

Unit - 1

Outbreak of World War I and Its Aftermath



Learning Objectives

To acquaint ourselves with

- The race for colonies leading to rivalry and clashes among the great powers of Europe
- Emergence of Japan as the strongest and most aggressive power in East Asia
- Colonialism's impact on Africa
- Causes, course and results of the First World War
- Treaty of Versailles and its provisions
- Causes, course and outcome of the Russian Revolution
- Foundation, functioning and failure of the League of Nations



Introduction

1914 is a turning point in world history. The political and social processes that began in 1789 culminated in the First World War that broke out in that year and decisively shaped the course of the twentieth century. Historians therefore call this as 'the long nineteenth century'. This was the first industrial war that drew on the economic resources of the entire world, and also affected large sections of the civilian population. The political map of the world was redrawn. Three major empires lay shattered by the end of the War: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans. The biggest outcome of the War was the Russian Revolution. It was a unique event as well as the first revolution of its kind in world history. For the first time, countries tried to bring about world peace through the League of Nations. In this lesson, we discuss the circumstances leading to the outbreak of the First World War and its repercussions, including the Russian Revolution and the formation of an

international peace organisation, namely the League of Nations.

1.1 Scramble for Colonies

Capitalist Countries' Race for Markets

The aim of capitalistic industry was to produce more and more. The surplus wealth thus produced was used to build more factories, railways, steamships and other such undertakings. Revolution in the means of communication and transportation in the latter half of the nineteenth century facilitated the process of European expansion in Africa and other places.

A striking feature of nineteenth century was that Europe emerged as the dominant power while Asia and Africa were colonized and exploited. Within Europe, England held a pre-eminent position as the world leader of capitalism. An ever-growing demand for markets and raw materials made the capitalist powers race around the world for expanding their empire for exploitation.