

# The causes of wwi

Politics, International Relations



The long-term causes

1. Colonial rivalry-competition for even bigger empires
2. Balkan nationalisim-the desire of the Slav peoples of this area to join those in the empire of Austria-Hungary
3. The arms race-competition for bigger armed forces and more armaments
4. The Anglo-German Naval Race
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The immediate cause of the war

1. The assassination of Franz-Ferdinand
2. Russia's backing Serbia made war more likely
3. German backing for Austria was crucially important

Colonial rivalry-competition for even bigger empires

Competition between the Great Powers in Europe to gain colonies plays an important role in causing the WWI. By the beginning of the twentieth century, many great powers in Europe has built up their empires by holding colonies or ares. This is known as imperialism and as means when a country takes over new lands or countries and makes them subject to their rule. Many countries such as the British Empire were at the peak of their industrial revolution and their developments of industries were huge. When industrialism occurs, countries need foreign markets to sell their increase in goods.

Great Britain had the the largest number of colonies in the world so that King George V was also the Emperor of India and ruler of many other lands overseas. The great Empire took up nearly a quarter of the world's land surface with 390 million of population of the colonies in 1914. And also France has the second largest empire in the world with colonies in Africa, the Far East and Indo-China. Those large number of colonies improved Britain's and France's dominance over the Europe and made them powerful and

influential. The Germans were left with some small and commercially marginal colonies.

There was a great deal of jealousy in Germany in regard to the British and French empires. The King of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm envied the mighty Britain Empire. He decided that Germany too must have colonies overseas, which would help him expand the German Empire and provide Germany with a market for her growing industries. It would also be a status symbol showing Germany's greatness and gaining it respect. ( Furthermore, Britain in particular, used its navy and merchant navy to dominate overseas trade, which also provided a source of irritation to the Germans. The Germans embarked on a program of massive naval spending in order to create a navy capable of challenging Britain's domination of the sea. This caused considerable concern in Britain and tensions between the Germans and the Britain. Once the trigger was fired, the assassination of the Archduke, Imperialism directly led to a naval arms race between the two countries. Causing the disparity of the power of different countries, competition and tension between countries to grow, the Colonial rivalry made countries willing and eager to join World War I, which was seen as an opportunity to gain colonies and reshape the world.

Therefore, Germany declared war on Russia and mobilized her army when Russia refused to send troops to help Serbia and other countries joined in the War later. On 5 August, all the great powers of Europe were at war with each other, WWI broke out. Balkan nationalism-the desire of the Slav peoples of this area to join those in the empire of Austria-Hungary Balkan nationalism is also one of the important factors of the outbreak of WWI. The Balkans is the

area of south-west Europe and it was the powder-keg or trouble spot of Europe. This area had once been part of Turkish Empire.

It was inhabited by Slav peoples such as the Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians, who were able to rule themselves. Many nationalities were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but Serbia wanted to unite all Serbs within a greater Serbia. The Slav peoples of Balkans desired those in the empire of Austria-Hungary to join with them. Russia regarded herself as the protector of these Slavs since they shared a common nationality. Austria-Hungary feared losing not only the Serbs but also other Balkan nationals so that Austria-Hungary wanted to take over the states of this area to preserve of this empire.

It brought increasing rivalry between Russia and Austria-Hungary. When Austria started war with Serbia, Russia ordered the Russian army to prepare for war in order to help the Slavs of Serbia on 29 July, which started a countdown to the biggest war, WWI. Germany sent ultimatum to Tsar Nicholas to order him to stop mobilizing but Russia refused to accept and so Germany declared war on Russia, mobilizing her army. As France was an ally of Russia the French government ordered the mobilization of the French army on 1 August. Many other great powers joined the war later so that WWI broke out on 5 August.

Causing the tension and opposition between Russia and Austria-Hungary to rise and making the mobilization of Russia which started the countdown of the war, the Balkan nationalism made the war likely to happen. Therefore, the Balkan nationalism was one of the factors of the outbreak of WWI, The arms race-(competition for bigger armed forces and more armaments) The <https://assignbuster.com/the-causes-of-wwi/>

arms race also contributes into causing the WWI to break out. By the beginning of twentieth century , great powers in Europe have started to rival with each other through building up the size of their armed forces.

Each major power in Europe except Britain had trained a huge army of conscripts, which means young men forced by law to become soldiers for a year or so. These armies could be mobilized at a moment's notice. In the period 1900-1904 the main European powers more than doubled their spending on their armies. From 1872 to 1912, Germany increased more than 300% of her armaments spending when Russia increased more than 250% with Italy, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary and France around 100%. Guns , shells, bullets and other weapons had been stockpiled in case of war.

Ever more destructive weapons were being developed and improved, such as the machine-gun and huge field guns. The increases in spending of armaments caused the military rival between countries to rise. The arm races increased tension between the Great Powers. They felt threatened when others increased its army and gained stronger weapons so that they competed with each other through making their military power stronger with a rolling ' snowball' effect. It made the war more likely since country increased its army and weapons it became more confident of success in a future war and more willing to test out their armed forces.

When Austria started war with Serbia after the assassination of Franz-Ferdinand, Russia backed Serbia as a starting point of countdown of WWI . More great powers joined the large-scaled war soon later since they were confident and well prepared to compete their military powers. WWI broke out on 5th August 1914. Increasing the tension and competition between

countries and accelerating the coming of the war , the arms race gathered all great powers together and made the war faster and more possible to happen. Therefore, the arms race was one of the most important factors of the outbreak of WWI. The Anglo-German Naval Race

The Anglo-German naval race was also one of the factors of the outbreak of WWI. Before WWI, Great Britain had the most powerful naval in the world, which was her Royal Navy. The navy which outgunned and outnumbered all other navies not only protected the Empire and trade, but also prevented foreign invasion. At the same time, Germany had the world's best army but Kaiser Wilhelm, but the German ruler would like to compete with Britain so that it began to build a fleet of battleships to rival the British Navy in 1898. Britain were not worried about the growth of the German fleet too much at first since they had enormous lead.

However, the introduction of the powerful British ' Dreadnought' battleship in 1906 changed all this. The dreadnought was faster, bigger and had a much great firing range than existing battleships and this super-battleship made all previous battleships obsolete or out of date. This allowed the Germans to begin building ' Dreadnoughts' on equal terms with Britain. A race developed between two countries to see who could build the most. In 1909 Britain had 8 Dreadnoughts to Germany's seven. This naval race poisoned the relations between the two countries and was the main bone of contention between the two right up to 1914.

When Germany was preparing to invade Belgium, the British sent her troops to protect Belgium from attack. British sent a telegram to call Germany to back her army. With no reply from Germany , the Britain started war with

Germany and from then, all the great powers of Europe became at war with each other. On 5th August, 1914, WWI broke out. By worsening the relations between Germany and Britain and causing rival and tension between them to rise, the Anglo-Naval Race made the war between the two more likely to happen and it became a part a WWI. Therefore, the Anglo-Naval race was one of the factors of the outbreak of WWI.