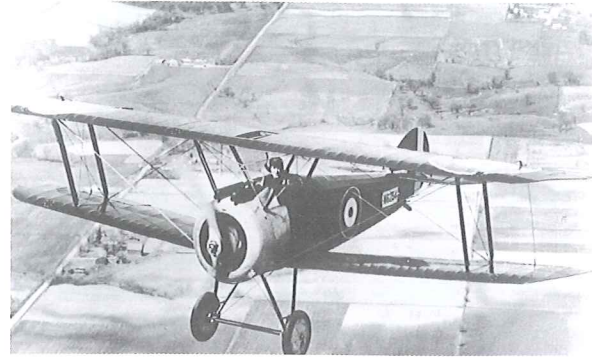




The 'Red Baron' – German fighter ace Baron Manfred von Richthofen.

Strategy and tactics

A strategy is the overall plan of action. It involves looking at the 'bigger picture' and seeing how all the different battles and engagements are linked together. Strategy is different from tactics. Tactics are the actual ways in which a strategy is carried out, i.e. how a particular battle is conducted.



The Sopwith Camel was one of the best fighter planes of World War I.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Review activities

Using what you have read in this chapter, copy and fill out the grids below and then answer the questions that follow.

	Western Front (land)	Eastern Front (land)	War in the air	War at sea
Key strategies/tactics used				
Impact of tactics (consider casualties, land gained, strategic gains)				
Overall impact on outcome of the war				

Questions

- Looking at the battles on both the Western and the Eastern Fronts, what differences can you see in how the war was fought and how it developed along these two fronts? (Refer to the map on p.45 and notice the amount of territory that changed hands on the Western and Eastern Fronts. Also compare casualty figures between the two fronts.)
- Why do think that there were these differences?
- What impact would the changing frontline in the east have had on the civilian populations of these areas?
- What impact overall did the war at sea have on the outcome of World War I?
- What was the impact of the war in the air?
- Overall, which theatre of war was most important for the outcome of the war?

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

	Technological developments	Impact on tactics	Impact on outcome of the war
War on land			
War at sea			
War in the air			

Questions

- How important were technological developments in deciding the outcome of the war?
- What do you consider to be the most important of the technological developments made?
- How did these technological developments change the nature of warfare?

What were the reasons for Germany's defeat in World War I?

Looking back over this chapter, we can see several reasons for Germany's eventual defeat. These can be grouped into Germany's weaknesses and mistakes and the Allies' successes and strengths.

Germany's weaknesses/failures

Germany made several ambitious gambles that didn't pay off. It gambled on a quick victory with the Schlieffen Plan. Once that gamble had failed, there was no hope of a rapid conclusion to the war. The plan, with its march through Belgium, also resulted in Britain entering the war. The war that resulted on two fronts was the one that Germany had always dreaded and tried to avoid. Another gamble – that of Verdun, with its emphasis on wearing down the strength of France and Britain – also failed. The German high-risk strategy of unrestricted U-boat warfare not only failed, but also helped to bring the USA into the war, which was vital to boosting Allied resources in 1918. By August 1918, US troops were arriving at a rate of 300,000 a month.

Germany also suffered from weak allies. As you have read, Germany constantly had to help out the Austrians and Bulgarians. With the defeat of Bulgaria and then the Serbs in September 1918, followed by the defeat of Austria by Italy and then the surrender of Turkey in October, it was only a matter of time before Germany had to surrender.

The failure of the Ludendorff Offensive was critical to overall German defeat. As historian Alexander Watson writes: 'Their [Ludendorff and Hindenburg's] desperate desire for peace derived not from any domestic considerations nor even the weakness of Germany's allies; it was due principally to the parlous state of their army. The war had been above all a contest of endurance and, during the course of 1918, the accumulated strain and the hopelessness of its situation had broken the army's will to continue fighting' (Watson, 'Stabbed at the Front', *History Today*, 2008). The Germans were ultimately unable to sustain their losses after the failure of the 1918 offensive. An epidemic of Spanish flu in 1918 made

the situation much worse, and morale was very low in the German Army. When Ludendorff asked for an armistice in October 1918, he said it was because, 'No reliance can be put on the troops any longer. Since August 8, it has gone rapidly down hill. Continually units have proved themselves so unreliable that they have hurriedly had to be withdrawn from the front ... the High Command and the German Army are finished.'

On top of military factors, the dire economic situation in Germany by 1918 played an important role in Germany's defeat. It meant that supplies were not reaching the German Army, and that the German population was ready for revolution. This situation was due partly due to the Allied blockade, which prevented imports reaching Germany, and also because the German government proved less efficient at organizing the country for war than the Allied countries. Germany spent 83 per cent of total public expenditure on military items, but just 2 per cent on the civilian sector. The figures in Britain were 62 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. Over the course of the conflict, there was a shift in resources away from the production of civilian goods in Germany. German agriculture was particularly hard hit by the war; production fell by 70 per cent in some areas. The economic situation, combined with the continual failures of the troops, meant that Germany was in a state of internal collapse by the end of 1918.

Even Russia's withdrawal from the war and the harsh terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk did not help Germany. The lengthy deliberations over the treaty seriously disrupted planning for the German spring offensive that was to begin on 21 March 1918. The one million men who were needed in the west were also still in the east to enforce the treaty and to occupy the Ukraine. The chaos in Russia and the impact of the civil war on agriculture also meant that Germany was unable to get badly needed resources from Russia to help deal with shortages at home.

ToK Time

Before you go on to read about World War I and total war, it is important to consider whether or not there can be effective 'rules' when fighting a war. There had been attempts to limit warfare, and to draw up some rules of engagement, prior to the Great War, at The Hague in 1898 (see Chapter 1).

What rules of engagement *should* there be in war? Should chemical and biological warfare be forbidden? Should civilian targets be outlawed?

What rules of engagement *have* to be tolerated in warfare?

How far do ethics matter in wars? Are morality and warfare mutually exclusive ideas?

Discuss these ideas as a class. Write up the discussion in your ToK journal.

Allied strengths/successes

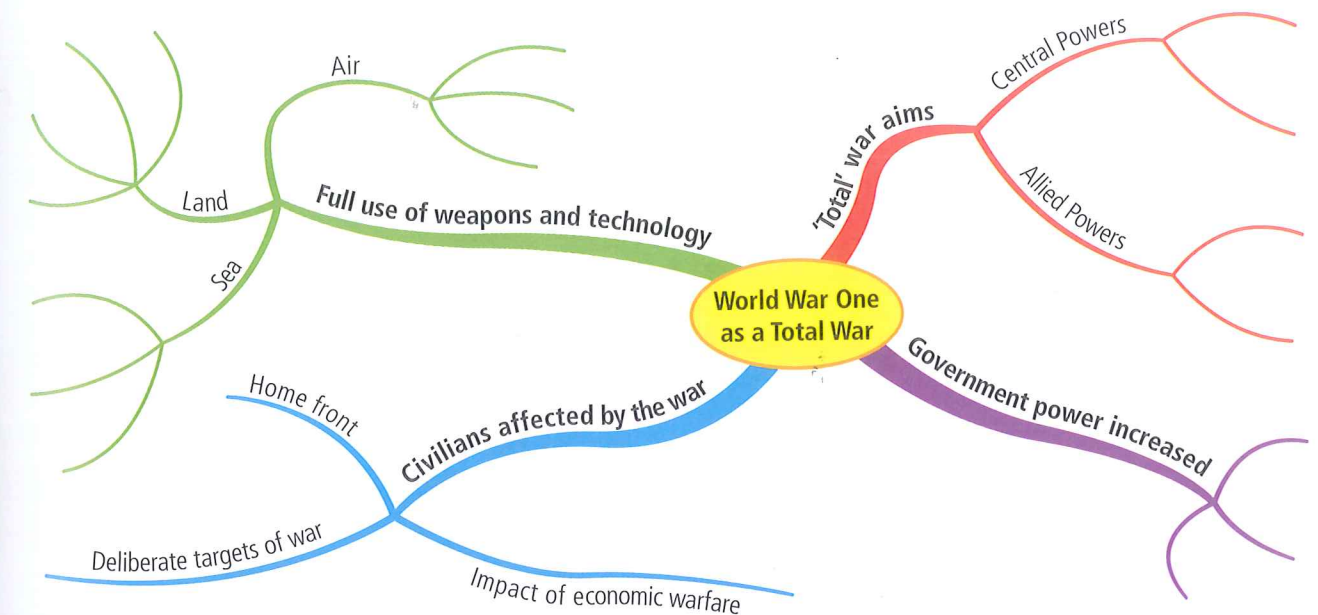
Ultimately, the Allies had greater men and resources and so the longer the war went on, the harder it was for the Germans to win. Germany could have beaten France on a one-to-one basis, just as Russia could have beaten Austria-Hungary, but all countries working together and helping each other out meant that the war would become one of attrition. This situation, in the long term, benefited the Allies (particularly once the USA had joined the war).

Maintaining control of the sea was decisive for the Allies. The blockade on Germany helped to cause dreadful food shortages, while Britain was still able to import food supplies both from its colonies and from the USA with the help of the convoy system. The British and French were also particularly successful in mobilizing their economies.

In the Allied counter-offensive of 1918, the Allies benefited from a greater coordination of effort and what Beckett calls a 'distinctly "modern" style of warfare' that took advantage of all of the technological and tactical developments that had taken place during the war – using tanks, artillery, aircraft and infantry in relatively close cooperation. The contribution of the USA to Allied victory in 1918 was also critical. US troops started arriving in France in June 1918. The two million soldiers eventually deployed brought a huge advantage to the Allied side in that they lacked the 'war weariness' of European soldiers now on the Western Front. America's massive economic resources were another key factor in the push for Allied victory. The USA made a substantial difference to the Allied fight, contributing money, weaponry and warships. Altogether America lent more than \$7.7 billion to the Allies during the war. As Akira Iriye puts it in *The Globalising of America 1913–1945* (1993), 'American participation spelled the defeat of German ambitions.'

In what ways was World War I a total war?

The diagram below highlights the key elements of World War I as total war.



STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Review activities

Copy out this mind map/spider diagram. As you read through the evidence below, add details to your diagram to make it a useful revision tool on World War I as a total war. Also, add links between the different sections where you see overlap.

▲ Mind-map – World War I as a total war.

World War I is considered to be the first total war for several reasons:

- Both sides fought the war, not for limited aims but for total victory.
- Governments used all weaponry that they had at their disposal in order to win the war. They also developed new technologies and weaponry as the war progressed.
- It involved all people of the major countries – not only soldiers but also civilians. Civilians were deliberately targeted during the military conflict and they suffered from the economic warfare carried out by both sides. Women also played a major role in the war effort at home.
- In order to fight the kind of battles waged in World War I, and to weld the state into a united, efficient war-making machine, nations developed new ways of controlling the economy and their own populations. In the process of trying to do this, the countries of Europe experienced major changes in government as well as in established social and economic practices.

These points are discussed in more detail below.

The aims of the belligerents

The *aims* of the powers involved in the fighting were 'total' and made any negotiated peace very difficult to achieve. Germany's aims in the September Memorandum have already been discussed on p.40. However, all the Great Powers developed ambitious war aims that they were reluctant to give up. France was determined to regain Alsace-Lorraine and both France