Conducting World War II

We shall not flag nor fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France and on the seas and oceans; we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on beaches, landing grounds, in fields, in streets and on the hills. We shall never surrender.

—British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (June 4, 1940)

Essential Question: What similarities and differences were there in the methods governments used to conduct war?

During World War II, governments rallied all their resources in the war effort. The call to intense nationalism, as illustrated in Winston Churchill's speech in the British House of Commons, was part of concerted policies that used all forms of communication to mobilize the population. Appeal to ideological beliefs, including fascism and communism, dominated daily life during the conflict and minimized resistance to militarism.

Governments also used new military technology and tactics, including the atomic bomb and "total war," disregarding previously accepted laws of war. These policies increased the level of wartime casualties.

Japan and Imperialist Policies

With the military in control of the government, Japan harbored imperialist ambitions that would lead to a world war in the Pacific. The Mukden Incident and the takeover of land in Manchuria in a state called Manchukuo (see Topic 7.5) were early efforts in this drive.

New Order in East Asia The occupation of parts of China was but one step in Japan's overall strategy, which was to create a "New Order in East Asia." The Japanese had looked to expand into Soviet Siberia, but when Germany and the Soviets signed the **Nonaggression Pact** of 1939, Japan had to look elsewhere for new territory. Nearby Southeast Asia, which had been under the control of imperial powers in Western Europe and the United States, was the most obvious target. However, Japan faced obstacles. Its occupation of China led to economic sanctions by the United States. Because Japan's economy relied on oil and scrap iron from the United States, sanctions threatened to strangle

its economy and undercut its military expansion. Therefore, Japan began to plan to retaliate against the United States with military force in the hope that by doing so, the Western powers would submit to Japan's imperial ambitions.

Germany's Early Victories and Challenges

Once war broke out in Europe, Hitler moved swiftly to acquire territory. He embarked on a strategy called **blitzkrieg**, or lightning war, to quickly subdue Poland. Germany used rapidly moving tank divisions supported by the air force in its four-week campaign. At the end of September 1939, Germany and the Soviets divided the country as they had planned when they signed the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact.

Germany's rapid success in Poland encouraged Hitler to attack and conquer Denmark and Norway in April 1940 and the Netherlands, Belgium, and France in the following month. Germany then proceeded to bring the government and resources of the conquered nations under its control. As the Germans approached Paris, the French government fled to Bordeaux, in southern France. Germany took direct control of the northern two-thirds of the country. The French set up a new pro-Nazi regime based in **Vichy** under Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain, an aged World War I hero. (Connect: Create a table comparing the conquests of Hitler and Genghis Khan. See Topic 2.2.)

Major Battles of World War II

British-American Relations Fearing that it would be the next victim in Germany's relentless and rapid campaign, Britain asked the United States for support. Despite a long history of isolationism from European troubles, President Roosevelt believed the United States should help the British.

In 1940, the two powers signed the **Destroyers-for-Bases Agreement**, in which the United States promised delivery of 50 destroyers in exchange

for eight British air and naval bases in the Western Hemisphere. In the 1941 **Lend-Lease Act**, the United States gave up all pretensions of neutrality by lending war materials to Britain. Also in 1941, Britain and the United States forged a policy statement known as the **Atlantic Charter**, which set down basic goals for the post-war world. The charter included such provisions as the restoration of self-government to those deprived of it, the abandonment of the use of force, and the disarmament of aggressor nations.

The Battle of Britain In Europe, Britain was the last major holdout against Nazi power. In July 1940, Hitler ordered a large campaign against the small island nation by the **Luftwaffe**, the German air force. He believed that bombardment from the air would sufficiently weaken the country so that German sea and land forces could mount a successful invasion. Initially targeting military bases in this **Battle of Britain**, the Germans turned to bombing British cities after the British Royal Air Force conducted a raid on Berlin. **Winston Churchill** termed this Britain's "finest hour" as the civilian population in London and other cities withstood months of relentless bombing.

The targeting of cities did provide one advantage for Britain: the British military was able to rebuild after the earlier raids on its bases. Ultimately, Britain's superior planes and radar system allowed it to destroy German planes faster than they could be replaced. By May 1941, Hitler was forced to postpone indefinitely any attempted invasion of Britain.

War on the Soviet Union After failing to invade Britain, Hitler turned east. He attacked the Soviet Union to eliminate Bolshevism and to create *Lebensraum*—land for settlement and development—for the German people. Germany's turning its focus to the east took pressure off Britain. Germany began its invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Initially the Nazis experienced rapid success as they had in Western Europe, capturing large amounts of territory and two million Soviet troops. However, the German forces soon found themselves at the mercy of the harsh Russian winter. The Soviets defended the city of Leningrad in the **Siege of Leningrad**, which lasted three years and led to the deaths of a million Soviet men, women, and children.

Japan Overreaches

Japan experienced rapid victories in the Pacific. It launched a surprise air attack on the U.S. naval base at **Pearl Harbor** in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, destroying much of the U.S. Pacific fleet. Japan then seized the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya, Burma, and numerous Pacific islands.

Japan believed that the surprise attack and the damage to the U.S. Pacific Fleet would prompt the United States to negotiate a settlement favorable to Japan immediately. Instead, U.S. isolationism disappeared overnight; public opinion demanded retaliation against Japan. Great Britain and China joined the United States in the fight against Japanese aggression. The war truly became global when, within days, Hitler responded to the U.S. declaration of war against Japan with his own declaration of war against the United States.

Colonial Armies As the Axis powers expanded into new territory, Western colonies began to join the Allies in the war effort. For example, the Indian Army, which had started the war with only 200,000 men, ended the war as the largest volunteer army in history with more than 2.5 million men. Although the Indian Army sent troops to North Africa, the bulk of its troops fought against the Japanese in Southeast Asia.

Home Fronts

Like World War I, World War II was a total war. Most countries mobilized all their resources, including the civilian population, to achieve victory. The United States started with the strongest industrial sector of any country in the world and it added stringent government planning to provide factories what they needed. In addition, unlike anywhere in Europe, U.S. industry operated without threat of military attack. The United States ramped up production of the resources required for war, including ships, tanks, planes, landing craft, radar equipment, guns, and ammunition. With the enlistment of large numbers of men in the armed forces, women found far more opportunities to work in factories and offices. The U.S. government promoted art of "Rosie the Riveter" to encourage women to succeed at jobs that were once thought to be for men.

Instead of mobilizing all available citizens in the war effort, German leaders relied on forced labor, some of it in concentration camps. At its peak, 20 percent of the wartime workforce was forced labor, with 600,000 French citizens working in German war plants and 1.5 million French soldiers working in prisoner-of-war (POW) camps. The solution was counterproductive, however. The workers were treated so poorly that productivity was low.

In Japan, efforts on the home front were confused. The government presented an optimistic view of the war instead of trying to mobilize resources. The government took pride in not using women in the war effort, claiming that the enemy is "drafting women but in Japan, out of consideration for the family system, we will not." The government was able to systematically remove children from cities to the countryside when bombing of cities started late in the war. It was also successful in rationing food throughout the war. (Connect: Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting warfare during World War I with the warfare before and during World War II. See Topic 7.3.)

The Tide Turns in the European Theater

With its entry into the war in December 1941, the United States joined the other Allied powers, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. In spite of political differences, the three nations were united in their determination to achieve a military victory and agreed that Axis surrender must be unconditional.

In early 1942, the Allies were struggling in Europe and North Africa. General **Erwin Rommel**, the "Desert Fox," led German troops in Egypt and threatened to take the northern city of Alexandria. But in the second half of 1942, the tide turned. The British defeated Rommel at the **Battle of El**

Alamein. And after months of fighting, a Soviet counteroffensive successfully defeated the pride of Hitler's military, the German Sixth Army, in the **Battle of Stalingrad**. Although the Germans remained in control of most of Western Europe, the momentum of the war in Europe had turned against the Nazis.

The Tide Turns in the Pacific Theater

The year 1942 was also crucial in the war against Japan. The first Allied victory occurred in May in the **Battle of the Coral Sea,** when the U.S. Navy stopped a Japanese fleet set to invade New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, thus helping to prevent a future invasion of Australia. The following month, with the destruction of four Japanese aircraft carriers at the **Battle of Midway Island**, Allied naval forces demonstrated their superiority in the Pacific. These battles stopped the advance of the Japanese. The first major Allied offensive was on the island of **Guadalcanal**, which ended in early 1943 with an Allied victory.

The Allied forces in the Pacific under U.S. General **Douglas MacArthur** used a strategy called **island-hopping**. The Allies attacked islands where Japan was weak and skipped those where Japan was strong. The Allies slowly, and at great human cost, moved through the Philippines, getting closer to Japan itself.

Technology was critical to Allied success. The development of fleets of **aircraft carriers**, ships that allowed planes to take off from and land on their decks at sea, provided air support for battleships and increased the range and flexibility of naval forces. Aircraft were used for raids on enemy ships and bases and for intelligence gathering. Submarines sank about 55 percent of the Japanese merchant fleet, severely damaging Japan's supply lines.

The Last Years of the War

The Allied successes of 1942 put the Axis powers on the defensive in 1943. The Allies identified Italy as the weakest point under Axis control in Europe. In spite of German forces sent to aid Italy, the Allies gained control of the island of Sicily in July 1943, leading to the fall of Mussolini. After the Allies invaded southern Italy in September 1943, Italy turned against its former ally. After months of slow and costly progress, the Allies finally recaptured Rome on June 4, 1944.

June 6, 1944, has become known as **D-Day**, when about 150,000 Allied forces under the command of U.S. General Dwight Eisenhower launched an amphibious invasion from England, landing on the beaches of Normandy in northern France. Allied casualties were high. Eventually, however, the Allies established a base to begin the march toward Paris, which was liberated in August. With control of Western Europe slipping away, Germany's defeat was drawing closer.

The Germans made one final push against the Allies during the winter of 1944. The **Battle of the Bulge** was fought in the Ardennes Forest across parts of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. An Allied victory left Germany with no

realistic expectation of winning the war, yet Hitler refused to give up. Allied air raids began to systematically destroy Germany's infrastructure and Allied troops crossed the Rhine River into Germany in March 1945. One month later they were approaching Germany's capital city of Berlin.

On the Eastern Front, Soviet troops were also moving rapidly toward Germany. In July 1943, the largest tank battle of the war, the **Battle of Kursk**, was fought about 300 miles south of Moscow. The Soviets challenged this instance of German Blitzkrieg by successfully holding their defensive position and then counterattacking. The Soviets then made rapid progress through the Ukraine and the Baltic States in 1944. After taking control of Warsaw, Poland, in January 1945, the Soviets moved on to Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. In April 1945, they advanced on Berlin.

Victory in Europe Hitler spent the war's final days hiding in a bunker, a fortified underground shelter, in Berlin. Although the country was falling apart, he continued to live under the delusion that somehow Germany would triumph. The end came on April 30, 1945, when Hitler committed suicide. His ally Mussolini had been killed by members of the Italian resistance two days before. After Hitler's death, members of Germany's High Command acknowledged that continuing the war would be futile. In the first days of May, Germany surrendered to the Allies. May 8, 1945, marked the official end of the war in Europe and was designated as Victory in Europe Day or **V-E Day**.

Victory over Japan In early 1945, U.S. forces captured the islands of Okinawa and Iwo Jima and prepared to attack the Japanese mainland. In March 1945, U.S. troops fire-bombed Tokyo, killing about 100,000 people and leaving about a million others homeless. Although the island-hopping campaign had weakened Japan's hold on the Pacific, the emperor was not ready to surrender. The United States was beginning to consider the costs of invading the Japanese homeland, which it feared might lead to enormous Allied casualties. Despite initial hesitations about using nuclear weapons, President Truman ordered the U.S. Army Air Force to drop the first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of **Hiroshima** on August 6, 1945. The nuclear age had begun. Three days later, a second bomb was dropped on **Nagasaki**, resulting in an estimated total of 140,000 Japanese civilian deaths. The months of Allied victories, combined with these devastating nuclear attacks, caused Japan to surrender unconditionally on August 14. Truman designated September 2, the day of the formal surrender ceremonies, as Victory over Japan Day or **V-J Day**.

Consequences of World War II

World War II was the bloodiest war in human history. It resulted in the deaths of around 75 million people, two-thirds of whom were civilians. As later topics explain, it changed how people thought about racism, colonial empires, and international relations. Further, it provided the context for a fierce ideological battle between the United States and the Soviet Union that would shape global affairs for the following five decades.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

GOVERNMENT: War
Vichy
Lend-Lease Act
Battle of Britain
Siege of Leningrad
Pearl Harbor
Battle of El Alamein
Battle of Stalingrad
Battle of the Coral Sea
Battle of Midway Island
Guadalcanal
island-hopping
D-Day
Battle of the Bulge
Battle of Kursk
V-E Day
Hiroshima
Nagasaki
V-J Day

GOVERNMENT: Treaties
Nonaggression Pact

Destroyers-for-Bases
  Agreement
Atlantic Charter

GOVERNMENT: Leaders
Winston Churchill
Erwin Rommel
Douglas MacArthur

TECHNOLOGY: Warfare
blitzkrieg
Luftwaffe
aircraft carriers

Mass Atrocities

Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?

—German Führer Adolf Hitler (August 22, 1939)

Essential Question: What were the causes and consequences of mass atrocities from 1900 to the present?

The deaths of fighting forces in the two world wars were only part of the total casualties. Genocide, ethnic violence, and other atrocities took place as extremist groups rose to power. During and after World War I, the Ottoman Empire, ruled by a clique of "Young Turks" who were disturbed by the continuing decline of Ottoman power, perpetrated the Armenian genocide in which some 1.5 million Armenians died. As Adolf Hitler implemented the Holocaust, he referred to the Armenian annihilation as a reminder of how little the Nazis need fear for the systematic murder of six million Jews.

Ethnic atrocities did not end after World War II. Dictator Pol Pot wanted to "purify" Cambodian society along racial, social, and political lines, resulting in the deaths of 1.6 to 1.8 million Cambodians. (See Topic 8.6.) And in Rwanda, the majority Hutu government directed mass slaughter of the Tutsi minority.

Atrocities in Europe and the Middle East

After three years of a bloody stalemate, the United States entered World War I in 1917, despite considerable popular protests in the United States against American involvement. By the summer of 1918, when U.S. forces were in place in Europe, U.S. actions helped push the war in the Allies' favor. Allied advances against the Central Powers forced Germany to surrender on November 11, 1918, which became known as **Armistice Day**.

Between 8 million and 9 million soldiers died in the war, with more than 21 million wounded. In France, Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary, fewer than half of all young men who fought for their countries returned physically unharmed. Soldiers who did return often bore emotional scars.

Civilian casualties were harder to record, but estimates range anywhere from 6 million to 13 million. This was one of the first modern wars where civilians were considered legitimate targets. Although the Allies' propaganda often exaggerated accounts of atrocities, reports of German soldiers raping women and killing families during their march through Belgium were common.

World War I Casualties				
Country	Alliance	Dead (in millions)	Wounded (in millions)	Imprisoned (in millions)
Germany	Central Powers	1.8	4.2	0.6
Russia	Allies	1.7	5.0	0.5
France	Allies	1.4	3.0	0.5
Austria-Hungary	Central Powers	1.2	3.6	0.2
Great Britain	Allies	0.9	2.1	0.2
Italy	Allies	0.5	1.0	0.5
Turkey	Central Powers	0.3	0.4	Not known
United States	Allies	0.1	0.2	Fewer than 0.05

Armenian Genocide The most shocking example of such atrocities were the deaths of between 600,000 and 1.5 million **Armenians** in Turkey. This action has been called the 20th century's first **genocide**, the attempted killing of a group of people based on their race, religion, or ethnicity. The Ottoman government alleged that the Christian Armenians, a minority within the Ottoman Empire, were cooperating with the Russian army, an Ottoman enemy during World War I. As punishment for this cooperation, the Ottoman government deported Armenians from their homes between 1915 and 1917 and into camps in Syria and what is today Iraq. Many Armenians died from starvation, disease, or exposure to the elements. Turkish troops executed others. Armenians have argued that the deaths were genocide. The Turkish government has said the deaths were the result of actions of war, ethnic conflicts, and disease, not genocide. (Connect: Create a graphic organizer comparing the Armenian genocide with the Nazis' extermination of millions of Jews. See Topic 7.6.)

Pandemic Disease

War-related deaths continued past Armistice Day in the form of an **influenza epidemic**. Under peacetime circumstances, a virulent disease might devastate a concentrated group of people in a particular region. However, in 1918, millions of soldiers were returning home as the war ended. As they did, they had contact with loved ones and friends, thereby spreading the flu. In 1919, the epidemic became a **pandemic**, a disease prevalent over a large area or the entire world, killing 20 million people in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. India alone may have lost 7 million people to the disease.

The worldwide spread of the disease was another sign that while nationalism remained a powerful political force, improvements in transportation were creating a global culture that would create global challenges. Whether people could create effective international responses was unclear.

Suffering and Famine

A more intangible casualty of the war was the loss of a sense of security and hopefulness. The term **Lost Generation**, first used to describe American expatriate writers living in Paris after the war, came to be used more broadly to describe those suffering from the shock of the war. World War I was the bloodiest war thus far in history. It resulted in tremendous suffering and death for both military personnel and civilians.

Famine in the Ukraine In the Soviet Union, peasants strongly resisted Stalin's collectivization of agriculture. They hid or destroyed their crops and killed their livestock rather than turning them over to state control. This led to famines from human action rather than by weather or crop failures. The famines in 1932 and 1933 were especially devastating in the Ukraine, one of the Soviet Union's most fertile farming regions. An estimated 7 million to 10 million peasants died as a result of these famines. The government took much of the crops that were grown to feed industrial workers or to use for industry. Although peasants starved, industry grew.

Casualties of World War II

Because of the widespread fighting, advances in the technology of destruction, and its impact on the economies and civilian life of so many nations, the effects of World War II were unprecedented. Although exact casualty figures have been impossible to determine, total deaths probably numbered 40 million to 50 million. Maybe half of those were citizens of the Soviet Union, and millions of others were from Germany, Poland, China, and Japan. Losses among U.S. troops were fewer, but still considerable: about 290,000 soldiers killed and more than 600,000 wounded. Civilian casualties from attacks on land, air, and sea; from government executions based on political rationales, including genocide; and from disease and starvation caused by the war likely exceeded military casualties.

The Nazis During the war, the world gradually learned about Nazi brutality. In its pursuit of territory, Germany forcefully removed many Slavic peoples, including one million Poles, and Roma, also known as Gypsies, from their homes. **Heinrich Himmler**, the leader of the Nazi special police, the SS, oversaw these policies. In addition, more than 7 million residents of conquered territories were forced to work in labor camps or in jobs that supported the German war effort. The Nazis sent political opponents, people with disabilities, and gay people to the camps. But the largest single group the Nazis targeted were the Jews. When Hitler became chancellor, he instituted many policies that reflected these extreme anti-Semitic views, such as the **Nuremberg Laws** of 1935 that banned Jews from certain professions and certain schools. Jews were forced to live in sections of cities called **ghettos**.

In 1942, the Nazi persecution of Jews turned into mass murder. They began a campaign led by the SS to kill all Jews in Europe, a plan they called the "**Final Solution**." Initially, Nazi killing units moved from place to place, shooting Jews and burying them in mass graves. Later the SS began rounding up Jews and shipping them to death camps, where Nazis gassed them. Auschwitz and Treblinka in Poland and Dachau in Germany were some of the largest camps. By the end of the war, the Nazis had killed about six million Jews, an act of genocide known as the **Holocaust**. The Nazis killed another five million people who belonged to other persecuted groups or were Soviet prisoners of war. The Nazis worked many to death in labor camps and massacred others.
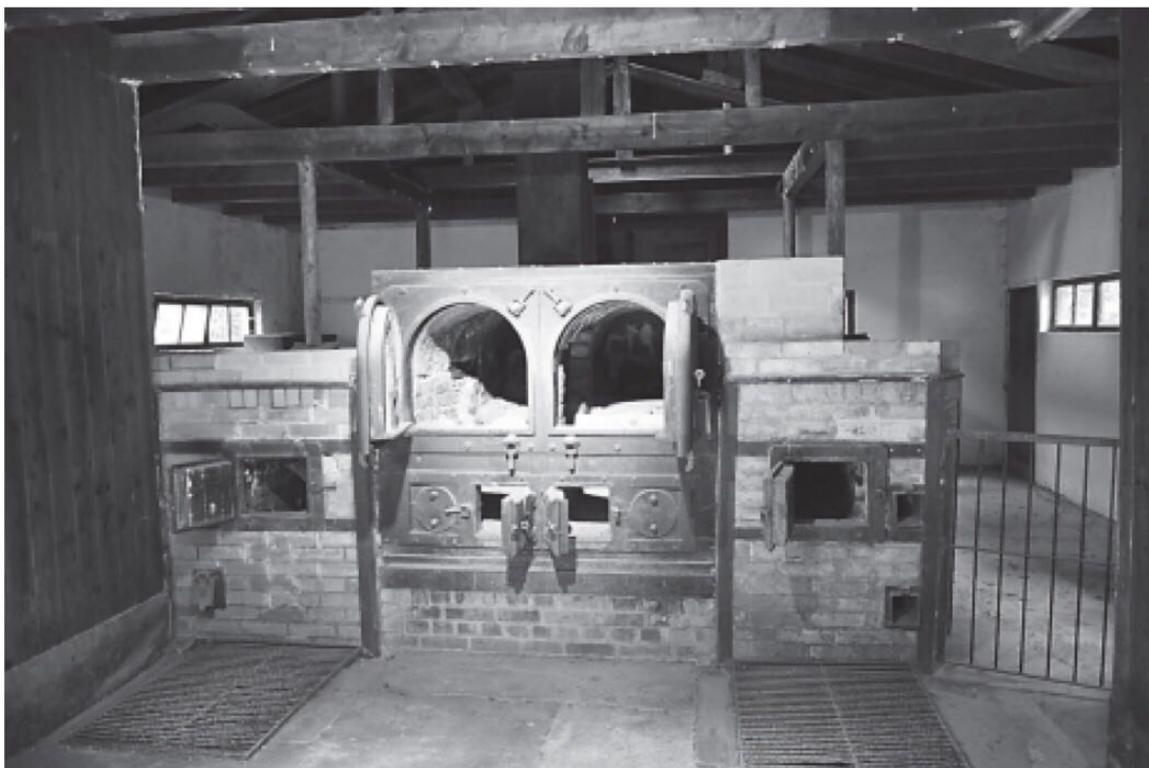
One shocking aspect of the Holocaust was how the Nazis used technology—trains, poisonous gas, and ovens for cremation (shown here)—to make their attempt at genocide more efficient and more deadly.

The Japanese During the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Japanese soldiers killed at least 100,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians in what was called the Rape of Nanking. During World War II, although the Japanese did not carry out a dedicated policy of genocide that paralleled the Holocaust, millions of people died as a result of their policies. Under the program "**Asia for Asiatics**," Japan forced people they had conquered into labor programs. These included service in the military, on public works projects, and on farms to reduce the food shortage in Japan. The Japanese army forced women in Korea, China, and other occupied countries to become "comfort women," prostitutes for Japanese soldiers. Because of these harsh programs, more than a million civilians died in Vietnam alone. Perhaps an equal number of Allied prisoners of war and local workers perished while doing forced labor for Japan.

The Allies Air warfare carried out by the United States and the other Allies brought a new type of deadly combat to civilians. The Allies' **firebombing** of German cities, particularly **Hamburg** in 1943 and **Dresden** in 1945, caused large casualties. The number of deaths in Hamburg was about 50,000. Dresden had fewer casualties, maybe 25,000 deaths, as 15 square miles of its historic city center were destroyed. The United States also used firebombing in **Tokyo**.

The final two air attacks in the war, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, produced not only high casualties, but tremendous fear about the destructiveness of a future war fought with nuclear weapons. These weapons had been developed by an international group of scientists working in the United States. The scientific achievement was impressive, but it also required developments in other areas to have military use. For example, to deliver the nuclear weapons required improvements in airplane design to allow long flights carrying heavy loads. There is a great difference between the planes used in World War II and those used in World War I. In addition, the widespread use of the aircraft carrier by several powers extended the airplanes' reach. Using these developments in planes and ships, countries could carry out air attacks anywhere in the world.

Genocide and Human Rights

The global community said "never again" to genocide after the horrors of the Holocaust. However, genocides continued to occur.

Bosnia Ethnic conflict drove the genocide in **Bosnia**. The end of World War I brought with it the creation of several new nations in Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia. That country was home to Serbians, who were Eastern Orthodox Christians; Croats and Slovenes, who were Catholic; and Muslims in the regions of Bosnia and Kosovo. Marshal Josip Broz Tito led communist Yugoslavia from the end of World War II until his death in 1980. As dictator, Tito tried to suppress separatist tendencies among the peoples of Yugoslavia by keeping Serbia and Croatia, the two largest republics, from dominating the smaller ones.

After the Soviet Union collapsed, so did Yugoslavia. When Slovenia, Croatia, and Montenegro declared independence, they each defined citizenship in terms of ethnic background and religion. Serbian nationalists led by the demagogue **Slobodan Miloševicć** were particularly emphatic about ethnic purity. Serb forces, in attempts to dominate states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, committed horrific acts of **ethnic cleansing** against Muslims from Bosnia and Kosovo, killing or driving people who were not part of the main ethnic group from their homes. Bosniaks, Kosovars, and Croats fought back, causing more casualties. Serb soldiers raped untold numbers of Muslim women. In total, more than 300,000 people in the region perished over the course of Yugoslavia's **balkanization**, or disintegration into separate states.

Rwanda One of the smallest countries in Africa, **Rwanda** was the site of one of the worst genocides in modern history. Ethnic and tribal hatred going

back to the colonial era was behind the slaughter. Belgian colonizers had treated the minority **Tutsis** better than the majority **Hutus**. The latter group resented all the power that the Tutsis enjoyed. When Rwanda won independence from Belgium in 1962, the Hutu majority easily won control of the government and took revenge on the Tutsis by discriminating against them. In response, tens of thousands of Tutsis fled the country and formed a rebel army.

In 1993, Tutsi and Hutu forces in Rwanda began negotiations for a coalition government in which both ethnic groups would share power. The negotiations were cut short in 1994 when Rwanda's president, a Hutu, was killed in an airplane crash, supposedly shot down by rebel forces. This incident lit the flames of genocide. Over the next three months or so, between 500,000 and 1 million civilians—mostly Tutsis and some moderate Hutus—were killed. Some sources estimate that casualties were even higher.

International responses ranged from insufficient to callous. United Nations peacekeepers were instructed *not* to use force to restore order. There were also too few peacekeepers to protect all Rwandans. Individual countries, including the United States, evacuated their personnel from the country after Belgian peacekeepers were killed. UN peacekeepers and individual nations failed to evacuate any Rwandans. The Rwandan genocide focused attention on the lack of leadership in the international community. It became clear that the United Nations needed to think seriously about its role in violent conflicts if it wanted to effectively protect human lives and human rights.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

A school building in Rwanda has space set aside for a display of skulls, bones, and mummified bodies to remind people of the genocide of hundreds of thousands of people in 1994.

Sudan Another genocide erupted in 2003 in **Darfur**, a region located in western Sudan. Most of the people involved were Muslim, but some were nomadic pastoralists of Arab descent, while others were non-Arab farmers. The government of Sudan was controlled by Arab Muslims. Two Darfur rebel groups composed of non-Arabs took up arms against the Sudanese government in response to attacks from nomads. In response, the government unleashed Arab militants known as the **Janjaweed** (translation: "evil men on horseback") on the region. Together with Sudanese forces, the Janjaweed attacked and destroyed hundreds of villages throughout Darfur, slaughtering more than 200,000 people, mostly non-Arab Muslim Africans. More than one million people were displaced, creating a refugee crisis that spilled into neighboring Chad. Despite negotiations, appeals, and the **International Criminal Court** charging Sudan's President **Omar al-Bashir** with war crimes, the genocide continued.

The genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Sudan became stains on the conscience of the world. International organizations and the broad global community were supposed to defend human rights after the Jewish Holocaust. Considering the millions of lives lost and human dignity shattered, the failure of the international community appeared obvious. (Connect: Write a paragraph comparing genocides in Africa during the last three decades with the Holocaust.)

KEY TERMS BY THEME

GOVERNMENT: War	**GOVERNMENT: Countries**	**TECHNOLOGY: Warfare**
Armistice Day	Bosnia	firebombing
Hamburg	Rwanda	
Dresden	Darfur	**ENVIRONMENT: Disease**
Tokyo		influenza epidemic
	GOVERNMENT: Leaders	pandemic
GOVERNMENT: Policies	Heinrich Himmler	
genocide	Slobodan Milošević	**SOCIETY: Discrimination**
Final Solution	Omar al-Bashir	Nuremberg Laws
Holocaust		ghetto
Asia for Asiatics	**CULTURE: Movements**	Janjaweed
ethnic cleansing	Lost Generation	
balkanization		
	CULTURE: Ethnic Groups	
GOVERNMENT: Organizations	Armenians	
International Criminal Court	Tutsis	
	Hutus	

Causation in Global Conflict

As long as there are sovereign nations possessing great power, war is inevitable.

—German-American Physicist Albert Einstein (1945)

Essential Question: What was the relative significance of the causes of global conflict from 1900 to the present?

The 20th century saw significant changes to the global order. At the beginning of the century, the West dominated the global political order. However, the First and Second World Wars resulted in a power shift within the Western political sphere from Western Europe to the United States. These global conflicts also resulted in the emergence of new states around the world as independence movements ended the colonial relationships that existed in the previous century.

The Ottoman, Russian, and Qing empires that had existed at the beginning of the century all collapsed due to internal decay and political revolutions. Other areas of the world also saw political upheaval as nations struggled with both economic depression and calls for greater democracy. Often, though, totalitarian governments emerged out of these political and economic crises.

Political Causes of Global Conflict in the 20th Century

Many historians refer to World War I as the first "total war." The war was fought on an industrial scale by soldiers from around the world, including soldiers from colonial areas. The combatants discovered more, and deadlier, methods of killing each other. Long-range artillery, poison gas, flamethrowers, and machine guns led to the deaths of millions of soldiers on both sides. The roots of this conflict lie in several main causes. A balance of power in Europe had been established during the 19th century through a constantly shifting system of alliances. However, these alliances proved instrumental in escalating the scope of the war as European nations jumped into the conflict to honor their commitments.

Nationalism was a growing force for political change in Europe. As such, Serbian nationalism was the main spark that created conflict in the Balkans, known as the "powder keg of Europe," which led to the expansion of the war

throughout Europe. An arms race among the great powers of Europe helped to increase the possibility of war as well. Lastly, the imperial rivalry among Western nations, as well as Japan and Russia, helped to increase tensions over commerce and access to resources.

Colonial Soldiers Serving with the British Army in World War I	
Colony or Dominion	Number of Soldiers Who Served (1914–1918)
Canada	418,218
Australia	331,814
New Zealand	112,223
South and East Africa	76,164
India	1,500,000
West Indies	16,000

Source: Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War 1914-1920

Some of the same issues that brought about World War I also led to World War II. Fascism was nationalism in an extreme form. The fascist governments of Germany and Italy defied international pressure and treaties when they invaded neighboring territories. The alliance of Germany, Italy, and, eventually, Japan was opposed by the Western democracies of Great Britain and France. However, it was the inability of the Western democracies to offer a strong response to Germany's aggressive militarism that launched Europe and the rest of the world into war. Additionally, Japan's imperial ambitions in Asia were the main cause for war to break out in the Pacific between Japan and the United States. (Connect: Compare the motivating factors for wars fought in the 20th century with wars fought in the 19th century. See Topic 6.3.)

Economic Causes of Global Conflict in the 20th Century

The primary economic cause of global conflict in the early 20th century was the acquisition and control of markets and resources. In the 19th century, Western European governments, followed by the United States, Russia, and Japan, began policies to take control of trade, territory, or both in Asia and Africa. In previous centuries, armed conflict would often erupt over the rivalry to control the natural resources of these areas. However, as the Industrial Revolution spread from Great Britain to the rest of Western Europe, and then to the United States, Russia, and Japan, control over markets to sell consumer goods was a primary motive of imperialistic policies. Attempts were made, particularly in the late 19th century, to prevent wars over trade but these attempts had mixed success.
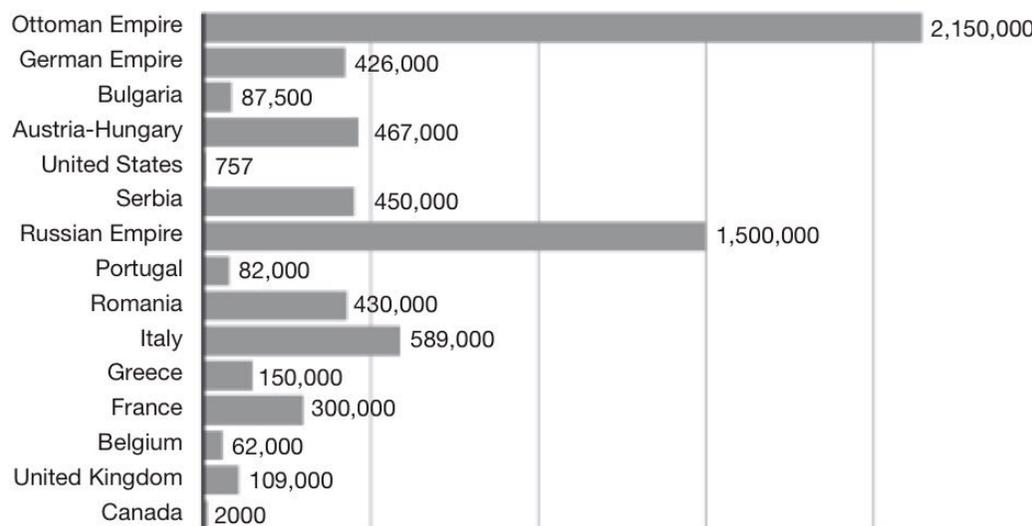
The Opium Wars, the First and Second Sino-Japanese War, the Crimean War, and eventually the First and Second World Wars had these economic factors as some of their root causes. For example, the desire of Imperial Japan to take over territory in Asia to obtain sources of oil, rice, rubber, and other raw materials led to the decision of the United States (and other countries) to place an embargo on Japan that cut off oil and steel exports from the United States to Japan. The result was the Japanese decision to attack the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, causing the United States to enter World War II. Economic crisis also helped lead to global conflict. The severe economic effects of the Great Depression (1929–1939), including high unemployment and low wages, led to the rise of populist leaders like Adolf Hitler who promised to rebuild the economies of their states.

Effects of Global Conflict in the 20th Century

Rapid advances in science and technology led to a better understanding of the natural world and brought about advances in many areas, including communication, transportation, industry, agriculture, and medicine. States also improved their war-making capabilities. As a result, one of the most significant effects of the global conflicts of the 20th century was the immense loss of life as warfare became deadlier to both combatants and civilians alike. Large-scale aerial bombing that targeted populated areas, deadly policies that targeted specific minority groups such as European Jews, and the use of new military technology such as the atomic bomb all meant that global conflict would cause unprecedented deaths among the civilian population. In addition, mass starvation and crimes against humanity were also responsible for millions of civilian deaths during the 20th century.

Civilian Deaths in the First World War

Country	Deaths
Ottoman Empire	2,150,000
German Empire	426,000
Bulgaria	87,500
Austria-Hungary	467,000
United States	757
Serbia	450,000
Russian Empire	1,500,000
Portugal	82,000
Romania	430,000
Italy	589,000
Greece	150,000
France	300,000
Belgium	62,000
United Kingdom	109,000
Canada	2000

Source: Centre Européen Robert Schuman

Civilian Deaths in the Second World War

Country	Deaths
United Kingdom	67,200
Soviet Union	15,000,000
Poland	5,360,000
Philippines	500,000
Netherlands	284,000
Japan	800,000
India	2,400,000
Hungary	280,000
Germany	3,000,000
French Indochina	1,500,000
France	350,000
Czechoslovakia	320,000
China	20,000,000
Belgium	74,000
Austria	123,700
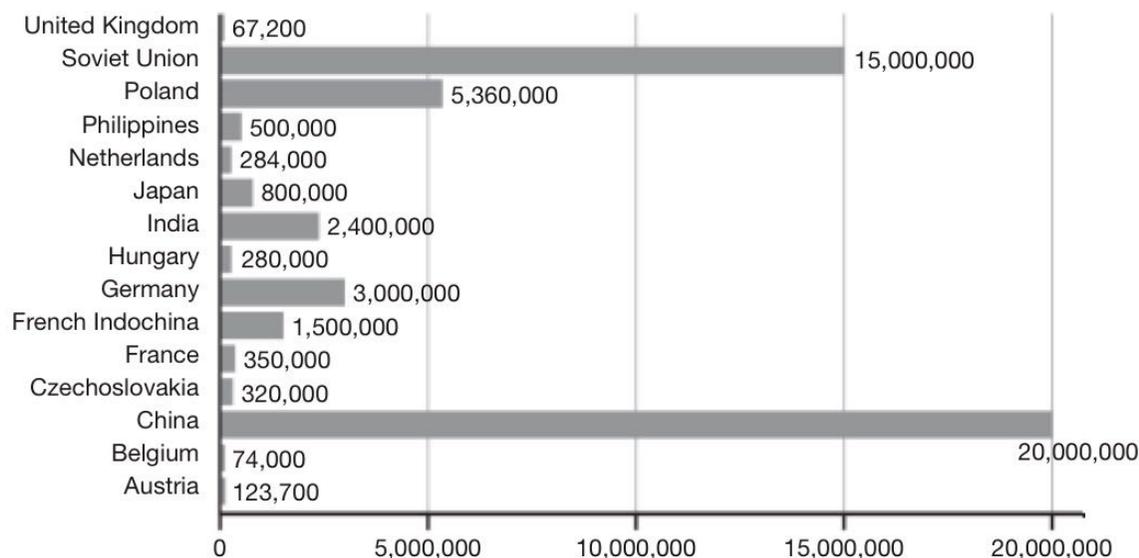
Source: Centre Européen Robert Schuman

Global conflict in the 20th century also brought about notable political changes in the world. In the beginning of the century, the Mexican Revolution took place because many Mexicans wanted political and economic reforms. Populist movements formed and, eventually, Mexico created a new constitution with more political and economic rights for the majority of Mexicans. However, true democratic institutions in Mexico emerged and evolved slowly. As a result of World War I, regime change occurred in both the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. In addition to the effect of the First World War, ineffective or corrupt leadership was also instrumental in bringing about the political revolutions that toppled the monarchies of these states. While the Ottoman government was replaced by a Western-style democracy, the Russian Revolution instituted a totalitarian government headed by the Communist Party.

Resentment of the Treaty of Versailles, the peace agreement that ended World War I, also helped to bring about totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy. These fascist governments appealed to people's nationalism and desire to restore the country's glory and standing in the world, leading their nations toward war.

World War I weakened the colonial powers, and after the war, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson advocated for the self-determination of people to choose their government or nation-state. This was seen as a sign that colonies had the right to demand independence. Many people in the colonies also felt that their support of or active participation in the war meant that they were owed some form of self-government. When those in power did not meet these demands, organized independence movements formed or grew.

The desire for independence continued to grow after World War II, as the colonial powers were further weakened by the war and unable to afford the cost and labor power to rebuild and maintain their empires. Many new

states formed during this time. Former colonies that had a small foreign settler population gained their independence relatively peacefully, while colonies that had a sizeable foreign settler population often experienced a more violent process towards independence.

Perhaps the largest independence movement, in terms of the number of people involved, took place in India. Relying on passive resistance and civil disobedience, the people of the British colony of India achieved independence in 1947. However, due to religious and ideological differences, the Indian subcontinent was partitioned into a Muslim-dominated Pakistan (which originally included East Pakistan, now Bangladesh) and a Hindu-dominated India. (See Topic 8.6.) The tensions between Muslims and Hindus living in British India did not disappear with independence. These tensions have led to several military conflicts between the two countries since partition.

Another significant effect of the global conflicts of the 20th century was a repositioning of power in the Western countries—away from Western Europe and to the United States. Because of the participation of the United States in both the First and Second World Wars, as well as the smaller scale of destruction the U.S. experienced compared to Western European countries, the United States became a world power, playing the dominant role in the transatlantic relationship. However, the Soviet Union soon emerged as a second superpower in opposition to the United States.