

Causes of World War I [Revision Cascade]

Triple Alliance: causes	Bismarck's genius	The German Chancellor Bismarck realised that Germany – a new country in 1871 – needed allies and security
	France wanted revenge	France wanted revenge on Germany for defeat in 1870, so Germany needed an ally
	Affinity between Germany and Austria	Germany and Austria – German-speaking countries – were natural allies
	Austria needed an ally	Austria – fearing Russian expansion in the Balkans – needed an ally
	Italy needed an ally	Italy – fearing French expansion in North Africa – needed an ally
Triple Alliance: development	German Empire, 1871	The German Empire was proclaimed after defeating France in a war
	Dual Alliance, 1879	A defensive alliance (if either was attacked) between Germany and Austria
	Triple Alliance, 1882	Italy joined the Dual Alliance
	Reinsurance Treaty lapsed, 1890	Kaiser Wilhelm II let a promise of neutrality between Germany and Russia lapse; he concentrated instead on his alliance with Austria
	The Blank Cheque, 1914	The Triple Alliance led Kaiser Wilhelm II to support Austria against Serbia in 1914 ('the blank cheque')
Triple Alliance: results	Triple Entente	A counter-alliance of France, Russia and Great Britain to 'balance' the Triple Alliance
	Hostile alliances	Sidney Bradshaw Fay said the alliance system was the main cause of the First World War
	Mitteleuropa	The Triple Alliance created a strong central bloc dominated by Germany
	Reinsurance Treaty lapsed	The Triple Alliance encouraged Kaiser Wilhelm II to abandon the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890
	The Blank Cheque	The Triple Alliance led Kaiser Wilhelm II to support Austria against Serbia in 1914 ('the blank cheque')

Triple Entente: causes	Franco-Prussian War	France hated Germany for defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870
	Reinsurance Treaty lapsed	Russia felt isolated after the collapse of the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890
	Mitteleuropa	France and Russia feared a German-dominated Triple Alliance in central Europe
	Weltpolitik	The Triple Entente was a response to Kaiser Wilhelm II's policy of colonial expansionism
	End of Britain's 'splendid isolation'	The Triple Entente marked Britain's decision to end the 'splendid isolation' policy of not getting involved in European affairs
Triple Entente: development	Reinsurance Treaty lapsed, 1890	This ended the alliance between Russia and Germany; Russia approached France
	Franco-Russian Entente, 1894	A defensive alliance against attack by the Triple Alliance
	Entente Cordiale, 1904	Britain accepted French influence in Morocco; France recognised British power in Egypt
	Algeciras Conference, 1906	Britain and Russia supported France against Germany in the Tangier Crisis
	Anglo-Russian Entente, 1907	An agreement to end conflict over Afghanistan
Triple Entente: results	End of Britain's 'splendid isolation'	End of Britain's 'splendid isolation'
	Triple Alliance strengthened	Triple Alliance strengthened
	Hostile alliances	Hostile alliances
	Arms race	Arms race
	First World War	First World War
The end of 'splendid isolation'	Treaty of London, 1839	Britain's trade depended on the English Channel – which was why Britain promised to defend Belgium against occupation by a foreign power
	Fear of Weltpolitik, 1901	Britain was alarmed at Germany's growing sea-power, trade and imperial ambitions
	Anglo-Japanese naval alliance, 1902	To allow the British navy to concentrate on Germany
	Entente Cordiale, 1904	Britain accepted French influence in Morocco; France recognised Britain in Egypt
	Triple Entente, 1907	A defensive alliance between Britain, France and Russia

Weltpolitik: causes	Kaiser Wilhelm II's psychological problems	Kaiser Wilhelm II was born with a withered arm, and was weak and inadequate as a child
	Economic strength	Germany was the most powerful industrial economy in Europe, very wealthy
	'A place in the sun'	Kaiser Wilhelm II felt Germany deserved an empire as big as Britain's
	Trade	Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted the right to trade wherever Germany wanted
	Militarism	Kaiser Wilhelm II loved Germany's huge army, and believed Germany could win any war
Kaiser Wilhelm II's Weltpolitik	'A place in the sun'	Kaiser Wilhelm II felt Germany deserved an empire as big as Britain's
	Mitteleuropa	Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted a strong German-dominated central European state
	Naval power	In 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered Admiral Tirpitz to build a navy as strong as Britain's
	Daily Telegraph interview, 1908	In which Kaiser Wilhelm II called the English people 'mad'
	Berlin-Baghdad railway	A 1903 plan to build a railway from Germany to the Middle East
Weltpolitik: results	Growing international tension, 1890–1914	Fearing German ambitions, countries made alliances and built up their armies
	Tangier Crisis, 1905	Kaiser Wilhelm II's attempt to intervene in Morocco led to an international crisis in 1905
	Triple Entente, 1907	Germany's aggressive foreign policy led France, Russia and Britain to join together in a defensive alliance
	Dreadnought Crisis, 1909	British crowds demanded 'We want eight' Dreadnoughts in response to Germany's growing navy
	Agadir Crisis, 1911	Kaiser Wilhelm II's attempt to intervene in Morocco led to an international crisis in 1911
Tangiers Crisis: causes	Wilhelm's Weltpolitik	The Tangiers Crisis was a direct result of Kaiser Wilhelm II's demand for 'a place in the sun' for Germany, including a colonial empire
	Conflicting imperial ambitions	Britain, France and Germany had conflicting imperial ambitions in North Africa
	Triple Entente	Germany wanted to destroy the Entente Cordiale by provoking a crisis in Africa
	French protectorate, 1904	In 1904, France tried to establish a protectorate, supported by Britain and Spain
	Wilhelm visited Tangiers, Mar 1905	In March 1905, Kaiser Wilhelm II visited and offered Morocco protection against France

Tangiers Crisis: events	French protectorate, 1904	France tried to establish a protectorate, supported by Britain and Spain
	Wilhelm visited Tangiers, Mar 1905	Kaiser Wilhelm II visited and offered Morocco protection against France
	Britain intervened, Jun 1905	Britain and French public opinion forced the French government to take a stand against Germany
	Germany and France mobilised, Dec 1905	Both Germany and France began to call up their armies
	Algeciras Conference, 1906	Germany was forced to back down
Tangiers Crisis: results	Strengthened the Entente Cordiale	Britain and France had worked together closely to thwart Germany
	Caused the Triple Entente	Russia supported France and Britain, and joined the Entente in 1907
	Germany was humiliated	Germany had been forced to back down at the Algeciras Conference
	Growing international tension	Fearing German ambitions, countries made alliances and built up their armies
	Agadir Crisis, 1911	Kaiser Wilhelm II was angry, which led him to attempt to intervene in Morocco again in 1911
Agadir Crisis: causes	Wilhelm's Weltpolitik	The Agadir Crisis was a direct result of Kaiser Wilhelm II's demand for 'a place in the sun' for Germany, including a colonial empire
	German navy	Britain was alarmed at Germany's growing navy
	Conflicting imperial ambitions	Britain, France and Germany had conflicting imperial ambitions in North Africa
	Moroccan rebellion	In April 1911 the French put down a rebellion in Morocco and took over
	The Panther Gunboat	In July 1911, Kaiser Wilhelm II sent The Panther to Agadir in Morocco 'to protect Germans'
Agadir Crisis: events	Moroccan rebellion, Apr 1911	The French put down a rebellion in Morocco and took over
	The Panther Gunboat, 1 Jul 1911	Kaiser Wilhelm II sent The Panther to Agadir in Morocco, allegedly 'to protect Germans'
	Mansion House speech, 21 Jul 1911	British PM Lloyd George declared that peace was not worth national humiliation
	The 'Panther Jump', 26 Jul 1911	i.e. the British fleet moved towards Morocco (the term the 'Panther Jump' came to be used for 'a show of force' to frighten off an opponent)
	Treaty of London, Nov 1911	Germany backed down in return for 100,000 square miles of the French Congo

Agadir Crisis: results	France annexed Morocco	The French conquered all Morocco, which became part of the French Empire
	Germany was humiliated	Kaiser Wilhelm II was angry at being humiliated, and was determined to try again
	Strengthened the Triple Entente	Britain and France had worked together successfully to oppose German aggression
	British Navy strengthened	The British decided to improve their navy, and move from coal to oil power
	Growing international tension	The Agadir Crisis exacerbated the underlying international problems, alliances, arms race, militarism, imperialism and suspicion
Bosnian Crisis: causes	Weak man of Europe	By 1900, Turkey was 'the weak man of Europe' and had lost control of the Balkans
	Balkan Pan Slavism	The Balkan nations were nationalistic and aggressive
	Austria feared nationalism	Austria feared that growing Pan Slavism would destabilise its 'polyglot' (multi-racial) empire
	Russian ambitions	Russia was allied to the Balkan nations and wanted access to the Mediterranean
	German ambitions	Germany was allied to Turkey and wanted to build a Berlin–Baghdad railway
Bosnian Crisis: events	Bulgaria rebelled, 5 Oct 1908	Bulgaria declared independence from the Turkish Empire
	Austria annexed Bosnia, 6 Oct 1908	Austria–Hungary declared that it was annexing Bosnia to protect the people there
	Serbia mobilised, 7 Oct 1908	Serbia mobilised its army, supported by Russia
	Germany supported Austria, 22 Mar 1909	Germany demanded that Russia accept the Austrian annexation
	Russia backed down, 23 Mar 1909	Russia backed down, and Serbia and Turkey were forced to back down too
Bosnian Crisis: results	Strengthened the Triple Alliance	Germany had fully backed Austria and successfully forced Russia to back down
	Russia was humiliated	Nicholas II felt humiliated and determined not to abandon Serbia again
	Increased international tension	The Bosnian Crisis exacerbated the underlying international problems, alliances, arms race, militarism, imperialism and suspicion
	Austria feared Serbia	The Serbs hated Austria and continued to demand Bosnia
	Sarajevo Crisis	Tension between Austria and Serbia was not resolved, and would flare up again in 1914 when Franz Ferdinand was assassinated

The arms race: causes	Militarism	The belief that war was a valid method of international diplomacy
	Balance of Power	The belief that countries would not dare to go to war if you had a huge army
	France hated Germany	France hated Germany for conquering Alsace–Lorraine in 1870–1871 and wanted it back
	Germany feared encirclement	Germany felt surrounded and intimidated by the Triple Entente
	Britannia Ruled the Waves	The British felt Germany wanted naval supremacy and was threatening the British Empire
The arms race: facts	Fourfold increase in spending, 1870–1914	Spending of the Great Powers on armaments increased fourfold, 1870–1914
	German Navy Law, 1900	German Admiral Tirpitz announced a huge programme of warship-building
	Dreadnought Crisis, 1909	In 1909, British crowds demanded 'We want eight' Dreadnoughts in response to Germany's growing navy
	Germany's huge army	In 1914, Germany's army numbered 2.2 million men plus 6 million reservists
	Russia's growing army	Russia's army was the fastest growing, and by 1914 stood at 1.2 million men
Anglo-German naval race: facts	German Navy Law, 1900	German Admiral Tirpitz announced a huge programme of warship-building
	HMS Dreadnought, 1906	Britain launched HMS Dreadnought (made the Germany navy obsolete)
	Naval arms race, 1907–1914	A race to build dreadnoughts
	Dreadnought Crisis, 1909	In 1909, British crowds demanded 'We want eight' Dreadnoughts in response to Germany's growing navy
	Britain 29 v Germany 17	By 1914 Britain had 29 Dreadnoughts; Germany had 17
The arms race: results	Militarism	It was part of the belief that war could solve international problems
	Growing international tension	As their rivals' armies grew, countries became more afraid of them
	German militarism	The huge German army made people think that Germany wanted to rule the world
	'War the sooner the better'	The rapidly growing Russian army made German General Moltke want war (1912) – 'the sooner the better'
	War seemed inevitable	By 1914 there was a belief that war was inevitable

Austria-Hungary's aims in the Balkans	Prevent Russian expansion	e.g. during the Bosnian Crisis of 1908
	The Pig War, 1906	Austria tried to damage the Serb economy by banning imports of Serbian pork
	Annex Bosnia, 1908	In 1908 Austria took advantage of a revolution in Turkey to annex Bosnia
	General Hotzendorf proposed war	Hotzendorf advised a 'surprise' war to destroy Serbia on more than 25 occasions 1906–14
	Planned invasion of Serbia	In 1913, an invasion was planned but did not take place
Serbia's aims in the Balkans	Panslavism	To unite all the Balkan Slav races into a 'Greater Serbia'
	The Black Hand	A terrorist group of Serb nationalists dedicated to Panslavism
	Bosnian Crisis, 1908	The international crisis provoked by Austria–Hungary's annexation of Bosnia in 1908
	Balkan Wars, 1912–13	Serbia became the most powerful country in the Balkans
	Nikola Pasic wanted to destroy Austria	In 1913, he said: 'Now for the second round – against Austria'
The Black Hand: facts	Union or Death	It was a terrorist group of Serb army officers dedicated to Panslavism
	Led by Apis	Colonel Dimitrijevic (codename 'Apis') was the Serbian Head of Intelligence
	Banned, 1909	After the Bosnian Crisis, the Serb government banned it, so it went underground
	Assassination attempts	Attempts to assassinate Franz Josef (1911) and Franz Ferdinand (January 1914) failed
	Sarajevo, 1914	The Black Hand provided the weapons
Assassination at Sarajevo: causes	The Black Hand	A terrorist group of Serb nationalists dedicated to Panslavism; a group of six sympathisers plotted to kill Franz Ferdinand
	Franz Ferdinand's reforms	Franz Ferdinand's pro-Slav beliefs undermined the Black Hand; the assassins wanted to increase tension in the region
	Serbia's National Day	Holding the parade on 28 June was a direct affront to Serb nationalists
	Poor police protection	Only 120 policemen were on duty to protect Franz Ferdinand; the driver took a wrong turn into Princip's path
	Gavrilo Princip	One of six assassins – a Serb terrorist trained by the Black Hand – it was he who shot Franz Ferdinand and Sophie

Assassination at Sarajevo: events	Troop review, 9:28am	Franz Ferdinand and Sophie arrived in Sarajevo by train
	Mehmed Mehmedbasic, 10:00am	Mehmedbasic was one of six assassins lined up along the Appel Quay; he lost his nerve
	Nedeljko Cabrinovic, 10:05am	Cabrinovic threw a bomb at the cortege but missed; he took poison which did not work
	Town Hall, 10:45am	A furious Franz Ferdinand cancelled the visit and left the Town Hall
	Gavrilo Princip, 11:00am	The driver took a wrong turn and stopped in front of Princip, who shot them both
Assassination at Sarajevo: results	Initial calm, 28 Jun 1914	There was shock but no international alarm; Kaiser Wilhelm II went on holiday
	The Blank Cheque, 5 Jul 1914	The Austrian government approached Kaiser Wilhelm II and got a promise of support; Austria saw the assassination as a chance to attack Serbia
	Austrian Ultimatum, 23 Jul 1914	Austria sent Serbia ten tough demands (i.e. seeking an excuse to invade)
	Clause Six, 25 Jul 1914	The Serbs agreed everything except clause 6 (which proposed to send Austrian police and judges into Serbia – this was against the Serb constitution)
	Austria–Hungary declared war, 28 Jul 1914	The declaration of war was seen as unreasonable after Serbia’s ‘capitulation’
Events leading to war: facts	Serbia asked Russia for help, 28 Jul 1914	(Remember that Russia had let Serbia down in 1909)
	Russia ordered a general mobilisation, 30 Jul 1914	However Tsar Nicholas assured Germany the Russian mobilisation was only directed at Austria–Hungary
	Germany declared war on Russia, 1 Aug 1914	Kaiser Wilhelm II likened Russian mobilisation to letting an enemy put a gun to your head; Germany mobilised and declared war on Russia
	Germany invaded Belgium, 2 Aug 1914	(c.f. the Schlieffen Plan) – also, on 3 August, Germany invaded France
	Britain declared war on Germany, 4 Aug 1914	To honour the 1839 Treaty with Belgium
How alliances helped cause World War I	The Blank Cheque, 5 Jul 1914	The Austrian government approached Kaiser Wilhelm II and got a promise of support; Austria saw the assassination as a chance to attack Serbia
	Russia mobilised to help Serbia, 30 Jul 1914	(Remember that Russia had let Serbia down in 1909)
	Germany declared war on Russia, 1 Aug 1914	Russian mobilisation was ‘a loaded gun’ because Russia was in the Triple Entente
	The Schlieffen Plan, 2 Aug 1914	The Schlieffen Plan was designed for a war on two fronts against the Triple Entente
	Britain declared war on Germany, 4 Aug 1914	To honour the 1839 Treaty with Belgium (the ‘scrap of paper’)

The Schlieffen Plan: facts	Took nine years to devise, 1897–1906	The Plan was named after the German army chief of staff, Alfred von Schlieffen; it was immensely detailed and complex (especially the railway timetables)
	Expected war on two fronts	The Plan (wrongly) thought that any war would be a simultaneous war against France and Russia
	Imagined a quick campaign against France	The Plan (wrongly) thought that France could be defeated quickly and easily
	Envisaged an overwhelming attack on France	The Plan proposed 90% of the Germany army would attack France through Belgium
	Planned to fight Russia after France	The Plan (wrongly) thought that Russia would take 6 weeks to mobilise
How the Schlieffen Plan helped cause World War I	It was a plan of attack	It did not allow Germany to fight Russia but not France – which was the situation in 1914
	It was Germany's only plan	Germany had no plan for a defensive mobilisation – so German mobilisation would start the war
	Russia was mobilising too quickly	It did not allow for Russia was mobilising before France went to war – which was the situation in 1914
	It involved invading Belgium	It involved attacking France through Belgium – which brought Britain into the war
	Railway timetables	The historian AJP Taylor argued that the complexity of the railway timetables meant that the Schlieffen Plan, once started, could not be halted
Who was to blame?	Serbia – Panslavism and Sarajevo	Serbian aggression and support of the Black Hand allowed the assassination
	Austria – Serbia and ultimatum	Austria was determined for a war with Serbia which started the slide to war in 1914
	Russia – Balkans and mobilisation	Russia's Balkans ambitions and mobilisation provoked Germany's attack
	Germany – Weltpolitik and the Blank Cheque	German aggression and desire for 'war the sooner the better' frightened Europe; the Blank Cheque promise encouraged Austria to declare war on Serbia
	Britain – Empire and Dreadnoughts	Britain's huge empire and demand for naval domination provoked Germany

Interpretations: Historiography	Treaty of Versailles	Clause 231 assigned responsibility to Germany "for causing all the loss and damage"
	Revisionists	In the 1920s and '30s, Sydney Bradshaw Fay blamed general forces - nationalism, imperialism, militarism and the system of alliances
	Anti-revisionists	After the Second World War, Fritz Fischer and AJP Taylor blamed a 'will to war' among Germany's leaders. Luigi Albertini especially blamed the German Schlieffen Plan
	Modern historians	Modern historians have assigned elements of blame to ALL the countries - there was a 'will to war' in all Europe
	Ruth Henig	blamed (1989) a 'failure of statesmanship and hope' - the general feeling among Europe's leaders that only war - not diplomacy - could solve Europe's problems