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BRITAIN AND EUROPE LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET L'EUROPE

FACTSHEET



At the end of the Second World War, Winston Churchill spoke of the need to create a “United States of Europe” considering that if the spread of communism from the Soviet Union was to be halted, a united Europe would be able to do so. Yet, quite interestingly, when asked about Britain’s different alliances, Churchill only ranked Europe in third place behind the United States of America and the Empire/ former colonies.

At the time when the idea came to establish ties between European countries eventually leading to the Treaty of Rome, Britain was asked to sign but did not. Britain claimed it was a global power and should not have to limit itself to Europe. It also had strong connections with the USA (known as the “Special Relationship”) which it did not wish to compromise. The United States, on the other hand, thought it was a mistake on Britain’s part claiming that being a part of Europe would develop trade further.

Only six years after the Treaty of Rome was signed, Britain applied to join the newly formed European Economic Community (EEC), only to see its application rejected by French President Charles De Gaulle on the grounds that Britain was not really interested in Europe and would act as a Trojan Horse for the United States. Britain’s second application was vetoed in exactly the same way. Britain finally joined the EEC in January 1973 while the conservative, Edward Heath, was Prime Minister. Heath thought just like Jean Monnet that political

and economic integration were necessary if further wars were to be avoided on the European continent. Britain also needed to establish and further secure economic connections with its closest neighbors. The Labour party, however, estimated that Britain had made a political mistake and should “seek a fundamental re-negotiation of the terms of entry” (quoted from the Labour party manifesto), and organized a referendum after it returned to power. More than 67% of the population voted in favor of being in the EEC. The situation that Britain was in domestically, however, did not improve under the Labour government; Britain’s ties with Europe were not being used or were of no use in this field, which led many politicians to reconsider their opinions.

Europe has always been a divisive issue in British politics causing divisions even within parties, let alone between them. In the Thatcher Era there was further division between Britain and Europe, since Britain was not prepared to accept a more federal Europe and certainly not a single currency. In Bruges in 1988, Margaret Thatcher denounced “a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels”.



EXTRACTS FROM TEXTS

Britain must have the right to make European migrants wait four years before receiving **welfare** or **council houses**, David Cameron will say, as he warns that he could be prepared to leave the E.U.

In his long-awaited speech on Europe, the Prime Minister will, for the first time, say that he will “rule nothing out” if fellow leaders reject his plans to **overhaul** the benefits system and suggests that he could be prepared to lead the campaign for a British exit.

The Daily Telegraph

Jean-Claude Juncker has privately accused David Cameron of confecting a row over business red tape in order to improve his electoral prospects at home.

The President of the European Commission is understood to have told colleagues that the Prime Minister’s call to ease the tax regime for internet start-ups was simply a ploy to boost his credentials among voters wavering with Ukip.

The Daily Telegraph

After being approached by Mr Cameron on the sidelines of the last European Council meeting before the election, Mr Juncker agreed to include the regulations in a major review of EU red tape.

But in a **disclosure** that further sets back the pair’s rocky relationship, Brussels sources disclosed that Mr Juncker initially dismissed the Prime Minister’s fears that the rules were pushing small firms to the brink as little more than pre-election posturing.

The Daily Telegraph

For many the question of whether Britain should leave the EU is founded on a great deal more than money. A large number of Eurosceptics strongly disapprove of handing over any measure of sovereignty to Brussels. Europhiles, meanwhile, can appear equally determined to achieve greater integration of nation states, no matter the cost, or the popular opposition.

One vital person, however, is clearly not in either of these ideological camps.

The Daily Telegraph

Theresa May yesterday suggested Britain should leave the European Union unless it embraces major reforms as she sought to crush a rebellion by Tory MPs.

The **Home Secretary**, a leading contender to succeed David Cameron, burnished her Eurosceptic credentials by flirting with the exit of Britain from Europe – the so-called ‘Brexit’.

But she told rebel colleagues they were picking the wrong battle by opposing British membership of the European Arrest Warrant.

The Daily Mail



Leaving the European Union is the biggest **threat** facing Britain, Ed Balls warned today.

Labour's **shadow chancellor** accused the Tories of 'flirting with exit' and warned walking away from Europe would be a 'disaster'.

Mr Balls sought use his speech to the British Chamber of Commerce to repair Labour's reputation on the economy after coming under attack from business leaders.

The Daily Mail

Britain should leave the European Union unless it changes, Theresa May has warned.

The Home Secretary said politicians who argue that the UK is better off in the EU 'whatever the terms, are wrong'.

Ranging beyond her law and order brief – in a move likely to fuel speculation about her leadership ambitions – Mrs May also warned red tape and regulations from Brussels is holding back the UK economy.

The Daily Mail

When David Cameron announced his **intention to hold a referendum on EU membership** two years ago, it caused multiple headaches for other European governments: the prospect of a **grim** and pointless negotiation, followed by British exit. But my impression from officials across the EU is that things are changing. No longer do European governments see this as the time when the UK leaves Europe. Instead, they will push Britain to face up to its Europeanness.

The Guardian

With the outcome of Britain's May general election becoming muddier by the day, other governments are growing bolder. They had been preparing for a clear election result, driven by Euroscepticism. No longer. Now they sense an opportunity to challenge the UK's sense of itself as apart from them, as more special.

The Guardian



THEME / VERSION

THÈME

1. Le Premier Ministre britannique a promis de consulter les Britanniques concernant la sortie de la Grande-Bretagne de l'Union Européenne en 2017. Son adversaire travailliste souhaite le maintien du royaume dans l'UE.
2. Le référendum pourrait être avancé en raison d'un gain de popularité du Parti pour l'indépendance du Royaume-Uni, dont le leader n'exclut pas de participer à un gouvernement de coalition avec les conservateurs.
3. L'opinion publique semble être divisée, et une petite majorité de Britanniques voterait pour le maintien du royaume dans l'Union Européenne. Certains voient une sortie de l'UE comme quelque chose de néfaste pour l'économie.
4. C'est une ironie que ce soit un Britannique qui a parlé le premier d'États-Unis d'Europe, alors que c'est la Grande-Bretagne qui pourrait être le premier pays à quitter l'union.
5. C'est le président français qui par deux fois s'est opposé à l'entrée de la Grande-Bretagne dans l'Europe, car il la voyait comme le cheval de Troie des États-Unis dans la CEE.

VERSION

1. Britain joined the EEC in 1973, and the 1975 referendum showed that 67% of British people supported this. The Labour party at that time was opposed though, whereas it is favorable today.
2. The Euro crisis made Britain wary of the single currency, and while Tony Blair wanted Britain to adopt the Euro when he was in power, fewer people want it today.
3. When transfers of power to the European Union came about, many people saw this as a loss of sovereignty of parliament. A lot of MPs still believe that national policies should not be decided by Europe.
4. Even though many Britons are wary of the EU, they still like visiting European countries. There are many living in European countries also, the large majority being in southern France and Spain.
5. A former conservative Prime Minister thought that political and economic integration was the best way of avoiding another war on the European continent.



THÈME

1. The British Prime Minister has promised to ask the British people's opinion about Great Britain's leaving the European Union in 2017. His labour counterpart wants for the kingdom to remain in the EU.
2. The referendum could be brought forward due to a surge in popularity of the United Kingdom Independence Party, whose leader is not ruling out taking part in a coalition government with the Conservatives.
3. Public opinion seems to be divided, and a small majority of British people would vote for the kingdom to remain in the European Union. Some see leaving the EU as something which will harm the economy.
4. It is ironic that it was a British person who first spoke of a United States of Europe, whereas it is Great Britain which may be the first country to leave the union.
5. It was the French president who, twice, opposed Great Britain's joining Europe, since he saw it as the United States' Trojan Horse in the EEC.

VERSION

1. La Grande-Bretagne a rejoint la CEE en 1973, et le référendum de 1975 a montré que 67% de la population y était favorable. Cependant, le parti travailliste de l'époque était contre, alors qu'il est favorable aujourd'hui.
2. La crise de l'Euro a rendu la Grande-Bretagne méfiant de la monnaie unique, et bien que Tony Blair voulait faire adopter l'Euro par la Grande-Bretagne quand il était au pouvoir, moins de gens en veulent aujourd'hui.
3. Quand les transferts de pouvoir à l'Union Européenne ont eu lieu, beaucoup de gens ont vu ceci comme une perte de la souveraineté du parlement. Beaucoup de députés pensent toujours que la politique nationale ne devrait pas être décidée par l'Europe.
4. Bien que beaucoup de Britanniques se méfient de l'Europe, ils aiment toujours visiter les pays européens. Il y en a également beaucoup qui vivent dans des pays européens, la grande majorité dans le sud de la France et en Espagne.
5. Un ancien Premier Ministre conservateur pensait que l'intégration politique et économique était la meilleure manière d'éviter une nouvelle guerre sur le continent européen.



VOCABULARY

agenda	ordre du jour
come (to) into effect	entrer en vigueur
Common Market	Marché commun
community law	droit communautaire
council houses	logement social
currency	devise étrangère
disclosure	révélation
enlarge (to) the European Union	élargir l'Union Européenne
entry	entrée
foreigner	étranger
forthcoming	à venir
founding treaty	traité fondateur
free trade	libre échange
goods	marchandises
grim	sombre
have (to) a say in	avoir son mot à dire
hold (to) a session	siéger
Home Secretary	équivalent britannique du ministre de l'intérieur
join (to) the E.U	adhérer à l'Union Européenne
Labour party	parti travailliste
lift (to) controls	lever les contrôles
member state	État membre
M.E.P.	député européen
monetary union	union monétaire
M.P. (Member of Parliament)	député
national	ressortissant
overhaul (to)	rénover
ploy	stratégie
postpone	remettre à plus tard
pro-Europe	en faveur de l'Europe
provision	disposition
ruling	décision
scheme	projet
Shadow Chancellor	Membre du cabinet fantôme (finances)
shift of power	transfert de compétences
subsidy	subvention
threat	menace
Trojan Horse	cheval de Troie
urge (to)	encourager
welfare	prestations sociales

- 1957** → The Treaty of Rome was signed by six nations, but not Britain. This saw the birth of the EEC (European Economic Community), also known as the Common Market.
- 1967** → The European Community was established.
- 1963** → Britain made its first application to join the European Community. This application was vetoed by French President Charles De Gaulle.
- 1967** → Britain made its second application to join the European Community, only to see its application vetoed again by the French President. The grounds for his veto were that Britain was hostile to European integration.
- 1973** → Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath took Britain into the European Community. The next Prime Minister (Harold Wilson) staged a referendum on Britain's membership, in which 67% of the population voted to remain in Europe.
- 1987** → Signing of the Single European Act, modifying the Treaty of Rome.
- 1991** → Maastricht Treaty signed, strengthening the European Parliament, establishing a European Central Bank, allowing for the creation of a common currency and a common defense policy. While Britain did sign the Maastricht Treaty, it obtained an 'opt-out' clause, meaning that it could be (and was) a part of the EEC, but would retain the British Pound (Sterling).
- 1992** → Britain is forced out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).
- 1993** → The European Union was formed.
- 1997** → The Schengen Pact comes into effect, although both the United Kingdom and Ireland maintain their rights to 'opt-out'.
- 2002** → The Euro became the official currency in eleven countries on January 1st. Public opinion in Britain was unfavorable to the new currency.
- 2004** → Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac clash during negotiations for a European Constitution.
- 2011** → David Cameron clashes with Europe over plans to introduce a levy on banks and restrict London's financial sector. The Prime Minister has promised to bring back powers from Brussels.



IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

■ FOR LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION

- “The British people thought they were joining a common market in 1973 and have ended up in an organisation that has the characteristics of an undemocratic federal union.” Justify this statement quoted by Nicholas Watt on May 21st 2014.
- Over the past forty years, many powers formerly held by Westminster have been ceded to Europe, resulting in a loss of control over certain areas of domestic policy. It is not up to Brussels to decide what should happen on the domestic front in Britain. Comment upon this statement.
- Today, two countries seem to dominate the European Union, making them unofficially the leaders of it. Why should a nation like Britain, with its long tradition as a strong country and its special relationship with other countries (like the United States), be dictated to by these two countries? Discuss.

■ AGAINST LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION

- Britain has gained a lot by being a member of the European Union, and has received a certain number of privileges. It has also contributed in many areas to European construction. Britain would have done this in vain if it were to leave the union now, whereas there is still more to be done. Discuss.
- Britain never hesitated to help its European allies during the twentieth century, showing that it does indeed believe in strong links with its neighbors in times of trouble. Leaving the European Union would look like Britain was turning its back on its friends, and would not necessarily be able to maintain such strong links in the future. Discuss.
- Even though it would maintain its seat on the UN security council, Britain would lose its place in the US-Russia-UN-EU quartet, the body which negotiates in the Middle East. This would weaken Britain’s influence on the world scene considerably. British firms would also have to face tariffs which could damage exportation. Leaving the European Union would therefore be a mistake. Discuss.