

UNITED KINGDOM

Party Portrait

The United Kingdom is third most populous state in the EU and the second largest economy. The UK voted to leave the EU in June 2016. As a result, the UK remains primarily focused on negotiations of future economic and political relationships with the EU. The UK has been an active player in world politics. In addition to membership in NATO and permanent seat on the UN Security Council, the UK wields influence through longstanding cultural and political relationships, with the experience of centuries of diplomacy and crisis management. Actors in the Middle East remain skeptical of the UK as an impartial actor, given the UK's history of imperialism and intervention. Domestic conflict over the course of the UK overshadows the UK's interest in the Middle Eastern conflicts. With terms for the UK's exit from the EU far from settled, Brexit has widened cleavages in the major political parties.

Key Interests

- Ensure its own stability and the stability of its neighbors and the EU by eliminating the threat of Islamist terrorism, limiting the impact of refugees
- Retain role as one of Europe's most important powers post-Brexit
- End Syrian Civil War
- Defeat ISIS
- Aid Middle East Peace Process
- Strengthen global trade through economic ties and investment

Sources of Leverage

Convening Power - Although the UK is losing global influence by leaving the EU, it maintains a strong influence through its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, its membership in NATO
Economic - Increasing economic investment in the region, and is a large UK is also a bilateral donor of development and humanitarian aid
Military - Founding member of the Global Coalition to counter ISIS, and second biggest contributor to the military campaign. Provides close air support and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activity as well as a military training mission in both Syria and Iraq.

Regional Strategy

The UK's approach to the Middle East is limited by domestic concerns, especially in the wake of the uncertainty surrounding the UK's exit from the EU. Any potential moves are considered first by their impact on security and commercial interests, and then from a desire to define a new role in international politics and to strengthen international institutions. The UK seeks an end to the Syrian civil war, to concentrate military efforts on the fight against ISIS.

Powerful Individuals

Prime Minister Theresa May (Tory Party); Jeremy Corbyn (opposition Labor Party leader); Nigel Farage (leader of the nationalistic right-wing UK Independence Party); First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon

Potential Negotiation Moves

Syrian Settlement – Support Syrian-led political settlement based on a transition away from the Assad regime.
Military Involvement – Constrained by reliance on outside support, domestic challenges, and the demands of international law.
Soft Power - Will likely remain one of the leading development actors in the region.
Two State Solution - Remains committed to a negotiated two state solution, by binding practical, concrete improvements on the ground to de-escalate the conflict and drive forward political progress.

Internal Conflicts

Domestic political leaders remain split on the UK's international role. Prime Minister May has called for further engaging with the region, while opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has called for UK withdrawal from NATO and opposes all military intervention unless explicitly approved by the UN. Nigel Farage, leader of the nationalistic right-wing Independence Group has gained international recognition. It remains unclear if a post-Brexit UK will turn to isolationism, international irrelevance, or seek to demonstrate that it is still a force in the world.

Memberships

EU (anticipated departure by 2019), IAEA, NATO, OECD, OSCE, UN (Security Council)

Allies

UNITED STATES, FRANCE, GERMANY, BAHRAIN, LIBYA Government of National Accord, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, JORDAN

Partners

ISRAEL, INDIA, LIBYA House of Representatives, SOUTH SUDAN, KUWAIT, OMAN, QATAR, SOUTH SUDAN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Rivals

RUSSIA

Adversaries

SYRIA Government

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

JORDAN

Aid Donor

N/A