

The United Kingdom (UK), comprising England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, occupies Northwestern Europe. Its geography includes Great Britain, northeastern Ireland, and surrounding islands, bordering the Republic of Ireland and various seas. With a 2022 population nearing 67 million, London serves as its capital. The Union Jack, combining the crosses of England, Scotland, and (formerly) Ireland, represents the nation. The UK's history involves centuries of unions and separations, culminating in its current form established in 1927. A former global superpower and the first industrialized nation, its vast British Empire significantly impacted its economy, though decolonization altered its global standing. Constitutionally a monarchy with a parliamentary democracy, the UK's government involves a Prime Minister and a bicameral Parliament. Three distinct legal jurisdictions exist (England & Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland), each with devolved governments since 1998. The UK boasts a large economy (sixth largest nominally), significant military spending, and exports various goods including oil, steel, and electrical equipment. Its historical wealth accumulation from colonization, notably from India, significantly contributed to its economic strength. Finally, British culture remains globally influential, notably in literature (Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen, Rowling, Tolkien), music, and sports (soccer, rugby, cricket).