

Germany was to blame for wwi

[War](#), [World War 1](#)



Article 231 in the Treaty of Versailles says the First World War was “ the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies”. Survey the causes of the First World War. Was the wording of article 231 an accurate assessment? The wording of article 231 in the treaty of Versailles is an accurate assessment on the causes of the First World War. The First World War was due to the acts of aggression that Germany and her allies were responsible for. The loss and damage to which all allied and associated governments were subjected to, was a consequence of the war imposed by Germany and her allies. The root causes of the war begin with Otto Von Bismarck’s renowned goals of unifying and maintaining of Germany through alliances, Germany’s quest for world power, and the Austro-Hungarian determination to impose its will upon the Balkans. The earliest causes of the war began with Otto Von Bismarck’s creation of a unified Germany in 1871 through the victorious war against France, which produced great tension between the two which were never resolved. His desire to maintain stability in Germany through a network of alliances was of direct relevance to the war that broke 43 years later. (FirstWorldWar, 2009) Acutely aware of France’s humiliation and need for redemption after the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, (FirstWorldWar, 2009) Bismarck’s foreign policy to isolate France was demonstrated by the construction of a network of alliances excluding France which created great tension between the two powerful nations. Victor Hugo spoke for most Frenchmen when he wrote “ France will have one thought ... to become

again a great France, the France of 1792, and the France of an idea with a sword. Then one day she will be irresistible. Then she will take back Alsace-Lorraine. " (Mills, 1983, 15) This rivalry wasn't resolved by the time of The Great War, which resulted in France eventually finding new allies, and thus creating more enemies for Germany. Whilst Germany never allied with France they often formed alliances with surrounding countries to pursue their policy. Though these alliances formed and fell often, Austria always stood by their side. Bismarck chose Austria to be their ally because he knew Austria would throw open the door to the Danube valley for German trade. He also preferred a weaker partner which could be more easily controlled. But whilst the Dual Alliance gave Germany a firm military ally, it also dragged them into situations that they had no interests in, such as supporting Austria in the Balkans, which turned out to be the main spark to the war. Without the creation of the Dual Alliance, Austria would never have declared war on Serbia. For twenty years Germany enjoyed peace and security, but disaster would follow in 1890 due to the forced resignation of Otto Von Bismarck by the new German Kaiser Wilhelm II. Kaiser Wilhelm's arrogance and unpredictability lead him to introduce a world policy of turning Germany into a world power. The aggressive actions conducted in the quest for world power left the other world powers suspicious and scared of Germany. In the quest for world power colonial and naval supremacy were both requirements that Germany did not have. Colonial greatness would be too difficult for Germany to gain as they had started the race too late. Although failure for the colonial mission, there was obvious aggression evident, and in 1899 German historian Hans Delbruck proclaimed " We want

to be a World Power and pursue colonial policy in the grand manner... We can pursue this policy with England or without England. With England means in peace; against England means through war. "(Mills, 1983, 15) In 1896, this aggression was also evident on the sea as Wilhelm announced the future of German was on the sea. A world power needed a large navy, so through a series of naval laws Germany's navy turned from a coastal protection force into a battle fleet capable of challenging Britain. Publicly the Germans were told the navy was for the protection of sea trade and colonies, but privately Secretary of the Navy Admiral von Tripitz wrote " For Germany the most dangerous naval enemy at the present time is England. It is also the enemy against which we most urgently require a certain measure of naval force as a political power factor. " (Mills, 1983, 16) The desire for greater power and international influence through the German naval program saw Great Britain, the other great naval power end its isolation by signing alliances with Japan and France. Whilst Britain and Germany were still not enemies, Britain's suspicions of Germany intensified. Britain responded to their suspicions by ending their isolation by building new and greater warships. After the Agadir incident in 1911, where Germany sent a gunboat to the Moroccan port of Agadir, Britain were more convinced than ever that Germany wanted to dominate Europe. (Mills, 1983, 36) Wilhelm's focus was on the prestige and respect that an empire would bring rather than the consequences possible in trying to achieve such greatness. Chancellor Bullow proclaimed to the Kaiser ' This gain will prompt the people and navy to follow Your Majesty further along the way leading to world power, greatness and eternal glory.' (Mills, 1983, 14)Such potential greatness would only drive the Kaiser more for

world power. Due to Germany's prospering economy Wilhelm had great reason to feel Germany deserved world power. Without colonies, Germany would become a second rate power, as colonies provided secure markets and raw materials. But the aggression by Germany for their place in the sun saw them gain more military enemies than territory. The short term spark of the war is to blame on the Austro-Hungarian determination to impose its will upon the Balkans. Their aggression towards Serbia was the trigger to starting the European war due the alliances that were attached within. The Balkans was a volatile region due to the divide of different nationalities and cultures. Austria-Hungary wanted to be the dominate power in the Balkan region, so they forbid countries such as Serbia to expand their nation. In attempt to reduce dependence on Austria-Hungary, Serbia began to build trade links with Bulgaria and France, but Austria-Hungary had no problem in quashing these trade links. Tension raised more when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia, leaving Serbia isolated. Serbia and Austria hated each other. Trouble in the Balkans was nothing new though, and in 1912 the first Balkan war occurred seeing Serbia emerge as the largest and most powerful Balkan nation. However, Austria-Hungary's harsh stance still left Serbia without access to the sea due to the formation of Albania. Austria became increasingly worried about the Serbians who felt it was their duty to liberate Serbians within the Austrian Empire, so Austria was very keen to break Serbia up. (Ross, 2002, 41) Austria's aggression towards Serbia concerned the Russians as they felt they need to protect their fellow Slav's. The addition of outside countries threatened to blow a small war into a European War, but Austria remained aggressive anyway. The assassination of

Archduke Franz Ferdinand by the Black Hand terrorist group gave Austria-Hungary a reason to start a war with Serbia. Serbian officials knew of the assassination plot and didn't warn Austria. (Ross, 2002, 46) In response to the assassination, Austria sent the harshest of ultimatums to Serbia requiring demands that could not possibly be met. The Austrian demands were only an excuse to start a war. It is clear they had decided on war, before the ultimatum was sent. Although the known backing of Russia for Serbia, the Austrians were not totally certain that an attack on Serbia meant an attack on Russia. They insured they had the backing of Germany if Russia intervened for reassurance. Germany also showed their intention for war as refused to take part in the four power's conference to resolve the dispute. Austria-Hungary and Germany both believed that the dispute could be kept localised in the Balkans. If the alliances were stronger and Austria was certain of Russia's backing, war might never have come that year, but they took that risk anyway. (Remak, 1984, 87) The responsibility of who caused the First World War is correctly worded in article 231 of the treaty of Versailles. The aggression shown by Germany and her allies was evident by the loss and damage to which all allied and associated governments endured. Otto Von Bismarck's alliances that lasted 43 years, the German quest for world power which started too late, and the Austro-Hungarian pursuit to dominate the Balkans were the causes to blame for World War I.

Bibliography: H. W. Koch, 1984, *The Origins Of The First World War*, Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims (Joachim Remak, 87, 1984) Harry Mills, 1983, *The Road To Sarajevo* Stewart Ross, 2002, *The Causes of World War I* Michael Duffy, 2009, *The Causes of World War I*,