There were many things which helped initiate the first world war. Countries building up their armies caused an arms race between Britain and Germany. Alliances played a big role as a relatively small dispute between two countries causes allied countries to join in and eventually the world could be fighting. Imperialism was also a factor, as countries fought each other for colonies. The assassination of archduke Ferdinand, though, sparked the war off.

Countries that were building up their armies and navies played quite a large part in the start of the war as all countries wanted to have the best and biggest army. It may also be that countries want to fight other countries before their armies and navies get too strong. Before World War I, many European nations grew their military powers and produced new military technology dramatically building bigger and better ships. The launch of HMS Dreadnought in 1906 made matters worse. This ship was fast, heavily armoured with powerful guns and it made all previous battleships obsolete. They did this because of competition over colonies from other countries. Countries such as Germany and Britain engaged in a race to produce the most powerful armies through invention and mass production of weapons. This arms race is often believed to be a leading cause for World War I.

Another important factor was Alliances. Though they were first formed to help keep peace. Alliances certainly helped start the war as some countries wouldn’t have even attempted to fight against others without knowing they had support and help. Alliances were also very effective ways of weakening a country’s army. For example, if France invaded Germany from the west, Russia would also invade Germany from the east causing Germany to fight a war on two fronts. Alliances were a bad thing for some countries though, as they didn’t want to go to war but they had signed the alliance so were forced to.

Imperialism also caused the war as many countries competed to gain the biggest empire and they would fight for colonies. Although it was only a minor cause it still made an impact on the world. One example of this would be the Moroccan Crisis in 1911. France had sent in troops to Morocco to help the Sultans government. Germany had seen this as a threat to the independence of Morocco and sent in a boat. Germany then demanded the entire French Congo from France. However, Britain helped France and Germany then ended up only with small strips of the Congo. This was important as it showed the strength of the entente. Germany wanted to expand their empire but this had shown them that it might not have been as easy as they had previously anticipated.

Nationalism was another key factor which helped start the first world war. For example, France were angry at Germany as, in a settlement, Germany had been given Alsace-Lorraine; which France thought was rightly theirs. This caused the war because many countries fought other to get back land which they had lost. This was a knock on effect of imperialism, as many countries fought for land to try and get the biggest empire. Nationalism helped countries get men to fight for there countries too, men were proud to be from their nations and wanted to fight for it. Without nationalism, there would have been a lot less men fighting the war.

There were many crises before the war that could have started a war earlier. One example of this is the Bosnian crisis in 1908. Both Austria-Hungary and Serbia believed that Bosnia should be theirs. Germany allied with Austria-Hungary and Russia allied with Serbia. Eventually war was avoided when Russia backed out. It is