# Causes of World War One

Although it was the assassination of the Austrian archduke, Franz Ferdinand by the Serbian terrorist group, the Black Hand, that led to the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 the actual causes of the war were more complicated and long-term.
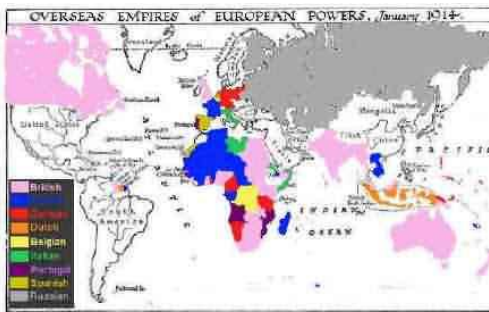
## Militarism

Militarism means that military forces are viewed as high importance by the government. Militarism grew throughout Europe during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most countries decided that building up their armed forces was the only way to protect themselves and their newly conquered empires. This was seen as a threat to rival nations. As a result, rival nations built up their empires. Germany, France, and Russia developed huge armies during this time by requiring citizens to serve in the military for a certain period of time. This is known as conscription or as a "draft." Great Britain was the world's largest and power navy at this time. When Germany started to build up their navy, Great Britain saw this as a threat. A bitter rivalry soon began between these two European empires.

## Alliances

An alliance is an agreement made between two or more countries to give each other help if it is needed. When an alliance is signed, those countries become known as Allies. There were two main alliances formed, the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. The Triple Entente (Allied Powers) was made up of France, Great Britain, and Russia. The Triple Alliance (Central Powers) was made up of German, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Alliances were important because they meant that some countries had no option but to declare war if one of their allies declared war first.

## Imperialism

Imperialism is when a country takes over new lands or countries and makes them subject to their rule. By 1900 the British Empire extended over five continents and France had control of large areas of Africa. The amount of lands 'owned' by Great Britain and France increased the rivalry with Germany who had entered the scramble to acquire colonies late and only had small areas of Africa. This led Europeans to compete for world power. This is also why European cultures are seen all around the world today.
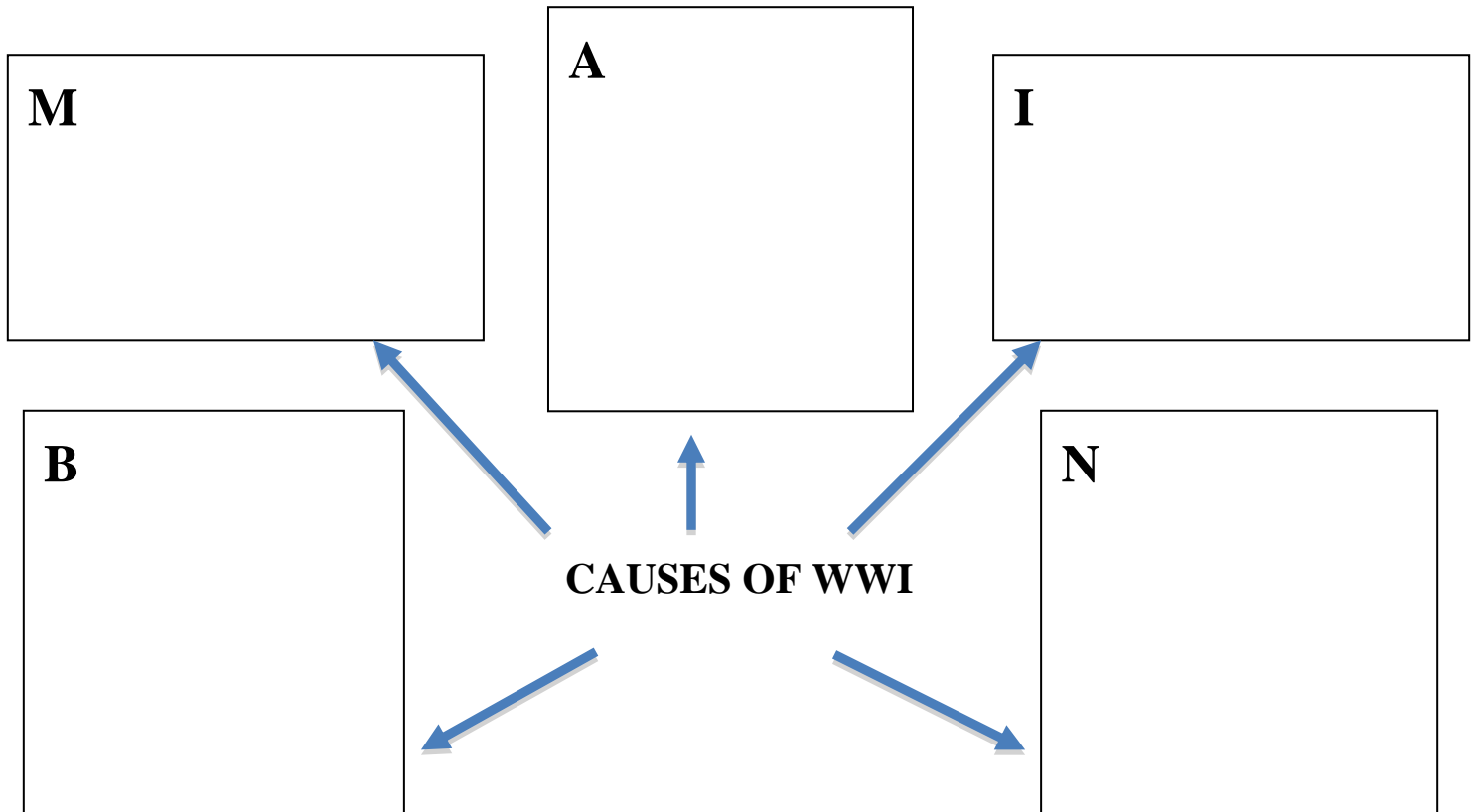
## Nationalism

Nationalism is a feeling of intense loyalty and pride to one's country. This caused tension in Europe and led to the birth of new nations, like Italy (1861) and Germany (1871). The actions of Germany soon challenged the position of older nations such as Britain and France. At the same time, the spread of nationalism threatened to break apart other countries in Europe.
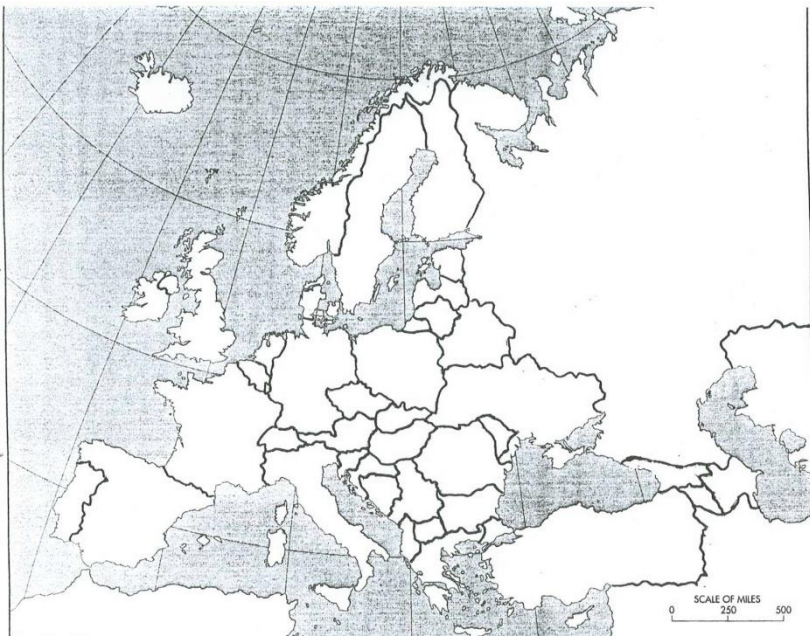
## The Spark → Balkan Crisis

In 1908, Austria-Hungary took over Bosnia. This angered Serbians who felt the territory should be theirs. Serbia threatened Austria-Hungary with war. This caused Russia to form an alliance with Serbia, and rally its forces. Germany allied with Austria-Hungary and mobilized its military forces. War was avoided when Russia backed down. In 1911 and 1912 there was war in the Balkan Peninsula when the Balkan states drove Turkey out of the area. Tension between Serbia and Austria-Hungary was high. In August 1914, the Serbian terrorist group, the Black Hand, assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary, which led to the start of the Great War.

**Directions –** In the figure below, write each of the 5 causes in the appropriate box and write 1 sentence describing how it led to World War I.

**M**

**A**

**I**

**B**

**N**

**CAUSES OF WWI**

**Directions** - On the map below, recreate the alliances that were formed before World War I and the countries that remained neutral. Remember to include a title, compass, and a key. Then answer the following questions below.

SCALE OF MILES
0    250    500

1. Why was nationalism an important factor in the causes of WWI?

2. How did imperialism contribute towards Germany's increasing anger with Britain and France?

3. What countries made up the Triple Alliance? Which countries made up the Triple Entente?

4. What are the four long term causes of World War I?