

Overview of Unit 12: Democracy and Dictatorship

Chapters 19 and 20

The irony regarding the rise of fascism and the start of WWII is that bad endings to the Russian Revolution and the First World War were major contributors to the causes of the Second World War. The responses to both the Russian Revolution and World War I by the democracies were irresponsible, unrealistic, misleading, illusory, and unreliable and led directly to what the democratic nations were desperate to avoid... another war.

Overall, too many challenges to democratic liberalism:

- 1. The responses to WW I as mentioned above**
- 2. Too many minority populations contained within newly developed nations following WWI. (The lines on the map were not appropriate as we have seen before)**
- 3. Land reform in Eastern Europe was a failure**
- 4. Democratic liberal ideals were caught between the radicals on the left and the extreme conservatives on the right**
- 5. Desperate to feel positive, there were too many things which provided a false sense of security for democratic nations**
- 6. Collapsing empires created power vacuums**
- 7. Nations felt intense pressure to form alliances and secure their borders (just like before WWI)**
- 8. Nations expressed intense nationalism, but in response to perceived humiliation, in an attempt to make their nations great again**
- 9. Try to identify the similarities between the causes and start of WWI and WWII**
 - a. Napoleon, WWI, Cold War provided chance to “start over”**
 - b. Look at political, geographic, economic, military, diplomatic, and intellectual trends**
 - c. Look at the mood, fears, examples of schizophrenic thinking, internal and external pressures, examples of perceived humiliations and the so-called “peace” settlements following each conflict**

In times of extreme stress, fear, and confusion, nations revert back to the “old habits” that caused the problems in the first place.

- **secret diplomacy and war plans**
- **alliances and “deals”**
- **pressure on other nations**
- **pressure on internal minorities in the name of “nationalism”**
- **inconsistencies: aggressive demeanor but too afraid to actually do anything**

Overall challenges to democratic / liberal ideals

1. Specific, tangible challenges

- a. **Accidents of war- new nations that didn't fit reality**
- b. **Inabilities of Weimar Republic**
- c. **Specific problems with Treaty of Versailles and League of Nations**
- d. **Global depression and economic nationalism**
- e. **Specific policies in Britain, and France**
- f. **Bad people coming to power**
- g. **Isolationism and lack of responsibility by US**

2. Philosophical, Intangible Challenges

- a. **Sense of powerlessness and disillusionment in nations**
- b. **Fear of the cure: no peace unless willingness to fight**
- c. **WWI itself**
- d. **Loss of values**
- e. **Disconnect with reality symbolized by League, Kellogg-Briand, and Locarno**
- f. **Certain cultural and artistic trends**
- g. **Status quo v. revisionism not understood**