



United Kingdom

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1 Afghanistan

UK's involvement in Afghanistan can be traced back to the 19th century, when it was competing with the Russian Empire for influence in this part of Asia. After several wars, Afghanistan obtained its full independence from the UK in 1919. The modern military involvement started in 2001 and had different names before being broadly named Operation Herrick. The UK supported ISAF (NATO led) and Operation Enduring Freedom (US led).

UK troops in Afghanistan were several thousand strong, but British combat personnel were ordered to leave Afghanistan in 2014. The total cost of Operation Herrick and the costs linked to the assistance that stayed after 2014 (Operation Toral) is estimated to be 27,7 Billion Pounds. There was also a huge human cost: 457 British troops lost their lives and another 616 were seriously wounded.

The UK left Afghanistan last August along with the rest of its allies. The evacuation operation has been criticised because many Afghans who had worked for the UK were left behind. Other incidents such as a data breach potentially exposing the information of interpreters who were still in Afghanistan also made it worse. In a very unusual way, many senior politicians criticised the US' retreat and decision to leave Afghanistan, a rare event for a country that normally tries to be aligned with the US, protecting their "special relation".

2 Turkey - Greece relations:

In the tension between its supposedly NATO allies Greece and Turkey, the UK has presented itself as rather impartial. It did declare its support for France and free speech, when the muslim world was angry at Macron's reaction to the murder of Samuel Patty, but France probably wanted a more vigorous statement. The UK was also present in talks between Greece and Turkey in April 2021 to help resolve the conflict.

It must be mentioned that Turkey, with which the UK has a free trade agreement, exchanges more goods with the UK than Greece, around 18 billion pounds and 3,9 billion pounds respectively. Moreover, Turkey represents a trade opportunity outside of the EU, exactly the kind that the UK is looking for in its strategy to diversify its economy and liberate itself from its EU dependency. In July 2021, when the international community widely condemned Turkey's declaration, where the latter would reopen a town in the very disputed Cyprus, an island disputed between Greek and Turkish populations, the UK issued calls for restraint and de-escalation.



Fig. 1: United Kingdom Flag

3 References

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