

# Paper 1 Revision

## Topic 1: Causes of WW1

## □ Causes of WW1

- MAIN causes
- The Moroccan Crisis 1905
- The Bosnian Crisis 1908
- Trouble in the Balkans
- The Moroccan Crisis 1911
- The Assassination of Franz Ferdinand
- The Austrian Ultimatum

## □ Events of WW1

- The Road to War
- The Schlieffen Plan
- The Battle of Mons
- The Battle of Marne
- The First Battle of Ypres
- The Race to the Sea
- Soldiers during WW1
- Trench life
- Trench Warfare
- New Weapons
- Gallipoli
- The Battle of the Somme
- The Eastern Front
- The War at Sea
- The end of the war

# The MAIN Causes of WW1

## Militarism: Arms and Naval Race

- **Militarism** is the belief or desire of a government or people that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively to defend or promote national interests
- It is the process of building up both the army and navy and strengthening them.
- The arms race was countries building up their army and the naval race was countries building up their navy.
- Britain had the strongest navy and 'ruled the seas' and Russia had the largest army (although it was not the best army)

## Britain and Germany in the Arms/Naval race.

- There was rivalry between the German and British navies.
- In 1898 the Kaiser announced he was going to build a new, powerful navy.
- Germany responded to Britain's Navy by building its own 'Dreadnoughts'.
- The German army was powerful and the Kaiser glorified militarism.
- Germany developed the Schlieffen Plan to avoid having to fight on two fronts.

## Impact of Militarism

- Increased tension and suspicion – all countries ordered the increase of their Navy/Army to ensure that they were ready for a war at any time.
- Led to an increase in the build up of Arms.
- Sped up the preparations for war.

---

## Alliances:

- Treaty of London 1839 – between Britain and Belgium to protect Belgium should they need to.
- Triple Alliance 1882 – Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy.
- Entente Cordiale 1904 – France and Britain
- Triple Entente 1907 – France, Britain and Russia.

---

## Impact of Alliances

- Increased tension and suspicion – countries were joining together to protect themselves against threats from other countries.
- Some countries were surrounded by others which led to them feeling threatened (e.g. France and Russia surrounded Germany).
- A 'domino effect' was created. If one country declared war on another, it would lead to most of Europe being involved.

---

## Empire building (imperialism):

- Imperialism is when a country takes over new lands or countries and makes them subject to their rule.
- By 1900 the British Empire extended over five continents and France had control of large areas of Africa.
- With the rise of industrialism, countries needed new markets.
- The amount of lands 'owned' by Britain and France increased the rivalry with Germany who had entered the scramble to acquire colonies late and only had small areas of Africa.

---

### Impact of Imperialism

- Increased rivalry amongst countries. All countries wanted to be the most powerful, and taking land allowed them this power.
- More wars across Europe as countries battled to take over land.
- Countries being super suspicious of one another.

## Nationalism:

- Nationalism is an extreme form of patriotism and loyalty to one's country. Nationalists place the interests of their own country above the interests of other countries.
- Pre-war Europeans believed in the cultural, economic and military supremacy of their nation.
- As a result of this, each country's press tended to report stories and write about their country more favourably.
- EACH COUNTRY in the build up to war was nationalistic and believed that their country was the best.

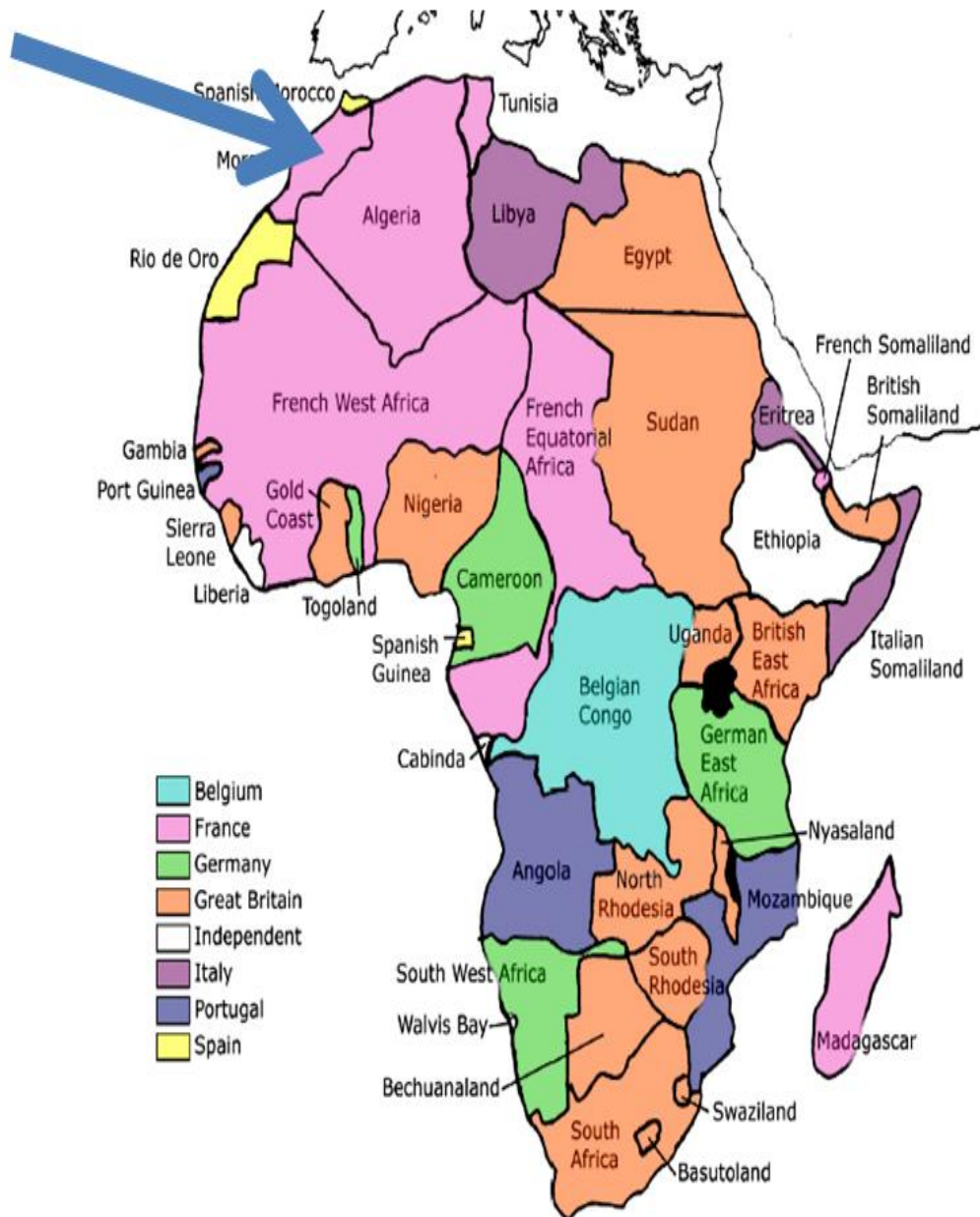
### Impact of Nationalism

- Increased rivalry amongst countries.
- Anger from citizens of the country towards other countries as a result of the exaggerated reporting in the press.
- Each country wanted to be the best and would do whatever they could to be the best.

## Impact of the MAIN causes

- War was INEVITABLE!
- All countries seemed to be suspicious and mistrust one another and this led to TENSION!
- All of these long term factors meant that Europe was ripe for war. They just needed a spark!

# The Moroccan Crisis 1905



## Crisis 1 - 1905

- France wanted to take over Morocco – the people of Morocco didn't mind, they thought they would be stronger with them.
- Kaiser Wilhelm II didn't want France to take over Morocco because he wanted it for himself. Morocco was a good place to have for trade purposes.
- So...Kaiser Wilhelm went to Morocco and delivered a speech, telling the people of Morocco how good they were and promoting them to stay independent.
- France couldn't take over now morale was high and was angry at Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II for interfering (already hated Germany because of Alsace Lorraine so just added to the tension between the two)
- France called a conference at Algeciras in 1906 between lots of European countries and belittled Kaiser Wilhelm when he tried to speak.
- Kaiser Wilhelm II was furious about this and was angry about how Germany was treated.
- France and Britain formed a friendship here against Germany and formed the Triple Entente with Russia shortly after.

## The Bosnian Crisis

### Why was the Balkans an unstable area?

1. Different nationalities were mixed together.
2. The area had been ruled by Turkey for centuries, but Turkish power was now in decline.
3. The new governments which had been set up in the place of Turkish rule were regularly arguing with each other.
4. Two great powers, Austria and Russia, bordered this area and both wanted to control it as it gave them access to the Mediterranean.

### So what happened?

- The first crisis was in 1908.
- Austria took over Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Russia and Serbia protested, but backed down when Germany said it supported Austria. Neither wanted war.
- Austria became super confident. Thinking that Germany would always back them in future disputes. Austria started making trouble with Serbia and Russia.
- Russia really resented this and quickened its Arms build up.

## Then...?

- From 1912-1913 there were a series of local wars.
- Serbia emerged from the wars as the strongest and most powerful country in the Balkans.
- Really worrying for Austria and Serbia had a strong army and were a close ally of Russia.
- By 1914, Austria was looking for a way to crush Serbia.

### The First Balkan War, 1912 (everyone against Turkey!)

Russia and Austria-Hungary were competing over the Balkans.

Russia organised the independent Balkan countries into the 'Balkan League' to attack Turkey and push her out of Europe.

**TASK:** Please note the above information down next to your map.  
Show on your map which countries were in the Balkan League.

### The Second Balkan War, 1913 (everyone against Bulgaria!)

With Turkey defeated her land had to be dealt with.

A conference was held in London to decide how to peacefully share out former Turkish land.

Bulgaria was **ANNOYED** with what she received and attacked Serbia...

...but was quickly defeated and **SERBIA** gained even more land.

## Morocco 1911 – The Agadir Crisis

### Crisis 2 - 1911

- France tried to take over again.
- Germany complained but France said that they would compensate Germany if they lost out on trade as a result.
- However, the Kaiser responded by sending a gunboat (the Panther) to Agadir (it was near to Morocco)
- Britain were worried by this because they thought Germany would set up a Naval Base in Agadir and they did not want German ships in the Mediterranean.
- So... Another conference was called.
- Britain and France stood firm together against Germany. France took control of Morocco.
- Germany was given land in central Africa as compensation (not near the sea)
- Without Germany knowing, Britain and France reached an agreement that France should patrol the Mediterranean to make sure Germany weren't using the sea, and that the British Royal Navy would defend France's Atlantic and North Sea Coasts.

## The assassination - the basics

1. Sarajevo was in Bosnia, the province that - to Serbia's anger - had been **annexed** by Austria-Hungary in 1908.

2. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. He was inspecting the army in Sarajevo with his wife Sophie. The royal couple arrived by train at 9.28am.



3. Seven young Bosnian Serbs planned to assassinate Franz Ferdinand as he drove along the main road in Sarajevo, the Appel Quay.

4. The first conspirator who tried to kill Franz Ferdinand threw a bomb at his car. He missed and was arrested.



5. The Archduke escaped unhurt. He decided to abandon the visit and return home via a different route to the one planned. .

6. No one had told the driver the route had changed. On the way back, therefore, the driver turned into Franz Josef Street, following the published route and, when told of his error, stopped the car to turn around.



7. Unfortunately, the car stopped in front of Gavrilo Princip, one of the conspirators, who was on his way home thinking he had failed.

8. Princip pulled out a gun and shot at Franz Ferdinand, hitting him in the jugular vein. There was a tussle, during which Princip shot and killed Sophie. By 11.30am, Franz Ferdinand had bled to death.



## Extra facts

Here are some extra facts about the assassination:

1. Franz Ferdinand was inspecting the army in Sarajevo with his wife Sophie and it was their wedding anniversary. The Austrian Emperor Franz Josef had **forbidden** him to be seen in public with her on other state occasions because she was a commoner.
2. That day - 28 June 1914 - was also **Serbia's National Day**. Franz Ferdinand's visit was a direct insult to the Serbs.
3. The conspirators got their guns and bombs from the **Black Hand**, a Serb terrorist organisation.
4. In Franz Josef Street, the car pulled up in front of Schiller's grocery store.
5. After shooting Franz Ferdinand, Princip tried to shoot **Potiorek**, the Austrian governor of Sarajevo, who was sat in the front seat. However, during the tussle he shot and killed Sophie instead.

Look at the source below.



Historical sources can be misinterpreted

This photograph is an example of the **problems of historical sources**. It is often shown in books as showing the arrest of Princip, but it probably shows the arrest of Cabrinovic.

## The Road To War: The Triple Alliance

How did the Triple Alliance react to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand?



Gavrilo Princip, © IWM

Tensions in the Balkan states were high, especially those between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. Serbia still strongly objected to Austria's **annexation** of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, and was afraid that it might be next. Organisations were formed to stir public opposition to Germanic rule in **Slavic** states. One young student and member of the Black Hand, **Gavrilo Princip**, took matters further when he shot the heir to the Austrian throne, **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, and his wife on 28th June 1914.

Before doing anything, Austria consulted Germany. They knew Russia supported the Balkan states. Because of the Triple Alliance agreement, any Austrian action against Serbia would force Russia into a major war with Germany, or to abandon its loyalty to Serbia. Assured of their success either way, Germany and Austria-Hungary took a chance that the **Schlieffen Plan** would work and that soon they could take their pick of the European empires and their colonies.

After three weeks, Austria-Hungary replied with an **ultimatum** to Serbia. It wanted:

- Serbia to take full responsibility for the murder, though Princip was not Serbian but Bosnian. Austria claimed that the **conspirators** confessed to the murders being planned with Serbian approval and weapons.
- The right to police 'anti-Austrian' groups within Serbia.
- The right to **prosecute** these and other conspirators in Austrian courts.

The terms were more severe than Serbia could possibly accept, and Austria-Hungary must have known this. To allow Austrian police into Serbia would challenge Serbia's right to rule itself, making it in effect a territory of Austria-Hungary. Serbia was given only 48 hours to decide on whether to accept the ultimatum. Refusal certainly meant war.

After seeking Russian advice, Serbia refused to accept the parts of the ultimatum that allowed Austrian troops or police into Serbia. It asked that other powers like France and Germany help resolve this disagreement. Austria-Hungary refused to accept this and declared war.

Meanwhile, Italy declared itself **neutral**, effectively breaking its treaty with Germany and Austria-Hungary, but keeping its secret treaty with France. Italy would be persuaded to join the Allies in 1915 when the Treaty of London promised them land if they fought for the Allies.

**Franco Prussian War:** Gr defeat F and gains Alsace- Lorraine

**Consequence:** F hates G and wants revenge

**Result:** long term tensions btw G and F, unification of Germany and the formation of the Triple Alliance

**Bosnian Crisis:** A-H annexes Bosnia

**Cause:** A-H was worried their empire would rebel if Serbia gained control of Bosnia

**Consequence:** G supports A-H, R is humiliated and had to back down, I is now less keen on the triple Alliance, B, F and R are brought closer because they all have a reason to dislike G

**Franco-Russian Alliance:** military agreement between F and R

**Cause:** F wants revenge on G, F scared of Triple Alliance

**Consequence:** Europe divided into 2 armed camps

**The Triple Alliance:** military alliance signed between A-H, G and I, a defensive alliance

**Cause:** the Franco Prussian War

**Consequence:** isolates F

**Triple Power standard:** B navy is as large as the next 3 largest navies combined

**Consequence:** B becomes nervous of G, start to end splendid isolation

**Germany starts to build up its navy:**

**Consequence:** B becomes nervous of G, start to end splendid isolation

**Moroccan Crisis:**

**Cause:** G wants to become an imperial power and test the Entente Cordiale

**Consequence:** the Entente Cordiale is strengthened, B started secret military talks with F, F gains confidence in B support

**Entente Cordiale:** Friendly agreement between B and F

**Cause:** B worried about G navy

**Consequence:** G thinks B is abandoning Splendid isolation

**Anglo-Russian Agreement:** F used the Moroccan Crisis to improve relations between B and R

**Consequence:** Triple Entente is formed, G thinks it's a policy of encirclement

# The Events of WW1



## Tips for Paper 1

# **Topic 1: The failure of the Schlieffen Plan**

## **How was the Schlieffen Plan supposed to work?**

- The 'Schlieffen Plan' was designed by Alfred von Schlieffen (the German Chief of Staff) back in 1905. It was a plan to **win the war in the West in just six weeks**. The Germans put it into action straight away when war started in 1914.
- The Schlieffen Plan was supposed to stop Germany having to fight a war on **two fronts**.
- The Germans assumed that the more dangerous opponent would be Russia, so the plan was intended to **knock out France before the Russian army was ready**.
- The plan assumed that the Russian army would take **six weeks to mobilise**. During that six weeks France would be defeated.
- An army of 1,500,000 (90% of the Germany army) would advance quickly through Belgium, swing around the French army, **encircle Paris** and then France would collapse.

## **Why did the Schlieffen Plan fail?**

- The Plan looked good on paper, but Schlieffen had not taken account of the **distances** that the German armies had to cover in the strict timetable he laid down. The troops soon got **very tired** and it became very difficult to supply them with enough food and equipment.
- The Schlieffen Plan was changed by von Moltke, the new Chief of Staff, who only dared to send **60% of the Germany army** through Belgium so he could leave more troops on the French border. This made it harder to attack so quickly.
- The German army met much **stronger opposition in Belgium** than was expected. The Belgian army fought bravely and flooded the land to make it more difficult for the Germans to pass through. This meant it took much longer than expected to break through Belgium.
- When Germany declared war on Belgium on 3 August 1914 the Belgian government appealed to **Great Britain** for help. Germany did not expect Britain to help, but in fact the British sent troops straight away and they played a key role in holding up the Germans even more.
- Even worse for the Germans was the fact that the **Russian army** had taken them by surprise and had attacked after two weeks before it was fully mobilised. Two German army corps had to be sent east as reinforcements. This made it even more difficult to attack quickly in the west.
- Eventually, Von Kluck, the commander of the German First Army, on the extreme right, gave up the attempt to encircle Paris and turned south. The Germans then met French forces along the river Maine. In a battle lasting eight days, the Germans were forced to fall back to the river Aisne. The Schlieffen Plan, which was supposed to defeat France in six weeks had failed.

## Topic 2: Trench Warfare and the Battle of the Somme

### Why was there stalemate on the Western Front?

- In late September 1914, the Allied armies tried to force the Germans back at the battle of the Aisne, but in heavy rain they failed. Both sides began to 'race to the sea'. This was an attempt to gain control of the Channel ports.
- The race to the sea created a front line of trenches that stretched from the Channel to Switzerland.
- It soon became clear that defence was much easier than attack. In particular, machine guns made it very easy to defend a trench and very hard to attack. But there were other factors – for example it was usually easy to see that the enemy were preparing for a big attack and the trenches were zig-zagged
- The Germans dug in especially deep and made their trenches very strong because they had already captured lots of enemy territory. They did not need to move forward any further, unlike the Allies.

### What was trench warfare like?

- The popular image of the trenches is mud and death, and for many soldiers this was their abiding memory. Often, the strongest memory of all was the smell of decaying bodies, made worse by the fact that battle after battle was fought over the same stretch of ground. The bodies from the previous battles were uncovered in later fighting.
- In places the two frontlines could be as little as fifteen metres apart, as at Hooze, near Ypres. Even the slightest movement above the parapet resulted in instant death from a sniper's bullet. Elsewhere, the two frontlines could be as much as 1,000 metres apart. Here there was relative safety, even boredom.
- Soldiers normally spent four days in the frontline and were then moved into the support trenches and then into the reserve.
- Many of the troops in the first wave at the Somme were members of "Pals' Battalions". They had been recruited from the same areas in big cities or towns and put into the same units to increase morale. But this meant that they were all cut down at the same time, with devastating effects on the areas they came from.

### Who was Douglas Haig?

- Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig was Commander-in-chief of the British Army on the Western Front from December 1915 until the end of the First World War.
- Douglas Haig believed in the idea of the 'Big Push'. He was convinced that the enemy would have to be overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers, and that final victory could only be achieved on the Western Front.

## What happened at the Battle of the Somme?

- On 1 July 1916, Haig launched his first great battle began along the banks of the Somme. This was an attempt to take pressure off the French at Verdun, but it ended up being the biggest **disaster** in British military history.
- The **massive bombardment failed** to destroy the enemy defences and the British suffered 60,000 casualties on the first day. 70% of the troops who went over the top in the first wave were either killed or wounded. When Haig eventually called off the attack in November, less than five miles had been gained.

## Does Haig deserve to be called the 'Butcher of the Somme'?

On the one hand, there is evidence that Haig does deserve to be called 'Butcher of the Somme'. For example:

- He allowed the army to **go on attacking** long after it was clear that no real progress was being made. This led to hundreds of thousands of needless deaths.
- At the same time, the French on the British right made much more impressive advances. Maybe their tactics were better?
- In 1917 Haig ordered a second major attack at **Passchendaele**, just north of Ypres. This time just four miles were gained in three months, across a battlefield that was a sea of mud. Haig did **not seem to have learned the lessons** from the Somme.
- Haig appears to have been **inflexible and lacking in new ideas**. He remained convinced until the end of the war that cavalry (horses) was the key to victory – they would storm the enemy lines after massive bombardments.
- However, in 1918 victory was actually won by **surprise attacks** without huge bombardments. Haig's tactics of the 'Big Push' failed.

On the other hand, there is evidence that Haig does not deserve this reputation. For example:

- Haig originally intended to fight his first major battle near Ypres in 1916, but he was forced to change his plans after the German attack on **Verdun**, which began in February 1916.
- He was **only given about half the forces** that he believed he needed to win at the Somme.
- Most **other commanders** in the war followed the same tactics as Haig and believed that cavalry was the key. None of them had any experience of a modern war fought like this one. Therefore, it is unfair to single out Haig for special blame.
- If it was not for the big battles on the Western Front (like the Somme and Passchendaele), the Germans would not have been as **worn down** as they were in 1918. In this sense, Haig was right that the Western Front was key.
- There is in fact evidence to show that **Haig was a caring man** and felt deeply sorry about the loss of his men.

# Topic 3: The War at Sea

The war at sea was vital because both sides needed supplies from abroad. If one side could defeat the other side at sea, then they could starve the other country into submission.

## The role of the navies and the Battle of Jutland

- When war broke out in 1914 the Royal Navy expected that there would be a major battle with the German High Seas Fleet. In fact, there was **very little action** between the two navies in the first two years of the war.
- There was only one major sea battle during the First World War, at **Jutland** in May 1916. The **result was indecisive**. Although the Royal Navy lost twice as many ships as the Germans and twice as many men, the leader of the German High Seas Fleet broke off the action and returned to port. It never left again.
- From 1916 the Royal Navy fulfilled two functions.
  1. It **blockaded Germany** and prevented vital supplies from getting through. In the end, this was a very important reason for the Allied victory because it caused a severe shortage of food in Germany.
  2. From 1917 it began to **escort convoys** across the Atlantic to protect them against German submarines (u-boats). This role ensured that Britain received the supplies it needed to fight the war.

## Submarine Warfare

- The Germans began a policy of **unrestricted submarine warfare** in 1915. This meant that their submarines attacked **any** ships coming to Britain without giving warning (in the past, it was agreed that commanders who thought a non-military ship was carrying war materials had to stop the ship and let off any passengers before sinking it).
- They did stop for a while after protests from the USA over the sinking of the US passenger ship, **the Lusitania**, in May 1915 led to lots of civilian deaths (remember – at this point, the USA was not in the war).
- However, they restarted the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917. They knew this would **anger the USA**, but the Germans were getting desperate and were trying to starve Britain out of the war.
- At first, it seemed as if this policy would work but the British introduced the **convoy system** (where navy ships sailed with ships carrying supplies), which stopped the u-boats being so effective.

# **Topic 4: The Gallipoli Campaign**

You will need to look in your folder for details of where Gallipoli is and what exactly the plan was...

## **Why were troops sent to Gallipoli in April, 1915?**

- The deadlock on the Western front seemed like it would never end.
- The landings were the idea of the 'Easterners', led by Winston Churchill; it was their way of **trying to break the deadlock**.
- There were two aims of the attack;
  1. **Defeat Turkey**, who were allies with Germany.
  2. Get **supplies to Russia** through the Dardanelles Straights.

## **What happened?**

- The Royal Navy tried to get bomb Turkish forts in the Straits in March 1915, but all this did was **warn the Turkish forces** that the Allies were thinking of attacking there.
- The landings at **Anzac Cove** on 25 April were in the wrong place. The ships got lost and landed a mile away from the correct beaches. Instead of a shallow beach, the landing force was faced by steep cliffs and Turkish defenders who were well dug in.
- The first beachhead was too small to allow forces to be landed quickly and later landings faced similar problems. At **Suvla Bay**, in August 1915, the landings were carried out in darkness and the troops became lost. There was total confusion.
- Once on land, the Allied troops found themselves bogged down in very difficult country, where the Turkish forces were always holding **the high ground**.
- The evacuation, the most successful part of whole operation, was carried out without any loss of life in December 1915.

## **Why did the Gallipoli Landings fail?**

- The British **would not send their best ships or officers** because they wanted to keep them on the Western Front.
- It was very **badly planned**. The British did not even know how many Turkish troops were in the area. They were even using some old tourist guide books for intelligence!
- There were **disagreements** between the army and navy commanders.
- The officers made some very **bad decisions**. For example, soldiers were told to wait on beaches when they could easily have moved inland. This gave the Turks time to regroup and attack.
- The Turkish forces proved to be very **determined fighters**.
- The climate was very **inhospitable** and many soldiers died of heat and disease.

# **Topic 5: The Impact of New Technology**

There were several advances in technology during the war. However, not all of them were especially effective.

## **What effects did submarines have on the war?**

- At first, German **submarines (or 'u-boats')** were really feared by the British
- Three British warships were sunk by one German submarine in September 1914. In May 1915 the Lusitania was sunk.
- But the real challenge from German submarines was faced in 1917. At the beginning of the year the Germans had 120 submarines at sea and in April 1917 more than 875,000 tonnes of shipping was sunk. This immediately **changed naval strategy** and David Lloyd George, the prime minister, ordered the Admiralty to supply escorts for convoys sailing across the Atlantic.
- In the end, this **convoy system** was a great success and the threat from the u-boats was defeated.

## **How important were aircraft?**

- When the war began, **aeroplanes were a very new invention** and none of the countries involved had many planes.
- The main job done by aircraft early in the war was **reconnaissance** – finding out where the enemy troops were.
- There were air raids on Britain, which made the British public very angry. However, the British soon found ways of limiting the effects of the raids – for example, searchlights, anti-aircraft guns and barrage balloons – so they were **not crucial** to the war overall.
- The Germans also used **Zeppelins** (large inflatable flying machines) to bomb Britain in 1915. However, they were filled with inflammable hydrogen and big, so the British soon developed planes that could shoot them down easily.
- There were developments in fighter planes during the war on both sides (for example, guns that were synchronized to fire through the propeller of the plane) and neither side really gained a significant advantage.
- Even by the end of the war, aircraft were still **not thought to be a vital weapon** of war. Aircraft were lightly armed and could not do enough damage to major military targets to affect the course of a battle in a major way. Large planes were too expensive to build in large numbers and could not carry enough bombs to make it worth it. Overall, therefore, the war in the air was **not very important in deciding who won** the war.

## **How important was Gas?**

- Poison gas was **first used at Ypres in April 1915** and proved a deadly weapon. 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed.
- Gas continued to be used until the very end of the war. Adolf Hitler was blinded by gas in

October in 1918 and spent the last weeks of the war recovering in hospital.

- Gas could be used in two ways. It could be released from tanks at the front line and allowed to drift over towards the enemy. This depended upon the wind being in the right direction. Gas shells could also be used. These broke open when they hit the ground.
- Gas was terrifying, but **did not prove to be a decisive weapon**. It could blow the wrong way and attackers had to wear gas masks, which hindered visibility and movement.

## How important were Tanks?

- The stalemate on the Western Front was **eventually broken in 1918** and a new British weapon, the tank, did help to bring this about.
- The main job of the tank was to break through barbed wire, clear enemy trenches with machine-gun fire and destroy enemy machine-gun posts. The infantry could then follow through. Unlike lots of other weapons in the trenches, this was **designed to attack, not just defend**.
- Tanks were used as early as 1916, but the British had not managed to build many of them and they proved very **unreliable** – half of them broke down before even getting to the front line! But they did enough to convince Haig that more should be built.
- However, tanks played an **important role in the final Allied offensive** of August 1918. 430 of them were used and, despite heavy losses (only six remained after five days), breakthrough was achieved. The Germans were now in retreat until they surrendered in November. The German Commander, Ludendorff, considered the tank to be the German army's most dangerous enemy.

## **Topic 6: the Eastern Front**

Often, when people think of World War One, they just think of the trenches on the Western front. However, it is important to remember that there was a very important battle happening in the East between Germany and Russia.

### **What were the key events on the Eastern Front?**

- In 1914, the Russians attacked Germany to take the pressure off France and Britain in the West.
- In the early battles, the Russians were **heavily defeated**. The Germans took 135,000 Russian prisoners and the disgraced Russian commander committed suicide.
- The Russian army made better progress against Austria-Hungary, but by 1915 it was struggling. Germany had come to the aid of its ally and by the end of the year the Russian army had retreated 500 kilometres and one million men had been killed.
- In June 1916, the Russians launched the **Brusilov Offensive** and made rapid progress in the space of three weeks. However, Brusilov had few troops in reserve and the Germans began to push the Russian advance back. What had looked so promising ended in defeat.
- In October 1917, the Communist Party seized power in the **Russian Revolution**. The communists were determined to end the war as soon as possible and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in March 1918. This was a **total defeat for Russia**, which gave away vast amounts of land and money to Germany, and agreed that German troops could occupy the Ukraine.
- After the end of the war in the east, the Germans were able to **transfer German regiments** from the Eastern Front to the Western Front for their surprise offensive in France. However, the USA had joined the war by now and it was too late (see topic 7).

### **Why was the Eastern Front so important?**

Even though Russia pulled out of the war in 1917, the Eastern Front was very important because;

- The Russian attack in 1914 helped to **defeat the Schlieffen Plan** because it forced the Germans to withdraw troops from the Western front before they had defeated France.
- It meant that the Germans had to fight a **war on two fronts** for most of the war – something they had always wanted to avoid.
- The Brusilov Offensive caused the withdrawal of German troops from the battles of Verdun and the Somme in 1916, which gave some **relief to the British and French**.

# **Topic 7: The Role of the USA**

## **Why did the USA declare war in April 1917?**

- Until 1916 the US government did not want to get involved in a conflict so **far away** from their own country.
- Nevertheless, by 1917 the USA had lent large sums of money to Britain and France - £850,000,000 to Britain alone. This would be lost if Germany won.
- There was also **increasing sympathy** in the USA for Britain and France, as democratic countries.
- In March 1917, after Germany began unrestricted U-boat warfare, **four US ships were sunk** by German U boats. This angered the USA.
- The British government then handed the **Zimmermann Telegram** to the US government. This was a secret message from Germany to Mexico, encouraging Mexico to attack the USA if war broke out. It seemed that Germany were plotting against the USA. Woodrow Wilson could not stay out of the war any longer.

## **How did the USA affect the war?**

- In fact, the US **troops themselves did not have a massive effect** on the outcome of the battles. They did not start arriving until the spring of 1918 and they were not trained for a war like the one they found – their casualty rate was very high.
- The most important effect of the US declaration of war was that it convinced the German High Command of the **need to win the war quickly**. The repeated attacks in April, May and June 1918 (see below) were in an effort to finish the war before US forces arrived in Europe in large numbers. In fact they had the effect of **exhausting the German soldiers**, which made final defeat all the more certain.
- They did also play an important part in the second battle of the Marne in June and the subsequent battles in September and October.
- The arrival of so many fresh and enthusiastic US troops also **helped break the Germans' will** to continue.

## Topic 8: The defeat of Germany

By 1918, there had been stalemate on the Western Front for four years. How, then, was this stalemate finally broken?

### How did the war end?

- In October 1917 the Communist Revolution allowed the Germans to move 1,000,000 men from the Eastern Front to France. This should have given them a big advantage, However, Germany had two major problems;
  1. The **British naval blockade** was biting hard and German people were starving. There were strikes and demonstrations against the war in Germany.
  2. The **USA had joined the war** by now and 1000s of fresh American troops would soon be arriving.
- Therefore, on 21 March 1918 the Germans launched a massive surprise attack called the **Ludendorff Offensive** on the Allied forces at St. Quentin. However, instead of the usual tactics of a massive bombardment in one place, they just used a **short barrage** and specially trained **'storm troopers'** who attacked in lots of **small groups along a very wide front** with light machine guns, grenades and flame-throwers.
- The Allies were taken completely off their guard. In one place the Allied forces were driven back fifty-three miles. By the end of May the Germans were only thirty-seven miles from Paris.
- However, by August, the German army was **exhausted** and could not reach Paris. Some hungry German soldiers had stopped advancing in order to loot French towns. The German army had moved too fast to be protected by its own artillery. In addition, the German high command could not supply their forces with enough weapons and reinforcements to keep the advance going. The Allies had fought hard to hold their positions and now **American troops** were joining them to help.
- It was now the turn of the Allies to push forward and they were helped by new technology. **Better tanks** tore huge holes in the German defences. The Allies advanced more kilometres in a day in the **Battle of Amiens** than they had in all the months of previous fighting. By now, it was obvious that the Germans were going to lose.
- By the beginning of November, all of Germany's allies – Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria – had surrendered. In the northern ports, German **sailors mutinied** rather than obey orders to take on the British navy, and in Berlin crowds marched through the streets calling for an end to the war. There were **food riots and strikes** in other German cities. The Kaiser fled to the Netherlands. A new German government was formed and it immediately asked for a ceasefire.

## Why was Germany defeated in 1918?

People have disagreed over exactly why Germany lost. Some Germans (including a young Hitler) believed that the German army was '**stabbed in the back**' by people back at home, who surrendered when Germany could still have won. However, Germany really lost for a number of other reasons, many of which are linked. For example;

- Germany had had to fight on **two fronts** for most of the war.
- The **British naval blockade** forced the German people into a desperate situation. Many were starving by 1917 because of the lack of food getting into Germany.
- The arrival of the **USA** forced Germany to quickly launch a major attack (the Ludendorff Offensive) that failed.
- The Ludendorff Offensive nearly worked, but was **not planned well enough** in the end (see above).
- The **constant battles** (like the Somme) of four years had weakened the German army and the spirit of the German people.
- Their **spirit was weakened** even more when the USA joined the war.