

It has been the custom of historians to divide the factors for wars into immediate and underlying causes. Among these underlying causes, the economic factor is generally placed at the head of the list. Indeed, the most important of these was the industrial and commercial rivalry between Germany and Great Britain.

Germany, after its unification in 1871, went through a period of economic miracle. By 1914, she was producing more iron and steel than Britain and France combined. In chemicals, in dye, and in the manufacture of scientific equipment she led the world. The products of her industries were crowding British manufactures in nearly every market for continental Europe, in the Far East and in Britain itself.

There is evidence that certain interests in Great Britain were becoming seriously alarmed over the menace of German competition.

There seemed to be a strong conviction that Germany was waging deliberate and deadly economic warfare upon Britain to capture her market by unfair methods. Thus, for Britain to allow Germany to be victorious in this struggle would mean the destruction of her prosperity and a grave threat to her national existence.

There are indications that the French also were alarmed by the German industrial expansion. In 1870, France had lost possession of the expensive iron and coal deposit of Lorraine, which had gone to swell the industrial growth of Germany. To be sure, the French had plenty of iron left in the Briery Fields, but they were afraid that their enemy might eventually reach out and grab these too. Besides, France was under necessity of importing coal and this galled her pride almost as much as the loss of the iron.

In addition, the Russian ambition to gain control of Constantinople and other portions of Turkish territory conflicted with German plans for reserving the Turkish Empire as their happy hunting ground of commercial privilege. Then Russia and Austria a close ally of Germany were rivals for a monopoly of trade with the Balkan kingdoms of Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.

