

The history of diplomacy history essay



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Most nations seek to maximize wealth at the minimum cost possible. Adam Smith's book already broadened the minds of European policy makers to the various ways they may increase the wealth of their respective nations by an acquisition of foreign empires most especially in Africa and Asia where resources could be extracted with less labor and capital sacrifices. The need to establish and make resourceful gains was a major drive towards the decision of western nations to acquire colonies and exploit the prosperity in periphery states. As slave trade was completely abolished and industrial revolution already set in, the need for raw materials and cheaper labor became increasingly important within competing core European nations and a very possible cause of the war could have been the need to eliminate competitors.

Great Britain and France in particular had acquired a significant wealth by keeping foreign markets and colonies under their control. In an attempt to keep up with the joneses, other nations desired the same and this led to tensions between them. Alliances were formed by Britain, France and Russia in what was called the Triple Entente on the one hand. On the other hand however, Germany and Austria-Hungary and Italy (the Central Powers) also had their own Triple Alliance mutual defense. The very nature of the alliances among the European great powers had become very polarized by 1907 and so, accommodation was difficult. With increased and intensified antagonism, the dexterity to make credible threats was on the rise so that the severity of a war outbreak would be catastrophic (Cashman and Robinson 36).

Arms race began with a very tight competition between the British and German navy. At the time when Germany emerged as an imperial power, the Berlin Conference was held in 1885 wherein an agreement was reached on which regions of Africa each European power had the colonial power. One core nation's wealth of resources can increase significantly if it could have additional colonies under its control. While the British naval force could only afford necessities in their development, the German navy already acquired advancement that catapulted its strength beyond comparable standards of the time. A response from the British was in terms of negotiations on naval cooperation with Russia in early 1914. While the Russians undertook extensive military organization in the aftermath of a defeat by Japan in 1905, railway construction already reached the German frontier in western Russia with the help of investment from the French so that if war broke out with the Germans, there could be a Russian offensive to the east. German concern about the development grew because a merger of Russia's natural resources with technological modernization would imply that the future would belong to Russia and the German Schlieffen plan would become virtually inoperative. (Cashman and Robinson 36-38).

With local domestic politics playing itself in industrialized Europe, the German government of the time wanted more national support by beginning a diversionary war to distract public's attention because they fear they may lose support. Also, tensions already exist between the left and right wing governments of France after a drastic 19th century French revolution. A war was becoming unavoidable.

Furthermore, there was a clear possibility that military service helped generate a nationalist outlook with the help of newspapers by strengthening public opinion. Most of the decision makers of the time were strong believers in the notion that life was a constant struggle to survive and that Charles Darwin's theories of natural selection could be transferred to the development of human society. If the history of nations was a constant rising and falling pattern and one nation can conquer the other in a war, then that nation is fit than the others and its nation rises (Hamilton and Herwigs 25-26). The dire need by European states for something that could provide regeneration and save the state from social rigidity led some of them to believe that war was going to play a key role in the long-term social development of their nation. War was seen as a normal tool of international politics and the ultimate legal right of all sovereign states. The nature of global political culture and that of institutions of the international system were permissive of war and states considered the preparation for war as one of their prime duties. (Cashman and Robinson, 29 – 30).

Rivalries interwoven with territorial disputes intensified the conflicts most especially between Germany and France and between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Earlier on, the German had meddled in British affairs in South Africa and ill will between these two nations had increased as a consequence. In 1905, and later 1911, the Moroccan crises had erupted with Germany versus France and Britain when the Germans undermined French power in Morocco. Other nations were involved in the events that followed. And, with several other rivalries and meddling springing up within the great powers of Europe,

hostilities were unavoidable and that eventually led to the war (Cashman and Robinson 42-48).

Of all causes of World War I, the most important, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was a provoking and an almost immediate cause of the war that brings alliances, nationalism and social Darwinism, economic imperialism and militarism into light as other causes. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by a Serbian nationalist in Bosnia, a part of Austria-Hungary territory. This happened as a protest by Serbia to Austria-Hungary having control of this region. The resulting verdict was a declaration of war on Serbia by Austria-Hungary and the expansion of the war continued as nation states took sides to better serve their interests.