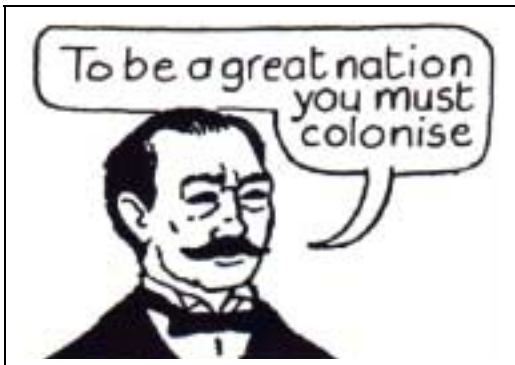# Long Term Causes of the First World War

In 1900 nearly everyone would have agreed with this statement made by a French Politician. A large Empire was important not only for trade but also national prestige. The larger your empire, the more important your country was. In 1800 France and Britain both had large empires, and these continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century.

In 1870s Italy and Germany became united countries for the first time. They too wanted an overseas empire. The result was that in the years up to 1900 competition between European powers grew more intense. There was a scramble for territory, especially in Africa with its rich minerals and resources.

This competition for colonies (countries controlled by European power) caused several disputes. For example, in 1906 and 1911 Germany and France argued about who should own Morocco. However, none of these arguments lead to a war, but they did lead to resentment and cause bad relations between some European countries. Sources A and B below show the colonies that were controlled by each European power.

[Source A: Empire map – separate sheet]

Source B: European countries Empires in 1914.

	Population of country	Population of colonies	Area in km^2 of colonies
Great Britain	40.8 million	390 million	27 million
France	39.6 million	63 million	11 million
Germany	63 million	15 million	2.5 million
Austria	50 million	none	none
Russia	139 million	none	none

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Activity 1: National Rivalry

1. Look at Sources A and B. Which two countries had expanded their empires the most by 1870?

2. Describe in your own words what the word 'colony' meant in 1900?

3. Describe in your own words what the word 'empire' meant in 1900?

4. Which European country had the largest Empire?

5. Which two new countries were born in the 1870s?

6. Look at Source B. How large were the Empires of these two new countries?

7. Which two countries argued about who should have Morocco in 1906 and 1911?

8. Germany wanted to become a 'great nation' in 1900. What would Germany have to do in order to increase the size of its Empire?

9. Why would this frighten Britain and France?

10. Using an Atlas and Source B, names the British colonies marked as 1 to 11 on the World Map in 1914.

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The Arms Race

When the German Emperor Wilhelm II, known as the Kaiser in Britain, made the statement in Source C, everyone knew what he meant to do next and began to increase the size of their armed forces. This lead to an arms race in which each country tried to build a much bigger and better military machine than their enemy. Between 1870 and 1914, military spending by the main European powers increased by 300 percent! After 1871 all the major nations except Britain brought in conscription, which meant that all men over the age of 18 were forced to serve a minimum period in one of their country's armed services.

Source C: This is what the Emperor of Germany, Wilhelm II, said in 1898.

Our future lies upon the ocean

Source D: European Military spending and the size of their armies, 1913 - 14.		
Country	**Soldiers**	**Money spent in millions.**
Britain	750,000	50,000,000
France	1,500,000	40,000,000
Germany	8,250,000	60,000,000
Austria	750,000	22,500,000
Russia	1,250,000	15,500,000
Italy	750,000	10,000,000

Britain had one of the best-trained and equipped armies in Europe, even though it wasn't very big. Which other armed service do think Britain spent the vast majority of its money on?

In 1900 the only way to travel around the World was by ship. Whichever country 'ruled the waves' could rule the world. Great Britain had the largest navy in 1900. It had to be to protect the British Empire. However, Britain was beginning to realise that it did not have

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enough resources to protect its vast Empire. In particular, Britain was worried about the growing size of the Germany Navy.

The British Government was determined that their navy should remain the biggest. Soon an arms race to build new battleships began between Britain and Germany. In 1906, Britain launched HMS Dreadnought, a new battleship that was stronger and faster than any other ship built before. Soon Germany also began to build 'Dreadnoughts' as well. The table below in Source E shows the results of this naval arms race.

Source E: German and British ships in 1914.

Type of ship	Great Britain	Germany
Dreadnoughts	29	17
Pre-Dreadnoughts	40	20
Battle-cruisers	34	9
Cruisers	74	41
Destroyers	167	130
Torpedo boats	49	0
Submarines	75	21

Source F: Dreadnought, 1906

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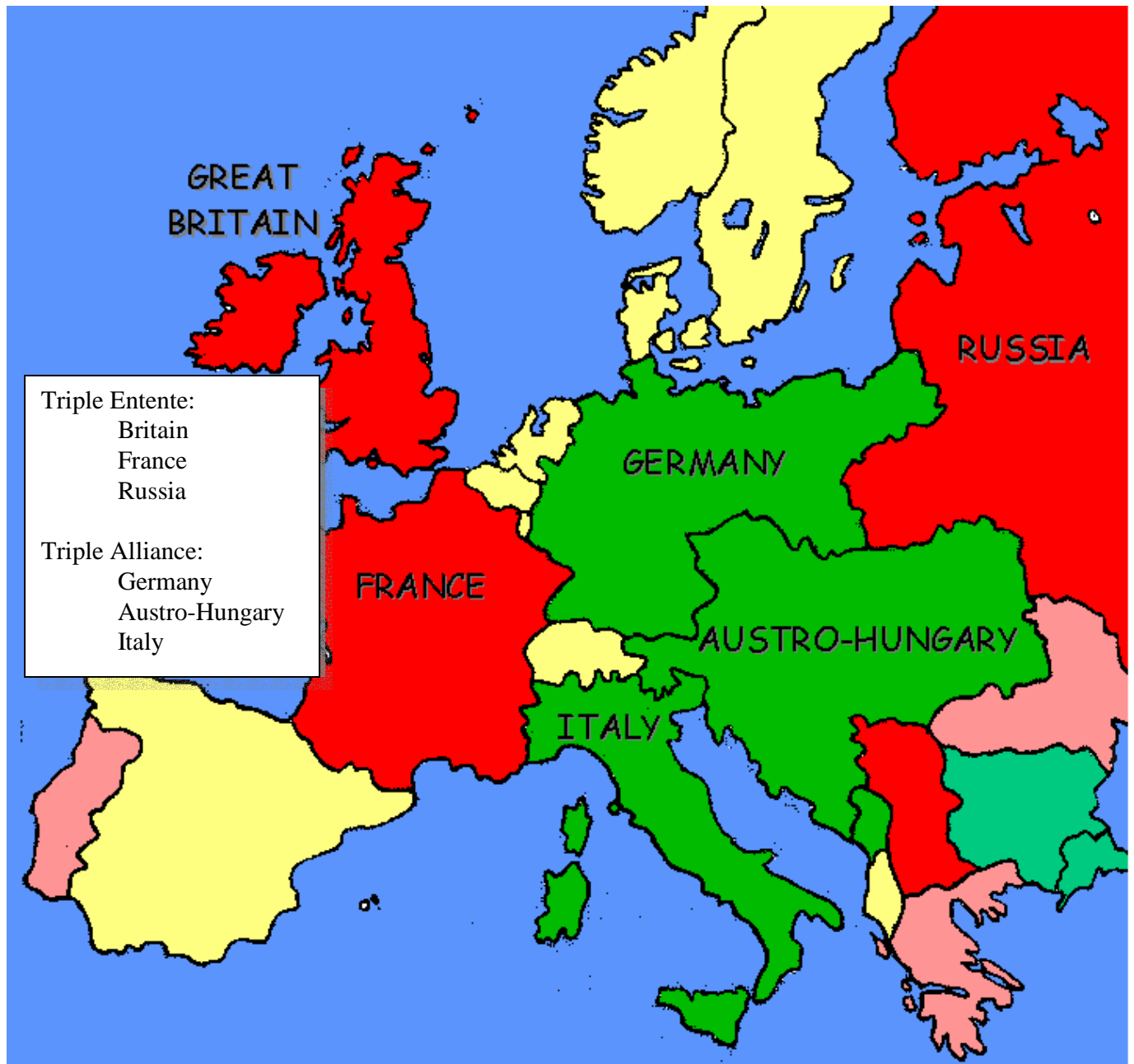
Activity 2: The Arms Race

1. What was the name of the German Emperor?

2. What name did the English-speaking people of the World call him?

3. Read Source C. What do think the Kaiser was hinting at when he made this statement?

4. Read Source D. What happened to the amount spent by each country on its armed services?

5. Which country had the largest army?

6. Which country spent the most money on its armed services?

7. What is meant by the term 'conscription'?

7. How did people travel across the World in 1900?

8. Why was it important that Britain had the largest navy in 1900?

9. Which country got into an arms race with Britain to build the largest navy?

10. Which new battleship was developed by Great Britain in 1906?

11. Which country won the arms race to build the largest navy in Source E?

12. Using Sources C to F, explain what is meant by the term 'arms race' and why the main European powers began to increase the size of their armed services from 1900 to 1914?

Alliance System

Between 1900 and 1914 the great powers of Europe became suspicious of each other and began to increase the size of their armed services. Eventually this turned into an arms race. Both France and Britain were afraid of the Kaiser's ambition to build a larger German Empire. The only way that Germany could achieve this in 1914 was by attacking and taking other European countries colonies. Eventually, each of the great powers realised that if there was going to be a war they would need friends and allies to help them defeat their enemies.

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They formed two gangs. These gangs were called alliances. The Map below shows the gangs or alliances that each of the great European powers had joined by 1914.

Triple Entente:
    Britain
    France
    Russia

Triple Alliance:
    Germany
    Austro-Hungary
    Italy

Activity 3: Alliance System.

On your own map of Europe colour in the countries Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria and Italy to show which gang or alliance they belonged to. You will need two different colours. Remember to draw a key at the bottom of the map.