



# GLOBAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

## National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy

### Country Profile

#### *The United Kingdom*

<b>Capital:</b>	London
<b>Geographical Size:</b>	248 527.8 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population:</b>	64 308 261 (2014)
<b>Population as % of total EU population:</b>	12.7% (2014)
<b>GDP:</b>	€ 1.899 trillion (2013)
<b>Defense Expenditure:</b>	€ 40.693 million (2013)
<b>Official EU language(s):</b>	English
<b>Political System:</b>	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy
<b>EU member country since:</b>	1 January 1973
<b>Seats in European Parliament:</b>	73
<b>Currency:</b>	Pound Sterling (GBP)
<b>Schengen area member?</b>	No
<b>Presidency of the Council:</b>	5 times between 1977 and 2005 (Next in 2017)

Source: Europa.eu

## GGI National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy 2015

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**The Global Governance Institute**  
Pleinlaan 5, Brussels  
B-1050 Belgium  
Email: [info@globalgovernance.eu](mailto:info@globalgovernance.eu)  
Web: [www.globalgovernance.eu](http://www.globalgovernance.eu)

### a. Political System

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (comprised of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) is ruled by a parliamentary monarchy based on an unwritten constitution. The head of state is a monarch (currently Queen Elizabeth II), who mainly holds ceremonial functions, but also chooses the member of the Parliament to form a government (usually the leader of the political party with the most seats in the lower house of the British Parliament). The monarch also has some legislative influence, as he or she is consulted with regards to legislation that might affect his or her private interests.

The British Parliament exercises the legislative power. It is composed of the House of Commons (lower house) and the House of Lords (upper house). The House of Commons has 650 members, each representing a geographical constituency and elected for five years. Elections of May 2015 resulted in the following composition of the House of Commons: 331 seats for the Conservative Party, 232 seats for the Labour Party, 56 for the Scottish National Party, 8 seats for the Liberal Democrat Party, and 23 seats for other parties. The House of Lords has less authority, and mainly revises legislation and scrutinizes the work of the Government. Its composition is rather unique and undemocratic, due to its historical construction.

The executive power is exercised by the British Government, which also proposes legislation to the Parliament. It is composed of ministers usually belonging to a single political party having the majority in the House of Commons. However, the British Government was made of a coalition for the first time in 2010-2015, between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. After May 2015 elections, the Conservatives won an overall majority and thus were exclusively chosen as ministers by the parliamentary member designated as Prime Minister (currently Mr. Cameron, Conservative). The Prime Minister is the most important person in the British political system, and has a role comparable to that of a president in other political systems.<sup>1</sup>

### b. Foreign Policy

The Conservative Party at power in the United Kingdom is known to be **Euro-skeptical**, which results in the country's rather **globally oriented** foreign policy. Indeed, it is very active in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, it is a permanent member of the UNSC, and contributes to the OECD's development aid and NATO's military force, as noted by Mr. Chalmers, Research director and director for UK defense policy at the Royal United Services Institute in Judy Dempsey's discussion on the future of British foreign policy. The country's recent military choices have been disapproved (e.g. lack of commitment in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Ukraine crisis). At the same time, the United Kingdom appears EU-averse, which is critical seeing the current turning point of Europe. Consequently, the United Kingdom is quite lost in its foreign policy, and the current Prime Minister Mr. Cameron is highly criticized.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Darlington, R., "British Political System", *Roger Darlington's World*, Web. Accessed June 11, 2015. <http://www.rogerdarlington.me.uk/Britishpoliticalsystem.html>

<sup>2</sup> Dempsey, J., "Judy Asks: Is Britain Still a Foreign Policy Power?", *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, February 18, 2015, Web. Accessed June 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59100>

Despite its **lack of activism and engagement**, the country has many foreign policy assets: it has armed forces, nuclear capacity, a high percentage share of the EU's military expenditures (21,4 % in 2011, just like France<sup>3</sup>), the highest number of national diplomats in Europe, legendary intelligence and diplomatic services, and many internationally recognized think tanks, which explains why it is part of the **“Big Three”**. However, they are rather serving the UK-USA bilateral relationship and NATO, which helped Europe to successfully deter Russia from its Eastern side to a certain extent, according to James Rogers, senior editor of *European Geostrategy*.

As reported by Xenia Wickett, project director for the USA at Chatham House, the future of the United Kingdom's foreign policy will depend on the possible 2017 EU membership vote and on its defense spending. Leaving the Union and continuing to decrease its defense spending would be tragic for the country's global influence, which would definitely deteriorate in that case. As exposed by Andrew Duff, “Unless and until Britain becomes part of the solution to Europe's manifold problems, the UK condemns itself to global irrelevance”<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, it would amputate one of the three legs building the **solid UK-USA relationship** (i.e. intelligence and military assets, EU membership, and legitimate external perspective), and leave the country with less global leverage. To conclude, the United Kingdom seems to have no choice, but to be more involved within the EU if it wants to remain a major global player in the current international state of affairs.<sup>5</sup>

### *European Union (EU)*

Uncertainty is the most appropriate word to describe the United Kingdom's relationship with the EU at the moment. Indeed, Prime Minister Cameron promised to organize a referendum on UK's membership of the EU by the end of 2017. Divided between the country's **skepticism** towards the EU, and its genuine need to be actively taking part in the EU's foreign policy in order to remain influent, Britain is at a **cornerstone** of its foreign policy. In fact, the British people barely identify with the Union, which influences the country's approach to the EU's foreign policy. The UK actually joined the EU in 1973, after long-standing opposition from French President De Gaulle.

The UK is definitely more interested by its ties with the USA, and thus always advocated for the primacy of member states' national foreign policy. For instance, Britain strongly backed the insertion of the “Declaration 13” in the Treaty of Lisbon, which states that the CFSP provisions “do not affect the responsibilities of the member states, as they currently exist, for the formulation and conduct of their foreign policy nor of their external national representation” and “do not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of the Member States”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Lehne, S., “The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy”, *The Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Europe, July 2012, p. 7, Web. Accessed June 10, 2015. [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu\\_big\\_three1.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu_big_three1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Dempsey, J., “Judy Asks: Is Britain Still a Foreign Policy Power?”, *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, February 18, 2015, Web. Accessed June 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59100>

<sup>5</sup> Dempsey, J., “Judy Asks: Is Britain Still a Foreign Policy Power?”, *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, February 18, 2015, Web. Accessed June 12, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59100> ; Lehne, S., “The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy”, *The Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Europe, July 2012, p. 7, Web. Accessed June 10, 2015. [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu\\_big\\_three1.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/eu_big_three1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Koutrakos, P. (ed.), “The European Union's external relations a year after Lisbon”, *CLEER Working Papers*, Centre for the Law of EU External Relations, March 2013, Web. Accessed June 12, 2015. [http://www.asser.nl/upload/documents/772011\\_51358CLEER%20WP%202011-3%20-%20KOUTRAKOS.pdf](http://www.asser.nl/upload/documents/772011_51358CLEER%20WP%202011-3%20-%20KOUTRAKOS.pdf)

Nonetheless, Britain does not deprive itself from using the Union when it serves to promote its own interests and positions, especially **trade and investment**, as forty percent of UK's trade takes place with the EU. When it is in line with its national foreign policy, the UK can show itself very supportive and active within the Union. It has however always been for the **intergovernmental approach**, against the federalization of the CFSP, and in favor of weaker EU institutions. It aims for a **limited role** for European Foreign Policy<sup>7</sup>.

### c. Peace & Security Policy

National security is of key importance in the United Kingdom. It is integrated within the UK's neighbors' and partners' security, with which the country collaborates and coordinates in order to achieve their common interests. The United Kingdom adopts the **comprehensive approach** and uses instruments of national power in accordance with the country's alliances and partnerships, and in cooperation with international organizations. The British government's security objectives are defined by the National Security Council (NSC), chaired by the Prime Minister, while its security priorities are determined in function of the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Strategic Defence Security Review (SDSR) led by the NSC and issued every five years.<sup>8</sup>

In order to be globally influent, the UK uses its defense assets as defined in the International Defence Engagement Strategy (IDES), which establishes means such as security and non-combat operations, defense diplomacy, defense and security exports, and regional stability, conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization. These means integrate the UK's national instruments of power: diplomatic, economic and military, all based on far-reaching intelligence.<sup>9</sup>

Britain's 2015 SDSR is expected to establish some change in the country's defense, and was feared to further decrease defense spending<sup>10</sup>. Nonetheless, the conservative government resulting from the 2015 elections has ambitious defense and security plans for the country, which contrasts with the current state of austerity in the field. Indeed, while Britain was dedicating 2,5% of its GDP for military spending in 2010, the share of GDP dropped to 2,0% in 2015. For this reason, the SDSR should **rethink British defense spending**, and should be more focused on long-term and conflict-preventing approaches, and still based on reduced expenditure.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Fiott, D. " 'Our Man in Brussels'. The UK and the EEAS: Ambivalence and Influence", In Balfour, R., Carta C., and Raik K. (ed.), "The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries", *The Globalisation, Europe, Multilateralism Series*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, p. 78 ; Hill, C. and Smith, M., *International Relations and the European Union*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> British Ministry of Defence, "Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01: UK Defence Doctrine", Fifth Edition, *Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC)*, November 2014, p. 3-21. Web. Accessed June 26, 2015. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/389755/20141208-JDP\\_0\\_01\\_Ed\\_5\\_UK\\_Defence\\_Doctrine.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389755/20141208-JDP_0_01_Ed_5_UK_Defence_Doctrine.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> British Ministry of Defence, "Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01: UK Defence Doctrine", Fifth Edition, *Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC)*, November 2014, p. 59-73. Web. Accessed June 26, 2015. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/389755/20141208-JDP\\_0\\_01\\_Ed\\_5\\_UK\\_Defence\\_Doctrine.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389755/20141208-JDP_0_01_Ed_5_UK_Defence_Doctrine.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Brooke, L. "Briefing Paper Number 07235 – The 2015 SDSR: a primer", *House of Commons Library*, June 19, 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015 ; Chuter, A. "Analyst Forecasts Big UK Defense Cuts", *Defense News*, March 8, 2015. Web. Accessed June 24, 2015. <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7235/CBP-7235.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Reeve, R. "Cutting the cloth: ambition, austerity and the case for rethinking UK military spending", *Oxford Research Group*, May 2015, p. 3-5. Web. Accessed June 25, 2015. <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/ORGCuttingTheClothMay15.pdf>

*European Union (EU)*

Britain's relationship with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has been characterized respectively by a strong link with the USA and restraint, which defines the UK's contribution to the EU<sup>12</sup>. The United Kingdom's role in the establishment and development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is marked by a clear motivation to **enhance the engagement of the USA and the role of NATO** in Europe. In fact, the UK's current conservative government tends to emphasize the UK-USA ties more than the UK-EU connection, with regards to security. In order to preserve the EU-USA relationship, the UK understood the need to be active in defense matter. It thus participated in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and in EUPM (Bosnia & Herzegovina) and EUMM (Georgia), for instance.<sup>13</sup> In 2014, the UK committed to 14,81% of the national contributions to the ATHENA mechanism budget (financing of EU military and defense operations that are not financed through EU budget), which is the third highest contribution after Germany (21,48%) and France (16,32%)<sup>14</sup>.

The British view on the CSDP has been more oriented towards leadership than participation, as the country has tended to prescribe defense cooperation for others while **discreetly abstaining**, in order to not displease its American ally. In addition, the UK ensures the primacy of NATO in Europe, as illustrates the country's obstinacy against the creation of EU military headquarters.<sup>15</sup> Britain has also been focused on **bilateral security cooperation with France** rather than investment in the CSDP, due to the country's fiscal austerity, the USA's geopolitical shifts, and the perceived lack of credibility of most EU countries. The 2010 Lancaster House Treaties and the 2014 Brize-Norton Summit on defense and security cooperation between France and the UK illustrate this approach.<sup>16</sup>

According to Jolyon Howorth, Professor Emeritus of European politics at the University of Bath (UK), the country's **potential exit of the EU** would negatively affect both the Union and Britain in terms of security. Indeed, the UK would lose significant influence on European defense and security policy, which would not please its favorite American ally, as the USA has always pressured the country to be more active in all EU policy areas. Also, the current fiscal austerity and unprecedented security challenges in Britain prevent it to resort to the Asia-Pacific region (the new US spotlight) as an alternative to its current EU focus. In addition, the UK's way out of the Union would lead to a closer relationship between France

<sup>12</sup> Simón, L., *Geopolitical Change, Grand Strategy and European Security: The EU-NATO Conundrum in Perspective*, The European Union in International Affairs series, 2013, p. 70-71. ; Fiott, D. " 'Our Man in Brussels' . The UK and the EEAS: Ambivalence and Influence", In Balfour, R., Carta C., and Raik K. (ed.), "The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries", *The Globalisation, Europe, Multilateralism Series*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, p. 77-78.

<sup>13</sup> Fiott, D. " 'Our Man in Brussels' . The UK and the EEAS: Ambivalence and Influence", In Balfour, R., Carta C., and Raik K. (ed.), "The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries", *The Globalisation, Europe, Multilateralism Series*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, p. 77-78.

<sup>14</sup> Council of the European Union, *Financing of military operations: the ATHENA mechanism*, January 2014. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139880.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139880.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Witney, N. "The UK and the CSDP" In Fiott, D. (ed.) *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, Egmont Institute, No. 79, May 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015.

<http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ep79.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Smith, Simon J. "European Defence, the CSDP and the UK: two cases of Catch-22", In Fiott, D. (ed.) *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, Egmont Institute, No. 79, May 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ep79.pdf> ; Dyson, T. "The Imperative for British Leadership on Pooling and Sharing", In Fiott, D. (ed.) *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, Egmont Institute, No. 79, May 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ep79.pdf>

and Germany, which would definitely put Britain apart from the picture of European defense and security decision-making. Therefore, Howorth says “Brexit” would deteriorate the UK’s position as a major EU military power and as the guardian of the transatlantic relationship, as well as strongly undermine its overall influence in defense and security.<sup>17</sup>

#### *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

Britain has been a member of NATO since the organization’s creation in 1949. From the beginning of the Cold War, the UK has positioned itself as the West’s pivot and the key actor in transatlantic relations in order to keep the West strong. The country has thus worked to keep the USA involved in Europe, even in the post-Cold War context, which was characterized by US disengagement in Europe, focus on diplomacy and economic cooperation, and demilitarization. From then, Britain’s aim has been to maintain the NATO as the **primary security and defense organization of Europe**. The UK tends to avoid investing so much in the CSDP, which could be perceived as a potential substitute to NATO.<sup>18</sup> For the period 2014-2015, the UK participated in about 10,5% of NATO’s common-funded budgets and programmes, a figure greatly superior to other NATO members, except for the US (about 22,5%), Germany (about 14,5%), and France (about 11%)<sup>19</sup>.

Following September 11, the USA started its military transformation and pre-emption doctrine, which contrasts with the European multilateral and soft power tendency. The UK remained close to Washington, in order to keep the gap as limited as possible. The country thus invested in the US/NATO-led wars in **Iraq** and in **Afghanistan** as the second largest contributing force.<sup>20</sup> This caused strong criticism, as a result of British strategic failures that induced high costs for the country (in total, £30 billion for UK taxpayers)<sup>21</sup>. In addition, the UK-USA ties are currently endangered by the British austerity policy, which could prevent the UK from remaining within the “**2% of GDP target**” in participation to the NATO’s defense budget<sup>22</sup>.

#### *United Nations (UN)*

The United Kingdom has been a member of the United Nations since its creation in 1945, and has a **permanent seat in the UN Security Council**. For the period 2013-2015, the UK was the fifth UN contributing nation (behind the US, Japan, France and Germany), as it participated in 6,68% of the UN Peacekeeping budget<sup>23</sup>. As of September 2015, the UK is

<sup>17</sup> Howorth, J. “The CSDP without the UK: Bad for Europe but even worse for Britain”, In Fiott, D. (ed.) *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, Egmont Institute, No. 79, May 2015. Web. Accessed June 22, 2015. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ep79.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Simón, L., *Geopolitical Change, Grand Strategy and European Security: The EU-NATO Conundrum in Perspective*, The European Union in International Affairs series, 2013, p. 113-114.

<sup>19</sup> “NATO Common-Funded Budgets & Programmes”, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Web. Accessed September 22, 2015. [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_06/20140611\\_20140601\\_NATO\\_common\\_funded\\_budgets\\_2014-2015.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_06/20140611_20140601_NATO_common_funded_budgets_2014-2015.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Simón, L., *Geopolitical Change, Grand Strategy and European Security: The EU-NATO Conundrum in Perspective*, The European Union in International Affairs series, 2013, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Wright, O. “‘Costly Failures’: Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost UK taxpayers £30bn”, *The Independent*, May 27, 2014. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/costly-failures-wars-in-iraq-and-afghanistan-cost-uk-taxpayers-30bn-9442640.html>

<sup>22</sup> Chuter, A. “Obama Warns UK About NATO Spending Target”, *Defense News*, February 11, 2015. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/budget/2015/02/11/obama-warns-uk-about-nato-spending-2-percent-uk/23224363/>

<sup>23</sup> “Financing Peacekeeping”, *United Nations Peacekeeping*, 2015. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>

mostly involved in the UN peacekeeping missions in Cyprus (UNFICYP) with 276 contingent troops, but also in DR Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), Mali (MINUSMA), Haiti (MINUSTAH), and Liberia (UNMIL)<sup>24</sup>. Recently, Prime Minister Cameron affirmed that the UK was to devote more troops to UN Peacekeeping missions, particularly through deployment in South Sudan<sup>25</sup>.

#### *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*

The United Kingdom joined the OSCE at its creation in 1973 (under the name of *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*), and currently has 52 nationals involved in the organization. In 2014, the country participated in 10,4% of the OSCE's unified budget, with €14.828.603, and had 53 nationals involved in the OSCE staff<sup>26</sup>. During the May 2015 Parliamentary elections in the UK, the OSCE led a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) and later issued an assessment mission report, in respect of the pre-election environment and preparations for the elections. As a result, the OSCE highlighted the high level of confidence in the British electoral process and the country's long-standing tradition of democratic elections, but also made some recommendations (e.g. harmonization of elections timetables, prisoners voting rights,...).<sup>27</sup>

#### *Council of Europe (CoE)*

The United Kingdom has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1949, as it is one of its founders. The country's contribution to the CoE's budget for 2015 is of €31.962.445.<sup>28</sup> In 2013, the country faced controversy when ignoring the ECHR's judgment giving prisoners the right to vote (to which British Prime Minister Mr. Cameron opposed), and was invited to leave the CoE system if it did not execute the Court's judgment. In November 2013, the British government published the draft of the "**voting eligibility (prisoners) bill**" for pre-legislative scrutiny.<sup>29</sup> Eventually, the legislation's amendment did not take place, as the ban on voting right was maintained in July 2014<sup>30</sup>.

#### *Strategic Culture*

As most European states, the UK's strategic culture was highly influenced by the Second World War and its place as a victor, which influenced the country to prioritize continental commitment, to enhance its close relationship with the USA, and to consider military force as an effective but averse mean to address security issues. According to Andrew M. Dorman,

<sup>24</sup> "UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country", *United Nations Peacekeeping*, September 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15_3.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> "UK troops for UN peacekeeping in South Sudan, PM to say", *BBC News*, September 17, 2015. Web. Accessed September 17, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34272308>

<sup>26</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Annual Report 2014*, July 2015. Web. Accessed September 1, 2015. <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/169971?download=true>

<sup>27</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *United Kingdom Of Great Britain And Northern Ireland General Election 7 May 2015: OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report 2-5 March 2015*, Warsaw, March 30, 2015. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/uk/147991?download=true>

<sup>28</sup> "United Kingdom – Member State", *Council of Europe*, 2015. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/united-kingdom-member-state>

<sup>29</sup> Bowcott, O. "UK 'should leave Council of Europe' if it defies ruling on prisoner voting rights", *The Guardian*, October 17, 2013. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/17/uk-council-of-europe-prisoner-votes-human-rights>; Wintour, P. and Sparrow A., "I won't give prisoners the vote, says David Cameron", *The Guardian*, October 24, 2012. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/oct/24/prisoners-vote-david-cameron>

<sup>30</sup> The House of Commons, *Convicted Prisoners Voting Bill*, Bill 50 55/4, Parliament.uk, July 2014. Web. Accessed June 29, 2015. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2014-2015/0050/15050.pdf>

Senior Lecturer in the Defence Studies Department at King's College in London, Britain considers itself as a **great power** that should influence international decisions. Furthermore, it is particularly characterized by its **strong link with the USA**. This is illustrated by the country's reluctance to get involved in multilateral operation without its close ally, its preference for NATO as the international organization for collective defense and security, and the many bilateral agreements between the USA and the UK. In fact, the United Kingdom always supported the USA in its intervention, to the opposite of France (e.g. in Iraq), even when public opinion disagreed.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, the United Kingdom's strategic culture was highly influenced by former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who worked at maintaining the country's significant role in **global politics**, thus closing the British debate between maritime and continental strategic commitment by focusing on global issues. In addition, Tony Blair argued for a British **proactive position in military interventions** and focus on risk analysis, especially after September 11. These predilections have now become strategic common sense, according to Yee-Kuang Heng, Lecturer in International Relations at University of St. Andrews in the UK.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Brigadier Mitch Mitchell argues that British strategic culture is decreasingly influenced by military thinking, and increasingly by historians or academics, and tends to lose its defining strategic culture, because of the great challenges the 21<sup>st</sup> century has set up. The argues that this tendency is unfortunately having negative effects on the country, as it contributed to the UK's **loss of strategic influence**.<sup>33</sup>

#### d. Economic Policy

As previously mentioned, the United Kingdom's economic policy was mainly characterized by **austerity** during the 2010-2015 coalition government between the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Parties. This course is rather expected to be continued, especially following the country's Chancellor of the Exchequer (head of the British economic and finance ministry) Osborne's proposal to run budget surpluses, motivated by the prevention of future crises' effects. However, better coordination is needed between the different fiscal, monetary and financial British agencies in order to support this objective, as the country's macroeconomic policy is currently excessively influenced by political factors.<sup>34</sup> According to Jamie Murray, Economist at the Office for Budget Responsibility in the UK, the elected government is expected to reduce recent **inconsistency** in public spending, by smoothening cuts over four years<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Komrij, F. "Strategic Culture and Divergent Security Policies of European States", *E-International Relations Students*, June 17, 2012. Web. Accessed July 2, 2015. <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/06/17/strategic-culture-and-divergent-policies-of-european-states/>

<sup>32</sup> Heng, Y.-K. " "What did New Labour Ever Do for Us?' Evaluating Tony Blair's Imprint on British Strategic Culture", *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2012, Vol. 14, p. 556-575. Web. Accessed July 2, 2015. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2011.00473.x/epdf>

<sup>33</sup> Mitchell, Mitch (Brigadier), "Decline, and Fall? The influence of military thinking on Britain's Strategic Culture", *Royal College of Defence Studies*, July 2013. Web. Accessed July 2, 2015. <http://www.da.mod.uk/Research-Publications/category/89/decline-and-fall-the-influence-of-military-thinking-on-britains-strategic-culture-3036>

<sup>34</sup> Hall, S. and Henry, B. "Britain's budget surpluses and economic policy gaps", *The Guardian*, March 19, 2015. Web. Accessed July 1, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2015/mar/19/britains-budget-surpluses-and-economic-policy-gaps>

<sup>35</sup> Murray, J. "Don't Believe the U.K.'s Economic Policy Plans", *Bloomberg Business*, April 2, 2015. Web. Accessed July 1, 2015. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-04-02/don-t-believe-the-u-k-s-economic-policy-plans>



The austerity measure faced **intense criticism**, as they do not obtain satisfying results. A survey led by the Centre For Macroeconomics (CFM), which collected views of prominent British economists on important macroeconomic and public policy questions, indicated that a great majority of UK-based economists don't believe that the austerity policies have had a positive effect on aggregate economic activity (employment and GDP) in the country. In fact, many were arguing for less austerity (e.g. Ethan Illetzki and Tony Yates) while skeptical others pointed out the positive effect of austerity measures in preventing a loss of confidence in UK economic policy (e.g. Giancarlo Corsetti and Charles Bean).<sup>36</sup> Michael Meacher from the Labour Party indicated that austerity is “the wrong way to cut the deficit”, because it actually smoothens growth (UK's GDP growth was of 0,3% in the first quarter of 2015) and only slightly decreases the deficit (when compared to previous economic stimulus' effect on the deficit)<sup>37</sup>.

According to the European Commission's 2015 report on the United Kingdom, the country managed to maintain strong domestic demand and employment growth, as well as to decrease inflation, which helped overall economic growth (1,7% in 2013 and 2,6% in 2014). The report points out remaining challenges for the British economy, such as household indebtedness, rise of house prices, and a persisting supply-demand imbalance. Macroeconomic issues are also indicated, including the country's focus on expenditure cuts for fiscal consolidation (about 80% of the implemented measures), which results in a slower reduction of the deficit than expected. Also, the Commission recommends increasing UK's productivity growth and competitiveness by boosting private and public investment. It also mentions urgent issues such as youth unemployment, falling bank credit, and insufficient competition in the banking sector.<sup>38</sup>

#### e. Other Diplomatic Priorities

##### *Priorities at the European Level*

Subsequently to Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron's re-election in May 2015, a bill to make provision for the holding of a **referendum** in the UK and Gibraltar in late 2017 was enacted, on whether the country should remain a member of the EU<sup>39</sup>. The potential “Brexit” is received with division among the local population: 44 % say they would vote to remain within the Union and 34% say they would vote to leave it, according to polls conducted in June 2015. Recent developments however appears to have resulted in a shift in polls. As of September 2015, 38% would vote ‘in’ and 40% would vote ‘out’.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> n.a. “The Importance of Elections for UK Economic Activity”, *Centre for Macroeconomics*, March 28, 2015. Web. Accessed July 1, 2015. <http://cfmsurvey.org/surveys/importance-elections-uk-economic-activity>

<sup>37</sup> Renshaw, P., Kapadia, A., Grivil, R. et al. “The economic case against austerity in the UK is overwhelming. So where's the left's challenge?”, *The Guardian*, June 25, 2015. Web. Accessed July 1, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jun/25/economic-case-against-austerity-uk-overwhelming>

<sup>38</sup> European Commission, “Country Report United Kingdom 2015 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances”, *Commission Staff Working Document*, Brussels, February 2015. Web. Accessed July 1, 2015. [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015\\_uk\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_uk_en.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> The House of Commons, *European Union Referendum Bill*, HC Bill 2, *Parliament.uk*, May 28, 2015. Web. Accessed July 2, 2015. [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2015-2016/0002/cbill\\_2015-20160002\\_en\\_2.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2015-2016/0002/cbill_2015-20160002_en_2.htm)

<sup>40</sup> Dahlgreen, W. “EU referendum: Brexit ahead by 2”, *YouGov*, September 28, 2015. Web. Accessed November 17, 2015. <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/09/28/eu-referendum-brexit-leads-2/>

### *Priorities at the Global Level*

According to the last White Paper on the UK's International Priorities, the country's strategic international priorities are:

1. Making the world safer from global terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.
2. Reducing the harm to the UK from international crime, including drug trafficking, people smuggling and money laundering.
3. Preventing and resolving conflict through a strong international system.
4. Building an effective and globally competitive EU in a secure neighbourhood.
5. Supporting the UK economy and business through an open and expanding global economy, science and innovation and secure energy supplies.
6. Promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment.
7. Managing migration and combating illegal immigration.
8. Delivering high-quality support for British nationals abroad, in normal times and in crises.
9. Ensuring the security and good governance of the UK's Overseas Territories.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the UK is increasingly presenting an **insular and isolationist** discourse, which contrasts with the people's wish for the United Kingdom to be a great power (63% of the public support this view) and to play a leadership role in international security and fight against climate change, although it thinks that the UK's international burden is too heavy. The **public's ambitions** are however constrained by the political and financial issues the UK is facing, according to a Chatam House/YouGov survey conducted in January 2015. The British population nonetheless concurs with the country's caution and defensiveness in foreign policy, as it believes it should focus on protecting the country's borders and should remain unsupportive of development aid spending.<sup>42</sup>

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**Author** *Sophie L. Vèriter, Vesalius College (VUB).*  
**Language Revision** *Sara Shah, Davidson College.*

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<sup>41</sup> Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK's International Priorities*, March 2006. Web. Accessed July 2, 2015.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/272260/6762.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272260/6762.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Raines, T. "Internationalism or Isolationsism? The Chatham House – YouGov Survey: British Attitudes Towards the UK's International Priorities", *Chatham House & The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, January 2015. Web. Accessed July 2, 2015.

[http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field\\_document/20150129YouGovRaines.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150129YouGovRaines.pdf)

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