The Road To World War I
Europe experienced peace from the 1870s through the early 1900s. However, the following powerful forces were pushing Europe towards war:

- **Militarism**
- **Alliances**
- **Imperialism**
- **Nationalism**
1. Alliances

Europe was made up of a system of alliances that kept the balance of power in Europe.

Nations agreed to defend each other if attacked.

This meant that a war between two nations could escalate into a global conflict.
Causes of WWI

Rival Alliances in 1914

Germany

Triple Alliance
(Central Powers)

Austria-Hungary

France

Triple Entente
(Allies)

Italy

Russia

Great Britain
2. Imperialism

The European powers, Russia, and Japan competed for economic power in the 1800s.

France and Germany competed for colonial gains in Africa, while Britain and Germany competed industrially.
Because of their mutual competition with Germany, Britain and France formed close ties with each other.
3. Militarism

During the 1800s militarism had increased around the world, making nations eager to use military force.
Causes of WWI

Most nations had built massive armies and navies with the latest technology. Britain and Germany had the biggest arms race.
Aggressive nationalism was the source of tension throughout Europe.

France was still upset over their humiliating defeat to Bismarck in their 1871 war with Prussia.

Many French people wanted to take revenge against Germany, and regain Alsace and Lorraine.
Russia also promoted pan-Slavism in the Balkans, which upset the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the “sick” Ottoman Empire.

Because of nationalism, the region was known as the “powder keg” of Europe.
The Spark that Started World War I
Not surprisingly, World War I began in Bosnia, which was the heart of the ethnically diverse Balkan powder keg.

Although inhabited by many Serbs, Bosnia was not ruled by Serbia, but by Austria.
When Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, traveled through Bosnia in June of 1914, he was assassinated by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip.
Princip’s assassination of Ferdinand is known as the “spark” that started the Great War.
After the assassination Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany gave his ally Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary "carte blanche," or a blank check of support.
With Germany’s support, Austria gave Serbia a harsh *ultimatum*, or set of demands.

Serbia refused to *comply* with some of the demands, so Austria-Hungary declared *war* on Serbia on July 28, 1914.
Czar Nicholas II of Russia, a fellow Slavic nation and ally of Serbia, pleaded with Austria not to attack the smaller country.

When the plea failed, Russia mobilized, or prepared its forces for war against Austria-Hungary.
The War Begins

In response to Russia’s mobilization against their ally Austria-Hungary, Germany declared war on Russia.

Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany
Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany then declared war on France, another ally of Russia.
The War Begins

To get to Paris, German troops invaded neutral Belgium.

Belgium’s protection was guaranteed by Great Britain, so the British joined the war against Germany.
The War Begins

The Ottoman Turks joined the Central Powers to combat pan-Slavism, which threatened their empire.

Italian Muslims Declare Jihad

Italy joined the Allies to gain Austrian-ruled lands that were inhabited by Italians.
Japan joined the allies and used the war as an excuse to seize German outposts in China and islands in the Pacific.
The War Begins

In 1917 the United States declared war on Germany after it sunk the Lusitania.
LUSITANIA SUNK BY A SUBMARINE, PROBABLY 1,260 DEAD; TWICE TORPEDOED OFF IRISH COAST; SINKS IN 15 MINUTES; CAPT. TURNER SAVED, FROHMAN AND VANDERBILT MISSING; WASHINGTON BELIEVES THAT A GRAVE CRISIS IS AT HAND

The Lost Cunard Steamerhip Lusitania

A Where the First Torpedo Struck... B Where the Second Torpedo Struck.
Other European Nations in World War I

**Allies:** Romania, Montenegro, Greece, Portugal

**Central Powers:** Bulgaria

**Neutral Nations:** Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Switzerland, Albania, Spain.
The alliance system pulled Europe into war

A-H declares war on Serbia

Assassination of Ferdinand

Russia (Slavic)

Russia mobilizes its forces

Germany
(Germanic)

Austria-Hungary (Germanic)

Serbia (Slavic)

RECAP
# The War Begins

## Major Powers in World War I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Alliance Before War</th>
<th>Side During War</th>
<th>Reason for Fighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Triple Entente</td>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Rival of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>Triple Entente</td>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Rival of Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Triple Entente</td>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Defend pan-Slavism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Germans sink <em>Lusitania</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Triple Alliance</td>
<td>Allies</td>
<td>Desire Austrian lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Triple Alliance</td>
<td>Central Powers</td>
<td>Rival of Britain, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>Triple Alliance</td>
<td>Central Powers</td>
<td>Destroy pan-Slavism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottoman Empire</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Central Powers</td>
<td>Destroy pan-Slavism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who was to blame for WWI?

- Austria-Hungary: Blamed Serbia for terrorism; wanted to crush Serbian nationalism.
- Germany: Felt it must stand behind its ally, Austria-Hungary.
- Russia: Supported Slavic people; feared A-H wanted to rule Slavic people.
- France: Backed Russia; felt it might someday need Russian support against Germany.
- Britain: Felt a duty to protect Belgium; feared power of Germany across English Channel.