

Why did the United States go to war with England in 1812?

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Introduction

The first decade of the 1800s is also known as the Napoleonic Wars. The French Empire and its allies faced many conflicts with the coalition formed by many European countries fed, led, and financed by the United Kingdom. The French Empire was led by Napoleon. This war was started as a result of the disputes that were started as a result of the French Revolution and the resultant that was shown against it. French were facing a lot of enemies in different places. In 1805, Russia and Austria attacked France, but Napoleon defeated the alliance of Russia and Austria (Office of the Historian). This was a major setback for the United Kingdom as the Russo-Austrian Alliance was being led and financed by the UK.

Both England and France were fighting to take the supremacy and to take full control of Europe. Both the countries were treating the weaker countries very badly and were taking as much benefit as they can. United States tried to get out of this war for the maximum time and tried to become neutral, but at the end it became part of all the conflicts that were happening in the Europe and ended up in fighting against England in 1812.

As England and France were in a state of war and fighting with each other in many phases, Britain blocked the neutral route of naval trade towards France. The United States contested this act of Britain as illegal as, according to international rules and regulations, one cannot block the trade route of another country. The British tried to cool down the Americans by hiring American Sailors in the British navy, but that didn't go well.

Discussion

Napoleon took the charge after overthrowing the French revolutionary government. During this time, American and French delegations were concluding their session to end the undeclared war that was being fought at almost the entire sea. In 1802, Napoleon declared to end the war with Britain that had been fought for almost a decade. Napoleon then tried to overcome other issues, such as crushing the Haitian revolution, but his army faced a huge defeat. Due to his defeat in Haiti, state of Louisiana went to destabilize and was on the edge of war against the Britain.

As it was expected, Great Britain again declared war against France in 1803 and this time these two remained at war for more than 10 years. Both British and French made a lot of allies to attack on one

another and to win the supremacy war.

In the starting years, i.e., from 1803 to 1806, Americans remained neutral and did not become allies with anyone, but after Britain's seizure of American citizens who were born in the United Kingdom into the British navy, the US suffered impressment. American president Thomas Jefferson sent a delegate to negotiate the terms on the halt of American sailors from impressment, but the Britishers didn't show any concession.

In 1806, Napoleon issued a decree after his success in the war against Prussia, saying that all the countries that were at ally with France or were dependent on France would not buy or sell anything to Great Britain (Nye, 2007). In other words, he banned all types of trade with the British. Britishers responded against this act and ordered the royal navy to seize all the ships that were in the sea and were trading or carrying French imports or exports.

In response of this act, British immediately blocked the naval route of France so that it can starve with its limited resources. In response, Napoleon again put more economic sanctions on the Britain and tried to break all the coalitions made by the British against France.

In the meantime, US relations with the British were becoming hard with the passage of time. In 1807, Britain bombarded H.M.S. Leopard and violated American airspace by boarding in the state of Virginia (Engdahl, 2004). As a result of this violation, President Thomas put economic sanctions on Great Britain and banned all types of trading with Britain to weaken its economy. However, this economic sanction was almost impossible to enforce as Britain's economy was not solely dependent on trade with the US. Still, at home, the British government was facing a lot of opposition and pressure against the taxes that were imposed on the public due to the war against France, which covered the expenses and also reopened the trade with the Americans.

In 1809, while Jefferson's tenure was about to end, he made another move and put an embargo that allowed trade with other nations except for France and Britain, but again, this was virtually impossible to act upon (Gibson, 2004).

As the economic sanctions that were put by Jefferson were almost impossible to enforce, President James Madison, who was the successor of Jefferson, offered both countries to cease their colonization of US ships, and as a result, the US again started trading with both countries. French were the ones who immediately accepted Madison's offer. Napoleon offered concessions to the Americans, which Madison accepted despite the doubtful attitude of Napoleon. By accepting Napoleon's offer, Madison became near to France and pushed itself towards the war with Great Britain.

With the abdication of the French leader i.e., Napoleon Bonaparte, the naval blockade of France came to an end and the Britisher started to block the naval route of the United States to block all of its ships and ending the naval trade of United States which brought the US government near to bankruptcy.

Relations of the United States with the British were becoming weak day by day. The US Navy

captured a UK navy ship as revenge for the impressment of British-born American sailors and fired it up (Dumbrell, 2006). As a result, British Minister to the United States, Thomas Foster, met with the American president, Madison, and told him that due to the recent event, the British were not going to offer any compensation and were not going to end the war with the Americans.

As a result of which, Madison decided to start a war against Britain. On 17th June congress passed a bill giving permission to start war against Britain on which Madison signed the very next day.

According to the British perspective, Britain had nothing to do with the Americans, but their war was only against the French. Britishers heavily relied on the naval blockade of France as they thought that by doing so, they were easily going to win this war. But when the Americans got involved in that war by saying that it was illegal and when their ships and merchants directly violated the blockage, they were not neutral anymore in this war; therefore, they had to put economic sanctions on the United States because they were breaching their space. At the same time, when the ships were being captured, and the sailors were forcibly imprisoned, that was the biggest mistake.

Another British school of thought says that this war could never have happened if the council could have made some relaxed decisions. All were blaming the Americans that the way they have employed the British sailors when their own Royal Navy needed them. Almost a decade of America putting economic sanctions on the British during the era of Jefferson and Madison, everyone was thinking that both the presidents are inclined towards the French.

The British had no interest in fighting war with America but once it started, British had only one goal on which they wanted to act upon, that was, try to fight this war so that America cannot take any part of Canada.

Conclusions

The first decade of the 1800's brought so much instability in the world. All the European countries were fighting each other under the umbrella and coalition of Great Britain and France. The US was not involved in this war, as the US wanted to remain neutral during this period, but it was impossible for the US to remain neutral for a decade. After all the situations and events that happened, Britain thought that the US was taking the side of the French and was no longer neutral. Although the US was not involved in the Anglo-French war, the impression of making a mistake went wrong, and Great Britain thought that the US was now inclining towards France. So, they started putting economic sanctions on the US as well and refused to provide any compensation. As a result, US President Madison declared war against Britain, which lasted for three years.

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