

## 13

# MODERNITY AND WAR: 1894–1919

---

Belief in human progress was a cornerstone of modern society at the turn of the twentieth century. Advances in science and technology influenced all facets of life—in industry and in the home. But that progress also gave rise to destructive forces. European powers used advances in human thought and technology to gain control over rival nations and people, which led to protests and eventual war as Europe exploded in a frenzy of hatred. World War I drastically altered the economic, social, and political order and left disillusionment in its wake.

## KEY TERMS

abstract art	Scramble for Africa
Bolsheviks	self-determination
Impressionism	social Darwinism
militarism	suffragists
mobilization	total war
Modernism	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
nationalization	Treaty of Versailles
pogroms	trench warfare
psychoanalysis	Zionism
relativity theory	
reparations	
Schlieffen Plan	

## KEY CONCEPTS

- ❖ Global powers used growing nationalism to justify imperialism, which in turn led to political rivalries and eventual war that, in the end, reshaped the political landscape of Europe.
- ❖ Tremendous economic growth across Europe at the turn of the century fostered competition for resources and markets, leading to imperialism and an arms race.
- ❖ In the era leading to World War I, new ideas regarding science and philosophy challenged the notions of progress associated with Enlightenment thought.

For a full discussion of the period between 1894 and the end of World War I, see *Western Civilization*, 7th and 8th editions, Chapters 24 and 25.

## MODERN SCIENTIFIC AND ARTISTIC THOUGHT

Scientific progress throughout the nineteenth century had suggested that the world is rational and orderly and that all problems could be solved through the application of scientific research. But new discoveries at the end of the century shook the foundations of science. Marie Curie's discovery of radium in 1902 and Max Planck's quantum theory in 1900 challenged Isaac Newton's longstanding theories. The work of Albert Einstein was a further complication for Newtonian physics. Published in 1915, Einstein's theory of relativity held that space and time are relative to the observer, rather than absolute. His theory would open an age in physics of new discoveries and greater uncertainty.

In the field of philosophy, the usefulness—even the possibility—of rational thought was questioned. Friedrich Nietzsche held that society's embrace of the rational had stunted human potential. By abandoning Christianity and giving free rein to emotion and instinct, one could become a superhuman.

Another important figure was Sigmund Freud, who developed his ideas on the human mind into a type of research called psychoanalysis. He theorized that human behavior is controlled by repressed experiences that can be resolved only through the analysis of subconscious memories.

As Darwin's theory of evolution became widely understood, it was soon applied in other fields. Herbert Spencer argued that social progress was a result of the "struggle for survival"; the fittest prospered at the expense of the weak. Soon extremists would use Spencer's ideas to justify nationalist and racist agendas.

These ideas found their way into the literature of the day. Many novelists incorporated Darwinian theory into their own work. This was especially true of the French novelist Émile Zola, the leading proponent of the literary movement called Naturalism, which portrayed characters caught up in social forces beyond their control. The earlier optimistic realism was gone.

A transformation in art had begun in the 1870s. The Impressionist movement, which originated in France, rejected the goal, set during the Renaissance, of rendering reality. Instead, the Impressionists

embraced nature and worked to capture the appearance of changing light and fleeting moments. Claude Monet, one of the best-known Impressionists, spent a lifetime painting the same haystacks and seacoast and water lilies in different light.

In the 1880s, French artists including Paul Cézanne and Vincent Van Gogh formed a new movement, Post-Impressionism. They used color and line to express inner feelings and portray subjective reality. Modern art had begun.

At the turn of the century art broke with realism, pushed by the rise in popularity of photography. The philosophical and psychological milieus encouraged experimentation. Pablo Picasso created a unique form of art known as Cubism, in which reality is viewed from various vantage points and rendered in geometric design forms. Soon, with the advent of abstract art, reality was abandoned altogether and gave way to pure shapes and color.

## NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLITICS

Anxiety arose throughout Europe late in the nineteenth century. The mass politics that had emerged earlier created turmoil that disturbed even liberals. Previously silent voices clamored for representation. The working class turned to socialism to represent its needs, while right-wing nationalists turned to racism.

With the rise of liberalism in Europe, women sought rights and privileges previously granted only to men. Foremost among these was the right to vote. Feminists in Britain began to push for voting rights as early as the 1840s. As the century progressed, feminists such as Emmeline Pankhurst turned to more radical methods.

### **AP Tip**

Women's history is often the topic—directly or indirectly—of free-response essay questions on social history.

After decades of progress, European Jews again experienced anti-Semitism at the end of the century, as social Darwinism encouraged efforts to deny them rights. Extreme nationalism, especially in Germany and Austria, gave rise to political groups that exploited anti-Semitism. Jews in Eastern Europe faced pogroms (organized massacres), in which residents of entire villages were slaughtered. Many Eastern European Jews emigrated to the United States, Canada, and Palestine. In Palestine, Theodor Herzl led a nationalist movement, Zionism, to establish a Jewish state in the Middle East.

Mass politics benefited many Europeans, but also led to conflict. For example, the rising influence of the British working class forced the Liberal Party to enact legislation that addressed the needs of labor. To gain the workers' support, Liberal leaders pushed through Parliament a social welfare program radically opposed to the liberal concept of *laissez-faire*.

In France, there was resistance to the republican desire for a more democratic society by the army, royalists, and the church. The Dreyfus Affair, which gripped the nation in the late 1890s, brought the conflict to a head. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer, was accused of selling army secrets, and in 1895 was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. Soon after, evidence emerged proving his innocence. Radical republicans used the Dreyfus Affair to force the elimination of many of the privileges traditionally granted to the old order.

In Russia, the minister of finance, Sergei Witte, worked to improve weak industrial production. Tremendous industrial growth, based primarily on the expansion of railroads, was unleashed, and by 1900, Russia was the world's fourth largest producer of steel. The growth of factories led a radical working class to embrace socialism. Government repression forced it underground, where the socialists began advocating for terrorism.

In 1904, Russia went to war against Japan over territorial expansion in the Far East. Much to the surprise of most European leaders, the Japanese won. Political and social discontent in Russia increased as both the middle class and workers pushed for greater reform. In St. Petersburg in January 1905, workers marched to the Winter Palace to present the tsar with a list of grievances. Soldiers opened fire on the peaceful marchers, sparking a revolt throughout Russia by workers, peasants, and the middle class. After months of disturbance, Tsar Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, granting civil liberties and increasing the political franchise. Reform was short-lived, however, as Nicholas later curtailed many of the very reforms he had granted.

## THE NEW IMPERIALISM

In the 1880s, European powers began a new search for foreign territory in Asia and Africa. Intense rivalries drove the extraordinary expansion of colonial empires. Governments had two main desires: military logistics and prestige. Britain, for example, needed fueling stations for its navy and territorial outposts that were vital to protecting overseas interests. National pride was also a central factor. As domestic turmoil increased during the late nineteenth century, governments used imperialist gains to distract attention from the unrest at home.

Other forces contributing to this “new imperialism” included social Darwinism, religion, and economics. The “white man’s burden,” a racist justification of imperialism, held that the white man had a moral duty to take his superior culture to the inferior native. Economic motives also played a role, as European industrialists continued to seek out natural resources in regions abroad.

## THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

European states had little control over the African continent before the 1880s, limiting themselves to a few long-established trading outposts. The British then began increasing their presence in South Africa, where they confronted not only native Zulus but also Dutch colonists called Boers, with whom they went to war in 1899. The Boer War ended in a British victory and allowed for the formation of the Union of South Africa.

By 1890, other European nations had joined the "Scramble for Africa." Portugal, France, Italy, and Belgium all claimed territory. Europeans used their superior military force to overwhelm and slaughter the defenseless Africans, and by the end of the century had partitioned the entire continent, with the exceptions of Liberia and Ethiopia.

## NEW IMPERIALISM IN ASIA

As with Africa, European states had had a presence in the Far East since the sixteenth century. Famous trading entities, such as the British East India Company, had dominated large territorial areas for many years.

Subjugation posed problems, however, as the British discovered in India. In 1857, the British East India Company faced a revolt by native Indian soldiers serving with the British army. On hearing rumors about the use of animal fat on British rifle cartridges, these sepoys killed over 200 English women and children, sparking a reprisal that led to the destruction of Indian villages. In the wake of the rebellion, control of India was transferred from the East India Company to the British government, and Queen Victoria became empress of India.

Elsewhere, the French were in Southeast Asia, the Dutch were in Indonesia, the Germans were in some of the South Pacific islands, and the Americans were in the Philippines. Except for American trade privileges, Japan managed to avoid being colonized, but became a colonial power when it annexed Korea in 1910.

China's decline during the nineteenth century presented opportunities for Western nations. The British gained Hong Kong in 1842 and soon acquired trading rights in many other Chinese cities. Other Western states were eager for influence there too. The rivalry prevented a complete conquest of China. Instead, the territory was divided into spheres of influence with an "open-door" trade policy.

China resented Western dominance. Beginning in 1900, the Boxer Rebellion was an attempt to force all foreigners out of China. After a number of Western government officials, businessmen, and missionaries were killed, an army of British, French, German, Russian, American, and Japanese troops put down the revolt and demanded further concessions from the weakened Chinese rulers. Soon after, the Manchu dynasty was overthrown by Chinese revolutionaries, who created the Republic of China in 1912.

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR WAR

In the fifty years before World War I, Europe had remained remarkably peaceful, primarily because of the diplomacy of Germany's Otto von Bismarck. But after his removal from office, changes were made that threatened the stability and eventually brought about war.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire upset the balance of power throughout Europe. Russia and Austria were especially interested in controlling Ottoman territory in Eastern Europe. Bismarck worked to reduce Russian influence while negotiating the Triple Alliance (1882), which committed Germany, Austria, and Italy to maintaining the European status quo. Emperor William II negated a great deal of Bismarck's efforts to keep Europe from war when he dismissed

Bismarck in 1890. To give Germany its "place in the sun," he embraced confrontation. The Kaiser severed ties with Russia, which then entered an alliance with France, and he threatened Britain, which then formed the Triple Entente with France and Russia.

The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century was especially problematic for Austria, which sought control over its Slavic-speaking territories. In 1908, when Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina to prevent the formation of a larger Serbian kingdom, Russia encouraged the Serbs to go to war. Only after William II interceded—even threatening war against Russia—did Serbia back down. Still, the Serbs pushed for greater power in the Balkans. Sides were drawn as Germany continued to back Austrian efforts, while Russia lent increasing support to the Serbian cause. By 1914, this was a point of national pride: Austria was fixed on crushing Serbian desires, while Russia was set on promoting them.

## THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

In the summer of 1914, myriad factors came together to unleash one of the great tragedies in world history.

A byproduct of nineteenth-century liberalism, nationalism fed intense rivalries in Europe. National honor was a high priority of European leaders, most of whom were influenced by bombastic military leaders, and diplomacy was based on the principles of nationalism.

Many historians argue that European leaders used warfare to remedy domestic social problems, such as the push by minority groups—including the Serbs, Irish, and Poles—for political independence, and the socialist labor movement across Europe.

So dependent on the military, European powers created some of the largest armies known to mankind. Advances in transportation, communication, and public health allowed for armies of nearly one million troops. With such substantial forces, some European nations used conscription to force men to join, and governments depended on military leadership to make political decisions.

On June 28, 1914, Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, Sophia, were assassinated in Sarajevo by a Bosnian nationalist. The Austrian government wanted to use the act to punish all Serbian nationalists. Emperor William II gave Austria a "blank check"—Germany's "full support" for any reprisal against Serbia. Austria then sent an ultimatum so extreme that Serbia had no choice but to reject it. Austria declared war on Serbia, trusting that the conflict would be limited in scope and duration.

Mobilization is complex, demanding detailed planning and precise execution. Russia had the largest army in Europe and mobilization plans for war against both Germany and Austria. When Tsar Nicholas II called for a partial mobilization against Austria, he was told that would be impossible. The resulting full mobilization provoked Germany to declare war on Russia.

With the formation of the Triple Entente, Germany faced the probability of a two-front war. Its strategy for such a scenario was the Schlieffen Plan, which called for the German army to strike quickly against the French, taking Paris and forcing the French to surrender,

and then turning quickly to the east and defeating the Russian army before it had a chance to fully mobilize. With the Schlieffen Plan, Germany was forced to declare war on France, which led Great Britain to declare war on Germany because Belgian neutrality had been violated by the German march toward Paris. In a matter of days, the great powers of Europe were at war. Across the continent, news of the war prompted enthusiasm. Nationalists welcomed it—even die-hard socialists favored war.

## THE GREAT WAR

Eager troops marched off, sure they would be home for Christmas. But both the British and the Russians mobilized quickly. On the outskirts of Paris, the German advance was halted. The machine gun completely changed warfare. Its deadly efficiency spurred the digging of massive trench systems that would eventually stretch across much of Western Europe. The defining feature of World War I would be trench warfare.

In Eastern Europe, the Germans scored an early victory over the Russians, and then joined forces with the Austrians to push Russia back. With over two million soldiers dead, Russia was no longer a serious problem to the Central Powers. Germany turned back to the west. Both sides found that frontal assaults to break through enemy lines were fruitless as wave after wave of soldiers was mowed down.

As the war turned into a stalemate, new allies were sought. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers, the Allied forces suffered a disastrous defeat in an attempt to establish a front near Constantinople. The British, led by Lawrence of Arabia, encouraged Arab leaders to revolt against the Ottomans, and by 1918, the Ottoman Empire was finished. The Allies also attacked German colonial holdings in Africa and Asia.

In 1917, the United States joined the war, abandoning neutrality when the Germans resumed unrestricted submarine warfare.

War on such a massive scale makes extraordinary demands on a nation. Governments centralized their powers, manipulated their economies, used propaganda to hold public support, and enlisted the citizenry to produce goods for the war effort. As a result, society changed in many ways during World War I. For example, labor unions gained more power because a satisfied workforce is needed to keep the war machine rolling; in addition, governments curtailed civil liberties, announcing that anyone speaking out against the war would face charges of treason.

Women also were significantly affected by the war. Wartime contingencies forced them to take jobs usually held by men in both offices and heavy industry. They also gained the right to vote. Many Europeans were persuaded that granting women suffrage would lend a moral dimension to national politics and perhaps prevent another war.

## REVOLUTION

The war brought misery to everyone, at home and on the front lines. As the death toll mounted, angry citizens openly challenged the status quo. In Russia the discontent led to full-scale revolution.

Russian dissatisfaction with tsarist rule had been felt long before World War I. But the war proved a catastrophe for Russia, whose huge army had been ineffective, as had Nicholas II and his wife, Alexandra, who ruled while Nicholas was at the front. Led by resentful top government officials, disenchantment with the monarchy grew. With working-class mothers leading the way, tens of thousands marched through Petrograd protesting the war and the near-starvation that many Russians faced. The army refused to put down the protest. On March 15, 1917, Nicholas II abdicated.

A liberal provisional government was established but was challenged at the outset by councils of workers and soldiers, divided between two factions: the moderate Mensheviks and more radical Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, called for the complete destruction of the capitalist system.

During the summer of 1917, the provisional government decided to remain in the war, launching an offensive that failed significantly. The Bolsheviks seized power and made good on their earlier promises: land was given to the peasants, factories were turned over to the workers, and civil rights were accorded to women. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk ended Russia's involvement in the war.

### **AP Tip**

The Russian Revolution is often paired with the French and American revolutions in compare-and-contrast questions in the AP exam. Be sure you understand how the fear and distrust that grew out of the rivalry between Russia and the West emerged during this time period. These attitudes shaped much of twentieth-century history.

Success did not come easily for the Communists (as the Bolsheviks were soon called), as various groups challenged Soviet rule. This culminated in a bloody three-year civil war. Across Russia, the Red Army fought anti-Communist forces (the White Army). Strongly united behind a common purpose that allowed for coherent military strategy, the Communist forces won.

The Communists also had success with a policy of “war communism” that allowed them to nationalize industry, control agricultural production, and centralize government. A secret police force, the Cheka, was called on to eliminate all opposition. Thousands were executed, including the entire royal family.

## THE WAR ENDS

When Russia withdrew from the war, the Germans launched a massive offensive on the Western front. At first the German gamble



appeared to be successful, but with the arrival of fresh troops from America, the German advance was halted. As more American troops entered the battlefields, German leaders realized that victory was impossible. William II abdicated, and on November, 11, 1918, a new German government signed an armistice.

The war devastated Europe. Some 9 million soldiers died; 22 million were wounded. The social fabric of European society was torn apart. Germany and Austria–Hungary experienced political upheaval. In Germany, radical socialists vying for political supremacy lost when leaders of the moderates instructed the army to kill the radicals' leaders. The senselessness of the war led many Europeans to search for peace. They found a voice in U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who drew up an outline for lasting peace, the "Fourteen Points." Key provisions were the elimination of secret diplomacy, the right of self-determination, and a "general association of nations" to help ensure democracy around the world.

## THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

Wilson's popularity throughout Europe did not soften the ambitions of the victors. Meeting in Paris in early 1919, David Lloyd George of Britain and Georges Clemenceau of France agreed that Germany should be held responsible for the war and pay harsh reparations. The British aimed to secure their overseas empire, while the French wanted to protect themselves from future German aggression. After much compromise, they agreed to Wilson's League of Nations. On June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed. The Germans were outraged by the terms, particularly Article 231, the so-called War Guilt Clause.

Eastern Europe was also reconfigured. New nation-states were created to satisfy ethnic nationalism and serve as potential allies to France and Britain. Austria–Hungary was dismantled; Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia emerged as new nations, while the Balkans were reshaped to provide land for Romania and Serbia. The Ottoman Empire was dissolved into new Arab states; however, Britain and France controlled them as mandates on behalf of the newly created League of Nations.

The peace process put into place a structure that might have prevented future world wars. But protecting peace would require a vigorous effort by the global powers, and when the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, it was doomed. When the United States retreated into isolationism, Britain followed suit, and France found itself alone to face the wrath of Germany.

## Multiple-Choice Questions

1. All of the following were associated with the emergence of a new physics in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century EXCEPT
  - (A) quantum theory
  - (B) radium
  - (C) relativity theory
  - (D) space-time continuum
  - (E) materialism
  
2. Friedrich Nietzsche believed that Western bourgeois society was incapable of cultural creativity because
  - (A) excessive emphasis was placed on the rational faculty at the expense of emotions
  - (B) middle-class Europeans lacked spirituality
  - (C) popular culture influenced a growing number of Europeans
  - (D) universities across Europe emphasized vocational education over the humanities
  - (E) revolutionary socialism failed to advance one's emotional well-being
  
3. The goal of psychoanalysis is to
  - (A) determine a patient's pleasure principle
  - (B) undermine a patient's Oedipus complex
  - (C) resolve a patient's psychic conflict
  - (D) enhance a patient's reality principle
  - (E) develop a patient's superego
  
4. The philosopher Herbert Spencer believed all of the following EXCEPT
  - (A) societies are organisms that evolve over time
  - (B) in society, the strong advance while the weak decline
  - (C) it is vital for the state to take part in social reform
  - (D) death of the weak and feeble is a natural process that makes society stronger
  - (E) the state should not intercede on behalf of the lame



5. The painting above reflects which style of art?
- (A) Impressionism
  - (B) abstract
  - (C) Cubism
  - (D) Post-Impressionism
  - (E) Abstract Expressionism
6. The Zionist Movement was influenced by all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) nationalist movements in Italy, Ireland, and Greece
  - (B) the Ottoman tradition of promoting cultural diversity
  - (C) anti-Semitism in Austria and Germany
  - (D) persecutions and pogroms in the Ukraine
  - (E) the quota systems of many European universities
7. The Dreyfus Affair resulted in all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) moderate and conservative republicans gained more power over radical factions
  - (B) the army was purged of anti-republican officers
  - (C) most Catholic religious orders were forced out of France
  - (D) the church and state were officially separated
  - (E) the government seized church property
8. The Russian Revolution of 1905 was inspired by all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) massive food shortages in Russian cities
  - (B) dissatisfied nationalities in regions dominated by minority ethnic Russians
  - (C) the peasants' desire for land
  - (D) an urban labor force that was displeased with industrial working conditions
  - (E) government reform of religious institutions

9. The “white man's burden” refers to Europeans’ moral duty to
- (A) overthrow capitalism
  - (B) give women the vote
  - (C) provide universal health care
  - (D) provide support to widows and orphans
  - (E) “civilize” the nonwhite peoples around the world
10. Which of the following was NOT an underlying factor of the outbreak of World War I?
- (A) rivalries over colonial and commercial interests
  - (B) overwhelming discontent with Europe's royal families
  - (C) national aspirations of ethnic minority groups
  - (D) the rising influence of military leaders
  - (E) the growth of socialist labor movements
11. A crucial moment leading up to the outbreak of World War I occurred when
- (A) Germany mobilized in response to Russia's declaration of war against Serbia
  - (B) France mobilized in response to Germany's declaration of war against Britain
  - (C) Austria mobilized in response to Russia's declaration of war against Serbia
  - (D) Russia mobilized in response to Austria's declaration of war against Serbia
  - (E) Britain mobilized in response to France's declaration of war against Serbia
12. Which statement regarding Italy's participation in World War I is true?
- (A) Previously allied with Germany, Italy chose to remain neutral.
  - (B) Previously allied with Russia and France, Italy chose to join with Germany.
  - (C) Previously allied with Germany, Italy chose to join with the Allied Powers.
  - (D) Previously allied with Britain and France, Italy chose to remain neutral.
  - (E) Previously allied with the Ottoman Empire, Italy chose to join with the Central Powers.
13. The concept of total war that emerged during World War I included all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) expansion of civil liberties
  - (B) mass conscription
  - (C) planned economies
  - (D) centralization of government powers
  - (E) manipulation of public opinion

14. In general, which of the following is most true of trade unions during World War I?
- (A) Trade unions suffered greatly.
  - (B) Trade unions saw membership decrease.
  - (C) Trade unions were mostly ignored by government authorities.
  - (D) Trade unions did not cooperate with government authorities.
  - (E) Trade unions gained prestige and increased membership.
15. Which of the following was NOT a problem faced by the provisional government of Russia after the tsar abdicated in March 1917?
- (A) the White Army forces under the leadership of Admiral Kolchak
  - (B) the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin
  - (C) peasant seizure of land
  - (D) Army Order No. 1
  - (E) a failed military offensive

## Free-Response Questions

1. Analyze the social, political, and economic changes associated with the process of total war that took place across Europe during World War I.
2. Explain how the intellectual and cultural developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shaped modern consciousness.

