bright blue

Centre Write

Spring 2018

Global giant?

Tom Tugendhat MP | Baroness Helic | Lord Heseltine | Shanker Singham

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Bright Blue is an independent think tank and pressure group for liberal conservatism.

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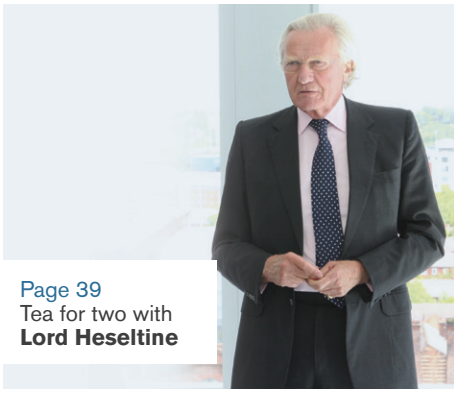

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Editor's note

Laura Round is the Editor of *Centre Write* and Communications Manager at Bright Blue

Leaving the European Union will significantly change Britain's place in the world. The Government claims Brexit will create a truly 'Global Britain', championing free trade. Recently, however, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee criticised the Government for lacking a clear strategy and the funding for Britain's post-Brexit foreign policy.

This edition of *Centre Write* takes a deeper look at the opportunities and challenges facing a freshly divorced Britain.

Britain is the home of both free trade and human rights, which are both essential for our prosperity and security. When we leave the EU, the Government should ensure that Britain remains a global leader of both. The summit of leaders of the Commonwealth, taking place in April this year in Windsor, is an opportunity to remind the world of both our values and our strengths through this historical alliance. As the former High Commissioner of New Zealand to the UK – **Sir Lockwood Smith** (p.8) – points out, the UK has the opportunity to "electrify that powerhouse".

The future of trade is currently the central issue of the Brexit negotiations. **Shanker Singham** (p.7), now at the Institute of Economic Affairs, highlights the opportunities after Brexit. But the Centre for European Reform's deputy director, **John Springford** (p.10), explains the complications around the Irish border. Former Deputy Prime Minister, **the Rt Hon Lord Heseltine** (p.39), chats over tea about why he is concerned Brexit is damaging our reputation abroad.

The increasingly high-profile Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, **Tom Tugendhat MP** (p.21), sets out what he believes the priorities for British foreign policy should be. In this edition's interview, he discusses – among other topics – the future of NATO and the Magnitsky Act.

Britain enjoys an impressive reputation worldwide for our aid spending and projects. However, some are lobbying the Government to revoke its legal commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on international development. Former Secretary of State for International Development, **the Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP** (p.16), defends British aid, arguing that it is effective and transformational public expenditure.

Former special advisers to William Hague when he was Foreign Secretary, **Baroness Helic** and **Chloe Dalton** (p.17), urge the Government to build on the UK leadership they developed when in Coalition Government on tackling sexual violence against women. They warn that the case for doing so is even more urgent today, due to the horrific rape and sexual slavery carried out in Syria and Burma in particular.

> **"The summit of leaders of the Commonwealth, taking place in April this year in Windsor, is an opportunity to remind the world of both our values and our strengths through this historical alliance."**

An increasingly belligerent Russia is focusing minds on the resources and capabilities of Britain's defence. Former soldier and now author, **James Wharton** (p.33), looks at the ways we can attract and retain more people in the army. **Dr Julia Rushchenko** (p.34), from the Henry Jackson Society, explains that this country can continue its role as a world leader in combating terrorism and organised crime.

Historically, Britain has been successful in wielding both hard and soft power. It is a nuclear power with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. But it has also vast cultural influence across the globe, especially because of our institutions such as universities and the BBC, as well as the widespread use of the English language. **Damian Collins MP** (p.38), who chairs the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, writes that soft power is more important than ever and should not be thought of as a secondary issue.

I hope this edition serves to provide fresh ideas to secure Britain's place, post-Brexit, as a global giant.

Director's note

Ryan Shorthouse is the Director of Bright Blue

The focus of Bright Blue's work is beyond Brexit, generating policy ideas to ensure Britain is "a secure, prosperous, tolerant country", in the words of the Prime Minister, after we leave the European Union.

In particular, we agree wholeheartedly that the UK should be "a country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike".

The Government talks of a 'Global Britain', free from some of the constraints of EU membership, such as on regulation and trade deals. But, as the Foreign Affairs Select Committee recently warned, there is currently no clear strategy or funding for this vision. Time to flesh it out.

The starting point should be two important ideas that this country has exported to the rest of the world: free trade and human rights.

Adam Smith and David Ricardo are generally viewed as the economists who first conceptualised and championed free trade, which Britain – especially after the repeal of the Corn Laws – vociferously promoted and prospered from as 'the workshop of the world' in the nineteenth century.

Former High Court judge Sir Michael Tugendhat, in a paper for us last year and in an article for this magazine, writes that Britain gradually developed human rights since the Magna Carta in 1215, and – through the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and decolonisation in the 1950s – spread them to the Continent and the Commonwealth.

Brexit could be an opportunity for Britain to assert itself as a global leader not only in free trade, as the Prime Minister has argued, but human rights too. These should be central pillars of Britain's post-Brexit foreign policy, since they are vital to Britain's – as well as the world's – prosperity and security.

The terms of the recently agreed transition agreement between the EU and UK were unsurprising: membership of the EU Single Market and Customs Union requiring the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. But Brexiteers were happy with one win: the ability to begin negotiating and signing trade deals with different countries. This essential but gigantic task, frankly, requires greater expertise and more realistic expectations.

It is paramount that, when forging new deals, standards are not sacrificed for quick wins. The sprightly Environment Secretary has been making the right noises, insisting that the regulations around the natural environment and animal welfare will, if anything, be strengthened once we leave the EU. Three quarters of all the world's trade deals, according to the WTO, have human rights provisions; we should ensure our deals, where possible, include obligations to improve human rights in the partner countries.

Britain has powerful levers we can pull to influence internationally. We have vital memberships and resources that need to be used strategically and comprehensively in the years ahead. There's our membership of the G7, NATO, the Commonwealth and, perhaps most importantly, the UN Security Council. And we have numerous and respected resources such as our military capability, aid budget, diplomatic and intelligence services, institutions such as the BBC and universities, and UK settlement and sanctuary.

Each of these critical resources need to have, post-Brexit, sufficient support, funding and reforms to maximise our national interest.

Not maintaining spending commitments to our aid or military budgets, for instance, would be a serious mistake. As would not reforming our immigration system to ensure talented students, workers and investors are not deterred from coming to our country.

Bright Blue has plenty of other ideas for the Government's 'Global Britain' agenda, published last year in our Britain breaking barriers report. The Department for International Development should match the funding provided by the Foreign Office for the Magna Carta Fund, which supports organisations in other countries improve human rights. This country should increase its financial contributions to the International Criminal Court. We should remain a proud signatory and champion of the European Convention on Human Rights. Finally, in the ongoing Brexit negotiations, Britain should offer – on a conditional basis – continued funding of the European Development Fund.

"The starting point should be two important ideas that this country has exported to the rest of the world: free trade and human rights."

To make 'Global Britain' an ongoing reality, the government needs to give plentiful thinking, planning and resources for life beyond Brexit.

Letters to the editor

Send your letters to laura@brightblue.org.uk

I was delighted to read in the last edition of this magazine Sam Hall correctly, and eloquently, highlighting the environment being higher on the Conservative Party's agenda and its strong track record on this issue ('A big splash of green', Autumn 2017).

There is now a focus of incorporating the environment into different areas of domestic and international policy. The challenge the Conservative Party now faces is cementing this agenda amongst its members and supporters.

Robert Lingard *member of Bright Blue*

As articulated in the interview with the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, there is no doubt that the Conservative Party should be the natural home of those who work within the arts and the creative industries ('Exhibition: Rachel Whiteread', Autumn 2017). Although sometimes these sectors can feel like the natural domain of the Left, as the party of Government the Conservative Party have a record to be proud of, and a record about which it should shout louder.

Support for the arts may, during tougher times, seem difficult to justify. However, the results often speak for themselves. The creative industries are our fastest growing sector, contributing over £90 billion annually to the UK economy. It is therefore essential that we continue to support creative talent across the country, and make sure that the fruits of these sectors are open for everyone to enjoy.

This is all the more important as we leave the EU. Due to *l'exception culturelle*, the creative industries are at real risk under a 'no deal' scenario. They will prove difficult to include within a trade agreement. Therefore, bespoke and innovative solutions will need to be found. We should all welcome the Prime Minister's recent acknowledgement of this, as it is essential that the Government and the EU "explore creative options with an open mind" so that the UK can continue to lead the world as a creative hub.

Jack Walker *member of Bright Blue*

Kate Maltby is right to warn of the dangers of socialism and argue that we need to remake the case of capitalism ('Beware Corbyn', Autumn 2017). Firstly, a more full-throated defence of capitalism from our politicians is needed. Secondly, alongside elites making the case for free enterprise, we need to engage with networks and communities. We trust our peers more than we trust institutions.

This means mobilising the tens of thousands of small business owners and the millions of people that rely on free enterprise for work and financial security. It means igniting the people around us to make the case as well. In doing so, we might just be able to make the case for capitalism and ensure socialism remains consigned to history.

James Boyd-Wallis *member of Bright Blue*

A global leader in free trade?

Shanker Singham is the Director of the International Trade and Competition Unit at the Institute of Economic Affairs

Shanker Singham explores the future of UK trade after leaving the European Union

The United Kingdom is doing two things in trade policy terms. First, we are leaving the European Union. Second, we are embracing the rest of the world. We must do both of these things well. I fully acknowledge that this will not be an easy journey, but the fact that it is difficult does not mean it is impossible.

The global trading system is in crisis. We have had no serious global round for 23 years, about a third of the lifetime of the post-war economic architecture. In 1997, you would have been quite optimistic – looking out at future services' liberalisation, having just concluded a basic telecoms agreement, with financial and energy services up next, including disciplines on domestic regulation and competition. But the subsequent 20 years yielded virtually nothing in terms of concrete liberalisation. This is one of the reasons that global trade plateaued in 2015 according to the Global Trade Alert of the University of St. Gallen, and why regulatory protectionism has massively increased since the financial crisis.

> "The EU's opening bids are always well beyond their bottom line."

Let me start by setting out three objectives that I believe our trade policy must satisfy: i) Improving our own domestic economy – the ability to improve our own domestic regulatory and trading environment; ii) Improving our trade relationships with the world – close trading relationship with EU countries is pivotal, but so are closer trading relationships with countries in the rest of the world; iii)

Playing our part – as a major trading nation we should play a role in improving global economic governance by contributing to structural reform and the elimination of barriers and distortions.

The challenge is to define what trade policy would achieve such goals and how we can maximise the benefits while minimising the disruptions. For business, the critical question is what you want the world to look like, not just the EU-UK part of the supply chain. The entrenched incumbent forces of business and managers of the UK-EU supply chain will not want much change. But government must speak not only for incumbents, but also for small businesses, for future businesses, and for consumers. I believe we need to build this trade policy on four pillars which must be built concurrently.

First, we can do a lot unilaterally. Britain needs the autonomy to be able to improve its regulatory and trading environment, given that the EU is no longer a force for global liberalisation. We have only to look at the possibility of REACH-style regulation all around the world: the General Data Protection Regulation, financial services regulation and the Brussels effect, where firms choose the most stringent regulations to comply with for ease. In agriculture, the ferocious interpretation of the precautionary principle has thwarted new technologies, and prevented non-EU firms from reaching the EU market, including the UK. This is wealth-destructive, and increases prices for consumers.

Regulatory autonomy does not mean massive deregulation. It means better regulation – the kind that delivers benefits for consumers, and firms, and is not unduly burdensome and costly. It also means being free to reduce our own tariffs where it makes sense in order to give consumers the benefit of cheaper products and more choice. This is particularly important for the poorest among us.

Second, we need to have a close relationship with the EU – a comprehensive free trade agreement that will cover goods and services, and will also cover regulatory issues including recognition. It is not a binary choice here as it is often portrayed. I believe that the EU and UK can and will come to such an agreement.

Why do I believe this is possible? Because both the UK and EU-27 will have identical regulation, and there is too much aligned interest for this not to happen. We are not negotiating in a vacuum. There

>> are existing frameworks in the WTO and the OECD where countries have basically agreed that regulation should be the least anti-competitive and least trade-distortive, consistent with the regulatory goal, and that differences in regulation should not defeat recognition if regulatory goals are aligned.

Furthermore, the EU's opening bid (we cannot recognise you unless you have identical rules) is only an opening bid. Their opening bids are always well beyond their bottom line. Our ability to do bilateral deals with other countries will strengthen our hand in negotiating with the EU. This is why an agreement with the United States is so important.

While naturally much of the focus has been on our relationship with the EU, whatever we do with the EU will materially affect what we can do with the rest of the world. So third, we must be able to accede to large platform agreements which are truly liberalising such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). And we must be able to do so within a reasonable time frame.

If we lock into the EU's regulatory system, other countries will not be able to do deals with us. However, this is not a binary choice between the EU and the rest of the world. We must minimise the trade costs of divergence from the EU's regulatory system, while allowing ourselves the regulatory autonomy necessary to convince others that we can in fact diverge from EU norms so that they will be able to do deals with us. If we cannot offer this, we will just present like a mini version of the EU, with all its defensive baggage and complication. A reasonable time frame means we must be able to not only negotiate, but also sign deals in the implementation period. Other countries must believe we can offer liberalisation in the future; and the future is quite close.

"The EU's opening bid is only an opening bid. Their opening bids are always well beyond their bottom line. Our ability to do bilateral deals with other countries will strengthen our hand in negotiating with the EU."

We must consider trade policy, not just in commercial terms, but in geo-strategic and geo-political terms. In the global battle between state-led capitalism and a market-led one, the UK could be a key player. Hence, the fourth pillar of this trade policy is that we need to operate decisively in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), to galvanise the stalled trading agenda, and to improve economic conditions around the world.

As the world's second largest exporter of services and one of the world's largest foreign investors and sites of foreign investment, the UK with an independent trade policy will make a difference in WTO councils. If you had to invent a country to galvanise those stalled processes, this is the one you would invent. My discussions with other countries' trade negotiators suggest that there is great appetite for anything that might break the logjam. The rest of the world expect the UK to play an important role in the WTO to reduce barriers, and would be surprised and disappointed if we did not.

British firms will benefit massively from a reduction of these barriers. Our service providers will be able to open offices and trade in countries where this is not currently possible, and our manufacturers will be able to sell more in previously difficult markets.

All of this means we cannot be in the (or indeed a) Customs Union or the Single Market. We must have control of our tariff schedules and control of our regulatory system. But we can have a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU, and be able to have deals with others, work decisively for change in the WTO, and improve our own domestic environment. I believe that our country is capable of harnessing its many talents in the private and public sectors and delivering a successful result.

I am confident that we will succeed, and I am confident that a bright future lies before us.

Compass towards the Commonwealth

Sir Lockwood Smith was High Commissioner of New Zealand to the United Kingdom from 2013 – 2017

Will a turn away from Europe become a turn towards the Commonwealth? **Sir Lockwood Smith** wants a new focus on an old relationship

Brexit has rekindled debate on the future of the Commonwealth with some saying it could even supplant the EU in the UK's trade relations.

Such talk is nonsense. The UK needs to negotiate an excellent trading relationship with the EU, but when it comes to the future, the Commonwealth does offer opportunity.

>> It spans the globe, occupying one fifth of the world's total land area, providing a home for one third of the world's population. It represents about one sixth of global GDP, which means, at present, its people are less wealthy than average.

"The Commonwealth, while encompassing such diversity of people and economic status, is united by language, history, culture, and shared values of democracy, free speech, human rights, and the rule of law."

But what of the future? Food production will be important to our rapidly growing global population and a large chunk of potentially cultivable land lies within the Commonwealth. What's more, one in three people aged 15 to 29 living in the world today live in Commonwealth countries. It should not, therefore, be surprising that its future economic growth is expected to be double that of the EU. Within a decade, the Commonwealth may well be a bigger economic power than the EU.

If one doubts that, just look at the world's top 20 emerging global cities. Half of them are in the Commonwealth. A renewed focus on facilitating trade and investment across the Commonwealth therefore makes sense. The opportunities undoubtedly exist, but so too do the challenges.

In terms of stage of economic development, there is a huge range, not to mention difference, in size. The Pacific island of Nauru has 10,000 people, while India has 1.2 billion.

These facts add complexity to any trade negotiation. The evolution of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP – now CPTPP) spanned almost 20 years. Such an agreement across the Commonwealth would, in some ways, be no less complex.

That said, some factors do help. The Commonwealth, while encompassing such diversity of people and economic status, is united by language, history, culture, and shared values of democracy, free speech, human rights, and the rule of law. That has resulted in similar legal systems and potentially similar approaches to regulation – so important in trade development work. It has already been found that the bilateral costs of trading between Commonwealth countries are 19% less than the costs of trading with other nations.

Successful trade strategies have more than one pathway towards their ultimate objective. Working towards a 'Commonwealth-Closer Economic Relations Agreement' that is realistic in both objectives and time frame could offer one such path. It could start laying down a valuable framework for the future. It could foster progress in dealing with the greatest impediment to personal well-being across so much of the Commonwealth, and that is corruption.

"The Commonwealth has been described as an "economic powerhouse in waiting". In hosting the Leaders Summit this year, the UK has the opportunity to electrify that powerhouse."

In the more immediate future, however, a new world-leading trade and investment agreement between the more advanced and liberal of the Commonwealth economies could pay dividends. As an open accession platform that others could join, such an agreement might benefit not just the Commonwealth, but the world.

It is likely that bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) will be negotiated first with like-minded Commonwealth partners such as New Zealand and Australia, but a world-leading open accession platform could evolve from those.

"One in three people aged 15 to 29 living in the world today live in Commonwealth countries."

The Trans-Pacific Partnership started that way. It was initiated with a high-quality, open accession FTA between New Zealand and Singapore. There is now a real opportunity for the UK to lead the next generation of trade development, taking services to a whole new level and advancing digital economy developments, with like-minded Commonwealth partners.

The Commonwealth has been described as an "economic powerhouse in waiting". In hosting the Leaders Summit this year, the UK has the opportunity to electrify that powerhouse.

To do that, though, something must happen first. That is, in negotiating its exit from the EU, the UK must regain the competence to develop its own global trade strategy. It cannot do that if it remains part of the EU Customs Union, or if it remains bound to the EU regulatory system. Either of those outcomes would result in a massively missed opportunity.

A smart global trade strategy is the greatest prize to be won by the UK from leaving the EU. It must have many facets. A world leading FTA with the EU is needed and should not be too difficult to negotiate unless politics trump reason; the UK acceding to CPTPP would bring a new world of opportunity to Europe, and refocusing the Commonwealth, done wisely, could put the UK at the heart of the next generation of global growth.

Theresa's Irish trilemma

John Springford is deputy director of the Centre for European Reform

There are no easy options for resolving the Irish border after Brexit, argues **John Springford**

Theresa May must soon deal with an invidious trilemma. She can only choose two of three options: leaving the single market and customs union, maintaining a border-free Ireland, and pursuing a whole-UK approach to Brexit.

The first two options she could pick are for Great Britain to leave the single market and customs union, while Northern Ireland would remain inside the EU's customs union and continue to sign up to EU rules covering agriculture, goods and value-added tax, among other things needed to maintain the 'all-island economy'. This is one of the scenarios that the EU set out in detail in its draft withdrawal treaty, published in late February this year. It would entail different rules for Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The Democratic Unionist Party might withdraw its support for the Government if May agreed to the EU's proposal. The Tory right could also revolt.

Alternatively, May could insist on taking all of the UK out of the single market and customs union and try to negotiate as soft a border as possible, using camera technology and online form-filling, a 'trusted trader' scheme and risk-based checks at lorry parks away from the border. This is the option that Boris Johnson prefers, judging by a letter to the Prime Minister that was leaked late last month. But it would violate the UK's vow to avoid "any physical infrastructure or related checks and controls". It is not apparent that Ireland and the rest of the EU-27 would accept that.

The Prime Minister's final choice would be to perform the mother of all U-turns, and keep all of the UK in the single market and customs union, which would eliminate the need for a border. This would almost certainly result in a leadership challenge.

In her March 2nd 'Road to Brexit' speech on the future relationship, May repeated her Government's proposals on customs made in an options paper published last summer: use technology, and exempt small and medium sized businesses which conduct 80% of cross-border trade from customs procedures. Checks to make sure goods crossing borders are up to code wouldn't be necessary, because the EU and UK could recognise each other's regulations and standards. In effect, she denied the existence of the Irish trilemma, claiming that technology, turning a blind eye to smuggling and comprehensive mutual recognition would alleviate the need for border infrastructure.

But it is very likely that the EU will only offer a limited free trade agreement, far from the broad partnership that May proposes. In the draft guidelines, published shortly after May's speech, European Council officials reiterated the no cherry-picking mantra, saying that there should be no participation based on a "sector-by-sector approach". They would aim for tariff and quota-free trade in goods, fisheries and agriculture, but said no to far-reaching mutual recognition. Finance went unmentioned, and trade in services would be determined by "host state rules", meaning that the UK would have the same access to the EU's services markets as any third country.

This tough approach should not be a surprise. The EU always defends its right to regulate, and May's ideas would mean the EU accepting goods and services into its market that are not subject to EU rules. It also means that May's Irish border headache will become more acute.

Taken together, the draft withdrawal treaty and the guidelines for the future relationship mean that either Ireland will have to accept border infrastructure, or that there will have to be a special status for Northern Ireland. In the guidelines, the Council said that the EU will insist on border checks to stop smuggling and VAT fraud, and to uphold EU standards. This means that a physical border will be needed between Britain and the EU-27. The European Commission has been at pains to say that if the UK can suggest ways in which technology or customs collaboration can prevent a border, it will be willing to listen. But it is sceptical.

May is being forced to pick two options in the Irish trilemma. So far, the signs are that the EU-27 will continue to back up Ireland, and press for a special status for Northern Ireland. They will argue this is the only way to reconcile the UK's decision to leave the customs union and single market with the joint promise to avoid a so-called hard border. Given the DUP's hostility to the idea – and that of Tory hardliners – resolving the Irish trilemma could lead to May's downfall.

Was and is the UK a force for good in the world?

Kwasi Kwarteng MP and **Joseph Harker** debate

Kwasi Kwarteng MP is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor

Joseph Harker is the deputy opinion editor for *The Guardian*

Dear Joseph,

In the aftermath of Britain's vote to the leave the European Union, there has been much concern regarding our ability to continue to be a force for good in the world, both in terms of championing free trade and defending western security and values.

There is no reason to think that these fears are well-founded. While, of course, there will be a period of transition, and perhaps some temporary disruption, Britain's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and its membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the G20 and G7 will ensure that Britain remains at the heart of the liberal international order.

Since its foundation in 1949, Britain has been a leading member of NATO and the international system that it protects. In fact, it was British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin who is widely recognised as the architect of the Washington Treaty. Ever since, Britain has promoted peace and security in the world by being an important contributor to NATO missions, such as Bosnia and Afghanistan.

"After the Brexit vote, with the Government pressing ahead with a policy almost certain to damage the nation, it's questionable whether Britain is even a force for good for itself any more."

Britain's current commitment to protect Europe's most vulnerable states, most notably by deploying 800 troops to Estonia as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, demonstrates that Britain will remain a force for good as it remains NATO's strongest and most committed European member.

Brexit has also presented Britain with a unique opportunity to once again further the cause of the free market, and spread wealth creation throughout the globe.

From the origins of the free market, Britain has been at the forefront of an economic system that has done more to lift millions out of poverty than any form of socialism. By liberalising trade, not only will British consumers benefit from cheaper products, but other countries will share in jobs, industry and prosperity. As free enterprise has spread, the benefits are clear to see. Between 1990 and 2010, the number of people in extreme poverty fell by half as a share of the total population in developing countries, from 43% to 21% – a reduction of almost one billion people.

"While Britain itself may not be a nirvana of racial harmony, it has fostered a multi-cultural society for decades."

By promoting free trade and remaining a key member of international organisations, Britain will continue to play an important and positive role in global affairs.

Kind regards, Kwasi

Dear Kwasi,

Thanks for your thoughts.

The question we're asked to discuss is: "Was and is the UK a force for good in the world?" You answer this by referring to Britain's role in NATO, the G7, G20, and the UN Security Council. You're right that in these roles Britain is "defending western security and values", but why do you think this is good for the rest of the world?

I hate making the point because it's too obvious, but how did Britain's role in Iraq or Libya help these nations? Rather, it unleashed instability that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, and costs more by the day. The only winners were western arms manufacturers.

Britain's shortsighted invasion of Afghanistan, similarly, caused lasting chaos and failed in its bid to rid the country of the Taliban.

Kwasi, your background is Ghanaian. Mine is Nigerian and Irish. Are you really saying that Britain has been good for West Africa? Two hundred and fifty years of slavery, followed by a century of colonialism which sucked the Empire's resources straight into the UK. And the latter of these periods included the Berlin Conference, which carved up Africa among Western powers (Britain being a leading member) and gave its nations

>> phony borders which brought different ethnic groups into direct conflict with each other. Yes, much of Africa has had 50 years of independence, but the long-term damage takes far longer than this to correct.

My Irish half knows too that, from Oliver Cromwell to the potato famine to the partition, Britain has had an often shameful role.

So, yes, Britain has had good moments (most notably, standing alone against Hitler in 1940-41, for which it is rightly proud). But, overall, the change sheet is far too tainted to claim to have had a positive impact.

Yours, Joseph

Dear Joseph,

Of course the rights and wrongs of British imperialism will be debated for years to come. Many atrocities were no doubt committed in the pursuit of Empire and, as you point out, not only as a Ghanaian but also as a historian of empire, I am fully conscious of the wrongs committed in the name of British imperialism.

When, however, you look at such institutions as Parliament, the impartiality of the judiciary, trial by jury and the common law, there is definitely a net positive contribution.

While Britain itself may not be a nirvana of racial harmony, it has fostered a multi-cultural society for decades. This compares favourably to such countries as France, Germany and Italy, who have also had imperial pretensions.

Britain is a tolerant place. The fact you and I can have a discussion like this is testament to the kind of progress that has been made in Britain since the mid-20th century. I find it ironic that many people who complain the most about British society are people like, for example, Afua Hirsch who have enjoyed great privilege in our society. That in itself is a sign of success.

"Brexit has also presented Britain with a unique opportunity to once again further the cause of the free market, and spread wealth creation throughout the globe."

I feel that in its treatment of minorities, whether they be ethnic or of sexual orientation, Britain is a force for good. From the abolitionists to the Chartists, to the suffragettes and the founders of the Trade Union movement, Britain has a proud radical tradition which I respect.

As a Conservative, I would perhaps stress the liberal free market tradition of John Locke, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill advocating property rights, the rule of law and free trade. Whether on the Left or the Right, political historians and activists can point to great developments pioneered by Britain's broadly tolerant culture. This is something all Britons can celebrate. It has been a hugely positive contribution to the modern world.

Kind regards, Kwasi

Dear Kwasi,

I'm pleased you accept that many wrongs were done in the cause of British imperialism. But I fail to see how Parliament, the judiciary, and others, gives the balance sheet "a net positive contribution". These institutions mainly benefited the UK, and made only glacial progress in halting the crimes of slavery or Empire.

And being better than France, Germany or Italy means little, given that for centuries western Europe has acted consistently and systematically to exploit and control much of the world.

"Britain's shortsighted invasion of Afghanistan caused lasting chaos and failed in its bid to rid the country of the Taliban."

I don't deny that progress has been made (let's face it, the 'No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs' signs are thankfully consigned to history). But let's not mistakenly believe this means we are in a good place. Virulent Islamophobia runs throughout our media, and in some parts of the country identifiable Muslims, especially women, run a gauntlet of hate on an almost daily basis.

Nor should you criticise people such as Afua Hirsch for having a "privileged" background. Without a good education, or a respectable professional role, she'd almost certainly be ignored by our media and political establishment, as are most people of colour (at Grenfell, it took a catastrophic fire before its residents were listened to).

It's interesting you say that you "respect" the suffragettes, the chartists, the trade unionists: as a Conservative you'd know only too well that your own party opposed all these radicals, so you can't claim to be proud of that history.

And as for Britain's "free market" tradition: again, as you'd know from your Ghanaian background, these markets only work for the powerful – and, today, they still work against developing nations trying to trade their way to prosperity.

So is Britain a force for a good? Only for itself, I'd conclude. And after the Brexit vote, with the Government pressing ahead with a policy almost certain to damage the nation, it's questionable whether Britain is even a force for good for itself any more.

Very best wishes, Joseph

The home of human rights

Sir Michael Tugendhat is a former Judge of the High Court of England and Wales

Sir Michael Tugendhat explains how Britain exported human rights around the world

Life, liberty, property and access to justice are the basic human rights that are recognised in all the famous texts. They are in the US Declaration of Independence of 1776, the French revolutionary Declaration of 1789, the Irish Constitution of 1922, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, and all the great democratic constitutions and treaties of the 20th and 21st centuries. Liberty includes not only physical freedom, but also freedom of trade and employment, freedom of speech and assembly, privacy, and the right of peoples to participate in the making of laws that govern them.

Where do these rights come from? They are universal. They were not invented in Britain. But Britain has had a special role in preserving these rights, and spreading their recognition across the world.

One of the earliest documents to set out these rights was Magna Carta – not so much the famous 1215 version of King John, extracted from him by force, but rather the many subsequent versions, freely issued again and again, in 1216 and the next three centuries, by each of the subsequent kings. A 1354 English statute uses the more modern language which inspired the US Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments: "no man of what Estate or Condition that he be, shall be put out of Land ..., nor imprisoned, … nor put to death, without … due Process of the Law".

Magna Carta did not achieve the recognition that it has today until the 60 or so years from 1580 to the start of the English Civil War in 1640. Liberty and property were the major points of contention. Or did he require the consent of Parliament, seen as representing all the people? In the centuries following 1215, before political battles descended into the 1640 civil war, life, liberty, property and access to justice had all been recognised as common law rights. Magna Carta was a means by which kings acknowledged these rights, as they did again by statutes such as the Petition of Right 1628 and the Bill of Rights 1688.

The weakness of the common law is that it can be overridden by Parliament. In times of crisis, particularly in the colonies, common law human rights often were overridden by Parliament. That is what led to the American rebellion in 1776, and later demands for independence. In all of these, peoples rejected British rule, but they embraced our common law, as they continue to do today.

> **"Britain softly exported British values to peoples who had not enjoyed, as we had, centuries of the rule of law."**

After World War One, Britain joined with our allies in treaties to prevent another war, and to promote the rights of workers and of women. But by the 1940s, those of our European neighbours who had enjoyed a democratic tradition like ours had all succumbed to tyranny. In World War Two, Churchill made the enthronement of human rights a British war aim. With victory, Britain was amongst the leaders of the movement to banish tyranny from the world. Our governments, Labour and Conservative alike, promoted the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and the European Convention on Human Rights 1950.

By that time, it was recognised that colonialism could not be reconciled with human rights or the common law. The peoples of the Empire moved quickly to independence. India enshrined human rights in its Constitution, largely following the common law and American models, as Ireland had done in 1922. Conservative governments in the 1950s prepared other colonies for independence by giving them codified constitutions; we in Britain have never adopted one for ourselves. These constitutions included the traditional common law rights, in most cases expressed in the words in which they had been set out in the European Convention of 1950.

Britain was committed by a Labour Government to the two 1976 International Covenants, on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. So, too, Britain was committed by Conservative Governments to the Refugee Convention in 1954, the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986; the UN and the European Conventions against Torture in 1988 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. By all these treaties, Britain voluntarily increased the commitments we had undertaken in the European Convention on Human Rights. Thus Britain softly exported British values to peoples who had not enjoyed, as we had, centuries of the rule of law.

The end of human rights in Hong Kong?

Benedict Rogers is co-founder and Chair of Hong Kong Watch and deputy chair of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

Hong Kong's basic freedoms have been increasingly eroded, warns **Benedict Rogers**

On 23 January this year, the House of Commons held a debate on Hong Kong. The following day, the House of Lords introduced their own oral question. Both debates were timely, and much-needed.

Last year marked the twentieth anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China. Under the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, both Britain and China have obligations to Hong Kong for the first fifty years following the handover. Britain's role is to monitor, and speak out in defence of the freedoms, human rights and the rule of law, set out in the Basic Law, and to ensure that China respects Hong Kong's autonomy; creating the concept of 'one country, two systems'.

For the first 15 years after the handover China largely honoured the bargain. However, in the last five years Hong Kong's basic freedoms have been increasingly eroded. A catalogue of examples illustrate this.

In 2014, China reneged on its promise of universal suffrage in elections for Hong Kong's Chief Executive, causing the police to crack down on thousands of peaceful protesters and jailing several leaders in what became known as the 'Umbrella Movement'.

In 2015, five Hong Kong-based publishers, including British citizen Lee Bo, were abducted for publishing books critical of the Chinese leadership. Four have since been released, but one – Swedish national Gui Minhai – remains in custody in China.

Hong Kong's former Chief Secretary, Anson Chan, and the founder of Hong Kong's Democratic Party, Martin Lee, concluded that "none of us is safe", and there was a direct violation of the Joint Declaration which guaranteed that "no Hong Kong resident would have to fear a midnight knock on the door".

Last year a court disqualified six elected legislators for failing to take their oaths properly. Nathan Law, the youngest ever elected legislator in Hong Kong, took his oath properly but was disqualified for citing Mahatma Gandhi. These legislators are now facing demands to repay salaries and expenses which they legitimately earned as legislators.

Just before Christmas the Legislative Council introduced procedural changes which weaken legislators' powers. The Hong Kong Government will, on Beijing's orders, introduce a new 'anti-subversion' law restricting freedom of expression, and a law criminalising disrespect of China's national anthem, with a penalty of up to three years in prison.

China is now preparing to impose mainland law at the new high-speed rail terminus in Hong Kong. The National People's Congress Standing Committee decided that this was constitutional, usurping the courts which have exclusive rights to adjudicate such cases. The Hong Kong Bar Association is "appalled" by this decision, which "severely undermines public confidence in 'one country, two systems' and the rule of law in Hong Kong."

To sum up the picture, the former Secretary-General of the Hong Kong Christian Council, Po Kam-cheong, claimed that China was "gradually devouring 'one country, two systems'." Alarmingly, he added, "I couldn't imagine either that 40 years after the death of Mao Zedong…the spectre of the Cultural Revolution would re-emerge."

In the face of this, Britain appears to be beginning to step up to its responsibilities: Last September's biannual Hong-Kong report to Parliament was more robust, contrasting what Hong Kong's last Governor Chris Patten has called previous "fairly neutral…and rather anodyne" reports.

Last October, I found myself at the centre of an international media row, as I was declared "a threat to [China's] sovereignty, safety and interests", simply because I wanted to have tea with some friends and listen to their perspectives. I found the British Government response encouraging – the Foreign Secretary issued a statement, the Chinese ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Office, and Mark Field MP, the Minister of State at the Foreign Office, wrote to Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam. In the House of Commons debate on 23 January, he repeated Britain's commitment to the Joint Declaration and asserted 'one country, two systems' is "absolute" and "unequivocal". He added that "if the people of Hong Kong…are to continue to have confidence in 'one

>> country, two systems', it is vital that the high degree of autonomy and the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Basic Law and guaranteed under international law by the Joint Declaration are respected. Let me make it clear. Maintaining confidence in 'one country, two systems' and the rule of law is crucial for Hong Kong and China's own interests…[and] will only flourish if the peoples enjoy the freedoms and safeguards that will ensure the promotion of their talents and enterprise."

Such language, even if a little overdue, is very welcome.

In 1995, Prime Minister Sir John Major told the people of Hong Kong that "if there were any suggestion of a breach of the Joint Declaration, we would have a duty to pursue every legal and other avenue available to us." He promised that: "Hong Kong will never have to walk alone." Britain has, as Chris Patten said, "a right and a moral obligation to continue to check on whether China is keeping its side of the bargain" – and risks "selling its honour" if it fails to do so. Courageous Hong Kong pro-democracy leaders such as Anson Chan and Martin Lee have also advocated the need for the UK to speak up forcefully in defence of the rights and freedoms that distinguish Hong Kong so sharply from the rest of China. "If it does not lead, then the future of 'one country, two systems' is at best troubled and at worst doomed." Britain's responsibility is clear. It must not be shirked, and the recent indications from the British Government are that it is starting to be taken seriously.

Aid to our advantage

The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP is the former Secretary of State for International Development

The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP ponders the nature of Britain's aid post-Brexit

I do not much like the expression 'British values'. There is something slightly pompous and self-serving about claiming that universal values that many people support are somehow British. They are not – they are universal – and many decent people around the world support these same values, whether they be the rule of law, free speech, or the right to lead your life free of conflict and misery.

But what is certainly true is that throughout some extremely difficult and unhappy parts of the world, Britain has been a beacon of light at times of very great darkness.

> "By tackling these evils we can see that every penny of Britain's development budget is spent in Britain's national interest too."

I think of the way that Britain is always the first country to help at times of humanitarian catastrophe, whether in Africa or Asia, and not just in the poor world where, of course, resilience can be very low indeed. When the terrible earthquake in Japan struck in 2011, British firemen and women immediately rushed to help and rescue people.

Britain's development budget (one of the best examples of public expenditure investing in the lives and futures of the British younger generation) confronts many of the international problems which loom over our future. Migration, climate change, terrorism, protectionism and the deep and abiding poverty and inequality which disfigures our world. By tackling these evils we can see that every penny of Britain's development budget is spent in Britain's national interest too.

It is hugely to our advantage that we help tackle the problems of conflict and grinding poverty. As well as making the poorest in the world safer and more prosperous, it does the same for Britain.

Consider Somalia – a country as conflict ridden and dysfunctional as any in the world. Not long ago there were more British passport holders training in terrorist camps in Somalia than in Pakistan or Afghanistan. By helping tackle conflict there and build a more accountable society – something which David Cameron's 2012 initiatives undoubtedly helped begin – we make our own streets and cities safer too. This is a good example, incidentally, of what 'Global Britain' can mean. The truth is that aid, trade, and development are always in our interests as well as those we are seeking to help.

Were we to withdraw support in countries that play fast and loose with the human rights of their citizens, it is not the rulers and the powerful in those countries that would suffer, it is those whose human rights are already being abused upon whom we would be turning our back.

In countries where Britain has an international development programme, we do not work through governments which are corrupt, or where we would be unable to look our own taxpayers in the eye and assure them that their hard-earned funds were being well spent. We have a policy of zero tolerance towards corruption. That is why in so many countries we avoid such government mechanisms that do exist in favour of working through multilateral organisations, international charities, and non-governmental bodies, of which Britain has some of the best in the world.

When I was at the Department for International Development, we helped set up a fund designed to assist the poorest countries in negotiating trade deals. We did this because we had seen for ourselves, while in opposition, the disparity between wealthy countries engaging through the WTO and poorer ones. Rich country teams included many lawyers, accountants and experienced negotiators whereas poor countries were often represented only by one dedicated official with very limited resources. We concluded that this was not a good way to reach trade deals which should, after all, be to the benefit of both sides. Negotiating good trade deals around the world post-Brexit will not only be very important for Britain but also hugely to the advantage of the countries with whom we trade and for whom good trade deals will contribute both to our and their prosperity.

And as poorer countries become more prosperous and develop a middle class with something to lose, the case for an independent legal system and fair treatment before the law, rather than at the whim of a warlord or corrupt politician, becomes ever stronger. And so it is that the concern for human rights and our ability to support freer trade and the rule of law becomes stronger, not weaker, through the propagation of aid, trade and development.

#MeToo on the front line

Chloe Dalton and **Baroness Helic** call for Britain to do much more to lead global efforts to reduce sexual violence in conflict

Chloe Dalton was a Former Special Adviser to the Foreign Secretary

Baroness Helic was a Former Special Adviser to the Foreign Secretary

Over the last few months we have witnessed an avalanche of revelations of sexual harassment experienced by women internationally. #MeToo has flooded Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, bringing countless individual stories to the world.

In different ways, these women have found their voice. Yet the same still cannot be said of the millions of female and male survivors of wartime sexual and gender-based violence, the vast majority of whom never receive justice, recognition or reparation. Girls like Hala, a teenage Rohingya girl who told Human Rights Watch how she was stripped naked by soldiers, gang-raped and left for dead, during the Burmese military's campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Hala has no hashtag. She is one of thousands of Rohingya women and girls – already some of the most marginalised and mistreated women in the world – now facing the lifelong consequences of rape, while living in crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh where they are vulnerable to forced marriage, human trafficking, and sexual assault.

In conflicts around the world, sexual and gender-based violence is used as a means of terrorising, controlling or expelling a civilian population. It is not the only crime faced by civilians during conflict, but it is one of the most devastating. In South Sudan, UN Human Rights Council investigators have documented horrific cases of violence by armed groups, including a mother who witnessed her son being forced to rape his grandmother, and an 85 year-old woman who was gang raped and forced to watch her husband and son killed.

On top of physical injury, trauma, and unwanted pregnancy, victims are often stigmatised and rejected by their communities. Nor are all survivors female. A December 2017 study by UNHCR found that boys as young as 10, and men as old as 80, have been sexually tortured in Assad's prisons. The stigma faced by male survivors is especially acute: the same report found that 70 countries criminalise men who report sexual victimisation, due to homophobic policies.

The prevalence of sexual violence as a military strategy, its salience as a factor in creating refugee flows, and its devastating impact on the rights of women and girls, mean that we will not address the security challenges of the 21st Century successfully if we turn a blind eye to this aspect of conflict and insecurity.

The Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) was set up in 2012 by the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, and Angelina Jolie, with the goal of increasing the number of perpetrators who are brought to justice, and building up the legal and practical capability of other countries to prevent this violence themselves.

The initiative included setting up the first team of diplomats working full time in the Foreign Office on preventing sexual violence in conflict, and a team of doctors, lawyers, police officers, psychologists and forensic scientists who could be deployed overseas to help gather evidence and train local authorities. Thanks to UK leadership, over two thirds of all UN member states endorsed a Global Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2013 pledging, for example, not to include amnesties for sexual violence in peace agreements.

And in 2014 the UK held a summit in London that crystallised a number of other important advances including changes to military training, action plans adopted by some of the worst-affected countries, and the launch of the first international protocol in the documentation and investigation of sexual violence.

The Government has pledged to hold an international meeting in 2019 to review progress made since the summit. The Government has yet to articulate its goals for the meeting, and should consider three steps.

> "Hala has no hashtag. She is one of thousands of Rohingya women and girls now facing the lifelong consequences of rape."

First, ministers should acknowledge that the case for action is even more urgent today than it was in 2012. ISIS's use of rape and sexual slavery as a genocidal strategy towards the Yazidi people, and the brutal sexual violence carried out in Syria and Burma, all point to the continuing centrality of this issue to UK foreign policy. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office should develop and announce a plan for the 2019 conference that is commensurate

>> with the scale of the problem and Britain's aspirations to a leading role in tackling global security challenges.

"We believe that the UK could set a lead by announcing that it will dedicate a fixed or minimum percentage of the aid budget to fighting sexual and gender based violence."

Second, the UK should be at the forefront in insisting on, and helping to enable, justice for survivors. It is disappointing that the Government has so far under-emphasised sexual violence in its response to the Burma crisis. The PSVI team of experts should be deployed, in force, to Bangladesh to gather testimony and evidence for use in future prosecutions. Failure to do this sends a tacit signal to the Burmese authorities that they will pay no serious penalty for the mass violation of the rights of Rohingya women and girls. The UK should also name and shame military commanders on whose watch these crimes have been committed, and make them a target of international sanctions.

Third, even though we know that gender-based violence is endemic in situations of conflict, disaster and human displacement, it is routinely under-funded and insufficiently prioritised in humanitarian responses. For instance, there is often a critical shortage of funds for the provision of post-rape care and other healthcare services. Speaking in December, the UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict reported a funding shortfall of $10 million to deliver urgent gender-based violence assistance to Rohingya women. This is a relatively small sum in the context of the $434 million UN appeal for the Rohingya crisis. It is a shortfall that could easily have been prevented if funding for these types of needs were hardwired into the international response on a sufficient scale.

We believe that the UK could set a lead by announcing that it will dedicate a fixed or minimum percentage of the aid budget to fighting sexual and gender based violence, including empowering women and addressing the inequalities that leave them vulnerable. The Development Secretary should announce that the UK will devote a minimum 1% of the International Development budget to this purpose, and call on like-minded allies to do the same.

Without this kind of coordinated, comprehensive approach, prevention and protection will always lag behind needs, and these war crimes will continue unchecked. The new-found willingness to confront entrenched sexual violence and harassment in our own society should be matched by an equal determination to defend the rights of the most vulnerable women in the world. Girls like Hala deserve nothing less.

Constitutional crisis?

Professor Vernon Bogdanor contemplates the impact of Brexit on the British constitution

Professor Vernon Bogdanor CBE is professor of government at King's College London and a constitutional expert

The European Union Withdrawal Bill, currently before Parliament, seeks to incorporate EU laws, enacted over a period of 44 years, into our domestic law, so as to preserve legal continuity following Brexit. This Bill does something quite unprecedented in the constitutional history of the modern world. It moves Britain from a codified constitution to an uncodified and unprotected one.

The EU is a protected constitutional system, its institutions enjoying only the powers given to them by the Treaties. It is based upon a separation of powers between its institutions – notably the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the Parliament – as well as territorially between the EU and the national member states. It is, moreover, a constitutional system based on the judicial review of legislation, since the European Court of Justice, as well as national courts, can disapply or annul legislation incompatible with any aspect of EU law. The constitutional system of the EU, therefore, is, by contrast with the British constitutional system, protected against the abuse of legislative power.

Since December 2009, European law has included the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. The 54 articles in the Charter give many rights additional

>> to those in the European Convention of Human Rights. These include a very wide right to equality, a right to protection of personal data, the rights of children and the elderly, and the right of a judicial remedy when rights are infringed.

We did not incorporate the Charter into our domestic law, and the Government believed that Britain had an opt-out from it. But the case of Benkharbouche last October showed that there was not in fact an opt out. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that part of the State Immunity Act of 1978 went against the provisions of the Charter and should therefore be disapplied. The Charter, therefore, gave greater protection than the European Convention since the latter allows only for a declaration of incompatibility which has no legal effect; it is then for Parliament to decide whether or not to amend the law. The Charter, by contrast, provides a judicial remedy.

"It is rare if not unprecedented for a democracy to exit from a major international human rights regime; and no democracy has hitherto moved from a protected to an unprotected system. Brexit, therefore, raises profound constitutional questions."

That remedy will be lost after Brexit. Admittedly, aspects of the Charter will then become irrelevant – for example the right to vote and stand in European Parliament elections. Other rights in the Charter such as that providing for free movement in the EU are against Government policy. Nevertheless, many rights will be lost. As Andrew Langdon, QC, and Chairman of the Bar Council stated last September, "rights are not being brought home, they are being abolished."

It is rare if not unprecedented for a democracy to exit from a major international human rights regime; and no democracy has hitherto moved from a protected to an unprotected system. Brexit, therefore, raises profound constitutional questions.

After Brexit, our rights will rest in the hands of MPs in a sovereign Parliament. That is dangerous. A party that has won power in a free election does of course have the right to govern. But it does not have the right to govern in any way that it pleases. It does not, for example, have the right to override minority rights. That is why nearly every democracy provides a judicial remedy to limit the power of governments and legislatures. We will have no such remedy. We have to ask ourselves whether our MPs are so much more sensitive to the protection of human rights than legislators in other countries that they can be trusted voluntarily to respect human rights. I am somewhat sceptical that they possess this special sensitivity.

Globally, most countries are strengthening their human rights laws. Britain will be weakening them. Brexit will expose the nakedness of our unprotected constitution and leave a gap in the protection of human rights. This gap might be filled by the judges who may take it upon themselves to protect human rights, just as they took it upon themselves to protect the supremacy of European law in the landmark Factortame case in 1991. In addition, Brexit calls into question whether such a constitution is still sufficient to protect our rights. Only two other democracies still adhere to uncodified constitutions – New Zealand, and Israel. New Zealand, however, governs a much smaller and more homogenous population than Britain, while Israel in 1992 passed a law giving judges the right to strike down legislation contravening human rights.

"Globally, most countries are strengthening their human rights laws. Britain will be weakening them."

Constitutions are generally drawn up after revolution, independence or decolonisation. Britain has not until the present enjoyed such a constitutional moment. Instead the British state has evolved over time. There seems no specific time at which it began. But perhaps Brexit, by revealing so starkly the nakedness of our constitution, will prove to be our own constitutional moment.

Emergency first responder

Theo Clarke on Britain's achievements as a world leader in humanitarian aid

Theo Clarke is the Chief Executive of the Coalition for Global Prosperity

There are plenty of people who argue that aid is a waste of money. Secretary James 'Mad Dog' Mattis – current US Secretary of Defence, and former Commander of the US Joint Forces – isn't one of them. In 2013, Mattis said if the US cut its diplomacy and development budgets "then I need to buy more ammunition".

Mattis is right. In today's complex and highly interdependent world the people who argue that we should spend more on the military but slash the aid budget have fundamentally misunderstood the threats that Britain faces. Our security is threatened from state and non-state actors; by strongmen dictators and by the fragile and failed states that incubate terrorism and conflict. We face threats that recognise no geographic boundaries – terrorist cells, online hackers, and epidemics like Ebola and Zika can strike unannounced at any moment.

Meeting these threats requires a combination of hard and soft power. We need an effective aid budget, alongside an active diplomatic and defence strategy, to protect ourselves. But keeping Britain at the forefront of saving lives, alleviating poverty and bringing freedom, security and prosperity to those who need it most, is not only in our own interests, it is also the right thing to do.

You won't know it from our newspapers, but Britain is a global leader in development. The work we do is hugely respected across the world, and the Department for International Development (DFID) is regarded as one of the world's most transparent, effective aid donors.

Our achievements should be a source of great national pride. We have helped to make the world safer, healthier and better off. British aid has immunised 67.1 million more children against preventable disease across the world, helped ensure Mozambique became landmine free and saved 6.2 million people from dying of malaria. We have literally helped to bring life and hope to millions of people.

That doesn't mean we can be complacent. Recent events show us, once again, how important it is to scrutinise every partner we work with and every program we fund. Wasting aid, funding corruption or exploitation, is sickening. It is a double crime, stealing both from the world's poorest and most desperate people who need aid most, and from the UK taxpayer whose money it is.

The UK must invest its aid carefully, strategically, and coherently. We should concentrate on the programs where we know we can deliver results, and where results can deliver real change. Take girls' education, which Boris Johnson calls "the Swiss army knife, the universal spanner" because it tackles so many problems, from radicalisation to poverty. Educated women have fewer children and their children are more likely to survive infancy. They have more opportunities to work, to earn an income, grow their economies and to participate in public life. So at a time when female equality is being hotly debated at home, it is fantastic that the FCO and DFID have made the provision of 12 years of good quality education for girls one of their top foreign policy priorities.

It isn't just education, DFID also has a great track record when it comes to delivering vaccines, clean water programs, and – crucially – tackling pandemics. We can't build a wall to hold back an epidemic. Defeating disease outbreaks at source is critical if we want to prevent them from arriving on our own shores. The UK was also at the forefront of the fight against Ebola and, as a result, West Africa has now been free from the disease for over two years.

Aid is not a silver bullet. It won't solve all of the world's problems, or meet all our security needs. The money donated by governments represents a fraction of the wealth that is generated by private investment and trade. Wealthy countries could do more to accelerate the growth of developing countries by lowering tariff barriers and cracking down on tax havens. Ultimately, developing countries will have to grow their way out of poverty, and for the foreseeable future most countries will need to invest directly in their own defence and security.

However, there are some things that aid does best. It is only aid that can help the poorest people in the poorest countries lift themselves out of poverty. Aid saves lives, supports refugees, gives life-saving support to stop people dying of hunger during famines, and vaccinates children against entirely preventable diseases. These achievements are worthwhile in their own right, but they also genuinely make us safer. Disasters, conflicts and diseases don't pay attention to national borders, so neither should we.

The *Centre Write* interview: Tom Tugendhat MP

Laura Round discusses what the priorities should be for British foreign policy post-Brexit with the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee

Post-Referendum, do you get the sense that Britain's reputation has changed abroad?

People are wondering where we're going and that's a legitimate question as we've chosen to have the biggest strategic shift in our foreign policy in 40 odd years. I think that we've got to answer that and that's one of the things that the Committee has sought to offer.

So you aren't concerned Brexit is impacting how people abroad are viewing Britain's role in the world?

No I'm not. I think we've got an extremely positive future, and I think that there's every reason to believe that the United Kingdom will continue to be a valued partner and trusted ally in the years to come. The United Kingdom is still one of the biggest investors in foreign affairs, one of the biggest investors in defence, and let's not forget our aid budget as well. We are absolutely at the frontline of global foreign policy and we maintain a very strong network. We could do better, particularly as we're losing – depending on how you look at it – the warm embrace, or the stifling embrace, of the European Union.

Are there any locations in particular where you think we should be focusing more resources?

Well, of course, we have to do more inside the European Union, because we will no longer have the megaphone of Brussels to use as a platform from which to conduct our diplomacy. We must ensure that we get out and conduct bilateral relations appropriately. This is something we haven't done for many

"There's a lot else we must do around the world. It's not enough just to talk about the Commonwealth. We've got to invest in it."

Matthew Plummer

>> years, because we haven't had to. But now we really must. On top of that, there's a lot else we must do around the world. It's not enough just to talk about the Commonwealth. We've got to invest in it. That doesn't mean just countries where we have traditional links and where we have serious investment, such as India and Australia. We have to multiply the efforts in other places. For example, we really do need to invest in our African network. Countries like Rwanda and Ghana offer serious opportunities, not just for British business, but much more importantly than that, they offer opportunities for the United Kingdom to demonstrate what British friendship means. If we were to invest properly in Ghana – partnering with her militarily, through the rule of law, through trade and aid – then we would see that country transform and through it, I think, we could transform West Africa.

"The United Kingdom is still one of the biggest investors in foreign affairs, one of the biggest investors in defence, and let's not forget our aid budget as well. We are absolutely at the frontline of global foreign policy and we maintain a very strong network."

Looking ahead to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) taking place this month what would you like the outcome to be?

Well, CHOGM is a huge opportunity. Let's not forget what it is: it's the first time in many years that every head of state or head of government is coming. That's quite something, because there's 53 of them, including Her Majesty. It can't just be raw trade: a naked opportunity for the UK to enrich itself. What it needs to be is a network that enables all of us to have a voice. Let's not forget what the Commonwealth is. The Commonwealth is one of the very, very few clubs or associations that people voluntarily join where individual members come from the widest spectrum of humanity. There are rich countries, there are poor countries, there are Eastern countries, there are Western countries, North and South. This is an amazing network. But unless we invest in it and take it seriously, and unless we see that it's a relationship based on values and not just on trade, then we will be failing to gain its full value.

Two years ago, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee found that the Foreign Office had deprioritised human rights. Do you think the Foreign Office has improved its approach to human rights since then?

We haven't looked specifically at human rights, so I can't speak on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Committee on this matter. What I would say, however, is that it is a matter of great sorrow to me that when we spoke to the Secretary of State he told us that the Commonwealth was not one of the priorities. Now that is a concern, because if the Commonwealth is not one of the priorities in a post-Brexit era, one wonders what is. The reality is there are very few organisations or associations that demonstrate quite so clearly the centrality of the United Kingdom. It's a great shame if the Foreign Office don't see that.

You've been slightly critical of Boris Johnson recently. What do you think makes a good Foreign Secretary?

Well, I think Boris has got some amazing strengths. He has the ability to make his voice heard and that is a real asset for the United Kingdom. People listen. But it is important, of course, that they hear the words that Britain really wants to project. Those words must have to do with promoting the values of the United Kingdom and promoting our interests around the world.

The former Ambassador to the United States, Sir Christopher Meyer, banned the phrase Special Relationship, because he thought it "made us behave like poodles". Are you cautious about using that term?

Every country in the world thinks it's got a 'special relationship' with the United States. We have a relationship with the United States based on the fact that we see the world in similar ways. We do understand the rule of law at home and we understand it abroad. We understand the importance of the rules-based system. We understand the importance of securing the global commons, whether at sea or now indeed on cyberspace. We share common interests. That's why our relationship is special. It's not to do with US forces in World War One, or landing in Normandy together in World War Two. Those things reinforce it,

"I speak harshly about Russia – and it's always with great sadness – because Russia is one of the truly great countries of the world."

but the reason that we have a relationship that is so strong and so deep is because we see the world in similar ways. So look, Christopher Meyer is right. 'Special relationship' is a cheap and trite phrase that many countries can use. The importance of the UK's relationship with the United States is that we reinforce each other in different ways around the world.

Are you concerned about NATO's future?

No. NATO is an extremely powerful organisation, which has demonstrated its worth time and again, not least recently with many countries' commitment to the air policing role over the Baltic states and the deployment of forces to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. It's also worth noting that the countries that Russia has had a go at in recent years aren't NATO states. They had a go at Georgia and at the Ukraine at times when there was talk they might be beginning to think about NATO membership. However, the countries that have joined have been able to pursue their destiny in peace.

On the topic of Russia, David Cameron recently said that one of his regrets was not signing up to the Magnitsky Act. Is this something you're keen to push?

The Committee hasn't yet looked at that, but it is something that is absolutely on my radar and that I'm extremely supportive of. There are various members of the Committee who I have been talking about this for some while. In fact, before I was the chair, we were talking about this. The Magnitsky Act is extremely important, because it prevents individuals who have committed crimes in Russia being able to hide their gains abroad. This is a problem that we have seen around the West, and it's a problem that we are fully conscious of in the United Kingdom, and we must make the law absolutely clear that this behaviour is unacceptable. I speak harshly about Russia – and it's always with great sadness – because Russia is one of the truly great countries of the world. Russia's place is at the top table of global diplomacy. European politics is unimaginable without Russia. Russia is an essential part, not just culturally and economically and politically, but socially as well, when looking at the interaction between Russia and the rest of Europe over centuries. Russia has an absolute rightful place, not only at Europe's top table, but around the world. To see it taken over by this gang of gangsters is deeply dispiriting and leaves me very sorry for the Russian people.

Your have recently spoken about your disappointment of Britain voting against military action in Syria. Do you think your generation of MPs would have voted differently?

I can't tell you how others would have voted. All I can say is that you don't have to come from my background, a military background, to think like this. I wrote a paper with a late friend, Jo Cox, who was so tragically murdered. She came at this from a different perspective: a humanitarian aid worker's perspective. But she too saw that you can't just walk on by. That isn't one of the choices. If you want to know the price of walking on by, look at the refugee crisis in Europe today, and ask yourself is it really the right thing to do, when Syria is becoming such a conflagration for the region.

The Oxfam Scandal has highlighted problems in the international aid sector. What do you think needs to change to make aid more effective and more popular with the electorate?

I think foreign aid can be extremely important. It can be a way of supporting governments that are on the right path, but need a little help. But the Oxfam scandal has pointed that oversight is an issue. We can't forget who these people are. Oxfam and organisations like them are flying the flag for the United Kingdom. They're, fundamentally, representing us abroad. We give them literally millions of pounds. So, to see these scandals occur is not only serious for the aid sector, it's actually serious for our foreign affairs sector. One of the implications has to be that our embassy network must be better at seeing what's going on, and picking up the issues and stopping them, or at least calling them out. There's a cultural issue here too. In some cases, and I've witnessed this when working in Afghanistan, there are splits between those who work for DFID and those who work for the Foreign Office, which is extremely distressing. What's absolutely essential is that we make sure that whoever you work for, whichever branch of the British Government you work for overseas, it is coordinated by the Foreign Office. The Ambassador and the Foreign Office team on the ground must have oversight and must have a feeling of responsibility, because they represent the UK overseas.

Why I'm a Bright Blue MP

The Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP is the former Minister of State for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise

The great social reforms in history have all been driven by liberalism, writes **the Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP**

I read Law at University and I've never studied Politics. I'm an instinctive politician and reckon my views on most issues come from a lifelong set of values.

My liberal conservativism springs from my upbringing and early experiences which moulded my thinking and helped set my moral compass. My parents met at the Young Conservatives in the early 1950s and were firm Macmillanites. We were an ordinary, middle-class, middle England, Church of England family. My father was the type of man who would always give a hitchhiker a lift, because it was right to help someone on their journey who didn't have the means he had. My mother, perhaps a rarity 60 years ago, welcomed and befriended a lonely, newly arrived young Asian doctor in the hospital where she worked in Doncaster.

When my father lost his business, my parents plans changed. I went to the local Grammar School in Worksop, which became the Hartland Comprehensive a couple of years later. A huge part of our intake came from Manton – home to miners at the local pit and the poorest of families in Worksop. I had always been aware that the town had more than its fair share of deprivation; now I was being educated in the harsh reality of life for many of my fellow pupils.

Years later as a criminal barrister in Nottingham, I found myself representing not just people I went to school with, but their children and, just before being elected in 2010, their grandchildren. Of course, criminals come from all social and economic groups, but most come from the least well-off backgrounds. I don't subscribe to the theory that poverty drives criminality – I do know you're more likely to offend if it's the only way of life you've ever known. The eradication of poverty has driven much of my desire to get involved in politics. It led me as a student to join the Conservative Party and re-join in 2002.

I believe in fairness; it's never struck me as fair that a child from the most deprived family shouldn't have the opportunity and assistance to make a better life as a child from the least deprived background. I believe in tolerance and social justice. I have never understood how you can take against someone, or even worse discriminate against a person, because of the colour of their skin, their sexuality, race, sex or religion. Seeing the person is a strong part of what makes one a small l, liberal.

History shows us that all the great social reforms, whether it was the abolition of slavery or universal suffrage, have been driven by liberalism – a generosity of spirit, open hearts and minds, and a desire for freedom and justice.

My mother is now well into her eighties. Eighteen months ago she was described as a member of the liberal, metropolitan elite. This staunch Conservative and NHS radiographer, who's lived her entire life in North Nottinghamshire, probably took the most offence at being called a 'liberal'. But she shouldn't – it's a huge compliment.

Research overview

Sam Hall is Head of Research at Bright Blue

Sam Hall updates us on Bright Blue's research programme

It has been a busy few months for our energy and environment team with Theresa May starting 2018 with the first speech by a Prime Minister on the environment in 14 years. Bright Blue's research on the political attitudes of younger voters has been credited with influencing the Government's new focus on the environment, with our recent polling

>> analysis of under 40s showing that climate change is the second top issue that they want to hear senior politicians discuss more, after health.

Before Christmas, we set out our vision for the future of rural payments after the UK leaves the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. We proposed a new market-based commissioning scheme where farmers and land owners bid to supply different environmental services to public and private bodies. We also hosted a day-long conference on 'green conservatism', featuring four panel discussions and speeches from the Climate Change Minister Claire Perry, the Committee on Climate Change Chair Lord Deben, and former Conservative Leader Lord Howard.

In the coming months, we will publish a report on the UK's Climate Change Act, analysing the main scientific and technological developments since this world-leading legislation was passed ten years ago and proposing ways to strengthen it. Bright Blue is also examining the sources of and trends in air pollution in the UK and assessing the different legislative options for improving the legal protections from air pollution. And our conservation project will produce its first output, an essay collection, in which leading conservationists and centre-right policymakers analyse the challenges to conservation and generate innovative policy ideas to address them.

Under our human rights and discrimination theme, we published a detailed study of what Conservative voters really think about human rights and discrimination, which unearthed support for the UK to promote human rights as part of its foreign policy. In the coming months, we will host a major conference on human rights with leading decision makers and opinion formers.

Turning to our ageing society theme, we published an essay collection with the Fabian Society that brought together leading thinkers on the Left and Right of British politics to propose new ideas for the next stage of workplace pension reform after the introduction of automatic enrolment. We will shortly be publishing a follow-up paper setting out where our two organisations see that consensus lying.

In the next couple of months, Bright Blue will publish its research mapping the relationship between immigration and levels of trust in different parts of the UK, as part of our Integrated Britain theme.

Finally, our social reform research programme has been compiling a cross-party essay collection on different 'burning injustices' which the Prime Minister has identified, which will be launched soon in the Houses of Parliament. We have also got underway with new research to better understand the experiences of the claimants who were involved in the initial stages of the Universal Credit rollout.

Despite the continued focus on Brexit, Bright Blue has been producing research and policy ideas that address the full range of challenges facing the UK. With many more exciting research projects coming up, we will continue to develop and champion new liberal conservative ideas in the months ahead.

Tamworth Prize winner 2017

The Tamworth Prize is our annual essay competition for young people aged 21 or under. It is a chance for young people to explain what sort of centre-right Britain needs today.

What are today's 'burning injustices' and how should conservatives go about tackling them?

David Verghese

Justice has always been a principle at the heart of conservative politics – from Baldwin's talk of a 'union of all classes' to the introduction of same-sex marriage in 2013 by David Cameron. Injustice is inimical to the basic conservative premise that a country's heritage and institutions can only be preserved through harmony between all segments of society – men and women, city and town, rich and poor. It is precisely this which makes it so urgent to address one of the great injustices of our time: the generational wealth gap.

> "Authentic conservatism cannot exist in a society in which the youth grow increasingly poor whilst older generations accumulate more and more wealth."

Any examination of this divide throws up a variety of alarming statistics. Younger generations are on track to have less wealth than older ones at every stage in their life; the youth unemployment rate is three times as high as the rate for the country at large; the number of young adults owning their own home has

>> dropped by fifty percent in two decades. At the same time, the wealth of older generations continues to rise, protected by the triple lock on pensions and buoyed by far higher rates of home ownership.

Conservatives can no longer afford to remain oblivious to this. Not only is it a serious dereliction of duty by the state, it will eventually become an issue that will punish Conservative candidates at the ballot box. For the sake of preserving social harmony, it is imperative that action be taken to redress the growing gap between generations.

What form should this action take? I suggest that conservatives should advocate for a redistribution of wealth between the generations, reducing subsidies towards pensioners and using the savings to make home ownership more attainable for young people. Simultaneously they should work to address issues such as education and employment, where younger generations stand at a disadvantage compared to older ones.

One such subsidy which stands as a particularly invidious example of over-generous state largesse is the triple lock on pensions. Though its removal was mooted prior to the 2017 general election, those plans were quietly shelved. British pensioners will continue to have their pensions uprated at one of the most generous rates in Europe; a policy costing billions each year. It is profoundly against conservative principles to allow such a thinly veiled electoral bribe to stand.

The OBR suggests that changing from a triple lock to an uprating system linked to inflation would save £2.3bn per annum by 2021-22. To this can be added the money saved from introducing other fiscally prudent common-sense economies into the budget; means-testing benefits such as the winter fuel allowance and bus passes. A more radical mechanism for redistribution might be to impose a small wealth tax on net assets beyond a certain level in the high hundreds of thousands of pounds, akin to the French model – something which would enable a movement of wealth from older homeowners towards younger generations. Payment of the tax could be delayed till after death, mitigating the impact upon poorer taxpayers.

This sum of taxpayers' money would serve more use if channelled by the government to causes which would help young working families. It could, for instance, allow an expansion of the Help to Buy scheme, enabling more families to enter the property market for the first time; equally it could be used to fund a major home-building program to develop the supply of housing in Britain.

"Injustice is inimical to the basic conservative premise that a country's heritage and institutions can only be preserved through harmony between all segments of society – men and women, city and town, rich and poor."

In addition to this, government should also encourage more older people to downsize, freeing up valuable household spaces. This could be done through not collecting stamp duty on sales involving downsizing, or through subsidising the construction of affordable housing stock designed for the elderly.

Beyond root-and-branch reforms to old-age benefits, conservatives should also seek to address the concerns of young voters regarding tertiary education. This should not mean revisiting the now-settled question of tuition fees, but developing alternative pathways to an expensive university education to help young people access employment. In particular, conservatives should support considerable investment in vocational training and apprenticeships; for many, this will form a much more useful form of education than studying a degree of limited value for three years. This investment might take the form of funding an expansion of apprenticeships, or setting up technical colleges to teach value-adding skills that can be used in industry.

For those who opt to attend university, the flaws of the present system governing tuition fees should be ironed out. Conservatives should advocate strongly for the government to take action against the much-maligned Student Loans Company, which has alienated many young people with its poor management and customer service. Another effective policy might be to reintroduce government-funded bursaries for students studying technical disciplines at highly academic universities; this would include restoring bursaries for student nurses.

Beyond investing in education, government should also make work pay for young people. For too many, the mere fact of employment does not mean financial security and rewarding work. One way that conservatives could improve this situation is through increasing the rate at which the National Living Wage rises, and bolstering in-work benefits. Robust enforcement of employment regulations will become increasingly important as more workers enter the 'gig economy', and conservatives must make it clear that they support dignified and safe jobs for workers.

Authentic conservatism cannot exist in a society in which the youth grow increasingly poor whilst older generations accumulate more and more wealth. A conservative government should embrace the possibility of using the state as a tool to redress this inequality. The result – a new generation of home-owning, prosperous young Britons – should reinvigorate the economy and the country as a whole.

David Verghese is the winner of the 2017 Tamworth Prize and studies at Cambridge University.

Transparent diplomacy

James Dobson is a Senior Researcher at Bright Blue

James Dobson argues the Government should establish a new, independent Human Rights Advisory Committee

The visit of the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Salman, to the UK recently has once again brought to focus Britain's alliances with countries that have particularly poor human rights records.

Saudi Arabia has long been considered a close friend of Britain. We are heavily reliant on the Gulf State for intelligence, particularly in relation to Islamic terrorist plots, and the country is an important strategic partner in a particularly unstable region.

However, the poor human rights record of Saudi Arabia is unequivocal. It has been lambasted by the United Nations for its conduct in the Yemeni Civil War, it is one of the world's most frequent users of the death penalty, and it practises significant gender segregation.

This record has led to more left-wing parties, and particularly the Labour Party, to criticise the British Government for its ongoing close friendship with Saudi Arabia. The leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, has called on Britain to end arms trade with the Gulf State and to further disengage with the country.

However, criticism of Britain's relationship with allies who practise poor human rights is not just confined to the left. Last July, Bright Blue polled over 2,000 Conservative voters. We asked these voters to name the countries that they believed had the the worst human rights records. The country that topped the list was, unsurprisingly, North Korea. But the country that Conservatives thought had the second worst record was Saudi Arabia.

This concern from Conservative voters, as well as more left-wing voters, presents a problem for the British Government and the Conservative Party. Ignoring voters' unease here would be unwise.

> **"The visit of the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince, Mohammad bin Salman, to the UK this month has once again brought to focus Britain's alliances with countries that have particularly poor human rights records."**

But the alternatives are equally difficult. The Labour Party seemingly continues to call for Britain to utilise so-called 'megaphone diplomacy' rather than close engagement. Megaphone diplomacy refers to the practice of pressuring foreign countries through press announcements and public statements rather than through behind-the-scenes, private negotiations.

But there's good reason to believe that behind-the-scenes diplomacy is frequently far more effective in improving human rights abroad than its louder counterpart. Returning to the example of Saudi Arabia, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) can point to a number of areas where the Gulf State has liberalised over the past few years. In less than a year of office, its young Crown Prince has reduced the power of Saudi Arabia's religious police, reduced gender segregation, and promoted mixed entertainment. And, soon, Saudi women will be able to drive for the first time. These changes may seem lacklustre by Western standards, but they represent significant change in the extremely conservative Saudi Arabia.

The very nature of behind-the-scenes diplomacy makes it difficult to determine how much of this liberalisation can be attributed to British pressure. However, we do know that Britain has been pushing for liberalisation. For instance, last December, *The Telegraph* reported that Saudi Arabia would allow food and fuel shipments into Yemen following British pressure, while the former Defence Secretary, Michael Fallon, revealed that Britain was effective in convincing Saudi Arabia to renounce its previous use of cluster bombs.

> **"This record has led to more left-wing parties, and particularly the Labour Party, to criticise the British government for its ongoing close friendship with Saudi Arabia."**

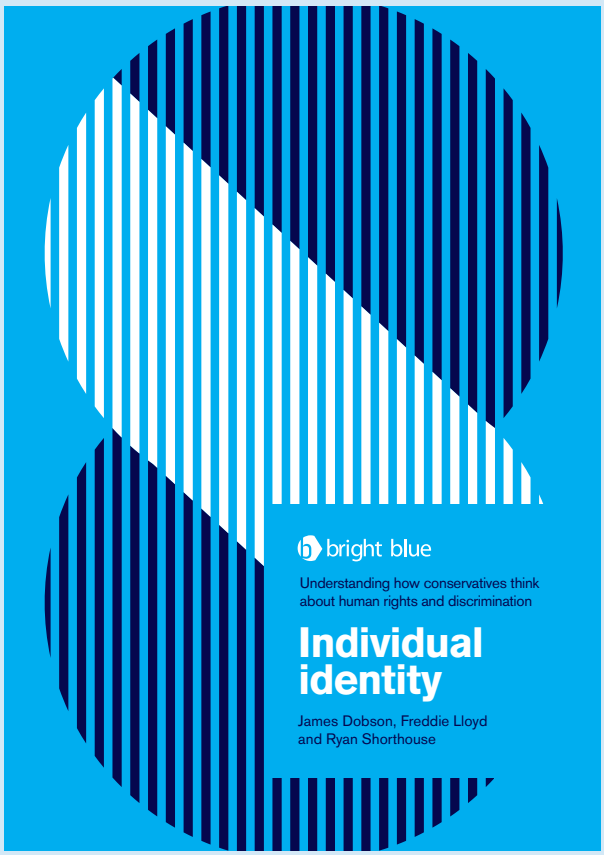
Yet these apparent successes do not appear to be convincing the British public that our alliance with countries such as Saudi Arabia are fruitful. Part of the reason for this is the discrete nature of the FCO. Unlike departments such as Department

>> for International Development, the FCO publishes little data on its success. Indeed, two years ago, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee stated that the FCO was not open enough in regard to the effectiveness of its human rights work.

There are many good reasons for the FCO to be somewhat less open than other government departments. Behind-the-scenes diplomacy would lose many of its advantages if the FCO chose to publish all of the results of its diplomatic efforts. But, as the public become increasingly sceptical of our alliances, than, perhaps, the FCO should become a little more open and accountable.

That is why Bright Blue is calling on the Government to establish a new and independent Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC). The HRAC would be tasked with advising the FCO on setting targets for its human rights work, holding the FCO to account for meeting these targets, and identifying countries with particularly poor human rights records.

The creation of such a body would allow the FCO to continue practising effective behind-the-scenes diplomacy while ensuring the FCO remains accountable and demands the trust of the British public.



Latest report

Individual identity
James Dobson, Freddie Lloyd and Ryan Shorthouse

Discrimination and the abuse of human rights are immoral, unjust and illegal barriers to individual freedom and flourishing. Tackling them should be at the heart of conservative thinking and policymaking. However, conservatives are often considered to be sceptical of measures to strengthen human rights and tackle discrimination. This polling report unearths in detail what Conservatives – including those from different social groups – really think about the existence of, importance of, and measures on human rights and discrimination.

A record to be proud of

Eamonn Ives is a Researcher at Bright Blue

Eamonn Ives examines how Britain is leading the fight against climate change both at home and abroad

British people like talking about the weather. What is not talked about so much, however, is the United Kingdom's record on climate. Specifically, tackling some of the main drivers of climate change is something which Britain has excelled at since the problem of anthropogenic climate change received general consensus in the late-20th Century. Indeed, at our 'Green conservatism' conference held last year, both the Energy Minister, Claire Perry, and the former leader of the Conservative Party, Lord Howard, boasted of how Britain has concomitantly led the G7 in both decarbonisation and per-capita economic growth since 1990.

Central to such success has been the wide array of – often exportable – technologies, designed and manufactured in Britain. The nation's automotive pedigree is embracing electric vehicles, with plants in Sunderland, Oxford, and the West Midlands set to produce thousands of vehicles each year. On electricity, Britain is both consuming ever more renewable power (up to a quarter of demand last year) and has established itself as a world leader in building the infrastructure needed to generate it – over 36% of installed wind capacity globally is British. In less publicised sectors, but those which nonetheless contribute significantly to climate change, for instance agriculture, British research is designing technologies to help decelerate the pace of climate change – such as drones and satellite mapping software.

Yet, whilst the technologies needed to counter climate change are of course vital, there must also be political leadership to go with it. A notable example of this in Britain has been the cross-party Climate Change Act 2008 (CCA), which binds the UK to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% of 1990 levels by 2050. Not only has the CCA committed Britain to curtail its own emissions, but it has also been copied abroad in Mexico and Sweden, showing that it is not just British goods that are exportable, but its laws, too.

Another innovative policy helping to combat climate change is Britain's 'Contracts for Difference' auctions in the energy sector. These reverse auctions provide guarantees for investment in low-carbon power generation, and by virtue of their design have helped to halve the costs of subsidy awarded to offshore wind in just two years.

Internationally, Britain has long been a leading force in championing global cooperation on tackling climate change: from Margaret Thatcher's 1989 speech to the UN General Assembly, to Britain being a prominent member of the 'high ambition coalition' during the negotiations of the 2015 Paris Agreement, to developing the International Climate Fund – which will provide almost £10 billion towards tackling climate change across the world. More recently, the Government has heeded Bright Blue's calls for domestic and international action on the phasing out of coal, by convening along with Canada the 'Powering Past Coal Alliance' – a group of governments, businesses and other organisations united in the objective of phasing out coal-fired power generation globally.

> **"The nation's automotive pedigree is embracing electric vehicles, with plants in Sunderland, Oxford, and the West Midlands set to produce thousands of vehicles each year."**

Sadly, conservatives are often regarded as apathetic towards tackling climate change. Yet polling which Bright Blue conducted returned results which challenge that assumption. A clear majority of Conservative voters (71%) feel proud of the UK's world-leading CCA, and only a handful of Conservative voters (14%) believe Britain should not try to influence environmental issues in foreign countries.

Whilst it is true that the UK has often paved the way on addressing climate change, Britain is not alone in this regard. Both New Zealand and Sweden have gone one step further by adopting 'net zero' targets on greenhouse gas emissions, whereby any emissions produced are entirely offset. Indeed, the Paris Agreement commits signatories to doing just this. If Britain wants to maintain its pioneering position in this space, amending the CCA to legally enshrine a net zero target would be a good place to start.

Acting in Alliance

Peter Quentin sets out why NATO is still indispensable

Peter Quentin is a research fellow in charge of Royal United Services Institute's land warfare studies

What is the most potent capability in the arsenal of Her Majesty's Armed Forces? The Queen Elizabeth Carrier? The state-of-the-art F-35 jets? Or, perhaps, the nuclear deterrent?

Counter to the more simplistic elements of our national defence debate. Our security cannot be calculated by arithmetic means of tanks, planes and ships, Instead, it relies upon membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Established for Europe to 'keep the Russians out, Americans in and Germans down', it continues to achieve two of the three, having long since realised the latter needs reversing as a cold wind blows in from the East. After a period of 'global policing' on expeditionary operations, NATO is back in the business of territorial defence and increasingly has become the centre of gravity for UK defence.

Therefore, it seems an odd time to question the utility and future of the Alliance, albeit under renewed threat both externally and internally.

Externally, the Eastern flank, High North and Atlantic have all witnessed increasingly aggressive Russian posturing in what have become the most obvious fronts in a 'Retro Cold War'. But the contemporary Russian threat is more multi-dimensional; with efforts to re-establish itself at the top table of international affairs, driving its disruptive activities from the Baltics to Balkans and further afield in the Eastern Mediterranean and Syria.

Combined with migration flows and instability in Northern Africa, it is NATO's south-eastern and southern flanks that now appear similarly exposed after several decades of taking their stability, and our security, for granted.

The greatest threat to NATO, however, is from within; due to the denial of its centrality to European territorial defence, and defence, and falling victim to the fracturing pressures of those external threats. These are being partially magnified, not least by 'rogue ally' Turkey, desperately balancing its own regional and domestic pressures in the swirling proxy wars of the Levant.

The Middle East has long been an arena competing for US attention, making it evermore challenging to keep 'America in'. The current President may be the first since 1949 to actively question the Alliance, but even his predecessor talked of 'pivots': continental responsibilities mismatched with commitments to collective defence and the expectation that Europe should care more about its own defence, in contrast to defence consuming allies from across the Atlantic.

That situation highlights the importance of long-term institutional investments, yet the 2% target remains an aspirational figure for most member states and, with Chancellor Merkel's reliance on a grand coalition, omitting to pledge to the target, even the largest continental ally looks likely to continue under-delivering on its commitments.

The Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, has done much to remind Europe of NATO's centrality to continental defence. Yet NATO leadership must come from individual member states as much as the Secretary General and perhaps it is time to 'ask not what the Alliance can do for us, but what our nation can do for the Alliance'.

The UK already provides considerable forces and our Armed Forces are serving overseas in the Balkans and Mediterranean (with HMS Albion leading the NATO Task Group, proving that amphibious ships can do so much more than just assault beaches!) as well as continuing their enduring operation in Afghanistan and contributing to a whole host of standing tasks and structures like the NATO Readiness Forces and HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

Britain's contribution is, however, far more than the sum of personnel and equipment, with considerable numbers of British civilians working within the International Staff and several senior military roles. So surely the UK already does its bit? Perhaps, but NATO is much more than a military alliance. It is an inherently political organisation which, in the context of Brexit, will become the UK's primary means of political-military support, influence and leadership within Europe – regardless of the Prime Minister's intended security treaty.

At a time of growing competition, uncertainty and fragmentation within the international community, it is important that a newly independent UK government invests in healthy, relevant and inclusive

>> intergovernmental institutions. The international rules-based order is the greatest defence and platform available to a truly Global Britain, requiring both plentiful carrots and a generously resourced but judiciously employed stick. NATO can be both of those things, but requires our political investment.

The UK can and should act as a driver for transatlantic security cooperation – seeking to complement rather than compete with whichever supranational structure is eventually established by the EU – and emphasise mutual interests over transactional obligations, as a dynamic alliance for the protection and projection of shared values.

The liberal order may be under great threat, but that only reinforces the significance of an intergovernmental, alliance-based response which emphasises its greatest asset against revisionist states and actors everywhere, not through superior defence capabilities, but ideological overmatch.

Those are fine words, familiar and appealing to liberal conservatives, but a public declaration of further investment in them would demonstrate that, for post-Brexit UK, NATO remains the indispensable alliance. This July's Brussels summit offers the Prime Minister a perfect opportunity to signal the relocation of our national commitment across town, from the EU's 'European Quarter' to the new headquarters of a renewed Alliance.

The relevance of our deterrence

In our age of mass weaponry, **the Rt Hon Julian Lewis MP** makes the case for Trident

The Rt Hon Julian Lewis MP is Chair of the Defence Select Committee

In June 1945, Professor Sir Henry Tizard and other top military scientists secretly reported on the impact on future warfare of new weapons systems. They explained why – if the atomic bomb actually worked – the only protection against it would be the ability to retaliate: "A knowledge that we were prepared, in the last resort, to do this might well deter an aggressive nation. Duelling was a recognised method of settling quarrels between men of high social standing so long as the duellists stood twenty paces apart and fired at each other with pistols of a primitive type. If the rule had been that they should stand a yard apart with pistols at each other's hearts, we doubt whether it would long have remained a recognised method of settling affairs of honour."

Tizard's analogy correctly identified the two central features of successful military deterrence: that the consequences of aggression must be unacceptable, but that they must also be unavoidable.

Since 1969, the UK's ability to inflict such retaliation has been continuously guaranteed by the Royal Navy's Polaris and Trident missile submarines. The present Vanguard class will eventually be succeeded by the new Dreadnought class, currently under construction. The parliamentary majority for initiating this programme was 248 in March 2007, rising to a massive 355 when the final decision was taken on 18 July 2016. Such a huge majority demonstrated that most Labour MPs remained committed to renewing Trident, despite the installation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament stalwart, Jeremy Corbyn, as their leader.

Having debated the pros and cons of nuclear deterrence with countless unilateralists, including Jeremy himself, for nearly 40 years, I have had plenty of time to formulate my case succinctly.

First, future military threats and conflicts will be no more predictable than those which engulfed us throughout the 20th Century. This is why we keep armed forces in peacetime as a national insurance policy. No one knows which enemies might confront us during the next 30 to 50 years, but it is highly probable that at least some of them will be armed with mass-destruction weapons.

Second, it is not the weapons themselves which we have to fear, but the nature of the regimes which possess them. Whereas democracies are generally reluctant to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear dictatorships (though President Truman did against Japan in 1945), the reverse is not true. Think, for example, of a non-nuclear Britain in 1982 facing an Argentina in possession of a few tactical nuclear bombs and the means of delivering them.

Third, the United Kingdom traditionally has played a more important and decisive

>> role in preserving freedom than other medium-sized states have been able or willing to do. Democratic countries without nuclear weapons have little choice but to declare themselves neutral and hope for the best, or to rely upon the nuclear umbrella of powerful allies. The United Kingdom is a nuclear power already, and is also much harder to defeat by conventional means because of our physical separation from the continent.

Fourth, our prominence as the principal ally of the United States, our strategic geographical position, and the fact that we are obviously the junior partner, might tempt an aggressor to risk attacking us separately. Given the difficulty of overrunning the United Kingdom with conventional forces, in contrast to our more vulnerable allies, an aggressor could be tempted to use one or more mass-destruction weapons against us, on the assumption that the United States would not reply on our behalf. Even if that assumption were false, the attacker would find out their mistake when, and only when, it was too late for all concerned. An independently-controlled British nuclear deterrent massively reduces the prospect of such a fatal miscalculation.

Fifth, no quantity of conventional forces can compensate for the military disadvantage which faces a non-nuclear country in a war against a nuclear-armed enemy. The atomic bombing of Japan is especially instructive – not only because the Emperor was forced to surrender, but also in terms of the reverse scenario: imagine if Japan had developed atomic bombs in the summer of 1945 and the Allies had not. An invasion to end the war would have been out of the question.

Trident is not a panacea and is not designed to forestall every type of threat. Its mission is unchanged: to minimise the prospect of the United Kingdom being attacked by mass-destruction weapons. It is the ultimate 'stalemate weapon' – and, in the nuclear age, stalemate is the most reliable source of security available to us all.

Fighting fit

James Wharton looks at ways the government can attract and retain people in the army

James Wharton served in the Household Cavalry from 2003 to 2013 and is the author of *Out in the Army*

Recruitment in the British Army depends on one thing: a prospective soldier's understanding that, ultimately, they may have to kill other human beings deemed enemies of this country, and actually that this may also result in their own injury or death. Because the army operates as a volunteer organisation, this bottom line possibility acts as a natural sift to military employment. You either accept the situation or you do not, and if you fall into the latter category, you just do not fill in the application form.

Then there is another choice: does one put oneself directly in the firing line, as it were, and join a front line and solely combat-focused regiment, say the Parachute regiment or any one of the numerous fine infantry regiments that make up the splendour of our army's main fighting units arms. Or does one opt to give a particular skill to the wider effort of defending this nation in times of war, perhaps as an engineer, chef or medic?

A useful analogy may be the opting to participate in different Sunday activities; some chose extreme sports, jumping out of planes or rock-climbing, while others opt to take a leisurely walk on a hillside, and some will prefer to stay indoors by the fire. It's all a choice, but each knows the dangers potentially waiting for them in each option.

Of late, a risk has emerged that may blur this situation: the Ministry of Defence (MoD)'s new approach to recruitment is on one hand embarrassing, but on the other, quite frankly, dangerous. I base this statement on the language, imagery and tone of the new cartoon adverts presented in January this year by the MoD that they hope will fill a substantial hole in a personnel crisis currently being felt by our army.

"Can I ask for emotional support?" asks one character in an advert, another voice says, "Is it OK to cry?" In none of the scenes are there images that reflect the realities of conflict, and at no point does the material point out that the army exists for one purpose, and one purpose alone: war.

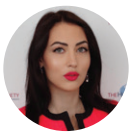
I am not suggesting that the young people watching these adverts are void of the fact that they may have to shoot somebody as part of their duties one

>> day, but what the adverts do allude to, carelessly, is that there may be some sort of choice in the matter. Let me be clear: you cannot introduce the idea at any point in the recruitment process that one day, as a soldier, there is give in how you can respond to a lawful order issued by a senior rank in the field of war. When the balloon goes up, when the whistle is blown, when the command is given, you need to be firing that rifle, fixing that bayonet and charging towards an enemy position fully aware that death may be an outcome of the situation for all parties concerned. It is not the most pleasant of thoughts, I concede, but let's not dress it up or disguise the fact with misleading marketing materials drawn up by some over-paid millennial who sits on a bean-bag in an office with a ping-pong table.

Perhaps some honest conversation about why there is a recruitment crisis occurring in the British Army at the moment is needed? If I were handed the responsibility of writing an agenda for that conversation, I would start by pointing out that the best recruitment tool the army ever has is conflict itself. Because of the natural sift I described earlier, seeing images of war on the six o'clock news, looking at pictures in newspapers of Union Flag-draped coffins carrying fallen soldiers through the streets of Wootton Bassett, and reading tales of gallantry when medals are awarded for bravery will make those who have an inclination for armed service naturally gravitate towards military recruitment offices. We just spent the best part of 15 years fighting two bloody wars, and during that period there was no recruitment crisis. Defence cuts led by the 2010 Coalition Government overshot in their efforts to downsize manpower, and the folk on the streets have had their heads turned by other opportunities. A 16-year-old kid from any town or city in this country has more opportunities than any generation before to do something different, and with a missing social consciousness of conflict from everyday life, they are pursuing those opportunities, education or work-based, instead of committing to a life in the military. Cleverly constructed, and by that I mean misleading, cartoon adverts pertaining to show a life unfamiliar to those who are currently serving, is not going to cement the shortfall in new signups to our army. But, in the absence of war, adverts that show ultimately what the game is all about, stand a better chance of getting those numbers filled, and of course by the right sort of men and women: those who are prepared to fight.

Jihadis and justice

Can Britian bring jihadis to justice? **Dr Julia Rushchenko** explores



Dr Julia Rushchenko is a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism at the Henry Jackson Society

As the Islamic State loses territorial control of its caliphate, more foreign fighters are returning home from Syria and Iraq, generating new security threats linked to the dangers of homegrown jihadism in Europe.

There is a heated debate in the UK over what to do with the returnees: prosecute them? Ban them from re-entry? Strip them of their nationality, as 'citizenship is a privilege, not a right'? It would certainly prove controversial to offer them assistance with housing, healthcare and jobs, as done by Denmark in the framework of the controversial Aarhus experiment.

Since 2013 many European states have been calling for accelerated implementation of measures to stop people from travelling to support ISIS. But not all have been consistent in putting words into action. Britain is the exception to this rule.

Besides prosecution strategies, travel bans and criminalising unauthorised participation in foreign wars, nationality revocation has been used more than 100 times to strip ISIS fighters of British citizenship.

On the one hand, denationalisation policies make it easier to prevent potentially radicalised individuals from returning to Britain. On the other hand, in the case of a person with only one nationality, the international law prohibits the revocation of citizenship unless certain exceptions to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness are satisfied.

Putting aside for the moment the criticism it sometimes generates from the international human rights community, citizenship revocation as a measure of tackling extremism is based on two considerations. First, it is supposed to act

>> as a deterrent, stopping people from joining terrorist movements abroad. Although the individuals who adopt Islamist rhetoric might be dismissive of a Western nation-state as a political concept, citizenship of these states offers many practical benefits: including international mobility, access to social welfare, and unlimited entry and residence in certain countries. Assuming that foreign fighters are rational actors, if the losses outweigh the potential benefits, they might be discouraged from taking risks.

Second, denationalisation policies are often approached through the prism of allegiance to Western liberal values, morality and membership. Besides rights and obligations, citizenship implies a certain political bond with a community and identification with a number of values. By travelling to join a terrorist movement abroad, returnees destroy the allegiances between themselves and the state, and can no longer expect all the benefits stemming from their citizenship.

If we were to avoid applying any criminal sanctions to returnees because we judged them to be 'naive' and accept that they could have been deceived and lured into extremist organisations, we will only increase the potential security threats from homegrown jihadism over the coming decades. Every terrorist foreign fighter has to receive a criminal justice response upon their return to Britain, and it has to be judicially supervised, proportionate and transparent.

However, a question that so far has been virtually absent from the public debate, is how to treat those returnees who are not, in fact, *terrorist* combatants.

James Matthews, a former British Army soldier who fought on the frontline against ISIS militants with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), is about to be charged with "attending a place used for terrorist training". This is not the first case when a soldier who fought on the side of the coalition promoting the very principles that liberal democracies are proud of is about to be put on the same footing as ISIS followers. In 2016, Joanna Palani, a Danish citizen who fought for the Kurdish Peshmerga in Iraq and the YPG in Syria, was arrested and faced a jail sentence in Copenhagen.

Should the aspect of morality be considered for counter terrorism laws, including how militant groups and their supporters are defined in legislation? How should European policymakers approach the dilemma between what constitutes a 'terrorist' or a 'freedom fighter' when it comes to European citizens fighting against ISIS?

As Britain prepares to leave the European Union, with many fearing a decline in her impact on policy-making, it is important to remember that the country has proved a leader in combating terrorism and organised crime on the European continent. It is crucial that in the wake of Brexit, Britain continues to set the tone for approaches to de-radicalisation and counter-extremism, as she has been doing in the last decade with the CONTEST strategy, intelligence gathering, border surveillance and other counter-terrorism initiatives. The issue of morality is just one of the many complex aspects to consider while crafting a response to transnational jihadism.

Sticking with the deal

Nick King was a special adviser between 2012 and 2017 and has lived and worked in the Middle East

As President Trump criticises the 2015 Iran Deal, **Nick King** urges Britain to burnish its diplomatic credentials and keep it alive

A recent Private Eye cover featured Jacob Rees-Mogg, resplendent in top hat and tails, urging us to "throw off the shackles of the EU and trade freely with Persia, Mesopotamia and Cathay."

Jokes aside, and despite the publication's sneering tone, a simple truth exists: encouraging more and freer trade with the erstwhile Persia represents our best hope of normalising relations with Iran and bringing it back into the international fold.

The ambition to move towards a friendlier and more constructive relationship between Iran and western democracies has been evident on both sides for some time. Increasingly isolated during the tenure of President Ahmadinejad between 2005 and 2013, the Iranian people made their feelings known by electing moderate Rouhani in 2013. He has brought in promising economic and social reform and shown his willingness to moderate Iran's nuclear ambitions in return for an easing of international sanctions.

The discussions had been going on for some thirteen years, but it was just two years after Rouhani's election that the clumsily named 'Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action' (JCPoA) was agreed in July 2015. It committed Iran to a series of measures designed to prevent it from developing nuclear weapon capacity and, in return, they would benefit from phased sanctions relief. The deal was agreed between Iran and the E3+3 (the UK, France and Germany, alongside the USA, China and Russia) and was hailed on all sides as a triumph of perseverance and diplomatic determination.

Within weeks and months the fruits of the JCPoA became clear. The UK and Iran reopened embassies in each other's capitals, trade missions poured in from all around the world, and Renzi, Hollande and Xi announced commercial agreements worth tens of billions of pounds. Simultaneously, Iran moderated their nuclear activity and each time International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) representatives have conducted their regular site inspections, Iran has been found compliant with the deal.

The approval of everyday Iranians has been clear at the ballot box. In the 2016 elections, only 12 of the 81 MPs who supported ending the nuclear negotiations were returned and, for the first time, more women than clerics were elected to the Majlis – the Iranian parliament. These results, and the re-election of Rouhani himself in 2017, show the Iranian people's rejection of the hardliners who exist in the Revolutionary Guard, the Basij (or religious police) and the Majlis.

But despite these successes, dark clouds now loom over the JCPoA. Whilst standing for President, Donald Trump reffered to this agreement as "a bad deal" and his criticism has not waned since assuming office. Last year, he launched a 'comprehensive policy review' towards Iran and, despite the clean bills of health consistently being issued by IAEA monitors, Trump has continued to talk down the deal.

In September last year the stakes were raised when Trump used a speech to call the deal an "embarrassment to the US" and by October he had upgraded "a bad deal" to "one of the worst...ever" and announced he would walk away from the JCPoA unless its "serious flaws" were fixed. The sorts of flaws he pointed to included the presence of sunset clauses regarding Iranian activity and the deal failing to cover ballistic missile testing, but his language suggested a much more fundamental opposition to the Iranian regime itself.

In January of this year, Trump issued a final warning and said that if the deal was not improved within 120 days then he would reinstate sanctions. We remain unsure as to what his next step might be.

Alongside the uncertainty generated by Trump, matters of trade and investment remain more difficult than many hoped. Visas remain a challenge for business people on both sides but, more fundamentally, banking and finance channels are sclerotic and expensive at best, and blocked off entirely at worst. Most of the world's banks remain nervous about the implications of remaining US sanctions which prevent US nationals doing business with Iran (a particular issue here given the preponderance of US nationals in UK banks) and restrictions abound around both dollar and sterling clearing, diminishing trade opportunities. Our country faces a particular problem as payments from Iran need to come to the UK via third party countries, injecting risk, delay and cost. As a result of these

problems, many companies, British or otherwise, are either pausing trade and investment decisions, or steering clear of Iran altogether.

It is therefore unsurprising that many consider the JCPoA's future under threat.

It must not be allowed to fail. Whatever our view of some elements of the Iranian regime, the fact is we are more secure with the JCPoA than without it. The deal keeps Iran a safe distance from nuclear weapon capability. It bolsters Rouhani and weakens Iran's dangerous hardline elements, helping smooth the path for Iran to reconnect with the world and it brings new opportunities for UK business and global trade.

Now, then, is the time for the UK to burnish its diplomatic credentials; we have a vital role to play in steadying the ship and making sure all involved stay the course. We are, of course, long-term trusted partners of the Americans but the same does not go for the Iranians who still refer to the UK as 'little Satan' or the 'old Fox'. But the faltering nature of the JCPoA presents an opportunity to demonstrate to Iran and the Iranian people the positive role we can play.

Whether or not we are able to influence and reassure the Americans – which must be our primary aim – it would not do for us to join them in abandoning a deal which we signed up to just over two years ago. Rather, if the Americans are to walk away, we must work with the remaining four members of the E3+3 to ensure the deal remains as intact as possible.

Diplomatic visits, easing of consular services and ongoing recognition of the validity of the IAEA inspections become more important than ever but, vitally, we must strain every sinew to re-establish financial channels and get trade flowing once again.

Such measures will demonstrate to the Iranians that we are steadfast in the deals we make; they will demonstrate to the world that Britain is determined to play a leading diplomatic role as it exits the European Union; they will create trading opportunities for British companies and others besides. Perhaps most vitally, however, they will help us normalise relations with a once great country whose decline has been tragic to see. But as its behaviour improves, and its fortunes increase, it can be a successful trading nation once again – perhaps even one that Rees-Mogg might wish to trade freely with.

Strongly soft

As power dynamics shift around the world, **Damian Collins MP** argues for enhancing Britain's soft power

Damian Collins MP is the Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee

Britain is a cultural superpower, a world leader in education and the arts, a creative hub where the best and the brightest come to develop the very best content, which is enjoyed by billions of people around the globe. Anyone who has been on a UK trade delegation will tell you that our two exports that are guaranteed to open doors are Shakespeare and Premier League football. Hence our soft power, the ability to influence opinion and to obtain desirable outcomes through attraction, is an essential asset to Britain's foreign policy.

Whilst a great deal of time and energy is dedicated to discussing 'hard power' assets – tanks, soldiers, battleships and submarines – significantly less attention is given to supporting and increasing the scope of the United Kingdom's soft power arsenal. This may in part be because, unlike tangible pieces of military hardware, a great deal of what makes up our soft power is intangible. People are attracted to the UK for a whole host of different reasons: the English language is the most widely spoken in the world; Britain has educated more world leaders than any other nation; films, television programmes, plays and books, made, produced and written in the UK, are consumed daily across the world – the BBC alone reaches more than 150 million people a week.

However, just because it is difficult to quantify, soft power should not simply be forgotten or thought of as a secondary issue. To understand why soft power is more important than ever, one simply needs to take a look at what is going on across the world today. Both China and Russia have invested billions of pounds in expanding their global reach and influence. Launched in 2005, RT (then Russia Today) is now available in more than 100 countries, spreading hyper-partisan content to the benefit of the Kremlin. For its part, China has put soft power at the heart of its international expansion. Amongst other things, it has vastly expanded its network of overseas schools and the distribution of party-controlled news content. This is an ever evolving and expanding picture, as authoritarian actors embrace new technologies. Evidence supplied by the major social media platforms to the US Senate demonstrate just how adept Russian-based actors have become at manipulating public opinion through the spreading of fake news and disinformation. As a recent report from the National Endowment for Democracy highlights, this is not principally about attraction or persuasion, it is about distraction and manipulation.

> **"It is time that the West stepped up, and more boldly asserted its own narrative."**

This is not always easy or straightforward, but as Professor Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle point out: "a balance must be struck that avoids overt interference whilst ensuring cultivation rather than neglect." The BBC World Service is a prime example of an asset that could be enhanced. It is right that the Government supports the service, but the Government and the BBC need to have an open and honest conversation about what the World Service should be, and whether it needs more funding. The television channel could certainly be reformed, to become more like World Service Radio, providing more than just the news on loop, but informative and interesting programmes that embody the values of both the BBC and the United Kingdom.

We could also do more to support the touring of cultural assets based here in the UK. The storage rooms of our museums and galleries are bursting with fascinating artefacts, scripts, and artworks, all of which could be out on tour across the globe. It is clear that growing economies across the world have an insatiable appetite for culture, so it would seem perverse not to utilise the cultural assets at our disposal as we seek to establish and expand our trading relationships in the post-Brexit world.

Soft power is something, that, if forced, can backfire. As a nation we are fortunate that the foundations of our soft power have been established over decades if not centuries. But, as autocratic powers have started to sharpen their soft power to undermine democratic institutions, it is time that we started to put greater weight on the soft power assets we already have, and seek to support and expand them. The rewards will be economic, cultural and political, and as we seek to forge new relationships with countries across the globe, it is essential that we fully utilise all of the tools available to us.

TEA FOR TWO WITH LORD HESELTINE

Laura Round is the Editor of *Centre Write* and Communications Manager at Bright Blue

More than six decades since Lord Heseltine's first time standing for Parliament, he is still an influential voice in British politics. This is made immediately clear as we sit down for tea and his phone goes off. It is the BBC Today Programme asking for his reaction to John Major's latest intervention on Brexit.

> **"The purpose of politics is to exercise power. To exercise power in a parliamentary democracy, you have to achieve a consensus."**

The former Deputy Prime Minister has made no secret of opposing Brexit. He believes it's Britain's biggest mistake. "It remains my conviction that a medium-size nation state will find it increasingly difficult to exert an influence in the world, except in association with partners with shared ambitions and shared power."

A year on from the Prime Minister triggering Article 50, he is concerned about the impact it's having on Britain's reputation: "In Europe, they find it incomprehensible that we are opting out of a relationship which has served us so well over such a so long a period. And outside the European Union, there is a disbelief that Britain should somehow believe that its self-interest is not interwoven with that of the European continent."

Lord Heseltine stresses the point that we are not yet 'post-Brexit' but that we are "in the middle of Brexit". Therefore, he believes that "the Brexit performance – and Boris Johnson's performance in that context – is the issue." He adds that "our reputation as a nation is essentially interwoven with the words of the Foreign Secretary and his political postures. You cannot sweep this aside." He stresses: "nobody is giving advice to Boris".

He recounts the years of Michael Foot as Labour leader and is concerned that so few people remember the consequences of "Corbynesque" policies. During his time as Defence Secretary, Lord Heseltine was critical in the political battle against the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. And "European self-interests are not guaranteed to be those of the United States", he reminds.

At home, Lord Heseltine worries about the state of the

Conservative Party, which has always been a broad church. "The purpose of politics is to exercise power. To exercise power in a parliamentary democracy, you have to achieve a consensus." He highlights the importance of the leadership embracing the centre-ground of politics. "The Conservatives didn't win the election. David Cameron won it, by appealing outside the traditional reaches of the party. That's a very important lesson if one is to take politics seriously."

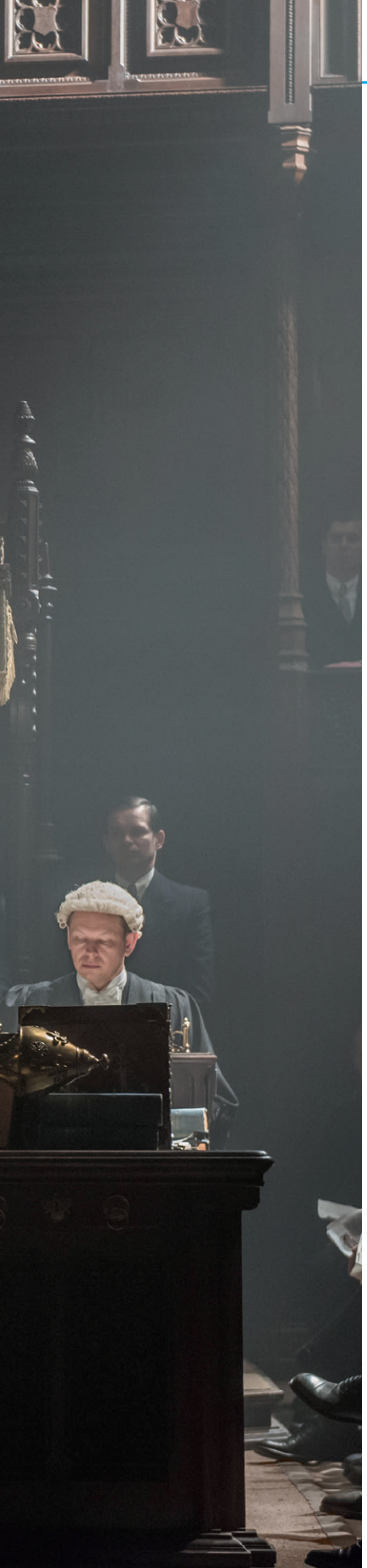
> **"It remains my conviction that a medium-size nation state will find it increasingly difficult to exert an influence in the world, except in association with partners with shared ambitions and shared power."**

Reflecting on his long career in politics, I ask whether there are any things he would have done differently. "One lived as one lived. One decided as one decided. I don't look back on any moment in which I would have changed the decisions that I made. The arguments for what I did seemed right at the time, and I haven't had cause to be thinking."

CULTURE

Eamonn Ives visits Tate Britain's exhibition on impressionism. **Philip Box** reviews the film Darkest Hour and **Ryan Shorthouse** critiques Sir Lawrence Freedman's new book on war.

Jack English – © 2017



Film: Darkest Hour

Directed by Joe Wharton

Phillip Box is a Researcher at Bright Blue

Winston Churchill has very much been in vogue this season, from cafés to *The Crown*. One question before watching *Darkest Hour* was, therefore, which Churchill would we be getting? Would it be the typical jowly bulldog, or something more?

The film ticks along with a calendar-style count from Chamberlain's resignation to the eve of Dunkirk. With less action than its competitors, the key to this film's successes was clearly going to be its ability to maintain immersive suspense, pace, and interesting character interactions. Much of this was ultimately going to hinge on Gary Oldman's performance as Churchill.

Most Churchill impersonators make the mistake of going for a deep, wobbly voice, whereas Churchill – as he sounds on the radio – is a bit higher up the register. Gary Oldman thankfully did not fall into the trap. Indeed, as the film progressed, it became less and less easy to tell it was him under all that makeup, although there was a scene near the beginning where this was touch and go. Only when he raised his voice could you occasionally hear a distressed Sirius Black or Commissioner Gordon bubble up.

Generally, the cast of famous faces held together well. Whilst it was possible to tell those not blessed with a native British accent, they steered clear of the usual caricature. With such a panoply, inevitably some characters received less attention and development than others. Although it would have perhaps been nice to have some more development for secretary Elizabeth Layton, or more to do for Churchill's wife, it is difficult to see how this could have been seamlessly achieved in the timeframe.

The pacing and suspense of the film was certainly strong. However, the Nazi threat – rather than bearing down inexorably and unstoppably – remained constant throughout. Indeed, the main 'threat' in the film came from within both Churchill's own party and Cabinet, something with inescapable parallels to today. Whilst this slowed the plot in places, it was not generally enough to break the immersion.

The main strength of the film was of course its tub-thumping, rabble-rousing speeches – of which there were plenty – building to an ultimate crescendo. The most moving scene involved the Prime Minister's impromptu interaction with the public. Whilst historically inaccurate, it was compelling all the same.

Inevitably as a wartime biopic, it invites comparison to *Downfall*. Far from following in Gary Oldman's legacy in being both serious and black, the film contained the right balance of solemn wartime gravity and light-hearted witticisms. The themes of peace and war were expertly handled and suitably thought-provoking, conveyed through a humanising focus on self-doubt. The film was particularly effective in conveying uncertainty through the momentously difficult decisions faced by those in power, inviting the audience to question despite hindsight.

Overall, whilst not a seamless ride – and in places destined to be the historian's chew-toy – the film was a fittingly heroic tribute, one that certainly captured the rousing spirit of Churchill.

The future of war: A history
by Sir Lawrence Freedman

Ryan Shorthouse is the Director of Bright Blue

Sir Lawrence Freedman, dubbed "the dean of British strategic studies" after nearly four decades at the top of the renowned War Studies department at King's College London, has created a comprehensive and illuminating account of changing cultural, public, military, and political attitudes towards war since the middle of the nineteenth century.

The duration of war has always been underappreciated, thanks to overconfidence in the delivery of a knockout blow. The belief in brief battles was popular among European elites, especially following successful crusades to unify Germany by Bismarck in the 1860s and 1870s. In this classical conception, civilians could be kept away from the battlefield, although conflicts in the colonies were an exception to this. Such optimism was eventually put to bed after the arduous Great Wars.

Yet, with patience and a plan, military action can be successful: Freedman reveals famous but also forgotten successes, from NATO's involvement in Bosnia in the 1990s to Britain's intervention in Malaysia in the 1960s.

By the Second World War, air power had advanced enormously, leading to indiscriminate bombing of whole cities, by both the Axis powers and the Allies. The devastation horrified, making European powers both weary and wary of warfare.

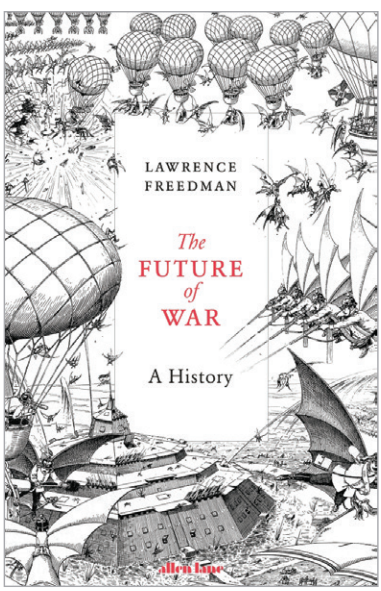
So began the 'long peace', with stalemate between superpowers, fearful of mutually assured destruction. Interestingly, the Americans dreaded another Pearl Harbour: a surprise missile attack from the Soviets. But the USSR was suspicious of something different: a repeat of German invasion by land.

Freedman is critical of the post-Soviet optimists, most famously the academic Professor Steven Pinker, who advocated that human violence is constantly declining. Inter-state violence has certainly decreased, but the 1990s were dominated by civil war, with states battling against guerrilla groups. In this decade, roughly 90% of the world's most fatal cities were in South America, as drug cartels caused chaos.

By the turn of this century, technology was rapidly developing, with aerial bombing impressively distant and precise. Western powers became enthusiastic about humanitarian intervention. But, during these crusades, asymmetry did not lead to annihilation: fightbacks, as ever, were underrated. Foreign engagements became entanglements, as resistance fighters used sly and shameless measures. The public in Western countries became deeply sceptical and the age of intervention swiftly terminated.

Freedman wisely avoids predicting the next chapter for modern warfare. Though he does describe the growing trends of cyber, informational and unconventional warfare. The revelation of contemporary depictions of future scenarios, such as tiny drones injecting diseases into people, are very dark indeed. Admittedly, as Freedman frequently jumps between fictional and historical sources, it is difficult – at times – to track what was fantastical and what was real.

We have come full circle, really; war today is once again increasingly considered, as it was two centuries ago, as something that can be contained from civilians. Modern weaponry may be drastically different compared to way back when, but there are many constant assumptions and features about warfare that Freedman – through forensic research and fascinating facts – demonstrates.



The future of war: A history, Sir Lawrence Freedman; Allen Lane Publishing; 400 pages (Hardback), from £25.00. Published 5th October 2017.

Exhibition: Impressionists in London

Eamonn Ives is a Researcher at Bright Blue

Light and luminosity define impressionism. Yet it is darkness and despair with which *Impressionists in London* begins. Setting the premise to the exhibition, a number of canvases and photographs document the trauma of a France scarred by the Franco-Prussian War, and the infamous Paris Commune. It was these events of the Century which triggered thousands of French nationals, including the now esteemed figures of which the impressionist movement comprised, to seek refuge in Britain.

However, if the first gallery was sufficiently visually striking – and not least historically beguiling – to whet one's appetite for a coordinated anthology of painters driven by peril across the Channel, disappointment only follows for the next portion of the exhibition.

After an introduction of the impressionists' first forays into the British art scene, and a flavour of James Tissot's reflections on English high society, one is presented a frankly forgettable profile on the works of Alphonse Legros. Compounding this sense of abject underwhelming is a cluttered gallery of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux sculpture, which serves only to jar with what has gone before – and is still to come – in the exhibition.

Mercifully, as one approaches the two-thirds point of the exhibition, the familiar, archetypal works of the impressionist movement come to the fore. Certainly, here, the exhibition which one expected to see upon entering materialises. The optimistic generosity of colour in Camille Pissarro's tropically blue Thames in *Charing Cross Bridge*, and the vibrant, verdant greens in his depictions of Hampton Court are magnificent. They stand, perhaps poignantly, in stark contrast to the bleak austerity of those introductory paintings of the exhibition.

> **"It was these events of the Century which triggered thousands of French nationals, including the now esteemed figures of which the impressionist movement comprised, to seek refuge in Britain."**

Following James Abbott McNeill Whistler's captivating *Nocturnes* is the exhibition's pinnacle – a smattering of paintings from the inimitable Claude Monet. Capturing the ghostly silhouette of the Palace of Westminster, engulfed in a once iconic London fog, appeals to the heart of impressionism as a concept – the exercise of capturing light *en plein air*. Indeed, if there is one reason to attend this exhibition, Monet provides several. His *Thames Series*, which hold the dimensions of the Palace fixed, and the light of the fading sun anything but, is a feat of chromatic brilliance which leaves one entranced.

Concluding the exhibition, one is treated to three works of André Derain. The images are bright and cheerful, and are certainly aesthetically pleasing.

Claude Monet *Houses of Parliament, Sunlight Effect* c.1903
Oil paint on canvas 1048 x 1156 mm Brooklyn Museum of Art

Yet whilst they contain unmistakably 'London' motifs, a note of discord rings through – he was neither 'in exile', nor an impressionist. The fact he embarked to London in 1906 belies the very title of the exhibition.

Indeed, it is perhaps this which encapsulates my dismay. The masterpieces of Alfred Sisley, Tissot, and Monet make sure of an agreeable showcase of talent. But somewhere amongst the crude partitioning of artists, the less than welcome surprise of sculpture, and general incoherence, the exhibition falls limp. This is not an exhibition which works organically, but rather seeks to force a narrative, occasionally erroneously, and in doing so compromises itself irreparably. The final, almost apologetic inclusion of the distractingly vivid Derain smacks of an exhibition which knows it has not fulfilled its potential.

Impressionists in London runs until 7th May 2018 at the Tate Britain, London.

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