



>> Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, were assassinated on June 28, 1914, just one hour after this photograph was taken.

 **Interactive Flipped Video**

>> Objectives

Describe how imperialism, nationalism, and militarism pushed Europe closer to war.

Identify the key event that sparked World War I.

Trace how the alliance system drew nations into the war.

>> Key Terms

entente
militarism
Alsace and Lorraine
ultimatum
mobilize
neutrality

7.1 By 1914, Europe had enjoyed a century of relative peace. Idealists hoped for a permanent end to the scourge of war. International events, such as the first modern Olympic games in 1896 and the First Universal Peace Conference in 1899, were steps toward keeping the peace. “The future belongs to peace,” said French economist Frédéric Passy (pa SEE).

World War I Begins

European Powers Form Alliances

Not everyone was so hopeful. “I shall not live to see the Great War,” warned German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, “but you will see it, and it will start in the east.” It was Bismarck’s prediction, rather than Passy’s, that came true.

Nations Form Alliances Despite efforts to ensure peace, the late 1800s saw growing rivalries among the great powers of Europe, including Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Russia. In an atmosphere of fear and distrust, the great powers set out to protect themselves by forming alliances. Nations signed treaties pledging to defend each other. These alliances were intended to create powerful combinations that no one would dare attack. Gradually, two rival alliances evolved.

The Triple Alliance The first major alliance had its origins in Bismarck’s day. He knew that France longed to avenge its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Sure that France would not attack Germany without help, Bismarck signed treaties with other powers. By 1882, Germany had formed the Triple Alliance with Italy and Austria-Hungary. Although Bismarck had previously signed an alliance with Russia, Kaiser William II did not preserve that alliance, leaving Russia free to seek other allies.

In 1914, when war did erupt, Germany and Austria-Hungary fought on the same side. They became known as the Central Powers.

The Triple Entente A rival bloc took shape in 1893, when France and Russia signed a secret treaty. France was eager to end its isolation and balance the growing power of Germany. In 1904, France and Britain signed an **entente** (ahn TAHNT), a nonbinding agreement to follow common policies. Though not as formal as a treaty, the entente led to close military and diplomatic ties. Britain later signed a similar agreement with Russia, creating the Triple Entente. When war began, these powers became known as the Allies.

Britain and France had been rivals for hundreds of years, and France had invaded Russia during the Napoleonic Wars. Still, these three powers joined together in the Triple Entente because they feared Germany wanted to dominate Europe.

Other Alliances Other states were drawn into alliances. Germany signed a treaty with the Ottoman empire. As early as 1867, Britain had signed a treaty to protect Belgium's right to remain neutral in any European conflict. Italy had a secret treaty with France not to attack it. And Russia had agreed to protect Serbia. Britain forged ties with Japan.

Rather than easing tensions, the growth of rival alliance systems made governments increasingly nervous. A local conflict could mushroom into a general war. In 1914, that threat became a reality.

? ANALYZE INFORMATION Why did the European nations form opposing alliances?

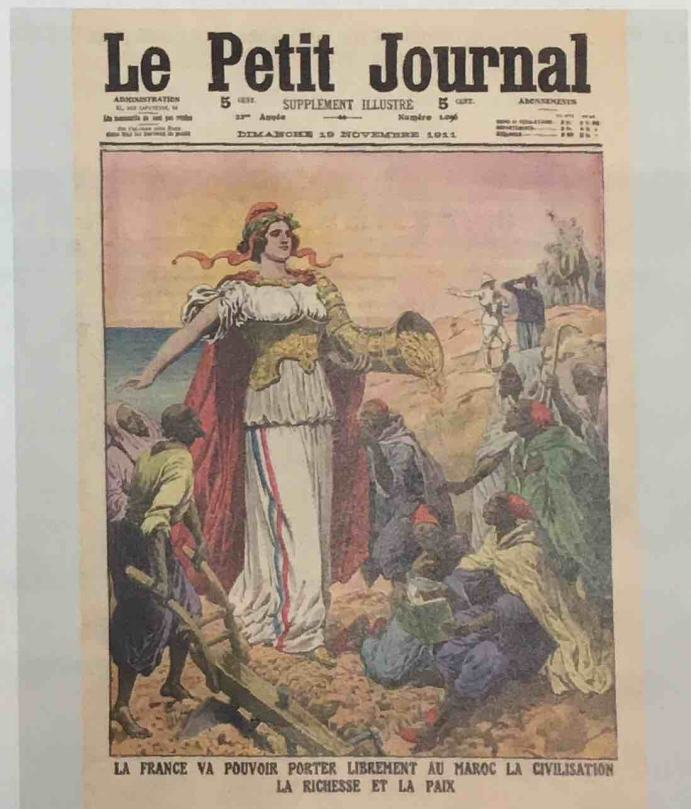
Major Causes of World War I

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, tensions were increasing among the great powers of Europe. Aggressive nationalism, economic competition, imperialism, militarism, and an arms race all helped fuel an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust.

Economic and Imperial Rivalry Economic rivalries helped sour the international atmosphere. Germany, the newest of the great powers, was growing into an economic and military powerhouse. Britain felt threatened by Germany's rapid growth. Germany, in turn, thought the other great powers did not give it enough respect. It also worried about future economic competition from Russia, which had a huge population and vast natural resources.



>> Germany, led by Kaiser William II (left), and Austria-Hungary, led by Emperor Francis Joseph (right), became close allies in the years before World War I.



>> A Parisian newspaper presented this view of imperialism. The caption says "France freely gives Morocco civilization, peace, and wealth." **Hypothesize** Who might have opposed this viewpoint? Why?

Imperialism also divided European nations. In 1905 and again in 1911, competition for colonies brought France and Germany to the brink of war in Morocco, then under France's influence. Although diplomats kept the peace, Germany did gain some territory in central Africa. As a result of the two Moroccan crises, Britain and France strengthened their ties against Germany.

Militarism and the Arms Race The late 1800s saw a rise in **militarism**, or the glorification of the military. Under militarism, the armed forces and readiness for war came to dominate national policy. Militarists painted war in romantic colors. Young men dreamed of blaring trumpets and dashing cavalry charges—not at all the sort of conflict they would soon face.

With international tensions on the rise, the great powers began to build up their armies and navies. The fiercest competition was the naval rivalry between Britain and Germany. To protect its vast overseas empire, Britain had built the world's most respected navy. As Germany began acquiring overseas colonies, it began to build up its own navy. Suspicious of Germany's motives, Britain in turn increased naval spending. Newspapers dramatized the arms race and stirred national public opinion against rival countries.

The arms race helped military leaders gain influence. On matters of peace and war, civilian governments turned to military leaders for advice. Germany generals

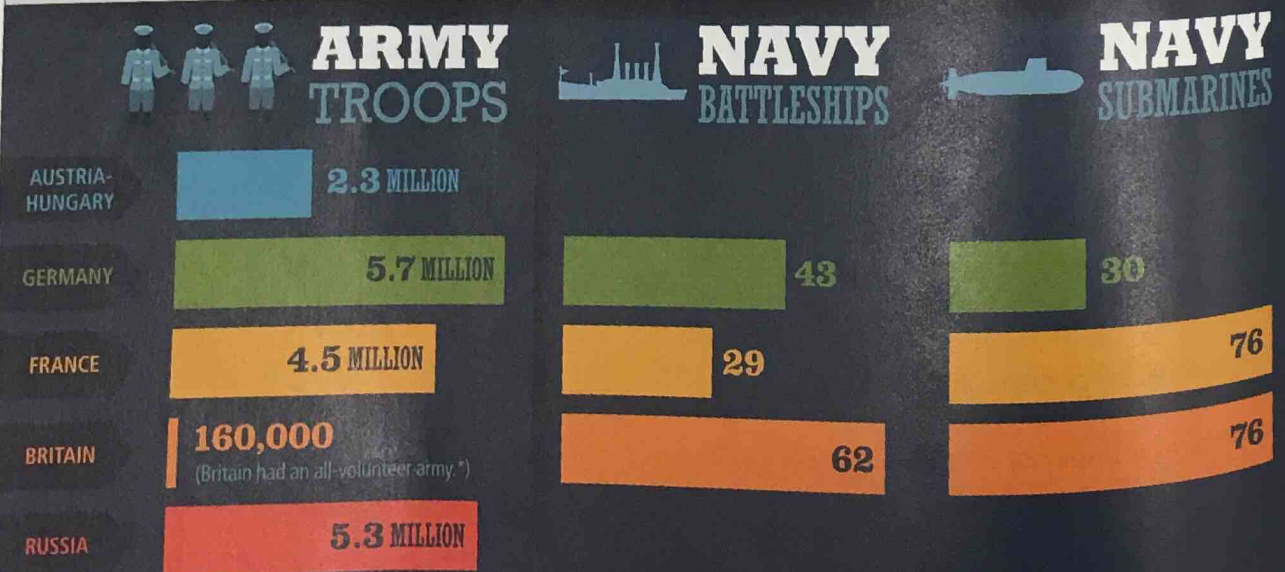
and British admirals enjoyed great respect and got more funds to build up their forces. As militarism and the arms race fed each other, tensions grew.

Nationalism Aggressive nationalism also caused tension. Nationalism was strong in both Germany and France. Germans were proud of their new empire's military power and industrial leadership. The French were bitter about their 1871 defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and yearned to recover the parts of the border provinces of **Alsace and Lorraine** that had been taken in the war.

In Eastern Europe, Russia sponsored a powerful form of nationalism called Pan-Slavism. It held that all Slavic peoples shared a common nationality. As the largest Slavic country, Russia felt that it had a duty to lead and defend all Slavs. By 1914, it stood ready to support Serbia, a proud young Slavic nation, against any threat.

Two old multinational empires particularly feared rising nationalism. Austria-Hungary worried that nationalism might foster rebellion among the many minority populations within its empire. Ottoman Turkey felt threatened by nearby new nations, such as Serbia. If realized, Serbia's dream of a South Slav state could take territory away from both Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

MILITARY BUILD UP IN EUROPE 1914



*After the war began Britain instituted a draft.

Source: Phillips, Charles, and Alan Axelrod. "World War I, historical background," in Encyclopedia of Wars.

>> Analyze Data According to this infographic, which country had the most soldiers? Which country had the largest navy?

In 1912, several Balkan states—Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro—attacked Turkey and succeeded in taking a large area of land away from Turkish control. The next year, they fought among themselves over the spoils of war. These brief but bloody Balkan wars raised tensions to a fever pitch. By 1914, the Balkans were called the “powder keg of Europe”—a barrel of gunpowder that a tiny spark might cause to explode.

? IDENTIFY CAUSE AND EFFECT How did imperialism heighten tensions in Europe?

The Balkan Powder Keg Explodes

As Bismarck had predicted, the Great War began in Eastern Europe. A regional conflict between tiny Serbia and the huge empire of Austria-Hungary grew rapidly into a general war that would mark one of history's significant turning points.

Archduke Francis Ferdinand Is Assassinated

The crisis began when Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary announced that he would visit Sarajevo (sa ruh YAY voh), the capital of Bosnia. Francis Ferdinand was the nephew and heir of the aging Austrian emperor, Francis Joseph. At the time of his visit, Bosnia was under the rule of Austria-Hungary. But it was also the home of many Serbs and other Slavs.

News of the royal visit angered many Serbian nationalists. They viewed the Austrians as foreign oppressors. Some members of Unity or Death, a Serbian terrorist group commonly known as the Black Hand, vowed to take action.

The archduke ignored warnings of anti-Austrian unrest in Sarajevo. On June 28, 1914, he and his wife, Sophie, rode through Sarajevo in an open car. As the car passed by, a conspirator named Gavrilo Princip (GAV ree loh PREEN tseep) seized his chance and fired twice into the car. Moments later, the archduke and his wife were dead.

Austria Declares War on Serbia When news of the assassination of Francis Ferdinand reached Vienna, the government of Emperor Francis Joseph blamed Serbia. Austria-Hungary believed that Serbia would stop at nothing to achieve its goal of a South Slav empire. Austria decided its only course was to punish Serbia.

In Berlin, Kaiser William II was horrified at the assassination. He wrote to Francis Joseph, advising him to take a firm stand toward Serbia. Instead of



THE BOILING POINT.

>> This political cartoon was published in 1912 in the British magazine *Punch*. **Analyze Political Cartoons** What view of the Balkans does this cartoon present?

Interactive Cartoon

urging restraint, Germany gave Austria a “blank check,” or permission to undertake whatever action it chose.

For weeks, diplomats shuttled notes among the great powers, trying to head off a conflict. Backed by Germany, however, Austria-Hungary sent Serbia a harsh **ultimatum**, or final set of demands. To avoid war, said the ultimatum, Serbia must end all anti-Austrian agitation and punish any Serbian official involved in the murder plot. It must even let Austria join in the investigation. Austria-Hungary gave Serbia 48 hours to reply.

Serbia agreed to most, but not all, of the terms of Austria's ultimatum. This partial refusal gave Austria the opportunity it was seeking. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia.

? INTEGRATE INFORMATION How did Austria's alliance system influence Austria's decision to send Serbia an ultimatum?

The Alliance System Leads to War

The war between Austria and Serbia might have been another "summer war," like most European wars of the previous century. However, the carefully planned alliances soon drew the great powers into the conflict.

Russia and France Support Serbia After receiving Austria's ultimatum, Serbia turned to its ally, Russia. From St. Petersburg, Nicholas II telegraphed William II. The tsar asked the kaiser to urge Austria to soften its demands. When this plea failed, Russia began to **mobilize**, or prepare its military forces for war. On August 1, Germany responded by declaring war on Russia.

Russia, in turn, appealed to its ally France. In Paris, nationalists saw a chance to avenge France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Though French leaders had some doubts, they gave Russia the same kind of backing Germany offered to Austria. When Germany demanded that France keep out of the conflict, France refused. Germany then declared war on France.

Germany Marches Through Belgium By early August, the battle lines were hardening. Italy and Britain still remained uncommitted. Italy chose to stay neutral for the time being. **Neutrality** is a policy of supporting neither side in a war. Britain had to decide quickly whether or not to support its ally France. Then, Germany's war plans suddenly made the decision for Britain.

Germany's worst fear was a war on two fronts, with France attacking from the west and Russia from the east. Years earlier, General Alfred Schlieffen (SHLEE fun) had developed a strategy to avoid a two-front war. Schlieffen reasoned that Russia's lumbering military would be slow to mobilize. Under the Schlieffen Plan, Germany first had to defeat France quickly. Then it would concentrate its forces against Russia.

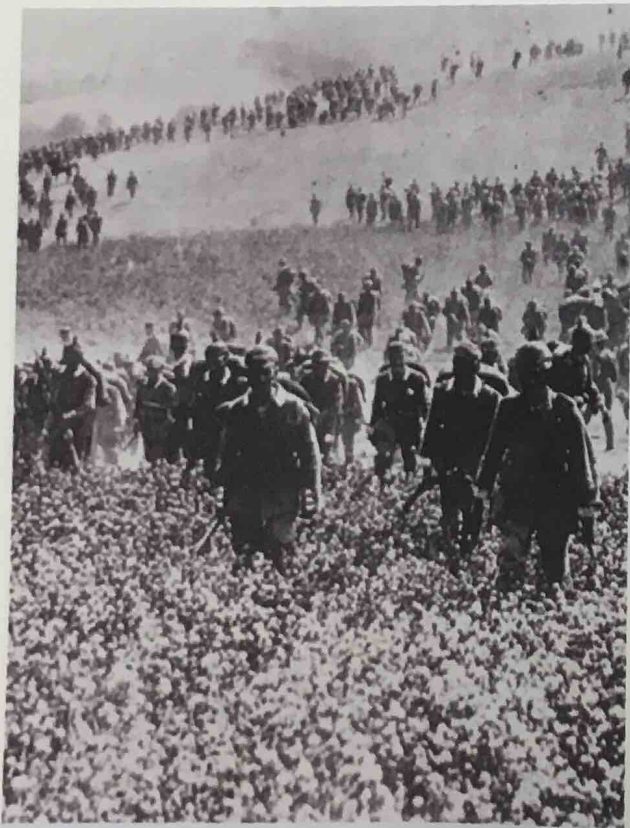
To ensure a swift victory in the west, the Schlieffen Plan required German armies to march through neutral Belgium and then swing south behind French lines. The goal was to encircle and crush France's army. The Germans embarked on the plan by invading Belgium on August 3.

However, Germany had signed a treaty with Britain and France guaranteeing Belgian neutrality. Outraged by the invasion of Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4.

Once the machinery of war was set in motion, it seemed impossible to stop. Military leaders insisted that they must mobilize their forces immediately to accomplish their military goals. These military



>> To aid its ally Serbia, Russia mobilized its army, including these Cossacks. As World War I began, European armies still sent cavalry units into battle.




>> In August 1914, Germany invaded neutral Belgium to reach France. Here, the German infantry advances across a Belgian field filled with flowers.

European Alliances, 1914



>> **Analyze Maps** How does this map help explain the expansion of World War I from a localized to a global war?

 **Interactive Chart**

timetables made it impossible for political leaders to negotiate instead of fight.

Whose Fault? How did an assassination lead to all-out war in just a few weeks? During the war, each side blamed the other. Afterward, the victorious Allies blamed Germany. Today, most historians agree that all parties must share blame for a catastrophe nobody wanted.

Each great power believed its cause was just. Austria wanted to punish Serbia for encouraging terrorism. Germany felt that it must stand by its one dependable ally, Austria. Russia saw the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia as an effort to oppress Slavic peoples.

France feared that if it did not support Russia, it would have to face Germany alone later. Britain felt committed to protect Belgium, but also feared the growing power of Germany.

Once the machinery of war was set in motion with the Austrian ultimatum and mobilization of troops, political leaders could no longer save the peace. Although government leaders made the decisions, most people on both sides were committed to military action. Young men rushed to enlist, cheered on by women and their elders. Now that war had come at last, it seemed an exciting adventure.

British diplomat Edward Grey was less optimistic. As armies began to move, he predicted, "The lamps

are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

? IDENTIFY CENTRAL ISSUES How did Germany's invasion of Belgium bring Britain into the war?

ASSESSMENT

- 1. Generate Explanations** How were economic competition and imperialism causes of World War I?
- 2. Identify Cause and Effect** Was nationalism a cause of World War I? Why or why not? Give examples.
- 3. Identify Central Issues** What is militarism, and how did it influence the nations of Europe prior to World War I?
- 4. Integrate Information** How did a single event start a chain reaction that sparked World War I?
- 5. Draw Conclusions** How did the alliance system spread the original conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia into a general war involving many countries?