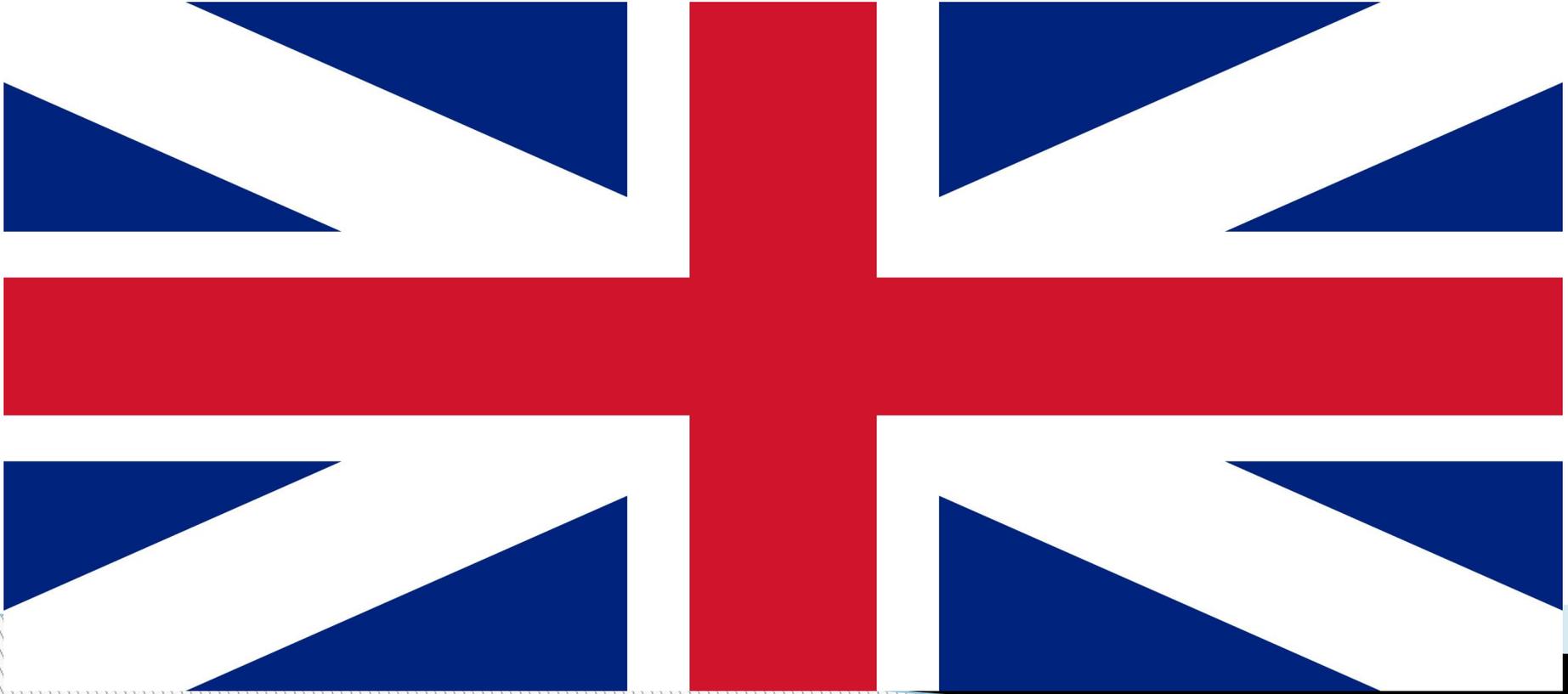


# History of Great Britain



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Иностранный язык: два иностранных языка

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# History of the United Kingdom



The **history of the United Kingdom** as a unified sovereign state began in 1707 with the political union of the kingdoms of England and Scotland, into a united Kingdom called Great

Britain. The Act of Union 1800 added the Kingdom of Ireland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

In 1927 the United Kingdom changed its formal title to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, usually shortened to Britain and (after 1945) to the United Kingdom or UK.

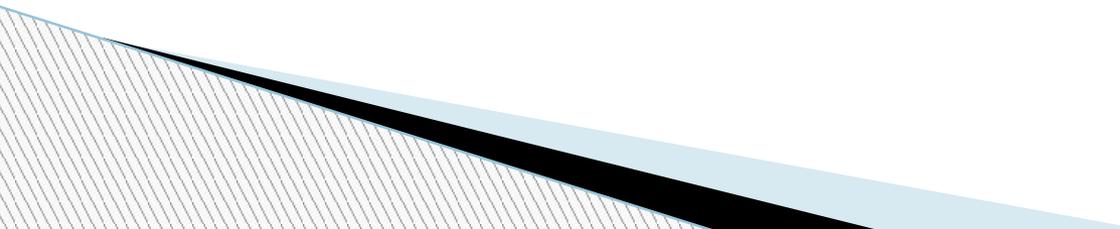
# Birth of the Union

The Kingdom of Great Britain came into being on 1 May 1707, as a result of the political union of the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland according to the Treaty of Union. It enabled the two kingdoms to be combined into a single kingdom, merging the two parliaments into a single parliament of Great Britain. Queen Anne became the first monarch of the new Great Britain.



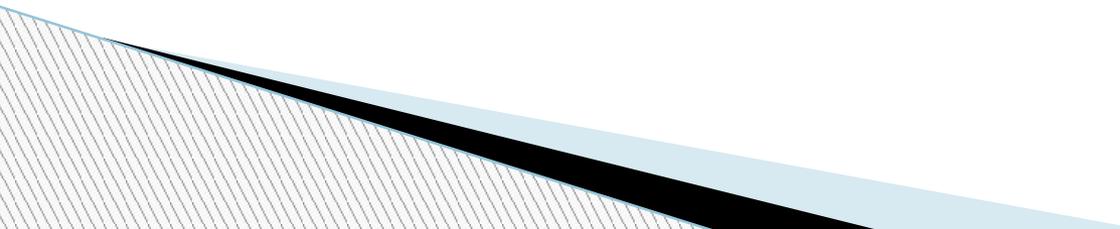
# British Empire

The Seven Years War, which began in 1756, was the first war waged on a global scale, fought in Europe, India, North America, the Caribbean, the Philippines and coastal Africa. The signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763) had important consequences for Britain and its empire. In North America, France's future as a colonial power there was effectively ended with the ceding of New France to Britain (leaving a sizeable French-speaking population under British control) and Louisiana to Spain. Spain ceded Florida to Britain. In India, the Carnatic War had left France still in control of its enclaves but with military restrictions and an obligation to support British client states, effectively leaving the future of India to Britain. The British victory over France in the Seven Years' War therefore left Britain as the world's dominant colonial power.



# Population Growth, Urbanization, and Industrialization

During the first half of the 18th century, the population of Great Britain increased by less than 15 percent. Between 1751 and 1801, the year of the first official census, the number rose by one-half to 16 million, and between 1801 and 1851, the population grew by more than two-thirds to 27 million. The reasons include a decline of deaths from infectious diseases, especially smallpox; an improved diet made possible by more efficient farming practices and the large-scale use of the potato; and earlier marriages and larger families, especially in those areas where new industries were starting up. Between 1760 and 1830 the production of cotton textiles increased twelvefold, making the product Britain's leading export.



# Victorian era

Victoria became queen in 1837 at age 18. Her long reign until 1901 saw Britain reach the zenith of its economic and political power. Exciting new technologies such as steam ships, railroads, photography, and telegraphs appeared, making the world much faster-paced. Britain again remained mostly inactive in Continental politics, and

it was not affected by the wave of revolutions in 1848.

The

Victorian era saw the fleshing out of the second British Empire. Historians like Bernard Porter have characterized

the mid-Victorian era, (1850–1870) as Britain's “Golden Years”.



# Britain in World War I

A British expeditionary force was immediately sent to France and helped stem the German advance at the Marne. Fighting on the Western Front soon became mired in a bloody stalemate amid muddy trenches, barbed wire, and machine-gun emplacements. Battles to push the Germans back failed repeatedly at the cost of tens of thousands of lives. Efforts to outflank the Central Powers in the Balkans, as at Gallipoli (1915), failed also. At the Battle of Jutland (1916), the British prevented the German fleet from venturing into the North Sea and beyond, but German submarines threatened Britain with starvation early in 1917; merchant-ship convoys guarded by destroyers helped avert that danger.



# Britain and World War II

Memories of World War I left Britons with an overwhelming desire to avoid another war, and the country played a leading role in the League of Nations and at interwar disarmament conferences such as those in Washington, D.C. in 1921 and 1922 and London in 1930 that limited naval size. Conscious that Germany might have been unfairly treated at the 1919 peace conference, the British government followed a policy of appeasement in dealing with Adolf

Hitler's Germany after 1933. German invasion plan was foiled by British air supremacy, large parts of London and other cities were destroyed and some 60,000 civilians were killed. Beginning early in

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# Great Britain Today

Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy. Queen Elizabeth II is Britain's head of state. Her powers are largely ceremonial, however, and a Cabinet of ministers actually rules the country. GB is a densely populated country, and about 93 per cent of the people live in urban areas. English is the official language, but some people in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland speak their National language.

