

The naval and arms race of ww1



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The naval and arms race of the early 20th Century is believed to be one of the several causes for the outbreak of World War I. It was mainly fought between the United Kingdom and the German Empire. However, there were some more naval build-ups in numerous countries which were emerging as great powers, such as Japan and the United States. The German army at the time was the largest and the best trained, while the British had the largest navy, this was said to balance the two countries in their military power, in 1900 Kaiser Wilhelm began to further develop the German navy (Tirpitz's Navy Law), proclaiming that he planned for Germans to sail around the world and claim for Germany a place in the sun. An increased German navy would assist in German attempts to gain colonies, as well as further Germany's commercial and economic interests in other areas around the world. The Kaiser was intent to make his country a strong colonial power in Africa and the Pacific.

One of the large contributing factors to much of the tensions between the great powers which led to the outbreak of World War I was the immense competition between Britain and Germany in constructing armaments. There were mainly 2 races between the two countries; the development of mass armies and the naval race. In 1889, the British government acknowledged the importance of having a strong navy for an island nation, so Britain started to modernise her Royal Navy. Britain also believed that her Royal Navy should contain twice as many ships than that of the next two largest navies in the world, Russia and France, combined together. But, around the mid-1890s, The Kaiser wanted to pursue his policy for world power, so with that Germany began to increase her naval forces. This decision begins the

Anglo-German naval arms race.? While the deployed soldiers numbers were not that large the reserves armies of skilled men numbered in hundreds of thousands. Throughout Europe, past the late nineteenth century, European armies massed quickly.

The move by Germany of increasing their naval forces, who already had the most powerful army in all of Europe, frightened the British; The British saw no reason for Germany to need a powerful? naval fleet. So by creating this new system of reserve forces, European countries were able to muster an additional 10 million men

The building of warships construction rates 1905-13

	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	Total	
England	4	3	3	2	9	4	4	4	4	42	
Germany	0	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	26

Britain saw this as a threat to her security of the Country. Britain did not like these German plans, as she feared overall German domination of Europe. To answer the Kaiser??™s attempts to equal her navy, Britain decided to build a navy so large that no other navy would dare attack it.

From Here Britain also decided to build an enormously powerful battleship. The first of these battleships was built in 1906, she was called the ??? HMS Dreadnought??™ future ships of this class were called Dreadnought-class battleships. Compared to earlier battleships, Dreadnought-class battleships were:
 Heavier
 Larger
 More thickly armoured (2 inches thicker than previous battleships)
 had a larger number of cannons (Three times as deadly firepower)
 These cannons had a much greater range so they were able to destroy other ships before the enemy go close enough to fire.
 *Had smaller crews

The Dreadnoughts were in fact so good that as soon as they can into service, all other battleships quickly became obsolete. This meant that other

countries were forced to build their own Dreadnoughts if they would risk being classed as a second-class power. This led to a massive ship building program across the world, including Japan and the USA as well as other more neutral countries, this new Battleship also sparked a new phase in the Anglo-German naval arms race. Britain was able to maintain a large naval lead over Germany, it should be noted that both Britain and Germany both believed Thayer Mahan's thesis which states that command over the sea is vital to a great nation's status.

However the new Dreadnought ships faced Britain a rather large problem as all her previous battle ships that Britain was able to construct before 1906 were effectively wasted as all of her battleships built before 1906 were no match for the new dreadnought class battleships. When the First World War began, the European forces were able to mobilize very large amounts of well-trained and well equipped men. In the event, Britain had won the naval arms race with Germany. Militarism also added to the already high amount of tension between the great powers of Europe. Militarists believed that their country should be well armed and that their country should be used to gain nationalist needs. Militarists also believed that leaders of the armed services should have a say in the Government. At the beginning of the 20th century, militarism was a powerful force through Europe. The great powers competed in building up supplies of weapons.

This competition was called the arms race, and in turn it added to the tension, fear and anger that the great powers felt towards each other. Overall the Arms Race was a race to build the biggest Air force, Navy and Army before the other countries could, when a country decided to expand or

create something, the other countries would then feel it necessary to create or expand the same thing so that you were able to create a lead over your enemy or not fall behind them, the goal was simply to create a larger and more advanced war machine by the time war came around, either to attack or discourage other from attacking you. All the countries except Germany and Britain, were attempting to mass the largest army anyone at the time ever seen, whereas Britain and Germany were pretty much trying to build up their naval forces as Germany wanted to claim a larger navy than Britain??™s in order to beat them in sea warfare. Germany boasted the largest land army force they were also the best trained and most powerful of all the countries which fought in WW1, After 1871 Every major nation excluding Britain, decided to bring in conscription, that meant that men of 18 and older were forced to serve for a selected period of time in one of their country??™s military services. It is clear that the cost of the arms race was felt by both? Germany and Britain. The total spending on arms by the six Powers (Austria-Hungary, Italy, France, Russia, Germany and Britain) increased by roughly 50% between the years of 1908 and 1913

Country	Army (thou.)	Pop. (mill.)
France	419	40.2
Germany	240	37.8
Austria-Hungary	766	97.7
Russia	1890	502
Germany	487	44.2
France	337	—
Austria-Hungary	647	—
Russia	1900	673
Germany	495	40.7
France	495	50.6
Austria-Hungary	375	47
Russia	1119	131

(mill.)| Army (thou.)| Pop. (mill.

)| Army (thou.)| Pop. (mill.)| Army (thou.)| Pop. (mill.)| 1880| 503| 39.

2| 419| 40.2| 240| 37.8| 766| 97.7| 1890| 502| 40.

0| 487| 44.2| 337| —| 647| —| 1900| 673| 40.7| 495| 50.6| 375| 47| 1119| 131.

7| 1910| 713| 41. 5| 636| 58. 5| 410| 51. 4| 1225| 153. 8| 1914| 846| | 812| |
 424| | 1300| | 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
German	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