

The responsibility of
britain foreign policies
in 1870-1914 leading
to world war ...



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Topic: The responsibility of Britain foreign policies in 1870-1914 leading to World War I
Introduction: In 1914, a human disaster appeared in our history which was the First World War. The world was in the chaos at that time. At last, Germany was the loser and “ Big Three “ which were America, Britain and France forced her to bear most of the responsibilities for the war and signed the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. However, only one country’s ambition cannot generate a war. WW1 was the last outbreak of conflicts between European countries. Other countries had different standards of responsibility to contribute World War I.

Britain was one of the countries. To a lesser extent, Britain’s foreign policies had the responsibilities to lead the World War I. They helped to keep a peaceful Europe, at the same time, they contributed conflicts in Europe. The foreign policies could be divided into alliance system, armament race, new imperialism and responses to Sarajevo incident which I would like to illustrate in the following. Alliance system: To begin with, it was the alliance system. The definition of it is a group of nations or countries formed to support a common goal. The original founder was Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck who was Germany’s prime minister.

He formed the Triple alliance in 1882 with Austria and Italy in order to monitor France which was Germany’s rival and converged power. To resist it, Britain, France and Russia formed the Triple Entente in 1907. To Britain, the main use of Triple Entente was liked the French meaning of “ Entente ” - understanding. Also, Britain did not sign any collective treaties in the alliance. In other words, the nature of it was peace, not for war. This policy had influence on World War I. It helped to prevent conflicts or wars between

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European powers. Firstly, Britain kept a stable relationship with France and Russia through the alliance system. Before the triple entente, Britain had colonial and other conflicts with two countries. With France, they had an argument in Egypt, Morocco, Newfoundland, some areas of West and Central Africa, Siam, Madagascar and the New Hebrides. With the alliance system, they signed the Entente cordiale in 1904 for ending this problem. The most important treaty was France would not affect British actions in Egypt and Britain would give assistance to France in Morocco. With Russia, they had conflicts in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet which called "The Great Game" in history.

They signed the Anglo-Russian Entente in 1907 to stop this struggle. The essential part was in Persia, Britain got the southwest part and Russian got the north part. Britain stopped the potential colonial wars with two countries and wars would not appear between 3 big European powers. Also, the alliance system had a deterrent function. Considered the alliance of 3 big powers, some countries would not announce war so easily. Take Two Morocco crises as an example, Germany and France wanted to control Morocco which was in a serious Strategic position.

In the first time (1906), Germany Kaiser Wilhelm II visited and announced Moroccan independence dramatically, which was a provocative challenge to French influence in Morocco. Two countries had mobilization (an act of assembling and making both troops and supplies ready for war). and it seemed to be a war. However, with the alliance system, Britain said that she would support France and made two countries to have Algeciras Conference for solving problem. Britain led Germany to give up. In the second time <https://assignbuster.com/the-responsibility-of-britain-foreign-policies-in-1870-1914-leading-to-world-war-i/>

(1911), Germany sent a gunboat Panther to Morocco and it was a military action to France.

Regarding the alliance system, Britain supported France again. Sir Edward Grey, which was the British Foreign Secretary, he wrote: "what the French contemplate doing is not wise, but we cannot under our agreement interfere". Also, Edward Grey, who was Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that Britain would start war with Germany in the Morocco crisis. Germany withdrew the gunboat later and a war was prevented. In the alliance system, Britain could deter other countries to stop war. However, the alliance system also had bad effects on World War I because it led to a big suspicion between European powers.

The Entente Alliance was a secret treaty which other countries did not know the nature of the alliance. They did not know it was a military or a simple alliance. In order to find it, Germany started the Morocco crisis to check the standard of British help to France in the alliance system. Also, to defend the involvement of Britain in war because of the alliance system, Germany used the Schlieffen plan and annexed Belgium, which was a vital strategic country of Britain. This made Britain join war and the war became World War I. In my view, Britain's alliance system policy brought more peace than conflicts.

The basic aim of Britain's alliance system was to keep peace and she did not want it to have any military use. The evidence was there were no any collective military treaties. Also, thanks to the alliance system, Britain stopped a lot of colonial conflicts. Although some people argued that the alliance system made a big suspicion between European powers, this was not any clear

relationship between it and World War I. Moreover, the triple entente was used to resist triple alliance. The root suspicion was built by Germany, not Britain and other 2 countries. Therefore, the alliance system of Britain tried to avoid the World War I.

Armament race: Also, it was the armament race. It means competition between two or more countries for the best armed forces. As David Stevenson (World War I's historian) said "the arms race did precipitate the First World War", there was a relationship between World War I and Armament race. The armament race can be divided into military and naval races. Britain is an island country and was a colonial empire; therefore, it focused on the naval armament and the main competitor was Germany. To the positive part, it makes a military balance of European powers which mean no country would be too powerful and start war individually.

After the retirement of Bismarck, the new Kaiser Wilhelm II built numerous armaments and stated that "Germany's future is on the sea" which meant a big increase in naval power. To fight back, Britain had a naval race with Germany which was about dreadnoughts (a predominant type of 20th-century battleship). According to the figure 1, in 1914, the number of Britain dreadnoughts was 29 and Germany dreadnought was 17. It seems that Britain broke the balance. However, when we look to the figure 2, in 1914, the number of Britain soldiers was 1,600,000 but Germany soldiers were 812,000.

Britain's naval power was a resistance to Germany's military and made a balance of the countries. Furthermore, Britain tried to call other countries for

decreasing armaments through Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, If your rivals and others are increasing power, will you not follow them? The situation appeared in the countries. In 1880 - 1914, Britain's naval tonnage rose from 650, 000 to 2, 714, 000. At the same time, Britain's naval race encouraged the whole armament races between countries. According to figure 3, only 34 years (1880 -1914), the soldiers (military and naval) of all countries increased amazingly.

Take Germany, Britain and Russia as an example, German increased 465 000, which was a double . France had 367 000 growth and Russia raised 561 000 troops. The participation of Britain intensified the armament race. With the increasing armaments, lot of countries would more want to use war than conference for tackling problems. The most obvious example was the World War I. In my opinion, Britain's Armament race policy brought more peace than conflicts again. With the strong naval armament, Britain could check and stop Germany's ambition.

Also, she made a military balance of European powers so no country could start a big war individually. Nevertheless, some views thought that the Britain's Armament race led tension to European powers, especially Germany. However, only Armament race would lead a bad relationship or even a war? In 1912, Britain's navy visited German Kiel's port and it showed a normal relationship. At last, the armament race was founded by Germany . The other countries were forced to respond to it. The main responsibility of armament race was not in Britain. Figure 1 (Naval military) [pic] Figure 2

(Armies) Country | Number of armies in 1880 | Number of armies in 1914 | |

Britain | 136, 000 | 160, 000 | | France | 503, 000 | 777, 000 | | Russia | 766, 000 | 1, 000, 000 | |

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000 | 1, 400, 000 | | Germany | 419, 000 | 812, 000 | | Austria | 267, 000 |
800, 000 | | Italy | N/A | 300, 000 | Figure 3 (naval and army Soldiers)

Country	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers	Number of soldiers
			in 1880	in 1890	in 1900	in 1910	in 1914		
Britain	367, 000	420, 000	624, 000	571, 000	523, 000				
France	543, 000	542, 000	715, 000	769, 000	910, 000				
Russia	791, 000	677, 000	1, 162, 000	1, 285, 000	1, 352, 000				
Germany	426, 000	504, 000	524, 000	694, 000	891, 000				
Italy	216, 000	284, 000							

000 | 225, 000 | 322, 000 | 345, 000 | New imperialism: Besides, we need to

consider the new imperialism of Britain. New Imperialism refers to the colonial expansion adopted by Europe's powers during the 19th and early 20th centuries, it stopped until World War I. Britain was a colonial empire at that time and she had lot of colonial conflicts with the other countries. it led the bad relationship between the European powers. Honestly speaking, new imperialism led Britain to target the colonials which ignored or avoided the European affairs. However, it generated different colonial's rivals.

As mentioned above, Britain was a colonial enemy of France and Russia. Without the threat of Germany and alliance entente, they were still enemies. Moreover, Britain and Germany had colonial conflict in South Africa. Britain started two Boer Wars with Boer republic which was the local government. In the second Boer War (1899-1902), Germany sent military support to Boers and Britain was defeated. After that, Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a telegram to Boer republic for the congratulation of victory. It led the resentment of Britain. Besides, Britain supported France's colony in the Morocco crisis to resist Germany. It led their relationship to become worse.

The evidence could show that Britain's new imperialism brought more conflicts than peace. Nevertheless, some people think that her new imperialism did not have direct relationship to World War I. World War I was an explosion of all European resentment to each other. This resentment included the colonial conflicts which mainly made by Britain. Moreover, after Britain won the colonial conflicts, the losers started to build more navies and contributed naval races which had a direct relationship to WW1. Therefore, the Britain's new imperialism had responsibility to lead to World War I.

Responses to Sarajevo incident: At last, I would like to discuss about the Britain reaction to Sarajevo incident.

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the Austria Empire and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, were assassinated in Sarajevo by a Black Hand member, Gavrilo Princip. This assassination brought Austria and Serbia to a local war (Austrian-Serbian war) and later became a world war. In history, this accident was the most recent reason and a trigger to cause World War I. Britain's responses played a vital role to determinate the appearance of World War I. In this tense situation, Britain tried her best to settle down the problem and called for the peace. On July 24, Sir Edward Grey (British Foreign Secretary) asked Germany, France, and Italy " who had no direct interests in Serbia, should act together for the sake of peace simultaneously".

Britain wanted the other countries to not join the Austrian-Serbian war and maintained the peace. On July 27, Sir Edward Grey sent a telegram to Germany and stated " Other issues might be raised that would supersede the dispute between Austria and Serbia...as long as Germany would work to <https://assignbuster.com/the-responsibility-of-britain-foreign-policies-in-1870-1914-leading-to-world-war-i/>

keep peace, I would keep closely in touch". Britain tried to stop Germany for helping Austria because it would intensify the local war. On July 29, Britain advised France and Russia that she would not support them in war. On August 1, Britain sent a telegram to Russia to ask for peaceful method but it was too late. On August 4, after the invasion of Germany into Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany.

In 2 weeks, although Britain was very enthusiastic to find a peaceful way for avoiding a big war, she could not change the other countries and the circumstance. However, some actions of Britain also contributed the World War I. The most obvious example was she had a vague response to join in the war. This led a dilemma to Germany. On July 29: The British Ambassador was informed by the German that Germany would declare war with France, and need to send its army through Belgium. Germany tried to secure Britain's neutrality in such an action. However, Britain had no response and Germany used Schlieffen plan (annexed Belgium) for preventing Britain's sudden attack which made Britain to declare war.

If Britain could do more and had a clear position to join in the war, perhaps World War I would not appear. For me, Britain's Responses to the Sarajevo incident brought more conflicts than peace. Although she had some policies to ask for peace, they were useless. Britain was the leader of the triple Entente and had a big influence on international world. She could advise her allies and other countries. However, the main concern of her was Belgium. If Germany did not annex Belgium, perhaps she would not join the war.

Besides, if she gave a clear view to the war, perhaps Germany would not be

involved the war, as we could see it in the Two Morocco crises. The reactions were big mistakes and a big responsibility to World War I. Conclusion:

Using a strange comparison, at that time, Britain was an introvert child. She only wanted to play lonely and kept the status quo. She did not want the other children to get her things so sometimes she would fight back. Later, when she saw the other children were divided into two groups, she felt isolated and lonely so she made friends with France and Russia. However, still she was introvert and she did not want a close relationship with them. Therefore, when 2 groups fought to each other, she tried to avoid it. Also, she did not want to fight to change the stable environment what she was enjoyed so she tried to stop the fight but she was unsuccessful. At the same time, Germany wanted to rob of her benefits .

To stop it, she joined the fight and World War I appeared. Overall, Britain wanted to keep the status quo because any change would affect her colonial benefits. Most of her policies were used to avoid conflicts and World War I, not make problems. Undoubtedly, Britain's foreign policies had less responsibility to lead the World War I. References World War I http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I Triple Entente http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Entente Anglo-Russian Entente http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Russian_Entente Entente cordiale http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entente_cordiale Two Moroccan Crises http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Moroccan_Crisis http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Moroccan_Crisis Naval race http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_naval_arms_race Armament race <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%AC%AC%E4%B8%80%E6%AC%A1%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C> <https://assignbuster.com/the-responsibility-of-britain-foreign-policies-in-1870-1914-leading-to-world-war-i/>

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