



## World War I Centenary

World leaders gathered at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on **November 11 to mark 100 years since the end of World War I** (1914-18).

- November 11 is observed as Remembrance Day (also known as Armistice Day) since the end of the World War I to remember members of armed forces who died in the line of duty.
- The commemoration marked the signing of the Armistice that brought the fighting to an end at exactly 11 a.m. on Nov 11, 1918.
- The **Paris Peace Forum**, conceived by French President Macron, is intended to highlight the importance of international institutions in helping resolve conflicts, avert wars and spread prosperity.
- The aim of the forum is to show that there are lots of forces in the international system — states, NGOs, foundations, intellectuals, companies — which believe that there is a need for world of rules, an open world and a multilateral world.

## World War I

- World War I was **fought between the Allied Powers and the Central Powers**. The main members of the **Allied Powers were France, Russia, and Britain**. The **United States** also fought on the side of the Allies after 1917. The main members of the **Central Powers were Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria**.
- **Reasons:**
  - There was no single event that caused World War I. The war happened because of several different events that took place in the years building up to 1914.
  - **Mutual Defense Alliances:** Countries throughout Europe made mutual defence agreements. These treaties meant that if one country was attacked, allied countries were bound to defend them.
  - **Imperialism:** Before World War I, Africa and parts of Asia were points of contention among the European countries because of their raw materials. The increasing competition and desire for greater empires led to an increase in the confrontation that helped push the world into World War I.
  - **Militarism:** As the world entered the 20th century, an arms race had begun. By 1914, Germany had the greatest increase in military buildup. Great Britain and Germany both greatly increased their navies in this time period. This increase in militarism helped push the countries involved into war.
  - **Nationalism:** Much of the origin of the war was based on the desire of the Slavic peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina to no longer be part of Austria Hungary but instead be part of Serbia. In this way, nationalism led directly to the War.
  - **Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand:** In June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was shot while he was visiting Sarajevo in Bosnia. He was killed by a Serbian person, who thought that Serbia should control Bosnia instead of Austria. Because its leader had been shot, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. As a result:

- Russia got involved as it had an alliance with Serbia.
- Germany then declared war on Russia because Germany had an alliance with Austria-Hungary.
- Britain declared war on Germany because of its invasion of neutral Belgium - Britain had agreements to protect both Belgium and France.
- Some of the major battles during the war included the First Battle of the Marne, Battle of the Somme, Battle of Tannenberg, Battle of Gallipoli, and the Battle of Verdun.
- The **War ended on November 11, 1918**, when a general armistice was agreed to by both sides.
- On June 28, 1919, **World War I officially ended** with the signing of the **Treaty of Versailles**. The Treaty of Versailles signed on June 28, 1919, was an attempt to prevent the world from going into another war.
- The “war to end all wars” turned out to be the opposite. By ensuring Germany’s economic ruin and political humiliation, the post-war settlement provided fertile ground for World War II.

## India’s Significance in WWI

- India being a former British colony played a vital role in **helping Britain and its allies win over Germany and allies**, a role that is often overlooked.
- Being a British colony, the Indian Army contributed a large number of soldiers to the European, Mediterranean and the Middle East conflicts of war in World War I.
- The Indian Army fought against the German Empire in East Africa and also on the Western Front.
- They served in places as diverse as France and Belgium, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Gallipoli, Palestine and Sinai.
- **More than 70 thousand of the Indian soldiers** who served British in World War I **lost their lives**. Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army once said: "**Britain couldn't have come through the wars if they hadn't had the Indian Army.**"
- As high as 100 million British Pounds was given by India to Britain to fund their war anticipating dominion status and home rule in return.
- The **British raised men and money from India, as well as large supplies of food, cash, and ammunition, collected by British taxation policies**. In return, the British promised to award self-rule to India at the end of the war which eventually was not delivered.

## India Gate

- In 1931, British commemorated the war by constructing the arch known as India Gate in New Delhi designed by **Edwin Lutyens**.
- India Gate has been the focal point to **commemorate over 70,000 Indian soldiers who lost their lives** fighting for the British Army during World War I.

## World War Memorial

- The Vice President inaugurated the First World War Memorial constructed by the Government of India at the town of Villers Guislain in France.
- It is the first national memorial for the Indian soldiers who died in France during World War I and features the Ashoka emblem.

## Saffron Marigold Sacrifice

- The **Marigold has become the symbol of sacrifice of Indian soldiers** who died in World War I.
- This is a part of the '**India Remembers' Project initiated by United Service Institution of India (USI)** which is a national security and defence services think tank based in New Delhi, India.
- Since the end of the First World War, poppy was adopted as the symbol of remembrance as it grew widely in fields in Europe where some of the major battles were fought.
- The Marigold joins the poppy as a symbol of sacrifice.
- The marigold was chosen because it is widely available and also because saffron is often seen as a colour of sacrifice.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/world-war-I-centenary>

