

THE POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

We learn about the following in this chapter:

- *The I World War*
- *The Russian Revolution*
- *The rise of dictators*
- *The II World War*
- *The Chinese Revolution*
- *The cold war*
- *The rise of America*

The First World War

Even prior to 1914, there were frequent strifes and conflicts among Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia to gain control over Europe and the colonies. Industrial revolution and new inventions led to severe competition among European countries. There is a history, spanning centuries, of rivalry among European countries with regard to capturing markets and the resources of innumerable countries of the world including India. The agreements arrived at in this process served to keep alive the boundary disputes of many countries. This shook the balance of power equations between strong European countries.

Due to the above state of affairs, every strong nation indulged in extreme militarization. Many alliance pacts were formed. Extreme nationalism began to develop in some countries. Imperialist tendencies strengthened. The first World War divided the countries into two groups. Britain, France and Russia formed the Triple Entente pact whereas Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy entered into a Triple Alliance pact. Within a short while, Italy joined the rival group. As the war progressed, the groups changed in structure.

The first world war took place between 1914 - 1918. The immediate reason for the war the assassination of the Austrian prince, Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28th July. This incident created a rift between Austria and Surbia.

In the beginning, America was neutral. Russia was against Germany. By the time the war ended, the picture had changed. America had joined Britain and France. In November 1917, a Socialist Revolution took place which prompted Russia to arrive at a ceasefire agreement with Germany and withdraw from the war. Germany, which had been severely battered by the attacks of the Triple Entente countries, accepted defeat and stopped fighting.

In 1919, the Alliance signed a humiliating Versailles treaty. Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman kingdoms lost their identity. Germany lost most of its area. The map of Europe changed drastically. Many small independent nations came into being. With the intention of preventing wars in the future, the League of Nations was established.

Among the defeated countries, feelings of shame and humiliation gave rise to aggressive nationalism. The compensation for the loss in war and other decisions that were heaped on Germany affected the people adversely. Unemployment, poverty and slump in development led to widespread dissatisfaction which was exploited by German industrialists for their own profit. This atmosphere enabled the growth of a dictator like Hitler who caused the II World War. The weapons manufacturers and arms traders of Britain, France, Germany and America made enormous gains at this time.

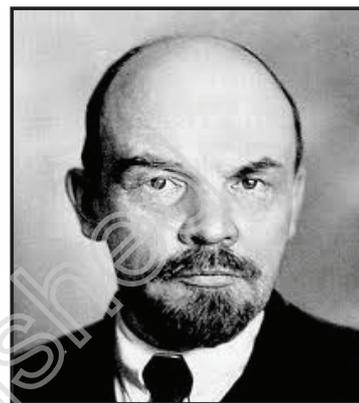
Do you know this?

In the World War I, approximately 1,00,00,000 people including soldiers and civilians of both the parties lost their lives. 2,00,00,000 people were injured and 35,00,000 people were permanently disabled. As in any war, even the first world war was fought for the profit and greed of some people. Immense suffering and loss of lives resulted.

The Russian Revolution

Russia is the largest country in the world. Czars ruled the country in the 19th Century. They used to oppress the nobles, feudal lords, peasants and poor people. The capitalists who were

emerging as a new class, exploited the workers and others. The people were fed up of the rule of the Tsars. Tsarism was being called 'a prison of nationalism'. The defeat of Russia by a small country like Japan in 1905, inspired the Russians to rise in rebellion against the Tsars. As a result, many riots took place. Workers called for a general strike. Factory workers and village peasants fought with weapons. The Tsars' army crushed the rebellion mercilessly. In the light of this experience, later on, V.I.Lenin gave guidance in revolutionary technique to peasants and workers. Consequently, the working class engaged in more and more agitations. At this juncture, Lenin was banished from the country. When the strikes proved too many and too intense to control, the last Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, deserted the country and ran away. This is known as the February Revolution of 1917. The liberal Mensheviks gained power. They declared Russia a democratic republic.



Lenin

Lenin who was in exile, came back to Russia and gave the simple, populist slogans of 'Peace, Food and Land'. Workers and poor villagers responded wholeheartedly to this. In October 1917, a revolution took place under the leadership of Bolsheviks of the Labour party. Lenin joined the revolutionary forces and declared Russia a Socialist Republic on 7th November. This is called the October Revolution of Russia. Lenin became the President of the Russian Government.

As soon as Lenin assumed power, he declared that all land belonged to the farmers. He brought into force all economic and political policies that provided facilities for free education, sports, health and shelter to all Russians. Lenin was the first one to put into practice the scientific Socialist ideology of Karl Marx. This was a totally unparalleled social system in the whole of human history. When it was still in its initial stages, Lenin died in 1924.

Joseph Stalin, who became the President of Russia after Lenin, played a prominent role in moulding Russia into a force capable of challenging America. The five-year plans initiated by him changed the path of development of Russia entirely. For the first time in the world, Russia sent a manned satellite into space. Yuri Gagarin became the first astronaut in the world. India borrowed the model of five-year plans from Russia. After World War II, Russia assumed leadership of Socialist Countries Block. It supported the liberation struggles of Asian, African and South American countries. However, in the process of developing Russia as a formidable force in the world, Stalin committed many errors. He did not pay sufficient attention to strengthening socialist democracy. As a result, forces against the revolution became powerful. After Gorbachev brought in reforms like Glasnost (openness) in 1985, and Perestroika (restructuring) in 1987, the socialist system in Russia collapsed and the Soviet Union disintegrated.

Do you know this?

Perestroika and Glasnost:

Gorbachev made use of these two words to carry to the people the proposals for the country's development, democracy and the overall reforms put forward by the Soviet Communist Party.

Perestroika: Restructuring
Glasnost: Openness

Dictators

Hitler : The situations that resulted after World War I brought into existence dictators like Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy. Hitler first became the Chancellor and, subsequently, after the death of Hindenberg, became a dictator. Hitler became the Fuhrer. By the time Hitler assumed power, communists and socialists had grown powerful in Germany. Against this backdrop, gaining the support of industrialists, Hitler suppressed the communists and socialists. He banned labour unions and political parties. He declared that Nazi was the only political party.



Hitler

Hitler planted his speculative thoughts and the fear that Jews would control the world, in the minds of Germans, and created a fear psychosis. He declared that the German Aryan race was the best in the world. To propagate all this, Hitler adopted Nazi philosophy. The gist of Nazi philosophy is: The best race in the world is the Aryan race. Only Germans are eligible to rule the world. All other communities are eligible only to be ruled. Jews are responsible for all the problems of Germans. In addition to Jews, Communists, Catholics and Socialists are also responsible. These people are unfit to exist. This sort of intense nationalism was put into practice in the cruelest manner. To spread racial hatred, he appointed a special minister called Goebels. He organized an outfit called 'Brown Shirts' to create unrest and fear in the minds of people.

In this direction, the mass murders and massacres have become most infamous in history. As per an estimate, he was responsible for the death of 6 million Jews and over a crore of other civilians. His mass massacre was called 'Holocaust'. He enacted his rules of 1934 called the Nuremberg Laws. He imprisoned people in gas chambers without light or ventilation, without giving them food or water. He made them work like slaves in concentration camps. He indulged in mass killings by using poisonous gas and mass shootings. He designed ways of killing people irrespective of whether they were children, women or old people. He employed his dictatorial power for mass massacres. The ambition to win the entire world and popularize the Aryan race was one of the reasons for the World War II. The chapter of Hitler's racial hatred ended with his death.

Mussolini: The social movements, repercussions of World War I and the Russian revolution led to the emergence of parallel political force with Mussolini's fascism. Intense nationalistic attitude, destruction of enemies, glorification of violence, racial supremacy, imperialist expansion, support to massacres were the main features of Fascism.

The Prime Minister of Italy from 1922-1943 was the founder of the 'National Fascist Party'. In 1925, he dismissed the democratic government and legally assumed dictatorship. With the support of his secret police, he destroyed all his political opponents. He prohibited all labour strikes. He became a dictator. Joining hands with Hitler, he became responsible for the death of lakhs of people. He was assassinated in 1945.

World War II

Even before people forgot the deaths and casualties of World War I, World War II started with the declaration of war by Nazi Germany against Poland on September 1st 1939. World War II is the most destructive and barbaric in the history of mankind. More than 30 countries were directly involved in this war. World War II lasted from 1939 – 1945. The Great Depression during the 1930s caused by the destructive policies of the developed nations caused very difficult situations in Europe and America. The life style of people deteriorated to a pitiable extent. Industrial and agricultural production came to a standstill. Unemployment reached a dangerous proportion. Against the backdrop of the defeat of World War I, humiliating treaties and enormous economic loss, there developed intense nationalistic awareness in many countries. In Germany and other European nations, industrialists donated huge amounts to propagate nationalism. Using this resource, movements of hatred and arrogance became active. People like Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy, came to power. In East Asia, Japan with an intention to expand its empire, was attacking Chinese territories.

During World War II, two rival groups, namely the Axis and the Allies, were formed. There were Germany, Italy and Japan in the Axis group, whereas there were Britain, France, Russia and other countries in the Allies group. When Germany attacked Poland, Britain which was an ally of Poland, declared war against Germany. However, in reality, Britain did not immediately rush to Poland's

help. Poland was captured by Germany. At this time, since there was communism in Russia, Britain, France, America and the others hoped that Hitler would attack Russia. Aware of this, on 24th August 1939, Russia signed a no-war pact with Germany (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). As a result, Hitler attacked the West instead of the East. Hitler entered into an agreement with Italy and occupied most parts of Western Europe including Denmark, Norway and Holland. In 1941, Hitler directed his attacks at Soviet Russia. Thus, Russia was forced to enter the war. At this juncture, Japan joined Hitler's camp. Japan attacked and occupied many areas in America and Europe which were to the west of the Pacific Ocean.

Italy and Germany attempted to capture the British colonies in North Africa and the Suez Canal, but failed. In 1942, Russia defeated the German troops in the Stalingrad war. After that, in 1943, Germany faced a series of defeats. Russia played a major role in these defeats. The Allied forces invaded Italy. America defeated Japan and got back the western Pacific islands. With the Great March of the Russian Red troops and the attack of the western nations, Germany was forced to surrender, and Berlin collapsed. Hitler committed suicide in 1945. With this ended the war in Europe. In 1945, America threw the first-ever nuclear bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan. As a result, lakhs of people were reduced to ashes. The effects of this are being felt by Japan even today. After Manchuria was liberated by Russia on 15th August 1945, Japan surrendered totally. With this, the Allied forces registered an emphatic victory.

Do you know this?

How many were killed in World War II?: In the world war II, civilians and soldiers put together, about 4,82,00,000 people lost their lives. German-led Axis forces lost about 82,00,000 people, while the Allied forces lost about 4,00,00,000. Maximum number of people, that is, 2,00,00,000, died in Russia. China, with 1,00,00,000 came second. With their sacrifice, victory over Hitler was impossible. The human race could not have been saved from the Nazi regime.

World War II which witnessed the maximum deaths and injuries, caused pronounced social and political changes in the entire world. The United Nations Organisation replaced the League of Nations. The victorious Allied countries, namely the United States of America, Soviet Union of Russia, China, Britain and France became the permanent members of the United Nations Organization. The Soviet Union and the United States of America became the most aggressive, rival countries. This paved the way for the beginning of a cold war. Asian and African nations were benefitted due to a conducive atmosphere for acquiring freedom. Britain, France and many other nations lost many colonial establishments which were under their rule. India's independence may be considered in this background. Since America used atomic power, it led to a severe competition in acquisition of atomic weapons by powerful nations.

The Chinese Revolution

China is one of the nations having a long history of culture and civilization. During the period of freedom struggle, China was not completely a colonised country like India. It was a semi-colonised nation, meaning some portions of it were independent. Besides, it was subjected to the influence of French, Japan and other imperialists. China was also a nation full of local chieftains. That means it was controlled by landlords and warmongers. Industrially, it was not developed as much as India had.

Against this backdrop, national integration, democracy and questions of survival came to the forefront. In 1911, under the leadership of Sun-yath-sun of Kyomintang party, there was a powerful agitation against the emperor's rule. But it did not develop into a complete agitation. Communism started in China in the year 1925.

In villages, farmers' movement and in cities, labourers' strike became active. Sun-yath-sun and Communists worked together to build a United China. After the death of Sun-yath-sun, the leader-



ship of Kyomintang party went into the hands of a repressive leader called Shiang-ki-shek. He joined hands with the emperor's forces and staged a war against Communists in their own lands. About 70,000 revolutionaries were killed. In order to protect themselves, under the leadership of Mao-tse-Tung, the historical Long March to the northern part took place. This was the most extraordinary military exercise in the history of the world. This received an unprecedented support from the farmers.

Do you know this?

The Long March: This is the historic Long March organized by the Chinese revolutionary leader, Mao, in order to escape the attacks of Shiang-ki-shek on the Chinese Communist revolutionaries. This is the event where 80,000 revolutionary soldiers were shifted from the Jiang area in south-east China to the tip of Yunnan in north-west China, travelling a distance of approximately 10,000 kms. By the time the long walk that took place from October 1934 to October 1935 ended, only around 10,000 people were alive. There is no other instance than this in the history of man's social revolutions, of so many people walking such a long distance. Thus it is called the 'Long March'.

During the period of World War II, Japan attacked many areas of China. To fight against this, the Communist Party of China came to the forefront. In 1945, Japan lost in the war. As the Japanese army receded, the People's Liberation Army of the Communist Party took control of those areas. It declared land reforms in the occupied areas. The land was distributed to the people. As a result, they received people's support. While some areas were under the control of Chiang-Kai-shek, many more areas were being acquired by the Communist Party. By 1949, many cities had come under their control. Chiang-ki-Shak lost and fled to Taiwan. On the 1st of October 1949, the People's Liberation Army entered Beijing. Democratic Republic of China came into being. Mao-Tse-Tung became the President.

After the revolution, community farming was adopted. Everyone enjoyed free education, health and sports facilities. A lot of importance was given to science and technology in order to achieve industrial development. The 'Leap Forward' project was adopted. Private property was converted to property of the society. In this process, the 'Cultural Revolution' brought into force in 1966 made many mistakes. To correct these mistakes, Deng Zioping who came to power in 1979, brought in many reforms. In this backdrop, China which has assimilated capitalism very well, is now advancing as a major force under the leadership of the Communist Party.

Cold War

After World War II, the state of constant fear, hatred, jealousy and anxiety in political, economic, military and other affairs between the two global powers is called Cold war. The undeclared war between the group of capitalist countries, along with the U.S.A., and the group of socialist countries along with the U.S.S.R. is the cold war. What is the solution for human problems - Capitalism or Socialism? Although the differences between these two ideologies had existed since 1917, they came to public light only after World

War II. The cold war was very powerful till the socialism in Soviet Russia collapsed in 1989. With the exception of these two groups, non-aligned movement started under the leadership of India, Egypt and other nations.

Due to the cold war, arms race between the two groups intensified. America emerged superior in this race. It came forward to sign agreements for arms trade all over the world. Military alliances were formed by countries to keep many nations on their side. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, South East Asian Treaty Organisation and Central East North Treaty Organisation were formed under the leadership of America, whereas the Warsaw Pact was formed under the leadership of Russia. Huge arms factories were set up in every district in America. Nuclear arms race developed at a great pace. Along with this, establishment of military bases in different countries, espionage and propaganda, scientific-technological rivalry like space war also grew. The whole world was immersed in anxiety over invisible war of different kinds.

The cold war gave rise to many fear-ridden situations like the Korean war, Vietnamese war, Suez Canal deadlock of 1956, the Berlin crisis of 1961 and the Cuban missile dilemma of 1962. The cold war grew intense till 1985, and later softened towards America. America became successful in achieving control of the world's resources. Russia fell a prey to economic crises and other internal conflicts. The arms race became one-sided and America ended up the sole powerful nation of the world.

Rise of America

The Great Depression that took place throughout the world in 1927, caused many changes in American politics. In World War I, America helped the Allied Forces with economic and military strength, and enabled them to achieve victory. In 1929, economic development in America stagnated. As a result, industrial and agricultural production collapsed. Besides, mining, ship-building,

production of consumer goods like automobiles and household appliances suffered. The economic crisis was witness to political change.

During World War II, Japan attacked the American Naval Base, Pearl Harbour. Consequently, America was dragged to the world war to fight on behalf of the Allied Forces. Roosevelt motivated the common people to form a military troop ready for war. He encouraged women to work in the social sector. America emerged victorious in the war. Even as World War II was going on, America co-operated with other countries in the establishment of the United Nations. After 1945, America has grown to be the most powerful nation in the world. In the aftermath of the cold war, the United States of America stands as the sole powerful nation of the world.

EXERCISES

I Fill in the blanks with suitable words:

1. The Communist government in Russia was established by _____ .
2. World War I ended in the year _____.
3. Versailles Pact was signed in the year _____.
4. Fascist dictator was _____ .
5. The leader of the Nazi Party in Germany was _____.
6. World War II started in the year _____.
7. Japan attacked the American Naval Centre at _____.

II Discuss the following in groups and answer them:

1. Describe Lenin's role in the Russian revolution.
2. What were the reforms adopted by Stalin in Russia?
3. Explain the immediate cause for World War I.

4. 'Nazi ideology destroyed Germany'. Justify this statement.
5. What were the causes for World War II?
6. What is meant by cold war?
7. What were the effects of the Chinese Revolution?
8. Explain how America overcame its economic depression.

III Activity:

1. With the help of newspapers and internet, collect information about the freedom struggles that took place in the world in recent times.
2. With the help of internet and newspapers, collect information and write an essay on the attempts being made by India, along with other nations, in order to establish peace at the global level.

IV Project:

1. Draw a map of the world and mark the countries of the Allied Forces and the Axis Powers.
2. Collect pictures of the flags of different countries of the world.

