**MAIN – Causes of WWI**

**Use the information given below as well as any (credible) information you find online to complete your presentation and convince the class that your assigned cause was the most significant cause of WWI.**

**Germany**

Individual German states like Hanover and Teck had united under the powerful state of Prussia and became Germany, united under Otto von Bismark in 1871. The very strong army had defeated France. Her growing

navy was worrying to Great Britain because Britain’s navy was vital for her defence and desire for empire in Africa. Germany was allied to Austria- Hungary, who had interests in the Balkans, and to Italy. Germany was

militaristic, aggressively nationalistic and yearned for empire. Her military planners had produced the Schlieffen Plan in 1897 to avoid her having to fight Russia and France at the same time. Russia and France were allied to each other in 1893 which worried Germany. The Schlieffen Plan involved a speedy attack on France through neutral Belgium before Russian had time to attack in the east. She had guaranteed Belgian neutrality in 1839.

**Austria-Hungary**

A huge but declining empire which felt very vulnerable (easily attacked). Allied to the much stronger Germany who might help her survival as a great power. Her army was large but weak. Her main interest was in the Balkans where she wanted to stop the rise of Serbia and cling on to areas she did control like Bosnia. She particularly distrusted the Russians who sympathized with the Serbs and were traditional enemies of the Austrians.

**France**

A large imperial power with lands in Africa, the Far East and West Indies. She hated the Germans, having been defeated by them in 1871 and having lost the valuable border department of Alsace Lorraine (a region in north-east France on the border with Germany). She wanted revenge and was rebuilding her army as fast as she could. She resented German attempts to gain land in Africa and was allied to Russia and eventually to GB. She had no

real interest in the Balkans. She had guaranteed Belgian neutrality in 1839.

**Great Britain**

Was the strongest imperial and economic power of the time with a global empire that spread from Canada via India and South Africa to Malaya, Australia and New Zealand. She was not really interested in Europe or allies

as long as a balance of power was retained. By 1904 she made a treaty of friendship with France and in 1908 with Russia. She was worried about the growth of the German fleet which could challenge her trade and empire; that would be unacceptable. Great Britain was rebuilding her army and expanding her navy. She had no real interest in the Balkans. She had guaranteed Belgian neutrality in 1839.

**Russia**

Huge and economically backward, Russia felt vulnerable; she had been defeated by the Japanese in 1903 and was rebuilding her army and navy. She traditionally disliked the Austrians, particularly their desire to expand in the Balkans, and the Germans who had designs on Western Russian lands; she was a firm supporter of the Slavic Serbs. Allied to France, they could cause big problems for Germany if both attacked together. She also had an agreement with Great Britain.

**Serbia**

Was a comparatively new Balkan nation formed with the decline of the Austrian and Turkish empires. Closely tied to Russia by religion and the Slavic race she wanted to expand in the Balkans at the expense of Austria. She had a relatively modern effective army which had been victorious in 2 Balkan Wars between 1900-13. She was militaristic and aggressively nationalistic.

**Belgium**

Had been created as a country in 1838-9 and was a small neutral state. This had been guaranteed by all the major European powers. Much fought over in the past, she was known as the ‘cockpit of Europe’. (A cockpit is somewhere a battle takes place.) She was peaceful and had no desire to fight. She was however ‘in the way’ if Germany launched their Schlieffen Plan.

Helpful links:

<http://users.humboldt.edu/ogayle/hist111/WWI.html>

<http://www.historyhome.co.uk/europe/causeww1.htm>

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/origins/causes.htm>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26048324> (interpretations)

<http://www.historytoday.com/blog/2014/01/complex-origins-first-world-war> (interpretations)

<http://www.dcte.udel.edu/hlp/resources/worldwar1/causesofww1.pdf> (interpretations)