

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The First World War (1914-1918) was unprecedented in scale and destruction, involving multiple nations and new warfare techniques.

Causes of the War

Aggressive and Militant Nationalism

- Aggressive nationalism led to competition and territorial disputes (e.g., France wanted Alsace-Lorraine back from Germany).
- Expansionist policies fuelled tensions, with European powers competing for colonies in Asia and Africa.

Race for Armament

- Nations stockpiled weapons for self-defence.
- Germany built a powerful navy, alarming Britain and France.

Formation of Alliances

- Europe divided into hostile camps:
 - **Triple Alliance:** Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy.
 - **Triple Entente:** Britain, France, Russia (later joined by Japan).

Immediate Cause: Assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand

- On 28 June 1914, Ferdinand was assassinated by the Serbian nationalist group "Black Hand."
- Austria declared war on Serbia, leading to a chain reaction of war declarations.
- Britain, France, and Russia formed the **Allied Powers**; Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey formed the **Central Powers**.

Major Events of the War

Western Front

- The **Battle of Marne** (1914) was a turning point, halting Germany's advance.
- **Trench warfare** dominated, with harsh living conditions.

Eastern Front

- Austria-Hungary and Germany initially advanced into Russian territory but faced setbacks.
- The Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers, isolating Russia.

Policy of Blockade

- Britain blockaded German ports, cutting supplies, leading to Germany's defeat at the **Battle of Dogger Bank**.
- Germany retaliated by sinking British ships, including the passenger ship **Lusitania** (1915), killing 128 Americans.

Entry of USA

- USA joined the war on 6 April 1917 due to German submarine warfare and economic interests in Allied victory.

Russia's Withdrawal

- Russia exited after the **Russian Revolution** and signed the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** (1918) with Germany.

End of the War

- By 1918, Germany was losing. Austria-Hungary and Turkey surrendered.
- The **German Emperor abdicated**, and Germany signed an **armistice on 11 November 1918**, ending the war.
- The war resulted in over 9 million deaths and massive economic destruction, leading to the **Great Depression (1929-30)**.

Results of the War

Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919)

- **Germany was held guilty** of aggression and had to pay **\$33 billion** in reparations.
- **Territorial losses**: Alsace-Lorraine to France, Schleswig to Denmark, Saar coal mines to France.
- **Military restrictions**: German army and navy size reduced; air force and submarines banned.
- **Colonial losses**: Germany lost all overseas colonies.

Territorial Rearrangements

- End of monarchies: **Romanovs (Russia), Hohenzollerns (Germany), Habsburgs (Austria-Hungary)**.
- New independent states emerged: **Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Yugoslavia**.

Formation of the League of Nations

- Aimed to prevent future wars and promote peace.
- Objectives:
 - Prohibit secret treaties and alliances.

- Resolve disputes peacefully.
- Promote cultural and economic cooperation.
- Weaknesses: **Germany and the Soviet Union were excluded**, USA did not join.
- The League failed, leading to the **Second World War**.

The First World War reshaped global politics, economies, and societies, setting the stage for future conflicts and changes in international relations.