

# Brits in High Places



How well represented is the United Kingdom  
at the top of international institutions?

Rt Hon Dr Andrew Murrison MP, Rt Hon Dr Liam  
Fox MP, and Alec Cadzow

Foreword by Rt Hon Lord Robertson of Port Ellen





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## About the Authors

**Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP** was elected as the Conservative MP for North Somerset in 1992. Dr Fox held several ministerial roles in John Major's Conservative government. He served as Constitutional Affairs Spokesman (1998-1999), Shadow Health Secretary (1999-2003), Conservative Party chairman (2003-05), Shadow Foreign Secretary (2005) and Shadow Defence Secretary (2005-10). He also served as Secretary of State for Defence (2010-2011) and Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (2016-2019)

**Dr Andrew Murrison MP** was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence on 30 October 2022. He was previously Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development from 9 May 2019 to 13 February 2020. He was elected Conservative MP for South West Wiltshire in May 2010, and was first elected as the Conservative MP for Westbury in June 2001.

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Published by  
Policy Exchange, 1 Old Queen Street, Westminster, London SW1H 9JA

[www.policyexchange.org.uk](http://www.policyexchange.org.uk)

ISBN: 978-1-910812-XX-X

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# Executive Summary

Brexit means Britain must rediscover its sharp elbow. That means getting the right people in the right numbers in the right places. This study maps the country's success in securing key international appointments over time and anticipates a cut-throat future where diplomacy, soft power and influence must be refined and reformed. It is an evidential base for policymakers deciding how to pitch the formidable human resources at its disposal to best advance the national interest.

The world's top thirty organisations were examined in four domains - security, humanitarian and development, political and judicial, and financial and commercial. Each organisation was mined for the names and nationalities of people in the most senior positions for as far back as possible, a total of 1,171 post holders.

Encouragingly, we found that Britain has historically done well – overall. However, when the data is put under the microscope, a different picture emerges – one of relative decline. The UK's proportion of representation is seen to fall – it nearly halves.

Sectoral analysis shows us where decline has been most acute. In what we term 'soft' sectors (humanitarian and political-judicial affairs), the UK has and continues to do relatively well. It has consistently held 9% of the total roles, second after the US.

British decline is very evident in the 'hard' sectors of security and commerce. The UK's presence in the highest reaches of security-related organisations has halved, from 14% of positions pre-1980 to 7% since 2000. This has happened whilst competitors, such as France, have increased their share. In addition, the UK has seemingly focused only on populating the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), with 9 of 11 of its security-related role holders since 2000 holding office within it.

In the financial/commercial domain, the UK's share has dwindled. It is currently the lowest share of representation (3%) out of all sectors. Since 1980, the UK has only been represented 8 times – USA, China, Japan, France, Germany, Nigeria, and India all do as well if not better. Since 2000, 5 Brits have held 6 top roles. Only one has been in a tier 1 role (Guy Ryder of the International Labor Organisation).

The UK's poor showing in commerce and finance is incompatible with the government's 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

But what kind of Brit have held commercial roles? We divided post

holders into internals from within the civil service and externals. We also looked at whether they were likely to see themselves primarily as British delegates or as part of an international bureaucracy inferred by whether they have spent time in international institutions prior to taking their job.

Accepting the obvious caveats and limitations attending qualitative analyses of this sort, we found the British job holder cadre to have the joint fewest externals and to be the most internationalist relative to other countries. British representatives in the humanitarian sector are mostly either from a civil service or political background. None of this accords with government's stated intention to populate positions of influence from broader civil society and business.

Success post Brexit for the average citizen means personal and collective prosperity. Britain shifting for itself on the world stage is an important element in advancing that agenda. At the moment woeful representation at the 'hard', commercial/financial end of the spectrum is handing an advantage to its strategic competitors. Given trade-offs and the transactional nature of international appointing, this may mean doing slightly less well in some of the softer institutions the UK has traditionally staffed up at senior level.



# Foreword

Rt Hon Lord Robertson of Port Ellen KT GCMG HonFRSE PC

As someone who led a major international organisation, I have long held the view that the UK does not take seeking such positions sufficiently seriously. Nor in my opinion have we sufficiently looked after those who we nominate to such positions.

This was a view based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence but on little hard research. I had seen, over my years involved in international affairs, other countries apparently dominating global and regional organisations and had thought that we were missing the boat. I have sounded off on the subject many times.

But there has been little hard evidence available on what is a very important subject. This study fills that gap. By meticulously researching and analysing the facts, the authors have outlined the real picture – and it allows us to examine where we have had successes and where we need to focus.

The anecdotal evidence and personal opinion were never enough – and it was, as this report shows, wrong. Britain it appears has had an excellent record in obtaining influential positions in many key areas if looked at over the very long term. Among our peers we do well in capturing major posts. However, in recent years, and specifically relating to key areas of commerce and security that carry clear national implications, anecdotal evidence appears worryingly close to the mark.

However, the report shows clearly that the record of Brits in High Places does not sit well with the objectives laid out in the Integrated Review. Since that Review stands as the overarching national strategy for the country then the effort to gain positions needs to be in synch with the areas it prioritises. The value of this report is that we can now identify where Britain needs to prioritise if it is to maximise our influence.

The Report also flags up the warning that other countries do have Grand Strategies – and that they are executing them with remarkable vigour. Many people have already noticed the way in which China has penetrated so many important organisations – and at many levels. That provides both a warning – and a spur to what we must do.

Holding, as I did, one of the most important positions in the world, it gave me a clear vision of what Brits abroad can do and can contribute. This report should therefore stimulate much thinking – and indeed some urgent action, if our place in the world is to be protected and our role promoted.

**Lord Robertson is a Labour Peer in the House of Lords and was the Tenth Secretary General of NATO from 1999-2003. He was Secretary of State for Defence from 1997-1999.**

## The context

Everyone knows Britain punches above its weight on the world stage, right? Well, it's an assertion looking for evidence. A search of leading British think tanks on governance and international affairs, including the Institute for Government, Chatham House, RUSI, Henry Jackson Society, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies leaves us none the wiser. The House of Commons Library has no data on senior UK nationals within supranational bodies and confirmed it has no knowledge of any recent work that could shed light.

Britain's 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, and Foreign Policy is stuffed with references to the diplomatic tools of multilateralism (referenced 35 times) and the international order (referenced 39 times).<sup>1</sup> Early in the review we read about Britain being 'a global leader in diplomacy and development'.<sup>2</sup> Some statistics are given which back this up. We are reminded that the UK is 'one of the largest bilateral and multilateral donors to global education'; the '4<sup>th</sup> largest (global) diplomatic network'; 'one of the largest funders of the WHO'; and, a seat holder in 'every major multilateral organisation'.

Despite being the world's 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy, Britain has long since surrendered any pretence as a superpower. To gauge its residual standing in the world it is important to consider what the two big players are up to. Much of the post-publication analysis of the Integrated Review focussed on China, identified as a 'systemic competitor'.<sup>3</sup> A September 2020 Civitas report entitled *A Long March through the institutions* documented Beijing's growing pernicious influence within (mainly) UN bodies and its attempts to create authoritarian alternatives to the liberal multilateral order.<sup>4</sup> Media coverage has chronicled China's rise in the international arena, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

The election of President Biden appeared to change everything. 'America First' under Donald Trump, meaning retreat from international institutions – including withdrawal from WHO and UNHRC, and undermining UNRWA and the WTO – is out. Now, 'America is back. Diplomacy is back at the centre of our foreign policy... we will engage with the world once again.'<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the minutes of Biden and Johnson's first official telephone call glimpsed a shared ambition to work together towards mutual foreign policy goals in international organisations:

'President Biden also noted the importance of cooperation, including through

1. Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, and Foreign Policy, March 2021

<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975077/Global\\_Britain\\_in\\_a\\_Competitive\\_Age\\_-\\_the\\_Integrated\\_Review\\_of\\_Security\\_-\\_Defence\\_Development\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_-_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf)> (henceforth 'IR')

2. *Ibid*, p.8

3. *Ibid* p.26

4. Radomir Tylecote and Robert Clark, *A Long March through the Institutions: Understanding and responding to*

China's influence in international organisations, for Civitas <<https://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/A-Long-March.pdf>> [accessed April 2022]

5. Claudia Rosett, *Buying power: how China co-opts the UN*, the *Spectator*, 12 December 2020 <<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/buying-power-how-china-co-opts-the-un>> [Accessed April 2022]

6. Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021, <

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>> [Accessed April 2022]

multilateral organizations, on shared challenges such as combatting climate change, containing COVID-19, and ensuring global health security. He noted his readiness to work closely with Prime Minister Johnson as the United Kingdom hosts the G-7 and United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) this year. The leaders also discussed the need for coordination on shared foreign policy priorities, including China, Iran, and Russia.<sup>7</sup>

The AUKUS submarine deal is turning words into action must faster than expected. It seems likely that at least some of the pique expressed by France over the deal was the reaction of another declining power to the apparent advantage secured by its peer (the UK).

Brexit means the UK is done with subcontracting international engagement to others. It must now shift for itself. Government has begun to meet the challenge by upgrading its foreign service, creating missions that are palpably more workmanlike and trade focussed. But supranational institutions are hugely influential in an interconnected world. Unless the UK has the right people in the right places, Global Britain will remain unfinished business. Britain's hard-nosed competitors will steal a march at great cost to those we serve and represent. Government appears to understand this, saying 'it is near impossible to advance national interest by proxy and presence is the only guarantee of the UK being heard.'<sup>8</sup>

Our perception was that the UK is increasingly under-represented in the senior ranks of international organisations, particularly in organisation dealing with trade and commerce and with respect to peer group countries. But our suspicions were anecdotal. This study sought to establish an evidence base one way or the other.

## **‘Everyone knows Britain punches above its weight on the world stage – right?’**

The following case studies illustrate the importance of nationals in senior ranks of international organisations:

### **Case Study 1: ‘Historic milestone’ for China**

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee has charted the ways in which China achieves influence through ‘ensuring that key senior level appointments of Chinese nationals are made within critical multilateral organisations.’ China has been contributing to UN peacekeeping missions but, of greater interest, is its use of UN agencies to promote its Belt and Road Initiative. Nineteen UN agencies have signing BRI cooperation documents as of late 2021. It has been targeting global governance, notably relating to cyberspace, and has majored on socio-economic development.<sup>9</sup>

China's focus has paid dividends. It has held the IMF's second-top position - Deputy Managing Director - since 2011 with three of its nationals (Min Zhu, Tao Zhang, and Bo Li – all of whom were previously Deputy Governors at the central bank, the People's Bank of China). Since

7. Readout of President Joseph R. Biden Call with Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/23/readout-of-president-joe-biden-call-with-prime-minister-boris-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom/>> [Accessed April 2022]
8. Government response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's First Report of Session 2021-22: *In the room: the UK's role in multilateral diplomacy* (7 September 2021), <<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7232/documents/75935/default/>> [Accessed July 2022] p.3
9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Position Paper on China's Cooperation with the United Nations (October 2021), <[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/wjzcs/202110/t20211022\\_9609380.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/202110/t20211022_9609380.html)> [Accessed July 2022]

2009 the bank campaigned to have the Chinese currency included in the IMF's basket currency, the Special Drawing Right (SDR). Its governor outlined his ambition in an essay whilst Min Zhu was his deputy.<sup>10</sup> He became the IMF's Deputy Managing Director in 2011, leaving in 2016. This meant that when Premier Li Keqiang officially asked the IMF to include the yuan in the SDR basket in early 2015, there was an amenable insider within the IMF's top tier. Unsurprisingly, the yuan's inclusion in 2016 was welcomed as a 'historic milestone' by the Chinese state bank.<sup>11</sup>

The decision raised eyebrows since 'it is odd to have a reserve currency that is not freely convertible.' Furthermore, despite its assurances, China has resisted standard currency reforms, such as 'capital account convertibility so that it can manage capital inflows and outflows and the level of its exchange rate.'

Of course, it is only possible to imply a causal link between the placement of Min Zhu and the inclusion of the yuan. However, the national interest for China in having its man at the top table is clear.

## Case study 2: 'Victory for France'

Finance minister under Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2011), Christine Lagarde has held two pivotal international roles, IMF Managing Director (2011-2019) and President of the European Central Bank (2019-).

Sarkozy openly referred to Lagarde's appointment as a "victory for France".<sup>12</sup> Her allegiance to both was confirmed in a letter discovered at her home by investigators in connection with the 2013 Tapie-Lagarde affair. In it she said "I am at your side to serve you and your projects for France... Use me for as long as it suits you and suits your action and your casting. (...) If you use me, I need you as a guide and as a support: without a guide, I risk being ineffective, without a support I risk having little credibility. With my immense admiration. Christine L."<sup>13</sup> It has not been confirmed when this note was written, but it was likely to have been between 2007 and mid-2012,<sup>14</sup> whilst Sarkozy was president, and potentially during or in the run up to Lagarde's appointment at the IMF.

10. Zhou Xiaochuan: *Reform the international monetary system*, Essay by Dr Zhou Xiaochuan, Governor of the People's Bank of China, 23 March 2009. <<https://www.bis.org/review/r090402c.pdf>> [Accessed July 2022]

11. The People's Bank of China, 'Chinese Renminbi Officially Included in the SDR' (October 2016), <<http://www.pbc.gov.cn/english/130721/3154437/index.html>> [Accessed July 2022]

12. Stefan Simons, 'A New Leader for the IMF', *Spiegel International* (June 2011), <<https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/a-new-leader-for-the-imf-convinced-european-christine-lagarde-takes-over-a-771278.html>> [Accessed July 2022]

13. 'La La lettre d'allégeance de Christine Lagarde à Nicolas Sarkozy', *Le Monde* (June 2013), <[https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2013/06/17/la-lettre-d-allegiance-de-christine-lagarde-a-nicolas-sarkozy\\_3431248\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2013/06/17/la-lettre-d-allegiance-de-christine-lagarde-a-nicolas-sarkozy_3431248_3224.html)> [Accessed July 2022]

14. *The International Economy*, Summer 2019, pp.4-5 <[http://www.international-economy.com/TIE\\_Su19\\_OfftheNews.pdf](http://www.international-economy.com/TIE_Su19_OfftheNews.pdf)> [Accessed July 2022]

# What we did

## Which organisations?

Following consultation between Murrison and Fox, a list of 30 organisations was constructed (Table 1) giving a balance of UN and non-UN-affiliated security, humanitarian and development, political and judicial, and commerce-related international organisations. We are happy to be challenged on our selection.

## Defining the top brass

The organisations examined have different senior leadership titles and ranking structures. It was necessary, therefore, to formulate a standardised two-tiered framework into which posts could be designated.

Senior leaders are defined as the top-ranking officials within an organisation. Tier one generally refers to the leader of an organisation - their ranks equate to at least Under Secretary General (USG) according to the United Nations (UN) framework. The UN equates these to senior or cabinet ministers. Tier two role holders are often deputies or assistants to tier one leaders. They must hold the rank of at least Assistant Secretary General (ASG) in UN terms. ASGs are held by the UN as equal to junior government ministers.

Table 1 details the organisations examined and their tier one and tier two posts. Note that there may be none, one or more than one office holder within each category depending on the organisation.

## Collecting the data

With a list of target organisations and the titles of the leaders identified, the harvesting of names, nationalities and dates of office occupancy could begin. The aim was for data to be found for every organisation dating as far back as possible, preferably to either an organisations' inception or to the inaugural role holder. The organisations for which this was possible are colour coded green in Table 1. In some cases, historic data was available up to a point, for example, when online records began. These organisations are coloured amber. In cases where no historic data was available or forthcoming from organisations, no data was recorded. These organisations are coloured red.

As this implies, the availability of data differed between organisations. As a general rule, the details of tier one ranking officials and their predecessors were publicly available on official websites or in archived press releases.

Incumbent tier two ranking officials were often identified on organisations' official websites. Their predecessors were more difficult to find. This required direct correspondence and some organisations were either unwilling or didn't hold the records of their previous tier two officials. Some organisations' deputies fell below the rank of ASG (or equivalent). Consequently, the data does not include entries for all of these officials in order to ensure consistency and avoid misleading over-representation.

**Table 1 illustrates the 30 organisations, their leadership positions and colour coded data availability, and the corresponding tier.**

Organisation name	Organisation's top-ranking official(s) - USG or equivalent (or higher).	Organisation's second-top ranking official(s) - ASG or equivalent (or higher).
UN Office of Secretary General (UNSG)	Secretary General	Deputy Secretary General
UN Office in Geneva (UNOG)	Director General	
UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	Executive Secretary	
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)	Under Secretary General	Assistant Secretary General
UN Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO)	Under Secretary General	Assistant Secretary General
UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA)	Under Secretary General	Assistant Secretary General
UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR)	High Commissioner	Assistant Secretary General
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	High Commissioner	Deputy High Commissioner, Assistant High Commissioner
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)	Under Secretary General	Assistant Secretary General (records only as far back as 1999)
UN Environment Programme (UNEP)	Executive Director	Deputy Executive Director
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	Executive Secretary	Deputy Executive Secretary

UN Development Programme (UNDP)	Administrator	Assistant Administrator, Regional Administrator for Europe and CIS, Assistant Secretary General (records only go back to 2006)
International Courts of Justice (ICJ)	President	Vice President
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)	Director General	Deputy Director General
International Criminal Courts (ICC)	President	First Vice President, Second Vice President, Chief Prosecutor
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Secretary General	Deputy Secretary General
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)	Secretary General, Chairman, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation	Deputy Secretary General, Deputy Chairman, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol)	Secretary General, President	Vice President, Europe Delegate
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	Secretary General	Head of Department
World Trade Organisation (WTO)	Director General	Deputy Director General (records only go back to 2005)
Council of Europe (CoE)	Secretary General	Deputy Secretary General (do not hold this data)
World Food Programme (WFP)	Executive Director	Deputy Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director (do not disclose personal data)
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	Managing Director	Deputy Managing Director
World Bank	President	Vice President, EVP/CEO
World Health Organisation (WHO)	Director General	Deputy Director General, Assistant Director General (confidential data, according to HR)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	Director General	Deputy Director General
World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)	Director General	Deputy Director General and Assistant Director General
International Labour Organisation (ILO)	Director General	Assistant Director General, Deputy Director General, Executive Director, Regional Director
Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance	Chief Executive Officer	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
International Telecommunications Union (ITU)	Secretary General	Deputy Secretary General

Annex 1 shows the full data, organised by organisation, position, name, nationality, and dates in office. The findings can be summarised:

- Data was collected from 30 international organisations whose operations can be categorised into four groups: health, development and humanitarian affairs; trade, economic and financial affairs; administrative, judicial and environmental affairs; and security.
- 71 tier 1 and tier 2 positions were identified within these 30 organisations.
- 1,171 role holders were identified out of the 71 positions.
- Of the 1,171 role holders, 423 were tier 1 and 748 tier 2.
- Dividing this into three time periods, 359 took office pre-1980; 323 between 1980-2000; and 489 post-2000
- Within tier 1, 177 role holders took office pre-1980, 109 between 1980-2000, and 137 post-2000
- Within tier 2, 182 took office pre-1980, 214 between 1980-2000, and 352 post-2000.

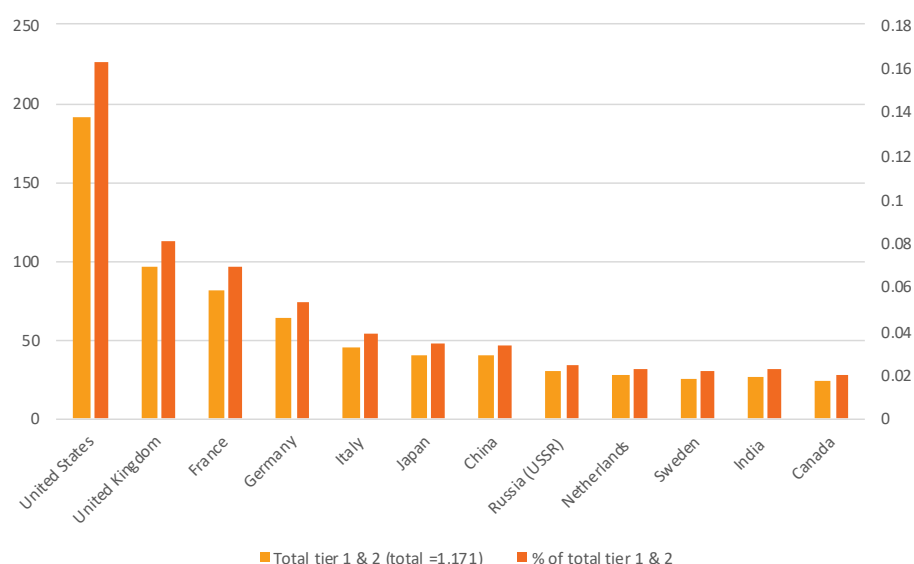


# What did we find?

## Broad picture = strong representation

Graph 1 shows the total number of position holders in absolute and percentage terms. Data is not broken down by time periods, sector or any other factor.

**Graph 1: Absolute and % of top represented nations in historic and current tier 1 & 2 senior leadership categories**

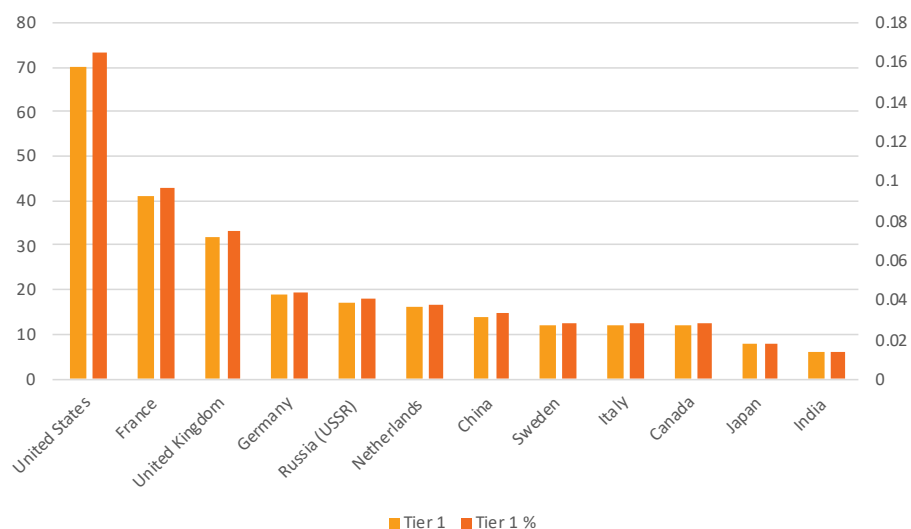


Using these metrics, the UK is the second-best represented country (holding 96 tier 1 and 2 historic and current positions out of the total 1,171 collected). Thus, Britain holds or has held 8.1% of the total roles collected in this analysis. America of course is first with 191 and 16.3%; and France comes third with 82 and 7.0%.

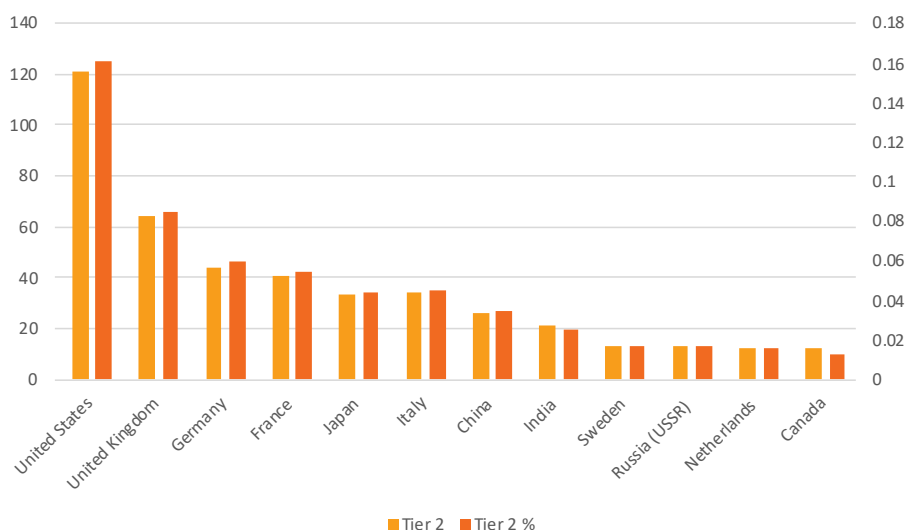
Breaking the data down into tier 1 and 2 senior leadership roles in Graphs 2 and 3, we can see that the UK is still well placed. France has been represented 9 times more than the UK in the more important tier 1 category (despite the UK having 14 more representatives in total), although the gap between the UK and its closest competitor, Germany, is significant at 14. The USA, France, and the UK together account for 34% of recorded current and historic tier 1 senior leaders.

Note France's superior tier 1 representation against its tier 2 representation – holding 9.6% of tier 1 positions and 5.4% of tier 2. The UK has had more success finding representation in tier 2 senior leadership roles (7.5% vs. 8.5%).

Graph 2: Tier 1 absolute and percentage numbers



Graph 3: Tier 2 absolute and percentage numbers

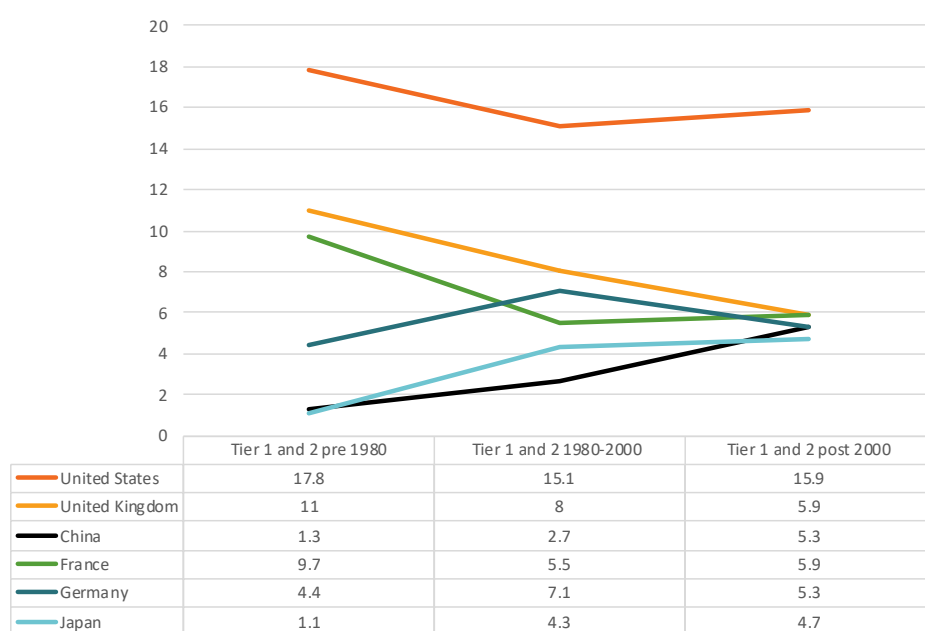


# UK's decline, China's ascent

In Graph 4, tier 1 and 2 leaders are divided into three periods - those taking office pre-1980, between 1980-2000, and post-2000. The UK's descent over time is particularly marked; the graph shows its share of overall leaders in international organisations has halved since the pre-1980 period. China, on the other hand, has experienced a significant ascent. Having started at different points pre-1980, the pack of countries including China, UK, France, Germany, and Japan are now all between 4.7-5.9% of total representation.

But what are the UK's strengths and weaknesses? To answer this, we conducted a sectoral analysis of the data, which we will look at next.

**Graph 4: % of representation in tier 1 and 2 over time**

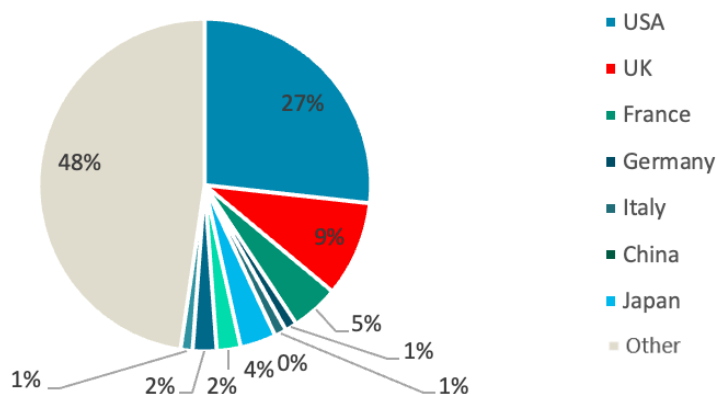


## Strength in humanitarian and security sectors

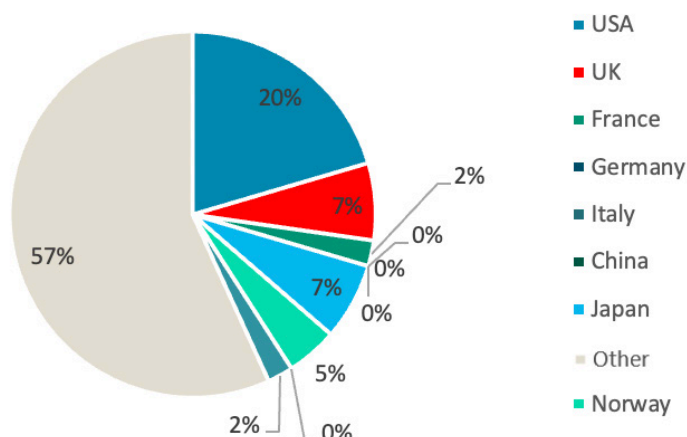
- Others stealing a march in trade, finance, and economic affairs.

Our 30 international organisations can be divided into the categories: humanitarian and development affairs; commerce; political and judicial affairs; and security (Annex 2).

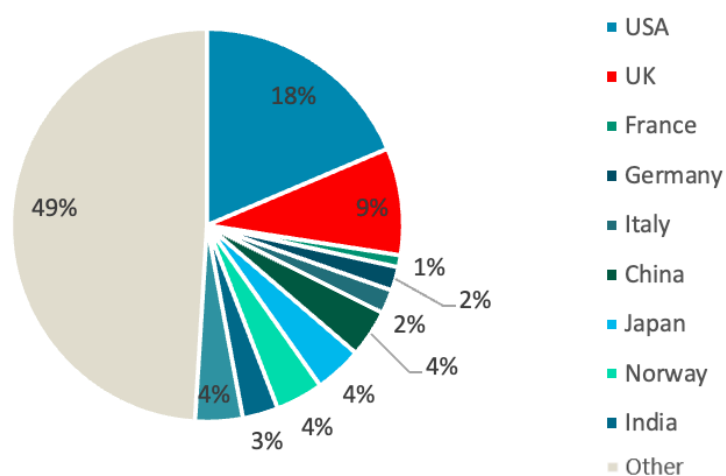
Graph 5: Humanitarian and development affairs pre-1980



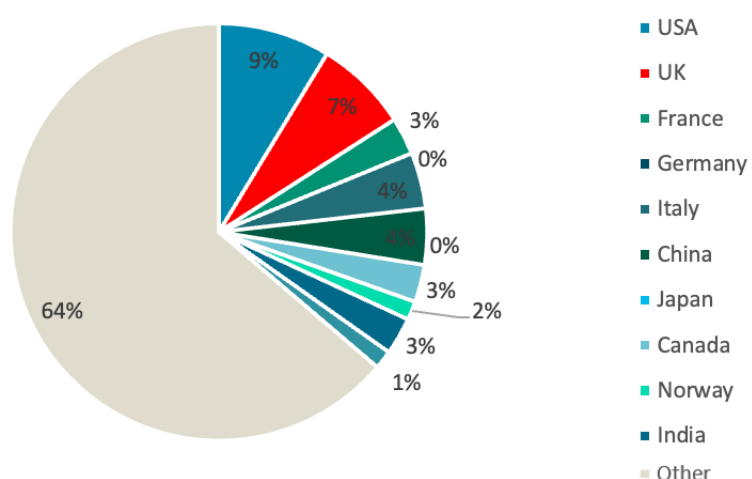
Graph 6: Humanitarian and development 1980-2000



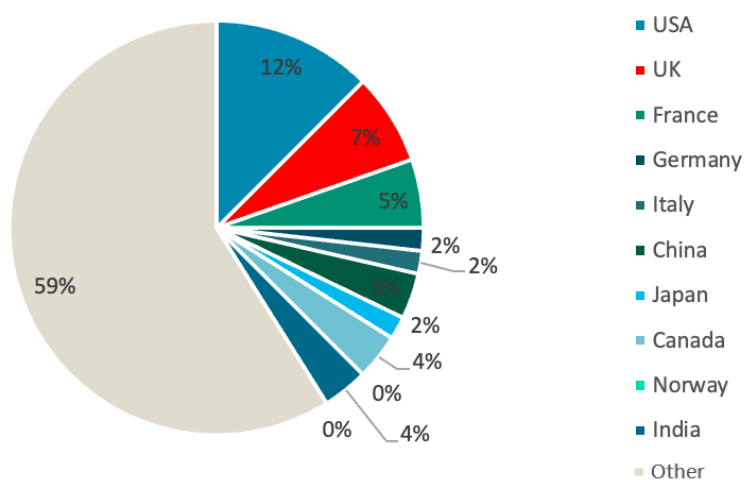
Graph 7: Humanitarian and development post-2000



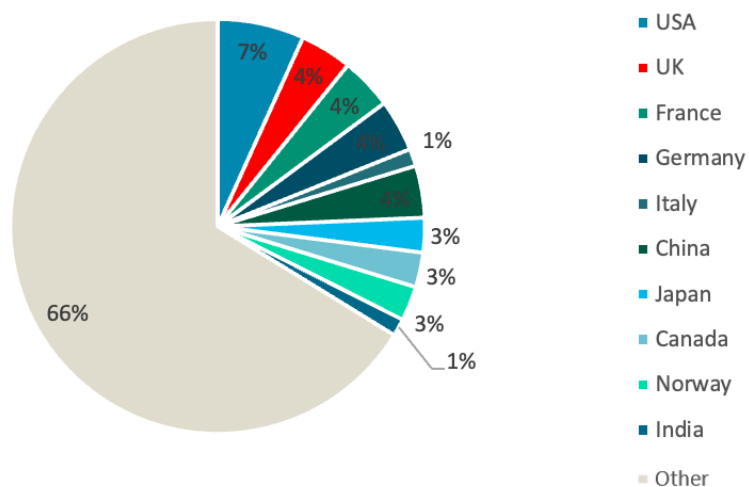
Graph 8: Political and judicial affairs pre-1980



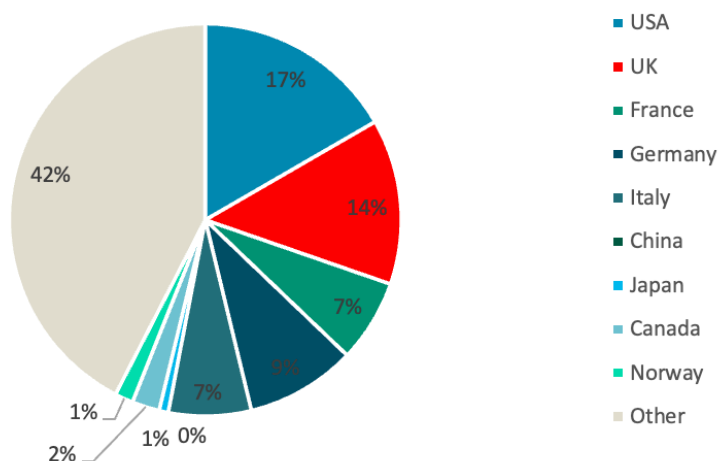
Graph 9: Political and judicial affairs 1980-2000



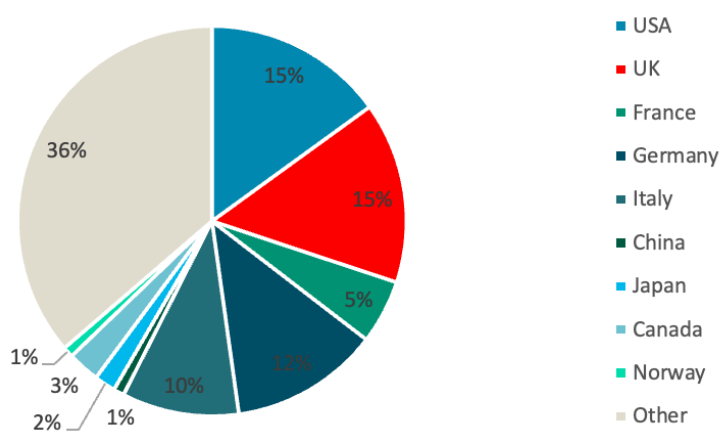
Graph 10: Political and judicial affairs post-2000



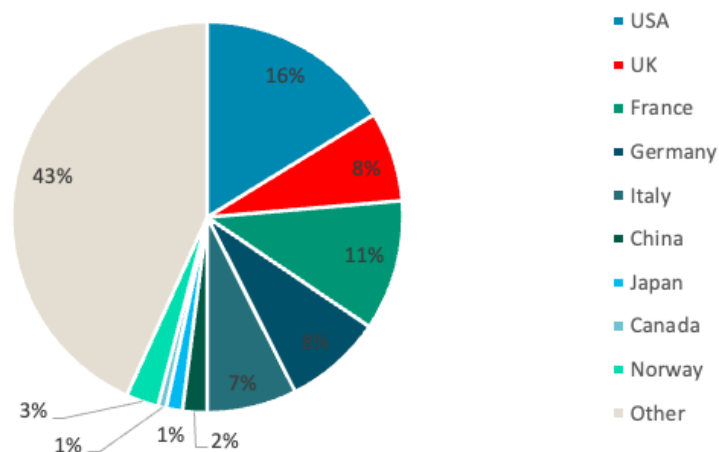
Graph 11: security pre-1980



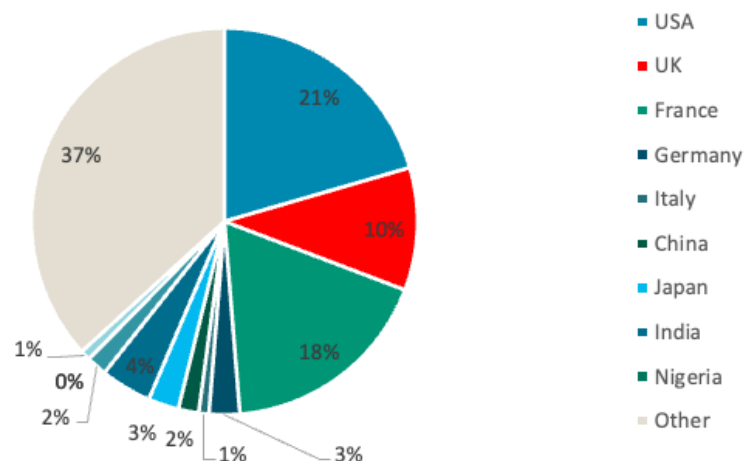
Graph 12: security 1980-2000



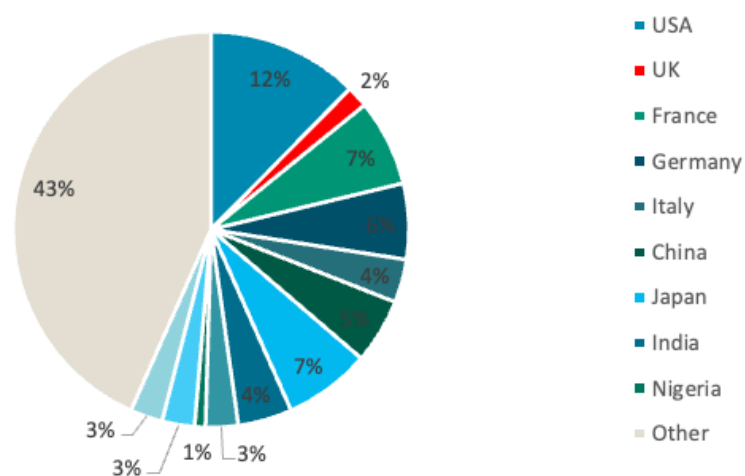
Graph 13: security post-2000



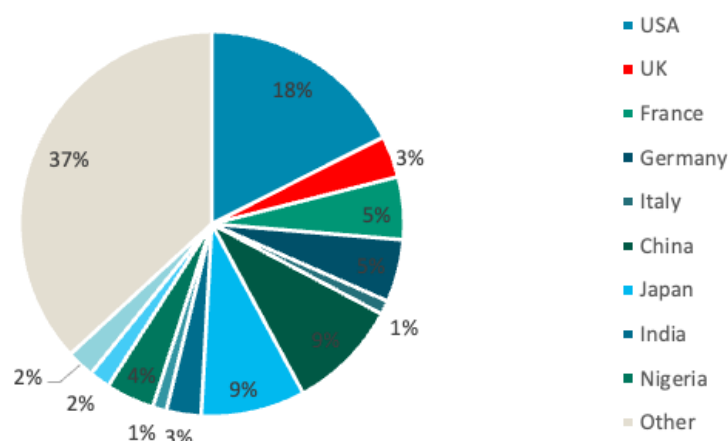
Graph 14: commerce pre-1980



Graph 15: commerce 1980-2000



Graph 16: commerce post-2000



In this series of graphs, we have a snapshot of where the UK now stands together with an indication of where the decline in overall representation has been over time.

The UK has an impressive record of representation in ‘soft’ institutions covering humanitarian and development affairs (Graphs 5, 6, and 7). Its current holding of 9% of these posts is consistently second only to the US. It might help being major bankroller of the institutions, particularly their core budgets, enabling the UK to ease in nominees<sup>15</sup>. However, the UK is the largest single funder of GAVI, the Vaccines Alliance, and it has no current senior representation there.<sup>16</sup> Another reason for good representation here is convention. The UK is particularly well represented in the tier 1 role of Under Secretary General in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), with five of the last five appointments being British. Other countries have fiefdoms in other UN departments – the USA (UNDPPA), France (UNDPKO) and China (UNDESA) each have held a series of consecutive USG roles. Similar conventions exist in non-UN organisations, such as NATO, World Bank and IMF.

The political and judicial affairs category (Graphs 8, 9, and 10) has the UK’s second best showing. Here, the UK has been in some decline (from 7% to 4%) but not as precipitously as in the areas of security and commerce (‘hard’ sectors, if you will).

In these ‘hard’ sectors, Britain’s representation begins to look significantly worse relative to other countries, relative to its historical representation, and in terms of the diversity of roles. In security (Graphs 11, 12, and 13), representation pre-1980 was 13%, between 1980-2000 14% and is now 7%. Since 2000, the UK has held 11 positions in the security sector – joint fourth with Italy, behind USA (34), France (16) and Germany (12) (Tables 2, 3 & 4 below). France and Germany had until 2000 trailed far behind the UK in this sector – until 2000 the UK held 35 positions, USA 29, Germany 26, Italy 20, and France 15. Furthermore, looking at which roles the UK has held since 2000, we can see that 6 of the 11 have been Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in NATO – a position

15. We have assumed throughout that money, dedicated assets, and where appropriate willingness to engage militarily, buys influence in appointment to top jobs. That assumption might be formally tested by comparing treasure in with jobs out.

16. The last change in senior roles was in 2015, so this might change at the next opportunity.



established by convention. 9 of the 11 positions have been in NATO (the other 2 being in INTERPOL). This contrasts with the more diverse French approach – they have been represented in every security-related international organisation we examined as well as possessing the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation position in NATO by convention since its creation relatively recently.

Britain's representation in the post-Brexit mission critical area of commerce (Graphs 14, 15, and 16) is poor, a misalignment with the Integrated Review's putting trade at the heart of Global Britain. Since 2000, it has been represented just 6 times out of the 171 recorded roles (3%). Since 1980 it has been represented 8 times (also 3%). USA (30), China (16), Japan (15), France (9), Germany (9), and Nigeria (7) all surpass the UK since 2000. Add to this list India, if expanding the scope to organisations post-1980. Thus, having started from a position of relative strength – having the third most representation up until 1980 – it now lies seventh, whilst smaller and similar sized countries have increased their share. Of these similar countries, the most comparable are Germany and France – since 1980, for every Brit represented there are two French and Germans, and since 2000 France and Germany have been represented three times more.

Table 2 shows the raw all-time data:

	Health, development and humanitarian affairs	Trade, finance & economic affairs	Political, judicial and environmental affairs	Security	/Out of total
USA	42	68	18	63	191
UK	17	20	12	47	96
France	5	38	8	31	82
Germany	3	19	4	38	64
Italy	3	7	5	31	46
China	4	24	8	4	40
Japan	7	26	3	5	41

Table 3 shows data up to 2000:

	Health, development and humanitarian affairs	Trade, finance & economic affairs	Political, judicial and environmental affairs	Security	/Out of total
USA	23	38	13	39	113
UK	8	14	9	36	67
France	4	29	5	15	53
China	0	8	5	1	16
Germany	1	10	1	26	38
Japan	3	11	1	3	18
Italy	1	5	4	20	30

Table 4: data from 2000.

	Health, development and humanitarian affairs	Trade, finance & economic affairs	Political, judicial and environmental affairs	Security	/Out of total
USA	19	30	5	24	78
UK	9	6	3	11	29
France	1	9	3	16	29
China	4	16	3	3	24
Germany	2	9	3	12	26
Japan	4	15	2	2	23
Italy	2	2	1	11	17

The national poor showing in international bodies dealing in commerce is, at first glance, at odds with the Government's ambition outlined in the Integrated Review (IR), which places strong emphasis on trade. We hear that 'we will be a global champion of free and fair trade' and that this will be achieved by the U.K. playing 'a more active part in sustaining an international order in which open societies and economies continue to flourish'.<sup>17</sup> Promoting UK trade and prosperity through the global economic architecture is not a new or post-Brexit idea, as the 2015 National Security Strategy shows. Brexit simply gives it more urgency.

The Government's response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's report on the UK's role in multilateral organisations promised more UK action in the international financial institutions that we are members of – which is welcome – but when outlining specific organisations to focus efforts on, only the WTO was mentioned (this represents only one of the nine international financial institutions examined in this paper).

The IR lists other specific areas that require focus - regulatory diplomacy, science and technology diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, national security diplomacy, dispute resolution, legal diplomacy, and data driven diplomacy.

17. HM Government, Global Britain in a Competitive Age, March 2021 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975077/Global\\_Britain\\_in\\_a\\_Competitive\\_Age\\_the\\_Integrated\\_Review\\_of\\_Security\\_Defence\\_Development\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf) p.6

On this we can start with some good news. WIPO, a specialised agency of the UN which protects and promotes Intellectual Property, falls under at least one of these headings. It fulfils HMG's forward-looking objective of 'shaping standards in rapidly evolving areas.' The recent appointment of a UK national, Andrew Staines, as WIPO's Assistant Deputy Secretary General is congruent with these goals and therefore welcome. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is important for similar reasons. Its objective is to 'connect the world'. The UK wants to ensure that this is done without the government interference model championed by China and relevant in the context of HMG's decision to remove Huawei's 5G infrastructure from domestic networks. So, the UK standing for ITU Council 2022 is very sensible and current British influence in senior ranks through Malcolm Johnson is important (Table 5).

The bad news is that Mr Staines and Mr Johnson are two of just five Brits (and six role-holders – since one held two separate senior positions) to achieve high office since 2000 in the trade, finance and economic affairs sector - just 3% of the overall.

To make matters worse, only one Brit has been a tier 1 senior leader, Guy Ryder, the ILO's current Director General, promoted from Assistant Director General. This thin spread of senior Brits is poorly aligned with the country's attachment to prosperity through free trade and the maintenance of a settled international order.

Top diplomat Lord Ricketts observes that influence in international organisations is two-pronged - political/ministerial and official:

*'These (multilateral institutions) give a shape to Britain's international engagement. But international influence does not come just from having a seat at as many tables as possible. It has to be earned by the willingness to take initiatives and then pursue them by building coalitions of interest and support. Ministerial time and energy are essential for this. So is effective staff work. British diplomats in international organisations have long been rated highly by foreign counterparts for their professionalism. They make a real contribution to the country's soft power... The combination of a British minister at the table, using debating skills honed in the House of Commons, and talented staff in support who can work the room and shape the final outcome, can prove highly effective.'*<sup>18</sup>

Peter Ricketts perceives that the successful projection of soft power is achieved through the alchemy of the civil service and politicians. This is particularly the case in the hard-nosed, competitive environment of trade, finance, and economic affairs. Having already concluded that there are too few senior British leaders within trade-related organisations, we have to consider the mix of who we send.

18. Peter Ricketts, *Hard Choices* (London, 2021), p.159

## Right sort of Brit?

So far, we have assumed that having Brits in high places is good for Britain. Whilst instinctively the proposition seems reasonable, it is worth taking a look at the people the UK sends onto the international stage, conducting a comparative analysis of other states' practices and considering what impact any differences might mean. Put bluntly, are we sending the right sort of Brit, if the aim, post-Brexit, is to advance the interests of British citizens?

### Data set 1: UK citizens vs France and Germany across all time

The occupants of senior positions within trade, finance and economic affairs organisations can broadly be categorised as: (a) civil servants who have climbed the career ladder within domestic departments; (b) international civil servants – those who have entered institutions as juniors; and (c) appointees from outside civil services, including politicians and businessmen, described here as 'externals'.

**Table 5:<sup>19</sup> France, Germany and the UK's historic and current role holders in the trade, finance, and economic affairs sectors:**

Country:	Civil Servants:	International Civil Servants:	Externals	Unknown background	Out of total
France	Yves Berthelot, Jean-Claude Milleron, Antoine Bianca, Gabriel van Laetham, Philippe de Seynes, Guillaume Georges-Picot, Jean Claude Paye, Jean-Marie Paugam, Philippe Petit, Nicolas Niemtchinow, Jean-Francois Tremeaud, Michel Camdessus, Jacque de Larosiere, Pierre-Paul Scheitzer 14	Robert Muller, Philippe le Houerou, Francis Blanchard, Philippe Blamont Leon Mulatier 5	Henri Laugier, Pascal Lamy, Sylvie Forbin, Bertrand Badre, Christine Lagarde, Dominique Strauss Kahn, 6	Jean Louis Ripert, Paul Lemerle, Gerard Eldin, Jean Cottier, Albert Thomas, Andre Aboughanem, Francis Wolf, Paul Bacon, Francis Field Blanchard, Jean Morellet, Marius Viple, Adrien Tixier, Fernand Maurette 13	38
Germany	Ludger Schuknecht (ICS), Klaus Pfanner (ICS), Heinz Koller (ICS), Susanne Hoffman, Karl Brauner, Herwig Schlogl 6	Caio Koch-Weser, Ladislaus von Hoffman 2	Peter Woicke (x2), Heribert Scharrenboic, Horst Kohler, Stefan Kapferer, Petra Ulshoeffer, Johannes Wichard (ICS & CS), Friedrich Buttler (CS) 8	Hans Wutte, Franz von Mutius, Herman Ernst 3	19
UK	David K Owen, Margaret Anstee, Eric Wyndham White, IPM Cargill, WAB Illiff, William Ryrie, Harold Buttler (x2), 8	Guy Ryder (x2), Namaat Shafik (CS), Malcolm Johnson 4	Caroline Anstey (ICS), Geoffrey Wilson, Andrew Staines (CS & ICS) 3	Jack Martin, Patrick Denby, Clarence Wilfried Jenks (x2), GA Johnston 4	20

We hope none of the post holders will be offended by our categorisation and description based as they are on information that is publicly accessible. Indeed, caution should be taken in interpretation at this stage, given the incomplete nature of the data available. The table shows that of its principal European competitors, the UK has the fewest externals. France has had 6 of these individuals – which, at 16% of its total, is proportionally similar to the UK's 15%. Germany trumps France and the UK, with 9 of its 19 being externals.

What does external actually mean? Two of the three Brits have (tenuous) political links: Caroline Anstey (worked for two years for James Callaghan at the beginning of her career, but spent the majority working as an international civil servant in the World Bank achieving senior office after 15 years) and Geoffrey Wilson (in the 1970s a World Bank

19. "(x2)" means the individual has held two senior roles. For consistency purposes, individuals with crossover between (international) civil service and external backgrounds (even if the latter does not account for most of their career) have been put into the latter category. When there is crossover this is denoted next to a name with brackets indicating the other background, e.g., "(CS)", which means also of a civil service background.

senior leader, previously an expelled Labour activist come Foreign Office diplomat during World War II) have held high office. Andrew Staines has had a diverse career spanning the private sector and the civil service – he is the only British representative in the international trade, finance and economic affairs sector to have had experience in the private sector.

Both Germany and France have had more individuals enter senior leadership positions from outside the public sphere than the UK. This is somewhat complicated by many individuals having a party-political allegiance before or whilst working in their country's civil service – like Britain's Geoffrey Wilson. Germany's Horst Kohler (IMF Managing Director, CDU member and future President of Germany), Heribert Scharrenboich (ILO Deputy Director General, previously CDU member, and civil servant), and Stefan Kapferer (OECD Deputy secretary General and FDP member) all have crossover between the political and civil servant categories. The others with their prime locus being outside the public sector are Peter Woicke (who held two senior positions in the World Bank, and previously worked in the private sector) and Petra Ulshoeffer, Johannes Wichard, and Friedrich Buttler, who were all academics for a time.

In France, there is a similar trend. In the category of those with a political and civil service background are Pascal Lamy (in 2005 made Director General of the WTO, previously a French and EU civil servant, advisor to Jacques Delors and member of the French Socialist Party), Bertrand Badre (in 2013 appointed a Managing Director in World Bank, previously in and out of the private and public sectors - including as advisor to Jacques Chirac), Christine Lagarde (Managing Director of the IMF between 2011-2019, and previously a prominent French centre right politician), and Dominique Strauss Kahn (Managing Director of the IMF between 2007-2011 and previously a prominent French politician in the Socialist Party). The two remaining are non-political - Henri Laugier (a founding UN Assistant Secretary General and previously a scientist) and Sylvie Forbin (in 2016 made a Deputy Director General in WIPO, and previously a French diplomat then a director in two private sector companies).

### Data Set 2: UK vs global peers since 2000

The previous data has looked at all-time representation in trade, finance and economic affairs facing organisations. Looking at the period from 2000 gives us fewer people with unknown backgrounds thanks to the internet. China is discounted due to the ambiguous line between private and public sector.

Table 6: UK citizens vs others in last 20 years in trade, finance and economic affairs.

Country:	Domestic Civil Servants	International Civil Servants	Externals	Unknown background	Total
USA	Richard A. Boucher, Richard E. Hecklinger, Sally Shelton-Colby, Martha Newton, Deborah Greenfield  5	John Sandage, Namat Shafik, John Lipsky  3	Jeffrey Schlagenhauf (CS), Douglas Frantz (CS), William C. Danvers, Thelma Askey (CS), Angela Ellard (CS), Alan Wolff, David Shark, Rufus Yerxa (CS), Lisa Jorgenson, James Pooley, Michael Keplinger (CS), Rita Hayes (CS), David Malpass, Jim Yong Kim, Robert Zoellick, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeffrey A. Goldstein, Sandra Polaski (CS), George Dragnich (CS), Sally Paxton, Geoffrey Okamoto, David Lipton, Anne Krueger.  23		31
Japan	Asada-Miyakawa Chihoko, Kenichiro Natsume (ICS), Shozo Uemura, Kiyotaka Akasaka, Rintaro Tamaki, Mario Amano, Yasuyuki Nodera.  7	Uramoto Yoshireto, Nishimoto Tomoko, Yoshiyuki Takagi (CS), Masamichi Kono (CS), Sachiko Yamamoto  5	Naoyuki Shinohara (CS),  Takatoshi Kato (CS & ICS), Mitsuhiro Furusawa (CS)  3		15
France	Jean-Marie Paugam, Philippe Petit, Nicolas Niemtchinow  3	Philippe le Houerou  1	Pascal Lamy, Sylvie Forbin, Bertrand Badre, Christine Lagarde, Dominique Strauss Kahn  5		9
Germany	Ludger Schuknecht (ICS), Heinz Koller (ICS), Susanne Hoffman, Karl Brauner  4		Horst Kohler, Stefan Kapferer, Petra Ulshoeffer (ICS), Johannes Wichard (ICS & CS), Friedrich Buttler (CS)  5		9
China	-	-	-	-	16
Nigeria	Yonov Agah  1	Geoffrey Onyeama (x2), Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon  3	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (x2), Regina Amadi  3		7
U.K.		Guy Ryder (x2), Namat Shafik (CS), Malcolm Johnson  4	Caroline Anstey (ICS), Andrew Staines (CS & ICS)  2		6

The first point to note is that the UK has had the fewest externals – a continuation of the historic trend we saw above. The two exceptions are Caroline Anstey and Andrew Staines. Japan – which has a larger sample size by a factor of three – has been represented by three externals, making its proportion of representatives from outside the same as the UK. Nigeria has been represented three times by externals.

That the USA nominates the most senior leaders with external backgrounds should come as no surprise. There is a blurred line between senior civil servant and political appointee, which partly explains the prodigious “(CS)” denotation next to names. Jeffrey Schlagenhauf is an example of this. He worked on Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign and was appointed to the OECD by the Trump administration. However, he previously worked as a staffer on the Congressional Joint Economic Committee. He thus has political patronage and affiliation, but also worked as a civil servant. Many others, like Thelma Askey, moved between various senior federal departmental staff roles and the private sector. This movement between civil service and politics or business is as much a baked-in feature of the American system as it is a reflection of America’s intent to nominate individuals with backgrounds outside the public sector.

All six of the UK’s senior leaders have spent time as an international civil servant, unlike all other peer countries. Nemat Shafik was Deputy Managing Director of the IMF between 2011-2014, after working in the World Bank as an international civil servant and later for the Department for International Development (DFID) as a British civil servant. She has been Britain’s only senior representative at the IMF.

We see that the UK has not been represented by any individuals with a purely domestic civil service background, but all other countries have. Andrew Staines (FCO), Nemat Shafik (DFID), and Malcolm Johnson (Ofcom – a public corporation rather than part of the civil service) are UK citizens who were all international civil servants at one point. Japan, meanwhile, has had 6 senior leaders from a purely domestic civil service background (typically from the Ministry of Finance, having held the prestigious position of Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs), while 12 of its 15 representatives have spent at least part of their career in the domestic civil service.

There are conventions within some of the organisations examined that ensure national representation. This is the case with the IMF and World Bank. The Managing Director of the former has always been a European whilst the President of the latter has traditionally been American. Rather than being coded into the organisations’ founding charters these are unwritten conventions. A system of quotas in the IMF ensures that the executive board is weighted towards Europe electing one of its own. This means that an EU official is usually elected to the post, eliciting allegations of ‘horse trading’ and ‘EU cronyism’ in some quarters.<sup>20</sup> Of its 12 previous leaders, there has never been a British Managing Director, whilst France has had 5. Outside the EU, this trend would be expected to continue, meaning the UK would be advised to focus its efforts on securing high-

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20. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2021/10/11/control-imf-must-taken-away-eu-mafia/>



level representation elsewhere whilst lobbying for reform of the IMF's governing structure.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 7: UK citizens in the humanitarian and development sector since 2000.**

Domestic Civil Servants	International Civil Servants	Externals	Unknown	Total
Michael O'Neil, Mark Lowcock, John Holmes  3	Andrew Gilmour  1	Valerie Amos, Stephen O'Brien, Martin Griffiths (CS & ICS), Terry Davis, Julian Lob-Levyt  5		9

Table 7 shows British representation in the humanitarian and development affairs sector in the last twenty years. It is notable that there are more Brits with an external background here than in the trade sector. Indeed, three appointees were politicians – former Labour MP Terry Davis, Labour Peer Baroness Amos, and former Conservative MP Stephen O'Brien. We also see that three senior representatives have come from a purely domestic civil service background. Such a spread is more in tune with the behaviour of our peers (Tables 5 & 6).

Considering all of the 29 times the UK has been represented in the last 21 years (this includes the 6 commerce and 9 humanitarian and development sectors given above, plus the security and political and administrative sectors):

- 9 of these were reserved for military personnel, 2 police and 2 judicial

Of the 16 remaining:

- 7 have worked at the FCO/DFID (including 1 of these who also worked in private sector)
- 1 at a QUANGO
- 6 within international civil services
- 3 were Members of Parliament - Labour x2, Conservative x1

Comparing the UK with its peers, we have seen how the UK is not only quantitatively under-represented but a qualitative outlier with a clear difference in the background of person Britain sends to represent the country. We have seen how Brits are simultaneously more internationalist and less occupationally diverse in the finance-facing group. The government appears to recognise the need to cast a wider net. It says: 'we will also influence change and the election of excellent UK nationals to senior posts across the multilateral system, seconding UK nationals into organisations and leveraging expertise from UK businesses and civil society.'<sup>22</sup>

21. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2010/number/3/article/the-g20-proposal-on-imfgovernance-has-any-progress-been-made.html>

22. HMG response to FASC, p.1

It is dangerous to generalise, but we speculate that nationals who have chosen to join international organisations early in their careers and have spent many years serving in them may well see themselves as, in whole or part, citizens of the world who work for a higher calling rather than a narrower national interest. It could be that the qualitative difference between the UK and its peers in successful nominations to bodies touching on finance and commerce is a consequence of a more focussed approach to the advancement of national interests including the denial of opportunity to competitors.

## Conclusions

The broad picture is one of strong representation. The UK is still a force to be reckoned with. It is respected, engaged and valued. We have seen that Britain is historically the second-best represented country with 96 positions. However, France, our most obvious European peer, has done historically better than the UK in tier 1 senior roles, suggesting its focus is on jobs at the very top.

But overall strong representation disguises a pattern of UK decline and underperformance against jurisdictions with which we can reasonably be compared. The UK's share of overall leaders in international organisations has almost halved over the reported period. Decline and under representation in hard, commercial, competitive areas is marked. Security has fallen from 14 to 7% - with 2/3 of our senior leaders in the sector being at NATO. Indeed, 32 of our total 96 positions have been in NATO, suggesting overreliance. Just 6 people have represented the UK in commercial billets since 2000. This dearth of Brits is contrary to the goals associated with 'Global Britain' outlined in the Integrated Review.

Sectoral analysis showed considerable strength in what we can describe as softer domains, where there is less scope for securing partisan advantage – humanitarian and development organisations (holding 9% of positions). This aligns with the UK consistently ranking within the top 3 countries in indices measuring soft power, the source of considerable pride. There has been decent, if falling, UK bearing in organisations dealing with political and judicial affairs (4% of positions).

The types of Brit in the few commercial positions we do command tend to be public sector insiders with working lives spent serving in international bodies. In these crucial posts the UK has the fewest externals among our peers. Only 20% of our nominees in the commerce sector have experience outside the public sector, and what experience there is tends to be thin. By contrast, France, Germany and the USA have been represented by more of what we call externals.

To succeed post-Brexit, advancing Global Britain beyond the rhetorical, the UK should focus on hard enterprises, particularly commercially facing international institutions. We accept of course the challenges presented by Brexit, for example in maintaining leverage with the EU-dominated IMF and the recent temptation for certain Europeans to lobby against UK nominations to influential international bodies.

Traditionally senior overseas appointments have been signed off by the Prime Minister on the advice of government departments. Predominantly that means the FCDO and its legacy departments. With their institutional

focus on soft power and international development it is perhaps unsurprising that the UK's tally has not been weighted towards the harder, more commercial, end of the jobs spectrum. That is particularly so given the absence historically of a cross government strategic approach to nominations, equipped with a long timeframe against which to weigh and prioritise appointments according to the national interest.

Whilst the advice of relevant government departments must of course be sought in securing the right slots and finding candidates, important overseas appointing should, in our view, be staffed by a central secretariat, preferably within Downing Street.

Encouraged by the government's announcement in May that it will make senior public service appointing 'external by default', we suggest the UK might particularly broaden its recruitment base beyond the public sector for what we have characterised as 'hard' international jobs, emulating its peers in an attempt to sharpen its focus on securing what is best for Britain. This seems particularly appropriate in those organisations with heavy tech content (ITU and WIPO for example) which are likely to be increasingly important, especially in service-based economies.

Given trade-offs and the transactional nature of international appointing, our proposition may mean less focus on some of the institutions the UK has traditionally done outstandingly well in to gain traction in those dealing with crunchier, combative sectors like commerce. After all, it is those disciplines that will chiefly govern the wealth and wellbeing of ordinary Britons as the UK strikes out on its own without the agency of the European Union.

## Policy Recommendations

1. More UK citizens at the top of 'hard', mainly commercially-facing, supranational institutions
2. A job distribution matrix that is more balanced across sectors, approximating our peers
3. The construction of a league table of international jobs ranked according to potential for advancing the national interest.
4. A much broader recruitment base, particularly for commercially-facing vacancies.
5. Oversight and ownership of the process by Number Ten

## Annexes

Annex 1: full list of data (separate document).

Annex 2: designations

Humanitarian and development: UNOHCHR, UNHCR, FAO, CoE, WFP, WHO, UNDP, UNOCHA, Gavi.

Political and judicial: UNSG, UNOG, UNDPPA, UNEP, UNFCCC, ICJ, ICC.

Security: UNDPKO, NATO, Interpol, OSCE, IAEA.

Commerce: UNDESA, OECD, WTO, WIPO, World Bank, IMF, ILO, ITU, UNECE.



£10.00  
ISBN: 978-1-910812-XX-X

Policy Exchange  
1 Old Queen Street  
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London SW1H 9JA

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