

Monsoons

Can you imagine living in a region where most of your life is dictated by the weather? Where you don't experience hot and cold seasons, but wet and dry? A wet season brings rain and flooding, but also life to your valuable crops. A dry season is marked by **drought**. Water becomes scarce, and many people are forced to resort to drastic measures to maintain their crops and their families. Life revolves around the monsoons in South and Southeast Asia.



Helping people to get home during flooding in Thailand.

A **monsoon** is a seasonal wind that will blow from the south and bring moisture and rain from the ocean or blow from the north and bring dry air. The wet monsoon usually runs from May to early October and can bring anywhere from 100 to 300 inches of rain. The dry monsoon is usually from November to April, and the dry air brings with it very little rain.

Monsoons are caused by changes in **atmospheric pressure**, which is the weight of the atmosphere pressing down on the surface of the Earth. Falling cool air creates areas of high pressure. Rising warm air creates areas of low pressure.

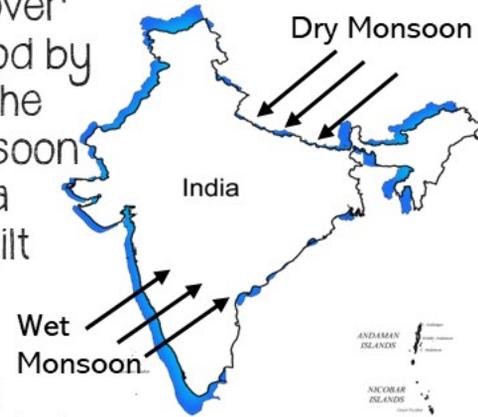
When the Earth is experiencing an area of high pressure, cool air from the upper atmosphere presses down towards the Earth's surface. This causes the atmospheric pressure to increase. With all of the downward pressure, very little surface air can reach into the upper atmosphere to form clouds. High pressure days are usually beautiful with low humidity, and full of sunshine.

Wind is caused when air from the high-pressure areas flow into the low-pressure areas. During the spring and summer months, the air over the land in South and Southeast Asia warms up faster than the air over the Indian Ocean. As the hot air rises, it creates a low-pressure area. As a result, the cool, moist air from the ocean blows into the low-pressure area. This is the *wet monsoon* or summer monsoon.

The rest of the year, the air over the land cools down and then sinks, forming an area of high pressure. This high-pressure area keeps the moist air out over the ocean as the wind blow south. Only a small amount of rain will fall, creating the *dry monsoon* or winter monsoon.

Case Study - India

The Indian **monsoons** have been studied for over a hundred years, and still are not fully understood by scientists. Because of the monsoon's effect on the economy and agriculture of the region, the monsoon is one of the most studied weather phenomena in the area. British colonists in the 18th century built the first weather observatories to record the monsoons. Since then, the Indian government has studied this system trying to determine which areas will receive little rain and which will be flooded.



While monsoons can mostly be predicted, the amount of rain each year cannot. The monsoon is the main source of water in India. It impacts all aspects of the environment, agriculture, society, and the health of the region. A recent study finds that the wet monsoon in India have strengthened in the last few years over north central India.



There is such a shortage of water during the dry monsoon that the girls are filling up the puddles of water on the road.

In the previous 50 years, there has been a significant change in the monsoons of India. North central India is experiencing a **drought**, with little rain brought from the wet monsoon. However, since 2002, this dry period has given way to a much wetter pattern. Wetter monsoons supply much-needed rain, along with powerful, damaging floods, to the heavily populated north central region of India.

Scientists are unsure on what is causing India to heat up while its oceans cool down. The cooling ocean temperatures could be part of a natural cycle. However, the warm land could be a result of pollution. The scientists have discovered that the air pollution can absorb the heat from the sun and prevent clouds from forming.

Understanding the monsoon is essential to life in India. A good monsoon results in more crops and increases the amount of electricity generated in hydroelectric production. A weak monsoon means higher food prices and slower economic growth for the region.

European Union

After World War II, the countries of Europe were left in shambles. Europe had been devastated economically and physically by World War I and II in less than 40 years. Cities had been destroyed by bombs, millions had died, and new governments had to be formed. Winston Churchill, who had been the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II, tried to develop a plan that would tie the countries of Europe together and prevent wars and destruction between the European countries. He knew the countries of Europe could not survive another war, and since Europe had a history of war, it was likely they would fight each other again. In 1946, Churchill made a speech calling for a *'European family'* to avoid allowing revenge and hatred leading Europe into another war. Churchill suggested Europe should build *"...a kind of United States of Europe"* so that the people of Europe would work together rather than against each other.



Winston Churchill supported the idea of a European Union.

With this idea in mind, in the 1950s countries of Europe began to unite politically and economically to avoid war and hopefully become peaceful economic partners. Rather than fighting over resources, these countries pledged to work together. This attempt began with the European Coal and Steel Community. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands worked together to acquire and distribute coal and steel for all the member countries. In the 1960s, these countries stopped charging custom duties or taxes when they traded with one another. Food production was added to the union, and food became available and easy to obtain in these countries.



The European Union was formed to prevent future conflict.

With the success of this union, other countries began to join. In the 1970s, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined. At this time, the **European Union (EU)** began to provide support for countries that needed help with job creation and building needed infrastructure in poorer areas. In the 1980s, Greece, Spain and Portugal join the EU and the **"Single Market"** is developed which provided for easy trade between all the member nations. The single market removed trade barriers between countries and created similar laws regarding how goods and services are provided. With the end of communism in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Latvia and Slovakia, also joined the EU.

European Union



An EU passport and a common currency makes it easy to travel in different countries in Europe.

By the 1990s the EU members had attained the “*four freedoms*” of movement: goods, services, people, and money among its member nations. Citizens in countries of the European Union could move among the countries without having to show a passport at all the border and the Euro was the new accepted form of currency in all nations (with the exception of the United Kingdom). People and goods could move around the European continent with greater ease. This ease of movement supported economic growth and better communication between all the member countries. The EU continued to grow in the 2000s as more Eastern European nations joined after the fall of the Soviet Union.

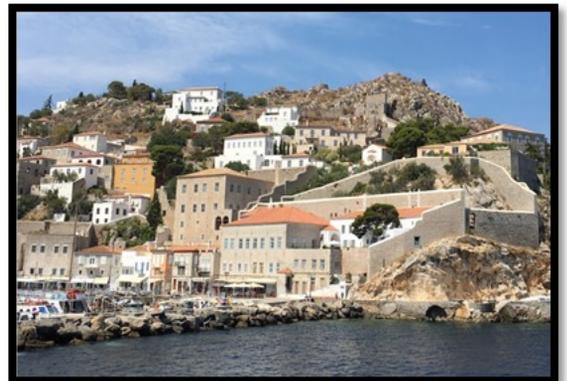
While the EU is the ideal solution, actually bringing countries together under one governing body has been very difficult. It has taken many years to develop a government for the EU and it still faces challenges. While each individual nation still maintains its own government, the EU is focused on helping all nations of the EU. Each EU citizen experiences two types of government - one from their own country and one from the EU.

The EU is made up of 4 branches of government: the executive, legislative, judicial, and financial. The first three branches are like those of the U.S government, but the EU also has a financial branch which is responsible for managing the budget of the EU.

The EU government is like the United States government in many ways. It has checks and balances and separation of powers. Members of the EU Parliament are directly elected by the citizens based on population. A country with a larger population will have more Parliament members than a smaller country. The EU has a court system which is responsible for hearing cases between disputing countries. The legislative branch makes the laws for the EU.

However, the EU government also differs from the government of the United States. EU citizens do not vote for the EU president. The president is selected from one of the representative members of the EU.

The financial branch is responsible for creating a budget for the EU. A budget is a seven-year plan that indicates how much each member country must pay in (a percentage of that country's national income in a year) and how the EU will use the funds it collects. Most of the money from the EU budget is spent on supporting poorer countries and agricultural development. Many poorer countries such as Poland, Greece, and Romania are receiving a large percentage of the EU funds, upsetting other EU member countries.



The EU government supports poorer countries like Greece.

World War I

The Causes of World War I

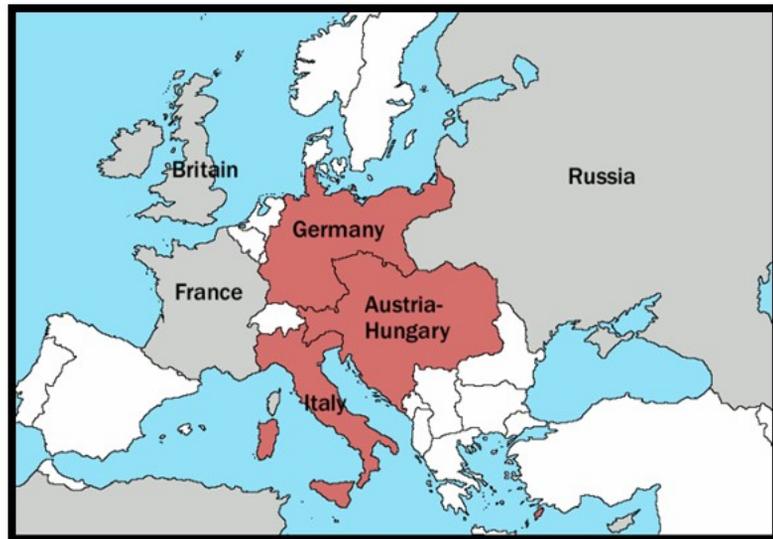
World War I was originally called "*The Great War*" or the "*War to End all Wars*". Over the course of 4 years, 16 million people would lose their lives either fighting in battle or as a result of the war. Like many wars, it did not have one specific cause, but started because of competition and alliances between the major countries in Europe.

The causes of World War I can be summarized into 4 MAIN reasons - **Militarism**, **Alliances**, **Imperialism**, and **Nationalism**.

During the late 1800s, advances in technology had led to an Industrial Revolution. All across Europe, countries developed advanced weapons of war. Many European countries expanded their military in order to both defend themselves and to take over other countries. Countries competed against each other to grow the size of their armed forces. Military life became very important to the culture of these European countries. The ideal of gaining glory through war spread across the European continent. This growth in military and the glorification of the military is called **militarism**.

As European countries competed for the largest military, they also competed for the most land. Countries like Great Britain had created a large empire by conquering areas of Africa and India. Many other European countries wanted the wealth and access to natural resources that would come with a world-wide empire. The competition for land around the world would lead to distrust between European countries. **Imperialism**, or attempting to control foreign land for trade and power, would lead to hostilities between nations.

Also, during this time period, as European countries competed against each other for natural resources and land, they turned to **alliances** to increase their strength. Countries that shared a common culture or history worked together to compete against their mutual enemies. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy formed an alliance called the *Triple Alliance*. In response, Great Britain, France, and Russia joined together in the *Triple Entente*. The Triple Alliance would later become the *Central Powers* and the Triple Entente would become the *Allied Powers*.



European alliances during World War I.

The growth of militarism and imperialism would lead to **nationalism**. Many European countries did not exist prior to the late 1800s, they were a collection of smaller regions or cities. As countries like Germany and Italy were formed out of these smaller regions, people began to identify themselves with their nation instead of just a region. They took great pride in being a German or Italian. This pride included a willingness to die to defend their country.

The Spark That Started It All

World War I officially started with one event, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on June 28th, 1914. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. He and his wife were visiting Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina when they were both killed by a Serbian teenager protesting the invasion of his country.

A grab for power and the complicated system of alliances soon lead Europe into war. A month after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Austria-Hungary, with the backing of Germany, declared war on Serbia. Serbia called on its' allies for help. Russia began to mobilize its troops, Germany warned Russia to keep out of the conflict, then declared war on Russia. France and Belgium began to **mobilize** their troops. Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium. Belgium called on their allies for help. The empire of Great Britain, including the British colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and South Africa, declared war on Germany. Austria-Hungary then declared war on Russia. Great Britain and France declared war on Austria-Hungary. By the end of the summer of 1914, almost all of Europe is at war with each other.



The assassination of Franz Ferdinand started World War I.