

CHAPTER 28

The Crisis of the Imperial Order, 1900–1929

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. Origins of the Crisis in Europe and the Middle East
 - A. The Ottoman Empire and the Balkans
 1. By the late nineteenth century the once-powerful Ottoman Empire was in decline and losing the outlying provinces closest to Europe. The European powers meddled in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire, sometimes in cooperation, at other times as rivals.
 2. In reaction, the Young Turks conspired to force a constitution on the Sultan, advocated centralized rule and Turkification of minorities, and carried out modernizing reforms. The Turks turned to Germany for assistance and hired a German general to modernize Turkey's armed forces.
 - B. Nationalism, Alliances, and Military Strategy
 1. The three main causes of World War I were nationalism, the system of alliances and military plans, and Germany's yearning to dominate Europe.
 2. Nationalism was deeply rooted in European culture, where it served to unite individual nations while undermining large multiethnic empires. Because of the spread of nationalism, most people viewed war as a crusade for liberty or as revenges for past injustices; the well-to-do believed that war could heal the class divisions in their societies.
 3. The major European countries were organized into two alliances: the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) and the Triple Entente (Britain, France, and Russia). The military alliance system was accompanied by inflexible mobilization plans that depended on railroads to move troops according to precise schedules.
 4. When Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914, diplomats, statesmen, and monarchs quickly lost control of events. The alliance system in combination with the rigidly scheduled mobilization plans meant that war was automatic.
- II. The "Great War" and the Russian Revolutions, 1914–1918.
 - A. Stalemate, 1914–1917
 1. The nations of Europe entered the war in high spirits, confident of victory. German victory at first seemed assured, but as the German advance faltered in September, both sides spread out until they formed an unbroken line of trenches (the Western Front) from the North Sea to Switzerland.
 2. The generals on each side tried for four years to take enemy positions by ordering their troops to charge across the open fields, only to have them cut down by machine-gun fire. For four years the war was inconclusive on both land and at sea.
 - B. The Home Front and the War Economy
 1. The material demands of trench warfare led governments to impose stringent controls over all aspects of their economies. Rationing and the recruitment of Africans, Indians, Chinese, and women into the European labor force transformed civilian life. German civilians paid an especially high price for the war as the British naval blockade cut off access to essential food imports.
 2. British and French forces overran Germany's African colonies (except for Tanganyika). In all of their African colonies Europeans requisitioned food, imposed heavy taxes,

- forced Africans to grow export crops and sell them at low prices, and recruited African men to serve as soldiers and as porters.
3. The United States grew rich during the war by selling goods to Britain and France. When the United States entered the war in 1917, businesses engaged in war production made tremendous profits.
- C. The Ottoman Empire at War
1. The Turks signed a secret alliance with Germany in 1914. Turkey engaged in unsuccessful campaigns against Russia, deported the Armenians (causing the deaths of hundred of thousands), and closed the Dardanelles Straits.
 2. When they failed to open the Dardanelles Straits by force, the British tried to subvert the Ottoman Empire from within by promising emir Hussein ibn Ali of Mecca a kingdom of his own if he would lead a revolt against the Turks, which he did in 1916.
 3. In the Balfour Declaration of 1917 the British suggested to the Zionist leader Chaim Weizman that they would “view with favor” the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Britain also sent troops into southern Mesopotamia in order to secure the oil pipeline from Iran, taking Baghdad in early 1917.
- D. Double Revolution in Russia, 1917
1. By late 1916 the large but incompetent and poorly equipped Russian army had experienced numerous defeats and had run out of ammunition and other essential supplies. The civilian economy was in a state of collapse and the cities faced shortages of fuel and food in the winter of 1916–1917.
 2. In March 1917 (February by the old Russian calendar) the tsar was overthrown and replaced by a Provisional Government led by Alexander Kerensky. On November 6, 1917 (October 24 in the Russian calendar) Vladimir Lenin’s Bolsheviks staged an uprising in Petrograd and overthrew the Provisional Government.
- E. The End of the War in Western Europe, 1917–1918
1. German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare brought the United States into the war in April 1917. On the Western Front, the two sides were evenly matched, but in 1918 the Germans were able to break through the front at several places and pushed within 40 miles of Paris.
 2. The arrival of United States forces allowed the Allies to counterattack in August 1918. The German soldiers retreated, many sick with the flu; an armistice was signed on November 11.
- III. Peace and Dislocation in Europe, 1919–1929
- A. The Impact of the War
1. The war left more dead and wounded and caused more physical destruction than any previous conflict. The war also created millions of refugees, many of whom fled to France and to the United States, where the influx of immigrants prompted the United States Congress to pass immigration laws that closed the doors to eastern and southern Europeans.
 2. One byproduct of the war was the influenza epidemic of 1918–1919, which started among soldiers headed for the Western Front and spread around the world, killing some 30 million people. The war also caused serious damage to the environment and hastened the build-up of mines, factories, and railroads.
- B. The Peace Treaties
1. Three men dominated the Paris Peace Conference: United States President Wilson, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and French Premier Georges Clemenceau. Because the three men had conflicting goals, the Treaty of Versailles turned out to be a series of unsatisfying compromises that humiliated Germany but left it largely intact and potentially the most powerful nation in Europe.

2. The Austro-Hungarian Empire fell apart. New countries were created in the lands lost by Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary.
- C. Russian Civil War and the New Economic Policy
1. In Russia, Allied intervention and civil war extended the fighting for another three years beyond the end of World War I. By 1921 the Communists had defeated most of their enemies, and in 1922 the Soviet republic of Ukraine and Russia merged to create the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
 2. Years of warfare, revolution, and mismanagement had ruined the Russian economy. Beginning in 1921 Lenin's New Economic Policy helped to restore production by relaxing government controls and allowing a return of market economics. This policy was regarded as a temporary measure that would be superseded as the Soviet Union built a modern socialist industrial economy by extracting resources from the peasants in order to pay for industrialization.
 3. When Lenin died in January 1924 his associates struggled for power; the two main contenders were Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. Stalin filled the bureaucracy with his supporters, expelled Trotsky, and forced him to flee the country.
- D. An Ephemeral Peace
1. The 1920s were a decade of apparent progress behind which lurked irreconcilable tensions and dissatisfaction among people whose hopes had been raised by the rhetoric of war and dashed by its outcome. The decade after the end of the war can be divided into two periods: five years of painful recovery and readjustment (1919–1923) followed by six years of growing peace and prosperity (1924–1929).
 2. In 1923 French occupation of the Ruhr and severe inflation brought Germany to the brink of civil war. Currency reform and French withdrawal from the Ruhr marked the beginning of a period of peace and economic growth beginning in 1924.
- IV. China and Japan: Contrasting Destinies
- A. Social and Economic Change
1. In the first decades of the twentieth century China was plagued by rapid population growth, an increasingly unfavorable ratio of population to arable land, avaricious landlords and tax collectors, and frequent devastating floods of the Yellow River. Japan had few natural resources and very little arable land, and, while not troubled by floods, Japan was subject to other natural calamities.
 2. Above the peasantry Chinese society was divided among many groups: landowners, wealthy merchants, and foreigners, whose luxurious lives aroused the resentment of educated young urban Chinese. In Japan, industrialization and economic growth aggravated social tensions between westernized urbanites and traditionalists and between the immensely wealthy zaibatsu and the poor farmers who still comprised half the population.
 3. Japanese prosperity depended on foreign trade and on imperialism in Asia. This made Japan much more vulnerable than China to swings in the world economy.
- B. Revolution and War, 1900–1918
1. China's defeat and humiliation at the hands of an international force in the Boxer affair of 1900 led many Chinese students to conclude that China needed a revolution to overthrow the Qing and modernize the country. When a regional army unit mutinied in 1911 Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance formed an assembly and elected Sun as president of China, but in order to avoid a civil war, the presidency was turned over to the powerful general Yuan Shikai, who rejected democracy and ruled as an autocrat.
 2. The Japanese joined the Allied side in World War I and benefited from an economic boom as demand for their products rose. Japan used the war as an opportunity to conquer the German colonies in the northern Pacific and on the Chinese coast and to further

extend Japanese influence in China by forcing the Chinese government to accede to many of the conditions presented in a document called the Twenty-One Demands.

C. Chinese Warlords and the Guomindang, 1919–1929

1. At the Paris Peace Conference the great powers allowed Japan to retain control over seized German enclaves in China, sparking protests in Beijing (May 4, 1919) and in many other parts of China. China's regional generals—the warlords—supported their armies through plunder and arbitrary taxation so that China grew poorer while only the treaty ports prospered.
2. Sun Yat-sen tried to make a comeback in Canton in the 1920s by reorganizing his Guomindang party along Leninist lines and by welcoming members of the newly created Chinese Communist Party. Sun's successor Chiang Kai-shek crushed the regional warlords in 1927.
3. Chiang then split with and decimated the Communist Party and embarked on an ambitious plan of top-down industrial modernization. However, Chiang's government was staffed by corrupt opportunists, not by competent administrators: China remained mired in poverty.

V. The New Middle East

A. The Mandate System

1. Instead of being given their independence, the former German colonies and Ottoman territories were given to the great powers as mandates. Class C Mandates were ruled as colonies, while Class B Mandates were to be given their autonomy at some unspecified time in the future.
2. The Arab-speaking territories of the former Ottoman Empire were Class A Mandates, a category that was defined in such a way as to lead the Arabs to believe that they had been promised independence. In practice, Britain took control of Palestine, Iraq, and Trans-Jordan, while France took Syria and Lebanon as its mandates.

B. The Rise of Modern Turkey

1. At the end of the war the Ottoman Empire was at the point of collapse, with French, British, Italian, and Greek forces occupying Constantinople and parts of Anatolia. The hero of the Gallipoli campaign Mustafa Kemal formed a nationalist government in 1919 and reconquered Anatolia and the area around Constantinople in 1922.
2. Kemal was an outspoken modernizer who declared Turkey to be a secular republic, introduced European laws, replaced the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet, and attempted to westernize the Turkish family, the roles of women, and even Turkish clothing and headgear. His reforms spread quickly in the urban areas, but they encountered strong resistance in the countryside, where Islamic traditions remained strong.

C. Arab Lands and the Question of Palestine

1. Among the Arab people, the thinly disguised colonialism of the Mandate System set off protests and rebellions. At the same time, Middle Eastern society underwent significant changes: nomads disappeared, the population grew by 50 percent from 1914 to 1939, major cities doubled in size, and the urban merchant class adopted Western ideas, customs, and lifestyles.
2. The Maghrib (Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco) was dominated by the French army and by French settlers, who owned the best lands and monopolized government jobs and businesses. Arabs and Berbers remained poor and suffered from discrimination.
3. The British allowed Iraq to become independent under King Faisal (leader of the Arab revolt) but maintained a significant military and economic influence. France sent thousands of troops to crush nationalist uprisings in Lebanon and Syria. Britain declared Egypt to be independent in 1922 but retained control through its alliance with King Farouk.

4. In the Palestine Mandate, the British tried to limit the wave of Jewish immigration that began in 1920, but only succeeded in alienating both Jews and Arabs.
- VI. Society, Culture, and Technology in the Industrialized World
- A. Class and Gender
 1. Class distinctions faded after the war as the role of the aristocracy (many of whom had died in battle) declined and displays of wealth came to be regarded as unpatriotic. The expanded role of government during and after the war led to an increase in the numbers of white collar workers; the working class did not expand because the introduction of new machinery and new ways of organizing work made it possible to increase production without expanding the labor force.
 2. In the 1920s women enjoyed more personal freedoms than ever before, and women won the right to vote in some countries between 1915 and 1934. This did not have a significant effect on politics because women tended to vote like their male relatives.
 - B. Revolution in the Sciences
 1. The discovery of sub-atomic particles, quanta, Einstein's theory of relativity, and the discovery that light is made up of either waves or particles undermined the certainties of Newtonian physics and offered the potential of unlocking new and dangerous sources of energy.
 2. Innovations in the social sciences challenged Victorian morality, middle class values, and notions of Western superiority. The psychology of Sigmund Freud and the sociology of Emile Durkheim introduced notions of cultural relativism that combined with the experience of the war to call into question the West's faith in reason and progress.
 - C. The New Technologies of Modernity
 1. The European and American public was fascinated with new technologies like the airplane and lionized the early aviators: Amelia Earhart, Richard Byrd, and especially Charles Lindbergh. Electricity began to transform home life, and commercial radio stations brought news, sports, soap operas, and advertising to homes throughout North America.
 2. Film spread explosively in the 1920s. The early film industry of the silent film era was marked by diversity, with films being made in Japan, India, Turkey, Egypt, and Hollywood in the 1920s. The introduction of the talking picture in the United States in 1921, combined with the tremendous size of the American market, marked the beginning of the era of Hollywood's domination of film and its role in the diffusion of American culture.
 3. Health and hygiene were also part of the cult of modernity. Advances in medicine, sewage treatment systems, indoor plumbing, and the increased use of soap and home appliances contributed to declines in infant mortality and improvements in health and life expectancy.
 - D. Technology and the Environment
 1. The skyscraper and the automobile transformed the urban environment. Skyscrapers with load-bearing steel frames and passenger elevators were built in American cities. European cities restricted the height of buildings, but European architects led the way in designing simple, easily constructed inexpensive, functional buildings in what came to be known as the International Style.
 2. Mass-produced automobiles replaced horses in the city streets and led to the construction of far-flung suburban areas like those of Los Angeles. On farms, gasoline-powered tractors began replacing horses in the 1920s while dams and canals were used to generate electricity and to irrigate dry land.