

A grayscale, halftone-style photograph of a soldier in a trench, looking down at a rifle. The soldier is wearing a helmet and a uniform. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a trench environment. The overall tone is somber and historical.

Causes of War

World War I: Background

April 2, 2015

How to Read History

- **Read actively**
- **Take notes**
- **Focus on big picture**

World War I: Why We Care

- **How it began**
- **How it proceeded**
- **How it ended**

Two Perspectives

- **War as inevitable**
 - **Irreconcilable conflicts among major powers**
 - **Why did it happen when it did?**
- **War as contingent**
 - **Sarajevo as more than pretext**
 - **Why did it spiral into a world war?**

Causes of War

- 1. What were the issues at stake between the European powers?**
- 2. Why didn't they solve those issues through negotiation?**
- 3. Why did war start when it did?**

Textbook Explanations

- **"Entangling alliances"**
- **Late rise of Germany**
- **Anarchy**



Austria-Hungary

- Previous control
 - Austrian Empire: part of German Confederation
 - Hungary: Austrian Empire
- Emerged in 1867
- 11 official nationalities¹
- Dual monarchy

¹ "Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Romanians, Ruthenians, Poles, and Italians" (p. 66)



Serbia

- Previous control: Ottoman rule
- Independence established 1804–1867
- Ethnically homogeneous
- Constitutional monarchy
 - Radical Party in effective control after 1903 regicide



Conflicts of Interest

- **Identity?**
- **Commerce?**
- **Identity and ideology → territory**

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- **Ethnic makeup**
 - 43% Serb
 - 20% Catholic Croats
 - 33% Bosnian Muslims
- **Austrian rule**
 - Occupation since 1878
 - Annexed 1908
 - Brought economic growth



Bargaining Breakdown

Rationalist Explanations

- Uncertainty?**
- Commitment problem?**
- Indivisibility?**

Bargaining Breakdown

Domestic Politics

- **Sovereignty problems in both countries**
- **Ideology and "common currency"**
- **Radicalism of Serbian nationalists**
 - **Constrained "win set"**
 - **Risk acceptance**
 - **Induced indivisibility**

Unanswered Questions

- Lots of reasons why Austria-Serbia war was *possible*—but which were *responsible*?
- And what about Germany, France, Russia, UK?

Next Time

- Keep reading *Sleepwalkers*
- Presentation on "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive"

Image Sources

- Archduke Franz Ferdinand: [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- Europe in 1914: [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- Austria-Hungary: [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- Serbia: [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: [Wikimedia Commons](#)