The Origins of the First World War

Providing a new interpretation of the origins of the First World War, this textbook synthesises recent scholarship and introduces the major historiographical and political debates surrounding the outbreak of the war. William Mulligan argues that the war was a far-from-inevitable outcome of international politics in the early twentieth century and suggests instead that there were powerful forces operating in favour of the maintenance of peace. His fresh perspective on the pre-war international system takes account of new approaches to the study of international politics since the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalisation. Thematic chapters examine key issues, including the military, public opinion, economics, diplomacy and geopolitics, and analyse relations between the great powers, the role of smaller states, the disintegrating empires and the July crisis. This compelling account will significantly revise our understanding of diplomacy, political culture and economic history from 1870 to 1914.

WILLIAM MULLIGAN is a lecturer in the School of History and Archives, University College Dublin. He is the author of The Creation of the Modern German Army (2005).
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The Origins of the First World War

William Mulligan

University College Dublin
## Contents

*List of illustrations*  vii
*List of maps*  vii
*Acknowledgements*  viii

1 Introduction  1
2 Security and expansion: the great powers and geopolitics, 1871–1914  23
3 The military, war, and international politics  92
4 Public opinion and international relations  133
5 The world economy and international politics before 1914  177
6 The July crisis  208
7 Conclusion  227

*Bibliography*  236
*Index*  250
Illustrations

2. European sovereigns gather for the funeral of HM King Edward VII at Windsor Castle in Britain (IWM Q 81794)  70
3. The battle cruiser SMS *Goeben* in the Mediterranean in 1913 (IWM Q 65787)  87
4. The Kaiser greeting his staff during the manoeuvres of 1905 (IWM HU 68475)  94
5. Hiram Maxim sits with the first portable, fully automatic machine gun, which he invented, and a Dundonald gun carriage (IWM Q 81725)  105
6. A Zeppelin and an airship fly over the manoeuvres of 1905 (IWM HU 68469)  127
7. Crowds in front of the Winter Palace, St Petersburg, 29 July 1914 (IWM Q 81828)  220

All images are used with the permission of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
Maps

1. The Balkans in 1878 page 28
2. Great power rivalries in the Far East 48
3. The Balkans in 1914 85
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