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Europe and the World Before the Great War, 1900–1914

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Chronology

1899–1902	Boer War
1901	Death of Queen Victoria
1904–1905	Russo-Japanese War
1905	Revolution in Russia
	Tsar Nicholas II issues the October Manifesto

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1906	Algeciras Conference
	Great Britain launches HMS *Dreadnought*
1908	Austria-Hungary annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina
1914	Assassination of Franz Ferdinand

If a member of "generation z" could somehow be transported back to the turn of the twentieth century, after the initial shock from the lack of modern technology, he or she would notice many similarities between the two periods. Both were periods of rapid change in every aspect of life. The pace of discoveries in the natural sciences was accelerating, providing new knowledge of how the universe machine operated. The new social sciences claimed to apply the scientific method to studying how people interacted with society. For many, the twentieth century promised an improved quality of life for all. While most saw peace and prosperity continuing, others saw dark clouds gathering over the horizon.

What would appear most different to our imaginary time traveler would be the international order. The twenty-first-century global village with its great diversity from which our time traveler came would not exist. Instead, with a virtual monopoly on certain kinds of scientific and technological knowledge, Western Civilization was able to exert imperialistic force all over the world by the end of the nineteenth century. Some of the more ancient civilizations—e.g., India, China, the Middle East, and North Africa—managed to retain their distinctive cultures while benefiting from Western science and technology. In some cases, Western influences were resisted by force, as in the Boxer Rebellion in China (1899–1901). Japan avoided becoming a victim of the new imperialism by embracing Western scientific, economic, military, and political practices while preserving its distinctive culture.

Europe and the World

Remnants of the overseas empires established during the Age of Exploration and Discovery (c. 1450–c. 1650) remained, but interest in overseas empires had waned by the mid-nineteenth century.

Those early outposts of Western influence around the globe mainly originated for economic reasons. According to the then-accepted economic theory (mercantilism), a fixed amount of wealth existed. The goal of a nation was to increase its share of the wealth, usually measured in precious metals, for example, gold and silver. International trade was one means by which a nation could either increase or decrease its share of wealth. A favorable trade balance increased a nation's share of the wealth, whereas an unfavorable balance of trade decreased its portion.

The new seaborn trade birthed a commercial revolution and the rise of capitalism (sixteenth to eighteenth century). The Scientific Revolution (1543–1687) provided a mechanical model of the universe governed by cause-and-effect natural laws. The intellectuals of the Enlightenment who followed the Scientific Revolution tried to find similar natural laws that governed society. Economic thinkers such as Adam Smith (1723–1790) believed they could identify the natural laws of economics. This new understanding of economics, often referred to as *laissez-faire,* free-market capitalism, or classical liberal economics, helped stimulate the Industrial Revolution that led to the new age of imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The new economic theories that fueled industrialization required free access to raw materials and markets but did not require control of the areas that provided the raw materials or markets for finished goods. Most European leaders as late as 1870 believed that apart from a few exceptions, colonies cost more than they were worth. Why be burdened by tracts of overseas territory that were expensive to administer and provided little benefits? The lack of interest in colonies shifted quickly to a fast-paced and dangerous competition for colonies during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The New Imperialism

There were a variety of motivations behind the new imperialism, and they were not different from those that fueled the Age of Exploration and Discovery. Some, including Christian missionaries and humanitarians, wanted to bring the benefits of modern

civilization to remote parts of the world. Some sought to explore unknown lands and people groups to satisfy curiosity and further knowledge of the non-Western world. Christian missionaries and humanitarians often built orphanages, hospitals, and schools for boys and girls, introduced agricultural technology, and tried to defend the native people from colonial exploiters. However, the two primary motives were first economic gain and, second, the role that colonies played in the ongoing struggle for power between the Great Powers in Europe.

The rapid industrialization in the West increased the demand for raw materials, some of which, like petroleum and rubber, were necessary to modernize existing industries and create new ones. As the standard of living increased for the working classes, there was an increased demand for items from distant parts of the world, such as coffee and tea. Mass production and distribution of manufactured products required reliable supplies of raw materials and new and expanding markets for finished goods. The seemingly insatiable need for new markets was due in part to the unequal distribution of wealth in the industrialized nations of the West. The concentration of wealth in fewer hands, combined with the inability of the working classes to purchase the ever-increasing quantities of goods they produced, drove the investment of excess capital abroad.

Governments of turn-of-the-century industrialized nations abandoned free trade in favor of neomercantilism to protect the profits of existing and emerging industries. The result was the creation of colonial empires that served as large, worldwide trading communities. Tariffs on imported goods, combined with restrictions on competition within the colonial empires, helped protect the upper classes' luxurious lifestyles while providing limited improvements in the working classes of the imperial powers. Except for the British Empire, however, the economic model fell short, as the cost of colonies often surpassed any economic benefit they provided for the mother country. More important, therefore, was what colonies meant in terms of national prestige and rivalry among the great powers.

Before the emergence of air power after the Great War, naval power determined a nation's rank among the great powers. Colonies required navies to protect them, and navies required

coaling stations. Possessing overseas territories and navies to protect them became a sign of great power status. The interrelationship between seaborne commerce, large naval forces, and imperial expansion was the subject of a series of lectures by US Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), published in 1890 as a book titled *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660–1783*. He argued that sea power was the key to a nation's military strength and economic growth. Mahan argued that Britain's control of the seas accounted for its imperial dominance.

The Influence of Sea Power Upon History greatly influenced the development of modern navies. After reading Mahan's magnum opus, Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941) invited Mahan to lunch aboard his yacht, *Hohenzollern*, then ordered copies of the book placed aboard every ship in the German Navy. Mahan influenced the imperialist foreign policies of US Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) and William McKinley (1843–1901), and the powerful influencer of American foreign policy, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (1850–1924). Inspired by Mahan's study, the United States began building a navy capable of operating in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It became the "big stick" of American foreign policy at the turn of the twentieth century.

In defending America's annexation of Hawaii (1898), Mahan argued that sea power was critical in determining a nation's position and prosperity. Big navies, seaborne commerce, economic prosperity at home, and foreign colonies were all bound together. Behind it all lay the influence of Social Darwinism. According to Social Darwinism, the greatness of a nation or a people was determined by struggle, ultimately a struggle won or lost on the battlefield. The argument went that the "fittest" people would naturally triumph in any such conflict for the betterment of both parties. To bring the supposition to its ironic—and ultimately tragic—conclusion, progress would stop if peace prevailed, and Western civilization would stagnate.

The colonial peoples were mere pawns in the high-stakes power struggle between the great powers. Westerners viewed the occupants of the world's underdeveloped areas through lenses colored by theories of evolution and Social Darwinism. They presented a picture of the native peoples as childlike and backward, souls in need

of "uplifting" from the darkness in which they seemed to exist and an introduction to the benefits of civilization, whether or not they wished such.

Most Westerners were caught up in the romantic image of colonialism portrayed by popular authors like Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936). Tales of explorers opening up the interior of Africa, still labeled the "Dark Continent" on many maps, or encounters with the mysterious ancient civilizations of Asia fed the popular imagination. One well-known example of how widespread support for imperialism was encouraged, or even manufactured, was the highly publicized search to find the Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone (1813–1873), who was reported missing somewhere in Africa. Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904), himself an explorer, convinced the *New York Herald* and London's *Daily Telegraph* editors to sponsor his search for Livingstone. The editors hoped to increase their newspapers' daily circulation; Stanley sought fame and fortune. Both were successful.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europeans and Europeans living abroad in North America and elsewhere took pride in the fact that the West's faith in progress and optimism was about to triumph over ignorance and darkness and usher in a new era of universal peace and prosperity. The humble peasant or laborer took pride in knowing that their country's flag was worldwide, on the high seas, and in the far corners of the globe.

The "Positive" Side of the New Imperialism

Europeans before the Great War divided the world into "civilized" and "uncivilized" peoples, much as we today speak of "developed" and "developing" nations. To be considered among the civilized nations meant being "Westernized," which in turn meant accepting the worldview and lifestyle of Europeans. "Westernized" peoples included more than the residents of Europe itself. The United States and Canada in North America and Australia and New Zealand in the South Pacific Ocean were also included. "European" and "civilized" were often used interchangeably.

Westernization offered more than a few benefits. Westerners were better housed, fed, and clothed than people anywhere else in the world. They lived longer, and their infant mortality rate was lower than in the non-Western world. Nearly 100 percent of the population of northwestern Europe was literate, whereas, in much of the non-Western world, the literacy rate was barely above zero. Europeans no longer lived in fear of unseen forces. Scientific knowledge gave them mastery over nature, showering them with a cornucopia of material blessings. They also governed themselves, while virtually the entire non-Western world was subject to the more advanced Europeans.

By 1900, the "relics of barbarism," such as slavery, infanticide, blood sports, and torture, were no longer allowed in the European nations. Even women, who were still denied the vote and full equality with men in employment and education, possessed the same human rights as every other human being. And where human rights clashed with cultural or religious practice, human rights were deemed superior. European Women were not subject to such barbaric practices as genital mutilation or *suttee*, burning a Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyre. Nor were they condemned to a lifetime of illiteracy and unquestioned submission to the arbitrary will of father or husband. This message of universal and inalienable human rights went, if not always practiced, wherever the might of European imperialism was felt.

Whatever benefits the colonial people gained from Western influence must be viewed along with the negative impact of imperialism that continues to disturb world peace in the twenty-first century. Political instability in Africa, for example, is partly because the borders of the African nations today remain largely those of the former colonies, borders that were established without regard to centuries-old tribal boundaries. Thus, the post-colonial African countries are plagued by internal conflicts between cultural and religious minorities that undermine efforts to create national unity.

There were, of course, other civilizations in the world whose ancestry reached further back than Europe's. China, India, Japan, and the Middle East all possessed civilized characteristics, for example, a socioeconomic class structure and systematic philosophical

thought. However, by the mid-1800s, all of the great non-European civilizations were but shadows of their past glory and vulnerable to the industrialized West in need of markets and resources to fuel its rapid development.

The Dark Side of the New Imperialism

There was a not-so-romantic reality to the new imperialism, the best-known example of which was the Belgian King Léopold II's private rubber plantation in Central Africa. Léopold II promoted his exploitation of the Congo Basin as a purely philanthropic and humanitarian effort to promote the end of slavery and the introduction of civilization to Central Africa: "To open to civilization the only part of our globe which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness which hangs over entire peoples, is, I dare say, a crusade worthy of this century of progress" (Hochschild 1998, p. 49). With the help of Henry Morton Stanley, Léopold laid claim to 905,000 square miles (2,343,939.24 km^2) of Central Africa with a population believed to have been around 30 million, which he named the "Congo Free State."

Because the Congo was recognized internationally as Léopold II's personal property, there were no legal restrictions on how he chose to exploit the Congo or its people. The methods employed by Léopold's agents to extract the Congo's natural resources—gold, ivory, and rubber—stand as one of the most shocking examples of how brutal imperialism could become. During the 23 years in which the Congo was Léopold's private property, the native population decreased by an estimated one-half due to the ruthless use of forced labor.

Léopold's Congo Free State was divided into districts. Each district and each worker were given near-impossible quotas of, for example, rubber that each district and each worker was required to produce. To enforce his demands and subdue the native people, Léopold established a military and police force (*Force Publique*) of white mercenaries and Africans recruited or drafted into its ranks. The officers were recruited from Europe, the British Empire, and

the United States. When workers failed to meet their quotas, either they or their wives or children suffered the amputation of a hand or foot, an arm or leg. As proof that they performed their duty, labor gang bosses delivered their superiors' baskets of severed limbs, primarily hands.

When reports of Léopold's barbarism began to appear in Europe, people found them hard to believe. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) provided descriptions and photographs of the atrocities in *The Crime of the Congo* (1909). Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) published *Heart of Darkness* in 1902, a novel based on his experiences as a steamboat captain on the Congo River. Mark Twain published *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905), a fictional monologue of Léopold defending his exploitation of the Congo. In November 1908, Belgium's Parliament yielded to popular and diplomatic pressure and ended Léopold II's personal rule. Ownership was transferred to the Kingdom of Belgium, and its name changed to the Belgium Congo.

The Congo Free State will forever stand as an extreme example of the horrors of imperialism, but there were others. When the Herrero, a native pastoral people in German South-West Africa, revolted in 1904, German forces suppressed the revolt and reduced the Herero population from an estimated 80,000 to an estimated 15,000. Similarly, in German South-East Africa, the Maji uprising of 1905–1907 was put down at the cost of between 80,000 and 100,000 African lives. During the Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902), British forces under Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener's (1850–1916) command employed a "scorch earth" campaign to defeat the Boers. "The British forces systematically burned crops, destroyed farms, homesteads, and even raped Boer women and children as young as ten" (Pitzer 2017).

Many Americans are surprised to learn that the United States was an imperial power with colonial possessions at the turn of the twentieth century. The United States was, from its founding in 1783, an imperialist nation. Like Russia, the United States built a transcontinental empire stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. In some cases, the territory was added by purchase from other imperialists, for example, the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 or Alaska from Russia in 1867. In other cases, the territory



The German crown prince Wilhelm stands over a tiger he shot in a big game hunting trip to Ceylon, c. 1912, a fitting symbol of European dominance in the world before the Great War. © ullsteinbild/TopFoto.

was acquired by conquest, as in the Mexican–American War (1846–1848) and the Spanish–American War (1898). Hawaii (1898) and the Panama Canal Zone (1903) were acquired by dubious means, including intrigue, revolution, and annexation. The United States claimed more than one hundred uninhabited and unclaimed islands under the Guano Islands Act of 1856. The islands were a significant source of guano—bird poop—consisting almost entirely of nitrogen, phosphate, and potassium. Before the development of chemical fertilizers, guano was very much in demand for agriculture.

The United States asserted a kind of informal sovereignty within the Western Hemisphere. With the Roosevelt Corollary (1904) added to the Monroe Doctrine (1823), the United States claimed the right to, and at times did, intervene at will in the affairs of any Latin American state where American interests were threatened.

The traditional great powers of Europe, joined by the United States, were the masters of the world on the eve of the Great War. But the colonial empires could not last first because colonialism is finite. Eventually, as was the case by 1914, every bit of land and every island was claimed. Also, the introduction of modernism, including Western values, necessary for the profitable exploitation of the colonies, led to national liberation movements and the end of colonialism.

The Great Powers

Italy was considered by many in 1900 to be a great power, but, as the events of the Great War were to demonstrate, this was more a clever ruse on Italy's part than an accurate assessment of its resources. At least on the surface, the five European great powers in 1900 were the same five great powers in 1815, Great Britain, Germany (Prussia), France, Russia, and Austria-Hungary (Austria). In fact, there were only three great powers since Russia and Austria-Hungary lagged in those areas vital to maintaining great power status into the twentieth century. Both resisted the modernist ideas that came out of the Enlightenment, especially liberalism. There were signs of industrial development in the Austrian portion of the Habsburg lands and Russia. Still, both remained predominately agrarian states of a few fabulously wealthy landlords and a multitude of poverty-stricken peasants.

Great Britain (United Kingdom)

Great Britain possessed the world's largest empire and the world's largest navy to protect it. Although its economic growth rate was slipping behind Germany and the United States, especially in the critical steel, iron, and coal industries, Great Britain nevertheless lay at the center of world trade, with vast, highly profitable foreign investments. Also, London remained the financial capital of the world.

Great Britain possessed a stable, two-party parliamentary system. The trend throughout the nineteenth century had been in the direction of steady, if at times slow, social and political reform. With the Great Reform Bill of 1832, the Reform Bill of 1867, and the Franchise Bill of 1884, Parliament gradually extended suffrage until virtually every adult male could vote. By 1900, it appeared that Great Britain would make a smooth transition to democracy.

The Liberal Party, which came to power in 1906 and remained in power until after the Great War, actually presided over the transition from aristocratic conservatism to popular democracy and the first signs of the emergence of a welfare state. In 1909, David Lloyd George (1863–1945), chancellor of the exchequer and leader of the radicals within the Liberal Party, presented a budget that proposed a revision of the tax system, placing the burden for financing the new social legislation upon the wealthiest classes. It was a radical new departure that foreshadowed the future British welfare state. The proposed budget led, not unexpectedly, to a showdown between the two houses of Parliament.

The outcome came in the form of the Parliament Act of 1911. The House of Lords lost the power to veto bills that originated in and were passed by the House of Commons. The Lords could delay the passage of money bills for only one month and all other bills for up to two years. They could suggest amendments to money bills but could no longer veto them. The power of the House of Lords was severely curtailed, making the House of Commons unequivocally the center of political affairs in Britain.

The Liberals remained in power between 1906 and 1914, partly through agreements with the Labour Party and the Irish delegation to Parliament. By 1914, the Labour Party was increasingly dissatisfied with its alliance with the Liberals. Working-class militancy increased between 1911 and 1914. The idea that change would come only through direct action gained ground. There was a series of strikes in 1911 and 1912. During the spring of 1914, transport workers, railwaymen, and miners formed a "triple industrial alliance" beyond the control of the Labour Party and the union officials.

In 1914, the House of Commons passed the Government of Ireland Act 1914, also known as the Home Rule Act. Opposition

to the Home Rule Act in the House of Lords was overcome when the Liberal Government invoked provisions of the Parliament Act of 1911. Ireland would receive home rule within the British Empire without any special provision for predominately Protestant Northern Ireland (Ulster). Civil war seemed possible when many in the British army indicated they would not enforce Irish Home Rule. A militant women's suffrage movement added to the labor unrest, and Irish home rule created an atmosphere of "domestic anarchy" in Great Britain on the eve of the Great War.

Germany

Germany, after 1900, was the dominant power on the continent and Great Britain's leading global rival. On the eve of the Great War, Germany produced nearly a third more pig iron, as much steel as Great Britain, and only slightly less coal. Having industrialized much later than Great Britain, German industry was able to take advantage of new power sources and techniques. Hence, its electrical and chemical industries flourished. German industry produced far more than could be consumed within the Reich. After 1880, Germany rapidly increased its share of world trade. By the outbreak of war in 1914, its merchant marine was the second largest in the world, behind Great Britain's.

Germany's surge to world-power status was not due only to its industrial development. Germany led the world in scientific development. Although no longer simply the land of "poets and philosophers," it still held a commanding lead in intellectual and cultural affairs. Its educational system, from elementary schools to graduate universities, was the model for, and envy of, all other developed counties. The number of German university students in 1911 was nearly twice that of students enrolled in universities in any of the European great powers.

In other areas, too, Germany appeared to be the most progressive nation in the world. Under Otto von Bismarck's leadership as the first chancellor (1871–1890) of the German Reich, Germany was the first nation to develop a social insurance system. The system

provided accident and sickness insurance, old-age pensions, and unemployment benefits. English workers would have to wait until 1906–1914, and American workers until Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal (1933–1939) to receive such benefits.

But Germany was far from being a democratic country in the same mold as Great Britain and France. Political liberalism was defeated in Germany in the revolutions of 1848. After that, German liberals expended their energies on developing economic liberalism. Conservatives carried out the task of achieving national unity in 1871 with the enthusiastic support of the masses. Consequently, Germany emerged from the nineteenth century as one of the world's great industrial powers, but with a governmental system that one might best describe as pseudo-constitutional absolutism.

Outwardly, Germany appeared as a constitutional monarchy, but that was only an illusion based upon the fact that the *Reichstag*, or parliament, was elected by universal manhood suffrage of all citizens over the age of 25. In fact, the *Reichstag* possessed little power other than refusing to pass the federal budget. However, past experience in the Prussian parliament (1862–1867) left the liberals convinced that this one "real" power was best left untested in the *Reichstag*.

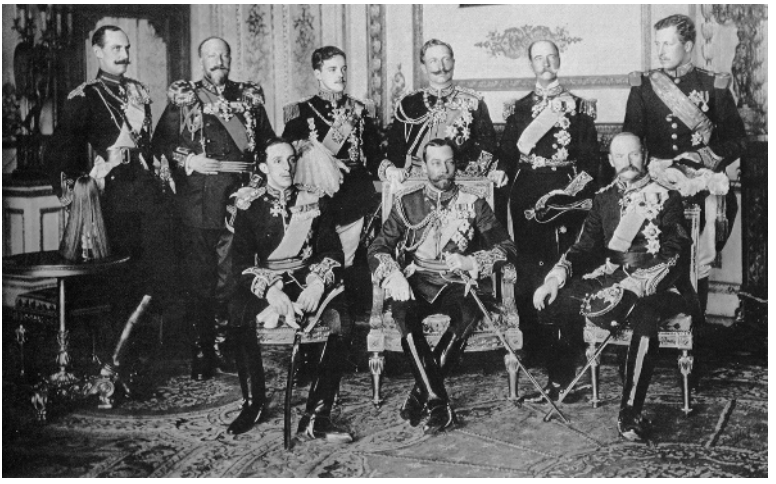
The German Reich was a federal union of individual German states in which real power was divided between Prussia, the largest state, and the *Bundesrat*, or federal parliament. The constitution vested sovereignty in the *Bundesrat,* presided over by the Reich chancellor, appointed by and accountable to the Kaiser (the King of Prussia). The delegates were appointed by their governments. All significant measures required approval by Prussia. Fourteen votes could defeat any attempt to amend the constitution in the *Bundesrat*—and Prussia had 17 votes.

The period from 1890 until Germany's defeat in 1918 is referred to as the "Wilhelmian era," for it was the Kaiser who determined the course of events in Germany. In foreign policy, Wilhelm II (1859–1941) chartered a "new course" meant to achieve Germany a commanding role in world affairs or, as he put it, a "place in the sun." Wilhelm II's new world policy, or *Weltpolitik*, brought Germany into conflict with France and Great Britain, especially the latter.

The "new course" meant colonies, and colonies meant a great navy capable of a commanding presence throughout the world. For Germany, the greatest military power in Europe, building a fleet capable of challenging British naval supremacy was a direct challenge to Great Britain. It was to prove a dangerous and ultimately disastrous course. The perilous situation for world peace was that, unlike Russia and Austria-Hungary, Germany possessed the economic power and national unity to make the Kaiser's wildest dreams possible. As in Russia and Austria-Hungary, the German emperor had real power. Whatever the constitutional trappings, Wilhelm II ruled Germany. Without responsible leadership, the German Reich was a real threat to the peace of Europe.

France

France, too, was an industrialized nation, although, on the eve of the Great War, it lagged behind Germany, Great Britain, and the



Nine of Europe's sovereigns gathered for a group picture while attending the funeral of Britain's King Edward VII. Standing fourth from left is Kaiser Wilhelm II. Seated in the middle is Britain's George V. World History Archive/ Alamy Images.

United States. France was a nation of small farmers, businessmen, and manufacturers, a country of the petit bourgeoisie rather than giant industrialists. More than half of the French still made their living from agriculture.

Of the great powers, France was the most democratic. Like Great Britain, it had a parliamentary system, but members of the upper house, or Senate, were elected in France. Also, unlike Great Britain with its two large political parties, French politics found expression in numerous small parties. The proliferation of parties meant that every government was a coalition, often only briefly in office. Between 1890 and 1914, a period of only 24 years, France had 43 different governments and 26 premiers. At the turn of the century, French politics and society were plagued by a sharp polarization between the left and right. In part, this was historic. Those on the left saw themselves as the heirs of an anticlerical, democratic revolutionary tradition reaching back to 1789. Those on the right were conservatives, who, from their base within the church and army, called for more order while blaming France's decline in power on too much democracy. In short, the Third Republic, a republic born out of France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, was divided between those who favored a republican form of government and those who desired restoration of the monarchy but were unable to determine the "rightful" monarch.

French society's divisions deepened due to the Dreyfus Affair between 1894 and 1906. In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935) was accused of selling military secrets to the Germans. Antisemitism and the need to defend the perceived honor of the French army played a prominent role in the twice-tried and twice-convicted Dreyfus and his being sentenced to life imprisonment in the infamous penal colony on Devil's Island. Believing Dreyfus was innocent, a group of noted politicians and intellectuals waged a public campaign for his release. Dreyfus was finally vindicated in 1906, but the army's image was tarnished, and France was more deeply divided. The Dreyfus Affair revealed a growing antisemitism in French society that was increasing throughout Europe and the United States on the eve of the Great War. France had a

functioning democratic government in 1914, so long as not too many demands were placed on it.

Russia

Russia's status as a great power in 1900 rested upon its immense size—it stretched across Eurasia from the eastern border of Germany to the Pacific Ocean. Like Austria-Hungary, Russia was an old-fashioned agrarian state. The Romanovs, who ruled Russia since 1613, devoted their energies to maintaining autocratic rule. The current Tsar, Nicholas II (1868–1918), upon ascending to the throne in 1894, promised: "I shall preserve the principle of autocracy as firmly and undeviatingly as did my father" (Sulzberger 1977). Nicholas II dismissed the ideas of the Enlightenment, especially any thought of liberal political reform, as simplistic nonsense. He was handsome and devoted to his family but weak-willed and easily dominated by those around him. His goal was to leave an unchanged Russia to his son and heir. He was not well suited to rule Russia in the troubled years before the Great War.

From 1900 to 1914, Russia experienced economic troubles, strikes, peasant disorders, and acts of terrorism. Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 further exposed the inability of the autocratic government to address the economic suffering of the masses resulting from the war. A peaceful procession of workers before the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on 22 January 1905 was met by soldiers firing on the demonstrators. The event known as "Bloody Sunday" resulted in Nicholas II issuing the October Manifesto authorizing the election of a Duma, or parliament, by a very restricted franchise. The Duma could debate and advise the Tsar, but no more.

Pyotr Stolypin (1862–1911), the interior minister between 1906 and 1911, carried through an important series of measures that allowed a peasant to claim his land from the village commune as a unified, independent holding. The idea behind the measure was that the peasants would be more conservative politically if they had their own property. Furthermore, if they farmed as independent farmers free of the restrictions of the commune or mir, they would be more productive.

Failure to modernize meant that the demands for justice from the workers and peasants continued to fester. The small educated class felt increasingly alienated from the government. The increased suffering that would come with Russia's failures in the Great War would bring about a revolution with unforeseeable consequences for Europe and beyond.

Austria-Hungary

Austria-Hungary often called the Dual Monarchy, maintained a cumbersome government with separate parliaments for Austria and Hungary. Common to both halves of the empire were ministries for war, finance, and foreign affairs. Uniting the vast multinational realm was the emperor, Franz Joseph (1830–1916), who had come to the throne in 1848 and would stubbornly resist death until 21 November 1916. Like Queen Victoria, Franz Joseph was the much-beloved symbol of a great historical tradition. The House of Habsburg was the oldest and most prestigious dynasty in Europe. But unlike Queen Victoria, Franz Joseph was committed to and lived in a world that no longer existed.

Austria-Hungary did not possess an overseas empire. It was a multicultural land empire held together by soldiers, bureaucrats, parades, and a living symbol of past glory. It was being torn apart by nationalism. Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croatians, and Ruthenians were only the most numerous of the minorities that inhabited the Habsburg lands. Fifty-one million inhabitants in 1911 spoke at least ten different languages. Among them were Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

Habsburg foreign policy had three primary goals: maintain and expand the empire at the expense of Turkey; prevent the spread of Russian influence in the Balkans; and combat the growth of nationalism among the South Slavs, especially the Serbian desire to create a Great Serbia.

One solution to the problem of appeasing so many minority populations was a triple monarchy with the organization of an autonomous Yugoslav (South Slav) state from portions of Austria and Hungary. Another was a federal state composed of several largely autonomous

units. The obstacle to any of the various solutions proposed was Magyar intransigence. Magyar elites dominated Hungarian politics and opposed any reorganization of the empire. Many contemporary observers felt that only the aging emperor held the empire together.

The United States of America

The twentieth century is often referred to as the American century, just as one often refers to the nineteenth century as the *Pax Britannica* (British Peace). Both terms are allusions to the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), roughly 100 years when the Roman Empire enjoyed hegemony over the Mediterranean world. During the nineteenth century, Great Britain was the dominant power on the world stage. The British Navy ruled the oceans, and London was the world's financial capital. Little happened in international affairs without consulting Great Britain. The United States of America enjoyed a similar role after the Great War and particularly after the Second World War. One cannot understand the history of the twentieth century without considering the part played by the United States.

Before the Great War, the United States emerged as a significant power in world affairs. Its population stood at 76 million in 1900. Thirteen million immigrants, including one million Jews, were added before 1914, mostly from Central and Southern Europe. The immigrants provided an energetic and willing labor force for the burgeoning northeastern industrial complex, rapidly becoming the most productive in the world. Between 1900 and 1914, manufacturing replaced agriculture as the nation's chief source of wealth. The great captains of American industry and finance, like J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), and John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), were every bit as worthy of note as any of Europe's aristocracy. Blessed with abundant natural resources, a democratic and business-friendly environment, and a vision of America's destiny, the United States was becoming the world's leading industrial power.

America's rising status was not due solely to its industrial growth. The belief in "Manifest Destiny" that drove America's expansion across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans was thrusting the United States onto the world stage during the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That spirit of nationalism that drove Europe's great powers was propelling the United States to establish its place in the sun.

When Theodore Roosevelt became president in 1901, following the assassination of President William McKinley (1843–1901), he took every opportunity to make America's presence felt in world affairs. In 1905, Roosevelt offered to mediate between Russia and Japan and hosted the peace conference at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, that ended the Russo-Japanese War. The following year, Roosevelt was instrumental in persuading his admirer, Kaiser Wilhelm II, to agree to an international conference at Algeciras, Spain, to relieve tensions over the Moroccan crisis. In 1907, he sent the new American Navy on a cruise around the world to show the flag. It was standard TR theatrics, a bit of bluster perhaps, but with a serious purpose.

A booming industrial plant, a large navy, and the acquisition of overseas colonies, euphemistically referred to as territories, were signs of great power status or aspiration for such status. The United States was emerging as a great power before the Great War but was not yet a member of the club. In 1917, it entered the war to decide its outcome in favor of the Allies but afterward retreated into isolation. Not until the second Great War, World War II, would the United States reenter world affairs. During the Cold War that followed World War II, the United States would be the dominant power in the West.

The Class Structure

The class structure of Europe before the Great War was still a pyramid, with a handful of very wealthy at the apex and a great multitude of poor at the base. At the turn of the century, the ruling aristocracy was a union of the old landed wealth and the new industrial wealth. Titled, land-owning families with pedigrees that stretched back for centuries formed marriage alliances of convenience with the wealthy new plutocrats of commerce and industry. This new elite shared a familiar pattern of education and consumption and similar economic and political views. Generally, the greater the nation's industrialization, the more closely tied was the upper middle class to the government. Peers of the realm and the giants of

industry and commerce often had the same values, political interests, and condescending attitudes toward the propertyless classes at the base of the pyramid.

The middle class was beginning to set the tone for all of society. The activities of the aristocracy, particularly the royal families of Europe, were still of great interest to many, but increasingly, standards were set by the new elite drawn from both the upper-middle class and the aristocracy. With its vast wealth, the upper class became an important source of patronage for the arts and significantly influenced fashion and style.

In later decades, the middle class viewed the era before 1914 mainly as a golden age, *les bon vieux temps*, "the good old days" in Europe, or the "Gilded Age" in American history. One measure of middle-class standing was the ability to employ one full-time servant. A prosperous middle-class family with an annual income of $10,000 (£7,308.15) could hire a staff of 10 full-time servants for only one-quarter of that income.

Economic opportunities abounded, political influence increased, and even social prominence rose for the middle class. The possibilities of achieving a comfortable income and a commensurate status were good, especially in Western Europe and America. The changing economic structure offered few options for individuals or families to own and control their enterprises, but this was compensated for by expanding management and civil service positions. Wider educational opportunities also made it possible for many to enter the professions or the upper reaches of government bureaucrats.

The middle class was not a unified group. The views of one group of businessmen often conflicted with those of professionals or other business groups. Nonetheless, the middle class was a formidable political power in states with well-established parliamentary governments. Politics was increasingly the preserve of elected and unelected professionals, and the middle class supplied more and more of these people. At the same time, the middle class furnished the leadership of most of the political parties in Europe and America. The same was true even of some socialist parties, in which renegade middle-class members formulated most policies and interpreted doctrine for the rank and file. Governments were increasingly sympathetic to middle-class views, as demonstrated by the trend toward protective tariffs and other legislation favorable to business.

The lower middle class was not a unified group. The independent lower middle class of shopkeepers, merchants, and artisans had long been a part of European and American society. It emphasized familiar middle-class ideals of family, property, and respectability. A second largely dependent component was a product of recent structural changes in the economy. As the distribution and sales of industrial goods increased and the complexity of industrial and business organizations became more complex, there was an increased demand for clerks, salespeople, and technicians. Governments also began to require increased numbers of clerical and technical personnel.

Both the independent and dependent elements of the lower middle class had in common a sense that they were distinct from the working class in terms of status and behavior. However, regarding income, the lower middle class no longer earned a great deal more than the working class. Lower middle-class people spent their money differently, buying or saving mainly for items connected with social status, such as a piano; the working class tended to spend on immediate pleasures. The intense consciousness of status was reflected not only in the behavior but also in the politics of the lower middle class, which was usually conservative, antisocialist, and sometimes anti-Semitic. In politics, the lower middle class favored parties like the Radical Party in France or the Christian Social Party in Austria, which catered to the "little man" and stressed the importance of order, property, and attachment to the nation.

Like the middle class, the lower middle class enjoyed the era's good times before 1914, including a new measure of prosperity, status, and political power. Living close to the lower classes, the lower middle class tended to take the good times less for granted than the middle class and remained more anxious about any developments that might threaten their societal position.

Most of those at the pyramid's base were better off in 1900 than at the beginning of the century. At least, this was true for those living in the industrialized nations of Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and the United States. For them, the quality of life was improving. Not only had real wages risen, but purchasing power had almost doubled in the decade before 1914. Even so, poverty was a reality for most Europeans, even those in the most prosperous nations.

Out of a population of 44.5 million in Great Britain before the war, 15.3 million earned less than £50 a year. That was when the "poverty line" was estimated as £55 a year for a family of five (Tuchman 1966). One study of London households in 1899 revealed that almost one-third of the inhabitants of the world's most prosperous city lived in poverty. Poverty was even more pervasive in the unindustrialized areas of Eastern and Southern Europe. Life expectancy in the Balkans and Spain remained at less than 35 in 1900 (Carr 1979).

Politically, the laboring classes were attracted to ideologies that, in contrast to liberalism, emphasized the equality of reward over the equality of opportunity. The two most attractive political ideologies were anarchism and Social Democracy (i.e., Marxism). Anarchism sought the violent overthrow of all existing orders and the establishment of a stateless, voluntary order. Anarchism appealed most to the urban and rural unemployed in the more backward regions of Eastern and Southern Europe.

More important than anarchism was the appeal of Social Democracy to the working classes in the more industrialized nations of Western and Northern Europe. Grounded in Marxism, Social Democracy was transforming by 1900. Known as "revisionism" in Germany, the emphasis shifted from revolution to evolution. Also, like the Fabian socialists that influenced the Labour Party in Great Britain, the revisionist Social Democrats in Germany looked more and more to a future welfare state as their goal rather than the classless utopia of Marx's dreams. The desire for "gas and water" socialism replaced the ideology of class struggle.

In general, the working class in Europe reacted to changing circumstances less according to national characteristics than to the stage of industrialization reached in a particular area. Where experience was lacking, hostility and friction resulted in radical and often violent protests. Where experience with industrial life went back over two or three generations, a durable, if not always satisfying, relationship between the working class and the industrial order emerged. The industrial system was becoming increasingly acceptable for workers in Great Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium, even if expectations always seemed to race ahead of fulfillment.

Nineteenth-Century Intellectual and Cultural Trends

As noted above, by the late nineteenth century, Western Civilization had a virtual monopoly on specific scientific and technological knowledge that enabled it to exert imperialistic force throughout the world. Unlike the non-Western world, the West unlocked the mysteries of how the universe worked. Beginning with the Scientific Revolution, Europeans began using a new method of inquiry, later known as the scientific method, that resulted in a new understanding of the universe as a machine governed by cause-and-effect natural laws. The universe was not the result of some random chance evolutionary process or the dwelling place of gods, spirits, and demons whose behavior was unpredictable. Nor was it an extension of some divine consciousness.

The Scientific Revolution arose from an understanding of reality that attributed all that exists to the handiwork of a transcendent, eternal, and omnipotent Creator who created all that is out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). This worldview (from the German word *Weltanschauung*) made the eighteenth-century Enlightenment or Age of Reason possible. The intellectuals of the Enlightenment redefined God as an architect, or clockmaker, who having created the universe machine, was no longer involved in its operation. Whatever could not be proven or explained by the application of reason, meaning the scientific method, was ruled either error or irrelevant. Despite its increasing secularization, the Western worldview remained a unified understanding of reality that gave meaning to history and the individual.

With knowledge of how the universe worked, it proved possible to discover more and more of the natural laws and, with that knowledge, create a better world, materially speaking. Thus, Western Civilization experienced an Industrial Revolution. It began in England during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, spread to the European continent after 1815, and by the end of the nineteenth century, made the rise of Western Civilization the central story of World Civilization.

The Industrial Revolution impacted every aspect of human life, not only how people lived but also what they thought, how they

understood what it meant to be human, and whether history had any meaning. Industrialization was accompanied by a second scientific revolution in the middle of the nineteenth century that renewed faith in the scientific method as the only reliable means of discovering a true understanding of reality following the romantic revolt of the first half of the century. Romanticism, metaphysics, and religion all lost ground to a growing materialist, secular worldview, the belief that matter is the ultimate reality and everything non-material is merely the product of physical forces.

The secularization of Western Civilization continued at an accelerated pace throughout the nineteenth century. Intellectually, philosophers and theologians, as well as natural and social scientists, had been actively questioning the presuppositions (or axioms) that undergirded Western civilization before the Great War. During the decades before the Great War, a new set of intellectuals brought forth new theories and scientific discoveries that called into question if the individual human being was, after all, a reasoning, rational being in an orderly, meaningful universe. Instead, the individual was adrift in a cold, mysterious universe without coherent answers to the question, "Who am I?" At best, the individual was a random chance "happening" thrown up by an impersonal universe whose ultimate reality was only the molecules of which he or she was composed. The unified worldview that distinguished Western Civilization from all other civilizations, in both its Premodern expression (commonly referred to as the Medieval Synthesis) and its secularized expression (Modernity or the Enlightenment Tradition), was replaced by a fragmented worldview known as Postmodernity or the Enlightenment Tradition in Disarray.

The individual's worldview determines the individual's values and how the individual acts. What is true of the individual is also true for society. "As a man thinketh, so is he" is true for both the individual and the corporate society individuals inhabit. The inner thought world, more so than the external forces and surroundings, determines how the individual acts. Everyone has an inner life of the mind, including the "Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker." The influence of worldview on human activity is particularly evident in the works of artists, writers, poets, and musicians, in short, the creators and guardians of culture.

Swan Song

The West's dominant position in the world was based upon several illusions, chief among them the belief that history can somehow be made to stand still. Imperialism is never more than a momentary advantage. It nourishes resentment and envy because the human spirit can never endure humiliation indefinitely. After all, human beings naturally desire to imitate what symbolizes a better life.

The long history of the rise of Western Civilization peaked during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. Many who lived during that era felt they were living at the dawn of a new age of world peace and progress. Others in Europe and abroad in the colonies sensed they were living on the verge of a history-making change that occurs from time to time in world history. Was it like the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, a waning of the old or birth of something new? Storm clouds were gathering in the sky above. In the spring and summer of 1914, the storm broke, and Europe and the world were plunged into the most destructive war since the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West.

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