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Socio-Political Warnings of War and Revolution: Assassinations in Europe, Asia, and North America, 1865 to 1914

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Abstract

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, antigovernment ideas, new political ideologies, and nationalist sentiments developed after political leaders unified and reformed their nations. The mixed responses led to the creation of ideologically divided populations, contributing to a rise in political and social instability in Europe, Asia, and North America. The relative instability, controversy over new ideas, and nationalism resulted in multiple assassinations and World War I in Europe, Asia, and North America between 1865 and 1914.

The motivations behind the assassinations in this period and World War I reflect new political ideas such as socialism and anarchy, imperialism and empire-building, political alliances, and militarization. Assassinations around the turn of the century reflected the dissatisfaction with autocratic rulers and the desire for independence. Three American presidents and a Russian czar were assassinated because of radical social changes and political polarization. The Balkan peninsula became a source of political instability, anarchism, and nationalism. Korea was caught between the Japanese and Chinese empires and needed to modernize as an independent nation. The assassinations of four royal consorts highlight how power dynamics and the popularity of royal consorts reveal public opinions of monarchies.

Keywords Europe, Asia, United States of America, History, World War I, Politics, 1865-1914

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, antigovernment ideas, new political ideas, and nationalist sentiments developed after a series of unifications and social reforms in several industrialized societies. The responses to these ideas divided populations, contributing to growing political and social instability. The instability, controversy over new political concepts, and nationalist antigovernment ideas contributed to a spike in the assassinations of major political figures across Europe, Asia, and North America between 1865 and 1914, ultimately resulting in World War I in 1914.

Gender in Pre-World War I Assassinations

Duchess Sophie Chotek von Chotkova und Wognin's (1868-1914) marriage to Franz Ferdinand (1863-1914), heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was controversial because he could only marry royalty, but they married in 1900 after making several concessions to the emperor.[1] Though not the primary target, Duchess Sophie's position because of her husband's status made her a politically significant figure for assassination.[2] Empress Elisabeth (1837-1898), like Duchess Sophie, was a symbol, and her death represented the changing political attitudes in Europe.[3] Empress Elisabeth married Franz Josef I (1830-1916, r. 1848-1916) and became Empress of Austria-Hungary in 1854, though she lacked power.[4] Despite her powerlessness, Empress Elisabeth symbolized monarchy, thus an ideal target for assassination.[5]

Unlike Duchess Sophie and Empress Elisabeth, the May Coup of 1903 directly targeted Queen Draga (1867-1903), who became Queen of Serbia when she married King Aleksandar I (1876-1903, r. 1889-1903) despite the controversy over her age and widowhood.[6] She reported a pregnancy in 1900, but she never gave birth, negatively affecting her popularity.[7] Empress Myeongseong (1851-1895, r. 1866-1895) was the main target of the Eulmi Incident in 1895, as she had been controversial since her marriage to Gojong (1852-1919, r. 1864-1907) in 1866.[8] Regent Heungseon Daewongun tried to remove Myeongseong, citing infertility, but she gave birth to a son in 1868.[9] During the 1870s and 1880s, Myeongseong and King Gojong appointed missions to Japan and the United States to modernize Joseon.[10] Her modernizations and pro-Chinese policies led to the Daewongun working with the Japanese to remove her in 1895.[11]

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[1] Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper, 2013), 107.
[2] Ibid., 49.
[3] Beckett Graham and Susan Vollenweider, season 10, episode 160, "Empress Sisi of Austria Part 2," September 2, 2020, in *The History Chicks*, podcast, audio, 113:00.
[4] Beckett Graham and Susan Vollenweider, season 10, episode 159, "Empress Sisi of Austria Part 1," August 17, 2020, in *The History Chicks*, podcast, audio, 85:00.
[5] Graham and Vollenweider, "Empress Sisi of Austria Part 2."
[6] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 8.
[7] Ibid., 10.
[8] Katy and Nathan, season 5, episode 2, "2. Empress Myeongseong," September 28, 2021, in *Queens Podcast*, podcast, audio, 88:00.
[9] "4 Royal Assassinations," video, 19:51, YouTube, posted by Lindsay Holliday, July 13, 2021, accessed February 4, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiX47d4UAR8&t=1s.
[10] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[11] Ibid.

Queen Draga of Serbia, Empress Elisabeth of Austria, and Duchess Sophie Chotek were victims of anarchism, and Queen Draga and Duchess Sophie were controversial brides while Empress Myeongseong had too much power. All four royal women were symbolic targets because of their husbands' royal statuses, making them ideal targets for attacks on the thrones. Queen Draga and Empress Myeongseong, as politically powerful consorts, were primary targets, while Empress Elisabeth and Duchess Sophie were secondary, yet significant, targets.

Causes and Motivations

Social Reforms

Czar Alexander II of Russia (1818-1881, r. 1855-1881) massively changed Russian society by freeing the serfs in 1861. In Russia, the upper class associated liberty and anarchy, an ominous connection for his reforms.[12] As the "revolution from above" began, the new social structure lacked the necessary support systems and connection to Saint Petersburg and was not as successful given these deficiencies.[13] With the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) similarly orchestrated a revolution from above without local support or resources to enforce the new system. The Proclamation only freed enslaved peoples in the Confederacy where the Union had no jurisdiction; the Union's enslaved population was not free until the Thirteenth Amendment.[14] Following Lincoln's assassination, the divisions around racial equality deepened, reinforced by segregation and local organizations, and the free Black population continued to occupy an inferior social position.

Empress Myeongseong and King Gojong's reforms focused on the government and Korea's military.[15] Empress Myeongseong sponsored Korean-language newspapers and schools, including the all-female Ewha Academy.[16] She also sponsored medical treatments, agricultural strategies, and manufacturing techniques.[17] Steam engines, trains, and telephones appeared in Joseon at this time, modernizing communication and transportation.[18] However, these reforms were not universally popular; the Daewongun's faction did not support her reforms and used them as motivation for the Eulmi Incident.

Anarchism

The anarchist movement started in England in the late eighteenth century.[19] William Godwin argued that individuals must remove obstacles that hindered liberty, such as social institutions; however, there would be no need for government or social structures if humans were educated and acted reasonably.[20] Monarchy and democracy threatened individual freedom; autocratic monarchies were the greatest threat, while democracy was subjected to

[12] Michael Knox Beran, *Forge of Empires, 1861-1871* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 38.
[13] Ibid., 184.
[14] Ibid., 143.
[15] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[16] "4 Royal Assassinations," video.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[19] Scott Miller, *The President and the Assassin: McKinley, Terror, and Empire at the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: Random House, 2011), 60.
[20] Ibid., 60-1.

the majority's opinion.[21] This led to calls for abolishing monarchies and removing "tyrannical" leaders from power, often violently.

In Russia, the nihilist anarchist movement grew out of the loosening restrictions on free speech and the press. A growing newspaper industry, coupled access to printing presses, allowed nihilist ideas to spread. In May 1862, Czar Alexander II ordered the secret police to crack down on the newspaper industry and student radicals following a series of fires in Saint Petersburg.[22] Like other nihilists, Sergei Nechaev believed that the deaths of the Romanovs would free Russia.[23] The first assassination attempt on Czar Alexander II occurred on April 4, 1866, when Dmitri Karakozov shot at the czar and missed.[24] In May 1867, the czar visited Napoleon III in Paris; during the trip, an assassin fired two bullets at the czar.[25] The czar survived another attempt in April 1879.[26] In November 1879, the terrorist group Land and Freedom blew up the imperial decoy train, and in December 1879, a group planned to bomb the Winter Palace but were arrested.[27] The People's Will successfully bombed the Winter Palace in February 1880.[28] When the czar was returning from a military parade on March 1, 1881, Nikolai Rysakov threw a bomb.[29] Ignacy Hryniewiecki threw a second bomb at the czar's feet, killing twenty and wounding the czar.[30] Brought back to the Winter Palace, the czar died.[31]

Luigi Lucheni, the Italian anarchist that assassinated Empress Elisabeth, originally arrived in Geneva, Switzerland to assassinate the Duke of Orléans.[32] However, the Duke of Orléans did not arrive, so Lucheni picked another target, the Empress of Austria-Hungary.[33] As an anarchist, his plan to assassinate any royal to send a message fit with the motives of other anarchists. The specifics did not matter as much as what their death meant for the monarchies of Europe.

Emma Goldman and Albert Parsons turned the anarchist movement into a feared political threat to the social order.[34] Goldman and Parsons inspired Leon Czolgosz, who joined the anarchist movement and assassinated William McKinley (1843-1901) in 1901. Charles Guiteau, who assassinated James Garfield (1831-1881), originally supported Garfield's election; when Guiteau did not receive a political appointment, he turned against Garfield. His anti-government ideas reflect larger anarchist sentiments. On July 2, 1881, Guiteau shot Garfield at

[21] Ibid., 61.
[22] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *The Romanovs: 1613-1918* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2016), 400, Kindle Book.
[23] Ibid., 410-1.
[24] Ibid., 407.
[25] Ibid., 413.
[26] Ibid., 433-434.
[27] Montefiore, *The Romanovs: 1613-1918*, 435.
[28] Ibid., 436-438.
[29] Ibid., 446-448.
[30] Ibid., 448-449.
[31] Ibid., 449-450.
[32] "Empress Elisabeth 'Sisi' of Austria," video, 14:10, YouTube, posted by Lindsay Holiday, February 4, 2020, accessed December 3, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiYVXDMcQyQ.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Miller, *The President and the Assassin*, 77, 80-1.

the Baltimore and Potomac station in Washington, D.C.[35] Garfield died on September 19, 1881, from a torn splenic artery, septic poisoning, and infection.[36]

Following the 1903 coup, the ultranationalist government in Serbia had created a platform that called for a dominant Serbia and the withdrawal of Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans.[37] Austria-Hungary recognized the new government as legitimate, granting the new regime power.[38] Under the new Serbian government, secret societies such as Narodna Odbrana and the Black Hand developed following the Bosnian annexation in 1908.[39] Without Russian opposition to the annexation, the pan-Slavic movement could not challenge Austria-Hungary. In 1910, a Bosnian Serb failed to assassinate the governor of Bosnia; this marked the beginning of the use of political terrorism against the Habsburgs and their associates, inspiring nationalists like Gavrilo Princip and Young Bosnia, who were behind the Sarajevo assassinations in June 1914.[40]

Political Instability

With the conclusion of the Civil War, the defeated Confederacy had to capitulate to Lincoln and Grant. Assassinated over a week after Robert E. Lee's surrender, the nation had barely stopped fighting. The relationship between the Confederacy and the Union remained polarized, as the southern population had no desire to submit. Fortunately for the South, Booth mostly worked independently, as Lincoln's death could be an act of war and restart fighting. The ideological differences complicated the reconciliation process; two different Reconstructions reinforced the ideological differences between the regions.

Serbia struggled between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire until gaining independence and creating two rival dynasties, the Obrenović and the Karadjordjović.[41] Dragutin Dimitridjević, later known as Apis, and Djordje Genĉić organized the 1903 coup and transformed the country by killing Aleksander I Obrenović and Draga.[42] The conspirators installed Petar Karadjordjević as the new king and received positions in the new government; conspirator Nikola Pasić served as prime minister until World War I.[43] Following the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbian people began demanding independence and a Slavic state in the Balkans, both strongly opposed by Austria-Hungary. The collapse of the Obrenović dynasty in the 1903 coup allowed nationalist ideas to develop. With Serbia dominating the Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina offered Austria-Hungary a foothold in the region. However, the annexation angered the Bosnian Serb population. Though Princip had help from the Black Hand, the Serbian organization stopped supporting his plot, making the assassination an

[35] Candice Millard, *The Destiny of the Republic* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 146, 152.
[36] Ibid., 268.
[37] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 17.
[38] Ibid., 29.
[39] Ibid., 36, 40.
[40] Ibid., 42, 51.
[41] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 5-6.
[42] Ibid., 4, 8, 11.
[43] Ibid., 5, 14-16.

internal affair since Bosnia and Herzegovina were under Austro-Hungarian rule. As such, there was no justification for an Austro-Serbian war based on the Sarajevo assassinations.

Korea struggled to balance the influences of Meiji Japan and Qing China in the kingdom. The Imo Incident of 1882 resulted in the deaths of military officers and supporters of Empress Myeongseong, who escaped.[44] However, the Japanese forced King Gojong to sign a pro-Japanese treaty.[45] Empress Myeongseong continued to support China and would subvert the Li-Ito Agreement (removing China and Japan from Korea).[46] In 1895, the Daewongun collaborated with the Japanese to remove Empress Myeongseong from power in the Eulmi Incident, which resulted in Empress Myeongseong's brutal murder.[47] In 1909, An Jung-geun cited Empress Myeongseong's death as a reason for the assassination of Japanese statesman Itō Hirobumi.

Greece also struggled with foreign rule, as the Ottoman Empire had controlled Greece since the fifteenth century. After the conclusion of their war for independence in 1830, the country established the first Hellenic Republic, followed by a kingdom. After deposing King Otto in 1862, the Greek Assembly nominated Prince William of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg (1845-1913, r. 1863-1913) to the throne as George I King of the Hellenes; he prioritized the Greek constitution and doubled Greek territory. [48] In the First Balkan War, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bulgaria united to fight the Ottoman Empire. After the army retook Salonika in 1913, George I visited the city.[49] He went for a walk on March 18, 1913, and Alexandros Schinas shot George I, who died instantly.[50] Described as an anarchist or a madman, Schinas described himself as a socialist. Given the First Balkan War, the additional regional instability of the Balkans and the desire to reclaim Byzantine territories may have influenced Schinas to turn against his country and advocate for a more egalitarian nation, but little is known about Schinas's motivations.

Contributions Towards World War I

Militarism

The military policy of various major powers evolved in the half-century before World War I, following massive military and technological advancements. Germany, lacking colonies, saw the British navy as a challenge and began building a larger navy.[51] Shortly after, the French, Russians, and Austrians also began to build up their militaries. While a détente existed with the formation of two alliance blocks, industrialization and mobilization rates varied, and the alliance blocs weighed the Russian and German threats.[52] With the deteriorating Balkan situation, Austria-Hungary, France, and Russia had to adjust their Balkan strategies as they

[44] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[45] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "The Sons of King Christian IX of Denmark," video, 17:00, YouTube, posted by Lindsay Holiday, August 20, 2020, accessed February 4, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqwtm8-F7Bc.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 314.
[52] Ibid., 323.

militarized.[53] Germany planned for a protective war against France and Russia before they fell below the peak of their power.[54] As for the United States, presidents recognized that the other major powers had armies, and the United States had a large nation to control following the end of the Civil War. Joseon Korea, trapped between China, Japan, and Russia, needed military security to maintain autonomy.[55] Machine guns, submarines, tanks, poison gas, grenades, and trench warfare revealed the horrors of military industrialization.

The American Civil War presented new challenges to the American government and army. Both armies still used older military tactics, but they increasingly used covert operations and guerilla tactics. The use of telegraphs and railroads transformed the Confederacy and the Union armies, predating innovations used in World War I. The country also evolved to have a standing army and would eventually build up its navy. Preceding the development of massive navies and submarines in World War I, the idea of naval warfare transformed the goals of the world powers; Britain could control their vast colonies and the seas as the largest naval power in the world. Various global powers (especially the United States and Germany) changed their focus from land armies to their navies, which would be significant in the Spanish-American War and World War I.

The Serbian military organized the June Coup of 1903 that directly resulted in the assassinations of King Aleksander I and Queen Draga of Serbia. The leaders of the coup, including the head of Serbian military intelligence Dragutin Dimitrijevic, recruited between 120 and 150 conspirators from the Serbian military and government.[56] As such, the new revolutionary government had strong ties to the military and, later, Narodna Odbrana and the Black Hand.[57] Following the Bosnian annexation in 1908 and the Sarajevo assassinations in 1914, a wave of mass mobilization spread across eastern Europe in Serbia, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. Each country mobilized at different rates.[58] However, the Serbian army was a fraction of the size of Austria-Hungary's, but Austria-Hungary overestimated the effectiveness of the Serbian army and overprepared.[59] Furthermore, the Serbian military and their associated cells and organizations began using acts of terror as supplemental military strategies. Austria-Hungary, convinced that Serbia had supported Princip and Young Bosnia in assassinating the archduke, had no evidence against the Serbian government or the Black Hand about their involvement in the assassination; this did not deter them from delivering the ultimatum to instigate the war.[60] Preparing for a localized war against Serbia, Austria-Hungary mobilized quickly and responded slowly, sending conflicting messages about their military; having crafted the ultimatum to anger Serbia and force a war, the contradictions of Austria-

[53] Ibid., 350-1.
[54] David Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 260.
[55] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[56] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, xxv, 12.
[57] Ibid., 40.
[58] Ibid., 475.
[59] Ibid., 515.
[60] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 453-4.

Hungary's war efforts, coupled with the mixed messages from Germany, resulted in an odd and stilted progression of mobilization in eastern Europe leading to World War I.[61]

A major aspect of Empress Myeongseong's reforms addressed the Korean military. She notably employed Chinese soldiers to train the Korean army in new military tactics and strategies.[62] As part of the missions that Myeongseong and Gojong sent to Japan and the United States, their ambassadors brought back new military technologies, which they then began to manufacture domestically, creating jobs and removing the reliance on foreign weapons.[63] American military instructors also taught the Joseon army to use the new weapons and techniques.[64] However, Korea, like other countries, had neglected their navies in favor of their militaries, leaving them vulnerable on the ocean to foreign threats.[65] The longest reform to implement, Empress Myeongseong's success in modernizing the Joseon army helped deter foreign powers (including Japan) from considering a war with Korea.[66] Though Korea would be annexed by Japan in 1910, the military modernizations helped postpone the outcome after Gojong and Myeongseong implemented their new military reforms, reflecting the new role that armies played when it came to the international game of conquest and power.

Alliances

Given the proximity of China and Japan to Korea, it is unsurprising that both countries were interested in extending their sphere of influence into the Korean peninsula. Empress Myeongseong backed an alliance with China; her father-in-law, Heungseon Daewongun, backed an alliance with the Japanese.[67] While Heungseon Daewongun controlled King Gojong until his retirement in 1871, the Daewongun could favor the Japanese alliance.[68] Afterword, however, Empress Myeongseong began challenging the Japanese alliance for one with Qing China. During the 1882 Imo Incident, the Japanese collaborators forced King Gojong to sign the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1882.[69] Following the Imo Incident, the Japanese demanded reparations and the ability to protect their legation and the Japanese population in Korea against future anti-Japanese sentiment. The Li-Ito Agreement in 1895 between China and Japan prevented both countries from directly influencing Korean policy as one of the consequences of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). With Japan's victory, China had to recognize Korean independence and sovereignty and make various other concessions. However, Empress Myeongseong subverted the agreement by asking China to guard the border and train the Korean army, encouraging a pro-Chinese policy.[70] The alliance with China seemed to benefit Korea more positively, as China did not look to colonize. Empress Myeongseong's pro-Chinese policies and reforms were not popular with the Japanese or Heungseon Daewongun, ultimately influencing

[61] Ibid., 477.
[62] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

the Eulmi Incident in 1895, the coup organized to remove Empress Myeongseong from power and make King Gojong more receptive to pro-Japanese policy.

European alliances shifted between 1887 and 1907, moving from a plurality system of alliances to a bipolar series of alliances. In 1887, Great Britain, France, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, Italy, and the German Empire were all competing for a variety of reasons in a variety of regions; this mess of competing interests and regions prevented one nation from being too powerful and kept the balance of power even.[71] The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy lasted into World War I, but Italy's commitment to the agreement seemed to decline as time passed. The Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia and the Three Emperors' League between Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary helped Germany prevent France from organizing an anti-German coalition as retaliation for France's loss in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1 and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.[72] By 1907, the Entente Cordiale between France and Great Britain had formed, as had the Franco-Russian Alliance and the Anglo-Russian Convention, creating a French-organized anti-German coalition.[73] With the establishment of bipolar alliances, the new alliances created the sides of World War I.[74]

Balkan alliances were extremely important in the early twentieth century. With a large Slavic population clamoring for independence, pan-Slavism organizations required Russian support in order to appear legitimate; this was especially important for Slavic peoples under Austrian control, as Austria-Hungary was the other major power in the Balkan peninsula (the Ottoman Empire was growing weaker).[75] Serbia and Austria-Hungary had contradictory interests when it came to the Balkans; following the 1903 coup, Serbia had a new nationalist interest in becoming the great power in the Balkans and supplanting Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans.[76] Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, wanted to counter the Russian influence on the Balkan Slavic population and otherwise maintain the status quo. However, the tension between Serbia and Austria-Hungary only increased with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. Serbia took the annexation as a direct attempt to weaken them and challenge their power, which fueled anti-Austria-Hungary nationalist ideas.[77]

Serbia lacked major allies outside the Balkans; Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece allied with Serbia against the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War (1912-1913), and in the Second Balkan War (1913), Romania joined Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece against Bulgaria.[78] This lack of official allies outside the region presented a degree of international isolation. Though Russia eventually backed Serbia against Austria-Hungary and brought their other allies France and Great Britain into the war, this only occurred after the war had escalated.

[71] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 121.
[72] Ibid., 121, 124-126.
[73] Ibid., 123.
[74] Ibid., 123.
[75] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 35.
[76] Ibid., 22, 24.
[77] Ibid., 33.
[78] Ibid., 42.

Greece was similarly isolated. By George I's assassination in 1913, the country had allies against the Ottoman Empire in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro, all Balkan nations fighting to throw off the yoke of Ottoman oppression towards the end of the First Balkan War and ousted the Ottomans from Thrace, Macedonia, and Albania.[79] In the Second Balkan War following the assassination of George I, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, and Greece fought Bulgaria for land in Thrace, Macedonia, and Dobrudja, in modern Romania and Bulgaria.[80]

Austria-Hungary, as one of the older and more powerful kingdoms, developed major alliances with other key powers. Their primary ally was the German Empire; the two nations shared cultural similarities, and the Austrian ruling class was ethnically German. While Italy belonged to the Triple Alliance, they ultimately defected to the Entente's side during World War I and lost interest in the alliance as time passed.[81] Though Germany had no interest in Balkan geopolitics, they had, by virtue of their alliance and "blank cheque" with Austria-Hungary, agreed to protect Austrian interests in the Balkans.[82]

The major alliance opposing the German-Austro-Hungarian axis, the Entente Cordiale, consisted of Russia, France, and Great Britain. Russia and France had already cemented the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894 based on a military convention, though they had opposite interests.[83] Great Britain, on the other hand, saw Russia as a long-term threat who threatened the balance of power in Asia.[84] Eventually, Britain and Russia came to an agreement at the 1907 naval talks.[85] France was the only nation that had purely anti-German motives; the anti-German sentiment in Russia and Great Britain was somewhat accidental and isolated Germany on the continent.[86] Eventually, the alliance blocs in continental Europe would create a détente juxtaposing the Russian and the German threats.[87] As for the Entente's goals in the Balkans, Russia wanted to counter and replace Austria-Hungary as the main power in the Balkans, drawing on pan-Slavism. The Russian policy in the Balkans, however, *was poorly coordinated* by the Russian government.[88] During the Balkan Wars, no European power backed the Ottoman Empire, highlighting the European powers' desire to acquire Ottoman territory for themselves.

Imperialism

The doctrine of imperialism also grew in the late nineteenth century. With the decline of resources on the continent, the European powers, Japan, China, and the United States had to find new resource-rich territories and new markets in Asia and Africa. Austria-Hungary attempted to expand into the Balkans, while Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain squabbled over Africa. France and Great Britain split south and southeast Asia. America

[79] Ibid., 42.
[80] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 42.
[81] Ibid., 123.
[82] Ibid., 126.
[83] Ibid., 131.
[84] Ibid., 137.
[85] Ibid., 138, 421.
[86] Ibid., 143.
[87] Ibid., 321, 323.
[88] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 259.

acquired islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean. China and Japan looked to expand in eastern Asia, particularly Korea, while Russia also eyed northern China and Mongolia. Europe defined power by territory and resources, both of which had disappeared from nineteenth-century Europe. Between 1887 and 1907, the major European powers engaged in a series of colonial conflicts with various other members of this elite group.[89] By 1907, the shifting alliances based on colonial interests and territories had solidified into the Entente Cordiale (the Triple Entente) and the Triple Alliance.[90] Italy went to war against the Ottoman Empire in Libya in 1911, and Germany, Spain, and France nearly went to war over Morocco during the Agadir crisis in 1911.[91] Tensions over colonial resources remained high into the early twentieth century.

Under William McKinley, the United States' production levels had become unsustainable for the size of the market – production and supply outstripped demand – and the companies needed new markets.[92] In 1898, McKinley expanded the United States through the Spanish-American War and the Hawai'i annexation. Around this time, Qing China began to voluntarily open its ports to Europe and North America, both of whom were interested in the new consumers and resources.[93] Hawaii would be an important shipping and refueling location for American merchants and the U.S. Navy, especially with Japan's modernization and China's Open Door policy, resulting in the annexation of Hawaii by the United States.[94] The Americans received Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, and Cuba from the Spanish. American imperialism encouraged the creation of a navy, opened economic opportunities in Asia, and turned the United States into a global power.[95] The next summer, the United States and Spain went to war in 1898.[96] Originally, McKinley had planned for an economic empire in the Caribbean and expanding outward, similar to the British empire.[97] Primarily fought in the Caribbean and the Philippines, the American victory led to the cession of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Cuba, the foundations of a new American empire.[98] McKinley's new imperialist policies were not popular; anti-imperialist leagues rose up across the country following the end of fighting but before peace talks in Paris began.[99] With the acquisition of Spanish islands in the Caribbean and Asia, the United States became a global empire.[100] The United States could be considered a major world player now that it had the territory, the markets, and resources. While Czolgosz did not cite American imperialism as a motivation for his assassination of McKinley, the new policy certainly factored into the president's overall ratings and success in office.

As for the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina greatly factored into their

[89] Ibid., 121.
[90] Ibid., 123.
[91] Ibid., 205.
[92] Miller, *The President and the Assassin,* 69-70.
[93] Ibid., 72-3.
[94] Ibid., 73-4.
[95] Ibid., 178, 361.
[96] Ibid., 115.
[97] Ibid., 123-4.
[98] Ibid., 216.
[99] Ibid., 236.
[100] Robert W. Merry, *President McKinley* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 361.

assassinations. The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 threatened the unification of the old Serbian kingdom that dominated the Balkans, and the Serbians would attack the Austro-Hungarian empire in response: the Austrians were threatening the Serbian kingdom, so the Serbian kingdom would threaten them.[101] Austria-Hungary's policy in the Balkan peninsula revolved around evicting the Ottoman Empire and Russia, countering pan-Slavist ideas, and extending Austro-Hungarian influence, perhaps creating a triple monarchy. Following the Second Balkan War and Russian mobilization in 1912, Balkan power divided between "Greater Serbia" and "Greater Bulgaria," but not both.[102] With access to the Black Sea and the Dardanelles, Bulgaria was valuable to Russia, so Russia had to weigh Bulgaria against Serbia, eventually favoring Serbia following Bulgaria's defeat in the Second Balkan War.[103] However, Austria-Hungary opposed the Second Balkan War, as it ruined their Balkan policy. Without a pro-Austrian nation in the Balkans, Serbia could expand across the peninsula.[104] Now lacking a buffer state in the Balkan peninsula, Austria-Hungary supported an independent Albania to turn Serbia into a landlocked kingdom, limiting their ability to expand.[105] Naturally, Serbia opposed the creation of an independent Albania, increasing the tension between the two nations.[106]

Nationalism

The late nineteenth century also saw the development of nationalism. Nationalism involves the development of feelings of support for a particular country. These feelings were especially strong among minority populations that belonged to a larger empire that want to rule themselves. Poland, in the 1860s, started revolting against Russia, while the entire Balkan peninsula wanted to rule themselves and remove the Ottomans and the Austro-Hungarians. The people of the Philippines were already frustrated with their Spanish colonizers and had no desire to stay under colonial control. The Cuban war and the Spanish-American War also sprung out of nationalism. With the rise of nationalist sentiment, countries began to throw off their oppressors, with many rulers, as symbols of these oppressive regimes, caught in the crossfire.

In the late nineteenth century, Russian nihilists and anarchists began organizing. From student groups to anarchist cells, these groups all had the same objective of liberating Russia from the tyranny of the czar. From 1866 to his death in 1881, czar Alexander II of Russia faced at least a half-dozen assassination attempts. From attempted shootings to a bombed and derailed imperial train, several anarchist cells had the same aim. With the expansion of the Russian press, the newspapers and universities became breeding grounds for dissent and anarchist thought; Dmitri Karakozov, the first anarchist assassin, had been expelled from Moscow University and instead joined an anarchist faction.[107] Blaming the liberals for the increase in anarchist thought and assassination attempts, Alexander II appointed a conservative, Count Dmitri Tolstoy, to suppress the radical element, leading to a series of mass

[101] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 49.
[102] Ibid., 266, 274.
[103] Ibid., 272-6.
[104] Ibid., 281-2.
[105] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 282.
[106] Ibid., 286.
[107] Montefiore, *The Romanovs: 1613-1918*, 407.

arrests on Russian university campuses.[108] Many anarchists were inspired by Chernyshevsky, including Karakozov and Sergei Nechaev.[109] Nechaezv, a Russian expat, returned to the country in 1869 where he began to stir up student riots and discussed proto-Leninist ideas in his *Revolutionary Catechism*.[110] In 1874, students inspired by utopian egalitarianist and pastoralist ideas started the Narodniki Revolts – *narod* meaning revolution – with the aim of leading the former serfs against the upper classes towards a better Russia.[111] The peasants were confused by the student populist revolutionaries, and Alexander II ordered the arrests of 4,000 student populists.[112] Many who were tried by jury were acquitted.[113] The people may have agreed with the ideas of freedom from the upper class, ideas later used by Leninists and Communists.

As for James Garfield, party loyalties and nationalist ideas influenced Guiteau's assassination attempt. Republican party loyalties were extremely strong; the party would enjoy almost uninterrupted control of the White House following the Civil War. The Republican party was especially nationalist in the late nineteenth century, as the still-recovering country looked to try to rebuild; at first, this meant Reconstruction and passing the Civil War Amendments, but later, this meant civil service reform and tariffs. With the massive technological innovations and the ensuing economic boom in the United States, the nationalism of this period would continue to grow and fuel the anger surrounding the attacks on the *Maine* in 1898 and the *Lusitania* in 1914. The evolution and development of nationalism in the United States in the late nineteenth century also came out of a creation of a more unified identity; through the Civil War, national identity had been largely based on state, sectional, and regional lines given the large differences between the states. Following the Civil War, a single national identity began to form as states were becoming more socially homogenous; the political, economic, and geographic differences remained, but the country began to reunify with the absence of slavery.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire spanned central, eastern, and southern Europe. Nationalism in Hungary led to the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867, setting a dangerous precedent for other minorities in the Empire. The annexation of Bosnia in 1908 was extremely controversial, as it reduced the nation to a satellite and negated the chance of independence.[114] Serbia saw it as a challenge to Slavic independence and Serbian authority.[115] After the Second Balkan War in 1913, Austria-Hungary began to perceive Serbia as a serious threat.[116]

The assassination of Empress Elisabeth in Switzerland in 1898 reflected the growing nationalist sentiments in eastern Europe. The wife of an emperor, her death was also a direct attack on the Austro-Hungarian Empire and imperialism. Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni, her assassin, harbored ideas of Italian independence and anarchism; large portions of northern Italy

[108] Montefiore, *The Romanovs: 1613-1918*, 408.
[109] Ibid., 407, 410.
[110] Ibid., 410.
[111] Ibid., 424.
[112] Ibid., 424.
[113] Ibid., 433.
[114] "4 Royal Assassinations," video.
[115] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 71.
[116] Ibid., 71-2, 74, 99.

had belonged to Austria-Hungary until the unification of Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, so there would have been some lingering resentment in the former Austro-Hungarian Italian provinces. Preceding World War I, Italian ultranationalism formed, motivating the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912, as Italy wanted to enter the empire-building game by taking Libya.[117] Italian anarchists also assassinated French President Sadi Carnot in 1894.[118] Empress Elisabeth's death led to a wave of pro-empire nationalism; the Empress was commemorated with statues and memorials across the empire, especially in Hungary. This temporary surge of Austro-Hungarian nationalism supported the empire for a few years before the heir crisis and unpopularity of Franz Ferdinand weakened support for the nation. However, the nationalist sentiments enabled the Austro-Hungarian empire to crack down on anarchist and nationalist anti-empire groups, using her death as a weapon and partially contributing to the decline in Austria-Hungary's Balkan policy. The minority rule within the Dual Monarchy made nationalist sentiments inevitable; Germanic Austrians and Hungarian Magyars minority populations ruled a more diverse empire and forced their language and culture onto larger ethnic populations.[119] Minorities within Austria-Hungary had been demanding in the late nineteenth century; demands for Hungarian independence led to the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867, a permanent alliance between Austrian Germans and the Magyars. Franz Ferdinand supported the creation of a triple monarchy, the third kingdom being in the Balkans comprised of Austria-Hungary's Serbian population.[120] The Slavic population of Austria-Hungary was its largest weakness, as the pull towards pan-Slavism and a Russian alliance had a strong influence, making their nationalist ideas more of a threat.[121]

The Balkan Wars started as nationalist efforts to liberate the Balkan states from the Ottoman Empire and establish independent monarchies. The First Balkan War transformed Europe and weakened the Ottoman Empire.[122] As the countries gained in territory and independence, the balance of power in the Balkans evolved and led to the creation of new countries and new conflicts over territory. Greece, as the country in closest proximity to the Ottoman Empire, saw a lot of fighting, both on land and water. The First Balkan War ended the Italo-Turkish War in Libya and ended the "eastern question" of who would be the new power in the Balkans.[123] However, the partition of Macedonia created further tension between Bulgaria and Greece; Greece saw Macedonia as part of its territory from the pre-Ottoman age and took offense at Bulgarian claims.[124] This led to the Second Balkan War in 1913, which negotiated a new Balkan balance of power and established the nations that participated in World War I.[125] Greek nationalism was heavily tied to their territory and the reclamation of historically Greek territories. The nationalist sentiments only increased with the murder of George I, though the radical elements had been tending towards independence for a few years, and the Balkan Wars

[117] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 226, 242-4.
[118] Ibid., 409.
[119] Ibid., 24-5.
[120] Ibid., 51-2.
[121] Ibid., 53.
[122] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 93.
[123] Ibid., 84-5.
[124] Ibid., 85.
[125] Ibid., 85.

further proved that Greece could independently rule a large territory. European countries not involved in the Balkans supported the ousting of the Ottoman Empire.[126]

Serbian nationalism, by the death of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, had spun out of control since the assassination of Empress Elisabeth in 1898. The growing nationalist ideas in the 11 minority groups of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were turning the empire into the new "sick man of Europe;" the growing nationalist ideas across the empire turned the Austrian Germans and Hungarian Magyars into enemies and their desires for independence.[127] Austria-Hungary, by World War I, had to either break up the empire, decentralize power, or brutally suppress the nationalist groups.[128] Austria-Hungary chose a fourth option: ignore the nationalist groups entirely unless they caused issues, such as assassinating the heir, and then suppress them. Following World War I, Austria-Hungary dissolved into several nations across eastern Europe and the Balkans. Following the Bosnian annexation of 1908, Serbia saw that Austria-Hungary was deliberately trying to undermine a larger Serbian kingdom and responded accordingly, building alliances with other Balkan nations and Russia against Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. However, the Bosnian Slavic population wanted independence and began to organize into militias, and Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, the foreign minister of Austria-Hungary, saw Young Turkey, who wanted to stop the European advance in the Balkans, as an opportunity to take territory away from the Ottoman Empire for Austria-Hungary.[129] The final annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 created a rift between Serbia and Austria-Hungary; Austria-Hungary, now weakening Serbian influence in the Balkans, would protect the new Balkan status quo.[130] Albania was meant to serve as a buffer state between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, but Italy began trying to exert influence in Albania.[131]

Following the annexation, the Black Hand and Narodna Odbrana formed as nationalist anarchist and nationalist paramilitary groups respectively, both working together for Serbian independence and power.[132] The Serbian secret anarchist societies had been heavily inspired by Russian revolutionaries and nihilists.[133] Gavrilo Princip belonged to Young Bosnia, a group of literate nationalists who wanted independence from Austria and saw the archduke and duchess as symbols of the imperialist order they wanted to overthrow.[134] The Black Hand had been created in 1911 by nationalists against the Bosnian annexation and temporarily supported Princip's plan, though the organization eventually withdrew their support for Princip.[135] Nationalism, as a whole, was a massive factor into the assassination of the archduke and duchess in 1914 for years of Bosnian and Serbian frustration with the Austro-Hungarian empire.

[126] Ibid., 88.
[127] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 52.
[128] Ibid., 52.
[129] Ibid., 71.
[130] Ibid., 71.
[131] Ibid., 88.
[132] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 72.
[133] Ibid., 120.
[134] Ibid., 120-1.
[135] Ibid., 123, 127.

Empires

Through imperialism and nationalism, countries in Europe, North America, and Asia found themselves able to amass massive international, multi-continental empires. These same forces, however, challenged the very existences of these empires as the people they ruled became less and less satisfied with their distant kings and colonial bureaucrats. These empires reached unprecedented heights and were more connected than ever with the various technological and transportation advancements. The European powers established colonial suppliers of raw materials and consumers. As these countries expanded, they came into proximity with other empires. With some empires having colonies in every part of the world, wars were now truly "world wars," as soldiers, supplies, and ships could come from all parts of the world, and these nations, with bases across the world, could more easily get involved in other nations' conflicts, increasing the likelihood of wars becoming "world wars."

With the consolidation of power in Austria-Hungary at the end of the nineteenth century, Franz Josef I attempted to centralize and maintain his hold on his empire. With the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867, the Hungarian Magyars obtained greater power and autonomy within the empire; however, this only alleviated the larger issue of regional nationalism, self-government, and independence.[136] As a multinational empire, the country could only become a homogeneous nation through the breakup of the empire, which became more likely as nationalist ideas grew.[137] With the losses of their Italian and central German provinces in the mid-nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian empire had begun to shrink and lose influence in Europe, and the further decline in Austro-Hungarian influence led to their manipulation by Germany at the onset of World War I. Becoming the new "sick man of Europe" gave the nationalist groups within the empire greater cause to seek independence.[138] Ultimately, Austria-Hungary had to compete with too many powerful nations and empires. Austria-Hungary could not modernize at the same rate as the more powerful Germany, have the sheer size of Russia, or the international reach of Great Britain.

With their new alliances with the Americans and the French, the Japanese Empire began looking to extend their influence into continental Asia. At the same time, China, having failed to industrialize, looked to expand via conquest, not economic dominance. Japan saw Korea as a foothold on the continent, ultimately succeeding with the annexation of Korea in 1910. China, reciprocally, wanted greater sea access and proximity for a naval assault on Japan. Japan was rising with rapid modernization and foreign alliances whereas China was fading with rising populations, low crop yields, famine, and a lack of industrialization. Both nations took advantage of the struggle between Gojong, the Daewongun, and Myeongseong to create a favorable outcome. Japan attempted to seize power in Korea through various incidents and attempted coups in the 1880s and 1890s; China made several agreements with Empress Myeongseong to counter the pro-Japanese faction led by the Daewongun.[139]

[136] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 25.
[137] Ibid., 25.
[138] Ibid., 24.
[139] Katy and Nathan, "2. Empress Myeongseong."

Korea, caught between these two empires, had little room to expand their own borders and instead attempted to maintain sovereignty under intense imperial pressure.[140] Following the death of Empress Myeongseong in 1895, Japan slowly began colonizing Korea, annexing the peninsula in 1910.[141] China, between failing to control Joseon and losing the First Sino-Japanese War, had lost their ability to expand on the Asian continent. The first part of the Japanese expansion into eastern Asia, Korea's annexation reflects the spread of empire-building to Asia following industrialization and the need for resources and markets. Joseon's failure to modernize at the same level as Meiji Japan and their weakness as an economic, military, and political power in comparison to Russia, Japan, and China resulted in the annexation and loss of Korean sovereignty; centuries as the "Hermit Kingdom" played a large role into the subjugation of Korea. When Joseon Korea modernized under Empress Myeongseong and King Gojong, the country did thrive; the modern military allowed the kingdom to resist foreign control, and the social and economic reforms increased the country's importance and status. Regardless, the spread of empire-building to eastern Asia influenced the shift in power towards Japan.

World War I

Following the Sarajevo assassinations in 1914, Austria-Hungary and Serbia separately investigated the assassination with varying levels of seriousness.[142] Austria-Hungary wanted a war with Serbia to eliminate their influence in the Balkans and a pro-Russia pan-Slavic state.[143] The slow investigation delayed Austria-Hungary's response, which was not released until the end of July and crafted so Serbia could not completely comply.[144] Serbia accepted most of the ultimatum and relied on Russia against Austro-Hungarian retaliation; however, this was not enough to delay war.[145] Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Serbia mobilized quickly, their proximities to each other and their various alliances leading to a rush to militarize.[146] The threat to Belgium changed the English position, and France, via their alliance with Russia, was involved from the outset.[147] Germany may have pushed Austria-Hungary into a war and turned it into a global one because Germany wanted to go to war at the height of their power and saw the Austro-Hungarian objective in the Balkans as inferior to a war against Russia.[148]

With the official declaration of war on July 28, 1914, World War I began and involved around 65 million troops.[149] 20 million soldiers would die, 21 million would be injured, and 20 million died during the 1918-1919 influenza epidemic.[150] As the first modern war, the fallout radically changed the world map.[151] In Russia and Germany, World War I created the

[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 385-7.
[143] Ibid., 409.
[144] Ibid., 457.
[145] Ibid., 467-8.
[146] Ibid., 406, 488, 504, 514, 553.
[147] Ibid., 536, 543, 545.
[148] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 260, 272, 286.
[149] Ibid., 5.
[150] Fromkin, *Europe's Last War*, 5.
[151] Ibid., 5-6.

circumstances that led to the creation of fascism, Nazism, Leninism, and communism which led to World War II (1939-1945) and the Cold War.[152] The various political crises of the modern Middle East also resulted from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and changing geopolitics.[153]

Conclusion

These assassinations highlight the socio-political and economic challenges of the pre-World War I period. The ideological developments included anarchism, social reform, economic challenges, socialism, and political instability. The mixed responses led to the creation of ideologically divided populations and contributed to a spike in assassinations across Europe, Asia, and North America. These nations began developing new strategies to gain power, including militarism, new alliance strategies, imperialism, nationalism, and empire-building. Due to conflicts between the governed and the governing, war broke out; colonies joined the war because of their ties to the European colonizers. At the same time, these colonies developed nationalist ideas and began to push for independence.

[152] Ibid., 6.
[153] Ibid., 6.

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