

## Origins of World War I:

### 3.1 – 3.3 PRE-WORLD WAR I EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY

#### Balance of power in Europe after 1815

- After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Prussia, The United Kingdom and France dominated Europe
- They maintained the status quo where no country challenged the position of another
- *A situation is stable when every party is roughly equal*
- The balance of power was upset in 1870 with the unification of Germany and Italy
- Germany, a rising power, destabilised the peace by challenging the declining powers of France, Russia and Austria-Hungary
- *World War I occurred because the balance of power was upset*
- Germany was a growing power that threatened the declining European powers and antagonised its enemies
- Germany's location in Central Europe put it in a position to take advantage of trade
- However, a disadvantage is that they were surrounded by potential enemies

#### **Germany's** foreign policy

- Wanted to check France's revenge
- Germany had invaded Alsace and Lorraine during the French-Prussian war
- German isolated France politically and manipulated European nations to this end
- Wanted to preserve the Turkish Ottoman Empire to prevent a power vacuum in the Balkans

#### Austria-**Hungary's** foreign policy

- Citizens of the Austro-Hungarian empire were mostly ethnic Germans and Hungarians, with the Slavs making up the 3<sup>rd</sup> most populous ethnic group
- Austria-Hungary was a multi-national empire
- Wanted to check foreign subversion
- Opposed Russian expansionism in the Balkans – Balkan states consisted of mostly Slavs
- The Slavs wanted the Austro-Hungarian empire to be broken up
- Russia saw itself as the defender of the Slavs and encouraged Slavic nationalism
- Increasing Slavic nationalism
- Sought to sustain its declining great power status
- Worried by the growing weakness of the Ottoman Turkish empire

#### **France's** foreign policy

- Revanchisme (revenge) to avenge the 1870 defeat by Prussia (a German state)
- Wanted to regain Alsace and Lorraine
- Wanted to sustain its declining great power status

### Russian foreign policy

- Sought to control the Straits of Constantinople, which were dominated by the Ottoman Turkish empire
- Russian ports e.g. Vladivostok had to be closed for most of the year due to the cold climate
- Saw itself as the defender of the Slavs and encouraged Slavic nationalism in other countries
- Sought to retain its influence in the Balkans and to retain its great power status after its humiliating defeat in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war
- Needed a foreign policy success to sustain the government due to growing domestic unrest

### British foreign policy

- Its priority was to ensure the security of the waters around it
- The United Kingdom is an island and is vulnerable to blockade
- Had to ensure that Belgium remained neutral as it was The United Kingdom's connection to the rest of Europe
- Wanted to prevent the domination of Europe by a single power
- Wanted to remove threats to its economical power
- The United Kingdom had to keep open its lines of communications with the rest of the British Empire
- Adopted the policy of splendid isolation – avoided alliances which may have dragged it into war
- This policy failed as The United Kingdom faced too much competition from the United States and Japan

## 3.4 NATIONALIST AMBITIONS OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE UNDER KAISER WILHELM II

### The weaknesses of the German leadership

- Kaiser Wilhelm II came to power in 1890
- Due to his upbringing and physical defect, he had a strong sense of inadequacy and inferiority
- Kaiser Wilhelm II was prone to acting on impulse and was easily won over by sycophants who gave bad advice
- The generals had growing influence over the Kaiser as compared to the civilians
- *Germany lacked a good leader*

### Succession of weak Chancellors

- The Chancellors were either too inexperienced, too old or too unscrupulous
- Theobald Hollweg was the Chancellor from 1909 to 1917 and led Germany into World War I
- Hollweg lacked experience in foreign and military affairs and was not decisive enough

### Aggressive and expansionist German nationalism – the Weltpolitik and Mitteleuropa

- *Germany's antagonism broke Europe up into 2 main factions: The Entente Powers which consisted of the United Kingdom, France and Russia; and the Central Powers which consisted of Germany and Austria-Hungary*
- Kaiser Wilhelm II launched Weltpolitik (world politics) in 1897 and aimed to make Germany a world power – he actually could not decide what defined a world power
- Germany adopted bullying tactics with an apparent lack of clear purpose
- Marked the rise of prestige politics – politics done for prestige instead of for pragmatic reasons
- Kaiser Wilhelm II: “Nothing must henceforth be settled in the world without the intervention of Germany and the German emperor.”
- German foreign minister Bernhard von Bulow: “We do not want to place anyone into the shadow, but we also claim our place in the sun.”

#### Reasons for the Weltpolitik

- Germany was not recognised as a world power despite its growing economic and military power
  - Pressure from German nationalists
  - Strong influence of Social Darwinism
- Pressure from middle class groups who pressed for colonial adventures to search for new markets and raw materials
- Deflect from growing domestic political instability
  - The expanding middle and working classes were able to challenge the ruling elite
  - Social imperialism

#### Manifestation of the Weltpolitik

- Growth of German imperialism – wild search for colonies around the world
  - Jiaozhou in China was a German colony
  - Reversal of Otto von Bismarck's earlier foreign policies
  - The colonies were unprofitable and indefensible, as they were too scattered
  - The colonies were lost during World War I
- Expansion of the German Navy
  - Sought to imitate the British Royal Navy which was seen as a source of world power
  - Germany's traditional strength however was in its ground forces
  - Support the German heavy industrialisation (debatable)
  - For prestige reasons

#### The Risk Theory

- Created by Admiral Alfred Tirpitz in 1898 and received support from the Kaiser

- Sought to build the Navy to a size that the British Royal Navy would not risk battle
- Wanted to build as many Dreadnoughts (battleships) as possible
- A major flaw was that it assumed the British Royal Navy would remain passive
- The continual refusal of Germany to negotiate pushed The United Kingdom into an alliance with France and Russia

#### Impact of the Anglo-German naval race

- German battleships were offensive in nature
- The German Navy could only operate in the North Sea as that was where most of Germany's ports were
- The British concluded that this was directed at them – strong British resentment
- The British Royal Navy's 2 Power Standard was established in 1899 – the British sought to have a Navy more powerful than the next two naval powers combined
- The British were able to outbuild the Germans
- The British entered into agreements with Japan and France which allowed it to concentrate its naval might in its home waters – increased the number of warships available against Germany
- By 1914, the British had 22 battleships while the Germans had 15

#### Impact of the Weltpolitik

- German foreign policy was confusing as the German leaders were not sure of their ultimate aim
- Reflects Kaiser Wilhelm II's personality – Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted Germany to have a say in all international issue through the use of bullying tactics
- This caused the other European powers to feel threatened – led to the rise of hostile alliances
- The naval arms race was unnecessary as The United Kingdom was not a natural enemy of Germany – France was
- The naval arms race was a very expensive diversion from the German Army and economy – the increase in taxes needed to fund the naval arms race created more domestic unhappiness in Germany

#### The policy of Mitteleuropa

- Germany aimed to achieve economic and cultural dominance over Central Europe
- This would allow Germany to exploit the region economically
- This would also allow Germany to compete with the British Empire

### 3.5 ECONOMIC AND IMPERIAL RIVALRY

- German economic power grew steadily from 1880 to 1914
- Germany's population rose from 41 million in 1871 to 66 million in 1914

- Germany's industrial power and economic strength outstripped The United Kingdom, France and Russia
- *Did war break out due to envy especially by The United Kingdom regarding its relative economic decline?*
- The European powers like The United Kingdom, France and Germany were major lenders – they created a network of economic relationships throughout Europe
- Most merchants and bankers wanted peace regardless of their nationality
- The extent of economic rivalry was not that great as there was a lot of economic cooperation amongst the European powers
- The United Kingdom's largest trading partner was Germany
- Germany was economic rivals with Austria-Hungary and invested in Serbia
- The ultimate trigger in the Balkans had nothing to do with economic issues
- Austria-Hungary and Russia were not capitalist powers

#### The rise of the New Imperialism and Imperial rivalry

- There was an expansion of Western colonialism throughout the world in the 19th century, especially in Africa – the European powers were motivated by the search for raw materials and new markets, and for prestige
- Colonialism was seen as a zero-sum game which threatened a country's great power status
- The United Kingdom and France had the largest empires – challenged by Germany who was a late entrant in the race
- The main colonial rivals were Russia, France and The United Kingdom – they were all allies in World War I

### 3.6 THE RISE OF HOSTILE ALLIANCES

#### The failure of the Bismarckian alliance system

- German chancellor Otto von Bismarck introduced a highly complex series of alliances – deliberately limiting Germany's ambitions
- Von Bismarck united hostile countries in an interlocking network of alliances – no single state could be assured of support in a war of aggression
- Von Bismarck isolated France through these alliances
- However, Von Bismarck rejected war against France, preferring to maintain the status quo
- The Bismarckian alliance system was abandoned by his successors
- The only remaining agreement was the Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary which lasted till 1918

#### Historiography of the failure of the Bismarckian alliance system

1. Von Bismarck's alliances were defensive but were corrupted by subsequent generations

2. Von Bismarck's policies were doomed by their contradictions – the socio-economic forces in Germany would not have accepted the system
3. Von Bismarck's secret diplomacy fostered and exploited rivalries amongst the European powers
4. It was not the issue of the alliances but Germany's commitment to peace that made the difference – Von Bismarck's successors did not bother to understand his policies

#### The encirclement of Germany

- The failure of the Bismarckian alliances and the antagonistic German foreign policy benefitted France
- France established a military alliance in 1894 with Russia which pledged mutual cooperation in a defensive war against Germany
- Germany rebuffed British efforts to establish an alliance in the 1900s – Germany was convinced that The United Kingdom was getting weaker
- France allied with the British in the Entente Cordiale of 1904
- Russia signed a treaty with The United Kingdom in 1907
- The Entente Powers was formed, consisting of The United Kingdom, Russia and France

#### Growing German imperialism and its impact on European diplomacy

- The Germans were determined to undermine France – Germany challenged France's sphere of influence over Morocco although it had no real interests in the region
- The 1905 and 1912 crises saw humiliating German retreats due to British support for France – the Germans were more determined not to back down during the next confrontation
- A. J. P. Taylor argues that the failure of the Weltpolitik from 1904 to 1907 was the starting point of World War I – it caused the Germans to turn towards Austria-Hungary to strengthen its continental European position

#### Impact of the Alliance system

- It has been argued that the Alliance system was decisive in leading to the war – despite the alliances being defensive in nature
- A. J. P. Taylor argues that the Alliance system cannot be blamed for the war – the Schlieffen plan meant that any Austro-Russian war would include France and The United Kingdom

#### The impact of public opinion on governments

- Some historians argue that the rise of mass electorates infused with ultranationalistic feelings pressed the leaders for war
- Other historians argue that governments were generally able to resist the more extreme demands however the public did still exert some pressure
- Newspapers focused on sensationalism fed by war, imperial expansion and xenophobia

- The impact affected The United Kingdom, France and Germany more as their public sphere was more developed
- The orthodox interpretation of public opinion was that it was belligerent – there were large crowds gathered in public squares supporting the war
- Wilhelm Mulligan however argues that the public was more influenced by defensive patriotism rather than seeking for a war of aggression or a preventive war
- British public hostility towards Germany oscillated – by 1914, the tensions had eased due to the end of the naval race, the cologne of colonial rivalries and increased diplomatic cooperation
- Popular French pressure to regain Alsace-Lorraine was weak – the French did not want war but were not willing to renounce their claims either
- Russia's public opinion was limited to a small educated class
- There was a growing sense of militarisation after the defeat by Japan in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905
- There was also deepening resentment towards Austria-Hungary and Germany in Russia – this was influenced by the pan-Slavic movement in the Balkans
- The Russian leaders were more susceptible to public opinion as the Tsarist regime was weak
- In Germany, the public supported a defensive war instead of a preventive war
- Chancellor Hollweg was less susceptible to public pressure as compared to his predecessors
- The German Austrians were very concerned about Slavic nationalism – wanted a strong alliance with Germany
- There was little desire for a general war

### 3.7 THE GROWING MILITARISATION AND ARMS RACE IN EUROPE

#### Civilian-military relations before 1914

- Annika Mombauer and Gunther Kronenbitter claim that military officers exercised too much influence over political decisions – examples include the German Chief of Staff Helmuth Moltke and the Austro-Hungarian Chief of Staff Franz Conrad
- Moltke was chosen despite the objections of his peers – he tried to give an impression of personal strength but actually lacked genius
- Moltke was fatalistic about war with Russia and France, and publicly claimed that Germany would win the war easily but privately doubted that
- Conrad was an extreme imperialist who wanted to expand the Austro-Hungarian empire
- Conrad was determined to fight a war with Russia to end the Serbian threat and was convinced he was a military genius despite the backwardness of the Austro-Hungarian army
- Fritz Fischer and John Rohl argued that real power was in the hands of the German military
- The British and French military were clearly subordinate to the civilian government
- Wolfgang Mommsen and William Mulligan argued that the European military elites did not make the key decisions – the civilian elites did

### The war planning

- The growth of the modern state allowed for the creation of mass armies
- General staffs believed in the cult of the offensive and thought that wars would be short and decisive – the German Schlieffen plan
- This led to the militarisation of diplomacy – military options took precedence
- War was due to the undue influence of the European generals
- War became more likely after 1911

### The military state of the Entente powers

- The French Army started the spiral of rapid military spending in Europe in 1912 – however they did not have the financial basis to sustain it
- The Russian Army despite its size was badly equipped and poorly led – they had also recently suffered several humiliating military defeats
- Russia introduced the Great Military Programme in 1913 which sought to achieve clear numerical superiority over Germany
- The potential of Russian power alarmed the German military leaders
- Russia lacked alternatives to military power as it was poor and could not use money as leverage in its foreign policy
- The British Army was the smallest as The United Kingdom relied mostly on the British Royal Navy for its defences
- The United Kingdom had the luxury of time to build up its army through conscription during the war
- The United Kingdom had the capacity of ruining the prospects of a quick limited war

### The military state of the Central Powers

- During 1910 to 1914, Germany's military spending amongst the European powers was the greatest – it increased by 73 %
- Germany accelerated her military expansion in 1913 in response to the Russian and French military expansion
- The Austro-Hungarian military lacked sufficient finances, training and equipment
- Germany saw Austria-Hungary militarily as a liability

### The Arms Race

- The arms race only became significant when coupled with the Alliance system
- It was not engineered by arms manufacturers
- Before 1911, the arms race was largely bilateral
- After 1911, the arms race became systemic
- Not all nations armed themselves to the same degree



- The statistics of military expenditure do not show constant growth

### 3.8 THE BALKAN CRISES

Chronic instability of the Balkan states

- Otto von Bismarck: "If there is ever another war in Europe, it will come out of some damned silly thing in the Balkans."
- The Balkan states under the Muslim Ottoman Turks were Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina et cetera
- There were frequent revolts due to the oppression of the Christian subjects
- Serbia gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878
- Serbian expansionism + Slavic nationalism = Conflict with Austria-Hungary
- In 1903, a military coup saw the rise of a pro-Russian, ultranationalistic government

The Balkan crises and their impact on European nationalism

- Failure to check Serbia threatened the unity of the Austro-Hungarian empire
- In 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina – this alienated Russia and Serbia
- Russia was determined to strengthen its military – Russia had to reassert itself after the humiliating defeat in the 1905 Russo-Japanese war
- Failure to support Serbia would undermine Russia's great power status
- The Russian inaction led to the Serbians to create a Black Hand secret society controlled by Serbian intelligence
- The Black Hand conducted terrorist assassinations in Austro-Hungarian territory
- The Russians failed to put a stop to the Serbians because it fears losing its prestige in the Slavic world

The Balkan Wars

- 2 wars broke out in 1912 and 1913
- These wars caused the end of Turkish control over the Balkans – creating a power vacuum
- There was fighting between Balkan states for territory
- Serbia doubled their territory and population – they now posed a serious threat to the Austro-Hungarian Empire
- The Balkan wars did not break out into a world war because Russia was not ready for war and the Entente powers did not support war

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

- Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne
- However he was disliked in Austria and his death was used as an excuse
- He was assassinated on 28 June 1914 in Bosnia by Gavrilo Princip
- The degree of the involvement of the Serbian government was unclear

The impact of the Blank Cheque on **Austria's** decision making

- The Austro-Hungarian government felt that the survival of Austria-Hungary was at stake – they wanted a preemptive war against Serbia
- Kaiser Wilhelm II unthinkingly decided to back Austria fully without consulting anyone
- Kaiser Wilhelm II promised German support to Austria – Germany feared that failure to support Austria-Hungary would threaten their defensive alliance and leave Germany totally isolated
- Germany pressed Austria to act quickly
- Austria sent an unacceptable ultimatum to Serbia which was rejected on 25 July – Serbia recognised that they were very unprepared for war
- Christopher Clark argues that Austria-Hungary did not have many other options – the Serbian government was unable to suppress the rebels and Serbia's allies refused to recognise Austria-Hungary's rights

Russia-French Planning

- There were claims that the Russians and French sought for a war of aggression
- It was likely that they wanted to take a tough stance but there is no evidence that they pushed for war
- France confirmed its support for Russia
- The Russian Tsar was not keen on war
- The Russian generals recognised that their army was not ready for war till earliest 1916

War by timetable – the cult of the offensive

- Most parties involved in the war assumed that it would be a quick and short one
- Mobilisation of the armed forces depended very heavily on the railway schedules – hence 'war by timetable'
- The rigidity of the war plans reduced the flexibility of the European powers' ability to respond to the crisis – example would be the German Schlieffen plan
- There was a lot of pressure from the generals to go to war – role of the generals in the causation of the war
- There was a strong belief in the cult of the offensive – attack was seen as decisive in winning wars
- There was a strong belief that wars would be short – this put much pressure on decision-makers to go to war

The outbreak of war

- Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July, attacking the Serbian capital Belgrade

- Russia's Tsar Nicholas II was caught in a dilemma – the Russian Army was not ready for war, but failure to support Serbia would lead to another humiliation
- All treaties were defensive agreements – no country was actually obliged to intervene
- The Russian generals pressed for total mobilisation – they recognised that Germany could mobilise much faster
- Tsar Nicholas II ordered mobilisation on 30 July despite having no treaty obligations to Serbia
- The Germans delayed their mobilisation until the Russians mobilised – shifting the blame of war onto the Russians
- France was obliged to support Russia and mobilised on 31 July
- However Russia had not been attacked and France was not obliged by any treaty obligations to support Russia
- Germany was not obliged by treaty obligations to support Austria-Hungary as Austria-Hungary had not been attacked
- Germany believed that strong support for Austria-Hungary would deter the Russians from entering the war – they were wrong
- The Germans believed that the war would be a localised one between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, not expecting the Russians to intervene on Serbia's behalf
- The German generals pressed for a preemptive war on Russia after receiving Austria-Hungary's ultimatum to Serbia
- The British Foreign Secretary Edward Grey did not want war – The United Kingdom had no treaty obligations to support its allies
- The United Kingdom originally did not know what it intended to do
- Germany had to invade Belgium which forced The United Kingdom to go to war supporting France and Russia
- The United Kingdom declared war on Germany on 5 August

#### Popular reactions to the war

- There were large number of volunteers when war first broke out – much popular enthusiasm for it
- The French people were more stoic and were influenced by defensive patriotism
- The German public did not entirely support the war

### 3.9 HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR I

- 2 types of possible exam questions here
  - To what extent was < factor > responsible for causing the war?
    - Use nationalism or militarism for this topic
  - To what extent was < country > responsible for causing the war?

School of thought	Analysis
German self-defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposed by post-war German academics</li><li>• Revived by Manfred Rauh and Erwin Holzle</li><li>• Blames the Entente that forced Germany into a defensive war</li><li>• However there is little evidence to support this point</li><li>• The encirclement was created by The United Kingdom and Russia</li></ul>
Old diplomacy and treaties based on secrecy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Popular immediately after World War I</li><li>• Proposed by E. D. Morel</li><li>• Blamed generals and diplomats for creating alliances which forced allies to support each other's actions</li><li>• Not possible as treaties were defensive in nature</li><li>• Example would be Germany supporting Austria-Hungary although they were not obligated to</li></ul>
Slide to war theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposed by Sidney Fay, Charles Beard and Harry Barnes</li><li>• Revived by Christopher Clark in 2012</li><li>• Blamed the mood of 1914</li><li>• Europe stumbled into war due to an accumulation of unresolved conflicts and ambitions</li><li>• There was low trust and transparency between European governments – led to a high-risk environment</li><li>• Much uncertainty on what each country would do next</li><li>• Worsened by tensions between each individual government and tensions within alliances</li><li>• All powers were responsible in part</li><li>• Became the consensus before World War II</li><li>• However this neglects the role of Germany and Austria-Hungary</li><li>• This fails to answer why war only broke out in 1914 – why not earlier?</li></ul>

War due to the impact of capitalism and imperialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Vladimir Lenin</li> <li>• Not accepted anymore</li> <li>• Blames the capitalist nations for the war – they fought due to their struggle for markets and raw materials</li> <li>• In reality the colonial rivalries were already toning down</li> <li>• Not likely as many of the participants like Russia and Austria-Hungary were agrarian societies – not capitalist societies</li> <li>• The countries with the largest number of colonies were The United Kingdom, France and Russia – yet they all were on the same side during the war</li> <li>• The European powers had strong interests in each other's countries and favoured peace</li> </ul>
The role of the arms race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by David Stevenson and David Herrmann</li> <li>• The arms race was a systemic threat to peace</li> <li>• Arms increases in one power for defensive purposes would provoke a response in the other powers</li> <li>• Fails to explain why there even existed an arms race in the first place</li> <li>• Does not answer why war broke out</li> </ul>
The role of public opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Jan Ruger and Dominik Geppert</li> <li>• Nationalism and pressure from the public generated tension</li> <li>• Governments were pressured by the masses to go to war</li> <li>• Evidence for this argument is weak – there is little proof of any evidence from the masses</li> <li>• The public actually supported the war for defensive reasons</li> </ul>

<p>The primacy of German domestic concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Eckhardt Kehr, Immanuel Geiss, Wolfgang Mommsen, Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Volker Berghahn</li> <li>• Post-World War II argument</li> <li>• Argues that domestic affairs determined foreign policy</li> <li>• Germany saw the rise of a large working class and a growing middle class – tensions with the Prussian land-owning Junker class which dominated the government</li> <li>• The communist presence in Germany at this time was strong – the German Socialist Party (SDP) was very popular</li> <li>• The middle class supported ultranationalist groups</li> <li>• The government was opposed to political reforms</li> <li>• The ruling elites were fearful of the working class and socialism</li> <li>• The economy was a problem</li> <li>• The arms race was expensive and the German economy was overheating – Germany had to go to war to support the economy</li> <li>• War was intended to unite the German society</li> <li>• In reality there was no revolutionary situation in Germany in 1914</li> </ul>
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<p>Germany's desire for world power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Fritz Fischer, Immanuel Geiss and A. J. P. Taylor in 1960</li> <li>• It destroyed the consensus of shared responsibility for World War I</li> <li>• Argues that German leaders had a long term plan and deliberately used war to gain world power</li> <li>• German nationalism was racist, aggressive and authoritarian</li> <li>• Such ideas were widely shared in Germany</li> <li>• December 1912 War Council</li> <li>• Kaiser Wilhelm II and his generals favoured aggressive war</li> <li>• However this theory assumes that Germany had consciously planned and provoked the war – this theory gives more credit to Germany than Germany actually possessed</li> <li>• The flaw in this theory is that it isolates Germany from an age where expansion was prevalent among the European powers</li> <li>• This theory neglects the role of the other European powers</li> <li>• Challenged by post-World War II historians like Gerhard Ritter</li> <li>• Georges-Henri Soutou in 1989 argued that the Germans did not have a coherent plan for world domination – there was no real consistent effort expended to expand the German Empire</li> </ul>
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<p>The German illusion of the limited war</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Max Hastings, James Joll, Andreas Hillsgruber, Gerhard Ritter, David Fromkin, John Rohl, Annika Mombauer and Mark Hewitson</li> <li>• The Germans had more limited objectives and had no long term plans</li> <li>• Germany felt encircled – as a result of Germany and Austria-Hungary's aggressive behaviour</li> <li>• Germany needed to sustain Austria-Hungary's great power status</li> <li>• Germany wanted to restore their European hegemony through a preemptive war – they were convinced that they would become weaker if delayed</li> <li>• Austria-Hungary intended to punish Serbia – one of the demands in the ultimatum involved letting Austro-Hungarian troops into Serbia, a clear violation of Serbian sovereignty</li> <li>• John Rohl argues that Germany risked European war to restore German hegemony</li> <li>• Annika Mombauer blames the German military for the war – the German military feared the eclipse of German strength by Russia</li> <li>• Mark Hewitson argues that the Germans went to war because of the overwhelming confidence in their strength</li> <li>• <i>This is the most commonly accepted argument</i></li> </ul>
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Austria-Hungary was to blame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Gunther Kronenbitter, Luigi Albertini, Samuel Williamson and Gerhard Ritter</li> <li>• Blames the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Leopold Berchtold and the Chief of the General Staff Franz Conrad</li> <li>• The Austro-Hungarian military had consciously used military threats as part of diplomacy – Germany was pulled into the war by them</li> <li>• Argues that its policy was reckless when it wanted to punish Serbia – Austria-Hungary wanted a preventive war and compelled Germany to support it</li> <li>• Austria-Hungary was fully aware that Russian involvement would lead to an even larger war</li> <li>• Austria-Hungary alone would not have gone to war without Germany's support</li> <li>• Christopher Clark argues that Austria-Hungary had a right to exact revenge against the rogue state Serbia</li> </ul>
The United Kingdom was to blame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Niall Ferguson</li> <li>• Blamed the British foreign minister Sir Edward Grey</li> <li>• Grey was ambivalent and indecisive – he misinterpreted German ambitions and failed to clearly communicate British intentions</li> <li>• However this argument fails as the Germans were already determined to go to war – regardless of British intentions</li> </ul>
Inevitability of war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed by Paul Schroeder, Holger Afflerbach, Klaus Wilsberg and Friedrich Kiebling</li> <li>• Very similar to the 'Slide to war' argument</li> <li>• European society was so militaristic that war was inevitable</li> <li>• Peace had been generally maintained since 1871</li> <li>• The Bismarckian alliance system was a force for peace and stability</li> <li>• Hence general war is improbable</li> <li>• At the eve of the war, French-German relations were still cordial</li> <li>• France and Germany had common commercial and colonial interests</li> <li>• Popular resentment against each other had declined</li> <li>• Anglo-German relations were focused on avoiding war</li> </ul>

Nationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationalisms were to blame</li> <li>• Clashing nationalisms caused the war</li> <li>• Russian nationalism supported Serbian nationalism</li> <li>• Serbian nationalism involved maintaining its sovereignty against violations by Austria-Hungary but was also expansionist</li> <li>• Austro-Hungarian nationalism involved punishing the rogue state Serbia</li> <li>• German nationalism involved supporting the Austro-Hungarian Empire</li> <li>• French nationalism involved taking revenge on Germany for the French defeat in the 1870 French-Prussian war</li> <li>• The United Kingdom not really involved</li> </ul>
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- Use Germany or Austria-Hungary for this topic

## The Nature and Effects of World War I:

### 4.1 TOTAL WAR

- Aspects of total war
  - A war of unlimited scope where a country engages in the total mobilisation of all resources ranging from human, industrial, military, technological, spiritual et cetera
  - There is a commitment to complete victory – the adoption of a strategy to *totally destroy the enemy's ability to resist and ensure its unconditional surrender*
  - The war is fought on many fronts and involves large hostile coalitions
  - The use of all weapons, irrespective of their destructiveness, was justifiable
  - The development of weapons of mass destruction is approved
  - There is extensive government intervention and control over the country
  - There are significant governmental controls like rationing, taking over of production, imports, exports and allocation of resources
  - The government controls the media and deploys propaganda to support the war – war is seen as vital for national survival
  - Conscription is used to create mass armies
  - There is complete mobilisation of the economy to support the war effort – includes the deployment of women (and possibly children)
  - There is no distinction between home and war fronts – there are huge civilian death tolls from the targeting of civilians and the destruction of cities
  - There is an absence of rules and an absence of restraint on behaviour

### 4.3 A GLOBAL WAR

#### The role of colonies

- The Entente Powers and Central Powers had extensive overseas colonies – the Entente Powers had more
- The colonies supplied manpower and resources for the war
- Australia and New Zealand (ANZAC) supplied 413 000 men and lost 62 000 men (about 15%)
- Canada supplied 629 000 men and lost 65 000 men (about 10%)
- South Africa supplied 136 000 men and lost 9 400 men (about 7%)
- India supplied 1 400 000 men and lost 74 000 men (about 5%)

#### The land war

- The fighting was concentrated on two fronts: the Western Front, along the French-German border, and the Eastern Front, along the German-Russian border
- The Entente Powers sought alternative theatres of war to bypass the deadlock in Europe
- The Entente Powers were defeated in Gallipoli, Turkey in 1915 and defeated in the Middle East in 1916
- The Central Powers were only defeated in these theatres of war in 1918
- This did not significantly contribute to the end of the war

#### The naval war

- The war was not confined to the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Mediterranean Sea
- There was fighting in the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean
- This was due to German attempts to sink Entente ships but the British Royal Navy's strength rendered it futile
- The war spread to Singapore – in February 1915, German prisoners imprisoned at Outram Prison managed to instigate a mutiny

#### 4.4 THE WAR ON THE WESTERN FRONT (1914 – 1918)

The failure of national strategies in 1914

- All sides planned strategies which sought to destroy their **enemies'** armies and their will to resist
- Harsh demands were to be imposed, including territorial and financial acquisitions
- **Germany's September 1914 Programme** wanted to make a Belgium a vassal state and France destroyed as a great power
- Germany sought to create a Mitteleuropa dominated by the German economy – this would weaken British economical supremacy

The railway system

- It was believed that the side which could mobilise and concentrate troops the fastest would win
- This ignored the logistical problems after the railheads (end of the railway lines)

The cult of the offensive

- Emphasis was placed on the offensive and morale of the soldiers
- Less emphasis was placed on firepower and the defensive side of the strategies
- All war plans were mobile and offensive minded – it was believed that this would lead to quick and decisive victories (the cult of the offensive)
- The generals failed to realise that technology favoured the defensive

Why did Germany lose the war?

- World War I was a coalition war
  - Japan and Italy joined the Entente Powers
  - Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers
- Germany lost because their allies were far weaker than the Allies
  - Germany had to bail its allies out on many occasions
- The obligations of allies limited strategic independence
  - Great Britain preferred to impose a naval blockade on the Central Powers
  - Great Britain's traditional strength was in its Royal Navy
  - However France wanted **Great Britain to change its strategy**
  - France was fighting a land war with Germany – and losing
- Germany failed to coordinate strategies with its allies
  - The Entente Powers on the other hand, managed to appoint Ferdinand Foch as the Supreme Allied Commander in 1918

The German Schlieffen Plan

- The plan was first devised by German General Helmuth von Moltke I and then revised by General Count Alfred von Schlieffen in 1892
- The plan involved attacking Russia first and hold France at bay
- The plan assumed that France was Germany's most lethal enemy and that France would be faster in their mobilisation than Russia
- The plan aimed to defeat the French first then attack the Russians
- The Germans would sweep westwards then southwards to capture Paris
- The main German Army would be then moved by train to fight the Russian Army after France was defeated
- The plan assumed that France would fall in less than 2 months and Russia in less than 6 months
- The plan sought to envelop and annihilate the enemies' armies – a total war mentality
- The Western Front was the decisive front in the War as Germany defeated Russia by 1917 – the Russian Revolution took place

#### Weaknesses of the Schlieffen Plan

- The plan forced Germany to attack France first even if Russia was more dangerous
- The French-German border had been fortified by France after the 1870 French-Prussian war
- Germany had to invade neutral Belgium in order to bypass French defences – this would be a propaganda disaster
- This would place Germany in the role of a brutal aggressor which alienated neutral countries
- The key to victory was rapid mobilisation and numerical superiority at the decisive point – however the German Army was unable to keep pace and still relied heavily on horses, leading to weary marching troops
- German General Helmuth von Moltke II feared the Russian threat and reduced the number of forces sent to fight France, transferring them to the Eastern front
- This limited the strength of the attack on France, allowing France to quickly muster their defences
- The German Army failed to take the small British Expeditionary Force and the Belgian Army seriously – this slowed down the German advance, allowing France to muster their defences
- The German Army failed to properly communicate with the Austro-Hungarian Army
- General von Moltke II wanted the Austro-Hungarians to bear the brunt of the Russian attack but the Austro-Hungarians refused to commit
- Just when Germany was winning on the Western Front, General von Moltke II weakened the German forces there, transferring 3 army corps to the Eastern Front as Russia threatened Austria-Hungary

#### The race to the sea

- The delays of the Germans allowed the French to quickly redeploy their forces
- Both sides began the race to the sea – attempting to outflank each other

- By the end of November 1914, the trenches stretched from the Belgian coast to the Vosges mountains in Alsace-Lorraine

#### Stalemate on the Western Front

- Total war – the strength of armies now numbered in the millions
- The Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had resulted in a large expansion of the population
- Generals had failed to appreciate that the new weapons had favoured the defensive
- The range and destructiveness of weapons increased
- There were improvements in technology – improved artillery, the invention of Machine guns, better Infantry rifles, grenades and poison gas

#### The development of trench warfare

- Trenches consisted of networks of fortified and static fighting lines, protected by machine guns, barbed wires and pillboxes
- The land between the enemy trenches was known as 'no man's land'
- The soldiers would go over the top, cross no man's land in massed formations and get cut down by enemy artillery and machine gun fire
- Officers had difficulty in coordinating and supporting the attacks due to the lack of reliable communications – radio was used but the Russians leaked information as they did not encrypt their communications
- A decentralised command system (might) have worked

#### Battles of attrition

- The Entente Powers adopted an attritional strategy – they attempted to wear the Central Powers down
- Example would be the Battle of Verdun (February to December 1916)
  - The Germans believed they could kill 5 Frenchmen for every 2 German deaths
  - France suffered 370 000 casualties, with 163 000 dead
  - Germany suffered 330 000 casualties, with 143 000 dead
  - 40 million artillery shells were fired
  - A French victory
- Example would be the Battle of the Somme (July to November 1916)
  - The British intended to divert the Germans from Verdun
  - The Entente Powers suffered 624 000 casualties, with 146 431 dead
  - The Central Powers suffered 630 000 casualties, with 164 055 dead

- On one day alone, an estimated 20 000 Entente soldiers died and 40 000 were wounded – within half an hour

#### Responses to trench warfare

- *Technology alone was not sufficient to win in trench warfare*
- The invention of the tank
  - The British introduced the tank in the Battle of Cambrai in 1917
  - The tanks were slow, cumbersome and mechanically deficient
  - The armour was not strong enough to resist artillery
  - The operational conditions for the tank operators were terrible due to the heat
- New tactics were devised
  - The Germans adopted the Hutier infiltration tactics in 1918
  - This involved small groups of stormtroopers armed with submachine guns, grenades and flame throwers (considered as use of technology)
  - This relied heavily on the element of surprise
  - This was very successful but by this time the German Army was on the verge of collapse
- Combined arms
  - There was a need for the combined arms approach – all arms like tanks, artillery, infantry and the air force mutually support each other
  - The Entente Powers adopted this in 1918 under Ferdinand Foch which played a vital role in their victory



#### 4.6 THE DEFEAT OF THE CENTRAL POWERS IN 1918

The impact of the blockade on the Central Powers

- Germany was encircled by Italy, France and Russia
- **Germany's** access to the sea was blocked by the British Royal Navy
- This prevented imports from entering Germany
- This led to a sharp drop in living standards
- Food riots broke out in 1918
- The Central Powers relied on inflationary measures – their financial position weakened as they were unwilling to increase taxes for fear of losing elite support
- The German **government's** policy of printing money resulted in hyperinflation
- This caused growing domestic opposition from the working classes

The entry of the United States of America into the war in 1917

- The United States of America became a critical source of manpower
- The United States of **America's** economic and industrial power was vital to sustaining the Entente war effort

The war-weariness of the Central Powers and the strength of the Entente Powers

- **Germany's** allies, such as Turkey, Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary were weak
- This dissipated **Germany's** manpower and resources – Germany had to save its allies on many occasions
- Germany launched the Ludendorff offensive in March 1918
- It was very successful and the Germans were 40 miles from Paris by June
- The offensive suffered from the lack of sufficient reserves, poor logistics and the collapsing discipline of the German soldiers
- By August, the German forces were forced to retreat back to the Hindenburg Line – their original border
- Junior officers initiated the mass surrenders which ended the war – the German Army was never fully defeated

The Central **Powers'** negative international image

- The Central Powers were depicted negatively in propaganda
- It was seen in the aggressor in the invasion of neutral Belgium
- It was accused of an unprovoked attack on civilians through the aerial bombing of Allied cities
- It was accused of unrestricted submarine warfare – German submarines attacked all Entente ships, regardless of whether military or civilian in nature
- This encouraged much sympathy for the Entente cause – the Americans thus entered the war

## 4.7 THE IMPACT OF AIR POWER ON WORLD WAR I

### Overview

- There was a lack of a systematic and rigorous pilot training system
- The Germans had a very thorough training programme
- The British were very haphazard and the biggest cause of British deaths was training accidents
- By the end of the war, the pilots suffered a death rate of 16 % – similar to that of the infantry

### Reconnaissance

- Aircraft was used to report troop concentrations, artillery positions and enemy movements
- Aircraft was used to detect the movements of the Germans during the Schlieffen Plan

### Aerial superiority

- The dominance of one air force over another that permits of the unrestricted conduct of operations by the former and its related military forces
- The Germans came out with the first fighter jet – the Fokker E1
- The British came up with the Sopwith Camel
- The French came up with the Nieuport
- Fighters were equipped with machine guns
- The Germans led by Oswald Boelcke and Max Immelmann developed group and manoeuvring tactics in 1915 – this afforded mutual protection and allowed for the amassing of firepower

### Close air support

- Aircraft were effective in tactical roles
- The Germans tended to have purpose-built aircraft like the Albatross and the Hannover CL III
- The Entente Powers favoured multi-purpose aircraft like the Sopwith Camel
- The Entente close air support aircraft dropped over 1 500 bombs and fired over 122 000 rounds of machine gun ammunition to support the ground troops
- They were used to support the combined arms approach to defeat the Germans

### Strategic bombing

- Attack on industries to hinder the war effort
- Attack on cities to destroy civilian morale
- The first German Zeppelin raid was in January 1915
- London was attacked by Zeppelins in June 1915
- 67 % of the Zeppelins were destroyed or damaged
- The German Gotha bomber had a bomb load of 500 kg and began bombing raids in 1917
- It was serious design flaws, leading to many being lost in accidents

## 4.8 THE IMPACT OF NAVAL POWER ON WORLD WAR I

- A naval force has command of the sea when it is powerful enough that none of its enemies will attack it directly
- Losing battleships was a matter of national pride – humiliating if a battleship was lost
- Great Britain's geography allowed it to blockade Germany
- Battle of Jutland
  - Took place in May 1916
  - Involved 250 battleships
  - The British lost more ships and men as compared to the Germans
  - Strategic victory for the British
  - The German Navy never ventured out of their base again
- The German Navy scuttled their fleet at Scapa Flow in 1918 after the German surrender
- The Germans used coercion-raiding as Great Britain was very reliant on imports, being an island
- This however ignored the rights of neutral countries and alienated the Americans who then joined the Entente Powers
- Submarine warfare was countered by the convoy system which was introduced in 1917 – merchant ships were protected by warships
- Hydrophones were used but were not successful due to limited technology
- HMS Furious was introduced as the first aircraft carrier in 1916
- The British were able to read German wireless traffic – however they were unable to disseminate the intelligence efficiently and not able to use this to their advantage

#### Amphibious operations

- Dardanelles campaign in 1915 – aimed to break the deadlock on the Western Front through knocking Turkey out of the war
- This required an amphibious operation – the Turkish forts had to be knocked out and the straits had to be cleared of mines
- The amphibious landings were haphazardly planned – landings were made at heavily defended points
- The campaign ended in December 1915 with the Entente Powers suffering at least 250 000 casualties

#### 4.9 THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC MOBILISATION

- Governments set up new departments for coordination – characteristic of total war
- Rise of monopolies and cartels
- Military-industrial complexes
- This was a danger to democracy – potential of a dictatorship
- The British and the French were more successful in mobilising their economies

#### 4.10 THE IMPACT ON SOCIETY

##### The growth of democracy

- The Entente Powers presented the war as a conflict between democracy and autocratic aggression – this focused on the moral rightness of the Entente actions
- The German military dictatorship on the other hand refused to move towards democracy – led to German Revolution of 1918 and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II

##### The impact of the war on civilians

- Sinking of British liner RMS Lusitania by a German U-boat (submarine) – 1 198 casualties
- Great Britain imposed food rationing in 1918
- The Germans failed to establish an equitable rationing system – worsened by the failure of 1917 and 1918 harvests

##### The impact of the war on women

- British women play major roles in key industries
- Universal suffrage was introduced
- No general desire for women combatants in Europe
- In Russia, a Women's Battalion of Death was introduced in 1917

##### The impact of the war on reporting and propaganda

- All governments had propaganda departments
- There was a need to sustain civilian morale to support the war effort – characteristic of total war
- The governments' arousal of popular support made any compromise impossible – people were willing to fight to the death for their country

#### 4.11 THE POST-WAR IMPACT ON EUROPE

##### The political impact of World War I

- 4 empires collapsed: The Russian Empire, The German Second Reich, The Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Turkish Empire
- The rise of extreme politics – unstable political system
- Emergence of radical extremists – Adolf Hitler

##### The economic impact of World War I

- Governments either increased taxes or printed money in order to fund the war
- There was growing economic discontent in European societies
- Great Britain and France raised taxes and borrowed money from the United States
- Germany and Austria-Hungary printed more money – eventually caused hyperinflation

##### The social impact of World War I

- 8 000 000 soldiers died
- 6 000 000 civilians died
- The loss amongst the young and educated middle class males was very severe – the 'lost generation'
- World War II eventually happened because of a lack of capable leadership
- Declining birth rates
- Declining attendance in churches – disillusionment with religion
- The idea of shell shock became accepted as a reality
- The war was seen as a waste of lives and futile
- The war poets were a small group of junior officers who were mostly members of the aristocracy – their views might not be exactly representative of the average soldier fighting in the war
- The rise of the flappers
- Women managed to secure the right to vote