

SECTION 1

The Road to World War I

Guide to Reading

Main Ideas

- Militarism, nationalism, and a crisis in the Balkans led to World War I.
- Serbia's determination to become a large, independent state angered Austria-Hungary and initiated hostilities.

Key Terms

conscription, mobilization

People to Identify

Archduke Francis Ferdinand, Gavrilo Princip, Emperor William II, Czar Nicholas II, General Alfred von Schlieffen

Places to Locate

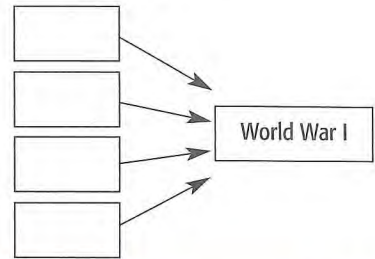
Serbia, Bosnia

Preview Questions

1. How did the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand lead to World War I?
2. How did the system of alliances help cause the war?

Reading Strategy

Cause and Effect Use a diagram like the one below to identify the factors that led to World War I.



Preview of Events



Voices from the Past

On June 28, 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was assassinated in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo. One of the conspirators described the scene:

“As the car came abreast, [the assassin] stepped forward from the curb, drew his automatic pistol from his coat and fired two shots. The first struck the wife of the Archduke, the Archduchess Sophia, in the abdomen. She was an expectant mother. She died instantly. The second bullet struck the Archduke close to the heart. He uttered only one word: ‘Sophia’—a call to his stricken wife. Then his head fell back and he collapsed. He died almost instantly.”

—*Eyewitness to History*, John Carey, ed., 1987

This event was the immediate cause of World War I, but underlying forces had been moving Europeans toward war for some time.

Nationalism and the System of Alliances

In the first half of the nineteenth century, liberals believed that if European states were organized along national lines, these states would work together and create a peaceful Europe. They were wrong.

The system of nation-states that emerged in Europe in the last half of the nineteenth century led not to cooperation but to competition. Rivalries over colonies



Geography Skills

The alliance system was one of the major causes of World War I.

- 1. Interpreting Maps**
What geographic factor made it unlikely that World War I battles would be fought in Great Britain?
- 2. Applying Geography Skills**
Create a three-column chart with the headings Triple Entente, Triple Alliance, and Other. Place all the countries labeled on the map in the proper column.

and trade grew during an age of frenzied nationalism and imperialist expansion.

At the same time, Europe's great powers had been divided into two loose alliances. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy formed the **Triple Alliance** in 1882. France, Great Britain, and Russia created the **Triple Entente** in 1907.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a series of crises tested these alliances. Especially troublesome were the crises in the Balkans between 1908 and 1913. These events left European states angry at each other and eager for revenge. Each state was guided by its own self-interest and success. They were willing to use war as a way to preserve the power of their national states.

The growth of nationalism in the nineteenth century had yet another serious result. Not all ethnic groups had become nations. Slavic minorities in the Balkans and the Hapsburg Empire, for example, still dreamed of creating their own national states. The Irish in the British Empire and the Poles in the Russian Empire had similar dreams.

✓ Reading Check Identifying Did the growth of nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century lead to increased competition or increased cooperation among European nations?

Internal Dissent

National desires were not the only source of internal strife at the beginning of the twentieth century. Socialist labor movements also had grown more powerful. The Socialists were increasingly inclined to use strikes, even violent ones, to achieve their goals.

Some conservative leaders, alarmed at the increase in labor strife and class division, feared that European nations were on the verge of revolution. In the view of some historians, the desire to suppress internal disorder may have encouraged various leaders to take the plunge into war in 1914.

✓ Reading Check Explaining According to some historians, how might internal disorder have been one of the causes of World War I?

Militarism

The growth of mass armies after 1900 heightened the existing tensions in Europe. The large size of these armies also made it obvious that if war did come, it would be highly destructive.

Conscription, a military draft, had been established as a regular practice in most Western countries before 1914. (The United States and Britain were

exceptions.) European armies doubled in size between 1890 and 1914.

With its 1.3 million men, the Russian army had grown to be the largest. The French and German armies were not far behind, with 900,000 each. The British, Italian, and Austro-Hungarian armies numbered between 250,000 and 500,000 soldiers each.

Militarism—aggressive preparation for war—was growing. As armies grew, so too did the influence of military leaders. They drew up vast and complex plans for quickly mobilizing millions of men and enormous quantities of supplies in the event of war.

Military leaders feared that any changes in these plans would cause chaos in the armed forces. Thus, they insisted that their plans could not be altered. In the 1914 crises, this left European political leaders with little leeway. They were forced to make decisions for military instead of political reasons.

Reading Check **Examining** What was the effect of conscription on events leading up to World War I?

The Outbreak of War: Summer 1914

Militarism, nationalism, and the desire to stifle internal dissent may all have played a role in the starting of World War I. However, it was the decisions made by European leaders in response to another crisis in the Balkans in the summer of 1914 that led directly to the conflict.

The Serbian Problem As we have seen, states in southeastern Europe had struggled for many years to free themselves of Ottoman rule. Furthermore, the rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia for domination of these new states created serious tensions in the region.

By 1914, **Serbia**, supported by Russia, was determined to create a large, independent Slavic state in the Balkans. Austria-Hungary, which had its own Slavic minorities to contend with, was equally determined to prevent that from happening.

Many Europeans saw the potential danger in this explosive situation. The British ambassador to Vienna anticipated war in 1913:

“Serbia will some day set Europe by the ears, and bring about a universal war on the Continent. . . . I cannot tell you how exasperated people are getting here at the continual worry which that little country causes to Austria under encouragement from Russia. . . . It will be lucky if Europe succeeds in avoiding war as a result of the present crisis.”

It was against this backdrop of mutual distrust and hatred that the events of the summer of 1914 were played out.

Assassination in Sarajevo On June 28, 1914, **Archduke Francis Ferdinand**, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophia, visited the Bosnian city of Sarajevo (SAR•uh•YAY•VOH). A group of conspirators waited there in the streets. The conspirators were members of the **Black Hand**, a Serbian terrorist organization that wanted **Bosnia** to be free of Austria-Hungary and to become part of a large Serbian kingdom.

The conspirators planned to kill the archduke, along with his wife. That morning, one of the conspirators threw a bomb at the archduke’s car, but it glanced off and exploded against the car behind him. Later in the day, however, **Gavrilo Princip**, a 19-year-old Bosnian Serb, succeeded in shooting both the archduke and his wife.

Austria-Hungary Responds The Austro-Hungarian government did not know whether or not the Serbian government had been directly involved in the archduke’s assassination, but it did not care. It saw an opportunity to “render Serbia innocuous [harmless] once and for all by a display of force,” as the Austrian foreign minister put it.

Austrian leaders wanted to attack Serbia but feared Russian intervention on Serbia’s behalf, so they sought the backing of their German allies. **Emperor William II** of Germany and his chancellor responded with a “blank check,” saying that Austria-

“Till the world comes to an end the ultimate decision will rest with the sword.”

—Emperor William II of Germany



Hungary could rely on Germany's "full support," even if "matters went to the length of a war between Austria-Hungary and Russia."

Strengthened by German support, Austrian leaders sent an ultimatum to Serbia on July 23. In it, they made such extreme demands that Serbia had little choice but to reject some of them in order to preserve its sovereignty. On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

Russia Mobilizes Russia was determined to support Serbia's cause. On July 28, Czar Nicholas II ordered partial mobilization of the Russian army against Austria-Hungary. **Mobilization** is the process of assembling troops and supplies and making them ready for war. In 1914, mobilization was considered an act of war.

Leaders of the Russian army informed the czar that they could not partially mobilize. Their mobilization plans were based on a war against both Germany and Austria-Hungary. Mobilizing against only Austria-Hungary, they claimed, would create chaos in the army. Based on this claim, the czar ordered full mobilization of the Russian army on July 29, knowing that Germany would consider this order an act of war.

The Conflict Broadens Indeed, Germany reacted quickly. The German government warned Russia that it must halt its mobilization within 12 hours. When Russia ignored this warning, Germany declared war on Russia on August 1.

Like the Russians, the Germans had a military plan. It had been drawn up under the guidance of **General Alfred von Schlieffen** (SHLEE•fuhn), so was known as the Schlieffen Plan. The plan called for a two-front war with France and Russia, who had formed a military alliance in 1894.

According to the Schlieffen Plan, Germany would conduct a small holding action against Russia while most of the German army would carry out a rapid invasion of France. This meant invading France by moving quickly along the level coastal area through Belgium. After France was defeated, the German invaders would move to the east against Russia.

Under the Schlieffen Plan, Germany could not mobilize its troops solely against Russia. Therefore, it declared war on France on August 3. About the same time, it issued an ultimatum to Belgium demanding the right of German troops to pass through Belgian territory. Belgium, however, was a neutral nation.

On August 4, Great Britain declared war on Germany, officially for violating Belgian neutrality. In fact, Britain, which was allied with the countries of France and Russia, was concerned about maintaining its own world power. As one British diplomat put it, "what would be the position of a friendless England?" By August 4, all the great powers of Europe were at war.

✓ Reading Check Evaluating What was the Schlieffen Plan and how did it complicate the events leading to World War I?

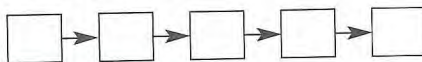
SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

1. **Define** conscription, mobilization.
2. **Identify** Triple Alliance, Triple Entente, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, Gavrilo Princip, Emperor William II, Czar Nicholas II, General Alfred von Schlieffen.
3. **Locate** Serbia, Bosnia.
4. **Explain** why Great Britain became involved in the war.
5. **List** the ethnic groups that were left without nations after the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century.

Critical Thinking

6. **Analyze** How did the creation of military plans help draw the nations of Europe into World War I? In your opinion, what should today's national and military leaders have learned from the military plans that helped initiate World War I? Explain your answer.
7. **Sequencing Information** Using a diagram like the one below, identify the series of decisions made by European leaders in 1914 that led directly to the outbreak of war.



Analyzing Visuals

8. **Examine** the painting of Emperor William II of Germany shown on page 719 of your text. How does this portrait of the emperor reflect the nature of leadership before World War I?

Writing About History

9. **Expository Writing** Some historians believe that the desire to suppress internal disorder may have encouraged leaders to take the plunge into war. As an adviser, write a memo to your country's leader explaining how a war might be advantageous for domestic policy.