

MICHAEL D. RICHARDS • PAUL R. WAIBEL

TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE

1900 TO THE PRESENT

FOURTH EDITION



WILEY Blackwell

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Preface

The fourth edition, like those before it, is meant to be not only brief but also readable and accurate. That it is relatively brief allows for some outside readings and other assignments. That it is readable is of great importance. It is important for students and instructors to have as much common ground as possible. This helps class sessions to be informed exchanges of questions and opinions. Lastly, accuracy is fundamentally important. We have worked to create a text that provides a reliable introduction to Europe from 1900 to the present and places Europe when appropriate in a global context.

The approach is largely chronological but there are, as well, some major themes. One theme is the slow unraveling of European dominance of the world. Another is the emergence of the United States as a major influence in terms of politics, the economy, and both popular and high culture. A third would be the postwar urge to find ways to cooperate, even while retaining a variety of approaches on the national level to political, economic, and social questions.

The book is divided into four parts with each part containing three chapters. The first two parts cover the period from 1900 to the end of World War II in 1945. The third and fourth parts cover developments from the end of World War II to the present. An “Overview,” summarizing the main themes of the period, serves as an introduction to each part.

Maps, tables, and illustrations are meant to assist the reader in gaining a more thorough understanding of the information provided by the text. Four maps show national boundaries at key points during

the last 120 years. The tables provided may either clarify key events (such as the German inflation of 1923) or offer an overview of a key development (e.g., the development over several decades of the European Community/European Union). Photographs, some from our own collections, are featured in every chapter to provide visual references. Each chapter begins with a brief chronology to orient the reader and to serve as a reference. The appendix contains a list of abbreviations and acronyms, which in this bureaucratic world grows longer with each edition. An extensive index, a useful if often overlooked feature, rounds out the resources supplementing the text.

This book has its own history. More than 40 years ago, Michael D. Richards, a young assistant professor at Sweet Briar College, published *Europe: 1900–1980: A Brief History*. Several years later, Paul R. Waibel, who had been using that original edition and had become acquainted with Professor Richards, joined with him in the creation of a new text. It was modeled on the original book but differed in some important aspects, in particular in an increased attention to intellectual and cultural trends. This edition offers an extensive revision of all chapters, in particular those chapters dealing with the twenty-first century.

We have each taught large numbers of students during careers several decades in length. To those students, to colleagues, and to our own teachers, we owe unpayable debts. This book is in some large part the product of countless conversations inside and outside the classroom. Our hope is that it will allow us to continue those conversations in some fashion with colleagues and students.

Every book is the work not only of its authors but also of the many dedicated employees of the publishing house. We would like to thank those who played a role in seeing the fourth edition to completion. We begin with Sophie Bradwell, who approached the authors more than a year ago to determine if we would be interested in a fourth edition. We were, of course, interested, and we began working with her. After she received a promotion, which we were most happy to hear about, she turned the project over to the capable hands of Anya Fielding, Rachel Greenberg, and Liz Wingett. As we worked through the revision of the manuscript, we were fortunate to have the help of Vijayalakshmi Saminathan and

Manju Subramanian in securing new illustrations for some of the chapters. Ed Robinson helped with the selection of the cover illustration and design. He and Sarah Milton handled other details of the cover and back cover. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers whose advice warned us away from potential several missteps. Radhika Raheja Sharma reviewed and accepted the manuscript. Shyamala Venkateshwaran headed the essential task of project management. Straive India copyedited this book, and Alison Waggit contributed to the preparation of the index. Belle Mundy contributed a much-needed professional proofreading of the manuscript and index. We would also like to thank Rachel Greenberg and Ed Robinson for guiding efforts to market the book.

As always, there are so many people who have contributed in one way or another to making this book possible. Mr. Richards wishes to thank Peter N. Stearns for generous editorial assistance with the original text. We both also want to recognize the assistance of Andrew Davidson for his work with the first, second, and third editions of the revised text. Mr. Richards also wishes to thank Nancy D. Potter for her support and encouragement over the years.

Mr. Waibel wishes to thank Darlene Waibel for her ever-present encouragement and assistance.

It is our sincere hope that readers will not only find this book informative but also enjoyable.

Michael D. Richards

Paul R. Waibel

Part 1

Overview: 1900–1919

THE TWO DECADES FROM THE DAWN of the twentieth century to the end of World War I form the era during which European civilization peaked. It was also the period in which the very foundations of European civilization began to crack beneath the weight of inner contradictions and new challenges.

In 1900, Europeans could have said, perhaps paradoxically, that Europe was the world and the world was Europe's. By 1914, "Europeans" controlled 84 percent of the world's land surface. Only Japan, which since 1871 had been pursuing a self-conscious policy of Westernization, was accepted as a "civilized" although non-Western nation.

Europeans' sense of superiority seemed confirmed by history. The Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, and Industrial Revolution had given the West a scientific-technological advantage over the non-Western world. By the end of the nineteenth century, the lion's share of the wealth of the world flowed into Western nations.

In Europe itself, the remnants of the old aristocracy still occupied thrones and, in some countries like Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, possessed real or potential power. But the period from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the outbreak of World War I or the Great War in 1914 was the golden age of the middle class, the

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bourgeoisie. They were the self-confident children of modernity, the Enlightenment tradition. Their ideology was classical liberalism, both political and economic. Their social status and, in some countries like Great Britain and France, political power derived from their growing wealth.

This Europe of Strauss waltzes and middle-class outings captured in impressionist paintings was being transformed even as it neared its fulfillment. Forces that had their origins in the nineteenth century were about to topple centuries-old dynasties and with them their archaic nobility. Likewise, the middle class, the real pillar of the existing order, was under serious attack, challenged politically and economically by the emerging working class, itself organized in increasingly powerful labor unions and political parties.

The Great War changed the course of European history. Beginning as a localized crisis brought on by the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it rapidly escalated into a world war. Each participant believed it was fighting to save its homeland from an aggressor. All felt that the war would be brief and glorious, concluding in time for them to be home for Christmas. All were disappointed. The enthusiasm that greeted the outbreak of war in August 1914 soon changed to frustration and disappointment.

Since no one had expected war to break out in 1914, none of the participants were prepared for what war actually brought. By 1916, the war had become one of attrition, each side trying to bleed the other to death. Necessity drove governments to assume a broader and more direct role in their economies and in the private lives of their people. Scarce economic resources vital to the war effort were rationed, as were consumer goods. Government-sponsored propaganda and censorship were used to mobilize “human resources.” Civil liberties often received only a polite wink as the need to combat defeatism grew.

1917 was a momentous year. In February, the German High Command persuaded the Kaiser to authorize the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. This move, intended to bring Great Britain to its knees, instead led to the United States coming into the war in April, a development that meant Germany’s eventual defeat. In March, revolution broke out in Russia.

As Lenin noted, Russian soldiers had voted against the war with their feet when they deserted in large numbers. The liberal Provisional Government failed to respond to the demands of the time and in November the Bolsheviks seized power. Their efforts to hold on to power would become one of the most important themes of twentieth-century European history. Fresh American troops tipped the scales in favor of the Allies on the Western Front. American intervention (and also in some cases failure to intervene) became another important theme in twentieth-century European history.

Allied armies broke through the Siegfried Line in July 1918. The Central Powers began to collapse. Revolution broke out in Germany. On 9 November, the Kaiser abdicated and went into exile in the Netherlands. On 11 November, Germany signed an armistice and the “guns of August” were finally silenced.

Germany had signed the armistice expecting to participate in the peace conference, but neither it nor Russia were invited to take part. The victors who gathered in Paris to bring an end to the war fought to end all wars were divided between new-world idealists and old-world realists. The treaty with Germany was a “victors’ peace” that poisoned the future. A second world war was not inevitable but, unfortunately, likely.

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 <i>Dreadnought</i>
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 seaborne 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 km²) 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 countries. 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.