



III. THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

CHAPTER 10

The First World War

Syllabus

The Contemporary World

The First World War

Causes (Nationalism and Imperialism, Armament Race, division of Europe and Sarajevo crisis) and Results (Treaty of Versailles, formation of League of Nations, Objectives of the League of Nations).

In 1914, a war began in Europe which soon engulfed almost the entire world with the battles fought in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Pacific. This war was different from the wars fought earlier in terms of its scale and its repercussions. It was fought on a worldwide scale and affected almost all the countries of the world. During this war new methods of defence and destruction were used. Moreover, in the earlier wars, the civilian populations were not generally involved. But this war was fought by the people as a whole. Thus, the war marked the turning point in the history of the world. Because of the unprecedented extent of its spread, impact and damage and its total nature, it is known as the *First World War*.

CAUSES OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

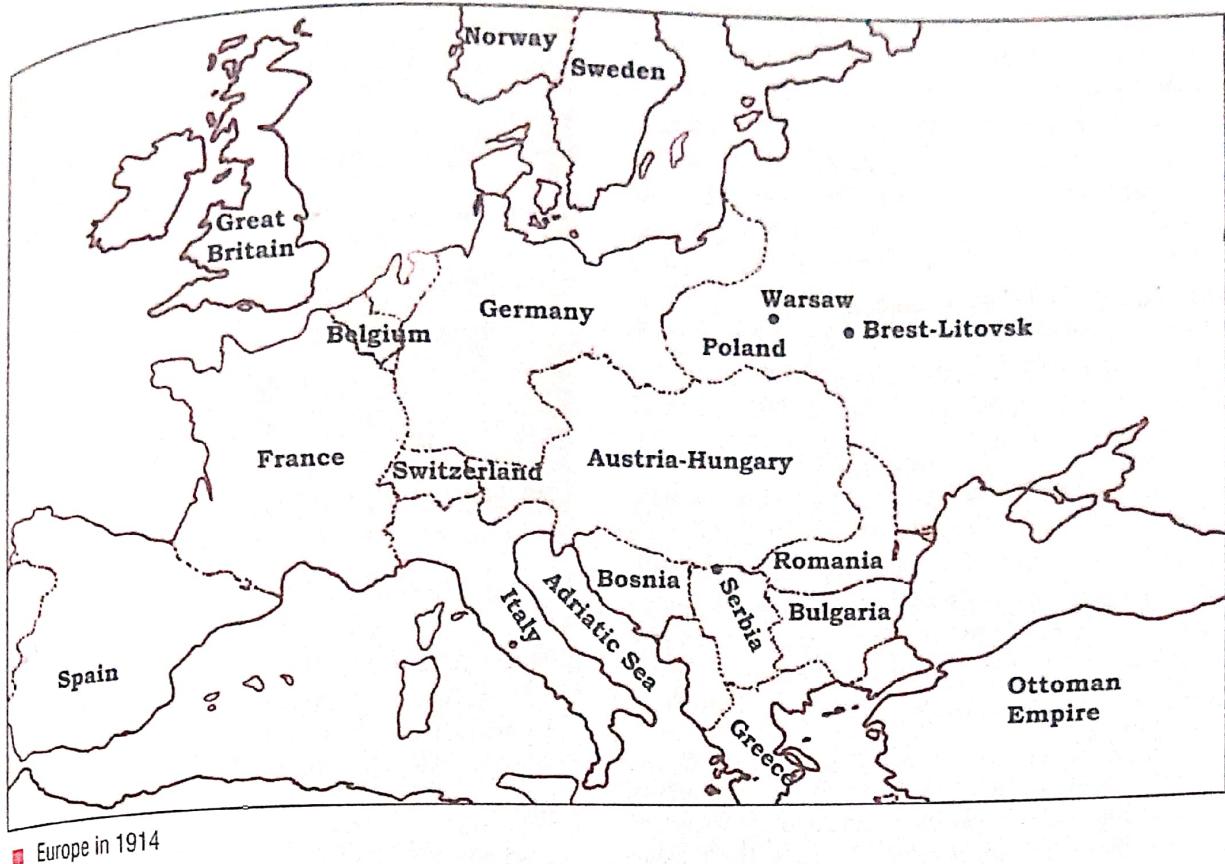
1. Nationalism and Imperialism: Nationalism refers to the sense of unity felt by the people, who share a common history, language and culture. In the latter half of the 19th century, this feeling of unity turned into extreme pride, which made the people of many countries believe that their country is superior to the

other countries. This led to the development of *aggressive nationalism* in Europe.

Aggressive Nationalism meant love for one's own country and hatred for other countries. Each nation thought about its own national interests and did not care for the interests of the other nations. For example, France wanted to get back its provinces of Alsace and Lorraine from Germany. Similarly, Italy wanted to get back the territory of Trentino Trieste from Austria and Balkan States like Serbia wanted that their fellow nationals (Slavs) who lived in other States should come together to form a greater Balkan State. These countries developed expansionist policies in the name of nationalism. Therefore, military strength became synonymous with national prestige and every country began to increase its military power.

This aggressive nationalism also led to the rise of *imperialism*. Imperialism refers to the state policy or practice by which a powerful nation establishes its control over another country, either by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control. Once conquered, this country was claimed as a *colony*. These colonies were governed and administered by the imperial nation through its representatives or a puppet government. The imperial nations exploited the resources of these colonies for their own economic interest. Colonies provided raw material, cheap labour, agricultural land and trading ports to the imperial nations.

By the end of the 19th century, England and France had built up a huge colonial empire



in Asia and Africa. British imperialism was focussed on maintaining and expanding trade by exploiting the resources of its colonies — India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Egypt, South Africa, Caribbean Islands and many parts of Africa. Britain's imperial power was reinforced by her powerful and the world's largest navy. Some other countries of the world like Germany, Italy, Russia and Japan also wanted to increase their sphere of influence and create their colonies in Asia and Africa. These colonies were essential for their progress as they could provide raw materials for their industries and markets for their finished products. Besides, acquiring colonies would add to the power and prestige of these countries. This led to a clash of interest among these countries. The European powers began to scramble for expanding their economic and political empire. Thus, aggressive nationalism and fierce economic competition filled the atmosphere with fear, apprehension, mutual hatred and international tension. People felt convinced that international problems could only be solved through militarism.

2. Race for Armaments: The mad race for armaments which began soon after the

Franco-Prussian War (1870) was one of the reasons which led to the First World War. Every major power began stockpiling armaments in the name of self-defence and preservation of peace. As a result, if one country increased its armaments, other countries were compelled to do the same. It filled the atmosphere with fear, apprehension and mutual hatred.

In order to protect her colonies in Africa and a few islands in the Pacific, Germany began to build a powerful navy with a view to achieving parity with Britain. By 1914, Germany had left Britain and France far behind in the production of iron and steel and in many other manufactures. One of its ships, the *Imperator*, built in 1912 was the largest in the world. The Germans dug the Kiel Canal deeper so that battleships could enter its waters. Britain and France were concerned with Germany's growing military strength. This led to a fierce competition among the European countries and gave rise to the race for armaments.

3. Division of Europe into Two Hostile Groups: There were two kinds of States in Europe in the early 20th century. On the one hand there were *single Nation-States* like France,

Holland and Germany whose national identities were based on their common language and traditions. On the other, there were *imperial States* like the Austria-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire. The Austria-Hungarian Empire was ruled by the Hapsburg dynasty of Austria and included in its territory Hungarian, Serb, Bosnian and Croat population, who spoke different languages and had different cultural traditions. Germany entered into an alliance with Austria-Hungary. In 1882 Italy joined the alliance and it came to be known as the *Triple Alliance*.

After the death of Bismarck, France was able to establish friendly relations with Russia and England. The Russian empire included territories populated by Polish, Ukrainian, Turkish and Mongol populations. The three countries entered into the *Triple Entente* in 1907 to counter the Triple Alliance. Later, Japan joined the Triple Entente. Thus, Europe was divided into two hostile camps.

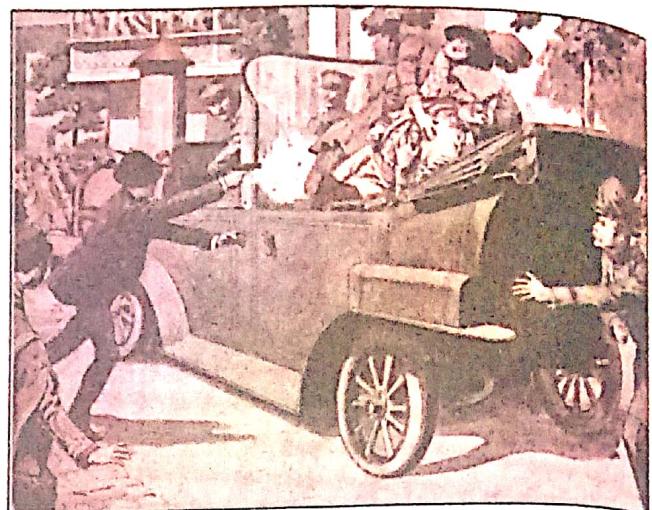
Britain had created a vast British Empire by acquiring colonies in Asia and Africa. It grew rich from its success in trade in foreign resources, markets, territories and people. Other countries of the world like Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and the USA too wanted to acquire colonies in Asia and Africa. This led to a *scramble for colonies* and therefore, rivalries and wars.

Rivalries between nations happened not just for colonies but for colonial trade and trade routes as well. These rivalries created suspicion, tension and wars, which finally culminated in the First World War.

4. Sarajevo Crisis (Immediate Cause): Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was assassinated at Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia on June 28, 1914. The assassination was organised by a secret society called 'Black Hand' or 'Union of Death' formed by extremist Serbian nationalists whose aim was to unite all Serbians into a single Serbian State.

Austria served an ultimatum to Serbia on July 23 making eleven demands. Serbia accepted most of the demands except those that would have led to the loss of her sovereignty.

Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Russia started preparation for war to



■ Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand

support Serbia. On August 1, 1914 Germany declared war on Russia; and on August 3, on France. German troops marched into Belgium to press on to France on August 4. Following an ultimatum to withdraw German troops from Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914.

Many other countries soon entered the War. Japan declared war on Germany to capture German colonies in the Far East. Turkey and Bulgaria joined on the side of Germany. Italy remained neutral for some time but joined the war against Germany in 1915 breaking the Triple Alliance.

Britain, France, Russia and their allies were called the *Allied powers*; while Germany, Austria and their allies were called the *Central Powers*. The War was fought in many different areas called *fronts*. There was a Western Front between Germany and northern France, and an Eastern Front between Germany and the Russian forces. There was fighting at sea and in the Middle East, where the Allied Powers attacked the Ottoman Empire.

*EVENTS OF THE WORLD WAR

War on the Western Front: On the Western Front, the war began when the German armies swept across Belgium and entered southern France. The French army along with the British army met the German forces in the *Battle of Marne* (after the river near which the battle was fought) some 15 miles from Paris. The German forces had to retreat. For about four years, neither side could dislodge the other.

The European countries made use of the troops recruited from their colonies in the war. Thus, the Battle of Marne was a turning point of the war because it foiled all German plans of crushing France.

Trench Warfare: The combination of machine guns and heavy artillery made life above ground too dangerous. The opposing armies dug a series of trenches to defend themselves and to launch attacks. Living conditions in these trenches was pathetic. Soldiers endured food shortages, lice, rats, poison gas, cold and the stench of dead soldiers who could not be moved out quickly. Rain and snow turned the trenches into thick mud caves.

War on the Eastern Front: In August 1914 fighting began on the Eastern Front with the invasion of Russia by Austria-Hungary. Germany and Austria succeeded in repulsing the Russian attack and capturing parts of the Russian empire. They were also successful against Romania, Serbia and Italy. Outside Europe, there were campaigns against the Ottoman Empire in Palestine, Mesopotamia and Arabia; and against Germany and Turkey in Iran where they were trying to establish their influence. Japan occupied German possessions in East Asia, and Britain and France seized most of the German colonies in Africa.

Policy of Blockade: The War involved total mobilisation of all the resources of the warring parties with all economic activities subordinated to the needs of the war. It also required that no goods including food, raw materials and war materials should be allowed to enter the enemy territory from anywhere. In 1916, Germany

started the submarine warfare and sunk many British warships but the French defeated her in the *Battle of Verdun*. The English tightened the blockade of the German coast to meet the German submarine warfare. Germany was defeated in the *Battle of Dogger Bank*.

War Against Turkey: Towards the end of the year 1914, Turkey joined the war on the side of Germany. The German fleet controlled the Baltic Sea, Turkey held Dardanelles which led to the Black Sea. Thus, Russia was cut off as it could not get any help from the Entente powers. The British Indian Army attacked Turkey and the Turks surrendered in October 1918.

Entry of the USA in the War

In 1915, the German U-Boats had sunk a British ship *Lusitania*. Among the 1153 passengers killed, 128 were Americans. The Americans were generally sympathetic to Britain, and this incident further roused anti-German feelings in the USA.

The Allied Powers had raised vast amounts of loans in the USA to pay for the arms and other goods bought by them. Therefore the USA feared that if Germany won the war, she would become a serious rival to the USA.

On 6 April, 1917, the United States of America declared war on Germany.

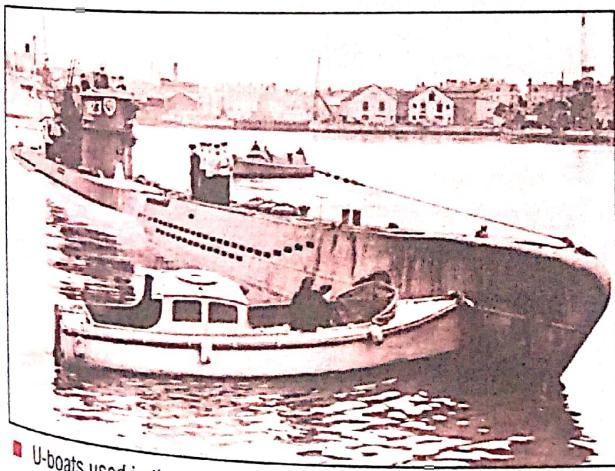
Exit of Russia

Another major development that took place in 1917 was the withdrawal of Russia from the War after the October Revolution. The Russian Empire had suffered serious reverses in the War. Over 600,000 Russian soldiers were killed. The day after the Bolshevik Government came to power under the leadership of Lenin, it issued the Decree on Peace with proposals to end the War without any annexations and indemnities.

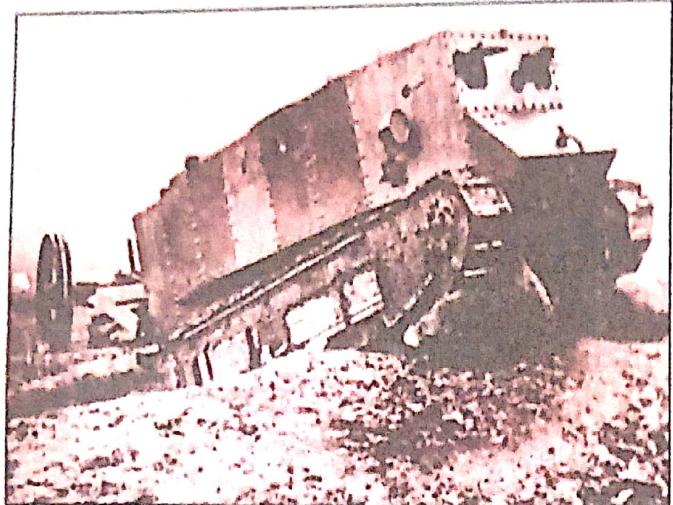
Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918): Russia signed a peace treaty with Germany in March 1918, known as the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Germany imposed harsh terms on Russia and the Russian government accepted them.

End of the War

Britain, France and the USA launched a military offensive in July 1918 and Germany



U-boats used in the blockade of Britain



■ Tanks used in the First World War

and her allies began to collapse. Political discontent started rising in Austria-Hungary and Germany. Bulgaria withdrew from the War in September and Turkey surrendered in October. The emperor of Austria-Hungary surrendered on 3rd November. In Germany a revolution broke out. Germany became a republic and the German emperor Kaiser William II fled to Holland. The new German government signed an armistice on November 11, 1918.

The number of persons who fought in the War vary between 53 and 70 million people. The total number of those killed and dead in the War are estimated at about nine million, that is, about one-seventh of those who participated in it. Several million became invalids. The air raids, epidemics and famines killed many more among the civilian populations.

Besides these terrible human losses, the economy of many countries was shattered. The global economic depression of 1929-30 is attributed to this War. It gave rise to many serious social problems.

According to some estimates the expenditure on the Allied side was nearly forty-one thousand million pounds and that on the German side over fifteen thousand million pounds.

RESULTS OF THE WAR

The following were the major results of the First World War:

1. The Treaty of Versailles (June 28, 1919):

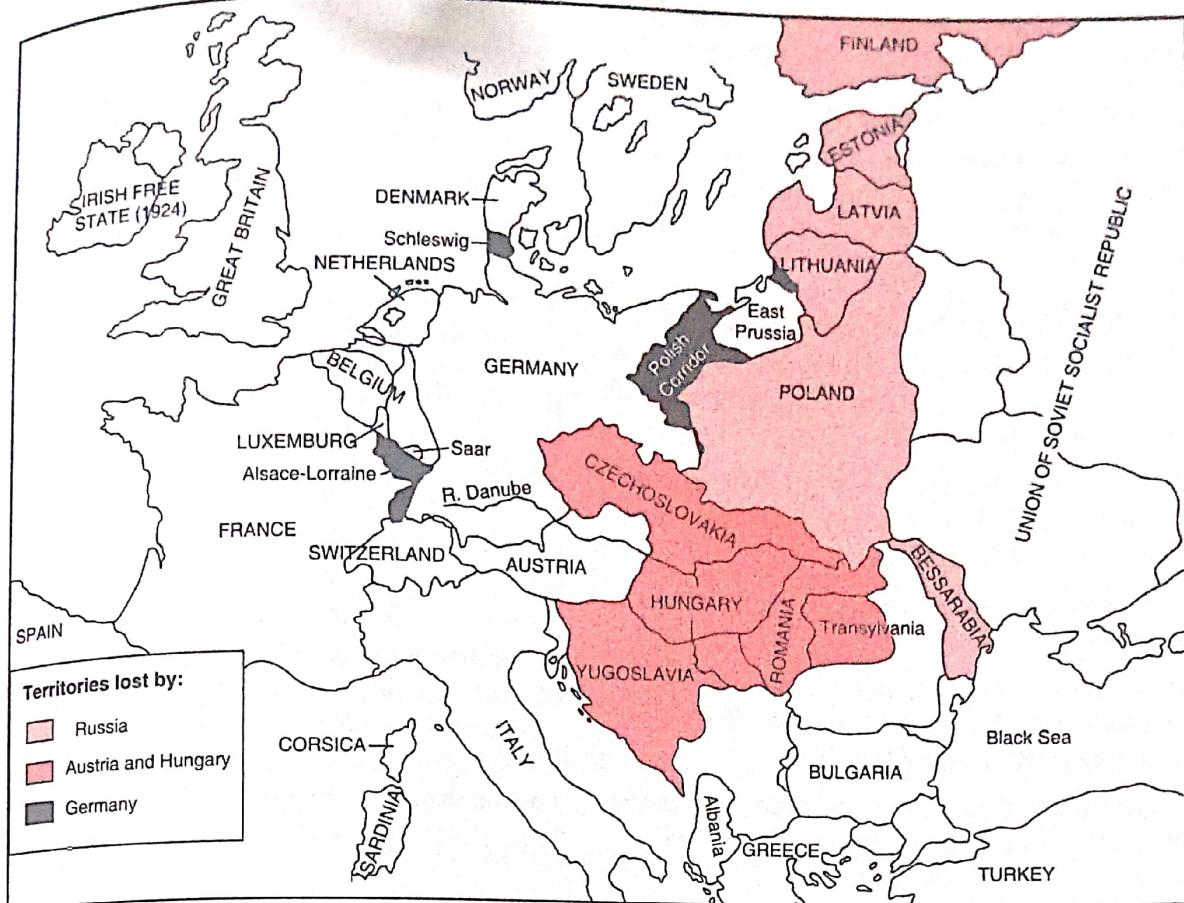
The victorious powers or the Allies, met in a conference first in Versailles, a suburb of

Paris, and later in Paris, between January and June 1919. Though the number of countries represented at the conference was 27, the terms of the peace treaties were really decided by Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Britain, and George Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France. The defeated countries were not represented at the conference. The victorious powers also excluded Russia from the conference.

As a result of the discussions at the Paris Conference, on June 28, 1919 *The Treaty of Versailles* was signed. It ended the War. The basis of the treaty's negotiations was the American President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The treaty was designed to prevent Germany from going to war again.

Terms of the Treaty

- (i) The Treaty declared Germany guilty of aggression.
- (ii) Germany was required to pay for all the loss and damage suffered by the Allies during the war. The amount of reparations was fixed at 33 billion dollars. Germany had to cede her merchant ships to the Allies as compensation and had to supply huge quantities of coal to France, Italy and Belgium for ten years.
- (iii) The area of the Rhine Valley was to be demilitarised and the German territory west of Rhine was to be occupied by the Allied Troops for 15 years.
- (iv) Germany lost Alsace-Lorraine to France; Eupen-et-Malmedy to Belgium, Schleswig to Denmark. Danzig became a Free Port in the Polish territory.
- (v) Germany ceded parts of her pre-War territory to Denmark, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia and France.
- (vi) The coal mines in the German area called Saar were ceded to France for 15 years and the area was to be governed by the League of Nations.
- (vii) Germany lost all her colonies to the victorious Allies—Britain, Belgium, South Africa and Portugal.
- (viii) German colonies in the Pacific and the areas under her control in China were



■ Europe after World War I

given to Japan. China was aligned with the Allies during the War but her areas under German control were given away to Japan.

- (ix) The German Army was restricted to a force of 1,00,000 soldiers and the Navy was limited to 15,000 men and 24 ships. The Air Force and submarines were banned.
- (x) The Treaty affirmed the complete independence of Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.
- (xi) The Covenant of the League of Nations was added to the Treaty of Versailles.

***2. Territorial Rearrangements:** The period after the War saw the beginning of the end of the European supremacy in the world. Economically and militarily, the United States surpassed Europe to emerge as a world power. The peace treaties signed after the War transformed the political map of the world, particularly of Europe. Three ruling dynasties were destroyed—the Romanov in Russia during

the War itself, the Hohenzollern in Germany and the Hapsburg in Austria-Hungary. Soon after the War, the rule of Ottomans came to an end in Turkey. Austria and Hungary became separate independent States. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia emerged as independent States. Thus, the War gave a serious blow to the autocratic monarchical system and led to the development of democracy in Europe. Empires having different cultures were dissolved and independent states having distinct cultures emerged after the War. These included Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Yugoslavia. Under the impulse of nationalism Alsace-Lorraine was restored to France and Schleswig-Holstein was restored to Denmark.

3. Formation of the League of Nations: One of the most significant consequences of the War was the creation of the League of Nations. The horrors of War convinced the leaders of the world that there must be a mechanism to prevent War and promote international cooperation. This culminated in the setting up of the League of Nations.

An important part of the peace treaty was the Covenant of the League of Nations. Wilson's Fourteen Points included the creation of an international organisation for the preservation of peace and to guarantee the independence of all states. Thus, the League of Nations was created as a world organisation of all independent States in 1920.

Aims and Objectives of the League of Nations

- (i) All the States of the world were prohibited from entering into any secret treaties and alliances.
- (ii) The member-States were not supposed to maintain huge armies, warships and destructive armaments.
- (iii) All States were to respect each other's independence.
- (iv) All States were to refer their mutual disputes, if any, to the League of Nations for a peaceful settlement.
- (v) The member-States were to take necessary action as directed by the League against

any State which tried to disturb world peace and order.

- (vi) Apart from political functions, the League of Nations was supposed to promote cultural, social and economic cooperation among the member-States.

The hopes of having a truly world organisation devoted to the preservation of peace and independence of nations were, however, not realised with the formation of the League of Nations. Two major countries—Germany and the Soviet Union—were not allowed to become its members for many years; while India, which was not independent, was made a member. The United States which had played an important part in the setting up of the League ultimately decided not to join it.

The rise of dictatorships in Italy and Germany led to the weakening of the League of Nations and it failed in its basic object of maintaining peace in the world. Unfortunately the League came to an end as Hitler committed aggression on Poland which began the World War II (1939-1945).

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE ➤➤➤

The First World War (1914-1919) was fought between the Allied Powers (France, England and Russia) and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary); The USA, Japan, Turkey and Bulgaria joined the War later.

Causes of the First World War: (1) Nationalism and Imperialism; (2) Armament Race; and (3) Division of Europe into two armed camps (4) *Sarajevo Crisis*, the immediate cause of the war was the murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, on June 28, 1914 by a Serbian at Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia.

Events of the First World War: (i) Declaration of war by Austria on Serbia on July 28, 1914; Germany on Russia and France. Germany marched into Belgium and Britain declared war on Germany; (ii) The War was fought at different fronts from 1914 to 1918. Finally, in July 1918, Britain, France and the USA launched a military offensive and Germany and her allies began to collapse.

Results of the War: (i) Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and Germany on June 28, 1919; (ii) Territorial rearrangements and (iii) Formation of the League of Nations.

EXERCISES

I. Multiple-Choice Questions

A. Select the correct option.

1. What refers to the sense of unity felt by people who share a common history, language and culture that came to fore in the beginning of the 20th century?
(a) Communism (b) Fascism (c) Nationalism (d) Imperialism

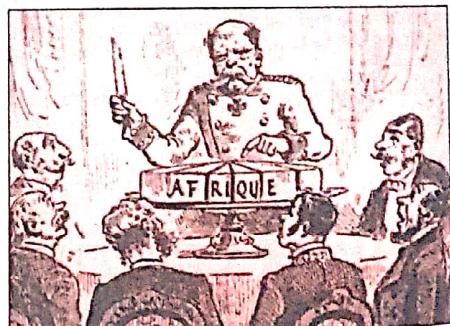
- 2.** The Franco-Prussian War led to which of the following?
- (a) Race for armaments
 - (b) Scramble for colonies
 - (c) Rise of nationalism in Asia
 - (d) Communist movement in Russia
- 3.** Which of the following was NOT a Nation-State?
- (a) France
 - (b) Russia
 - (c) Germany
 - (d) Holland
- 4.** Which of the following had vast colonies in Asia and Africa?
- (a) Germany
 - (b) Italy
 - (c) USA
 - (d) Britain
- 5.** Which of the following is incorrect?
- (a) Triple Entente: France, Russia, Japan
 - (b) Allied Powers: Britain, France, Russia
 - (c) Triple Alliance: Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary
 - (d) Central Powers: Germany, Austria, Italy
- 6.** Who left the "Triple Alliance"?
- (a) Germany
 - (b) Russia
 - (c) France
 - (d) Italy
- 7.** The First World War was fought on many _____.
- (a) Trenches
 - (b) Fronts
 - (c) Borders
 - (d) Ports
- 8.** When and where did the First World War begin?
- (a) 1912; Europe
 - (b) 1914; Asia
 - (c) 1914; Europe
 - (d) 1912; Africa
- 9.** Which event led the United States to declare war on Germany?
- (a) The attack on Pearl Harbour
 - (b) The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand
 - (c) The sinking of Lusitania by U-boats
 - (d) None of the above
- 10.** I am a citizen of a country that issued a Decree on Peace to exit the War. Name my motherland.
- (a) Germany
 - (b) France
 - (c) Russia
 - (d) Italy
- 11.** The Treaty of Versailles was signed as a result of the discussions at the
- (a) Paris conference
 - (b) Moscow conference
 - (c) London conference
 - (d) New York conference
- 12.** As per the Treaty of Versailles, Alsace-Lorraine and Danzig were respectively restored to
- (a) Denmark and Belgium
 - (b) France and Poland
 - (c) Russia and Hungary
 - (d) Germany and France
- 13.** The Treaty of Versailles was based on
- (a) Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen points
 - (b) The French Charter
 - (c) The Eleven demands of Serbia
 - (d) The conditions of the October Revolution
- 14.** Which of the following was one of aims of the League of Nations?
- (a) Prohibition of Secret Treaties and Alliances between members
 - (b) Prohibition of maintenance of large armed forces by member-states
 - (c) Promotion of local, cultural and economic cooperation
 - (d) All of the above.

B. Select the option that shows the correct relationship between Statements (I) and (II).

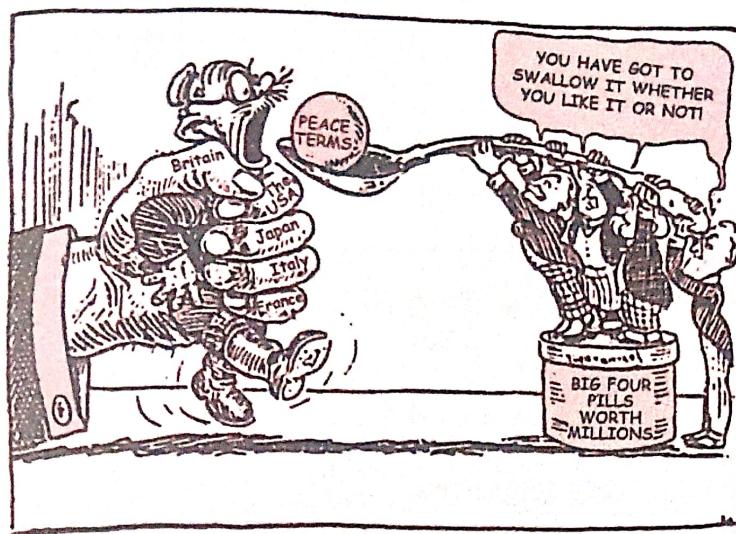
1. (I) The First World War began when Austria declared war on Serbia in July 1914.
(II) The war which began from Austria was fought entirely in Europe.
 - (a) (II) contradicts (I)
 - (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 - (c) (I) is true but (II) is false
 - (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
2. (I) British imperialism was based on the concept of maintaining and expanding trade by exploring the resources of its colonies in Asia and Africa.
(II) By the end of the 19th century, England had built a huge colonial empire in Asia and Africa.
 - (a) (II) contradicts (I)
 - (b) (I) is the reason for (II)
 - (c) (I) is true but (II) is false
 - (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
3. (I) In the later half of the 19th century, every major power began stockpiling armaments in the name of self-defence and preservation of peace.
(II) The race for armaments increased hostilities between nations and became one of the reasons for the First World War.
 - (a) (II) contradicts (I)
 - (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 - (c) (I) is true but (II) is false
 - (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
4. (I) The end of the First World War also led to the end of European supremacy in the world.
(II) The United States of America surpassed Europe both economically and militarily to emerge as a world power.
 - (a) (II) contradicts (I)
 - (b) (I) is the reason for (II)
 - (c) (I) is true but (II) is false
 - (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.
5. (I) The League of Nations was established in 1920 for the preservation of peace and to prevent wars.
(II) The League of Nations failed to check the rise of dictatorships in Italy and Germany.
 - (a) (II) contradicts (I)
 - (b) (II) is the reason for (I)
 - (c) (I) is true but (II) is false
 - (d) (I) and (II) are independent of each other.

II. Short Answer Questions

1. Define nationalism. State the difference between nationalism and aggressive nationalism.
2. The cartoon titled, 'The cutting of Africa at the Berlin Conference' shows the imperialistic ambitions of European nations. State two features of Imperialism.
3. What was the cause of Franco-German rivalry?
4. How did the Sarajevo Crisis in 1914 lead to the First World War?
5. Which country was blamed for the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand? Which country declared war on Serbia? Name two countries which supported it.
6. Why did Britain declare war on Germany in 1914?
7. Name the five major powers who got involved in the hostilities in 1914.
8. Why is the war fought between 1914 and 1918 called the First World War?



9. Which country withdrew from the First World War and why?
10. The Peace Terms of which Treaty is being referred to in the cartoon given below? Who had to swallow the bitter pills and why?



11. Explain briefly the Treaty of Versailles.
12. Name the country which emerged as a world power after the War. What happened to the Austrian Empire after the First World War?
13. What was the effect of the First World War on the colonial possessions of industrialised countries?
14. How was Denmark affected by the Treaty of Versailles?
15. When and why was the League of Nations formed?
16. Name the two major countries which were not allowed to become the members of the League of Nations.

III. Structured Questions

1. The First World War was unique in history. In this context, answer the following:
 - (a) Any three causes that led to the War.
 - (b) The extent and methods used in this War.
 - (c) Economic consequences of this War.
2. With reference to the First World War, answer the following questions:
 - (a) State any three consequences of the War.
 - (b) Mention three points under the Treaty of Versailles, which affected Germany.
 - (c) What were the objectives of the League of Nations? Name the organisation formed in October 1945 with objectives similar to those of the League of Nations.
3. Look at the newspaper clipping given on the next page and answer the questions that follow:
 - (a) What was the immediate impact of the incident mentioned in newspaper clipping? Who organised the assassination? What was the objective behind the assassination?

- (b) Besides the incident mentioned in the newspaper, state three other reasons that led to a turning point in the history of the world.
- (c) Name the treaty that was designed to prevent Germany from going to war again. State any three clauses of this treaty.



4. Look at the newspaper excerpt given on the right and answer the questions that follow:

- (a) Who summarily rejected the British ultimatum? Why?
- (b) Why did Great Britain declare war on Germany?
- (c) What was the final outcome of the war that began after Great Britain declared war on Germany? How did it affect both the countries?



IV. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

1. More than national pride, it was the greed to acquire colonies and thereby, more money and resources that led to the First World War. Explain.
2. Do you think that the First World War could have been avoided? Give reasons to support your answer.

