**World War One Causes**

**1878 – 1914**



This timeline details the long term, short term and trigger events that caused the outbreak of World War One

**Long Term Causes**

1878 (3rd March)

Treaty of San Stefano

This was a peace treaty that was forced on Turkey by Russia following Turkish defeat in the the Russo-Turkish War. Under the terms of the treaty Turkey lost control of areas in the Balkans and Eastern Europe – Montenegro gained recognition, Serbia and Romania were given independence and Bulgaria was created. Austria-Hungary disliked the treaty because they did not want to see independent Balkan states. Britain disliked the treaty fearing Russian expansion in Europe.

1878 (13th July)

Treaty of Berlin

This treaty revised the Treaty of San Stefano. Russia was deprived of the whole of Bulgaria and Serbia was forced to give back land it had gained from Bosnia. Although technically under Turkish control Austria-Hungary was allowed to station military garrisons in Bosnia.

1879 (7th October)

The Dual Alliance

This was an alliance made between Germany and Austria-Hungary to protect themselves from Russia. The Treaty was instigated by the the German minister Bismarck who was concerned by the fact that relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia had become strained because Russia had attacked Turkey. The terms of the treaty agreed that they would come to the other’s aid in the face of attack by Russia.

1881 (18th June)

The Three Emperors’ League

In an attempt to stabilise the situation in Eastern Europe, Germany and Austria-Hungary invited Russia to join their Dual Alliance.

1881 (28th June)

Austro-Serbian Alliance

This was an alliance made between Austria-Hungary and Serbia to prevent Russia gaining control of Serbia. Austria-Hungary told Serbia that they would not tolerate a Russian state on their borders leaving the Serbs with little choice but to agree to the alliance. The alliance bound Serbia to Austria-Hungary economically as well as politically and was not popularly received in Serbia.

1882 (20th May)

The Triple Alliance

This alliance extended the Dual Alliance made in 1879 to include Italy. The Italians had been prompted to join the Alliance because of anger at France’s seizure of Tunisia but also out of a need for protection in case of attack.

1883 (30th October)

The Austro-German-Romanian Alliance

This was a secret alliance made between Romania and the signees of the Triple Alliance which gave Romania protection but only bound her to go to war if Austria-Hungary were attacked.

1894 (4th January)

The Franco-Russian Alliance

This was a mutual aid alliance between France and Russia. The French Republic had so far remained independent but in the face of the Triple Alliance made the alliance with Russia to curb German and Austro-Hungarian power. In the event of war Germany and Austria-Hungary would be forced to fight a war on two fronts.

1897 (at the time of)

Militarism

As successive countries had formed alliances and ‘taken sides’ so they had began to build up their armies. By 1897 the total numbers of military personnel available for each major power was:

Britain – navy – more powerful than the others put together

France – army – 3.4 million reservists

Russia – army – 4 million reservists

Germany – army – 545,000 regular soldiers and 3.4 million reservists

Austria-Hungary – 2.6 million reservists

1900 (at the time of)

Imperialism

There was strong rivalry with Germany over the extent of the European powers’ empires and overseas colonies. Throughout the 19th century there had been a rapid expansion in the acquisition of overseas territories by European nations especially in Africa (the scramble for Africa).

1900 Empires:

Britain – included: Canada, British Guyana, Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Malaya (Malaysia), Burma, Siam (Thailand), India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Aden (Yemen), Oman, Hong Kong, South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Tanganyika and Zanzibar (Tanzania), Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, South Pacific Islands

France – included: French Guyana, Tunisia, Algeria, French Western Africa (Most of N. Western Africa), French Equatorial Africa (Ivory Coast, Chad, Gabon, Congo), Madagascar, French Indo-China (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) Germany – included – German South West Africa (Namibia), German East Africa (Burundi, Rwanda, part of Tanzania), Cameroon, Benin, German Pacific Islands

1902 (31st May)

The Russo-Bulgarian Military Convention

This was an agreement between Russia and newly created Bulgaria. Russia wanted to ensure Bulgarian support and offered protection to Bulgaria in return Bulgaria was only obliged to go to war if attacked by Austria-Hungary.

1904 (8th April)

Entente Cordiale

This was an agreement, but not a formal alliance, between France and Britain. The agreement ended the traditional hostility between the two countries. France recognised British control of Egypt while Britain recognised French control of Morocco, disputes over fishing rights were settled and disputes in Siam (Thailand) were also settled.

1905 (During)

The Germany Army Chief of Staff, Alfred von Schlieffen drew up a plan by which Germany could quickly invade and defeat France. It was known as the Schlieffen Plan.

1905 (March) to 1906 (May)

First Moroccan Crisis

Morocco wanted independence from France. Germany declared support for the Moroccans against the French. War was avoided following negotiations which allowed France to retain possession of Morocco.

1906 (10th February)

The British navy launched the Dreadnought, a new and very efficient battleship. The introduction of this new vessel sparked a naval race between Britain and Germany.

1907 (31st August)

Anglo-Russian Entente

This was an agreement between Britain and Russia that settled territorial disputes in Persia (Iran), Afghanistan and Tibet.

1907 (31st August)

Triple Entente

The signing of the Ango-Russian Entente together with the Entente Cordiale between Britain and France and the Franco-Russian Alliance created what was known as the Triple Entente and provided for mutual aid guarantees if any country were attacked.

1908 (17th March)

The SMS Nassau, the first German dreadnought ship was launched

1908 (March) to 1909 (May)

Bosnian Crisis

Austria took control of Bosnia angering Serbia. Serbia threatened Austria-Hungary with war. Russia, allied to Serbia, mobilised its forces. Germany mobilised its forces and threatened Russia. War was avoided when Russia backed down.

**Short Term Causes**

1911 (Spring) - A revolt broke out in Morocco which confined the Sultan to his palace.

1911 (April) - A sizeable number of French troops were moved to Morocco in support of the Sultan.

1911 (9th May) - The Black Hand was formed by Colonel Dragutin Dimitrievitchten, known as Colonel Apis, and ten like-minded men, the aim of this group was to build a Greater Serbian Empire.

1911 (1st July) Second Morocco Crisis - Germany sent a gunboat to the Moroccon port of Agadir in protest at France’s increasing military presence in Morocco. Britain announced that she would stand behind France. This move threatened to result in the outbreak of war.

1911 (July) - Germany was hit by a financial crisis that saw the stock market fall by more than 30% in a day. Faced with financial collapse Germany was forced to pull out of Morocco and attempt to find a peaceful settlement.

1911 (4th November) Treaty of Fez - This was a peace treaty between France and Germany whereby Germany agreed to recognise French possession of Morocco in return for Middle Congo (Republic of Congo) which became part of the German colony of Kamerun (Cameroon)

1912 (November) - Russia announced a reconstruction and modernisation of its army.

1912 (29th November) - Germany announced that if Austria-Hungary were forced into a war then Germany would stand with her.

1912 (after 29th November) - Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary warned the German ambassador that allowing Austria-Hungary a free rein in the Balkans would be catastrophic. He also added that Britain would stand by France if France were attacked.

1912 (8th December) - An unscheduled meeting of Germany’s top military leaders was called for by Kaiser Wilhelm II. The army leaders and the Kaiser felt that if the situation in Europe was to descend into war then it would be best for Germany sooner rather than later however, Admiral Tirpitz requested a delay until the new U Boat base was completed.

1913 (at the time of) - The Serbian Nationalist Group, The Black Hand, had grown and now had a membership of around 2,500 including many government and military officials

1913 (18th February) - The new French President, Raymond Poincaré, favoured a policy of trying to improve relations with Germany rather than pursuing a military solution. Germany on the other hand favoured a policy of war against France and intended to use General Schlieffen’s plan to overpower France should war break out.

1914 (May) - The political situation in Serbia was very volatile with two rival factions under Prime Minister Nikola Pasic and radical nationalist chief of Military Intelligence and founder of the Black Hand, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijevic. The King dismissed the Prime Minister but then the Russian ambassador, realising that a radical nationalist would not be favourable to Russia, intervened and called for Pasic to be reinstated.

1914 (May) - Prominent Serbian Military men armed and trained three Bosnian students, Gavrilo Princip, Nedeljko Cabrinovic and Trifko Grabez, in explosives. They were then smuggled back to Bosnia. Their mission was to assassinate the archduke of Austria-Hungary.

1914 (May and June) - Field Marshall Moltke continually called for Germany to launch a preventative war against Russia.

1914 (at the time of) - The continued arms race had resulted in a huge increase in military power of all the major European powers.

Britain – 29 dreadnoughts and 9 dreadnought battle cruisers

Germany – 17 dreadnoughts and 7 dreadnought battle cruisers

**Trigger Event**

1914 (28th June)

Assassination

The heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were assassinated. The couple were on a visit to the Bosnian capital Sarajevo when they were shot and killed by Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Black Hand Serbian terrorist group.

1914 (after 28th June)

The Austrian government laid the blame for the assassination on Serbia but refrained from declaring war because Serbia was allied to Russia.

1914 (5th July)

Kaiser Wilhelm agreed German support for Austria against Serbia.

1914 (23rd July)

The Austrian government issued an ultimatum to Serbia.

1914 (25th July)

Serbia rejected Austria’s ultimatum.

**Declarations of War**

1914 (28th July) - Austria declared war on Serbia

1914 (1st August) - Germany declared war on Russia after Russia ignored Germany’s ultimatum asking them to stop mobilising.

1914 (1st August) - France rejected Germany’s request to remain neutral and mobilised its army.

1914 (3rd August) - Germany declared war on Russia’s ally, France and invaded Belgium.

1914 (4th August) - Britain issued an ultimatum to Germany to remove its troops from Belgium by midnight. Germany did not comply and Britain declared war on Germany for violating Belgian neutrality

1914 (6th August) - Austria declared war on Russia.

1914 (12th August) - Britain and France declared war on Austria.

1914 (13th August) - Japan, allied to Britain, declared war on Germany

1914 (29th October) - Turkey formed an alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary

1914 (2nd November) - Russia declared war on Turkey

1914 (5th November) - Britain and France declared war on Turkey

1915 (26th April) - Italy changed sides and joined the allies

1915 (23rd May) - Italy declared war on Germany

1917 (6th April) - The United states declared war on Germany

1917 (7th December) - The United States declared war on Austria-Hungary