

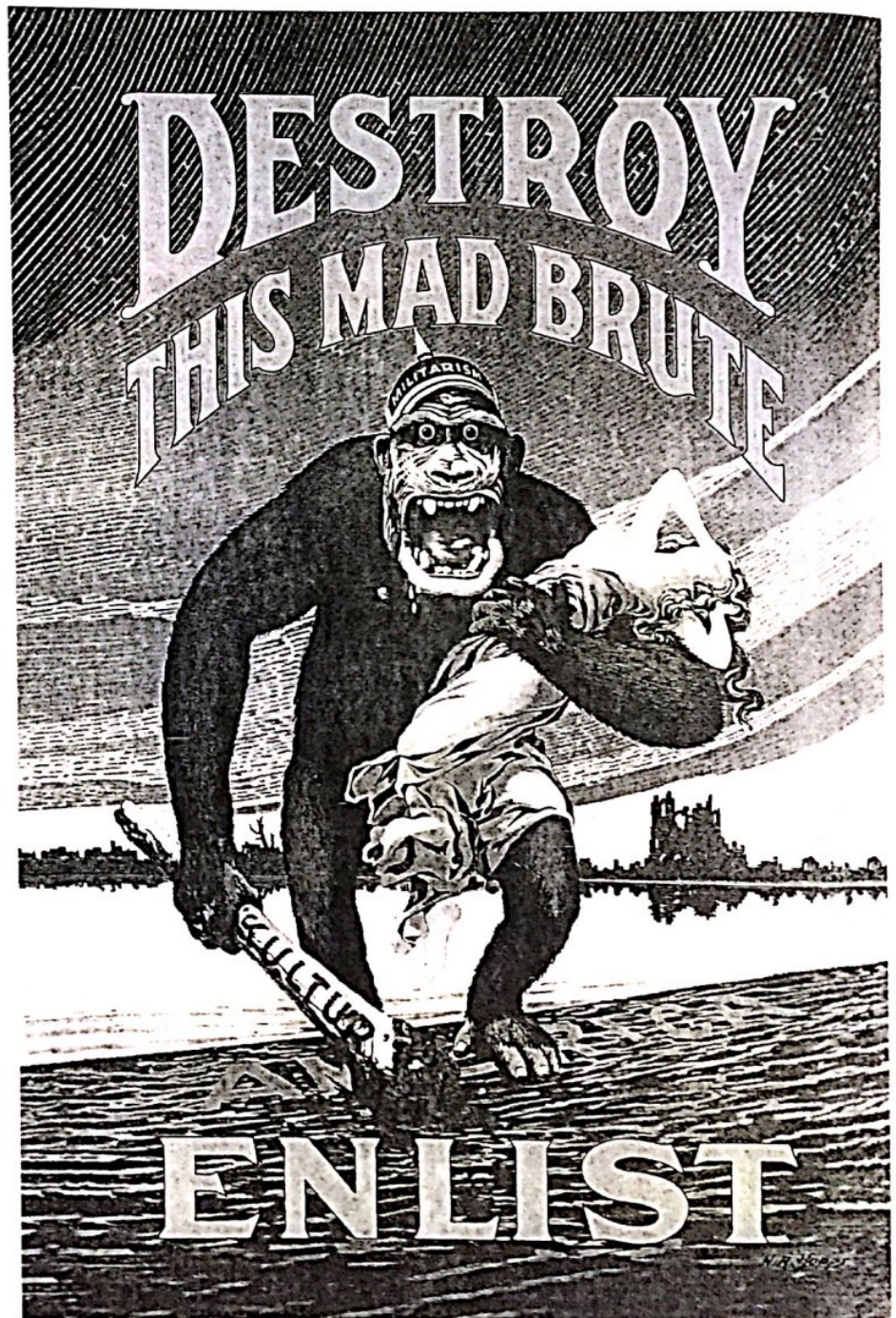
Comparative study of cross-regional wars

Key concepts: Change and continuity

As you read this chapter, consider the following essay questions:

- Compare and contrast the causes of two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.
- With reference to two 20th-century wars examine the role of ideology in the outbreak of wars.
- Compare and contrast the role of the war at sea in the course and outcome of two 20th-century wars.
- Discuss the role of the war on the land in determining the outcome of two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.
- Compare and contrast the results of two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.

You have now studied two cross-regional wars. You can use these as examples in questions that ask you to consider two 20th-century war case studies. Where you are asked to consider case studies from different regions in an essay question you will need to specify in your introduction which ones you will look at. You can use World War One in Europe and World War Two in Asia as cross-regional case studies. However, please note that you cannot use World War Two in Europe and World War Two in Asia, as these are the same case study – that is, both are from the same war.



American propaganda poster by H. R. Hopps, 1917.

Compare and contrast the causes of two 20th-century wars

These are the themes that you need to consider when comparing the causes of wars:

- economic, ideological, political, territorial, and any other relevant causes
- long- and short-term causes.

Here are some areas where you might be able to make effective comparisons between the two world wars.

Comparisons between the two world wars	
World War One	World War Two
Ideology	
Nationalism, social Darwinism (see source in Activity 1 for comparison of the impact of German nationalism before each war)	Fascism, Communism, Liberal Capitalist democracy
Imperialism	
Germany's desire for colonies Conflict between Austria and Russia in the Balkans in their search for more land Britain's concerns to maintain its empire	Germany, Italy, and Japan all sought to establish and then expand their empires Britain's concern to maintain its empire
Economic factors	
War was seen as a distraction from economic problems in both Germany and Russia	Economic crises led to protectionism and contributed to the failure of collective security amongst the Western powers Economic crises, encouraged expansionism of Germany and Japan
Militarism	
The arms race from 1871 contributed to tension in Europe The naval race from 1900 caused tension between Britain and Germany	The failure of disarmament Growing militarism in Japan, Italy, and Germany
Alliances	
The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente encouraged hostility and led to war plans that drew all powers into the crises	Shifting alliances in the 1930s led to further aggression and expansion (Axis Alliance bloc, Nazi-Soviet Pact, Sino-Soviet neutrality pact)

Here are some areas where you could make effective contrasts.

Contrasts between the two world wars	
World War One	World War Two
Extent of tensions	
European region was the focus of tensions and rivalries	There were cross-regional tensions between Europe, Americas, and Asia
Failure of peace settlement	
No international peace settlement existed before World War One	The failure of the Versailles settlement helped create the conditions for Hitler's rise to power
Collective action	
No international body facilitating collective security European powers were actively promoting own self-interest prior to the war; no common policies to prevent war	The League of Nations existed to keep the peace, but this failed France and Britain worked together to try to stop war via a policy of appeasement
Fear of Communism	
This was not a factor before 1914	The establishment of the USSR led to an increase in fear of Communism. It fostered the rise of Fascist states and encouraged the policy of appeasement

Contrasts between the two world wars

World War One	World War Two
Economic	
Limited economic factors: for example, Germany was looking for new markets and cheap raw materials. Economic tensions in Germany and Russia contributed to governments seeking war	Important economic factors: for example, the Great Depression, affected all states and created far more wide-ranging and deep economic problems, which undermined political and social stability (see Overy source below)

The following sources highlight some of these factors.

German nationalism

Activity 1



Pressure groups started to form in the early 1890s, committed to strengthening Germany's power, as well as defending their own interests. The Agrarian League sought to protect farmers, the Pan-German League hoped to bring all Germans within a single Reich and the Navy League supported and lobbied for further naval expansion. All of these asserted an ideology of Germany's superiority and, in the case of the 20,000 strong Pan-German League, it was aggressively xenophobic and even anti-semitic. The radical nationalists looked for mass support over the long-term, targeting many of the lower classes successfully.

The German state was also nationalistic within its own frontiers towards non-German minorities – an attitude that predated the radical nationalists ...

Before the First World War, German nationalism had grown in significance to the German people and become much more complex by nature. Its appeal had widened to include the lower middle class and it had progressed beyond the endemic waves of protest to a sustained tide of pressure through radical nationalist groups. No longer just an anti-foreigner attitude, it was more aggressive through the Kaiser's global ambitions of Weltpolitik, as well as having an internal focus in trying to deal with national minorities such as Poles and Danes ... its insidious anti-semitism ... was to re-emerge as a central feature of Nazi ideology in the 1930s.

Tim Chapman, 'The Rise of German Nationalism', *20th-Century History Review*, September 2010 (vol. 6, no. 1), p.31.

1. According to Chapman, how did nationalism show itself in Germany before World War One?
2. Identify the ways that Chapman links World Wars One and Two.

Failure of the peace after World War One

Activity 2



Such were the origins of the Second World War, or rather the war between the three Western Powers over the settlement of Versailles; a war which had been implicit since the moment when the first war ended. Men will long debate whether this renewed war could have been averted by greater firmness or by greater conciliation; and no answer will be found to these hypothetical speculations. Maybe either would have succeeded, if consistently followed; the mixture of the two, practiced by the British government, was the most likely to fail. These questions now seem infinitely remote. Though Hitler blundered in supposing that the two Western Powers would not go to war at all, his expectation that they would not go to war seriously turned out to be correct. Great Britain and France did nothing to help the Poles, and little to help themselves. The European struggle which began in 1918 when the German armistice delegates presented themselves before Foch in the railway-carriage at Rethondes, ended in 1940 when the French armistice delegates presented themselves before Hitler in the same carriage. There was a 'new order' in Europe; it was dominated by Germany.

The British people resolved to defy Hitler, though they lacked the strength to undo his work. He himself came to their aid. His success depended on the isolation of Europe from the rest of the world. He gratuitously destroyed the source of his success. In 1941 he attacked Soviet Russia and declared war on the United States, two World Powers who asked only to be left alone. In this way a real war began.

A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Penguin, 1963), p.336.

1. Read the source above and explain how the failure of the peace settlement at the end World War One arguably caused World War Two.

Economics and ideology

Activity 3



The world depression confirmed the pessimists of the 1920s in the argument that the capitalist system was doomed from its own nature and that some other way of organizing the economic life of the country was in the long run unavoidable ... As the depression intensified during 1931 and 1932 the level of alarmism grew. Even the liberal Keynes, who insisted throughout the crisis that he remained optimistic about the long-term capacity of the system to survive, thought probably only communism could cure unemployment, though he did not like the prospect of building on what he called 'the vapours of misery and discontent.'

R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (Allen Lane, 2009), p.70.

1. Read the source above. How might the economic crises of the 1930s have intensified the fear of Communism in the democratic states?

Long-term and short-term causes

Activity 4



1. Which of the causes in the tables on page 211 are long term and which are short term?
2. In pairs, create a table like the one on page 211 to compare long-term and short-term causes of the two world wars.
3. Now plan each of the questions below using World War One and World War Two as your case studies.
 - Compare and contrast the short-term causes of two 20th-century wars.
 - Compare and contrast the causes of two 20th-century wars each chosen from a different region.
 - Compare and contrast the role of ideology in causing two 20th-century wars.
 - Compare and contrast the role of economic factors in causing two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.

Writing comparative essays

When comparing two events in an essay, make sure that you start comparing straight away. Do not just write about one war and then the other with a final paragraph comparing them!

Here is one idea for how you could structure your answer:

- First point/theme: comparisons and contrasts
- Second point/theme: comparisons and contrasts
- Third point/theme: comparisons and contrasts

Or you could structure it like this:

- Deal with each thematic similarity
- Deal with each thematic difference



Practices of 20th-century war and their impact on the outcome



A soldier in a waterlogged World War One trench.



War in the air in Eastern Europe.

Theatres of War

Consider the following essay question:

Compare and contrast the role of one of the following: a) war on the land, b) war at sea, c) war in the air, in the outcome of two 20th-century wars.

1. In pairs complete this grid. The information in the coloured boxes below is to remind you of key content that could be useful evidence for each of the themes in the grid. Attempt to match this information to the correct theme.
2. Try to add more comparisons and contrasts where you can. Also add more evidence to support each theme.

Theatre of War	World War One	World War Two
Comparison Significance of war on the land on the outcome of the war		
Comparison Significance of war at sea on the outcome of the war		
Contrast Significance of war in the air on the outcome of the war		

Central Powers: failure of the Schlieffen Plan – Battle of the Marne 1914; failure of Verdun 1916; failure to capitalize on land victories in the East; Treaty of Brest-Litovsk meant an occupation force of approximately 1 million troops in East from 1917; failure of Spring Offensive 1918; defeat of Germany's allies on the land 1918.

The failure of [Ludendorff's] offensives did more than anything else to break the German Army's spirit [and to plunge it into an insurmountable crisis of manpower], and for all the undoubted gains in Allied fighting prowess a German defeat could otherwise have been postponed for at least another year.

D. Stevenson, 1914–18: *The History of First World War* (Penguin, 2004) p.598.

Entente Allies: held German advance – Battle of the Marne led to the failure of the Schlieffen Plan; held Verdun 1916; successful land campaigns in 1918; impact of entry of the USA.

Battleship engagements limited and German navy fought war of blockade again using U-boats. Initially very effective; however, new technology and cheap, mass-produced US merchant boats break the blockade. Allies won war in Atlantic. British navy key to maintaining supplies and Lend-Lease materials to Europe. Navy play key role in blockading Italy after British had sunk half Italian fleet early on in war. Amphibious landings for land armies in campaign in Italy; D-Day.

Key naval battles in Pacific – Midway and Leyte Gulf – decisive for US. Amphibious landing for island-hopping. Air power in Pacific carried by navy.

The historian John Keegan argues role of Allied navies in the Atlantic and the Pacific was decisive in outcome of the war.

Air power key theatre in outcome: the Battle of Britain won in the air; air superiority in Europe by end of war allowed D-Day; Soviets out-produce Germany in aircraft on Eastern Front; air campaign and air power in Pacific – Midway; atomic bombs.

War in air crucial to war on land. *Blitzkrieg*; campaigns in East; coordination via communication between air and land force – that is, tanks; air power to cover D-Day landings; air power covered island-hopping; parachuting troops behind enemy lines.

War in air crucial to war at sea. Battle for Atlantic and role of aircraft; battle in Pacific and role of aircraft carriers.

War in air crucial to home-front defeat. Bombing campaigns on Germany and Japan destroyed industrial productivity, supply lines, and morale.

Axis Powers: failure of Operation Barbarossa 1941; failure at Battle of Stalingrad 1942; Kursk 1943; Soviet forces force German retreat in East on the land; British force German retreat on the land in north Africa – Battle of El Alamein 1942; Italian campaign and removal of Mussolini; island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific; D-Day 1944 in Europe – Anglo-American force push German retreat in West.

Dreadnought Battle of Jutland 1916: German numerical victory; however, this led to withdrawal of both fleets. Britain's naval power meant able to move supplies and troops to fighting fronts and home front. German U-boat campaign attritional. Ultimately failed and led to entry of USA; British blockade of Germany ultimately more effective by end of war: 'The defeat of Germany had pivoted on control of the Atlantic' (A. Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order* [Allen Lane, 2014], p.228).

Used to support war on land: for example, reconnaissance; some bombing of front lines; support war at sea for scouting and attacks on U-boats; bombing of home front; dog-fights in the air; distribution of propaganda.

Some co-ordination of air and land towards end of war. Importance understood by end of war: for instance, Britain established an independent air force (RAF) in April 1918. Limited impact on outcome. Other theatres more significant.

Overview of themes: theatre, technology, extent of mobilization

Activity 5



1. In small groups, discuss the material in the table on the next page, adding extra details and relevant historians' views where possible.
2. Share your additional information with other groups.
3. Discuss the key areas of similarity and difference between the wars.

	World War One	World War Two	Conclusions on similarities/differences in terms of the impact on the outcome of the war
Scope and scale of fighting in the war (also casualties)			
Strategy and tactics on land	Trench warfare on Western Front War of movement on Eastern Front	War of movement War in the air and bombing	
War at sea	Blockades	Blockades	
War in the air			
Impact on civilians.	Rationing	Civilian front strategic target	
Power of governments	Increased government control, e.g. Britain		

Activity 6

Before 1939, bombing wars were popularly expected to be short, sharp and decisive. The major offensives conducted by Germany, Britain and the United States were instead long drawn-out affairs, wars of attrition with high losses of men and machines, with no clear-cut end and a wide gap between ambition and outcome, a Western front of the air. The more minor operations conducted by the German Air Force in the Soviet Union or the Italian Air Force in the Mediterranean were poorly resourced and ineffective. Little of this had been predicted. The bomber offensives were regarded as unique expressions of the changing form of war, one thought to be more appropriate for an age of mass politics and scientific modernity, in which whole societies were mobilized to fight each other using cutting-edge technology to do so. The advent of air power,' wrote one American airman after the war, 'created total war. Prior to air power, opportunities for destruction of another nation's total strength were limited almost entirely to the destruction of the armed forces.'

R. Overy, *The Bombing War* (Allen Lane, 2013), pp.609–610.

1. What does Richard Overy highlight as misconceptions about bombing before World War Two?
2. Discuss what Overy means when he suggests that the bombing campaigns became a 'Western Front' in the air.
3. To what extent do you agree with the American airman who is quoted as saying 'The advent of air power created total war'?

Activity 7

Now plan the following essay questions:

1. **Compare and contrast the role of technology in the course of two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.**
2. **Compare and contrast the impact of technological developments in two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.**
3. **Compare and contrast the extent of the mobilization of human and material resources in two 20th-century wars.**
4. **Compare and contrast the significance of war in the air in two 20th-century wars, each chosen from a different region.**

Comparing the effects of World War One and World War Two

Review the impact of each war politically, ideologically, economically, and territorially. Sources A–I below will help remind you of some of the key similarities and differences in each of these areas, but you should also look back at chapter 4 on the impact of World War One and chapter 9 on the impact of World War Two.

Activity 8



Copy out the grid below and summarize your information from the following sources and chapters 2 and 3 in the grid. Then have a go at planning the essay questions on page 219.

Effects of war	Similarities between World Wars One and Two	Differences between World Wars One and Two
Political		
Ideological		
Economic		
Territorial		

Similarities and differences in the territorial impact of the two wars

World War One

Source A

“When the peacemakers gathered in Paris January 1919 to construct a peace settlement, the political map of Europe as it had existed in August 1914 had been swept away. In the course of the war, or soon after it, four empires collapsed – the Russian Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the German Second Reich and the Ottoman Empire ...

At the end of the war there was a power vacuum in central and eastern Europe. Instead of three powerful, conservative empires competing against each other in the area, there were a number of small new states, trying to establish themselves politically and economically.

C. Culpin and R. Henig, *Modern Europe, 1870–1945* (Longman, 1997) p.143.

Source B

“The new Europe was thus deeply divided. There was the split between victors and vanquished, which stood out most obviously in the treatment of Germany as not merely a defeated enemy but as an outcast, held responsible for the war and disarmed. There was also the linked, but by no means identical, division between the ‘revisionist’ countries, which wanted to change the settlement reached in 1919–21 and those which wanted to maintain it.

P. Bell, *Twentieth Century Europe* (Arnold, 2006), p.84.

World War Two

Source C

“From 1870 to 1945 Europe had been at the centre of the world’s events. In 1945 there was a real shift of emphasis. World power now lay with the two ‘superpowers’: the USA and the USSR. Both were larger, with more people, and clearly richer, than any European country could ever be.

1945 was also a dramatic turning-point in the history of the nations of western Europe. After 1945 a new dynamic appears: European unity.

C. Culpin and R. Henig, *Modern Europe, 1870–1945* (Longman, 1997) p.339.

Source D

- The war changed everything. East of the Elbe, the Soviets and their local representatives inherited a sub-continent where a radical break with the past had already taken place. What was not entirely discredited was irretrievably damaged. Exiled governments from Oslo, Brussels or the Hague could return from London and hope to take up the legitimate authority they had been forced to relinquish in 1940. But the old rulers of Bucharest and Sofia, Warsaw, Budapest and even Prague had no future; their world had been swept aside by the Nazis' transformative violence.

Tony Judt, *Postwar* (Vintage, 2010), p.40.

Similarities and differences in the *political* impact of the two wars

World War One

Source E

- As leader of the successful Bolshevik coup in Russia [in 1917], Lenin encouraged socialist groups to rise up against their governments and seize power. Many of the war-weary people of Europe were ready to listen. In Germany there were one million workers on strike by January 1918. In Britain, the red flag was flown over Glasgow Town Hall and there was talk of revolution in south Wales. Socialist regimes appeared briefly in Hungary and Bavaria ... Fear of revolution was a powerful force in interwar politics. It gave a boost to right-wing parties and helped to bring to power Fascist regimes in Italy, Germany and elsewhere.

C. Culpin and R. Henig, *Modern Europe, 1870–1945* (Longman, 1997) p.142.

World War Two

Source F

- In the immediate post-war years the sorry state of the European economy and the apparent popularity of left-wing ideologies [thus] had an uncomfortable similarity to the events of the previous decade. That these events were coupled with the expansion of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe rapidly transformed the American image of a post-war order based on co-operative security arrangements with all the victors to one that emphasized the differences between the United States and Western Europe, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe on the other. Within the European context this meant, primarily, two things: that the Truman administration viewed the recovery of Western Europe as a major precondition to international stability and American prosperity, and that the Soviet quest for security and recovery almost inevitably clashed with American goals.

Antony Best et al., *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Routledge, 2004), p.213.

Source G

- The ideological struggles for the soul of Europe which had developed after 1917 and which took violent form in the 1930s and early 1940s now assumed a new and rigid shape as a Soviet dominated, communist eastern Europe faced an American-led liberal-democratic western Europe—a division which came to seem increasingly final and immovable as time went on.

P.M.H. Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe* (Hodder, 2006), p.149.

Similarities and differences in the *economic* impact of the two wars

World War One

Source H

- the First World War left a legacy of severe economic disruption ... All over Europe industry, agriculture and transport systems had worked for four years under intense pressure, so that men machines and land were all exhausted and worn out ... Europe's financial and monetary structure had suffered gravely. By contrast, some of the economic fruits and advantages of the war went to non-Europeans.

P.M.H. Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe* (Hodder, 2006), p.85.

World War Two

Source I

“The Second World War left Europe ruined and divided. The crippling of the European economy, amounting in some areas to near-destruction, meant that the continent had to struggle for life, and European predominance in the world economy already much weakened, came to an end. Western Europe came to rely on the USA, while Eastern Europe fell under the domination of the Soviet Union.

P.M.H. Bell, *Twentieth-Century Europe* (Hodder, 2006), p.145.

Now plan out these essays on the effects of war:

1. **Discuss the impact of territorial changes as a result of two 20th-century wars.**
2. **Compare and contrast the political results of two 20th-century wars.**
3. **Examine the economic results of two 20th-century wars.**



Peace treaties of World War One and World War Two

Don't forget to review the impact of the post-war treaties. For World War One, this means the Treaty of Versailles, and for World War Two, the Treaty of San Francisco. See page 206 for sources on the Treaty of San Francisco and the exercise comparing these treaties.

What was the social impact of the First World War and the Second World War?

The impact of World War One and World War Two on the roles and status of women

Activity 9



Copy out the following grid and complete it, using the information in the last few chapters. Give specific examples where possible, as the situation for women varied country to country. Use the research that you have done on this topic.

	Political impact	Economic impact	Social impact	Military impact
During World War One				
Change as a result of World War One	Women get right to vote in Britain in 1918			
During World War Two				
Change as a result of World War Two				

Activity 10



1. **With reference to two wars, examine the effects of 20th-century war on the roles and status of women.**

For the impact of World War One and World War Two on other social groups, refer back to chapters 3 and 4 for World War One and chapters 8 and 9 for World War Two.