# CAUSES OF WORLD WAR I

# Militarism

# Increased war spending enabled all the powers to raise more armies and improve their weapon supplies. Each nation began building up its army or navy and its weapon supply (arms race) to increase their power and prestige (reputation).

# England had a large navy which drove Germany to build up its navy. This created a naval race between England and Germany which led to them to become enemies. Russia desired to have a bigger army than Austria. Austria tried to have a bigger army than Russia. Consequently, Russia and Austria became enemies.

# Alliances

The six most powerful nations in Europe were in two different alliances against one another. An alliance is a close association or union of nations based on common interest. These alliances meant that if a nation got into a war, its allied nations would help them fight their enemies. ”If you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”

England, France, and Russia were in an alliance called the **Triple Entente**. Germany, Austria, and Italy were in the **Triple Alliance**. These alliances divided Europe into two groups. Each side didn't care for the other. If war came between two nations then all six nations would be drawn into the fighting.

# Imperialism

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, some European nations became interested in building large empires. Great Britain and France already built up large empires throughout the world. Germany did not start to build an empire until late in the 1800s. By then, Germany was only able to acquire (take) a few colonies which were mainly in Africa.

Before World War I, a serious quarrel broke out between France and Germany over which nation was to control Morocco in northern Africa. Most European nations supported France in this quarrel, and Germany had to give up its claims to Morocco. However, Germany did not give up its goal to have more colonies. In fact, Germany’s desire for more colonies helped lead to World War I.

Closely related to imperialism was the economic rivalry, or the struggle for trade and business among the industrial nations of Europe. By the early 1900s, German industries were producing nearly as many manufactured goods as were Great Britain's industries. Both nations needed new world markets in which to sell their products. This need led to economic rivalry between the two nations as each tried to gain control of world markets. This rivalry also helped to cause World War I.

**Nationalism -**There were two kinds of nationalism in 19th century Europe:

1. "My country is better than your country!" Nationalism is pride or love of one's own country. Extreme nationalism is a country’s belief that it is better than all others. This belief was strong in many European nations during the early years of the 1900s. The nation also believed that it must win all disputes or disagreements that it had with other nations.

The extreme nationalism in many of the European countries soon developed into hatred of other nations. By 1914, this hatred caused many of the European nations to spend a great deal of valuable time, energy, and money in order to prepare themselves for war.

1. The second form of nationalism was the desire of dominated peoples to be independent and be free to govern themselves (self-determination). Nationalism also meant that people who were alike should have a nation of their own.

For example, the Polish people (Poles) did not have their own nation. The Poles hoped Germany and Russia would go to war so that they could destroy each other, and then the Poles could create their own country. France wanted the area of Alsace-Lorraine that Germany took from them during a war in 1871. The French wanted this territory returned because they felt the people of this region were more French than German. As a result, France welcomed another war against Germany to get the land back.

# Social Unrest - Problems in the Balkans

The most dangerous trouble spot in Europe was the Balkan Peninsula. This region in Europe was home to a diverse mix of ethnic groups with a long history of nationalist uprisings and clashes. The Balkans was known as the “powder keg” of Europe.

Part of the Balkan Peninsula still belonged to the Turkish Empire. The rest of it was divided among several small nations that were trying to expand their territory. Some of these Balkan nations depended on Austria-Hungary for protection while others depended on Russia for protection.

The country of Serbia, who was allied with Russia, wanted to bring all Slavic people under one rule. This attempt created conflict with Austria-Hungary. When Austria-Hungary took over two small Balkan nations in 1908, Russia almost went to war against Austria-Hungary. However, Germany supported Austria-Hungary and Russia backed down. Other small Balkan wars took place in 1912 and 1913, and these wars only made matters worse.

Tensions in the Balkan region were once again on the rise when Austria-Hungary vowed to crush any Serbian effort to undermine its authority in the Balkan region. Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was visiting the Balkan nation of Bosnia when he was murdered by a Serbian nationalist on June 28, 1914. The Archduke and his wife were shot at point-blank range as they rode through the streets of Sarajevo, Bosnia in an open car. This event led to the outbreak of World War I, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in July of 1914.