

14 – The First World War and Russian Revolution

The First World War and Russian Revolution represent the defining events of the 20th century. For decades, intellectuals and political leaders had predicted the coming of a great war, but few expected the devastation and disillusionment that broke upon Europe in 1914. This chapter examines the complex causes of World War I – one of the most analyzed events in European history – the course and nature of the war, how various nations organized for the first total war, and how the war ended in revolution and a controversial treaty settlement at Versailles. It also explores the fall of the Romanov Dynasty in Russia—a consequence of the country’s poorly organized involvement in World War I and a growing discontent with the tsarist rule. By 1921, the Bolsheviks (later Communist Party) defeated their foes in a civil war, purging enemies of the state in the Red Terror and securing control of the new Soviet Union (USSR), Europe’s first socialist government. The existence of the Soviet Union coincides directly with the 20th century that helped create it, a century that began in violence and revolution.

Chapter 14 covers the following Key Concepts from the Course Description:

- Key Concepts 3.4 and 4.1: The causes and course of World War I
- Key Concepts 4.1 and 4.4 The experience of total war on the battlefields and home fronts
- Key Concept 4.3: How World War I affected attitudes toward technology and progress
- Key Concept 4.2: The causes and course of the Russian Revolution
- Key Concept 4.2: Bolshevik victory in the Russian civil war and consolidation of power
- Key Concept 4.1: The Versailles Peace Settlement, rise of the U.S. as a global power, and anti-colonial measures

The Causes of the First World War

Who or what caused the First World War is a hotly debated historical issue. Long-term diplomatic and political clashes building up for over a century were ignited by the assassination of the heir, to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. As you review below, consider how long-term and short-term factors interacted to produce the conflict.

• SKILL SET

Historians have debated the question of causation (CAUS) for the First World War since it began, a common reaction to a devastating event brought about by a seemingly minor loss (the assassination of Franz Ferdinand). The issue makes for an ideal historiographical question (INTR) and one that requires you to make an argument (ARG) by considering the range of evidence (EVARG) from both long- and short-term factors. As you read this section, consider these interpretive questions: 1) Which causal factor played the most essential role?, 2) Could the conflict have been avoided? If so, how?, and 3) How would one apportion national responsibility for actions bringing about the conflict?

MAIMIN’

Students often find mnemonic devices helpful in recalling content. The standard for World War I’s causes is MAIN. However, this formula tends to overlook the importance of internal and intellectual causes, which are harder to identify precisely but important nonetheless. Therefore, we use MAIMIN’. The following provides a bird’s-eye view of these causes.

Militarism and Military Plans – After the wars of unification in the mid-19th century, armies exploded in size and firepower, driven by mass production and the

dynamic Second Industrial Revolution. These technological and industrial advances rendered warfare even more efficient and deadly. Never before or since have greater percentages of populations served in their nations’ military. Conscription (the draft) and regular military training militarized society by creating mass citizen armies. Government leaders associated national greatness with a strong military, and many adopted military dress in public ceremonies. In preparation for the upcoming conflict, nations expanded their armaments and navies.

Germany’s desire to build a world-class fleet of battleships antagonized Great Britain and made an enemy out of a potential ally. Kaiser William II’s (r. 1888-1918) reading of American Admiral A.T. Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power on History* (1890) convinced him that if Germany wanted a “place in the sun,” it must develop a commercial empire akin to Britain’s. Given the Kaiser’s erratic and bombastic personality, this threat to British naval dominance represented the first of many actions by Germany upsetting the balance of power after 1890. As often occurs in history, the Great War was preceded by arms and naval races. Upon the completion of the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894, Germany began work on the Schlieffen Plan, designed to fight a two-front war against Russia (to the east) and France (to the west). Germany’s was only the most famous of such plans; each nation developed complex blueprints involving railroad timetables, troop movements, and battle strategies that often significantly affected *political* decisions. These plans often limited, or were perceived to limit, the options open to policy makers and, in most cases, escalated regional clashes into a world war.

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For example, when Germany began mobilizing troops in 1914 in accordance with the Schlieffen Plan, all hopes of political negotiations to prevent war were lost.

Alliance System – After Germany’s unification in 1871, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck worked to maintain the balance of power and prevent war through a complex system of interlocking alliances. As Bismarck put it, Germany was a “satisfied giant” that desired no additional territory. He believed a war among the great powers would be a disaster for Germany. Bismarck aimed to isolate a French nation bent on avenging the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and to stay allied with three of the five great powers. To achieve this purpose, Bismarck attempted to mediate the potential for dispute in the Balkans by forming the Three Emperors’ League in 1873 between Germany, Austria, and Russia. This agreement proved difficult to maintain, so Bismarck formed a strong mutual defense treaty with Austria (Austro-German Alliance) in 1879 and the Triple Alliance with Italy and Austria in 1882. When Russia refused to revive the alliance with both Germany and Austria, Bismarck convinced the Russians to sign the Reinsurance Treaty in 1887 simply with Germany. Moreover, Bismarck maintained friendly relations with Great Britain and even avoided antagonizing France. Within the Bismarckian alliance structure, no great power could count on the support of any other should it initiate aggressive war, and might in fact trigger a hostile alliance against it.

Kaiser William dismissed Bismarck in 1890 and quickly undid his alliance system. William allowed the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia to lapse, counting on his personal relation with the Russian tsar (they were cousins), which freed Russia to complete the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894. As it industrialized and pursued colonies more vigorously, Germany’s potential military and economic might created concern among the other great powers. William’s efforts to match Britain’s navy, and his militant personal style, drove France and Britain together with the *Entente Cordiale* (“friendly. Understanding”) in 1904. Soon after, in 1907, Russia, smarting from its military defeat to Japan, agreed with Britain to the Anglo-Russian Entente to compromise their contending interests in central Asia. These series of loose agreements among Britain, France, and Russia came to be known as the Triple Entente, which now opposed the Triple Alliance. Within a generation, William had destroyed Bismarck’s alliance system and caused Germany’s encirclement. As of 1907, two mutually antagonistic alliances faced off, with the potential of a minor conflict between Austria and Russia dragging the whole of Europe into War. The alliance system thus acted as a chain of causation leading to an all-out war once the first trap was sprung.

Imperialism – World War I did not begin over colonial issues; however, conflicts among imperial powers increased tension and hardened the emerging alliance structure. Italy’s pursuit of colonies in North Africa brought it into conflict with France and led in 1882 to its joining the Triple Alliance. To test the new alliance between France and Britain (Triple Entente), William provoked the Moroccan Crises of 1905 and 1911, disputes over French control of the North African region. His aggressive actions produced the opposite of the intended effect, as the two Atlantic nations drew closer in their joint military plans. In addition, Britain’s isolation during the Boer War (1899-1902) led it to approach Japan, France, and Russia in the next decade to ensure its security vis-à-vis an expansive Germany. Finally, Italy’s attack on the crumbling Ottoman Empire in pursuit of the North African colony of Libya (1911) triggered a series of crises in the Balkans culminating in the First World War.

Mass Politics – By 1914, many European states faced significant internal problems – strikes, ethnic violence, extremist groups, and outsiders demanding rights. To promote unity, governments promoted imperialism and fanned nationalist sentiments. As leaders contemplated the momentous decision for war in July 1914, they may have viewed the crisis as an opportunity to solve domestic issues. When war broke out, citizens celebrated in European capitals, and political dissenters called for an end to internal disputes. Kaiser William announced a *Burgfrieden*, or civil peace, for the duration of the war, while in Britain, female suffrage and Irish home rule were tabled. Socialist parties, which wished to unite workers of all nations, generally supported the call to arms, in spite of their Marxist ideology. Mass politics had worked only too well in promoting popular nationalist sentiment in favor of war.

Intellectual Context – Many observers of the European scene sensed that a major war loomed on the horizon. It had been 40 years since the Franco-Prussian War, and with the advent of Darwinism and irrationality in philosophy, some glorified war as a natural product of human advance-how it called upon patriotism and sacrifice and separated the weak from the strong nations. For example, German writer Friedrich von Bernhardi, in *The Next War* (1912), welcomed the prospect of demonstrating Germany’s national greatness and predicted that technological advances would render warfare brief and decisive. Europeans’ faith in technological and scientific solutions to problems and belief in the productivity of warfare seem naïve today only because of the results of the war they produced.

Nationalism – Nationalism caused the First World War in two ways: (1) by making it difficult for nations to

compromise what they perceived as their national honor and (2) by feeding the ethnic tensions in the Balkans that drew Austria and Russia into conflict there.

European Diplomacy, 1871-1914

• THEME MUSIC

Much of this chapter addresses the SP theme, particularly the structure of diplomatic rivalries, balance of power, and the state's power over the economy and society. In many ways, World War I formed a turning point. It laid the groundwork for totalitarian movements of subsequent decades, planted the seeds of the Second World War, and set the stage for the superpower rivalry between the U.S. and USSR.

By destroying the Concert of Europe, the Crimean War not only opened the way for the unification of Italy and Germany, it effectively destroyed an international mechanism for containing conflict. Germany's defeat of France in the last of its unification wars established the perennial rivalry at the base of the First World War. With this unstable diplomatic situation and intense national rivalries, all that was needed was a *casus belli* (cause of war). This proved to be the volatile situation in the Balkan peninsula, involving Austria, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire.

Like Russia, the Ottoman Empire realized its backwardness during the Crimean War. However, efforts by reformers, known as Young Turks, to introduce national citizenship, abolish religious hierarchies, and establish legal equality only provoked a conservative backlash. The Sick Man of Europe seemed unable to stem the disintegration of its multiethnic realm, which drew in Russia as the protector of its brother Slavs and in its perennial drive to gain territory at the Ottomans' expense. The ensuing Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) resulted in Russia's clear victory but one that seemed to threaten the balance of power in the region and Britain's control of the Suez Canal. To prevent further conflict, Bismarck acted as an "honest broker" and called the Congress of Berlin (1878) to resolve the issue. The Congress reduced the territory Russia gained and allowed Austria to occupy (but not annex) Bosnia-Herzegovina, coveted by nationalistic Serbs. Most viewed the Congress of Berlin as a defeat for Russia. The subsequent anti-German feeling in Russia led Bismarck to conclude an Austro-German alliance in 1879; however, Germany and Russia eventually reestablished friendly diplomatic relations with the Reinsurance Treaty. Nonetheless, the conflict revealed the explosive potential of the Balkans.

During the first decade of the 20th century, the Balkans experienced a series of crises. In a rare sign of cooperation, Austria and Russia in 1908 concluded a secret agreement at the expense of an Ottoman Empire once again undergoing internal instability. In exchange for

allowing Russia to take the strategic Dardanelles (straits from the Black to Mediterranean Seas), Austria was to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina, which it already occupied. Fearing the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the other great powers blocked Russia's advance into the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, Austria took Bosnia anyway, demonstrating the power of coercion over diplomacy. Russia was humiliated, while its smaller neighbor Serbia was incensed, viewing Bosnia's Slavic population as rightfully belonging to a future greater Serbia. Soon after, Serbian pan-Slavists formed the terrorist Black Hand, bent on expelling Austrian influence from the Balkans.

Like a flock of vultures, the smaller Balkan nations circled the carcass of the dying Ottoman Empire. After Italy's defeat of the Turks in 1911, the smaller nations formed the Balkan League (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro) and attacked the Ottomans in the First Balkan War (1912-1913). Following the Balkan League's victory, Serbia stood poised to gain access to the Adriatic Sea. At the London Conference, Austria, Italy, and Germany forced upon Serbia and its protector Russia the creation of an independent Albania, designed specifically to block Serbian access to the sea. Once again, Russia had been forced to back down in its own backyard. When the victors could not agree on how to divide the conquered territory of Macedonia, Bulgaria (created in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin) faced off against the other Balkan nations and the Ottomans in the Second Balkan War (1913). Bulgaria was easily defeated. The two conflicts heightened the animosity between Serbia and Austria, convinced Russia of the need to save face in the next crisis, and set the stage for the ultimate conflict.

The July Crisis of 1914

Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863-1914), the heir to the Austrian throne, visited the capital of Bosnia (Sarajevo) with the intention of building support for his solution to the ethnic problems in the Balkans—a Triple Monarchy. Franz Ferdinand hoped to appease the Slavic minorities in the region by granting them autonomy *within* the Habsburg empire (like the Magyars); however, the Black Hand feared the plan would undermine its goal of establishing a unified independent Serbian kingdom. To stop Ferdinand's plan and punish Austria, the Black Hand trained a group of young assassins to kill the Archduke and his wife, Sophie. On June 28, 1914, the 23-year-old Gavrilo Princip fulfilled his mission, plunging Europe into crisis.

Austria believed the Serbian government was behind the assassination and a month later issued it an ultimatum. Kaiser William of Germany gave his only reliable ally a "blank check" to settle its ethnic issue permanently, emboldening Austria to take a hard line and risk war with

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Serbia's ally, Russia. Fearing Germany's military plans, France in turn stood firm behind its ally Russia. Meanwhile, Britain refused to signal its intentions clearly, trying in vain to mediate the dispute. When Serbia rejected one point of Austria's ultimatum, Austria declared war against it, an action that prompted Russia's declaration of war against Austria. Russia's war plan presumed a war against *both* Germany and Austria, forcing Tsar Nicholas to mobilize his army on both nations' borders. Despite a last-minute flurry of telegrams between cousins Willy and Nicky, Germany declared war on Russia, triggering the trap of the alliance system. France quickly joined the conflict, and because Germany's Schlieffen Plan had violated Belgian neutrality, Britain too declared war on Germany. Europe was now engulfed in the war for which many had planned but of a nature that few expected.

Fighting on the Fronts

Europe did not get the war it expected. What was supposed to be over by Christmas turned to stalemate by the end of 1914. Though the war eventually involved the nations of six continents, the hinge turned on the Western Front. It is most important for you to understand the nature of the war and its phases; do not be overly concerned with battles.

The Nature of the War

Military tactics often lag a generation behind technologies. The First World War illustrates this adage in bold type. Generals of the day learned the Napoleonic tactics of rapid movement and the massed infantry assault. Military theorists assumed that the new technologies of airplanes, high-powered artillery, and machine guns would favor the offensive by overwhelming a static opponent with massive firepower. The reverse turned out to be the case, as these weapons and technologies proved advantageous to entrenched (defensive) positions. In all, almost 10 million Europeans (almost all soldiers) were killed during the First World War, largely the result of an inability to conceive of new tactics in dealing with defensive weapons.

Once the Western Front settled down to a stalemate, each side entrenched positions and fortified them with barbed wire. In between stood "no-man's land," an expanse denuded of trees, houses, and crops. Generals attempted to soften up enemy positions with artillery bombardments, often lasting days, as a prelude to "over the top," where infantry ran exposed through no-man's land in a vain effort to overwhelm the enemy trench. Though trenches had been used during the Crimean War and the U.S. Civil War, the combatants in this war relied on them extensively. Trench warfare emerged as a

dehumanizing and absurd symbol of the futility of the First World

War. Many other important technological breakthroughs occurred or were first used in World War I, but none exercised the decisive impact as hoped and only increased the body count: tanks, airplanes, flamethrowers, submarines (U-boats), high-powered artillery, grenades, poison gas, barbed wire, zeppelins, and aerial bombardment.

The War of Illusions: 1914

Germany gambled that its Schlieffen Plan would defeat France before Russia could mobilize. The plan called for a huge right-flanking maneuver in August 1914 through Belgium to hit Paris from the rear and trap the French army at Alsace-Lorraine. Violation of Belgium neutrality brought Britain in the war on the side of the Entente (Allied Powers), and moreover, Belgium put up unexpected resistance to German forces. This resistance led to the first atrocities of the war against Belgian civilians, providing the Allies with an important propaganda weapon against Germany.

As the German advance toward Paris stalled, the French regrouped and hit the German flank at the Marne River. The Miracle of the Marne halted the German offensive. After each side unsuccessfully tried to outflank the other by racing to the English Channel, the Western Front had settled down by Christmas to a stalemate, with a string of trenches from the English Channel to the Swiss frontier – 300 miles in length. On the more open and less populated Eastern Front, the Germans met with more success by capturing an entire Russian army at Tannenberg. This battle was the prelude to the generally poor performance of the Russian army, whose men were captured in much larger numbers than any combatant nation.

Stalemate: 1915

To break out of the stalemate, the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany) and the Allied forces (Russia, France, Britain, Belgium) expanded the war by bidding for new allies. To recapture its lost territories, Turkey joined the Central Powers in November of 1914. The Allies, meanwhile, bribed Italy, via the Treaty of London, with the promise of Austrian territory to join the war against the Central Powers. From 1915 to 1917, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece all entered the conflict to achieve territorial objectives left over from the pre-1914 Balkan conflicts.

Each side engaged in probing offensives aimed at finding the enemy weak spot. To knock out the Turks and secure Europe's "soft underbelly," the British in April 1915 launched the poorly planned Gallipoli

campaign, an amphibious assault designed to capture Constantinople and the Dardanelles. British forces found themselves pinned down on a narrow ridge and after months of futile assaults withdrew in early 1916.

Germany and Great Britain both attempted to blockade the other and starve it into submission. The German navy's reliance on the submarine made blockades dangerous – the U-boat had to either surface to inspect enemy ships, making it vulnerable to enemy fire, or gamble and destroy the potential enemy craft. This problem almost brought the United States into the conflict when a German U-boat sank the British liner *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland, killing 1,200, including 128 Americans. President Wilson was able to maintain U.S. neutrality while extracting a promise from the German government to avoid unrestricted submarine warfare. However, U.S. exports and loans to Britain and France skyrocketed as aid and trade to Germany fizzled.

Slaughter: 1916-1917

By 1916, the effects of total war were exhausting all nations involved in the conflict. To break the deadlock, Germany rolled the dice on another bold plan. In February 1916, Commander Erich von Falkenhayn launched a massive surprise attack at the key position of Verdun in the French line. Though the attack met with initial success, the Germans were unable to maintain their momentum. They did not call off the battle, however, until January 1917, making Verdun the longest battle of the war and one of the deadliest in history. In all, the French and German armies combined experienced 1.1 million casualties.

• EXAMPLE BASE

Few of the specifics in this section constitute required knowledge per se; however, you can employ examples from the fighting to examine how military stalemate and technology affected mobilization, home front issues, and the relationship between governments and science.

To take the pressure off the French, the British launched the Somme offensive in July. The battle proved a disaster for the British army, which lost 30,000 dead in the first 3 hours of the attack, known as the bloodiest day in British military history. In addition, the Russian command surprised the Austrian army with the Brusilov Offensive, driving their enemy back hundreds of miles before the Germans stabilized their collapsing ally. One success for the Central Powers was their victory over Serbia; this country was knocked completely out of the war, losing a greater percentage of its population than any other warring nation.

In one of the ironies of the war, the large battleships that had provoked such animosity between Britain and Germany generally stayed in port, with leaders fearful of destroying such large investments. The only major naval

engagement of the war occurred in 1916 off the coast of Denmark at Jutland. Both sides were bloodied but survived, and the German battleships returned to port. After the armistice, the Germans scuttled (sank) their expensive fleet rather than allow it to fall into enemy hands.

Exhaustion and Revolution: 1917-1918

In 1917, the Allied forces lost a key nation: Russia. At the same time, they gained perhaps an even greater force: the United States. Russia's deteriorating economic and political situation resulted in the fall of the Romanov Dynasty, and in late 1917 the newly empowered Bolsheviks pulled Russia out of the war. Germany once again rolled the dice to end the war, betting that unrestricted submarine warfare around the British Isles, in violation of an earlier pledge, could knock Britain and France out of the conflict before the United States could effectively mobilize. They were wrong. The announcement of Germany's U-boat campaign, combined with the Zimmerman Telegram—in which the German ambassador promised Mexico the recovery of lands lost to the United States if it entered the war—drew the United States into the war in April 1917. Contrary to German plans, American involvement proved decisive.

By mid-1917, it looked as if the Central Powers might prevail. Austrian and German forces routed the Italian army at Caporetto, forcing the diversion of French and British forces into the difficult Alpine fighting to prop up their ally. In Belgium, British, ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps), and Canadian forces worked to retake the town of Passchendaele. In the subsequent battle, thousands drowned in muddy shell holes, a morbid symbol of the futility of warfare. By March 1918, the Germans imposed on the Bolsheviks the draconian Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, costing Russia significant territory and resources.

In Germany's final gamble of the war, its High Command launched one last major offensive in Spring 1918 on the Western Front. Despite initial gains, which brought the Germans to within 30 miles of Paris, American troops began to inject fresh manpower and morale into the Allied cause. American and French counteroffensives pushed the German lines back by early Fall 1918. By this time, ethnic minorities were establishing independence from the Austrian Empire, and Germany faced a revolutionary situation at home from an exhausted populace. Though few troops stood on German soil, the German High Command asked for an armistice on November 11, 1918. The Armistice ended fighting, yet Europe faced a revolutionary situation in which a return to the prewar world proved impossible.

Organizing for Total War

The Great War involved full mobilization of each nation's resources and populations. Despite modern industrial, military, and bureaucratic techniques, most nations found the burdens of fighting the war an enormous strain, fueling a revolutionary situation.

Government and Economy

Pressures of total war forced the abandonment of laissez-faire practices. Governments moved quickly to oversee wartime production to ensure an adequate supply of materiel. To appreciate the demands of the Great War, you may consider that at the battle of Verdun more projectiles were dropped than in all previous warfare in human history combined! Many combatant nations managed production via bureaucratic centralization—that is, running the war effort as one large industry: In Germany, industrialist Walter Rathenau (1867-1922) helped Germany deal with severe shortages and maintain adequate supplies by overseeing production in the War Ministry. When Britain experienced a shortage of shells in 1915, future Prime Minister David Lloyd George (1863-1945) was made Minister of Munitions to avoid shortfalls. Because of such policies, large businesses and labor unions benefited, as governments found it more efficient to award government contracts to and oversee large enterprises.

To pay for the war, governments exercised three options: raise taxes, depreciate currencies, and borrow money. Raising taxes could only go so far; as the war dragged on, governments grew fearful of placing any additional demands on an already strained populace. By the end of the conflict, France and Britain had borrowed significant amounts from the United States, making it a creditor for the first time in its history. All nations appealed to their citizens' patriotic duty to purchase war bonds. In all, the war cost the nations involved over \$350 billion. Inflation acted as a hidden tax and resulted in currency depreciation, a situation that rendered a return to prewar economic stability impossible when the war finally ended.

Nationalist Unrest and Agitation

Almost every nation experienced internal ethnic conflicts, and their enemies attempted to exploit them. For example, the German government gave aid to Irish rebels wishing for independence from the British in the Easter Rising of 1916. Though British men and resources were diverted, the attempt failed. Not to be outdone, the Allies promoted the creation of independence committees for various minorities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially for the Poles and Czechs, an effort that yielded the dissolution of the empire by 1918. Most famously,

the British sent Colonel T.E. Lawrence ("of Arabia," 1888-1935) to promote the cause of Arab nationalism within the Ottoman Empire. Though these efforts did not play a decisive role in the outcome of the war, they did set up future conflicts in the Middle East, often over the new strategic resource of oil.

The Home Fronts

The First World War represents the culmination of the trend toward mass politics in the previous half-century. Governments called on citizens to sacrifice for the war effort by enlisting, buying war bonds, and rationing. Rationing went furthest in Germany. By 1916, the Kaiser had turned the government over to the famous generals Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937) and Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934), who quietly established a military dictatorship, part of which involved allotting families ration books for a particular number of calories per day. By the end of the war, many Germans agonized over eating sawdust bread and shortages of essential fats and oils.

Because of the manpower shortage, many women entered the workforce outside the home for the first time. In Britain, industrialists employed women in the production of TNT and shells. Neglect of safety conditions led tragically to the poisoning and infertility of thousands of female laborers. These "women with yellow hands" demonstrated the potential public role of women and helped to earn them the vote in many nations after the war ended. The Provisional Government of Russia even formed a military unit, the Women's Battalion of Death, which saw action at the front and in defense of the state. Among other groups, skilled workers gained the most, as they won wage increases and recognition of union collaboration in production. Nonetheless, strikes did occur. Governments often responded with the promise of improved conditions and the threat of violence if the strike continued. By the end of the war, union discontent broke out into open rebellion, helping to bring down teetering governments in the Fall of 1918. On the other hand, small business owners, those in traditional crafts, and the lower middle-class often found themselves struggling with competition from large businesses favored by government officials.

Freedom is often the first casualty of war. Though states worked to build positive support for their war efforts, they were also quick to crush dissent. Early in the war, the British Parliament passed the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA), which in addition to regimenting the lives of British citizens, censored the press and allowed the government to requisition war supplies from private citizens. All states, including the United States, established stricter laws against treasonous activities and dissent against

the government. Germany used spies to infiltrate radical unions, while many governments simply jailed the most outspoken opponents of the war effort.

Propaganda and Genocide

• SKILL SET

World War I elevated mass politics to a new level with its need for mobilization. Governments employed propaganda to motivate citizens both to sacrifice and to view enemies as less than human. Using the firstworldwar.com site below, peruse some of the propaganda posters from various nations and place them in historical context, considering how and why they might have motivated combatants and citizens (CTX).

Propaganda came of age during the First World War. To motivate citizens, governments employed both positive patriotic appeals with national symbols and negative attacks on the enemy, portraying the war as a battle over civilization against a brutal and inhuman foe. Demonizing the enemy seemed a logical culmination of mass political pressures in the previous half-century—anti-Semitism, xenophobia, extreme nationalism, and glorification of struggle. A tragic culmination of this logic was the first genocide of the 20th century. In 1915, the Ottoman government feared that its Armenian Christian minority might aid the Russian war effort. Several hundred leaders of the Armenian community were executed, while thousands of Armenians were deported to camps with inadequate facilities, where between 500,000 and 1.5 million died from neglect, disease, and starvation. Even today, the Turkish government rejects the notion of an Armenian Genocide, though most independent scholars classify the event as such.

The Treaty of Versailles and Revolution

The Treaty of Versailles ending the First World War represents one of the most significant diplomatic events you will study this year and is essential to your understanding of the 20th century. The Versailles settlement is often compared with the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815 regarding their respective schemes for collective security and the success of their decisions. Though the Allies negotiated treaties with each of the Central Powers, the settlement with Germany proved most important for future events.

Revolutionary Fallout

When the Allied victors met starting in January 1919 in the Palace of Versailles, they found it nearly impossible to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Revolutionary violence led to the toppling of four empires – Austro-Hungarian, German, Ottoman, and Russian. What would replace these traditional diplomatic

entities remained an open question. Allied leaders were prepared to confirm the **creation of new states** out of the former Habsburg Empire (Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) and promote democratic governments there and in Germany. Even after the completion of treaties, revolutionary unrest continued, often fed by the existence of a new socialist government in the east, the Soviet Union.

Differing Goals for and Visions of the Peace

President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1923), the first American president to travel abroad, set foot on European soil a hero. He authored the renowned Fourteen Points, his idealistic vision for reconstructing Europe and “making the world safe for democracy.” He also declared that WWI should be the “war to end all wars.” Wilson dreamed of a new diplomatic order guided by open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, arms reduction, **national self-determination**, and collective security. Representatives from African and Asian colonies attended negotiations in hopes of gaining autonomy only to be thwarted as former German and Ottoman colonies were granted to Britain and France under **mandates**, granting them Control until the colonies were ready for self-governance. Collective security was to be achieved by the creation of an international governing body to mediate disputes – the League of Nations. Wilson knew that Germany must be punished but hoped that drastic action might be avoided to build a more secure foundation for democratic government after the war.

French Premier George Clemenceau (1841-1929), nicknamed the Tiger, considered Wilson’s vision utopian, and concentrated on security for France by emasculating Germany’s military and economic potential. **British Prime Minister David Lloyd George** stood somewhere in between Wilson and Clemenceau (famously remarking, “I had God on one side and the devil on the other”) in wanting to punish Germany but not utterly destroy it. And though **Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando** (1860-1952) represented Italy in negotiations, he eventually walked out in protest over Italy’s lack of territorial spoils. Importantly, Russia sat out the negotiations, as the new Bolshevik leader Lenin denounced the gathering as a capitalist plot. The Allies rejected German participation and continued the naval blockade until June 1919 when Germany signed the treaty; in all, approximately 750,000 Germans died of starvation during and after World War I. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that the treaty pleased no nation.

The Final Product

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After months of negotiations, the reluctant German delegates signed the Versailles settlement in the palace's famous Hall of Mirrors on June 28, 1919 (5 years to the day from the start of the war). By all accounts, the treaty represented a harsh peace:

• SKILL SET

The Treaty of Versailles's Article 231, which assessed full responsibility for the war to Germany, represents the first official interpretation of the war's origins (INTR) and of great political consequence, since it was used to justify the victors' actions against the defeated. To sharpen your skill of Comparison (COMP), make a balance sheet or Venn Diagram of the Congress of Vienna and the Treaty of Versailles. Which was more successful in addressing its respective situation and promoting collective security? **Territorial Losses** – Germany lost 13% of its territory and 12% of its population. The important Saar industrial region was placed under League of Nations control until 1935. East Prussia was cut off from the rest of Germany to provide the new Polish state with access to the Sea. Finally, German surrendered its overseas colonies.

Demilitarization – The German army was reduced to 100,000 men, the nation's naval fleet was severely curtailed (including the banning of U-boats), and its air force was eliminated. Fearing further German aggression, the French insisted on the demilitarization of the Rhineland, adjacent to France.

War Guilt – In the most controversial provision of the treaty, Germany was forced to accept full responsibility for the war via Article 231

Reparations – Based on the War Guilt clause, the Allies in 1921 set a reparations amount for the German government of 132 billion marks (some \$33 billion), a figure most German observers considered exorbitant.

League of Nations – To promote collective security, the Allies agreed to Wilson's idea of a League of Nations. However, because the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the treaty, the United States never joined, and the new Soviet Union and Germany were initially excluded.

Consequences and Conflicts

Few were fully satisfied with the Treaty of Versailles, but none less so than Germany. Germany's new postwar government, the Weimar Republic, started off with two strikes against it, being saddled with what most Germans perceived as a dictated peace. Discontent over the treaty was fed by extremists groups like the Nazis and played a major role in bringing down Germany's short-lived experiment with democracy. Almost immediately, observers condemned the economic arrangements of the treaty. Economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) attended the negotiations on behalf of Britain and afterward predicted in his *Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919) the ruination of the world economy, which was not long in coming. Overall, the inability of the victors to establish a consistent diplomatic approach torpedoed their

efforts at establishing a stable balance of power, but perhaps the complexity of the issues and intensity of the conflicts might have doomed any settlement. Certainly a major reason for the treaty's failure proved to be the subsequent isolation of both the United States and the Soviet Union. America's unwillingness to guarantee French security after 1920 and the fear of Soviet communism opened the way for a revival of German power. Without a full commitment to collective security and the League of Nations, Europe in the next two decades drifted toward an even more destructive war.

The Russian Revolution: Importance and Causes

Like the First World War that sparked it, the Russian Revolution helped define the political and ideological issues of the 20th century. Historians often compare it with the earlier French Revolution. Both revolutions proceeded through several phases, appealed to those outside their borders, and forced philosophical divisions throughout the world. One difference, however, was that France stood as Europe's leading nation in 1789 when their revolution began, whereas Russia lagged behind in 1914. Russia's revolution did prove more immediately successful, though, as the Bolsheviks secured power and held it for three-quarters of a century. In France, the Old Regime returned to control in 1814, just 25 years after the struggle began. Without the Russian Revolution, the history of the 20th century – including the Second World War, the Cold War, decolonization, and the nuclear arms race – would be a different story.

Long-Term Causes, 1861-1905

Throughout its history, Russia faced two perennial and irresolvable problems: (1) its technological and economic backwardness vis-à-vis the other European powers and (2) its inability to develop a form of government that successfully harnessed the will of its people. The Russian Revolution can be viewed as a drastic solution to these problems.

Following Alexander II's (r. 1855-1881) reforms, Russia seemed to be moving in the right direction. However, each top-down move by the government engendered a new set of problems. Following the abolition of serfdom, former serfs were forced to continue living on the *mir*s (rural communities practicing subsistence agriculture) until they had paid for their lands. Moreover, large landholders (the gentry) garnered most of the best lands for themselves, sticking former serfs with the rest. Rural overcrowding and a shortage of land led to continual unrest in the countryside, which served as a magnet for revolutionary groups.

Russian intellectuals were divided between those who lauded the unique features of Russia's Slavic culture (called Slavophiles) and those who believed the nation needed to become more like the West to survive (Westernizers). As Russia industrialized after 1880 under the leadership of Finance Minister Sergei Witte (1849-1915), these divisions deepened. Many of the worst problems of industrialization previously experienced by western European nations seemed accentuated within Russia's undemocratic political system. Moreover, the rapid pace of advance proved problematic. Industry and the resulting urban problems of overcrowding, pollution, and poor working/living conditions were concentrated in two cities—Moscow and St. Petersburg. Russian manufacturing enterprises tended to be large, making it easy for workers to organize politically. As such, large cities and factories emerged as centers of proletarian unrest and revolution in subsequent decades.

Reform only seemed to fuel the growth of movements that wished to take things further. Among the Slavophiles, an anarchist movement known as the People's Will succeeded in assassinating Alexander II in 1881, causing a brutal suppression of revolutionary groups by his successor, the reactionary Alexander III (r. 1881-1894). Anarchists succeeded, in fact, in assassinating thousands of Russian officials between 1870 and 1914. Less violent but also radical were the Social Revolutionaries, who favored a socialism led by the peasants—that stressed Russia's rural tradition. Westernizers divided strongly between the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets), who favored the development of a capitalist economy and a parliamentary democracy like Britain's, and the Social Democrats, a Marxist party founded in 1898 in exile. Even within the Social Democrats, divisions existed; the Mensheviks wished to establish a mass-based political party like the SPD in Germany, and the **Bolsheviks** claimed that only a conspiratorial group of professional agitators could survive in Russia's autocratic political climate.

Revolution of 1905

The divisions in Russian society burst to the fore under the ongoing pressure of the country's repeated military defeats. Russia's poor showing in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) produced an economic crisis and a breakdown of the nation's infrastructure. Revolutionary groups looked to exploit the situation to foment change. Strikes broke out in the major cities, the small number of university students rallied, and a group of peaceful protestors marched on the tsar's Winter Palace to request reform. Though unprovoked, the Tsar's troops fired on the crowd, killing hundreds, in an event known as Bloody Sunday. To calm the furor that followed, Tsar Nicholas II (r. 1894-1917) issued the October

Manifesto promising the creation of a legislative assembly, known as the Duma, and further reforms. For the moment, these actions appeased the moderate reform parties. Any moderate efforts toward the evolution of a constitutional monarchy were undermined by the actions of Nicholas II. Much like Louis XVI, Nicholas appeared a well-meaning and religious family man who, while espousing divine right rule, proved incapable of upholding what this ideal entailed. Nicholas's prime minister, Peter Stolypin (1862-1911), offered the last chance to pull Russia through its difficult transition. Stolypin introduced a series of far-reaching reforms in the decade before WWI designed to move Russia toward a functioning parliamentary democracy and a modern economic system. Peasants were finally allowed to sell their land shares to the *mir* and move to cities; property rights were advanced; and the provincial zemstvos (government councils) were strengthened. Unfortunately, Nicholas thwarted Stolypin's attempts to work with the Duma in creating parliamentary coalitions, exercising his royal prerogative to suspend the legislative whenever its policies annoyed him. When Stolypin was assassinated in 1911, it marked the end of Russia's chance for a peaceful transition to modernity.

The March Revolution and Provisional Government

World War I served as the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back of the Romanov Dynasty. Russia did not fare well in the conflict, experiencing a lack of supplies, poor morale among troops, and numerous casualties. Once again, war had exposed Russia's economic and technological weakness in comparison with the western European powers. As political divisions deepened, Tsar Nicholas II in 1915 dissolved the Duma. Following failures at the front, Nicholas then took personal control of the troops, a task for which he was woefully unprepared. Many soldiers were sent into battle with inadequate clothing and weapons. Meanwhile, public opinion turned against the monarchy, as it became increasingly viewed as distant and corrupt. Discontent toward the royal family centered on the mysterious figure of Rasputin (1869-1916), a dissolute monk who exercised sway over the tsarina (tsar's wife) because of his supposed ability to cure her son, Alexis, of hemophilia. Nobles at the court decided to end Rasputin's corrupting influence by assassinating him in December 1916.

Only a crisis was needed to topple the tsarist regime. On March 8, 1917, International Women's Day, a food riot broke out over the high cost of bread in an event eerily similar to the women's march on Versailles during the French Revolution. Revolutionary agitators pushed the

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crowd toward a political insurrection. When nearby troops refused to fire on the crowd, the Romanov Dynasty collapsed like a house of cards. Two new governments came to the fore as the result of the March Revolution. First, the **Provisional Government** replaced the deposed tsar and was led by constitutional democrats and moderate socialists. Second, more radical groups founded councils of workers, sailors, and soldiers known as soviets, the most important of which was the Petrograd Soviet (the city of St. Petersburg had been changed to Petrograd because it sounded less German). The Petrograd Soviet played much the same role as the Paris Commune during the French Revolution, pushing the government further to the left.

The Provisional Government opted to continue the war effort and honor its treaty commitments. Meanwhile, peasants seized land from the gentry, and discipline among troops dissolved. The Petrograd Soviet aided the latter development by passing Army Order No.1, which provided for democratically elected committees to run the army, causing the breakdown of all discipline. In April 1917, the German army sent Lenin through their lines in a sealed train to Petrograd in the hope that he would further undermine the Provisional Government.

The Bolshevik Revolution

The Role of Lenin

V.I. Lenin (1870-1924) provided the intellectual and organizational energy behind the Russian Revolution. From an upper middle-class family, Lenin became radicalized when his brother was executed for indirect involvement in an assassination attempt against Tsar Alexander II. Unable to find work and arrested for his revolutionary affiliations, Lenin went into exile in Switzerland, where he joined the Social Democratic Party and urged a hard line against capitalism. Lenin's writings, such as the *April Theses* issued upon his arrival in 1917 in Russia, adapted Marxism to the experience of Russia. His contributions to socialist ideology include:

Imperialism – As noted in Chapter 12, Lenin incorporated the phenomenon of imperialism into Marx's critique of capitalism. Lenin claimed that imperialism represented the highest stage of capitalism's concentration of power into fewer and fewer hands and signaled an imminent crisis.

Vanguard Party – Lenin insisted, in contrast to the Mensheviks, that only a small group of professional revolutionary conspirators could operate successfully in Russia's undemocratic political climate.

"Weakest link in the chain" – Orthodox Marxism held that the revolution would occur first in the most developed capitalist nation, such as Britain or Germany. Lenin

countered that because capitalism operated as a worldwide system, revolutionaries should concentrate on the weakest link--Russia--enabling the spread of revolution to the other links.

Telescoping – Many Russian socialists cooperated with the Provisional Government, believing Russia unready to enter into a socialist phase of development before its complete industrialization. Lenin rejected this notion and claimed that the time was ripe for revolution. He further claimed that Russia's rapid industrialization could occur under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Revolutionary tactics – To stir the masses, Lenin and the Bolsheviks focused on simple slogans and uncompromising opposition to the Provisional Government. "Peace, bread, and land" and "power to the soviets!" indicated clearly the thrust of the Bolshevik message.

Bolshevik Consolidation of Power

By November 1917, Lenin judged that the hour for action had arrived. Troops in Petrograd voted to support the Bolshevik-controlled soviets. The Bolsheviks easily seized key communication, transportation, and utilities, while the Provisional Government fled for lack of support. Lenin and the Bolsheviks timed their takeover to coincide with the Congress of Soviets, which elected Lenin the head of the Council of People's Commissars, an executive body. Bolshevik leaders quickly moved to consolidate their power by confirming peasant seizures of land and worker control of factories. More importantly, the Bolsheviks in January 1918 disbanded the recently elected Constituent Assembly, which had produced majorities for the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. This action plunged Russia into civil war. Claiming to speak on behalf of the proletariat, the Bolsheviks (now the Communist Party) proclaimed a dictatorship in their name.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

Now preoccupied with a civil war, Lenin desperately needed to end Russia's involvement in the First World War. In March 1918, the Bolsheviks signed the harsh Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany. By the agreement, Russia recognized the independence of the Baltic provinces, Poland, and Ukraine. In the process, the Bolsheviks lost the most densely populated regions of their nation, important mineral resources, and some of Russia's best farmland. Bolshevik leaders gambled that Russia would regain these lands amid the inevitable socialist revolution accompanying the collapse of the war effort all around.

Russian Civil War, 1918-1922

To fight the civil war, the Bolsheviks formed the Red Army. Led by the brilliant organizer and former head of the Petrograd Soviet, Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), the army faced a motley collection of former tsarists, Cadets, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries known as the White Army. Organizing the war effort was accomplished through war communism. The Bolsheviks nationalized key industries, allowing workers to run factories but dealing harshly with peasants who hoarded grain and refused to surrender their crops and livestock for the Reds' worthless paper money. Bolshevik policies, exacerbated by economic problems, produced class warfare, especially between wealthy peasants on one side and landless laborers and urban dwellers on the other. Complicating the situation, Allied governments landed armies under American, Japanese, and Czech control to aid the Whites and bring Russia back into World War I.

Despite being outnumbered, the Bolsheviks were able to survive. Several factors account for this. First, the Bolsheviks were united in a common vision, in contrast with their enemies who could only agree that they hated the Bolsheviks. Second, intervention by foreign powers allowed the Bolsheviks to paint their opponents as traitors. Third, efforts by the White Army were hindered by exterior lines of communication, making it difficult for them to coordinate their attacks and allowing the Bolsheviks to travel on the inside of the circle they controlled to meet any incursion. Finally, the Bolsheviks simply exhibited a more ruthless willingness than their opponents to maintain their newly won power. Soon after their revolution, the Bolsheviks formed a secret police to infiltrate and eliminate centers of opposition.

Though the situation remained fluid, by 1922 the Bolsheviks had secured control of the nation. In fact, the Red Army recaptured some of the lands lost in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and from ethnic minorities that had declared independence since 1918. Once the Bolsheviks had secured power, they engaged in a Red Terror designed to eliminate class enemies. Under the influence of the Cheka (security police), thousands of former bourgeoisie, gentry, and White Army collaborators were shot summarily without trial. The Bolsheviks determined not to repeat the mistakes of French revolutionaries who allowed supporters of the Old Regime to survive or escape. Estimates run to over 2 million for those killed by the Bolsheviks; no Russian after 1922 would openly call for a return to traditional or even antisocialist government.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

By 1922, the Bolsheviks felt secure enough in their power to create the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

(USSR), also known as the Soviet Union. Eventually the new nation consisted of 15 such republics. It is important to remember that only about 50% of the citizens in this new USSR claimed Russian ethnicity and language. In that sense, the USSR acquired an international character. During the 1920s, many communists continued to hold out hope for the imminent overthrow of capitalism. To this purpose, the Bolsheviks in 1919 created the Third International of communist parties, or Comintern, to replace the Second International, which had divided over entry into the First World War. Supposedly an alliance of socialist parties, in actuality, the Comintern represented a Soviet effort to control the international communist movement.

Party-State Structure

The political structure of the Soviet Union reflected a unique party-state dualism. For each function of government, there existed both a party and a state organ. Because the party acted as the driving force of the revolution and direct representative of the proletariat, it played the primary policymaking role. State organs essentially worked to carry out policies. Constitutions were created in 1924 and 1936 to outline the complex workings of a strongly centralized government. Elections featured only one party, the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), and authority worked according to the principle of democratic centralism, a feature of Lenin's political philosophy. Elections and discussion flowed upward to the top, where decisions were made and adhered to by all party members. At the top of this centralized structure stood the Politburo (policy bureau) of a dozen individuals who dominated the decision-making process. Once Stalin came to power, the position of General Secretary (of the CPSU) took on an important role in maintaining strict discipline, selecting members to key positions, and enacting policy.

The Nationalities Issue

For centuries, the Russian tsars had unsuccessfully attempted to Russify the 50 different ethnic groups of their empire, in which over a hundred languages were spoken. To address the nationalities issues, the Bolsheviks adopted a federal structure of government whereby the various republics, and less important autonomous regions, could theoretically secede. In fact, the dominance of the Communist Party, many of whose officials were appointed by Russian leaders of the CPSU, prevented any movement away from the Soviet Union's centralized structure. However, the minority issue never died, and under Mikhail Gorbachev's rule (1985-1991) once again came to the fore in the form of national independence

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movements, leading to the disintegration of the Soviet empire.

The New Economic Policy (NEP)

As a result of the ravages of the First World War, civil war, and resulting famine, the Soviet economy stood at only a small fraction of its prewar productivity. To jump-start production, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921, a strategic retreat from communism and compromise with capitalism. Under the NEP, peasants were allowed to sell their grain themselves, and middlemen in towns and cities began exchanging goods for profit. A new class of wealthy peasants, called kulaks, arose in the countryside, often resented by landless laborers. Though the NEP did help to revive production, the Soviet economy by 1928 had just returned to its prewar level. Moreover, the policy provoked a split in the Politburo between those who favored continuing the NEP and those who wished to move further toward communism.

Social and Cultural Changes

The 1920s were a decade of experimentation in the Soviet Union. Legal changes provided women with a measure of equality—the vote in 1918, the right to divorce, and access to birth control and abortion. Such reforms did not always translate into immediate changes in the daily lives of women, especially as families struggled to rebuild after a disastrous decade of violence. One of the more prominent women involved in the building of a socialist society was Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952), appointed People’s Commissar for Social Welfare. Kollontai helped found Zhenotdel, a women’s bureau designed to fight illiteracy and educate women about the new marriage laws. Sparking controversy, Kollontai argued that as a natural instinct, sexuality should be freed from oppressive traditions, which mainly harm women. As for children, the Soviet Union created the Communist Youth League, or Komsomol, to promote socialist values and promote membership in the CPSU.

Artists and intellectuals eagerly assisted in the government’s efforts to promote literacy. The great filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein pioneered new techniques of portraying action and political themes. Soviet leaders sponsored Eisenstein’s famous film about the revolution, *Potemkin* (1925), critically acclaimed by film critics for its innovations. Radical artists incorporated the style of futurist art with a socialist message. Eventually, Stalin ended this period of experimentation, enforcing a cultural orthodoxy of socialist realism in the arts, celebrating factories and tractors, and reversing many of the provisions regarding women’s equality.

The Russian Revolution initially promoted women’s rights (e.g., granting suffrage); however, the end of social experimentation after 1928 coincided with a harsher time for women. Take note of how revolution and total war in the first half of the 20th century altered attitudes and practices toward women and other social groups (IS), such as workers, peasants, and ethnic minorities (e.g., Jews).

Stalin versus Trotsky

Soon after the Russian Civil War, Lenin fell ill from a series of strokes. Behind the scenes, General Secretary Josef Stalin (1879-1953) and Leon Trotsky – a true intellectual force in socialism and the organizer of the Red Army – battled for control of the party. Trotsky condemned the NEP as a sell-out to capitalism, calling for “permanent revolution” and protesting the bureaucratization of the communist party. Stalin proved the more organized and ruthless. With his control of patronage in the CPSU and by wrapping himself in the mantle of Lenin, Stalin engineered Trotsky’s dismissal from the party and then his exile. By 1928, Stalin had secured his absolute hold on power and moved to implement his plans to modernize the Soviet Union.

Results of WWI and the Russian Revolution

It would be difficult to overestimate the combined impact of the First World War and Russian Revolution on European and world history. In 1914, Europe stood at its zenith of power. Less than a decade later, total war and revolution had altered that situation. First, violent and extreme forces liberated by the war and revolution would bear full fruit with the totalitarian movements of the 1920s and 1930s. Second, laissez-faire ideas regarding the economy were abandoned under pressure of the war effort, and the Versailles settlement laid the seeds for the Great Depression. Third, World War I and the Russian Revolution both radically altered diplomatic structures and destroyed the balance of power. Fourth, prewar cultural trends toward irrationality and alienation gained currency from a decade of upheaval and dominated ideas during the interwar period. Though the Treaty of Versailles attempted to remake a stable world order, the task proved too much given the extreme circumstances facing Europe in 1919. The 20th century achieved its violent birth amid the chaos of the First World War and Russian Revolution.