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The First World War, 1914-1918, causes and consequences

Questions to ponder

1. To what extent was Alliance system/ Kaiser William II/ the Sarajevo incident or double murder/ Germany /Anglo-Germany rivalry/nationalism/Arms race/ Austria Hungary/Franco-Prussian war/economic factors responsible for outbreak of World War I

(Give a brief introduction of World War 1 and Alliance system/ Kaiser William II/ the Sarajevo incident or double murder/ Germany /Anglo-Germany rivalry/nationalism/Arms race/ Austria Hungary/Franco-Prussian war. Identify and explain the part played by Alliance system/ Kaiser William II/ the Sarajevo incident or double murder/ Germany /Anglo-Germany rivalry/nationalism/Arms race/ Austria Hungary/Franco-Prussian war/economic Factors in outbreak of WWI. Identify and explain other factors. A standpoint is required in introduction and conclusion).

2. Examine the impact of the first World War in Europe.

(Give a brief introduction of World War 1. Identify and explain the impact of the First World War on Europe. Give a generalized conclusion).

3. Account for the Victory of the allied powers in the 1914-1918 Great War.

(Give a brief introduction of World War 1/1914-1918 Great War. Identify and explain the reasons for the victory of the allied powers in WWI. Give a generalized conclusion).

Summary and course of the First World War, 1914-1918

The **First World War** (1914-1918), also known as the **Great War**, was a global conflict primarily fought in Europe.

Causes

- **Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand:** The immediate cause was the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, by a Bosnian Serb nationalist on June 28, 1914.
- **Alliance System:** Europe was divided into two major alliances: the **Allied Powers** (including France, Britain, Russia, Italy, and later the United States) and the **Central Powers** (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria).
- **Militarism and Nationalism:** Rising nationalism and militarism among European powers also contributed to the outbreak of war.

Major Events

- **Trench Warfare:** The war is known for its trench warfare, characterized by long, gruelling battles with high casualties.
- **Technological Advancements:** The war saw the introduction of new military technologies, including tanks, aircraft, machine guns, and chemical weapons.
- **Major Battles:** Significant battles included the **Battle of the Somme**, **Battle of Verdun**, and **Battle of Gallipoli**.

Outcome

- **Allied Victory:** The war ended with the **Armistice of November 11, 1918**, resulting in victory for the Allied Powers.
- **Treaty of Versailles:** The peace treaty imposed heavy reparations and territorial changes on Germany, contributing to long-term political and economic instability in Europe.

Impact

- **Casualties:** The war resulted in over **16 million deaths** and **20 million wounded** soldiers, along with significant civilian casualties.
- **Political Changes:** The war led to the dissolution of empires (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, German, and Russian) and the creation of new nations.
- **Economic Impact:** The war caused widespread economic disruption and set the stage for future conflicts, including World War II.

Causes of the first World War 1914-1918

1. **Militarism:** The arms race and the glorification of military power led to an environment where war was seen as a viable means of resolving disputes.
2. **Alliance System:** European powers formed complex alliances for mutual protection, which created a web of obligations. The main alliances were the **Triple Entente** (France, Russia, and Britain) and the **Triple Alliance** (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy).

3. **Imperialism:** Competition for colonies and resources heightened tensions among European powers.
4. **Nationalism:** Intense national pride and aspirations for independence among various ethnic groups, particularly in the Balkans, fueled conflicts.
5. **Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand:** The immediate trigger was the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by a Bosnian Serb nationalist on June 28, 1914.

Contributions of alliance system to outbreak World War I

1. **Division into Military Camps:** By 1907, Europe was divided into two main military camps: the **Triple Alliance** (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) and the **Triple Entente** (France, Russia, and Britain). This division created a clear line of opposition.
2. **Secret Clauses:** Many alliances contained secret clauses that were not publicly known, leading to mutual suspicions and fears among the powers.
3. **Assurance of Support:** The alliances assured member countries that they would receive military support if war broke out, making them less willing to settle disputes peacefully.
4. **Intensified Arms Race:** The alliances led to an arms race, as countries felt the need to be stronger than their potential adversaries.
5. **Escalation of Conflicts:** Any conflict between two countries could quickly involve their allies, turning a small dispute into a larger war. For example, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand led to a chain reaction of mobilizations and declarations of war.
6. **Isolation of France.** Because alliance system the isolated France managed to get into the Triple Entente alliance and to effect a revenge on Germany that humiliated it in the Franco-Prussian war.
7. **The alliance system promoted aggressive foreign policies among European powers.** For instance, Germany pursued a plan of building the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. This caused tension due other European power envy.
8. **The system created a spirit of nationalism and destroyed that of diplomacy.**

Contributions of the aggressive character of Kaiser William II to outbreak World War I

1. **Militaristic Policies:** Wilhelm II was a strong advocate for expanding the German military, particularly the navy. His aggressive stance on military expansion heightened tensions with other European powers, especially Great Britain.
2. **Naval Arms Race:** His obsession with building a powerful navy led to a naval arms race with Britain, straining relations between the two countries.
3. **Support for Austria-Hungary:** During the July Crisis of 1914, Wilhelm II gave Austria-Hungary a "blank cheque" of support, encouraging them to take a hardline approach against Serbia. This assurance contributed to the rapid escalation of the conflict.
4. **Colonial Ambitions:** Wilhelm's aggressive colonial policies and support for the Boers in their fight against the British further alienated European powers.

5. **Diplomatic Missteps:** His erratic and unpredictable behavior in international diplomacy created mistrust and fear among other nations, contributing to the unstable political climate.
6. **Militaristic character and arrogance made Kaiser William II to oppose disarmament suggestion during 1899 and 1907 Hague conferences.** This caused suspicion, mistrust and tension among European powers culminating into World War I.
7. **His aggressive policies forced Britain to form alliances with other powers.** For instance, the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance to hinder expansion of Germany to the East.
8. **Invasion of Belgium.** In 1914 Kaiser William II invaded and refused to withdraw from Belgium which compelled Britain to wage a war against Germany ending in World War I.
9. **Kaiser William II objected proposed Anglo-German Alliance** which caused tension between Britain and Germany contributing to the outbreak of World War I.

Contributions of the arms race to outbreak World War I

1. **Increased Tensions:** The competition among European powers to build larger and more advanced militaries heightened tensions and created a climate of mutual suspicion and fear.
2. **Naval Arms Race:** The most notable arms race was between Britain and Germany, with both nations rapidly expanding their navies. This led to increased hostility and a race for dominance at sea.
3. **Technological Advancements:** The development of new weapons and military technologies, such as machine guns, rapid-fire artillery, and dreadnought battleships, made war more deadly and destructive, encouraging nations to prepare for conflict.
4. **Militarism:** The glorification of military power and the belief in the necessity of war as a means of resolving disputes further fueled the arms race and made diplomatic solutions less likely.
5. **Economic Burden:** The high costs associated with maintaining and expanding military forces strained national budgets and economies, leading to further competition and conflict.
6. **Excitement of soldiers by new modern military equipment.** Soldiers were looking for a chance to utilize the military equipment and the World War I provided this opportunity.
7. **Arm race encouraged Germany to oppose disarmament efforts made at during Hague conference.** This worsened the relationship between Britain and Germany.
8. **Arm race contributed to the collapse of international diplomacy.** And a belief in solving disputes on war frontline.
9. **Arm race magnified Anglo-Germany naval rivalry** leading to outbreak the first world War.

Contributions of the Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871 to outbreak World War I

1. **German Unification:** The war led to the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership, creating a powerful new nation-state. This new Germany became a dominant force in European politics.
2. **Alsace-Lorraine:** The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany fueled French desire for revenge, known as **Revanchism**, which became a driving force behind French foreign policy.
3. **Military Prestige:** The decisive Prussian victory boosted German military prestige and confidence, contributing to a more aggressive military posture in Europe.
4. **Diplomatic Tensions:** The war strained relations between Germany and France, as well as other European powers, creating a climate of mutual distrust and rivalry.
5. **Militarization:** The success of Prussian military tactics and organization encouraged other nations to adopt similar military strategies, leading to an arms race and increased militarization across Europe.
6. **Bismarck due to fear of the French revenge was force to initiate the alliance system.** This divided Europe into two antagonistic camps that contributed to the outbreak of World War I.
7. **Kaiser William II became proud and thought Germany was a superpower.** This made him a war monger.
8. **European imperialism increased as a result of the Franco-Prussian war and this increased the desire of many European state to fight for their integrity.**

Contributions of the Sarajevo incident/double murder to outbreak World War I

1. **Immediate Catalyst:** The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife Sophie on June 28, 1914, by Gavrilo Principe, a Bosnian Serb nationalist, directly triggered the July Crisis.
2. **Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum:** Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia, which Serbia could not fully accept, leading Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia.
3. **Alliance Activation:** The declaration of war set off a chain reaction of alliances. Russia mobilized in support of Serbia, leading Germany to declare war on Russia, and subsequently on France.
4. **British Involvement:** Germany's invasion of Belgium to reach France brought Britain into the war due to its treaty obligations to protect Belgian neutrality.
5. **Escalation:** The assassination and subsequent events rapidly escalated into a full-scale war involving multiple European powers.
6. **Press exaggeration of the incidence.** This increased fear and suspicion, mistrust and tension leading to outbreak of the First World War.
7. **It gave an opportunity to European powers to test their military hardware and making World War I inevitable.**
8. **It worsened hostility between Triple Alliance and Triple entente.**

Contributions of the Germans to outbreak World War I

1. **Militarization and Arms Race:** Germany's aggressive military expansion and naval buildup, particularly the naval arms race with Britain, heightened tensions and created a climate of mutual suspicion and fear among European powers.
2. **Support for Austria-Hungary:** Germany's unconditional support for Austria-Hungary after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 led to a rapid escalation of the conflict.
3. **Blank Cheque Assurance:** The "blank cheque" assurance given to Austria-Hungary by Kaiser Wilhelm II emboldened Austria-Hungary to take a hardline stance against Serbia, setting off a chain reaction of mobilizations and declarations of war.
4. **Invasion of Belgium:** Germany's invasion of neutral Belgium to outflank French defenses brought Britain into the war due to its treaty obligations to protect Belgian neutrality.
5. **Colonial Ambitions:** Germany's late entry into the colonial race and its aggressive colonial policies created tensions with other European powers, contributing to the overall instability in Europe.
6. **Kaiser William II** was a reckless war monger.
7. **Germany annexed Alsace/Lorraine** creating permanent enmity with France.
8. **Masterminded the alliance system that divided Europe into two antagonist camps.**
9. Germany press propaganda
10. Germany's unification in 1871 tilted the balance of power in favor of Germany.

Contributions of the Austria-Hungary to outbreak World War I

1. **Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand:** The assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, by a Bosnian Serb nationalist, was the immediate catalyst for the war.
2. **Ultimatum to Serbia:** Following the assassination, Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia with harsh demands, which Serbia could not fully accept. This led Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia on July 28, 1914.
3. **Alliance with Germany:** Austria-Hungary's alliance with Germany meant that Germany supported Austria-Hungary's actions against Serbia, leading to a broader conflict.
4. **Mobilization of Forces:** Austria-Hungary's mobilization of its military forces against Serbia prompted Russia to mobilize in support of Serbia, further escalating the conflict.
5. **Invasion of Serbia:** Austria-Hungary's invasion of Serbia brought other nations into the war, including Russia, France, and eventually Britain, due to existing alliances and treaties.
6. **Failure of Austria-Hungarian diplomacy** in 1914.

Contributions of the Nationalism to outbreak World War I

7. **Rival Nationalisms:** Nationalistic fervor led to rivalries between nations, particularly in regions like the Balkans, where various ethnic groups sought independence from larger empires.

8. **Militarism:** Nationalism was closely linked to militarism, as nations built up their armies and navies to assert their dominance and protect their interests.
9. **Imperial Ambitions:** Nationalistic pride drove countries to expand their empires, leading to conflicts over colonies and resources.
10. **Ethnic Tensions:** Nationalism exacerbated ethnic tensions within multi-ethnic empires like Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, contributing to internal instability and external conflicts.
11. **Alliance Systems:** Nationalistic sentiments led countries to form alliances for mutual protection, creating a web of obligations that pulled multiple nations into the conflict after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

Factors that lead to the Victory of the allied powers in the 1914-1918 Great War

1. **Economic Resources:** The Allies, particularly the British Empire and the United States, had superior economic resources and industrial capabilities, allowing them to sustain prolonged military efforts.
2. **Population Size:** The Allies had a larger population compared to the Central Powers, providing a bigger pool of military personnel.
3. **Technological Advancements:** The Allies were able to leverage technological advancements in weaponry, communication, and logistics more effectively.
4. **Strategic Alliances:** The Allies maintained strong alliances, including the Triple Entente (France, Russia, and Britain) and later the United States, which provided additional military and economic support.
5. **Naval Blockade:** The British naval blockade of Germany significantly weakened the German economy and war effort by restricting access to essential supplies and resources.
6. **Entry of the United States:** The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 provided a significant boost in terms of troops, resources, and morale.
7. **Internal Strife in Central Powers:** The Central Powers, particularly Germany and Austria-Hungary, faced internal political and social unrest, which weakened their war efforts.
8. **Effective Leadership:** The Allies benefited from effective military leadership and strategic coordination, particularly in the latter years of the war.

Positive outcomes World War I

1. **Technological Advancements:** The war spurred significant technological innovations, including advancements in aviation, communication, and medical treatments³.
2. **Medical Innovations:** The need to treat wounded soldiers led to improvements in medical care, such as the development of antiseptics, better surgical techniques, and the establishment of modern nursing practices¹.
3. **Women's Roles:** The war expanded the roles of women in society, as they took on jobs traditionally held by men, leading to greater gender equality and the eventual granting of women's suffrage in many countries.

4. **Political Changes:** The war led to the collapse of several empires (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, German, and Russian), paving the way for the creation of new nations and the redrawing of national borders.
5. **League of Nations:** The establishment of the League of Nations aimed to promote international cooperation and prevent future conflicts, laying the groundwork for the United Nations.
6. **France was able to regain Alsace and Lorraine after the defeat of Germany.**
7. **Germany became democratic when Emperor William II fled to exile in Netherlands.**

Negative outcomes of World War I

1. **Human Losses:** The war resulted in the deaths of approximately **16 million soldiers** and **8 million civilians**, with many more wounded and traumatized.
2. **Destruction of property.**
3. **The war contributed to anti-Semitism or discrimination against the Jews.**
4. **Economic Devastation:** The war caused immense economic damage, draining the resources of participating nations and leading to widespread poverty and hardship.
5. **Political Instability:** The collapse of major empires (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, German, and Russian) led to political instability and the creation of new, often fragile, nation-states.
6. **Treaty of Versailles:** The harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles imposed on Germany created deep resentment and economic hardship, contributing to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the onset of World War II.
7. **Social Disruption:** The war disrupted social structures, leading to changes in gender roles, family dynamics, and societal norms.
8. **Spread of Disease:** The movement of troops and refugees facilitated the spread of the **Spanish flu**, which killed millions worldwide.
9. **Psychological Impact:** The war left a legacy of psychological trauma, including **shell shock** (now known as PTSD), affecting soldiers and civilians alike.

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