

Lesson 18: Era Overview: Global Crisis and Achievement, 1900-1945

How did the global balance of power change between 1900 and 1945, and why?

Section 1. Introduction

The crowd lined the route of the motorcade, eager for a glimpse of their next emperor as he passed by. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was visiting Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BAWZ-nee-uh hurt-suh-go-VEE-nuh), a province in the empire with a large Serbian population. But not everyone gathered that morning of June 28, 1914 had come to cheer the archduke. Seven young men spread along the route had come to assassinate him. Among them was 19-year-old Gavrilo Princip (gah-VREE-low PREEN-sip). Princip viewed the archduke's death as key to freeing the province from Austria-Hungry, to join the neighboring nation of Serbia.

With a pistol hidden in his coat, Princip stood at the curb and waited his chance. He heard a loud boom a short distance away. Another of the assassins had thrown a grenade. But it had bounced off the archduke's car and exploded in the street. The car sped past Princip's position, headed to safety at Sarajevo's city hall.

Believing the mission had failed, Princip walked to a nearby deli to buy lunch. When he left the deli, incredibly, he saw the archduke's car directly in front of him. Ferdinand was headed to the hospital to visit those wounded in the grenade attack. The driver had taken a wrong turn and had stopped to turn around. Princip ran forward, pulled out his gun, and started firing. Both the archduke and his wife Sophie were hit.

"It is nothing. It is nothing," Ferdinand insisted when asked if he was hurt. But it was not nothing. In fact, it was quite something, indeed. Within minutes both the archduke and Sophie were dead, and within weeks their deaths plunged Europe into war.

Themes

Cultural Interactions The rise and spread of communism and fascism resulted in political unrest and increased international tensions.

Political Systems Conflict arose as nations sought to expand or protect their empires and as subject peoples sought to be free.

Economic Systems Nations sought control over areas that could provide raw materials for their industries and markets for their goods.

Human-Environment Interaction Two major wars brought great destruction to large areas of the world.

Section 2. The Turn-of-the Century World

The rivalries, jealousies, and tensions that Ferdinand's assassination ignited into World War I in August 1914 had been developing for many years. Austria-Hungary, Russia, Germany, France, and the Ottoman Empire (centered in present-day Turkey) competed for land and influence in Europe, and along with Great Britain, for colonies and control over much of Africa and Asia.

Similar tensions also existed elsewhere. To the west, the United States was seeking to become the dominant nation in the Americas. In the east, Japan had abandoned its traditional policy of isolation and was seeking land and power in mainland Asia. China was struggling with the **spheres of influence** [**spheres of influence : an area within which the political and economic interests of one nation are more important than those of other nations**] the European powers and Japan had carved out in that large but weak and divided nation.

A World of Empires The popular nineteenth-century expression that "the sun never sets on the British Empire" was still true at the dawn of the twentieth. With territories on every continent, Great Britain controlled one-fifth of the world and a quarter of its population. Great Britain and France ruled most of Africa. Along with Russia, Great Britain had vast holdings in Asia, where the French and Dutch were also important colonial powers. This division of the world left little opportunity for two ambitious and rapidly industrializing nations—Germany and Japan.

Germany, which did not become a unified nation until 1871, finished a distant third to Great Britain and France in the scramble for colonies. This outcome did not sit well with ambitious German leaders. "To stand dreamily to one side while other people split up the pie, we cannot and we will not do that," proclaimed German foreign secretary Bernhard von Bulow in 1899. "If the English speak of a 'Greater Britain;' if the French speak of a 'Nouvelle [New] France;' if the Russians open up Asia; then we, too, have the right to a greater Germany."

Russia's vast empire spread from its border with Germany east to the Pacific Ocean. Russia's Trans-Siberian Railroad, completed in 1904, was the first to link Europe and Asia. It also fueled Russian dreams for expanding trade, landholding, and influence in East

Asia. In the early 1900s, Russia seized Chinese Manchuria and established a **protectorate** [**protectorate: a relationship in which the protection and partial control of one nation is held by another, more powerful nation**] over Mongolia, which had declared independence from China.

The Emergence of Japan and the United States Russia's move on Manchuria brought conflict with Japan, which also desired the resource-rich region. In 1904 Russia and Japan went to war over Manchuria and Korea—another area of rivalry between the two nations. The war went badly for Russia and ended in 1905 when the United States, with German and British support, forced a settlement. Manchuria was returned to China and Russia agreed to respect Japan's control over Korea, which became a Japanese colony in 1910.

Neither Russia nor Japan was happy with the war's outcome. Russia's military defeat, coupled with the loss of Manchuria, added to the unrest that led to revolution in 1905 and eventually to the communist Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The frustration of Japan's ambitions in Manchuria created resentment and tensions that contributed to the coming of World War II.

For the United States, settling the Russo-Japanese War marked its emergence as a major player on the world stage. Like Germany and Japan, the United States came late to the quest for empire. Also like those nations, its expansion overseas was linked to a need for resources and markets for its growing industries. However, unlike German and Japanese **imperialism** [**imperialism: the policy of extending a nation's power and influence by gaining control over territory through political or military means**], U.S. actions were not driven by a desire for land. Although the United States annexed Hawaii and seized the Philippines from Spain in the 1890s, American attention focused on U.S. business investments in Latin America.

Like the Americans, European companies invested in Latin American mines, railroads, plantations, and other businesses. However, political instability sometimes put such investments at risk. In 1904, the United States announced that it would take charge in any Latin American nation that could not properly manage its affairs. It took such action in several nations between 1904 and 1916. The policy blocked European powers from increased control in Latin America to protect their investments and made the United States the major power in the region. It also caused much resentment in Latin America.



Nationalism and Imperialism The idea that they were not capable of managing their own nations offended the pride of Latin American peoples. U.S. and European **economic imperialism** [**economic imperialism : the domination of one nation by another nation—and companies within it—that is economically more powerful**] benefitted development in Latin America. But it also aroused a spirit of nationalism, as it did in China at about the same time. Chinese nationalism led to the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. A group of anti-Western Chinese known as the Boxers rose up against the European presence there. The European powers, the United States, and Japan all sent troops to end the uprising. The result was increased foreign control and a further weakening of China's rulers.

Nationalism was a powerful force throughout the turn-of-the-century world. One of its basic principles is that people of the same culture should rule themselves and have their own nation. Nationalism also involves intense love for one's country and, sometimes, the idea that the country and its culture are superior to others. These beliefs and their expression help explain much of the history of this period. They also are responsible for many developments and events of the later twentieth century.

Nationalism was a driving force behind German unification. The nationalist belief in cultural superiority was a factor in British, French, and other European imperialism in Africa and Asia. At the same time, however, nationalism also helps explain the unrest that developed in European empires. Between 1900 and 1914, African peoples revolted against the rule of every European colonial power. In Asia, Indian nationalism fueled a movement for self-rule in the British Empire in the late 1800s—and later for independence. In the early 1900s, nationalist groups called for violent resistance to British rule in Burma and French rule in Vietnam. In the Philippines, American troops crushed a long-running war for independence in 1901. And it was Serbian nationalism in 1914 that inspired the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and sent all of Europe to war.

Section 3. Empires in Europe

As the struggle for colonies and control played out in Africa and Asia, the European nations of Germany, France, Russia, and Austria-Hungary also sought land, security, and power within Europe. One result of this effort was a shifting series of alliances among them.



The Alliance System Germany and France competed for a region on their border called Alsace-Lorraine. Austria-Hungary and Russia both desired land and influence in the Balkans. To protect themselves against their rivals, Germany and Austria-Hungary signed a defense agreement in 1879. Italy later joined this agreement to form what was known as the Triple Alliance.

The Triple Alliance threatened to isolate France in Western Europe. At the same time, Russia feared rival Austria-Hungary's alliance with Germany. So Russia and France signed a treaty in 1894. This agreement threatened Germany on both its eastern and western borders. The situation grew even more tense in the early 1900s when Britain, fearing Germany's growing industrial might, joined Russia and France to form the Triple Entente. Entente is a French term meaning "agreement" or "understanding."

Europe's Balance of Power The alliance system was one result of a shift in the balance of power that was underway in Europe. Austria-Hungary was battling rising nationalism from ethnic groups within its borders and was trying to avoid decline. Russia, humiliated by Japan in Asia and also challenged by nationalism and other unrest, faced a similar challenge. The Ottoman Empire, once a powerful force in Eastern Europe, was already in serious trouble. Nationalism sparked Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria to declare independence. Austria-Hungary gained control of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Britain, France, and Italy seized Ottoman territory in North Africa.

As these old empires weakened, Germany was on the rise. With a smaller overseas empire than Britain and France, Germany used its industries to build a strong military and its power in Europe instead. Germany's increasing power alarmed Russia and France. The British viewed Germany's naval buildup as another threat. Not only was Britain an island nation, but its navy's control of the high seas was vital to protecting its world-wide empire. These concerns helped to unite Britain, Russia, and France in the Triple Entente.

Clashing Empires The borders, interests, and ambitions of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires came together on Europe's Balkan Peninsula. Russia had long sought expansion into the region, wanting to gain access to a warm-water port. This goal caused Russia to support the Serbian and other nationalist revolts against Turkish rule. Austria-Hungary also wanted to weaken the Ottoman hold in the Balkans. However, it felt threatened by Russia's actions. Not only did it oppose Russian influence in the region, it wanted the Balkans for itself. In addition, Austria-Hungary feared that new, independent nations in the region would stir nationalist unrest among those ethnic groups in its own empire.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire faced its own problems with nationalism. In the early 1900s, a group of Turkish nationalists called the Young Turks took control of the government. The Young Turks launched reforms to strengthen Turkish culture across the empire. This action stirred nationalism and unrest in its Arab and Christian populations.

Austria-Hungary took advantage of these events to officially make Bosnia-Herzegovina part of its empire in 1908. In 1912, Russia encouraged Serbia and the other independent Balkan nations to declare war on Turkey. The war cost the Ottomans almost all that remained of their empire in Europe. Much of this land went to Serbia, doubling its size. But Serbia remained landlocked, with no outlet to the sea. Plus it had visions of an even larger nation that included all Serbians in the Balkans. To fulfill this vision and give itself a border on the sea, Serbia turned its attention to Austria-Hungary's new province of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Section 4. World War I and Its Consequences

Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914. It saw a chance to use the horrible event to end Serbian ambitions and nationalism in the region. Backed by the promise of German support, Austria-Hungary made a series of demands on Serbia. Serb leaders agreed to most of these demands. But Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia anyway.



The World Goes to War The archduke's death ignited war in the Balkans. Larger forces were responsible for turning this regional conflict into a world war. They are the now-familiar forces of nationalism, imperialism, **militarism**, and the alliance system.

The tensions between Austria-Hungary and Serbia were fueled by each side's nationalism and desire for increased territory and influence. Nationalism and imperialism caused Russia to support Serbia. Russians and Serbs are both Slavic peoples. In addition, Russia hoped that siding with Serbia would increase its influence in the Balkans and perhaps even gain territory there.

To support Serbia, Russia began massing troops along its border with Austria-Hungary. Germany responded by declaring war on Russia on August 1, 1914. Within days, Russia's allies France and Britain had joined the conflict. Both had been building their militaries for years in response to Germany's arms buildup and they were prepared for war. Japan also declared war on Germany, hoping to gain control of German possessions in Asia.

Because of their central location in Europe, Germany and Austria-Hungary were called the Central Powers. Russia and its allies became the Allied Powers. The Ottoman Empire's long rivalry with Russia over the Balkans and the Black Sea brought it into the war as another Central Power. Meanwhile, lured by promises of Austrian territory, Italy abandoned the Triple Alliance and joined the Allies in 1915. The conflict became a true world war when the United States entered it in 1917 on the side of the Allies.



Fighting World War I The outbreak of war stirred national pride across Europe. Both sides predicted a short war and were confident of victory. No one expected the long, bloody conflict that followed.

German forces quickly invaded France with the intent of defeating France first and avoiding a two front war. But British and French troops stopped the German forces. The opposing armies then dug a network of defensive trenches across northern France, along what became known as the Western Front. The industrialization of the late nineteenth century had given both sides highly effective weapons, such as long-range artillery and machine guns. For three years, each side tried to push the other back, out of its trenches. The loss of life was horrific. More than 1.7 million soldiers were killed in one year alone.

The fighting was also brutal on the war's Eastern Front, as German troops pushed deep into Russia. Heavy Russian losses helped cause the government's collapse in 1917 and the formation of the communist Bolshevik government. The Bolsheviks made peace with Germany and pulled Russia out of the war in March 1918.

Other fighting took place in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. But it was the fighting in Western Europe that decided the outcome of World War I. By mid-1918, American troops and supplies arriving in Europe finally tipped the balance on the Western Front. Allied forces began pushing the German army back, leading to a cease-fire in November 1918. Germany's formal surrender came when the Treaty of Paris was finalized in 1919.

Outcomes of World War I The first world war destroyed the old order in central and eastern Europe and in the Middle East. Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were broken up. Nine new countries were created from Austria-Hungary and from land taken from Germany and Russia. What remained of the Russian Empire became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union) under communist rule.

In the Middle East, Turkey overthrew its Ottoman ruler and became a republic. The rest of the Ottoman Empire was divided into Arab nations that were put under British and French control. Britain and France, along with Japan and other Allied nations, took over all of Germany's colonies in China, Africa, and the Pacific, as required by the Treaty of Paris.

The Allies' punishment of Germany went far beyond taking its land and colonies. The Treaty of Versailles, the peace treaty with Germany, reduced its military to a size that made it almost powerless. In addition, Germany was forbidden to keep troops in the Rhineland, a region along its border with France. The ban left Germany unable to protect this important industrial region. Finally, Germany was forced to admit that it had started the war and to pay \$33 billion for war damages. This harsh and humiliating treaty damaged Germany's national pride and left Germans bitter about its terms.

Postwar Problems World War I was very costly, both in money spent to fight it and in the high loss of life. Countries in which fighting took place, such as France, also had to deal with great destruction and the cost of rebuilding damaged areas. France, Britain, and Germany had huge war debts, and almost all of Europe suffered from inflation, high unemployment, and other economic problems resulting from the war. In addition, Germany, Poland, and the nations created from the breakup of Austria-Hungary were trying to form democratic governments. In some of these nations, people turned to **authoritarian** leaders in hopes of restoring political and economic order. The new democratic nations of Hungary and Poland, for example, quickly became **dictatorships**.

The Rise of Dictators Italy and Germany were among the nations that adopted extreme solutions to their problems after World War I. Anti-communist leader Benito Mussolini took advantage of Italy's unrest to come to power in 1922. Mussolini led a political movement that he called **fascism**. Fascism is an extreme form of nationalism that puts the nation above all else. It accepts the use of force and the denial of rights and freedoms in order to make the people serve the good of the nation. Control usually rests in one all-powerful leader.

Mussolini used the peoples' desire for political and economic stability to gain control of Italy's democratic government for his Fascist Party. Once in control, he abolished elections and banned all other political parties. He also ended all civil rights in Italy, including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and trial by jury. By the late 1920s Italy had become a police state. In return, Mussolini promised that he would restore to Italy the power and glory of ancient Rome.



Germany followed a similar course. In 1921, Adolf Hitler became head of a small German political party called the National Socialist German Workers Party. The party is commonly known in English as the Nazi Party. The Nazi Party was extremely nationalistic, anti-democratic, anti-socialist, and anticommunist. By promising to protect the nation from communism, it gradually gained voter support and influence in Germany's new, democratic government.

Hitler's attacks on Germany's treatment by the Allies after World War I added to the party's popularity. He promised to undo the war's results, regain Germany's lost territory and colonies, and restore Germany as a great military power. His fiery speeches appealed to the patriotism of many Germans who felt bitter and humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles.

Hitler's rise to power was also aided by the Great Depression that struck the United States in the early 1930s. As the Great Depression spread worldwide, its effects increased Germany's postwar economic problems and pushed more voters to the Nazi Party. In 1933, Germany's president named Hitler to head the government. Hitler quickly convinced Germany's parliament to give him emergency powers to put down an alleged communist revolt. He then used these powers to become a dictator and, like Mussolini, turned his nation into a police state. Freedom of the press and opposition political parties were banned.

In the Soviet Union, dictatorship emerged from a different source—communism. The Soviet Union had only one political party in the 1920s—the Communist Party. A power struggle developed for leadership of the party in 1924. By 1928, Joseph Stalin had emerged as head of the Communist Party and leader of the Soviet Union. Stalin gradually increased his control by using a network of spies and secret police to eliminate party members and others suspected of opposing his rule. By the early 1930s, the Soviet Union had become a totalitarian dictatorship. Totalitarianism is a system in which the government totally controls all aspects of a society, including the economy. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union continued to support communist revolution in Europe and Asia.

Nowhere did communism and fascism clash more violently than in Spain. Like several other European nations, Spain became a military dictatorship in the 1920s. In 1931, the dictatorship fell and a democratic republic was formed. When elections put a communist-led government in power in 1936, fascist elements in the army revolted. Civil war followed. The Soviet Union sent military aid to supporters of the government, while Germany and Italy aided the rebels, who called themselves Nationalists. By 1939, the Nationalists had gained control of Spain. Their leader General Francisco Franco set up a dictatorship similar to the fascist governments of Italy and Germany.

Nationalism and Unrest in Asia and Africa A civil war also took place in China. Weakened by decades of European imperialism, by the end of World War I China barely existed as a nation. Chinese nationalists had overthrown the emperor and formed a republic. However, most governing power was held by regional warlords. In 1926 Chiang Kaishek (chang ky-SHEK), head of China's Nationalist Party, began a military campaign to unite China. Aid from the Soviet Union helped Chiang defeat the warlords. Then he turned against the communists and expelled them from his Nationalist movement. This action launched a long civil war that ended in a communist victory in 1949 and the creation of China's current communist government.

Like China, Japan introduced western-style democracy. However, the Allies' treatment of Japan after the war humiliated and angered many Japanese. By blocking Japan's desire to be the greatest power in Asia, the western nations strengthened the military's influence in Japan's government. The suffering that resulted from the Great Depression also turned many Japanese against the West, further strengthening Japanese nationalism and militarism. By the mid 1930s the military was in control of Japan's government.

Nationalism grew stronger throughout Asia in the 1920s and 1930s. In Southeast Asia, a young Vietnamese communist known as Ho Chi Minh (hoe-chee-MIN) helped launch a sometimes-violent movement to free Indochina from French rule. To the west, Mohandas Gandhi (Moe-HAHN-dahs GAHN-dee) began a nonviolent campaign for India's independence from Great Britain. Still farther west, Arab unrest led Britain and France to recognize the independence of Jordan (1923), Syria (1930), and Iraq (1932). However, British or French troops remained in all three nations.

Britain and France kept a tight hold on their colonies in Africa. Although Britain granted Egypt independence in 1922, British troops continued to occupy that nation, in part to protect the vital Suez Canal which connected the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Elsewhere, Britain and France tried to weaken African nationalism by giving more power to tribal leaders and increasing Africans' role in colonial governments. However, by the late 1930s independence movements existed in Nigeria, Kenya, and several other African colonies. Such calls for independence would increase after World War II.

5. A Second World War



Most historians believe that the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, combined with the effects of worldwide depression in the 1930s, created conditions that set the stage for World War II. By the late 1930s, tensions in Europe were as high as they had been before World War I. In Asia, Japan was once again on the move to enlarge its empire and establish itself as a great power.

Aggression and Appeasement In 1931, Japan seized Manchuria, the region it was forced to return to China in 1905, following the Russo-Japanese War. China complained to the League of Nations, an international peacekeeping organization set up by the Treaty of Versailles. When the League condemned Japan's actions, Japan withdrew from the organization. The League of Nations did not have its own military force. No nation proved willing to use force to help, and in 1937 Japanese troops launched new attacks to conquer all of China.

The great powers' failure to respond to Japan's aggression encouraged Mussolini to act on his promise to expand Italy's empire. In 1935 Italian forces attacked and soon conquered Ethiopia, one of the few independent nations in Africa. Again, the League of Nations condemned this act of aggression. But also again, no other nation rose to oppose it. The major powers—France, Great Britain, and the United States—were too involved with their own problems, many of which resulted from the Great Depression. In addition, people in all three nations remembered the horrors of World War I. They were not willing to risk a new war to save Ethiopia.

Like Mussolini, Adolf Hitler was also encouraged by the Allies' unwillingness to act. In 1933, Hitler announced plans to rearm Germany in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. Three years later, in another violation of the treaty, he moved German troops into the Rhineland. He also made alliances with Italy and Japan. When Britain and France did not respond, Hitler pushed forward with even greater plans. In 1938 he annexed neighboring Austria. Then he demanded a German-speaking region of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland. At last, Britain and France protested.

British and French leaders met with Hitler in Munich, Germany, in September 1938. At the Munich Conference, they agreed to allow Germany to take the Sudetenland. Hitler assured them that this was his last demand for territory. By adopting this policy of **appeasement**, Britain and France thought they were avoiding war. However, six months later, Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia. Then he demanded territory from Poland.

Finally convinced that appeasement had failed, Britain and France pledged to defend Poland. But by now Hitler had little fear that they would actually go to war. Just in case, however, in August 1939 he signed an agreement with Soviet leader Stalin. Both nations pledged that they would not attack the other. With the threat of a Soviet attack from the east now gone, Hitler felt free to carry out his plan.

On September 1, 1939, German forces attacked Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun. The war was truly a world war in more ways than World War I. Besides Europe, major fighting took place in North Africa, East and Southeast Asia, and on many islands in the Pacific. Britain and France, and later the United States and Soviet Union were the major Allies. They opposed the Axis—Germany and Italy, which were later joined by Japan. Eventually, however, the war involved 49 nations on the Allies' side and 11 as members of the Axis.

The Early Fighting By mid-1940 German forces had conquered France and much of northern Europe. Encouraged by Hitler's success, Italy then entered the war by attacking Greece and Egypt. By mid-1941, Italy and Germany also controlled the Balkans and most of North Africa. With the United States and the Soviet Union officially neutral, only Great Britain remained to resist the Axis Powers.

In late 1940 Hitler launched a weeks-long air assault on Britain, preparing for a land invasion of that nation. The German air raids caused great destruction on the ground. But the British air force was able to keep control of the skies over Britain. This forced Hitler to cancel the invasion. Instead, in June 1941 he broke his 1939 agreement with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. German forces pushed deep into the Soviet Union before its army finally stopped their advance at the city of Stalingrad in September 1942.

Everywhere that German armies conquered, Jews, Gypsies, and other groups the Nazis considered dangerous or inferior were rounded up and held in prison camps. In 1941 Hitler ordered the killing of such prisoners. Eventually the Nazis systematically murdered some 6 million Jews and others in Germany and elsewhere in agencide known as the Holocaust.

As German forces conquered Europe, Japan sought control of the conquered nations' colonies in Asia. In mid-1941 Japanese troops occupied French Indochina—today the nations of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Japan next eyed the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya. The colonies of this region offered a rich source of raw materials for Japan's industries. Concerned about further Japanese imperialism, Britain and the United States banned exports of oil and other vital goods to Japan. Japan responded on December 7, 1941 by attacking the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Japanese land forces then invaded Malaya, the East Indies, and the American-controlled Philippine Islands.

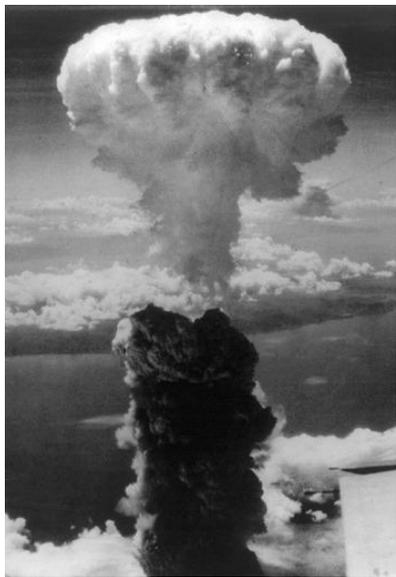


Defeating the Axis Powers The attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States directly into the war against Germany and Italy as well. With U.S. involvement, the war's tide began to turn against the Axis. In November 1942, a British-American force landed in North Africa and began driving the Axis forces back. That same month, the Soviet Red Army was able to surround the Germans attacking Stalingrad. They surrendered in February 1943, and other German forces were soon in retreat across the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the Axis army in North Africa surrendered in May 1943.

The Allies saw similar success in the Pacific. In June 1942, U.S. forces turned back an attack on Midway Island and inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese navy. After the Battle of Midway, Japan was on the defensive for the rest of the war. In August, U.S. forces began a campaign to retake islands captured by the Japanese.

In June 1943 American and British forces began bombing Germany. In July they invaded Italy. The Italian army soon surrendered, but German troops in Italy continued to fight until April 1945. In the meantime, defending Italy weakened Hitler's ability to the Soviet Red Army's advances in the east. The strain on German military resources grew even greater when Allied troops invaded France in June 1944. They slowly pushed German forces back. By early 1945 Allied forces were advancing into Germany from both east and west. On April 25, 1945, U.S. and Red Army troops met at the Elbe River in central Germany. On May 7 Germany surrendered.

The war in Europe was over, but Japan continued to fight. Allied forces in the Pacific captured island after island as they advanced toward Japan. By November 1944, they were close enough for U.S. warplanes to begin bombing Japan itself. In the spring of 1945, American troops captured two key islands—Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Control of these islands put the Allies in position to invade Japan. Planning for the invasion began. But an invasion was not needed. Instead, the United States used a secret new weapon to end the war. In August, U.S. planes dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both cities were destroyed. More than 100,000 people were killed in the two blasts. (Thousand more died later from the bombs' radiation.) The horrible devastation of these attacks convinced Japan's leaders to surrender, bringing World War II to an end on August 14, 1945.



Costs and Consequences The destruction brought by World War II far exceeded the destruction of World War I. Estimates of the number of lives lost run as high as 60 million. More than 25 percent of these dead were **civilians**, including the nearly 6 million Jews slaughtered in the Nazi Holocaust. Millions more were forced from their homes. Europe lay in ruins. Its economy and that of Japan were destroyed.

U.S. military forces occupied Japan following the war and helped the Japanese create a democratic government. Army General Douglas MacArthur remained in control until Japan adopted a new constitution in 1947. Germany suffered a similar but harsher fate. It was divided into four military zones, each occupied by U.S., French, British, or Soviet troops. In 1949 the U.S., French, and British zones were united to form the democratic nation of West Germany (officially called the Federal Republic of Germany). The Soviet zone became East Germany (officially the German Democratic Republic) and was ruled by a communist government. Although it was not the Allies' intent, Germany would remain divided for about the next 40 years.

Section 6. The Postwar World

As Germany's defeat became certain, Allied leaders met at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 to plan for the peace. They agreed that the Eastern European nations freed from the Germans by the Red Army would have democratic governments. Soviet leader Stalin, however, later ignored this pledge. Communist governments were installed in those nations and remained under Soviet control. This division of Europe marked the beginning of the Cold War—a nearly 50-year political and military rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union and their allies.



Asia After World War II Japan's defeat ended its control of Korea. The peninsula was divided into a southern zone occupied by U.S. forces and a northern zone, which Soviet troops had invaded near the end of the war. In 1948 these zones became the nations of South Korea and North Korea.

In China, conflict between the nationalists and communists was suspended during World War II, as both groups fought the Japanese. After the war, however, the civil war resumed. By 1949, the nationalists had been defeated and the communist People's Republic of China was established. The nationalists fled to the island of Taiwan and set up a rival government.

World War II also strengthened independence movements in South and Southeast Asia. Indians demanded independence when the war ended in return for helping the British fight Japan. Independence was delayed, however, by differences between India's Hindu and Muslim religious groups. Finally, in 1947, British India was divided into two countries. Pakistan was established as a Muslim homeland, while India remained a predominantly Hindu nation.

The peoples of Southeast Asia believed that their resistance of the Japanese had earned them the right to independence. The United States granted the Philippines independence in 1946. Britain and the Netherlands followed with independence for Burma (now Myanmar) and the Dutch East Indies (which became Indonesia) in 1948 and 1949. The French were unwilling to do the same for Indochina, however. The Vietnamese revolted against continued French rule. The French withdrew in 1954, allowing the nations of Laos and Cambodia to be created. Vietnam was divided, like Korea, into a communist North and a noncommunist South Vietnam.

The Middle East and Africa France also tried to hold on to control in the Middle East and North Africa. Only after uprisings by Arab nationalists did France grant Syria and Lebanon full independence in 1946. British and Soviet forces had occupied Iran during the war. American pressure caused the Soviets to withdraw, but Iran remained under British influence until the 1950s.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Jewish survivors of the Holocaust who had migrated there during and after the war joined existing communities in the Jewish homeland. These Jews revolted against British rule in 1946. In 1948, in accordance with a United Nations plan, Israel declared its independence as a Jewish state. Neighboring Arab states immediately invaded to destroy it. Tensions between Israel and Arab governments remain high today.

The success of Arab nationalism in Syria and Lebanon inspired the peoples of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in North Africa to also revolt against the French in the 1950s. Their independence would prove more difficult to achieve, however. Independence would also be delayed for the peoples of the rest of Africa who remained under European rule.

Summary

In this lesson, you read about how imperialism and nationalist competition among nations led to two devastating World Wars in the first half of the 20th century.

Cultural Interactions Communism caused unrest as revolution during World War I installed it in Russia and its supporters attempted to spread it to other parts of the world. An extreme form of nationalism called fascism arose in Europe between the world wars, resulting in authoritarian governments, suppression of human rights, and threats to world peace.

Political Systems Competition for colonies among the world powers was an underlying cause of World War I. Nationalism within the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the immediate cause of the war. Nationalism expressed through fascism and militarism after the war soon led to World War II. That war sparked nationalism within the Allies' empires as colonial peoples who fought against the Axis demanded their freedom.

Economic Systems European nations and Japan sought control over areas that could provide raw materials for their industries and markets for their goods. These efforts caused competition among the imperial powers, and aggression, expansion, and conflict in Africa and Asia that were contributing factors to World Wars I and II.

Human-Environment Interaction The fighting in World War I, from 1914 to 1918, and World War II, from 1939 to 1945, caused massive destruction in Europe and Asia. Cities were destroyed, millions of people were killed, and millions more were displaced from their lands.