Help notes

**Militarism**

All the nations of Europe were militaristic, but the governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary were especially so. All the countries of Europe built up their armies and navies.

Another thing that the countries of Europe did was to train all their young men so that if there was a war they could call, not only on the standing army, but on huge numbers of trained reservists.   Thus (including reservists) the countries could call upon:

•   Germany: 8.5 million men

•   Russia: 4.4 million

•   France: 3.5 million

•   Austria-Hungary: 3 million

And as one country increased its armies, so all the others felt obliged to increase their armed forces to keep the ‘balance of power’.

It is important to realise that - although in 1914 the German army was the biggest and best in the world - the Russian army was growing the fastest, and German generals were worried that, in a few years time, they would not be able to defeat Russia so easily.

**Alliances**

As well as seeking protection in the size of their armies, the countries of Europe sought protection by forming alliances.

At first, Bismarck had kept Germany friendly with Russia.   Kaiser Wilhelm overturned this, and concentrated instead on the [Dual Alliance of 1879](http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914m/allyahg.html) between Germany and Austria-Hungary - which became the [Triple Alliance](http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914m/tripally.html) (or Central Powers Alliance) when Italy joined in 1882.

Alarmed by this strong central bloc:

a.   France in 1894 made an alliance with Russia, and

b.   In 1904 France made an agreement with Britain called the [Entente Cordiale](http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914m/entecord.html) (= ‘Friendly Relationship’ – not a formal alliance, but a promise to work together).

c.   In 1907, Britain made an entente with Russia, thus forming the Triple Entente (France, Russia, Great Britain).

d.   In 1902 Britain made a naval treaty with Japan.

e. The Triple Entente alarmed Germany, which felt itself surrounded by the France-Russia alliance.

## The countries of Europe thought that the alliance system would act as a deterrent to war; in fact it tied the countries together so that, when one country went to war, the others felt themselves obliged to follow.

**.  Imperialism**

Countries who believed that they were superior thought it was alright to conquer and rule others – particularly if they were inhabited by races they thought were inferior.   France, Belgium and Italy had colonised vast areas of Africa in the 19th century.   In 1900, the British Empire covered a fifth of land-area of the earth.

a.   This led to clashes between imperialist powers.   Britain was trying to conquer Africa from Cairo (in the north) to Cape Town (in South Africa).   France was trying to conquer Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.   In 1898 their two armies met, at Fashoda in the Sudan,  almost causing a war.

b.   Most of all, it led to HUGE tension when Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany decided that HE wanted some colonies too!

**.  Nationalism**

EVERYONE was nationalist in those days, and this helped cause war in two ways:

a.   It made the people of countries like Britain, Germany and France more bellicose (warlike).   French politicians like Clemenceau and Poincare (who had been around in 1870) HATED the Germans.   People were enraged when someone insulted their country.

b.   It made the races ruled by Turkey (such as the Romanians and the Bulgarians) and by Austria-Hungary (such as the Serbs) want to be free.   In the Balkans this was called ‘Panslavism’ because the people who wanted to be free were all Slav races.   The most nationalistic of all were the Serbs – Serbia had became an independent country by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, but in 1900 many Serbs were still ruled by Turkey and Austria-Hungary, and Serbia was determined to rule over them all.   This led to rebellions and terrorism which destablised the Balkans.