

The March to War

A. Germany and the New Balance of Power

1. Germany's industrial capacity, population, and military power all dramatically increased. In 1900, Germany produced more steel than Great Britain and France combined. Germany's population increased from 41 million in 1871 to 64 million in 1910. In contrast, France had just 40 million people in 1910.
2. European leaders from Cardinal Richelieu (see chapter 9) to Prince Klemens von Metternich (see chapter 15) had feared a united Germany. Their fears now became a reality. As Germany's power surged, its leaders demanded respect and a new "place in the sun."

B. Bismarck's Network of Alliances

1. The French were humiliated by their defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and embittered by their loss of Alsace-Lorraine.
2. In an attempt to isolate France, Bismarck formed a military alliance with Austria-Hungary in 1879. Three years later, Italy joined these two countries, thus forming the Triple Alliance.
3. In 1887, Bismarck took yet another ally away from France by signing a treaty with Russia.

C. William II's Aggressive Policies

1. In 1890, Kaiser William II forced Bismarck to resign.
2. William II promptly set Germany on a new course by letting the treaty of friendship with Russia lapse.
3. William II then challenged Britain's long-standing naval supremacy by embarking on an expensive program of naval expansion that poisoned relations between the two countries.

D. The Formation of the Triple Entente

1. France immediately offered Russia financial investments and diplomatic friendship. The two nations signed a Franco-Russian Alliance in 1894.
2. Alarmed by Germany's growing naval power, Britain abandoned its policy of "splendid isolation." In 1904, Britain concluded a series of agreements with France collectively called the Entente Cordiale. With French support, the British concluded a similar agreement with Russia, thus forming the Triple Entente.

Crash Course

3. Germany tested the Anglo-French entente by challenging France's plan to dominate Morocco. However, Germany's belligerent actions only served to draw France and Britain closer together.
4. Two rival alliances now confronted each other. A dispute between any two powers could easily escalate into a major war.

E. The Balkan Powder Keg

1. As the power of the Ottoman Empire receded, the Balkan Peninsula became a powder keg of competing interests.
2. With the exception of the Greeks and the Romanians, most of the Balkan population spoke the same Slavic language. Many Slavs embraced Pan-Slavism, a nationalist movement to unite all Slavic peoples.
3. Bismarck recognized the potential danger of nationalist aspirations in the Balkans. At the 1878 Congress of Berlin, he tried to reduce tensions by supporting Serbian independence and Austria-Hungary's right to "occupy and administer" Bosnia and Herzegovina.
4. The newly independent nation of Serbia quickly became the leader of the Pan-Slavic movement. Serbian leaders hoped to unite the Slavs in the same way Piedmont had united the Italians and Prussia the Germans.
5. Austria felt threatened by the growth of Slavic nationalism within its borders and across the Balkans. In 1908, the Austrians enraged the Serbs by annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina.
6. Serbian nationalism threatened Austria. At the same time, it offered Slavic Russia an opportunity to advance its interests in the Balkans.
7. Russia and Austria-Hungary were thus on a collision course in the Balkans. As one Balkan crisis followed another, Europe tottered on the brink of war.

F. The Outbreak of War

1. On June 28, 1914, a 19-year-old Slav nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne.
2. The assassination set in motion a sequence of events that plunged Europe into war. In August 1914, millions of soldiers marched off to battle, convinced the war would be over in a few weeks.

Crash Course

NOTE: AP European textbooks devote lengthy discussions to the complex sequence of events that led to the outbreak of World War I. Interestingly, APEURO test writers devote very few multiple-choice questions to this topic. Don't become bogged down trying to memorize the details of the Balkan wars and the exchange of ultimatums between the Great Powers. Devote the majority of your time to studying the consequences of World War I for the home front, for Russia, and for postwar Europe.