

# The domino theory and world war i



Many history teachers refer to the turbulent situation that preceded the First World War by the popular acronym MANIA. Each of the letters refers to a different aspect of the situation all of which interacted to create a volatile atmosphere which helped a little spark turn into what was called at the time “the war to end all wars” or even The Great War. The acronym literally represents the five causes of the war, those being militarism of the time, the variety of alliance systems, surging nationalism, the rise of imperialism at the time, and the direct cause of any confrontation the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.

The assassination began a series of actions, that one could easily say occurred because of the twisted web of alliances and problems that had a simple action turn into the most horrific war in history up until that point. Each one of the aspects in their own right could have led to war but with each one occurring in conjunction with the other created a situation so volatile that with one action all hell broke loose in Europe, and moved onto a global stage. Working its way back into the 1880's the alliance system created a twisted web of allies and enemies in Europe.

The idea behind the alliances was for defense, it gave each country the ability to understand that if they go to war they have an ally to join them. The foreign prime minister of Germany, Otto von Bismarck, wanted to focus on staying friendly with Russia. However, Kaiser Wilhelm instead set up an alliance with Austria Hungary in the Dual Alliance of 1879. This alliance became the Triple Alliance of 1882 when Italy joined in. Following the Kaiser's ignorance towards Russia left France with its own opportunity so it set up the Franco-Russian Entente.

This minor treaty held that both sides would consult each other when it was threatened by an outside force. This evolved in 1892 into a military contract which itself further developed into a full blown alliance. In 1904 Britain and France created a treaty, the Entente Cordiale, which was not used as a military alliance but settled past differences and tried to prevent any violent outbreaks. In 1907 the last and most important treaty was made, that being the Anglo-Russian Entente which also put away any past difference but also linked Russia with Britain and France which in effect created the Triple Entente, or the allied powers.

The countries of Europe felt that these alliances would prevent any major wars, without looking at the big picture they didn't realize that these alliances would result in all countries going to war if any battles occurred. The theory of the alliances was that if the countries were tightly linked together then all disturbances could easily be solved peacefully. When the war broke out in the summer of 1914 several different alliances had to go into play. Several different alliances had to be asked to join, the French had to assist the Russians, and the British were brought in as well.

On the other side Germany and Austria had to work together; Italy actually declared neutrality and left Germany and Austria to only have each other. Eventually Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire would join in with Germany. The alliances of Europe created to defined sides, the very sides that would fight each other in the Great War. Those sides were the Central Powers, of which included Germany and Austria, and the Entente powers, of France Britain and Russia. Surging nationalism had begun just earlier in time prior to

outbreak of war and it was a major cause to why the Great War had even begun.

It is first the idea of empowering the people that created a very hawkish public. With a war hawk majority growing with the countries, the possibility for war increases as the people believe they are far superior and even the simplest issues could lead to war. For example, the British sang a song called The Land of Hope and Glory, [1]“ Land of Hope and Glory, mother of the free.... God who made thee mightier, make thee mightier yet. ” This was a popular song and its lyrics alone exemplified the common feeling of superiority.

Many of the countries at the time felt the need to show off their dominance as all of them felt that they were the most superior. Germany's national anthem also shows off this, [2]“ Germany, Germany above all, over everything in the world, When it steadfastly holds together, offensively and defensively. ” That alone demonstrates the German's feeling of superiority, the first lyric explicitly states that the Germans are the greatest country. The fact that those were taken directly from their national anthem just goes to show exactly how superior they felt.

In addition nationalism also was more of a direct type of reasoning for the start of the war. The various races of people who were being oppressed by countries like Austria felt that they should no longer be oppressed. Most notable of any were the Serbs. They were beginning a rebellion trying to get there freedom, the end result was that a terrorist organization had made plans to assassinate the Archduke of Austria. However the reason that

nationalism truly made the biggest difference in causing the war was the Pan Slavism.

This idea was that all those who were of Slavic descent should band together and defend each other. So when Austria began attacking Serbia in retaliation, the Russians felt compelled to join in. Militarism was on the rise during this point in time as well. By that statement it did not only refer to the developing arms race, but also the governments' time's attitude towards war. This idea can be seen as a result of growing influence of generals on their government. [3]Englishmen J.

A Cramb even said, "...I can see no solution to the present collision of ideals but war. " In the period of time leading up to 1914 most countries had begun to build up their forces in an incredible arms race the likes of which the world hadn't seen. By 1914 the armies of all the major players in the war had passed over 700, 000 with countries like Germany and Russia, even France, had eclipsed the one million mark. While from a naval perspective Britain had asserted dominance, while Germany was increasing its prowess as to challenge Britain's dominance.

The Kaiser of Germany wanted to be the most powerful and expand German reach, so he supported Tirpiz's Naval Law; this called for the building of a fleet of " dreadnought" battleships which were one of the most powerful in the world at the time. As one country increased its power and forces the others felt they had to follow suit in order to maintain the power ladder that had previously existed. Under British fear of overseas possessions, due to

increasing German naval power, a treaty was instituted in 1902 between Britain and Japan in order to protect British Pacific colonies.

In addition to building strong armies at the time, it was also important to establish a large reserve, so in the event it was needed the countries would not only have a standing army but a tremendous reserve to draw from. Once again Germany was the best prepared, having 8.5 million in reserves, Russia was a close second with 4.4, France after them with 3.5 million, and the Austria with 3 million reserves. An important side note is that at that point in 1914 Germany had the largest reserves but Russian reserves were the fastest growing, which was a means for concern for the Germans.

The last two causes of the war included imperialism and the assassination. Neither was a major background cause, compared to the other three; but the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand was the immediate cause of all issues. The imperialism was the type of thing was expected because countries that felt that they were superior also felt the need to control others and impress their way on them. This was seen most importantly in Africa as most countries tried to take out large parts, French and British armies met almost causing an issue at that point in time.

However when Germany tried to “put its name in for consideration” it caused issues that further developed the animosity that was already heavy in Europe. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand was the catalyst that helped to take a small regional issue and turn it into a continental war which further developed into a war of globally defining powers. The assassination

was the spark that set off a horrific battle, a war which saw more death and more technology that made war more dangerous than ever before in history.

It found a way to fuse all of the issues that could be simplified in the simple high school acronym MANIA. The militarism and nationalism, along with the animosity that can with the imperialism, cause the stresses that made Europe a volatile scene going into the 1910's. The assassination caused Austria and Serbia to begin war against each other and Pan Slavism, a nationalistic sentiment between those of Slavic descent, caused the Russians to enter in the conflict on behalf of the slaves.

Then the most important cause of creating a world war, the variety of alliances created began to step in for each other and the British French and Russians began fighting against the Germans the Austrians and eventually the Bulgarians and the Ottomans. This developed into one of the most deadly wars fought in the entire history of the world, and all because of the five factors that turned a small disturbance into a full scale battle. Kelly, Martin. " Causes of World War 1 | Top Causes That Led to World War I. " American History From About.

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German National Anthem c1890; Joseph Haydn [3] A 1913 lecture by JA

Cramb