

Kaiser disbelief.  
bismarck realised that  
twenty years



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Kaiser William II“ Kaiser William II of Germany, 1888-1918, by his personality and actions, contributed to the outbreak of World War I,” Discuss. William II came to power prematurely, on the death of his father, at the age of 29. He lacked discipline, was arrogant and bad-tempered. He lacked political experience and maturity and was influenced in his youth by Hinzpeter who instilled in him the idea that a monarch should be independent and follow orders from none.

It was obvious to all who were politically aware in Germany in 1890 that a clash would occur between the Chancellor Bismarck, and the Kaiser. When this clash did occur it was over the issue of German policy towards Russia. William favoured outright hostility towards Russia and when he expressed this belief to Bismarck he was met with disillusionment and disbelief. Bismarck realised that twenty years of his work was about to be undone by this impetuous imbecile.

William has begun on his road to destruction for Europe. After the collapse of the renewed Dreikaiserbund in 1884, Bismarck recognised that there was a possibility that the isolated Russia would join with France who was in a similar situation. He recognised that this would be disaster for Germany as it would pose the constant threat of a two-front war. However, Bismarck convinced Russia to sign the Reinsurance Treaty and once again managed to insure Germany was safe. However, in 1890 when the treaty was due for renewal William, maintaining that his position “ having been imposed on me from heaven.” Allowed him to let this treaty lapse. He worsened the situation by refusing to let German bankers make loans to Russian banks.

French bankers took their place and in 1894 the Franco-Russian alliance fused the two together. For Bismarck, this was the ultimate blunder and Germany was faced with a nightmare war. William then adopted a policy of "Weltpolitik", that is now that Germany was a European power he wanted to make it a World power also. He hoped to do this by expanding Germany's number of colonies and by getting involved in international crises between other powers. However, this policy was to bring Germany into conflict with Britain and hence alienate a potential French ally. This began when he announced the construction of the Berlin-Baghdad railway. Baghdad was contained within a British Sphere of influence and was suspicious of the Kaiser's actions. The second and more serious incident which turned the British against the Germans was the Kaiser's interference in South Africa.

After the defeat of Cecil Rhodes in the Jameson Raid in 1895 by the Boers, William sent a telegram to Paul Kruger, the Boer leader, congratulating them on their achievement. The British saw this as a latent interference in what they considered was an internal affair. For them, this proved that the Kaiser was a dangerous figure who posed a serious threat to the balance and stability which they wanted to maintain in Europe. Thus, when the Kaiser decided to build up military armaments, they felt they could not allow him to surpass their army size. Admiral von Tirpitz, a powerful military figure, felt that if Germany were to become a world power she needed a strong Navy. William was easily persuaded of this because of his love of pomp and parade and set about building up a Navy.

The British saw this as a war threat and pointed out that "the Royal Navy is a dire necessity- the German fleet a luxury" The bringing into operation of the <https://assignbuster.com/kaiser-disbelief-bismarck-realised-that-twenty-years/>

dreadnought made all other ships obsolete because of its power and this a Naval Race began between the two powers. Huge bitterness and suspicion lingered between the two and by 1914 the two were bitter enemies and Britain used the meek excuse of Germany marching on Belgium as an excuse to declare war on Germany. William's wanting to get involved in international crises was also a cause of World War I, because of how he failed to achieve anything at these conferences but to alienate other powers. He demanded an international meeting on the question of French influence in Morocco thinking that other countries would stand with him. However, France and Britain together crushed him and his first diplomatic defeat was one not easily forgotten. This 1906 conference also brought France and Britain together and after the Entente Cordiale was signed they began drawing up military plans.

The Moroccan Crisis rose again in 1911 and once again the Kaiser was diplomatically humiliated. By his alienation of other powers he was lining up the sides for World War I. William's humiliating defeats were beginning to be criticized at home. The necessity of a war became apparent.

Count von Schlieffen drew up a plan as to how Germany was to cope with the two front war. The plan was to annihilate France and then turn all forces to Russia who it was thought would take longer to mobilise. The army numbers were increased and improved weaponry was developed. 90% of the German budget went on military and naval build up. William's impetuous personality had now made it necessary for Germany to go to war if he was to survive and she was to prosper.

Between William's years of power, a great number of alliances buildup around his own Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria and Italy. The Triple Entente between Russia, Britain and France marked the bringing together of the Anglo-French Entente, 1904, the Anglo-Russian alliance, 1907, and the Franco-Russian alliance, 1894. In his twenty four years in power he had managed to make true the ultimate nightmare of the 'iron chancellor' Bismarck. When Austria asked Germany if she would support her if she were to attack Serbia, and the Kaiser gave his full support, war was imminent.