Origins of World War I

Causes of World War I

- **NIMS**
  - Nationalism, Imperialism, Militarism, alliances

Nationalism
- Fierce Competition
  - Each state was motivated only by its own self interest
    - States acted to the benefit of the state
  - Economic competition
  - Competing colonial rivalries
- Acceptability of war
  - A way of preserving power
- Fear of internal conflict (and nationalisms)
  - “Active policy” smothers internal differences
    - Hope that external threats can trump internal conflicts
  - Nationalists without states created internal fights
    - Poles, Irish, etc. were not happy being ruled by others
- Popular support for war
  - Individuals liked the idea of war and were excited about it
    - Volunteers for the army
    - Even socialists as individuals joined
  - Other possibilities:
    - Economic capitalism wanted war profits
      - Profitability of war for manufacturers of war materials
        - Bullets, artillery, etc...
    - Competition for raw materials and markets
      - Some industrialists would get profit from new markets and materials
- General expectation for a quick and successful war

Imperialism
- Ambition to be seen as a great power
- First Moroccan Crisis 1905
  - Big crisis over Morocco
    - France, Britain, and Germany
  - Scramble for Africa

Militarism
- Large armies
  - European armies doubled in size between 1870 and 1914
    - Russia had the largest army with 1.3 million
    - France and Germany had 900,000 each
    - Britain, Italy, Austria had 250,000-500,000 each
    - German Naval Build-up
- Increased influence of military leaders
  - Plans
Alliances
- 1879 - Germany and Austria
  - Italy joined Germany and Austria 1882 to make **Triple Alliance**
  - Support existing political order
    - They wanted to keep things as they were
- 1887 Reinsurance Treaty - Germany and Russia
  - Bismarck did not want a Russian-French alliance
    - Makes an alliance with Russia
  - Not aggressive enough for Kaiser
    - Bismarck fired
  - Reinsurance Treaty not renewed
- 1894 - Franco-Russian Alliance
- 1894 Entente Cordiale - Britain and France
- 1907 Triple Entente - Russia joined the Entente powers (Britain and France)

Origins of the War
- Everyone claimed to be fighting a defensive war for the “fatherland”
- Illusions
  - Short – Any war would be quick and easy
  - War = “glorious adventure”
    - Brings out the best in people
      - Self-sacrifice, heroism, nobility

Balkan Crises
- **Bosnian crisis of 1907-08**
  - Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina
    - To prevent Serbia from growing
    - Feared Serbia expanding will cause Serbs in the Austrian empire to want to join Serbia
      - Feared spread to the other nationalities
  - Russia backed Serbia and Serbia prepared for war against Austria
    - Russia sees self as protector of Slavic peoples
  - Kaiser William II forced Russia to back off by threatening war with Germany
    - Russia accepted that Austria will annex these territories
    - Russia felt humiliated and vowed revenge
- **First Balkan War 1912**
  - Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece created the Balkan League and fought the Ottoman Empire
    - Conquered Macedonia and Albania
    - Could not agree on how to divide the land
- **Second Balkan War 1913**
  - Serbia, Greece, Romania, and the Ottoman Empire against Bulgaria
    - Bulgaria lost and got only a little piece of Macedonia
- **London Conference**
  - Serbia and Greece got most of the rest of the land
    - Serbia not satisfied because Austria did not let Serbia get Albania
      - Port on the Adriatic Sea is what they really wanted
    - Albania was made independent
Results
- Serbia viewed Austria as evil monsters
- Russia was upset
  - they were backing the Slavs
  - Russia prepares for war
- Austria saw Serbia as a mortal danger
  - Nationalism would destroy the empire
- France and Russia renewed their alliance and
  - Promised not to back down next time
- France and Britain drew closer

By 1914 Triple Alliance and Triple Entente were armed and ready for an outbreak of war

The July Crisis
- Trigger: assassination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand was in Sarajevo
- Bosnian nationalist Gavrilo Princip decided to shoot the Archduke.
  - Austria suspected the Serbian government was involved
    - Organized by the Black Hand
      - Secret nationalist society that wanted a Pan-Slavic country
    - Dragutin Ddimitrijevic head of Serbian intelligence
      - Also head of Black Hand
      - Ordered the murder
    - Serbian Prime Minister tried and failed to stop the assassination
- Tensions rise quickly
  - Austria worried about Russian reaction
    - Consulted Germany and got a “blank cheque”
  - Austria was nervous about Russia
    - Germany said they could do whatever they want
- Austrian ultimatum to Serbia
  - To avoid war:
    - Serbia should prevent all anti-Austrian or pro Greater Serbian expression propaganda
    - Austria can “help” investigate the murder
    - Serbia refused to give control of the investigation to Austria
      - Only agreed to limit press
- Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914
  - Russia wanted to support Serbia
    - Czar tried to order a partial mobilization but the General Staff said it was too hard to do a “partial mobilization”
      - full mobilization July 29
      - Knew the Germans would consider this an act of war
  - Willi-Nikki Letters
    - Germans tried to prevent Russian mobilization
      - it takes Russia longer to mobilize
      - Germans and Russians both know that Germany can mobilize faster