

Introduction

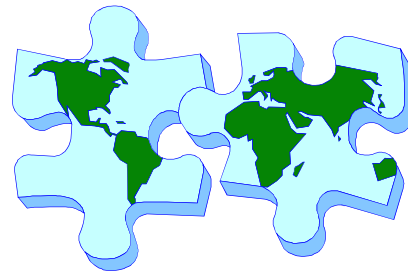
In the Progressive Era, the United States focused much attention on social improvement. Progressives led the fight to reform big business and eliminate corruption in government. During this period of American history (1890–1917), the United States became one of the most powerful nations in the world.

After the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States took colonies in both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. In addition, the United States sold many of its products, such as coal, oil, steel, and iron, to other countries. When World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, the United States hoped to remain **neutral**, or not take sides. But the United States was too powerful and did too much trading with Europe to avoid the war.

Events in Europe

Growth of Imperialism

During the Progressive Era in the United States, problems were developing in Europe. Several European countries were competing for overseas **colonies** to increase their power. Colonies could provide countries with natural resources, markets in which to sell their products, and key military bases. The growth of **imperialism** caused European countries to distrust one another.



Strong Feelings of Nationalism

People in many European countries experienced strong feelings of **nationalism**. Nationalism is pride, loyalty, and devotion to one's country. Nationalism often encourages people to want their country to be a strong and wealthy nation. To increase their strength, some European countries had taken over smaller countries.

People in some of the small countries which were taken over also were experiencing strong feelings of nationalism. They wanted to be **independent**, or free, and run their countries for themselves. The large

powers tried to put down the unrest that was developing in the countries they had taken over.

The Buildup of Militaries



European countries were building large militaries to protect their own countries and their new colonies. Some European countries used their large militaries to prevent small countries from gaining their independence. The belief in building large militaries is known as **militarism**. The spread of militarism led to the breakdown of trust between leaders of the imperialist nations. It caused many people to fear a war was coming.

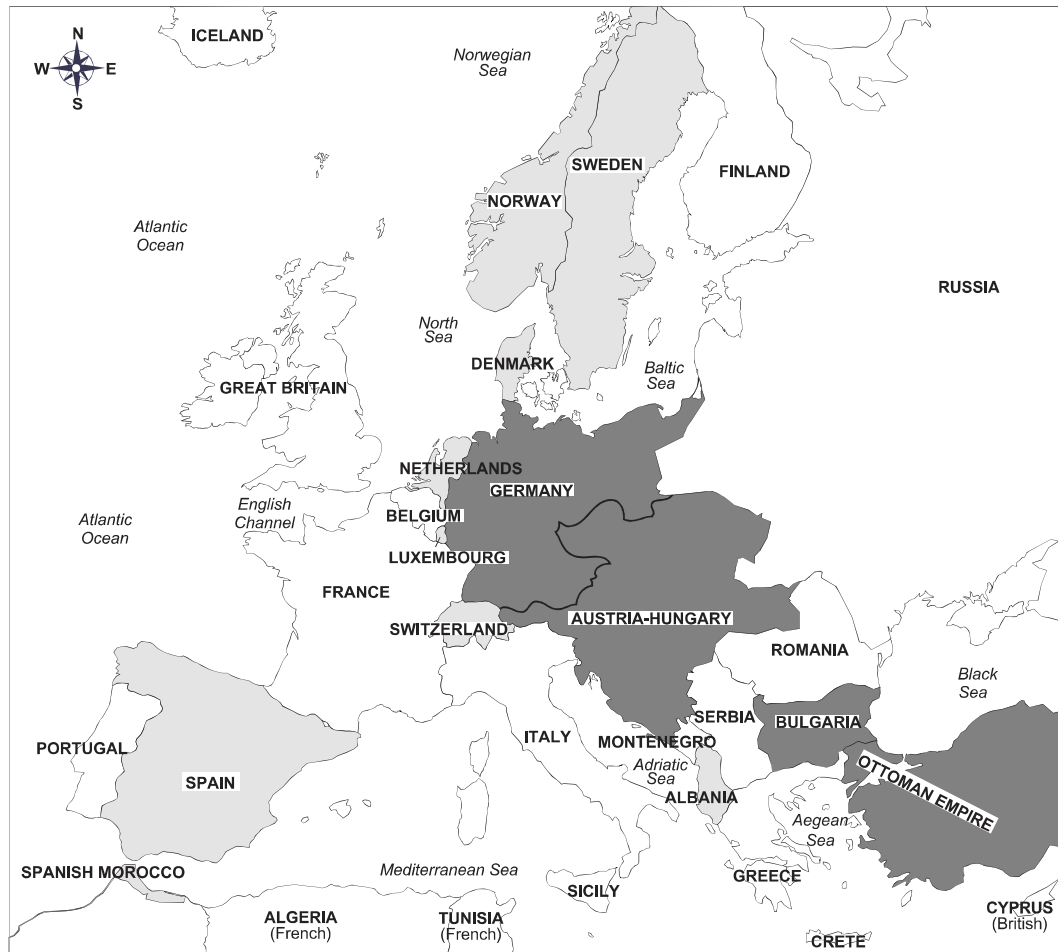
The Growth of Alliances

Some European countries did not have enough wealth to build powerful militaries. They asked stronger nations to help defend them should war break out. The nations began to sign **treaties**, or agreements, with each other and to form military **alliances**. These alliances were agreements between nations to work together to protect one another in time of war.

Great Britain, France, and Russia formed one alliance. They called themselves the **Allies**. Germany and Austria-Hungary formed another alliance called the **Central Powers**. The Allies and the Central Powers did not trust each other. If any one of these nations went to war, its allies were sworn to help fight the enemy. This system made it likely that the outbreak of a war would involve many nations. (See map of Europe on the following page.)

Desire for Independence

Many small countries ruled by major European powers began to take action to gain their freedom. One country, Bosnia, was a small territory inside Austria-Hungary. The Slavic people of Bosnia wanted independence from Austria-Hungary. They wanted to join with Serbia, another small Slavic country nearby.



Europe, World War I

Key	
	Allied Powers
	Central Powers
	Neutral nations

The emperor of Austria-Hungary, *Francis Joseph*, was aware of the discontent in Bosnia. He did not want to lose the small territory. To show the people of Bosnia that the government cared about them, he sent the Archduke *Francis Ferdinand* and his wife on a goodwill visit to the area in June of 1914. Ferdinand was the man next in line to be ruler of Austria-Hungary.

The Archduke and his wife went to the city of **Sarajevo** (sah-rah-yeh-vo) in Bosnia. Serbian nationalists **assassinated**, or killed, the Archduke and his wife to protest Austria-Hungary's rule over the Slavic people of Bosnia. Austria-Hungary blamed the assassination on the Serbian government. Serbia's leaders denied they were involved, but within a month, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

Although this event marked the beginning of the war, it was not the real cause. World War I began because many European countries were greedy for land and seaports. The assassination of Ferdinand was used as an excuse to start a war.

World War I Begins in Europe

Austria-Hungary and Serbia belonged to rival alliances. When Austria-Hungary, who was backed by Germany, attacked Serbia, who was backed by Russia, many other countries belonging to one of the rival alliances entered the war. Soon the Central Powers, which included Austria-Hungary and Germany, were battling the Allied Powers, which included Russia, France, and England.

Some countries remained *neutral*—they did not side with any of the fighting countries and did not want to enter the war. At first Belgium was a neutral country. When Germany decided to attack France, Belgium refused to let Germany cross its territory to attack France. Germany declared war on Belgium, and marched through Belgium to the French border. World War I often involved countries wishing to remain neutral. Belgium, no longer a neutral country, became an ally.

Chronology of World War I

1914	June 28, 1914 —Archduke Ferdinand and wife assassinated by Serbian nationalists.
	July 28, 1914 —Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia; Germany declares war on Russia; Britain declares war on Germany—the beginning of World War I.
	August 4, 1914 —President Wilson declares the United States neutral.
1915	May 7, 1915 —German submarine sinks passenger liner <i>Lusitania</i> ; 128 American civilians among the 1,198 casualties.
1917	January 17, 1917 —German and Mexican espionage uncovered; Germany promised Mexico some United States territory in return for Mexico's support.
	March, 1917 —Germans sink four unarmed American merchant ships with a loss of 36 lives; Zimmermann note proposing German-Mexican alliance to help Mexico regain Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona if United States enters the war.
	April 6, 1917 —United States joins the war after a meeting of Congress.
1918	June, 1917 —General John Pershing takes 14,500 soldiers to France; by November he has over 2 million troops.
	November 11, 1918 —World War I ends; Bulgaria gives up on September 30, Turkey on October 30, Austria-Hungary on November 4, and Germany on November 11, 1918.

Within one year, almost every country in Europe had gone to war. Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Romania joined the Allies. Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers. Meanwhile, Americans feared the war would spread beyond Europe and cause the United States to

become involved. After German U-boats (from the German word *Unterseeboot* meaning undersea boat), or submarines, attacked United States merchant ships carrying goods to European countries, the United States was forced to enter the fight as an **Associated Power** in support of the Allies in 1917. The war lasted until 1918. At the time, this war was called the **Great War**.

Summary

M	militarism
A	alliances
I	imperialism
N	nationalism

The growth of imperialism and militarism caused large European countries to distrust each other. Their governments began to build strong militaries and make alliances with other countries to protect their interests. One way to remember the main causes of the Great War (World War I) is **militarism, alliances, imperialism, and nationalism—MAIN**. Finally, the violent murder of the Austria-Hungarian Archduke by a Serbian nationalist led to the outbreak of World War I in Europe. Although

the United States wanted to remain neutral, it was forced to enter the war as an Associated Power in support of the Allies.