

The Franco Prussian War in 1870-71

led to massive resentment in France

because the Germans took the provinces of Alsace Lorraine.

The naval rivalry between Britain and Germany

soured relations between the two countries

as Britain depended on its naval dominance to defend the home islands and its Empire.

The web of alliances

built up two camps

that distrusted each other intensely.

The Schlaeffen Plan of 1905 meant that

in the event of war, Germany would need to act quickly

before Russia could mobilise and join the war.

Colonial rivalry between the British, French, Russian and German nations

played an important role in setting the mood for

the Triple Entente and the isolationism of Germany.

The isolation of Germany pushed

her to ally herself more strongly with Austria-Hungary

which ultimately led to unconditional support in the July crisis of 1914.

The dismissal of Otto von Bismarck led to

a policy of assertive diplomacy known as Weltpolitik

which, in turn, led to a cementing of the Triple Entente.

The timetable for war coupled with the alliance system

meant that it was difficult for any nation

to back down. This would have been humiliating.

Gavrilo Princip was a member of the Black Hand Gang,

a Serbian nationalist organisation, which wanted Serbia to be

independent. He shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1914.

Istvan Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister,

wanted to stop any attack on Serbia as he thought

it would guarantee a larger conflict involving Russia and France.

Statesmen were ignored in the

crisis of July 1914. This led to Austria issuing an

ultimatum to Serbia which was very difficult for them to agree... but they did.

The Kaiser agreed to guarantee

Germany's support for the Austrians

which gave Austria the confidence to issue their ultimatum.

Austria issued an ultimatum to the

Serbian government. The ultimatum was written in such a way

as to make it almost impossible to agree.

The Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia coupled with the

Schlaeffen Plan meant that in order to have any chance of beating

the Russians, Germany would have to attack France through Belgium first.

The Treaty of London (1839) guaranteed Belgian neutrality.

This guarantee was issued by Great Britain and so, when Germany,

following the Schlaeffen Plan, attacked France through Belgium, the UK declared war on Germany.

The system of alliances that the countries of Europe had

formed to avoid war, eventually dragged the four imperial powers

into one. Unfortunately, this included their Empires making it the first world war.