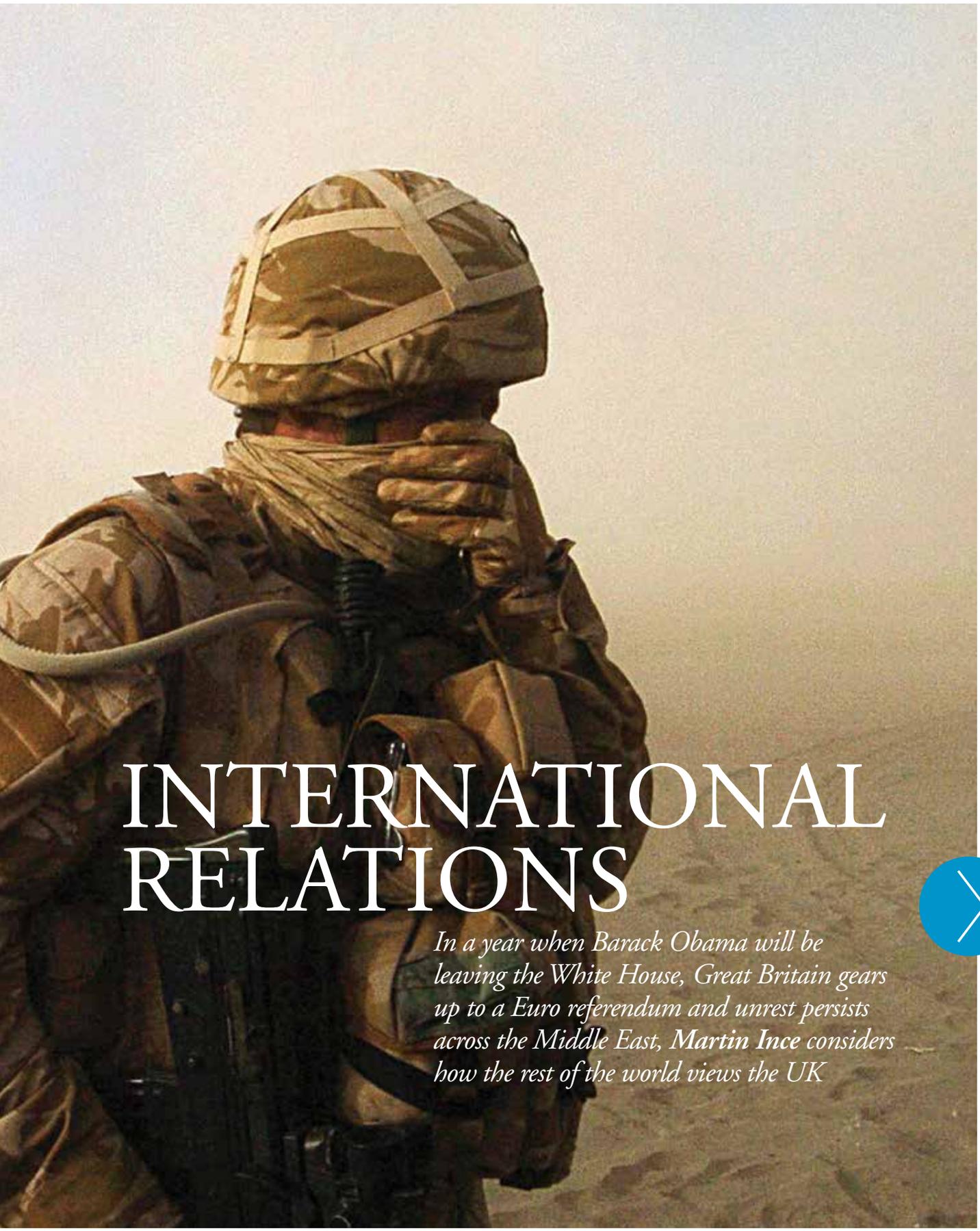


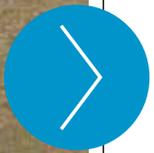


GETTY



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In a year when Barack Obama will be leaving the White House, Great Britain gears up to a Euro referendum and unrest persists across the Middle East, Martin Ince considers how the rest of the world views the UK



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The UK is a small island off the end of the Eurasian landmass, with less than one per cent of the world population. Does it have a dwindling place on the world stage, or is it the planetary centre for finance, culture, business and learning, home of the world's global language and a permanent member of the UN Security Council?

A census of British academic opinion reveals that both of these views have their adherents. In continental Europe (see page 12), there is puzzlement over Britain's continuing inability to buy wholeheartedly into the European ideal, although it is also possible to argue that the last few years of Eurozone crisis have amply justified British caution about the project. Ties of language, history and shared economic interests mean that the UK's 'special relationship' with the US remains a valid construct, albeit one that is more likely to be mentioned in London than in Washington. The UK is also one of the US's most reliable military and diplomatic allies.

Baroness Amos, director of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and former under-secretary general of the UN, takes the middle ground in this debate. She says that the UK has continuing relevance around the world, partly due to its seat on the Security Council, but adds that it is "of declining influence as a diplomatic partner". On issues such as human rights,



AMERICAN DREAM

While our special relationship has waxed and waned over the years, the UK remains one of the US's staunchest allies. The new President in 2016 is likely to want to perpetuate the trend.



LEADING IN LEARNING

Our professional institutes and universities are the envy of the world – from the centuries-old Oxford and Cambridge to newer establishments like the Institute of Physics, just over 50 years of age.



INTERNATIONAL AID GOALS

A commitment to a yearly United Nations spend target on overseas aid and the UN-backed Sustainable Development Goals such as eradicating poverty has garnered plaudits internationally.

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

Some of the ways in which the UK is viewed as having a positive role on the world stage

Leader of the pack

How did Angela Merkel become the leader of Europe and a power broker who is influential across the globe?

IN NOVEMBER 2016, Hillary Clinton just might become the most powerful woman on Earth. But until then Angela Merkel's grip on the title is uncontested.

Born in what was then East Germany in 1954, she has had a political career that would have been inconceivable in the Communist era. She became leader of the CDU, Germany's principal right-of-centre party, in 2000, and Chancellor of Germany in 2005, making her one of the most durable political figures in any democratic state. In a world where politicians feel the need to parade

their spouses in public, she retains her privacy, and her chemistry professor husband, Joachim Sauer, is rarely seen at any official function.

She has always regarded the UK as a vital ally, but is clear that there are limits to her inclination to compromise over the UK's relationship with Europe to help David Cameron win the Brexit referendum.

There are also signs that her long stint at the head of Europe's leading nation may be coming to a close. She faces tricky elections in 2017 and her popularity has been dented by her open

attitude towards refugees from the Middle East.

Perhaps more menacingly, Germany's record of economic success on her watch is threatened by the Volkswagen scandal, which it is estimated could cost Germany more than a Greek debt default might have done. This demonstration of lax standards and possible illegality at a company that symbolises German economic achievement and technological prowess has the scope to disrupt assumptions about Germany itself and its place in the world. ■



**RUSSIAN RELATIONS**

Despite Russia's international aberrations of recent years, such as the Ukraine civil war, the London stock exchange is still a big draw for Russian companies as is our cultural heritage.

**WORLD-CLASS SERVICE**

As the world's largest international broadcaster, the BBC's World Service is renowned for providing coverage of events across the globe, in 28 languages, to around 190 million people.

**POSITIVE INVESTMENT**

India and China remain keen to invest in the UK in businesses such as Jaguar Land Rover and Hinkley Point respectively. Japan is also eager to foster relationships with its fellow island nation.

The UK's 'special relationship' with the US remains a valid construct, albeit one that is more likely to be mentioned in London than in Washington

she thinks, the UK gives out “contradictory messages” that cause it to lose respect. This approach, she says, “chips away at a reputation that has developed over time”. However, the UK also has immense assets. These include the BBC World Service, a major provider of unbiased news to the Global South and a prime instrument of UK soft power. She adds that British professional institutions and universities – not least SOAS – are well-regarded around the world.

Partly because of the many diasporic communities that have found a home in the UK, thinks Amos, there is a high level of global interest in the UK and in the debates going on there, including the EU membership referendum. As she sees it, “The UK is seen as being in decline, so its role in the EU is of growing importance to nations beyond Europe. In addition, regional groupings of nations are becoming more important around the world.”

Amos adds that the Commonwealth is perhaps less influential than it could be in UK relations with the South. “It is potentially important because it includes rich and poor nations, large and small ones, island states, and countries with very young populations. So it could have a bigger voice on issues such as climate change and development.”

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

However, she adds that the UK is liked in the South for its commitment to development. “Among donors, Britain has excellent standing for its innovative work. Politically, the UK has kudos for reaching the target of 0.7 [per cent of GDP] for aid spending.” Amos, who is former secretary of state for international development, adds that big UK aid programmes are well regarded for their impact on nations in transition. The UK was heavily involved in the setting of the Sustainable Development Goals, announced in September 2015, with prime minister David Cameron taking a role at an early stage.

Amos is more cautious about the effects of recent UK military interventions on Britain's reputation in and beyond the Middle East. She believes that they have been “quite damaging in some circles, but not all”. She explains: “The world is getting more polarised in its views on military intervention and we see this in attitudes within the UK as well.” But she adds that her five years at the UN brought home to her the immense damage done by unresolved political crises, which lead to inevitable humanitarian crises. While not completely opposing the idea of military intervention in Syria, she says that this step will only work as part of an integrated approach that includes political and other measures, with the authority of the UN.



Crisis point

The Middle East remains a crucible of conflict. Can the UK hope for more settled relations in the future?

A CENTURY AGO, the UK had two big stakes in the Middle East. One was the Suez Canal, the sea route to India, jewel in the crown of the Empire. The other was the region's copious oil production.

While the first of these interests is now defunct, the other is still very much alive. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil producer, remains one of the UK's firmest allies in the region, despite domestic dislike in the UK for many aspects of Saudi society.

However, the UK's inability to impose itself on the region has now

become a major issue in British politics. Nobody argues about the rightness of the first Gulf War, in 1991, in which Iraqi occupiers were removed from Kuwait. But more recent interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have not created stable, friendly governments. Nor did the Arab Spring of 2011 produce the western-type democracies that the UK and the US had hoped for. And, at the time of writing, there seemed to be little chance of a satisfactory end to the Syrian crisis and the disputed regime of Bashar al-Assad.

The mass movement of refugees that this chaos has precipitated is one of the UK's biggest political issues, as well as being a massive humanitarian crisis. In addition, the UK is one of the many European states from which young people have travelled, or tried to travel, to the region to join the supposed Islamic State.

So it seems certain that the UK will be embroiled in the Middle East for many years to come. But it is less apparent just what success might look like in relations with this most troubled corner of the Earth. ■



Amos's view of the continuing importance of the UK is echoed by Sankalp Chaturvedi, head of the Gandhi Centre for Inclusive Innovation at the Imperial College Business School. He points out that the UK is home to a business-oriented diaspora second only to the Indian community of the US. The UK has become a significant destination for Indian investment, for example the purchase of Jaguar Land Rover and of much of the British steel industry.

Chaturvedi says: "There is now a very positive vibe in India about dealings with the UK. The fact that English is the language of work in India, and the large Indian presence here, means that the UK is the natural point of entry to Europe for Indians. Of course, it would be troublesome if the UK decided to leave the EU. At the moment many Indian businesses handle all their European operations from the UK and that option would become less attractive."

Derek Averre, senior lecturer at the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies at the University of Birmingham, says that the UK is "without a doubt" important to Russian business and political elites. "The UK is the fifth-largest investor in Russia and the London Stock Exchange is the biggest international platform for Russian companies." But he adds: "The political class in Russia is disillusioned with the UK because of its role in Iraq, Libya and now Syria. In the Ukraine, Germany is seen as taking a lead among the Western powers and the UK is regarded as more peripheral." However, he states that Russians take an enormous interest in British culture, especially music and literature. "And every young person wants to learn English."

The UK is seen as being in decline, so its role in the EU is of growing importance to nations beyond Europe

John Nilsson-Wright, head of the Asia programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and an expert on Japan, says that there too the UK is held in strong affection. "The Japanese see many commonalities with the UK," he points out. "They are island nations that share a complex relationship with the neighbouring continent, and a very important alliance with the US. They have a long history of close relations, interrupted of course by World War II."

THE NEW NORMAL

This relationship is now developing in areas such as security and defence and through inward investment into the UK. But he warns that it is important not to take it for granted. "The Japanese tilt towards China means that there is a danger of the UK disappearing below the radar and ceasing to be politically mainstream for Japan."



Kaoru Kamata is president of Waseda University in Tokyo. He says: “The UK has had to share power and influence as other nations, particularly in Asia, have grown in economic strength and political importance. But it remains a first-class nation.” He adds: “No nation that sits on the UN Security Council or is a founding member of NATO can be disregarded.” But the UK is important in its own right, not just as a member of international organisations. “Its ambiguous, sometimes contentious, relations with the EU underscore its independence.”

And Kamata is clear that the UK is a cultural pace-setter. “Walk down any street in Tokyo or tune in to any music station, and one encounters Britain.”

China expert Rod Wye, an associate fellow of the Asia Programme, points out that China’s current leaders are happy to make ideological use of Britain’s past record as a perceived oppressor of the Chinese masses. But he adds that most of this invective is now directed at Japan rather than the UK. He says: “The UK is important to China, especially because of its open attitude to trade, and as an export market. It is also a vital financial centre for trading in renminbi, China’s official currency. The Chinese are not keen on Brexit and dislike dealing with the more protectionist European states.”

He warns too that there is no point in anyone in the UK worrying about Chinese investment in Britain’s nuclear power stations, railways, airports and other national infrastructure. “China is going to grow these overseas investments. It’s the new normal and we need to get used to it.” ■

Martin Ince is principal of Martin Ince Communications. He is a freelance science writer, media adviser and media trainer.



Greek tragedy

Will the ripple effect from Greece’s recent financial maelstrom affect the United Kingdom?

THE GREEK CRISIS has a simple cause: debt. But that is the only simple thing about it. The country’s enormous debts were run up in a climate in which the government lacked the basic tax income to pay for itself. While the Eurozone crisis was severe for Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland as well as Greece, its small size and deep debts made the effects there far more severe than elsewhere in the Eurozone. And the Greek people have elected and re-elected a Syriza government that is deeply opposed to international austerity measures intended to cure the problem.

Greece is a small country whose economic problems have little direct effect on the UK. But its troubles do have resonance here. The clouds

now over the Eurozone make it harder to persuade British voters of the case for continuing UK membership of the EU. And with Jeremy Corbyn leading the Labour Party, we can look forward to Conservative attempts to paint him as a British version of Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras.

Britain’s decision to keep out of the Eurozone means that a possible Greek departure would have only marginal effects here. However, Syriza leaders have spent a surprising amount of time in the UK, trying to persuade London’s bankers and money managers that its regime is worthy of support. Many of the key decisions about Greece’s financial future will be influenced by policies set in London rather than in Athens. ■

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The EU has 28 member states and is made up of seven institutions located in four different countries:

1 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Function: Mainly shares legislative and budgetary authority over the EU with the Council of the European Union. It is the only directly elected EU body. It is made up of 751 MEPs - 73 from the UK.

Location: Strasbourg, Brussels, Luxembourg

President: Martin Schulz (German).

2 THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Function: Comprises all heads of state or government of the EU member states. It decides the EU's political direction and meets four times a year. It's the highest political body of the European Union.

Location: Brussels

President: Donald Tusk (Polish). The principal representative of the EU on the world stage, similar to a head of state.

3 THE COUNCIL (of the European Union, also called Council of Ministers)

Function: Holds legislative and some limited executive powers and is the main decision-making body of the Union, in conjunction with the parliament. It is separate from the European Council. The Council is composed of 28 national ministers (one per state). Those who attend are the relevant ministers to the subject area to be discussed - for example, agriculture.

Location: Brussels

President: Rotates between the states every six months.

4 THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Function: Composed of one 'commissioner' from each state, it is designed to be independent of national interests and to promote the general interest of the EU. The body is responsible for drafting all law of the European Union and has a near monopoly on proposing new laws (bills). It also deals with the day-to-day running of the Union and has the duty of upholding the law and treaties.

Location: Brussels

President: Jean-Claude Juncker (Luxembourg). The most powerful office in the EU.

5 COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Function: The CJEU is the EU's judicial branch and is responsible for interpreting EU law and treaties and ensuring that all EU countries and institutions abide by EU law.

Location: Luxembourg

President: Koen Lenaerts (Belgian).

6 THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

Function: This is the central bank for the Eurozone. It controls monetary policy in the area with a remit to maintain price stability.

Location: Frankfurt

President: Mario Draghi (Italian).

7 THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

Function: A court of no judicial powers, it ensures that taxpayer funds from the budget of the European Union have been correctly spent. It is composed of one member from each state.

Location: Luxembourg

President: Vítor Manuel da Silva Caldeira (Portuguese).

INSIDE THE G8

WHAT IT IS: The Group of 8 forum is an annual political gathering of governmental leaders of the wealthiest developed countries - it is not an IGO but an informal forum. The members are: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the US and Russia (currently suspended as a result of the Crimea crisis). The EU is also represented, but although it holds the privileges and obligations of membership it doesn't have the right to host or chair a summit. The forum is held in and hosted by a different member country each year.

FUNCTION: To discuss global issues such as economic growth, crisis management, global security, energy and terrorism.



FRANCE
EU | G8 | G20 | NA | OE | UfM | UN/SC

François Hollande
President



ITALY
EU | G8 | G20 | NA | OE | UfM | UN

Matteo Renzi
Prime Minister



GERMANY
EU | G8 | G20 | NA | OE | UfM | UN

Angela Merkel
Chancellor



SPAIN
EU | NA | OE | UfM | UN

Mariano Rajoy
Prime Minister



CANADA
CO | EU | G8 | G20 | NA | OE | UN

Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister



UNITED STATES
EU | G8 | G20 | NA | OE | UN/SC

Barack Obama
President



BRAZIL
BR | G20 | G77/24 | UN | US

Dilma Rousseff
President



ARGENTINA
G20 | G77/24 | UN | US

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner
Prime Minister



LET'S GET TOGETHER

Here are a few of the regional organisations and political and economic groupings that along with the UK shape our world – and some of the prominent world leaders at the heart of them

KEY: AL Arab League; AU African Union; BR One of BRICS nations; CO Commonwealth country; EU Member of European Union; G8 Member of Group of 8; IGO Intergovernmental Organisation; NA NATO; OE OECD; NAM Non-Aligned Movement; SA South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation; UfM Union for Mediterranean; UN United Nations member; UN/SC Permanent member of UN Security Council; US Union of South American Nations *See box on European Union *Suspended

OTHER GROUPS

G7 (economies)

Finance ministers and central bank governors from the G8 countries meet to discuss economic policies at several gatherings in a year.

G20

This is a more informal international forum for the finance ministers and central bank governors from 20 major economies, largely to promote international financial stability: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France,

Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States – along with the EU.

G77

The Group of 77 is a loose coalition of developing countries – all members of the United Nations – who meet to promote the members' collective economic interests. Although it first comprised 77, the number of founding members of the UN, it now has grown to encompass 134 UN members. Chairmanship rotates on a regional

basis between Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

G24

This loose chapter of the G77 co-ordinates the positions of developing countries on international monetary and development finance issues and ensures that their interests are well represented.

g7+

This IGO brings together countries with recent experience of conflict and draws attention to the special challenges facing these 'fragile states'.



UNITED KINGDOM
CO | EU | G8 | G20 | NA | OE | UfM | UN/SC
David Cameron
Prime Minister



GREECE
EU | NA | OE | UfM | UN
Alexis Tsipras
Prime Minister



ISRAEL
OE | UfM | UN
Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister



IRAN
G77/24 | NAM | UN
Hassan Rouhani
President



EUROPEAN UNION
G8 | G20
Jean-Claude Juncker
(left*)
Donald Tusk
(right*)



IRAQ
AL | G77 | NAM | UN
Haider al-Abadi
Prime Minister



SAUDI ARABIA
AL | G20 | G77 | NAM | UN
King Abdullah
King and head of state/government



INDIA
BR | CO | G20 | G77/24 | NA | NAM | SA | UN
Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



RUSSIA
BR | EU | G8 | G20 | UN/SC
Vladimir Putin
President



SOUTH AFRICA
AU | CO | BR | G20 | G77/24 | NAM | UN
Jacob Zuma
President



AUSTRALIA
CO | G20 | OE | UN
Malcolm Turnbull
Prime Minister



JAPAN
G8 | G20 | OE | UN
Shinzo Abe
Prime Minister



CHINA
BR | G20 | G77 | UN/SC
Li Keqiang
Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

MORE LEADING ORGANISATIONS WORLDWIDE

The **Arab League** (AL) is a regional organisation of Arab countries, with 22 member states. It aims to create close relations with each other to safeguard independence and sovereignty.

The **African Union** (AU) comprises 54 countries in Africa with an aim to promote co-operation among the independent nations of Africa.

BRICS is an acronym for an association of five major emerging national

economies which discusses how the countries could better co-operate in the future: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

The **Commonwealth of Nations** is an IGO of 53 member states, mostly territories of the former British Empire. Headed by the Queen, it promotes democracy and individual liberty.

The **Non-Aligned Movement** (NAM) is a group of states not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. Its 120 members from across the globe meet to represent the interests and priorities of developing countries.

The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO) is an IGO military alliance where 28 member states agree to mutual defence in response to attack by external parties.

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** (OECD) is an international organisation of 34 countries aiming to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

The **South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation** (SAARC) is an economic and geopolitical organisation of eight countries, aiming to foster more collective self-reliance and economic welfare.

The **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) is a partnership of 43 countries – the 28 member states of the EU and 15 partner countries from North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Europe.

The **United Nations** (UN) is an IGO with 193 member states. The **UN Security Council** (UNSC) is one of six main organs of the UN, principally charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.

The **Union of South American Nations** (USAN) is an IGO comprising 12 South American countries to aid the continuing process of South American integration.