; General Samsonov allowed his

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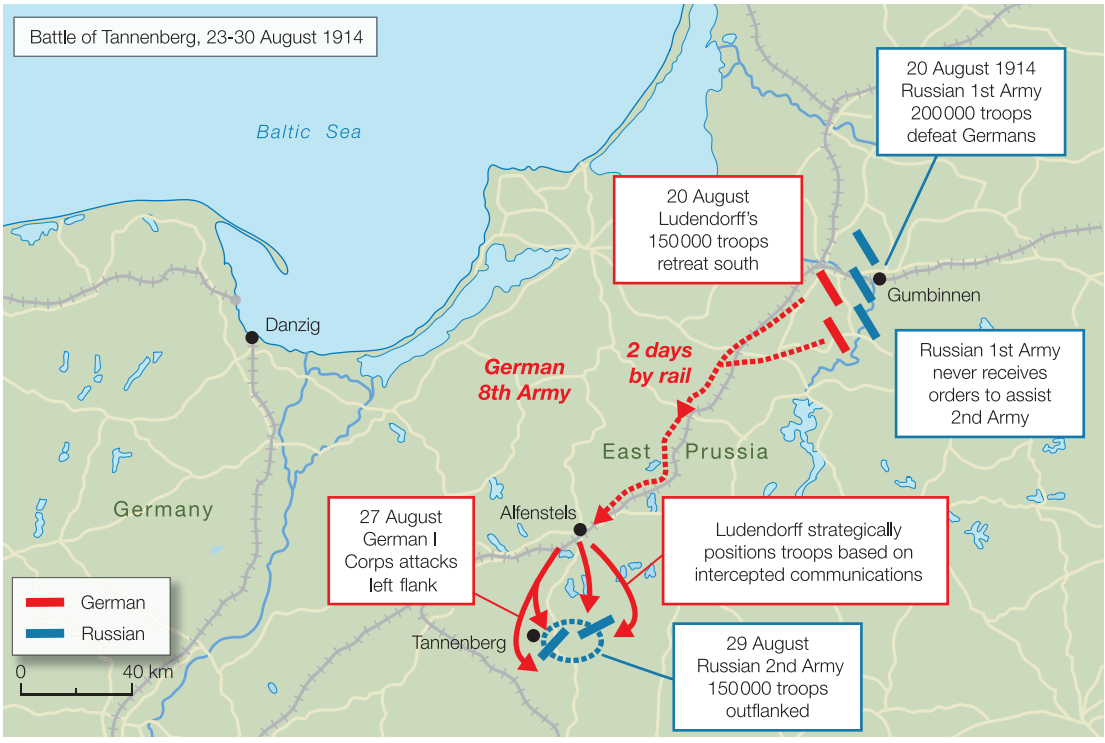

Figure 6.1 The Battle of Tannenberg

army to push forward without a secure battle order. The ensuing moves and counter-moves by the Germans, now under the command of Generals von Hindenburg and Ludendorff, prompted the complete annihilation of the Russian 2nd Army in a battle known as the Battle of Tannenberg; the Russians were destroyed over four days at the end of August 1914 because of the thoughtful planning of the German commanders and their efficient use of the rail networks as well as the poor decisions made by the Russian commanders.

The First Battle of the Masurian Lakes

In further engagements, the Russian 1st Army, led by General Paul von Rennenkampf, was also defeated in the Battle of the Masurian Lakes. The intention was for the Russian 1st and 2nd Armies to act as a pincer in East Prussia, and crush General von Hindenberg's 8th Army between them. However, when the Russian 2nd Army, the southern arm of the pincer, was destroyed, the Germans were able to attack from the south on 7 September. The Russian 1st Army was heavily outnumbered, and on 9 September Rennenkampf ordered a retreat.

By 13 September, there were no Russian troops remaining in East Prussia and, while the withdrawal had been orderly, the 1st Army lost over 100 000 men to Germany's 40 000; the wide open spaces on the Eastern Front had allowed the German Army to implement the ideas of Schlieffen and destroy the enemy through envelopment.

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The Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes

Later, in September 1914, the Russians regained some of the lost ground, counter-attacking the Germans in the Battle of the Niemen and pushing them back to the border. In early 1915, the German command planned four offensives on the Eastern Front, one of which was, again, at Masurian Lakes. The trench lines between the lakes had been held by the German Army, and on 7 February 1915, in a heavy snowstorm, the German 8th Army launched a surprise attack on the southern flank of the Russian Army. The Russians were forced back, only to be attacked from the north by the German 10th Army on 9 February. The Germans were able to advance over 100 kilometres in a week; the Russian 10th Army was in disarray, yet the Germans were eventually halted by the Russian 12th Army on 22 February.

The offensive in the south-west

The Russians suffered many fatalities and were mauled badly in these battles, but due to the importance of the Western Front to the Germans, the German troops were outnumbered on the Eastern Front and remained on the defensive over the coming years.

In 1916, on the orders of the Russian Provisional Government, an offensive was launched against the south-western sector, under the command of General Aleksei Brusilov. The Brusilov offensive was initially successful at driving deep into Austrian Territory and could have paved the way for future Russian victories on the Eastern Front. However, Russian general headquarters failed to see the importance of launching a follow-up offensive against Germany and instead pulled troops away from the German front to reinforce Brusilov's army fighting the Austrians. The leadership's failure to appreciate the strategic situation in front of them gave the Germans the breathing space they required to reinforce the Austrians and, eventually, to rout the Russian forces.

Summary

- The Russian Army experienced significant supply and communication issues, and made many poor military decisions.
- The Russian 1st and 2nd Armies separated, intending to form a pincer movement, but the 2nd Army was destroyed in the Battle of Tannenberg.
- The Russian 1st Army suffered large casualties and was forced to retreat in the First Battle of the Masurian lakes.
- In February 1915, the Germans gained over 100 kilometres of ground in a week during the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes.
- A Russian south-west offensive in 1916 was again routed by the German Army.

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Activities

Thinking historically 6.1

1. Complete brief notes on aspects of the Eastern Front stalemate by answering the following questions:
   - **a** Why was there no decisive result in 1914 on the Eastern Front?
   - **b** Why did the Russians fail to defeat the Germans?
   - **c** Why was there no decisive result in 1916 on the Eastern Front?
   - **d** Explain why the war on the Eastern Front remained, to a large extent, a defensive war until 1917.

Working historically 6.1

1. Research and summarise the opinions of three historians in relation to the development of the stalemate on the Eastern Front.

6.2 The Russian Revolution

The two revolutions that occurred in Russia in 1917 were a major political turning point in the twentieth century, affecting the lives of millions of people and profoundly shifting global geopolitics. World War I was a pivotal cause of the revolutions, and they are one of the conflict's most important legacies.

While the outbreak of the war initially resulted in an upsurge of Russian patriotism and support for the Tsar, Russia's defeats on the battlefield and its economic deprivation at home induced a significant decline in support for the monarchy. In a total war (see Chapter 9), armies need to be supported by a substantial **industrial military complex**, and have an effective infrastructure. Russia's adversary, Germany, possessed a well-trained military, an advanced economy and a functional transport system, whereas Russia did not. Fundamentally, Russia's economy was not developed enough to meet the demands of a modern war, and this led to its army being affected by substantial shortages in food, guns and equipment. Further, the strain of supplying a large army in the field precipitated a significant decline in living standards throughout the Russian Empire.

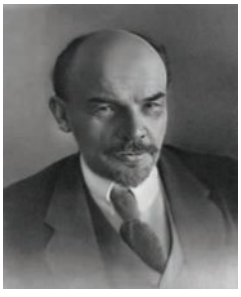

Figure 6.2 Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party

New factories built to help supply the Russian Army increased the size of the working class fourfold. This new urban population was highly susceptible to the simple political messages of revolutionary groups such as the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries because of the economic hardships caused by the war. Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party, used the slogan 'Peace! Bread! Land!' to neatly summarise the discontent of the Russian people.

The Russian Empire's poor leadership structures also played a pivotal role in the growth of discontent during the War. The war effort was largely run by **Duma** politicians, liberals and industrialists, not Nicholas II.

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In July 1915, the Tsar took personal command of the troops at the front, making him personally responsible not only for victories, but also for defeats. The day-to-day running of the government would thenceforth be undertaken by the Tsarina Alexandra, who was German born and unpopular. The Tsarina relied heavily on the advice of the mystic Rasputin (Russian for 'immoral') who gained leverage with her as he seemed to be able to alleviate the symptoms of her son Alexei's haemophilia. This led to the perception among the populace that Rasputin was effectively the ruler of Russia. In December 1916, Rasputin was murdered by the Tsar's uncle and cousin.

The February/March Revolution

In February/March 1917, almost 200 000 workers in Petrograd went on strike over the scarcity of food. The Tsar then made the fatal move of disbanding the Russian parliament, the Duma. When the Tsar ordered the army to restore control in the capital, the generals refused him because the Duma had advised them that military action would result in civil war and that they were in control. Entire regiments of the Russian Army then deserted, and provided arms to revolutionaries and civilians. By 14 March, Petrograd was in the hands of revolutionaries and on 15 March 1917, Nicholas II abdicated, ending over 300 years of Romanov rule.

Note: the following dates are according to the Western calendar – until February 1918 the Russian calendar was thirteen days behind the Western calendar. Therefore, in Russia the March and November revolutions are referred to as the February and October revolutions.

The October/November Revolution

Following the February/March Revolution, there were effectively two governments in Russia, the Provisional Government, led by the moderate middle-class members of the Duma, and the Petrograd Soviet, led by representatives of the radical political parties of the workers. The disparate outlooks of these two groups had a destabilising political impact on Russia. The Soviet initially supported the Provisional Government, but when Lenin returned in April 1917, he introduced the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' to encourage further revolution. Lenin gained traction by criticising the Provisional Government's decision to keep Russia in the war, and by questioning the Government's legitimacy more broadly since it had not been lawfully elected. On 6 and 7 November, the Bolshevik Red Guard, organised by Leon Trotsky and assisted by the naval cruiser *Aurora*, attacked the Winter Palace, headquarters of the Provisional Government and established a new Bolshevik government.

The collapse of the Russian front

The collapse of the Russian front in 1917 sent shock waves throughout the world. The abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the emergence of the Provisional Government generated chaos in the Russian Army between March and May. Alexander Kerensky, first the Minister for War and later the Premier, managed to briefly rally the army. However, a swift German counter-attack broke the offensive and the resistance of the Russian troops.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of October/November, Lenin ordered the immediate cessation of hostilities. Peace negotiations began on 3 December, and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was formally concluded on 3 March 1918. The collapse of the Eastern Front and Italian weaknesses at Caporetto enabled the Germans to launch a final great offensive on the Western Front.

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Summary

- The outbreak of World War I initially caused an upsurge of Russian patriotism and support for the Tsar.
- Poor fortunes on the battlefield and economic deprivation on the Russian home front led to a significant decline in support for the monarchy.
- When Tsar Nicholas II ordered the army to control striking workers, the generals refused to obey.
- Entire regiments of the Russian Army deserted, and provided arms to revolutionaries and civilians.
- On 15 March 1917, Nicholas II abdicated, ending over 300 years of Romanov rule.
- Following the February revolution, there were effectively two governments in Russia: the Provisional Government; and the Petrograd Soviet.
- Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917 and criticised the Provisional Government's decision to keep Russia in the war.
- On 6 and 7 November, the Bolshevik Red Guard attacked the Winter Palace and established a new Bolshevik government.
- After the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin ordered the immediate cessation of hostilities, and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was formally concluded on 3 March 1918.

Activities

Thinking historically 6.2

1. Describe the economic and political conditions in Russia in 1914.
2. Explain how the decisions of the Tsar, Nicholas II, brought about unrest within Russia during World War I.
3. Why was it not possible for power in post-Tsarist Russia to evolve more democratically?

Working historically 6.2

1. Research via the internet and then summarise the result of the attack on the Winter Palace on 6 and 7 November 1917 by the Bolshevik Red Guard.

6.3 The other fronts

The other fronts proved just as elusive for the Allies. The Dardanelles campaign was abandoned in January 1916. The Serbian front grew steadily worse. Despite reinforcement by the Serbs, and success by Italian forces in linking up with the Allies, the Bulgarians and Germans took the offensive in August, and were stopped only by a counter-attack in September. By the end of the year, another stalemate was evident. In the Caucasus, the Russians made some progress against the Turks, but in August the fighting lost intensity as the winter set in.

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The Middle East

During the war, support from the Ottoman Empire would have benefited Germany through diverting Russian troops to the Caucasus, which would have posed a threat to British rule in India. However, due to poor organisation by the Ottomans and a lack of frontline troops, this initiative failed, and Baghdad fell to the British in March 1917.

To bolster the German position in the Middle East, the German government sent General von Falkenhayn to initiate an offensive campaign against the British. However, by the time von Falkenhayn arrived in the Middle East, the British were pushing into the Sinai Peninsula and, once successful, into Palestine. To forestall the British, the Turks decided to fight a defensive battle because of logistical problems and the condition of their army. They drew a defensive line between Gaza and Beersheba. Von Falkenhayn realised that, in this situation, his forces would be divided between Mesopotamia and Gaza, and a British breakthrough into Palestine would threaten his communication lines in Iraq.

From recorded accounts, von Falkenhayn was high-handed and antagonistic towards the local Germans and Turks. He wanted to attack the British in the Sinai and then deal with Mesopotamia. In this situation, he was opposed by Field Marshal Edmund Allenby, leader of the British Empire's Egyptian Expeditionary Force, and a cavalryman. Under Allenby's command was the Australian Light Horse, and significantly the Desert Mounted Corps under Lieutenant-General Harry Chauvel. The British government supported Allenby's proposed attack on the Gaza–Beersheba line, and the battle opened on 27 October 1917 amidst huge artillery barrage and aerial reconnaissance.

Beersheba

On 31 October, the 4th Light Horse Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General William Grant and with Chauvel as head of the Desert Mounted Corps, charged the defences at Beersheba, in what was the first cavalry charge by Australian troops in World War I. The Turkish machine-gunners were silenced by Allied artillery and the trenches around Beersheba were not protected by barbed wire. Only 31 Australian cavalrymen lost their lives in this action. The Gaza–Beersheba Line was broken, the water supply was taken intact and British troops entered Jerusalem in early December 1917.

Following this action, the British troops continued to push north into Syria, bringing the war in this theatre to an end by October 1918.

The Arab revolt

In the Middle East, General Charles Townshend's British forces were forced to surrender Kut while Russian moves in Persia were fended off by the Turks. The British had more success in Arabia, where the beginnings of an Arab revolt and the successful resistance to a Turkish offensive in the Sinai laid the foundations for a broader, mobile offensive in 1917.

The reassignment of General Allenby from the Western Front, and the transfer of divisions and air force units from Greece, enabled the Allies to remove the Turkish forces from Palestine during 1917–1918. Allenby was

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assisted by the inclusion of units of the Australian Light Horse and through the clandestine activities of the British intelligence officer, T.E. Lawrence. His activities among the Arab tribes, swung necessary support to the Allied cause. The importance of coordinated military assaults by Allenby, as well as his administrative changes (with water supplies and medical practices), secured the defeat of the Turkish troops.

T.E. Lawrence's organisation of the Arab revolt, and the British desert campaigns in Syria, Palestine and Persia, all resulted in advances for the Allies; Gaza, Beersheba, Jerusalem and Baghdad all fell in 1917. The Turks were in disarray.

Summary

- The Dardanelles campaign was abandoned in January 1916.
- Baghdad fell to the British in March 1917.
- When German General von Falkenhayn arrived in the Middle East, the British were pushing into the Sinai and Palestine, and were using the Australian Light Horse and the Desert Mounted Corps.
- On 31 October the Australian Light Horse successfully charged the defences at Beersheba.
- British troops entered Jerusalem in early December 1917 and continued to push north into Syria.
- The Russian moves in Persia were fended off by the Turks.
- Advances for the Allies were due to T.E. Lawrence's organisation of the Arab revolt, and the British desert campaigns in Syria, Palestine and Persia.
- Gaza, Beersheba, Jerusalem and Baghdad all fell in 1917.

Activities

Thinking historically 6.3

1. Discuss the reasons why the fighting in the Russian and Turkish sectors lost intensity from the end of 1916.
2. Discuss some reasons why the initiative of diverting Russian troops to the Caucasus failed and resulted in Baghdad falling to the British in March 1917.
3. Describe the circumstances around the first cavalry charge by Australian troops in World War I.

Working historically 6.3

1. Research the major developments between 1914 and 1918 in each of the following theatres of war:
   - **a** the Eastern Front
   - **b** the Serbian front
   - **c** the Italian front
   - **d** the Middle East.

Map these developments onto a common timeline with the events on the Western Front. What trends or patterns do you observe?

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Experiences of soldiers

7

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the nature of trench fighting and the experiences of ordinary soldiers
- about the changing attitudes of soldiers to the fighting on the Western Front
- to evaluate the reliability and usefulness of written and visual source material
- to evaluate differing perspectives and changing experiences about the fighting on the Western Front.

7.1 First-hand accounts of life in the trenches

In 1929, Frederic Manning published *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. Born in Sydney in 1882, he worked as a journalist in England before serving as a private in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry from 1914 to 1918. In his novel, Manning attempted to describe the experience of war for the ordinary soldier:

> No one knew anything about it; it was like one of the blind forces of nature; no one could control it, no one could comprehend it, and no one could predict its course from hour to hour.

For any individual involved, World War I comprised too vast a range of actions and experiences to be fully understood. All that any individual could hope for was to make some meaning out of his or her personal experiences.

The trenches

Captain J.I. Cohen, 1915, in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

Letter – suggestions to an officer friend on trench design in 1915.

> Our trouble of course is drainage. This horrible country is made of mud, water and dead Germans. Whenever water is left in a trench it drags the earth down on either side and forms a fearful sticky viscous matter that
>
> *continued…*

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…continued

lets you sink gently down and grips you like a vice when you're there. The chief business is revetting and draining, and improving parapets and traverses. We use no loopholes in the ordinary sense, or overhead cover; there is not enough material, and loopholes are death traps if not properly masked. But at intervals snipers' loopholes with iron plates properly concealed and masked are put up. Cover is got by building 'bugwarms' or 'tamboos', i.e. **dugouts**, behind the trench. Two walls of sandbags with a sheet of corrugated iron on top and an oil-sheet under it to make the whole waterproof.

The parapet to be bullet-proof should have two sandbags with brick between. The sides of the trenches must be revetted with sandbags, etc., if possible, supported by stakes which are driven in the ground inside the trench and wired over on to pegs outside the trench. A sheet of iron or pieces of timber between the stakes and the sandbags is useful as a support. Sandbags must be evenly filled with solid earth – liquid mud is useless; and when put in position hammered well down and squared with a shovel or some flat instrument.

In front of the trench, wire; there is plenty of wire to be had. Make two tripods of wooden stakes roughly, and place another stake over the top of them, then wire heavily from end to end, up and down, etc. This instrument can then be properly lifted into position or easily replaced if a shell knocks your wire about. Trip wires weighted down with sandbags are also used.

The bottom of the trench has planks running along it, otherwise progress is impossible. At intervals, 'sump-holes' the size of a coal scuttle are dug to receive the water which collects: thus baling is much easier. Finally every section of trench has a latrine dug out of the back of it.

The parapet should be a couple of feet higher than a man standing in a trench. A plank stand, i.e. planks laid along sandbags, is put at the bottom inside the parapet, sufficiently high for a man to fire standing.

Memoirs – rotation and routines

A British Soldier in M. Brown, *Tommy Goes to War*, J.M. Dent, London, 1978.

An infantry battalion permutated through three basic locations: in the line, that is the front and support trenches; in billets (usually some ruined village or farm just behind the line) where they would act as local reserves; or in a rest camp clear of the fighting zone. A typical pattern would be a fortnight spent commuting between the line and the billets, followed by six days out at rest. Relief of battalions in the line was always carried out at night; in fact, most activities at the front were, for obvious reasons, nocturnal …

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Life in the line was not one of furious activity: far more often than not it consisted of the dreary round of trench routine. There were 'cushy' trenches and quiet times as well as appalling conditions and moments of 'hell let loose'. Even so on average a British battalion (roughly a thousand strong) lost about 30 men a month through death, wounds and sickness. In big setpiece battles, of course, battalions could, and frequently did, suffer virtual annihilation.

Colour-Quartermaster-Sergeant Robert Macfie, 1917, in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

Letter – an officer's view of trench routines

One man in or four or six goes on sentry at a time. He looks over the parapet occasionally to see how things are progressing and is rarely hit in that way. When his first relief comes in he does any baling that is necessary.

Working parties are formed most of the night and in the day where possible to repair or rebuild damaged parts or make improvements [to the trenches]. A party goes after dark to fetch rations, or a small party before dawn for the rum. It is also necessary to send parties out for ammunition material, etc. in the dark. We 'stand to' directly it begins to be light and at such times when heavy firing and cheering, etc. make it probable that an attack is in progress somewhere.

We get our sleep not so much according to our inclination as when we are off work! It is impossible to do much work by day. The platoon commander carries out the company commander's general directions as to the scheme of repairs, etc. in the trench: after that it depends on the platoon sergeant if the work is done properly. He must be able to get every ounce of work out of his men. This is very important.

Sergeant Penleigh Boyd, *Salvage*, 1918, Australian war memorial facsimile editions, Canberra, 1983.

Memoirs – after the rain

In an incredibly short space of time after a heavy shower, the ground is turned into a spongy pulp of mud. Tiny rivulets form immediately, running down to the trenches, where the water accumulates, having no outlet, until it soon reaches to a man's knees, or even his waist. Mud is the chief enemy and chief misery of the soldier. Mud, soft and deep, that you sink into, vainly seeking a foothold on something solid; or stiff and clinging, gripping boots so firmly as sometimes to drag them off. Mud, that coats men, horses, guns, rifles, and all in a thick camouflage, so that they become almost indistinguishable from the ground. It clings to men's bodies and cracks their skins, and the slimy horror of it soaks their souls and

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…continued

sucks their courage. I have known those who can face an enemy barrage without flinching, who still shiver at the memory of their experiences in the mud of Flanders.

Memoirs – trench life at Passchendaele

Captain Ulick Burke, '1917', in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

There were no trenches at all at Passchendaele: only a series of shell holes which had been reinforced with sandbags so you could hide your body. If you wanted to do your daily job of urinating and otherwise there was an empty bully beef tin, and you had to use that in front of all your men, and then chuck the contents, but not the bully beef tin, out over the back.

Now you can imagine a man being in those trenches for a week, where he couldn't wash. He got a petrol tin of tea given to him. Now those tins were baked, boiled, everything was done to them; but when you put a hot substance in you got petrol oozing from the tin. And that of course gave the men violent diarrhoea. But they had to drink it because it was the only hot drink they had.

Personal notebook – rats

Raymond Naegelean, '1916', in M. Ferro, *The Great War*, op. cit., Routledge, 1973.

I saw ... corpses of soldiers mown down by machine-gun in September 1915; they lay stretched out, face down, lined up as if on manoeuvre. The rain fell on them inexorably, bullets snapped their white bones. One night, Jacques, on patrol, saw enormous rats running off from under their faded caps, fat with human meat. He crawled toward the corpse, his heart beating loud; the helmet had rolled off, there was a grinning head with no flesh left on it, the skull bare, the eyes eaten up. Part of the false teeth had slipped out onto the rotting shirt and some vile animal jumped out of the gaping mouth.

Memoirs – attitudes to punishment of soldiers

M. Evans, 'Going across', Constable, 1952, in D. Winter, *Death's Men*, Penguin, London, 1979.

A man either can or cannot stand up to his environment. With some, the limit for breaking is reached sooner. The human frame can only stand so much ... How easy for the generals living in luxury well back in their chateaux to enforce the death penalty and with the stroke of a pen sign some poor wretch's death warrant. Maybe of some poor, half-witted farm yokel, who once came forward of his own free will without being fetched. It makes one sick.

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Raymond Naegelean, '1916', in M. Ferro, *The Great War*, op.cit.

Personal notebook – going over the top

The hours went by slowly and inexorably; we could not even swallow for tension; there was always the thought – in a few hours where shall I be, here or one of those vile corpses, torn to bits by shell. The moment comes – thirty, twenty, ten minutes more, the hand goes round, and I go on counting the seconds. Gradually I got to my knees, my pockets stuffed with cartridges and a dead man's rifle in my hand – 5.58, 5.59, 6 o'clock. I shouted, 'Forward!', and then a red explosion blinded me and threw me to the ground. My right knee was pierced, and I was wounded in the stomach and the cheek. Nearby were other wounded and dead.

Captain Delvert, '1916', in M. Ferro, *The Great War*, op.cit.

Personal diary – a German assault on Fort Vaux

At four o'clock the bombardment lifted, and the attack began. An officer came out of the ground 200 yards away, followed by a column-of-four – their rifles were at the slope, and it looked like a parade. We were all taken aback, which no doubt the Germans intended, but after a few seconds we began to fire madly, and the surviving machine-guns came in. The officer dropped dead fifty yards off, his right arm stretched out towards us, his men piling up and dropping next to him. It was not to be believed.

Colour-Quartermaster-Sergeant Robert Macfie, '1917', in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, op. cit.

Letter – attacking at the Somme

Our attack, in the early hours of 9 August, was directed against a certain village which had been attacked before and has been attacked several times since, always without success. Our performance was no exception to the rule: of my company 177 went up – 20 were killed, 42 wounded, and about eight are missing (i.e. in all probability dead). The want of preparation, the vague orders, the ignorance of the objective and geography, the absurd haste, and in general the horrid bungling were scandalous. After two years of war it seems that our higher commanders are still without common sense. In any well-regulated organisation a divisional commander would be shot for incompetence – here another regiment is ordered to attempt the same task in the same muddling way.

Signaller G.H. Molesworth, '1918', in Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Penguin, London, 1985.

Letter – a trench raid

We advanced out into no-man's land in the dark as stealthy as red Indians and took up positions in shell holes quite close to the hun trenches … our

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artillery opened into the Germans and belted hell and blazes into them – we sneaked up under the barrage and it was lovely shells bursting and lights shooting all over the sky … all of a sudden it lifted back a couple of hundred yards and away we charged yelling like devils right into his trenches. Fritzy bolted and we after him. I was directly after my officer and a couple dodged into a dugout. We fed them on bombs, etc. and on to the next. Gee, you should have been in the fun our boys got busy bayonets, bombs and rifle fire. We first bombed it and finished off a couple and took a couple of prisoners. Then we got into it and got all the mail and so on.

Memoirs – fighting in a tank

Second Lieutenant Gordon Hassell, in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

Terribly noisy, oily, hot, airless and bumpy! Without any sort of cushion, as we had no springs and had thirty tons' weight, any slight bump and crash was magnified and many a burn was caused by a jerk throwing the crew about. Instinctively one caught at a handhold, and got a burn on the hot engine. The crew had very little knowledge of where they were going, only by peeping through slits and weapon apertures could they see anything. In action if the tank was hit slivers of steel began to fly – bullets hitting the armoured plates caused melting and the splash, as in steel factories, was dangerous to the eyes. For protection we used to wear a small face mask.

Memoirs – German reactions to the tanks at Cambrai

General Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, *Aus Meinem Leben*, S. Hirzel, Leipzig, 1920.

The infantryman felt that he could do practically nothing against its armoured sides. As soon as the machine broke through our trench lines, the defenders felt themselves threatened from the rear and left their posts.

Memoirs – observing gas victims

Pioneer Georg Zobel, 1918, in R. Holmes, *Firing Line*, Penguin, London, 1987.

Here and there were men from other units who had been surprised by the gas. They lay or sat and vomited pieces of their corroded lungs. Horrible, this death!

Memoirs – a mustard gas victim

Private Harold Clegg, diary extract 1917, in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

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On regaining consciousness, I was in the 47th General Hospital at Le Tréport; the date was 2 August. I was given a blanket bath; I had not had a hot bath since the previous May. I was loaded with vermin and I had not had my boots off for 15 or 16 days. My sympathies were with the nurses … (some of the) symptoms were as follows:

blindness
deafness
loss of voice
inability to swallow.

H. Williams, 'Comrades of the great adventure', 1935, in Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Penguin, London, 1985.

Memoirs – the effects of battles

The men were battle-weary and worn. Their faces were drawn and pallid, their eyes had the fixed stare common in men who had endured heavy bombardments, and the jerky mannerisms of human beings whose nervous systems had been shocked to an alarming degree. So tired, so dead beat were they that many of them, when opportunity offered, slept the heavy drugged sleep of utter exhaustion for 24 hours on end. Their faded, earth-stained uniforms hung loosely on bodies which had lost as much as two stone in as many months.

Artillery

Sergeant Penleigh Boyd, *Salvage*, 1918, Australian war memorial facsimile editions, Canberra, 1983.

Memoirs – heavy artillery in action

With the elaborate camouflaging to which guns are treated now-a-days, one often stumbles upon a huge specimen before being aware of its presence. Indeed, this same presence is often forced on one's notice by a devastating explosion which, for the moment, completely knocks the breath from the body. It pays to keep one's eyes open whilst in the heavy artillery zone. If one is prepared, the discharge is not so nerve-shattering, and it is interesting to stand directly behind, and watch the shell leap from a bright belch of flame at the muzzle up into the blue; shrink to a speck and disappear, all in the space of a second.

Sergeant Major Ernest Shephard, 1916, in Jon E. Lewis (ed.), *Eyewitness the 20th century*, Robinson, London, 1994.

Personal diary – shell fire

Lots of casualties in my trench. The enemy are **enfilading** us with heavy shells, dropping straight on us. A complete trench mortar battery of men killed by one shell, scores of dead and wounded in trench, now one pm.

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Every move we make brings intense fire, as trenches so badly battered the enemy can see all our movements. Lots of wounded in front we got in, several were hit again and killed in trench. We put as many wounded as possible in best spots in trench and I sent a lot down [to the Casualty Clearing Station], but I had so many of my own men killed and wounded that after a time I could not do this. Sent urgent messages to Brigade asking for RAMC bearers to be sent to evacuate wounded, but none came, although Brigade said they had been dispatched. Meanwhile the enemy deliberately shelled the wounded between the trenches with shrapnel, thus killing, or wounding again, most of them ... Brigade sent a message to say we would be relieved by 15th HLI as soon as possible. Meanwhile we were to hold tight.

Health, disease, hospitals

Letter – a perspective of death

An Australian artillery officer, in R. Holmes, *Firing Line*, Penguin, London, 1987.

If a shell or bullet 'has my name on it' I will get it no matter how hard I try to dodge it. I have seen scores of our lads walking along while being shelled without quickening their pace or trying to get out of the line of fire and yet none of them got hit and again I have seen others run ... and run into a shell.

Statistics – British soldiers and lice in 1916

A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services 1914–1918 Vol. II*, Australian war memorial, Melbourne, 1938–1943.

Usual level of infestation (about 20 lice per man):	95%
Dangerous level of infestation (about 100 to 300 lice per man):	5%
No infestation:	0%

Memoirs – trench diseases

Captain Ulick Burke, 1917, in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War,* Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

Many men got trench feet and trench fever. With trench fever a fellow had a very high temperature, you could see he had. It wasn't dysentery but he had constant diarrhoea, it left him weak and listless. Trench feet was owing to the wet sogging through your boots. In many cases your toes nearly rotted off in your boots. We lost more that way than we did from wounds. Then again it was difficult getting them back through all this mud and sludge.

Letter – 'shell shock' (post-traumatic stress disorder)

Captain R.A. McGoldrick, '1917', in Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Penguin, London, 1985.

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One of our men … went suddenly demented. The shells had an electrifying effect on him … [He] dropped his rifle and rushed out over the front line trench into No-man's Land, the Germans blazing away at him: then he turned and ran down between the lines of the two armies: no one seemed able to bring him down. Then he turned again, raced into our system, down overland through the support trenches … where men from the Battalion pursued him, overpowered him, and forcibly rolled him in blankets and tied him up with rope … He was unwounded but evacuated raving mad.

Attitudes

Captain Norman Taylor, '1916', in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993.

Letter – hating the enemy

I am now beginning to realise the genuine hatred of Germans one gets after a year or so of this, which one cannot understand when one first comes out. You have no idea what a subtle thrill there is on a good moonlight night, a Hun working party perhaps faintly silhouetted, an opening, a sudden burst of fire with a gun on them.

2nd Lieutenant E.F. Chapman, to his young sister 1916, in M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1993, p. 83.

Letter – communicating with the enemy

We were in some very rough trenches that had only just been dug. After we had been there about an hour, four Germans came over and gave themselves up. They may not have intended doing so – perhaps they had lost their way. Anyhow they didn't mind being taken prisoners. They were shaking all over with cold or fright. I tapped my revolver and said 'Sie verstehen?' ['Do you understand?'] and they said 'Jawohl!' ['Certainly!'] I started telling them that I had been a student in Germany, and so enjoyed talking German again that I quite forgot that we were in trenches and very close to the Boche! War is so very strange and stupid when the people who do the fighting do not hate each other at all. War is the stupidest thing in the whole world.

Brigadier General Count Gleichen, *The Doings of the Fifteenth Brigade*, Blackwood, 1917.

Public diary – a brigadier's view

When going round the trenches, I asked a man whether he had had any shots at the Germans. He responded that there was an elderly gentleman with a bald head and a long beard who often showed himself over the parapet. 'Well why didn't you shoot him?' 'Shoot him?' said the man,

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'Why, Lord bless you sir, he's never done me no harm.' A case of live and let live, which is certainly not to be encouraged. But cold-blooded murder is never popular with our men.

Memoirs – during the battle.

J. Laffin, *On the Western Front*, Alan Sutton, Wolfeboro, 1985.

[Corporal Smith] encountered a young soldier of the 12th London Regiment, the Rangers. He was cut and bleeding, and one arm was hanging limp and grotesque, probably smashed in several places. Staggering, he said to Smith, 'Is there a dressing station beyond here, mate?' 'Straight on down the trench', Smith said, 'but it's a bit far. Tell you what, you stay here and I'll chase a stretcher-bearer I saw a few minutes ago. I'll bring him back for you.'

'I don't want him for me', the young soldier said, wiping blood out of his eyes. 'I want someone to come back with me to get my mate. He's hurt!'

Summary

- Soldiers from World War I recorded their experiences in letters, diaries, memoirs, and other written and visual media.
- Allied and German soldiers on the Western Front shared common experiences.
- To understand a soldier's perspective of trench warfare, you must attempt to view all aspects of the experience: military tactics and conditions; attitudes to the enemy; attitudes to companions and officers; daily routine; and support mechanisms.

Activities

Thinking historically 7.1

1. Use the written descriptions to draw a cross-section of a front-line trench. Label each of the key features.
2. List the major dangers to life experienced by soldiers on the Western Front.
3. Research exercise: What did army rations and equipment lists for a British soldier tell you about the logistics of fighting in World War I? Think about the numbers of people involved in the war, and consider the support networks, at the battle front and at home, that would be needed to provide these supplies.
4. Explain why political philosophies, such as socialism, would have gained increasing support among soldiers during World War I?
5. Write an extended response to the following question: how and why did the attitudes of soldiers towards the war, their companions, and the enemy change between 1914 and 1918?
6. Read the following source.

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Lieutenant Franklin Lushington, 1916 in J. Laffin, *On the Western Front*, Alan Sutton, Wolfeboro, 1985, p. 134 Source 7.A

Dig a hole in the garden, fairly close to the house, a few yards long, six feet deep and four feet wide. At night go armed with a pop-gun and stand in this hole. Then ask the members of your family to throw into the hole from the upper window every utensil and article of furniture they can lay their hands on: crockery, fire-irons, coal, chairs, tables, beds – let them heave the lot at you, not forgetting the grand piano, just to give you an idea of a nine-inch shell. You must not leave the hole, but while the bombardment is going on you are at liberty to march up and down, eat, sleep, remove the debris that doesn't hit you, and generally to pretend that nothing unpleasant is happening to you.

Remain there a few days or you will evade the trench-dweller's worst enemy, boredom. And if you want to be realistic, add heat, shortage of water, stench, shortage of sleep, and give yourself the actual possibility of being killed every moment. It would give you some idea. Of course you would miss the noise. But you would know the sense of futility which being shelled in a trench produces.

a Who is the audience of this source?
b What is the author's purpose in this source?
c What language techniques does the author use to convey his message to his audience?
d How successful is the author in achieving his purpose?
e What perspective is presented by this source?
f How does the date of the source assist you in judging its usefulness and reliability?
g What additional questions might a historian need to ask in order to evaluate the perspective, reliability and usefulness of this source?

Working historically 7.1

1. The following table gives the experiences of a typical British soldier. Use this information as the scaffold for a series of diary entries written by a British soldier seriously wounded in a battle on the Western Front in 1917.

Typical experiences of a soldier in battle
Stage 1: Prior to battle
• Soldiers were given relatively little warning of an advance in order to minimise their nervousness. • Soldiers wrote letters and drew up wills. • Soldiers marched to the battle zone to be acclimatised to the region: one day for British troops, three to four days for Dominion troops. • The bombardment began and the infantry moved up to the front line. • There was little or no food or sleep on the night before a battle.

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Typical experiences of a soldier in battle
Stage 2: During battle
• The attack usually took place at dawn after soldiers had been issued with a tot of rum. • Soldiers advanced on a whistle blast and many soldiers were immediately hit in no-man's land. • Soldiers usually experienced an adrenalin high for the next three to four minutes. • Soldiers then experienced a rapid mood slump as their ranks were decimated by machine gun, rifle and artillery fire. • Most officers and NCOs were wounded. • There was noise, confusion and poor visibility in no-man's land.
Stage 3: After battle
• Most soldiers remembered very little of their experiences. • Soldiers were totally exhausted and looked older than their years. • If they had not been hit or the attack had failed, they slowly filtered back to their lines. • If the attack had been successful they consolidated their new position and awaited the arrival of relief troops. • Soldiers usually fell into a deep sleep. • Soldiers often felt euphoric when they realised they had survived. • Soldiers' moods slowly returned to normal. • Wounded soldiers felt little pain as shock set in. • Iodine and field dressing treatments took place on the battlefield. • If possible, wounded men walked to the regimental aid post. • The seriously wounded awaited the arrival of stretcher bearers. • Wounds needed treatment within 30 hours otherwise death by shock, blood loss or gangrene could occur. • Fatalities apparently felt little pain and many men cried out for their mothers.

7.2 Mutiny and desertion

By late 1914, the German armies had been thinned by battle losses, illness, poor lines of communication and sheer exhaustion. On the Eastern Front, the 2nd and 9th Russian Armies were suffering in the same way. The soldiers were low on artillery shells and low on morale. Supply systems were ineffective, medical facilities were primitive and the commanders seemed incapable of rectifying the situation; for example, the 4th German Army at Ypres has been described by Robert B. Asprey in *The German high command at war* (Warner Books, London, 1994), as consisting of 'teenage volunteers, middle and upper-class students ... fanatically devoted to kaiser and fatherland, inadequately trained, poorly led by older reserve officers, and insufficiently supported by artillery'.

Alfred Buchalski, a German student, wrote in late October 1914: 'With what joy, with what enthusiasm I went into war, which seemed to me a splendid opportunity for working off the natural craving of youth for

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excitement and experience! In what disappointment I now sit here, with horror in my heart.'

Shortly before his death, a German soldier, Alfred Vaeth complained of 'disappointment after disappointment ... (yet we) know that we have got to win, and that however war-weary we may be, we shall go on doing our duty. We shall not be beaten anyhow, but we may bleed to death'.

At the Somme, in 1916, a German officer wrote of the effects of artillery fire: 'The infantry lost probably half of its men, if not more. Those who survived are at this moment not men, but more or less finished beings, being neither fit to defend or attack. Officers whom I once knew as very vigorous are only sobbing.'

By the middle of 1916 there was a feeling that the superiority of the German soldier was an illusion, yet for others the war had become such an essential part of their existence they could write: 'I must go to the Front. I must again hear the shells roaring up into the sky and the desolate valley echoing the sound. I must go back to my company. I must get back into touch with the enemy.'

Mutiny in the French Army

In April to June 1917 the French Army on the Western Front mutinied. The repeatedly high casualty rates, failure of the Nivelle Offensive, low pay and cancelled leave resulted in the desertion of entire units (27 000 men in total) while other units threatened direct action against the civilian government. The units retired to the rear and refused to return to their trenches. In one sector they established their own anti-war government. For several weeks, a long stretch of the Western Front was left virtually undefended, but the French authorities managed to keep news of the disturbances secret from their Allies and the public. By July, Pétain had convinced the rebel units to move back to their positions with improved food, longer periods of rest and more home leave. As punishment, about 50 men were shot and over 350 were sent to penal servitude in the French colonies.

Other mutinies

Other armies also experienced mutinies during the war. In February 1915, German intrigue encouraged the mutiny of Indian troops in Singapore against their English officers. Later, in 1915, Russian sailors mutinied as a protest against poor food and the severity of officer discipline. Both of these mutinies were put down severely and quickly. In 1916, Arab troops fighting for the Turks deserted under pressure from the Russians.

The most significant mutinies were the rebellion of the Russian Army in 1917 in the lead up to the Bolshevik Revolution, and the collapse of the Turkish Army in Palestine in 1918. Even the discipline of the German Army gave way after the failure of the 1918 offensives.

Disturbances among the British forces were much smaller in scale and tended to occur among its Dominion troops – notably the Australians and New Zealanders. These incidents were referred to as 'loyal indiscipline' rather than mutinies, although rioting among British troops lasted for four days at Étaples in September 1917 and resulted in one execution. In the

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course of the war, 304 British soldiers were executed by firing squad: 19 for murder, others for desertion, cowardice, quitting a post when on duty, or striking a superior officer. However, as John Laffin points out in *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*:

> Many hundreds of British soldiers deserted through fear and were not caught, so escaping punishment. Not all those who did desert were executed. Perhaps the most significant figure which does not appear in war statistics concerns the tens of thousands of men who only just managed not to run away. They may have been the most genuine heroes of the war (p. 23).

The governments and High Commands of both sides deliberately played down all of these problems. They firmly believed that the unrest was the result of pacifist and socialist propaganda rather than the conditions being experienced by the soldiers at the Western Front.

Summary

- The nature of the fighting on the Western Front had a strong impact on the morale and spirit of the soldiers.
- The longer the fighting lasted the more difficult it became for commanders to maintain morale.
- A large section of the French Army mutinied in 1917, and other armies also experienced mutinies.

Activities

Thinking historically 7.2

1. From your knowledge of the conditions on the Western Front, explain why soldiers would have sometimes refused to follow the orders of their commanders.
2. Explain why sections of the French army mutinied in 1917?
3. Explain what aspects of the German Army's training, tactics, beliefs and attitudes made mutiny less likely?

Working historically 7.2

Read the following extract from the memoirs of an Australian soldier on the Western Front.

Source 7.B **Bert Bishop, *The Hell, the Humour and the Heartbreak: A Private's View of World War I*, Kangaroo Press, 1991.**

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On some mornings there would be as many as half-a-dozen particulars of courts martial, all Tommies. They all went through on the same stereotyped phraseology. First there was the name, the rank, the man's number, his unit, the offence with which he was charged. The date of the court martial. The findings of the court martial. 'Found guilty and sentenced to be shot by firing-squad. Sentence duly carried out at dawn on such-and-such a date.'

None of these courts martial were of Australians. No digger was ever shot by his own men because of an offence against King's Rules & Regulations. The heads knew it would not work with us. The terrible part of it all was that in practically every case the offender was a young English boy. Dragged from their homes at the age of nineteen, given about three months' training, they were dumped into battle as soon as they hit France.

If any man, young or old, claims that he did not experience the dreadfulness of real terror when he first hit battle, I say he's a liar. The offences of these English boys were all the same. They had 'deserted in the face of the enemy', 'refused duty in the face of the enemy', and sometimes 'shown cowardice in the face of the enemy'. Any man when he finds himself in real battle for the first time finds he has two wars to cope with – the war with the enemy, and another war, the harder of the two, with himself. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and it was this natural law that won with so many of the English boys. Had they been gradually introduced to the horror of war, they would have won their personal war and become good soldiers, but they were not given this chance – their own gaudily-bedecked heads, who never got within cooee of war, just murdered them.

It was generally understood that a firing party consisted of at least six men, and one or two of their rifles, placed in their hands just on firing time, contained blank cartridges. This gave each member of a firing party the hope that he had not committed murder.

a What is the attitude of this soldier to the events he is describing?
b Whom does this soldier blame for the events he is describing?
c How would the British commanders have justified the disciplinary actions they took with their soldiers?
d How could a historian use this source to understand why soldiers on the Western Front sometimes mutinied against their commanders?

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8 The changing nature of war to 1918

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about developments in weaponry and tactics throughout the war
- about the mechanisation of warfare
- about advances in medicine and communications during the war
- to draw conclusions about the continuation of the stalemate on the battle front.

8.1 Developments in weaponry

Rifles

Rifles were the standard infantry weapon. Most were bolt action with magazines of five-round capacity. They could be fired with great accuracy at individual targets at ranges of up to 500 metres, or, when used as an area weapon (a section of soldiers firing at a target such as a line of men), they could be effective over a kilometre. Rifle rounds could travel as far as two to three kilometres. They were most efficiently used in volley fire, with a group of men firing simultaneously; soldiers on the move were restricted in their ability to fire accurately, but standing and aiming in no-man's land invited death. Generally, attacking soldiers could only fire inaccurately 'from the hip', while defending riflemen, protected and steadied by trenches, held a distinct advantage. The best marksmen were usually trained as snipers: specialist riflemen, operating in pairs, whose function was to identify and eliminate key targets such as officers.

Machine-guns

Machine-guns could deliver up to 600 rounds per minute over an effective range of three kilometres. Irregularities in the manufacture of cartridges and the shaking of the barrel during firing meant each bullet followed a different trajectory. Each burst produced a cone of fire, and this pattern on the ground was called the **beaten zone**. The beaten zone of a machine-gun at a range of 500 metres was approximately 90metres long and onemetre wide. Consequently, a single machine-gun could quickly and easily decimate a force of 1000 infantrymen. The only problem with machine-guns was their weight; the British Vickers gun, for example, weighed over 30 kilograms and could not be carried forward to support assaulting troops.

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Most generals recognised the effectiveness of machine-guns, but had little idea of their most efficient use. Germany used them in batteries, whereas France and Great Britain spread them out along the defensive line. The French and British assumed that the machine-guns would be knocked out in the initial artillery bombardment, and they also considered the machine-gun to be uncivilised, and morally inferior to the bayonet and cavalry sabre.

Light machine-guns were developed and used later in the war. Models such as the British Lewis gun and the German Bergman gun could be carried and fired by one man. The former had a cylindrical magazine, whereas the latter was fed by belts of 100 or 250 rounds. They were so useful and versatile that by 1918 the German Army had 37 000 Bergmans.

Artillery

The artillery preferred on the battle front at the start of the war was light field artillery. The most effective example was the French 75-millimetre field gun, which could fire 25 rounds per minute over a range of 8000 metres. Each high-explosive shell had a lethal radius of 10 metres. Guns were usually fired in batteries of 12. The fire of 10 rounds from all the guns in one of these batteries could cover an area of around 200 square metres. Heavier guns of greater range and more destructive power were used by the Germans for operations against heavily fortified positions. Unlike the horse-drawn field artillery, these heavy guns relied on rail and motorised transport, which made them unsuitable for following the manoeuvres of an open battlefield. For most of the war the effectiveness of artillery was limited by the inability of the gunners to predict accurately where the shells would fall.

Mortars

Mortars were metal tubes with a metal base plate at the bottom. A bomb was dropped into the tube. When a percussion cap at the bottom of the bomb struck the base plate, the bomb was propelled into the air. The high trajectory of the propelled bomb meant that the range was short, from 50 to 500 metres. Mortars were ideally suited for use in the trenches and were adopted by all armies. They were used to harass the enemy and they usually produced a savage counter-barrage from the enemy's artillery. Trench mortars were equally loathed by both sides; from the target's side because of the mortar fire, and from the firing side because of the retaliation.

Figure 8.1 Soldier loading a mortar

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Grenades Grenades were small hand-thrown bombs. The first grenades used in the war were simply home-made jam tin explosives ignited by a 5–10 second fuse lit by the thrower. Later models used a pin, which, when removed, released chemicals into the explosive charge. This created a delayed-reaction explosion. They were used extensively by trench raiders and attacking forces, mainly because they were the easiest of personal weapons, and their blasting effect provided the maximum portable short-range fire support. This was perfectly suited to trench fighting. The German models were nicknamed 'potato mashers', because of their long handles. By the end of the war, most casualties were caused by grenades.

Gas Gas was first used by the Germans at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in October 1914, when several shrapnel shells containing a chemical irritant were fired. Tear gas (xylyl bromide) shells were used on the Russian front in January 1915. But the first major use of gas came when the Germans used chlorine gas at Ypres on 22 April 1915. This yellow-coloured gas was released from large cylinders in the German position and drifted on the wind towards the Allied lines. It was initially very successful; the Allied soldiers retreated in panic and an eight-kilometre gap opened in the line. However, the German soldiers refused to push beyond the Allied lines – the gas had settled, and they did not wish to advance through their own weapon. This was the major shortcoming when using gas cylinders: it relied on favourable wind conditions.

Figure 8.2 Gas masks for man and horse

The Allies also used gas as an offensive weapon. New gases were developed: phosgene, chloropicrin and odourless, colourless mustard gas. Mustard gas acted as a severe irritant to the respiratory tract and blistered bare skin. It was the most lethal gas used in the war. From 1916, gas was generally delivered by shells fired from artillery and mortars.

Within a few days of the first gas attack at Ypres in 1915, the Allies had provided their troops with crude cotton nose and mouth masks, which were to be dipped in urine or bicarbonate of soda. By 1918, full rubber face masks, with clear cellophane eye-pieces and charcoal-filtered box respirators were used by all armies.

Flamethrowers The flamethrower or *flammenwerfer* was first used by the Germans in 1915. It had been developed prior to 1914 and was issued to pioneer battalions. The flamethrower was designed for use against fortified positions as an aid to clear small enclosed defences. Gas pressure forced a small spray of oil from a tank to a nozzle where the spray was then ignited. The earlier versions required the operator to light the spray using a small torch, but later versions were self-igniting. The portable model was operated by two

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men; one carried the oil tank on his back, and the other directed the hose and nozzle. It could fire to a range of 20 metres. A larger, static version was operated in a similar manner, and could fire for about 40 seconds to a range of 40 metres.

Flamethrowers proved to be reasonably effective when operated from a place of safety, and they generated fear among defending troops, such as at Verdun. However, flamethrowers were clumsy to use and proved deadly for the operators if they were caught in the open. The limited range for a flamethrower and the duration of their fire meant that they could only be used at close range for a short period of time.

Summary

- Rifles were the standard infantry weapon.
- Machine-guns could deliver up to 600 rounds per minute over an effective range of three kilometres, but they were heavy.
- Mortars were metal tubes with a metal base plate at the bottom; they were ideally suited for use in the trenches and were adopted by all armies.
- The first grenades used in the war were home-made jam tin explosives ignited by a 5–10 second fuse. Later models used a pin, which released chemicals into the explosive charge. Most casualties were caused by grenades by the end of the war.
- The first major use of gas came when the Germans used chlorine gas at Ypres on 22 April 1915.
- The flamethrower or *flammenwerfer* was first used by the Germans in 1915. It was designed for use against fortified positions and aided clearing out small enclosed defences.

Activities

Thinking historically 8.1

1. Explain the role of each of the following weapons on the Western Front:
   - **a** mortar
   - **b** grenades
   - **c** gas.
2. Which weapon was most devastating in terms of loss of life?

Working historically 8.1

1. Find some photos of early-model gas masks. How do they compare with today's versions?

8.2 Changing tactics

An examination of how tactics changed during World War I is included in the digital versions of the textbook. **DIGITAL**

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8.3 Mechanisation of modern warfare

The development of mechanisation

World War I marked a turning point in the technological history of war as it witnessed a proliferation in the use of mechanised warfare. 'Mechanisation' means using machines for tasks that were formerly carried out by hand, so **mechanised warfare** essentially refers to humans using machines to carry out defensive and offensive operations. This is as opposed to traditional forms of warfare, which require humans to fight on foot or mounted on an animal such as a horse, camel or elephant.

There were many key technological advancements in the years leading up to World War I that made the mechanisation of warfare possible. The invention of the railway in England in the early nineteenth century enabled, for the first time, the rapid deployment of soldiers to the front line. Coupled with the raising of mass-conscripted national armies, mechanisation meant that larger forces could be brought to battle more quickly than any period before in history. The strategic importance of railways was demonstrated in the United States Civil War, where trains were used to transport soldiers and equipment, and were also used as mobile artillery pieces. According to the historian Hughes, in the Franco–Prussian War of 1871, Prussia was able to use its rail network to deploy an army of over a million men to the front line by the eighteenth day, by which point the French had only succeeded in sending 200 000 to face them.

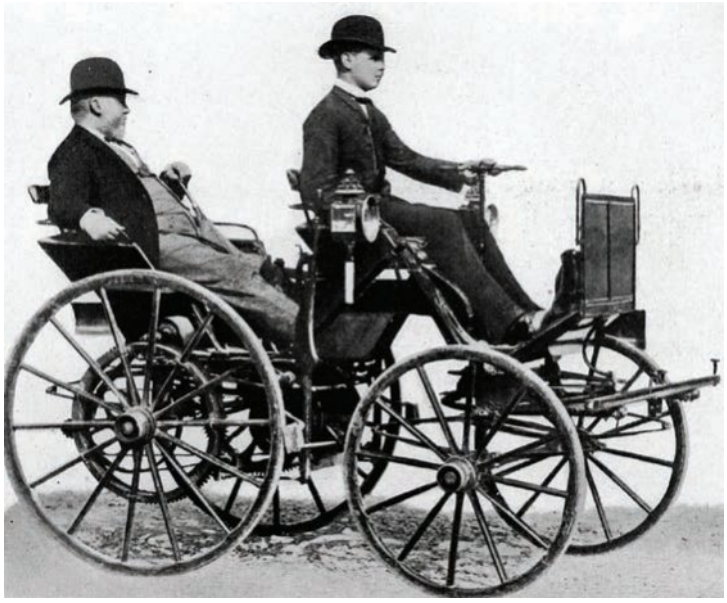

Figure 8.10 The development of the petrol internal combustion engine played a key role in the mechanisation of warfare

The development of the internal combustion engine in the mid-nineteenth century played a pivotal role in the shift toward mechanised warfare. This new form of engine would lead to a revolution in warfare on the sea, in the air and on land – it provided the propulsion and energy necessary to power modern oil-powered ships, aircraft and vehicles, such as tanks, self-propelled artillery and trucks for supply.

Summary

- World War I saw the proliferation of mechanised warfare, when humans started using machines to carry out offensive and defensive military operations.

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Activities

Thinking historically 8.2

1. Discuss what is meant by 'the mechanisation of warfare'.
2. Identify the key inventions that lead to the mechanisation of warfare in World War I.

Working historically 8.2

Describe three examples of mechanised warfare.

8.4 Mechanisation at sea

The outbreak of World War I coincided with a major technological shift that was occurring in the navies of the Great Powers: the introduction of oil-powered ships. The thermal content of oil is twice that of coal, meaning a ship using the same weight of oil as coal has twice the operational range. Having a more efficient and effective fuel source meant that oil-powered ships could be made larger and more powerful than their coal-powered predecessors. Further, it enabled the introduction of larger cargo ships that could transport soldiers, materiel and supplies around the world at a much faster rate than had previously been possible.

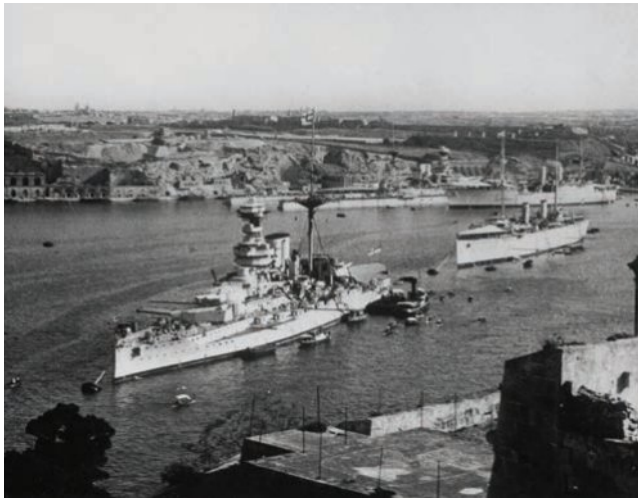

Figure 8.11 HMS *Queen Elizabeth* (1913)

The technological impact of this change can be seen in the table which compares the coal-powered HMS *Dreadnought* with the first fully oil-powered ship introduced by the Royal Navy, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*.

	HMS *Dreadnought* (1906)	HMS *Queen Elizabeth* (1913)
Displacement	18 120 long tons	32 590 long tons
Length	160.6 metres	196.2 metres
Crew	810	1262
Power	23 000 hp	75 000 hp
Speed	21 knots	24 knots
Armament	• 5 × twin 12-inch guns • 27 × single 12-pdr (76 mm) guns • 5 × 18-inch torpedo tubes	• 4 × twin 15-inch guns • 16 × single 6-inch guns • 2 × single 3-inch anti-aircraft guns • 4 × 21-inch torpedo tubes

The impact of battle fleets on the war

The Great Powers engaged in a naval race in the years leading to the outbreak of war. Great Britain and Germany, in particular, constructed enormous ships, such as dreadnoughts, and had large battle fleets, as discussed in Chapter 2. The strategic thinking of the leaders in the naval

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hierarchies argued that a battle fleet could be used to destroy, or at least neutralise, the enemy's fleet, which would secure the sea lanes for trade and supplies.

However, for the course of World War I, these battle fleets were largely unused. The ships were so big and their armaments were so great that they acted as mutual deterrents to each other. Indeed, despite the best efforts of the British and German fleets – at Heligoland Bight (1914), Scarborough (1914), Cuxhaven (1914) and Dogger Bank (1915) – to draw each other out to sea for a decisive encounter, there was only one major naval battle in the war; both sides claimed victory.

Some historians, such as A.J.P Taylor, have argued that the prewar planners of all nations failed to appreciate the role smaller vessels such as submarines, destroyers and light cruisers could play in a conflict because they were too focused on the construction of battleships. He noted that while the Germans built very few commerce raiders, the ones they did build caused considerable damage to Allied shipping and required significant resources to be neutralised; when the light cruiser *Emden* was deployed, for example, it 'ravaged British shipping in the Indian Ocean. Seventy-eight British ships hunted her, before she was caught and destroyed by the Australian cruiser *Sydney*.'

The Battle of Jutland

The long awaited naval battle between the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet took place off Denmark on 31 May 1916, and is known as the 'Battle of Jutland'. The Germans were cognisant of the numerical superiority of the Grand Fleet and aimed to lure out a portion of the British ships so they could be destroyed. Had this been successful, the British would have found it difficult to maintain the **blockade** of Germany – German naval ships may have been able to re-enter the Atlantic and recommence trade, which was vital to Germany's economy, and its ability to feed and supply its people.

During the Battle of Jutland, the Grand Fleet and High Seas Fleet clashed, chased and avoided each other – a total of 274 ships and 70 000 men were involved. The result of the battle was inconclusive: Great Britain claimed victory because the German fleet turned away and fled back to port; and Germany claimed victory because it lost fewer ships (11 to Britain's 14).

Figure 8.12 HMS *Lion*, left, is shelled and HMS *Queen Mary*, right, is blown up by German shells during the Battle of Jutland

The human toll of mechanised naval warfare was significant. The British lost over 6000 men in the battle, the highest number of deaths on a single day in the Royal Navy's history, and the Germans lost over 2500 men.

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Jutland was not a decisive victory for either side, but was one of the turning points of the war. Following the battle's conclusion, the German fleet withdrew and was not put to sea again to challenge British naval supremacy. Consequently, the British naval blockade against Germany (see below) remained in place; Germany was starved of the resources it needed to carry on the war and, ultimately, to feed its people. The severity of this economic deprivation was fertile ground for the political unrest that swept through Germany towards the end of the conflict, further expediting its defeat.

The strategic significance of Jutland

Blockade

In the lead-up to the war, many of the Great Powers were concerned about the use of naval blockades to starve countries into submission by denying them access to exports and imports. These Great Powers believed that such a tactic was an infringement on trading rights, particularly of neutral countries. In 1908, the Declaration of London was signed by all of the major naval powers, with the exception of Great Britain. The declaration banned the use of blockades of exports from a country and blockades in neutral waters.

When war broke out in 1914, Great Britain immediately imposed a naval blockade of the entire North Sea area. Despite the claims of illegality by Germany, and the initial protests by the US, whose trade was adversely affected, Great Britain referred to this action as part of the 'economic warfare' it was waging against Germany. The British tactic was to stop and search every ship in the North Sea. The German response was to institute unrestricted submarine warfare – any ship associated with one of its enemies was regarded as fair game for its torpedoes. This approach shifted international condemnation away from the actions of Great Britain and on to the actions of Germany.

Figure 8.13 The Battle of Jutland, 1916

Submarine warfare and the sinking of the *Lusitania*

The Germans employed submarine warfare to combat the restrictions imposed by the blockade of the North Sea. However, submarines had relatively slow dive times. This made them easy prey for destroyers and more effective against merchant shipping than military targets, which could avoid attack by sailing rapid zigzag courses.

According to the 'rules' which applied to engagements with non-military vessels, a submarine was required to surface, search for and warn its target. An attack without warning on an unarmed ship was generally considered to be a war crime and there was also the risk of damaging a

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vessel from a neutral country. In February 1915, as part of overall policy of *Handelskrieg* (or 'trade warfare'), Germany declared the seas around Great Britain to be a war zone in which all Allied merchant shipping would be destroyed without warning.

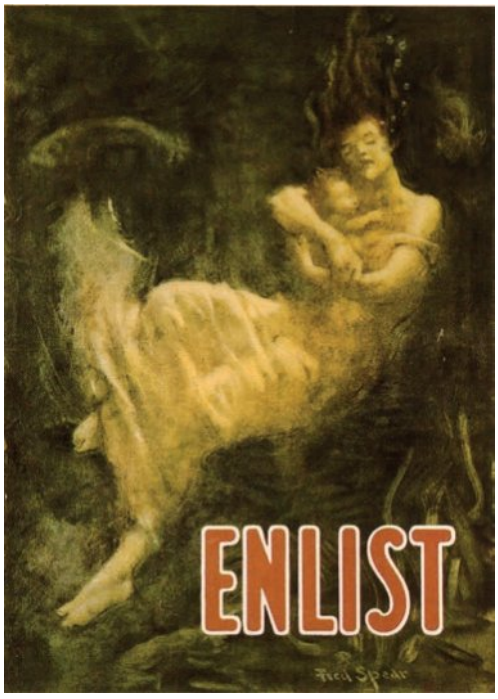

Figure 8.14 US enlistment poster, 1915 – a response to the sinking of the *Lusitania*

In May 1915, the US passenger liner, *Lusitania*, was torpedoed off the Irish coast while en route from New York to Great Britain; 1198 people were killed, including 124 US citizens. Initially celebrated in German newspapers as a great victory, the event soon became a major propaganda defeat for the Central Powers. *The London Daily Express* of 8 May 1915 carried the headline, 'THE WORLD'S GREATEST AND FOULEST CRIME' and the coroner's inquiry two days later declared the sinking to be 'the foulest act of wilful murder ever committed on the high seas.' The fact that there were two explosions before the *Lusitania* went down was also used as proof of German barbarity; it was believed that the Germans fired not just one torpedo, but two without warning. The Germans, for their part, attempted to argue that the second explosion was proof that the liner was carrying a secret cargo of ammunition and was, therefore, a legitimate target. However, recent evidence from the wreck has shown both explanations to be incorrect; the second explosion was probably caused by coal dust in the *Lusitania's* almost empty bunkers igniting under pressure.

In August 1915, another trans-Atlantic passenger liner, *Arabic*, was torpedoed without warning. Although only 44 of its 429 passengers and crew were killed, it rekindled anger in the USA over the unrestricted German submarine campaign in British waters. Responding to diplomatic pressure, and against the wishes of some of his senior naval advisers, Kaiser Wilhelm II issued orders limiting the operation of U-boats in the Atlantic. Germany's return to unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, in an attempt to break Great Britain's blockade, was a key reason for the decision by the USA to enter the war in April.

The British naval blockade is regarded as a major factor in determining the outcome of the war because it increased the economic dislocation and shortages experienced on the German home front. However, it must be acknowledged that, at least initially, the restrictions on imports and exports worked in favour of Germany's war effort because it forced Germany's domestic industries to shift to military production and to create ***ersatz* goods** (substitute goods).

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Warship losses, 1914–1918				
	Great Britain	France	USA	Germany
Tonnage	651 907	172 261	41 365	362 371
Personnel	41 058	11 400	8 106	24 955
Dreadnoughts	2	–	–	–
Battle cruisers	3	–	–	1
Pre-dreadnoughts	10	4	–	1
Submarines	54	12	2	192
Other	270	42	4	192
Merchant ship losses, 1914–1918				
	Great Britain	France	USA	Germany
Tonnage	7 759 090	891 000	531 000	4 900 000

Summary

- The introduction of oil-powered ships coincided with the outbreak of World War I; consequently, navies that had oil-powered ships were very powerful.
- The British Grand Fleet and German High Seas Fleet clashed in the Battle of Jutland. There was an inconclusive result, but huge death tolls.
- The German navy withdrew its fleet and was blockaded by Great Britain, which meant that Germany could not supply resources to its troops for the remainder of the war.
- In 1908, the Declaration of London, which banned naval blockades, was signed by all the major naval powers except Great Britain.
- The Germans engaged in submarine warfare, culminating in the sinking of a US passenger liner, the *Lusitania* which killed 1198 civilians and outraged the international community.

Activities

Thinking historically 8.3

1. Discuss the impact of the introduction of oil-powered ships into modern navies.
2. Account for the focus of prewar naval planners on large battle fleets. Was their opinion justified?
3. Assess the impact of the naval blockade on Germany.
4. Describe the use of submarine warfare in World War I.

Working historically 8.3

1. To what extent was there no victor at the Battle of Jutland?
2. To what extent did submarine warfare alter the course of World War I?
3. Examine Figure 8.14. Describe why this painting would serve as powerful propaganda for the Allies during the war.

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8.5 Mechanisation in the air

World War I also saw the initiation of the air as an alternative battlefield. Aeroplanes were still new inventions in 1914 and it was not until 1911 that they appeared in military service. While at the beginning of the war, the belligerents possessed very few aircraft, by 1918 both sides deployed several thousand planes. The Western Front was the major aerial theatre of combat. As the war progressed, aerial warfare became highly specialised and diversified, with aircraft performing three major tactical roles: aerial observation and photography; air superiority; and strategic and civilian bombing.

Aerial observation and photography

The emergence of a stalemate on the Western Front meant that traditional methods of military reconnaissance, such as using scouts and cavalry patrols, were no longer feasible. The nature of trench warfare, therefore, increased the uncertainty of war, and made planning for defensive and offensive operations difficult. Aeroplanes were ideal at reconnaissance because they were able to provide a birds-eye view of the battlefield.

At first, aerial observers were required to make sketches of what they saw, but physically drawing what they observed was time consuming, highly dangerous, and lacked accuracy. As the war progressed, however, there were significant advancements in aerial photography. Cameras were eventually mounted on aircraft, and these were able to take pictures that were clear and accurate.

An important role of aircraft during the war was artillery observation, also known as 'spotting'. This process involved pilots flying their planes over the front line and then relaying information back to the artillery officers. While messages were initially sent through rudimentary devices such as flags and flares, radio technology had advanced to a point by 1915 where aircraft began to be equipped with lightweight radios that could transmit messages back to commanders on the ground.

Figure 8.15 A German soldier jumps from an observation balloon after its destruction by enemy action

Aside from the use of aircraft, aerial balloons were also employed to observe the enemy. These balloons were usually fixed in place near the front line and forewarned commanders of infantry and air attacks. A soldier deployed on an observation balloon was a highly dangerous role as aerial balloons were a prized target for fighter pilots. Accordingly, soldiers manning balloons were given parachutes so that they could escape if attacked. However, the balloons were also very strongly defended by anti-aircraft guns and steel cables, which created a collision risk for enemy pilots.

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Air superiority

Given the important reconnaissance role played by aircraft, it was inevitable that observation planes became a military target. Consequently, control of the skies, also known as air superiority, played an integral role during World War I. Although, in the early phases of the war, planes were not technically capable of carrying offensive weaponry and the major combat tactic was to ram the opponent, a technique that did not bode well for either pilot.

The role of the aeroplane began to change from 1916 onwards. Fighter aircraft were developed carrying the **interrupter gear** mechanism, which enabled pilots to fire machine-guns through their own propellers. This led to the practice of air-to-air combat. Aircraft were also used in greater numbers to support attacking infantry or to carry out limited strategic bombing.

Between 1915 and 1917, the Junkers and Fokkers of the German Army Air Service maintained a large degree of control over the skies of the Western Front and were technically superior to the Allied aerial forces. However, from mid-1917, due to shortages of material, fuel and pilots, Germany could not match the appearance of new Allied fighter aircraft, such as the Sopwith Camel and Bristol Fighter. By 1918, the Allied offensives were better coordinated and their aeroplanes were more effectively used as an offensive weapon.

The most memorable aspect of the war in the air was in the propaganda value that both sides generated from victories in air combats, or **dogfights**. Fighter pilots were lionised and the exploits of the most successful pilots – called **aces** in Great Britain – became part of popular folklore.

Figure 8.16 A British single-seat Sopwith Camel fighter, named after the hump covering the Vickers machine-gun

Most successful fighter pilots of World War I							
Germany		**Great Britain**		**France**		**Russia**	
von Richthofen	80 kills	Mannock	73 kills	Fonck	75 kills	Kazakov	17 kills
Udet	62 kills	Bishop	72 kills	Guynemer	54 kills		
Löwenhardt	53 kills	McCudden	57 kills	Nungesser	45 kills		
Italy		**USA**				**Austria–Hungary**	
Baracca	34 kills	Rickenbacker	26 kills			Brunowski	40 kills

The improvements in fighter planes during World War I demonstrates the rapid rate of technological advancement in aviation during the conflict. While early planes, such as the German Albatross B.II, had a maximum top speed of around one hundred kilometres per hour, later fighter planes, such as the Martinside Buzzard introduced in 1918, could reach speeds of over 230 kilometres an hour, climb to 24 000 feet and were armed with two

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machine-guns. When considering that powered flight was only invented in 1903, this speed of technological aerial innovation is a remarkable feat.

Strategic bombing

World War I led to considerable advances in aerial bombardment. At the start of the war, attempts to bomb ground forces were very basic and often involved soldiers throwing bombs by hand at the enemy. However, by the end of the war, specialised planes called **bombers** were developed to carry out this function. As with fighter aircraft, there were significant technological improvements made to bombers during the war. By 1918, for example, the Handley-Page V/1500 four-engine bomber had a range of over 2000 kilometres, giving it the ability to fly from England to Berlin and back.

The development of aircraft capable of attacking enemy cities posed a moral and legal dilemma – was bombing enemy civilians justified? During 1915, Germany began its first **Zeppelin** (airship) raids against Great Britain. On 31 May of that year, a Zeppelin dropped 90 incendiary bombs and 30 grenades on civilian targets in London, which left seven people dead. Although the military impact of these raids was small, they caused panic among the London populace and were a clear reminder that in a total war, civilians on the home front were not immune from the horrors being experienced by soldiers on the front line.

Figure 8.17 A German L2 Zeppelin during the war

Although Zeppelins were, initially, largely impervious to enemy anti-aircraft fire and attack by fighter aircraft due to the altitudes at which they flew, they became obsolete towards the end of the war through technological advancement. In 1917, Germany launched bomber raids on Great Britain using their new Gotha bomber, which could fly at a higher altitude than British fighters and could carry up to 500 kilograms of bombs. Great Britain did not initially possess the capability to neutralise this threat and, consequently, during the first daylight Gotha raid against London on 13 June 1917, 162 people were killed without the loss of a German aircraft.

In April 1918, Great Britain established the Royal Air Force (RAF) as an independent branch of its armed forces. The new RAF formed the Independent Air Force in 1918, which was designed to conduct strategic bombing deep within Germany. In the final five months of the war, the Independent Air Force dropped over 550 tons of bombs on German targets, nearly double the amount dropped by Germany on British targets throughout the entire war.

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Summary

- Aeroplanes were still new inventions in 1914.
- As the war progressed, aerial warfare became highly specialised and diversified.
- Aerial observation saw advancements in reconnaissance, photography, scouting and spotting.
- Early planes were not capable of carrying weaponry, so the major combat tactic was to ram the opponent.
- From 1916, fighter aircraft were developed carrying the interrupter gear mechanism, which enabled pilots to fire machine-guns through their own propellers.
- Air combat had a huge propaganda value, which both sides generated from their victories in aerial warfare.
- By the end of the war, specialised planes called bombers were developed to carry out bombing of ground forces.
- In April 1918, Great Britain established the Royal Air Force (RAF) as an independent branch of its armed forces.

Activities

Thinking historically 8.4

1. Discuss the importance of aerial observation in World War I.
2. Describe the evolution of fighter and bomber aircraft during the war.
3. Discuss the impact of bombing raids during the war.

Working historically 8.4

1. Conduct research into one of the fighter aces mentioned in the table on page 119. For your chosen ace, write a newspaper article or obituary recounting their deeds during the war.
2. Assess the impact of air power on the outcome of World War I.

8.6 Mechanisation on land

The use of mechanised warfare on land had a pivotal impact on the outcome of the war and the strategies used by each side. For the most part, mechanised warfare in World War I involved the use of railways, both as a means of deploying men before an offensive, and as a defensive tool to quickly reinforce weak points that were being threatened.

According to the historian A.J.P Taylor, the mechanised nature of the conflict in its early phases was one of the key reasons for the static nature of the war. While men could quickly be brought to the front line by rail to defend a position, if they wanted to go on the offensive they were required to fight on foot or on horseback. In addition, mechanisation enabled defensive soldiers to be constantly resupplied with ammunition and food.

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However, when these soldiers then went on the offensive, there was no means of supplying them at the necessary speed to maintain their advance. In other words, mechanised warfare had only advanced enough by 1914 to facilitate defensive and not offensive warfare. Taylor writes:

> Men slogged along on foot once they reached the railhead. Hence the extraordinary contrast of the war; fast in delivering men to the battlefield; slow when they got there. The armies could move no faster than in Napoleon's time or in the time of the Romans when it came to fighting. Indeed, they could not move as fast. For reinforcements could always arrive by rail to a threatened position before the attacking side could break through on foot. Railway trains go faster than men walking. This is the strategical reason why the defence was stronger than the attack throughout the First World War. Defence was mechanized; attack was not.

The automobile was also used in defensive operations in the early phases of the war, deploying soldiers to the frontline and casualties to the rear. As mentioned in Chapter 5, during the Battle of the Marne in September 1914, French General Galliéni famously commandeered Parisian taxis to rapidly deploy soldiers to the front. Although the contribution of Galliéni's taxis to the victory at the Marne River was minimal, the initiative clearly demonstrated the potential for mechanised vehicles to shape the outcome of a battle.

Figure 8.18 French commemorations to mark the 100th anniversary of Galliéni's use of taxis at the Battle of Marne

The development of armoured warfare

The mechanisation of World War I signalled the end of the cavalry playing a significant role in combat; mounted soldiers could not succeed against artillery and machine-gun fire. The engagement in August 1914 between the Russian and Austro–Hungarian cavalry divisions is probably the world's last battle involving thousands of horsemen on both sides. Arguably, the 1917 attack on Beersheba by the Australian Light Horse Brigade is the final cavalry charge in history, although technically they were mounted infantry rather than cavalry.

The defensive advantage of mechanisation necessitated the creation of a mobile offensive weapon that could protect infantry and break through enemy lines. Therefore, the tank was invented. The tank was made possible by the development of the internal combustion engine and advances to metallurgy.

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Great Britain began developing tanks in 1915. Their original aim was to use them as land battleships, with single tanks employed in front of an assault wave, to destroy machine-gun nests. For this reason, on 15 September 1916, 49 Mark I tanks were used at the Somme in this manner. Understandably, the effect of seeing a tank in battle for the first time was initially terrifying for the Germans, but they adapted quickly. However, the tanks, which were 31-ton machines, ran into problems despite having an armament of two six-pound naval guns and four machine-guns. The tanks' engines were not powerful enough to move through the mud, their employment as single units meant that they could not provide covering fire, and their slow speed of six kilometres per hour made them easy targets for grenades.

The German High Command remained sceptical about the use of tanks until late in 1918, but the British and French were committed to the concept. In 1917, a separate Tank Corps of specially trained men was formed. The Mark IV tank appeared in early 1917. It had thicker armour, a more powerful (but just as slow) engine, the more reliable Lewis gun as well as two six-pounders.

The Mark IV was occasionally used in pairs during mid-1917, but this proved to be just as frustrating as their earlier use on the Somme. Eventually, the Allied generals were persuaded to use tanks in a massed charge, rather like cavalry. This tactic was implemented for the first time at the Battle of Cambrai on 20 November 1917. A wave of 476 tanks moved forward after a brief initial artillery bombardment accompanied by aircraft to strafe and bomb the enemy lines. The tanks were grouped into threes: the left-hand tank targeted a sector of the front-line trench, while the forward and right-hand tanks advanced to clean out the support line. A solid wave of infantry followed the tanks forward, flushing out pockets of resistance. The tanks used their guns, machine-guns or simply rolled over the top of trenches to take out the enemy. When used in such numbers they provided support for each other and a screen for the supporting infantry. Cambrai was initially a huge success – a hole 3.5 kilometres wide and nine kilometres deep was made in the German defences. However, the gap was not consolidated.

Figure 8.19 A Mark I tank crossing a British trench

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Figure 8.20 A German A7V *Sturmpanzerwagen* after the Second Battle of Villers-Brettoneux

In March 1918, the Germans deployed their first tank, the A7V *Sturmpanzerwagen*, which required a crew of 18 men. While too few of these vehicles were built during the war to have a tangible impact, their deployment did lead to the first tank battle in history at the Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux. In this brief engagement, three A7Vs attacked three Mark IVs, forcing two of them to withdraw. However, the remaining Mark IV then succeeded in knocking out the lead German tank, causing the Germans to retreat.

Additional examples of mechanised land vehicles developed in the war

The invention of the internal combustion engine paved the way for numerous other mechanised vehicles to be developed. They served a variety of functions and included: the first self-propelled artillery, the Gun Carrier Mark I; armoured cars such as the Rolls-Royce armoured car; the first mobile anti-aircraft guns; and motorised ambulances.

Figure 8.21 A mobile anti-aircraft gun used by French forces on the Somme

Summary

- Mechanised warfare in World War I involved the use of railways and automobiles to deploy troops.
- Mechanisation allowed soldiers that were defending to be constantly resupplied with ammunition and food.
- Great Britain first started using the tank in 1916 – it could protect infantry and break through enemy lines. Both sides advanced its technology quickly throughout the war.
- Other advancements included the first self-propelled artillery, armoured cars, the first mobile anti-aircraft guns and motorised ambulances

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Activities

Thinking historically 8.5

1. Explain what is meant by the Taylor's phrase 'defence was mechanised attack was not'.
2. Discuss the significance of railways in defensive operations in the war.
3. Why was the introduction of the tank such an important military development?
4. Identify the problems associated with the early use of tanks on the Western Front.

Working historically 8.5

Answer the following extended response questions.

1. Conduct research into the Battle of Cambrai and the Battle of Hamel. Discuss the reasons why the use of tanks in these battles was successful.
2. Conduct research into the role that General John Monash played in the development of combined arms' tactics.
3. Assess the impact of mechanisation on the course of World War I.
4. To what extent was World War I the first mechanised War?

8.7 Advances in medicine

> A war benefits medicine more than it benefits anybody else.
> (US female doctor in France during World War I)

From the outset of hostilities in 1914, the nature of trench warfare on the Western Front, and the use of large artillery concentrations on the Eastern Front, caused significant numbers of casualties among the fighting men. The use of artillery and the machine-gun destroyed men in battle. To treat the wounded and dying, men were first sent to the regimental aid posts before being transferred to casualty clearing stations behind the lines, and then to hospitals in the rear before being sent home if their medical condition continued to be poor. According to the historian Hastings, conditions within the clearing stations were reported to be brutal; the lack of medicines and trained staff led, in extreme cases, to the wounded being left to die.

Due to the large number of casualties, conditions on the front had to be improved. Motorised ambulances were used to make the journey to the rear more efficient. These were sometimes driven by female orderlies, who were members of the British Royal Army Medical Corps. Vehicles were also often commandeered to act as X-Ray units.

Antiseptics became more widely used as the war progressed. German medical orderlies carried antiseptics, pain-killers and bandages. During the worst years of the Allied blockade, cotton and linen were in short supply

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in Germany, so wood fibre, paper and lace curtains were used to make the bandages.

On the Allied side, surgeons were brought closer to the front line, and anaesthetics were used on an ever-widening scale; this significant change helped to reduce the death rates. Hospital trains were also used to transport the wounded to the rear, which proved to be a more efficient and faster journey for the injured. As a result, towards the end of the war, well over 70% of injured British soldiers returned to active duty. There was also a marked effort to improve the sanitation in the trenches through water purification and the correct disposal of wastes. Splints were introduced to immobilise limbs, and vaccinations were used to seriously reduce the incidence of typhoid. During the Battle of Cambrai in 1917, the first blood transfusion was performed, the blood being brought to the front in an ambulance, packed in ice. All these improvements meant that trench fever was eradicated, and the rates of gout were significantly lowered.

After the war, the changes introduced between 1914–1918 assisted in further advances being made. The models developed by the Royal Army Medical Corps served as examples for postwar practice. The government of David Lloyd George, Great Britain's Prime Minister, helped to introduce rehabilitation hospitals for wounded veterans. Surgeons were brought to these hospitals and fracture clinics became a feature of the medical profession during the 1920s. Hospitals became a common feature of life in Great Britain during the 1920s, and reconstructive surgery and the science involved in prosthetics expanded dramatically.

Summary

- Motorised ambulances were used to make the journey to the rear more efficient.
- Hospital trains were used to transport the wounded to the rear, and proved to be a more efficient, faster journey for the injured.
- Other medical advancements included a rise in sanitation levels, the use of splints, anaesthetics, vaccinations, and blood transfusions.
- Reconstructive surgery and the science of prosthetics expanded dramatically in the postwar period.

Activities

Thinking historically 8.6

Discuss the problems involved in making a battlefield hospital.

Working historically 8.6

Research the history of development and use of anaesthetic.

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8.8 Advances in communications

Communications are vitally important in warfare, particularly when a message ranges over a vast area. In the early stages of World War I, the problems in communications were a significant factor contributing to the stalemate.

Traditional communication methods

The high commands of both sides were situated many kilometres behind the fighting. Moltke's headquarters, for example, was in Luxembourg. The traditional communication method was to use runners, either on foot, horseback or motorbike, but their progress was slow, and they regularly became casualties. Another ancient communication system was carrier pigeon, used by the British and French commanders. However, a delay of between 24 and 48 hours between the event and news of it reaching headquarters was common – a message was often out of date by the time the communication reached the commanders. As this was the case, the reactions and orders commanders gave were often vague. The front-line officers then had difficulties interpreting their orders, which resulted in further confusion at all levels.

There was similar delay and confusion on the battlefield itself; word of mouth and signal flags were used to communicate, but noise, smoke, fog, rain and fear made an objective perspective of battle virtually impossible. There were few people able to see events clearly and no one was able to implement swift changes of plan on a large scale. The British Navy made use of traditional semaphore flags and faced similar problems.

Telephone and telegraph

Telephone and telegraph communication methods were in place by the start of the war; Bell's patent for the telephone was granted in March 1876, and the first field telephone was developed for military use by 1889. While this type of communication was too expensive for widespread domestic production, further developments leading up to the was meant that telephone and telegraph were in regular use during World War I. Miles of telephone cables were laid to provide immediate connections between commanders and front-line soldiers, but the telephone lines were regularly cut by artillery.

There was often no way for the infantry and artillery to maintain telephone communications throughout a battle. The artillery, usually situated some kilometres behind the infantry, had to rely on telescopes and binoculars to determine the progress of the battle and the range of fire.

The other risk in this form of messaging was that the British army's telephone lines could be easily intercepted by the Germans, as could the very basic wireless telegraph sets that were in use. This was due to the wire vibrations feeding in to the earth anywhere that bare metal touched the ground. In October 1915, Captain A.C. Fuller developed the Fullerphone, which offered a secure way to send Morse code transmissions. It used a low-voltage line and turned the signal on and off at synchronised times, which meant that it was far more difficult to tap than a traditional telegraph. The technology also offered a higher speed than the traditional buzzer telegraph.

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Existing field telephone sets could be adapted into Fullerphones, and the same lines could be used for both telephone and Fullerphone signals. By 1818, the Fullerphone had become widespread within the British army.

Radio

In the early days of the war, radio communication was still in its infancy. Morse code signals could be sent wirelessly, but the range was short and the communications were subject to high levels of atmospheric interference. The equipment itself was also bulky, relying on heavy vacuum tubes, so it took up to three men – or a mule – to transport it. For land-based use, wired telephone and telegraph systems were more appropriate than radio.

However, at sea and in the air, radio became invaluable. Naval ships were frequently equipped with radio telegraph. Radio sets were developed by the Royal Flying Corps in 1916, to enable planes to contact ground stations – although it was only one-way communication, so flags had to be used to indicate that the message had been received. Yet, this innovation was followed by plane-to-plane communication over distances that would have been unthinkable at the start of the war, and, in 1917, the first radio voice communication from a pilot to a ground operator was achieved.

Summary

- Traditional war communication methods included runners (foot and on horseback) and carrier pigeons.
- Miles of telephone cables were laid during the war, but the telephone lines were regularly cut by artillery.
- Very basic wireless telegraph sets could be easily intercepted.
- In October 1915, Captain A.C. Fuller developed the Fullerphone, which offered a secure way to send Morse code transmissions.
- For land-based use, wired telephone and telegraph systems were more appropriate than radio, but naval ships were frequently equipped with radio telegraph.
- In 1917, the first radio voice communication from a pilot to a ground operator was achieved.

Activities

Thinking historically 8.7

Analyse communication methods in World War I against today's methods – how would today's communications methods fare in a current war?

Working historically 8.7

Search the internet or use a movie streaming service to find the 1981 Australian movie *Gallipoli*. Watch the famous final scene, in which Australian Archy Hamilton is about to crawl out of the trench, while his best friend (and military courier) runs through the crowds to deliver the most important message of his life. Consider the various communication methods, and their efficiency, used in this scene.

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9 Total war: the impact on civilians

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the concept of total war
- about the scale of recruitment and conscription in Great Britain and Germany
- about the scale of censorship and propaganda in Great Britain and Germany
- how government restrictions impacted civilians in Great Britain and Germany
- how women in Great Britain and Germany were affected by the war
- about the growth of anti-war sentiment and peace movements
- how contemporary artists and writers depicted the fighting on the Western Front
- to evaluate the perspective and reliability of visual sources associated with civilians during World War I.
- to evaluate different perspectives about World War I.

9.1 Total war

The effect of World War I on the home front was different to all previous wars. Until 1914, wars had been confined in area and had involved relatively small armies; men had fought on some distant battlefield and returned home victorious or defeated. World War I was the first time that all the major participants practised total war. **Total war** refers to a country's entire economic, social and political systems being devoted to the war effort. World War I became more than soldiers fighting on the fronts – it also involved the domestic war effort, known as the **home front**.

The objective was to channel all of a nation's resources into winning the war of attrition. To do this governments had to increase their control of a society in peacetime and convert it into a military-oriented system; governments had to gain the power to intervene in the lives of their people and deny them lifestyle choices they might otherwise have had prior to 1914.

Government regulations

To gain the power needed over the populace, governments enacted laws and regulations which gave them and their officials the authority to change political, social and economic conditions. For example, in most countries, the government gained control over what the nation's economy produced. In addition, censorship was introduced, as well as restrictions

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on other political freedoms. Many countries introduced rationing of food and other goods to allow these materials to be sent to the soldiers on the fighting front.

However, no country achieved total war during World War I. No matter how hard a government tried to direct an entire country's resources to the war effort, it could never gain complete control over all aspects of life in that country. Generally, the geographical closeness of a nation to a fighting front determined how close the nation was to a state of total war – the nearer the country, the closer the state. Therefore, in France and Germany there was a greater level of government intervention and regulation in society because they were the two closest and major combatants fighting on the Western Front. Great Britain, separated from the fighting by the Channel, spoke the language of total war, but practised it less strictly. In nations like Australia and the United States, which were thousands of kilometres from combat, the governments were serious about the fighting, but did not indoctrinate their societies with the principles of total war. Nonetheless, the longer the war waged, the more insistent the politicians became about achieving victory because the war's material, human and political costs were extensive and becoming too great.

Attitudes

The policy of total war had a significant impact on the attitudes of ordinary people. In 1914, people predominantly supported the war enthusiastically in most nations. However, by 1916, the naive spirit of adventure and belief in the empire tended to subside in most nations. It was replaced by a more serious and determined sentiment; most people felt they were part of the war and truly a part of the home front. They felt as though they were contributing directly to the war effort through what they did in their daily lives.

The impact of government regulations and rationing on the lives of civilians, coupled with the impact of the death toll from the fronts, also led to increased negativity about the war and the governments that waged it. Many people came to dislike, even hate the war. This made them even more resolved to end it as quickly as possible. For some, this meant greater support for their government's policies; for others, opposition to the government and the war policies was preferable.

In most nations there was increased anti-war political action. The most extreme examples such as Russia (in 1917) and Germany (in 1918) saw the overthrow of governments. Even in nations like Great Britain and France, where the amount of direct anti-war protest was limited, people began to question the actions and responsibilities of their governments. To control and redirect thoughts such as these, governments used increasing levels of propaganda and censorship. The changing messages conveyed in the posters of World War I are a good indication of the shifting nature of popular support between 1914 and 1918.

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In fact, the development of total war prolonged the fighting and stimulated the anti-war sentiment. This happened because governments were determined to pour even more resources into the fighting. The more committed they became, the more resolved they were to achieve a victorious outcome. This, in turn, fed their desire to commit even more resources to the war. Therefore, a vicious cycle developed where the war became the ends and the means of government policy.

In some nations, the obsession with victory became too great. Autocratic governments in Russia, Austria–Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Germany, which had never really paid much attention to the needs of ordinary people, placed too large a strain on the goodwill of the lower classes. For these people, the war could not be sustainably justified and they were prepared to revolt to overthrow a government that had placed victory above all else.

Legacy

The policies of total war affected the political mood of nations in another way; the changed perception of the role and responsibilities of governments was carried over into the postwar period. Never again would the masses of ordinary people place blind faith in governments and their foreign policies. A climate of questioning entered politics, as well as an insistence on the involvement of ordinary people in the affairs of state. In many nations, left-wing governments, representing the interests of the working classes, were elected to office for the first time in the 1920s and 1930s.

The final legacy of total war was that it became the way in which modern wars were fought during the twentieth century. Governments and generals realised that a nation's social and economic structures were needed to support the technology of modern armies and navies. World War II was perhaps the strongest example of this. No longer could civilians expect to watch or hear about the soldiers fighting from a distance.

Summary

- World War I was the first time that all the major participants attempted, but did not succeed, practising total war.
- The war's material, human and political costs meant that by 1916 most people felt that they were part of the war, and truly part of a home front.
- There was increased anti-war political action in most nations.
- The development of total war prolonged the fighting and stimulated the anti-war sentiment.
- People began to think more critically about the role and responsibilities of governments in the postwar period.
- Total war became the way in which modern wars were fought during the twentieth century.

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Activities

Thinking historically 9.1

1. Define the term 'total war'.
2. Discuss how World War I affected autocratic governments.

Working historically 9.1

1. Research how the Australian political scene was affected by World War I.

9.2 Context

Great Britain

When war broke out, much of Great Britain's industry was inefficient and out of date. There were few factories geared for mass-production, and its chemical and light engineering industries were way behind those of Germany. Yet, for close to 200 years, its economy had dominated the world and, although World War I would be its most serious test of strength, in 1914 there appeared little cause for concern. Morale was high and the BEF departed with enthusiastic support – it would, after all, 'be over by Christmas'.

The British Prime Minister in 1914 was Herbert Asquith, a Liberal. In May 1915, following the publication of a series of damaging newspaper articles about shell shortages on the Western Front, he formed a coalition war cabinet made up of 12 Liberals, 8 Conservatives and 1 Labour member, with Lord Kitchener as the War Minister. Over the next 18 months, this government became increasingly unpopular following the military failures at Gallipoli and at the Somme, as well as the Easter uprising in Ireland. In 1916 Kitchener was replaced by David Lloyd George.

Along with Winston Churchill, Lloyd George was an **easterner**, believing that the mass attacks on the Western Front were doomed to failure and that increasing supplies of men and equipment should be deployed to the Eastern Front instead. However, by 1916, control over military strategy had shifted firmly into the hands of the generals, and Douglas Haig, along with William Robertson, was an unswerving westerner.

Increasing dissatisfaction with the government led to resignations and disputes, but this was finally resolved when, on 6 December 1916, David Lloyd George became Prime Minister of Great Britain, a position he held until 1922.

Germany

A number of unique circumstances determined the response of the German home front to the outbreak of the war.

First, the years prior to 1914 had seen the rise of the Social Democrats as the dominant political force. The calls of this group for more liberalism

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and less authoritarianism meant the government, in its efforts to secure the support of the entire Reichstag, had to convince them that the war was being fought for defensive reasons.

Second, the German political system had the Kaiser as the imperial warlord, with the chancellor and chief of staff responsible only to him. While the Reichstag did have control over the money supply, it could not exert any direct influence over the war effort.

Third, the geography of Germany, with its limited coastline and ports, made it susceptible to the effects of a blockade. Germany was more susceptible to the power of blockades because it was fighting a war on two fronts, and its limited raw material resources meant that German industry was heavily dependent on imports.

Fourth, the long tradition of conscription of adult males into the armed services ensured that the initial German response would be extremely strong. However, it also meant that if the conflict became drawn out, there would be difficulties in making up any shortfall in manpower needs.

Finally, the unification of the German states in 1871 had in many ways been achieved through force and coercion. There was no real tradition of 'German' loyalty and **nationalism** that the government could call on if the war was not quickly won. Instead, a prolonged crisis produced protests and a splintering of the country.

Summary

- David Lloyd George became British Prime Minister in 1916 and he continued the use of a war cabinet.
- There was serious political unrest prior to the war in Germany between the Social Democrats and the ruling autocracy, and although these disputes were put aside at the start of the war, they re-emerged later.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.2

1. To what extent is it possible to argue that the German and British war efforts were ones of total war?

- **a** Explain why the British home front initially greeted the outbreak of war with enthusiasm?
- **b** Suggest reasons for possible sources of conflict between Lloyd George and his military commanders?

Working historically 9.2

1. Find and read the first paragraph of *The Times*' seminal piece on the Shell Crisis of 1915. What was Great Britain's 'fatal bar to success'?

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9.3 Recruitment and conscription

Great Britain

In Great Britain, the war quickly became a global conflict as it recalled troops from imperial postings. Despite the British army only being approximately one-fifth of the size of the German army in 1914, the government at Westminster believed that recruitment campaigns in Britain and throughout the Empire would make up any shortfall.

Recruiting centres

The recruiting centres established around the country and government advertising, such as Lord Kitchener's famous recruitment poster, were successful in attracting young men who desired to fight, either because of their romantic dreams of signing up for 'king and country' or because their friends were enlisting. The enthusiasm engendered by the centres and advertising alongside other factors attracted over 1.3 million men by the beginning of 1915. After this time, however, the number of recruits declined significantly and the growing number of casualties placed pressure on the government to do more; the authorities altered the basic requirements for enlistment and began a propaganda program to entice men to enlist.

The Derby Scheme

Due to the difficulty of encouraging men to enlist, known as 'winning men to the colours', the British government introduced the Derby Scheme in 1915, which depended on voluntary enlistment if you were asked to enlist. Despite categories for exemptions and emotional appeals to young single men, the plan was a failure.

Military Service Bill

In January 1916, the Asquith government introduced the Military Service Bill, which conscripted single men and childless widowers aged between 18 and 40. Those who were exempt included clergymen, workers in essential industries such as munitions, the physically unfit and conscientious objectors who had been officially approved by the local judiciary. In May 1916, a second Military Service Bill made all men aged between 18 and 41 liable to be conscripted. By 1918, approximately five million men had served in the British armed forces in a male working population of 18 million – this was close to one in every three adult males in Great Britain.

Conscientious objectors suffered a difficult time from other members of society during the war years and were often persecuted.

Germany

The situation in Germany was different to that which existed in Great Britain. In the decades prior to 1914, young men spent a year or two in the army, and could subsequently be recalled, so the German army of ninety-four divisions was supplemented by a large body of reservists. The military were given almost unlimited powers through the declaration of martial law in 1914 and, later, by the passing of the *Auxiliary service for the fatherland*

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law (1916). These laws were supplemented by tight control over the nation's press, and thus discussion of the events was severely limited. Men enlisted for reasons similar to those of their British counterparts, but the numbers in Germany were fewer.

Summary

- In 1916, conscription was introduced, and conscientious objectors were persecuted.
- Conscription existed in Germany before the start of World War I, which meant that their initial military response was very powerful, but that problems would emerge as manpower reserves depleted.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.3

1. Discuss the pros and cons of conscription. Do you agree with it as a governmental policy during a war?

Working historically 9.3

1. What was the catalyst for Germany's introduction to conscription before World War I?

9.4 Censorship and propaganda

Great Britain

World War I was the first time that the British Government took deliberate steps to control what the domestic population read, saw and thought about a war. Information from the front was strictly controlled and soldiers' letters were censored. In 1914, the Defence of the Realm Act (**DORA**) gave the British government unprecedented powers; civil rights were suspended for the duration of the conflict and the government gained an almost unlimited ability to regulate daily life. Newspapers such as the *Daily mail* joined the government in the propaganda war that developed. Anti-German hysteria was rampant and there were increasing stories of German barbarity, particularly following the use of poison gas on the battle front. Even the royal family was affected and changed its name from the German 'Saxe-Coburg-Gotha' to the more acceptably British 'Windsor'.

Reaction to the Somme

Central to the British experience of World War I was the 1916 Battle of the Somme – not just because of its high casualty rates, but also because the battle provided one of the first pieces of cinematic 'factual propaganda'. The film *Battle of the Somme* opened in London on 21 August 1916 and within six weeks had attracted an audience of some 20 million. Constructed

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from footage filmed by two official cameramen (Geoffrey Malins and J.B. McDowell) it presented the preparations, the attack and the consequences of the battle. In its 72-minute length only one 22-second sequence of soldiers **going over the top** was faked. The rest was authentic footage and prompted criticism from some quarters for being too realistic. However, it was this realism that was appreciated by the majority who saw it. Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's secretary, wrote:

> We went on Wednesday night to a private view of the 'Somme films', i.e. the pictures taken during the recent fighting. To say that one enjoyed them would be untrue; but I am glad I went. I am glad I have seen the sort of thing our men have to go through, even to the sortie from the trench, and the falling in the barbed wire. There were pictures too of the battlefield after the fight, and of our gallant men lying all crumpled up and helpless. There were pictures of men mortally wounded being carried out of the communication trenches, with the look of agony on their faces. It reminded me of what Paul's [her brother's] last hours were: I have often tried to imagine myself what he went through, but now I know: and I shall never forget. It was like going through a tragedy. I felt something of what the Greeks must have felt when they went in their crowds to witness those grand old plays – to be purged in their minds through pity and terror.

Germany

Similarly, German public opinion was influenced by government propaganda and an outpouring of other publications – from war-themed merchandise through to letters and newspapers. Some of these media may have been driven by ideological support for the war, while others were attempts to profit from popular feeling. For example, war-themed postcards, both patriotic and comic, represented sales for the publishers and enabled people to communicate with distant loved ones, but they also reflected and supported perceptions of the war, and reached a larger audience than many other channels.

Official channels focused strongly on using censorship to prevent less positive aspects of the war from being published, while ensuring that approved information was distributed to newspapers. There were also efforts to prevent enemy propaganda from being circulated within Germany.

As the war continued, official war propaganda was driven by the need to raise the funds for the war effort. Initially this was done by way of text posters, but as financial needs grew more pressing, they expanded to visual and even film material.

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Summary

- DORA gave the British government virtually unlimited powers over the war effort; the Ministry of Munitions took charge of industry.
- The film *Battle of the Somme* introduced the public to a close-up view of war through so-called 'factual propaganda'.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.4

1. Outline the powers given to the British government under the DORA.

Working historically 9.4

1. Examine the following British and German propaganda posters from World War I and answer the questions that follow.

British propaganda posters Source 9.A

Figure 9.1 1914

Figure 9.2 1914

Figure 9.3 1915

Figure 9.4 1915

Figure 9.5 1916

Figure 9.6 1916

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Source 9.B German propaganda posters

Figure 9.7 1915

Figure 9.8 1917

Figure 9.9 1917

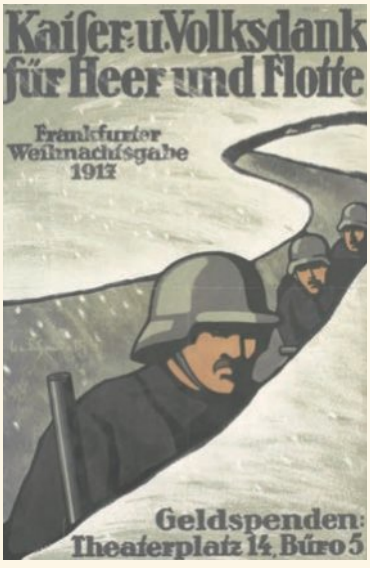

Figure 9.10 1917

Figure 9.11 1917

Figure 9.12 1918

a Outline the main images, attitudes and perspectives presented in each poster.

b Is there a connection between the content of each poster and the date when it was produced?

c What do these posters tell you about the methods used by the British and German governments to increase the involvement of their populations in the war effort?

d In what ways would a historian find these posters to be useful, but unreliable, sources of information?

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9.5 Government restrictions

Great Britain

Munitions

The initial British attitude of 'business as usual' came under question when, in 1915, the shortage of shells was revealed. The scale of the fighting and the rapid consumption of artillery shells had not been foreseen by any of the belligerents. The German army, for example, fired more shells at the Battle of the Marne than it had during the entire Franco–Prussian War.

The Daily Mail and *The Times* both launched savage attacks about the shortage of heavy artillery shells during the 1915 Artois offensive. The main aim of these articles was to discredit Lord Kitchener and his handling of the War Ministry, but Kitchener kept his position. Asquith responded to these articles by reorganising the government and establishing a Ministry of Munitions under the control of Lloyd George. This ministry assumed control over industry in a complete reversal of Great Britain's traditional **laissez-faire** economic policies. The aim was to transform British factories and workers into a gigantic arsenal to service the needs of the battle front.

The June 1915 Munitions Act introduced the Leaving Certificate, which restricted the movement of men and women out of the munitions industry. Under new restrictions, police were given the power to arrest without warrant. Railways and dockyards were placed under military control, and limits were placed on the use and purchase of kites and binoculars to reduce opportunities for spying.

Food

The effectiveness of the German submarine campaign and the loss of agricultural workers to the munitions industry caused the price of food to rise dramatically. Between 1914 and 1918, average food prices rose 110% in Great Britain. In December 1917 there were shortages of sugar, tea, butter, margarine, dripping, milk, bacon, pork, rice, dried fruits, spirits and wines. Meatless days were imposed, and limits were placed on meals in hotels and restaurants. The government also launched advertising campaigns encouraging thrift and urging the cultivation of all available open space such as tennis courts, railway sidings and building sites.

Germany

Manufacturing

Although the German economy had made rapid progress between 1871 and 1914, it was heavily based on secondary or manufacturing industries. Germany's economy was self-sufficient in food, but its reliance on the importation of raw materials such as copper, rubber, oil and fertilisers meant that if the war effort was to be successful, it had to be swiftly achieved.

To conserve all possible materials, the War Raw Materials Department (*Kriegsrohstoffabteilung* or KRA) was established in August 1914 under the control of Walter Rathenau. This body purchased all supplies of raw materials such as metals, wool, leather and chemicals, and then sold them

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to manufacturers for production into war goods. This proved crucial to Germany's capacity to sustain its war effort.

Rathenau and the KRA also provided the scientific ingenuity needed to create alternative solutions for restricted products. For example, the Haber-Bosch process of synthesising nitrate was used to overcome the shortage of saltpetre, a chemical needed for explosives.

However, the KRA was unable to overcome the even greater problem of shortages of labour, spiralling inflation and economic policies that favoured the large corporations at the expense of the working class.

In 1916, the Chief of Staff, Paul von Hindenburg, established the ***Kriegsamt***, Supreme War Office, which took control over all matters affecting the war. Civilian labour, manufacturing and transport were all placed under government direction, and the patriotic auxiliary service law of 1916 made all men aged between 17 and 60 liable for labour service in areas determined by the *Kriegsamt*. It was all part of the necessity of ensuring that the home front made the maximum possible contribution.

Food

Providing food supplies to the nation was a large problem. German agriculture was able to produce enough food to feed the population, and farmers expected a record harvest from the 1915 crop, but these expectations were destroyed by the heavy rains, which also played havoc with the fighting conditions on the Western Front. The crops were ruined and agriculture never fully recovered, resulting in shortages and rationing on the German home front.

Figure 9.13 German housewives queuing for potato peelings

Figure 9.14 Packet of German *ersatz* sugar, one of the many ersatz products manufactured to compensate for food shortages in Germany during the war

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The average food prices rose 446% between 1914 and 1918. From 1916 bread was rationed and a War Food Office was established. It instituted over 250 different regulations governing the supply and distribution of goods, including prices, hours of sale, the amount of material in clothing and the types of meat that could be sold.

The government launched an advertising campaign to encourage thrift, recipes for alternative foodstuffs such as 'K bread' (made from sawdust and potato peelings) were issued and substitute ersatz goods were produced. Some goods did reach Germany via the neutral Scandinavian countries and the occupied territories, but the effect of the conscription of agricultural workers into the armed forces eventually proved too strong to overcome. In 1915, the number of deaths in Germany attributable to the combined effects of starvation and the naval blockade was 88 000. This grew to 120 000 in 1916, to 260 000 in 1917 and 294 000 in 1918 – a total equivalent to British military losses on the Western Front.

Summary

- The initial assumption in Great Britain was that the war would be short and limited in its impact – this created the notion of 'business as usual'.
- The British attitude changed after the 1915 German offensives destroyed the army, and the entire nation became involved in the war effort.
- German submarine attacks affected British food supplies, prices and shortages increased and there was extensive rationing.
- German industry was heavily dependent on the importation of raw materials.
- Food supplies were disrupted by the ruined harvests of 1916 and 1917.
- The British naval blockade had an additional impact on the German home front.
- The KRA and the *Kriegsamt* were established to coordinate the German war effort.
- In Germany, rationing and *ersatz* products were introduced to compensate for shortages.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.5

1. Make a list of the restrictions imposed on daily life by the British and German governments.
2. Explain why the British government introduced conscription in 1916?
3. What connection can you see between the fighting on the Western Front and the domestic policies of the British government? Give examples to support your answer.
4. What factors determined the response of the German home front to World War I?
5. **a** Outline the effect of the blockade on the daily life of the German people.
   b How did the German people attempt to overcome the restrictions created by the blockade?

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6. Assess the reasons why the involvement of the British home front differed from that of Germany?

Working historically 9.5

1. Examine the following images associated with the British and German home fronts during World War I. What evidence can you see of a connection between the civilian experience and the battle fronts?

Source 9.C **A munitions factory**

Figure 9.15 Munitions workers at a factory in Nottinghamshire

Source 9.D **German housewives queueing for new ration books**

Figure 9.16 German housewives queueing for new ration books

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Meat ration cards for the King and Queen of England

Source 9.E

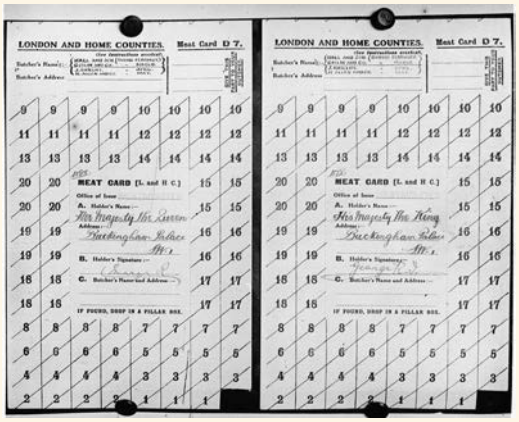

Figure 9.17 Meat ration cards for the King and Queen of England

Krupp steelworks in Essen

Source 9.F

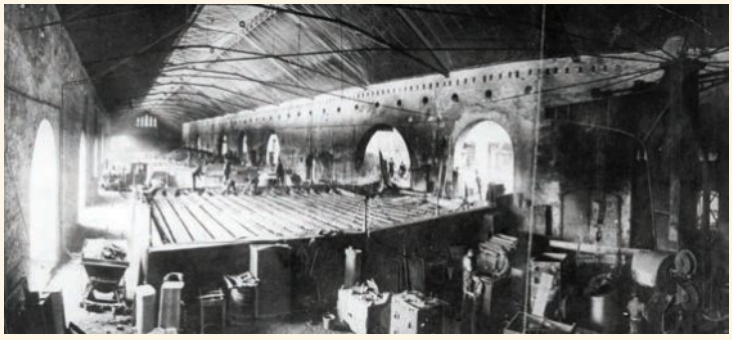

Figure 9.18 Krupp steelworks in Essen, chief arms supplier of the German Empire

2. Explain why the contribution of civilians was just as important as the events on the battle fronts in determining the outcome of World War I.

9.6 Women

Great Britain

The roles of women in society underwent significant changes because of men going to war. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, women had predominantly worked in areas such as domestic service, textiles and other forms of manufacturing, and dressmaking, with smaller numbers involved in teaching, shops and offices, agriculture and medical roles. When the war started, large numbers of men enlisted so there was an urgent need for women to step up and contribute more closely to the war effort. It should be remembered, however, that many women continued to work in traditional roles during the war, especially in the textile and women's clothing industries.

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Industry

Women took the place of men in industry, particularly by working in the munitions factories. The government issued an appeal to women to join a Register of Women for War Service in March 1915. In 1914, there were 175 000 women involved in war production, but by July 1918, this number had grown to over 750 000.

Women did not, however, find the transition to these new workplaces easy. **Trade unions** refused women membership and often insisted that they be the first to be discharged, and there were anomalies in the rates of pay, for example, at some factories, women received one-third of the weekly wage of men carrying out the same work. Yet, for many women formerly in domestic service, these conditions represented a pay increase.

However, the work that women undertook, especially in the munitions industry, carried significant hardships and dangers; for example, the 'munitionettes', who worked with TNT, were nicknamed 'canaries' due to the chemical discolouring of their skin, and, in January 1917, the Silvertown factory in East London blew up, causing 69 deaths and over 400 casualties.

Figure 9.19 Women working in a British munitions factory

Figure 9.20 A regulator taking the time of London bus journeys from a new woman bus conductor, 1916

The right to serve

Women also entered other areas of employment to 'do their bit' for the war effort – over 30 000 women demonstrated in London in 1915, demanding the 'right to serve'. Consequently, auxiliary branches of each of the armed services were formed to allow women to take on the non-combatant roles of men.

Despite opposition from many quarters in British society, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was established in 1917, which enabled women to participate in activities on the home front, although they were only employed when a man was released for front-line service.

In the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), women worked as electricians, instructors, telegraphists and wireless operators, and coders and

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decoders; there was also the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF). However, women remained civilians despite the work they performed and only a very small number participated on the Western Front, for example as ambulance drivers or orderlies in a dressing station in Belgium.

In 1917, the Women's Land Army was established as part of the National Service Scheme. During the war, over 23 000 young women joined the movement to increase food production in the British economy. Many of the volunteers in the Woman's Land Army came from middle and upper-class backgrounds.

One of the largest women's organisations was the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), which provided nurses, cooks, maids, clerks, hospital workers, cleaners and drivers.

Germany

At the outset of the war, German unions and some members the military high command were opposed to the large-scale use of women in the war effort. However, the absence of men, enlisted under the 1916 Auxiliary Service Law, meant that women were expected to work; initially they worked on the farms, but later they worked in the factories.

As the number of men required for longer periods of active service increased, the role and presence of women also increased significantly. Ultimately, the role of women proved crucial in ensuring that the German war effort continued for as long as it did. Due to its centralised autocratic system of government, the recruitment of women was more efficient and widespread in Germany than in any other belligerent country – 6.5 million women entered war work. Women took over men's roles in steelworks and mines, and Dr Gertrude Baumer was placed in charge of organising and mobilising the participation of women in the workforce.

After the war

On the British home front, many women left their low-paid jobs and took higher paid ones during the war, thereby gaining enhanced social and economic status. When the soldiers returned home after the armistice in 1918, many women returned to their prewar locations and occupations. Overall, the significant contribution that women made in Great Britain and Germany during World War I changed their place in society in western Europe forever. Employment opportunities for women during the postwar years stalled, but their overall contribution bore changes in the decades ahead. In 1918, women over the age of 30 were given the right to vote in Great Britain.

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Summary

- British women entered the workforce to take the place of men who had been conscripted; they were directly involved as doctors and nurses, and auxiliary branches of the armed services were formed.
- All available land in Great Britain was used for agriculture and the Women's Land Army was established.
- In Germany, there was initial resistance to the use of women in the war effort, but, in time, their role increased significantly.
- The recruitment of women was more efficient and widespread in Germany than in any other belligerent country.
- The contribution made by women in Great Britain and Germany was significant enough to change their social standing.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.6

1. **a** Outline the contribution women made to the British and German war efforts.
   b In what ways did the role of women in British society change as a result of their involvement in the war effort?
   c What 'rewards' did women receive in acknowledgement of their contribution to the war effort?

Working historically 9.6

1. Conduct research into the formation of the Women's Land Army. Who was its leader?

9.7 Anti-war sentiment and peace movements

Anti-war sentiment in Great Britain

A growing anti-war movement was being expressed by 1918. Many supporters of the No Conscription Fellowship were jailed for their opposition to conscription, but others – both male and female – continued the organisation. Meanwhile, the International Labour Party, which argued that the war was being prolonged to protect the interests of the rich.

Indeed, the longer the war continued, the more vocal and widespread became the opposition to it became among the socialist and trade union movement. In 1914, there were 972 strikes involving 447 000 workers, and, in 1918, there were 1165 strikes involving 1 116 000 workers. The British national war machine was stretched to its limit. Lord Lansdowne stated:

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we are slowly but surely killing off the best of the male population of these islands ... generations will have to come and go before the country recovers from the loss which it has sustained in human beings and from the financial ruin and the destruction of the means of production that are taking place.

Anti-war sentiment in Germany

In Germany, as in Great Britain, the longer the war lasted, the greater the anti-war sentiment grew, which, like Britain, manifested itself in the political left-wing.

The initial reaction to the outbreak of war had been enthusiastic and patriotic. Great Britain, rather than Russia or France, was the target of propaganda – after all it had taken the 'aggressive' action of declaring war on Germany. This mood soon dissipated following the failure of the much-lauded Schlieffen Plan. Questions relating to Germany's war aims were asked by the Social Democrats. Was, for example, the failed attack on Verdun in 1916 a defensive action?

October 1916 saw a peaceful demonstration in Frankfurt by 30 000 workers. Rosa Luxembourg, Karl Liebknecht and other socialist leaders were imprisoned for their anti-war activities, and throughout the year there were civilian food riots in over 30 German cities. These uprisings resulted from the food shortages imposed on the German people by the war effort. The British naval blockade, the diversion of available resources to the fighting fronts, and the policies that gave increasing profits to the large war-industry companies at the expense of the ordinary people, weakened on popular enthusiasm for the war.

Despite this, the anti-war movement remained a minority movement and the entry of the USA into the war brought a brief return to the German unity of purpose. However, when political divisions re-emerged later in 1917, they were wider than ever: the military hierarchy continually rejected constitutional changes that might undermine its power and shift authority to the Social Democrat-dominated civilian government; the transport system was on the point of collapse; and inflation was increasing due to the nation's inability to fund the war effort. The government revenue in 1918 was 762 million Reichsmarks compared with its expenditure of 41 897 000 000. In January 1918, there was a strike by 250 000 workers in Berlin and in October the German fleet refused to take to sea.

The 'unified' Germany was coming apart. On 7 November 1918, the state of Bavaria declared itself to be an independent republic. On 9 November, von Hindenburg advised the Kaiser of the withdrawal of the army's support. With revolution spreading to Berlin, the Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, announced the abdication of the Kaiser and called for immediate elections to establish a new German republic. The Kaiser left

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Germany for Holland on 10 November and the armistice with the Allies came into effect on the following morning.

Peace movements

Prior to the outbreak of war, the force of international socialism seemed to be the best hope of avoiding conflict. The doctrine of Marxism asserted that war was the result of imperialist, capitalist politicians seeking to pursue their own class ends at the expense of the working-class people who inevitably had to fight the wars. Inspired by leaders such as the French socialist Jean Jaurés, there was momentum gathering for a genuinely pacifist consensus, as well as the capacity to enforce this in the parliaments of many of the nations.

However, following Jaurés' assassination in July 1914, the promise of international socialism collapsed. By August, all the major socialist parties in the combatant nations had changed their platforms and swung their support behind the nationalistic war policies of their own governments. Some individuals, such as Ramsay MacDonald in Britain, continued to oppose the war effort, but there were few people of influence prepared to stand out in this way. For the remainder of the war, the mainstream of socialism in the major countries (except for Russia and Germany in 1917–1918) continued to support the efforts of the right-wing governments.

Women's movements

Throughout the war increasing numbers of women in both Great Britain and Germany were drawn to **pacifism**. In Germany, most women were at first very supportive of the war effort, but by late 1916, the burden of total war was starting to become too much for many. Women were conspicuous at the protests and demonstrations for peace held during the following two years, despite the harsh reprisals of the Kaiser's government. In addition, the writer and activist Rosa Luxembourg was prominent among the socialist politicians who eventually assumed control of Germany at the end of the war.

In Great Britain, most members of the **suffrage movement** initially supported the war effort. Indeed, leaders such as the Pankhursts were among the loudest and most strident of British nationalists. However, as the war continued, more women were prepared to join organisations to oppose the war effort. The Women's International League for Permanent Peace had 2458 members in Great Britain by the end of 1916, and held rallies and handed out anti-war pamphlets. The Women's Peace Crusade was another example. In June 1916 it organised large anti-war rallies. Capitalising on the mood of war-weariness among the population (especially during and after the Battle of the Somme) and resentment against war profiteers, it had some success in promoting its cause, but was unable to overcome the hostility of its opponents, particularly those in the government.

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Summary

- The longer the war lasted the stronger the anti-war movement became, and strikes were widespread in 1918.
- Socialist protests against the war mounted as the war progressed. While these were initially suppressed by the military, they eventually brought about the abdication of the Kaiser.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.7

1. **a** Explain the rise of anti-war movements in Great Britain and Germany during World War I.
   b Why was there growing support for socialism in Great Britain and Germany during the course of World War I?

Working historically 9.7

1. Research the peace movements during the war.
   a Which social or political groups seem to have been the strongest supporters of peace during the war?
   b In what ways did the peace movement change as the war progressed?
   c Why was it so difficult for the peace movement to achieve any significant success until 1918?

9.8 Literature and art

World War I produced a mixture of new and old in literature and art; new methods and themes were explored, and the forms and processes of the past were reworked, sometimes for propaganda and historical purposes. Artistic production during World War I was so prolific that the terms 'war literature' and 'war artist' have survived.

Literature

World War I stimulated the creation of a great number of literary works. Many works were written by young men and women, with little or no reputation prior to the conflict. Their poetry and prose is a tangible and permanent record of the attitudes and reactions to the war, as well as encapsulating the experience of many young soldiers, brought together by the conscription policies of their governments.

Novels

Initially, the great majority of writings were fictional and laced with patriotic themes for the benefit of the civilian populations at home. One of the best

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examples in this area was R.W. Campbell's *Private Spud Tamson* (1915). This British novel presents an account of the military fortunes of a young Scottish soldier, who, in the best romantic tradition, saves his commanding officer, is awarded the Victoria Cross, survives a bayonet charge and marries his sweetheart!

Later works, particularly those that were published in the late 1920s, were more realistic and gave harrowing accounts of life at the front. Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) is probably the most famous. Presented as a first-person narrative, it chronicles the experiences of a German infantry soldier from training through to death in the month prior to the Armistice in 1918. In a similar vein *Goodbye to all That* (1929) by Robert Graves is a personal memoir of military service.

Poetry

The poetry of the war exhibited a similar range from patriotic fervour to despair and futility. Indeed, many of the young writers, found that poetry was the most appropriate literary form to express their emotional response to the fighting. Men and women of all ranks and classes used poetry to record their experiences and attitudes, with many of their pieces becoming important parts of national culture. For example, Lawrence Binyon's 1914 poem *For the Fallen* contained four lines that are still used in remembrance services today:

> They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,
> Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
> At the going down of the sun and in the morning
> We will remember them.

The most famous British war poets were Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon, while one of the most quoted war poems is *In Flanders Fields* by Canadian poet John McCrae, published in 1915:

> In Flanders fields the poppies blow
> Between the crosses, row on row,
> That mark our place; and in the sky
> The larks, still bravely singing, fly
> Scarce heard amid the guns below.
>
> We are the Dead. Short days ago
> We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
> Loved and were loved, and now we lie
> In Flanders fields.
>
> Take up our quarrel with the foe:
> To you from failing hands we throw
> The torch; be yours to hold it high.

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If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Figure 9.21 Siegfried Sassoon

Figure 9.22 Rupert Brooke

Figure 9.23 Wilfred Owen

The visual arts

As with the written word, many of the initial visual representations of the war emphasised its heroic nature and appealed to the patriotism of the civilian population. Appearing in popular illustrated periodicals such as *The Illustrated London News*, these earlier artworks were dominated by romantic imagery and were usually commissioned by governments for propaganda purposes.

In France, paintings of the front tended to be uncommissioned and undertaken by soldiers whose only art training was in painting camouflage. The Germans adopted a similar policy to the British, declaring only some men suitable for 'artistic duties' and directing them to depict specific subjects for use in propaganda.

Later in the war, attitudes on both sides changed to include a more realistic depiction of events at the fronts. For example, in 1917 Lord Beaverbrook, the British Minister of Information, encouraged artists to produce more accurate historical records, while maintaining a prowar stance. Furthermore, governments employed 'home-based' illustrators to create many of the published images of combat. These artists drew their information and inspiration from the accounts of returned soldiers and government agencies.

Prior to 1916, the British Government banned artists from the front, and even after they relaxed this policy, restrictions remained on what could be depicted: the style was to be traditional, patriotic – and there were to be no dead bodies.

In contrast to these pre-1916 images, there developed a more realistic style, associated with the work of the Australian Will Dyson and the American Hervey Dunn. English artists such as Paul Nash and C.R.W.

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Nevinson, both of whom were serving soldiers, extended this concept of realism, using symbolism and innovative techniques to represent the emotional impact of the war. German artists such as Otto Dix and Georg Grosz went even further and depicted the horror and savagery of the fighting, using confronting images of mental anguish and physical atrocities. Dix and Grosz both drew on their personal experiences as frontline soldiers.

Figure 9.24 *We are Making a New World* by Paul Nash

Figure 9.25 *Flanders* by Otto Dix

Other forms of visual expression also flourished. Cartoons and line drawings were used to capture and depict the everyday experiences of the soldiers in the trenches; posters were used by governments of all persuasions for propaganda purposes (particularly for recruitment and raising funds); and picture postcards were a widely used method of communication by men at the front and carried scenes far removed from the realities of the fighting. Sculpture was the one artistic medium not to prosper between 1914 and 1918. However, this changed once the war was over and numerous monuments and memorials were erected in remembrance.

Figure 9.26 *Heavy Artillery* by Colin Gill

Figure 9.27 *Oppy Wood* by John Nash

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Photographs

The publication of photographs of the war was always subject to strict censorship and official control. All governments appointed official photographers, and while this may have limited the range of subject matter it did lead to an improvement in the quality of photography; more and better resources were made available to cameramen.

Many of the scenes in wartime photographs were posed, although deliberate faking was rare. The major problem lay in the captioning of the image. Often photographs were labelled as depicting events that they were not. For example, troops advancing from reserve trenches might be depicted as 'going over the top' of the front lines, and prewar training manoeuvres at home could be labelled as 'training in France'.

The Australian Government appointed Frank Hurley as its official war photographer in 1917. His memorable images of the Ypres salient are typical of many of the photographs of the war. Hurley saw himself as not only creating a technically correct visual record, but also making a personal statement about the war. He was not averse to 'judicious manipulation' (his term) by burning out details, brushing in additions and combining several separate images.

Summary

- World War I had a significant impact on all forms of artistic and literary expression.
- Soldiers and civilians used art and literature as a way of dealing with the experiences of the war.
- All governments attempted to control the content of art and literature.

Activities

Thinking historically 9.8

1. Why did World War I generate such an enormous quantity of original literature and art?
2. Compare the literature and artwork of the Central Powers with that of the Allied powers. Account for any similarities and differences observed.
3. How did the works of the listed poets reflect their war experience?

Working historically 9.8

1. Research the work of women writers and artists during World War I. What common themes or ideas occurred in their work?
2. Examine the following examples of the photography of Frank Hurley. What do these images reveal about the use of photography as a medium of artistic expression and/or propaganda during World War I?

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Source 9.G Infantry moving forward

Figure 9.28 *Infantry Moving Forward* was one of the most famous of Hurley's photographs

Source 9.H Albert Cathedral

Figure 9.29 The bombed-out interior of Albert Cathedral

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Troops in trenches

Source 9.I

Figure 9.30 *Troops in Trenches*

Troops on the Menin Road

Source 9.J

Figure 9.31 *Troops on the Menin Road*

Exercises in historical inquiry

Refer to *Cambridge GO* for downloadable historical inquiry exercises on the impact of the war on civilians.

DIGITAL

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10 The war to end all wars: victory, defeat and the peace process

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the reasons for the Allied victory
- about the peace process and the 'end of empire'
- about the desire to make World War I the 'war to end all wars'
- to evaluate the roles played by individuals in the attempts to secure peace at the end of World War I.

10.1 Reasons for the Allied victory

Development of an armistice

On 8 January 1918, the United States President, Woodrow Wilson, presented a speech to Congress in which he outlined his country's aims in the war. The ideas in this speech were put together by Wilson with the help of Colonel Edward House, the President's personal adviser, and a team headed by Sydney Mezes and Walter Lippmann. Dealing with general principles, as well as specific territorial issues, the 'Fourteen Points' he presented would provide the framework on which ceasefire negotiations would take place later in the year.

Among other suggestions, Wilson called for the renunciation of secret treaties between nations, the freedom of the seas beyond territorial waters, a worldwide reduction of armaments and the establishment of a general association of nations that would oversee future relations between nations.

The reaction to Wilson's Fourteen Points

The initial reaction of the belligerent nations to this program was mixed. While many hailed Wilson for his vision of a peaceful world, the Allied governments chose not to make a formal response.

Indeed, the failure to specifically address Italy's territorial claims (as outlined in the 1915 Treaty of London), the absence of any mention of reparations, and its direct challenge to Great Britain's naval supremacy, ensured that the Fourteen Points would be viewed with suspicion.

Similarly, the Central Powers were threatened by the program's proposed destruction of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. However, the course of events on the battle front during the second half of 1918 changed this

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stance, particularly since the demands of the Fourteen Points were mild in comparison to the severity of the measures being spoken of by Great Britain and France.

Collapse of the Central Powers

From the end of September 1918, the unity of the Central Powers began to crumble with the surrender of Bulgaria. This coincided with mounting domestic opposition to the war within Germany.

On the same day as the Bulgarian armistice, the German Chancellor, Georg von Hertling, resigned. In the absence of a new chancellor, Ludendorff and von Hindenburg sought the Kaiser's permission to begin immediate peace moves towards the Allies, specifically the USA. To support this action these two generals addressed a joint meeting of the leaders of all German political parties at which they expressed despair regarding a successful military outcome to the war. Germany's deteriorating military situation thereby became known to the public and set in train a sequence of events over which the traditional leadership soon lost control.

On 3 October 1918, Prince Maximilian of Baden was appointed Chancellor and although he attempted to slow the peace process so that Germany's eagerness would not be interpreted as a sign of imminent collapse, advice from the military leaders led him to send a message to Woodrow Wilson seeking a ceasefire and peace negotiations based on the Fourteen Points.

Requirements for Germany

On 8 October 1918, the US reply required the Germans to agree to withdraw all forces from Allied soil and to commence negotiations about how each of the Fourteen Points would be implemented. Germany accepted these conditions on 12 October and suggested the establishment of a multinational commission to oversee their withdrawal.

Two days later, however, the USA sent a second message imposing further conditions:

- The terms and implementation of the armistice were to be determined by the USA and the Allies, without reference to Germany.
- The German autocracy was to be replaced by a government made up of democratically elected representatives.

On 20 October 1918, Germany accepted the first of these conditions and stated that it trusted that the USA would urge the Allies to treat Germany with respect. Three days later, Wilson agreed to propose an armistice to the Allies, but again added a condition: the terms must be such as to render Germany incapable of renewing hostilities. Ludendorff's protest that this amounted to a call for unconditional surrender came to nothing; on the advice of the Chancellor, he was dismissed by the Kaiser.

Terms for an armistice

Wilson then entered into correspondence with the Allies who agreed, with two reservations, to an armistice and subsequent peace negotiations based on the US–German agreement. The exceptions were a total rejection of the second of the Fourteen Points dealing with freedom of the seas, and

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an insistence that there would be compensation, in terms of money and material, for all of the damage done to their civilian populations by 'the aggression of Germany'. The Germans were told of these changes to the conditions on 5 November 1918.

On 8 November 1918, a German delegation led by Matthias Erzberger arrived at Rethondes in Compiègne to meet Marshal Foch and receive the peace terms. The preceding week had seen Germany rocked by internal revolution. The navy had mutinied, and a socialist uprising had broken out. Political and military leaders had lost control, and on 9 November 1918, acting on his own initiative, Prince Maximilian of Baden announced the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the establishment of a provisional government led by Friedrich Ebert.

Meanwhile, the delegation at Rethondes had been presented with armistice terms. They included: German forces to withdraw from Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine and the west bank of the Rhine River, the east bank of the Rhine River was to be demilitarised and the Allied blockade of Germany's ports was to continue.

The Germans argued that the unconditional acceptance of all these terms would result in their nation, already undergoing revolutionary upheaval, falling completely under the control of the Bolsheviks. This argument proved persuasive and the severity of some of the terms was lessened, most notably that German forces could remain in eastern Europe, the number of arms to be surrendered was reduced and a relaxation of the blockade was raised as a possibility.

At 5 a.m. on 11 November 1918, the armistice was signed at Rethondes by representatives of Germany's civilian politicians. Its terms came into effect at 11 a.m. that day. Militarily World War I was over, but its social, economic and political influences were only just beginning.

Reasons for victory and defeat

Part of the success of the Allies in 1918 came from their more effective command structures. Many of the poorly performing Allied generals had been removed from their commands by 1918, and replaced by juniors who had practical experience of battlefield command and who more readily appreciated the need for thorough planning and supply. Perhaps the best example was the Australian general, Sir John Monash, who combined intelligent application of tactics with effective coordination of the troops and technology at his disposal, and thorough staff work.

Allied command system

The most striking illustration of the superiority of the Allied command system in 1918, the last year of the war, came with the appointment of Ferdinand Foch as Commander-in-Chief of all Allied Forces.

Foch differed from Haig and the other commanders, who only viewed attack in the form of the big push in one location. His ability to smooth over

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national differences and impose his will on the battlefields was prodigious. Foch organised the allocation of resources during the crisis of the German Spring offensives and provided great moral support for his subordinate generals. He directed the Allied counter-offensives masterfully, stressing the importance of well-prepared attacks at several points. This stretched the German resources beyond breaking point and denied them the ability to switch their limited reserve troops to just one point of attack (as had happened in most battles up to 1918).

At the same time, Foch allowed his generals to fight their own battles relatively unhindered within the broad plan. This gave them the flexibility to deal with sudden situations on the spot as best suited local conditions.

Technology

The frontal wave assault was the primary tactic employed by both sides for most of the war. Changes suggested by junior officers were slow to be implemented. Consequently, the new technology available was underused and it was not until late in the war when generals learned to deploy the range of available modern weapons to the advantage of the attacking soldiers.

The invention of light machine-guns provided a mobile form of close infantry fire support. The science of artillery was eventually refined to the point where creeping barrages could be used to cover the front and sides of men in the open, and the fall of shot could be accurately predicted. Tanks came to be used en masse to provide cover along with mobile armoured fire support. Aircraft were used to strafe and bomb enemy trenches. Wave tactics involving unsupported and poorly coordinated infantry attacks were replaced by the superior battle craft of combined infantry, tank, air and artillery assaults, and by Allied use of German infiltration tactics.

Yet, until the ceasefire, each defensive system still showed itself capable of withstanding most attacks. Even when gaps were forced, the allocation of reserves enabled the defending generals to fill these gaps, mount counter-attacks and drive the attackers back before the attackers could call on their own, more distant reserve forces.

Strategic advantages

When final victory on the Western Front came, it was the result of the Allied strategic advantages – more personnel, more equipment, greater industrial and agricultural capacity, and the denial of supplies to the Central Powers through the naval blockade. It was the cumulative effects of the Allied strategy of attrition that led to the breakthrough on the Western Front:

- The blockade of Germany by the British Navy prevented access to many necessary resources from outside the European territories of the Central Powers.
- The Allies could draw on the vast resources of the British and French empires. This ensured that they continued to have a steadier supply of food, minerals and men than the Central Powers throughout the war.

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- In the early years of the war, US financial and material support was directed more towards the Allies than to the Central Powers. This increased after the sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania* in 1915.
- The political disasters of invading neutral Belgium and unrestricted submarine warfare alienated many of the neutral countries from Germany and brought the USA directly into the war. Allied propaganda also proved to be more effective in rallying world sympathy for their cause.
- Increased support and new allies meant that Allied resources were strengthened, giving them superior manpower in 1918. German resources began to dwindle from 1916. At the time of the armistice, 32 nations were at war with Germany.
- Germany was forced to fight a war on two fronts and was primarily responsible for pursuing Central Power war aims. This proved too much for Germany to bear alone. Even when Russia and Romania surrendered in 1918 – giving Germany large tracts of land, oil and other mineral reserves, and freeing its soldiers to fight in France alone – the advantages were outweighed by the enormous strength that the USA gave to the Allied cause.
- The support given by Germany's allies, Austria–Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria, was largely ineffectual. Between 1914 and 1917, none were able to break through on any of the fronts that each were allocated. The Central Powers' war effort on the Italian, Middle Eastern and Balkan fronts collapsed when Germany was forced to withdraw its troops and equipment to bolster its own forces on the Western Front.
- The Allies had a new weapon capable of breaking the trench deadlock: the tank. Although it took them some time to work out its most effective use, it proved decisive in gaining numerous breakthroughs in late 1917 and 1918. The Germans were unable to manufacture tanks as quickly and in as many numbers as the Allies.
- In 1918, the Allies showed more skill than the Germans in coordinating the operations of the different arms of infantry, armour, artillery and aircraft.
- The key was the Allied policy of attrition on the battlefield. The Allies could afford to play a waiting game. Haig, Joffre and Foch realised that if the Allies stood firm, denied Germany the breakthrough they wanted and, later in the war, relied on US support, they would triumph. To the generals it was simply a matter of numbers.

Summary

- World War I ended with an armistice rather than with a major military victory.
- The Allies' strategic advantages – more personnel, more equipment, greater industrial and agricultural capacity, and the denial of supplies – led to the final victory on the Western Front

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Activities

Thinking historically 10.1

1. Rank from the most important to the least important, each of the following factors in relation to its contribution to the outcome of World War I. What evidence can you produce to support your decisions?
   - the British naval blockade
   - tactical errors made by German commanders
   - the human and material resources of the Allied and associated powers
   - the entry of the USA into the war
   - civilian unrest in Germany.

Working historically 10.1

1. Read the following extracts from the works of three British historians, and then answer the questions.

J. Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, Hutchinson, London, 1993. Source 10.A

> Machine-guns, and their rather less lethal but related equivalent, the breech-loading, small-bore magazine rifle ... rapidly established a defensive dominance on the battlefield that made infantry attacks costly and often suicidal. From the first moment of the digging of trench lines in which the infantry could take refuge from this storm of steel, the generals sought to find a means of dampening its effect. Multiplication of artillery pieces was the first solution tried; it resulted only in mutual attrition by the competing artilleries, devastation of the battlefield and overtaxation both of the shell-producing industries at home and of the supply services nearer the Front. The invention of the tank was the second solution; but the machines produced were too few in number, too slow and too cumbersome to impose a decisive alteration to tactical conditions. Towards the end of the war both sides were looking to the newly introduced instrument of airpower ... however neither the heavy aeroplane nor the airship had yet achieved the offensive capability to alter the balance ... The First World War was eventually resolved not by any discovery or application of new military technique by the high commands, but by the relentless attrition of manpower by industrial output.

J. Terraine, *White Heat*, Book Club Associates, London, 1982. Source 10.B

> The Royal Navy did not win the war; but it is impossible to see how the war could have been won without it.

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Source 10.C **B. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War*, Pan, London, 1972.**

The Western Front, the Balkan front, the tank, the blockade and propaganda have all been claimed as the cause of victory. All claims are justified. None is wholly right, although the blockade ranks first and began first. In this warfare between nations, victory was a cumulative effect, to which all weapons – military, economic, and psychological – contributed. Victory came, and could only come through the utilisation and combination of all the resources existing in a modern nation, and the dividend of success depended on the way in which these manifold activities were coordinated.

It is even more futile to ask which country won the war. France did not win the war, but unless she had held the fort while the forces of Britain were preparing and those of America were still a dream the release of civilisation from this nightmare of **militarism** would have been impossible. Britain did not win the war but without her command of the sea, her financial support, and her army, to take over the main burden of the struggle from 1916 onwards, defeat would have been inevitable. The United States did not win the war, but without their economic aid to ease the strain, without the arrival of their troops to turn the balance, and, above all, without the moral tonic which their coming gave, victory would have been impossible. And let us not forget how many times Russia had sacrificed herself to save her allies; preparing the way for their ultimate victory as surely as for her own downfall.

a Summarise the points made in each of these sources.
b What evidence can you produce to support or refute each of these historian's views?

10.2 The peace process and the end of empire

Paris Peace Conference

In January 1919, the representatives of 32 nations gathered in Paris to discuss the peace settlements that would be presented to the Central Powers. The last time such a meeting had taken place was in Vienna in 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. However, by 1919 the political map of the world had changed dramatically: the Congress of Vienna had been attended by monarchs and aristocrats from each of the belligerent nations, including the defeated France. In Paris a century later, the delegates were representatives of democratically elected governments, with the Central Powers and the recently-turned-communist Russia specifically excluded.

What forces were operating on the peacemakers in 1919 and how did these pressures influence the decisions they made? First, the conference did not convene in an environment conducive to the formulation of an impartial and lasting peace. Instead, it met in Paris, the European city in which hatred of the enemy and desire for revenge was strongest.

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Second, postwar Europe was in a state of political turmoil and economic chaos: Russia was in the midst of a civil war; there was a fear that Bolshevism was about to spread across Europe; Bela Kun's Communists had seized power in Hungary; revolution had broken out in Germany; there were food shortages in many parts of the continent; millions of displaced persons were on the move; and the Spanish influenza outbreak was reaching epidemic proportions. The aim of the statesmen at Paris was, therefore, just as much to keep Europe functioning as it was to formulate a peace treaty. Consequently, a sense of urgency governed the process of **peacemaking** and speedy, rather than well-considered, decisions resulted.

Figure 10.1 Military leaders outside the railway carriage at Rethondes in the Forest of Compiègne, where the World War I armistice was declared on 11 November 1918

Third, most of the delegates were not free to make decisions according to their personal beliefs. As popularly elected leaders, they were subject to the pressures and desires of their parliaments and electorates, all of whom were kept fully aware of the decision-making process by the reporters who were present. Furthermore, their hands were often tied by the terms of several secret treaties that had been negotiated in order to win wartime support for the Allies. The Treaty of London of 1915 between Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy promised Italy extensive territorial additions, especially in Tyrol, along the Adriatic, and in Africa. The US treaty with Japan in 1917 had promised Japan Germany's Pacific islands north of the equator as well as increased rights in China. The Middle East was complicated by promises to the Arabs and the clauses of the 1916 Sykes–Picot agreement, which divided much of the Arab world between Great Britain and France.

Fourth, there was the problem of reconciling the aspirations of individual nations with the idealistic program outlined by Woodrow Wilson. For example, Germany would consistently argue that it was on the basis of the Fourteen Points that it had laid down its arms, but to meet the objections of particular nations, many of Wilson's points would have to be watered down or completely redrafted.

Finally, the delegates had to grapple with their own contradictory aspirations. The USA strongly supported the **internationalism** of the League of Nations, but was also determined to safeguard US national interests; Great Britain was committed to a heavy reparations claim, but also wanted to revive the German economy; France supported **self-determination** because it would create a series of friendly succession states from the old Austro–Hungarian Empire, but for reasons of national security, it was prepared to deny this same principle to the Sudeten Germans, the Austrians and German communities in the Rhineland.

The conference began its work in sessions with all delegate nations present. However, this procedure was quickly abandoned since it was too

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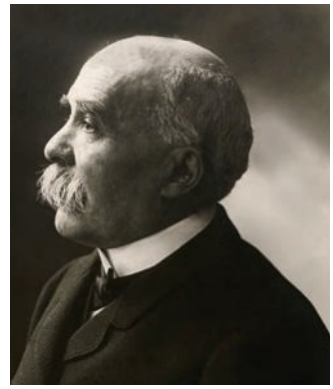
unwieldy. The initial Council of Ten proved cumbersome and before long became the Council of Four, made up of the leaders from Great Britain, the USA, Italy and France. With the withdrawal of Italy, the essential decisions of the conference were then taken by The Big Three: David Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and Georges Clemenceau.

Who were The Big Three?



Georges Benjamin Clemenceau, 1841–1929

Before World War I

- influenced by the 1789 revolutionary ideals
- studied medicine in Paris and joined a republican organisation opposed to the French monarchy; founded the journals *Le Travail* (Work) and *Le Matin* (Morning) and spent time in jail for advertising a commemoration of the 1848 Revolution
- in the USA from 1865–1869: witnessed the end and aftermath of the Civil War; was impressed by the freedom of expression and debate (unknown in France)
- returned to France in 1869: celebrated the establishment of the Third Republic; 1871 was elected to the National Assembly; voted against the 'shameful humiliation' of the peace terms demanded by Germany following the Franco–Prussian War
- elected to the Chamber of Deputies (legislative assembly) in 1876: tenacity and eloquence made him the leader of the radical left-wing bloc; initially fought against anti-republic movements but, through his newspaper *La Justice*, became known as a vehement critic of republicans and radicals as well as conservatives; opposed French colonial expansion
- became regarded as someone who was prepared to destroy governments but not take office himself; personal attacks against him were mounted by *Le Petit Journal*; defeated in elections of 1893
- re-established reputation as a journalist in his support for Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer accused of selling French military secrets to Germany; re-elected in 1902
- became Interior Minister in 1906 and used the army to break a miners' strike – this established him as the 'strong man' of French politics; served as Premier from 1906 until 1909 during which time the entente with Great Britain was strengthened and tensions with Germany rose
- resigned from political office in 1909 and travelled widely – re-elected in 1911
- in 1913 founded *L'homme Libre* in which he urged rearmament and French preparedness for war aggressively.

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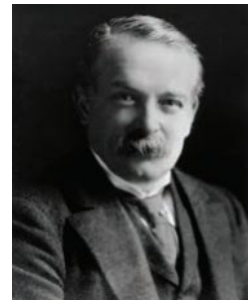
During World War I

- from the outbreak of war, argued for an increase in the number of guns, munitions and soldiers, a more effective use of manpower, and a more efficient medical service; also sent personal appeals to the US public and President Wilson requesting US support for the French war effort
- aim was to create a 'will to victory': fiercely denounced pacifism or war weariness and earned the nickname le Tigre (the Tiger)
- November 1917, President Poincaré had him form a government – single purpose became to win the war so served as both Premier and Minister of War; in March 1918 organised a unified military command for Allied Forces on the Western Front
- was the sole surviving protester against the treaty of 1871, in the return of Alsace-Lorraine under the terms of the 11 November armistice

After World War I

- in 1919 presided over the sessions of the Paris Peace Conference
- primary goals at this conference were: to ensure that the wartime alliance be continued into a peacetime alliance to defend the position of France; and to ensure that Germany was disarmed
- involved in debate and negotiation with Lloyd George and Wilson over the nature and wording of the final peace settlement
- insisted that the Treaty of Versailles be signed in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles, where the German Empire had been proclaimed in 1871.
- single-minded approach to the peace negotiations lost him support within the Chamber of Deputies; became marginalised and was no longer believed to be the indispensable national leader he had been in 1917 – not forgiven by politicians who had been excluded in conduct of the war and from the negotiation of the peace
- defeated in the 1920 presidential election and resigned as Premier.

David Lloyd George, 1863–1945



Before World War I

- born in England, raised in Wales, gained most of his formative ideas from his uncle, a Welsh shoemaker and Baptist minister
- qualified as a solicitor in 1884; became associated with the defence of oppressed religions and Welsh nationalists against the ruling Conservative Party and Anglican Church
- married Margaret Owen in 1888 (five children)
- in 1890 entered parliament as the Liberal member for Caernarvon Boroughs, a seat he held for the next 55 years; gained a reputation for audacity, charm and wit in parliamentary debate
- between 1895 and 1905 became a leading figure of the radicals within the Liberal Party: opposed the Boer War and British imperial expansion, and argued against the 1902 education reforms

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- entered the Cabinet in 1905 as President of the Board of Trade, and introduced a series of pieces of legislation relating to shipping, trade and invention
- in 1908 became Chancellor of the Exchequer: oversaw the formulation of the 1909 'People's Budget' that proposed increased taxation for the landed class and higher income-earners in order to finance social welfare reform and the Admiralty's desire for more battleships; refusal of the House of Lords to pass this budget resulted in a constitutional crisis, two general elections and the 1911 Parliament Act, which drastically cut the powers of the Lords
- introduced a social insurance scheme in 1911, which laid the basis for the modern welfare state in Great Britain; in foreign policy gave a major speech in July 1911 warning Germany over its actions in Morocco
- in 1913, reputation was damaged by a scandal involving the purchase of shares
- during the July Crisis of 1914 favoured Great Britain staying out of the war, but once war was declared, his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer meant that he was responsible for financing the war effort.

During World War I

- a vigorous advocate of greater munitions production, leading to conflict with Lord Kitchener and the War Office during the shell crisis of 1914–1915; became Minister of Munitions following the restructuring of Asquith's War Cabinet in 1915: gained cooperation from industrialists and labour organisations to increase armaments manufacture
- believed that a breakthrough on the Western Front was impossible and advocated a flank attack from the Near East; his appointment as Kitchener's replacement at the War Office, therefore, brought him into further conflict with Haig and Robertson (Chief of Imperial General Staff) over this policy
- in December 1916 replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in a Coalition government; he established a War Cabinet of only five members to speed up decision-making
- major successes were limited: forced the Admiralty to adopt the convoy system to protect merchant shipping against German submarines; instituted food rationing; he confronted Haig and Robertson in 1917 with a plan to place British forces under French command for the coming Nivelle offensive – Haig and Robertson distrusted him from that moment onward
- when the Nivelle offensive failed, was unable to resist Haig's disastrous Passchendaele battle in 1917 – this reinforced his view that the British high command was incompetent; between 1917 and 1918 deliberately withheld troops from Haig to prevent any further attacks, with the result that the German offensive of 1918 was almost successful

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- supported the establishment of a unified command under Ferdinand Foch for Allied counter-offensive

After World War I

- following the armistice, called an election in December 1918, which returned the Coalition government
- at the Paris Peace Conference, was torn between the promise of German punishment made in the election campaign, the draconian measures proposed by Clemenceau, the idealism of Wilson, and the need to restore Great Britain's economic and diplomatic position.
- had to deal with problems in Ireland: civil war, 1919–1921, began the negotiations that culminated in Irish independence in December 1921
- two crises in 1922 (one over the allocation of imperial honours and the other involving a possible war against Turkey) led the withdrawal of Conservative Party support and his resignation as Prime Minister
- died in 1945, having published his *War Memoirs* (1933–1936) and *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* (1938).

Thomas Woodrow Wilson, 1856–1924

Before World War I

- born in Virginia, father was a minister who served as a chaplain in the Confederate Army and the family church was a military hospital – deeply affected by the horrors of war
- at Princeton University edited the college newspaper and pursued an interest in politics and literature; studied law with the hope of entering politics but abandoned his law career for graduate study in government and history
- married Ellen Louise Axson in 1885 (three daughters) and began a teaching career; in 1902 became President of Princeton where his far-reaching intellectual and financial reforms gained the attention of the Democratic Party
- in 1910 was elected Governor of New Jersey, where he again instituted sweeping reforms – became the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in 1912
- was elected US President in 1912 using a progressive campaign agenda called 'New Freedom'
- attempted to implement a 'prime ministerial' style of government: drew up a detailed legislative program, regularly addressed Congress in person, and worked with the membership of the Democratic Party
- in first term as President achieved tariff and income tax reform, established the Federal Reserve System to oversee economic affairs, strengthened anti-trust legislation, regulated overseas shipping, gave loans to farmers, introduced child labour laws and mandated an eight-hour workday for railroad workers
- in foreign policy was immediately faced with problems in Latin America – critical of the previous administration's interventionist

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policies, but soon did the same: Haiti and the Dominican Republic were occupied and governed as protectorates; initial policy of 'watchful waiting' towards Mexico gave way to military engagements by the navy at Veracruz in 1914 and by the army against Pancho Villa in 1916
- neutrality had wide support, but soon came under pressure from Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare – response was to build up the US armed forces
- was re-elected for a second term in 1916 based on his record of progressive domestic reform and the campaign slogan 'He kept us out of war'
- between December 1916 and January 1917 mounted a peace offensive aimed at ending the war in Europe: asked the belligerents to state their peace terms; offered US mediation; called for 'peace without victory' and promised the establishment of an international organisation to prevent future wars
- Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 and the publication of the **Zimmermann Telegram** led him to ask Congress to declare war on Germany to make the world 'safe for **democracy**' – hoped US involvement in the war would allow it to shape the nature of the peace.

During World War I

- Selective Service Law of May 1917 swelled the strength of the armed forces to five million (two million of whom reached France before war's end)
- delegated major decisions to professional soldiers such as Pershing and economic experts such as Herbert Hoover but delegation led some members of cabinet, such as Attorney General Palmer, to suppress dissent on the grounds of national security
- saw his primary function as being diplomacy: 14 Points speech in January 1918 established his war aims but personal attendance at the Paris Peace Conference meant that he was overseas for seven months

After World War I

- negotiations with Clemenceau, Lloyd George and the other delegates were often acrimonious and the final treaties seriously compromised his aims – however, he believed that the inclusion of the Covenant of the League of Nations would lead to postwar adjustment of international relations and the maintenance of peace.
- on return was faced by Republican senators, led by Henry Cabot Lodge, seeking to either reject the Treaty of Versailles or revise its terms; embarked on a cross-country speaking tour in an attempt to sway public opinion, but collapsed; in October 1919 had a massive stroke

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- continued as President: Republican indignation at the lack of compromise or consultation led to a refusal by the Congress to ratify the Treaty of Versailles
- gradually recovered and spoke about running for a third term by using the election as a referendum on the League; failed to gain nomination
- continued to take a keen interest in politics and never lost conviction that the USA should and would join the League of Nations.

Peace treaties

The Treaty of Versailles

The final peace treaty with Germany was completed within about four months. The German delegates were then summoned to hear the terms, which they could accept or reject. By this time, there was no possibility of resuming military resistance, so the German representatives signed the treaty on 28 June 1919, which was exactly five years after the assassination at Sarajevo. The treaty was signed in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles, the same site where the German Empire had been proclaimed in 1871.

The main terms of the Treaty of Versailles were as follows:

- Eupen and Malmedy were allocated to Belgium.
- France regained Alsace-Lorraine and acquired control of the Saar, with its rich coalfields for a period of 15 years.
- Poland was recreated and was given Posen, most of West Prussia and an outlet to the sea known as the Polish Corridor.
- Danzig, at the mouth of the Vistula River in the Corridor, was made a free city under the supervision of the League of Nations.
- East Prussia was separated from the rest of Germany by the Corridor.
- The fate of Schleswig, Upper Silesia, Marienwerder and Allenstein was to be determined by future plebiscites.
- Allied forces were to occupy the left bank of the Rhine for 15 years, while the Rhineland was to be demilitarised.
- Great Britain acquired mandates over German East Africa and Palestine.
- Togoland and the Cameroons were divided as mandates between Great Britain and France.
- South Africa was given responsibility for German South-West Africa, New Zealand was given a mandate over the German Samoan Islands, Australia acquired responsibility for German New Guinea, and Japan received a mandate for Germany's Pacific islands north of the Equator along with control over Kiao-chau and Shantung in China.
- The Elbe, Oder and Rhine rivers were placed under the administration of international commissions and the Allies were granted favourable tariff terms for a five-year period.
- Germany was prohibited from uniting with Austria.

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- German merchant ships, railways, locomotives and rolling stock were to be handed over to the Allies.

Figure 10.2 German delegates sign the Treaty of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919

- Compulsory military training was abolished, while volunteers were only permitted on a long-term basis to prevent the build-up of an army reserve.
- The German army was limited to a maximum of 100 000 men and the navy could have no more than 15 000 personnel.
- Naval and military air forces were prohibited.
- The navy was reduced to six battleships, six light cruisers, 12 destroyers and 12 torpedo boats – dreadnoughts and submarines were prohibited.
- All significant fortifications, such as the Heligoland naval base, were to be dismantled.
- Under the war guilt and reparations clauses, Germany accepted responsibility for the war and agreed to pay an as-yet unspecified sum in compensation.

The Treaty of Versailles has been criticised for its psychological, territorial and economic impact, as well as for its inconsistent application of the principle of national self-determination. At the same time, though, it must be acknowledged that the peacemakers did attempt to achieve as just a peace as was possible in the circumstances. Perhaps the treaty's greatest problem was that it was harsh enough to cause German resentment, but not punitive enough to stop Germany from actively seeking to overturn its clauses.

The other peace treaties

Over the following 14 months, peace treaties were also signed with each of the other Central Powers. On 10 September 1919, the Treaty of St Germain was signed with Austria; on 27 November 1919, the Treaty of Neuilly was signed with Bulgaria; on 4 June 1920, the Treaty of Trianon was signed with Hungary; and on 10 August 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres was signed with Turkey. Each treaty was a dictated peace, had many clauses in common with the Treaty of Versailles, and created a changed economic and military balance in central and south-eastern Europe.

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Nothing in the treaties, however, caused as much debate and future instability as the issue of reparations. The practice of recovering the cost of war from the defeated opponent was well-established and the armistice terms of November 1918 gave notice to Germany that compensation would be expected.

Reparations

Nevertheless, reparations led to considerable conflict of opinion between the US, British and French representatives in Paris; public opinion in Great Britain and France certainly anticipated that Germany would be made to pay the total costs of the war; Wilson's Fourteen Points spoke of no contributions and no punitive damages, yet the US Treasury refused to discuss the cancelling of British and French war debts.

The Treaty of Versailles placed the responsibility for the damages caused by the war on Germany, but did not decide on the total amount of liability. Instead, this was to be determined by an Inter-Allied Reparations Commission.

In the interim, Germany had to make an initial payment of 20 billion gold marks (£1 billion) and was to make deliveries in kind of raw materials to France, Belgium, and Italy.

After much discussion and many conferences, the Reparations Commission finally presented Germany with a reparations bill of 132 billion gold marks (£6.6 billion) plus interest in May 1921.

Summary

- Those who drew up the peace settlement faced pressures at home.
- The Big Three at the peace conference – Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau – had conflicting aspirations.
- The final peace treaties represented a compromise between the various national positions, and were resented by the defeated powers who were not involved in the peace negotiations.

Activities

Thinking historically 10.2

1. **a** Divide Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points into economic, political, military and diplomatic clauses.
   b Which of the Fourteen Points do you think was the most realistic/least realistic or easiest/hardest to attain?
   c Which country or countries would have gained and/or lost most from the implementation of the Fourteen Points? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Explain the process by which the Treaty of Versailles was formulated. Why were most of the decisions taken by The Big Three? What pressures did they face?

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3. To what extent were the terms of the Treaty of Versailles a just conclusion to the conflict that began in August 1914?
4. The 1918 Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles would later be denounced in Germany as part of the 'stab in the back' campaign launched by opponents of the new German Republic.
   a Did the political leaders of Germany have any other choice but to sign these documents?
   b How might the course of future events have been different if military leaders such as Wilhelm II, von Hindenburg or Ludendorff had signed these documents rather than politicians?

Working historically 10.2

1. Read each of the following sources and answer the questions that follow.

Source 10.D **Speech by US President Woodrow Wilson, introducing his proposal of the Fourteen Points, 1918.**

> We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected, and the world made secure once and for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and self-aggression.

Source 10.E **Diary entry of British General James Jack, dated 11 November 1918.**

> Incidents flash through the memory: the battle of the first four months; the awful winters in waterlogged trenches, cold and miserable; the terrible trench assaults and shell-fire for the next three years; loss of friends, exhaustion and wounds; the stupendous victories of the last few months; our enemies all beaten to their knees.
>
> Thank God! The end of a frightful two years, thirty-four months of them at the front with the infantry, whose company officers, rank and file, together with other front-line units have suffered bravely, patiently and unselfishly, hardships and perils beyond even the imagination of those, including soldiers, who have not shared them.

Source 10.F **Speech by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau of the German delegation on being presented with the Treaty of Versailles by the Allied and associated powers in June 1919.**

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Gentlemen,

We are deeply impressed with the great mission that has brought us here to give to the world forthwith a lasting peace ... We know the intensity of the hatred which meets us, and we have heard the victors' passionate demand that as the vanquished we shall be made to pay, and as the guilty we shall be punished. The demand is made that we shall acknowledge that we alone are guilty of having caused the war. Such a confession in my mouth would be a lie. We are far from seeking to escape from any responsibility for the World War, and for its having been waged as it was ... but we with all emphasis deny that the people of Germany, who are convinced that they were waging a war of defence, should be burdened with the sole guilt of that war …

Public opinion in every country is echoing the crimes Germany is said to have committed in the war. Here, too, we are ready to admit that unjust things have been done ... But in the manner of waging war, Germany was not the only one that erred … Crimes in war may not be inexcusable, but they are committed in the struggle for victory, when we think only of maintaining our national existence, and are in such passion as makes the conscience of peoples blunt. The hundred of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since November 11, because of the blockade, were destroyed coolly and deliberately after our opponents had won a certain and assured victory. Remember that, when you speak of guilt and atonement …

Extract from *Europe Since Napoleon*, by British historian David Thomson, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966. Source 10.G

The men in Paris never had a free hand. Constricted not only by their wartime agreements with one another and by pledges at home, but also by the accumulated debris of war itself, they could do no more than try to produce some order from chaos, determine details of frontiers and plan projects of compensation, and leave the achievement of greater precision and perfection to subsequent negotiation and good sense. They were not, as they have sometimes been depicted, men behaving like gods and reshaping a new heaven on earth … Perhaps the biggest mistake they made was to mention at all ideals of absolute justice or perpetual peace; for these, surely, were a most impossible outcome of the conditions in which Europe found itself when the guns no longer thundered and the men came marching home.

a Use Wilson's speech only:
- **i** List two different things that the US President 'demanded' come out of World War I.

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ii Why did President Wilson believe that it was important for 'justice' to be done in the forming of a peace settlement at the end of World War I?

b Using the diary entry and your own knowledge, explain how soldiers of both sides responded to the end of World War I.

c How useful would each of these sources be to a historian attempting to understand the conclusion to World War I? (In your answer you must refer to the nature, audience, motive and reliability of each source as well as its perspective.)

2. a What similarities can you see between the careers, experiences and attitudes of each of The Big Three leaders?

b What differences can you see between the careers, experiences and attitudes of each of these leaders?

10.3 The League of Nations

Another important aspect of the peace settlement was the establishment of the League of Nations. The proposals of Lord Robert Cecil of Great Britain, General Smuts of South Africa, and Colonel House and Woodrow Wilson from the USA were combined to form the basis of discussions by the League of Nations Commission established, under Wilson's chairmanship, at the peace conference.

Support for the principles underlying the League were so strong in Paris that its Covenant was unanimously accepted by the delegates in April 1919. The Covenant was subsequently incorporated into each of the peace treaties and set out the objectives of the League to promote international cooperation, and to achieve international peace and security:

- by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war
- by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations
- by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among governments
- by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of the organised peoples with one another.

To achieve these ends, the League was entrusted with implementing many of the provisions of the peace treaties and other postwar international agreements. For example, it was made responsible for supervising plebiscites, for overseeing the free city of Danzig, for administering the Saar valley, and for examining implementation of the colonial mandates. The League was also designed to reduce the risk of war and deal with any aggression using collective economic or military action. Secret diplomacy – one of the reasons for past tension – was to be replaced by openly concluded treaties registered with the League. Similarly, arms races were to be prevented by giving the League responsibility for achieving disarmament.

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During 1919 in Paris, the peacemakers attempted to construct the machinery for international disarmament and **collective security** – they were sincere in their desire to make World War I the 'war to end all wars'. However, their endeavour was flawed from the start. The absence of the defeated powers and Soviet Russia meant that any agreement could not be considered as anything other than parochial, and the refusal by the US Congress in 1920 to ratify the peace treaties and join the League ensured that the new international system was limited in its scope and influence. The outbreak of World War II, just 20 years later, was the result.

Military effort and losses				
Country	**Mobilised**	**Deaths**	**Wounded**	**Prisoners/ missing**
Australia	416 809	59 330	152 100	4084
Austria–Hungary	8 000 000	1 496 200	1 943 000	1 211 000
Belgium	380 000	45 500	78 624	73 976
Bulgaria	1 200 000	101 224	155 026	90 619
Canada	628 964	59 544	172 950	3735
France	8 660 000	1 397 800	4 266 000	557 000
Germany	13 240 000	1 808 555	4 248 158	1 152 800
Great Britain	5 704 416	722 785	1 662 624	170 389
Greece	230 000	23 098	14 145	1067
India	1 679 998	62 056	66 889	11 070
Italy	5 903 140	680 000	947 000	600 000
Japan	800 000	300	907	3
Montenegro	50 000	3000	10 000	7000
New Zealand	128 524	16 654	41 317	530
Russia	12 000 000	1 850 000	4 950 000	2 500 000
Serbia	707 343	127 535	133 148	152 958
South Africa	136 070	9050	11 444	1538
Turkey	2 998 321	600 000	1 565 000	240 000
USA	4 743 826	116 708	204 002	4526

Summary

- The League of Nations, with its principle of collective security, was established to ensure that World War I was the 'war to end all wars'.

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Activities

Thinking historically 10.3

1. Discuss the barriers that proved to be the ultimate undoing of the League of Nations.

Working historically 10.3

1. Research the major differences between the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Exercises in historical inquiry

DIGITAL

Refer to *Cambridge GO* for downloadable historical inquiry exercises on the peace process.

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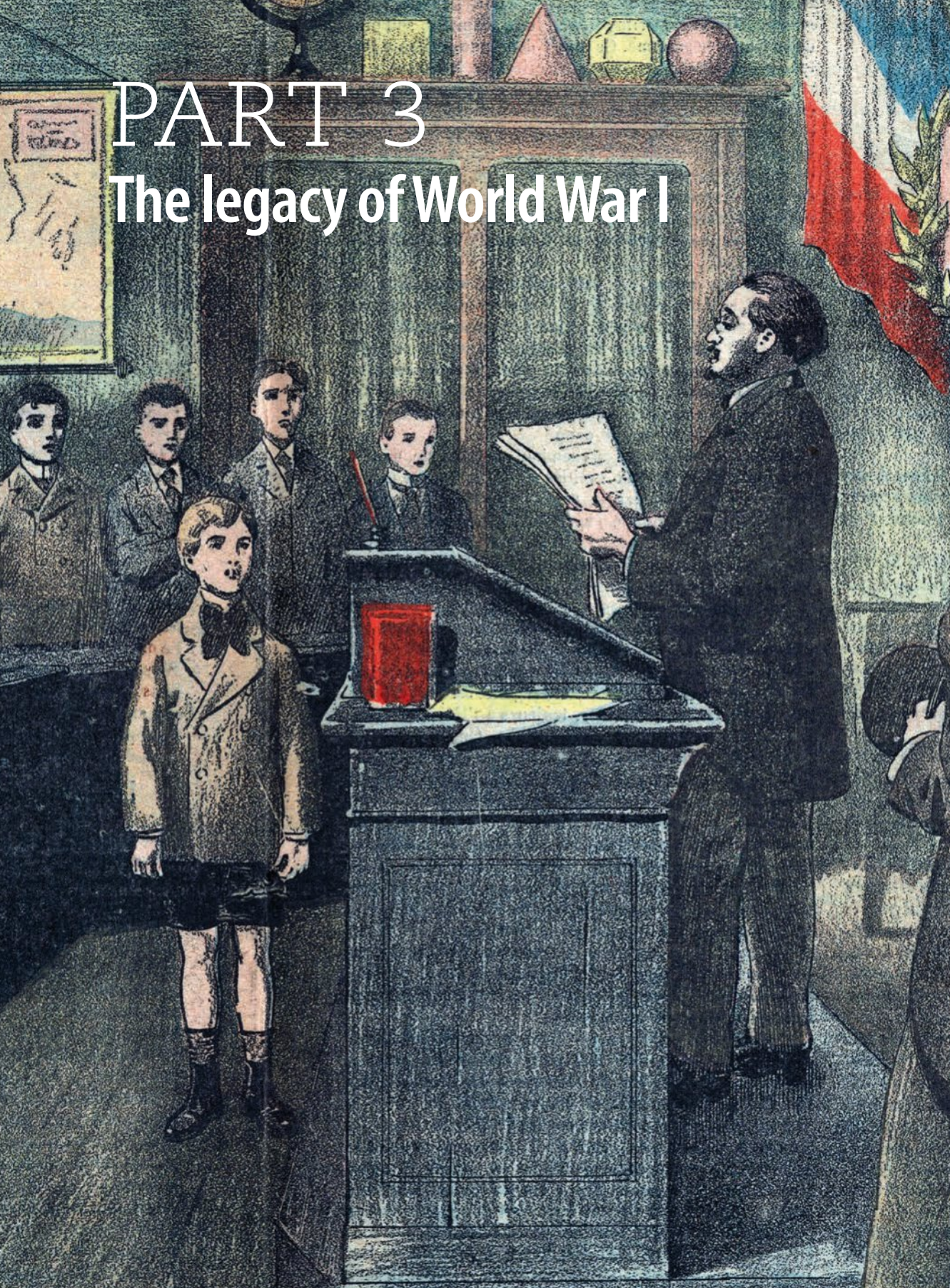
PART 3
The legacy of World War I



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11 Shaping the modern world and modernity

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the nature and legacy of World War I
- about the impact of the war on nationalism and national consciousness, political systems and ideologies, women's lives, culture, technology, economies, and international cooperation and human rights
- to classify, analyse and evaluate a variety of historical sources.

11.1 Nationalism and national consciousness

The nature of World War I changed the lives of millions of people and had a profound impact on the modern world and modernity. The imposition of total war and the experience itself brought massive upheaval to people's lives; there were changes to social and class structures, and new technologies were developed that affected humankind in positive and negative ways. In addition, the global reach of the conflict fostered the development of national consciousness in European nations and their colonial empires.

The impact of the war on nationalism and national consciousness

Nationalism was a major effect of World War I. Governments used and reinforced the appeal of nationalism to gain support for their war efforts and, by doing so, the people were convinced of the rightness of their government's cause. Industries and technologies were developed to enable the situation of total war, and poets, writers and newspaper publishers extolled its romance; the celebrations of the victors are still remembered today through the efforts of governments and veteran's associations. The British war poet Wilfred Owen conveyed the ecstasy of fighting in his poetry; *Exposure* describes the misery of war, but indicates the worth of fighting for England.

After the armistice, veterans from each country remembered the sacrifices made by their colleagues. Since the initial victory parades in London in 1919 to the observances of Remembrance Day in nations of the twenty-first century, the dead are remembered in numerous ways from memorial services to re-enactments.

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Figure 11.1 A map of Europe after the Versailles treaty

The settlements after the war were largely governed by the desire to satisfy national loyalty. The renewed sense of national consciousness among Europe's various ethnic groups facilitated the break-up of Europe's large multinational empires, and led to the creation of new countries based on national groups. These included Poland, Yugoslavia, Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Ireland, which became a free state in 1922 and then a republic in 1937.

However, the creation of these states sowed the seeds of future conflict. The drawing of new political boundaries led to some countries having large ethnic minority groups, who were separated from their country of origin and had little allegiance to their new state. Yugoslavia, for example, consisted of several dominant minority groups who historically were adversaries.

The separation of ethnic populations was used in the 1930s as a political tool to justify territorial expansion and to return groups of people to their perceived native lands. Adolf Hitler, for example, used the existence of Germans in Czechoslovakia and Poland to justify his violation of the Versailles treaty. Numerous other minority groups believed that they suffered adversely by the collapse of the traditional empires of central Europe. At this time, the map of Europe once again

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Figure 11.2 Ho Chi Minh addresses the French Socialist Party in 1920

became, according to the modern historian David Reynolds, **balkanised**.

The economic, military and political conditions of the Treaty of Versailles immediately created unstable conditions for decades to come, and the continuing indifference of the major colonial powers, regarding the political needs of their subject peoples, further led to discord and the dissolution of these empires in the decades following World War II. The process of dismemberment arose from the ashes of World War I – local political elites in the colonies in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Caribbean, backed in some places by people's movements, continued the process of decolonisation. Two-thirds of the world's population was under colonial rule in 1945 rule, but by the end of the twentieth century, there was only one per cent.

Ho Chi Minh, a young Vietnamese student studying in Paris, sent a petition seeking help from the US delegation regarding the issue of self-determination in French Indo-China. In his petition, Ho expressed the need for freedom and justice for his people. He was, however, ignored by the Allied leaders, thus sowing the seeds for his anti-colonial struggles against the French and USA following World War II.

In the Middle East, the war lit the fuse of Arab nationalism, culminating in the 1916 Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire. A catalyst for this revolt was the McMahon–Hussein correspondence, which appeared to promise the Arabs independence at the end of the war. However, like Indo-china, there were forces associated with the old order which refused to facilitate change. The signing of the secret Sykes–Picot Agreement in 1916 between Great Britain and France divided up the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence, thereby extending colonial rule in the Middle East until after World War II.

This Sykes–Picot Agreement's drawing of boundaries also failed to sufficiently consider ethnic, religious and political differences, which created problems between those who ruled and the governed. The impact of this wartime agreement is still felt today in religious and ethnic conflicts in the Middle East, such as the recent sectarian violence in Iraq and Syria, and even in the growth of the Islamic State movement, which has made the destruction of Sykes–Picot one of their military and political aims.

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Summary

- Governments used nationalism to gain support for their war efforts and by doing so, the people were convinced that their government's cause was right.
- After the war, some of Europe's largest multinational empires were broken up, creating new countries, which, in turn, caused feelings of displacement for their citizens.
- Ho Chi Minh asked the US delegate for Vietnamese freedom from the French, but was ignored by the Allies.
- In the Middle East, the war lit the fuse of Arab nationalism, culminating in the 1916 Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire.

Activities

Thinking historically 11.1

1. Explain how World War I helped to entrench the concept of nationalism in belligerent countries.
2. Describe the impact nationalism had on the map of Europe following World War I.
3. Discuss how the changes described in question 2 might have been a source of future tension in Europe.
4. Describe the impact of nationalism on people in Europe's colonies.

Working historically 11.1

Mahatma Gandhi's defence statement in the Great Trial of 1922. Source 11.A

When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany, I raised volunteer ambulance cars in London, consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly, in India … I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda, and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased, and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service, I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen…

But all that hope was shattered ... I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically … She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines … Little do town dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage

continued…

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continued…

they get for their work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town dweller of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history.

1. According to Source 11.A, describe Gandhi's attitude to British rule in India at the start of the war. Explain how his perspective changed.

11.2 Political systems and ideologies

Communism

World War I was a significant cause of the Russian Revolution, and ultimately set Russia on the path towards communism and a totalitarian government. This had far reaching consequences. Although Bolshevik control was initially precarious, military success in the Russian Civil War enabled the new regime to survive and consolidate its power.

Following Lenin's death in 1924, and after a struggle for power, Joseph Stalin became the effective ruler of the Soviet Union. Through his policies of collectivisation and industrialisation, and with the use of terror, he forcibly turned the Soviet Union into a command economy that was the second only to the United States. This enabled the Soviet Union to survive

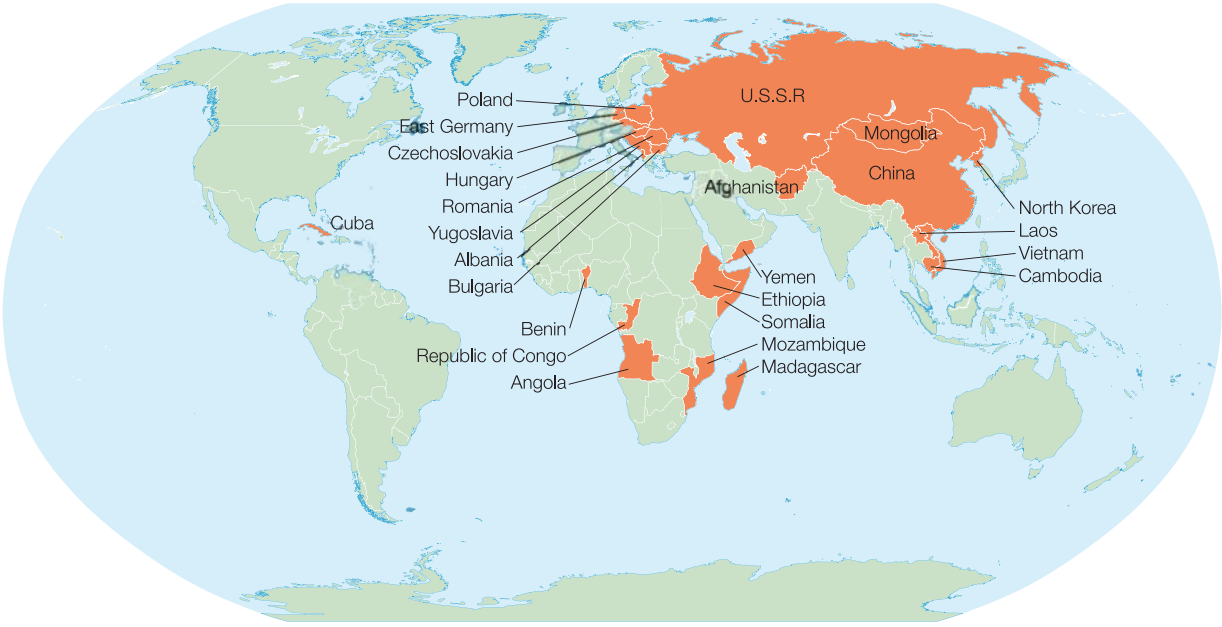

Figure 11.3 Countries that were communist at some point during the twentieth century

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the largest military invasion in history in 1941 by Nazi Germany and to emerge from World War II as a superpower that would challenge the USA for global supremacy in the Cold War.

The Bolshevik Revolution also paved the way for other countries to become communist states in the twentieth century including China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea. This significant political shift would not have been possible had World War I not made Russia ripe for political upheaval in 1917.

Democracy

There were few countries that could be considered truly democratic at the beginning of World War I. Great Britain, for example, was relatively undemocratic in 1914 because it denied a large proportion of the male population the right to vote, and women had no right to participate in elections. However, the impact of total war, the abdication of royal families such as the houses of Habsburg and the Hohenzollern, and the development of new states based on nationality, changed the relationship between Europe's rulers and her people. Further, since the war was won by the Allies, countries that generally had greater political freedoms, helped promote the benefits of liberalism to the rest of Europe.

By 1920, the authoritarian regimes of prewar Europe had mostly been replaced with fledgling democracies in countries like Germany, Austria, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. There was significant political reform in Great Britain too, with all men being granted the right to vote in 1919 and progress made for women's **suffrage**. In Russia, however, the political instability caused by the war led to the successful Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 as opposed to the democratic reforms seen in most other European countries.

Fascism

The granting of suffrage to people who had hitherto not been able to vote had a tremendous impact on the political landscape in Europe. It enabled political movements that had previously been illegal, such as communism, to legitimately participate in local and national elections. However, given the inexperience of the new governments in managing affairs of state, especially following the Great Depression, a negative impact of the advent of democracy was the growth of fascism. This ideology centred around the idea of a 'strongman' to provide the order and stability that early democratic governments seemed unable to provide. Fascist parties were able to use the Treaty of Versailles as a political tool to blame the new governments for any woes faced by the country, and to perpetuate myths about the country's soldiers being 'stabbed in the back' by politicians.

Therefore, a consequence of the war was ideological conflict between the three great ideologies of liberalism, communism and fascism. Ironically, fascist movements, such as the Nazis in Germany, were able to use the democratic systems created at the end of World War I to secure power, ultimately destroying the political gains achieved at the end of that war. By 1939, most of the new democracies in Europe had become either fascist or autocratic.

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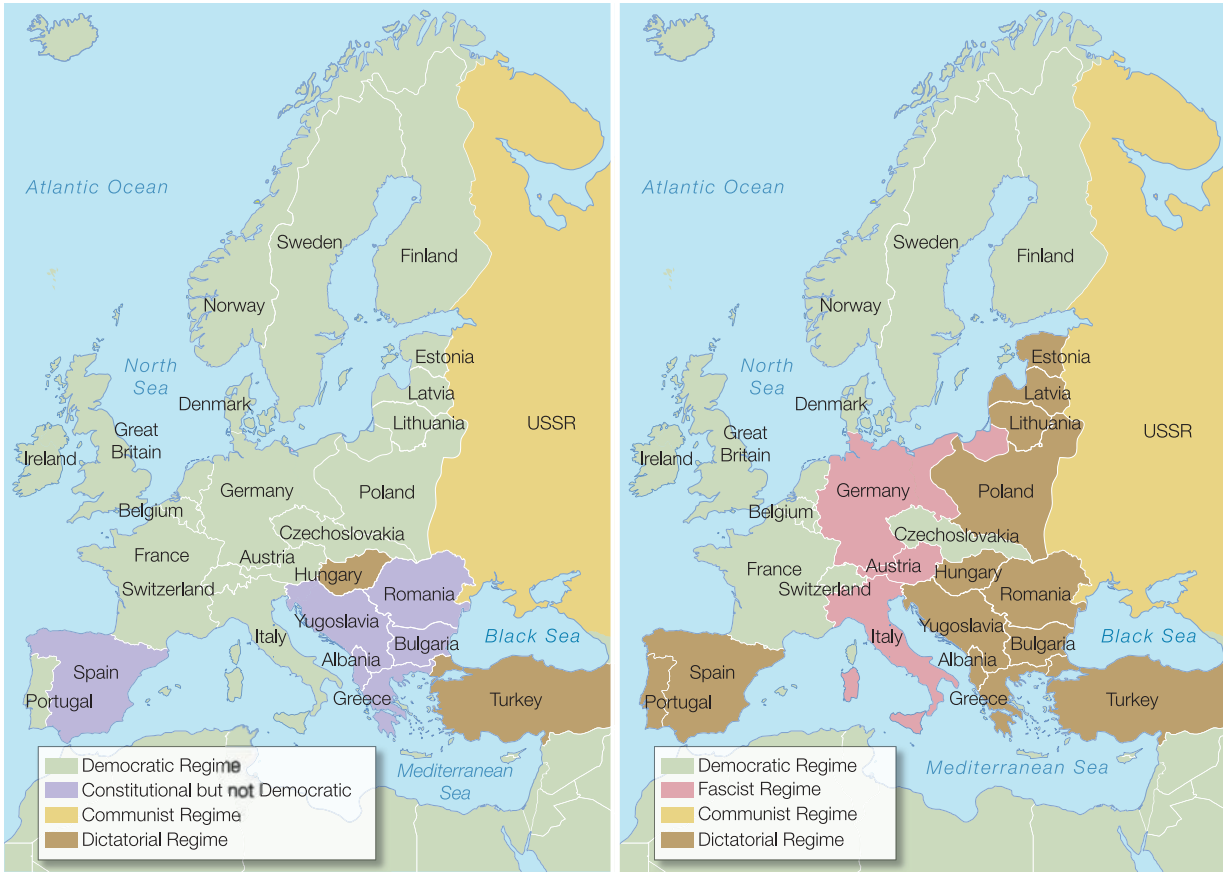

Figure 11.4 Political systems in Europe in 1919 compared to 1939

Summary

- In Russia, Stalin's communist policy turned the Soviet Union into a strong economy.
- After the war, the authoritarian regimes of prewar Europe were replaced with fledgling democracies.
- Fascist movements, such as the Nazis in Germany, were able to use the democratic systems created at the end of World War I to secure power.
- By 1939, most of the new democracies in Europe had become either fascist or autocratic.

Activities

Thinking historically 11.2

1. Briefly discuss the impact of the Russian Revolutions on the twentieth century.
2. Discuss the impact of the war on the political landscape in Europe in the years immediately after the cessation of hostilities.

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3. Explain why liberalism initially gained traction after the war.
4. Explain how new political freedoms ultimately contributed to the collapse of democracy in many European countries.

Working historically 11.2

1. World War I left important legacies on the world. Using the Russian Revolution as the example, write 200 words summarising this legacy.
2. Write an extended response in forty minutes, which addresses the following: discuss the legacy of the Russian Revolutions in shaping the modern world.

11.3 Social and cultural changes

World War I resulted in considerable cultural changes in the West, in terms of attitudes to religion, how and where people socialised, the role of women and views on sex. There were also new styles of artistic and musical expression. The **Roaring Twenties** that followed the war, was a period marked by economic prosperity, innovative technologies and new social values.

Women's rights

Women made a substantial contribution to World War I through their involvement in wartime manufacturing on the home front and their deployment as nurses overseas. By 1918, over 750 000 women were directly involved in wartime production in Great Britain, and many others served in auxiliary branches of the armed services, such as the Women's Royal Naval Service, Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, Women's Royal Air Force, as well as the Voluntary Aid Detachment. Importantly, the war helped change societal perception about the types of jobs that women could perform.

Most women had to leave their wartime jobs at the end of World War I, but their involvement in the war was one of the key events of the twentieth century and led to an improvement in women's rights. Women had poor working conditions and received lower pay than their male colleagues, so many women became more politically involved. This was especially true for the union movement of Great Britain where there were over one million female members by the end of the war. Women were also prominent in the anti-war movement in groups such as the No-Conscription Fellowship.

This growing political awareness energised the suffrage movement.

Figure 11.5 Suffragists picketing the House of Commons in 1924

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This movement, led by activists such as Emmeline Pankhurst, aimed to extend the right to vote in elections to all women. As a result of their work, with the assistance of the Labour Party, in 1928 the right to vote in England was granted to all females over the age of 30 who owned property. In 1928 right was extended to all women in Great Britain over 21.

Employment

The war led to a decline in one of the more traditional domains of female employment in Great Britain, domestic service. The employment of domestic staff was a greater financial burden for many families in the middle and upper-classes at the end of the war. Further, these families were able to afford new time-saving devices such as washing machines that reduced the need for servants. This enabled women who had previously been employed in domestic service to seek employment in new fields where they were afforded more independence.

Religion

An important consequence of World War I was a decline in the influence of organised religion on a society. Across Europe, parishioners and clergy were unable to make sense of the horrors of the war, leading to large numbers of people turning away from their faith and seeking explanations for the horrors of war elsewhere. In addition, the war led to large empires, such as Russia and the Ottoman Empire, losing their religious affiliations and becoming secular states.

Social life

Disillusionment following the war led to a society that was more concerned with seeking fulfilment in the present. This could be seen in the catchphrase of the 1920s, 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' Nightclubs grew in popularity and played new jazz music from the USA, including popular dance tunes like the Charleston. According to the historian MacMillan, the period also saw the more frequent use of new recreational drugs such as cocaine.

Figure 11.6 Bee Jackson, world champion Charleston dancer, 1925

The 1920s gave rise to a new generation of women known as 'flappers' who were known for their more liberal social attitudes. They wore shorter and more revealing clothing, put on 'excessive' make-up, drank at bars and often had more casual attitudes to sex. The flappers' sense of freedom was also aided by technological changes such as the development of the automobile and the growth of consumerist society in the years following the war.

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Figure 11.7 Flappers in a bar, c. 1925

Figure 11.8 *Three Musicians* by Pablo Picasso 1921 – an example of Cubism
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The arts

New art forms emerged from **modernism** which rejected classical ideas of modernity. Many of these originated in the prewar period, but the brutality of the war gave them traction. This included avant-garde movements such as **Surrealism**, **Cubism** and **Dada**, which critiqued logic and reason, and allowed ideas of the subconscious to be expressed. In music, similarly, Arnold Schoenberg created **Serialism**, a technique whereby twelve-note tone rows replaced the seven-note diatonic scales which had been the very foundation of Western classical music. Finally, in literature, writer D.H. Lawrence challenged accepted social norms by addressing issues such as sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Summary

- World War I's end led into the Roaring Twenties, a period marked by economic prosperity, innovative technologies and new social values.
- The War helped change societal perceptions about the types of jobs that could be performed by women.
- In 1918, the right to vote in England was extended to all females over the age of 30 who owned property.
- Domestic service rates declined as the financial burden became too much to bear, but this also led to families being able to afford things like washing machines (without needing to pay for help).
- Organised religion declined due to large numbers of people losing faith after the horrors of war.
- The catchphrase of the 1920s was, 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.'
- Women known as 'flappers' were characterised by liberal social attitudes.
- Postwar modernism challenged classical ideas and societal norms in literature, music, and art, and had a more liberal and critical approach.

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Activities

Thinking historically 11.3

1. Describe the impact of World War I on the involvement of British women in politics.
2. Explain how World War I assisted the suffrage movement.
3. Discuss the impact of the war on the types of employment undertaken by women after the war.
4. Explain what is meant by 'the Roaring Twenties' and 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.'
5. Discuss the reasons why World War I led to changes in people's attitudes to religion, sex and the place of women in society.
6. Describe the attributes of a 'flapper'.
7. Explain the impact of World War I on the arts.

Working historically 11.3

Source 11.B **Photos of English women in 1905 and in the 1920s**

Figure 11.9 An English woman in 1905

Figure 11.10 An English woman in the 1920s

Source 11.C **A woman votes for the first time in the United Kingdom, 1918**

Figure 11.11 A woman votes for the first time in the United Kingdom, 1918

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1. Using Source 11.B, list your observations about the style of dress worn by English women in 1905 and in the 1920s. Identify as many differences as you can.

11.4 Technology

Impact of World War I on technology

World War I greatly quickened the pace of technological change that had already begun during the industrial revolution in Europe and the USA. Pressure for war materials, central government demands, acute shortages of materials and labour, and the strong desire for victory in the context of total war, created opportunities for technological innovations.

While many of the technological developments of the war had obvious military applications, such as tanks and more advanced aircraft, many of the technologies invented were beneficial to the civilian population in the postwar period. Key technological developments facilitated by the war included commercial air travel, smaller radios, plastic surgery and ultrasounds.

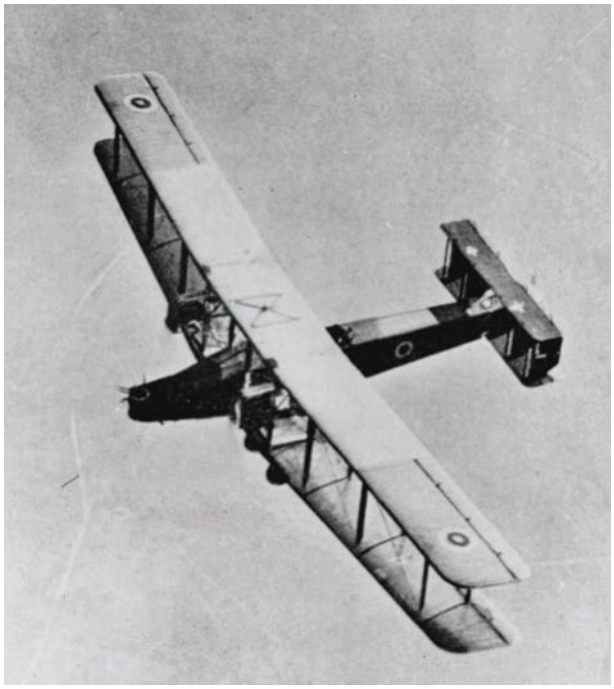

Figure 11.12 The Handley-Page V/1500 four-engine bomber developed in 1918 had the ability to fly from Great Britain to Berlin and back, demonstrating advances made in air transport during the war

The development of new technologies led to an increase in productivity in Europe and in the USA. According to Aldcroft, industry 'witnessed a constant stream of innovations during the inter-war years and under the influence of rapid technical progress … productivity increased rapidly" (1966, p. 306). Productivity increases were furthered by the development of the internal combustion engine, and advances in electronics and chemistry. In turn, these developments led to a boom in automobile manufacture, the development of the radio as well as electrical refrigeration and **synthetics**. One of the most important changes to occur in the 1920s, and developed rapidly thereafter, was the motion picture industry, which attracted large crowds during the Great Depression years and post-World War II. The development of industries based on new technologies was aided by the USA granting $3 billion in war loans to the war-shattered economies of Europe. Despite the difficulty of the Allied powers in paying these funds to the USA, the international economy in the short term gained greater stability through the loans.

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Summary

- The demands of the war created opportunities for technological innovations.
- Key technological developments facilitated by the war included commercial air travel, smaller radios, plastic surgery and ultrasounds.
- The development of new technologies led to an increase in productivity in Europe and in the USA.

Activities

Thinking historically 11.4

1. Explain how the nature of World War I led to rapid technological development.
2. Identify one key technological advance made during the war and evaluate its impact on the twentieth century. You may be required to do additional research on your chosen invention.

Working historically 11.4

Read each of the following sources and answer the questions that follow.

Source 11.D **Historian D. H. Aldcroft discusses the technological effect of World War I on Great Britain.**

> For one thing Britain was forced to manufacture many products which before 1914 she had imported from abroad, such as magnetos, optical and chemical glass, ball bearings, tungsten, ignition plugs, scientific instruments, dyestuffs and certain machine tools. Some of these trades were fostered by the Government and after the war protected by a tariff … Apart from these virtually new creations many branches of industry received a direct stimulus from the war: some of the most notable advances occurred in food preservation, petroleum, new chemical solvents, artificial fibres and certain plastics. For example, it was the military need for a non-inflammable coating of aircraft that laid the foundation of the cellulose-acetate industry.
>
> (Economic Progress in Britain in the 1920s, in *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 13, 1966 pp. 308–309.)

1. According to Source 11.D and your own knowledge, explain how World War I led to technical innovation.

11.5 Economics

Economic impact of the war

One of the most important economic legacies of the war was the requirement in the Versailles treaty that Germany make reparations for damage caused to France, Great Britain and other European states. Georges Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, was determined that 'Germany

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would pay', thus providing for the financial security France required in central Europe during the 1920s.

The modern historian A.J.P. Taylor maintains that Germany remained the most important power in central Europe with the disappearance of the Russian Empire – it had a large population and resources base of coal and steel – but the immediate application of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles created economic hardship and anger in Germany. The level of reparations, the occupation of the Saar and the demilitarisation of the Rhineland caused problems that gave the fledgling Weimar Republic had little chance of overcoming in the short run. This had a detrimental effect on its political stability, and facilitated the rise of extreme left- and right-wing organisations who wanted to overthrow the Weimar Government, such as the National Socialist German Workers' Party led by Adolf Hitler.

Of similar importance, in terms of economic consequences of the war, was the shift in financial power away from Europe to the USA. MacMillan writes:

> Europe collectively was no longer the centre of the world. It had spent its great wealth and exhausted its power … New players from outside Europe were taking a greater part in world affairs … Across the Atlantic, the United States was now a major world power, its industries and farms stimulated to even more growth by the war and with New York increasingly the centre of world finance.

The stronger financial position of the USA enabled it to grant loans to European countries during the war and after it to facilitate reconstruction. While the war was waged, the USA lent the Allied countries around $6 billion for their prosecution, and immediately after a further $3 billion became available to the war-shattered economies. Significant financial assistance was also supplied to Germany through the 1924 Dawes Plan, which provided it with 800 million marks to revive the economy and to enable it to make its reparation payments.

Despite the economic hardships faced by Europe following the war, the USA refused to cancel the debts it was owed, with President Coolidge, who reflected US public opinion by opining that since the European countries borrowed the money, they should pay it back. The need to repay loans to the USA affected the strength of European economies and made them potentially vulnerable in the event of an economic crisis affecting the USA. In 1928, German Chancellor, Gustav Stresemann warned, 'During the past ten years we have been living on borrowed money. If a crisis were to occur and the Americans were to call in their short-term loans, we should be faced with bankruptcy.'

Such a crisis did occur in October 1929 with the Wall Street Crash and the subsequent Great Depression. This was the worst economic crisis in the twentieth century and its impact was felt worldwide until the beginning

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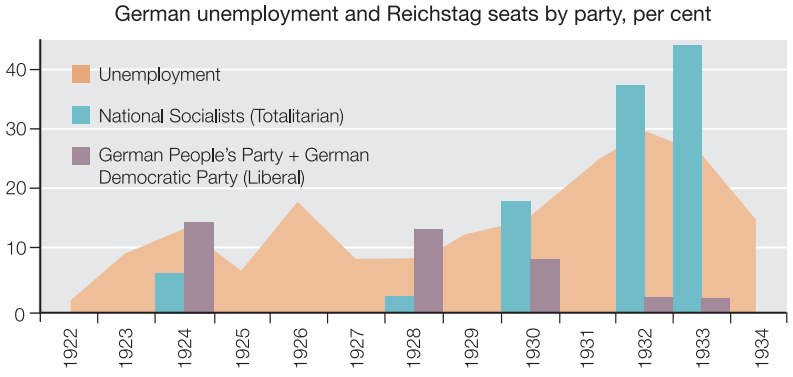
of World War II. One of the worst effects of the Great Depression was mass unemployment across Europe and the USA. This significantly altered the political landscape in Europe and especially in Germany, with voters abandoning moderate parties to vote for parties on the extreme right and left. In May 1928, the National Socialist Party in Germany only received 2.6% of the vote. However, at the height of the Great Depression in July 1932, it received 37.8% of the vote, signifying the extreme impact of the Great Depression on voting patterns. As the historian A.J.P Taylor has noted, 'the Great Depression put the wind into Hitler's sails.'



Source: International Historical Statistics, Europe 1750-1988, *Historische Ausstellung Des Deutschen Bundestages.*

Figure 11.13 German unemployment and support for the National Socialist Party

Summary

- The Treaty of Versailles required Germany to make reparations for damage caused to France, Great Britain and other European states.
- The need to repay loans to the USA affected the strength of European economies and made them potentially vulnerable in the event of an economic crisis affecting the USA.
- In 1929, the US stock market crashed, and thus began the Great Depression, which caused a worldwide economic crisis, and paved the way to political upheaval in Germany.

Activities

Thinking historically 11.5

1. Explain why Clemenceau wanted Germany to pay reparations following World War I.
2. Evaluate the impact of these reparations on Germany and on the stability of Europe more broadly.
3. Outline how the war led to a shift in economic power from Europe to the USA.
4. Discuss the impact of the US loans on the ability of Europe to recover after the war.
5. Reflect on how the US loans ultimately affected political stability in Europe.

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Working historically 11.5

Adolf Hitler's speech on Czechoslovakia at the Sportpalast in Berlin on 26 September 1938 Source 11.E

Ten million Germans found themselves outside the borders of the Reich, in two large settlement areas: Germans, who want to return to their homeland! …

My comrades! There is a limit beyond which concession-making must stop, because otherwise it would become merely a pernicious weakness. I would have no right to stand before German history if I simply and indifferently surrendered these ten million Germans.

On the history of this problem: In 1918, under the slogan of the 'self-determination of peoples', Central Europe was torn to bits and shuffled around by a few insane so-called 'statesmen': without regard to the origins of the peoples, their national desires or economic necessities, Central Europe was atomised and arbitrarily jig-saw puzzled together again in so-called 'New States'. Czechoslovakia owes its very existence to this procedure!

Because if they [the statesmen] had, they would have immediately discovered that there is no such thing as a Czechoslovakian nation; there are only Czechs and Slovaks, and the Slovaks want nothing to do with the Czechs. The whole development of the country since 1913 up to 1938 shows one thing very clearly: Mr Benes was determined to gradually wipe out the German identity … They have the highest mortality rate of all German ethnic groups, their child poverty rate is the highest, their unemployment is by far the highest. How long is something like this supposed to last?

1. In Source 11.E, what did Adolf Hitler mean when he said, 'Central Europe was atomised and arbitrarily jig-saw puzzled together again in so-called "New States"'?

11.6 World order

Following the appalling loss of life and destruction in World War I, the victorious powers were keen to develop a new world order that would prevent war by using disarmament, negotiation and **arbitration**, and the promotion of particular **human rights**. The League of Nations was created by the Treaty of Versailles in 1920 and was the international body designed to achieve these objectives. At its height in 1934, no fewer than 58 nations belonged to the League.

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The League of Nations

The Covenant of the League of Nations contained several features that made it a radical departure from the way states had previously interrelated to solve international disputes. It encouraged states to not resort to war, to follow international law, and to be open, transparent and just in their dealings with each other. Further, it created an assembly where member states could discuss issues with each other, a council to quickly respond to crises and an international court to resolve issues according to international law. The creation of these institutions distinguished the League from previous attempts at avoiding international conflict, such as the Concert of Europe which was created following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815.

One of the League's most significant and revolutionary features was its promotion of **collective security**. Under Article X of the Covenant, every member state was required to 'respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League.' In other words, all states were required to defend other countries that were the victims of military aggression.

Failure of the League of Nations

Ultimately, the League proved to be a failure, which has led historians to overlook its significance. Despite Woodrow Wilson's pivotal role in the creation of the League, the requirement to preserve nations from aggression in Article X resulted in an increasingly isolationist USA not ratifying the Covenant. Several of the world's major powers were also not members, including Germany, the USSR and Japan, which left in 1933. Without a permanent army or the support of powerful countries like the USA, decisions of the League of Nations lacked enforceability. The League was therefore powerfulness and ineffectual when faced with the military aggression of Japan, Germany, Italy and the USSR in the 1930s.

The United Nations

Notwithstanding, the League's promotion of a rules-based world order based on international law and cooperation would pave the way for the establishment of the United Nations following World War II. The United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and International Court of Justice are essentially stronger versions of the League's Assembly, Council and International Court. Some of the League's bodies still exist and were simply incorporated into the United Nations, such as the International Labour Organization.

The Covenant of the League of Nations was also important to the development of modern human rights law as it promoted the right to peace, labour rights, the rights of colonised peoples and the right to health. This set the foundation for the codification of human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights following World War II.

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Summary

- The League of Nations was created by the Treaty of Versailles.
- The League encouraged states to not resort to war, to follow international law, and to be open, transparent and just in their dealings with each other.
- Article X was a covenant that required all member states to defend other countries that were the victims of military aggression.
- Ultimately, the League of Nations failed due to a lack of support from the USA, and powerful countries like Germany, the USSR and Japan not being members.
- The United Nations was formed on the back of the League of Nations.

Activities

Thinking historically 11.6

1. Identify the key features of the Covenant of League of Nations Covenant and explain how it represented a new phase in international cooperation.
2. Explain why the League of Nations failed.
3. Discuss the impact of the League of Nations on future attempts at international cooperation and on human rights law.

Working historically 11.6

Refer to the historical sources in earlier Activities and answer the questions that follow.

1. Using all five sources and your own knowledge, discuss how the changes brought about by World War I impacted the twentieth century.
2. In what ways are Sources 11.A and 11.C useful to a historian who is seeking to understand the effects of World War I in shaping modernity. (In your answer you must consider the nature, motive, origin and audience of each source as well as its content.)
3. Extended response: using the historical sources and information in this chapter and the quotations below, answer one of the following questions:
   - **a** To what extent was the legacy of World War I positive?
   - **b** Assess the impact of World War I in shaping the modern world. In your response consider the social, political, cultural, technological and economic effects of the war. Your response should be an essay and your paragraphs should follow the STEAL format.

STEAL Paragraphs

Statement: answer the question using the words of the question
Topic elaboration: expand and build your argument
Evidence: refer to historical evidence (the opinions of historians)
Analysis: explain how your evidence helps you answer the question
Linking sentence: link your paragraph back to the question (using the words of the question)

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Using the essay plan below will help you plan your response.

Paragraph idea	Topic sentence	Key facts	Historians' opinions
Paragraph 1			
Paragraph 2			
Paragraph 3			
Paragraph 4			
Paragraph 5			
Overall argument (thesis):			

Source 11.F **M. MacMillan, in K. Adie "What did the War really do for women?", BBC.**

The war changed women's lives, and in some ways for the better. They showed society that they were able to do men's jobs and were intellectually more than capable of taking part in society. However, those gains could not be completely consolidated after the war was over; many women were forced from their jobs once the men returned and expected to go back into domestic life. Many women had earned the right to vote, but such things as going to university or standing as MPs were still overwhelmingly the preserve of men.

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V. Brendon, *The First World War*, 1914–18, p. 137. Source 11.G

All over Europe, the most obvious sign of change was in the appearance of women: they looked different in the shorter skirts and bobbed hairstyles which had proved so much more practical in factories, at the front and on the farm. There was a new code of behaviour to go with the new look; the chaperone had been an early casualty of the war and it was now acceptable for a young woman to out to the cinema or dance hall with a boyfriend or girlfriends.

A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, pp. 277–280. Source 11.H

What effects did the First World War have on the destinies of man? Contemporaries saw only the tremendous destruction and were weighed down by it. The death toll reached an unprecedented total … Yet they left no permanent scar. No nation was permanently knocked out of the ranks of the Great Powers by wartime losses, though France came near to being. Young males could be more easily spared than at any other time in the world's history, brutal as this sounds.

The material destruction was even more temporary. Though this, too, horrified contemporaries, it was on a comparatively small scale. Against this, though less noticed, were the new industrial resources which the war had called into existence. All the destruction was put right within a relatively few years, so that it was soon hard to find the evidence that there had ever been a great war. Most countries surpassed their pre-war production by 1923. At the end of the war, farsighted men, such as J.M. Keynes, thought that the great problem of the future would be general poverty: they imagined that productive powers had been permanently reduced. Instead, within ten years, over-production became the greatest problem of mankind. The war, far from weakening economic resources, stimulated them too much. The most serious blow inflicted by the war economically was to men's minds, not to their productive powers. The old order of financial stability was shaken, never to be restored.

In 1919, men expected social upheaval as well as economic disaster.

A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, p. 282. Source 11.I

After the war there were more republics than monarchies in Europe … The King of England was the only remaining Emperor in the world, in his capacity as Emperor of India; even that title had only another generation to run. All this showed the triumph of democracy. Within a few years, many of these democracies became dictatorships. Men often blamed this on the war. Perhaps unjustly. The prestige of the old governing classes had been

continued…

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…continued

decaying. When they vanished, dictatorships were as likely as democracy to take their place. War, at most, accelerated what was happening in any case.

Source 11.J **A. Pickard, *World War I and its Aftermath*, p. 115, 2002.**

any attempt to improve living conditions, health and education or to try to create employment suggested these would have to be done by governments … [however] there were serious difficulties facing any government trying to implement a program of reform. The wealthy and conservative elements had understandably selfish concerns to maintain their political and economic power. Most had little sympathy for the aspirations of the lower classes.

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The representation and commemoration of World War I

12

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the public nature of history and the uses of history
- about the need for critical analysis of representations of the past and historical methods that can be used for this purpose
- about how history is represented through film
- about the various ways World War I is commemorated, including the role of key influences such as nationalism and nation-building.

This chapter is available in the digital versions of the textbook.

DIGITAL

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Glossary

ace British pilot credited with shooting down five or more enemy planes

AIF Australian Imperial Forces

alliance system the method of international diplomacy that developed in the years leading up to World War I. Two or more countries would enter into agreements of mutual support, cooperation and/or neutrality, with the aim of restricting the possible offensive action of a perceived enemy state. Examples were the Dual Alliance, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente.

Allied and associated powers a collective term given to those nations at war with the Central Powers. It totalled 32 powers and included the Allies, such as the British Empire, France and Russia, who declared war against the Central Powers in 1914, and the associated powers, such as the United States, who later aligned themselves with the Allies.

arbitration the process of solving an argument between parties by helping them to agree to an acceptable solution

armistice a temporary cessation of fighting by agreement between both sides to allow for discussion of peace terms. The armistice with Germany at the end of World War I came into effect at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended the war with Germany, was signed on 28 June 1919. It was followed by the Treaty of St Germain with Austria on 10 September 1919, the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine with Bulgaria on 27 November 1919, the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920, and the Treaties of Sèvres (10 August 1920) and Lausanne (24 July 1924) with Turkey.

arms race a competition for military supremacy between two or more nations, which involves the pursuit of numerical and technical superiority. The naval race that developed between Germany and Great Britain is an example.

artillery guns that are mounted on a platform. They may be stationary or mobile, but are too large to be carried as part of the armoury of an individual soldier.

attrition a method of warfare involving the use of sustained pressure to wear away the strength of an opponent. The aim is to create losses of personnel and materiel that cannot be replaced, thereby weakening the opponent, leading to the opponent's surrender or defeat.

Austria–Hungary the dominant empire of central and south-eastern Europe. The dual monarchy was formally created in 1867, with Austria and Hungary as independent states which shared a common monarch, Emperor Franz Joseph I. Within its boundaries, it included several intermingled ethnic groups including: Serbs, Slovenes, Croats, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Poles, Romanians, Magyars and Germans.

balance of power a principle of international diplomacy based on the notion that no one nation should become strong enough to dominate the European continent. To ensure this did not happen, other nations joined alliances or made agreements to restrict the influence and actions of the emerging power.

Balkan crisis a situation which occurred because of the interplay of nationalist and imperialist forces: large powers, such as Germany, Russia and Austria–Hungary, came into conflict due to their imperial desires in south-eastern Europe; they also had to contend with the rising tide of nationalism among the large ethnic groups under the control of the declining Ottoman Empire. The conflicts which ensued ultimately led to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914.

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Balkans regions of south-eastern Europe to the north of modern-day Greece. It included many of the ethnic minorities of the Austro–Hungarian Empire.

balkanise to break up a state or empire into smaller states

beaten zone refers to the fire from infantry units which will hit an opposing soldier between the first point of contact (usually the head) and the final point of contact of that same soldier (usually the feet). During World War I, the term predominantly related to machine-gun fire.

BEF British Expeditionary Force

big push a colloquial term used to describe a large-scale assault on the enemy line

Black Hand a Serbian nationalist terrorist organisation associated with the planning and implementation of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Similar organisations included the Young Bosnians and the *Narodna Odbrana*.

blockade a military strategy of using naval ships to halt or limit the movement of naval and merchant shipping into or out of the ports of the enemy

bomber a combat aircraft of World War I. Aerial bombing was the result of improved technology and was utilised by the Germans from the beginning of the war to unsettle the domestic population of the enemy. Initially bombs were dropped by hand but as the war progressed, technology developed to created more sophisticated effective weaponry.

box barrage a military tactic using a three-sided protective shield of artillery fire to enable advancing troops to capture enemy positions

capitalism an economic system where most means of production are privately owned. Production is guided and income is distributed through market operations. It has become the dominant economic system in the industrialised world since the decline of feudalism.

cavalry the units of soldiers on horseback within an army

Central Powers a collective term given to Germany, Austria–Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire

Chief of Staff the title accorded to the person in charge of a nation's military forces

collective security an agreement among a group of nations to act on behalf of each other if one or several of them faces a military threat

Concert of Europe a dispute resolution system instituted by the major powers following the Napoleonic Wars. It was adopted to sustain the power of the victorious nations and to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas including the spread of nationalism. It was also referred to as 'the congress system'.

conscription compulsory military service

coordinated assault a military tactic employed from 1918 involving the combined use of artillery, infantry, tanks and aircraft to attack the enemy line. This tactic was first effectively used by the Australian general John Monash at the Battle of Hamel in May 1918. It became the tactic employed by the Allied forces along the Western Front.

creeping barrage a military tactic which uses a moving protective wall of artillery fire to enable advancing troops to capture enemy positions

Cubism a style of modern art in which an object or person is shown as a set of geometric shapes and as if seen from many different angles at the same time

Dada a school of artists who rejected the logic and reason of the modern age, and expressed ideas that were nonsensical and irrational

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defence in depth a military tactic involving the temporary yielding of ground to the enemy to lure it into a pre-planned killing zone. The lost ground was regained by way of a rapid counter-attack. This was the preferred tactic of the German forces and explains why they were able to hold their positions for so long. See *flexible defence*.

democracy meaning 'rule by the people', this government system can take three forms: direct (based on the majority decisions of a body of citizens), representative (based on majority decisions of the elected delegates of a body of citizens), and liberal (based on majority decisions within the framework of rights and freedoms guaranteed by a constitution).

dig in colloquial term for the construction of trench lines.

division the major administrative/tactical unit within an army. A division was larger than a brigade or regiment, but smaller than a corps. It was usually commanded by a major general.

dogfight a colloquial term given to a battle between enemy aircraft

DORA Defence of the Realm Act. Introduced in Great Britain in 1914, this act of parliament gave the government wide-ranging powers over the civilian population.

dreadnought a class of battleship based on HMS *Dreadnought*, which was launched in 1906. These ships were so large and so heavily armed that it was believed they 'feared nothing'. They were symbolic of the arms race between Great Britain and Germany.

Dreikaiserbund the 'Three Emperors' League', which was an agreement of mutual support between Germany, Russia and Austria–Hungary made in 1873

duckboards a wooden structure, shaped like a ladder, which was laid at the base of the trenches and provided solid footing over the wet muddy ground

dugout a shelter carved into the side of a trench used for rest and as officer command posts. The size and complexity varied along different sections of the front.

Duma the Russian parliament

easterner a term given to those Allied military and civilian commanders who believed that World War I would be decided by the battles on the Eastern Front. They supported strategies involving engagement with the Ottoman Empire and support for the war effort of the Russian Empire.

enfilade a type of gunfire that can sweep along an entire line of troops, especially when the troops are attacked from the flanks. The use of this tactic was hindered by the construction of the trench lines in a dog-tooth pattern rather than as straight lines.

entente a mutual understanding made between two parties, as opposed to binding agreement or alliance

***ersatz* goods** substitute products made from alternative materials produced to overcome the shortages generated by the war

fire and manoeuvre a military tactic using pairs of soldiers to assault an enemy position. One soldier provided covering fire while the other moved forward about five metres to then provide cover for his colleague to advance. It was effectively employed by Canadian and Australian troops on a number of occasions, but was abandoned by the British and French commanders in favour of the wave assault.

flexible defence a system predicated on the successful movement of reserve troops into the second line of defence. It was expected that armies, drawn into the second zone, would be exhausted and thus repulsed. The system arose from the need to sustain fewer casualties. See *defence in depth*.

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Flottenpolitik a term for Germany's naval policy that required construction of a large fleet to protect its colonies and prevent British domination of world trade. It was closely linked to *Weltpolitik* (world policy), which involved the quest for colonial possessions and the spreading of German influence abroad.

'freeing' offensive the Allied offensive launched in August 1918, which led to German surrender

front line the primary trench line from which assaults were launched and from which the positions of the various armies was measured

going over the top a colloquial term for the commencement of an assault. It literally means going over the top of the parapet and attempting to advance across no man's land.

Hindenburg line a series of linked heavily fortified areas constructed behind the German lines from September 1916

home front refers to life in either Germany or Britain during the war period, which had numerous and significant changes over the years including the role of women, rationing, bombing raids, the development of technology, the growth of industrial strike action by the working classes, and the development of central government power

human rights the rights that belong to all people and cannot be taken away

imperialism the policy involving the extension of one nation's authority over another nation or territory

industrialisation the process of a society converting to a socio-economic system in which machines dominate

industrial military complex the armed forces and the industries that supply them

infantry the military units who fight on foot using rifles, machine-guns, mortars, grenades

infiltration tactics a military tactic used by the Germans, also known as Hutier tactics. Specifically designed to take out a trench system, it was based on *fire and manoeuvre*, and combined shock troops with coordinated infantry and artillery assaults.

internationalism a belief in, and support for, the mutual interests and cooperation between nations. It argues that disputes between states can be resolved through the democratic control of diplomacy, self-determination for all nations, open negotiations, disarmament, free trade, and a system of international law and collective security.

interrupter gear a mechanism installed in aircraft that linked the shaft of the propeller with the trigger of the machine-gun mounted before the pilot. It allowed the machine-gun to fire 'through' the propeller and gave the pilot greater accuracy in a dogfight.

jingoism an extreme, belligerent form of nationalism

July crisis the diplomatic developments following the assassination in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 through to the outbreak of war on 4 August

Kriegsamt the Supreme War Office established in Germany in 1916. It took control over all domestic matters affecting the war effort.

laissez-faire an economic policy based on free trade and an absence of government interference

liberalism the support for individual rights and freedoms, and a belief in democratic forms of government that preserve and protect these rights and freedoms

materiel a general term for arms, ammunition and military equipment

mechanised warfare refers to humans using machines to carry out defensive and offensive operations. It was developed during World War I from 1917 onwards to overcome the static nature of the Western Front.

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militarism the tendency to make the affairs or interests of the army/navy/air force the dominant factor in a nation's policy making. Militarist beliefs resulted in increased international tension and led to the arms race prior to World War I.

mobilisation to order, assemble and organise military forces so that they are ready to undertake active service

modernism a philosophical movement that rejected traditional and classical ideas. Modernism was a reaction to many of the rapid changes brought about by modernity.

Monro doctrine a military tactic of *fire and manoeuvre* developed by British Colonel Charles Monro at the end of the nineteenth century.

Moroccan crisis an international incident that occurred in 1905 or 1911 that was designed by Germany to break the entente between Great Britain and France, but instead resulted in a stronger Anglo–French relationship

nationalism a dominant philosophy of the nineteenth century and a fundamental cause of World War I. It involved the belief that: people of a common religious, linguistic, cultural and geographic heritage should be united in one nation; the people were the embodiment of the nation's and political power rather than a ruler; and that a nation should expand its power and influence for the good of its people. Nationalism has links to the rise of imperialism and militarism.

no man's land the area between the two opposing front lines marked by shell craters and covered with barbed wire

Ottoman Empire an old name for the modern state of Turkey and incorporating parts of Greece, the Balkans, Romania and the Middle East

pacifism an opposition to any form of violence or participation in war

pan-Slavism a belief that Russia had a duty to free and protect the Slav people of south-eastern Europe

peacemaking the process of creating a treaty that ends the conflict between two or more powers who have been at war

pill box a small fortified structure of reinforced concrete enclosing a machine-gun

regiment a military unit made up of two or more battalions, a headquarters unit and support units, and commanded by a lieutenant colonel

Roaring Twenties the years between 1920 and 1930, when society was returning to normal after World War I and the general mood was positive

salient a section of the trench line that bulged outwards making it vulnerable to attack from three sides. Any salient, such as that near Ypres, was liable to be the scene of intensive fighting.

self-determination the right of a nation to determine how it is governed

Serialism a radical form of composition developed by Arnold Schoenberg that rejected the harmonic conventions of Western music

ships of the line during the late nineteenth century this term meant 'ship of the line of battle' or 'line of battle ship'. It originated from the practice of the major European navies lining up for battle, opposed in line to gain the major advantage during an engagement.

socialism a philosophy based on notions of political, economic and social equality

splendid isolation a guiding principle of British foreign policy up to the period before World War I. It was felt that Great Britain should not directly involve itself in European affairs, but should intervene if and when the balance of power on the continent needed to be redressed.

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stalemate at a standstill, with neither of the opposing forces able to advance and achieve the objectives of its war plans

suffrage the right to vote

suffrage movement a movement aimed to extend the right to vote in elections to all women

synthetics products made from artificial substances, often copying a natural product

Surrealism a type of twentieth-century art and literature in which unusual or impossible things are shown happening

total war the notion that a nation's entire social, political and economic structures should be devoted to the war effort. In a total war, the role of the home front can prove as decisive as victories on the battlefield.

trade unionism the emergence of associations of workers in a particular trade, industry, or factory, with the aim of using collective action to obtain improvements in pay, benefits, working conditions and the socio-political status of the membership.

Treaty of San Stefano a treaty of 1878 that ended the Russo–Turkish War and created the state of Bulgaria

ultimatum a statement of conditions that, unless met by a specified deadline, results in certain action being taken

war a state of open hostility and conflict between nations. From the time of the French Revolution, the way wars were fought changed: the size of armies increased from small professional units to large bodies of conscripted men. The objectives of war broadened to include ideals of revolution, nationalism or morality. Throughout the nineteenth century, countries viewed the waging of war as a legitimate, rational instrument of national policy. World War I changed this belief.

wave assault the most used military strategy of World War I. It involved lines of infantry soldiers advancing towards enemy positions under the belief that sustained pressure from the numbers of men would eventually force a break in the defensive line.

weak point strategy a military strategy based on the targeting of perceived weaknesses in the enemy's defensive line. Those who favoured an eastern assault believed that the weak link in the Central Powers lay with Austria–Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. This was the dominant military thinking in 1915.

Weltpolitik the policy of taking a forceful part in international affairs: the quest for colonial possessions and the spreading of German influence abroad.

westerner a term given to those Allied military and civilian commanders who believed that World War I should be decided by the battles on the Western Front. They supported strategies involving the deployment of massive resources – men and materiel – to France.

Zeppelin an airship developed by the German Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin and utilised for reconnaissance and bombing purposes by the German High Command during World War I. It is reported to have killed over five hundred British civilians.

Zimmerman telegram a coded message dated 19 January 1917 from the German Foreign Secretary, Arthur Zimmerman, to the German ambassador to Mexico urging Mexican support in the event of war between Germany and the USA. The message was intercepted by British intelligence, decoded and passed to the USA. It had the impact of further outraging the US public opinion, following the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, and played a key part in the decision of its congress to go to war against Germany.

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8 Digital-only resource
The changing nature of war to 1918

8.2 Changing tactics

The impact of new weaponry on tactics

In 1914, the Great Powers expected to fight a war of rapid movement, open battles and swift victory. They had anticipated large, industrialised armies to sweep across Europe via intricate railroad networks and, when battles arose, they would be fought in the fashion that Napoleon had envisaged a century earlier – there would be brief and preparatory artillery fire in the field, followed by a spirited infantry frontal assault; when the infantry breached the enemy's line, the cavalry would pour into the hole, break up the enemy's forces and complete the rout.

In the early years of the twentieth century, perhaps influenced by Prussia's quick victory in the Franco–Prussian war, the military academies of Europe had preached the doctrine of the offensive. Officers were taught to think of the battlefield as an opportunity to attack. The attack was to be an exercise in combining the fighting spirit of the men with the concentration of firepower. For example, the French Field Regulations, issued in 1913, stated:

> The French army, returning to its traditions, henceforth admits no law but the offensive. Battles are beyond everything else struggles of morale. Defeat is inevitable as soon as the hope of conquering ceases to exist. Success comes not to him who has suffered the least but to him whose will is firmest and morale strongest.

Most of the generals of 1914 were cavalry officers. Since medieval times the cavalry was seen as the elite corps of armies, the command of which had historically been entrusted to the wealthy upper classes. Commanders viewed the infantry with disdain and dreamed of the opportunity to orchestrate a dramatic cavalry charge in battle. The 1907 British Cavalry Training Manual reflected this belief:

> It must be accepted as a principle that the rifle, effective as it is, cannot replace the effect produced by the speed of the horse, the magnetism of the charge and the terror of cold steel.

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The infantry tactics at the start of 1914 were much as they had been for the preceding 200 years. Troops were either moved in densely packed columns four-men wide and hundreds deep, or in several ranks of around 100 men. Spacing between the men ranged from shoulder to shoulder in the German army to several metres for the British. They were to keep in straight lines at all times, so that their volleys of unaimed fire would have the maximum impact. They were trained to march slowly, even when coming into the range of enemy fire, and to break into a moderate running pace for the final charge (some 50 metres from the enemy line). They had to stay in the open – diving to the ground to shelter behind dips and slopes was considered unmanly. The target they presented to defenders was large and slow, but this was meant to be overcome by their 'fighting spirit'.

The tactical problem

The use of rifles, machine-guns and artillery created several tactical problems during World War I.

- Soldiers who were covered from shell or bullet fire by trenches or rifle pits were better protected than soldiers in the open, and could fire with greater accuracy.
- Cavalry could not succeed against artillery and machine-gun fire combined with entrenchments and fortifications. This, together with the unsuitable ground, made cavalry ineffective on the Western Front, although it was less of an issue in the Palestine campaign.
- Slow moving infantry assault lines could be destroyed by artillery and machine-gun fire before they had the chance to use their rifles.
- The rate of fire of modern weapons favoured defence over attack. Artillery and machine-gun fire could not be used to support attacking troops when they came close to the enemy, but defending machine-guns and artillery could fire on the assaulting troops throughout an attack.
- Closely spaced assaulting troops in the open presented an easier target to defenders than the entrenched defenders did to the attackers.

Trench warfare

The three-line trench system

In late 1914, the Germans began to develop their earlier defences into a more systematic approach for defending the territory they held. This came to be known as the three-line trench system and was adopted by both sides on the Western Front. There were three lines of trenches: front line, support and reserve trenches. Trench lines were constructed in pairs, about 50 metres apart, with each pair of trenches about 400 metres from another pair. Fighting trenches were slightly deeper than the average man's height (about 1.8 metres) and about 1.5–2 metres wide.

On the side facing the enemy, there was a firing step on which the soldier could stand and fire his rifle at attacking soldiers. Half a metre in front of him there would be a metre-thick layer of protective sand-bags with gaps through which he could fire. Beyond this would be a thick layer of barbed wire defences – ideally at least 35 metres wide, because

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Figure 8.3 An aerial view of a section of the Western Front. Notice the tessellated (shaped like teeth) pattern of the trenches.

30 metres was the distance that most soldiers could throw a grenade. Located within the barbed wire were observation posts and easily removable gates. These gaps in the wire were closely guarded: the aim was to provide access to no-man's land for the defending side's trench raiders, reconnaissance teams or assault waves.

Along the bottom of the trenches was a line of **duckboards** – wooden, ladder-like structures that were to provide firm footing on the mud, water and other fluids of the battlefield. Where possible, the sides of the trenches were revetted, or strengthened, with woven sticks or sheets of corrugated iron to prevent the trenches from collapsing. The trench line itself was tessellated (shaped like teeth). Each section of trench was no longer than about five metres. There would then be a sharp bend or corner. The aim was to minimise the effect of a bomb blast and prevent an enemy machine-gunner wiping out the entire line of defenders in one burst.

The front line, support and reserve trenches were linked by communication trenches. These were little more than a metre wide and about the height of a man. They had neither firing steps nor other defences: they were merely a means of moving from one line to another. They too were tessellated.

Barbed wire was also located in the areas between the lines of fighting trenches. In the event of one line being overrun, this would enable the next line to take on the role of the front line. The support and reserve lines also contained strong points. These were heavily wired and fortified positions, housing company or battalion command posts, with machine-guns and reserve troops on site. They were designed to protect the command posts and provide a means of preventing a complete walkover by enemy attackers.

Figure 8.4 A soldier sleeping in a trench

Machine-gun nests were located in the front and support-line trenches and were ferociously defended. If the nest was about to be captured, the crew would withdraw to an alternative machine-gun position in the support or reserve trenches. If this was impossible, they would attempt to disable the gun so that it could not be used by the enemy. The supporting field artillery, battalion aid posts and kitchens were usually located behind the reserve-line trenches.

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Ammunition bays and cooking holes were dug into the sides of the trenches, and sleeping dugouts were carved deep into the earth with the soil used to fill the sand-bags on the firing parapets. These dugouts would be dug into the enemy side of a support trench to minimise the effect of shell blast, and were reinforced by log rafters to prevent cave-ins. They could sleep up to 30 or 40 men. Company officers usually had their own mess dugouts, as did sergeants and warrant officers.

The basic tactical principles behind the three-line trench system were:

- The major killing zone for an enemy attack was in no-man's land, usually about 50 to 150 metres in front of the front-line trench.
- Each line of trenches mutually supported the others.
- The trenches provided sufficient protection to allow defenders to use rifles and machine-guns effectively.
- The existence of three lines of trenches ensured that the position was unlikely to be taken even if one line of trenches fell.
- The lines of trenches allowed for an effective counter-attack.
- The trench lines were complex enough to cause the enemy to become disoriented.

The opposing lines of trenches were about 500 to 1000 metres apart. In some sectors of the Western Front, greater distances were not uncommon, especially near the English Channel. In other areas, such as near Ypres and Verdun, the trench lines were as little as 50 metres apart. Furthermore, the attitudes towards trench building depended on the ways in which the different armies viewed defence. The French considered trenches to be no more than a brief necessity before the expected offensive, and until late 1917 their trenches tended to be poorly constructed with primitive drainage and sanitation systems.

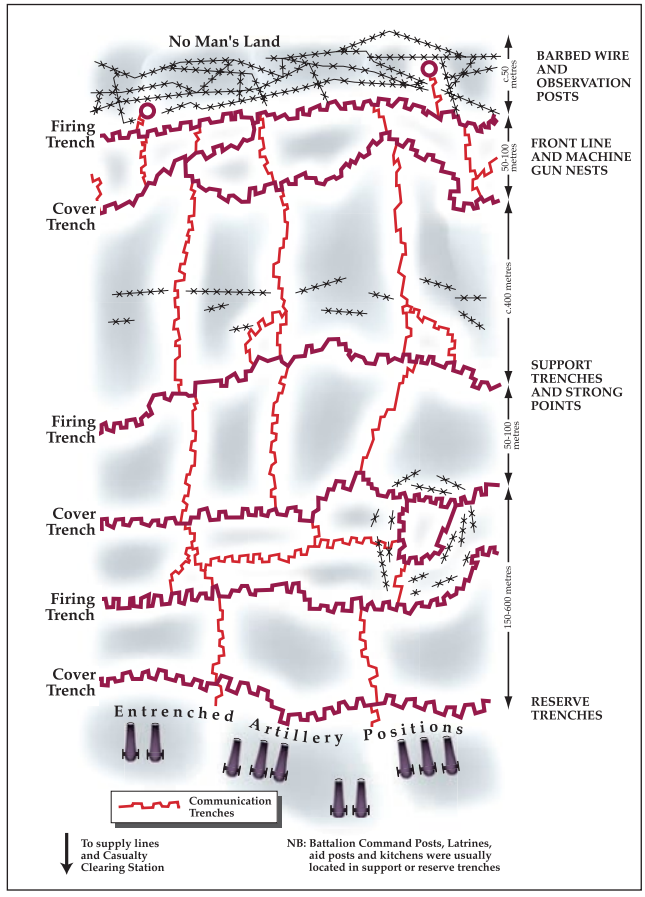

Figure 8.5 The three-line trench system

Figure 8.6 A wounded British soldier

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On the other hand, the Germans quickly realised that most sectors of the trench line would need to be defended for a long period of time. Consequently, German trenches tended to be well-constructed with proper revetting (stone or concrete supports rather than corrugated iron), deep concrete bunkers and elaborate drainage systems. The British trenches depended on the attitudes of individual commanding officers and varied from well-designed trenches to simple earthworks.

Defence in depth

By late 1916, the war of **attrition** had begun to tell on Germany's manpower. After Verdun, it was unable to defend its trenches at its usual three-line calculation of one man per metre of trench. So, Germany turned to a technique called **defence in depth** that had proven successful on the Eastern Front. In this system, the defence would temporarily yield ground to the enemy's attack in order to lure the attackers into a series of well-planned killing zones. The lost ground would then be regained by using a rapid counter-attack. The area covered by defence in depth could be up to 10 kilometres, and it substituted large numbers of men for the firepower of their weapons. The tactic proved to be extremely successful against **wave assaults**, but less successful against mass tank attacks later in the war.

The French army adopted the principles of defence in depth in 1917 when they began to construct their trenches further apart with allocated killing zones in between. The British were more reluctant to adopt this system – by the start of the 1918 German offensives, they had only partly

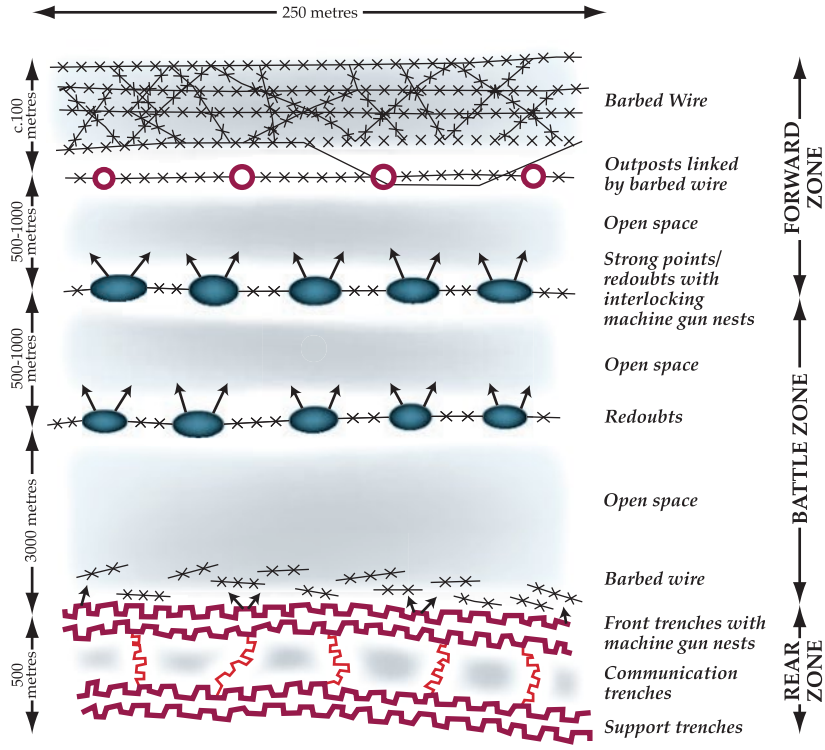

Figure 8.7 Defence in depth

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established their forward zones. Ultimately, however, the Allies' adoption of this flexible defensive tactic enabled them to absorb the final German offensives, and use their tanks and motor vehicles to turn the war back into a war of movement.

Fire and manoeuvre and trench raids

The British army, chastened by its experiences in the Boer War (1899–1902), had trained under the **Monro Doctrine** of Colonel Charles Monro from 1901 onwards. This system of assault on the battlefield involved splitting groups of soldiers into pairs. Each pair within its section would 'pepper-pot' through to an objective: one man provided covering fire while the other moved forward about five metres; when the moving man went to ground, he then provided covering fire for his colleague to move forward, and so on. This system of **fire and manoeuvre** had almost been perfected by the British by 1914. In France, the BEF abandoned the tactic – the cavalry generals who commanded them favoured the older, less complicated and easier to control system of the wave assault.

The area in which fire and manoeuvre was used to great effect was in trench raids – a tactic initiated by the Canadians in 1915. Australian and Canadian troops were considered the best trench raiders. The object of a trench raid was to obtain information about the enemy such as the state of their defences, morale, identity of units and so on, prior to a general attack. The operations were small, with a group of 20 to 200 men allocated to a small sector of enemy trench to raid.

Trench raids usually took place at night. A **box barrage** would cut off the targeted sector of the enemy trench and the raiders would move forward accompanied by a light machine-gun crew on each flank. The raiders, armed with clubs, knives, knuckledusters, pistols and grenades, would jump into the enemy trenches, kill as many as possible, bomb dugouts and either bring back prisoners or marks of identification, such as cap and collar unit badges. The raiders would retreat to their trenches under the cover of light machine-gun.

Hutier or infiltration tactics

Another attempt to break the trench deadlock came in the form of new infantry tactics. Based on information gathered from all fronts, and the experiences of Lieutenant Erwin Rommel in Italy and General Emil von Hutier on the Eastern Front, the Germans developed a form of small group fire and manoeuvre tactics, specifically designed to take out trench systems. They were first used on the Western Front in the Spring offensives of 1918 and were very successful.

These infiltration tactics combined shock troops, pepper-potting, specific infantry task allocation and *Brüchmuller* artillery strategies. Many regiments of infantry were trained as *sturmtruppen* or storm troopers armed with sub-machine-guns and grenades.

The attack would begin with a five-hour barrage of gas and high explosive shells to the flanks of the targeted trench lines. This barrage would then continue throughout the attack to prevent the enemy moving to support their flanks.

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The targeted sector itself was bombarded with high explosive shells and smoke bombs before a wave of storm troopers assaulted. Their function was to eliminate any enemy encountered and to avoid a prolonged conflict. Strong points were bypassed, their real targets being the artillery batteries, headquarters and supply depots behind the reserve lines. Storm troopers were given the freedom to determine which targets needed the most attention based on their own observations; responsibility was delegated to the lowest levels.

Once the storm troopers had moved past the front line and support trenches, they were followed by platoons of normal infantry whose function was to link up with storm trooper guides. Armed with rifles, light machine-guns and grenades, this second wave of infantry attackers bombed and machine-gunned the remaining strong points.

These tactics were employed by the Germans on the first day of the Spring offensive on 21 March 1918, with spectacular results:

- British killed: 7512
- British wounded: 10 000
- British prisoners: 21 000
- British guns lost: 382

The British had only ever lost more men in a single day during the first day of the Battle of the Somme, and had never lost so many guns in one day. In all five phases of the Spring offensive, the Germans used this tactic to gain 65 kilometres in the western sector of the trench lines, and up to 60 kilometres in the central and eastern sectors. However, the Germans lacked the tanks or armoured cars necessary to exploit the gains.

Infantry waves or frontal assaults

The basic attack for most of World War I was the infantry wave, consisting of infantry platoons of 30 to 50 men lined up in an extended file, facing the enemy. They were armed with rifles with bayonets attached. Officers were armed with pistols, but many chose to go into action with only their swagger sticks. The wave attack was usually preceded by a preparatory bombardment. On a given signal – a whistle blast from the platoon officer – the platoon would advance towards the enemy at a slow walk. At about 50 metres from the enemy, the officer would give the signal to charge and the wave would break into a run. The aim was to break through the enemy line with the shock of the bayonet charge.

A wave attack would normally be a large-scale assault; several divisions of infantry would be committed and the waves would vary from four platoons' width (several hundred metres) to two battalions' width (several kilometres). There would usually be 10 to 15 waves allocated to the attack, with each wave given a specific target, such as a line on a map that they had to reach. In the open battles of 1914, troops would line up in full view of the enemy and attack in daylight. With the advent of trenches, troops assembled at night and assaulted at dawn.

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In the early battles of 1914, the Germans assaulted in close order, often standing shoulder to shoulder. By 1916, all armies were assaulting in open order (with around five metres spacing between each man). This was designed to present a less dense target for machine-guns and artillery. In fact, it usually meant that the majority of the wave was hit later in the advance through no-man's land.

The big pushes of 1916 and 1917 represented the extremity of the wave attack. Thousands of men were used to assault strongly defended positions. Alternative tactics were suggested, but discarded by the generals who thought that the briefly trained officers and conscript troops were incapable of executing more sophisticated actions. The generals also feared that if the soldiers went to ground while waiting for covering rifle fire, they would never get up to move ahead.

From late 1916, the waves were allocated different tasks in the assault. The first waves were fighting platoons, while the next were mopping-up and support platoons, armed with grenades and rifles. The final waves were carrying platoons with defence stores, such as wire and wooden duckboards, to assist in the fortification of the occupied enemy trench lines. Initially, soldiers carried all their equipment into battle. For the British soldier, this equated to up to 30 kilograms of pack, sleeping kit, personal items, spare ammunition, three days' rations, and so on. By 1917, soldiers in assault waves usually carried only basic personal equipment and ammunition.

Artillery tactics

Artillery in 1914

World War I is often called the 'Artillery War' because most battle casualties were caused by artillery. Guns were used in great numbers. Awesome bombardments of many days, even weeks, were used to soften up the lines for the trench attacks. Soldiers feared the noise and impact of artillery, and many suffered high levels of stress, which was a condition colloquially known as 'shell shock'. More than any other weapon, the artillery defined the character of the misery and destruction of the fighting on the Western Front.

There were two types of artillery: guns with long slender barrels used for firing over longer ranges with a flat trajectory and a smaller shell; and howitzers with shorter, thicker barrels, a higher trajectory, and heavier shells for shorter ranges. Artillery was an area weapon: it was designed to cover an area of ground with fire. Guns were fired in groups called batteries.

Most armies in 1914 had batteries of four to six guns; each battery covered an area of around 100 square metres with its salvo of high explosive or shrapnel shells. Each shell had a lethal radius of up to 10 metres and a casualty radius of around 20–30 metres. In 1914, most nations had few heavy guns or howitzers. Those they had were difficult to move easily, and were used to assist the attack or defence of static siege positions such as towns.

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Figure 8.8 The German 420 mm gun, 'Big Bertha'

Throughout the war, the heavy guns of the Central Powers were generally superior. Famous examples of heavy guns were the German 150 mm (5.9 inch) howitzer, the Austrian 305 mm heavy howitzer, the German 420 mm heavy howitzer – known by the British as 'Big Bertha' – and the French 120 mm 1877 *Systeme de Bange* gun. The disadvantage of heavy guns was their mobility; most weighed many tonnes and had to be moved by rail or horse, or be man-hauled.

Artillery in 1915 – the preparatory bombardment

In 1915, gunners attempted to fire in support of their troops in traditional ways: they would fire on the enemy front lines for a few hours prior to an attack; or they would fire on an advancing line of troops as soon as they were attacked. The length of the bombardment was determined by the number of shells available. There were severe ammunition shortages in 1915 on both the Allied and Central sides, which led to the reorganisation of the munitions industries and the stockpiling of artillery ammunition.

Figure 8.9 A French 120 mm gun

The first problem with the 1915 preparatory bombardments was accuracy. Although they could reliably hit a single target line, they were incapable of rapidly switching targets or firing on a range of targets. In defence, they could not keep up with the line of attacking troops, which were usually able to get too close to the defending trenches for the artillery to fire without hitting their own troops. There were similar problems in attack. Although they could pepper a defending trench line prior to the attack, they could

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not quickly switch targets once their own wave of infantry approached within 100 metres of the defending line, so consequently they had to stop firing. The Germans learnt to counter these bombardments by sparsely manning their front lines and then quickly moving reserves to the front line in time to turn back the attackers.

The second problem was the type of fire. In the wars before 1914, shrapnel had been used to great effect against troops in the open and the generals expected the same circumstances in World War I. Once troops began to use trenches for protection, more shrapnel shells were used than high explosive; the aim was to cut the barbed wire in front of the defending trenches. However, the shrapnel did little more than further tangle the wire and left the attacking troops stranded in no-man's land.

Box barrages

This offensive tactic was developed in late 1915. It was used throughout 1916 and 1917 to support trench raids, and was expanded to include major operations in late 1917 and 1918. A box-shaped 'curtain' was created by field gun fire into which the attacking troops could advance, capture troops and information, and destroy enemy strong points. Outside this box, machine-guns and medium and heavy artillery were fired on reserve trenches and enemy artillery positions to prevent the reinforcement of the attacked sector. These raids were short and sharp, and usually conducted at night.

The success of the box barrage encouraged its use in major assaults in 1917 and 1918, but it ran into problems when troops attempted to move beyond the front line of the enemy's position.

***Bruchmrüller* tactics**

The German artillery tactician, General Georg Bruchmüller, took the box barrage, and adapted it on the Eastern Front in 1916 and 1917. He brought it back to the Western Front in 1917 where it became an integral part of all successful offensives. Heavy guns were used to fire a short, but extremely heavy, barrage to cut off the targeted position from the rest of the enemy. Gas shells were used in addition to high explosives and smoke bombs to prevent the enemy from assisting the sides of the targeted position. The barrage continued throughout the attack with infantry soldiers pouring through using infiltration tactics. The only limitation on this extremely successful tactic was the high number of shells that was needed. This worked in the Allies' favour when they adopted it in 1918.

Artillery in 1916 – the creeping or rolling barrage

The tactic of the creeping or rolling barrage was first used in late 1915. It involved the guns firing on pre-set barrage lines for a determined number of minutes in support of an attack. The first barrage line would coincide with the enemy front line, the second barrage line with the enemy support line, the third barrage line with the enemy reserve line and so on. The infantry wave moved forwards 100–150 metres behind the line of artillery fire. The theory was that the artillery would destroy the enemy positions, and protect the infantry as it mopped up and occupied the trenches.

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However, too much shrapnel was fired and too few heavy guns were used for these barrages to work properly. The enemy simply waited in dugouts for the barrage to pass, knowing that the attacking infantry would still be at least 100 metres away. This gave them time to man their positions, and bring their defensive rifle and machine-gun fire into effect.

The 1916 solution was to increase the period of the initial barrage. The aim was to completely shatter the enemy lines with a massive but slow bombardment. For example, at the Somme, a seven-day preliminary bombardment involved 1.7 million artillery shells being fired at the Germans. Later battles saw even greater expenditure of ammunition. Although, this caused problems too. The vast numbers of shells needed on the fronts stretched the domestic war efforts even further, and the ability to launch a sudden attack was negated by the need for armies to stockpile as many shells as possible. Eventually it became predictable – once the bombardment began, the defenders waited and eventually their opportunity would come.

Defensive artillery fire, 1917–1918

Protective barrages were first used in 1917 and were adaptations of the preparatory barrage. The aim was to break an enemy attack by pouring heavy field gun fire onto the enemy jump-off point as soon as an attack began. It would then switch to a point 150 metres in front of the defending trenches once the first barrage line had been passed by enemy troops. These barrages invariably failed, with the enemy able to slip through the barrage lines and carry on its attack.

The last defensive artillery technique of the war was the counter-preparation barrage, which was developed in late 1917. Its aim was to saturate the entire enemy position, not just the front line, as soon as an attack was anticipated, not just when it began. Heavy gun fire and field gun fire were poured on to all troops, assembly points, lines of approach and other key areas. This tactic proved successful for the Allies as they had ammunition reserves to provide the large amount of fire needed.

Predicted artillery fire and transport

The major problem for artillery was its inflexibility in adapting to sudden targets of opportunity. Artillery plans were laid down weeks in advance and were based on assumptions about the position of enemy strong points. If assaulting infantry required spontaneous support from an unexpected position, the gunners had neither the communications nor the technical knowledge about explosive charges and trajectories to respond accurately and immediately. Consequently, opportunities to exploit a potentially favourable position were often lost.

By the end of the war, however, British and French artillery officers and scientists had accumulated enormous tables of data to enable them to accurately predict the propellant charge and barrel angle needed to land a shell at a specified location. For example, at the Battle of Hamel on 4 July 1918, gunners predicted their fall of shot accurately. Thus, Allied gunners were able to adjust to opportunity targets with much greater ease and this made a significant difference in the Allied counter-offensives of 1918.

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The advent of motorised transport also meant that the Allies could more easily move their heavy guns in support of their attacking troops. This gave them a distinct advantage over the Germans who, with fuel and steel shortages, were confined to using railways, horses and manpower to move their heavy guns.

Allied coordinated assault – the Battle of Hamel, 1918

On 31 May 1918, Major General John Monash was appointed to command the Australian Corps on the Western Front, the first time that an Australian-born officer had achieved the highest Australian field command. Monash's first task was to use a **coordinated assault** to attack the German position north of the Somme and to capture the town of Hamel. He was allocated 10 companies of US troops and the British Tank Brigade (comprising over 60 of the new British Mark V tanks) along with three Australian divisions.

The battle took place on 4 July and within 90 minutes the Australian force had achieved its objectives. The front was advanced two and a half kilometres along a six-and-a-half-kilometre line. Clemenceau commented to the Australian Imperial Force (**AIF**) in a speech just after the battle that, 'We knew that you would fight a real fight, but we did not know that from the very beginning you would astonish the whole continent.' The French Prime Minister was exaggerating, for Hamel was a relatively small affair, given the scale of most of the offensives on the Western Front. However, it was notable for the style of the victory rather than its size.

Monash's staff prepared for the battle in detail. Little was left to chance, but enough flexibility was allowed to give the local commanders room to deal with unexpected problems on the battlefield. The battle tactics involved a surprise attack; there was no preliminary bombardment. Instead, at zero-hour, four waves of infantry moved off behind a screen of tanks with a protective creeping barrage. The RAF provided close air support with 198 pilots dropping 1358 25-pound bombs on tactical and strategic targets. Ground troops were, for the first time, resupplied from the air; British aircraft dropped over 100 000 rounds of machine-gun ammunition to the Australians while the battle was in progress. As a result of these tactics, the infantry mopped up and occupied German positions that had been neutralised by the artillery, tanks and aircraft.

The battle demonstrated Monash's all-arms coordinated approach to offensives. Due to the low Allied casualties and a relatively high success rate, these tactics were wryly nicknamed 'peaceful penetration'. No longer were infantry expected to sacrifice themselves in pursuit of unattainable goals. Further, the Battle of Hamel showed that Australian soldiers could plan and execute their own battles successfully. Monash obtained his ideas from many sources, but the depth of preparation and combination of tactics were his own. Hamel was so successful a venture that the Allied generals considered it a prototype for each of their future offensives.

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Summary

- Throughout the period 1914 to early 1918 inappropriate offensive tactics, slow commitment of reserve forces and poor use of modern technology meant that defence prevailed over attack. The result was a trench deadlock.
- The Germans adopted better defence, from the three-line trench system to flexible defence or defence in depth.
- Machine-guns and artillery were the main weapons for maintaining defence.
- Neither side was prepared to devote enough time to train soldiers for the small details of trench warfare – the generals kept looking for a big solution.
- Gas was too difficult to control to be an effective means for breaking the deadlock, but it was an effective means of supporting an attack.
- Wave assaults were usually complete failures and did little more than sacrifice lives. This eventually played into the hands of the Allies.
- Between 1914 and 1917, artillery was used in an unsophisticated fashion with the generals expecting brute force to prevail. It was not until 1918 that its use was accurate enough to create an advantage for the attack.
- Tanks enabled the Allies to break trench deadlock, but caused relatively few casualties themselves. Their major effect was on morale.
- Flexible defence eventually enabled the Allies to counter the German's infiltration and Bruchmüller tactics.
- Adoption of German-style offensive tactics, with coordination of all participating forces, enabled the Allies to roll back the Germans in the latter part of 1918.

Activities

Thinking historically 8a.1

1. Explain the role of each of the following innovations on the Western Front:
   - **a** tanks
   - **b** gas
   - **c** infiltration tactics
   - **d** coordinated assaults.
2. Copy and complete the following table:

The effectiveness of artillery on the Western Front		
Type of artillery fire	**Intended effect**	**Actual effect**
Preparatory bombardments		
Creeping barrages		
Box barrages		
***Bruchmüller* tactics**		
Predicted fire		

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3. **a** Describe the wave assault strategy.
   b Explain why, despite its failure, the wave assault continued to be used on the Western Front.
4. Why, despite their record of success, was the tactic of trench raids not effectively employed between 1915 and 1917?
5. **a** Outline the differences between coordinated assault and the other attack strategies used on the Western Front.
   b Why did it take until the middle of 1918 for the use of the coordinated assault to become a key tactic for breaking the stalemate?

Working historically 8a.1

1. Imagine you are the author of the following statement:

Extract from the memoirs of a French officer, General J.G.M. Rouquerol, published in 1934. Source 8.A

> Before the war, the word defensive, if it was not eliminated from the military vocabulary, was at least virtually abrogated. Anyone who pronounced it was disqualified. During manoeuvres or exercises, to obtain the blessings of the commander and his counsellors, it sufficed for him who would promote himself to say, 'I attack'.

Explain why the French army prior to World War I spurned the notion of defence.

2. Read the following source.

Extract from *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One* by the Australian historian John Laffin, Alan Sutton, Wolfeboro Falls, 1988. Source 8.B

> British generals could see that battles would be murderous, but they reasoned that victory would certainly go to those who showed the greatest staunchness. Weapons were not the major factor, but will-power. Haig had pronounced this in 1907, in his *Cavalry Studies*. 'Success in battle depends mainly on moral [sic] and a determination to conquer.' Yet it was obvious that machine-guns and rifles used from static positions gave the advantage to the defender. The British had used Maxim machine-guns at Omdurman and inflicted great slaughter among the Dervishes. The Boer War of 1899–1902 had shown that brave British bayonet charges by men in line were futile, even against men armed with nothing more than rifles.

   a Outline the attitude of the author towards British generals.
   b How does the title of the book of this source affect your view of its historical reliability?

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c How would this source prove useful to a historian attempting to understand tactical developments on the Western Front during World War I?

3. Read the following source.

Source 8.C **Official Dispatch by Field Marshal Sir John French, Commander of the BEF, 2 February 1915.**

> The deadly accuracy, range and quick-firing capabilities of the modern rifle and machine-gun require that a fire-swept zone be crossed in the shortest possible space of time by attacking troops. But if men are detained under the enemy's fire by the difficulty of emerging from a water-logged trench, and by the necessity of passing over ground knee-deep in mud and slush, such attacks become practically prohibitive owing to the losses they entail.

a According to Sir John French, what impact did the rifle and the machine-gun have on the movement of men across a battlefield?

b Explain how useful this source would be to a historian attempting to understand the nature and effects of weaponry in World War I.

c What additional information would a historian require to gain a more complete picture of the effect of infantry on the Western Front?

d Explain why trench systems developed in 1914.

e What were the major features of the three-line trench system?

4. Read the following source.

Source 8.D **An extract from *History of the First World War* by British historian Basil Liddell Hart, Pan, London, 1972.**

> Petain had set himself to insure against a recurrence of the trouble by tactics that should be both an economy of force and of the nervous force of the combatant. To this end, one method was an elastic defence in depth, allowing the initial shock and impetus of the enemy's attack to be absorbed by a thinly held forward position, and then to await him on a strong position in rear, when the enemy's troops would be beyond the range of the bulk of their artillery.

This source describes the decision by French Commander-in-Chief, Pétain, to adopt the German strategy of defence in depth.

a Explain how the strategy of defence in depth worked.

b What was the effect of this strategy on trench warfare?

5. Read the following two sources.

Source 8.E **Extract from *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One* by the Australian historian John Laffin, Alan Sutton, Wolfeboro Falls, 1988.**

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During the Aubers Ridge battle one of Haig's Corps Commanders, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, was angered by the apparent absence of the East Lancashires and the Sherwood Foresters. The situation was 'most unsatisfactory', he declared and furiously he demanded to know where they were. A brigade commander said, 'They are lying out in No-Man's Land, sir, and most of them will never stand again'.

Extract from a letter by 'JC', British soldier at Ypres in 1915. Source 8.F

The fatal day here! Received instructions just before dawn. Told to take opposite trench and hold until No 2 party arrived to consolidate, then to go forward to second line and hold until further instructed. Artillery going like mad, never heard anything like it. Got order and went over top. Could see shells pounding the enemy trench to atoms. Felt better by the sight. Suddenly noise lifted and a queer silence prevailed. My heart seemed to stand still. Could not see the trench ahead, owing to smoke and dust. Then the order came and we went forward at the double with the bayonet. Everyone yelled like mad, and the sound was extraordinarily comforting. Soon lost all sense of surroundings, and doubled like one in a dream. I shall never forget the next quarter of an hour. It was a horrible nightmare that will always cling. Men were going down like ninepins, maxims crackling, and amid all the strange, rare sounds of battle nothing seemed so penetrating as the human voice. A man laughed idiotically, and it seemed to ring right above the din of guns, and yet as far away as the sounds that come when one is under the anaesthetic, just on the brim of unconsciousness.

We took that trench and held it – how, I don't know. But there I found myself amid the rubbish and the dead men, muttering a word again and again in a ridiculous fashion.

Then I felt terribly sick and faint, and a cold sweat came out all over me. This I utterly failed to understand till a Corporal came up and put his arm around my shoulder. I saw him look at something on my chest, and, astonished, I turned my eyes down – a bullet had gone clean through me, and two of my fingers were missing – and I never knew a thing about it until then!

a What similarities and differences do you notice in these two sources?
b What reasons can you offer for the differences in these sources?
c How does the nature of each source determine its usefulness to a historian studying the tactics employed on the Western Front?

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12 Digital-only chapter
The representation and commemoration of World War I

Chapter focus

In this chapter you will learn:

- about the public nature of history and the uses of history
- about the need for critical analysis of representations of the past and historical methods that can be used for this purpose
- about how history is represented through film
- about the various ways World War I is commemorated, including the role of key influences such as nationalism and nation-building

12.1 The public nature of history

History is enormously popular among the public despite being an academic subject. Debates about how the past should be interpreted can be found in all forums of discussion, ranging from social media to radio, or television and film to informal conversations. History is essentially a public discipline in which society actively partakes. Historian Anna Clark in *Private Lives, Public History* notes:

> History is what happened, and it's something we do. History is learned, studied and critiqued. It's also gossiped, chattered, whispered, imagined and laughed. We do it at home, at school and at university, as well as in the media, in libraries, in politics and in public.

The public nature of history can be seen in the popularity and appetite the public has for historical films. World War I has proven to be a particularly popular topic for historical film settings, with films such as *War Horse* (2011), *Joyeux Noël* (2005) and *Beneath Hill 60* (2010) helping to raise public awareness of the war. Even superhero films have World War I as their backdrop; *Wonder Woman*, one of the highest grossing films worldwide in 2017, was set during the war.

'Public history' refers to any history that is created by and for the consumption of the general non-academic public. When examining public history, it is important to analyse how and why historical narratives have

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been created for the public, and how the public interprets and derives its own meanings from the histories that are presented.

Many countries have developed and promoted strong narratives regarding World War I, but these do not necessarily fully shape how individuals interpret the past. According to Clark, people 'negotiate their own everyday understandings of history in the context of those powerful national narratives' (such as the ANZAC revival) p. 13.

The uses of history

History serves many functions in our society such as:

- informing our understanding of our past, present and future
- enabling us to commemorate and process tragic or significant events
- creating national consciousness and unity
- being an instrument of control
- entertaining us through mass media.

Informing our understanding of our past, present and future

At a simple level, the study of history enables humans to determine what came before us to give meaning to contemporary events and to enable us to predict what might occur in the future. This fits in with the desire of humans to derive meaning from their existence and to work out their place in the universe more broadly. The yearning to know what came before us and where we fit in can be seen in the popularity of television shows such as *Who do you think you are?* and family history websites such as Ancestory.com.

Enabling us to commemorate and process tragic or significant events

History enables us to remember and come to terms with significant events. The building of public memorials was an important way this was done for World War I.

Figure 12.1 People visiting the Australian Cemetery and Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France

Creating national consciousness and unity

Governments use historical events to build cohesion among their citizens and to create stories to define the nation's identity. Using history in this manner is strongly linked with nationalism and can lead to falsification of the past. An Australian example of this is how Gallipoli and the ANZAC story are used to define our national identity at the expense of other historical events such as Federation or immigration following World War II.

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Figure 12.2 George Orwell, 'He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.'

Being an instrument of control

At a more sinister level, history can be used as a tool to control the public. This idea was expressed by George Orwell in his novel *1984* when he wrote, 'He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.' Ultimately, governments can use propaganda to shape how people interpret the past in order to influence their interpretation of contemporary events and to build support for an incumbent regime. In the Soviet Union under Stalin, for example, films in a style known as 'social realism' portrayed 'historical' events dealing with issues like class struggle in order to maintain communist control.

Entertaining us through mass media

The high level of public interest in history means that it is used as a means of popular entertainment. A key motive in this use of history is money, as historical films and television series can generate significant income. In recent years, video games have become a highly important genre of historical entertainment and information, with series such as *Battlefield, Assassin's Creed* and *Civilization* selling hundreds of millions of games.

Figure 12.3 Many people obtain historical information through the mass media including computer games such as *Battlefield 1*, a 2016 game set during World War I.

Summary

- The public nature of history can be seen in the appetite for and popularity of films in historical settings.
- History helps us to: understand our past, present and future; commemorate significant events; create national unity; and entertain us. It can also be manipulated and used to control society.

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Activities

Thinking historically 12.1

1. Explain why history can be considered a public as well as an academic discipline.
2. Describe what is meant by the term 'public history'.
3. George Santayana the Spanish philosopher wrote, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' Explain what uses of history this statement best refers to. Justify your response.

Working historically 12.1

1. Describe an example of a time when a nation's government has used history to control its people.

12.2 Analysis of representations of the past

The need for critical analysis

Historians aim to uncover what occurred in the past through their research and, in their analysis, to be as objective as possible.

Since ancient times, historians have argued about objectivity in history. Objectivity refers to the ability of authors to present history in a way that removes their own context, prejudices and biases from the process of research and writing. Some historians argue that it is possible to be objective, and that the historian's methods should reveal the past impartially, for what it was. In this way, historians see their work as serving the needs of the past. However, it is very difficult for a historian to be entirely objective because we are all a product of our time; we cannot fully remove the unconscious biases we possess or the impact that our culture has on our way of thinking. Therefore, it is essential for historians to critically analyse their sources.

Methods of historical analysis

Herodotus, who is referred to as the 'father of history' and was a Greek historian in the fifth century BC, stipulated that the best way to accurately uncover the past was through inquiry. Indeed, the word 'history' comes from the Greek word for 'inquiries'. So, when we critically analyse a representation of the past, we must make inquiries into:

- **Origin:** Who wrote the source? When was it written? Where was it written? What was happening at the time the source was written? (This gives context.)
- **Motive:** Why was the source written?
- **Content:** What information is contained in the source?
- **Limitations:** What doesn't the source tell us?
- **Audience:** Who was the source intended for?
- **Perspective:** Is there bias in the source?

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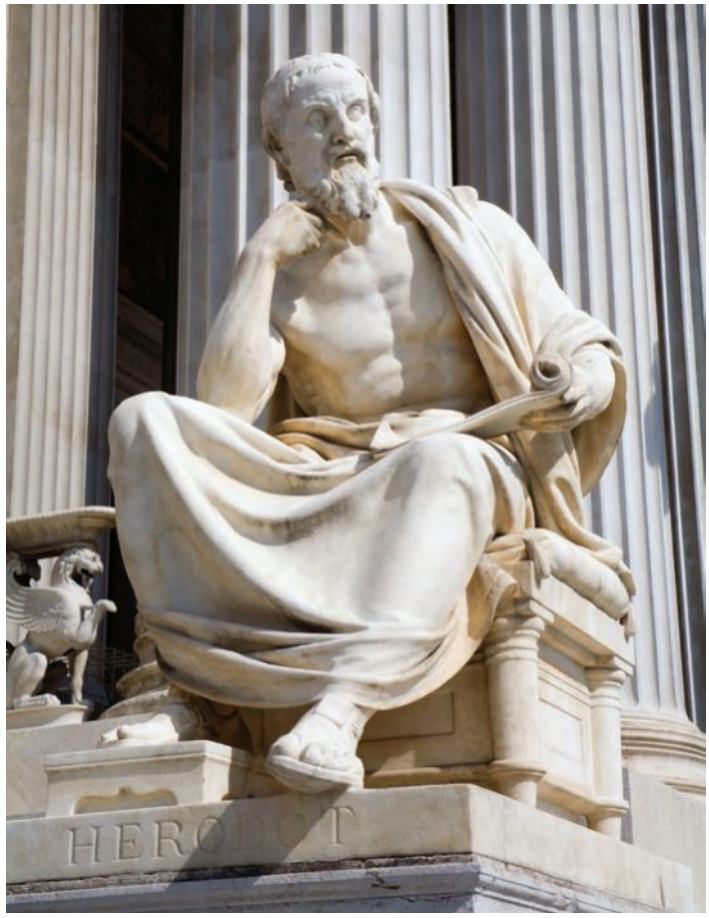

Figure 12.4 The father of history: Herodotus

The historical debate surrounding the use of film

The representation of World War I through film

Notwithstanding the popularity of film as a medium through which people obtain information about the past, there is considerable debate among historians as to whether film is useful as a historical source and whether it is deserving of historians' attention. To this end: are the historical representations of World War I on film reliable and are they useful?

Ian Jarvie in *Seeing Through Movies* was highly critical of using films as historical sources. Following the tradition of the famous source-based historian, Leopold Von Ranke, he argued that interpreting documentary sources should be the key focus of historians when they interpret the past, and that they should not be distracted by fictional films. He wrote that film is not the material of history. Documents are the material of history. Further, in his critique, he dismissed film representations of the past as being at best a nice 'visual aid' and noted that unlike more traditional forms of academic history, they could not 'participate in the debate about historical problems.'

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Another criticism of film as a historical source is that often the motive in making films, apart from depicting a historical event, is to make money through the sale of tickets on release and through online distribution. The essence of this argument is that due to the need to entertain an audience, historical issues are modified or simplified to ensure the plot is more exciting. For instance, in the film *War Horse,* British cavalry charged into battle on horseback in the Battle of Flanders when, in fact, cavalry soldiers in that battle fought dismounted, a far less exciting spectacle.

Robert Rosenstone, however, in *History in Images/History in Words* argued that films possess a distinct advantage over traditional forms of history. He contends that when films are accurately-researched, their ability to visually depict events and to use sound means that they can give viewers are far more accurate and less ambiguous understanding of historical events than traditional written accounts. The 1979 film, *All Quiet on the Western Front,* for example, was widely praised for the accurate way it depicted the nature of warfare on the Western Front.

Rosenstone further argues that, for the public, the engaging visual nature of film can make it a far more accessible medium to obtain historical information than formal academic prose.

According to another historian, Pierre Sorlin, the benefit of film as a historical source is that it tells us more about the society *producing* the film than it does about the society or events being *depicted* in the film. This argument is also held by Rasmus Falbe-Hansen who notes that a pivotal role that films play as historical sources is what they tell us about the historical context in which the film was made. A clear example of the use of film to understand historical context was *La Grande Illusion*, produced in 1937 and directed by Jean Renoir. The film depicts the story of two French aviators who are shot down and then interned in several prisoner of war camps. The film is anti-war, humanist, and portrays positive interactions between the German and French soldiers. While its scenes might not have accurately conveyed what life was like on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918, the film provides a valuable insight into the negative attitudes of some Europeans to war when the film was made in the late 1930s, in the context of a Europe that was threatened by fascism and militarism.

Figure 12.5 Erich von Stroheim in *La Grande Illusion*

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Summary

- Herodotus, the 'father of history', stipulated that the best way to accurately uncover the past was through inquiry.
- History should be critically analysed through angles of origin, motive, content, limitations, audience and perspective.
- Film is a contentious medium of history; it has a need to be entertaining, but its accessibility opens it up to a wider audience than prose.

Activities

Thinking historically 12a.2

1. Outline the arguments for and against the use of film as a historical source.
2. In your opinion, how useful is film as a historical source? Justify your opinion.

Working historically 12a.2

1. Conduct research into one or more of the historical films listed below:
   - *La Grande Illusion* (1937)
   - *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1979)
   - *Beneath Hill 60* (2010)
   - *Joyeux Noel* (2005)
   - *War Horse* (2011)
   - *Gallipoli* (1981)
   - *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
   - *Aces High* (1976)
   - *The Lighthorsemen* (1987)
   - *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969)
2. Answer the following question: to what extent is your chosen film/films a reliable and useful source for depicting events in World War I? In your response consider the historical context in which the film was made. You can use the table on the next page to structure your research.

Figure 12.6 Peter O'Toole and Anthony Quinn in *Lawrence of Arabia*

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Name of film:	
What is the origin of the film?	
What is the motive of the film?	
Describe the content of the film.	
What are the limitations of the film?	
Who was the intended audience of the film?	
What is the perspective of the film? (Is there bias?)	

12.3 Commemorations of World War I

The manner that World War I is commemorated has been shaped by many key influences, including:

- the need for public memory
- nationalism and nation-building
- *zeitgeist* and historical context
- ideology and politics
- self-interest and preservation
- accessibility and popular history.

The need for public memory

An important way World War I is commemorated is through the building of public memorials, and through ceremonies to remember key events and the dead. Following the war, most communities in Australia built local

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memorials to record the names of those who served and those who died. These memorials not only gave individuals a place to grieve, but also served as a location where the entire community could meet and hold commemoration services (such as on Anzac and Remembrance Day). Despite the last World War I veteran, Claude Choules, dying in 2011, these services continue to be hugely popular due the increasing importance of family history and governments using remembrance days as celebrations of national identity.

At a national level, several countries, including Australia have built tombs for 'unknown soldiers' to serve as a focal point for the grief of the entire nation. Unlike France and Great Britain, who entombed their unknown soldiers soon after the war, Australia only did this in 1993, removing the remains of a soldier from France. In the entombment ceremony, the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, commented on how the unknown soldier's tomb commemorated all soldiers who died in the war and in subsequent conflicts.

> We will never know who this Australian was. Yet he has always been among those whom we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45 000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416 000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324 000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60 000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100 000 Australians who have died in wars this century. He is all of them. And he is one of us.

Nationalism and nation-building

How we commemorate the past can be skewed by nationalism, and the desire to use historical events like World War I to create national stories and national identity. The way in which Australia celebrates Anzac Day is an example of this. While 25 April was initially commemorated to remember those who fought and died at Gallipoli, some historians argue that nationalism has led to the day morphing into a celebration of the birth of the nation and national identity. These historians also argue that this interpretation of Anzac Day has been perpetuated by the Australian media and by politicians. According to historian Mark McKenna, the reason Anzac Day is commemorated as a day of national birth is due to the disinterest of Australians in Australia Day and the false belief that 'a nation can only be born and fused through the loss of sacrificial blood' such as on Bastille Day in France or 4 July in the USA.

Allowing nationalism to affect how we commemorate the past is problematic, as it can lead to historical objectivity being compromised by the necessity of maintaining the established national myth. It also leads to a narrow interpretation of the past that fails to allow alternate interpretations of events to be heard. Consequently, commemorating Anzac Day as the birth of 'the Australian' means that other events that have shaped national identity might not receive the credit they are due.

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Zeitgeist and historical context

The poet John Donne wrote in 1624 that it is impossible for humans to fully isolate themselves from human society and human ideas: 'No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.' As with all historical writing, the way World War I is commemorated is very closely linked to the society in which we live and the prevailing mood at the time a work of history is written. All histories are, therefore, a product of their *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time, and their historical context, what was happening at the time. It is accordingly no surprise that our commemoration of World War I has not been static – remembrance has constantly evolved to reflect the ideas and the mood of the time.

An example of the impact of *zeitgeist* in the interpretation of World War I is the work of the popular British historian A.J.P. Taylor. Taylor's work clearly reflects the Cold War context in which he was writing and his strong desire for nuclear disarmament. In his interpretation of the causes of World War I, he places significant emphasis on the inevitability of war once plans for mobilisation were enacted. Further, he argued that the existence of destructive weaponry and large armies in the lead-up to the war was never a deterrent, as it reflected his own belief that the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) would not prevent a third world war. In *War by Timetable: How the First World War began*, he wrote, 'The deterrent failed to deter. This was to be expected sooner or later. A deterrent may work ninety-nine times out of a hundred. On the hundredth occasion it produces catastrophe.'

Figure 12.7 Historian A.J.P. Taylor

Ideology and politics

The commemoration of World War I has been strongly influenced by the political ideology of those writing about the past. While traditional conservative accounts of the war focused on the roles of 'great' individuals, such as Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Wilson, left-leaning historians in their accounts have focused more on 'history from below'. This style of history focuses on the impact of historical events on ordinary people and ensures their perspective is portrayed. Further, socialist historians, such as Eric Hobsbawm in *Age of Extremes*, have tended to interpret the war through a Marxist prism by focusing on the inequality created by **capitalism** and how this led to a growth of national competition and, eventually, conflict.

Self-interest and preservation

Self-interest can have a negative effect on how the past is commemorated since it can lead individuals to distort the past in order to preserve their own career or reputation. Niall Ferguson in *The Pity of War* notes that official histories commemorating World War I were especially prone to self-interest as they largely served to justify the decisions and actions of politicians who were responsible for the outbreak and conduct of war. This is especially true with respect to how official British histories portrayed the outbreak of war as being inevitable and almost imply that they were helpless to prevent it. Lloyd George, for instance, in his memoirs writes:

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> In looking back upon the incidents of those few eventful days one feels like recalling a nightmare, and after reading most of the literature explaining why the nations went to war, and who was responsible, the impression left on my mind is one of utter chaos, confusion, feebleness and futility … Amongst the rulers and statesmen who alone could give the final word which caused great armies to spring from the ground and march to and across frontiers, one can see now clearly that not one of them wanted war; certainly not on this scale.

Throughout his book, Ferguson critiques this perspective, concluding that while the war was indeed a horrific occurrence, it was by no means inevitable or even certain that the British would convert a continental event into a world conflict by deciding to intervene on the side of the Belgians, French and the Russians. In the context of responsibility, he shows that the British were just as culpable as the Germans in making poor decisions that resulted in the outcome of war and the consequences of it from 1914 onwards.

Accessibility and popular history

Popular history is a genre of historical writing that targets a non-academic audience. The writing style is often simple and in narrative form to be highly accessible. Narrative history often lacks the in-depth critical analysis found in academic prose and its writers often have a background in journalism rather than academia.

World War I is an immensely popular historical topic in Australia. Journalists Peter Fitzsimons (*Gallipoli, Fromelles & Pozieres, Victory at Villers-Bretonneux)* and Les Carylon (*Gallipoli, the Great War*) have been particularly successful at making the ANZAC story accessible and relevant to Australians from a wide range of backgrounds.

One of the potential limitations of popular histories is that have the tendency to examine topics that have been already countlessly revisited and, consequently, they can perpetuate a narrow understanding of the past. For instance, in the Australian context, popular histories of the war continue to focus on Gallipoli and the Western Front rather than examining other theatres of war, other participants beyond the ANZACs, or the broader world context of the conflict. According to British historian David Reynolds in a 2014 interview, World War I needs to be cast in a new light:

> it is time not only to remember the dead but also to understand the war as history. That means getting out of the trenches of France and Belgium to explore the Home Fronts, especially the roles of women, and also to see the War as a global conflict with profound implications for China, Japan and India.

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Summary

- World War I is commemorated through the building of public memorials and through public ceremonies to remember key events and the dead.
- How we commemorate the past can be skewed by nationalism and the desire to use historical events like World War I to create national stories and national identity.
- Histories are a product of their *zeitgeist* (spirit of the time) and their historical context (what was happening at that time).
- The commemoration of World War I has been strongly influenced by the political ideology of those writing about the past – conservative accounts focus on the war's leaders, while left-leaning historians often focus on the war's impact on ordinary people.
- Self-interest can lead individuals to distort the past to preserve their own career or reputation.
- Popular history is highly accessible, but can perpetuate a narrow understanding of the past.

Activities

Thinking historically 12.3

1. Discuss whether historians can write objectively about the past.
2. Describe why there is a need to publicly commemorate World War I.
3. Explain how the commemoration of World War I is used to create national identity.
4. Explain what is meant by the term *zeitgeist*.
5. Are historians able to escape their own historical context when they write about the past? Justify your opinion.
6. Describe how ideology has affected the historical interpretation of World War I.
7. Discuss the reasons why some of the official histories released in the years immediately after the war were affected by self-interest.
8. Describe what popular history is and explain its potential limitations.

Working historically 12.3

1. Conduct research into the notion of the ANZAC myth. For this, you might want to read or investigate the following sources:
   - Charles Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*
   - Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*
   - Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *What's Wrong With ANZAC?*
   - Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: the End of the Myth*
   - Carolyn Holbrook, *ANZAC: The Unauthorised Biography*
   - Les Carylon, *Gallipoli*
   - Peter Fitzsimons, *Gallipoli*
   - Alan Seymour, *The One Day of the Year* (play)
   - Peter Weir, *Gallipoli* (film).
2. Using the above sources and ideas in this chapter, answer the following question: to what extent is the historical accuracy of the commemoration of World War I in Australia affected by the existence of an ANZAC myth?

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