

# Long Term Causes of The Great War

“To be a great nation, you must colonize.” In the 1800s, nearly everyone would have agreed with this statement. A large empire was important, not only for trade, but also for national prestige. The larger your empire, the more important your country appeared to be. Competition between European powers grew more intense as a scramble for territory caused disputes. For example, in 1906 and 1911, Germany and France argued over who should own Morocco. The arguments did not lead to wars, but it did lead to resentment and cause bad relations between some European countries.

Country: 1914	Population	Population of Colonies	Area of Colonies: sq. km
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

An arms race, with each country trying to build a bigger military machine than their enemy, led to military spending by the main European powers increasing by 300% between 1870 and 1914.

In 1900, the only way to travel the world was by ship. Whichever country “ruled the waves” could rule the world. Great Britain had the largest navy in 1900. However, Britain was beginning to realize that it did not have enough resources to protect its vast Empire. Also, Britain was worried about the growing size of the German 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 the HMS Dreadnought, a new battleship that was stronger and faster than any other ship built before. Soon Germany also began to build “Dreadnoughts.”

British and German Navy 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

Using the text and tables above, answer the following questions.

1. Which European country had the largest empire?
2. Germany wanted to become a “great nation” in 1900. What would Germany have to do in order to increase the size of its empire?
3. Why was it important that Britain have the largest navy in 1900?
4. Which new battleship was developed by Great Britain in 1906?
5. Which country won the arms race to build the largest navy in 1900?