

First world war

November 5, 2018

Manifest pedagogy

UPSC is regularly targeting areas in history where there is a centenary or 50 years or 25 years of occurrence of an event in the year of the exam or the one preceding it. And it is 100 years of the conclusion of the First World War so the topic becomes automatically important. Looking at this issue from alternative perspectives gives us new dimensions like:

1. The impact of important international events on the origin and growth of the Indian nationalist consciousness.
2. How did this war change the nature of nationalist response during Second World War?
3. Why did India grow economically during the three great catastrophes of the modern world?

In news

100 years of World War 1

Placing it in syllabus

History of the world will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.- their forms and effect on the society.

Dimensions

1. Causes for outbreak of the war.
2. War as a total war.

3. Consequences of war.
4. Contribution of colonies (especially India).
5. Its impact on Indian national movement.

Content

First World War is a war of monumental proportions with nearly 8 million casualties and large scale destruction of property. The causes of this manmade disaster can be seen in the international relations and imperial rivalries starting from 1870.

1. The system of Secret alliances which made the international relations anarchical.
2. Arms race between countries particularly the naval race between Britain and Germany.
3. Competitive mobilizations which lead to the outbreak of war which were generated out of fear. This set of the war machine without any control over its consequences.
4. New imperialism and competitive rivalries among countries to acquire colonies.
5. Protectionism – Economic and Trade wars
6. Nationalism as an aggressive force emerged in Europe guided and helped by the propaganda machines. The best example of which are Nationalism of France for re-conquest of Alsace and Lorraine and slavish nationalism in Balkan Peninsula.
7. Welt Politick of Kaiser Wilhelm which is based on world dominance.
8. The process of unification of Germany lead to a thorough reordering of the balance of power in Europe.
9. The final trigger for the war is the murder of Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian extremist organization which sparked off the accumulated rivalries into a great war.

Thus the First World War is a product of the underlying

intentions which festered for nearly 4 decades and tensions between the countries which lead to the immediate outbreak of war.

War as a total war

Total War is when the entire resources and population are mobilized towards the war effort, which takes priority over everything else. Further, Total War also involves prosecuting the war against the entire population of the enemy, not just against its military



Nature of total war

1. Conscription into the military for all countries involved.
2. Women working in munitions factories, heavy industry, and many other jobs they hadn't done before.
3. A War Economy where manufacture of weapons, munitions, and other war materiel was prioritized.
4. German U-boats attacked and sank civilian merchant shipping and liners.
5. Advancements in technology made the war to be fought on all domains of Air, land, sea.
6. Rationing was enforced on the civilian population.
7. Because of mobilization of industry, factories and the workforce, civilian facilities were made targets as they were supporting the war efforts leading to strategic bombing.
8. The instruments of nationalism and the newly emerged mass media based propaganda was effectively used by the nations to mobilize the masses for war effort. The society started working in a disciplined fashion with military ethos.

9. The state powers enormously increased as a war measure laying the foundation for the further emergence of totalitarian states and ideologies like Nazism and Fascism.
10. It also involved the resources both of men and material of the colonies for the cause of the imperial powers.

Consequences of total war

1. The need to organize masses of men and material for years of combat led to increased centralization of government powers, economic regimentation, and manipulation of public opinion to keep the war effort going.
2. Free market capitalistic systems were temporarily shelved as governments experimented with price, wage, and rent controls; the rationing of food supplies and materials; the regulation of imports and exports; and the nationalization of transportation systems and industries. This finally led to the conception of planned model of development.
3. The overproduction in the economy during the war lead to the glut in post war situation which finally lead on to the great economic depression of 1929.
4. As the war dragged on for quite long the morale of the population was replaced by disillusionment and a general trend of anti-war sentiments as the atrocities of the war were made clear in the post war situation.
5. The war also created new roles for women. Because so many men went off to fight at the front, women were called on to take over jobs and responsibilities that had not been available to them before. This lead to rise of feminist movements.
6. The role of ideological differences between countries and their effective usage to mobilize masses during war was further perfected and used in the post war phase.
7. The strategies of total war lead to breakdown of a

familiar world order and its replacement by an efficient national war machine which led to emergence of states based on new ideologies like socialism and fascism which provided succor to people who are adversely affected by war.

Thus the strategy of total war has deep seated and long lasting consequences both during and the post war phase. And the monstrosity of the total war led to a commitment to global peace but this commitment in the form of League of Nations wavered in post war phase leading to outbreak of Second World War.

India's role in First World War and its impact:

1. Men and material

1.5 million Indians participated directly in the war as soldiers and carriers. As the nature of the war is a total war, the entire resources of the empire were put at the disposal of war effort turning it in to a global conflict. The total Indian military casualties were 75,000 soldiers.

2. Fronts fought

India dispatched 7 expeditionary forces overseas during the war. Indian soldiers participate in all the theaters of the war like **German East Africa (Burundi, Ruanda), Gallipoli campaign (Turkey), French trench warfare, Mesopotamian front in Middle East.**

3. Princely states contribution

Indian princes contributed to the British War effort with money, resources and army. Many princely states rulers were recruited into the British army in honorary positions.

4. Contribution of nationalist leadership

Gandhi ji participated actively in recruiting the volunteer

forces to support the British war effort. Most of the moderate leadership led by the Grand old man Dadabhai Naoroji gave unconditional support to British War effort. Gandhi was awarded **the Kaiser-i-Hind medal**.

5. Economic support of India

Many Indians were forced to subscribe to the war bonds and Indians faced higher taxes and material shortages. The total Indian contribution to the British war effort is a **loan of 2 billion dollar equivalent** according to modern estimates.

6. Contribution of women

Queen Alexandria's imperial military nursing service was established and Indian women were recruited for tending to the wounded and maimed in the war.

Effect on India

1. Attempts at using British weakness for Indian advantage: Ghadar Movement

The war years were also witness to increased political turbulence with intensifying revolutionary activity. Particularly on the part of the revolutionary Ghadar Movement which aimed to gain India's independence, by violence if necessary. The war had **drained India of troops and at one point a mere 15,000 soldiers were physically present in the subcontinent**. For revolutionaries, like the Ghadar, this weakness was ripe for exploiting and their violent activities flourished – particularly in Punjab and Bengal.

2. Attempts by revolutionary terrorists to take help of enemies of British like Germany

The Provisional Government of India was a **provisional government-in-exile established in Kabul**, Afghanistan on December 1, 1915 by Indian nationalists, during World War I with support from the Central Powers, the provisional

government was composed of Mahendra Pratap as President, Maulana Barkatullah as Prime Minister.

3. Price rise

During the war prices of food grains rose by 93%, Indian made goods 60% & Imported goods 190%.

These rise in prices were caused by the **disruption of war to normal trading patterns, exchange rate problems, and diversion of food to the war effort and the demands of the military.**

4. Industrial expansion

A group of entrepreneurs who bagged **war supply contracts**, however, made windfall profits in a short time. Britain understood the need for an **independent industrial base in India and its strategic advantage**. This created opportunities for Indian industrialists to set up **war goods oriented industries** in the country. As a result, a good number of factories sprang up in centers like Bombay. This created employment and benefited the economy. First World War gave the newly established and ailing **Tata steel plant** a shot in the arm.

5. Political suppression

The British imposed the repressive Rowlatt Act, which vested the Viceroy's government with extraordinary powers to quell "sedition" against the Empire by silencing and censoring the press, detaining political activists without trial, and arresting without a warrant any individuals suspected of treason against the Empire.

Public protests against this draconian legislation were quelled ruthlessly. The worst incident was the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre of April 1919, when Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer ordered his troops to fire without warning on 15,000 unarmed and non-violent men, women and children demonstrating peacefully in an enclosed garden in Amritsar, killing as many

as 1,499 and wounding up to 1,137.

6. National disillusion

Sir Rabindranath Tagore returned **his knighthood** to the British in protest against “the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India” because of the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacare.

7. British policies

The principle of self-government to India in the future was promised by the Montagu declaration.

8. Indian Muslim sentiments

The harsh terms imposed by Treaty of Sevres on Ottoman Turkey and the taking away the control of holy places from the Caliph led to a disillusion among Indian Muslims leading to the khilafat movement.

9. Monument commemorating dead soldiers (India gate)

The India Gate was originally named All-India War Memorial and it was built to pay homage to the soldiers of the Indian Army who lost their lives fighting for the British Empire in World War I and the Third Anglo-Afghan War. India Gate was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and is at New Delhi's Raj Path.

10. Transition from responsive co-operation to non-cooperation

The excesses post war converted Gandhi from responsive Cooperation to non-Cooperation. As it would be impossible to handle an intransigent enemy who responds to cooperation by repression, leading to the non-cooperation movement.

11. The aura and glory of western civilization was lost beyond redemption

As the advancements in west which earlier evoked awe and

inspiration of Indians, now evoked in them a sense of revulsion looking at the enormity of the casualties brought about by modern warfare.

Test Yourself: Mould Your Thoughts

1. World War 1 was a fight for colonies and also involved colonies as parties in it. In the context of this statement discuss the role played by India in World War 1.