

Name:

Great Britain Country Profile

Role in WWI

During WWI, Britain and Germany were bitter enemies. These sentiments (feelings, emotions) spilled over into the first few years after the war as British antagonism (rivalry, opposition) towards Germany dominated public opinion. This growing anger stemmed from the economic collapse that Great Britain was experiencing, a crisis caused by the strenuous economic costs of the war effort. These economic factors angered the British public as cries across the country were heard to “**Make Germany Pay**” in order to relieve the economic burden that Britain was experiencing.

Historical Background, 1918-1936

The defeat of Germany at the end of WWI also meant the end of the German challenge to Britain’s mastery of the seas. Britain now wanted to retreat from the problems of the European continent in order to deal with more pressing domestic problems. During the 1930’s, England’s economy was devastated by the **Great Depression**. England’s unemployment rate doubled reaching 20% of the work force while their export revenue decreased 50%. Furthermore, England opposed any commitment to uphold the security of the newly formed states of Eastern Europe as the public put its faith in the League of Nations to take up the responsibility of maintaining the balance of power in Europe.

Foreign Policy

On the heels of the economic devastation and large number of casualties of WWI, the horrific results of the Great Depression, and lack of military preparation, Great Britain’s main foreign policy was to avoid another war. In order to accomplish this goal, Britain maintained a strong navy which was second only to the United States, protected its colonies, and maintained strong ties with its allies. France was Britain’s major ally during the inter-war period even though each country differed significantly on whether or not the Treaty of Versailles mistreated Germany. Great Britain believed that Germany was indeed treated too harshly and showed a willingness to revise this treaty; however, the French had no such wishes. The central goal of the British after the First World War was to offer the hand of friendship toward Germany in order to avoid encouraging a spirit of revenge. There was also great hostility to the communist Soviet Union which many British business groups viewed as a much greater threat than fascism. This resulted in a strong opposition to an alliance with the Soviet Union who had remained in political and diplomatic isolation for most of the inter-war period. Furthermore, British and French relations were strained by two agreements between France and the Soviet Union that were signed outside the League of Nations. This increased Great Britain’s willingness to negotiate with Germany and led to the signing of an **Anglo-German Naval Agreement** that allowed Germany to begin rebuilding its navy. By October of 1935 the unity between Great Britain and France completely collapsed when Italy invaded Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia). In response Britain imposed economic sanctions on Italy. However, France did not support these sanctions. This disagreement between France and Britain damaged the credibility of the League of Nations proving that it would be hard pressed to stop military aggression in Europe.

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Country Profile Questions

1. What are the greatest issues facing your country?
2. What countries do you see as potential allies?
3. What countries cause you see as potential threats?
4. List your top 3 foreign policy goals in order of importance.