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Welcome to the course

Welcome to Modern World History! Studying this subject will help you to understand the world you live in: the events of the last 100 years can help to explain the problems and opportunities that exist in the world today.

There are four units in the course and each is worth 25% of the whole GCSE. Those units are:

- **Unit 1** Peace and War: International Relations 1900-91
- **Unit 2** Modern World Depth Study (Germany 1918-39; Russia 1917-39; or USA 1919-41)
- **Unit 3** Modern World Source Enquiry (First World War and British Society 1903-28; Second World War and British Society 1931-51; or the USA 1945-70)
- **Unit 4** Representations of History (your controlled assessment task).

Introduction to Unit 1

This book covers Unit 1: Peace and War: International Relations 1900-91. Depending on which sections you study in this unit, you might look at why Europe was plunged into war in 1914 and why, despite determined efforts to avoid further conflict, another war broke out just 20 years later. You might also discover that although there has been no major international war since 1945, in 1962 the world came within minutes of a devastating nuclear conflict.

How to use this book

There are six sections in Unit 1 and these are all covered in this book. You will study three of these:

- **Section 1**: Why did war break out? International rivalry 1900-14
- **Section 2**: The peace settlement 1918-28
- **Section 3**: Why did war break out? International relations 1929-39
- **Section 4**: How did the Cold War develop? 1943-56
- **Section 5**: Three Cold War crises: Berlin, Cuba and Czechoslovakia c. 1957-69
- **Section 6**: Why did the Cold War end? The invasion of Afghanistan (1979) to the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991).

Key terms are emboldened in the text, and definitions can be found in the glossary.

examzone

We’ve broken down the six stages of revision to ensure you are prepared every step of the way.

**Zone in:** How to get into the perfect ‘zone’ for revision.

**Planning zone:** Tips and advice on how to effectively plan revision.

**Know zone:** The facts you need to know, memory tips and exam-style practice for every section.

**Don’t panic zone:** Last-minute revision tips.

**Exam zone:** What to expect on the exam paper.

**Zone out:** What happens after the exams.
These features help you to understand how to improve, with guidance on answering exam-style questions, plus tips on how to remember important concepts and how to avoid common pitfalls.

There are three different types of ResultsPlus features throughout this book:

- **Top Tips** provide handy hints on how to apply what you have learned and how to remember key information and concepts.

- **Watch out!** These warn you about common mistakes and misconceptions that students often make.

- **Build Better Answers** give you an opportunity to answer exam-style questions. They include tips for what a basic, good, and excellent answer will contain.

The Know Zone Build Better Answers pages at the end of each section include an exam-style question with a student answer, examiner comments and an improved answer so that you can see how to improve your own writing.
Section 1: Why did war break out?  
International rivalry  
1900–14

At 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918, French and German representatives signed an armistice, bringing the ‘Great War’ to an end. The war had resulted in destruction and loss of life on a scale which few people had even dreamed was possible. On average, around 6000 lives were lost every day in the war.

What had driven the Great Powers to the point where they thought that the only solution to their rivalry was mass slaughter of each other’s soldiers? The sad truth is that when war broke out in August 1914, no one imagined that it would last so long or result in so many deaths. In fact, it was generally thought that ‘it would all be over by Christmas’. Men rushed to join the army to make sure they did not ‘miss the fun’.

But this was not ‘fun’. The war was widespread, lengthy and appallingly costly in human lives. International rivalry in the period 1900–14 was fierce; as a result there were too many scores to be settled for the conflict to be a short one.

In this section you will study:

- the alliance system and international rivalry between the Great Powers 1900–14
- the struggle for control in the Balkans 1900–14
- the growth of tension in Europe 1900–14.
In 1900, the world was a very different place from the one you know today. If you could go back to 1900, you would see a time when there were no computers, no email, no mobile phones or texting (telephones had only recently been invented), no television, no aeroplanes and very few cars! People at the time would not have believed that a journey to the other side of the world could be completed in less than a day.

The Great Powers
At this time, Europe contained the most powerful countries in the world and was dominated by six ‘Great Powers’: Britain, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Italy. Each of those powers wanted to control as much of the world’s trade and become as wealthy as possible. This meant they were rivals. During the nineteenth century, Britain had become rich through selling its manufactured goods around the world, particularly to its colonies. But in the early twentieth century, this British dominance came under threat as each of the Great Powers tried to outdo the others by producing more manufactured goods and selling them overseas. The country that made and sold the most goods would become richer and more powerful than the others. In particular, British dominance was being challenged in Europe by both Germany and France.

The United States
British dominance was also under threat from the ‘new’ power, the United States of America. By 1900 immigration into the USA meant the country had a higher population than Britain and France put together. It was only a matter of time before it produced and sold more manufactured goods and became richer and more powerful than Britain. So there was rivalry between Britain, France and Germany – and a challenge from the USA. There was also bitter rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia in Eastern Europe.

The Ottoman Empire (based on modern-day Turkey) controlled large areas of land in Eastern Europe. But the Ottoman Empire was growing weaker, and both Austria-Hungary and Russia wanted to take land from the Ottomans.

So, with so many countries in competition, you can understand that there was a real possibility of disagreement and armed conflict in the future.
Section 1: Why did war break out? International rivalry 1900–14

The Alliance system before 1900

Learning objectives

In this chapter you will learn about:
- how the alliance system developed up to 1914
- the role of Germany in creating tension in Europe.

The rise of Germany

By 1900, the Great Powers in Europe were beginning to divide themselves into two separate groups. A major cause of this had been the growth in power of Germany and its rivalry with other powers, particularly France.

Before 1871, Germany was a collection of small, independent states. On 18 January 1871, these states were brought together as a single country by its famous chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. As part of the unification of Germany, the king of Prussia, Wilhelm I, was crowned emperor (or Kaiser in German). Also in 1871, Germany defeated France in war. The Germans made France pay 200 million francs compensation and give the border territories of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany.

Isolating France

The Germans knew that France would look for revenge as soon as possible. To prevent this, Bismarck made agreements with other countries so that France would have no allies with which to fight against Germany in the future. In 1882 Germany signed an agreement with Austria-Hungary and Italy, known as the Triple Alliance. In 1887 they also signed an alliance with Russia.

Thus, by 1887 Germany had made alliances with three of the other major powers. The only possible ally for France if it wanted to attack Germany was Britain. But Britain had no interest in war in Europe. What it wanted was to maintain peace so that its huge empire was not threatened. It looked like Bismarck had successfully isolated France and kept Germany safe from attack.

Kaiser Wilhelm (William) II

One of the reasons Bismarck's plans came undone was the character of the new Kaiser, Wilhelm II (Wilhelm I died in 1888). Wilhelm II was an intelligent man, but also very moody and he lacked diplomatic skills. Bismarck had worked hard to keep France isolated, but Wilhelm II quarrelled with Bismarck and dismissed him from office.

Then he failed to renew the agreement with Russia in 1890. So Russia turned to France, and in 1894 the two countries signed the Dual Entente (understanding). France had found an ally.
British fears

Britain was concerned about the growth in German industrial power and the new Kaiser’s ambitions to build an empire like those of Britain and France. Wilhelm also planned to build huge numbers of new battleships and cruisers to make a ‘great navy’, and this worried the British especially. Britain had the world’s strongest navy and so was safe from invasion from mainland Europe. It also used its navy to protect its empire. What would happen if Germany built a more powerful navy? French and British fears led to secret discussions between them.

The Entente Cordiale and the Triple Entente

The Entente Cordiale between Britain and France was agreed in 1904. The new British King, Edward VII, favoured a French alliance and the new French Foreign Minister, Declassé, wanted a British alliance to isolate Germany. Both countries felt threatened by the growth of the German empire, its rise as an economic power and the alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy. The French did not seek to avenge themselves for the 1871 defeat, but they were keen to ensure a ‘buffer’ against further German aggression.

Meaning ‘friendly understanding’, the Cordiale was an agreement not to quarrel over colonies rather than an agreement to defend each other if attacked. The French did not want to be dragged into a war before they were ready – their armed forces were too weak.

The Triple Entente between Britain, France and Russia developed in stages. After the lapse of its alliance with Germany, Russia felt threatened by Germany’s close ties with Austria, one of its rivals. Russia had begun secret talks with France in 1891, leading to the Dual Entente. This Franco-Russian Alliance was finalised in 1894 (before the Entente Cordiale).

Britain and Russia had been colonial rivals in Persia, Afghanistan and China, but Britain came to see Germany as more of a threat following Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1905). In 1907, Britain and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian Entente. Britain, France and Russia then agreed the Triple Entente which, again, was not an agreement to defend each other if attacked.

A divided Europe

So the six Great Powers were divided into two separate groups.

• Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy had joined in a formal alliance in which they agreed to help each other in time of war.

• To protect themselves from the growing power of Germany, the other Great Powers – Britain, France and Russia – had joined together. Their agreement was more of an ‘understanding’ not to quarrel rather than a formal military alliance.

Activities

1 One of the skills a historian needs is to summarise information in a few words. What one-line answers would you give to the following questions?

   • Kaiser Wilhelm, it is 1907. Are you happy with the alliances you have?

2 British foreign secretary, why are you worried about Germany?

2 Once you have prepared your answers, ask the person sitting next to you the same questions. If you get different answers, decide whose answer is better.
Great power rivalry: imperial rivalry

Learning objectives
In this chapter you will learn about:

- the importance of colonies to the Great Powers
- how the Kaiser’s actions threatened Britain and France.

The race for colonies
One of the issues that led to tension between the Great Powers in the early years of the twentieth century concerned the ownership of land overseas – colonies. Today, almost all countries rule themselves, but in 1914 many people lived in colonies ruled by one of the Great Powers. These colonies were very important to the European nations as they provided cheap raw materials for industry and also a place where the Europeans could sell their home-produced goods. It has been estimated that from just one of its colonies (India), Britain took over £1000 million in tax and goods in the period 1750–1900. Some colonies were also important as military or trading bases. Egypt was an important British possession because its Suez Canal was a shortcut from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. This meant that British ships did not have to sail around Africa to get to India and the Far East.

An Italian cartoon from the period leading up to the war, showing Kaiser Wilhelm II’s greed for an Empire.

Overseas colonies in 1914.
Great power rivalry: imperial rivalry

German threat
Britain and France both had huge overseas empires and they were determined to keep them. This meant protecting their colonies from any country which threatened them. Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted Germany to also have what he called ‘its place in the sun’. He felt that Germany was hemmed in, encircled by the threat of France and Britain. Britain and France knew that any gains Germany made would be at their expense. So, as Germany became more threatening, Britain and France became friendlier to help each other resist German expansion.

Morocco, 1905
In 1904, Britain and France had signed the Entente Cordiale. Kaiser Wilhelm decided to test how strong that agreement was. He knew that France wanted to take control of Morocco, so in 1905 he visited the area and made a speech saying he supported the independence of Morocco. The French were furious but had to agree to hold a conference to discuss the matter at Algeciras in Spain. At that conference Britain and other countries stood by France. They said that although Morocco was independent, France had special rights in the country. Wilhelm had hoped to split France and Britain but all that he had achieved was that Britain and France moved closer together. Britain now agreed to send troops to help France if it was attacked by Germany.

The Agadir Crisis, 1911
Six years later, there was another crisis in Morocco. In 1911 there was a rebellion against the ruler, the sultan. France sent in troops to put down the uprising and used the rebellion as the opportunity to take over Morocco. The French knew that several countries would complain that their trade would be harmed if the French took control, so they offered compensation. Kaiser Wilhelm was not satisfied with this and sent a gunboat, the Panther, to the Moroccan port of Agadir to threaten the French. But, once again, Britain stood by its friend. The British had the world’s most powerful navy and were concerned that Wilhelm was trying to set up a base in Morocco. So the British chancellor of the exchequer, David Lloyd George, made a strong speech threatening to go to war if Germany continued to bully France. The British fleet was put on a war footing to back up Lloyd George’s aggressive words. Wilhelm realised that his actions could cause war. He backed down and accepted French control of Morocco. In return, Germany received 100,000 square miles of the French Congo (a French colony in Africa), but this land was mostly worthless swamp and jungle.

Once again, Britain and France had stood firm and Wilhelm had been forced to back down. As one German complained, the Agadir Crisis had ‘amused the world and ended by making us look foolish’. Wilhelm was determined that the next contest would not be one in which he looked foolish. Tension between the Great Powers was growing.

ResultsPlus
Top Tip
Students who do well in this type of question usually do so by finding two or three key points (for example, what the Kaiser wanted, how the French reacted and what the outcome was) and then giving some detail to support each point. Students who do poorly just write all they know.

Activities
1. The Great Powers obviously thought that having colonies was a good thing. You are an MP who has been asked to make a speech in parliament explaining why Britain should have colonies. What would you say?
2. a. Make a list of the Kaiser’s actions in Morocco in 1905 and 1911.
   b. Now make a list of what he was trying to achieve.
   c. Overall, what score out of 10 would you give him for his actions? Why?
Section 1: Why did war break out? International rivalry 1900–14

Great power rivalry: military rivalry

Learning objectives

In this chapter you will learn about:

- the importance of the navy to Britain
- how Germany was threatening British naval supremacy.

Britannia rules the waves

Britain had defeated the French at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and since that date had controlled the seas with the most powerful navy in the world. Britain’s trade was widespread and her huge overseas empire produced great wealth for the country. As long as Britain had the world’s strongest navy, it could make sure that none of the other Great Powers would try to seize parts of its empire. It could also use the navy to prevent an enemy from invading Britain. But what if another country wanted to challenge Britain’s naval superiority?

In 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm announced that Germany was going to build 41 battleships and 61 cruisers. This was part of a plan to make sure that Germany could defend itself and protect its growing overseas trade. The Kaiser’s ambitions caused alarm in Britain. Germany was in central Europe and needed a large army to protect its borders, so why did it need a large navy? It had only a small coastline, but Britain was an island and its power was based on its navy. As the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, said in 1909:

‘There is no comparison between the importance of the German navy to Germany and the importance of our navy to us… it is not a matter of life and death to them as it is to us.’

Britain saw the German naval building programme as part of a deliberate policy to challenge British naval supremacy. We do not know whether this was what Wilhelm was doing; perhaps he was genuinely building a large navy to protect Germany’s trade and small empire. Another possible reason for the Kaiser’s actions was to frighten the British into reaching an agreement with Germany instead of France.

An ‘arms race’ develops

Whatever Wilhelm’s intentions, Britain saw Germany’s shipbuilding programme as a threat. Talks were held to try to limit the size of the British and German navies, but they broke down. Then, in 1906, the game changed. Britain launched the first of a new type of battleship, HMS Dreadnought. This ship was so powerful that all previous battleships were immediately out of date. Indeed, the impact of this new type of ship was so great that all battleships built after it were referred to as ‘dreadnoughts’. What mattered now was not how many ships the navy had, but how many dreadnoughts it had. So if Germany could build more of these ships than Britain did, it would have a more powerful navy.

A British dreadnought. This battleship was faster, had more powerful guns and was harder to sink than any previous ship.
Great power rivalry: military rivalry

From 1906, an ‘arms race’ broke out between Britain and Germany as both countries tried to build the most dreadnoughts. Between 1906 and 1907, Britain built five dreadnoughts, and it was not until 1908 that Germany launched its first. Then, in 1908, Germany built four new ships and Britain just two! Britain considered building either two or four new ships in the years 1910–11, but the British public began demanding eight. There were even times in music halls when the audience burst into a chorus of ‘We want eight and we won’t wait.’ So, eight ships were built between 1910 and 1911. Between 1906 and 1914, Britain built 29 dreadnoughts compared to Germany’s 17.

**The build-up of armies**

In the same way that Britain believed that security came from having a strong navy, so the other Great Powers believed that military strength came from having an army powerful enough to prevent an attack from another country. In the years up to 1914, the Great Powers concentrated on building up their armed forces and ensuring their soldiers were well trained. All the Great Powers except Britain introduced **conscription** (compulsory military service). In France, soldiers had to serve for three years and in Russia for three and a half years. As the graph shows, by 1914 the armies of the Great Powers numbered more than 4 million men, with another 2 million reservists waiting to be called up.

**The ‘balance of power’**

The Great Powers had become involved in an **arms race** to make sure that each of them had armed forces which could win a victory in war. But this did not mean that they intended to fight. Each country knew that it was important to make sure that its forces balanced those of any potential enemy, so that the enemy would be less likely to attack. In this sense, building up armed forces was actually a way of preventing war.

**Activities**

1. You are preparing for a debate but don’t know which side you will be speaking for! The debate is ‘Did the Kaiser build a great navy just to threaten Britain?’ As you don’t know which side you will be speaking for, make some notes for each side of the argument. Which side would you prefer to speak for? Why?

2. ‘We want eight and we won’t wait’ is a great slogan. Can you think of any other good slogans for the events described on these pages?

3. Consider the statement ‘building up armed forces was actually a way of preventing war’. That sounds like nonsense. Explain how making your armed forces stronger could stop war.
Section 1: Why did war break out? International rivalry 1900–14

Great power rivalry: economic rivalry

Learning objectives
In this chapter you will learn about:
• the economic background to the First World War
• the importance of industrialisation.

The First World War broke out in 1914 because of a series of events and disagreements in that year. But those events were just short-term reasons why war broke out when it did. The real causes of war were long-term and much more deep-seated. They had existed for some time and made war very likely. All that was needed was the short-term reasons to trigger the start of the war.

The battle for economic supremacy
At the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain had been the most powerful country in the world, with the largest empire and the richest trade. However, Germany had overtaken Britain by 1914. It produced more iron, more steel and more cars.

Germany was also showing a keen interest in gaining colonies, which would give it access to cheap raw materials and markets into which to sell its goods. Its interest in colonies had also brought it into conflict with France.

But while Britain was increasingly concerned about the expanding German navy, and France felt threatened by Germany over its colonies, what was really happening was that Germany was building a stronger economy than those of Britain and France and they were trying to stop this. So, to what extent was the First World War really just about money?

Activities
Let’s do some statistics. Look at the graphs and answer the following questions.

1. Which country had the most valuable trade in 1913? Why do you think this was?
2. Which country had the second highest? Why might this be a problem to the country with the highest?
3. Why did Britain have a much higher ‘overseas population’ than other countries?
4. Why do you think figures for steel production are shown? Why does it matter how much steel is produced?
5. Why does it matter how large the population is? Does that mean that Russia must have been the strongest because it had the largest population?
6. What was the combined total for a) the Triple Alliance and b) the Triple Entente for:
   - annual trade
   - steel production?
7. In 1913 the USA had a home population of 91 million, annual trade of £1.8 million and steel production of 23.6 million tonnes. What does that tell you?
8. ‘None of these figures matter. All that is important is the size of a country’s armed forces.’ Explain whether you agree with that statement.
The Great Powers in 1913

Population: home (millions)

Population: overseas (millions)

Value of annual trade (£ millions)

Steel production (million tons)

The Great Power rivalry: economic rivalry
The Balkans: problem area

Learning objectives
In this chapter you will learn about:
- the importance of the decline of Ottoman power
- the importance of the Balkans to different countries.

The Kaiser’s plans to expand Germany led to increased rivalry with Britain and France. Two of the other Great Powers, Russia and Austria, had their own dispute to deal with.

The Ottomans
Since the seventeenth century, much of south-east Europe (the Balkans) had been part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans were the Muslim rulers of what is now called Turkey, with their capital in Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). However, by the nineteenth century Ottoman military power was in decline. In 1832 Greece won its independence from the Ottoman Empire. This marked a gradual weakening of power as other countries within the empire, such as Serbia and Bulgaria, also achieved independence.

What made the Balkans such a controversial area was the fact that the Great Powers all had their own reasons for intervening. Britain, France and Italy had important trade in the eastern Mediterranean and wanted to ensure that this trade was not disrupted. For Austria-Hungary and Russia, however, the ‘Balkan Question’ was about much more than trade.

Austria-Hungary
Austria-Hungary was a large and scattered empire in central Europe, with its capital in Vienna. It was ruled by the Habsburg family and so is often referred to as the ‘Habsburg Empire’. The empire had 11 different nationalities in it. The Austrians were Germans and the Hungarians were Magyars, but the Habsburgs also ruled over millions of ‘Slav’ subjects, such as Czechs, Serbs, Bosnians and Croats. The major aim of the Habsburg emperor, Franz Joseph, was to stop the growth of nationalism. This was a belief that different nationalities should rule themselves and it threatened to break up the empire.

Ever since it had gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, Serbia had been a problem for Austria-Hungary. There were several million Serbs in southern Austria and they were keen to unite with Serbia. Franz Joseph was very worried by this, and some of his ministers thought it might be better to conquer Serbia to stop the threat. The Czechs in the north and the Croats in the south-west also wanted independence. If the Serbs broke free to join Serbia, the demands of the Czechs and Croats would grow.
Russia
To complicate matters, Russia also had a strong interest in what happened in the Balkans. Russia’s only southern port was Sebastopol in the Crimea. To reach the Mediterranean, Russian ships had to sail through a narrow strait called the Dardanelles. This area was controlled by Turkey and could easily be cut off. So Russia was determined to help establish pro-Russian governments in the Balkans, which would allow their ports to be used to transport Russian goods in the Mediterranean. When Bulgarians rose up against the Ottoman Empire in 1876, Russia saw an opportunity to gain influence in the Balkans and sent troops to fight on the side of the rebels, helping to liberate Bulgaria in 1878. Although Russia’s policy in the Balkans involved a ‘drive to the Mediterranean’, they were able to disguise this ambition by claiming much more noble aims. The Ottomans were Muslims, but many of the people in the region were Christians, and a lot of them belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. So the Russians were able to portray themselves as protectors of the Christian religion against oppressive Muslim rulers.
The Russians were also Slavs, so were keen to promote Slav nationalism and thus help the Slav people in the region win their freedom from the Ottomans. Of course, if this freedom caused problems for the Habsburgs and threatened the break-up of Austria-Hungary, that would be even better.
So the Balkans was a region where there was enormous potential for the Great Powers to fall out.
• The Ottomans were trying to keep their empire in Europe.
• The Slav people were trying to set up independent countries.
• Austria-Hungary was trying to stop these Slav countries being set up.
• Russia was trying to encourage the Slavs to ensure it had a secure access to the Mediterranean.
• Britain and France wanted to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean to protect their own trade.

Did you know?
After the 1917 revolutions in Russia, Tsar Nicholas, his wife Alexandra and his family were shot by the communists. Their bodies were thrown down a mineshaft and not discovered until the fall of communism in 1991. The bodies were identified by taking DNA samples from Prince Philip of Britain, who is a cousin of Alexandra.

Activity
From what you have read here, explain whether you think the following is likely to happen in the next pages you read on the Balkans. Give reasons to support your answer – and no cheating by looking it up!
a. Austria-Hungary and Britain will fall out.
b. Serbia and Austria-Hungary will fall out.
c. Turkey will take control of Austria-Hungary’s eastern territories.
d. Russia and Austria-Hungary will fall out.
Section 1: Why did war break out? International rivalry 1900–14

The Balkans 1900–13: turning up the heat

Learning objectives
In this chapter you will learn about:
• the impact of the Bosnian Crisis
• how the Balkan Wars increased tension.

The weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire in 1900
By 1900, the Ottoman Empire was very weak. This was especially true in the Balkans – the part of the Empire in Europe. Various factors contributed to this:
• The Balkans was made up of many ethnic groups with their own languages and their own sense of nationality. Among these were Bosnians, Serbs and Croats. Added to this, the Ottoman Empire was Muslim and most of the people in the Balkan countries they had taken over were not.
• The Ottoman Empire was too big for the army to keep control everywhere. In the Balkans, different Balkan states wanted their independence. Austria-Hungary and Russia both wanted to increase their influence in the Balkans, and push the Ottoman Empire out of Europe.
• The Ottoman Empire was retreating:
  o it had already given some states their independence
  o some states were semi-independent states within the Ottoman Empire
  o the sultan (ruler) had been forced to let Austria-Hungary ‘administer’ Bosnia-Herzegovina in his name at a conference in 1878. He could not control it so the alternative was to allow it to be independent.
• The sultans of the Ottoman Empire had long been inefficient and corrupt. The sultan in 1900, Abdul Hamid II, spent most of his time hidden in his palace, drinking heavily and fearing a revolution.

Balkan nationalism
The various Balkan ethnic groups had a strong sense of their own national identities. But they were small and not powerful. Most were ruled by either the Ottoman Empire or Austria-Hungary. Their boundaries were redrawn to suit these rulers. So, for example, several million Serbs (estimates vary from 2 to 6 million) were living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Balkan nationalism was encouraged to grow by:
• the fact that Greece (1832), Serbia (1878) and Romania (1878) became independent and other states (e.g. Bulgaria) were given semi-independence within the Ottoman Empire
• the increasing weakness of the Ottoman Empire
• the encouragement of Russia – which would benefit from the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary being weakened.
The Bosnian Crisis 1908

Austria-Hungary did not want to see more independent countries in the Balkans, nor did it want to see the expansion of Russian influence. So it supported the continuation of Ottoman control in the region. However, there were some problems with this policy. At a conference in 1878 it was agreed that Austria-Hungary should ‘administer’ Bosnia-Herzegovina. This area had been controlled by the Ottomans, but they no longer had the military power to keep control. Austria-Hungary did not want to see the Serbian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina join with Serbia, so it was happy to provide ‘peaceful protection’ for the country.

However, in 1908, there was a revolution in Turkey. An army group called ‘the Young Turks’ replaced Sultan Abdul Hamid with his brother, Mohammed V. The Young Turks actually ran the country, however, not the new sultan. They began to introduce reforms to turn the Ottoman Empire into a modern state. It seemed as if they might make the Ottoman Empire stronger. This caused alarm in Austria-Hungary and set off a crisis in the Balkans.

- **Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1908 to prevent any Ottoman attempts to recover the territory that the Austro-Hungarians had been administering for them since 1878. From now on it would be officially part of the Habsburg Empire.**
- **The Ottomans considered that their territory had been seized.**
- **Serbia, which had a very strong nationalist movement, objected to the annexation as it hoped to bring the Bosnian Serbs into Serbia. It could not fight Austria-Hungary alone, so asked its Russian allies to help stop the annexation.**
- **Russia objected to Austria-Hungary’s action and the threatened increase in Habsburg power, and considered war.**
- **Germany made it clear to Russia that it would help Austria-Hungary if Russia tried to help Serbia take back Bosnia-Herzegovina.**

Finally, Austria-Hungary agreed to pay the Turks compensation, which was accepted.

Russia backed down, as the Germans stood by the Triple Alliance, so Serbia had to back down as well. Without Russian support it had to accept the Austrian takeover.

Austria-Hungary’s success came at a price. Both Serbia and Russia were determined to make sure they won the next dispute. Another consequence was the formation of a Serbian terrorist organisation, called the ‘Black Hand’, to fight Austria-Hungary in the Balkans.

This organisation would turn out to play a significant role in the outbreak of war in 1914.

The Bosnian Crisis was over, but it had several effects:

- Austria-Hungary began to see the Serbs as a real threat.
- It was the first real test of the Triple Alliance – and Germany had come to the aid of Austria-Hungary; it showed the alliance system could work.
- The formation of the Black Hand was to prove most significant.
Despite the reforms carried out by the Young Turks, the Ottoman Empire continued to break up. In 1911 the Young Turks fell from power in Turkey. The Balkan states saw this as an opportunity to attack the Ottomans. Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro came together in an organisation known as the Balkan League, and in 1912, declared war.

In just three weeks the Balkan League pushed the Ottomans back as far as Adrianople – almost out of Europe altogether. The dramatic decline of the Ottomans worried Austria-Hungary, who feared nationalism would rise once more and unsettle its people. It managed to persuade the Great Powers to hold a conference in London to draw up a peace treaty, which ended the First Balkan War.