



KEEP YOUR ENEMIES CLOSE; KEEP YOUR FAMILY CLOSER:

THE THREE COUSINS OF WWI

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Director's Letter

Hello everyone!

Welcome to RGSSMUN V 2024! My name is Anabelli Zaidfeld (she/her) and I'm honoured to serve as your crisis director for the Three Cousins Committee! This is my second RGSSMUN and first time as a Crisis Director, as I was the Crisis Assistant Director for RGSSMUN IV's Norse Mythology committee last year. This is also my 3rd year of participating in Model UN, having acted as a delegate and attended conferences across North America. I began participating in Model UN in my first year of high school and competed as a crisis delegate for three years, having been to over seven conferences now. I am also the publicist for the RGSSMUN executive team, and so any posts you see on the instagram this year, it was all made by me!

Just like two years ago when I, a humble mythology nerd, asked if we could do a Norse Mythology committee, (and then got to write the character guide) was talking to the future president of the club and discussing with her ideas for this year's committees and mentioned my love of history and we began talking while I proposed an idea. I happily exclaimed that one of my favourite parts of history was WWI because of the interesting connection that lead to increased tension during WWI, which was that the leaders of England, Russia, and Germany were all cousins! And from there the idea was born, and I used my passion for history to work on the background guide and ensured the committee would happen.

Outside of the Model UN world, I am an avid book reader, pop culture enthusiast, artist, and enjoy occasional sports. I also am a die-hard marvel, DC, mythology, and philosophy fan, and would be happy to talk to anyone about any of those things for hours on end.

I'm always excited to participate in a crisis, but am particularly excited for this committee as I believe it gives you all a great chance to show us your creativity! I encourage all of you to use your varied characters to change the course of the first world war. Embrace the unique communication structure this committee will have and use every resource you can find to your advantage.

Looking forward to meeting you all at SSUNS 2023! Feel free to email me at abzaidfeld@gmail.com about any committee-related questions and concerns.

Good luck delegates!

That's all folks,
Anabelli Zaidfeld

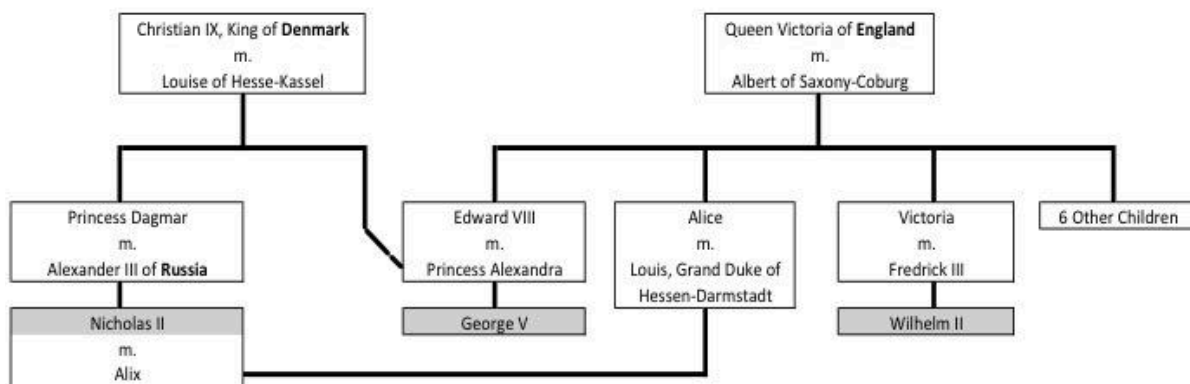
Introduction

At the time of the First World War, the rulers of the world's three greatest nations – **King George V of Great Britain** and **Tsar Nicholas II of Russia** on the one hand, and **Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany** on the other – were first cousins, as their shared grandmother was Queen Victoria.

In the years before the First World War, the great European powers were ruled by three first cousins: King George V of Britain, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. Together, they presided over the last years of dynastic Europe and the outbreak of the most destructive war the world had ever seen, a war that set twentieth-century Europe on course to be the most violent continent in the history of the world.

On the 28th of July, 1914, one of the largest and deadliest conflicts would begin, known today as World War I. Tied between alliances and Imperialist Empires, most of Europe erupted into conflict lasting until the 11th of November of 1918. The committee will take delegates in the prelude up to WW1, where they will try to prevent the ethnic tensions from boiling over through diplomacy, or forget all that in pursuit of power and territory. Delegates from many different countries throughout Europe will have to work through shifting alliances, and even forces within their own territory to try to escape the war to end all wars. All delegates will represent an agenda with its own goals, and weave past other incentives. The stakes have never been higher, as every delegate has resources at their disposal, from influencing other countries to swing to their alliance, or when diplomacy fails, to incite revolution within the government.

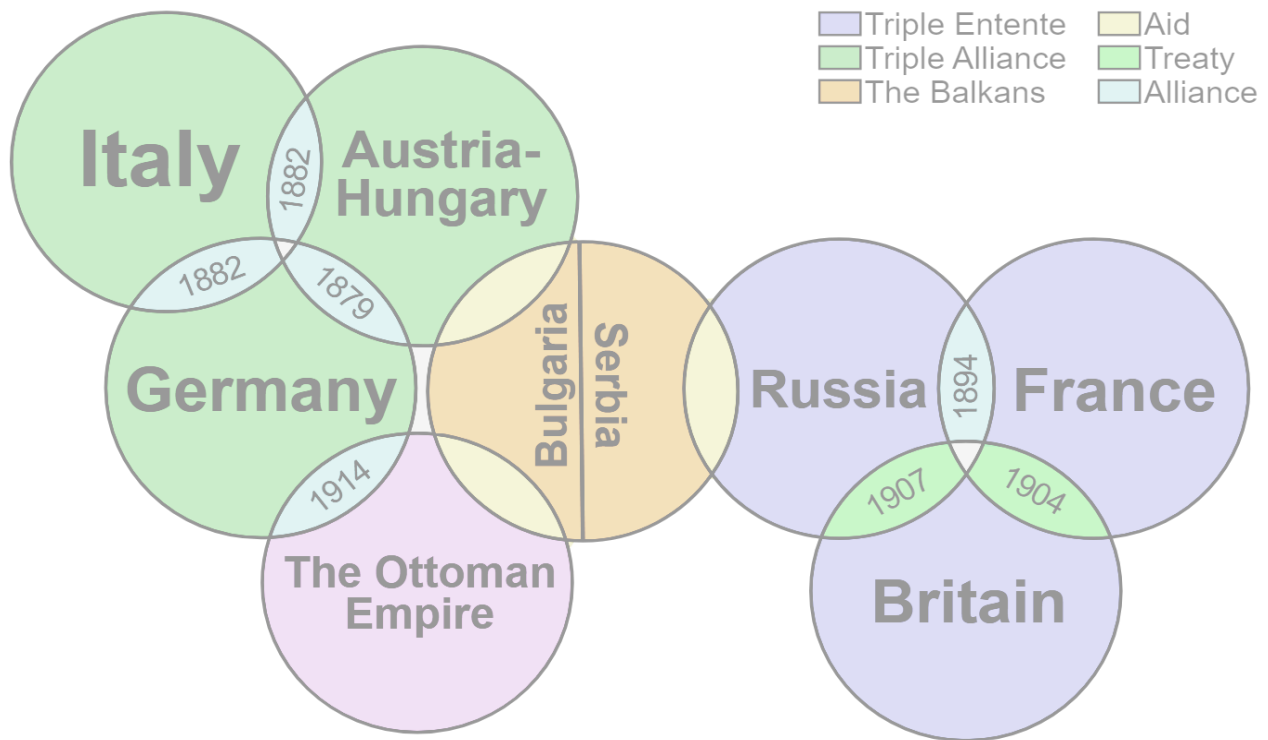
We begin on the first of July, just two days after the Archduke was murdered...



The family tree of Nicholas, George, and Wilhelm¹

¹ <http://theworcesterjournal.com/2014/08/22/family-feud-the-three-cousins-who-led-europe-into-the-first-world-war/>

Topic 1: The July Crisis



European diplomatic alignments before the war. Germany and the Ottoman Empire allied after the outbreak of war

The July Crisis was a series of interconnected diplomatic and military escalated situations between Europe's main powers in the summer of 1914, leading to the commencement of World War I. Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb nationalist, killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, on June 28, 1914. A complicated network of collaborations, combined with the miscalculations of numerous political and military leaders (who either saw war as being in their collective best interests, or believed that an overall conflict would not develop), resulted in the beginning of hostilities among the majority of the major European nations in early August 1914.

After the assassination, Austria-Hungary intended to strike a military blow against Serbia in order to display its own power and dampen Serbian support for Yugoslav nationalism, which it viewed as a danger to the unity of its multinational empire. However, fearful of Russia's reaction (a key backer of Serbia), Vienna sought assurances from its ally, Germany, that Berlin would defend Austria in any fight. Germany pledged its backing in what became known as the "blank cheque," but pushed Austria-Hungary to strike immediately in order to keep the conflict localised and avoid bringing in Russia. However,

Austro-Hungarian officials would ponder until mid-July before issuing a stern ultimatum to Serbia, and they would not invade without a complete mobilisation of the military.

On July 23, Austria-Hungary sent an ultimatum to Serbia; before Serbia responded, Russia authorised a covert, but noticeable, partial mobilisation of its military forces. Though Russia's military leadership recognised that they were not yet powerful enough to fight a global war, they thought that the Austro-Hungarian grievance against Serbia was a ruse planned by Germany, and that a firm reaction was the most prudent course of action. Russia's incomplete mobilisation—the first major military action not undertaken by an involved party in the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia—increased Serbia's willingness to resist an Austro-Hungarian attack; it also alarmed the German leadership, who had not anticipated having to fight Russia before France.

While the UK was semi-formally associated with Russia and France, many British officials saw no compelling reason to engage militarily; the UK made numerous offers to arbitrate, and Germany made multiple commitments to attempt to secure British neutrality. Worried that Germany would overtake France, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, and used the German invasion of Belgium to galvanise popular support. By the beginning of August, the alleged motive for the battle—the killing of an Austro-Hungarian archduke—had already faded into the background of a greater European struggle.

Assination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

Austria-Hungary was granted the authority to invade Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Congress of Berlin, which ended the Russo-Turkish War in 1878. Thirty years later, Austria-Hungary legally annexed the area, breaking the Berlin Treaty and disturbing the Balkans' delicate equilibrium of power, sparking a diplomatic crisis. Sarajevo was designated as the capital of the province, and Oskar Potiorek, a military officer, was appointed governor. In the summer of 1914, Emperor Franz Joseph summoned Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the apparent successor to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, to military drills in Bosnia. Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, explored Sarajevo after the exercises on June 28. Six armed irredentists, five Bosnian Serbs and one Bosnian Muslim, led by Danilo Ili, laid in wait along Ferdinand's declared motorcade route, intending to liberate Bosnia from Austria-Hungarian dominion and unify all Southern Slavs.

Nedeljko Čabrinović tossed an improvised hand grenade at Ferdinand's motorcade at 10:10 a.m., damaging and wounding the passengers of the vehicle that followed. Later that morning, when driving back to see the injured at the hospital, Gavrilo Princip was able to shoot Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, killing both. After Princip and Čabrinović consumed cyanide, it did nothing but make them ill due to the cyanide unknowingly being expired. They had both been taken into custody. Princip started telling investigators his tale 45 minutes after the shooting. After the two murderers were questioned, Potiorek revealed by

telegraph to Vienna the next day that Princip and Čabrinović had planned in Belgrade with others to get money, firearms, and bombs in order to assassinate the Archduke. Most of the conspirators were soon apprehended by a police dragnet.

The Black Hand

Officers in the Army of the Kingdom of Serbia founded the secret military club known as Unification or Death, or the Black Hand, in 1901. It became well-known for its purported role in the 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo and the 1903 assassination of the Serbian royal pair, both carried out under Captain Dragutin Dimitrijević's (also known as "Apis") supervision.

The organisation was created to bring together all the South Slavic-majority regions that were not under the control of Serbia or Montenegro at the time. It was mostly influenced by the 1859–1870 Italian unification, however the 1871 German unification also served as a source of inspiration. Through its connections to the June 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, carried out by the members of the youth movement Young Bosnia, the Black Hand is often viewed as instrumental in starting World War I by precipitating the July Crisis of 1914.

Picking Sides

The Allies, or the Entente Powers, were an international military coalition of countries led by France, the United Kingdom, Russia, the United States, Italy, and Japan against the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria in World War I.

The major European nations were split into the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. The United Kingdom, France, and Russia formed the Triple Entente. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy were the initial members of the Triple Alliance, although Italy stayed neutral in 1914.

The Central states were challenged by the Triple Entente, which was founded in 1907 when an agreement between the United Kingdom and Russia supplemented existing accords between the three states.

For much of the 19th century, Britain sought to maintain the European balance of power without formal alliances, a policy known as splendid isolation. This left it dangerously exposed as Europe divided into opposing power blocs and the 1895–1905 Conservative government negotiated first the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance, then the 1904 Entente Cordiale with France. The first tangible result of this shift was British support for France against Germany in the 1905 Moroccan Crisis.

The 1905–1915 Liberal government continued this re-alignment with the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention. Like the Anglo-Japanese and Entente agreements, it focused on settling colonial disputes but by doing so paved the way for wider co-operation and allowed Britain to refocus resources in response to German naval expansion.

Since control of Belgium allowed an opponent to threaten invasion or blockade British trade, preventing it was a long-standing British strategic interest. Under Article VII of the 1839 Treaty of London, Britain guaranteed Belgian neutrality against aggression by any other state, by force if required. Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg later dismissed this as a 'scrap of paper,' but British law officers routinely confirmed it as a binding legal obligation and its importance was well understood by Germany.

The 1911 Agadir Crisis led to secret discussions between France and Britain in case of war with Germany. These agreed that within two weeks of its outbreak, a British Expeditionary Force of 100,000 men would be landed in France; in addition, the Royal Navy would be responsible for the North Sea, the Channel and protecting Northern France, with the French navy concentrated in the Mediterranean. Britain was committed to support France in a war against Germany but this was not widely understood outside government or the upper ranks of the military.

As late as 1 August, a clear majority of the Liberal government and its supporters wanted to stay out of the war. While Liberal leaders H. H. Asquith and Edward Grey considered Britain legally and morally committed to support France regardless, waiting until Germany triggered the 1839 Treaty provided the best chance of preserving Liberal party unity.

The German high command was aware entering Belgium would lead to British intervention but decided the risk was acceptable; they expected a short war while their ambassador in London claimed troubles in Ireland would prevent Britain from assisting France. On 3 August, Germany demanded unimpeded progress through any part of Belgium and when this was refused, invaded early on the morning of 4 August.

This changed the situation; the invasion of Belgium consolidated political and public support for the war by presenting what appeared to be a simple moral and strategic choice. The Belgians later asked for assistance under the 1839 Treaty.

The Central Powers, also known as the Central Empires, were one of the two main coalitions that fought in World War I (1914–1918). It consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria; this was also known as the Quadruple Alliance.

The Central Powers' origin was the alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1879. Despite having nominally joined the Triple Alliance before, Italy did not take part in World War I on the side of the Central Powers. The Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria did not join until after World War I had begun.

In early July 1914, in the aftermath of the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and faced with the prospect of war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, Kaiser Wilhelm II and the German government informed the Austro-Hungarian government that Germany would uphold its alliance with Austria-Hungary and defend it from possible Russian intervention if a war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia took place. When Russia enacted a general mobilisation, Germany viewed the act as provocative. The Russian government promised Germany that its general mobilisation did not mean preparation for war with Germany but was a reaction to the tensions between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. The German government regarded the Russian promise of no war with Germany to be nonsense in light of its general mobilisation, and Germany, in turn, mobilised for war.

Topic 2: Alliances and Grievances

History of Royal Relations

Although the following conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary may have been sparked by the archduke's killing, other reasons may have contributed to the outbreak of war on a continental scale. The backdrop for the military mobilisation of the three giants of European power—England, Germany, and Russia—was decades of political unrest and foreign alliances. And three cousins, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, and King George V of Great Britain, stood in the middle of this platform, whose complicated family relationships partly fueled the international animosity that led to the horrors of The Great War.

While George and Nicholas were linked by their mothers, the two Danish princesses, Alexandra and Dagmar, George and Wilhelm had a common relative in their grandmother Queen Victoria. Wilhelm and Nicholas were not related by blood, but they were made cousins-in-law when Nicholas wed Alexandra of Germany, Wilhelm's first cousin.

The three cousins experienced tremendous stress growing up, and as they ascended to prominence, the political views of their forebears shaped their beliefs and perspectives. Even though there was hostility between the three countries in the years leading up to World War I, the young cousins continued to communicate with one another, in part because they expected their shared relatives to be polite, but also because they really cared about the lives of their social peers. However, through the first decade of the 20th century, the bonds among George, Wilhelm, and Nicholas began to be strained.

Since Queen Victoria was the grandmother of both George and Wilhelm, she had a significant impact on two of the young boys. With so many thrones inhabited by her successors, Victoria earned the moniker "The Mother of Europe" during her 64-year reign as queen of Great Britain, 1837–1901. Wilhelm, the Queen's first-born grandchild, and Victoria rapidly grew close, with Victoria actively instilling in him the virtues and triumphs of British culture and governance. Victoria planned to use her passion for her German grandson Wilhelm to sway German political policy in favour of Great Britain when Wilhelm grew up to be a powerful man. Though the Queen did steer Wilhelm in the direction of British influence, she did not support Wilhelm's connection with the one individual who could have solidified the Kaiser's good relations with her island nation—her younger grandson George, who would go on to become king. Historian Miranda Carter claims that Victoria had a general strategy to "avoid having more than one set of grandchildren staying at any one time" because she didn't enjoy the thought of her grandchildren socialising together. As a result, Wilhelm and George never really got along as kids, which may have led to a closer tie between the two kings when they gained authority.

It wasn't just Victoria who disapproved of this friendship. The Danish Princess Alexandra, George's mother, continued to feel animosity towards Germany as a result of the Prussians' cruelty towards her realm during the Dane-Prussian War in 1864. The German chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, had planned this war to strengthen the German state's unity and forge a political partnership with Austria, which provided military assistance in the fight. Additionally, Alexandra helped George and Nicholas II, her sister's son, grow closer. Nicholas and his Danish mother Dagmar travelled a great distance across the continent to see their British cousin, and the two forged an enduring friendship that would withstand the animosity between Russia and the United Kingdom in the coming decades of the 19th century.

Wilhelm continuously discovered himself on the outside, alienated by anti-Prussian sentiments on both sides, as a result of the social dynamic that rapidly developed between the three cousins through the Danish sisters and Queen Victoria.

From the beginning of their reigns, Wilhelm, Nicholas, and George soon found themselves in a power struggle as they all tried to gain the upper hand in politics. Wilhelm developed a preference for Russia over Great Britain and believed that Germany needed to make an alliance with one of these nations to stop Russia and Great Britain from forming an alliance that would have left Germany flanked by two of the continent's most powerful military powers to the east and west.

Wilhelm, on the other hand, saw a chance to take advantage of younger Nicholas's lack of political experience and exert influence on the newly appointed Tsar. The two young men shared a love interest in Alexandra, who later became Nicholas's wife, which led to some animosity between them, but the Kaiser overcame this jealousy in order to secure a Russian alliance. Historian Robert K. Massie claims that Wilhelm actively pursued a connection with Nicholas, showering him with praise and flattery while attempting to shape his political beliefs. Initially, Nicholas looked up to the more senior and seasoned Wilhelm as an example. But as time went on and the tsar gained political experience, he started to view Wilhelm's influence as more intrusive than beneficial.

Nicholas was more concerned with preserving his connection with George, his frequent companion, even if it was getting harder as the already strained ties between Russia and Great Britain grew thinner. Despite having comparable upbringings and adult interests (both were passionate about their country's navy), the two maintained a friendly connection.

Since Edward VII, George's father, ruled until nearly the very beginning of the War, while Wilhelm and Nicholas had ascended to the thrones when they were young adults, the relationship between George and Nicholas had little bearing on the politics of these competing nations. But this relationship proved vital in forming pre-war alliances after

George took the throne. And as George and Nicholas forged a bond between Russia and Great Britain, Germany became more isolated.

By 1907, Russia, Great Britain, and France had formally formed a political alliance known as the Triple Entente. After Edward passed away three years later, George finally inherited his crown, allowing him and Nicholas to finally bring their lifelong friendship into the political realm. Simultaneously, Nicholas's mounting irritation became to disdain for the Kaiser. Wilhelm had encouraged Nicholas to go to war with the Japanese in an attempt to seize a warm-water port on the Pacific, but this military campaign ended disastrously when the smaller Japanese army destroyed Russia's ostensibly stronger forces. For the Tsar, this was the last straw.

To make matters worse, a growing hostility was brought on by this defeat in the east as well as a number of social and economic problems towards Nicholas in his own country. Tension between the two countries arose as the Tsar and Kaiser's friendship deteriorated.

Without a doubt, a variety of circumstances fueled the growing hostility between countries that culminated in World War I. But social issues such as Wilhelm's early experiences of being the odd man out in the family and his difficulties assimilating into the George and Nicholas friendship might have also been factors. The idea that the dynamics of a family projected onto the world stage through shifting national alliances could have effects as vast and horrifying as the First World War is both astounding and depressing.

Resources of the Respective Countries

Oil was vital to Britain for fuelling its most powerful warships, as well as for motor transport. British forces therefore occupied the oilfields near Basra in late 1914.

When war broke out, the Allied powers possessed greater overall demographic, industrial, and military resources than the Central Powers and enjoyed easier access to the oceans for trade with neutral countries, particularly with the United States.

Table 1 shows the population, steel production, and armed strengths of the two rival coalitions in 1914.

Resources	Central Powers	Allied Powers
population (in millions)	115.2	265.5
steel production (in millions of metric tons)	17.0	15.3
army divisions available	146	212

for mobilisation		
modern battleships	20	39

All the initial belligerents in World War I were self-sufficient in food except Great Britain and Germany. Great Britain's industrial establishment was slightly superior to Germany's (17 percent of world trade in 1913 as compared with 12 percent for Germany), but Germany's diversified chemical industry facilitated the production of ersatz, or substitute, materials, which compensated for the worst shortages ensuing from the British wartime blockade. The German chemist Fritz Haber was already developing a process for the fixation of nitrogen from air; this process made Germany self-sufficient in explosives and thus no longer dependent on imports of nitrates from Chile.

Of all the initial belligerent nations, only Great Britain had a volunteer army, and this was quite small at the start of the war. The other nations had much larger conscript armies that required three to four years of service from able-bodied males of military age, to be followed by several years in reserve formations. Military strength on land was counted in terms of divisions composed of 12,000–20,000 officers and men. Two or more divisions made up an army corps, and two or more corps made up an army. An army could thus comprise anywhere from 50,000 to 250,000 men.

	Regular divisions (with number of field armies)	Other land forces	Total manpower	Country
Central Powers	Germany	98 (8)	27 Landwehr brigades	1,900,000
	Austria-Hungary	48 (6)		450,000
Allied Powers	Russia	102 (6)		1,400,000
	France	72 (5)		1,290,000
	Serbia	11 (3)		190,000
	Belgium	7 (1)	69,000 fortress troops	186,000
	Great Britain	6 (1)	14 territorial divisions*	120,000

The higher state of discipline, training, leadership, and armament of the German army reduced the importance of the initial numerical inferiority of the armies of the Central Powers. Because of the comparative slowness of mobilization, poor higher leadership, and lower scale of armament of the Russian armies, there was an approximate balance of forces between the Central Powers and the Allies

Military

Economy

Current Situations

Weapons of War

While weapons such as artillery had been in production and in use in wars for hundreds of years, many developments had made them much stronger and more damaging. The possibility of a World War could kickstart a spark in massive research into possible weapons of war previously unthought of, to help a country obtain a decisive advantage

Maintaining Communication

Establishing Order

Guiding Questions

Character Guide

Albert I

As the second son and fifth child of Prince Philippe, Count of Flanders, and Princess Marie of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Albert was born in Brussels. In 1909, he succeeded his uncle Leopold II as the king of Belgium. Albert ruled during an eventful period in the history of Belgium, which included the period of World War I (1914–1918), when most of Belgium was occupied by German forces. The war inflicted great suffering on Belgium, which was subjected to a harsh German occupation.

Aleksey Alekseyevich Brusilov

The biggest accomplishment of Russian and later Soviet general Aleksei Alekseyevich Brusilov was devising novel offensive strategies for the 1916 Brusilov attack. The Germans later used similar creative and somewhat successful strategies. As the Russian army grew during the mobilisation in July 1914, Brusilov was elevated to command the 8th Army, which was a component of the Southwest Front that was active in Galicia.

Alexandra Feodorovna

Born as Princess Alix of Hesse and by Rhine, Alexandra Feodorovna was the final Empress of Russia and the consort of Emperor Nicholas II following their marriage on 26 November. Alexandra was renowned for her beauty. Queen Victoria, her maternal grandmother, complimented her as "a most lovely child".

Alexei Nikolaevich

Alexei Nikolaevich was the last Tsesarevich. He was the youngest child and only son of Emperor Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. He was born with haemophilia, which his parents tried treating with the methods of a peasant faith healer named Grigori Rasputin. During World War I, Alexei joined his father at Stavka.

Alfred von Tirpitz

From 1897 until 1916, German grand admiral Alfred Peter Friedrich von Tirpitz served as secretary of state of the German Imperial Naval Office, the influential executive arm of the German Imperial Navy. Before the German Empire was established in 1871, neither Prussia nor the other German nations possessed a significant navy. The Tirpitz Plan

was Tirpitz's blueprint for using naval might to become a global power while simultaneously attending to internal matters. The Tirpitz Plan's political legacy was established by the 1898, 1900, 1908, and 1912 Fleet Acts. Germany possessed the second-largest naval force in the world by 1914, however it was still around 40% smaller than the Royal Navy.

Anastasia Nikolaevna

The youngest child of Tsar Nicholas II, the final ruler of Imperial Russia, and his wife Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna, was the Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia. She had a great effect on her father's stature and his decisions, being his youngest child, and also being well-liked in the public image.

Andrew Fisher

The fifth prime minister of Australia was Andrew Fisher, a trade unionist and politician of Australia from 1908 to 1909, 1910 to 1913 and 1914 to 1915. During the 1914 election campaign, the First World War broke out, with both sides pledging Australia's allegiance to the British Empire. In his campaign, Fisher emphasised Labor's history of backing an autonomous defence force for Australia and promised that Australia would "stand beside the mother country to help and defend her to the last man and the last shilling". On September 17, 1914, Labor won the election with an overwhelming majority in both chambers, and Fisher established his third administration.

Augusta Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein

Augusta Viktoria, the last German Empress and Queen of Prussia, was born in Schleswig-Holstein VA. Augusta wed Prince Wilhelm of Prussia, her half-second cousin, on February 27, 1881. Queen Victoria, Wilhelm's maternal grandmother, had a half-sister named Princess Feodora of Leiningen, Augusta's maternal grandmother. At first, Wilhelm's family opposed marrying Augusta Victoria, whose father wasn't even a monarch. Otto von Bismarck, the chancellor, was a staunch supporter of the union, reasoning that it would put an end to the conflict between Augusta's father and the Prussian government. Ultimately, Wilhelm's unyielding persistence, Bismarck's backing, and a will to go past Ella's rejection of his proposal propelled the reticent imperial family to officially agree.

Erich Ludendorff

General, statesman, and military thinker Erich Friedrich Wilhelm Ludendorff was from Germany. Because of his pivotal part in the German triumphs at Tannenberg and Liège

in 1914, he became well-known during World War I. Erich Ludendorff was descended from a lowly aristocratic family in the Prussian Province of Posen's Kruszenia. In 1885, having finished his cadet training, he was commissioned as a junior officer. Ludendorff was recommended to the General Staff Corps just a year after being accepted into the esteemed German War Academy in 1893 by its commandant. He quickly rose through the ranks to join the Army's Great General Staff in 1904, where he was in charge of the Schlieffen Plan's development.

Felix Yusupov

Tsar Nicholas II's niece Princess Irina Alexandrovna was married to Russian nobility Prince Felix Felixovich Yusupov, Count Sumarokov-Elston. Both were briefly imprisoned in Berlin when the First World War broke out in August 1914. Irina requested that her cousin, Prussia's Crown Princess Cecilie, speak with Kaiser Wilhelm II on her behalf. The Yusupov family was given the option to reside at one of three country estates by the Kaiser, but he refused to let them leave during the war. Felix's father appealed to the Spanish ambassador in Germany and won permission for them to return to Russia via neutral Denmark to the Grand Duchy of Finland and from there to Saint Petersburg.

Ferdinand Foch

Ferdinand Foch was a French general and military theorist who served as the Supreme Allied Commander during the First World War. An aggressive, even reckless commander at the First Marne, Flanders and Artois campaigns of 1914–1916. At the outbreak of war in August 1914, Foch's XX Corps participated in the brief invasion of Germany before retreating in the face of a German counter-attack and successfully blocking the Germans short of Nancy.

H. H. Asquith

From 1908 until 1916, British leader and politician Herbert Henry Asquith, sometimes known as H. H. Asquith, led the country as prime minister. He was the most recent Liberal to hold the office of Leader of the Opposition and the last prime minister to lead the Liberal Party in a majority administration. He was a driving force behind the creation and enactment of significant liberal laws as well as the curtailment of the House of Lords' authority. Asquith led the British Empire and Great Britain into the First World War in August 1914. His liberal pre-war administration established unemployment insurance and pensions, laying the groundwork for the welfare state of today.

Herbert Kitchener

British Army officer Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener, was also an administrator of colonies. Kitchener gained notoriety for his colonial conquests, his participation in the Second Boer War, and his pivotal role in the First World War's early stages. In 1898, Kitchener was created Baron Kitchener of Khartoum and credited with winning the Battle of Omdurman and gaining control of the Sudan. He was instrumental in Lord Roberts' conquest of the Boer Republics during his tenure as Chief of Staff in the Second Boer War. After Roberts' death, Boer forces had turned to guerrilla warfare, and British forces had imprisoned Boer and African civilians in concentration camps. His term as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India saw him quarrel with another eminent proconsul, the Viceroy Lord Curzon, who eventually resigned. Kitchener then returned to Egypt as British Agent and Consul-General (de facto administrator). In 1914, at the start of the First World War, Kitchener became Secretary of State for War, a Cabinet Minister.

Irina Alexandrovna

The oldest child and only daughter of Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich and Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna of Russia was Princess Irina Alexandrovna. She was Tsar Nicholas II's sole biological niece and the first granddaughter of Tsar Alexander III. Prince Felix Felixovich Yusupov, the richest man in Imperial Russia, was Irina's husband. Irina, the oldest child and only daughter in a family of seven, was regarded as one of the most beautiful ladies in Imperial Russia prior to her marriage on February 22, 1914. Due to her father's political differences with the Tsar, the family had been residing in the south of France for extended periods of time starting around 1906.

John French

Known as Sir John French from 1901 to 1916, during the Second Boer War, French rose to national hero status. He led I Corps at Aldershot during the Edwardian era, afterwards holding the position of Inspector-General of the Army, and in 1912 he was appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), which was the official title of the British Army. In the midst of the so-called "cavalry controversy," he assisted in getting the British Army ready for a potential war in Europe and was one of the proponents of keeping cavalry trained to charge with a sabre and a lance. He had to quit as CIGS during the Curragh incident, having written to Hubert Gough that the Army would not be used to force Ulster Protestants into a Home Rule Ireland. Commander-in-Chief French held the most significant position in the British Expeditionary Force for the first year and a half of the First World War.

Karl von Stürgkh

A politician from Austria, Count Karl von Stürgkh served as Cisleithania's Minister-President during the July Crisis of 1914, which precipitated the start of World War I. Stürgkh was from an aristocratic Styrian family that had been made Imperial Counts in 1721. The family had originally come from the Bavarian Upper Palatinate region. In 1891, he was chosen as a member of the Austrian Imperial Council and possessed substantial properties in Halbenrain. He was the minister of education in the ministries of Paul Gautsch von Frankenthurn and Richard von Bienenrth-Schmerling from 1909 to 1911. Gautsch resigned when rising prices led to bloody unrest in Vienna and even a shooting in parliament (the bullets just missed Stürgkh), whereafter Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria appointed him Austrian Minister-President (Prime Minister) on 3 November 1911. He went on to rule the Cisleithanian lands autocratically: On 16 March 1914 he used the continuous filibustering in parliament to indefinitely adjourn the convenings of the Imperial Council and to pass laws by emergency decrees. This de facto elimination of the legislature turned out to be fatal in the following July Crisis, when upon the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria the deputies were not able to interact with the government on the way to World War I.

Mary of Teck

Victoria Mary Augusta Louise Olga Pauline Claudine Agnes, known as Mary of Teck (26 May 1867 – 24 March 1953), was the wife of King-Emperor George V and the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom, the British Dominions, and the Empress of India from 6 May 1910 until 20 January 1936. Mary was born and raised in the United Kingdom. She was the granddaughter of King George III and the daughter of German aristocrat Francis, Duke of Teck. Given her birth month, "May" was her alias informally. She was twenty-four years old when she got engaged to her second cousin, Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale, who was second in line to the throne. Six weeks after the announcement of the engagement, he died unexpectedly during an influenza pandemic. The following year, she became engaged to Albert Victor's only surviving brother, George, who subsequently became king. Before her husband's accession, she was successively Duchess of York, Duchess of Cornwall, and Princess of Wales.

Mehmed V

From 1909 until 1918, Mehmed V Reşâd served as the Ottoman Empire's penultimate sultan. Mehmed V ruled as a constitutional king, rarely meddling in matters of state, but his

administrations paid scant attention to the constitution. Reşad was Sultan Abdulmejid I's son. After the events of March 31, he succeeded his half-brother Abdul Hamid II. His nine-year reign, which began with a failed coup attempt, saw three coups d'état, four wars, and several uprisings. The military drove the CUP from power during the Italo-Turkish War, which resulted in the cession of the Empire's North African possessions and the Dodecanese Islands, which included Rhodes. This was followed up by the traumatic loss of almost all of the Empire's European territories west of Constantinople (now Istanbul) in the First Balkan War, and the return of a now radicalised CUP rule in another coup. Eastern Thrace was retaken in the Second Balkan War. The Ottomans entered World War I in November 1914 during which Mehmed declared jihad against the Allies.

Paul von Hindenburg

German field marshal and statesman Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg commanded the Imperial German Army in World War I. In Posen, Hindenburg was born into a modestly aristocratic Prussian family. After graduating from cadet school, he became a second lieutenant in the Third Regiment of Foot Guards. After that, he participated in fighting in the Franco-Prussian and Austro-Prussian wars. He was accepted into the esteemed Kriegsakademie in Berlin in 1873, and after three years of studies there, he was assigned to the General Staff Corps of the Army. He was elevated to the rank of major and included in the Great General Staff later in 1885. After a five-year teaching stint at the Kriegsakademie, Hindenburg steadily rose through the army's ranks to become a lieutenant general by 1900. Around the time of his promotion to General of the Infantry in 1905, Count Alfred von Schlieffen recommended that he succeed him as Chief of the Great General Staff but the post ultimately went to Helmuth von Moltke in January 1906. In 1911, Hindenburg announced his retirement from the military. After World War I started in July 1914, Hindenburg was recalled to military service and quickly achieved fame on the Eastern Front as the victor of Tannenberg. Subsequently, he oversaw a crushing series of victories against the Russians that made him a national hero and the centre of a massive personality cult.

Rasputin

Rasputin Grigori Yefimovich was a Russian mystic and holy figure. His friendship with Nicholas II, the last Russian Emperor, and the subsequent power he obtained during the closing years of the Russian Empire are what made him most famous. In Tyumensky Uyezd, Tobolsk Governorate (modern-day Yarkovsky District in Tyumen Oblast), a village in Siberia, Rasputin was born into a peasant family. Though he held no official post in the Russian Orthodox Church, he has been described as a monk or a strannik (wanderer or

pilgrim), having undergone a religious conversion experience after setting out on a pilgrimage to a monastery in 1897. In 1903 or in the winter of 1904–1905, he travelled to Saint Petersburg and captivated a number of religious and social leaders, eventually becoming a prominent figure in Russian society. In November 1905, Rasputin met Nicholas II and his empress consort, Alexandra Feodorovna. In late 1906, Rasputin began acting as a faith healer for Nicholas' and Alexandra's only son, Alexei Nikolaevich, who suffered from haemophilia. He was a divisive figure at court, seen by some Russians as a mystic, visionary and prophet, and by others as a religious charlatan.

Robert Borden

Sir Robert Laird Borden GCMG PC KC (June 26, 1854 – June 10, 1937) was the ninth Prime Minister of Canada, serving from 1911 to 1920. He is primarily remembered for leading Canada during World War I. Borden was born in the Nova Scotia town of Grand-Pré. He taught for a while before beginning his articles of clerkship at a Halifax law firm. He was admitted to the bar in 1878 and quickly rose to prominence as one of Nova Scotia's most distinguished barristers. Borden was elected to the House of Commons as a Conservative Party candidate in the 1896 federal election. He replaced Charles Tupper as party leader in 1901, but was defeated in two federal elections by Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier in 1904 and 1908. However, in the 1911 federal election, Borden led the Conservatives to victory after he claimed that the Liberals' proposed trade reciprocity treaty with the United States would lead to the US influencing Canadian identity and weaken ties with Great Britain. Borden's early years as prime minister focused on strengthening relations with Britain. Halfway through his first term, World War I broke out.

Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg

Theobald Theodor Friedrich Alfred von Bethmann Hollweg (November 29, 1856 – January 1, 1921) was a German politician who served as the German Empire's Chancellor from 1909 to 1917. He handled Germany's entry into World War I and played an important role in the war's first three years. Between 1884 and 1899, Bethmann Hollweg quickly ascended through the Prussian administration, becoming Brandenburg's provincial governor in 1899, Prussian minister of the interior in 1905, and Reich secretary of the interior in 1907. He also briefly served in the Reichstag in 1890, an experience that left him dissatisfied with the party system and an independent for the rest of his political career. He sought a "diagonal course" between left and right, opposing democratic egalitarianism but also breaking precedent as a Reich state secretary by meeting with trade unions. During World War I, Bethmann Hollweg supported many of Germany's harsher policies, believing that Germany was so threatened that it needed to take all necessary measures to survive. His support of

many of the policies was nevertheless reluctant and given only under pressure or because he saw that the majority was against him. Immediately after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that led to the outbreak of the war, he hoped that it could be limited to the Balkans but assured Austria-Hungary of Germany's full backing and supported its aggressive demands against Serbia.

Vasil Radoslavov

Vasil Hristov Radoslavov was a prominent Bulgarian liberal politician who was Prime Minister twice. He was the country's Premier during the majority of World War I. He returned to government in 1899 as Minister for Internal Affairs in Todor Ivanchov's ministry, but stayed out of politics until 1913, when he was re-elected Prime Minister. Ferdinand, who worked closely with Radoslavov to shape foreign policy, was captivated by his anti-Russian rhetoric. In July 1914, he obtained a significant loan from Germany and Austria-Hungary while simultaneously delaying Bulgaria's involvement into the war.

Woodrow Wilson

From 1913 until 1921, American politician and scholar Thomas Woodrow Wilson led the country as its 28th president. Before emerging victorious in the 1912 presidential contest, Wilson, a Democrat, held the positions of governor of New Jersey and president of Princeton University. Wilson was born in Staunton, Virginia, and spent his childhood during the American Civil War and Reconstruction era in the Southern United States, mostly in Augusta, Georgia. Wilson taught at a number of universities after receiving a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in political science and history from Johns Hopkins University. He later became president of Princeton University and a leading advocate for progressivism in higher education. As governor of New Jersey from 1911 to 1913, Wilson broke with party bosses and won the passage of several progressive reforms. Wilson defeated incumbent Republican William Howard Taft and third-party nominee Theodore Roosevelt to easily win the 1912 United States presidential election, becoming the first Southerner to do so since 1848. During his first year as president, Wilson authorised the widespread imposition of segregation inside the federal bureaucracy. He ousted many African Americans from federal posts and his opposition to women's suffrage drew protests. His first term was largely devoted to pursuing passage of his progressive New Freedom domestic agenda. His first major priority was the Revenue Act of 1913, which lowered tariffs and began the modern income tax. Wilson also negotiated the passage of the Federal Reserve Act, which created the Federal Reserve System. Two major laws, the Federal Trade Commission Act and the Clayton Antitrust Act, were enacted to promote business competition and combat extreme corporate power. At the

outbreak of World War I in 1914, the U.S. declared neutrality as Wilson tried to negotiate a peace between the Allied and Central Powers.

Bibliography