

1 The First World War (1914–18)



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Key concepts:

- Cause and consequence
- Continuity and change
- Perspectives
- Significance

Inquiry question: Why did conflict emerge?

World War One Timeline	
1914	
28 June	Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (Sarajevo).
28 July	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
August	Germany invades Belgium; Britain declares war on Germany.
	Russia invades East Prussia but is defeated at Tannenberg (26–30 August).
	Japan enters the war (23 August).
	Fighting begins in German colonies in Africa.
September–December	Western Front settles into trench warfare.
	Russia advances into Galicia, defeating Austria-Hungary.
	Ottoman Empire enters the war (November).
1915	
January–March	Stalemate continues on Western Front.
	1st–3rd Battles of the Isonzo (Italy vs Austria-Hungary).
April	Gallipoli Campaign begins (25 April).
May	Italy joins the Allies (23 May).
	Gorlice–Tarnów Offensive (May–September): Germany pushes Russia back.
June–August	Further Isonzo battles (4th–7th).
	Allied failures mount at Gallipoli.
October	Bulgaria enters the war on the Central Powers' side.
	Serbia invaded by Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria.
December	Allies begin evacuation of Gallipoli.
1916	
February	Battle of Verdun begins (21 February).
June	Brusilov Offensive (June–September) devastates Austria-Hungary.
July	Battle of the Somme begins (1 July).
August–December	Verdun and Somme continue into late 1916.
	Romania enters the war (August) and is defeated by December.
	Arab Revolt underway across the Middle East.
1917	
February	Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare.
	Russian February Revolution brings down the tsar.
April	United States enters the war (6 April).
June	Greece joins the Allies.
July–October	Heavy fighting on Western Front; morale and supplies deteriorate.
November	Russian October Revolution: Bolsheviks take power and seek peace.
	British forces capture Jerusalem (December).

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1918	
March	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk ends Russia's participation (3 March).
	Ludendorff Offensive begins (March–July).
April–July	US troops arrive in large numbers; German offensive fails.
July–November	The Hundred Days Offensive (Allied Counter-Offensive)
8 August–11 November 1918	The offensive continuously pushes German armies back towards their borders and directly leads to German collapse.
September	Bulgaria defeated (29 September).
	Battle of Megiddo (Middle East) leads to collapse of Ottoman forces.
October	Ottoman Empire surrenders (30 October).
	Austria-Hungary collapses after defeat at Vittorio Veneto (late October).
November	
11 November	Armistice signed; fighting ends.
1919	
January–June	Paris Peace Conference debates peace terms.
	Treaty of Versailles signed (28 June).
	China protests award of Shandong to Japan → May Fourth Movement (4 May).

Line of inquiry: Political factors

The map below shows how Europe looked in 1900, before the start of the First World War.

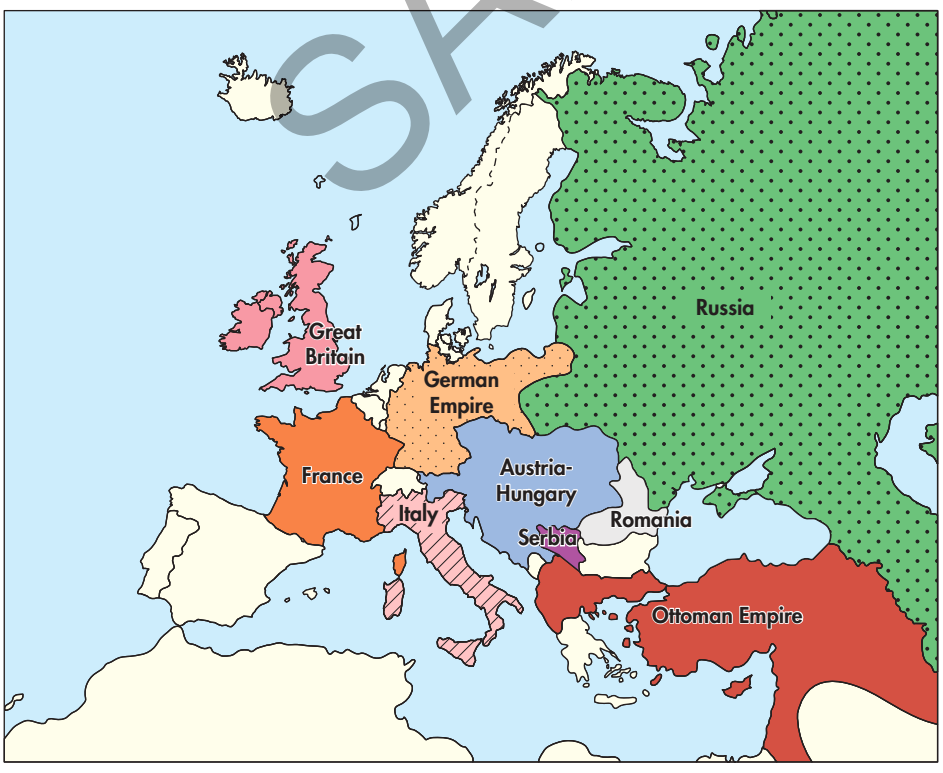


Figure 1.1 Europe in 1900.

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The Franco-Prussian War and the unification of Germany

Germany had been made up of over 30 states until they were led to **unification** by the most powerful state, Prussia. Two wars were fought which were vital in bringing the states of Germany together. First, the Austrians were defeated in 1866; then, the French were crushed in 1871 and made to sign a peace agreement in the Versailles Palace, in which they lost Alsace-Lorraine, an important province on what had been the French side of the Rhine river. The French sought revenge (known as *revanchism*).

Balance of power

To prevent conflict, it is important that no single country or group of countries becomes so powerful that it can overwhelm its rivals. Wars often happen because a country either (a) is encouraged to declare war because it is very confident of victory or (b) feels that a rival country is becoming so strong that it threatens its security. That is when the balance of power is threatened.

Activity 1 ATL Thinking skills, Research skills

Find a map of Europe as it is today to compare with Figure 1.1.

- What differences do you see in the frontiers of Germany?
- How many modern countries now occupy Austria-Hungary as it was in 1900?
- Now compare a map of Russia as it is today with a map of Russia in 1900 and list the differences.
- Why was control of the Straits of Constantinople so important for the **Ottoman Empire** and Russia?

Long-term political factor 1: The rise of nationalism and militarism in Europe

Germany, 1871–88

Germany was a relatively new country in 1914. It had only become unified in 1871, after defeating France in the **Franco-Prussian War**. This war led to the founding of the German Empire. Germany's rise to power was not only political. It also became a strong industrial and military nation. Its sudden rise unsettled the existing balance of power in Europe and made other countries feel threatened.

After **unification**, Germany's leader Chancellor Otto von Bismarck wanted to keep the peace in Europe. He aimed to isolate France and avoid conflict with Russia. To protect Germany from enemies on two sides, he created alliances:

- **Triple Alliance (1882)**: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. If any one of these countries was attacked by two or more powers, the others would help.
- Germany signed a secret treaty with Russia in 1887 to prevent a two-front war.
- Bismarck avoided conflict over **colonies**. He helped organize the Berlin Conference (1884), which recognized Germany's African colonies: Burundi, Cameroon, Rwanda, Tanganyika (now the mainland of Tanzania), Togo, and South-West Africa (now Namibia).

A change in direction: The impact of Weltpolitik

In 1888, Kaiser Wilhelm II became Emperor. By 1890, he had dismissed Bismarck and changed Germany's foreign policy. He let the treaty with Russia expire and introduced a new, more aggressive policy called **Weltpolitik** (world policy).

Weltpolitik had four main goals:

- expand Germany's overseas colonies
- build a large and powerful **navy** to rival Britain's
- increase Germany's share of world trade
- increase Germany's status as a world power.

While Wilhelm claimed these goals were peaceful, Germany's actions, such as rapid military build-up and interfering in foreign territories, worried its neighbors and increased tensions.

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Conceptual focus: Perspectives

There are always diverse *perspectives* on events: views held by those who participated in and observed events, and views held by those looking back on events from a later date. Therefore, Weltpolitik would be seen quite differently by the Kaiser, who viewed it as a means by which Germany could take its proper place in world affairs, acting no differently from existing colonial powers. Other European countries saw the policy as aggressive and threatening.

Activity 2

ATL Thinking skills

In pairs, consider the following:

- Why would a British or French leader believe that Wilhelm's Weltpolitik was dangerous to their country's interests?
- How would Wilhelm defend Weltpolitik?

Individually:
In no more than 200 words, in the role of a modern historian, what is your judgment about the importance of Weltpolitik to the emergence of conflict?

Short-term political factor 1: Consequences of Weltpolitik

Military build-up and war plans

Between 1898 and 1912, Germany passed five naval laws to grow its navy. Britain responded in 1906 with the HMS *Dreadnought*, a powerful new type of battleship that, because of its superior speed, range, and firepower, made older ships obsolete. By 1914, Britain had 29 dreadnoughts and 9 battlecruisers, and Germany had 17 dreadnoughts and 7 battlecruisers.

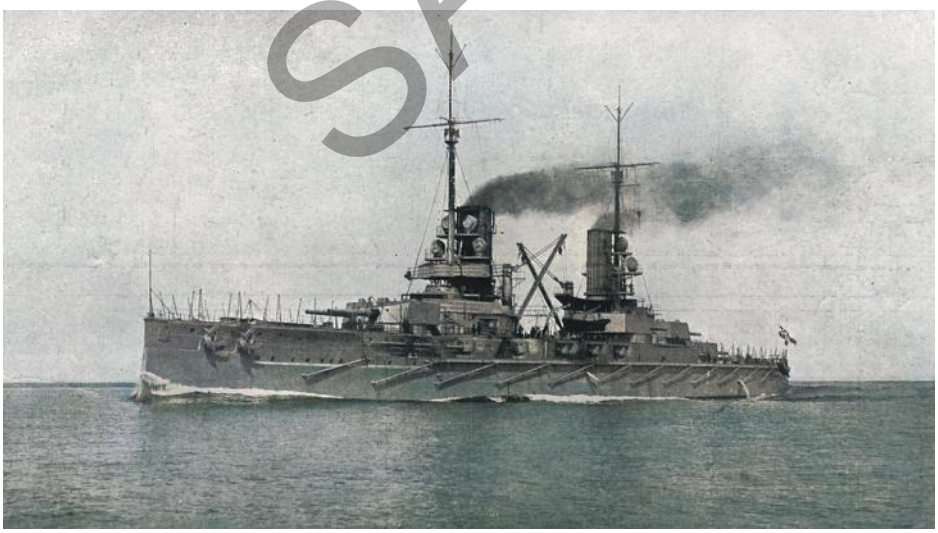


Figure 1.2 SMS *Prinzregent Luitpold*, a German dreadnought ship, launched in 1912.

Checkpoint

To what extent does an arms race, such as the naval arms race described above, make the emergence of conflict more likely? Can you see parallels in the world around you today?

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Table 1.1 Defense estimates (in millions of GBP) of the European **Great Powers**, 1870–1914.

	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1914
Germany	10.8	20.4	28.8	41.0	64.0	110.8
Austria-Hungary	8.2	13.2	12.8	13.6	17.4	36.4
France	22.0	31.4	37.4	42.4	52.4	57.4
Great Britain	23.4	25.2	31.4	116.0	68.0	76.8
Italy	7.8	10.0	14.8	14.6	24.4	28.2
Russia	22.0	29.6	29.0	40.8	63.4	88.2

The rise of Germany made Europe seem more insecure. Due to this, all the major powers were building up their armies and navies (see Table 1.1 on defense estimates from 1870 to 1914). Young men around Europe were required to join the military through **conscription**. Many women also took up support roles, such as volunteering as nurses.

Two peace conferences (1899 and 1907, held in The Hague in the Netherlands) tried to limit arms production but failed.

Most countries also had detailed war plans. These relied on railways to move troops quickly. Once mobilization began, it was hard to stop – this is sometimes called 'war by timetable.' This term refers to the idea that the rigid railway mobilization schedules of European powers in 1914 made the outbreak of the First World War almost automatic once orders were given. Because troop movements relied on precise train timetables, plans like Germany's Schlieffen Plan could not easily be delayed or altered without risking failure. This meant that once one country mobilized, others felt compelled to follow, pushing Europe rapidly into war.

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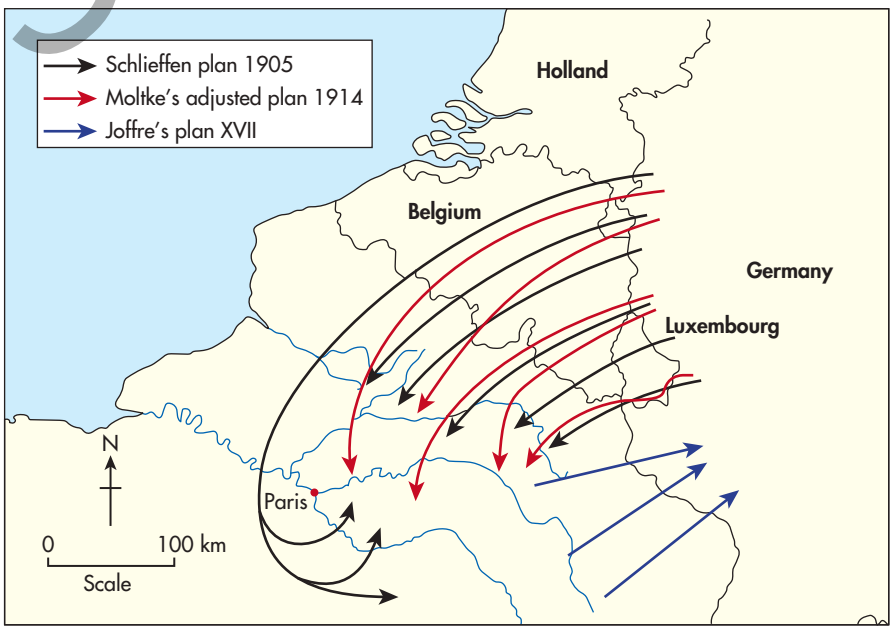


Figure 1.3 Pre-First World War German and French plans.

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Checkpoint
Do you think that war plans made war more or less likely?
How important were military plans to the emergence of conflict?

Rival alliances

In the 19th century, Britain avoided alliances with European countries and focused on its empire. But as Germany grew stronger, Britain realized it needed allies, and made agreements with:

- Japan (military alliance, 1902)
- France (**Entente Cordiale**, 1904)
- Russia (the 1907 agreement settled long-standing differences in Persia and central Asia).

The Entente Cordiale evolved into the **Triple Entente** (Britain, France, and Russia) in 1907. It brought these three countries closer by settling colonial rivalries and encouraging regular diplomatic consultation, particularly in response to the perceived threat from Germany. However, it involved no binding military commitments, functioning as an informal understanding rather than a formal alliance. There were now two major power blocs in Europe:

- Triple Alliance: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy
- Triple Entente: Britain, France, Russia.

The Moroccan Crises (1905–06 and 1911)

France and Britain agreed that France could take control of Morocco in 1904 as part of the Entente Cordiale. In line with the Weltpolitik aim of extending Germany's influence beyond Europe, Germany tried to block this and weaken the Entente.

- In 1905–06, Germany said it would support Morocco's independence. A conference in Algeciras (Spain) was held, but France and Britain stood firm.
- In 1911, French intervention in a revolt in Morocco prompted Germany to send a gunboat to show their opposition to the French action. This aggressive move angered France and Britain. Germany had to settle for two small parts of the French Congo, but the crisis increased tensions and mistrust.

Conceptual focus: Consequence

Historical events and their *consequences* could be probable, improbable, intentional, or accidental. It has often been claimed that the consequences of the formation of alliances were important to the emergence of conflict.

Activity 3 ATL Research skills, Thinking skills

Individually:

1. Identify the two sets of alliances among the European Great Powers.
2. What were the terms of the alliances? (Who promised what to whom?)
3. What were the motives of Germany, Russia, Britain, France, and Austria-Hungary in deciding to form their alliances? (Causes)

In groups:
Did the alliance system make war probable, less probable, or improbable?

Count Alfred von Schlieffen was the German Chief of the General Staff who, in 1905, devised the Schlieffen Plan, a strategy for a rapid victory over France by sweeping through Belgium before turning to fight Russia.

Schlieffen's successor, Helmuth von Moltke the Younger, modified the plan by weakening the crucial right (northern) wing and diverting troops to the eastern front, which contributed to its failure.

On the French side, General Joseph Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, developed Plan XVII, an offensive strategy focused on attacking Germany through Alsace-Lorraine.

Think about international alliances in today's world. Are they promoting or inhibiting conflict?

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Long-term political factor 2: The decline of the Ottoman Empire

By the early 1900s, the Ottoman Empire was weak and unstable. Its government was corrupt, and there were tensions between Turks, Slavs, Christians, and Muslims, creating instability. In 1909, the Young Turks (a movement of Ottoman intellectuals, military officers, and public officials who sought to modernize the Ottoman Empire) overthrew the Sultan.

The issue of what should be done about the failing Ottoman Empire became known as the '**Eastern Question**.' Russia wanted Balkan countries, mostly Slavic and likely to be pro-Russian, to be independent. Austria-Hungary opposed this because it feared losing control of the Slavic population within its own borders. Most European powers thought that the best policy was to encourage the Ottomans to undertake significant military and political reform in order to strengthen their resistance to Russia.

In the **Russo-Japanese War** (1904–05) Japan's modern, well-prepared forces defeated Russia's larger but less organized military.

Short-term political factor 2: The Balkans Crisis (1912–14)

The Balkans had long been a trouble spot. In 1908, Austria took full control over Bosnia (formerly part of the Ottoman Empire), which it had occupied since 1878. This angered Serbia and Russia, but they couldn't respond because:

- Germany strongly backed Austria.
- Russia had been weakened by its 1905 defeat by Japan.

In 1911–12, Italy defeated Turkey and took control of Libya (then called Tripolitania), exposing more Ottoman weakness.

The Balkan Wars (1912–13)

- First Balkan War (1912): Several Balkan countries (including Serbia) joined together to defeat the Ottomans. Austria was alarmed, and Britain rushed to hold a peace conference.
- Second Balkan War (1913): Bulgaria, unhappy with the peace settlement, attacked Serbia and Greece. Serbia emerged even stronger.

In 1913, Serbia had doubled in size and built an army of 200,000. Austria felt threatened, and Serbian **nationalism** grew. Germany's advice to Austria to stay calm during these wars had backfired. Austria now wanted to crush Serbia.

The trigger for European War: The July Crisis 1914

Hopes of peace in the Balkans were shattered when, on 28 June, the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie were assassinated in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. The assassin was 19-year-old Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Black Hand, a Serbian terrorist group which aimed to free all Slavs from Austrian rule. The Austrians correctly concluded that the Serbian government was linked to the assassination.

Austria knew that an attack on Serbia would bring in the Russians and had to be sure that they had German support. On 5 July 1918, the Kaiser and his Chancellor issued what became known as the 'blank cheque': a German guarantee of unconditional support.

Checkpoint

To what extent did the issuing of the 'blank cheque' mean that Germany had a large responsibility for the outbreak of war?

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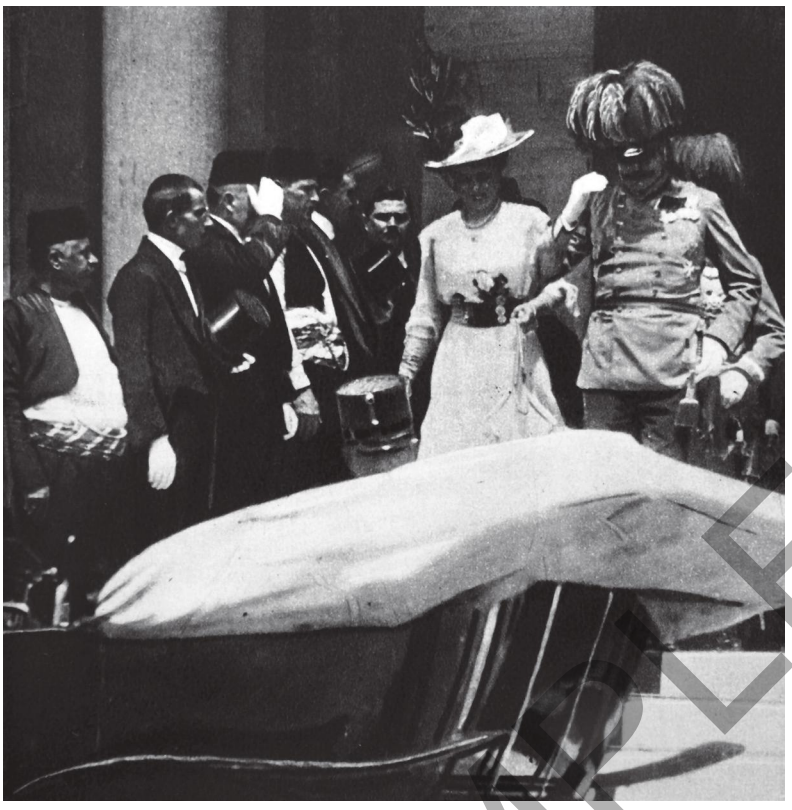


Figure 1.4 Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Sophie minutes before their assassination, 1914.



Figure 1.5 Gavrilo Princip is arrested in Sarajevo after his assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, 28 June 1914.

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Serbia's reply of 25 July 1914 was carefully worded diplomacy rather than full acceptance. Serbia agreed to suppress anti-Austrian propaganda and punish officials linked to the assassination, yet resisted allowing Austrian officials to operate inside Serbia, proposing international mediation instead. The response was cooperative in tone only. Austria-Hungary viewed this as a rejection in practice and used it to justify declaring war.

The Austrians issued an **ultimatum** which was intended to be so severe that the Serbians could not possibly accept it. On 23 July 1918, the ultimatum was delivered and a response demanded within 48 hours. The Serbs accepted all but one of the demands, but on 28 July, Austria began their attack on Serbia.

On 30 July, the Russians ordered a general mobilization of their troops. Germany, allied to Austria, declared war on Russia on the same day, and then, fearing a war on two fronts, asked the French for a guarantee of their neutrality. When this was refused, Germany declared war on France. The British knew that an attack on France would bypass French defenses and go through Belgium and demanded that Germans honor Belgian neutrality, which had been guaranteed in a treaty of 1839. When no such guarantee was given, Britain declared war on 4 August.

Activity 4

ATL Thinking skills

Design a spider diagram or mind map to show how the two sets of political causes, both long and short term, contributed to the emergence of conflict, and converged in July 1914.

Historians generally consider that the forces of imperialism, militarism, the alliance systems, and nationalism helped to increase the tensions that led to the First World War.

First, make sure that you understand what each of these terms mean. Now look over your spider diagram and identify where these forces were at work and label them.

Activity 5

ATL Research skills

Research the roles of individual statespeople in the outbreak of war. Examples of important actors include Kaiser Wilhelm II, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, Leopold Berchtold, Raymond Poincaré, Sir Edward Grey, and Tsar Nicolas II of Russia.

Choose at least two and consider the following: How important was their contribution to the outbreak of war? To what extent were their actions affected by social and economic factors? What could they have done differently to avoid war? Discuss your conclusions with a partner.

Line of inquiry: Economic factors

The Industrial Revolution, marked by rapid growth in factory production, began in Britain in the late 18th century and had spread across Europe and the United States by the early 20th century. By 1914, industrialization was significantly more advanced than it had been just 40 years earlier. However, this progress was uneven, which helped increase international tension. Countries like France, Russia, and Austria-Hungary lagged behind the leading industrial powers. While steel production in the US grew by an impressive 242 percent between 1890 and 1913, Britain's output actually declined during the same period. Germany, meanwhile, had overtaken Britain to become Europe's leading industrial nation.

Militarization

Industrialization enabled militarization, which contributed to the emergence of conflict. Nearly all major economies could now produce large amounts of weapons.

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Armaments companies were well established in major European countries by 1914. It was now possible to produce large numbers of warships, thus fueling a naval arms race involving not only Germany and Britain, but most other major powers. Millions of **artillery** shells and small arms ammunition had been stockpiled. In 1916, Russia could produce 4.5 million shells – up ten times from the previous year.

Trade

Britain's industrialization and economic growth also resulted in rivalry over trade. By 1913, Germany's exports equaled Britain's, which is why they needed a navy to protect their commercial interests. Britain was worried that Germany was challenging its power at sea and in trade; its prosperity depended on free access to markets around the world. The Suez Canal route to India was especially important, and Britain feared it might be at risk because the Ottoman Empire (which controlled the area around Suez) was growing weaker.

In 1913, 10 percent of British exports went to India, and 27 percent to the wider empire. Britain depended on raw materials such as:

- rubber (Malaya, Ceylon)
- cotton (India, Egypt)
- sugar (Caribbean, Mauritius)
- wheat (Australia, Canada)
- minerals (South Africa).

Financial and commercial interests

London's status as the financial capital of the world was largely dependent on investments in, for example, colonial mines and railways. India also brought in large amounts of tax revenue. Britain dominated global shipping, with important ports in places like Suez, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

The British invasion of Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) in November 1914 was partly inspired by a need to protect the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and a desire to access Ottoman oil supplies. Furthermore, the British were suspicious of the Berlin–Baghdad railway project, which threatened British commercial and strategic interests in the Middle East.

Suez canal

The Suez Canal is a 193 km-long artificial waterway in Egypt that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. It was officially opened in November 1869 after ten years of construction.

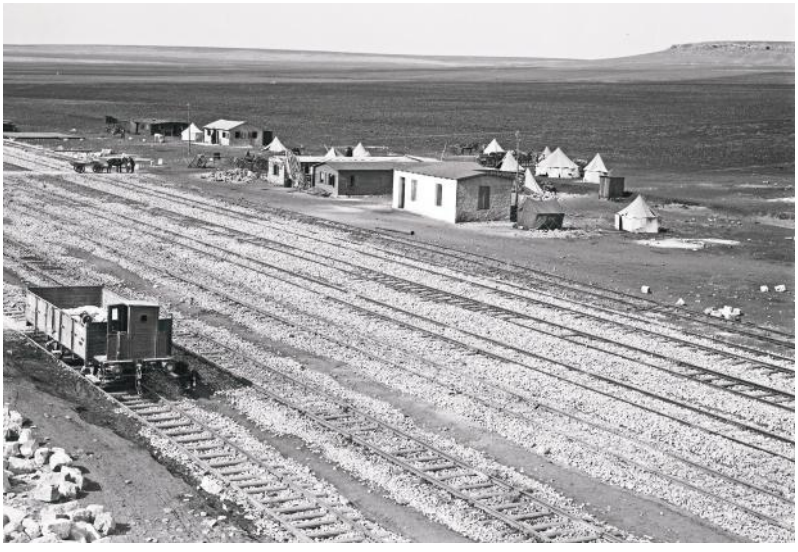


Figure 1.6 Desert construction on the Berlin–Baghdad Railway, c.1900–10.

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Activity 6 ATL Research skills

What was the Berlin–Baghdad railway project? What progress had been made by 1914? Why were the British so concerned about it? How could this have contributed to the origin of the conflict?

Even though France's trade was smaller than Britain's (only 13 percent of exports in 1913), France also felt threatened by Germany as it still traded important materials like cotton (from Algeria, West Africa) and rubber (from Indochina, Equatorial Africa), and French banks had many investments in the colonies.

Tariffs

Tariffs (taxes on imported goods) also increased tension. In 1879, Germany introduced tariffs to protect its own businesses. This upset free-trade countries like Britain. France responded with the Méline Tariff in 1892, which raised taxes on German goods and worsened relations between France and Germany. Russia also put high taxes on German goods in the 1890s. These problems helped push Russia to form an alliance with France in 1894 (the **Franco-Russian Alliance**). These tariffs and protectionist policies damaged trade, created mistrust, and made it harder for countries to solve problems peacefully.

Activity 7 ATL Research skills, Thinking skills, Communication skills

1. In groups, make a list of key pieces of information in this section on economic factors leading to the First World War.

   Sort the evidence into economic themes:

   - industrialization and militarization
   - imperial trade and resources
   - trade rivalries and tariffs
   - infrastructure and strategic projects (e.g. railways, ports).

2. In pairs, find examples of connections between economic factors which contributed to the emergence of conflict (e.g. Industrial growth → Naval build-up → Trade tension with Britain).

   Show whether each factor increased competition, mistrust, or military risk.

   - Which economic factors had the biggest impact on tension between nations?
   - Did industrial growth automatically lead to war or did it depend on other political or strategic choices?
   - How did economic needs and fears influence foreign policy decisions (e.g. Britain in Mesopotamia or Germany's Weltpolitik)?
   - To what extent was the rise of Germany a threat to the existing economic order?

3. Individually (optional), write a short response to this prompt:

   Explain how economic developments in Europe between 1870 and 1914 helped to create the conditions for war. Include at least three examples from different categories (e.g. industry, trade, colonial resources).

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Line of inquiry: Social factors

Nationalist attitudes in Europe

Nationalism was a political factor when it influenced the actions of leaders. This section analyzes nationalism as a social factor among the public.

Before 1914, Europe saw the growth of increasingly aggressive nationalist attitudes, characterized by a pride in a nation's culture and values. This was, in part, also a reaction to an increasingly competitive international environment. Such nationalism made war more likely, as **patriotism** was exploited by governments to support increased military spending. National pride promoted optimism in victory in the event of war.

So-called '**social Darwinism**' played a role in supporting the growth of nationalism. The application of Charles Darwin's work on natural selection led many to believe that some races were superior to others. This was seen as especially relevant to the impact of empires on colonial peoples. There was also a belief that war was a way of renewing national spirit and physical fitness. In France, some despaired because their population was falling and had been overtaken by Britain and an even more rapidly-growing Germany.

Both Russia and Serbia, for example, demonstrated the influence of nationalism on decisions to go to war.

The link between social Darwinism and nationalism

Social Darwinists believe that some people or groups are naturally better than others – only the 'fittest' survive and rise to the top.

Nationalism is the belief that your nation is the best and should be powerful or independent.

When these ideas mix, countries start to believe they deserve to be powerful – and even take over other nations.

Charles Darwin was a 19th-century British naturalist best known for developing the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Russian nationalism

Russia regarded itself as the protector of Slavic nations and felt a strong sense of duty to defend the Serbs in July 1914. Austria and Germany had long been feared by Balkan nationalists as a threat to Slavic nations and Russian influence in Eastern Europe. This was because Austria wanted to control neighboring Balkan nations for its own security, and Germany was a strong supporter of its fellow German-speakers.

Hatred of Germany ran very deep in Russian society. Russian national pride had suffered a severe blow as a result of defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1905) and the 1914 war gave Russians an opportunity to recover prestige and power. Backing down in the face of Austrian and German aggression was unthinkable to Russian people.

Activity 8 ATL Research skills, Thinking skills

In the illustration (next page), Russia promises to leap straight from the Carpathians to Berlin. The artist, Bakst, shows a figure personifying Russia, holding a sword in one hand and a Slavic flag in the other. The other figures in the drawing are wearing various types of traditional Slavic costume.

- Where are the Carpathians, and what is their significance in this context?
- What is Bakst's message in the drawing?

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The Spirit of Pan-Slavism by Leon Bakst, a Russian artist, 1912.



THE SPIRIT OF PAN-SLAVISM

"Russia promises to leap straight from the Carpathians to Berlin."

Leon Bakst, the celebrated Russian artist, furnishes this Russian cartoon. In it he proclaims that his country will not be content merely to hold back Austria in a defensive war. When called on to defend the Serbian Slavs, she will cross the Carpathian Mountains, will overrun Austria, and is even able if necessary to fight Germany also. The Russian cartoons contain nothing of the keen insight of Dyson nor of the high spirituality of Raemaekers; they are savage, direct threats, meeting the similar German cartoons blow for blow.

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Serbian nationalism

Widespread nationalist sentiment among the Serbian people played a very important role in triggering the outbreak of war. Serbs had a strong sense of identity rooted in historic struggles against the Ottomans. After 1878, when Serbia became fully independent, nationalism became even stronger, and many Serbs supported the ambition to unite the southern Slavs in a Greater Serbia (known as **Pan-Slavism**). When Austria took full control of Bosnia in 1908, anti-Austrian feeling increased, while Serb victories in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 boosted Serbian confidence and ambition. The nationalist Black Hand movement, which had been involved in the planning of the Sarajevo assassination, received support from the Serbian military, most notably from the movement's founder, Apis, the Chief of Military Intelligence. When the Austrians issued their ultimatum in June 1914, Serbs were strongly in favor of standing up to them.

Activity 9

ATL Thinking skills

- Why do you think Pan-Slavism was appealing to some groups but frightening to others?
- How did Pan-Slavism contribute to the outbreak of the First World War?
- Do you think ideas like Pan-Slavism are still relevant in the world today? Why or why not?

Activity 10

ATL Research skills

- To what extent was nationalism an important factor in making war more likely in Britain, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary? (Focus on one or more of these countries and share your findings.)
- In Britain, France, Germany, and Russia, to what extent was nationalist sentiment driven by aggression or insecurity? Explain your answer.

A diversion from domestic social problems?

It is not unusual for one country to declare war on another to distract the home population from internal unrest. One example was in Russia, where there was widespread labor unrest and deep dissatisfaction with living conditions in new industrial centers, coupled with a very poor peasant class. This led to an attempted revolution in 1905. Some in the ruling classes thought that joining the war as an anti-German, Pan-Slavist crusade might unite the country and distract the population from its anger with the royal family.

The German ruling classes were very fearful of the rapid rise of the Social Democratic Party, which had **communist** origins. By 1912, it had become the largest party in the Reichstag (German parliament) with 4 million votes. Workers's strikes had become widespread and in 1913, 400,000 workers went on strike. However, it is doubtful that the government saw war as a solution, although some historians disagree. In France and Britain, there were also widespread strikes and socialists were becoming more aggressive in their demands, but there is even less evidence that these governments used war as a deliberate tactic.

TOK

How would we know that governments were partly motivated to go to war by a desire to divert attention from domestic social problems? Can you think of any examples in history where this has been the case?

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The mood in August 1914 and the expectation of a short war

While some military leaders, such as Kitchener in Britain and von Moltke in Germany, expected a long war, many political and military figures agreed with Kaiser Wilhelm, who told his troops, 'You will be home before the leaves have fallen from the trees.' Nationalist pride fueled the belief that the war would be short. Young men rushed to enlist, often confident they would return by Christmas. Diaries reveal this early optimism. Newspapers in Britain, France, and Germany also predicted a quick victory. There was clear public enthusiasm in some places: the *New York Times* reported cheering crowds in Berlin on 26 July 1914, while in Paris, crowds shouted 'Vive l'armée' and 'Vive la France.'

However, this enthusiasm was not always shared by poorer communities. German enthusiasm in August 1914, which became known as the 'August Experience,' was felt mainly by intellectuals, university students, and the middle class in the larger cities. Among the urban worker and rural populations, the mood was more subdued. Rather than enthusiasm or elation, it was a sense of duty and determination that carried German soldiers into battle. In Russia, peasants and workers showed little of the middle-class patriotism that had encouraged the Tsar. No flags fluttered, no military music played. There were just soldiers going off to fight with grim, defeated expressions. Their brutal experience of war would help spark revolution. The Tsar's gamble led to his downfall.



Figure 1.7 Reservists on their way to the Gare de l'Est, Paris, c.1914–15.

Why is it so difficult to identify a 'public mood'? What evidence is needed to make a valid judgment?

TOK

Conceptual focus: Perspectives

This section shows how the concept of *perspectives* applies to the outbreak of war. Attitudes to the declaration varied between individuals, groups, and nations at the time, and have been interpreted differently by historians since. Changing evidence and new interpretations have led historians to reassess earlier beliefs about widespread enthusiasm, highlighting how perspectives can shift over time.

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Line of inquiry: Environmental factors

Often, in the context of the First World War, environmental factors overlap with economic factors.

The fact that European empires included territories which were scattered all over the world, from Australia to South America and Canada, was an environmental or geographical factor that contributed to the outbreak of war. The economies of the colonial powers, especially Britain, relied on the secure supply of raw materials. Demand for some materials, such as rubber and oil, was boosted by new technologies, especially motor vehicles. Britain was nervous about losing control over international sea routes, including the Suez Canal. The British merchant fleet, which was dominant worldwide, relied on secure coal stations, situated, for example, in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Singapore. Britain was determined to sustain the 'two-power standard' which meant that the British navy should be as big as or bigger than the combined strength of the next two most powerful navies.

Germany's ambition to acquire colonies also contributed to the emergence of conflict. Wilhelm II's aggressive Weltpolitik heightened tension. While British clashes with Germany over South-West Africa, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar were settled by negotiation, German support for the Boers in South Africa, most notably the so-called 'Kruger Telegram' (see Info box), caused huge resentment. This was a factor in inspiring growing anti-German opinion in Britain, stoked by the popular press. South Africa was one of the most important states geographically in the British Empire, as it controlled the trade route round the Cape of Good Hope, on the south-western tip of the African continent; Cape Town was a vital port.

Two other specific geographic issues contributed to tensions linked to the outbreak of war. The first issue, in 1913, after the first Balkan War, was the recognition of the independence of Albania, denying the Serbs access to the Adriatic Sea. The second issue was the desire of the Turks to join the **Central Powers** in 1914 to regain lands on the western side of the Straits of Constantinople, a sea route vital to their defense and commerce.

It is also worth considering how geography affected the approach of the powers to the growing tensions before the First World War.

- The United States was an ocean away from the main areas of tension in Europe, and American opinion was that European issues had little to do with them. European powers did not see the rise of America as the dominant world power as a reason for conflict.
- Fear of Germany was a major factor in causing war. The newly-united country had a geographically unique position right in the center of Europe, which, with its access to abundant natural resources, gave it the potential to dominate the continent, bridging east and west.
- Armies had to travel huge distances at the outset of the war, especially in Russia, and the consequent reliance on railways for transporting troops to the front meant that swift mobilization was necessary: hence 'war by timetable' was a factor (see page 6).

The Kruger Telegram

The 'Kruger Telegram' was a message of support sent to Paul Kruger, the leader of the Boers (Afrikaans-speaking descendants of Dutch settlers in South Africa) by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1896. The Boers were engaged in a war against the British in which 22,000 British troops, at least 14,000 Boers, and nearly 50,000 civilians died.

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Activity 11

ATL Research skills

To better understand how important it was for Britain to control the seas in order to preserve its status as a world power:

1. Find a map of the British Empire in 1914.
2. Locate significant imperial ports: Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Cape Town, Colombo, and Singapore.
3. Locate British 'possessions' as follows:
   - Find three Caribbean islands.
   - Which were the largest two countries in the British Empire?
   - Find five territories in West Africa and three in Southern and East Africa.
   - Locate Hong Kong and find two territories in South-East Asia.

You might also locate French and German colonies.

Activity 12

ATL Research skills, Thinking skills, Communication skills

Historical events always have multiple, interrelated, short- and long-term causes.

Split a page into four sections and give each section a color-coded heading (use highlighters, colored pens, or symbols):

Political	Economic	Social	Environmental

If a cause fits more than one category, list it in both.

Individually (or in small groups), write the key causes of the First World War under each category. Use brief bullet points or phrases. Or you can write the causes on sticky notes or index cards.

Now write the same headings on a large sheet of paper:

1. Place your causes in their categories, spaced out around the page.
2. Draw arrows between causes that are connected.
3. Label each arrow with a short explanation of the connection (e.g. nationalism increased support for military spending.).

In groups, answer the following questions:

- Which causes seem to connect the most?
- Which categories had the biggest impact overall?
- What was the most unexpected or surprising connection?
- Which causes made war more likely accidental (unintended consequences)?
- How did nationalism link to other factors like militarism or imperialism?

Answer the following questions as a class:

- Was there one main cause of the First World War, or a web of equal causes?
- How do alliances, nationalism, and economic competition reinforce each other?

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Inquiry question: What determined the outcome of the conflict?

Line of inquiry: Role of leadership

In a war of such length and geographic spread there were many leaders who had an impact on the outcome of the First World War. Some were military leaders; others were politicians. Here are some examples.

Russian leaders

Tsar Nicholas II made a number of decisions which led to defeat. In 1915, he took personal charge of the war, joining soldiers at the front. He lost touch with the serious problems experienced by the Russian public, such as food shortages and inflation. The running of the country was left to his wife, the Tsarina, and her unpopular adviser, Rasputin. Nicholas was personally blamed for the disastrous conduct of the war, which had led to millions of casualties, and the discrediting of the officer class in the eyes of their soldiers. Ultimately Nicholas's decisions contributed to him being overthrown and the eventual withdrawal of Russia from the war.

Alexei Brusilov led a successful offensive against Austria in 1916, using **shock troops** to break through enemy lines. Although the offensive was eventually driven back as Germany brought reinforcements, Brusilov almost knocked Austria out of the war.

i A decisive defeat in the early stages of the war was the battle of Tannenberg in August 1914. Russian generals Alexander Samsonov and Paul von Rennenkampf allowed their armies to be separated; the Germans isolated Samsonov's army and defeated it. After the battle, Samsonov took his own life. The Russians never recovered from this early defeat.

Lenin was the leader who took full responsibility for Russia leaving the war because he wanted peace, no matter the cost. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on 3 March 1918, and huge areas which had been under Russian rule or control (including the Baltic states and Ukraine) were transferred to Germany.

Allied leaders on the Western Front

Field Marshal Douglas Haig led the British forces on the Western Front from 1915 until 1918. He relied on **war of attrition** which resulted in the British suffering 57,470 casualties on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, including 19,240 killed, which remains a record number for one day in British military history. Crucially, by the end of the battle, the Germans had lost 650,000 troops. Haig was open to the use of new weapons and **tactics**, masterminding the first use of tanks, and encouraged the use of air **reconnaissance**. His Fourth Army played a vital role in the decisive Hundred Days Offensive which led to the German surrender. Historians debate the wisdom of his attrition tactics.

Marshal Ferdinand Foch was Supreme Allied Commander of British, French, and American forces from March 1918 until the end of the war. He was the first to coordinate Allied strategy and was famous for his aggressive and unified approach to warfare. He led devastating continuous attacks during the Hundred Days Offensive. Foch insisted on unconditional surrender from Germany and its allies.



Figure 1.8 Tsar Nicholas II.



Figure 1.9 Alexei Brusilov.

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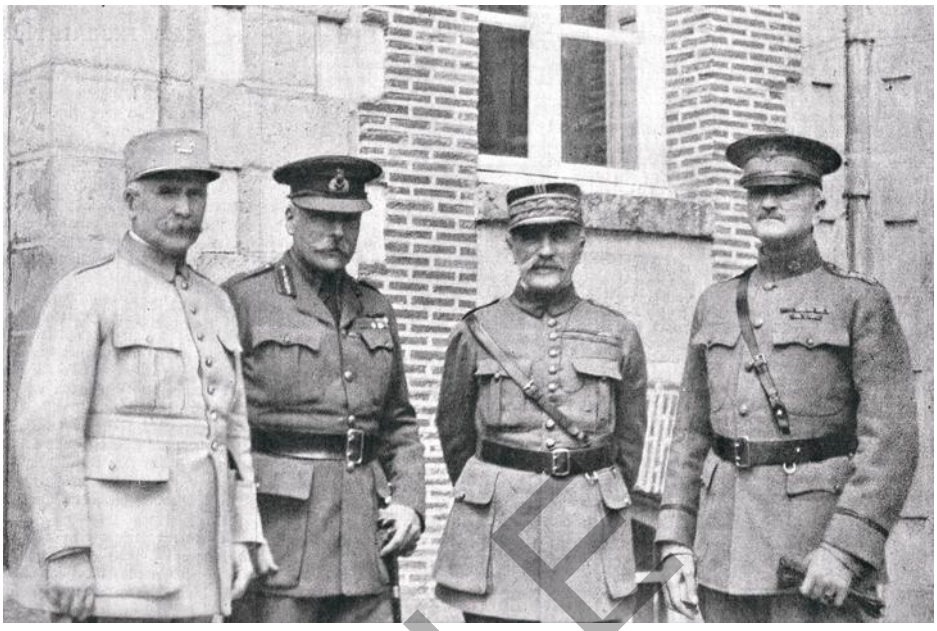


Figure 1.10 Pétain, Haig, Foch, and Pershing.



Figure 1.11 Cartoon showing Lloyd George, April 1915.

Allied political leaders

David Lloyd George was British Prime Minister from 1916–22, before which he served as Minister for Munitions. He brought in experts from big business, and secured the cooperation of the **trade unions**, ensuring the availability of supplies. His first major contribution as Prime Minister was to introduce a more effective **War Cabinet**. Lloyd George pushed for the adoption of a **convoy system** in the Atlantic, which helped to secure food and military supplies. Under his leadership there was an increase in the number of munitions factories, and women were encouraged to join the work force. He supported Foch's appointment to the Supreme Allied Command in 1918 and worked successfully to persuade President Woodrow Wilson to bring the US into the war.

Georges Clemenceau ('the tiger') was Prime Minister of France from November 1917 until January 1920. He took over at a time when French morale was very low as France was an invaded nation within which hundreds of thousands of French soldiers had been killed. He rallied his country behind the war effort, thereby preserving what was known as the *union sacré* (holy union) of all sections of French society. When the German **Spring Offensive** in 1918 got close to Paris, he refused to leave. His commanding presence inspired obedience in the National Assembly (a legislative body similar to a parliament). He took stern measures against soldiers who disobeyed orders and resisted calls for a separate peace with Germany. He worked well with his military commanders, respecting their independence and expertise. He had been a driving force in establishing a unified command of allied forces. Like Lloyd George, he insisted on unconditional surrender.

American leaders

After pursuing a policy of neutrality until 1917, President Woodrow Wilson was persuaded to request that Congress declare war on Germany. He was influenced by German submarine attacks on American shipping and the Zimmermann Telegram (a secret German communication to Mexico, promising United States territory to Mexico in return for supporting the German cause). Under Wilson's leadership, numbers of

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members of the US armed forces increased rapidly. Wilson launched the Committee for Public Information (CPI), which commissioned anti-German movies and posters. He was keen to portray the war as a moral crusade in the name of democracy, embodied in his '14 Points' which were published in January 1918.

General John 'Black Jack' Pershing was commander of the US forces on the Western Front. He was responsible for transporting 2 million troops to Europe and organizing them into an effective fighting force. He was insistent on US forces remaining independent of foreign command. Pershing advocated an aggressive **strategy**. Casualty rates were often high, attracting criticism. In the autumn of 1917, his First Army suffered when supply lines failed and German defenses held firm. Pershing improved logistical support, gave his soldiers more rest days, and created a Second Army, which proved too powerful for the Germans. Thus, Pershing showed adaptability, humility, and leadership.



Figure 1.12 A US propaganda poster, 1917.

Leaders of the war in Africa

Activity 13

ATL Research skills

Investigate the role of two leaders of the war in Africa – General Louis Botha and Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck: 'The Lion of Africa.'

- What did they achieve?
- What were their leadership qualities?
- What strategies did they use?

Also, to what extent were the campaigns in South and East Africa important to the outcome of the First World War?

TOK

You might use websites that allow the general public to edit information for your research (such as Wikipedia). How useful are the entries you have found? How can you judge how trustworthy these knowledge sources are?

Activity 14

ATL Thinking skills, Research skills

- What questions would you ask in order to assess individual leaders' influence on the outcomes of wars? Consider political and military leaders separately.
- Apply those questions to one or more of the leaders who are listed in this section.
- Research a leader online who is not mentioned in this section. Others worthy of study could include the Germans Ludendorff and Hindenburg, the French general Pétain, Allenby (the British commander in the Middle East), and TE Lawrence and Sharif Hussein's roles in the Arab Revolt. How important was your chosen leader to the war's outcome?

Line of inquiry: Strategies and tactics

On the Eastern Front, Russia and Romania confronted Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria, whereas the Western Front saw conflict between Germany, and France and Britain. France called upon troops from its African colonies, while the British were supported by troops from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Newfoundland, India, South Africa, and laborers from China.

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While there were many other campaigns during the First World War, these two fronts, alongside the war at sea, were by far the most important to the outcome of the war.

Strategy on the Eastern Front

Figure 1.13 Map of the Eastern Front.



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The Russian strategy was to attack quickly to catch the Germans and Austrians off guard, and so they moved into East Prussia and occupied parts of the Austrian Empire. By forcing the Germans to divert troops east, the Schlieffen Plan (see next page), was defeated. However, the Germans drove the Russians back, with victories at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. In 1915, the Germans attacked the Russians, defeating them at Warsaw in August, forcing them to fall back to a defensive line stretching from the Baltic to Romania. Russia's final strategy was to launch a huge offensive against their weakest adversary, Austria. It was led by Brusilov, in 1916,

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and was nearly successful, advancing over 160 km. However, Germany came to the rescue of its ally.

Tactics on the Eastern Front

The war in the east was much less static than on the Western Front, and armies frequently moved over vast distances.

At Tannenberg, Germany's tactic of surrounding its opponents and the swift movement of troops via rail from the west proved decisive. The Russian effort had been slowed down by poor supplies of military equipment. In 1916, Brusilov's new tactics of short, intense **artillery barrages** followed by small-unit **infiltration** (rather than massed frontal assaults) caught Austro-Hungarian forces off guard. Again, stretched supply lines and troop shortages meant that initial successes were not followed up.

As Russia retreated, it used **scorched earth tactics** – burning villages, destroying rail lines, and evacuating populations. This slowed the Central Powers' advance but caused enormous hardship for civilians, contributing to instability and fueling revolutionary feelings within Russia.

One further tactic of the Germans was to exploit Russian domestic instability. They allowed Lenin to travel to Petrograd (now St Petersburg) in April 1917, enabling him to lead revolution a few months later, and take Russia out of the war.

German strategy on the Western Front: The failure of the Schlieffen Plan

Von Schlieffen's war plan (see page 6) for Germany assumed the war would be short. His strategy required the German armies to sweep through into northern France via neutral Belgium and then advance to the west of Paris, finally swinging back eastwards to defeat the main French forces, which would still be defending the German border. German troops would then be free to move to the Eastern Front to confront the Russian army, which, given the size of the army and the country, would have only just mobilized.

The Schlieffen Plan failed for several reasons:

- Belgian resistance was unexpectedly strong, and it took the Germans more than two weeks to capture Brussels.
- The attack on Belgium also brought Britain, which guaranteed Belgian neutrality through the 1839 Treaty of London, into the war.
- The German delay in getting through Belgium gave the British time to organize themselves and left the Channel ports free, enabling the British Expeditionary Force to land.
- The German forces marching to Paris were weakened because some troops had to be sent east (where Russia had mobilized faster than expected). Also there were difficulties in maintaining supplies.
- In Paris, reservists were sent to meet the Germans in the famous 'taxis of the Marne' – thousands of soldiers were transported to the battle via Paris taxicabs and buses. The Germans, slowed down by exhaustion and a lack of food and ammunition, were halted by British and French troops at the First Battle of the Marne on 9 September 1914.

i Infiltration is a military tactic in which small, specialized units sneak through or around enemy lines to exploit weak points, disrupt defenses, or attack key positions from behind. These tactics were not only used by Brusilov, but also in the final stages of the war on the Western Front.

i The Germans organized a 'sealed train' to take Lenin from Switzerland to Russia in April 1917. Lenin had been living in exile in Switzerland. After the Russian Tsar was overthrown, he wanted to return to Russia. Germany hoped he would cause unrest and weaken the Russian war effort. The train was 'sealed' – meaning Lenin and the others could not get off or mix with Germans along the way.

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Figure 1.14 Taxi to the Marne, 1914.

The failure of the Schlieffen Plan ensured that there would be no short war. Germany was now committed to a lengthy war against two European powers and their empires, and later the US, which Germany, arguably, could not win. This was a major factor in the outcome of the war.

Strategy on the Western Front after the failure of the Schlieffen Plan

After the failure of the Schlieffen Plan, which aimed to quickly defeat France, both sides shifted to a new strategy: holding ground. A continuous line of trenches was built from the English Channel to Switzerland, marking the end of mobile warfare and the start of **static positional warfare**. This strategic **stalemate** led to a long and drawn-out war of attrition, where each side aimed to gradually wear down the enemy's resources and morale rather than achieve a swift victory.

The Allied strategy, especially under British General Haig, focused on launching repeated assaults to weaken the German army. Battles like the Somme followed this approach. While they inflicted heavy losses on the Germans, they also caused enormous casualties for the Allies and often failed to deliver significant territorial gains. By the end of 1917, French morale was near collapse; the Allied strategy had not achieved its goal of breaking through German lines.



Figure 1.15 Royal Irish regiment on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1916.

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Activity 15 ATL Research skills

Investigate the two bloodiest battles on the Western Front: the Battle of the Somme, from July to November 1916, and the Battle of Verdun, from February to December, also in 1916.

- What were the aims of the Allies in these battles?
- What tactics were used?
- How successful were they in achieving their aims?
- What was the human cost?

In contrast, the German strategic withdrawal to the **Hindenburg Line** in March 1917 reflected a defensive strategy. This shorter, stronger line allowed them to conserve resources, rebuild strength, and better resist Allied attacks.

Tactical developments and their effects

To support strategic aims, both sides developed a variety of tactics, but none proved decisive in ending the stalemate.

- **Infantry charges** remained common. These involved troops going 'over the top' after artillery bombardments, trying to cross **no man's land** under heavy machine-gun fire. They had to break through barbed wire, while being subjected to shelling from enemy mortars and artillery. These attacks were extremely deadly. Attackers suffered twice as many casualties as defenders.
- Poison gas and underground **mines** (such as those used at La Boisselle, creating the Lochnagar Crater) were introduced to surprise and demoralize the enemy, but had limited long-term success.
- The 'bite-and-hold' tactic was a more realistic alternative to full breakthroughs. It involved capturing a small section of the enemy line and holding it against counterattacks. This approach had some local success but did not break the wider stalemate.



Figure 1.16 The Lochnagar crater at La Boisselle.

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Activity 16 ATL Research skills

Find out more about the crater in Figure 1.16. How was it made and what impact did it have on the Battle of the Somme?

- Artillery tactics also evolved:
  - The creeping barrage created a moving wall of shellfire ahead of advancing troops.
  - The artillery ambush involved sudden, intense shelling of specific enemy targets.

The tactical improvements still failed to achieve a strategic breakthrough or overcome the deeply entrenched and well-defended front lines of both sides. Local gains were often reversed by German counterattacks.

These strategies and tactics ensured that the Allies avoided defeat and prolonged the war – at huge cost to troop numbers and French morale. German forces were being steadily weakened, although they were still able to mount a formidable offensive in 1918.

Crucially, the stalemate also gave time for the Allied blockade of Germany to take effect and to prevent a German victory before the US entered the war, which gave the Allies a big advantage.

German strategy at the end of the war on the Western Front

In March 1918, knowing that the arrival of US forces was likely to tip the balance against them, the Germans attempted one last assault, the Spring Offensive. It was successful at first as the Germans came within 50 miles of Paris. However, the Allies halted the German advance at the Second Battle of the Marne. The German strategy failed because advance German forces outran their supply lines, and their huge losses (680,000 casualties) could not be replaced. The arrival of American troops was also decisive.

German tactics during the Spring Offensive

German tactics changed markedly from those used previously on the Western Front. Small, well-trained units known as 'stormtroopers' bypassed strong enemy positions and targeted command centers and transport hubs. Artillery 'hurricane' bombardments were short and intense, and gas shells were used to disrupt the Allies. The Germans operated in lightly armed, highly mobile, well-coordinated groups. At first, these tactics were successful, but supplies were inadequate to support these rapid advances. Even in 1918, unlike the Allies, the Germans relied on horse-drawn transport of supplies.



Figure 1.17 German stormtroopers attack in northern France in the Spring Offensive of 1918.

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Allied strategy during the Hundred Days Offensive

Two developments were key to Allied strategy as the war entered its final stages. In March 1918, a unified command under Foch was established which was very effective in coordinating Allied forces.

The American contribution to the Second Battle of the Marne

Pershing agreed to let the US Second and Third Divisions fight under French and British command. The 3rd US Infantry Division, known later as the 'Rock of the Marne,' was stationed near Château-Thierry, directly in the path of the German advance. On 15 July 1918, German forces tried to cross the Marne but encountered strong resistance from American troops, who held their ground and destroyed pontoon bridges under heavy fire.

Also, the arrival of the Americans brought a more aggressive approach to the war. Over the summer of 1918, determined to break out of the trench stalemate, American and other allied forces made a series of massive assaults on German lines which, despite heavy casualties and some supply issues, succeeded in what became known as the 'Hundred Days Offensive.'

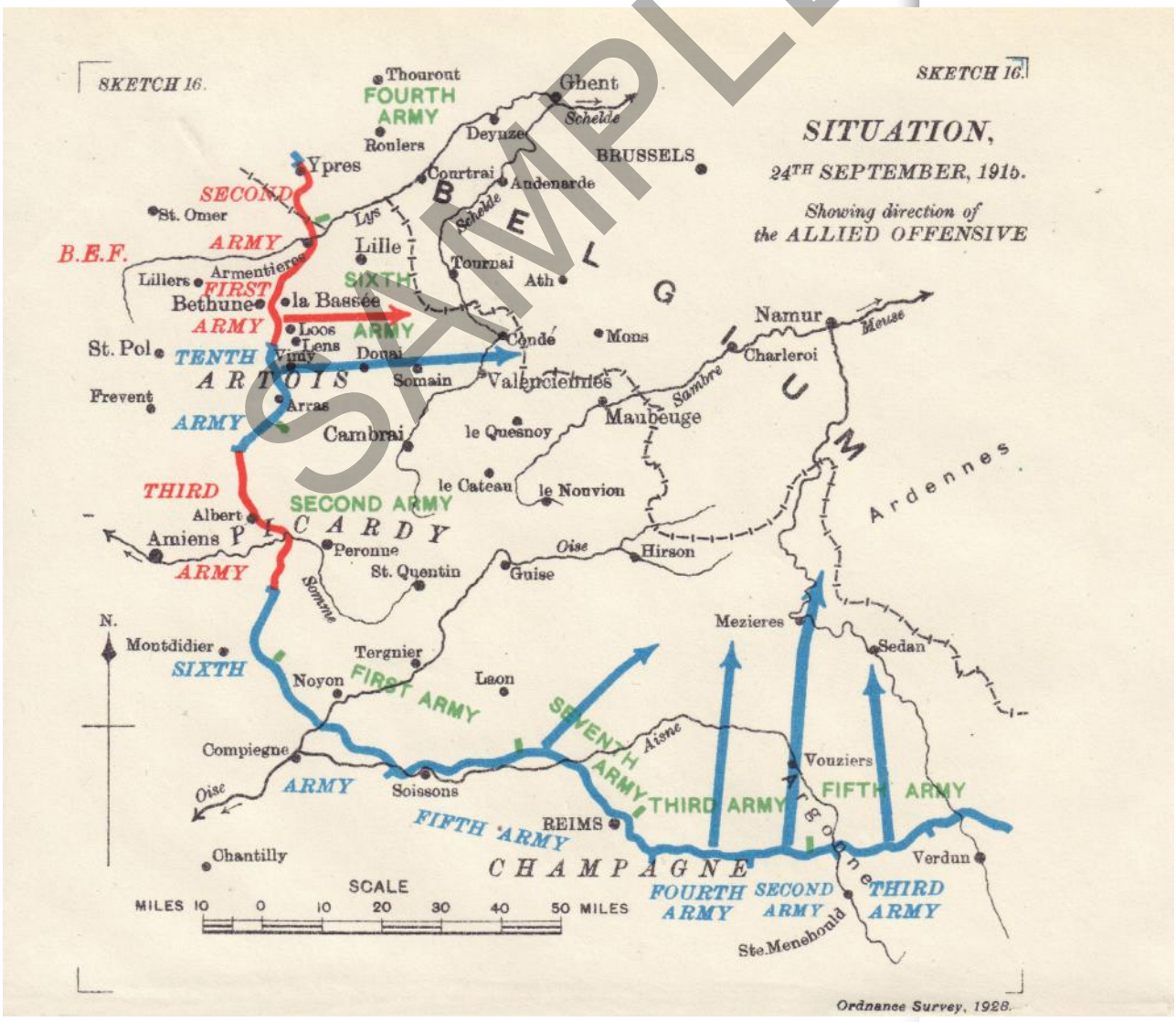


Figure 1.18 Map to show Belgium and French territory recovered by the Allies, July–November 1918.

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Allied tactics during the Hundred Days Offensive

The Allies adopted **fire-and-movement tactics**, just like the Germans, with attacks carried out by smaller groups. They made rapid gains.

Combined arms tactics meant that infantry, artillery, and air power were used one after another. Artillery was more precisely targeted, infantry was in smaller units, while tanks led the initial attacks. Aircraft were used to spot targets and bomb enemy trenches. Improvements in wireless and telephone communication aided coordination. Although the Allies, like the Germans, had problems with shortages of equipment, they improved their logistics, using motorized vehicles, and with superior troop numbers, they were able to overwhelm their enemy.

In order to consider this, you will need to review what you have learned so far from this chapter and also look forward to the section on the role of technology.

Checkpoint

Why did strategy and tactics change in the final stages of the war on the Western Front?

Activity 17

ATL Thinking skills, Communication skills

The British leadership, especially Douglas Haig, has been criticized for the huge loss of life in the Western Front. Could it have been avoided?

Discuss the question in a group, arguing either that Haig's strategy resulted in needless loss of life, or that it was justified.

Before you start, decide how to approach the question. How would you structure your inquiry? Think about how the other side of the debate could approach the issues.

Activity 18

ATL Research skills

On 25 April 1915, troops from Britain, India, Canada, and Australia and New Zealand (the **ANZAC**), landed at several points on the Turkish Gallipoli Peninsula, facing resistance from Ottoman forces led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk). Both sides suffered immense casualties, and the Allies failed to make significant gains. By January 1916, the Allies had evacuated. The bravery of the ANZAC troops made Gallipoli a defining moment in the national identities of Australia and New Zealand.

- Who devised the Gallipoli campaign and what were its aims?
- Why were the Allies unsuccessful?
- What was the human cost?
- What was the impact of Gallipoli on the growth of national identity in Australia and New Zealand and why?
- To what extent do you agree with the statement that the Gallipoli Campaign did little to determine the outcome of the war?

Naval blockades

German naval strategy: Submarine blockade

Germany aimed to weaken Britain and France by cutting off their overseas supplies, using a **naval blockade** as a key part of its wartime strategy. Because Germany's surface fleet was trapped in the North Sea by superior British naval power, this plan relied on submarines (U-boats) to sink Allied shipping and starve Britain into surrender.

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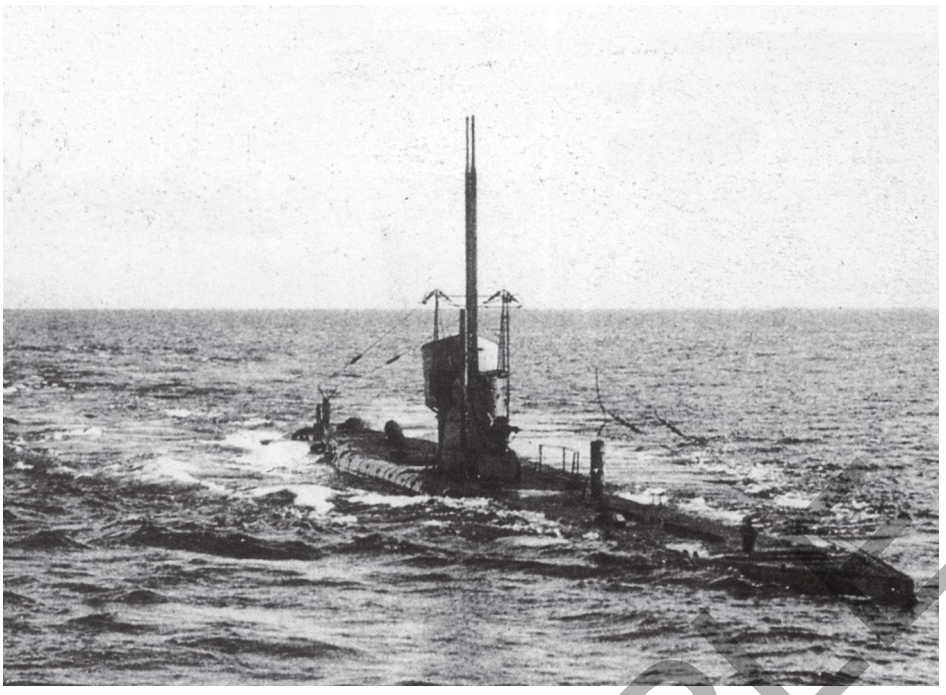


Figure 1.19 *SM U-35* was a German U 31-class U-boat which operated in the Mediterranean Sea during the First World War. It was the most successful U-boat participating in the war, sinking 224 ships.

This strategy came close to success. In February 1917, British shipping losses reached 464,000 tons, and Britain's grain supply dropped to just six weeks. However, Germany's submarine campaign faced a major limitation: risk of provoking neutral countries, especially the United States. After the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915, which killed over 100 Americans, Germany restricted its submarine attacks. But the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 was an important reason why the US entered the war – a major factor which determined the war's outcome.

Despite early success, the strategy ultimately failed. The Allies developed effective tactics, including the convoy system and improved submarine detection. In Britain, rationing and expanded domestic food production helped it withstand the submarine threat until US support arrived.

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British naval strategy: Blockading Germany

The British strategic goal was to severely damage Germany's economy and war effort through a naval blockade. By controlling the North Sea and laying minefields in key sea routes, Britain prevented imports of essential goods such as oil, rubber, and metals.

The First World War convoy system was a naval strategy introduced by the Allies in 1917 to protect merchant ships from German U-boat attacks. Instead of sailing alone, merchant ships traveled together in groups, or convoys, escorted by warships such as destroyers. These escorts used tactics like zigzagging, depth charges, and lookout patrols to detect and deter submarines. The system proved highly effective: losses by U-boats dropped sharply once convoys were introduced, ensuring that vital food, troops, and supplies could reach Britain and the front lines safely.

This strategy was highly effective. By 1918, Germany faced severe shortages of equipment and fuel, which restricted vehicle use. Morale became low due to food shortages at home. The blockade caused widespread unrest and hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths from starvation-related causes. By the end of the war, the blockade had become an important factor in the Central Powers' decision to surrender.

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Tactics used to enforce the blockade

To achieve this strategic goal, the British used a variety of tactics:

- They implemented a 'distant blockade;' naval patrols were carried out in the North Sea and English Channel, rather than directly off the German coast.
- Over 70,000 naval mines were laid in the Northern Barrage between Scotland and Norway.
- The English Channel was protected by patrol boats and submarine nets.
- Britain also bought supplies from neutral countries (such as Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands) to prevent them from trading with Germany.

These tactical actions ensured the blockade was thorough and difficult to evade.

In preparation for the examination, you will need to answer the question 'To what extent did strategy and tactics determine the outcome of the war.' Remember to look at strategy and tactics against other factors. How would you go about this? How might you structure an answer?

The examination question will also require you to make connections by discussing one other war from a different region. Think about patterns across the regions. What are the similarities and differences?

Activity 19 ATL Research skills

There was one major challenge to British supremacy of the sea at the Battle of Jutland (31 May–1 June 1916). Research what happened at this battle and summarize the impact it had on the war.

Conceptual focus: Cause and consequence

Causes and consequences are often interrelated. Developments in strategy, tactics, and technology (*causes*) were interrelated in determining how the First World War was fought. On the Western Front, the strategy of attrition depended on technology such as machine guns and rapid-firing artillery, which made defense stronger than offence and, as a *consequence*, forced the adoption of trench systems, barbed wire, and creeping barrages. In 1918, Germany's Spring Offensive aimed for a decisive victory before American forces could arrive in strength. This strategy relied on new technologies, including hurricane bombardments, gas shells, and light, portable machine guns, which made rapid movement and surprise possible. These innovations enabled stormtrooper infiltration tactics that bypassed strong points and disrupted supply lines, showing how strategy, tactics, and technology were closely interlinked.

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Line of inquiry: Role of technology

Technological innovation played a crucial role in determining the outcome of the First World War. Although the war began with outdated tactics such as mass infantry assaults, new weapons and machinery gradually shaped the way battles were fought and, ultimately, how victory was achieved. While no single invention brought immediate success, the cumulative effect of technological developments allowed the Allies to break the stalemate and win the war by 1918.



Figure 1.20 A Vickers machine gun operated by British soldiers in their gas masks, 1915.

Machine guns, grenades, and flamethrowers

At the start of the war, infantry charges supported by rifle fire and bayonets remained the dominant tactic. However, this quickly became outdated in the face of machine guns, which transformed defensive warfare. With a firing

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2 The Second World War in Asia-Pacific (1941–45)



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Income tax is paid on earnings. In most tax systems the rate of tax paid (that means the percentage of income which is paid in tax) increases according to the amount earned. In the US in wartime the top rate of 94 percent was paid on amounts earned in excess of $200,000.

Deficits (where governments' spending is more than their income) are often covered by printing more money, which increases the money supply. If too much money is created compared to available goods, this drives up prices and leads to inflation.

Australia's economic and logistical support

The Australian home front was mobilized for total war. Agricultural production surged to feed not only the Australian domestic population and soldiers but also American forces in the southwest Pacific. The Australian Women's Land Army was formed in 1942 to combat labor shortages, employing 3000 women at its peak. After 1942 Australia was the principal land base for the southwest Pacific area. MacArthur's headquarters were in Australia, and vital ports, training camps, and airfields were provided. Over 400 submarine patrols were launched against Japanese shipping from Fremantle naval base near Perth. By 1943 Australia was providing food, clothing, construction materials, boots, vehicles, and signals equipment to US troops in the South-West Pacific. Australia hosted military training schools and airbases used by both Australian and American forces. Over 1 million US military personnel passed through Australia during the war.



Figure 2.25 Australian recruitment poster

Checkpoint

What similar mobilization methods were used by Japan and the US?

Why were the US able to mobilize their industry and human resources more effectively than the Japanese?

Line of inquiry: Role of technology

There are six technologies which had a significant impact on the outcome of the Second World War in the Asia-Pacific region.

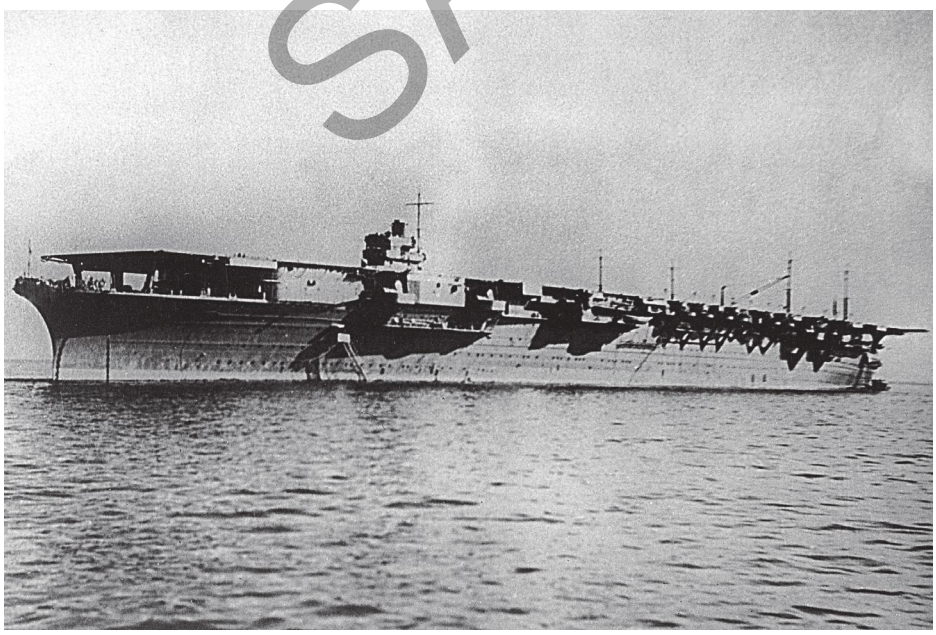


Figure 2.26 The Japanese aircraft carrier *Zuikaku*.

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Aircraft carriers and naval aviation

Pearl Harbor had shown how devastating carrier-based aviation could be. A new form of naval combat emerged – carrier forces engaging opponents over long distances, sending aircraft to locate and attack enemy ships. The Americans were quick to use their own carriers in the battle at Midway, when four Japanese carriers were sunk. Thereafter, the US steadily expanded their carrier fleet and carriers provided vital support to every major offensive, from Guadalcanal to Okinawa. The Battle of the Philippine Sea (June 1944) saw the end of the Japanese navy's carrier presence in the war. The US had total command of the Pacific thereafter.

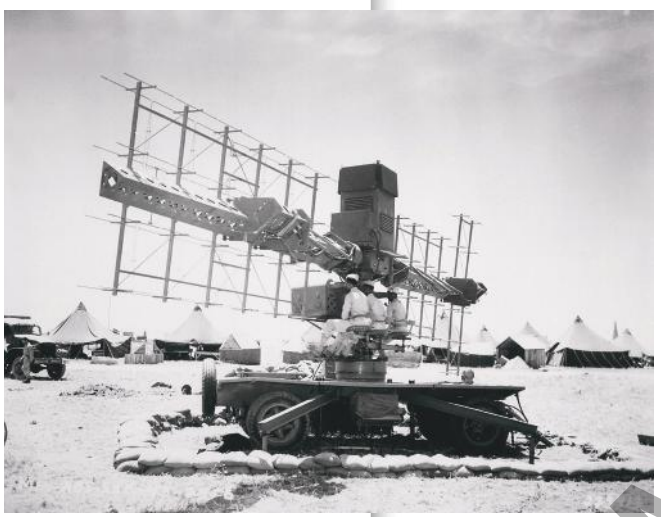


Figure 2.27 The SCR-268 Radar (Signal Corps Radio n°268), US Army's first radar system.

Radar

The US developed an ability to track incoming aircraft with great accuracy with radar reporting into combat information centers on every carrier. Radar-guided fighter aircraft weakened Japanese attacking formations, most famously in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. The few enemy aircraft which made it through were faced with anti-aircraft guns armed with technology which meant that bullets exploded much closer to their targets (proximity fuses), another radar-linked innovation. Later in the war, radar ships were stationed ahead of Allied fleets around Okinawa, providing advance warning of kamikaze attacks.

Naval gunfights at night or in poor visibility were also transformed by radar. At the Battle of Surigao Strait (October 1944) the USS *West Virginia* used radar to identify targets 13 miles (21 km) away in pitch black conditions. Throughout the later stages of the island-hopping campaign, radar enabled the avoidance of surprise attacks and the targeting of enemy ships. Thus, the early Japanese night fighting superiority was overturned. The Japanese had no comparable technology.

Radar was used in the protection of wide-ranging Allied operations, including the many amphibious landings and the protection of airbases. Submarines were also equipped with surface radar, which made them even more effective in locating and sinking Japanese shipping.

Codebreaking and signals intelligence (SIGINT)

The Americans devoted huge effort to their codebreaking program, nicknamed 'Magic.' They succeeded in breaking most of the Japanese naval, army, and diplomatic codes. There were three famous examples where codebreaking made a difference:

- In advance of the Battle of Midway, a team headed by Commander Joseph Rochefort worked out that an attack on Midway was coming; they had also identified the date and line of battle. This information enabled Nimitz to lay a trap for the Japanese. This had a significant impact on the outcome of the battle.
- Intercepted messages allowed the American fleet to halt Japanese progress toward New Guinea in the Battle of the Coral Sea (May 1942).
- 'Magic' codebreaking informed the Americans of Yamamoto's flight from Rabaul to Bougainville in New Guinea which was shot down on 18 April 1943.

The Allies, who also used the British-developed ULTRA **decryption** program, often knew Japanese troop movements in advance throughout the Pacific theater.

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Codebreaking contributed strongly to the success of the blockade of Japan, as merchant shipping codes had been cracked. The Allies managed to break the Japanese 'Purple' code, which was used to send secret messages between Japanese leaders. This allowed the Allies to read Japan's high-level diplomatic plans and see what Japan wanted to negotiate at the end of the war.

All this had enormous strategic impact as the Japanese did not develop comparable technology, and, moreover, were largely unaware of Allied technological breakthroughs.

Amphibious warfare

Island-hopping could not have been accomplished without the development of specialized landing craft, essential to attacks on fortified islands and atolls (coral reefs) without port facilities. Three landing vehicles were especially important:

- Andrew Higgins's LCVP (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel), the 'Higgins Boat' with its drop-down ramp, could land 36 infantry soldiers directly onto an open beach.
- LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) and LVTs (Landing Vehicle, Tracked, nicknamed 'Alligator' or 'Amtrac') could, between them, land tanks, trucks, and artillery to provide support for troops as they landed. The Alligators were capable of crawling over coral reefs, which proved to be significant at the Battle of Tarawa (November 1943). Later LVTs were armored and had mounted guns. They were supplemented by other vehicles such as the DUKW amphibious trucks.



Figure 2.28 A Higgins boat.

Massive amphibious landings, for example in the Marianas (mid-1944), the Philippines (late 1944), Iwo Jima, and Okinawa (the last was the largest of the war), were vital to the success of the island-hopping campaign, without which the war could not have been won.

Aircraft

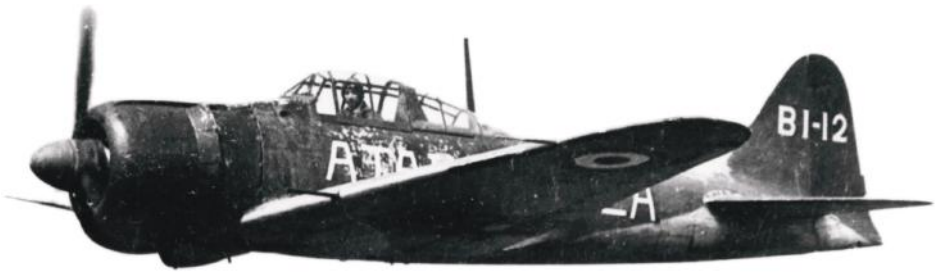
At the beginning of the war the Japanese Mitsubishi Zero was the most agile fighter in the skies. However, owing to shortages of materials and manufacturing capability, the Japanese were not able to introduce improved versions of the Zero into wartime combat. In contrast, the US developed a number of high-quality aircraft which were superior to their counterparts. For example, the Grumman Hellcat was introduced in 1943, nicknamed the 'Zero-killer,' and was credited with over 5000 air-to-air kills, while Boeing's B-29 Superfortress, in operation from mid-1944, was an advanced long-range bomber which made a major contribution to Japan's surrender. In Burma, the new British Mark V Spitfire aircraft gave the Allies the advantage.

Although Japanese crews were initially better trained, heavy losses and the extensive training programs in the United States soon shifted the balance. By the end of 1944, as the US was producing new and better aircraft in huge numbers, mastery of the skies was almost complete. As we have seen, aircraft technology was hugely important to the Allied victory.

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Figure 2.29 Mitsubishi Zero.



The atomic bomb

On 16 July 1945 President Truman received a coded message from Leslie Groves, director of the **Manhattan Project**, to confirm that atomic bomb testing had been successful. The first ever atomic bomb was dropped from a B-29 aircraft 'Enola Gay' named after the pilot, Colonel Paul Tibbets's mother, on Hiroshima, Japan, on 6 August 1945. On 9 August 1945 a further attack on Nagasaki was carried out, also from a B-29.

There is debate about the role of the atomic bomb in Hirohito's decision to surrender.

Look forward to the section on 'military outcome' under peace-building (page 102), and review the section on strategy. Consider Japan's overall position in the war and think of reasons for and against surrendering.,

Activity 8

ATL Thinking skills

In groups, answer the following questions:

- What factors were influencing Hirohito's thinking about whether to surrender in August 1945?
- Which of these factors were the most *significant* (choose one or two)?

Inquiry question: How did the conflict affect people's lives?

Conceptual focus: Perspectives

Understanding the impact of the war on people's lives requires engaging with a wide range of historical *perspectives*. These include those of local civilians, soldiers, collaborators, and resistance fighters, as well as later historians, each offering different interpretations. Survivors might focus on personal loss, suffering, and resilience, while outside observers might emphasize economic aspects and longer-term impact. The *perspectives* of women and marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, have often been overlooked both at the time and postwar, but are now central to a fuller understanding. These accounts can both support and contradict each other, creating ambiguities that historians must investigate and interpret.

Line of inquiry: Economic impact

Japan

By the early 1940s the government had taken control of the economy in Japan, and resources were diverted toward the military effort. Commercial factories were repurposed to produce war materials. Prices and wages were also controlled by

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the government, which had the unintended consequence of pushing employers, consumers, and workers to create unofficial 'black markets' in goods and jobs. Real wages (the amount of goods and services that wages can actually buy) fell by 60 percent between 1937 and 1945. There was huge damage to industrial plants and infrastructure such as railways and ports. Industrial output in 1945 was only 15 percent of its 1941 level. Basic commodities like eggs and sugar became unavailable. In the final stages of the war many large cities became uninhabitable, and families were forced to leave. After the war, economic recovery under the American administration was fast. This is explained in the peace-building section starting on page 107.

Philippines

The economic damage in the Philippines had a huge impact on people's lives. The Battle of Manila (1945) saw the city almost destroyed; families lost their homes and businesses. Japanese seizure of rice and food, coupled with their **scorched-earth tactics** against rebellious guerrillas, caused widespread shortages and malnutrition. Hyperinflation set in, as the currency introduced by the Japanese became almost worthless. Urban families who had enjoyed a steady income saw their savings disappear. Almost all employment stopped, and some were conscripted to work on the land or on military fortifications. Wages were worthless due to inflation, and almost all sections of society struggled to access essentials. Unemployment was massive until the US began reconstruction after the war. Women and ethnic minorities experienced particular economic burdens (see later sections).



Figure 2.30 Destruction of Manila, 1945.

Vietnam (then part of French Indochina)

The vast majority of the Vietnamese population were rural farmers, and they suffered in the famine of 1944–45. The impact of a poor harvest was made worse by occupation forces' seizure of grain, even burning rice as motor fuel. Farmers were forced to sell

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their produce way below market rates. Urban economies, such as in Hanoi and Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City) collapsed too, and many living in urban areas fled to the countryside in an unsuccessful search for food. The conscription of workers onto military and infrastructure projects and the disappearance of export markets led to wage cuts and people losing their jobs in the rubber and mining industries.

Malaya

Malaya had been one of the most prosperous countries in South-East Asia, with valuable exports of rubber and tin. The collapse of international trade changed that. Here too there were severe food shortages and inflation, as the Japanese imposed their own currency, nicknamed 'banana money'; bags full of money notes were needed to buy a handful of food. The large-scale attack on Chinese communities was devastating not only for them, but also for the economy. Many mines and plantations, forced to serve the needs of the Japanese military, fell into disrepair or had been bombed. Lack of materials and power had forced most urban industries to close down by the end of the war. Even fishing could not operate because of fuel shortages. By the end of the war, normal economic activity had almost stopped. Recovery after the war was slow, partly because the British colonial government was faced with a communist rebellion. The rubber and tin industries were back to prewar production levels by 1950, but other sectors continued to struggle.

China

China had been at war since 1937 and by 1941 had seen enormous economic disruption. For example, the invaders' 'Three Alls' (kill all, burn all, loot all) raids in northern and central China had seen hundreds of villages wiped out (for more details see 'social impact' on page 93). Seizure of foodstuffs to feed the Japanese army was a severe problem too. Major cities had been heavily bombarded. The prosperous former capital Nanjing's economy was destroyed. By 1945 millions of homes had been lost, the transport networks broken, and a vast proportion of the population made homeless or impoverished. In Nationalist-held China, life was not much better. Hyperinflation had set in by 1944, and agricultural laborers and farmers faced heavy taxation. The collapse of export markets severely hit many industries, such as silk manufacture.

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Checkpoint

Write a summary report on the economic impact of the Second World War on China and South-East Asia using the following headings:

- Widespread destruction of infrastructure and cities
- Collapse of formal economies and employment
- Inflation and currency instability
- Agricultural disruption and food shortages
- Forced labor and exploitation of resources
- Collapse of trade and export markets
- Postwar recovery was uneven and slow

In a concluding section, give two examples of how two of these headings are interconnected.

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United States

For the average American civilian, the Second World War meant both sacrifice and prosperity. On one hand, shortages and **rationing** became part of daily life. The government rationed commodities such as gasoline, rubber, sugar, butter, and meat to ensure enough supplies for the military. Families received ration books limiting how much they could buy.

Americans adjusted by carpooling (traveling together in a single vehicle to share costs), growing 'Victory Gardens' (home vegetable gardens produced an estimated 40 percent of US vegetables by 1944), and recycling scrap metal and rubber for war use. Consumer goods became rare: new automobiles and appliances were virtually unavailable as factories converted to war production; even clothes and shoes were sometimes hard to find. Civilians often had to find substitute products (e.g. margarine instead of butter). Many items were traded illegally at high prices, and some Americans faced long ration lines. However, civilians saw higher incomes and savings, as they benefited from employment in war industries.

The war ended the Great Depression – unemployment went down from 14 percent in 1940 to only 1.2 percent by 1944. Factories ran overtime, and even with paycheck deductions for war bonds and higher taxes, many had more money to spend. With few goods to buy, Americans accumulated substantial savings. This set the stage for a postwar increase in consumer spending, and the US emerged with the world's strongest economy – by far – after 1945.



Figure 2.31 A poster encouraging the digging of Victory Gardens.

Line of inquiry: Social impact

Philippines

As the Philippines saw so much fighting on its soil, the country was hit especially hard socially. Over 1 million Filipinos died, many of them civilians. The destruction of entire communities left deep scars. Families were killed or displaced, leaving many orphans and widows. Urban residents left for the countryside to escape bombings; in the countryside people were uprooted due to scorched-earth tactics and guerrilla warfare. Community institutions (schools, churches, civic organizations) were disrupted or destroyed, leaving a gap in social structure and local governance. Psychological trauma from bombings, massacres, starvation, and fear of Japanese revenge attacks greatly affected survivors.

Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos supported or joined anti-Japanese guerrilla movements, such as the Hukbalahap (Huks) in Luzon. This resistance culture promoted local solidarity but also encouraged violence in some areas. The experience politicized many ordinary Filipinos and class tensions grew between landowners and peasant fighters – leading to postwar unrest. The war widened inequality. Wealthy families who collaborated with the Japanese or fled to safer zones often retained their land and status, while poorer Filipinos, especially peasants and workers, suffered

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Figure 2.32 Independence day in the Philippines, 4 July 1946.

most from occupation and forced labor. Class division helped to fuel postwar social movements (like the Huk rebellion) calling for land reform and social justice. Nevertheless, the shared suffering and resistance during the Second World War strengthened Filipino nationalism and contributed to the growing demand for full independence, which was granted in 1946.

Religious faith, particularly Catholicism, played an important role in providing hope and unity for Filipinos during and after the conflict. Schools, civic groups, and local governments were quickly re-established, and wartime suffering became central to national historical memory (such as commemorations of the Bataan Death March, guerrilla heroes, and comfort women).

Malaya

There was widespread hunger and malnutrition in Malaya during the war. Rationing was introduced, but favored the occupying troops, with civilians relying on sweet potato gruel (a thin watery porridge), wild greens, and tapioca. Weakened by this poor diet and shortages, the population suffered from diseases like malaria and beriberi (caused by a Vitamin B deficiency). As you will see in the section 'Experiences of marginalized groups,' the massacre of up to 50,000 opponents of Japanese rule, many of them Chinese, combined with the widespread seizure of property, caused Malay society to suffer. Many thousands of laborers were conscripted onto Japanese projects, were paid very little, and were forced into **subsistence farming**. Long hours, harsh discipline, and non-existent safety standards made working in occupied Malaya a difficult experience. Social and political division continued after the war and Malayan society recovered very slowly. The shortage of labor meant that migrant workers had to be brought in. The war left a lasting impact on the Malayan workforce and relations between communities.

TOK

Why are exact statistics for the economic and social impact of the war in the Far East and South-East Asia hard to find?

China

The Chinese had been at war with Japan since 1937. 500,000 people died from famine and epidemics, and over 4 million others were displaced when Jiang Jieshi deliberately released floods from the Yellow River in 1938 to slow the Japanese advance. 100,000–300,000 died as a result of the notorious Nanjing Massacre in 1937, while other cities such as Wuhan, Chongqing, and Guangzhou suffered heavy bombardment. The Japanese 'Three Alls' campaign (see Info box below) also had a huge social cost.

The Three Alls Campaign, 1941–44 and Unit 731

In 1940 the 100 Regiments Campaign targeted transport and telephone links and military installations in northern China. In retaliation, in the spring of 1941 the Japanese North China Army was instructed to launch a policy known as the 'Three Alls' (*sankô*) – 'kill all, burn all, loot all.' 250,000 Communist troops in north China were attacked by 150,000 Japanese troops and 100,000 Chinese collaborators. Whole villages were burned, crops ruined, and grain confiscated. Japanese troops would return repeatedly to make sure that no resistance could re-emerge. Communist sources estimated that the population of these areas shrank from 44 million to 25 million. Many were rehoused in new villages called 'collective hamlets' which they had to build themselves.

The Chinese were also subjected to biological warfare via the notorious Unit 731. Its extensive headquarters were near Harbin in Manchuria under the cover name of the Kwantung Army Epidemic Protection and Water Supply Unit; it eventually operated all over China. The unit conducted experiments on live human subjects.

During the war cholera, dysentery, plague, and typhus germs were spread from the air, but there is no reliable way of estimating their impact on a population already weakened by food shortages and naturally occurring disease.

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Approximately 2 million died in 1942–43 as a result of famine induced by Japanese seizures of food. Tens of millions of Chinese people became **refugees**, many traveling to safer inland towns, living in **shanties**, and suffering high levels of unemployment. Some areas such as around Shanghai and Wuhan were deindustrialized as the Japanese removed machinery to Manchuria or back to Japan. Millions of Chinese were conscripted to work in Japanese-run factories and mines, working 12-hour days, with limited food, suffering disease and abuse. Some of the worst conditions were in Manchuria, where Chinese worked in coal mines and constructed massive fortifications for the Kwantung Army. The Nationalists also relocated industries into the interior, and workers followed, also suffering poor conditions and inadequate wages.

Postwar recovery was complicated by the civil war between Mao's Communists and Jiang's Nationalists restarting, which did not end until 1949.

Checkpoint

What themes emerge from the social impact of the Second World War on the Philippines, Malaya, and China?

What were the long- and short-term impacts?

United States

The Asia-Pacific War resulted in 64,752 killed and 212,905 wounded US military personnel. 16 million Americans served in the armed forces. Many thousands of families therefore experienced reduced military pay, the loss of loved ones, and lifelong injuries. Blackouts and civil defense drills became a part of everyday life on the west coast. As we have seen, there was rationing of some key products and consumer goods, as war production took priority.

Millions moved to towns where military production was concentrated, causing housing shortages and increased rents. Unemployment disappeared and there was a rural labor shortage, which prompted the government to bring in 60,000 Mexican workers on the Bracero Program in 1942–44. Labor disputes were restricted by a 'no-strike' promise, but there were some strikes, caused mainly by low wages, in the mines. As industry expanded so too did trade union membership. Wages and skills were boosted by the war. When the veterans returned home there were problems as war industries closed down or reduced output; however, a postwar boom (a period of rapid economic growth) saw a return to full employment by 1950.

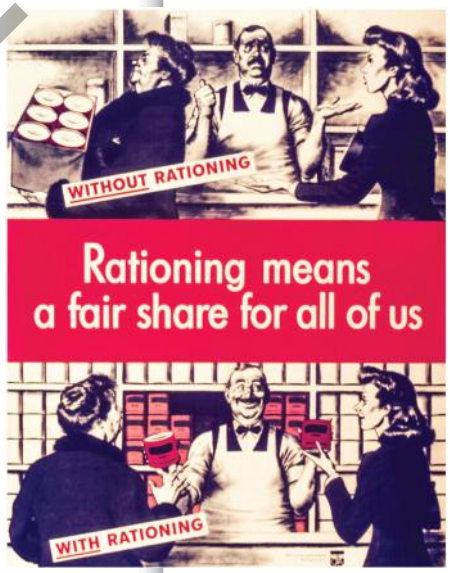


Figure 2.33 American wartime food rationing poster.

Checkpoint

Look at the economic and social impact of the Second World War on the lives of Americans.

To what extent did the Second World War have a positive social and economic impact?

Make a list of positive and negative impacts and weigh them against each other.

Australia and the Kokoda campaign

As Australia was, like the US and other Allies, reorganized to fight a total war, the country also saw important changes in the role of women, who joined the industrial workforce and the armed forces. There was migration to cities where war production was concentrated. But there was one social impact which was specifically Australian – the impact of the Kokoda campaign on national identity. The campaign was fought on

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Papua, an island then administered by Australia. It was the first time Australian troops fought, in the public perception (we now know that the Japanese were not intending an invasion), to directly defend Australian territory. This gave the campaign deep national significance and sparked widespread public support. The Australian soldiers on the Kokoda Track became national heroes. They were young, often inexperienced conscripts who endured jungle conditions facing huge odds. The 'Kokoda spirit' of courage, mateship, sacrifice, and endurance became legendary. The Kokoda campaign also marked a shift away from dependence on Britain, who had largely abandoned Australians fighting in Singapore, toward greater independence and self-reliance.

Line of inquiry: Experiences of women

China, Korea, and South-East Asia

Comfort women abuse

Across the Asia–Pacific region, many thousands of women – possibly more than 100,000, although estimates vary – were forced into sexual slavery as so-called "comfort women." A very large proportion came from Korea, which was under Japanese colonial rule at the time. Many Korean girls and young women were deceived with promises of factory work or education, others were taken by force, in a system organized and overseen by the Japanese authorities and military. They were confined in military "comfort stations," often in harsh conditions, denied the right to refuse soldiers, and suffered severe physical harm, malnutrition, and lasting psychological trauma. Korean women were sent across the Japanese empire wherever troops were stationed. At the end of the war, some comfort women were executed to silence them while others were abandoned. Those who returned home often faced shame, silence, and social rejection, leaving many unable to work, marry, or rebuild their lives. The long-term medical and psychological consequences were devastating, and the experiences of Korean women in particular remain one of the most painful and contested legacies of the war in East Asia.

Women as family providers in wartime

In the Philippines, Indonesia, and Indochina, the absence of men – taken away by wartime service, forced labor, or internal security measures – meant that women became the main providers for their families. Many worked as small-scale farmers or traders to supplement their rations. In Malaya, women established domestic workshops producing soap, cigarettes, and sewn products, while Chinese women commonly set up street stalls to sell dumplings and handicrafts. After the war, millions of women were left widowed.

Dutch women in Indonesia

From the 1600s, the Netherlands controlled a vast Empire that colonized many Asian countries, including Indonesia, which formally became a colony (known as the Dutch East Indies) in 1800. Therefore, before the war, many Dutch people – administrators, plantation owners, businesspeople, teachers, and missionaries – were already living in Indonesia. Dutch men often brought their wives and children with them, creating expatriate communities across the colony. When Japan invaded in 1942, Dutch women and their children were imprisoned in civilian camps. They lost their homes, property, and social status, and suffered overcrowding, poor sanitation, food shortages, and lack of medical care. Malnutrition, disease, and psychological trauma were common. Despite these hardships, women showed resilience by organizing educational activities, worship services, and secret support networks inside the camps.

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Indigenous East Indian women

Indigenous East Indian women faced different, but equally harsh, experiences. Many were mobilized under the romusha forced labor system – originally intended for men but extended to women – where they worked in agriculture, construction, logistics, and roles linked to military service, often unpaid and under coercion.

Women in resistance movements

Across the region, women also played important roles in resistance. In the Philippines, some joined guerrilla groups; in Vietnam, women served the Viet Minh; in Malaya, they supported the People's Anti-Japanese Army; and in Indonesia, women aided Sukarno's supporters. They often acted as couriers or nurses. Chinese communists recruited women to run supply depots, mend uniforms, and lead local militia, while Nationalists used smaller numbers in combat roles. Women also served as nurses and medical staff in field hospitals, propaganda and morale officers (especially those trained in education or communication), and as spies and intelligence agents.

Japan

As elsewhere, Japanese women had to cope with the large-scale absences of male family members. Women were used less in the wartime workforce than in other countries because of deeply held beliefs about gender roles. However, the needs of war forced compromise, and all single women aged between 12 and 39 were forced to register for work in the Women's 'Volunteer' Labor Corps – 470,000 women went to work in 1943–45 as a result. Many other women went to work because they needed money, and a total of 14 million women, 42 percent of the civilian workforce, were working outside the home at the peak of the wartime economy. This significant increase was less marked than in many Allied countries. Immediately after the war, Japanese women were given the vote on an equal basis to men.



Figure 2.34 A recruitment poster for the Women's Army Corps.

United States

Women were encouraged to enroll in the US Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (renamed the Women's Army Corps in 1943 when it became part of the regular army) from 1942. Over 100,000 women served in:

- clerical and administrative work: typists, secretaries, and office managers
- communications: radio operators, telephone switchboard operators
- logistics and supply: motor pool drivers, mechanics, and supply clerks
- medical support: assistants in military hospitals
- intelligence and cryptography: codebreaking and interpreting enemy messages (some worked with the Signal Corps and in intelligence).

More than 7 million women who had not been wage earners before the war joined 11 million already in the workforce. Women accounted for 36 percent of the workforce by 1945 (up from 26 percent in 1939). The war had a profound, if partially temporary, impact on the role and status of women in the US.



Figure 2.35 Rosie the Riveter.

Women, inspired by government propaganda (e.g. 'Rosie the Riveter,' the most famous symbol of female wartime workers seen in many posters and photographs), worked in defense industries, building planes, aircraft, ships, and vehicles taking on jobs previously thought too tough and dangerous for them – for example, riveters at the Lockheed plant or welders in the Kaiser Richmond

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shipyards, both in California. Alongside their work, women also had household and child-rearing duties and women sometimes experienced harassment from resentful male colleagues. However, income from their jobs, which were usually better-paid than their prewar employment, gave many women financial independence. After the war many women left the labor force when male war veterans returned. Nevertheless 32 percent of women remained in the work force, higher than before the war, many having learned new skills.

You need to identify what changed and what stayed the same and make a judgment on the overall extent.

(Of course, it was the impact of the Second World War as a whole, rather than just in Asia-Pacific which is in focus.)

Activity 9 ATL Thinking skills

Discuss the following question, in groups:

To what extent did the Second World War change the lives of American women?

Line of inquiry: Experiences of marginalized groups

The Chinese in Malaya

Suspected of sympathy with the enemy, the Chinese in Malaya were severely punished. Between 55,000 and 100,000 civilians, overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese, were killed. The most notorious atrocity was the Sook Ching massacre of February–March 1942 which was billed as a systematic purge of anti-Japanese elements in Singapore. In reality it targeted the Chinese community and spread into neighboring areas, overseen by the Japanese secret police. Chinese business and financial assets were confiscated or heavily taxed. Many Chinese fled to the countryside to avoid persecution. The Chinese in the Philippines suffered similar treatment but not on the same scale.

Koreans

Suppression of Korean culture

Korea had been under Japanese rule since 1910. The Second World War saw increased efforts to eliminate Korean culture (Koreans were increasingly forced to adopt Japanese names, speak Japanese, worship at Japanese shrines, and worship the Japanese emperor.) As a result, many Koreans grew up distanced from their own Korean culture and language.

Collaboration and postwar elites

Some Koreans who collaborated with Japanese authorities (officials, police, businesspeople) gained wealth and status during the war, later forming postwar elites in both North and South Korea. This created long-standing class resentments – many saw these collaborators as traitors, especially since they often retained power after 1945, particularly in South Korea. For example, President Park Chung-hee (1963–79) had served as a lieutenant in the Japanese Kwantung Army after graduating from a Japanese military academy in Manchukuo.

Forced labor and military service

Estimates suggest up to 800,000 Koreans were taken to work in Japanese factories, mines, shipyards, and construction under poor, often dangerous conditions. Many were unpaid or underpaid, overworked, and abused. Mortality rates were high. Thousands of Koreans were sent to other parts of the Japanese Empire (e.g. Manchuria, South-East Asia) as forced laborers (*romusha*). They were often used to build railways, roads, and military facilities under brutal conditions. Over 200,000 Koreans served in the Japanese armed forces; some were conscripted, while others 'volunteered' for economic reasons; they often faced discrimination and the most dangerous assignments. As a result of these forced labor policies, families were broken apart and survivors faced poverty and ill-health for decades.

End of colonial rule and division of Korea

Japan's defeat in 1945 finally ended colonial rule in Korea, but it was then divided by the US and USSR, setting the stage for the Korean War. Survivors of wartime abuses, particularly former forced laborers, struggled for decades to gain recognition and compensation from Japan. By 1945, over 2 million Koreans were living in Japan, many as forced laborers or migrants.

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After Japan's defeat, about 600,000 remained as a stateless underclass, forming the *Zainichi* (living in Japan) Korean community, which still faces discrimination today.

United States: Black Americans and Japanese Americans

The war had profound consequences for Black Americans and Japanese Americans, both of which groups, despite discrimination, contributed significantly to the American war effort.

Black Americans

Black recruits were organized into separate units and were thought unsuited to leadership. However, examples of notable Black units included the Tuskegee Airmen who flew 179 missions escorting bombers without losing a single plane and the 'Black Panther' tank battalion which fought in Patton's Third Army in Europe. 4000 Black Americans died in military service.



Figure 2.36 The Tuskegee Airmen.

African Americans and Minority Workers were drawn into the wartime workforce following Executive Order 8802 (1941), which banned racial discrimination in defense industries and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee. This order was issued in response to pressure from labour leader A. Philip Randolph, who threatened mass protest against discriminatory hiring practices.

During the war, approximately 2 million Black Americans worked in war industries. In total, more than 15 million people of all races, including 6 million Black Americans, migrated to defencs jobs. These included tank manufacturing in Detroit, aircraft production in Los Angeles and Seattle, and shipbuilding in New York.

On the home front, around 1.5 million Black workers moved from the South to northern and western cities in search of better-paid employment in defense industries, a movement known as the 'Second Great Migration.' For example, the Black population of Portland, Oregon increased from 2,000 to 22,000, with many employed in shipyards.

Although many Black workers initially faced discriminatory hiring practices, Executive Order 8802 provided a legal challenge to such discrimination. While employers continued to find ways to discriminate, the order marked an important step forward. Black workers were now able to benefit from wages significantly higher than those in the agricultural South.

Black migration brought racial tension, worsened by competition for jobs and housing. There were over 240 recorded examples of racial clashes, the worst of which was on a hot June day in Detroit in 1943: 25 Black people and 9 white people died in 36 hours. Campaigning for civil rights took on renewed energy. Black newspapers like the *Pittsburgh Courier* launched the 'Double V' campaign: Victory against fascism abroad and victory against racism at home. Membership of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) increased from 50,000 to 500,000 during the war, and new organizations were founded such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942, which pioneered civil disobedience as a means of protest.

After the war, President Truman passed Executive Order 9981 which **desegregated** the US armed forces. This gave momentum to the civil rights movement and subsequent reform, ranging from Jackie Robinson breaking baseball's color bar in 1947, to bus boycotts and sit-ins which led to changes in education and voting rights – all fueled,

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in part, by the experiences and expectations forged during the Second World War. There were setbacks, such as examples of racial violence against Black ex-servicemen in Georgia and Tennessee, but the war had given Black people access to better-paid jobs and improved college education (funded by government grants to veterans). While many Black women, like their white counterparts, surrendered their industrial jobs to returning veterans, many did not, and the American workforce was significantly diversified.

Japanese Americans

Although classified as 'enemy aliens' Japanese soldiers served in two segregated units, the most distinguished of which was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which fought in Europe and was the most awarded unit of its size in US history. Furthermore, 6000 Japanese Americans served in the Military Intelligence Service as translators, interpreters, codebreakers, and intelligence operatives. Over 30,000 Japanese Americans served in the US military. Nevertheless, Japanese Americans were treated to mass **internment**.

i Wartime racism contributed to the US government's decision to pass the notorious Executive Order 9066 (February 1942), setting up designated 'exclusion zones' from which any persons deemed a threat should be removed. It was implemented mainly in western coastal states, and targeted Japanese American communities. Up to 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry were relocated by force: this was 90 percent of the total Japanese American population, and 70 percent were US citizens. They were sent, taking only what they could carry, to 12 internment camps, no more than very basic accommodation with no privacy, sited in remote locations where the climate was harsh. They were imprisoned by barbed wire, patrolled by armed guards, and took whatever jobs they could on minimal wages ($25 per month for a janitor or laborer). The camps were closed down from the end of 1944; the last one was closed in November 1945. Internees were given just $25 and a one-way ticket to return home. Most had nothing to go back to and had lost everything.

After the war most Japanese Americans had to re - establish themselves from scratch. While some relocated to the east coast, most returned to the west coast states. In many places they continued to suffer hostility: shots were sometimes fired, signs were displayed to make it clear they were not wanted in those areas, and a few were killed in hate crimes. The psychological impact was profound; most felt shame and guilt for many years afterward. However, the Japanese communities rebuilt themselves, and established businesses. By the 1960s the Japanese had one of the highest rates of college education and family income among the ethnic communities in California, although they continued to feel the pain of wartime injustice. In 1988 the US government issued a formal apology and granted compensation payments of $20,000 to each of the surviving 82,000 internees. As President Reagan stated, 'Here we admit a wrong; here we reaffirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law.'

Look at their situation before, during, and after the conflict. What were the positive and negative aspects of their experiences?

Activity 10

ATL Thinking skills, Communication skills

In pairs, consider these two questions, and report back to your class.

1. How might President Roosevelt have explained the policy of internment toward Japanese Americans? How might a Japanese American have replied to him?
2. Historical perspectives can be contradictory and lead to ambiguities. In the light of this statement, how might Black Americans have explained the impact of conflict on their lives?

Make a written record of your conclusions.

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Burma

The Japanese occupation of Burma triggered a racial war. Initially, many Burmese sided with the Japanese against British rule and nationalist leader Aung San formed the Burma Independence Army (BIA). Most ethnic minorities, however, remained loyal to the British or, at least, hostile to the Japanese, and were vulnerable to mistreatment from both the BIA and the invaders. The Karen community (an ethnic group living in South-East Burma) suffered (for example, the Kalagon massacre in July 1945). Many hundreds of thousands of ethnic Indians returned to India; unknown numbers died from exhaustion, hunger, and disease on the journey.

Toward the end of the war, the BIA turned against the Japanese and helped the Allies liberate Rangoon. The Karens and another ethnic group, the Kachins, fought alongside the British, causing over 12,000 Japanese fatalities. Many others acted as scouts for British Special Forces.

Activity 11

ATL Thinking skills

1. Identify the variety of Burmese perspectives when the Japanese invaded Burma.
2. How and why did they change during the war?

New Guinea

1.5 million Papuans and New Guineans experienced their island becoming a battleground from 1942, when the Japanese invaded, to 1945, by which time the Australians had become the main occupying force. Reliable statistics are hard to find, but it is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 Papuans died. Typically, Japanese troops would enter villages, take food, and murder those who hesitated or were suspected of aiding the Allies. There were many examples of massacres and destruction of villages, particularly in northern Papua. Indigenous people were subjected to forced labor – building airstrips or carrying supplies. Many did not survive. The Australians also used forced labor, and approximately 37,000 New Guineans worked for them as carriers. Their conditions were better than those who worked for the Japanese, but beatings still took place.

There was widespread depopulation, destruction of sacred sites and artifacts, and complete disruption to traditional farming. Some slight compensation came with the construction of roads and airstrips and the introduction of modern medicines such as quinine, which was used to treat malaria.

In the latter years of the war, Papuans and New Guineans assisted wounded and sick Allied forces. One female local heroine, Maiogaru (Gimuleia) Taulebona, a courageous nurse from Papua New Guinea, played a vital role during the Battle of Milne Bay in 1942.

Maiogaru risked her life to save an injured Australian airman, demonstrating the significant contributions of Papua New Guinean women during the war. In recognition of her heroism, she was awarded the Loyal Service Medal.

Conceptual focus: Significance

Historians judge events and people as *significant* because their stories help us understand the past. For example, the Sook Ching massacre of Chinese civilians in Singapore, the forced labor of Koreans, or the internment of

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What has your study of the experiences of women and marginalized groups told you about contemporary social attitudes? How do attitudes then and now compare? What do the experiences of women and marginalized groups tell you about justice and historical memory?

TOK

Japanese Americans show how ordinary people suffered during the war. These stories are *significant* because they reveal the impact of racism and empire in wartime. Remembering the bravery of individuals, like Maiogaru (Gimuleia) Taulebona in New Guinea, also shows how women and local communities contributed. By choosing to include these voices, historians make sure that the experiences of these marginalized groups are not forgotten.

Checkpoint

For each of the marginalized groups, consider the following:

- Who was affected?
- How were they treated during the war? (short-term consequences)
- What were the lasting effects? (long-term consequences)

Inquiry question: How was peace established?

Conceptual focus: Continuity and change

Societies can undergo historical *continuity* and *change* at the same time, as these are interwoven processes that can be both rapid and transformative over the short term and follow slower patterns and trends in the long term. In the case of Japan, which is the focus of this section, the reconstruction of Japan by the American occupiers resulted in rapid and transformative *change*, both in the short and long term. Nevertheless, there are elements of *continuity*. The ways in which people (both individuals and societies) have experienced historical *continuity* and *change* can be positive, negative, or a combination of both; this was the case in Japan.

SAMPLE

Peace came after Japan had been defeated on multiple fronts in 1945 and accepted the peace terms offered by the Allies. During the American occupation Japan was completely changed so that its society and politics moved away from militarism and nationalism. As a result, Japan was welcomed back into the international community as a peaceful democracy. For most Japanese these were positive changes, but some experiences were negative, and there were some areas where action was not taken which would have been helpful to peace-building.

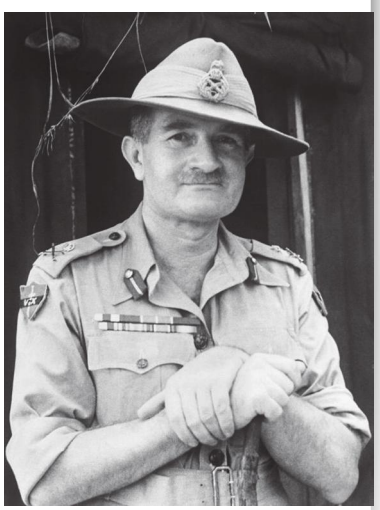


Figure 2.37 Lieutenant General William Slim.

Line of inquiry: Military outcome

The Allies defeated Japan on multiple fronts. A success of the central Pacific campaign was the recapture of the Philippines by forces led by Douglas MacArthur, who fulfilled his promise to return after fleeing in 1942. This costly campaign, in which the Allied forces were supported by Filipino guerrillas, involved the Battle of Leyte Gulf (October 1944), one of the largest naval battles in history, and the Battle of Manila (February–March 1945) in which 100,000 civilians died. The Japanese lost 300,000 troops. The islands did not fall until August 1945, marking the end of the Central Pacific campaign.

One military operation of the war was led in Burma by British Lieutenant General William Slim. His 'Forgotten Army' repelled the Japanese advance on India at Imphal and Kewhira (Kohima) in March–July 1944 and then launched a major offensive,

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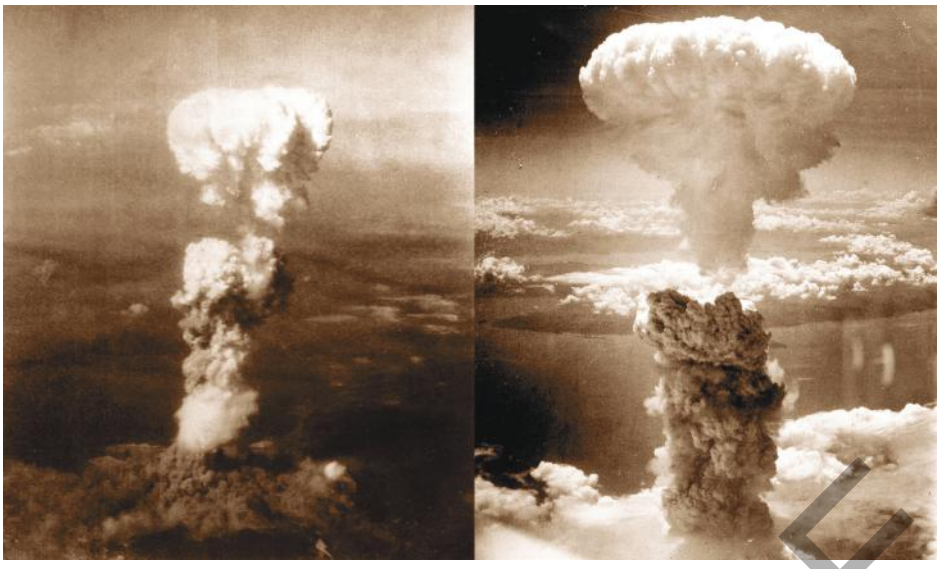


Figure 2.38 The atomic bombs: Hiroshima (left) and Nagasaki.

capturing Mandalay in early 1945 and Rangoon in May, thereby freeing Burma from Japanese rule.

The war with Japan ended in August 1945 after its defeat in the island-hopping campaign, isolation by an Allied blockade, and a devastating bombing offensive. The Soviet invasion of Manchuria and the dropping of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were decisive in persuading the emperor to surrender.

Line of inquiry: Political decision-making

There was no negotiation directly with Japan until 1951, but on 26 July 1945, the Allies, including China, issued the Potsdam Declaration, which outlined the terms for Japan's surrender, namely:

- Japan must surrender unconditionally or face 'prompt and utter destruction.'
- Japan must be completely disarmed and could not maintain military forces capable of waging war again.
- Japan would be occupied by Allied forces until the terms were fulfilled.
- War criminals would be placed on trial.
- Japanese borders would return to those of 1895, meaning that Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria would be lost.
- Japan would be rebuilt as a peace-loving, democratic society.

This last term was the most significant in promoting peace after 1945. The mistake of over-punishing Germany after the First World War, which only led to deep resentment and future conflict, had been learned. After the war, Japan was occupied by the United States. In the years that followed, Japan emerged as a peaceful, prosperous member of the international community. MacArthur's policies in rebuilding Japan included the protection of Hirohito's role and status which were seen as important to political stability in postwar Japan.

After the US had made it clear that Hirohito would remain in position, Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration on 15 August 1945, leading to its official surrender on 2 September 1945.



Figure 2.39 Hirohito with Douglas MacArthur, 1945.

SAMPLE

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Figure 2.40 Japanese surrender on board the USS *Missouri* anchored in Tokyo harbor.

The Potsdam Declaration reversed Japanese expansion into South-East Asia and the East Indies. The colonial powers re-took what they had owned before the war: France (Indochina), Britain (Malaya, parts of Borneo, and Burma), the US (the Philippines), and the Netherlands (Dutch East Indies). As most of these areas saw renewed conflict after the war, peace-building was not an immediate outcome.

After the Allied occupation had fundamentally reshaped the Japanese state, and as part of wider Cold War strategic realignments, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida signed the Treaty of San Francisco with 48 Allied nations in September 1951. Japan's independence was restored. The treaty, which took effect on 28 April 1952, officially ended the state of war and the Allied occupation. Japan accepted the judgments of the war crimes tribunals and agreed to pay compensation to Allied civilians and prisoners of war who had suffered under Japanese rule. There was no financial compensation to countries with which Japan had been at war. It required Japan to recognize the independence or future independence of territories it had formerly occupied, but it successfully welcomed Japan as a peaceful partner in the postwar order rather than punish it excessively.

After the Treaty of San Francisco, Japan restored relations with most neighbors and former enemies. In 1952, it signed a peace treaty with Taiwan, and in 1972, it normalized ties with the People's Republic of China. A 1956 Joint Declaration with the Soviet Union ended the state of war and allowed Japan to join the UN, though a formal peace treaty remains blocked by a territorial dispute. Japan also negotiated compensation and aid with countries it had occupied, helping to rebuild relationships with other Asian nations. In 1965, it normalized relations with South Korea via the Japan–ROK Basic Treaty, paired with economic aid to address its colonial legacy. By the 1960s, Japan was seen as a respected, peaceful, and constructive international partner.

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Checkpoint

In pairs, discuss and write short answers to the following:

- List two main terms of the Potsdam Declaration.
- Explain one way the Allies tried to avoid repeating mistakes made after the First World War.
- Why was the Treaty of San Francisco in 1951 significant for Japan's position in the world?

Line of inquiry: Social factors

This section will focus on Japan.

The catastrophic end to the Second World War had a profound effect on a population exhausted by war and having to come to terms with defeat. The horrific nature of the end of the war, combined with the reforms under US occupation also contributed to a broad embracing of pacifism in Japan – a huge social change.

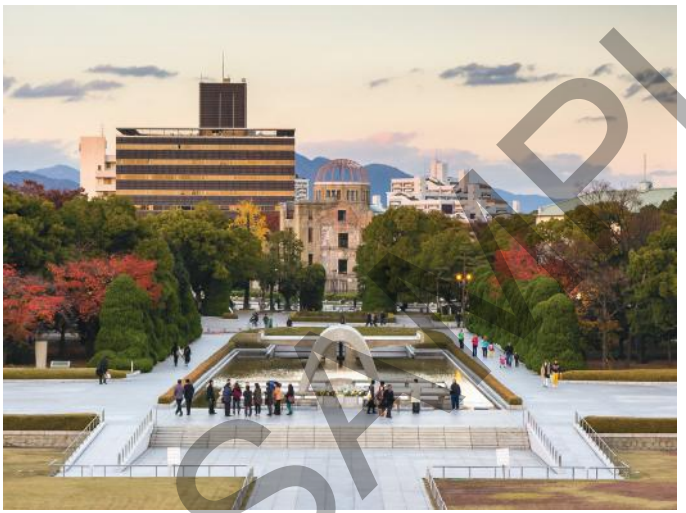


Figure 2.41 Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

SAMPLE

In 1947 a new Japanese constitution was agreed without much dissent. It embraced pacifism in Article 9, which stated that 'the Japanese people forever renounce war' and that 'land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.' This provision effectively placed pacifism at the heart of Japan's legal and social framework and was promoted in nationwide education programs. The Japanese expressed deep regret for the millions of lives lost, and that they had been led by aggressive militarism and nationalism. For example, the slogan 'Do not send our students again to battlefields' was adopted by the Japan Teachers' Union (JTU), founded in 1947. In 1951, the JTU adopted Four Principles for Peace, calling for full disarmament, neutrality, opposition to military bases, and rejection of rearmament. Japanese policymakers were careful on military matters throughout the 1945–70 period.

Japan's cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which suffered atomic attacks, became centers of peace education. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was established in 1954 near the point where the A-bomb was dropped, featuring memorials such as the Cenotaph (a monument for those who died in war) for A-bomb victims and the preserved skeletal dome of the Industrial Promotion Hall (Genbaku Dome) as a reminder of the bombing. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, opened in 1955,

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displays artefacts like tattered clothing and melted glass – reminders of nuclear war's human toll. Nagasaki's Peace Park was established in 1955, with its iconic statue of a man pointing to the sky in warning. Every year on 6 August and 9 August (the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing anniversaries), memorial ceremonies are held, often with speeches reasserting Japan's commitment to be a pacifist nation. It was important for Japan to reflect on its role in the wars against China and the Allies. As with many countries after conflict, Japan found it difficult to fully accept responsibility for events such as the Nanjing Massacre, the use of forced labor, the abuse of women, and the treatment of prisoners of war. Many forms of culture reflected the national mood of pacifism and acceptance of the war's legacy.

In literature, the late 1940s through 1960s saw novels, poems, and essays that explored the war's legacy and advocated peace. Examples include:

- atomic bomb survivor Tōge Sankichi's *Poems of the Atomic Bomb* (1951)
- Tamiki Hara and Yōko Ōta's stories about the horror of Hiroshima, begging humanity not to repeat past mistakes
- *Black Rain* by Masuji Ibuse (published in 1965), describing a family's suffering as a result of the atomic bomb as a way of promoting peace
- Sakae Tsuboi's *Twenty-Four Eyes* (1952) which was made into a popular film
- Ōe Kenzaburō's collection of essays *Hiroshima Notes* (1965), arguing forcefully for nuclear disarmament.

Similarly in cinema, there were many important anti-war films, such as Kaneto Shindō's *Children of Hiroshima* (1952), and Hideo Sekigawa's semi-documentary film *Hiroshima* (1953) which cast actual survivors as extras to re-enact the bombings. Such films personalized the suffering and helped build popular support for peace and anti-nuclear sentiments. The iconic anti-war film was Kon Ichikawa's *The Burmese Harp* (1956), which tells the story of a Japanese soldier who was so deeply affected by his experiences that he became a monk dedicated to burying the dead. Ichikawa's *Fires on the Plain* (1959), depicted the last days of starving Japanese troops in the Philippines. Around the same time, director Masaki Kobayashi released *The Human Condition* trilogy (1959–61), which highlighted the wartime brutality.

There was no more celebration of Japanese war heroics. Even the original 'Godzilla' movie (1954) depicted a monster awakened by H-bomb tests. Among the most famous artistic depictions of war were Maruki Iri and Maruki Toshi's, *Hiroshima Panels,* 15 panels completed between 1950 and 1982, which powerfully portrayed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and were taken on nationwide tour.

Japanese pacifism was showcased after the Lucky Dragon No.5 incident. In March 1954 a Japanese fishing boat (*Daigo Fukuryū Maru*) was showered with radioactive fallout from a US hydrogen bomb test near Bikini Atoll, causing the death of one crew member (Kuboyama Aikichi) in September 1954 and the illness of another. There was further public fear of contaminated fish entering the food supply. Over 30 million signed a petition calling for nuclear weapons' abolition, leading to the first World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in Hiroshima in August 1955, where 2600 delegates from Japan and elsewhere met. The Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyō) was created to promote peace in a nuclear-free world. The momentum from the anti-nuclear movement flowed directly into the 1960 protests against a US-Japan security agreement, as it symbolized acceptance of the nuclear-armed US military presence.

SAMPLE

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Figure 2.42 The *Daigo Fukuryū Maru* before the Lucky Dragon incident.

Activity 12

ATL Communication skills

1. Consider reactions to the social changes in postwar Japan from the following points of view:
- A spokesman for the JTU
- A war veteran
- The Japanese Prime Minister
- A member of SCAP, the American occupying force
- A university student
2. Write a letter to a newspaper from the perspective of someone committed to peace which explains your reaction to the Lucky Dragon incident, and what action you recommend.

SAMPLE

Line of inquiry: Post-conflict peace-building

As noted, peace-building in South-East Asia was put on hold for the period immediately after the war as post-colonial tensions, independence movements, and internal conflict was the experience of most nations. The US was soon to be involved in a major war in Korea in 1950. The focus of this section is, therefore, on Japan.

Rebuilding Japan was carried out under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), with the core objectives, which had been set out at Potsdam, of demilitarization and democratization. The following were the main areas for reform.

The dismantling of the militarist state

Japan's armed forces were demobilized. The large imperial military establishment and war industries were disbanded, and ultra-nationalist organizations (including the state-sponsored State Shinto religion) were abolished. The Home Ministry, which had controlled police and local governments, was dissolved, and the police force

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was stripped of its repressive powers. Hundreds of leaders of the wartime regime were removed from positions of authority ('purged'), including military officers and industrialists who had supported aggression.

An International Military Tribunal in Tokyo tried top war criminals; seven, including former Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō, were convicted and executed, and others received prison terms. At the insistence of MacArthur, Hirohito and other members of the royal family were granted immunity (the right to not be put on trial).



Figure 2.43 Trial of Hideki Tōjō, former Japanese Prime Minister.

Japan did set up a Self-Defense Force (SDF), which was in place by 1954, but even then, Japan insisted these forces were not 'military' and would be used strictly for self-defense.

Soviet forces moved into Manchuria and neighboring islands at the beginning of August 1945. Japanese civilians and POWs were herded into camps where many died from disease and malnutrition. Soviet soldiers committed widespread violence; in Shenyang, women disguised themselves as men to keep safe from sexual violence while homes were looted, and property burned down. In August 1945 alone, over 1000 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed in what became known as the Gegenmiao incident (named after the village where it had happened); on Sakhalin, Soviet troops fired on 18,000 refugees awaiting evacuation, killing more than 1000; and submarines attacked three refugee ships off the coast of Hokkaido, with survivors fired on by aircraft – 1708 lives were lost. Around 600,000 Japanese soldiers surrendered in Manchuria and nearby islands; even though the war had ended, most were deported to Siberian labor camps, where 10 percent died. Unlike Japanese war crimes, these Soviet actions were never investigated in postwar tribunals.

TOK

Was it morally right to put Japanese leaders on trial, while Allied actions, which might also have been considered war crimes, went uninvestigated and unpunished? Was the morality of the Tokyo trials undermined by granting immunity to Hirohito and the royal family? How did the treatment of the Japanese leadership compare with that meted out by the Nuremberg Trials in Germany?

Political democratization

In December 1945 the election law was amended to grant the vote to all men and women aged 20 and over, regardless of income or tax payments, which more than doubled the electorate from around 14 million to over 36 million eligible voters. Women were allowed to vote or run for office for the first time, and 39 women won seats in the National Diet (an assembly which had two chambers; the more powerful lower chamber was elected by the people) in April 1946.

SAMPLE

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Prewar political parties were re-formed into democratic parties and powers were taken away from several actors (see Info box). A Bill of Rights guaranteed civil liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. Minority rights were also better protected.

Land reforms

Absentee landowners were forced to sell their land to their tenants at very low prices, dramatically improving the livelihoods of rural families. Thereby, as SCAP intended, communist influences were weakened and inequalities reduced. A conservative small-landowner class emerged which was highly loyal to the new state.

Economic restructuring

Initially the intention was to break up all giant industrial groups, or zaibatsu, which had dominated prewar Japan, and had supported militarism. Of these groups, 30 were disbanded before policy changed (remaining zaibatsu were allowed to continue), the so-called 'reverse course.' With the emerging Cold War (a weak Japan could be vulnerable to political instability), economic rebirth became the priority.

US aid and purchases for defense provided crucial support – in the first three years after surrender, the US sent about $700 million in food aid to prevent famine, and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 turned Japan into a supply hub for UN forces, pumping money into Japan's economy. 1950 saw the beginning of a period of sustained economic growth of over 10 percent annually which lasted until 1973, the so-called Japanese 'economic miracle.' Japan was ready for a post-occupation economic boom; peace and prosperity could reinforce each other.

Education reforms

Militarism and glorification of imperial **ideology** were eliminated. In 1947, Japan introduced a new Fundamental Law of Education (with SCAP's guidance) that guaranteed academic freedom and refocused education on democratic values. Compulsory education was extended from six years to nine years and coeducation was implemented, doing away with the prewar practice of segregating by gender in secondary education. Curriculum reforms aimed to develop independent, civic-minded individuals rather than obedient subjects.

There was a huge expansion in higher education beyond the traditional imperial universities: new local colleges and universities were established. The number of college students increased from 84,000 in 1944 to 502,000 in 1952, the last year of the occupation. Thus, a reformed educational system produced a generation of Japanese comfortable with democracy and open to international ideas – essential ingredients for promoting peace.

Conclusion

The country had been transformed into a peace-loving, educated, and stable democracy with a dynamic and growing economy, open to new ideas, and welcome on the international stage. It has not engaged in overseas conflict since 1945. Arguably, this was one of the most remarkable peace-building exercises in history, and SCAP MacArthur's greatest achievement.

Nearly 200,000 public officials and business and military leaders associated with militarism or communism were purged, alongside minsters such as Shigenori Tōgō, Japan's former Foreign Minister and briefly Minister of Education during the Second World War. In the new Constitution (1947) the emperor was stripped of all political authority, and the Prime Minister was chosen by the National Diet.

SAMPLE

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Compare the effectiveness of peace-building after the Second World War in Asia-Pacific with that after another war, chosen from a different region.

What succeeded, what failed? What circumstances affected the degree of effectiveness achieved?

Checkpoint

In pairs, consider the following and report back.

In the context of peace-building:

- Find two examples of rapid and transformative change over the short term.
- Find two examples of change which followed a slower pattern over the long term.
- In terms of peace-building, was there anything more that could have been done by SCAP or the Japanese? (examples of continuity)
- 'The ways people (individuals and societies) have experienced historical continuity and change can be positive, negative, or a combination of both.' How does this apply to the impact of peace-building in Japan after the Second World War?

Consider who may regard the person as significant – historians, others who were there at the time?

Exam practice

Section A

Use the Second World War in Aisa-Pacific (1941–45) as an example to answer the following questions.

Significance

1. Analyze how historical people (or events) are regarded as significant. Use **one** example from your thematic study to support your response. [6]

Perspectives

2. Analyze how historical events can be viewed from different perspectives. Use **one** example from your thematic study to support your response. [6]

This is a short answer. It's important not to take too long over it; it's worth four marks. It's important to leave plenty of time for question 2 of Part I.

Section B

Use the Second World War in Asia-Pacific (1941-45) as an example to answer the following questions.

3. (a) Explain how leadership was a factor in determining the outcome of the conflict. Use **one** example from the thematic study in your response. [4]
   (b) To what extent was the mobilization of resources the most important factor in determining the outcome of the conflict? Use at least **two** examples of conflicts from at least **two** regions to support your response. [15]
4. (a) Explain how the conflict affected the experience of one marginalized group. Use **one** example from the thematic study in your response. [4]
   (b) To what extent was the impact on women the most important way in which people's lives were affected by the conflict? Use at least **two** examples of conflicts from at least **two** regions to support your response. [15]

You need to make an assessment of the importance of the mobilization of resources – during the conflict and after it – and while doing so, decide how significant its importance was. You need also to consider other factors which determined the conflict's outcome, but not in the same level of detail. The main focus should be mobilization of resources.

SAMPLE

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