

The Causes of World War One

Central Historical Question:

Was World War One caused by a just and righteous struggle for a country's power or was it an inevitable consequence of mankind's greed?

Document #1 Joseph Mazzini, *On the Duties of Man Addressed to Workingmen*

O, my brothers, love your Country! Be ever ready to combat for the liberty of that people. Combat in such ways that the blood you shed may reflect glory, not on yourself alone, but on your country.

Document #2 Emile Zola *The Origins of the First World War* France, 1891

Would not the end of war be the end of humanity? War is life itself. Nothing exists in nature, is born, grows or multiplies except by combat. We must eat and be eaten so that the world may live. It is only warlike nations which have prospered; a nation dies as soon as it disarms. War is the school of discipline, sacrifice and courage.

James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, New York: Addison Wesley Longman 1992

Document #3 Prince Bernhard von Bulow, German Chancellor, speech to the Reichstag (the German legislature) December 11, 1899

We realize that without power, without a strong army and a strong navy, there can be no welfare for us. The means of fighting the battle for existence in this world without strong armaments on land and water, for a nation living in the centre of Europe, have not yet been found. In the coming century the German nation will be either the hammer or the anvil.

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Document #4 Colonel Dragutin Dimitrevic, leader and founder of Serbian military secret society, “Union or Death” (or the “Black Hand” by opponents)

The war in Serbia and Austria is inevitable. If Serbia wants to live in honor, she can only do this by war. This war is determined by our obligation to our traditions and culture. This war derives from the duty of our race to not allow itself to be taken over. This war must bring about the eternal freedom of Serbia, of the South Slavs, of the Balkan peoples. Our race must stand together to halt the onslaught of these aliens from the north.

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Document #5 Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, *The Master of the Seas* Paris, 1903

The great states of Europe are dividing up the other continents of Africa and Asia in the same manner they would divide such countries as Italy or Poland. What used to be a European balance of power is now a world balance of power, but it is subject to the same laws, and any country that does not wish to become less important must obtain as much new territory relatively as our rivals are doing.

Document #6 Bertrand Russell in *The Origins of the First World War*

I spent the evening of August 3, 1914 walking round the streets, noticing cheering crowds, and watching the emotions of people. I was amazed to see that average men and women were delighted at the prospect of war.

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