

P-5 COUNTRY PROFILES

UNITED KINGDOM

General Information

<i>Official Name:</i>	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
<i>Capital:</i>	London, England
<i>Population:</i>	60,943,912
<i>Major Languages:</i>	English, Welsh, and Scottish (Gaelic)
<i>Major Religions:</i>	Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist Presbyterian, Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish
<i>Regional/Economic Organizational Membership:</i>	ICC, Interpol, EU, MONUC, NATO, UN, UNSC, UNMSL, UNIDO, UNOMIG, and the WTO, etc.

Governmental System

The United Kingdom is simultaneously a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The constitution is largely unwritten, with almost all-political power concentrated in one chamber of the bicameral Parliament, the House of Commons. The other chamber, the House of Lords, has limited legislative powers and is currently the subject of a historic reform effort. The members of the House of Commons, each representing about 60,000 voters, are elected from specific geographic constituencies.

The party or coalitions in command of a majority in the Commons forms the government. Legislation is passed by majority vote. Currently, the two significant parties are the ruling Labour Party and the Conservative Party. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House of the Commons and acts as the head of the state. Gordon Brown (successor of Tony Blair) has occupied the position of prime minister since June 2007. Because of this party affiliation, the Labour Party currently dominates the government of the U.K. Britain's official head of state is the reigning king or queen, which represents a largely ceremonial position. Queen Elizabeth II has occupied her position since February 6, 1972.

Foreign Policy

The foundation of the U.K. foreign policy is the commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rules of law. The United Kingdom supports an active role in the international community and in the United Nations. Great Britain also has a commitment to help third-world states develop economically, strongly endorsing the expansion of the free market and international trade. The United Kingdom owns influential membership in both regional and worldwide institutions, including the United Nations Security Council, NATO, and EU. The United Kingdom is a key member of NATO. It is one of the largest contributors by paying €120 million annually. The U.K. is one of NATO's major European maritime powers, and its army is a key

element in NATO's defense strategy. Concerning involvement in the European Union, Great Britain views Europe as an alliance of independent nations, emphasizing cooperation to achieve collective goals. The U. K., with a rich tradition of sovereignty, is more reluctant than many other nations to surrender power to the EU. This tendency is illustrated by Britain's refusal to join the European Monetary Union of 1997, a move that would replace the traditional British pound with the euro. However, the U.K. is actively involved in other aspects of the EU. A strategy of working with regional allies to resolve problems is a major aspect of British foreign policy.

The United Kingdom has many close relations historically with former colonies around the globe. Many of its colonies are now independent states. Following World War II, decolonization reined in the next half century for the British Empire. India was granted independence and Pakistan was afterward formed in 1947. Other nations followed this trend of autonomy. Today, many former colonies maintain close ties with the U.K. through the Commonwealth of Nations. There also remain several islands classified as Crown Dependence (e.g. Jersey, the Guernsey Islands, and the Falklands) that manage their internal affairs but depend on the U.K. for security. These dependent islands are also a part of the Commonwealth. Today, British foreign policy emphasizes to work together on most international issues.

The United Kingdom has long experienced terrorism in Northern Ireland and given the recent terrorists attack in London, is indeed committed to combating terrorism. Since July 7, 2005, when the London bombings occurred, the issue of terrorism has grown even more imperative with the U.K., and they continue to coordinate their efforts with the U.S. to expose and defeat international terrorism.

Issues Summary

Issue 1: Terrorism → The UK's Terrorism Act specifically aims to make it more difficult for extremists to abuse freedoms that all people are entitled to. This aims to capture those planning serious acts of terrorism. The Act also criminalizes attendance at a place of terrorist training. They have ratified ten of the internal conventions concerning Terrorism and urging other countries to do the same.

Issue 2: Iraq → The UK is heavily involved in the American-led-military intervention in Iraq. British troops took part in the initial invasion and remain in Iraq as a peacekeeping stabilization force. The British government has taken much criticism at home and abroad for its participation in the military action that lacked UN authorization. However, the UK remains the US's closest ally on the controversial issue. Although the UK is actively involved in the war, they may soon be pulling out upon the wishes of its citizens and the new prime minister, Gordon Brown.

Issue 3: Iran → The UK is strongly concerned with the issue of Iran's nuclear program. The UK cosponsored the first non-proliferation treaty in 1995. Also the UK opposes the stance Iran has taken becoming the only country that opposes a two-state solution in the Middle East conflict. Iran also supports terrorism and is undermining the Middle East Peace Process. They support Iran for the development of civil nuclear power and research. The UK wants to be active but wants Iran to solve internal conflicts without intervention. In April of 2007 Iranian revolutionary guards seized 15 Royal navy based personal of the UK but were freed as a "gift" to the UK.

Issue 4: Georgia → The UK will continue to work with international partners to ensure that effective support is given to Georgia and towards a lasting, peaceful solution. The UK is involved in the observer mission that straddles the administrative border of Abkhazia in eastern Georgia. The mandate of that mission, which is independent from the EU mission in South Ossetia in northern Georgia, was renewed by the Security Council for four months on October 9, 2008 through resolution 1839.

Issue 5: Africa → Great Britain recognizes that peace and growth must come from leadership within Africa. UK is in full supports of the African Union (AU). It contends that more developed nations must support African peace and prosperity. Continuing reports of human rights violations fueling violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are of concern to the UK, and they want to prevent further conflict. Sudan is another area of concern. The Sudanese government was supposed to disarm the Janjaweed militias. The UK has committed \$52 million to resolving the Darfur conflict, and they strongly support the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). In June of 2007 the UK stated that it would push for tougher UN Sanctions against Sudan if its government does not support international efforts to end the conflict in Darfur. The UK strongly supports African nations joining the United Nations since 70% of Security Council issues involve Africa.

Relationship with the United Nations

The UK has been a member of the United Nations since the founding of the organization in 1945. The UK holds one of the five permanent veto powers on the council. In the late 1990s the UK announced its support for the expansion of the UN Security Council to broaden its base without reducing its effectiveness. Britain recognizes that nations such as Japan and Germany, who are among the top contributors to the UN, should be considered for permanent membership on the Security Council. However, the UK favors Germany more so over Japan because with Germany being added as a permanent member, this will give Europe three countries with veto powers.

The UK has pledged to strengthen the UN by augmenting its role in maintaining peace in the post-Cold War era. The UK believes that in the future, the UN should focus on the preventative action and peace building. The UK purposes that rather than awaiting the outbreak of a crisis, the UN should engage in the preventative missions by helping to restructure institutionally weak governments and emphasizing civil rights and humanitarian aid Great Britain contends that lasting security requires more than diplomacy and military force.

The UK currently has 360 personnel involved in peacekeeping operations. This number reflects contributions of 276 troops, 68 police, and 16 military observers. Currently, the UK is involved in many peacekeeping missions around the world including MONUC (Congo), UNIFICYP (Cyprus), UNMIK (Kosovo), and UNOMIG (Georgia).

The recent American-led-military action in Iraq has led to a serious chasm among the members of the Security Council. The UK, the US's strongest ally in the war, has found itself rather isolated on the American side of the rift. Many members of the Security Council remain resentful that American and Britain conducted military action in Iraq without approval of the

UN. Domestically, the British government has also come under fire for its role in the Iraqi conflict. The Blair government appears to have weathered the storm but new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, isn't as pro-Iraq war as Blair was. Brown's focus during his first year in administration is to admit failure of operation in Iraq and create a strategy for pulling the UK's troops out of Iraq.

Relationships with other United Nations Security Council Members

China: British relations with China have not been as cordial, but are improving. Britain remains the largest European investor in China and is interested in expanding both exports and investment in China. Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the Labour Party, recently visited China to boost the economic relationship between the two countries. Relations have become excellent and have rapidly expanded since the signing of a joint statement and comprehensive strategic partnership. China's and Britain's top scientist work together to solve many of the world's problems. However, the UK is not too fond of China's position on human rights, especially concerning Tibet. The UK will stress the need for human rights in China at all costs.

Viet Nam: The British relations with Vietnam has developed vastly since the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1973, and now include a wide spectrum of issues, from high-level political contacts, through growing trade and investment links, cooperation against terrorism, international crime and illegal migration, to a fast growing Department for International Development (DFID) development assistance program.

Indonesia: Britain has a vested interest in seeing Indonesia develop into a prosperous, open and stable democracy, in order to strengthen the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and reinforce stability in South East Asia as a whole. Through Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) and Global Conflict Prevention Fund (GCPF), the UK government supports a number of projects that encourage much needed and desired reform in Indonesia. GOF and GCPF also fund projects that advance co-operation in areas of joint interest, such as counter-terrorism and promoting interfaith dialogue. Foreign and Commonwealth Minister Dr. Kim Howells visited Indonesia to take part in the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue Conference 20-21 July 2005. This event held in Bali and co-chaired by the UK and Indonesia resulted in the Bali Declaration.

France: The UK also has a relatively close relationship with France but will not see eye to eye with France on every issue. The UK is supportive of French actions in Rwanda, and Britain and France share a long history of engagement in Africa. They both have resident missions in all African countries except Somalia, Liberia, and Sao Tom and Principe. In 1998, the UK and France agreed to harmonize policies towards Africa to intensify cooperation on the ground. The UK's support of the US has created some tension between France and other major members of the Security Council.

Italy: Britain and Italy share an excellent relationship. This relationship is strengthened by frequent contacts at ministerial level. The prime ministers of both countries meet annually. Treaties and agreements were signed in 2004, which will enable the enlarged union to work more effectively in order to respond to its citizens' demands and play a role on the international stage. About 4-5 million British visitors visit Italy each year, while just over 1 million Italians visit the

UK. There are 100,000 Britons resident in Italy, while 150,000 Italians live in the UK. Italy is an important partner of the United Kingdom, both in the bilateral context and as members of the European Union, NATO, G8 and other international organizations.

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya: Libyan Foreign Minister Shalgam's visit to London in February 2004 was the first visit to the United Kingdom by a Libyan Foreign Minister since Qadhafi came to power. It helped pave the way for Prime Minister Tony Blair's visit to Libya in March 2004- the first by a British Prime Minister since 1943 and another visit in June 2007. The visit in 2007 opened up the bilateral relationship again. The UK is now developing relations in many issues, including defense, trade, health, education, trade and investment, education, environment, health, migration, and many others. Discussions are open and treaties have been signed for science, visas, and health.

Burkina Faso: UK interests in Burkina Faso are very minimal. There is no bilateral assistance program. British assistance reaches Burkina Faso through multilateral channels, mainly the EU

South Africa: South Africa and UK supported efforts by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to find a solution to the political crisis in Zimbabwe. The Blair-Mbeki talks were held in the framework of the seventh bilateral forum of Britain and South Africa. The highlight was an \$8-million trade deal to stimulate commerce between Britain and southern Africa, and between South Africa and its neighbors. South Africa's closest European ties have been with Britain, particularly with its Conservative Party-led governments. More than 800,000 South Africans retained the right to live in Britain, although official ties weakened after South Africa left the British Commonwealth in 1961. Britain supported the 1977 Commonwealth decision to discourage sporting links with South Africa to register international disapproval of apartheid, but Britain's refusal to impose broader sanctions came under attack at subsequent Commonwealth heads of government meetings, especially in 1985, 1987, and 1989. In September 1994, British Prime Minister John Major, on a visit to Pretoria promised a new investment protection treaty that would further strengthen commercial ties.

Russian Federation: Since Russia has risen again as a world player, the UK will generally support Russia in questions involving the Russian state. The UK is most concerned with the humanitarian issues in Russia, such as the situations in Chechnya and now Georgia. The British Foreign Secretary expressed his concern about the overall situation in Chechnya, especially the plight of the refugees. Britain asked for early access to the area for humanitarian organizations, particularly to meet the needs of refugees. The UK seeks to bring Russia into the European fold, so it will not be quick to take actions that will alienate Russia. However, the UK will stand up to the Russian position, especially over human rights and European security issues.

Belgium: Close links with the UK go back to trade with England in wool and cloth in the tenth century. Belgian neutrality was confirmed by the Treaty of London in 1839. During World War II, the Belgian Government in exile was based in London. During both World Wars over 250,000 Commonwealth soldiers died in Belgium. As fellow members of the EU, the UK and Belgium enjoy good relations. There are approximately 50,000 British citizens living in Belgium, and a similar number of Belgians living in the UK. The Belgo-British Conference is an annual event held alternately in the UK and Belgium. Organized by the British Council in Brussels, it brings

together politicians, academics and professionals for high-level discussions on key issues affecting Belgium, the UK and Europe.

Croatia: The UK established diplomatic relations with Croatia in June 1992. Relations have gone from strong to stronger since the arrest of General Ante Gotovina and his transfer to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague (ICTY) in December 2005. Croatia's relations with the UK are currently excellent. Britain has provided both political and practical support to Croatia's efforts to join the EU and NATO, while Croatia commits to play an important and increasingly proactive role in its region and beyond.

United States: The US and the UK political and economic relationships are extremely close. Following the events of 11 September 2001, the UK made a commitment to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with the US in the campaign to defeat terrorism. The United Kingdom's support for action against Iraq and the subsequent commitment of substantial forces to fight alongside those of the US underlined the strength of the transatlantic relationship. The UK and the US co-operate especially on nuclear non-proliferation, homeland security the Middle East Peace Process, counter-terrorism and intelligence matters. The UK probably finds its strongest ally in the US and vice-versa. The two countries are very closely linked economically, culturally, and governmentally. In the Security Council, the UK often follows the US, but does not act solely as a follower.

Panama: The relationship between these two countries is good. The main focuses of the union are trade and global warming. The British Council promotes educational and cultural relations between the UK and Panama.

Costa Rica: Bilateral relations were established over 150 years ago and have always been good. The UK helped to develop the market for Costa Rican coffee and the UK has helped build Costa Rica's infrastructure. There have been high level visits in both directions.