

***Lecture one: an Introduction to British Geography, People, and Customs***

**A. Generalities:**

i. Introduction: what is in a name?

“when people say ‘England’, they sometimes mean ‘Great Britain’... sometimes the ‘United Kingdom’... sometimes the ‘British Isles’ ...\_but never England.” *How to be an Alien* by George Mikes (P. 3).

**England** is sometimes, wrongly, used in reference to the whole United Kingdom, the entire island of Great Britain, or indeed the British Isles. This is not only incorrect but can cause offence to people from other parts of the UK. To accurately define it, let’s first know what makes up the country.

ii. Countries within a Country- the United Kingdom:

The United Kingdom (abbreviated as UK), an island country located off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe, refers to the union of what were once four separate realms: England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland gained its independence from British control and only the northern part now remains part of the UK. Britain comprises England and Wales. Great Britain (abbreviated as GB), however, refers to the whole land of England, Wales and Scotland. Different from above appellations, the British Isles comprise England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and many small islands altogether. So, the official name of the country under study is ***United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland***. The map below demonstrates its different parts.

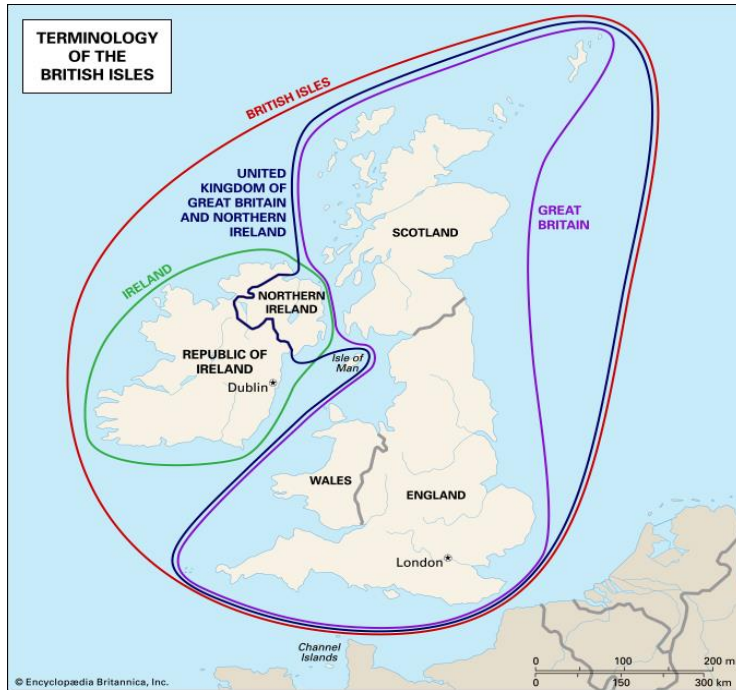
iii. History of the Making of the UK :

1536- Act of Union joins England and Wales.

1707- Act of Union unites Scotland and England together with Wales to form the Kingdom of Great Britain .

1801- the Irish Parliament voted in favor of joining the union. The then kingdom of Great Britain becomes the *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*.

In 1922- the name of the country has changed since most of the southern counties in Ireland gained independence. It turned to the *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*. (six out of nine counties of Ulster are now forming Northern Ireland; its people are called unionists because they favored remaining in the union)



iv. The Capital City of the UK:

The capital city of the UK is London:

England's capital is London

Scotland's capital is Edinburgh

The capital of Wales is Cardiff

The capital of Northern Ireland is Belfast.

v. Flag: a flag containing three other flags

The Union Flag, popularly as the Union Jack, is the national flag of the UK. It is called the Union Flag because it symbolizes the administrative union of the countries of the UK. It is made up of the individual flags of three of the Kingdom's countries all united under one sovereign- the flags of England, of Scotland and of Northern Ireland.



The national flag of England: the Flag of St. George is introduced by Richard I in 1194 A.D.



The national flag of Scotland: it is the flag of St. Andrew



Northern Ireland: St. Patrick's flag



The Union Flag consists of the heraldic crosses of England, Scotland and Ireland

vi. National Anthem

“God Save the Queen” (sung as “God Save the King” when a male is reigning)

vii. Membership in International Organizations

United Nations (permanent member of the Security Council), European Union (left it in June 2016), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Commonwealth of Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, Interpol, and many others.

## B. Geography

### I. Land area

The UK covers a land area of 242.495 square kilometers. It is the ninth-largest island in the world and the largest island in Europe.



II. Coastal borders The archipelago lies between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea and comes within 35km of the northwest coast of France, from which it is separated by the English Channel. Northern Ireland shares a 360 km international land boundary with the Republic of Ireland. The Channel Tunnel bored beneath the English Channel, now links the UK with France.

### III. Elevation

The highest point in Great Britain is the mountain of Ben Nevis (Aonach Mor) in Scotland, at 4,400 feet (1,344 meters). The lowest point is in the English fens, at 13 feet (4 meters) below sea level.

### Iv. Terrain

The UK varies greatly. England consists of mostly lowland terrain with mountainous terrain only found in the northwest of the Tees-exe line. There are level and rolling plains, hills, and low mountains mainly in Scotland and Wales though the former is the most. Northern Ireland consists mainly of hilly areas which include the largest body of water in the UK. The longest river is the River Severn (350km) which flows from Wales into England. The largest lake is Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland. The Coastal line is about 12.429 kms (CIA Factbook).

## C. People

### I. Population

The total population is approximately 65 million. The population of Great Britain is about 57 million. It is the third most heavily populated island in the world. By far the most heavily populated area is England, with a population of about 49 million. Scotland has about 5 million people, and Wales has about 3 million people. The population of Great Britain is about 97 percent of the population of the United Kingdom.

### II. Growth Rate

.276 percent (source: *CIA World Factbook*)

### III. Ethnic Groups

In the 2001 census, about 87.5 percent of the population of Great Britain identified as “British” by ethnicity, 1.2 percent as Irish, and 2.6 percent as “other white.” Some 4.4 percent identified as Asian or Asian British, mostly from India and Pakistan; 2.2 percent identified as black and black British, mostly from former British colonies in the Caribbean and Africa; 1.3 percent identified as mixed; .4 percent identified as Chinese; and .4 percent were from other groups.

### IV. Languages

English is the main language. Welsh and Gaelic are also spoken, as are different languages in immigrant communities.

### V. Religions

The Church of England is the established church in England, and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland is the established church in Scotland. There is no established church in Wales. The population of Great Britain is primarily Christian or secular. About 72 percent identify as Christian, and about 22.8 percent do not identify with or declare a religion. Numerous other religions are represented among the British population, including Islam (2.8 percent), Hinduism (1 percent) and Judaism (.5 percent).