

**Observation no: 114**

**Country-year: United Kingdom 1955**

**1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?**

No.

**2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?**

No.

**3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?**

Yes. Anthony Eden, who served as Prime Minister (PM) from April 1955 through January 1957, entered the army as a non-commissioned officer. He reached the rank of captain during World War One and was the youngest brigade-major in the British Army at the age of 20.<sup>1</sup> Eden's predecessor as PM, Winston Churchill, entered the British Military as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in 1895 and was promoted to Major by 1905 and served as a temporary Lieutenant-Colonel in 1916.<sup>2</sup>

**4. Is the military officer corps largely closed to those who do not share the leader's ethnic or sectarian background?**

No. The military, did not, by law, exclude people of a certain ethnic or sectarian background. It is worth noting, however, that the military was to a certain extent classist prior to World War II. Its officers were largely aristocrats and thus did not adequately represent the demographics of the country.<sup>3</sup> There were likely long-term pipeline effects from this aristocratic bias.

**5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?**

No. There is no evidence of ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps. However, the British upper class was suspicious of potential threats to the

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<sup>1</sup> D. R. Thorpe, "Eden, (Robert) Anthony, first earl of Avon (1897–1977)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, May 2011, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31060>, accessed 27 May 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Russell and Paul Courtenay, "Churchill's Commissions and Military Attachments," *The Churchill Centre* (online), accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/reference/commissions-and-military-attachments>.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Two Wars*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.)

state. In the interwar period, Kier describes a widespread “gentleman-officer culture” in which the armed forces were kept intentionally weak and the officer corps was prevented from professionalizing too much.<sup>4</sup> In common with most Western democracies following World War II, it was unlikely that someone with pro-Communist ideology would receive the security clearance necessary to become a high-ranking military officer.

**6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?**

No.

**7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?**

No.

**8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?**

No.

**9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?**

No. The United Kingdom has been a democratic, civilian-led, constitutional democracy since the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

**10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?**

No.

**11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?**

No. In 1955, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) was focused on foreign threats to the United Kingdom, primarily related to Communism. None of its

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<sup>4</sup> Kier, 3.

<sup>5</sup> The exact point at which England democratized has been disputed. For example see, Sheri Berman. “How Democracies Emerge: Lessons from Europe,” *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 18, No. 1 (2007): 28-41.

component agencies had oversight of the regular military as its part of their explicit mission.<sup>6</sup>

**12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?**

No.

**13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?**

Yes. The civil-military forum of the Committee of Imperial Defense (CID)<sup>7</sup> was suspended at the outbreak of World War II and in 1940, Winston Churchill created the civilian office of Minister of Defence (for himself) in order to co-ordinate civil-military defense issues and have ministerial oversight over the Chiefs of Staff Committee.<sup>8</sup> Clement Attlee also served in this capacity as PM until his government passed the Ministry of Defence Act of 1946, which created a separate cabinet seat for the Minister of Defence.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, Michael, *SIX: A History of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service*, (London: Dialogue, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> "History of Sir Winston Churchill – GOV.UK," *Gov.UK*, accessed May 21, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/winston-churchill>.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Brookshire, *Clement Attlee*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995).