Britain in the World

Consultation Paper 129

Background

This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of new Party policy in relation to Britain's place in the world. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the response generated and on the deliberations of the working group a full Britain in the World policy paper will be drawn up and presented to Conference for debate.

The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Martin Horwood. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party.

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Comments should reach us as soon as possible and no later than Friday 31st March 2017.

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1.   Introduction

1.1   Core liberal values

1.1.1   Liberal Democrats are internationalists – determined to work with other countries towards an equitable and peaceful international order and durable systems of common security. We believe that peoples' rights and aspirations are universal, not constrained by national borders and we are committed to fighting poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur. So, we aim to play a full and constructive role in international organisations – not only the European Union, but all those institutions that work towards peace and disarmament, the elimination of poverty and the collective safeguarding of democracy.

1.2   Issues and challenges facing the world

1.2.1   2016 saw Britain vote to leave the EU, Donald Trump elected US President, deteriorating respect for democratic institutions at home and in America, and the continued rise of populist and nationalist movements across the world. The world feels less secure, uncertainty reigns, and long-established international liberal values and co-operation are increasingly under threat.

1.2.2   The nature of global threats has expanded in recent years. Terrorism continues to pose a threat to citizens in ways that threaten fragile states and influence the foreign and defence policies of others. Cyber threats have been highlighted by Russian involvement in the US Presidential election and its efforts to cultivate friendly propaganda networks in democratic states. Security threats are no longer limited to large, traditional standing armies – and cannot be combatted simply by increasing defence spending. Today's threats are deeply embedded in complex systems that blend local and global politics, hard and soft power, and are enabled by global supply chains and social media networks.

1.2.3   Recent years have seen a global power shift. Western democracies, which established the international liberal order in the wake of World War Two (WW2), have begun ceding power to newly assertive nations with different values and ideals. While a number of regional powers have emerged, and become active in organizations like the G20, the most notable change in the foreign policy landscape has been the rise of China as a global superpower.

1.2.4   We are also witnessing the erosion of the existing rules-based international order. Our hard-won system of global governance— characterised by institutions like the EU, the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, and the International Criminal Court— hangs in the balance. The liberal order is being undermined on two fronts. Rising powers, long clamouring for a seat at the table, are now seeking to build rival institutions that better serve their interests. At the same time, populists are appealing to a selfish isolationism, attacking international co-operation on issues like climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.2.5   Alongside this erosion is the growing instability in international alliances and organisations, typified by the UK's vote for Brexit. Britain is the second biggest contributor to the EU budget, and its military spending is the highest in the EU. This loss of EU capacity could provide an opportunity to illiberal states. As Russia seeks to expand its sphere of influence, and grows increasingly aggressive, it could threaten the EU and its Easternmost members.

1.2.6   The world has not seen such large numbers of displaced people and refugees since WW2. UN data show that nearly 1% of the global population was forcibly displaced in 2015, including almost 6% of people in the Middle East, and six out of every ten Syrians. Turkey has accepted 2.85 million refugees, 1 in 5 people in Lebanon is a refugee, and European nations have received unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers. The displacement of so many war-traumatised families puts pressure not only on the political

stability of surrounding regions, but also further afield, on countries that have volunteered to resettle large numbers of refugees.

1.2.7   2016 was the warmest year on record. Climate change threatens food production and livelihoods, prosperity and political stability, low-lying communities and especially the poor. As its impact intensifies, global warming will exacerbate existing security and development challenges, threatening to be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

> *Question 1:   Which of the challenges identified here do you think is the greatest challenge facing the UK?*
>
> *Question 2:   Are the main challenges outlined here? What additional challenges would you prioritise?*
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> *Question 3:   How should the UK engage with efforts to assist displaced people and refugees? Should these efforts focus on helping refugees domestically e.g., by accepting more of them into the UK, or focus primarily on assisting them in the regions where they are being displaced e.g., through humanitarian aid?*

1.3   Role of the UK in the World

1.3.1   The UK has been a global economic, colonial, and military power for centuries. The last 50 years have seen the end of empires, the fall of Communism, the economic and political ascent of the US, the growing confidence of Germany as Europe's leading partner, and now, the emergence of China. In this new landscape where power is more widely shared, liberals see an opportunity for Britain to draw on its political, economic, and creative strengths to lead as a force for good in the world.

1.3.2   Today the UK retains enormous cultural, intellectual, and academic influence, and is a global leader in financial services and many other sectors. We are the world's sixth-largest economy, the

second biggest aid donor, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and we lead on important international issues such as arms control. We have one of the most powerful militaries in the world, with a nuclear deterrent. We retain strong alliances as a member of NATO and, for now, the EU. We play a leading role in the Commonwealth, and maintain close relationships with other democracies around the world.

1.3.3 Britain has benefitted from a more open global situation – as a free trading nation and a key architect of liberal international order. UKIP and the Conservatives bemoan Britain's supposed 'decline', but the wellbeing of Britons has soared since the Second World War. The relative power of the UK has only declined as other nations have become less poor, better educated, healthier, and more assertive in their politics. Even though there remains much to achieve in gender equality and reproductive rights, disease prevention, expanding access to education, and securing civil liberties – in terms of development, the world has made tremendous progress over the last 50 years. Liberal Democrats are now in an excellent position to take advantage of our international position, and leverage this power to further not only our own national interests, but also to support prosperity, equality, democracy, and human rights around the world.

Question 4: In one sentence, what should the UK's role in the world be?

Question 5: What international obligations should the UK undertake beyond protecting our own national interest?

Question 6: How should we engage with illiberal and/or undemocratic states without compromising either our liberal values or our national interest?

Question 7: Has the liberal international order had its day?

2. Europe after Brexit

2.1 Why does the UK need the European Union?

2.1.1   The European Union brings together 28 member states and more than 500 million people in political and economic union. The European Communities were created in the aftermath of the Second World War to unite the divided peoples of Europe and foster economic co-operation in the belief that economic interdependence would reduce the chance of another war. In time, the EU would develop a comprehensive single market and trading bloc, a European Parliament, legislation and policies on energy and the environment, freedom, justice and human rights, security and policing, and a major role in foreign policy and international trade.

2.1.2   Liberal Democrats have long extolled the benefits of working closely with the rest of Europe. Over time, however, the European 'project' became controversial with the right-wing media and increasingly unpopular with many voters – both here and across Europe. During the referendum campaign, the Liberal Democrats campaigned passionately for the UK to remain – and we stand by our commitment.

2.1.3   Our campaign focused on five benefits of European Union membership – prosperity, peace, opportunity, the environment, and security.

- Prosperity. The UK is stronger and better off trading and working with Europe. There are millions of jobs linked to trade with Europe, and thousands of businesses will be thrown into turmoil if we leave. Leaving could cost the average family up to £450 a year, particularly if the Government pursues a 'hard' Brexit, leaving both the single market and the customs union.

- Peace. After centuries of brutal conflict, European nations came together in co-operation. To this day, neighbours and allies support each other in what remains the world's most successful peacebuilding project.

- Opportunity. British people have more opportunities to work, travel and learn than ever before. Remaining in the EU offers our children and grandchildren more opportunities to learn, work and live in and amongst different cultures.

- Environment. Protecting the natural environment remains the planet's greatest challenge but the environment knows no national boundaries. Environmental standards, climate change and pollution are only effective when tackled collectively.

- Security. Together we are better able to fight the threats to our safety and security from organised crime, cyber-crime, terrorism, the illegal drugs trade and human trafficking. EU initiatives such as Europol, Eurojust, the Prüm Convention, and the European Arrest Warrant aid our police, intelligence services, and judicial authorities in targeting criminals and bringing them to justice.

2.2 How will Brexit impact Britain's place in the world?

2.2.1   The EU has been a gateway to British participation on the world stage. Membership gives us more international leverage as compared to going it alone – this is evident in world trade and climate change talks. Leaving the EU will lose us our place at many international tables.

2.2.2   Brexit contributes to greater uncertainty in the world. A Europe divided strengthens the prospect of Russian aggression, particularly on the EU periphery. Responding to Russia, along with

the recent rise in terrorist incidents on European soil, requires strong alliances and co-ordinated responses. Weakening our European allies harms our own self-interest, and years of trade negotiations will distract attention from critical security threats.

2.2.3   Britain's capacity to trade will be harmed by Brexit; even more so if the current government succeeds in its pursuit of 'hard Brexit'. Withdrawal from the customs union will result in the imposition of non-tariff barriers on goods from the EU, including on components within integrated supply chains; and withdrawal from the single market will make exporting to the largest market in the world more difficult. Services will be particularly hard hit. Given the importance of trade in the emerging world order, Brexit could crush Britain's global economic standing.

2.2.4   Relentless public discourse on immigration, and the poisonous rhetoric of the referendum campaign has risked our country's reputation as a welcoming nation and a facilitator of collaboration in business, academia, science, and the arts. Moving further from Europe and closer to Donald Trump, Erdogan, and Saudi Arabia risks severe harm to the UK's international standing.

2.2.5   Weakened capacity to trade and do business will mean a weaker economy. British businesses are already experiencing a weaker pound with less international purchasing power, and may well face expensive import tariffs. These effects will likely ripple outwards, hitting the incomes of British households.

2.2.6   Academia may suffer an enormous blow following Brexit. British universities are amongst the best in the world, and several universities have already reported a sharp drop in international applications following the referendum, while academic staff, uncertain about their futures in the UK, look to re-locate.

2.2.7   The government's focus on reducing migration will impact on UK industry and service sectors. Skilled professionals may well be in shorter supply, but the biggest impact is likely to be in sectors

that rely heavily on migrant labour. These include tourism, agriculture, the NHS, residential care and construction.

2.3   Guiding principles for the future

2.3.1   Liberal Democrats deeply regret the outcome of the referendum on membership of the EU in which a majority voted to leave.

2.3.2   We commit to giving the British people the final say through a referendum on whether the terms of the deal agreed for the withdrawal of Britain from the EU should be accepted.

2.3.3   In the meantime, we have argued that the UK government should have the following priorities in any negotiations:

- Protection of the rights of EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in Europe
- Membership of the Single Market
- Protecting freedom of movement
- Maintaining environmental protections
- Keeping the high level of health, safety, consumer protection, employment, and equalities standards in the UK
- Ensuring effective law enforcement and judicial co-operation
- Protecting British business and jobs
- Promoting scientific co-operation and funding for research
- Encouraging travel and tourism.

2.3.4   Since we adopted these priorities, it has become increasingly clear that the Government will be pursuing a 'hard' Brexit – departing from the single market and customs union, and reducing the likelihood of us being able to pursue the other aims listed here.

2.3.5   We therefore continue to believe that any deal that the Government negotiates for the UK outside the EU will not be as

beneficial to the British people as continued EU membership, and will continue to campaign for the UK to remain a member of the EU.

Question 8: *Do you believe that the UK should remain a member of the EU, if so, why?*

Question 9: *If the UK leaves the EU, what kind of relationship should we seek to maintain with the EU and European nations?*

Question 10: *In your opinion, what is the single biggest challenge the UK will face if we leave the EU? Are there any potential advantages in leaving?*

Question 11: *If we leave the EU, should the UK prioritise seeking to re-join?*

3. International Security and Stability

3.1 The UK armed forces & intelligence services

3.1.1   The UK is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), a military alliance established in 1949 as a collective defence network for its members. NATO member states have pledged to spend at least 2% of GDP per annum on defence to ensure that the Alliance can meet its objectives – the UK is one of only five (out of 28) NATO members to honour this commitment, with a defence budget of £35 billion. Trump's election has raised concerns about the future of NATO and collective defence.

3.1.2   Recent UK overseas military involvement has included the NATO-led intervention in Libya and ongoing military and humanitarian assistance in Iraq and Syria, which is now largely limited to air strikes and training. UK Special Forces have carried out operations in Iraq and Syria and reportedly elsewhere in the Middle East. Britain retains a military presence in many other parts of the world including Cyprus, the Falklands and Gibraltar, as well as peacekeeping or security roles in Nigeria, Kenya and Somalia. We continue to maintain our commitment to NATO.

3.1.3   The Army is currently undergoing significant overhaul. By 2020 the Army will be cut to 82,000 personnel, with 35,000 reservists. This compares to 475,000 active personnel currently in the US Army, and is down from 102,000 personnel in 2003. Whilst fleet size has dropped significantly, the Royal Navy's technical capability has increased. It is one of the most technically capable navies in the world. The navy force now stands at just under 30,000 regulars. The RAF is in the latter stages of phasing out Tornado fighter jets, replacing them with Eurofighter Typhoons. F35s to be carried by our new aircraft carriers are being phased in; the

Government plans to have at least 24 of these available by 2023. The full procurement of 138 aircraft are not expected to be in service until the 2030s.

3.1.4   In addition to our military assets, our intelligence agencies play a significant role in national security. The Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) is an internationally renowned covert intelligence agency while MI5 (the domestic Security Service) and the electronic intelligence agency GCHQ also play major roles in international collective security, including through co-operation and, sometimes controversially, shared intelligence.

3.1.5   The UK remains a nuclear power. The Liberal Democrats have historically been committed to reducing nuclear proliferation and achieving multilateral disarmament. The party will debate a separate updated policy on nuclear weapons at spring conference 2017.

3.1.6   Liberal Democrats have supported greater European defence co-operation. The European Union recently began to develop policy for a more structured European Defence Union, a step traditionally resisted by UK governments.

3.1.7   In 2014, the coalition government strongly supported the global Arms Trade Treaty which aims to bring international standards and rules to an infamously rogue trade that has fuelled countless conflicts. Liberal Democrats in government also imposed tougher restrictions on the use of British arms by regimes that violently abused their own and neighbouring populations.

> *Question 12:*   *What role should the UK's forces play in the 21st century, given the changing nature of both threats and warfare?*

> *Question 13:*   *Given that NATO has a defence spending target of 2% of GDP, how much should the UK spend on defence?*

Question 14:   With the election of Donald Trump, the future of NATO appears uncertain. What should Britain's future commitment to NATO and its basis of collective security look like?

Question 15:   With the prospect of Brexit and the uncertainty of NATO's future, what role should the UK seek to play in any future European Defence Union?

3.2   Diplomacy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3.2.1   The primary role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is to promote UK interests overseas through its network of over 270 overseas posts, missions and embassies.

3.2.2   British diplomats have an outstanding reputation and are generally perceived as making their case firmly but reasonably. There is an international dimension to the work of most Whitehall Departments, and overseas missions present UK policy across the board in a coherent and consistent way.

3.2.3   There are significant risks to our position and reputation. Diplomats must be outward-looking and internationally-minded, but, as British foreign policy becomes more inward-looking and definitions of 'national interest' too tightly drawn, the UK's standing will decline. These problems of outlook are compounded by resource constraints. At a time when Britain's diplomatic corps most needs to be rejuvenated, its resources have been restricted, with predictable consequences for the quality and reach of UK international policy.

Question 16:   What should be the priority of UK diplomatic effort in a post-Brexit world?

Question 17:   With the prospect of Brexit and the consequent reduction in international stature, what resources

should we be willing to commit to ensure that we retain our diplomatic power?

Question 18:   What other international alliances should we strengthen or build? Our traditional Commonwealth and NATO allies? Should we forge new bilateral and multilateral relationships?

3.3   Humanitarian intervention

3.3.1   International humanitarian law is a set of rules that seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects non-combatants and restricts the means and methods of warfare. The most important element of international humanitarian law is the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Humanitarian intervention is a means of upholding these principles in an unwilling state. It is a nation's use of military force against another state when the principal publicly declared aim is to protect the nationals of the target state from violence and human rights violations.

3.3.2   The failure to adequately protect citizens from atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia, along with more successful humanitarian efforts in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, resulted in an increased appetite for the establishment of a global framework for protecting populations by using force. Agreed at the 2005 World Summit, Responsibility to Protect (R2P) focuses on the protection of populations from the crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The principle of R2P encourages member states to act to protect populations vulnerable to these crimes.

3.3.3   The R2P principle has been invoked in response to humanitarian crises in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire. R2P is distinct from humanitarian intervention; it only permits the use of force as an absolute last resort under circumstances whereby a State is patently failing to protect its own population. Unlike standard humanitarian intervention, R2P relates only to the crimes specified above.

3.3.4   In the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the well-publicised failures to properly address post-conflict state-building and peacebuilding in countries like Libya, neither politicians nor the public are as keen on humanitarian intervention as they were a decade ago. Indeed, Theresa May has recently announced that overseas intervention should only be undertaken by the UK when it directly affects our own national interests.

Question 19:   Under what conditions, if any, should we support military intervention for humanitarian purposes?

Question 20:   Should we contribute more UK military personnel to UN peacekeeping missions?

3.4   International institutions

3.4.1   Alongside NATO and the EU, the UK is an important member of several other international organisations. Britain was a founding member of the United Nations (UN), which was established to promote world peace after the WW2. The UN's principal aims are to promote international cooperation, peacekeeping, human rights, and economic development. The UK Mission to the UN states that its aim is "to make the UK more secure and prosperous by making the UN more effective and efficient at delivering peace, sustainable development, human rights, justice and humanitarian assistance."

3.4.2   Within the United Nations, the UK is one of the five permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council alongside France, Russia, the United States and China. Each permanent member has the power to veto, with the ability to block Security Council resolutions. While Russia and the USA use their veto power more regularly to protect their international interests and allies, Britain has not used its veto since 1989.

3.4.3   Collectively, the UN and its associated agencies, have brought many important conventions, treaties and institutions into existence, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the

Law of the Sea, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Torture, and the International Criminal Court. Taken together, they form part of international law, which also includes older treaties such as the Geneva Conventions. Liberals worldwide have been consistent champions of international law, which has helped the battle against climate change, promoted human rights and brought genocidal dictators and warlords to justice. But this is a system that operates through consent. Changing opinions on and adherence to international institutions could easily fracture this global system.

3.4.4   The Commonwealth of Nations is a group of 52 states, mostly made up of former British colonies, including major states such as Canada, Nigeria, South Africa, India, and Australia. The Harare Declaration of 1991 set out common values and goals, including international co-operation and the rule of law, freedom, democracy, and an end to racial discrimination – a goal the Commonwealth nations actively pursued in opposition to apartheid South Africa. Since then the Commonwealth has made faltering attempts to enforce these values, several times suspending members after military coups.

3.4.5   The international financial bodies known as the Bretton Woods institutions were established to aid global economic recovery after WW2 and prevent a repeat of the Depression and economic chaos of the 1930s. They are the World Bank Group of development lending and financing institutions and the International Monetary Fund, which aims to promote stability in the global financial system and offer crisis lending in financial crises. They have attracted much criticism over the years for promoting globalised capitalism, for heavy-handed conditionality in their financial packages, and for environmentally and socially insensitive projects and policies. But both the IMF and the World Bank have become more responsive to these criticisms, reacting quickly to the 2008 financial crisis. They are regarded by many as vital to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3.4.6   In addition to these international institutions, there are a larger number of newer institutions which often engage at a regional or a sub-regional level. These include the African Union, the Arab League, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. as well as multilateral regional development banks for Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas and the new Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank which has 50 founding members, including the UK.

> *Question 21:* *Are post-war international institutions fit for purpose? If not, how should we reform them?*
>
> *Question 22:* *Is there a place for UK in newer international institutions? If so, what?*
>
> *Question 23:* *If international institutions and international law come under attack, how can liberals mobilise world and UK public opinion in their defence?*
>
> *Question 24:* *When working with international institutions, what should be our priority: defending our own national interest, promoting liberal values, or defending the integrity of international institutions?*

4.   Trade and Sustainable Development

4.1   International development

4.1.1   The United Nations General Assembly agreed on the 0.7% target for donor countries in 1973. One of the most important achievements of Liberal Democrats in government was enshrining the 0.7% target in law. The UK is one of only six countries that meets the UN-defined goal.

4.1.2   In 2015, the UK provided £12.1bn of aid to developing countries, mostly through the Department for International Development (DfID). The vast majority of UK bilateral aid was spent in Africa and Asia; namely in Pakistan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Syria. DfID's primary focus under the 2002 International Development Act is to end extreme poverty, but recent aid policy has also prioritised fragile states and UK national interests. British aid tackles poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity, and conflict - transforming the lives of millions. However, the Conservatives are pooling some aid resources in shared funds also accessible to the FCO, MoD and other departments not governed by the 2002 Act.

4.1.3   The coalition introduced a series of measures to evaluate impact and value for money for British aid including the establishment of the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) and support for the Independent Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Independent analysis shows UK aid to be well targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable. But many sections of the media and the public remain sceptical of its value and affordability.

> *Question 25:   Should the UK continue to meet the 0.7% target for international development spending?*

Question 26: In an age where international aid spending is coming under attack, how can liberals best defend the principle of spending on international development?

Question 27: Should our development spending have a geographical or topical focus? For example, should we be specialising and investing in a single country or region, or investing to solve a single problem e.g., literacy?

Question 28: What new measures can we take to demonstrate aid's effectiveness and value for money?

4.2   Sustainable Development Goals

4.2.1   17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), designed to alleviate all forms of global poverty, tackle climate change, increase peace and security and reduce inequalities, were agreed by world leaders at a UN Summit in September 2015. The SDGs came into force in 2016. While the SDGs are not legally binding, all governments— not just those who receive development assistance— are expected to take ownership of them and establish national frameworks for their achievement.

4.2.2   The UK must now move forward with implementing the Goals at home and supporting other countries to achieve them overseas. Achieving the SDGs will require a global financial investment of trillions of dollars over the course of the next 15 years. This will come from a variety of sources, including development assistance, but also through co-operation with the private sector. Adequate funding, though, is only part of the challenge. Some critically important goals such as peacebuilding receive relatively little support while others such as reducing inequality and promoting public health will be hard for the UK to implement at home. Devising and communicating the goals to the public and the private sector will

be a further challenge, as will ensuring that the UK has a coherent strategy for implementation.

4.2.3   One of the most high-profile aspects of international relations which falls within Sustainable Development Goals is gender. Gender equality is inextricably linked to poverty reduction, education, and healthcare, but spending on gender equality often falls below the radar, particularly in fragile states.

Question 29:   What role should the Sustainable Development Goals play in framing our international development spending?

Question 30:   Should we link the achievement of the SDGs globally with their achievement at home?

Question 31:   Is there a way to give more oversight of our adherence to Sustainable Development Goals?

4.3   Trade

4.3.1   The UK prides itself on being a trading nation, with over half of UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generated through trade. Much of this trade is in services. This has led to considerable imbalances in our trade in goods over the years, a problem for the UK as it negotiates its departure from the EU since most Free Trade Agreements focus on trade in goods but not services.

4.3.2   Around half of UK trade is with the EU, where we run a surplus in service exports but a deficit in goods. While the EU is declining in market share, it remains by far the UK's largest market and the most natural for traded goods, given proximity. The UK thus needs to ensure that the future relationship with the EU includes free trade in services as well as goods. As countries such as India see their economies mature, there may be increased scope for the UK to expand, but this will again require agreements in services.

4.3.3   Since the decision to leave the EU, the Government has been keen to pursue new trading relations – albeit only on an exploratory basis. No potential trading partner offers a relationship at the same scale as the EU and the single market. And of course, some of the potential areas for export and types of goods the UK may wish to export, such as arms to the Gulf States, raise serious ethical issues.

4.3.4   Liberals have historically been champions of free trade. The current round of comprehensive world trade talks – the so-called Doha round – are the latest designed to spread prosperity by reducing both global tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade; however, they have been underway for 16 years and are currently stalled. Recent history has seen a proliferation of non-global trade and investment deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP) and EU deals with South Korea and others. But they have attracted criticism for potential corporate exploitation and for undermining employment rights and environmental protections.

Question 32:   Should we maintain the traditional liberal commitment to free trade?

Question 33:   How can the UK thrive in a world in which economic protectionism is increasingly prevalent?

Question 34:   To what extent can trade be a substitute for aid?

Question 35:   To what extent should ethical issues be taken into consideration when seeking trade deals, e.g. exporting arms to Saudi Arabia or asking for investment in the development of green technology from state-owned Chinese businesses?

Question 36:   How do we balance our economy, our democratic values, our strategic security interests, and our interest in global issues such as climate change?

5.   Knowledge, Culture, and Ideas; Aspects of Soft Power

5.1   The English language

5.1.1   Around the world, English is the second most spoken language with over 300 million native speakers and perhaps 600 million or more speaking it as a second language. 54 countries use English as an official language. The impact of having such a widely-spoken language is that the products of UK business and culture are not seen by the UK alone. Everything from news reports to political campaigns are easily accessible to 1/7th of the world's population.

5.1.2   Writing in English is also widely consumed, and a way of extending soft power. Shakespeare is read around the world and performed more than any other playwright, in addition to having been translated into every major living language. English language productions, books and blogs provide an insight into the British interpretation of the world, and enable interaction with a wider and more diverse population than any other language.

5.2   Media

5.2.1   BBC productions reach around the world – the global weekly audience of international BBC content is nearly 350 million. Most this is via the BBC World Service, but over 100m people watch and listen to both entertainment and news outside the World Service while BBC Monitoring translates and analyses free media content from sources in 150 countries and is available in 100 different languages. BBC news coverage is widely regarded as high quality and trustworthy – often in contrast to tightly-controlled national media. The USA is the largest market for international BBC content, with sizeable audiences in countries such as Nigeria (35m), Iran (12m), and Afghanistan (7m). There are current plans to extend World Service news to North Korea, competing with the North

Korean state news agency. But the Government has recently cut the BBC's independent funding source and political interference in governance structures is becoming more frequent.

> *Question 37: How can we best use and support the BBC's global influence without compromising its invaluable independence?*

5.2.2   The British Council is the UK's vehicle for cultural relations and educational opportunities – working in over 100 countries in areas such as arts and culture, English language, education, and civil society. Their reach is wide – talking to 20m people face to face very year, and reaching a further 500 million online, via broadcasts, or with publications. FCO funds cover 20% of the British Council's budget – around £150m. The expectation in the event of Brexit is that the British Council will have a more significant role to play – especially as the UK looks to new countries for sizeable trade deals.

> *Question 38: What future role might the British Council have in promoting British interest?*

5.3   Sport and the arts

5.3.1   UK sport is consumed worldwide. The Premier League is broadcast in more than 200 territories to 643 million homes and a potential TV audience of 4.7 billion people. Similar leagues across Europe lag far behind – Premier League television deals are worth over £3bn, with the highest European challenger commanding £700m.

5.3.2   The British creative industries remain world-leading – contributing £84.1bn per year to the UK economy. British actors are routinely successful at international awards ceremonies such as Cannes and the Oscars, and British crews and production facilities earns over £1bn annually for the UK economy while British-made TV, films, books, and theatre bring tourism, investment, and awareness of the UK to international audiences. In 2013, figures

suggested that almost 1 in 3 UK tourists visited a historic house or castle related to either Harry Potter or Downton Abbey, spending £6.5bn during their stay, and a Game of Thrones tourist industry has already grown up in Northern Ireland.

5.3.3   From both a diplomatic and tourism perspective, museums and art galleries remain at the forefront of British soft power. In 2012, they made up the top five attractions in the UK in terms of visitor admissions, and the sharing of large, expensive, and well-cultivated collections with and from other nations gives the UK a large amount of cultural capital. They also have the power to raise international questions, particularly when it comes to provenance and the legitimacy of items acquired during the imperial era – most notably with the Elgin Marbles.

5.4   Education and academia

5.4.1   The education system in the UK is world-renowned, with large numbers of international students coming to the UK to attend private schools and undertake degrees at many universities. The Independent School Council cites figures that 1 in 5 private school pupils come from abroad and some state schools argue they could attract foreign students as well. The reputation of schools and universities alone are a significant source of soft power, but perhaps more important is the education that international students receive before returning to their home countries. High achieving students can have a fundamental impact on global relations in the years to come – the British Council reports that 1 in 10 world leaders have attended university in the UK.

5.4.2   One of the major concerns about a continuing international role in education is the government's inclusion of students in net immigration figures – thus subjecting them to similar immigration controls and a political focus on reducing not increasing their numbers. Liberal Democrats believe that international students are a huge benefit to the UK – not only for the money they bring into the

country and the funding they contribute to UK universities, but in the future benefits they bring to the UK in the form of closer relationships and international co-operation.

5.4.3   The issues around immigration and students are only worsened when it comes to academics and teaching staff at universities. There is additional concern that funding will reduce if and when the UK withdraws from the EU, and that international co-operation on research will suffer. Academia has a large impact on our soft power, and protecting it should be key to our international relations.

> *Question 39:   Should international students be counted in migration figures? What further steps can we take to protect and enhance the UK's educational influence around the world?*

5.5   Science and technology

5.5.1   Building on a long history of British scientific discovery, the UK still makes a huge impact on global science and technology. British scientists (and funds) make a major contribution to European scientific initiatives like CERN in Geneva and the European Space Agency, which benefit hugely from EU funding and the free movement of scientists within the European Union. Brexit will make their work and our participation in them more difficult.

5.5.2   UK technology companies employ over a million people including world leaders in genetics, financial technology, software, energy, and pharmaceuticals. Public funds support globally significant work from the Met Office to the British Antarctic Survey and participation in global bodies like UNESCO, WHO, the Global Alliance on Vaccination and Immunisation and the International Panel on Climate Change. In 2014, government reported that the UK's share of highly cited papers worldwide was still an impressive 16%.

5.5.3   But many of the trends described elsewhere in this consultation are true of science. The traditional western 'science superpowers' of western Europe, North America and Japan are increasingly being joined by emerging economies including India, South Korea, Brazil, and China - now the second highest producer of research output in the world. Science is becoming ever more multipolar, collaborative, and openly accessible.

5.5.4   But this rational, internationalist vision is at risk. 'Anti-Science' is on the march worldwide, from intimidating American fundamentalism and climate change denial to murderous Pakistani Taliban campaigns against vaccination. Isolationist nationalism threatens UN institutions, the free movement of scientists and international collaboration generally. Growing restrictions on free speech in many countries already threaten campaigners, journalists and writers but scientists revealing inconvenient truths will not be far behind. And while the private sector plays a vital role in science and technology, corporate interests also have inevitable tendencies to prioritise profit over need, hide inconvenient scientific results, share innovation reluctantly until their investment is repaid and exploit natural and traditional intellectual and genetic heritage given the opportunity.

> *Question 40:   How can we confront 'anti-science' on issues like climate change and vaccination?*

> *Question 41:   How can global technology businesses receive fair reward for their investment but also be encouraged down ethical and socially responsible paths?*

5.6   History and culture

5.6.1   British tradition, heritage and history are central to our global 'brand', consistently putting the UK amongst the top ten tourist destinations in the world and contributing to what is in effect an export industry worth over £100bn and employing 3m people. Millions visit our castles and historic buildings, watch our period

dramas and are fascinated by the real-life tradition, romance and occasionally drama of our Royal Family. HM Queen Elizabeth II remains head of state of 15 other countries and Head of the Commonwealth although this position is not guaranteed to her successor. She and other members of the Royal Family also perform a discreet diplomatic role.

5.6.2   Britain's 300-year history as a colonial power is more controversial, providing particularly deep cultural, language and often family ties to its former colonies, tempered by inevitably sensitivity about the former imperial power anachronistically assuming some lingering right to interfere, accusations of which have been made everywhere from Israel to Australia to China to Zimbabwe in recent decades. Post-imperial territorial disputes and high-handed mapmaking continue to complicate several international relationships. There may be little any UK government can do to change this ambivalent image, but we have not made any very consistent effort to do so.

5.6.3   Britain's history as a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy is also used to build not only political but also personal connections between parliamentarians in different countries through institutions like the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which are perceived - from the UK side at least - as important means to export British democratic values.

> *Question 42:* *How should the UK leverage its heritage and history in the modern era? Can we or should we make a more concerted effort to break with our colonialist past?*
>
> *Question 43:* *Is it possible to enhance our soft power?*
>
> *Question 44:* *To what extent should we prioritise enhancing our soft power over other kinds of power e.g. diplomatic or military?*

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