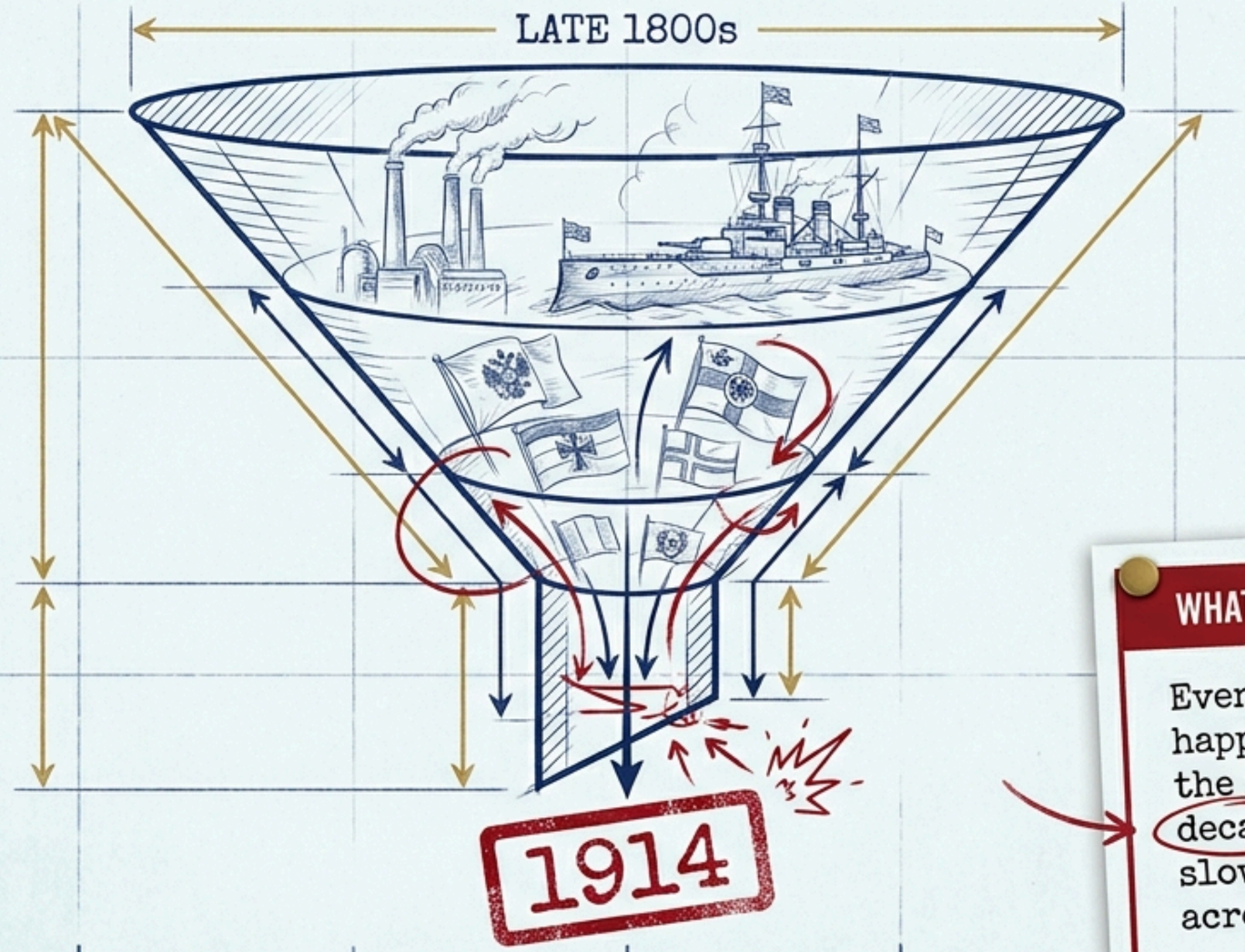
THE FOUR LONG-TERM CAUSES OF WORLD WAR I

Guiding Question: Why was Europe ready for war before 1914?



WHAT IS A "LONG-TERM CAUSE"?

Events in history rarely happen overnight. Before the fighting began in 1914, decades of tension had slowly been building across Europe.

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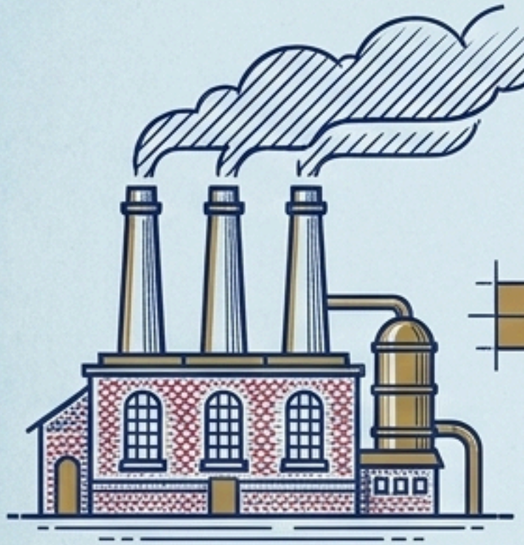
NATIONALISM: The Pride That Divided Europe

NATIONALISM: Intense pride and devotion to one's country, often believing it is superior to all others. It inspires citizens to willingly fight for supremacy.



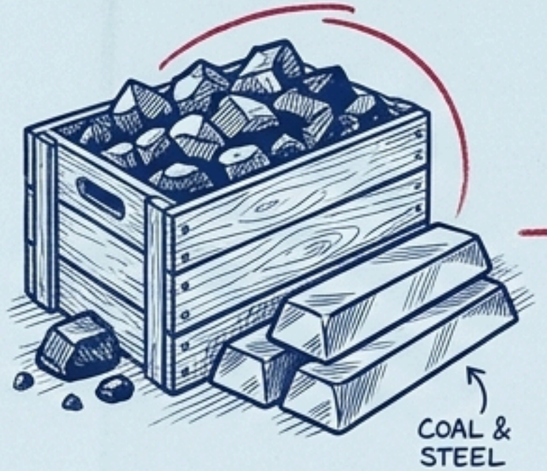
INDUSTRIAL RIVALRY: The Engine of Competition

Britain was initially the wealthiest global power because it dominated early industrialisation. But as new powers like Germany built massive factories, they sought to rival Britain and France.



A

B





Raw Materials: Mass production was impossible without huge, continuous supplies of essential raw materials to feed the machines.

Consumer Markets: Factories produced goods faster than local populations could buy them, requiring new consumer markets to purchase the surplus.

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IMPERIALISM: The Global Scramble

Industrial Need: Driven by the economic need for factory resources and markets (from Slide 3).



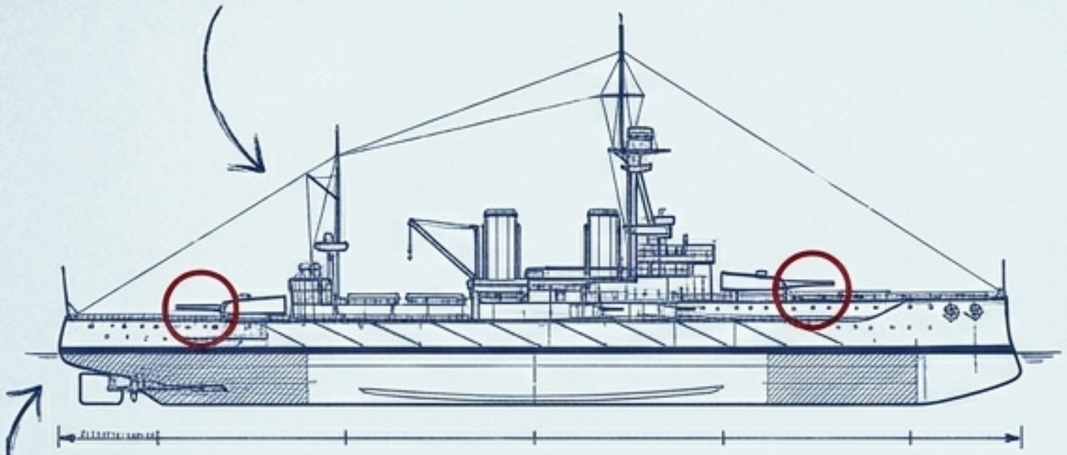
The Scramble for Africa: European nations raced to claim land and mineral wealth globally. This fierce competition over African territories created deep distrust and friction between European powers.

Increased National Prestige: Building a massive global empire became the ultimate measure of a nation's greatness and superiority.

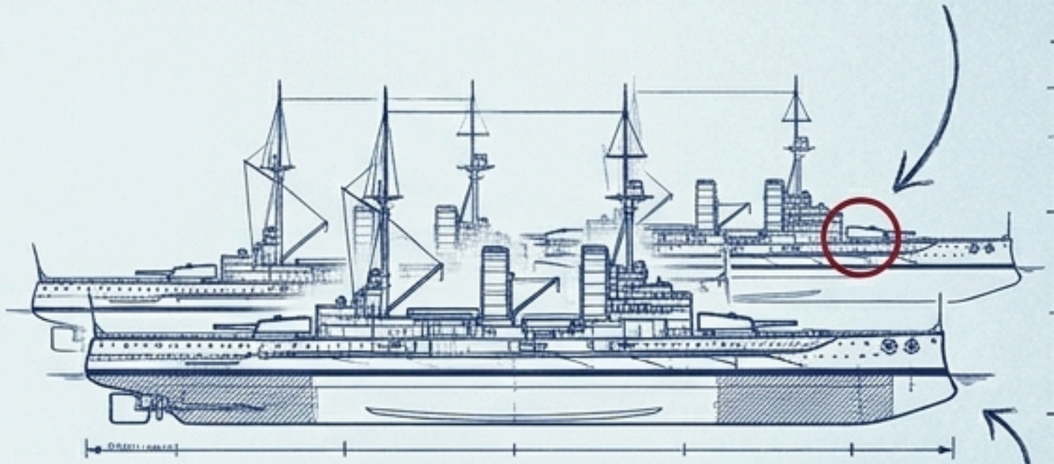
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MILITARISM & THE ARMS RACE

Industrialised Warfare: Industrial power allowed nations to mass-produce advanced artillery and massive standing armies. Militarism glorified this expanding military strength.



VS



BRITAIN

Needed a dominant navy to protect trade routes and overseas colonies.

In 1906, launched the Dreadnought (meaning 'fear nothing") — the fastest, most powerful warship of its time.

GERMANY

German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II viewed the Dreadnought as a challenge.

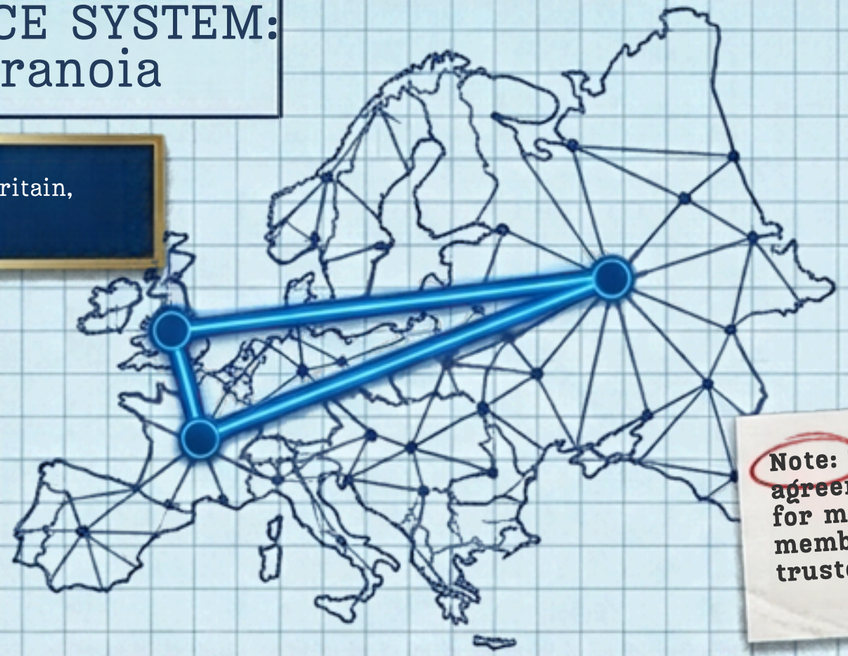
He ordered the construction of a massive rival fleet to compete with Britain.

The Result: Instead of creating security, this arms race created an atmosphere of fear. Nations were fully primed to mobilize rapidly.

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THE ALLIANCE SYSTEM: A Web of Paranoia

Triple Entente (Blue):Britain, France, Russia.



Triple Alliance (Red):Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy.



Note: These secret agreements were meant for mutual defence, but member countries rarely trusted one another.

The Chain Reaction



1. Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
2. Russia mobilizes to protect Serbia.
3. Germany declares war on Russia and France.
4. Germany marches through neutral Belgium; Britain declares war.
5. Result: Over 30 nations dragged into a World War in one month.

The Result: The rigid alliance system transformed a local conflict into a catastrophic global war.

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THE ‘M.A.I.N.’ POWDER KEG

The Spark: Long-term tension set off the immediate trigger: **Gavrilo Princip** (a member of the Slav nationalist group the Black Hand) assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.

M - Militarism:

Armies and navies mass-producing weapons for war.

N - Nationalism:

Intense pride, expansion, and resistance to rule.



A - Alliances:

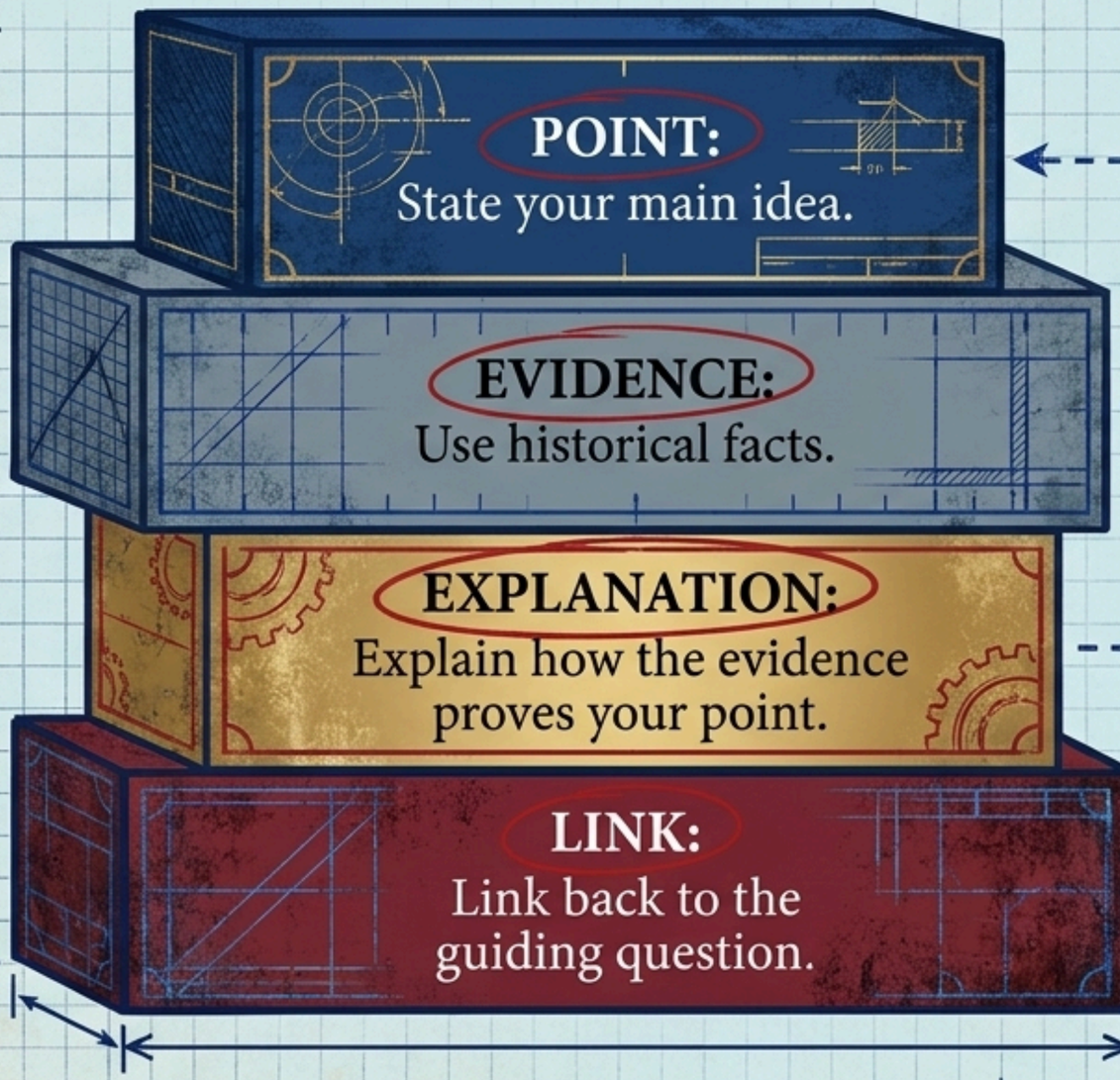
Secret webs of defence dragging nations together.

I - Imperialism / Industrial Rivalry:

Fierce competition for raw materials and colonies.

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WRITING LIKE A HISTORIAN: The P.E.E.L. Method



Example: Militarism was a major cause of World War I because it created deep paranoia among European nations.

Example: In 1906, Britain launched the Dreadnought, causing Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II to build a massive rival fleet.

Example: This Anglo-German naval arms race meant nations mass-produced weapons, ensuring they were primed for conflict.

Example: Therefore, this atmosphere of fear meant Europe was physically and psychologically ready for war before 1914.

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SUMMARY & KNOWLEDGE CHECK

M — Armies & arms races built an atmosphere of fear.

A — Secret treaties guaranteed a chain reaction.

I — Industry drove a scramble for global colonies.

N — Extreme pride and rebellion destabilised borders.

Retrieval Challenge: Can you answer these without looking back?

1. What was the name of the powerful British battleship launched in 1906?
2. Which three nations made up the Triple Entente?
3. How did the Industrial Revolution fuel the Scramble for Africa?

CLASSIFIED

Once you can answer these three questions, you are ready to move on to your interactive activity!

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