

# World Wars: Causes and Effects

**M**ilitarism

**A**lliances

**I**mperialism  
(Economic Competition)

**N**ationalism



**World  
War I**

End of the old order  
Political instability  
Disillusionment  
Resentment  
Economic Suffering  
Social Chaos  
Nationalism  
Rise of dictatorships  
Aggressive expansion



**World  
War II**

- Shift in balance of power
- Emergence of superpowers
- Creation of new nations
- Founding of United Nations

# Long-term causes of World War I

## Nationalism

- Many European countries believed that their country was more important than any other. This showed itself in lots of ways. It showed itself in German aggression both in Europe and over colonies. It also showed itself in another way in the Balkans. Here it was seen as attempts to gain independence from both Austria-Hungary and Russia. For example, Bosnia wished to break free from the Austria-Hungary and join up with Serbia. On 28 June 1914 Gavrilo Princip, an eighteen-year-old Serbian student and a member of the Black Hand Gang, shot the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary.
- Why did he do this? Serbia had become an independent country in the late nineteenth century. The Serbians wanted to expand, but were hemmed in by other countries. They also wanted to take Bosnia from Austria-Hungary because most of the inhabitants of Bosnia were Serbian. Most Serbs hated Austria-Hungary and were prepared to do anything they could to attack it.
- All of these European neighbors had long-term reasons to distrust other.

# FRANCE

In 1870 France had gone to war with Prussia (Germany) and had been very badly defeated. Germany took two French provinces after the war, Alsace and Lorraine. Ever since, the French had wanted revenge.

France built up alliances:

- 1894, the Dual Entente between France and Russia
- 1904, the Entente Cordiale between France and Britain
- 1907, the Triple Entente between France, Russia and Britain

The French Army had a plan to attack Germany, it was called Plan 17 and it meant that they would charge straight into Germany through the area of Champagne.

# BRITAIN

- Britain had become very concerned about Germany since Kaiser Wilhelm II had succeeded to the throne in 1887 because: Germany had begun to occupy colonies in Africa and the Pacific; many of the colonies were next to British colonies. The German government had passed the Navy Laws in 1898 and 1900; these said that the German Navy would be built up over a period of seventeen years to rival the Royal Navy. Britain felt threatened by Germany's growing Navy. In 1906 a naval arms race began. Britain and Germany each tried to build more ships than the other. This race continued until 1914.
- Britain was committed to defend Belgium if it was ever attacked. This promise had been made at the Treaty of Westminster in 1839.

# GERMANY

- The German government expected the French to try to get Alsace and Lorraine back at some point. It was also worried that it might have to fight France and Russia at the same time. This would be a war on two fronts.
- Germany had made alliances with other countries. Since the 1870s it had been allied with Austria-Hungary and in 1882 Italy joined this alliance. This was the Triple Alliance.
- The German army had worked out a plan to defeat France before the Russian army was ready to fight. This was the **Schlieffen Plan**. The German army would attack France through Belgium (neutral country) and defeat France in 6 weeks. Then the Germans would deal with Russia.

# AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

- Austria-Hungary had been growing weaker for many years, but wanted to expand its empire to the south, into the Balkans. The Austrians had occupied Bosnia in 1885 and annexed it in 1908.
- The only country which now stood in the Austrians' way was Serbia, which had become very powerful in the years from 1900 to 1914. The Austrians wanted to attack Serbia, but knew that Russia backed up Serbia. The Austrian government knew that it could not defeat Russia unless it got support from Germany.

# RUSSIA

- Russia had been defeated in a war with Japan in 1905 and wanted to prove that it was still a major power. The Russian government believed that the Russian army could defeat the army of any other European country.
- Russia also wanted to gain more influence in the Balkans and wanted to stop Austria-Hungary from expanding there. It was very keen to back up Serbia.
- Russia supported Serbia because the Serbians had a similar language and religion as Russia. The Russian government was determined to protect Serbia against Austria-Hungary.

# 1914: The Steps to War

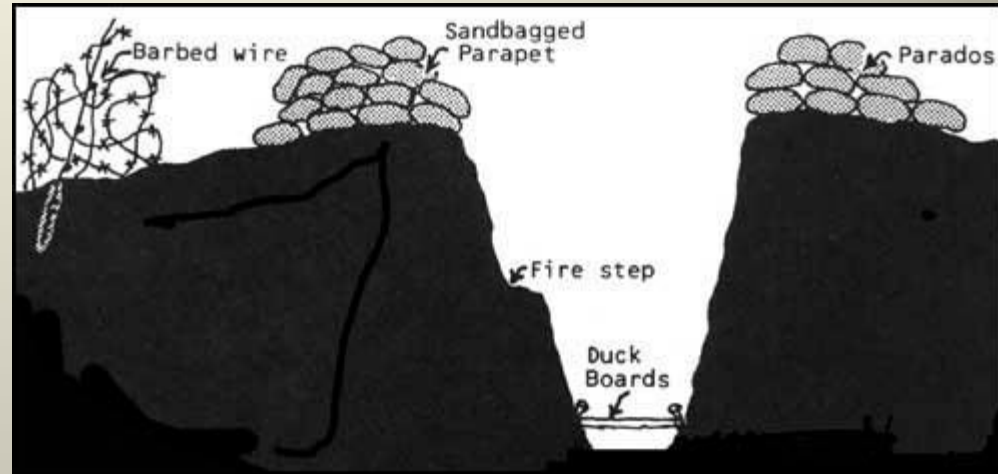
- July 5 - The Austrian government asked the German government if it would support Austria in a war against Russia if Russia supported Serbia. Kaiser Wilhelm replied by issuing a 'blank check'. He said that Germany would support whatever the Austrian government decided to do.
- July 23 - The Austrian government sent the Serbians an ultimatum.
- July 25 - The Serbians accepted all the conditions except one, that Austrian police should be allowed into Serbia to help stop any further unrest. The Austrian government expected the Serbians to reject this.
- July 28 - Austria-Hungary declared war upon Serbia.
- July 29 - The Russian army was mobilized.
- Aug 1 - Germany declared war on Russia.
- Aug 3 - Germany declared war on France.
- Aug 4 - Germany declared war on Belgium.
- Aug 4 - Britain declared war upon Germany.
- Aug 6 - Austria declared war on Russia.
- Aug 12 - France and Britain declared war on Austria.

These happened  
on the same day!



In 1914 the Germans declared war on France and attacked. The Germans had a plan called the Schlieffen Plan. Using his plan the Germans invaded Belgium and then France. They thought that they would be able to avoid the French defenses and defeat them very quickly. The plan didn't work. The French and British armies 'dug in' and stopped the German advance. In doing so they had started Trench Warfare.

# Trench Warfare



## Why did the French and British 'Dig in'?

- The Germans were advancing very quickly and the only way to stop them was to put a large barrier in their way.

## How did the French and British dig in?

- The diagram shows how the trench was designed.

## What is in a Trench?

**Barbed wire:** to make running at the trench difficult.

**Sandbagged parapet:** to stop the trench collapsing.

**Parados:** to stop 'shrapnel' getting into the trench.

**Fire step:** to shoot from.

**Duck Boards:** stopped the bottom of the trench getting very muddy and slippery.

## Reasons for Trenches

- Both sides soon found that they could stop an enemy attack by digging trenches and setting up machine guns. Trenches soon became a permanent feature of warfare and the trench lines changed little in three and a half years. Sandbags protected the soldiers from bullets and shrapnel. Barbed wire was set up to delay any enemy advance. The ground between the trench lines became pock-marked with shell craters. The British developed the tank to destroy machine gun positions, cross rough ground and go through belts of barbed wire.

## Why the Trenches stayed

- **Barbed wire-** This was difficult to cut. Shelling usually only tangled it up. It spread men out in a line.
- **Machine guns-** These mowed down men with intersecting crossfire.
- **Gas-** This was very effective in slowing down heavily-laden attackers. It was not so effective against troops in trenches.
- **Shells-** The best trenches saved soldiers from all but a direct hit. Shells churned up the ground, destroyed drainage systems and made attack very difficult.
- **Lack of secrecy-** The enemy could easily see when extra supplies were brought up for an attack.
- **Railway-** These could rush reinforcements to a threatened spot very quickly. Airplanes were not powerful enough then to delay rail traffic by any great amount.
- **Attack at walking pace-** Men could only advance at walking pace.
- **Lack of experience-** Generals had never fought this way before and could not think of ways of breaking through the trenches
- **Zigzagging Trenches-** These were to stop enemy artillery destroying a whole line of trench and to prevent successful attackers being able to fire along a long length of a trench.
- **Communication trenches-** These joined lines of trenches.
- **Blind Alleys-** These led nowhere and they were built to confuse and slow down the enemy in the event of a successful attack.
- **Forward positions-** These were built for miners and snipers.
- **Underground 'Saps'-** These were tunnels driven under enemy trenches so that explosives could be placed under them and detonated.
- **No Man's Land-** This was very difficult to cross because of the belts of barbed wire, shell holes and very swampy conditions when it rained.