**M**

Following the tension caused by European imperialism, an arms race had begun between the major powers. An arms race is when countries compete to build larger, stronger armies and navies. Countries also invest in new war-time technology and weapons. This is called militarism. More advanced, stronger militaries were needed as the size of European empires grew. Countries had to protect their land in Europe, as well as, their colonies around the world. Between 1870 and 1914, the armies of France and Germany had more than doubled their sizes. The growing militaries increased the tension between the countries, and also put suspicion in each other’s minds that their neighbors were planning possible attacks. Countries developed plans for rapid mobilization to prepare for war.

**A**

In order to obtain protection from other countries, many countries *partnered up and became mutual defense alliances. These alliances* included: “The Triple Alliance,” between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy and “The Triple Entente of 1914,” between Britain, Russia, and France. By creating these alliances, more countries would enter into war. If one country were to declare war on another, a chain reaction would begin. Eventually, every country involved in an alliance would be pulled into war. For example, on July 28th, 1914 Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia because of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Due to the system of alliances in place, this declaration of war dragged many other countries into the war that was not otherwise involved in the dispute between Serbia and Austria-Hungary.

**I**

Imperialism is when a country increases their power and wealth by bringing additional territories under their control. Africa and Asia were hotspots for European imperialism because of the raw materials the areas provided. This is a major cause of World War One because it caused tension as countries fought for possession of dwindling available land. Many of these countries were racing to control pieces of land in Africa, these countries include: England, India, Belgium, Germany, France, and Italy. Every country wanted a piece of Africa and this pushed the countries to confrontation. Countries were brought even closer to the edge of war as tension and jealousy grew.

**N**

During the pre-war period, the European powers had a strong sense of national identity. France, Germany, and Britain all had their own very clear national identities and reveled in them. Citizens were not afraid to show their love of country and saw it as their duty to show their support. This is called nationalism. Nationalism is demonstrated by the use of flags, national anthems, and other signature items to represent the country. Just as they loved their own countries, they tended to have great distrust of their neighbors.

Germany was a relatively new nation. The Germans were proud of their military tradition, technology, and history. France was a nation with a long history of hatred for Germany. In a previous war, the French were defeated and lost part of the French territory called Alsace-Lorraine. France wanted this land back. Great Britain was a strong nation with a grand empire. It is said that, “the sun never set on the British Empire.” This means that the sun was always shining somewhere in Britain’s large empire. Britain’s navy ruled the oceans. This was a source of great pride for the British.

While the major players in WWI were secure in their national identities, many other people were trying to establish their own. In particular, the people of the Balkans were struggling against oppression. Austria-Hungary ruled a vast territory which included people from many different cultural backgrounds, many of whom wanted independence. Gavrilo Princips was one such extreme Serbian nationalist.