Balance of Power

**(Alliances**: At the end of the 19th century, relationships between European countries were often fragile, mistrustful and based on fear. They all began to seek alliances with other nations who might help them if conflict arose.  
  
**Power potential:**  
**Great Britain**: an industrial powerhouse with **colonies all over the world**; small island nation; powerful **navy** to protect alliances; gave the country **potential** to be **powerful when necessary**.  
  
**Germany:**a powerful industrial giant; building army; and alliances.   
  
**These two nations would become the leaders of the alliance system in the years leading up to 1914 and the beginning of the war.**  
  
**Balance of power** is the term used to describe a political relationship between countries. **Like a set of scales.**The relationship between countries is delicately balanced, but either side can move up or down as political, economic and cultural events unfold.  
  
Foreign diplomacy: Form treaties, agreements, military pacts, and economic and trade ventures. **Keep balance of power.**  
  
**Leading into the 20th century, attempts to maintain the balance of power and avoid conflict resulted in the establishment of covert (secret) and overt (not secret) military alliances. The result was just the opposite of what was intended: the balance of power became very delicate and likely to fall apart.**  
  
  
The MAIN Causes of WWI  
**The balance of power**was influenced by **4 FACTORS:**

* [**Militarism:**](http://jstandring.weebly.com/militarism.html) – a buildup of arms in European countries

## Militarism

**Militarism** describes nations competing to have the largest military forces with the most advanced stockpile of weapons. A growing imbalance of power led to an **arms race** between the major powers of Europe between 1870 and 1914. An arms race is a competition between two or more countries for military supremacy.  
  
The British introduced the heavily armed and fortified warship [**Dreadnought**](http://i58.tinypic.com/27wyj60.jpg)in 1906. The Germans soon followed suit, introducing their own battleships. Naval forces became the focus of the competition:  
1) Protect foreign colonies  
2) Protect trade routes  
3) Blockade land troops at important points.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| As part of the arms race, the countries of Europe trained all their young men to create a huge number of trained reservists who could be called on, in case of war, to supplement the standing army. As one country increased its armies, so did all the others in an effort to keep the balance of power. Instead of calming tensions and preventing war, militarism resulted in nations having large numbers of fighting men and modern weapons at their disposal. Picture |  |

**DEVELOPING A PLAN:**  
Militarism led some to anticipate or expect war to break out with each minor conflict, and nations began to plan for this.  
The **Schlieffen Plan**was one such plan.  
  
In 1897, German **General Count Alfred von Schlieffen** was asked by **Kaiser (German for Emperor) Wilhelm II** to draw up plans to ensure a victory in a possible future war in which the German Reich (German for Empire) might find itself fighting on two fronts: Russia to the east and France to the west.  
  
The plan took nine years to complete. The idea was to win a two-front war by quickly defeating France before the Russians could mobilize their troops in the east. The plan scheduled 39 days for the fall of Paris, and 42 days until the entire country would surrender.  
The Schlieffen Plan heavily depended on **two elements**:  
**First:** the German ability to mobilize and move troops quickly,**first to France and then towards Russia.**  
**Second:** a quick attack before either country could prepare its forces and mobilize.  
If necessary, the plan called for German troops to march through potentially neutral territories, such as Belgium.  
  
​[**Alliance Systems**](http://jstandring.weebly.com/alliance-systems.html)**:** – secret treaties and backroom deals

Alliance Systems

[The two main military alliances were the](http://www.animatedatlas.com/ww1/ww1preview.html):

* **Triple Alliance** - an agreement between Germany, Hungary-Austria and Italy (Central Powers)
* **Triple Entente** - an agreement between Great Britain, France and Russia (Allied Powers)

**Keep in mind that alliances were often secret: not discussed or announced openly to the public.**The following information is quoted from the website, [History Wiz: The Alliance System](http://www.historywiz.com/alliance.htm)  
The leaders were unable to back away from their national "honor" and the entangling alliances they had agreed to.  
[**The Dual Alliance**](http://www.historywiz.com/primarysources/dualalliance.html)of 1879 - Germany and Austria-Hungary made an alliance to protect themselves from Russia.  
The Austro-Serbian Alliance of 1881 - Austria-Hungary made an alliance with Serbia to prevent Russian aggression in Serbia.  
[**The Triple Alliance**](http://www.historywiz.com/primarysources/triplealliancetext.html)of 1882 - Germany and Austria- Hungary made an alliance with Italy to stop Italy from taking sides with Russia  
The [**Franco-Russian Alliance**](http://www.historywiz.com/primarysources/francorussianalliance.html) of 1892 - Russia formed an alliance with France to protect herself against Germany and Austria-Hungary  
[**Entente Cordiale**](http://www.historywiz.com/primarysources/ententecordiale.html) of 1904 - This was an agreement between France and Great Britain ending conflict between the two nations  
The [**Anglo-Russian Entente**](http://www.historywiz.com/primarysources/anglorussianentente.html) of 1907 - This was an agreement between Britain and Russia concerning an end to imperialistic rivalries in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.  
The Triple Entente of 1907 - The Anglo-Russian Entente combined with the Entente Cordiale created what is called the Triple Entente between Russia, France and Britain - an agreement to defend each other in the event of a threat from Germany - a counter to the Triple Alliance  
The Triple Entente of 1914 - Britain, Russia and France agreed not to agree to peace separately  
In spite of a series of last minute telegrams between the cousins Kaiser Wilhelm and Nicholas II trying to avoid a general war (dubbed the [***Willy-Nicky Telegrams***](http://www.historywiz.com/primarysources/willynickytelegrams.html)) the alliance system brought all the major European powers to war.  
Austria Hungary declared war on Serbia, who they believed had supported the assassins. Russia, the traditional friend and ally of their fellow-Slavs, the Serbians, came to their support. Russia's ally France also mobilized for war. Germany, the ally of Austria Hungary, then came to the aid of their ally and invaded neutral Belgium to get to France. When the French violated Belgian neutrality, Great Britain entered the fray. Other  nations followed. What should have been a small local war became the first world war.   
  
Instead of deterring war, through a balance of power the alliance system tied the countries together, so that even a single small, regional or local conflict could have the potential to bring all the nations of Europe into the conflict. If one went to war, they all went. Even if it was over something stupid...  
**Consider copying a map and illustrating the alliance system, so that you will understand the relationships.**

* [**Imperialism**](http://jstandring.weebly.com/imperialism.html)**:** – competition for territory around the world

Imperialism

In the decades prior to WWI, powerful countries competed with each another to acquire territory around the world, especially in Africa.  
  
They wanted natural resources and markets to sell their products, along with the prestige that accompanied owning territory.  
Why?  
Industrial Revolution? Need resources?   
Nationalism? Expanding nation for power and pride?  
  
Britain, France, Germany, etc were fighting over lands/colonies.  
  
**The Moroccan Crisis**In 1904, the colony of Morocco was given to France by Britain, though the Moroccans wanted their independence. In 1905, Germany announced her support for Moroccan independence in order to test the strength of the relationship between France and Britain.  
  
Effects of the crisis:

* Tension was increased between France and Germany.
* The British regarded this as an attempt by Germany to build a German Empire to rival the British Empire.
* At a conference in 1906, Britain and Russia supported France, and Germany was forced to promise to stay out of Morocco.
* In 1907, Britain and Russia, alarmed by German ambitions, made an Entente Alliance.

**The Bosnian Crisis**In 1908, Austria-Hungary took advantage of a revolution in Turkey to annex (take over) the Turkish state of Bosnia.  
Effects of the crisis:

* Serbia was furious because many Serbs lived in Bosnia.
* Serbia asked her ally Russia to help. Russia called a European Conference expecting support from France and Britain. However, Britain and France did not support Russia, no conference took place, and Russia, humiliated, was forced to back down.

​

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

* [**Nationalism**](http://jstandring.weebly.com/nationalism.html)**:** – pride in one’s nation, ethnic nationalism, linguistic nationalism and separatist movements are only some of the many forms of nationalism.

## Nationalism

Nationalism was an extremely strong force in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Nationalism is best understood as a force that unites people because of perceived similarities, such as a common language, ethnicity, religion or culture. People who are nationalistic want their country to be strong and powerful, and they believe that their way of life is superior to others. Nationalism helped cause war in two ways.  
  
First, it made the people of countries like Britain, Germany and France more warlike. French politicians (like Clemenceau and Poincare, who had been around in 1870 during Bismarck's Franco-Prussian War) despised the Germans and stirred up nationalistic fervour to get elected.  
Second, it made the different ethnic groups ruled by the Ottoman Empire (such as the Romanians and the Bulgarians) and by Austria-Hungary (such as the Serbs) want to be free. In the Balkans, this was called **Pan-Slavism** because the people who wanted to be free were all of Slav ethnicity. The most nationalistic of all were the Serbs. Serbia had become an independent country in 1878, but in 1900, many Serbs were still ruled by Turkey and Austria-Hungary. The Serbian government was determined to rule over them all.

**​**  
The Powder Keg of Europe  
The **Ottoman Empire** (also known as the Turkish Empire, or Turkey) lasted from 1299 to 1923. It was the eastern area of the ancient world ruled by Sultans. During the 19th century, nationalism played a key role in its downfall.  
Nationalism weakened the Ottoman Empire as the Slavic peoples of the Balkan region struggled to free themselves from Ottoman control. The Austrian-Hungarian Empire (also called the Austro-Hungarian Empire) was also disintegrating. Serbia declared independence in 1878 by allying itself with Russia, only to be taken over by the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in 1908. Serbia wanted to unite with Bosnia and Herzegovina, also controlled by Austria-Hungary, to form an independent nation of Slavic people.  
Due to alliances, Serbia could rely on Russian support in her effort to become independent, but Austria-Hungary could count on its alliance with Germany to stop Serbia's attempt. Because of the high tensions in this area, the Balkans became known as the **powder keg of Europe**. All that was needed to ignite a major war in that area was a single spark. (**Archduke Franz Ferdinand)**  
The Balkan Wars 1912-13The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) continued to grow weaker when, in 1912, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria (calling themselves the **Balkan League**) attacked Turkey and captured almost all the remaining Turkish land in Europe. Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, arranged a peace conference in London. In 1913, the Bulgarians, unhappy with their share of land captured from Turkey, attacked Serbia and were defeated. Britain and Germany used their influence to bring the war to an end with the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913.  
As a result of the Balkan wars, Serbia proved itself to be the most powerful Balkan state and felt confident enough to threaten Austria, and Germany mistook Britain's cooperation as a sign of weakness.  
The Spark That Lit the Powder Keg  
  
The "spark" that actually started World War I was an assassination in the Bosnian capital city of Sarajevo. At that time, Bosnia was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Many Slavs lived in the Balkans. Pan-Slav nationalist groups wanted to end Austro-Hungarian rule and bring the Slavs of the area together under the rule of Russia.  
On June 28, 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were on an official visit to Bosnia. The Archduke was next in line for the throne of Austria-Hungary.  
  
Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Serbian terrorist organization known as the **Black Hand**, killed both the Archduke and his pregnant wife shortly after they left the town hall.  
  
  
One Thing Led to Another  
Following the assassination, Austria-Hungary sent an ultimatum to Serbia, where the Black Hand terrorists came from. Austria-Hungary demanded justice for the assassination and wanted Serbia to control its terrorists. More importantly, it wanted to stop Serbia from being a centre for the Pan-Slav nationalist movement that sought to end Austro-Hungarian rule over Slavs. The demands were unacceptable to Serbia.  
Austria-Hungary expected that they would fight a local war, put an end to the nationalist uprising in Serbia, and return to normalcy. They never expected the Serbians to ask for help from Russia (one of its allies), and receive it. Russia supported Serbia and readied their military for war. This set off a domino effect, and what was supposed to be a regional conflict quickly turned into a global war.  
  
  
When Russia began mobilizing its troops, the complex network of military alliances and secret deals came into play. The complex web of alliances obligated other countries to mobilize as well. One nation after another prepared their armies, and plans for mobilization quickly became plans for war.  
Germany and Austria-Hungary launched an attack on France, Russia and Serbia. Great Britain wanted to remain neutral but couldn't stand by after neutral Belgium was invaded by the Germans on their way to France. This brought Great Britain and her colonies into the war, along with Japan (another ally of Great Britain). When war was declared on Germany, Turkey entered the war as an ally of Germany. The "war to end all wars" had begun, setting in motion an event that would kill millions of soldiers and civilians.

The Cousins' War  
Kaiser Wilhelm II and Tsar Nicholas II were third cousins and the Kaiser was a first cousin of Nicholas's wife. The two leaders called each other "Willy" and "Nicky" informally, and although their formal communications used their formal names, their correspondence on the eve of the war has become known as the **Willy-Nicky telegrams**.  
The telegrams start with a plea from the Tsar to the Kaiser, as an old friend, to help him try to avoid a European war.  
As the telegrams continue, they show that the leaders began to realize that factors out of their control were pushing their countries toward mobilization. Nonetheless, they maintained their belief that mobilization did not necessarily mean war.  
   
  
Unfortunately for them, it did mean war between their nations and that of King George V of England, who was first cousin to both Wilhelm (on his paternal side) and Nicholas (on his maternal side).  
It was too late to turn back. War had begun.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |