

- **Europe still dominated the rest of the world in 1914:**
  - » The majority of the decisions that influenced the world's fate were made in Europe's capitals. Germany was Europe's most dominant military and economic force. Europe had exceeded Britain in pig-iron and steel production, but not yet in coal, although Belgium, France, Italy, and Austria-Hungary (known as the Habsburg Empire) trailed far behind.
  - » Industries in Russia were rapidly expanding, but it was so backward to start that it could not seriously compete with the United Kingdom and Germany. However, the most impressive technological development had occurred outside of Europe over the previous 40 years.
  - » The United States produced more pig iron, coal, and steel than Germany or the United Kingdom in 1914, and it is now considered a world power. After defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, Japan had also modernized rapidly and was a force to be reckoned with.
- **Varied political systems:**
  - » The United Kingdom, France and the United States all had democratic governments. This meant that each had a parliament made up of members elected by the people, and these parliaments had a big say in how the country was run.
  - » Some regimes were not as democratic as they appeared: Germany had an elected lower house of parliament (Reichstag), but the Chancellor (akin to a prime minister) and the Kaiser held real power.
  - » Italy was a monarchy with an elected parliament, but voting rights were restricted to the rich.
  - » Japan had an elected lower house, but the franchise was limited here as well, and the emperor and the privy council retained the majority of power.
- **Imperial expansion after 1880:**
  - » Russia's and Austria-Hungary's government were somewhat different from Western democracies. Russia's Tsar (emperor) and Austria's Emperor (who was also King of Hungary) were both autocratic and absolute rulers. This means that, though parliaments existed, they could only advise rulers; if the rulers so desired, they could disregard parliaments and do as they pleased.
- **Europe had divided itself into two alliance systems:**
  - » The Triple Alliance: Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy.
  - » The Triple Entente: France, Britain, and Russia.
  - » Furthermore, Japan and the United Kingdom had formed an alliance in 1902. Since 1900, tensions between the two major classes (sometimes referred to as "the armed camps") have taken Europe to the brink of war many times.

## **Causes of Friction within Europe**

**Many factors threatened to destabilize Europe's peace:**

- Naval competition between Germany and Britain.