

World War I

"The War to End All Wars"



"The Great War was without precedent ... never had so many nations taken up arms at a single time. Never had the battlefield been so vast... never had the fighting been so gruesome..."

The Immediate Cause of WWI

The World War of 1914-18 - The Great War, as contemporaries called it -- was the first man-made catastrophe of the 20th century. Historians can easily identify the literal "smoking gun" that set the War in motion: a revolver used by a Serbian nationalist to **assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne) in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914.**

The Four MAIN Causes of WWI (proximate causes)

However, scholars are still debating the underlying causes. Was it the desire for greater empire, wealth and territory? A massive arms race? The series of treaties, which ensured that once one power went to war, all of Europe would quickly follow? Was it social turmoil and changing artistic sensibilities brought about by the Industrial Revolution? On the other hand, was it simply a miscalculation by rulers and generals in power? The answer provided in "The Great War and The Shaping of the 20th Century" is that all of these volatile elements combined to set off a gigantic explosion we now know as World War I

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Militarism

- Imperialism and the need to protect overseas colonies leads European nations to strengthen their Armies and Navies
- When one nation increased its strength, others felt threatened and increased theirs. This led to an "arms race" and militarism.
- Great Britain long the world's leader in Naval power felt threatened by a German buildup of Naval might.

Alliances

- The European nations also looked to protect themselves by forming alliances or defensive agreements among nations.
- Many of the alliances were “secret” so a nation did not know if they attack another nation whether that nation was allied with any other.
- Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy banded together to form the **Triple Alliance**. When the war begins this alliance with the addition of the **Ottoman Empire** will form the **Central Powers**. Italy refused to honor its alliance and joined the Allies in 1915.
- Great Britain, France and Russia formed the **Triple Entente**. When the war begins, this alliance will be known as the **Allies**. Japan joined the Allies in 1914 because of its rivalry with Germany over colonies in Asia. Italy would join the Allies in 1915 after being promised land in Austria.
- The allies looked to create a **balance of power** or a system that prevents any one country from dominating another.

Alliances	Before the War starts	After the War started	Alliances
Triple Alliance	Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy	Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire	Central Powers
Triple Entente	Great Britain, France and Russia	Great Britain, France and Russia, Japan 1914, Italy 1915	Allies

Imperialism

- European nations had a desire to expand their empires through imperialism and new colonies overseas.
- These nations competed for colonies in Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world.
- The new colonies brought new markets and raw materials as well as prestige to the countries.
- Great Britain and France had huge overseas empires and now Russia, Italy and Germany wanted to increase their empires as well.
- Because few areas were left to colonize, European countries often came into conflict with each other over new colonies.

Nationalism

- Nationalism is a feeling of intense loyalty to one’s country. In this case, intense nationalism was caused by the tension in Europe over Imperialism.
- Nationalism led to the unification (coming together as one nation) of Germany and Italy.
- The unification of Germany and Italy challenged the traditionally strongest nations of Great Britain and France for dominance in Europe.
- Nationalism inspired some ethnic groups (groups of people who share a common language and tradition) to break away from existing nations and demand their own independence.

