

UNITED KINGDOM

Understanding World Cultures
Osher course, January 2021

J. N. Hooker

WHAT IS THE UK?

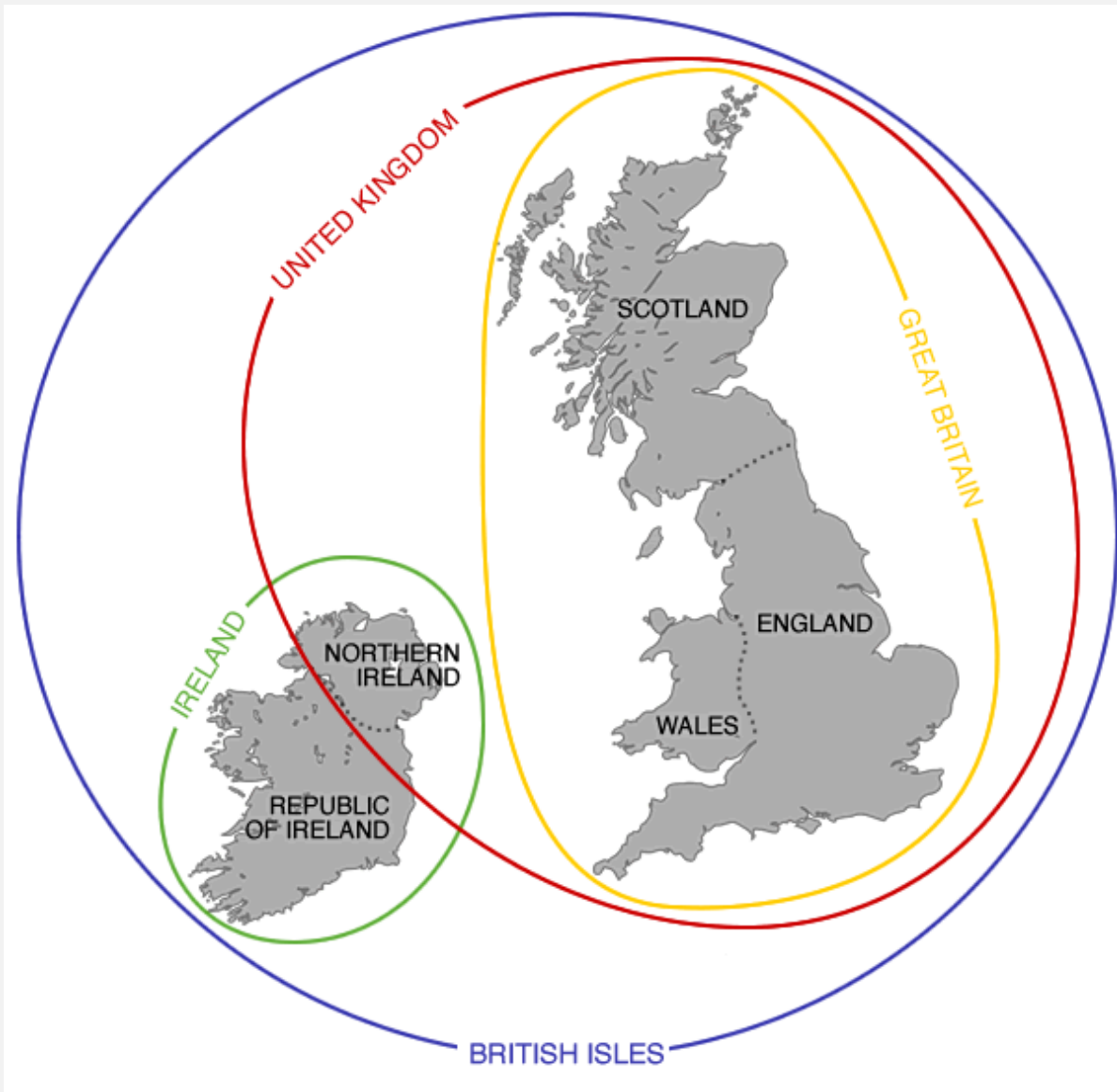


PHOTO ALBUM



London – A truly international city

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London – A truly expensive city
“The Shard” is owned by State of Qatar, as is much of the city

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Russell Square, London

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British Museum Reading Room

Contained Karl Marx's desk. Now converted to exhibition space

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London School of Economics

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Edinburgh, Scotland

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University of Glasgow, Scotland

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Scottish Highlands

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Birthplace of Andrew Carnegie
Dunfermline, Scotland

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Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland
Home of the Mellon Family

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Western Pennsylvania log house
Ulster American Folk Park
Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland



Replica of first Mellon Bank
in Ulster American Folk Park
Original was on Smithfield St
Pittsburgh (1870)

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Mellon's Bar
Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland

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City Hall, Belfast, Northern Ireland

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“Peace Wall” in Belfast

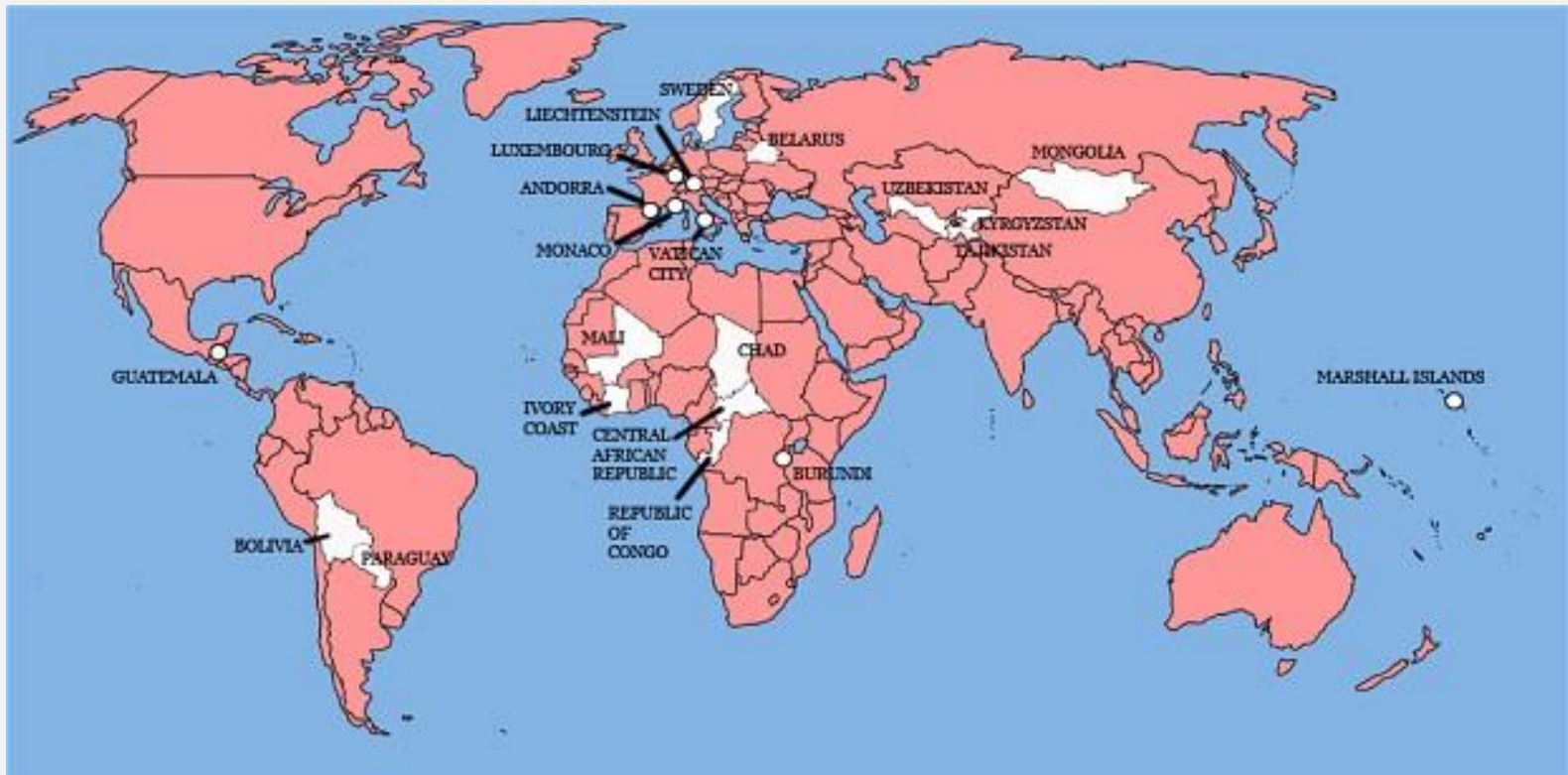
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Summit of Snowdon, Wales

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

- A strongly uncertainty-tolerant culture.
- The British will go anywhere, and live there.
 - Including British colonies worldwide.



Countries **not** invaded by the British

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

- But the British compensate with a conservative streak.
- Strong respect for tradition.
- Passion for gardening.



Part of royal family (2011 wedding photo)



“Country Gardens” unofficial national song

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

- Humor makes fun of themselves and others.
- Much irony, sarcasm.



Mr Bean



British sitcoms



UNDERSTATEMENT

- British are famous for understatement.
 - For example, in recommendation letters.
- Courtesy and etiquette are important.
- But they can be brutally frank or sarcastic (in a polite way).



Mind your table manners

POWER DISTANCE

- Generally low power distance.
- But class hierarchy persists (exclusive schools, proper accent)
- Greater power distance in the business world.
 - A façade of democracy, but the boss usually makes the decisions



Winchester College, boarding school for boys
Oldest “public” school, £42,000 per year

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

- Strongly individualistic, independent thinking
- Starts with alienated youth
- Origin of modern democracy
- Pathbreaking science



UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

- British are generally accepting of immigrants, foreigners.
 - Despite what we hear in the media with respect to Brexit, etc.
- Historically, a masculine culture
 - Still evident in militarism
- But beware of political correctness.
 - Particularly regarding feminism



Elizabeth I



Victoria

Greatest British monarchs?

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

- British say they invented the queue
 - Probably true. Dates from early Industrial Revolution.
 - You earn privileges by queuing up.
 - They *love* the National Health Service despite queuing.
- Don't complain about unpleasant conditions or bad service
 - “Stiff upper lip”



Queue at Wimbledon tennis finals

PURITANISM

- Oliver Cromwell was the most famous Puritan leader
 - “Lord Protector,” 1653-1658.
 - Strove to eradicate Catholicism (even in Ireland) and reform the nation’s morals.
- Strict rules to purify life
 - Closed all theaters, many inns.
 - Punished swearing by fine or prison.
 - Punished work and sports on Sunday by fine, whipping or stocks.
 - Banned colorful dresses, makeup.
 - Banned Christmas celebrations.



Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

- Cromwell followed in footsteps of John Calvin
 - One of the founders of Protestant Christianity (with Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli).
 - Strongly influenced Presbyterians in Scotland, and thereby Pittsburgh and CMU.
- Ruled Geneva with an iron hand
 - Not unlike the Taliban in Afghanistan.
 - Everyone required to confess their faith.
 - Purified religion of Catholic influence, many festivals, sacraments – all viewed as unscriptural.
 - Listed forbidden names for babies.
 - Banned dancing, fancy clothes, card games , dice, and other “worldly pleasures.”



John Calvin(1509-1564)

PURITANISM

- Deep influence on US
 - Plymouth Rock is part of folklore.
 - Thanksgiving holiday actually due to A. Lincoln, 1863.
- Purity extended to life in general
 - A pure soul and a clean life.
 - Hard work leads to heaven.
- Cultural function
 - Cleanliness provides a sense of control over one's fate.



William Bradford and Pilgrims
landing at Plymouth Rock (1620)

PURITANISM

- One finds purity movements in other religions.
- For example, Wahhabi (Salafi) movement in Islam.
 - Advocates strict adherence to scripture (*Qur'an*).
 - Emphasizes ritual purity.
 - Aims to keep the faith “clean” of outside influences, including some Shia ideas.
 - Strict regulation of relations between the sexes.
 - Strict rules for attire, diet.
 - Al-Wahhab allied with Muhammad bin Saud to create first Saudi state (Diriyah, 1744).



Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab
(1703-1792)

PURITANISM

- Takes many forms in the U.S.
 - Healthy diet, preoccupation with hygiene.
 - “Dirty” jokes, etc.
 - Prohibition of “dirty” language now appears as politically correct speech.
 - Sex morals now appear as anti-smoking ethic, fitness, standing at desk, etc.



Ubiquitous in U.S.



Opposition to Czech anti-smoking law, 2017