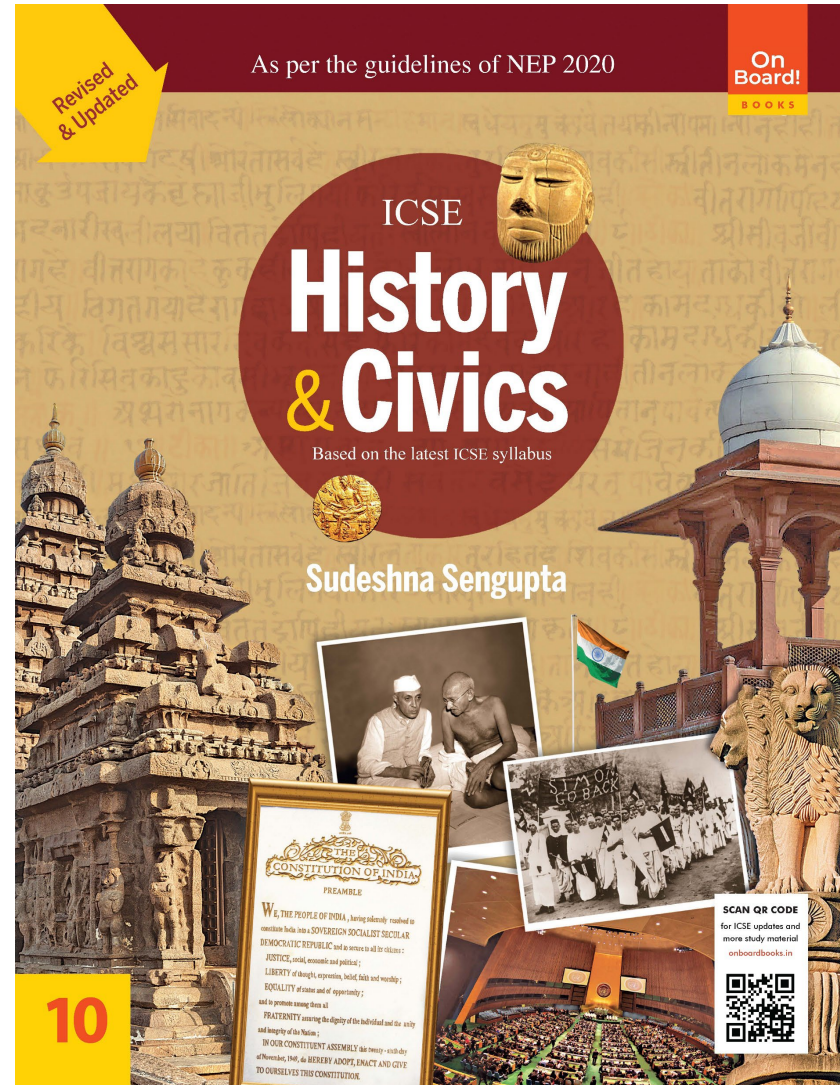


On Board!

B O O K S

ICSE History and Civics 10



Section B: History

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Chapter 10 The First World War (1914–1918)

The war that broke out in 1914 was in many ways entirely novel in the annals of human history. This was the first conflict that saw highly organized states of the twentieth century pitted against each other. The most notable feature was that since the European powers had spread over the globe during the previous decades, a war between them embraced nearly every continent and therefore rightly came to be called the First World War.

CAUSES OF THE WAR

Europe divided into power blocs In Europe, there existed nation-states, imperial states, Russian Empire, and so on. The nationalities spoke different languages and had varied cultural traditions. Existence of different nationalists meant more differences in society and frequent clash of interests.

Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy had formed the Triple Alliance in 1882. Britain, France and Russia had formed an alliance called the Triple Entente in 1907. They had made treaties of mutual help in case of a war with the opponents. Thus, Europe was divided into armed camps at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Nationalism and imperialism The nineteenth century was an era of extreme nationalism.

- Nationalism had become competitive and aggressive.
- Patriotism and love for one's own nation meant hatred for other nations.
- Each nation thought about its national interests alone.
- Nationalism was a strong driving force in European politics of the nineteenth century.
- One way to show patriotism was to enlarge the original territory through imperial conquests.
- The new Emperor of Germany, wanted his country to be the leader of the world.
- Britain had already emerged as the foremost colonial power with almost the quarter of the world under her control.

Thus, the whole atmosphere was charged with narrow nationalism and inter-state rivalries.

Militarism and armament race In this atmosphere of distrust, there began an armament race amongst European nations, each producing arms and ammunition on a large-scale for its security against the other. In order to protect its colonies, Germany made more warships and developed a powerful navy. Basically Germany wanted a strong navy to challenge the naval supremacy of Britain and a strong army to challenge the military might of France, which made France and Britain also to enter arm race.

Clash of imperialist interests and colonial rivalry By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the countries of Asia and Africa had been colonized, mostly by Britain and the rest by France, Spain, Holland, Portugal and Belgium. Though Germany entered the industrial field late, it surpassed all other European nations in industrial production. It finally occupied colonies in Africa and the Far East. This brought her in direct clash with the existing colonial powers like Britain, France and others. Thus, a warlike situation was created. Thus, colonial rivalry became a major cause of the First World War.

Territorial conflicts In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Turkish power began to decline. European nations like Austria, Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia began to increase their influence in the Balkans. In 1912, four Balkan states waged a war against the Turks. Two Balkan wars were fought in which Turks were defeated and allies were formed to curtail increasing Serbian power.

Absence of an effective international machinery There was no effective international machinery to enforce international laws amongst nations. The two Hague Conferences couldn't convince nations to cut down on arms and defence budgets. So, the countries continued safeguarding their own interests through armaments, secret diplomacy, ententes and alliances.

Immediate cause

The Sarajevo incident Gone on an official visit to Sarajevo, the heir-apparent to the throne of Austria and his wife were assassinated. The Austrians blamed Serbians as the conspirators of this crime. Austria sent a stiff ultimatum to Serbia to apprehend the criminals and hand them over to the Austrian government. Austria also sought a ban on anti-Austrian publications, meetings and institutions.

ONSET OF THE WORLD WAR

When Serbia refused to comply with some of the above conditions, Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia warned Austria and Germany declared war on Russia. When the German army invaded Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany. Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia. Turkey and Bulgaria joined the war on the side of Austria and Germany. Japan also declared war on Germany. Italy withdrew from the Triple Alliance and joined the war against Germany in 1915. In all, about 86 nations became involved in this war.

COURSE OF THE WAR

- The Germans had conquered all but a small section of Belgium, northeastern France and had reached from the North Sea to Switzerland.
- At the battle of Ypres, poison gas was used for the first time. The French defence collapsed.
- The Germans wanted to eliminate Russia and then turn to France and finally England. East Prussia was captured first.
- Poland and Lithuania were also conquered. Russia lost 65,000 square miles of territory.
- The Allies' Gallipoli campaign to capture Constantinople, the capital of the Turkish Empire, also failed.

- Bulgaria entered the War, which provided a link to Turkey, completing the corridor to the east, to Asia.
- Italy joined the Allies as she was promised to round out her territory
- Another important gain for the Allies was the conquest of German colonies in Africa.
- The event that shook the world that year was the sinking of the mammoth Atlantic liner, The Lusitania, off the coast of Ireland.

The War in 1916

- The Germans were unable to defeat the French.
- For the first time the British used powerful armoured 'tanks'. The Allies won a small area though it was a great psychological victory.
- Rumania and Portugal entered the War on the side of the Allies. Rumania was easily conquered.
- The Battle of Jutland, the great naval battle between Germany and Britain, took place near the western coast of Denmark. The result was inconclusive. But the German fleet had to return to Kiel.

The War in 1917

- The most important event was the entry of the USA into the War.
- Russia collapsed in the same year.
- The Republics of Cuba and Panama, Greece, Siam, Liberia, China, Brazil and several central and south American states severed diplomatic ties with Germany and joined the War on the side of the Allies.
- The Germans were forced to retreat to the Hindenburg Line.
- The invasion of Italy was a setback to the Allies.

The War in 1918

- During the initial period, the Germans were unstoppable in the Western front. Americans helped the French to stop the Germans at Marne.
- The Germans were pushed back to the Hindenburg Line. They were forced to give up Belgium, Ostend and Lille.
- Bulgaria surrendered. Serbia was reconquered. Italy went on an offensive against Austria and won.
- The Austria-Hungary Empire was dissolved. Hungary declared her independence.
- Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated the throne. His son renounced his rights to the throne. Germany was seeking peace. Germany became a republic.

The First World War ended with unexpected abruptness.

THE PEACE SETTLEMENT

A conference of the representatives of different European countries was held in Paris to settle the terms for peace. Germany signed the Treaty of Peace. In addition, the representatives of Austria, Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria signed separate treaties jointly with the Allied Powers. All these treaties together were called the Peace Settlement of 1919–1923.

- The Treaty of St Germain (1919) was signed with Austria.
- Treaty of Neuilly (1919) with Bulgaria.
- The Treaty of Trianon (1920) with Hungary.
- Treaty of Sevres (1920) with Turkey.
- Treaty of Lausanne (1923), a revised treaty with Turkey.

TREATY OF VERSAILLES (1919)

The Treaty of Versailles was the main treaty, signed on 28 June 1919 in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles in France between the defeated Germany and the victorious Britain, France and the USA. There were some sub-treaties made as well with other defeated nations like Austria, Hungary and Turkey.

Main terms of the Treaty of Versailles

- Germany was held guilty of aggression. She had to pay the cost of the War, called war-indemnity or reparation, to victor nations.
- Germany was to evacuate the places captured during the War.
- The German area of Rhine Valley was to be demilitarized.
- The German territory to the west of Rhine Valley was to be occupied by the Allied troops for fifteen years.
- Germany was to return Alsace and Lorraine to France.
- To compensate France for the destruction of its coal mines by Germany in 1918, she was given full control over the rich coal mines in the Saar basin.
- Germany lost all her colonies to the Allies.
- The German army was disbanded.
- Germany had to cede her merchant ships as compensation to the Allies.
- Germany was to supply huge quantity of coal to France, Italy and Belgium for ten years.
- The Treaty of Versailles affirmed the complete independence of Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.
- The Covenant (Constitution) of the League of Nations was added to the Treaty of Versailles.

Criticism of the Treaty of Versailles

As Germans were not allowed in the discussions held at Versailles, the peace was a 'dictated one'. It inaugurated a new era in the struggle for world power. According to the Treaty of Versailles, a belligerent country could confiscate property of any nature belonging to the subjects of an enemy country and could compel the government of a defeated nation to indemnify its own nationals for the property thus confiscated.

The Treaty of Versailles had the immediate outcome of redrawing the political map of Europe.

Results of the War

Loss of life and psychological effect of war During the four years of War, people lost their lives, were injured or disabled and wounded. Many were declared missing. More number of people faced sufferings due to diseases, famines and epidemics after the War.

Heavy cost of the War in terms of money Financially, this War proved to be very destructive and costly. The War also ruined many industries, farms, cities and towns, which in turn shattered the world economy.

Changes in the political map of the world The end of the War signified the victory of the spirit of nationalism, while the political map of the world was recast with the emergence of several new states.

New political ideologies After the War, democratic governments were established in many countries that were ruled by the royal dynasties in a despotic and autocratic manner. A communist government was set up in Russia after the Revolution of 1917, overthrowing the Tsarist rule. Thus after this War, a democratic era was ushered in with people being given more political rights and opportunities of participation in decision-making.

World economic recession Due to the heavy cost of the War in terms of money and material, there occurred economic depression, general inflation and a steep rise in the prices of commodities. The European nations had to depend on loans from USA for relief. In this way, the European markets came under the American influence.

Emergence of USA as a world power USA ended her political isolation when she joined the First World War in 1917. She was largely responsible for turning the tables against the Axis Powers and for the victory of the Allied Powers. The armistice signed by Germany on 11 November 1918 was based upon American President Wilson's Fourteen Points brought out in January 1918. Some of the important clauses of this were:

- Free navigation for all nations in war and peace
- All-round reduction of armaments
- Impartial adjustments of colonial claims in the interests of the population concerned
- Evacuation of Russian territory
- Liberation of France and restoration of Alsace-Lorraine
- A general association of nations to preserve peace

Seeds of the Second World War The treatment meted out to the defeated nations after the First World War possessed within itself the seeds of the Second World War.

Birth of the League of Nations

On 10 January 1920, the League of Nations officially came into existence with its headquarters at Geneva, Switzerland.

Members There were two kinds of members of the League of Nations, original and non-original members.

Organs The main organs of the League of Nations were the Assembly, the Council and the Secretariat. There was the Permanent Court of International Justice and the International Labour Office.

Functions The main function of the League was to avoid wars and to maintain peace in the world. The other functions included:

- Check on the armament race among nations
- Size of armies to be reduced
- Maintenance of law and order and defence against foreign aggression
- Collective action to be taken against the state, which violated the Covenant of the League
- Collective action could be taken against a rebellious state

Assessment The League of Nations was looked upon as an association of victors over the vanquished. So it was not believed to be an impartial organization. The United States, the Soviet Union and Germany were not the original members. Being dominated by Britain and France, the other nations lost their confidence in the League. It failed in its basic objective of maintaining world peace, and the Second World War broke out in 1939.

To Remember

Causes of the First World War – Europe divided into power blocs, militant nationalism and mutual rivalries, militarism and armament race, clash of imperialist interests and colonial rivalry, territorial conflicts, absence of effective international machinery, the Sarajevo crisis.

Onset of the War – Austria declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914 that triggered off the sequence of nearly 86 countries taking part in the First World War.

Course of the War – 1915: Germans wanted to eliminate Russia and then enter France, Allies occupied Serbia, Italy joined the Allies, Lusitania, a passenger liner sunk, 1916: Germans unable to defeat the French, tanks used for the first time, a naval battle between Germany and England, Battle of Jutland's result inconclusive, 1917: United States entered the war, Russia experienced the Bolshevik Revolution, Germans forced to retreat, Italy invaded, 1918: The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed, Americans help stop German army, Turkey and Austria sign an armistice, Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany abdicates, Germany becomes a republic.

The Peace Settlement – The Treaty of St Germain (1919) with Austria, Treaty of Neuilly (1919) with Bulgaria, Treaty of Trianon (1920) with Hungary, Treaty of Sevres (1920) with Turkey, Treaty of Lausanne (1923), a revised treaty with Turkey.

The Treaty of Versailles – Signed on 28 June 1919 in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, France, Main terms: Germany declared the aggressor, to evacuate all places captured, Rhineland demilitarized, Alsace and Lorraine returned to France, coal mines of Saar basin given to France, Germany lost all her colonies, army disbanded, Covenant of the League of Nations added to the Treaty, Criticism: A 'dictated peace', Germany humiliated, created more problems rather than solving them, Results of the War: Loss of life, heavy cost of war in terms of money, changes in the political map of the world, new political ideologies, world economic recession, emergence of USA as a world power, seeds of the Second World War.

Birth of the League of Nations – 10 January 1920 the League came into existence, headquarters at Geneva, Switzerland, original members 42, Organs: The Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat, the Permanent Court of International Justice, International Labour Office, Functions: Avoid wars and maintain peace, political independence to all nations great and small, check on the armament race, size of armies reduced, collective action against an erring state, mandate territories to be provided for, Assessment: Not accepted as an impartial organization, larger nations did not accept its terms, Britain and France dominated so others lost confidence, rise of dictatorship in Italy, Japan and Germany led to its decadence, the Second World War broke out.

Thank You