Systems of Alliance

KS3 History-Lesson 1 of 6

Enquiry: Did the Assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand lead to the outbreak of WWI?

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What were the Alliance Systems?

By 1914 the powerful countries of Europe had formed two rival **alliances**. Britain, France and Russia had made an agreement to work together called the **Triple Entente**. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy had also made an agreement called the **Triple Alliance**.

Why did countries join alliances?

These alliances had formed because the countries of Europe started fearing each other. Before 1914, each country had been increasing their military power in order to protect their **empires**. For example, France and Britain had agreed to work together as both countries wanted to prevent Germany from gaining more land in Africa. Germany and Austria-Hungary had formed an alliance because they felt threatened by the **'Triple Entente'**.

What were the risks of these Alliance Systems?

The alliance systems meant that a disagreement between two countries could become a European war. For example, if one nation, such as Germany, should enter a war with another, such as France, this would mean the involvement of all **European Powers**. In this way, alliance systems had the potential to lead to a 'World War'. Even if the European Powers did not want to go to war, the alliance systems made them feel vulnerable and threatened and therefore more likely to act aggressively. Additionally the European countries were eager to keep their allies on side. For example if Austria-Hungary wanted to keep Germany as an ally, they would need to fight Britain, should Germany and Britain go to war.

Why were the 'Balkans' Significant?

The region of the '**Balkans**' contained countries like **Serbia**. The Russian Empire felt they should protect and influence this region. It sat on their southern border and had **ethnic** and cultural similarities. Therefore, if any country fought a war with a country in the **Balkans**, it was likely that Russia would involve itself. As Russia was a member of the **'Triple Entente'**, a conflict in Balkans could end up involving France and Britain, as they were Russia's allies.

How did these Systems Contribute Directly to War?

In June 1914, **Archduke Franz Ferdinand** of Austria was was assassinated by a Serbian. The Austro Hungarian government were furious and they invaded **Serbia**. Previously, Germany had given the Austro Hungarian government a '**blank cheque**', meaning that the German army would support them no matter what. Germany assumed this would lead to war with Russia and because of the Triple Entente, Britain and France also. Therefore Germany thought it best to strike first, invading France on 3/06 1914.

Glossary

Triple Entente: Britain, France and Russia.

Triple Alliance: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy.

The Balkans: A Southeastern region of Europe.

Serbia: A country in the Balkans region.

Ethnic (group): A group of people linked by culture, race and language.

The Black Hand Gang: A Serbian nationalist terror group.

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand: The heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, who was assassinated in July 1914.

Blank Cheque: Germany's offer of full support in war.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who was assassinated in July 1914?
2. Can you describe the two major alliance systems in Europe in 1914?
3. What did Germany offer Austria-Hungary when preparing for war with Serbia?
4. How did these alliance systems make a war more likely?
5. Challenge: Why might these alliance systems have made European Powers act more aggressively?

Sentence starter: One way in which alliance systems made war more likely…

Extension Question

1. Using the timeline from the lesson, explain how the assassination led to 'The July Crisis' and war.

Sentence starters:	Key words
When the Archduke was killed, Austria-Hungary decided to invade Serbia... *Germany offered Austria-Hungary a 'blank cheque'...*	-Balkans -Alliances -Blank Cheque