



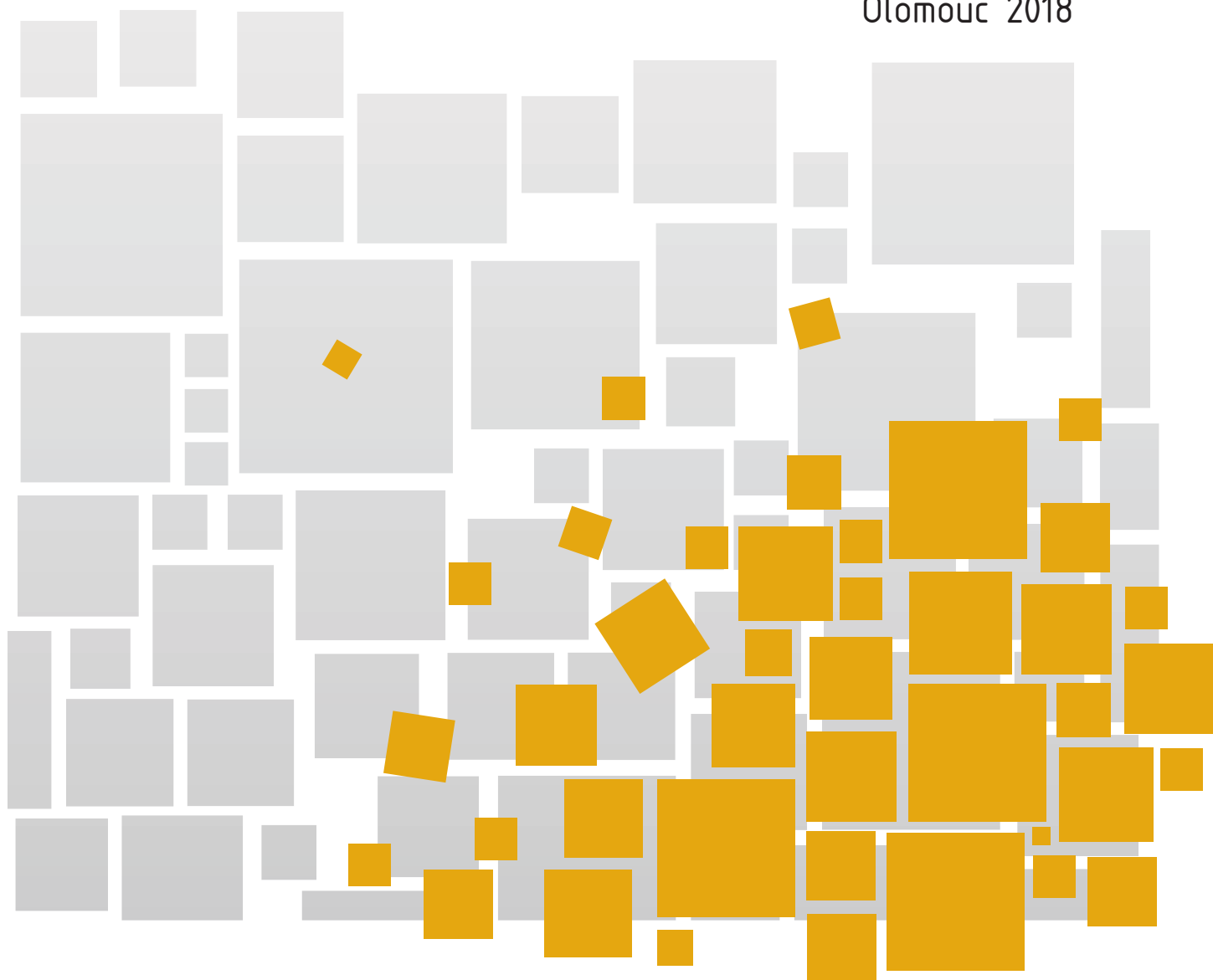
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UK AND US BACKGROUND STUDIES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UK AND BRITISH STUDIES, AND TO THE US AND AMERICAN STUDIES

Pierce Mountney, Petr Anténe

Olomouc 2018



Palacký University Olomouc

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and to the US and American Studies

Pierce Mountney
Petr Anténe

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Reviewers:

Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

prof. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.

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Foreword

This book aims to provide general knowledge about various aspects of the United Kingdom and the United States of America at present. After reading this book, you should have an understanding of how each country works, what it means to come from that country, and what it is like to live there.

The book is not intended to present intricate details about all parts of both countries. However, after reading this book, you should be able to better comprehend these intricacies should you choose to research them further.

The topics in this book have been chosen according to a short survey on what people may want to know about the life and institutions of foreign countries, especially those with such storied histories and current fame as the UK and USA. Completed in early 2018, the book also includes a brief discussion of the reasons behind two rather exceptional recent events, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as American president.

To follow the book and find the desired piece of information as easily as possible, the chapters are split into sub-chapters. This allows you to find the information more conveniently and to understand how it relates to the rest of the chapter. Charts and maps from various acknowledged sources were added whenever they were considered useful for further illustration of the issues discussed in the text. The text follows the conventions of British English unless indicated otherwise.

We, the authors, hope you will enjoy your usage of this book.

Pierce Mountney and Petr Anténe
2018

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UK Background Studies:

An Introduction to the UK and British Studies

Introduction to the UK

↳ Name

Although it is often shortened, the official name of the UK is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

↳ Flag

The flag of the United Kingdom is the Union flag. It is more commonly known as the Union Jack, but this is an old colloquial name from the Navy (Nicolls 2018).

| ↳ Design

The flag design is created by overlaying the crosses of St George, St Andrew and St Patrick (Bartram 2018). Many people presume that the flag is symmetrical, but it is in fact possible to fly the Union flag upside down.

↳ Political structure

The UK is a constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses. The head of state in 2018 is Queen Elizabeth II and the head of government is Theresa May (Britannica 2018a).

↳ National anthem

The national anthem of the United Kingdom is *God Save the Queen*; however Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland occasionally use different anthems at sporting events if they are playing as separate teams.

↳ Currency

The currency of the UK is Pounds Sterling (£). One pound is equal to 100 pence (p). A very common nickname for £1 is a quid.

| ↳ Denominations

Notes cover £50, £20, £10 and £5 (Bank of England, 2018). Coins cover £2, £1, 50p, 20p, 10p, 5p, 2p and 1p. 1p coins are called pennies. There is also a £5 coin, but it is very, very rare and is usually for collectors (Royal Mint 2018).

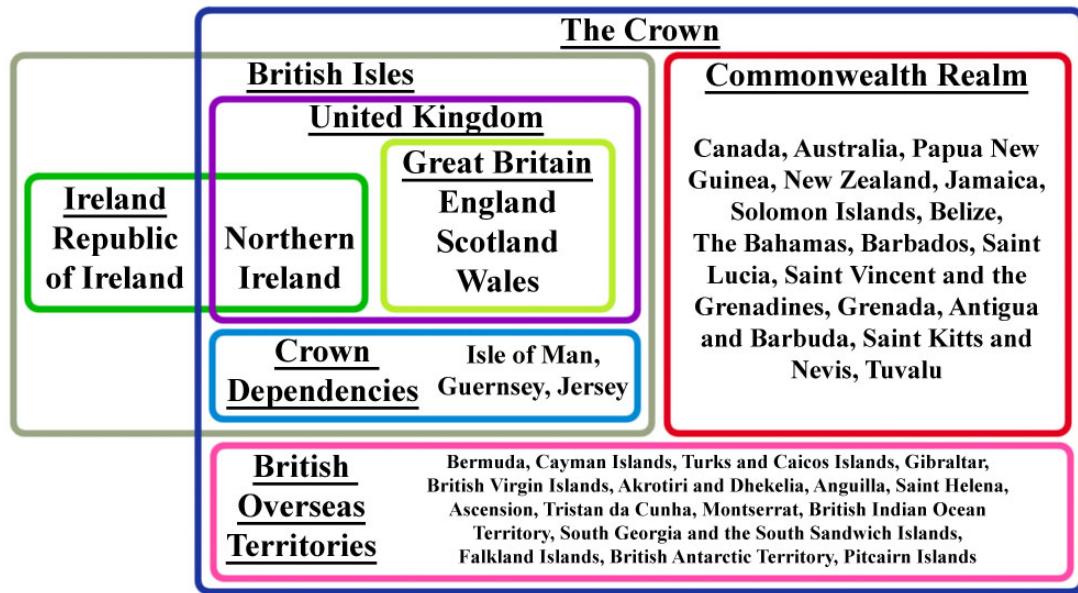
↳ Time zone

The UK uses UTC+00:00 for most of the year, calling it Greenwich Mean Time. During Daylight Saving Time, they switch to British Summer Time, which is UTC+01:00.

GMT is the time shown on the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London. Therefore, this clock shows the exact time which it is on the Prime Meridian. It was originally established as such to help British sailors tell the time no matter where they were in the world.

Polity

↳ GB versus UK versus England



(CGP Grey 2011a)

| ↳ **The United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom is a “country of countries” (CGP Grey 2011a). Whilst the UK is the recognised sovereign state (nation or country), it is made up of four countries. This may be confusing, but it is how they are referred to as they do fit the dictionary definition of a country. Usually, during international interaction, the country referred to would be the UK. The capital of the UK is London, but each country within has their own capital city too.

| | ↳ **England**

England is the largest and most populous country within the UK. Their parliament is the UK parliament, as England has no England-specific parliament. The capital is London.

| | ↳ **Scotland**

Scotland is the northernmost country within the UK and for a long time was its own sovereign state (no longer). It has its own parliament, but the British parliament can overrule it if need be. The capital is Edinburgh. Scotland also has its own version of Pounds Sterling, which is tied to the British Pound Sterling but is not legally recognised everywhere.

| | ↳ **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland is commonly called a country (similar to England or Scotland), but is also recognised by the International Organization for Standardization as a province (ISO 2011). It has its own parliament which can be overruled by the British parliament. The capital is Belfast. Northern Ireland born citizens also have the right to apply for an Irish passport. Northern Ireland also has its own version of Pounds Sterling, which is tied to the British Pound Sterling but is not legally recognised everywhere.

| | ↳ **Wales**

Wales is somewhat more confusing. In 2011, it was recognised by the International Organization for Standardization as a country on par with England or Scotland (ISO 2011). However, the last official records show that Wales is part of England. This is not really recognised any more. It is sometimes referred to by its historical status as a principality, but this is incorrect and is mostly used just to annoy the Welsh. The Welsh have a parliament called the Welsh Assembly, which can again be overruled by the British parliament. The capital city is Cardiff.

- | ↳ **The British Isles**
The group of islands which people point to as the UK are known as the British Isles.
- | | ↳ **Great Britain**
Great Britain is the name of the largest island in the UK. It holds most of England, Wales and Scotland, but each of these has separate islands also.
- | | ↳ **Ireland**
Ireland is the name of the island on which Northern Ireland sits. The remainder of the island of Ireland is a separate sovereign state called the Republic of Ireland (not part of the UK).
- | | ↳ **Other Islands**
Each UK country has other islands, including (but not limited to) the Isle of Wight (Eng.), The Isle of Anglesey (Wal.), Rathlin Island (NI.) and Scotland famously holds the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the Orkney islands and the Shetland islands.
- | ↳ **Crown Dependencies**
These are three small islands nearby Great Britain called Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. These are not independent nations, but are given local autonomy by the Crown and receive British citizenship. Their local assemblies can be overruled by the British government.
- | ↳ **British Overseas Territories**
These are “the remnants of the British Empire” (CGP Grey 2011a). They are still governed by the British government and do not have their own local assemblies. They are still part of the UK and everyone born there receives British citizenship.
- | ↳ **The Commonwealth**
The Commonwealth is made up of many countries which broke away from the British Empire (not usually through bloodshed, but through diplomacy). They received political autonomy and are not part of the UK, but they still recognise the British Monarch as their head of state; hence why Queen Elizabeth II is currently on the Canadian dollar.
- ↳ **Major cities**
London – Capital of England and the UK. Largest city in the UK
Edinburgh – Capital of Scotland
Cardiff – Capital of Wales
Belfast – Capital of Northern Ireland
Birmingham – Second largest city in the UK
Leeds – Third largest city in the UK
Glasgow – Largest city in Scotland
(Elledge 2015)
- | ↳ **A few other notable cities**
Cambridge, Canterbury, Inverness, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford, Swansea
- ↳ **North/South divide**
Splitting the UK and/or England into a North and a South is a difficult task, as many people have different answers as to where the split should be. Dividing it so that 50% of the land is on each side would work geographically, but culturally it is considered very wrong. Doing the same with 50% of the population on each half results in the same problem.
If you ask 100 Brits where the North/South divide is, you get 100 different answers (Foreman 2016). There is also a strip of land called the Midlands, but this is only considered to exist by people who live there. The Southerners deem the Midlands as part of the North and vice versa.
Prof Danny Dorling (2010) created a suggestion of where the line should be according to cultural and economic factors. This line ascended in a North-East direction, creating a diagonal line from Gloucester to Grimsby. Due to this, certain cities are considered Northern whilst other cities which