

# The Balkans in 1914\*



\* **BALKAN COUNTRIES:** Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Greece,

Which European powers might have been interested in this region? Name the countries and explain what concerns each might have had. **PARAGRAPH!!!**

# The Powder Keg of Europe

The Balkan Peninsula in southeast Europe is a small corner of the world, but was VERY important before World War I. This region of about 212,000 square miles in size had little to its advantage except that it was surrounded by bodies of water key to trade: the Black, Aegean, Adriatic, and Mediterranean Seas. Though history, the Balkans were the crossroads of cultures under the rule of various empires. In the ancient world, the Greeks and Romans had great influence in the region. Later, Slavs from Russia made their way into the peninsula. By the eve of World War I, the region was carved into a mixture of free states and those that were still parts of empires.

- 1875:** Russia goes to war with the Ottoman Empire and frees Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro from Ottoman control. Russia also wins the right to a much-needed, warm-water port in Bulgaria. Greece, Serbia, Romania, Montenegro, and Bulgaria are now all independent.
- 1908:** In response to the Pan-Slavic movement (explained below), Austria-Hungary annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia and Serbia are furious but can do nothing because the Germans are backing Austria-Hungary.
- 1912:** The First Balkan War breaks out between the Ottoman Empire (which controls Macedonia and Albania) and the Balkan League (Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro). The Balkan League frees Macedonia and Albania from Ottoman control. They divide up Macedonia but have to give up their claim to Albania when Germany and Austria-Hungary demand they do so.
- 1913:** The Second Balkan War breaks out after the Balkan League falls apart. Bulgaria (who felt cheated after gaining nothing in the First Balkan War) attacks Serbia. Serbia easily defeats the Bulgarians, doubling its territory.

The **Pan-Slavic Movement** also contributed to tense circumstances in the region. Led by Serbia, the goal of this movement was to unite the southern European Slavs into one Slavic nation. The Pan-Slavic movement was heavily supported by Russia, who felt a strong connection to the Slavs of southern Europe due to their shared culture.

**Explain why the Balkans were called the “powder keg of Europe.” PARAGRAPH!!!**