WWI – The Great War

July 1914 - November 1918

Causes of the Great War (WWI)

1) Imperialism: Tensions exist and arise BR, GER, FRA

Britain’s Industrial Revolution makes it an economic superpower

By the early 1900’s Germany catches up and surpasses Britain due to its newer infrastructure

Germany also feels that Britain is denying Germany their position in world Imperialism (Germany’s “place in the sun”)

Germany to increase its navy

Makes an alliance between the two difficult

“Race for Africa”

British naval supremacy makes access to Germany’s African claims difficult

France and Germany clash over parts of Africa

French are angered by the loss of the Alsace-Lorraine region to Germany in the Franco-Prussian war 1870

2) Nationalism

3) Militarism

Britain had a “two power standard”

Their navy had to be equal or better than any two other nation’s navies combined

Germany starts an arms race (naval) with Britain

4) Alliances/ Treaty commitments

Alliance: binds states against other states

”Dual Alliance” (1879) of Germany under Otto Von Bismarck and Austria (aka. *Anschluss* – the uniting of Austrians and Germans in history)

Germany’s plan to isolate France in the case of revenge over the losses in 1870

Russian treaty with Germany

Three Emperors League 1873, Reinsurance Treaty 1887

Italy and Germany/Austria

Triple Alliance 1882

Bismarck assumed that Britain would not ally itself with France because they were Imperialistic rivals

Under Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia is not renewed – Germany’s idea, not Russia’s

Russia was concerned that the failure to resign the treaty would further ally Germany and Austria

Germany stated that the Reinsurance Treaty conflicted with the treaties they had with other states

Russia joins in a Triple Entente with France and Britain for protection

“Entente” was an “understanding” of military cooperation and imperialistic competition

Direct causes of WWI

Immediate Events that Caused WWI

Terrorist group (Black Hand) wanting an independent union of Bosnia and Serbia, assassinates the Austrian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914 during his visit to Sarajevo

Gavrilo Princip

One of 3 men sent to assassinate the Archduke

Archduke was planning to visit those injured in a previous attempt at his assassination

En route to the hospital, Gavrilo Princip gets within 5 ft of the cavalcade and shoots the Archduke in the neck and his wife in the abdomen

This causes a chain of events that brings many states into war:

1. With the assurance of German support, Austria issues an ultimatum to Serbia on July 23 to punish those involved in the assassination and suppress nationalism.
2. Serbia does not accept the part to allow an Austrian inquiry
3. July 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia. Russians had already mobilized to support Serbia
4. July 31, Russians order a general mobilization
5. Germany orders Russia to stop mobilizing
6. Germany makes good on its word to Austria and war is declared against Serbia-Russia on August 1, 1914.
7. France orders general mobilization
8. Germany declares war on France August 3, 1914
9. August 4, 1914 Germany invades Belgium (declared neutrality)
10. Britain declares war on Germany for violating Belgium’s neutrality

What happened to Italy???

1. Declares itself neutral when the war began

Finally joins on May 23, 1915 on the side of the Entente!

Had a non-aggression deal with France and naval deals in the Mediterranean with Britain

Spent it’s time after Aug 1914 trying to create a deal with Britain