

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain

Chapter 4: The UK's role in key international organisations

Key question

- What is the UK's role in key international organisations?

The role of the UK within key international organisations

Spec coverage

- The role of the UK within: the United Nations (UN), NATO, the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The UK has played a major role in the establishment of many of the key international organisations and bodies that exist today. Many of these bodies came into existence in the period immediately after the end of the Second World War. In a recent poll of the power and influence of countries, the United Kingdom came top as the country that has more soft power influence than any other country. With regard to hard power, in the year ending March 2020, the UK spent £51.3bn, 2.85 per cent of its **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, on defence. Its defence budget is the fifth largest in the world. The USA had the largest defence budget, over the same period spending 3.5 per cent of its GDP.

United Nations (UN)

The UN was established in 1945 when representatives of 51 countries met in San Francisco in the USA to draw up the **United Nations Charter**. The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945. This day is now celebrated as United Nations Day.



Figure 4.1 UN Headquarters, New York

The UN has its headquarters in New York, where all member countries meet to decide the policy and actions to be taken by the UN. The General Assembly is the forum to which all member countries belong. The **Security Council** is made up of 15 members, five of whom are permanent and have the ability to **veto** any proposals. The UK was a founder member of the UN and has a permanent seat on the Security Council.

Today the UN is one of the most important international bodies in the world, with 193 members. In 1948, after much discussion and debate, the UN adopted the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR)**, which identified rights to which all people are entitled.

The four purposes set out in the Charter of the UN are:

- 1 to maintain international peace and security
- 2 to develop friendly relations among nations
- 3 to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights
- 4 to be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations.

Chapter 4: The UK's role in key international organisations

While it was established to help maintain peace, the work of the UN and its **agencies** now has an impact on many aspects of people's lives, from agriculture to health and education.

Some examples of UN Agencies and international bodies linked to the UN:

- **FAO** – the Food and Agricultural Organization aims to improve agricultural productivity.
- **IAEA** – the International Atomic Energy Authority works for the safe use of atomic power.
- **ILO** – the International Labour Organization aims to improve working conditions and set standards.
- **UNESCO** – the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization promotes education for all.
- **WHO** – the World Health Organization works to improve standards of health throughout the world.

The UN has often undertaken a peace-keeping role. It has no standing armed forces of its own and relies on member states **volunteering** forces and resources to support the UN's peace-keeping function. The United Kingdom has long been an active contributor to UN peace-keeping missions and is a major contributor to the peace-keeping budget. Since 1948, there have been 68 peace-keeping missions. At the beginning of 2020, the UN had 14 active peace-keeping operations. British personnel are currently supporting three UN peace-keeping missions in:

- Cyprus (UNFICYP)
- The Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)
- South Sudan (UNMISS).

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO is an intergovernmental military defence alliance. It was established in 1949 and the UK was a founder member. It has its HQ in Brussels in Belgium. The organisation provides for a system of collective defence – if a member country is attacked, the other members come to its defence.

There are currently 30 member states of NATO (see box). Recent countries to become members are Albania and Croatia in 2009, Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020. Besides European countries, its membership includes the USA, Canada and Turkey.

The 30 member states of NATO (listed alphabetically) and the year they joined:

Albania (2009)	Iceland (1949)	Norway (1949)
Belgium (1949)	Italy (1949)	Poland (1999)
Bulgaria (2004)	Latvia (2004)	Portugal (1949)
Canada (1949)	Lithuania (2004)	Romania (2004)
Croatia (2009)	Luxembourg (1949)	Slovakia (2004)
Czech Republic (1999)	Montenegro (2017)	Slovenia (2004)
Denmark (1949)	Netherlands (1949)	Spain (1982)
Estonia (2004)	North Macedonia (2020)	Turkey (1952)
France (1949)		United Kingdom (1949)
Germany (1955)		United States of America (1949)
Greece (1952)		
Hungary (1999)		

NATO also has a number of partnership arrangements with other countries and organisations from the Atlantic to Central Asia and cooperates with a network of international organisations. While NATO has not been called upon to use its members' armed forces to defend its members' borders, it did take command of the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003. Its mission was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country and to ensure that it would never again be a safe haven for terrorists. Its mission was completed at the end of 2014.

NATO member countries' combined military spending accounts for over 70 per cent of the world's defence spending. NATO has set a target for member countries to spend 2 per cent of their GDP on defence. Following the 2015 General Election, the Conservative government pledged to maintain UK defence spending at the 2 per cent target figure set by NATO for the next ten years.

European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) was formerly known as the European Economic Community (EEC) and more usually as the Common Market. The six founding member countries that signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957 were France, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy. The Community aimed to encourage trade between member countries, allow for the free movement of people

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain

between countries and work towards 'an ever-closer union'.

Sir Winston Churchill first suggested the idea of a United States of Europe in 1946. The EEC was seen as a way of preventing future wars. Twice in the twentieth century there had been war in Europe, with the six member countries taking opposing sides.

In 2020 there were 27 members of the EU, of which 19 used the **euro** as their currency. The United Kingdom joined in 1973, after being refused membership by the French President in 1961 and 1968. The headquarters of the Union is divided between Brussels in Belgium and Strasbourg in France. In June 2016 in a national referendum, the UK voted to leave the EU. The UK ceased to be a member of the EU in January 2020, and set a target of achieving a new treaty arrangement with the EU by January 2021. See page 27 for more details about the relationship between the UK and the EU.

The Union has its own directly elected Parliament, which is elected every four years.

The decision-making process within the European Union is different from that which operates in its member states. Proposals for new laws, directives or initiatives are drafted by the **European Commission**. These are then considered by the member state governments at **Council of the European Union** meetings. The **European Parliament** is then consulted. Four times a year, heads of government from all the member states meet at the **European Council** to discuss the political direction and priorities of the Union.

Council of Europe

The **Council of Europe** is the continent's leading human rights organisation. Forty-seven countries are members, of which 27 are also members of the European Union. The Council of Europe is not itself a part of the European Union. All member countries agreed to abide by the **European Convention on Human Rights**. The convention was adopted in 1950 and came into force in 1953. The **European Court of Human Rights** oversees the implementation of the Convention. The Court is made up of judges from all its member countries. The UK was a founder member of the Council of Europe and helped draft the Convention. Individual citizens can bring complaints of human rights violations to the Strasbourg Court, once all possibilities of appeal have been exhausted in the member state concerned.

The European Convention on Human Rights

The Convention enshrines the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of everyone within the jurisdiction of any member state. These include rights:

- to life
- to protection against torture and inhuman treatment
- to freedom and safety
- to a fair trial
- to respect for private and family life
- to freedom of expression (including freedom of the press), thought, conscience and religion
- to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Commonwealth

Formerly known as the British Commonwealth, the Commonwealth has 54 member countries, which span Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific. Thirty-one of the members are small states with fewer than 1.5 million people. It represents about 30 per cent of the world's population. Its members include some of the richest and some of the poorest countries in the world. All members must agree with the values set out in the **Commonwealth Charter**. The Commonwealth is a voluntary organisation and its Charter brings together the values that unite the Commonwealth – democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Head of the Commonwealth is Queen Elizabeth II, and its headquarters are in London. Heads of government of the member states meet every two years at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Case study

Commonwealth helps St Lucia build climate resilience

St Lucia is a small country with limited resources to deal with the impact of severe weather. With help via finance and technical assistance from the Commonwealth, the aim is to prepare post-disaster business plans, use new technology and enable schools to be used as emergency shelters.

Different viewpoint

Does the Commonwealth have a useful function in the twenty-first century?

Chapter 4: The UK's role in key international organisations

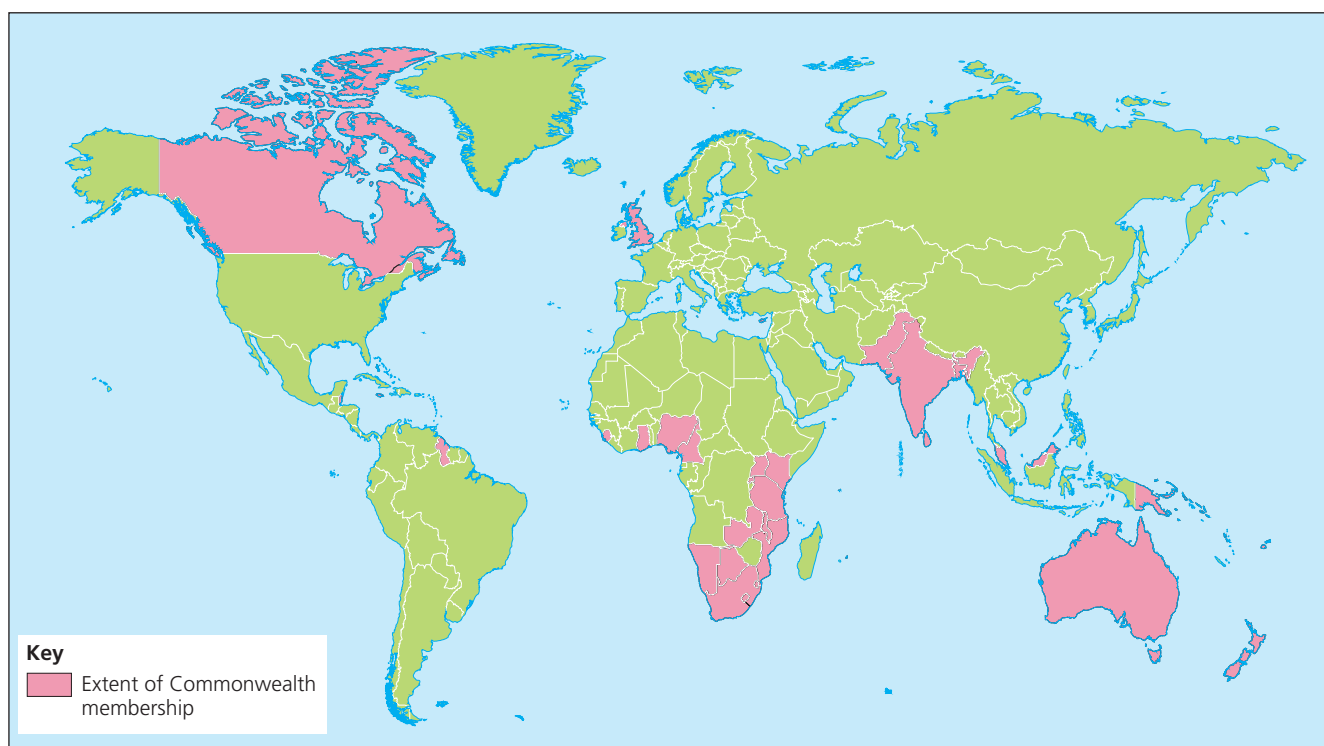


Figure 4.2 Map showing the extent of Commonwealth membership

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The World Trade Organization came into being in 1955 as the successor body to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was set up at the end of the Second World War. The United Kingdom was a member of GATT from 1948 and joined the WTO in 1955. The WTO has 164 member countries and its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland. The WTO is the only global organisation dealing with trading rules between nations.

The WTO claims to:

- cut living costs and raise living standards
- settle trade disputes and reduce trade tensions between nations
- encourage economic growth and employment
- cut the cost of doing business
- encourage good governance
- help countries develop
- give the weak a stronger voice
- help support health and the environment
- contribute to peace and stability.

Discussion point

It is often said that 'the UK punches above its weight' when it comes to international affairs. To what extent do you think the statement is correct?

The UK and the EU

Spec coverage

- The UK's membership of the EU and its impact upon the UK.

The UK joined the then European Economic Community (EEC), usually known at the time as the Common Market, in 1973, 16 years after it was set up. By joining the EEC, the UK agreed to pool and share elements of our **sovereignty** over some policy areas. In those areas where the EU has been given **competence**, member governments cannot change or undermine the rules it has laid down. Where the EU has no competence, a national government can decide its own policy. For example, if the UK tried to amend its competition policy on takeovers and state aid to business, the EU would intervene as these rules are set at a European Union level. However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer could

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain

set whatever income tax rates they wished in their Budget, because taxation is not an EU competence.

Our membership was a controversial issue for many years. In 1975, the Labour government of the day organised a national **referendum** about our continued membership. The referendum resulted in a 2:1 vote in favour of the new terms and remaining a member.

In 1986, the UK government was fully supportive of the Single Market Agreement, which promised to allow all goods and services to be traded and open to competition and accessible to all businesses across the EU, but progress was slow, especially regarding financial, insurance and other services where the UK government had felt the agreement would benefit UK businesses.

As the UK was a member of the EU, laws passed at a European level had a higher status than UK laws covering the same issues. Any conflict resulted in cases coming before the European Court of Justice, the court of the EU whose decisions are binding on members.

In recent years, some members of the EU have wanted closer cooperation in a number of areas. This approach is often called **federalist** and UK governments ensured that the UK had opt-outs from many of the initiatives.

The Labour government that was elected in 1997 reversed this policy with regard to the rights of UK workers to maternity and paternity leave and the rights of casual and part-time workers, and agreed to implement the Social Chapter of EU policies.

The UK did not sign up to the Eurozone (those countries that have adopted the euro as their common currency) nor the Schengen Area Agreement, which abolished border controls to allow for the free movements of people.

The Conservative government held a referendum in June 2016 on the UK membership of the EU. With a 72 per cent turnout, voters decided to leave the EU by a 51.9 per cent Leave vote to a 48.1 per cent Remain vote. The expression **'Brexit'** was used to describe the Leave campaign's aims. The 'Br' stood for Britain or the UK, and 'exit' for leaving the European Union.

Many of those who supported UK membership of the EU pointed out the economic benefits to the UK of our membership. The Single Market, with its 500 million people, generates about £10 trillion of economic activity. The EU accounts for half of the UK's overall trade and investments. Around 3.5 million jobs in the UK are linked to our EU trade.

Case study

The EU In–Out Referendum, 2016

Since the 1990s, the gap between those who wanted to 'stay in' the EU and those who wanted to 'get out' narrowed significantly. The 1975 Referendum had been 2:1 in favour of remaining in the then EEC.

In the 2015 General Election, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) – whose main aim was for the UK to leave the European Union – achieved 3.9 million votes (12.6 per cent of the votes cast), but won in only one constituency. In the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, UKIP topped the poll with 27.5 per cent of the vote and had 24 MEPs elected.

Following the 2015 General Election, the re-elected Prime Minister, David Cameron, reiterated a Conservative Party manifesto commitment to hold an 'in–out' referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union by the end of 2017, following renegotiations with EU leaders. The referendum took place on 23 June 2016.

For the third time in its history, all the electors within the UK were able to take part in a referendum. In 1975 the referendum was about the UK membership of the European Economic Community, and in 2011 it

was about changing the voting system regarding how we elect MPs.

Both sides of the debate received taxpayer funding to promote their cause in the run-up to the 2016 referendum. Politicians from different political parties found themselves debating and disagreeing with members of their own parties.

While the television channels have to be politically neutral, the press was divided over our membership. The *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Telegraph* supported a Leave vote, while the *Daily Mirror*, *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Financial Times* supported a Remain vote. The Remain campaign was led by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, while two of the leading Leave campaigners were also important members of the Conservative Party: Boris Johnson and the Justice Minister, Michael Gove.

The case for Brexit

The slogan used by the Leave campaign in 2016 encapsulated its stance: 'Take Back Control'. It believed that for over 40 years the EU had undermined the

sovereignty of the UK Parliament by taking control of many policy areas. It argued that the EU was basically undemocratic, with all its officials being appointed rather than directly elected. It thought the EU was leading to the end of the nation state and moving towards a federal United States of Europe. Also, issues such as the number of EU citizens migrating into the UK had caused resentment. It argued that, by moving away from the trade regulations of the EU, the UK could enter into more favourable trade agreements with the nations of the world.

The result

- Votes to Leave: 17,410,742 (51.9 per cent)
- Votes to Remain: 16,141,241 (48.1 per cent)

The turnout was 72 per cent. The results in Table 4.1 showed some interesting voting patterns:

Table 4.1 The results of the 2016 EU referendum

Nation	Vote to Leave (%)	Vote to Remain (%)	Turnout (%)
England	53.4	46.6	73.0
Scotland	38.0	62.0	67.2
Wales	52.5	47.5	71.7
Northern Ireland	44.2	55.8	62.9

In England, every counting region with the exception of London voted by a majority to leave the EU. The morning after the count, David Cameron announced his resignation as Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party.

The UK and the EU after the separation – the divorce agreement

Following the referendum in 2016, there was political turmoil in the UK. The new Conservative Prime Minister, Theresa May, tried to make progress regarding leaving the EU, but Parliament was often deadlocked, so in May 2017 she called a General Election on the issue of Brexit. The official opposition party, the Labour Party, also had a new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, from the far left of his party, who energised the party and was an effective campaigner. Following the election, the Conservatives lost their overall majority so had to make an

arrangement with the DUP (Democratic Unionist Party) from Northern Ireland, to have a majority in the House of Commons. The result of the election only added to the political turmoil at Westminster. The EU had insisted that the negotiations regarding the UK leaving the EU should fall into two parts, firstly a withdrawal agreement, detailing the process of leaving, and secondly a treaty about the future relationship of the UK and the EU.

Eventually Mrs May was forced to ask for an extension to the leaving date as she was not able to get a majority to support her in the House of Commons. The EU agreed that the UK membership could be extended until October 2019.

Mrs May was forced to stand down due to an inability to make progress on Brexit. In July 2019, Boris Johnson was elected as the new Conservative leader and Prime Minister. He called the third General Election in four years, in December 2019, and campaigned under the slogan ‘Get Brexit Done’. The Conservatives won the election with a majority of 80 seats.

With this majority won by the Conservative government, it was able to agree the Withdrawal Agreement and formally leave the EU in January 2020, three months later than the original extension date under Mrs May. The impact of leaving was delayed for 12 months as the UK maintained the rights of membership until January 2021. At the time of writing, a treaty between the UK and the EU had been agreed in December 2020, but many matters are still to be resolved with further talks. The relationship between the UK financial sector and the EU is a major issue that is still outstanding.

Different viewpoints

‘Referendums should not be used in the UK; we have an elected Parliament to make decisions on our behalf.’ Carry out a survey to see who agrees and disagrees with this statement. What are the key points made by each side?

After more than 40 years’ membership, the decision by the British people means that the UK has to negotiate a new arrangement with the EU.

What would be your priorities within these negotiations regarding, for example, trade, freedom of movement of peoples, accepting EU laws or paying to have access to the EU Single Market?

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain

Table 4.2 The UK's possible future trade relations with the EU

		LEAVE SINGLE MARKET AND CUSTOMS UNION BUT NEGOTIATE BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT	LEAVE SINGLE MARKET AND CUSTOMS UNION WITH NO DEAL
KEY POINTS THE UK WANTS TO ACHIEVE BY LEAVING THE EU	Central migration from the EU	✓	✓
	End ECJ jurisdiction	✓	✓
	End applicability of EU regulations	✓	✓
	Pursue an independent trade policy	✓	✓
	Stop obligatory budgetary contributions to the EU	✓	✓
	Exit CAF and CFP	✓	✓
WHAT THE UK WANTS FROM THE EU	Tariff-free trade with the EU	✓	✓
	Access to the EU Single Market for services	Very limited	✗
	Seamless and frictionless border, including in Northern Ireland	✗	✗
	Voluntary participation in EU programmes	Partial	✗

The Lisbon Treaty, which includes a section about a country leaving the EU (Article 50), requires a country to formally announce it wants to leave. Then for a period of two years that country remains a member of the EU, but undertakes negotiations with the EU about their future relationship.

Table 4.2 outlines the options available for the UK's future relationship with the EU.

The second column indicates what the UK wishes to achieve from the talks.

Discussion point

Looking at the table of votes for each nation within the UK (Table 4.1 on page 29) what impact could leaving the EU have on the future cohesion of the UK?

International disputes and conflicts

Spec coverage

- How the UK has assisted in resolving international disputes and conflicts, and the range of methods used.

The UK has played an active part in attempting to resolve international disputes and conflicts. The methods used have varied from **mediation** to **humanitarian aid (soft power)**, from the use of **sanctions** to the use of force (**hard power**). In recent years, the UK government has been involved in trying to resolve a number of international disputes and has worked with international bodies and agencies and directly with other nations to help resolve issues. Some of these interventions have been controversial and still divide public opinion in the UK. The UK's intervention in Iraq, 2001–09, was subject to a public Inquiry that eventually led to the publication of the Chilcot Report.

Chapter 4: The UK's role in key international organisations

There was a huge anti-war demonstration in London to protest about British participation in the conflict. It happened just prior to a vote in the House of Commons in February 2003 about the UK taking part in the war. Police claimed it was the UK's biggest ever demonstration, with at least 750,000 taking part. The organisers put the figure closer to two million.

Mediation

The UK has been involved in numerous mediation attempts to resolve disputes and conflicts by seeking a peaceful resolution or sponsoring international conferences that lead to a peaceful resolution. From 1968 until 1998, the history of Northern Ireland was linked to the phrase 'the Troubles'. Several attempts to seek a peaceful solution to the civil unrest and conflict between the opposing Unionist and Nationalist communities had failed. The UK

government imposed direct rule from Westminster. The bombing and killing spread from Northern Ireland to the UK mainland. By 1993, a framework had been agreed for a peaceful agreement to the Troubles, based upon the idea of 'consent': that any agreement could only proceed if the people of Northern Ireland consented. In 1996, the former US Senator George Mitchell agreed to chair the Northern Ireland peace talks. After all-party talks, an agreement was announced on Good Friday 1998. This Good Friday Agreement was put to the people of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Eire) in a referendum, and both voted in favour of the agreement, which is still in force today. In this case, it took the influence of an outside but interested party – the USA – to enable an agreement, which involved the UK government, the government of the Irish Republic and all the political parties in Northern Ireland, to be reached.

Case study
'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland

DATE		EVENT
1971	February	First soldier shot dead in Northern Ireland
	December	15 people killed in attack on Belfast pub (Ulster Volunteer Force)
1972	January	13 Catholic protesters killed by British troops
	July	9 killed in 22 IRA bombs in Belfast
1974	May	22 killed in car bombs in Dublin
	October	5 killed in a Guildford pub
	November	21 killed in two Birmingham pubs
1978	February	12 killed in hotel in County Down
1979	March	Conservative MP Airey Neave killed in car bomb attack
	August	Lord Mountbatten killed when his boat was blown up 19 people died when a bomb exploded under a bus
1981	May	10 Republican (Nationalist) prisoners starve to death
1984	October	5 killed when IRA bombed Conservative Party Conference hotel
1987	November	11 killed during Remembrance service in Enniskillen
1988	March	Three IRA suspects shot by British Special Forces in Gibraltar
1990	July	Ian Gow, Conservative MP, murdered by IRA car bomb
1993	March	Warrington – 2 children killed by IRA bomb
1996	February	IRA bombed Canary Wharf, London, killing 2 people
	July	Manchester – IRA bombed shopping centre

Different viewpoint

To what extent is the peace settlement in Northern Ireland a good example of a mediation process?

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain

Sanctions

The UK government operates a range of sanctions, from arms embargoes and trade control restrictions, to defence export policies against a number of countries and terrorist organisations. These sanctions are normally imposed as a part of a collective action by international bodies such as the EU, NATO or the UN. In 2020, arms embargoes or controls were being imposed on 20 countries, ranging from Mali, Syria and Zimbabwe to Belarus and Russia.

Sometimes sanctions can take the form of **boycotts**, where citizens and organisations refuse to buy goods or use services relating to a specific country or company to express their opposition to a policy or action. Sometimes the government undertakes a boycott. In 2012, the UK government refused to send a minister to attend the UEFA football European Championship due to the actions of the then Ukraine government. Increasingly, the UK government is targeting individual citizens in foreign countries who have committed human rights abuse, and placing them under financial sanctions.

In the past, groups and citizens boycotted South African goods when the country was run by the **apartheid** regime. Nestlé, the Swiss-based company, has faced a boycott from consumers because of its policy of selling baby-feeding products in Africa.

Use of force

The United Kingdom armed forces have been involved in numerous military actions since 1990 (see Table 4.3). Most of the actions of British armed forces have involved working with others in alliances or the allocation of troops to an international force

Case study
Military intervention in Afghanistan

Quote from the National Army Museum website:
The war in Afghanistan spanned the tenures of three prime ministers, and cost the lives of 453 British service personnel and thousands of Afghans. What was accomplished after 13 years of conflict, which included eight years of heavy fighting in Helmand, still remains open to debate.
(Source: www.nam.ac.uk/explore/war-afghanistan)

Table 4.3 The UK’s use of force since 1990

DATE	EVENT
1991	The Gulf War
1992–96	UN peace-keeping mission in the former Yugoslavia
1998	Operation Desert Fox – a four-day bombing campaign against targets in Iraq
1999	NATO-led campaigns in the former Republic of Yugoslavia and Kosovo
1999	East Timor, as part of a multinational peace-keeping force
2000	Sierra Leone, evacuating non-combatants and rescuing captured British troops
2001–14	Afghanistan – British troops were involved in combat operations as part of a US-led campaign
2003	EU-led crisis management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
2003	Invasion of Iraq. British troops remained in Iraq until 2011
2011	Military intervention in Libya
2014	Iraq and Syria - Operation Shader
2019	Persian Gulf Crisis

under the control of an international body like the EU, NATO or the UN. Many of these actions have proved to be controversial. One parliamentary convention that developed following the Iraq war is that governments should obtain the approval of the House of Commons before committing British troops to action abroad.

The two case studies on this page are examples of the UK using military force to try to resolve an issue abroad.

Case study
Military intervention in Sierra Leone

The UK sent troops into Sierra Leone, a former British colony in Africa, in May 2000, to bring the civil war there to an end. The rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was using extreme violence against its opponents in the conflict. Through Operation Palliser, the UK was able to support and re-establish a stable and democratic Sierra Leone under President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who achieved his office through an election declared as ‘free and fair’ by international observers.

Different viewpoint
Looking at these two case studies, do you think the use of force is an acceptable way to bring about change?

How non-governmental organisations respond to humanitarian crises

Spec coverage

- How non-governmental organisations (NGOs) respond to humanitarian crises.

Whenever there is a natural disaster or civil war, appeals are made to provide funds to help those in need. Many of these appeals are by single organisations, but they are often made by umbrella groups such as the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), which works with a range of **NGOs** to provide urgent help and relief. DEC works with 13 leading UK aid charities in times of crisis. Since its launch in 1963, it has run 67 appeals and raised more than £1.4 billion.

The UK government is the first country in the **G7** to honour the UN target set in 1970 of ring-fencing 0.7 per cent of its **GNI** for international aid spending. In 2020 the government announced that it would reduce our international aid funding to 0.5 per cent of GNI. The government allocates some of its funding to the work of NGOs.

The Department for International Development, which is currently responsible for allocating funding, has been subsumed into the Foreign Office and renamed the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Announcing the merger in July 2020, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated, 'The merger is an opportunity for the UK to have even greater impact and influence on the world stage as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and prepare to hold the G7 presidency and host COP26 next year.'

UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) 2019

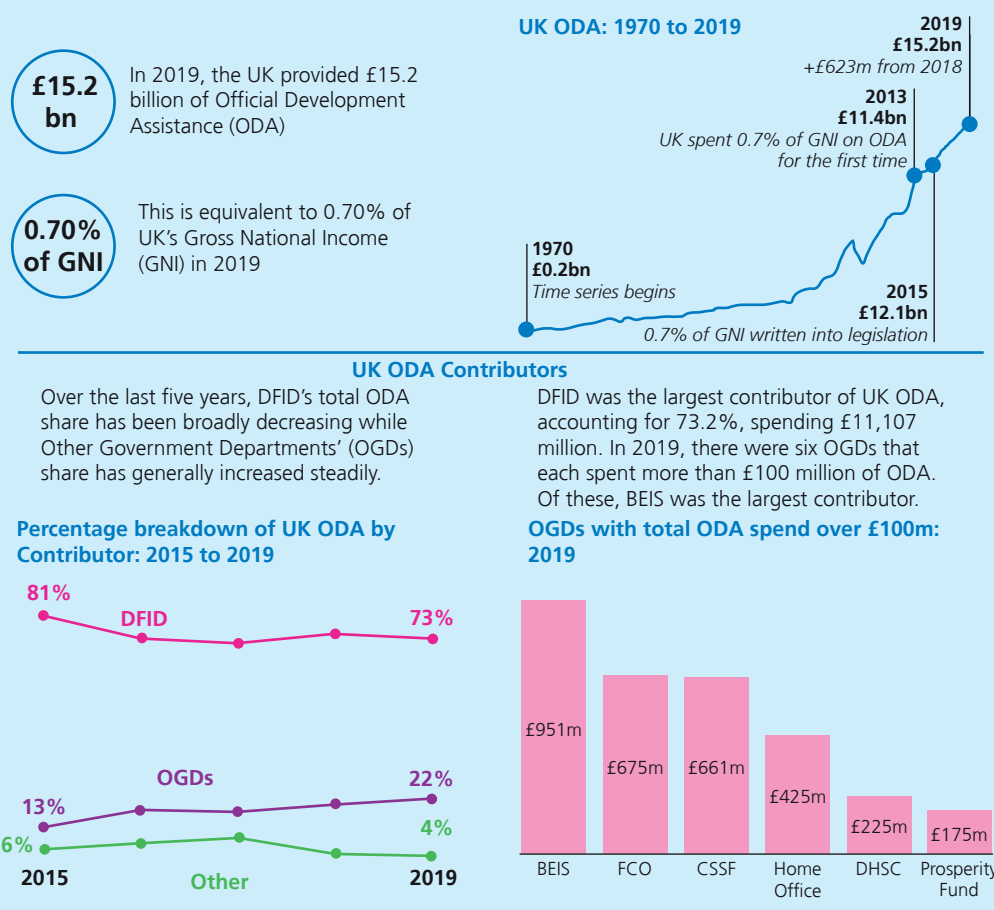


Figure 4.3 UK Official Development Assistance, 2019 (DFID is Department for International Development; BEIS is Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy; FCO is Foreign & Commonwealth Office; CSSF is Conflict, Stability and Security Fund; DHSC is Department of Health and Social Care) (Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878395/Statistics-on-International-Development-Provisional-UK-Aid-Spend-2019.pdf)

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain

Case study

Oxfam

Oxfam is a UK-based international humanitarian relief NGO. This organisation dates back to 1942, when the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was set up to pressure the wartime government to help starving children in Belgium and Greece. Today, Oxfam is a worldwide organisation providing a range of services and help.

Different viewpoint

Look at www.oxfam.org.uk for details of the work of Oxfam.

Why in the twenty-first century is there still a need for charities like Oxfam?



Case study

The government working with NGOs and others in Syria

Since 2012 the UK government has allocated over £2.8bn to ongoing work in Syria. Some of those funds have assisted over 30 partners, including NGOs and the Red Cross, to meet the needs of the population of Syria.

Between 2012 and 2015, the key outcomes of this funding were:

- **Food** – 13.3 million ration portions were provided.
- **Water** – 1.6 million people a month gained access to clean water.
- **Health** – 2 million medical consultations were held.
- **Shelter** – 409,000 people were given shelter in the whole region.
- **Education** – 224,000 children were supported in formal and informal education.

Different viewpoint

Why is it easier for governments to give money to NGOs rather than doing the work themselves?

Case study

International Red Cross/Red Crescent

The Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is an example of a well-known international NGO and is made up of three parts:

- 1 The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- 2 The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- 3 189 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world, including the British Red Cross.

As a part of its work, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent is currently helping people in Nepal, Yemen, Africa, Iraq, South Sudan and Syria.



Different viewpoint

Look at www.icrc.org for details of the work undertaken by the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

What important work is carried out by the International Red Cross/Red Crescent organisation?

Chapter 4: The UK's role in key international organisations

Case study**MSF Factfile – Ukraine**

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders, a medical charity that helps in humanitarian emergencies), set up in 1971, now operates in over 60 countries. In Ukraine, MSF has 62 staff working with 130 Ukrainian staff, providing basic health care and medicines in 25 locations on both sides of the disputed

border. As the conflict has progressed, it has had to expand its psychological support and mental health provision and is helping people at 30 locations on both sides of the frontline.

Different viewpoint

Look at www.msf.org.uk for details of the work undertaken by Médecins Sans Frontières.

How does MSF help those in need?

Websites

United Nations: www.un.org/en

NATO: www.nato.int

EU: www.europa.eu/index_en.htm

Council of Europe: www.coe.int/en

Commonwealth: www.thecommonwealth.org

WTO: www.wto.org

International Committee of the Red Cross: www.icrc.org

MSF: www.msf.org.uk

Oxfam: www.oxfam.org.uk

FCDO: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office

Activity

What actions do you think your school or local community could take in response to a humanitarian crisis? Consider inviting an NGO representative to come in to school to discuss the work of their organisation.

Review questions

- 1 Identify two international bodies to which the UK belongs.
- 2 Which body oversees human rights issues in Europe?
- 3 What is soft power?
- 4 Where can the UK use a veto?

Learning review points

- What is the role of the UK within:
 - the UN
 - NATO
 - the Council of Europe
 - the WTO
 - the Commonwealth?
- What is the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union?
- How are international disputes and conflicts resolved?
- What is the role and work of NGOs?

EXAM PRACTICE

- 1 Define the role of the UK at the United Nations. (AO1) [2 marks]
- 2 Referring to Table 4.2 on page 30, consider two consequences of leaving the EU without a treaty for the UK's relationship with the EU. (AO2) [4 marks]
- 3 Examine the arguments put forward that the UK spends too much on international aid. (AO3) [8 marks]