04 Cross-regional war: World War One – Effects

Key concepts: Change and continuity

As you read this chapter, consider the following essay questions:

- Examine the reasons for the failure of one peace treaty in the 20th century.
- Discuss the economic and social consequences of one 20th-century war.

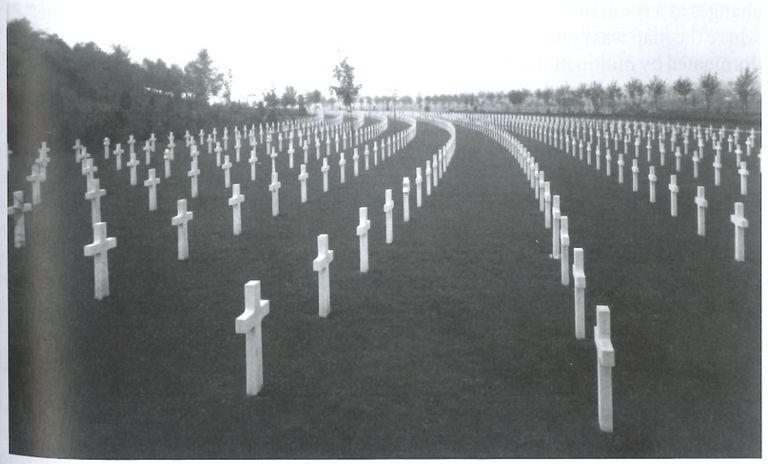
When the delegates of the 'victorious' powers met at Versailles near Paris in 1919 to attempt to create a peace settlement, they faced a Europe that was very different from that of 1914, and one that was in a state of turmoil and chaos. The old empires of Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary had disappeared, and various successor states were struggling to replace them. A Communist revolution had taken place in Russia and there appeared to be a real threat of revolution spreading across Europe. In addition, there had been terrible destruction, and the population of Europe now faced the problems of starvation, displacement, and a lethal flu epidemic.

Against this difficult background, the leaders of France, Britain, the USA, and Italy attempted to create a peace settlement. The fact that the settlement was to break down within 20 years has led many historians to view it as a disaster that contributed to the outbreak of World War Two. More recently, however, historians have argued that the peacemakers did not fully comprehend the scale of the problems in 1919, therefore it is not surprising that they failed to create a lasting peace.

Ruins of St. Martin's Church and Cloth Hall in Ypres on the Western Front.

The impact of the war on Europe – the situation in 1919

The human cost of the war



The Tyne Cot cemetery at Passchendaele in Belgium.

How did different countries attempt to come to terms with the loss of so many lives? Research the discussions that took place in one country regarding how to remember the dead, the nature of war memorials, and the setting up of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The death toll for the armed forces in World War One was appalling. Around 9 million soldiers were killed, which was about 15 per cent of all combatants. In addition, millions more were permanently disabled by the war; of British war veterans, for example, 41,000 lost a limb in the fighting. In Britain, it became common to talk of a 'lost generation'. This was also a particularly appropriate phrase for the situation in France, where 20 per cent of those between the ages of 20 and 40 in 1914 were killed.

The Spanish flu

Spanish flu was a flu pandemic that hit the world in 1918, causing millions of deaths. It first appeared in the United States, but spread to nearly every part of the world. It is estimated that anywhere from 20 to 100 million people died worldwide, at least more than double the number killed in World War One. It was called the Spanish flu primarily because the pandemic received such great press attention when it moved from France to Spain in November 1918. Spain was not involved in the war and had not imposed wartime censorship.

Although civilians were not killed on the scale that they would be in World War Two, populations had nevertheless become targets of war. In addition to the civilians killed directly in the war, millions more died from famine and disease in the aftermath, and at least a further 20 million died worldwide in the Spanish flu **pandemic** in the winter of 1918–1919.

Economic consequences

The economic impact of the war on Europe was devastating. The war cost Britain alone more than £34 billion. All powers had financed the war by borrowing money. By 1918, the USA had lent $2,000 million to Britain and France; U-boats had also sunk 40 per cent of British merchant shipping. Throughout the 1920s, Britain and France spent between a third and a half of their total public expenditure on debt charges and repayments. Britain never regained its pre-war international financial predominance, and lost several overseas markets.

The physical effects of the war also had an impact on the economic situation of Europe. Wherever fighting had taken place, land and industry had been destroyed. France suffered particularly badly, with farm land (2 million hectares), factories, and railway lines along the Western Front totally ruined. Belgium, Poland, Italy, and Serbia were also badly affected. Roads and railway lines needed to be reconstructed, hospitals and houses had to be rebuilt, and **arable** land made productive again by the removal of unexploded shells. Consequently, there was a dramatic decline in manufacturing output. Combined with the loss of trade and foreign investments, it is clear that Europe faced an acute economic crisis in 1919.

Political consequences

The victorious governments of Britain and France did not suffer any major political changes as a result of the war. However, there were huge changes in Central Europe, where the map was completely redrawn. Before 1914, Central Europe had been dominated by multinational, monarchical regimes. By the end of the war, these regimes had all collapsed. As Niall Ferguson writes, 'the war led to a triumph of republicanism undreamt of even in the 1790s' (*The Pity of War* [Penguin, 2006], p.435).

Germany

Even before the war ended on 11 November 1918, revolution had broken out in Germany against the old regime. Sailors in northern Germany mutinied and took over the town of Kiel. This action triggered further revolts, with socialists leading uprisings of workers and soldiers in other German ports and cities. In Bavaria, an independent socialist republic was declared. On 9 November 1918, the Kaiser abdicated his throne and fled to Holland. The following day, the socialist leader Friedrich Ebert became the new leader of the Republic of Germany.

Russia

As discussed in the previous chapter, Russia experienced two revolutions in 1917. The first overthrew the Tsarist regime and replaced it briefly with a Provisional Government that planned to hold free elections. This government, however, was overthrown in the second revolution of 1917, in which the Communist Bolsheviks seized power and sought to establish a dictatorship. In turn, this, and the peace of Brest-Litovsk that took Russia out of the war, helped to cause a civil war that lasted until the end of 1920.

The Habsburg Empire

With the defeat of Austria-Hungary, the Habsburg Empire disintegrated and the monarchy collapsed. The last emperor, Karl I, was forced to abdicate in November 1918 and a republic was declared. Austria and Hungary split into two separate states and the various other nationalities in the empire declared themselves independent.

Turkey

The collapse of the sultanate finally came in 1922, and it was replaced by the rule of Mustapha Kemal, who established an authoritarian regime.

The collapse of these empires left a huge area of Central and Eastern Europe in turmoil. In addition, the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia encouraged growth of socialist politics in post-war Europe. Many of the ruling classes were afraid that revolution would spread across the continent, particularly given the weak economic state of its countries.

Impact of the war outside of Europe – the situation in 1919

America

In stark comparison to the economic situation in Europe, the USA emerged from the war as the world's leading economy. Throughout the war, American industry and trade had prospered, as US food, raw materials, and munitions were sent to Europe to help with the war effort. In addition, the USA had taken over European overseas markets during the war, and many American industries had become more successful than their European competitors. The USA had, for example, replaced Germany as the world's leading producer of fertilizers, dyes, and chemical products. The war also led to US advances in technology – the USA was now world leader in areas such as mechanization and the development of plastics.

President Woodrow Wilson hoped that America would now play a larger role in international affairs and worked hard at the Versailles Peace Conference to create an alternative world order in which international problems would be solved through collective security (see chapter 5). However, the majority of Americans had never wanted to be involved in World War One, and once it ended they were keen to return to concerns nearer to home: the Spanish flu epidemic, the fear of Communism (exacerbated by a series of industrial strikes), and racial tension, which exploded into riots in 25 cities across the USA. There was also a concern that America might be dragged into other European disputes.

Japan and China

Japan also did well economically out of the war. As in the case of America, new markets and new demands for Japanese goods brought economic growth and prosperity, with exports nearly tripling during the war years. World War One also presented Japan with opportunities for territorial expansion; under the guise of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, it was able to seize German holdings in Shandong province and German-held islands in the Pacific, and to present the Chinese with a list of 21 demands that aimed for political and economic domination of China. At the end of the war, Japan hoped to be able to hold on to these gains.

China, which had finally entered the war on the Allied side in 1917, was also entitled to send delegates to the Versailles Peace Conference. Their hopes were entirely opposed to those of the Japanese: they wanted to resume political and economic control over Shandong and to be released from the Japanese demands.

Problems facing the peacemakers in 1919

The Versailles Peace Conference was dominated by the political leaders of three of the five victorious powers: David Lloyd George (prime minister of the UK), Georges Clemenceau (prime minister of France), and Woodrow Wilson (president of the USA). Japan was only interested in what was decided about the Pacific and played little part. Vittorio Orlando, prime minister of Italy, played only a minor role in discussions, and in fact walked out of the conference when he failed to get the territorial gains that Italy had hoped for.

The first problem faced by the peacemakers at Versailles was the political and social instability in Europe, which called for them to act speedily to reach a peace settlement. One Allied observer noted that 'there was a veritable race between peace and anarchy'. Other political issues, however, combined to make a satisfactory treaty difficult to achieve:

- the different aims of the peacemakers
- the nature of the Armistice settlement and the mood of the German population
- the popular sentiment in the Allied countries.

The aims of the peacemakers

In a speech to Congress on 8 January 1918, Woodrow Wilson stated US war aims in his Fourteen Points, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Abolition of secret diplomacy
2. Free navigation at sea for all nations in war and peace
3. Free trade between countries
4. **Disarmament** by all countries
5. Colonies to have a say in their own future
6. German troops to leave Russia
7. Restoration of independence for Belgium
8. France to regain Alsace and Lorraine
9. Frontier between Austria and Italy to be adjusted along the lines of nationality
10. **Self-determination** for the peoples of Austria-Hungary
11. Serbia to have access to the sea
12. Self-determination for the people in the Turkish Empire and permanent opening of the Dardanelles
13. Poland to become an independent state with access to the sea
14. A **League of Nations** to be set up in order to preserve the peace.

The 'Big Three': Georges Clemenceau (prime minister of France), David Lloyd George (prime minister of the UK), and Woodrow Wilson (president of the USA).

Activity 1

ATL Thinking and social skills

Discuss the following questions in pairs:

1. Look at Wilson's points. What would you consider to be his overall aims for the post-war world?
2. Which of these points would you consider as:
   - easily achievable
   - difficult to achieve in Europe
3. Are there issues not covered by Wilson's Fourteen Points that other countries might want to see addressed? Give reasons for your decisions.

As you can see from his points above, Wilson was an **idealist** whose aim was to build a better and more peaceful world. Although he believed that Germany should be punished, he hoped that these points would allow for a new political and international world order. Self-determination – giving the different ethnic groups within the old empires of Europe the chance to set up their own countries – would, in Wilson's mind, end the frustrations that had contributed to the outbreak of World War One. In addition, open diplomacy, world disarmament, economic integration, and a League of Nations would stop secret alliances, and force countries to work together to prevent a tragedy such as World War One happening again.

Wilson also believed that the USA should take the lead in this new world order. In 1916, he had proclaimed that the object of the war should be 'to make the world safe for democracy' – unlike the ostensibly more selfish aims of the Allied powers, the USA would take the lead in promoting the ideas of democracy and self-determination.

Wilson's idealist views were not shared by Clemenceau and Lloyd George. Clemenceau (who commented that even God had only needed ten points) wanted a harsh settlement to ensure that Germany could not threaten France again. The way to achieve this would be to combine heavy economic and territorial **sanctions** with disarmament policies. **Reparations** for France were necessary not only to pay for the terrible losses inflicted upon their country, but also to keep Germany weak. Clemenceau was also keen to retain wartime links with Britain and America, and was ready to make concessions in order to achieve this aim.

Lloyd George was in favour of a less severe settlement. He wanted Germany to lose its navy and colonies so that it could not threaten the British Empire. Yet he also wanted Germany to be able to recover quickly, so that it could start trading again with Britain and be a bulwark against the spread of Communism from the new Bolshevik Russia. He was also aware that 'injustice and arrogance displayed in the hour of triumph will never be forgotten or forgiven'. He was under pressure from public opinion at home, however, to make Germany accountable for the death and suffering that had taken place.

The aims of Japan and Italy were to maximize their wartime gains. The Italian prime minister, Vittorio Orlando, wanted the Allies to keep the promises they made in the Treaty of London and also demanded the port of Fiume in the Adriatic. Japan, which had already seized the German islands in the Pacific, wanted recognition of these gains. Japan also wanted the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations in the hope that this would protect Japanese immigrants in America.

The Covenant of the League of Nations

The first 26 articles of the Treaty of Versailles, and of the other treaties concluded with Germany's allies, formed the Covenant of the League of Nations. The League of Nations was an organization with the broad aim of keeping international peace and preventing a war happening again. Germany, however, along with Russia, was not allowed to join.

The racial equality clause

Japan had wanted a racial equality clause to be included within the Covenant of the League of Nations, to gain recognition that all races should be treated equally. This was because the Japanese faced discrimination in the West, particularly in America, as many Japanese had emigrated there. The clause was opposed by Australia because Prime Minister William Hughes feared it might prevent him from being able to limit Japanese immigration into Australia. Japan suggested a compromise in which the word 'racial' was dropped. This modification still did not meet with unanimous support. Wilson insisted that such a point of principle had to have unanimous, rather than majority, support. Thus no such commitment was included in the League's founding document, though Japan still joined the League and was a permanent member of its Council.

Activity 2

ATL Thinking skills

1. How might the demands of France, Britain, Italy, and Japan have gone against the spirit of Wilson's Fourteen Points?

The Armistice settlement and the mood of the German population

When the German government sued for an end to fighting, it did so in the belief that the Armistice would be based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. These offered an alternative to having to face the 'total' defeat that the nature of this war had indicated would happen. In reality, the Armistice terms were very tough, and were designed not only to remove Germany's ability to continue fighting, but also to serve as the basis for a more permanent weakening of Germany. The terms of the Armistice ordered Germany to evacuate all occupied territory, including Alsace-Lorraine, and to withdraw beyond a 10-kilometre-wide neutral zone to the east of the Rhine. Allied troops would occupy the west bank of the Rhine. The Germans also lost all their submarines and much of their surface fleet and air force.

When German soldiers returned home after the new government had signed the Armistice, they were initially greeted as heroes. The German population was not fully aware of the reality, and Germany's defeat came as a shock. The German army had occupied parts of France and Belgium and had defeated Russia. Ordinary Germans had been told that their army was on the verge of victory. Yet its defeat did not seem to have been caused by any overwhelming Allied military victory, and certainly not by an invasion of Germany.

Several days after the Armistice had been signed, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, the most respected German commander, made the following comment: 'In spite of the superiority of the enemy in men and materials, we could have brought the struggle to a favourable conclusion if there had been proper cooperation between the politicians and the army. The German army was stabbed in the back.'

Although the German army was in disarray by November 1918, the idea that Germany had been 'stabbed in the back' soon took hold. The months before the Armistice was signed had seen Germany facing mutinies and strikes, and attempts by some groups

to set up a socialist government. Therefore the blame for defeat was put on 'internal' enemies – Jews, socialists, Communists. Hitler would later refer to those who had agreed to an armistice in November 1918 as the 'November Criminals'.

Thus, at the start of the Versailles Peace Conference, the German population believed that they had not been truly defeated; even their leaders still believed that Germany would play a part in the peace conference and that the final treaty, based on Wilson's principles, would not be too harsh. There was, therefore, a huge difference between the expectations of the Germans and the expectations of the Allies, who believed that Germany would accept the terms of the treaty as the defeated nation.

The popular mood in Britain, France, Italy, and the USA

Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando also faced pressure from the popular mood in their own countries, where the feeling was that revenge had to be taken on the Germans for the trauma of the last four years. Encouraged by the popular press, the people of Britain and France in particular looked to the peacemakers at Versailles to 'hang the Kaiser' and 'squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak'. The French, having borne the brunt of the fighting, would be satisfied with nothing less than a punitive peace.

The press closely reported all the details of the Versailles conference and helped put pressure on the delegates to create a settlement that would satisfy popular demands. Clemenceau and Lloyd George also knew that their political success depended on keeping their electorates happy, which meant obtaining a harsh settlement. Similarly, Orlando was under pressure from opinion at home to get a settlement that gave Italy the territorial and economic gains it desired, and which would at last make Italy into a great power.

In America, however, the electorate had lost interest in the Versailles settlement and Wilson's aims for Europe. Mid-term elections held on 5 November 1918 saw Americans reject Wilson's appeal to voters to support him in his work in Europe. There were sweeping gains for his Republican opponents, who had been very critical of his foreign policy and his Fourteen Points. When he sailed for Europe in December 1918, Wilson left behind a Republican-dominated **House of Representatives** and **Senate** and a hostile Foreign Relations Committee. He thus could not be sure that any agreements reached at Versailles would be honoured by his own government.

Activity 3

ATL Communication and social skills

Group activity

Before you read what the peacemakers decided at Versailles, consider in more detail the issues they faced. Divide the class into four groups. Groups 1, 2, and 3 should take on the roles of France, Britain, and America. Group 4 is Germany. Groups 1–3 need to look at the issues presented below and decide their standpoint on each one (based on the views of their country as presented on pages 80–81). Each group will then have to make a presentation to the rest of the class based on their decisions.

Germany was not allowed to have any representative at the Versailles conference. In this role-play, however, Group 4 will be given the opportunity to respond to the presentations of the other groups. The German delegation should therefore also consider the bullet points below.

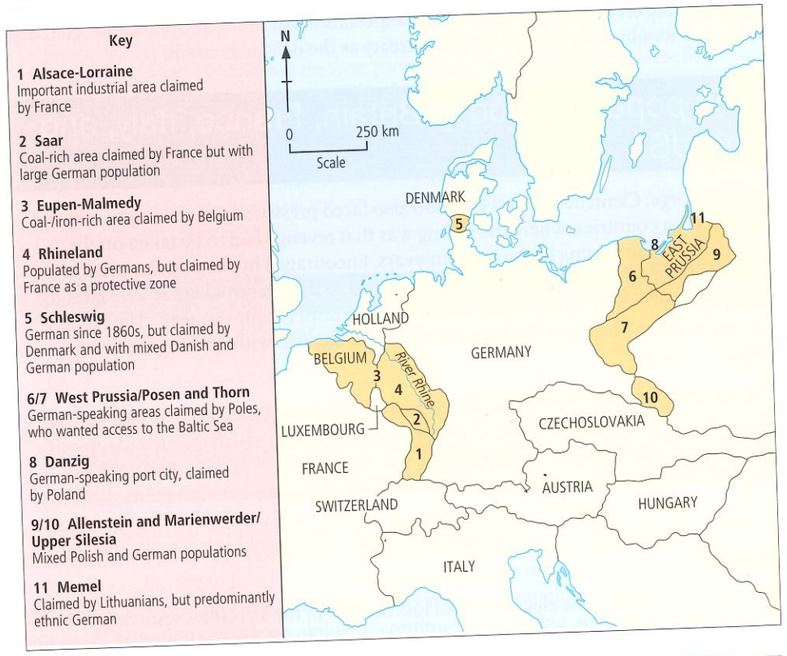
Points that your delegates need to address:

- Look at the map below showing disputed territory around Germany. What decisions will you make concerning each of these areas?
- Germany's armed forces. Will you limit them? If so, how?
- Germany's colonies. Should Germany lose them? If so, why? What should happen to them?

- Should Germany pay **reparations**? What damages, losses, or penalties are these reparations expected to cover?
- Will you make Germany guilty of starting the war? If so, why?
- What other restrictions, if any, would you place on Germany?

At the start of your country's presentation, you need to give a brief speech giving an overview of your country's views regarding the war and any peace settlement, the impact the war has had on your country, and your views on Germany's responsibility.

Disputed territories at issue in the Treaty of Versailles.



The terms of the Treaty of Versailles

After six hectic weeks of negotiations, deals, and compromises, the German government was presented with the terms of the peace treaty. None of the powers on the losing side had been allowed any representation during the discussions. For this reason, it became known as the **diktat**. The signing ceremony took place in the Hall of the Mirrors at Versailles, where the Germans had proclaimed the German Empire 50 years earlier following the Franco-Prussian War. The 440 clauses of the peace treaty covered the following areas.

War guilt

The infamous Clause 231, or what later became known as the 'war guilt clause', lay at the heart of the treaty:

> *The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.*
>
> **Article 231, Treaty of Versailles, 1919.**

This clause allowed moral justification for the other terms of the treaty that were imposed upon Germany.

Disarmament

It was generally accepted that the pre-1914 arms race in Europe had contributed to the outbreak of war. Thus the treaty addressed disarmament directly. Yet while Germany was obliged to disarm to the lowest point compatible with internal security, there was only a general reference to the idea of full international disarmament. Specifically, Germany was forbidden to have submarines, an air force, armoured cars, or tanks. It was allowed to keep 6 battleships and an army of 100,000 men to provide internal security. (The German navy sank its own fleet at Scapa Flow in Scotland in protest.) In addition, the west bank of the Rhine was **demilitarized** (that is, stripped of German troops), and an Allied army of occupation was to be stationed in the area for 15 years. The French had actually wanted the Rhineland taken away from Germany altogether, but this was not acceptable to Britain and the USA. Finally, a compromise was reached. France agreed that Germany could keep the (demilitarized) Rhineland and in return America and Britain gave a guarantee that if France were ever attacked by Germany in the future, they would immediately come to its assistance.

Territorial changes

Wilson's Fourteen Points proposed respect for the principle of self-determination, and the collapse of large empires gave an opportunity to create states based on the different nationalities. This ambition was to prove very difficult to achieve and, unavoidably, some nationals were left in countries where they constituted minorities, such as Germans who lived in newly formed Czechoslovakia. The situation was made even more complex by the territorial demands of the different powers and of the economic arrangements related to the payment of reparations.

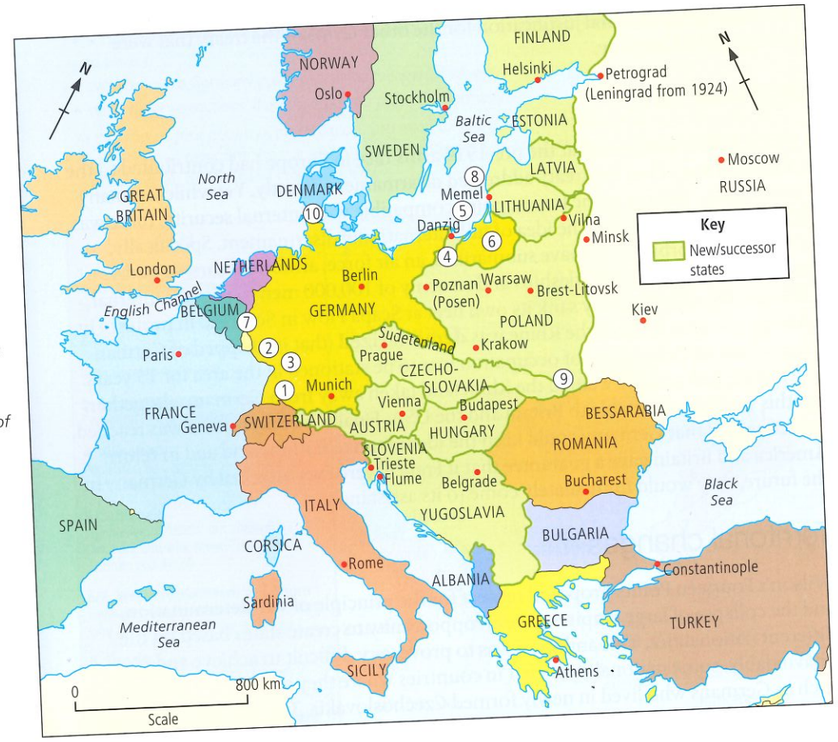
The following points were agreed upon:

- Alsace-Lorraine, which had been seized from France after the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, was returned to France.
- The Saarland was put under the administration of the League of Nations for 15 years, after which a **plebiscite** was to allow the inhabitants to decide whether they wanted to be annexed to Germany or France. In the meantime, the coal extracted there was to go to France.
- Eupen, Moresnet, and Malmedy were to become parts of Belgium after a plebiscite in 1920.
- Germany as a country was split in two. Parts of Upper Silesia, Poznan, and West Prussia formed part of the new Poland, creating a 'Polish Corridor' between Germany and East Prussia and giving Poland access to the sea. The German port of Danzig became a free city under the **mandate** of the League of Nations.
- North Schleswig was given to Denmark after a plebiscite (South Schleswig remained German).
- All territory received by Germany from Russia under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was to be returned. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were made independent states in line with the principle of self-determination.
- The port of Memel was to be given to Lithuania in 1922.
- Union (***Anschluss***) between Germany and Austria was forbidden.
- Germany's African colonies were taken away because, the Allies argued, Germany had shown itself unfit to govern subject races. Those in Asia (including Shandong) were given to Japan, Australia, and New Zealand and those in Africa to Britain,

Recreating Poland

Poland had ceased to exist as a country at the end of the 18th century, when it had been partitioned between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The Polish people, however, had always maintained a strong national identity and Polish independence was proclaimed at the cessation of fighting in 1918 and supported by Point 13 of Wilson's Fourteen Points. The Polish frontiers in the west were fixed by the peacemakers in the Treaty of Versailles. Yet the borders in the east were decided after the Poles fought a victorious battle with the Bolsheviks and forced the Russians back from Warsaw. The resulting Treaty of Riga in 1921 fixed the border in the east on what became known as the Curzon Line.

① **Alsace and Lorraine**
▶ *handed back to France*
② **Rhineland**
▶ *demilitarized zone*
③ **Saar**
▶ *under League of Nations for 15 years*
④ **Polish Corridor**
▶ *gave Poland an outlet to the sea*
⑤ **Danzig**
▶ *free city under League of Nations*
⑥ **East Prussia**
▶ *separated from the rest of Germany*
⑦ **Eupen-Malmedy**
▶ *to Belgium*
⑧ **Memel**
▶ *to Lithuania*
⑨ **Upper Silesia**
▶ *to Poland*
⑩ **Northern Schleswig**
▶ *to Denmark*



Territorial changes resulting from the Versailles Treaty.

France, Belgium, and South Africa. All were to become 'mandates', which meant that the new countries came under the supervision of the League of Nations.

Mandates

Germany's colonies were handed over to the League of Nations. Yet Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations reflected a change in attitude towards colonies, requiring all nations to help underdeveloped countries whose peoples were 'not yet able to stand up for themselves'. The mandate system thus meant that nations who were given Germany's colonies had to ensure that they looked after the people in their care; they would also be answerable to the League of Nations for their actions. 'A' mandate countries – including Palestine, Iraq, and Transjordan (given to Britain), and Syria and the Lebanon (given to France) – were to become independent in the near future. Colonies that were considered to be less developed and therefore not ready for immediate independence were 'B' mandates. These included the Cameroons, Togoland, and Tanganyika, and were also given to Britain and France. Belgium also received a 'B' mandate – Ruanda-Urundi. 'C' mandate areas were considered to be in need of the greatest development and were handed over to the powers that had originally conquered them in the war. Thus the North Pacific Islands went to Japan, New Guinea to Australia, South-West Africa to the Union of South Africa, and Western Samoa to New Zealand.

Reparations

Germany's 'war guilt' provided justification for the Allied demands for reparations. The Allies wanted to make Germany pay for the material damage done to them during

the war. They also proposed to charge Germany for the future costs of pensions to war widows and war wounded. There was much argument between the delegates at the conference on the whole issue of reparations. Although France has traditionally been blamed for pushing for a high reparations sum, and thus stopping a practical reparations deal, in fact more recent accounts of the negotiations at Versailles blame Britain for making the most extreme demands and preventing a settlement. In the end it was the Inter-Allied Reparations Commission that, in 1921, came up with the reparations sum of £6,600 million.

Punishment of war criminals

The Treaty of Versailles also called for the extradition and trial of the Kaiser and other 'war criminals'. However, the Dutch government refused to hand over the Kaiser, and the Allied leaders found it difficult to identify and find the lesser war criminals. Eventually, a few German military commanders and submarine captains were tried by a German military court at Leipzig and received fines or short terms of imprisonment. These were light sentences, but what is important about the whole process is that the concept of 'crimes against humanity' was given legal sanction for the first time.

Activity 4

ATL Thinking skills

1. Consider the positions of the American, British, and French delegations before the Versailles Peace Conference. With which aspects of the treaty would each country be
   a) satisfied
   b) dissatisfied?
2. Which clauses were likely to be most problematic to enforce?
3. Which aspects of the treaty were most likely to
   a) anger Germany
   b) damage Germany?
4. What would be the most likely response of
   a) Japan
   b) China to the treaty?

What was the contemporary response to the Treaty of Versailles?

Read through the sources below and then address the questions in the following activity.

Activity 5

ATL Thinking skills

Source analysis

Source A

... the future life of Europe was not their concern: its means of livelihood was not their anxiety. Their preoccupations, good and bad alike, related to frontiers and nationalities, to the balance of power, to imperial aggrandisements, to the future enfeeblement of a strong and dangerous enemy, to revenge, and to the shifting by the victors of their unbearable financial burdens onto the shoulders of the defeated.

From John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Harcourt Brace, 1920), p.56. Keynes was a British economist who worked at the Treasury during World War One and was a chief representative at negotiations prior to the Treaty of Versailles, although he resigned from the British delegation.

Source B

Now that we see [the terms] as a whole, we realise that they are much too stiff. The real crime is the reparations and indemnity chapter, which is immoral and senseless … There is not a single person among the younger people here who is not unhappy and disappointed with the terms. The only people who approve are the old fire-eaters … If I were the Germans, I shouldn't sign it for a moment.

From Harold Nicolson, diary, 1919. Nicolson was a junior member of the British Foreign Office and was attending the Versailles conference.

Source C

The last time I had the opportunity of addressing the House upon this Treaty its main outlines had been settled. I ventured then to call it a 'stern but just Treaty'. I adhere to that description. The terms are in many respects, terrible terms to impose upon a country. Terrible were the deeds that it requites. Terrible were the consequences that were inflicted upon the world. Still more terrible would have been the consequences had they succeeded. What do these terms mean to Germany?

Take the territorial terms. In so far as territories have been taken away from Germany, it is a restoration. Alsace-Lorraine was forcibly taken from the land to which its population were deeply attached. Is it an injustice to restore them to their country? Schleswig-Holstein, the meanest of the Hohenzollern frauds; robbing a small, poor, helpless country, and then retaining that land against the wishes of the population for 50 to 60 years. I am glad the opportunity has come for restoring Schleswig-Holstein. Poland, torn to bits to feed the carnivorous greed of Russian, Austrian and Prussian autocracy. This Treaty has re-knit the torn flag of Poland.

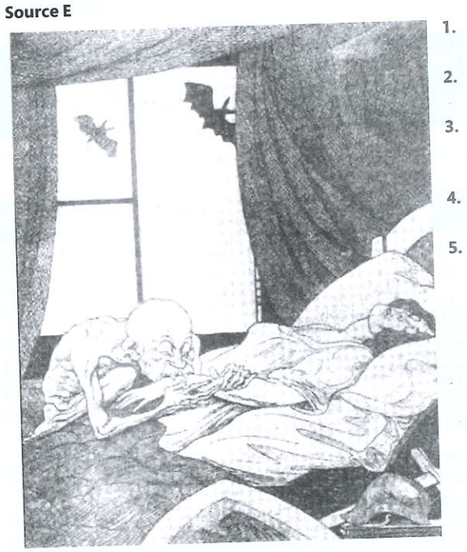
Speech by Lloyd George to the House of Commons, 1919.

Source D

Today in the Hall of Mirrors of Versailles the disgraceful Treaty is being signed. Do not forget it! The German people will with unceasing labour press forward to reconquer the place among nations to which it is entitled. Then will come the vengeance for the same of 1919.

German newspaper, *Deutsche Zeitung*, 1919.

Source E



German cartoon entitled 'Clemenceau the Vampire' from the conservative German newspaper *Kladderadatsch*, July 1919.

1. What are Lloyd George's justifications for the treaty in Source C?
2. What are the main criticisms of the treaty in Sources A and B?
3. Compare and contrast the views expressed about the Treaty of Versailles in Sources A and C.
4. What were Germany's assessments of the treaty (Sources D and E)?
5. With reference to its origin, purpose, and content, assess the value of Source C for historians studying the Treaty of Versailles.

Criticisms of the Treaty of Versailles

As you can see from the sources above, there was already strong criticism of the Treaty of Versailles at the time that it was signed, not just from the Germans but also from among the Allies. These criticisms became stronger in the 1920s, forcefully expressed by contemporary observers like Harold Nicolson and Norman H. Davies, and economist J.M. Keynes. Many historians today also support these criticisms, which are summarized below.

The issue of war guilt

The 'war guilt' clause was particularly hated by the Germans, who felt that all countries should bear responsibility for the outbreak of war in 1914. It was especially harsh to put the whole guilt for the war on the new republic, which was already struggling for survival against the forces of the extreme right. This clause later helped Hitler to gain support, as he was able to play on the resentment and anger felt by the German population towards the war guilt clause, and also towards the fact that it was a *diktat*.

Disarmament clauses

These were hard for the Germans to accept. An army of 100,000 was small for a country of Germany's size. Germany was also very proud of its army. Germany's anger grew when, despite Wilson's call for disarmament in his Fourteen Points, efforts by the other European powers to disarm came to nothing in the 1920s and 1930s.

Reparations and loss of key resources

Keynes (see Source A on page 87) led the criticisms of the treaty in the area of reparations. In *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, he argued that 'the treaty ignores the economic solidarity of Europe and by aiming at the destruction of the economic life of Germany it threatens the health and prosperity of the Allies themselves'. Not only could Germany not pay the huge reparations bill, but by taking away Germany's coal and iron resources, it also meant that Germany's economy would be unable to recover. Keynes argued that the real problem of the settlement lay not in issues of boundaries 'but rather in questions of food, coal and commerce'. The fact that Germany was to face **hyper-inflation** in the early 1920s seems to provide evidence for his predictions.

Territorial changes to satisfy the issue of self-determination

On this issue, Germany believed that it was treated unfairly. Thus while the Danes were given the chance of a plebiscite in northern Schleswig, the Germans in the Sudetenland and Austria were not given any such choice. Many German-speaking peoples were now ruled by non-Germans. Historian W.H. Dawson claimed in 1933, in his book *Germany under the Treaty*, that Germany's borders 'are literally bleeding. From them oozes out the life-blood, physical, spiritual and material of large populations' (cited in Stephen Lee, *European Dictatorships 1918–1945* [Routledge, 2008], p.13).

Removal of colonies

Wilson's reason for taking away regions like South-West Africa and Ruanda-Urundi from German administration was to remove them from the harsh nature of German rule. Yet this action was clearly hypocritical. States that received German colonies – South Africa and Belgium, for example – could not themselves claim to be model colonial rulers.

The German Problem

The 'German problem' refers to the concern of other European powers regarding the huge potential that Germany had to dominate Europe. Given its geographical position and its economic and military potential, it was in a position to upset the balance of power and threaten other countries.

League of Nations

The failure of the peacemakers to invite Germany to join the League of Nations not only insulted Germany and added to its sense of grievance, but made it less likely that the League could be effective in promoting international cooperation.

ATL Thinking skills

Activity 6

1. Read again through the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the information box on page 50. Does this treaty change your views in any way concerning the harshness of the Versailles treaty?

Alternative views of the Treaty of Versailles

Many historians take a different view of the Treaty of Versailles and its impact on the events of Europe after 1920. In fact, it is now argued that the treaty was in fact 'relatively lenient' (Niall Ferguson) and that, given the huge problems facing the peacemakers, it would have been difficult for them to have achieved a more satisfactory settlement. The key arguments of historians such as Sally Marks, Anthony Lentin, Alan Sharp, and Ruth Henig can be summarized as follows.

Compared to the treaties that Germany had imposed on Russia and Romania earlier in 1918, the Treaty of Versailles was quite moderate. Germany's war aims were far reaching and, as shown in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, indicate that Germany would have sought huge areas of land from the Allies if it had won. Thus, the Allies can be seen to have exercised considerable restraint. The treaty deprived Germany of about 13.5 per cent of its territory (much of this consisted of Alsace-Lorraine, which was returned to France), about 13 per cent of its economic productivity, and just over 10 per cent of its population. In addition, it can be argued that France deserved to be compensated for the destruction of so much of its land and industry. German land had not been invaded and its farmland and industries therefore remained intact.

The treaty in fact left Germany in a relatively strong position in the centre of Europe. Germany remained a dominant power in a weakened Europe. Not only was it physically undamaged, but it had gained strategic advantages. Russia remained weak and isolated at this time, and Central Europe was fragmented. The peacemakers had created several new states in accordance with the principle of self-determination (see pages 91–92), and this was to create a power vacuum that would favour the expansion of Germany in the future. Anthony Lentin has pointed out the problem here of creating a treaty that failed to weaken Germany, but at the same time left it 'scourged, humiliated and resentful'.

The huge reparations bill was not responsible for the economic crisis that Germany faced in the early 1920s. In fact, the issue of banknotes by the German government was a major factor in causing hyper-inflation. In addition, many economic historians have argued that Germany could have paid the 7.2 per cent of its national income that the reparations schedule required in the years 1925–1929, if it had reformed its financial system or raised its taxation to British levels. However, it chose not to pay the reparations as a way of protesting against the peace settlement.

Thus it can be argued that the treaty was reasonable and not in itself responsible for the chaos of post-war Germany. Why then is the view that the treaty was vindictive and unjust so prevalent, and why is it so often cited as a key factor in the cause of World War Two?

The first issue is that while the treaty was not in itself exceptionally unfair, the Germans thought it was, and they directed all their efforts into persuading others

of their case. German propaganda on this issue was very successful, and Britain and France were forced into several revisions of the treaty, while Germany evaded paying reparations or carrying out the disarmament clauses.

The second issue is that the USA and Britain lacked the will to enforce the terms of the treaty. The coalition that put the treaty together at Versailles soon collapsed. The USA refused to ratify the treaty, and Britain, content with colonial gains and with strategic and maritime security from Germany, now wished to distance itself from many of the treaty's territorial provisions. Liberal opinion in the USA and Britain was influenced not only by German propaganda, but also by Keynes's arguments for allowing Germany to recover economically.

France was the only country that still feared for its security and that wanted to enforce Versailles in full. This fact explains why France invaded the Ruhr in 1923 in order to secure reparation payments. It received no support for such actions, however, from the USA and Great Britain, who accused France of 'bullying' Germany. As the American historian William R. Keylor writes,

> *it must in fairness be recorded that the Treaty of Versailles proved to be a failure less because of the inherent defects it contained than because it was never put into full effect.*
>
> ***The Twentieth Century World and Beyond* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p.88.**

The one feature of the Versailles settlement that guaranteed peace and the security of France was the occupation of the Rhineland. Yet the treaty stipulated that the troops should only be there for 15 years. In fact, the last Allied soldiers left in 1930, 5 years earlier than agreed, and just as Germany was recovering its strength.

The settlement of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

Four separate peace treaties were signed: with Austria (the Treaty of St Germain), Hungary (Treaty of Trianon), Bulgaria (Treaty of Neuilly), and Turkey (Treaty of Sèvres, revised by the Treaty of Lausanne). Following the format of the Treaty of Versailles, all four countries were to disarm, to pay reparations, and to lose territory.

The Treaty of St Germain (1919)

By the time the delegates met at Versailles, the peoples of Austria-Hungary had already broken away from the empire and were setting up their own states in accordance with the principle of self-determination. The conference had no choice but to agree to this situation and suggest minor changes. Austria was separated from Hungary and reduced to a small landlocked state consisting of only 25 per cent of its pre-war area and 20 per cent of its pre-war population. It became a republic of 7 million people, which many nicknamed 'the tadpole state' due to its shape and size.

Other conditions of the Treaty of St Germain were:

- Austria lost Bohemia and Moravia – wealthy industrial provinces – to the new state of Czechoslovakia.
- Austria lost Dalmatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina to a new state peopled by Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – a state that, from 1929, became known as Yugoslavia.
- Poland gained Galicia.
- Italy received the South Tyrol, Trentino, and Istria.

In addition, *Anschluss* (union with Germany) was forbidden and Austrian armed forces were reduced to 30,000 men. Austria had to pay reparations to the Allies, and by 1922 it was virtually bankrupt and the League of Nations took over its financial affairs.

The Treaty of Trianon (1920)

Hungary had to recognize the independence of the new states of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Austria. In this treaty it lost 75 per cent of its pre-war territory and 66 per cent of its pre-war population. In addition:

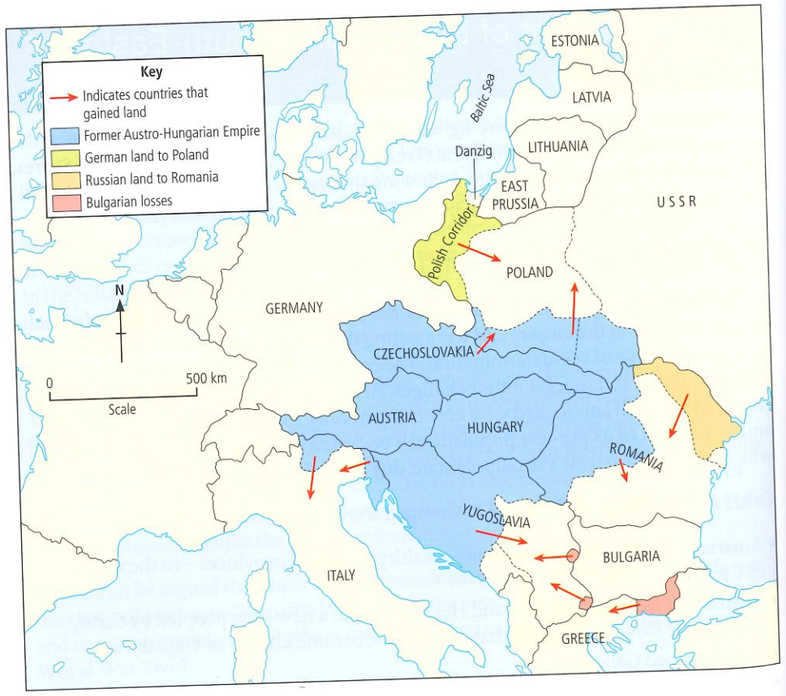
- Slovakia and Ruthenia were given to Czechoslovakia.
- Croatia and Slovenia were given to Yugoslavia.
- Transylvania and the Banat of Temesvar were given to Romania.

Furthermore, the Hungarian army was limited to 35,000 men and Hungary had to pay reparations.

Hungary complained bitterly that the newly formed Hungarian nation was much smaller than the Kingdom of Hungary that had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and that more than 3 million Magyars had been put under foreign rule.

The Treaty of Neuilly (1919)

In the Treaty of Neuilly, Bulgaria lost territory to Greece and Yugoslavia. Significantly, it lost its Aegean coastline and therefore access to the Mediterranean. However, it was the only defeated nation to receive territory, from Turkey.



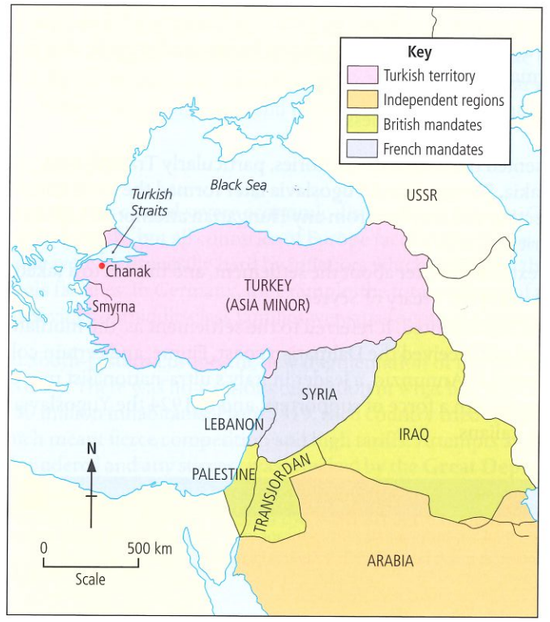
The break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. East Prussia at this time was part of Germany.

The Treaty of Sèvres (1920)

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had been long expected and both Britain and France hoped to make some gains in the region. In the Treaty of Sèvres:

- Syria went to France as a mandate.
- Palestine, Iraq, Transjordan, and Cyprus went to Great Britain.
- Eastern Thrace went to Greece.
- Rhodes and the Dodecanese Islands went to Italy.
- Smyrna was occupied by the Greeks for five years and then a plebiscite was due to be held.
- The Straits (exit from the Black Sea) were to become a demilitarized zone administered by the League of Nations: Britain, France, and Italy were to keep troops in Turkey.

The treaty was accepted by Sultan Muhammad VI. Yet there was fierce resentment to the terms. The nationalist leader Mustapha Kemal led a National Assembly at Ankara to pledge the unification of Muslim Turks and the rejection of Sèvres. Greece, ambitious for more land, attempted to take advantage of this internal disorder and declared war, but Kemal smashed the Greek advance, captured and burned Smyrna, and finally ejected all Greek soldiers and civilians from Asia. Kemal advanced on the Straits and for a while it looked as though he intended to attack the British soldiers at the town of Chanak. A compromise was agreed upon, however, which resulted in the Treaty of Sèvres being revised at Lausanne in Switzerland.



The Treaty of Sèvres and the Turkish Empire.

The Treaty of Lausanne (1923)

The provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne ran as follows:

- Turkey regained Eastern Thrace, Smyrna, some territory along the Syrian border, and several Aegean islands.
- Turkish sovereignty over the Straits was recognized, but the area remained demilitarized.
- Foreign troops were withdrawn from Turkish territory.
- Turkey no longer had to pay reparations or have its army reduced.

What were the criticisms of the peace settlements in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe?

It was very difficult to apply the principle of self-determination consistently and fairly. Because Czechoslovakia needed a mountainous, defensible border and because the new state lacked certain minerals and industry, it was given the ex-Austrian Sudetenland, which contained around 3.5 million German speakers. The new Czechoslovakia set up on racial lines therefore contained five main racial groups: Czechs, Poles, Magyars, Ruthenians, and German speakers. Racial problems were also rife in the new Yugoslavia, which had at least a dozen nationalities within its borders. Thus the historian Alan Sharp writes that 'the 1919 minorities were probably more discontented than those of 1914' (*Modern History Review*, November 1991, page 30).

As well as ethnic strife, the new states were weak politically and economically. Both Hungary and Austria suffered economic collapse by 1922. The weakness of these new states was later to create a power vacuum in this part of Europe and thus the area became an easy target for German domination.

The treaties caused much bitterness:

- Hungary resented the loss of its territories, particularly Transylvania. Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia later formed the Little Entente, with the aim of protecting one another from any Hungarian attempt to regain control over their territories.
- Turkey was extremely bitter about the settlement, and this led to a takeover by Kemal and the revision of the Treaty of Sèvres.
- Italy was also discontented. It referred to the settlement as 'the mutilated peace' because it had not received the Dalmatian coast, Fiume, and certain colonies. In 1919, Gabriele D'Annunzio, a leader in Italy's ultra-nationalist movement, occupied Fiume with a force of supporters, and in 1924 the Yugoslavians gave Fiume to the Italians.

Self-determination outside Europe
Applying the principle of self-determination also proved problematic outside Europe. France and Britain were not interested in allowing this principle to operate in their colonies. Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese revolutionary, arrived at Versailles with a petition seeking support for the Vietnamese nationalist cause, but he was ignored. Claims from the Indian nationalist press that India's 'deeds and sacrifices justified its claim to an equality within the British Empire' were also unacceptable. Wilson also ignored a memorandum from the black American leader W.E.B. Dubois, which suggested that Africa be reconstructed 'in accordance with the wishes of the Negro race'.

Activity 7

ATL Thinking skills

1. What do you think the historian Alan Sharp means when he says that the peace settlement was a disappointment 'as much because of its virtues as its faults'?

What was the impact of the war and the peace treaties by the early 1920s?

Political issues

Although Western Europe was still familiar on the map in 1920, this was not the case in Eastern Europe, where no fewer than nine new or revived states came into existence: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, Russia's government was now a Bolshevik dictatorship that was encouraging revolution abroad. The frontiers of new states thus became the frontiers of the Europe from which Russia was excluded. Russia was not invited to the Versailles conference and was not a member of the League of Nations until 1934.

The new Europe remained divided not only between the 'victors' and the 'defeated', but also between those who wanted to maintain the peace settlement and those who wanted to see it revised. Not only Germany, but also Hungary and Italy, were active in pursuing their aims of getting the treaties changed. Despite Wilson's hopes to the contrary, international 'blocs' developed, such as that formed by the Little Entente. The peacemakers had hoped for and encouraged democracy in the new states. Yet the people in Central Europe only had experience with autocracy, and governments were undermined by the rivalry between the different ethnic groups and by the economic problems that they faced.

Although Britain and France still had their empires and continued their same colonial policies, the war saw the start of the decline of these powers on the world stage. The role of America in the war had made it clear that Britain and France were going to find it hard to act on their own to deal with international disputes; the focus of power in the world had shifted away from Europe. Furthermore, the war encouraged movements for independence in French and British colonies in Asia and Africa.

The Little Entente
This was a defensive alliance between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. France supported the alliance by signing treaties with each member country. A key aim of the Little Entente was to prevent any kind of revision of the Versailles treaty by Germany or Hungary.

Economic issues

As we have seen, the war caused severe economic disruption in Europe. Germany suffered particularly badly, but all countries of Europe faced rising prices. The middle classes of Europe were hit especially hard by inflation, which destroyed the wealth of many **bourgeois** families. In Germany, for example, the total collapse of the currency meant that the savings of middle-class families were made completely worthless.

In Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the new fragmentation of the area hindered economic recovery. There was now serious disruption in what had been a free trade area of some 50 million inhabitants. From 1919, each country tried to build up its economy, which meant fierce competition and high tariffs. Attempts at economic cooperation foundered and any success was wrecked by the **Great Depression**. As noted, only America and Japan benefited economically from the war, and they went on to experience economic prosperity until the **Wall Street Crash** in 1929.

Social changes

The war also swept away the traditional structures in society. Across Europe, the **landed aristocracy**, which had been so prominent before 1914, lost much of its power and influence. In Russia, the revolution rid the country of its aristocracy

completely. In the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, estates were broken up; many governments, such as that of Yugoslavia, undertook land reform and distributed land out to the peasants. In Prussia, the landowners (*Junkers*) kept their lands but lost much of their influence with the decline of the military and the collapse of the monarchy.

Other groups of people benefited from the war. Trade unions were considerably strengthened by the role that they played in negotiating with the governments during the war to improve pay and conditions for the valuable war workers. In both Britain and France, standards of health and welfare also rose during the war, thus improving the lives of the poorest citizens. Measures were introduced to improve the health of children. In Britain, social legislation continued after the war with the Housing Act of 1918, which subsidized the building of houses, and the Unemployment Insurance Acts of 1920 and 1921, which increased benefits for unemployed workers and their families.

How were women affected by the war?

After the war, women gained rights they had previously been denied. Such changes were reflected in a growing female confidence and changes in fashion and behaviour. In Britain and America the so-called flappers wore plain, short dresses, had short hair, smoked cigarettes, and drank cocktails. This kind of behaviour would have been considered unacceptable before the war. In Britain, some professions also opened up to women after the war; they could now train to become architects and lawyers, and were allowed to serve on a jury.

The end of the war also saw women getting the vote in a number of countries: Russia in 1917, Austria and Britain in 1918, Czechoslovakia, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Sweden in 1919, and America and Belgium in 1920. The role that women played in the war effort was a contributory factor to this shift in some countries, though it was not the only factor. In Britain, for instance, the pre-war work of the suffrage movements in raising awareness of women's rights issues was also important. Yet the new employment opportunities that women had experienced during the war did not continue afterwards, with most women giving up their work and returning to their more traditional roles in the home.

Activity 8

ATL Thinking skills

Source analysis

> *Unceremoniously, women were tipped out of their wartime jobs to make way for the returning men: their work had always been 'for the duration'. If life were to be returned to 'normal', the women would have to return to the home. Protest was brushed aside – those women who tried to keep their jobs were even met with cries of 'parasites', 'blacklegs' and 'limpets'.*
>
> *In too many households there was no bread winner coming back from the battlefield. Nor, for a generation of women, was there the traditional prospect of marriage and security. Was it some consolation that they knew they had shouldered responsibility and demonstrated skills as never before? That they had proved they could keep the country going, feed the voracious war machine and show courage in the face of danger? Only to a point. They could do it – but it wasn't enough to shift the traditional shape of society – and for so many it was scant consolation in the face of bereavement and insecurity.*

Kate Adie, *Fighting on the Home Front* (Hodder, 2013), p.301.

1. According to Kate Adie, what problems did women in Britain face after World War One?

Activity 9

ATL Research and social skills

1. Divide into groups. Each group should research a different country in which women received the vote after the war. It should consider:
   - the effect of the war in bringing about this change
   - what other factors contributed to this
   - whether the lives of women in each country changed in any other respect.

   Each group should then feed back its findings to the rest of the groups so that as a class you gain specific examples from a range of countries. This will be important for writing essays on the impact of war on women (see below and also chapter 10).
2. How did the war affect art and culture in the 1920s? Research the artistic movements of Dada and Constructivism. What do these show about the changed attitudes of artists following the horrors of the war?

Activity 10

ATL Thinking skills

Essay planning

In pairs plan the following questions.

- ***Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of one peace treaty in the 20th century.***
- ***With reference to one 20th-century peace treaty, to what extent did the terms meet the aims of the peacemakers?***
- ***Discuss the social and economic effects of one 20th-century war.***
- ***With reference to one 20th-century war, examine the effects of the war on the role and status of women.***
- ***'Peace settlements rarely create a stable peace.' With reference to one 20th-century war, to what extent do you agree with this statement?***

It is very easy with the third essay question in Activity 10 to be too vague or general in your answer. The problem with social, political, and economic effects is that it is not possible to make sweeping generalizations; they varied from country to country and not all were caused solely by the war. You therefore need to ensure that you give very specific examples from a range of countries (European and non-European) to support your arguments.

Note that question 4 takes one social issue only – the impact on women. For this question, you need to refer back to the previous section on the work that women did during the war and combine this with the information in this chapter (along with the research you have done) on the impact that the war had on the position of women in society and the workplace, along with new political rights. Again, you will need specific examples from different countries to support your arguments.

To access websites relevant to this chapter, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, search for the book title or ISBN, and click on 'chapter 4'.