Slide 1

Causes of the Great War

Nationalism

Slide 2

Notes

In Europe during the Middle Ages the administration of states, regions or territories was defined by how men gave their loyalty to a city state, a feudal lord or a religious group.
With the advent of the **Modern Era** and the **French Revolution** however a new idea began to emerge.
The concept of **Nationalism** came into being where various communities throughout Europe began to develop **'national' identities** based on shared characteristics such as culture, language, race, religion, political goals or a belief in a common ancestry.
Nationalism is a political, social, and economic system characterized by promoting the interests of a particular nation, particularly with the aim of gaining and maintaining self-governance, or full sovereignty, over the group's homeland.
The political ideology therefore holds that a nation should govern itself, free from unwanted outside interference, and is linked to the concept of **self-determination**.
Nationalism therefore seeks to preserve the nation's culture. It often also involves a sense of pride in the nation's achievements, and is closely linked to the concept of patriotism.

In the age of European nationalism, the principle was generally recognized that each nationality should form a state—its state—and that the state should include all members of that nationality.

Nationalism was the ideological impetus that, over the century, transformed Europe.

Rule by religious heads and foreign control of territory began to be replaced by self-determination and newly formed national governments

slide 3

Notes

The birth of nationalist aspirations for unity and independence throughout Europe had much to do with France.
The French Revolution had inspired people all over Europe. It spread the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity and generated the spirit of nationalism.
Napoleon Bonaparte, though he established a monarchy in France, carried forward the revolutionary ideals of equality and nationalism.
From 1803-1815, Napoleon and his armies traversed Europe to try to unite the continent under French control, and in so doing he unwittingly spread his ideal of nationalism, which was the idea of national pride and unity.

Napoleon's empire gave to Europe a form of unity, even though it was imposed by him through conquests. A new concept emerged which bound people together with a sense of belonging and unity. Nations began to be formed by those who shared a common tradition and common territory.

A wave of Nationalism was a key factor in the development of Europe in the 19th century, as it swept the European continent and transformed many countries.

Some newly formed nations, such as Germany and Italy were formed by uniting various regional states with a common "national identity".

Others, such as Greece, Serbia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, were formed by uprisings against the Ottoman Empire and Russia.

Slide 4

Notes

While it is natural and healthy for the people of a country to have a reasonable amount of pride in their Nation, there have been many occasions in modern world history where that pride has been transformed / hijacked to create extreme forms of Patriotism, Jingoism and Xenophobia.
These in turn can be used to induce over confidence in the righteousness of one's own country, while denigrating aspects of the cultures of other countries that are considered inferior and promoting fear of them.

A key issue for study is – how did ordinary people within the various nations of pre-war Europe develop levels of toxic Nationalism that contributed to the outbreak of the Great War?

Public Education

Literacy & Critical Thinking

Slide 6

Pre War Public Education

Notes
One relevant factor that contributed to the causes of the Great War is provided by the nature of public education. In Britain for example, reforms in the 1870s made it possible for most children to learn to read, evidenced by the fact that the number of English newspaper publications doubled between 1880 and 1900.

This was an education trend that likewise occurred in the States of our newly federated Australian nation in the decade before the War, as well as in other Dominion nations and in many industrialized countries in western Europe.

Literacy however is a 'relative' concept. A 'basic' level of community literacy is considered to be a critical key performance indicator for an 'advanced' nation because it enables its people to read, comprehend the information they receive in their media communications and to follow any instructions they are given.

Slide 7

Basic Literacy Vs Critical Thinking
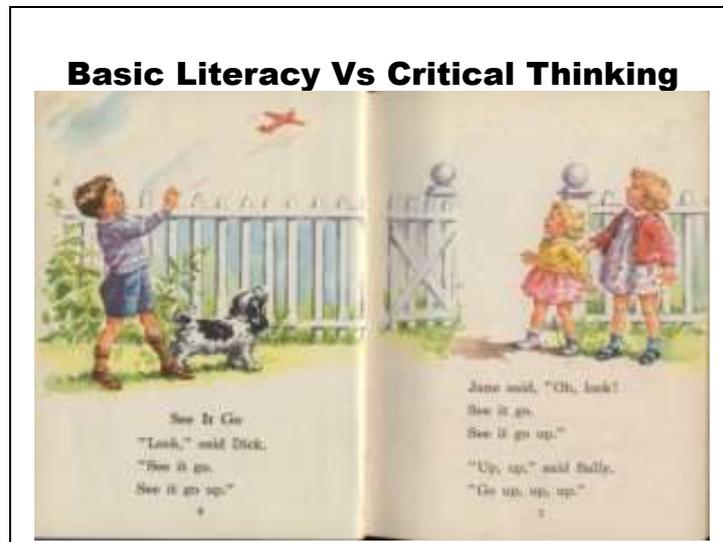
Notes
In the pre-war era a majority of the adult people in the world who were able to read were only literate to a 'basic' level, which meant they could just *'read'* and comprehend a simple article in a newspaper.

In 1914 only small proportions of the populations of the nations of the day had actually received the 'advanced' education needed for them to be endowed with *'critical thinking'* skills.

These are the higher level skills that endow an individual with the ability to be able to critique the difference between a brief / sensational newspaper story based solely on a journalist's personal 'assertions' and 'opinions,' in contrast with a more in-depth balanced and insightful article based on 'facts' backed by 'evidence' that uses reasoning and a 'logical line of argument' to support an assertion.

Consequently most ordinary people within the belligerent nations prior to the Great War obtained their information from *'tabloid'* style newspapers which tended to *'sensationalize'* some elements of an event while also employing the technique of '*hyperbole'*- whereby aspects of a story were frequently 'exaggerated' in an appeal to audiences with lower level literacy skills.

In those circumstances it was not difficult for publishers of newspapers, magazines and books to provide basic nationalistic and jingoistic stories/ depictions with sentiments that the average person in the belligerent nations took to be truisms.

Slide 8

Most people in each of the pre-war nations of Europe had some reasons to believe in the cultural, economic and military supremacy of their own nation.

However more extreme attitudes and overconfidence in many nations were fuelled by things like jingoistic press reporting.

The pages of newspapers were often packed with nationalist rhetoric and inflammatory stories or rumours about rival nations.

Nationalism could also be found in other aspects of popular culture, including literature, music and theatre.

Royals, politicians and diplomats of the various European nations did little to deflate nationalism – and some actively contributed to it with provocative remarks and rhetoric. Nationalism gave citizens excessive confidence in their nation, their governments and their military strength. It assured them that their country was fair, righteous and without blame. In contrast, nationalist ideas demonised rival nations, caricaturing them as aggressive, scheming, deceitful, backward or uncivilised.

It convinced many citizens their nation was being threatened by the plotting, scheming and hungry imperialism of its rivals.

On the other hand, nationalist and militarist rhetoric assured people that if war erupted, their nation would emerge victorious.

In concert with its brothers, imperialism and militarism, nationalism contributed to a mass delusion that made a European war seem both necessary and winnable.

A new and aggressive nationalism, different from its predecessors, emerged in Europe at the end of the 19th century… The new nationalism engaged the fierce us/them group emotions – loyalty inwards, aggression outwards – that characterise human relations at simpler sociological levels, like the family or the tribe.

What was new was attaching these passions to the nation… In its outward-looking dimension, the new nationalism was fully a movement of the 'age of imperialism' – of the 'great game', the 'scramble for Africa', the enterprise of great powers."

Europe's pre-war nationalism and its indifference to war can be partly explained by its 19th century history. Aside from the Crimean War (1853-56) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), the 1800s were a century of comparative peace for Europe. Citizens of England, France and Germany had grown accustomed to colonial wars.
These conflicts were fought against undeveloped and under-equipped opponents in far away places, and were mostly brief and victorious.
Ultra-nationalists placed the interests of their own country above the interests of other countries.
Rampant Nationalism was prevalent in early 20th century Europe and was thus a significant contributing factor to the outbreak of the Great War.

Slide 9

Pre War Invasion Literature

Notes

This slide shows the *cover of The Battle of Dorking, a typical example of anti-German invasion fiction*

Britain had spent the 19th century advancing her imperial and commercial interests and avoiding wars – however the unification of Germany, the speed of German armament and the bellicosity of Kaiser Wilhelm II caused concern among British nationalists.

England's 'penny press' – cheap serialised novels, essays and short stories – fuelled foreign rivalries by publishing incredible fictions about foreign intrigues, espionage, future war and invasion.

The Battle of Dorking (**1871**), provides one of the best known examples of 'invasion literature', with a wild tale about an invasion of England by German forces.

By 1910 a Londoner could buy dozens of tawdry novellas, each gamely warning of German, Russian or French aggression, perpetrated against England or her interests.

This invasion literature often employed racial stereotyping or innuendo: the German was painted as cold, cruel and calculating, the Russian was an uncultured barbarian, the Frenchman was a leisure-seeking layabout, the Chinese were a race of murderous opium-smoking savages.

Penny novelists, cartoonists and satirists mocked the rulers of these countries. Two of the most popular targets were the German Kaiser and the Russian Tsar, who were both ridiculed for their arrogance, excessive ambition or megalomania.

Slide 10

Notes
The British Empire was an important source of nationalism

In 1870, some forty years prior to the outbreak of the Great War, Britain was the most industrially advanced country in Europe.

Britain had enjoyed two centuries of imperial, commercial and naval dominance, with her pre-war empire spanning **one quarter** of the globe, while she also possessed the largest navy in the world.

In that period Britain did not want to trouble herself with the continental affairs of Europe, as her main concerns were to preserve her overseas empire and her overseas trade routes via the Royal Navy.

Ironically, before 1890, her chief enemies had been France and Russia, who would become her Allies in the Great War. The colonial interests of France often clashed with those of Britain, as the two countries had been colonial rivals in Asia, Egypt and Africa.

Russia's interest in the Balkan area also alarmed Britain, as British naval interests in the Mediterranean Sea were perceived to be threatened.

However, **after 1890**, as Germany increased its naval forces it was therefore perceived to become the major threat to Britain's naval supremacy and trade routes, and Germany gradually evolved to became Britain's chief enemy.

British nationalism was fuelled by a century of comparative peace and prosperity, as her Empire had flourished and expanded, its naval strength had grown and Britons had known only colonial wars.

Britain's 19th century conflicts had been fought against undeveloped and under-equipped opponents in far-away places such as Kashmir, the Sudan, and South Africa and were mostly brief and victorious. Thus these prior conflicts would prove to provide little of value to British military tactics in the Great War.

Slide 11

Notes
Europe's nationalism and its indifference to war can be explained. Aside from the Crimean War (1853-56) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), the 1800s were a century of comparative peace for Europe. Citizens of England, France and Germany had grown accustomed to colonial wars. These conflicts were fought against undeveloped and under-equipped opponents in far away places, and were mostly brief and victorious.
With the exception of France, which was defeated by the Prussians in 1871, none of Europe's Great Powers had experienced a significant military defeat for more than half a century. This indifference to war, along with the arms race, contributed to a growing delusion of invincibility. Britons believed their naval power, backed by the economic might of the British Empire, would give them the upper hand in any war.
The Germans placed great faith in Prussian military efficiency, their industrial base, their growth in armaments and their expanding fleet of battleships and U-boats (submarines). In the event of a war, the German high command had supreme confidence in the Schlieffen Plan, a pre-emptive military strategy designed to win a war against Germany's eastern and western neighbours (Russia and France).

Within Russia, the tsar believed his throne and empire were protected by God – as well as Russia's massive standing army of 1.5 million men, Europe's largest peacetime land force. Russia's commanders believed its enormous population gave it the upper hand over the much smaller nations of western Europe. The French placed their faith in a wall of concrete fortresses and defences running the length of their eastern border, capable of deterring and withstanding any German attack.

Slide 12

France had been the dominant power in Europe for centuries.

Napoleon I and Napoleon III had attempted to dominate Europe. However in 1871, France was defeated by Prussia, and as a consequence lost two of her provinces: Alsace and Lorraine.

From 1871 up until the end of the Great War, France's greatest ambition was to recover Alsace and Lorraine from Germany.

She also wanted to prevent the possibility of another defeat by Germany, by making diplomatic alliances with other important powers in Europe (Russia and Britain).

France also sought to recover her national prestige by acquiring overseas colonies (e.g. Morocco and Syria).

Slide 13

Pre-War Russian Nationalism

Notes
Russia was the largest and most populous country in Europe. Her Empire extended from the shores of the Arctic Ocean to those of the Black Sea and from the Baltic Sea eastwards to the Pacific Ocean.

Despite her size, Russia was still territorially ambitious and sought to expand in all directions.

In 1870, Russia broke the Treaty of Paris and renewed her aggression in the Balkans. Thus, her territorial ambitions clashed with the interests of Austria-Hungary and Britain. However, Russia did not retreat. Being a 'landlocked' state, she wanted to acquire warm water ports in the Balkans.

Moreover, as most of the Balkan peoples were of the Slavic race, and two thirds of the Russian people were Slavs, she claimed to be the protector of her brother races as a reason for her expansion.

Within Russia, the Tsar believed his throne and empire were protected by God. Militarily, Russia's massive standing army of 1.5 million men constituted Europe's largest peacetime land force, and its army commanders believed its enormous population and man power would give it the advantage in any conflicts with the much smaller nations of western Europe.

Slide 14

Notes

Germany was united in 1871 following the Franco-Prussian War, and via industrialization she rapidly became the strongest economic and military power in Europe, under the leadership of the Prussian Otto von Bismarck.
From 1871 to 1890, Germany attempted to preserve her dominant position in Europe by forming a series of peaceful alliances with other powers. After 1890, Germany was more aggressive. She wanted to build up her influence in every part of the world.

German nationalism and xenophobia was no less intense, than that in other European countries, though it derived from different origins.
German nationalism or 'Pan-Germanism' was the political glue that bound these states together. The leaders of post-1871 Germany relied on nationalist sentiment to consolidate and strengthen the new nation and to gain public support.
German culture – from the poetry of Goethe to the music of Richard Wagner – was promoted and celebrated.
German foreign policy in these years was best expressed by the term **'Weltpolitik'** (World Politics). Because German ambitions were extended to many parts of the globe, Germany came into serious conflicts with all other major powers of Europe (except Austria-Hungary) from 1890 to 1914.

German nationalism was backed by German militarism; the state of the nation was defined and reflected by the strength of its military forces. The new Kaiser, Wilhelm II, was the personification of this new Germany.

Both the Kaiser and his nation were young, nationalistic, obsessed with military power and imperial expansion. The Kaiser was proud of Germany's achievements but nervous about its future; he was envious of Great Britain, and desperate for national success.

In the Kaiser's mind, the main obstacle to German expansion was Britain. Wilhelm envied Britain's vast empire and enormous naval power – but he thought the British avaricious and hypocritical. He found it galling that the British government, which oversaw the world's largest empire, opposed German colonial expansion in Africa and Asia. Consequently, prior to the outbreak of the Great War, the British became a popular target in the pre-war German press, where Britain was painted as expansionist, selfish, greedy and obsessed with money.

Anti-British sentiment intensified during the Boer War of 1899-1902, when Britain's armies fought against farmer-settlers for control of South Africa.

Slide 15

The Pre-War Austrian-Hungarian Empire

Notes
Austria-Hungary was established as the **Dual Monarchy** in 1867. The Dual Monarchy ruled over a large empire consisting of many nationalities, but only the Austrians and the Hungarians had the right to rule.

The other nationalities Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Rumanians and Poles resented their loss of political freedom, and many desired political independence.

Thus the policy of the Dual Monarchy was to suppress the nationalist movements both inside and outside the empire.

Slide 16
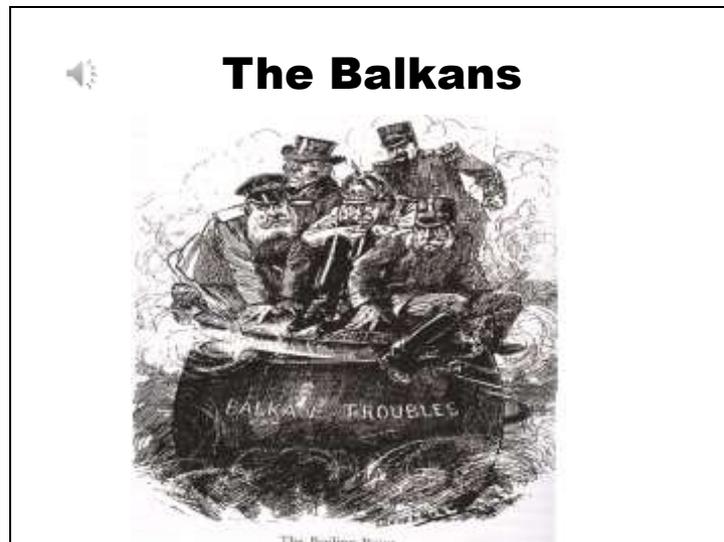
Notes
A key objective of the Dual Monarchy was to gain political control over the Balkan Peninsula, where nationalist movements were rife and were always giving encouragement to the nationalist movements within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The centre of the nationalist movements in the Balkans was Serbia. Serbia always hoped to unite with the Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire so as to create a large Serbian state.

Therefore the first enemy of Austria-Hungary from 1871 to 1914 was Serbia. Besides Serbia, Austria-Hungary also hated Russia because Russia, being a Slav country, always backed up Serbia in any Austro-Serbian disputes.

Slide 17

Notes

As the Great Powers of Europe beat their chests and filled their people with a sense of righteousness and superiority in the early 20th Century, another and different form of **nationalism** was on the rise in southern Europe.

This nationalism was not about supremacy or military power – but the right of ethnic groups to independence, autonomy and self-government.

With the world divided into large empires and spheres of influence, many different regions, races and religious groups wanted freedom from their imperial masters.

In Russia for example, more than **80 ethnic groups** in eastern Europe and Asia were forced to speak the Russian language, worship the Russian Tsar and practice the Russian Orthodox religion.

Nationalist groups contributed to the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in eastern Europe, by seeking to throw off Muslim rule.

No nationalist movement had a greater impact in the outbreak of war than Slavic groups in the Balkans. **Pan-Slavism**, the belief that the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe should have their own nation, was a powerful force in the region.

Slavic nationalism was strongest in Serbia, where it had risen significantly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pan-Slavism was particularly opposed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its control and influence over the region.

Aggravated by Vienna's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, young Serbs joined radical nationalist groups like the 'Black Hand'. These groups hoped to drive Austria-Hungary from the Balkans and establish a 'Greater Serbia', a unified state for all Slavic people.

It was this pan-Slavic nationalism that inspired the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914, an event that would lead directly to the outbreak of World War I.

Slide 18
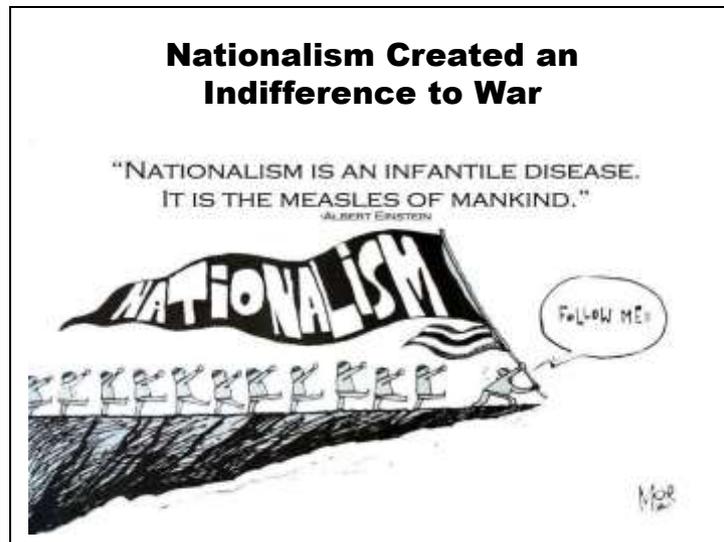
Notes

With the exception of France, which was defeated by the Prussians in 1871, none of Europe's Great Powers had experienced a significant military defeat for more than half a century (that is, beyond the living memory of those in authority).

This lead to a widely shared 'indifference' to war, as widespread xenophobia, jingoism and nationalism, along with the 'arms race', contributed to a growing delusion of national invincibility, and an complete lack of comprehension as to the impact and consequences of what a modern conflict war would be like in the 20th Century.

Britons believed their naval power, backed by the economic might of the British Empire, would give them the upper hand in any war.

Germans placed great faith in Prussian military efficiency, their industrial base, their growth in armaments and their expanding fleet of battleships and U-boats (submarines).

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