

# Finding Britain's role in a changing world:

Protecting the UK's ability to  
defend its values



## Executive Summary

The 'Protecting the UK's ability to protect its values' publication brings together a range of different expert perspectives that recognise the need to build on the UK's existing international capacities and activities, while reforming, refining and where appropriate refocusing them. This means bringing together the right blend of the best parts of both the FCO and DFID to create an institutional culture combining expertise, flexibility and transparency; ensuring there is policy and operational coherence both within the department and with its international obligations; effective policy coordination across Government; and ensuring it can lead cooperation with external partners both in the UK and overseas, what in her essay Harpinder Collacott called the four 'Cs'.

The FCDO should find new ways to bring in the stakeholders, the public and Parliament into the development of new country, regional and cross-departmental strategies, including a Government-wide human rights strategy. It needs to ensure that capacity is expanded rather than lost to enable diplomats to deal with the department's growing workload. To help improve effective government and its global leadership efforts, it must protect existing transparency mechanisms such as ICAI and ensure its procurement policies are robust, accountable and in keeping with the UK's values.

If the Integrated Review is going to set out the UK's new international strategy, the publication argues it must build from a clear assessment of its existing assets. While sometimes difficult to quantify, it is clear that soft-power remains one of the UK's enduring strengths, something to nurture and build on to help Britain continue to get a hearing around the world. At this time of pandemic and pressure on the public purse it is imperative for the UK's long-term strategic reach that institutions like Universities, the BBC and the British Council, its globally relevant civil society, cultural and sporting sectors are able to survive and thrive, avoiding short-term asset stripping. The UK's role as a cultural, civil society, media and higher education hub is of huge importance to help it maintain its international relevance in the years to come. It should also seek to protect institutions such as Universities and Parliament from the influence of authoritarian powers. While it responds to new challenges and priorities, the UK must also not forget areas where it has shown past leadership. Whether it is on Women's and LGBTQ rights, PSVI, abolition of the death penalty, support for the rule of law and the rules based international system, protecting and building on its existing strengths will help the UK to prepare for the future and ensure its foreign policy remains firmly rooted in its values. So protecting and reforming the UK's institutions, soft power assets and its capacity to govern should be at the heart of the Integrated Review and the future of UK foreign policy.

### **This publication makes a number of recommendations for Government. It should consider:**

- Ensuring the FCDO builds on the best traditions of its predecessor departments by:
  - Improving diplomatic capacity, including direct support for Ambassadors and through the use of Special Representatives;
  - Protecting and nurturing expertise;
  - Promoting the four 'Cs'- a Culture of transparency, policy Coherence, Cooperation with stakeholders at home and abroad and Collaboration across Whitehall;
  - Developing new publically accessible country, regional and human rights strategies, through enhanced public, stakeholder and parliamentary engagement;
  - Sustaining longstanding UK leadership on PSVI, Death Penalty, Rule of law and the importance of multilateral institutions; and
  - Retaining full aid scrutiny through ICAI and a new parliamentary Select Committee.
- Enhancing transparency, accountability and the importance of values in the operations of Government, particularly in areas such as procurement.
- Protecting the soft power strength of the BBC, British Council, the UK universities, civil society, cultural industries and sporting sectors.

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## 1. Protecting the UK's ability to defend its values

By Adam Hug<sup>1</sup>

This second publication in the FPC's new 'Finding Britain's role in a changing world' series examines the UK's current capabilities and strengths both inside and outside government to deliver an effective foreign policy and to protect the values it wishes to promote in the world. At a time of great political change, it is essential to look at what strengths need to be preserved and built on as the UK's post-Brexit foreign policy evolves under the Johnson Government.

### **Machinery of Government**

One of the key challenges for government is how to protect its operational capacity and capabilities as it grapples with the ongoing public health and economic challenges of COVID-19, whilst making structural changes through the new FCDO and significant modifications to the Cabinet Office.

When the Prime Minister set out his objectives for the new FCDO, he said "we are going to use this powerful new Whitehall Department...to give the UK extra throw weight and megawattage. It is absolutely vital that, in the new Department, people are multi-skilled and, as I said just now to the House, that people in the Department for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (sic) understand how development can be a fantastic tool for the promotion not just of human rights and

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Hug became Director of the Foreign Policy Centre (FPC) in November 2017. He had previously been the Policy Director at the FPC from 2008–2017. His research focuses on human rights and governance issues, particularly in the former Soviet Union. He also writes on UK and EU foreign policy. *Image by MOD under (CC).*

the tackling of poverty around the world but of the values and interests of this country at the same time.”<sup>2</sup>

This publication explores how the culture and structures of the new FCDO should develop to help deliver a more integrated international approach for the Government. As Mark White points out the new department will be managing a fusion of cultures between the more politically focused and adaptive approach of the FCO, where diplomats would move between a range of different roles (albeit with somewhat greater scope to build regional specialisms than perhaps in years past), with staff from DFID, a department that prioritised development, thematic and subject expertise. White argues that this previously made DFID better at long-term planning, while the FCO's approach enabled it to react quicker and more effectively to events.

In this context there may be some tension between, in the PM's words, the need for people in the new department to be 'multi-skilled' and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's desire, outlined in his Ditchley Annual Lecture, to increase the amount of specialist knowledge in government so it is worth assessing where the FCDO now stands.<sup>3</sup> The goal surely is to get the best of both operational cultures, getting a balance within teams of those with an adaptive, crosscutting outlook and those who have been able to build subject matter expertise, whether geographic or thematic, helping give the new teams as a whole an integrated outlook on foreign policy and the Government's objectives.

In truth over the years both the FCO and DFID have become somewhat more normal government departments than they may once had been, with staff coming in more frequently from other government departments. Senior diplomats have also been able to take mid-career breaks and secondments to gain expertise in business and other relevant fields. One area the UK could do more on, particularly post-Brexit, is to encourage secondment to international organisations such as the OSCE to improve both skills and institutional knowledge in the FCDO and to improve British global influence.<sup>4</sup>

In the former FCO the Research Analysts division, the core of specialists who acted as the department's essential repository of country and regional knowledge, has been taking academics from Universities around the UK on secondment. This helped to broaden the range of perspectives heard within the FCO, whilst increasing understanding within academia about the operation of Government to help future policy development. Such an approach can help to address concerns around the lack of specialist country knowledge and understanding, for example highlighted in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's review of Libya and in concerns around the lack of knowledge within Government on key countries such as India and China.<sup>5</sup> Research analysts play a vital challenge function for colleagues to help ensure the development of evidence based policymaking, something that needs to be retained and strengthened in the new FCDO. It is to be hoped that the infusion of subject expertise from DFID can be integrated, nurtured and harnessed effectively. This

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<sup>2</sup> DFID, FCO, Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons: 16 June 2020, Government, June 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-16-june-2020>; The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson), Global Britain, House of Commons Hansard, June 2020, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-16/debates/20061637000001/GlobalBritain>

<sup>3</sup> Cabinet Office and The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, "The privilege of public service" given as the Ditchley Annual Lecture", Government, July 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-privilege-of-public-service-given-as-the-ditchley-annual-lecture>; James Forsyth, Mission impossible: Boris's attempt to rewire the British government, The Spectator, July 2020, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/mission-impossible-boriss-attempt-to-rewire-the-british-government>

<sup>4</sup> As professionals working in any international organisation they would follow the rules of that organisation but they would bring a British perspective to the shaping of proposals and policies that may help them evolve into positions the UK would prefer international organisations might take- a question of cultural influence rather than officials 'batting for Britain'

<sup>5</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee, Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options, House of Commons, September 2016, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmffaff/119/119.pdf>

includes, particularly in the context of a data focused Government, retaining its statistical expertise, both to inform policy and retain transparency as discussed below.<sup>6</sup>

As Harpinder Collacott argues in her essay making the merger a success is likely to rely on the 'four C's - Culture, Coherence, Coordination and Collaboration:

- **Culture of transparency** - maintain the strong commitment within the department itself and with the partners FCDO works with
- **Coherence** - strengthen the coherence of policy nationally, internationally, and with the SDG agenda
- **Coordination** - facilitate cooperative working across Whitehall on critical agendas including trade and climate
- **Collaboration** - work in close partnership with stakeholders and strengthen local ownership of development

Such an approach could enable the new department to breakdown silos that may have still existed between the FCO and DFID, despite prior efforts to create interdepartmental teams (such as the Good Governance Fund) and the presence of 'double-hatted' ministers for both departments. Improving coordination within the new FCDO does not remove the need for continuing efforts to refine broader interdepartmental cooperation across Whitehall through the National Security Council and other crosscutting structures via a potentially expanded Cabinet Office. This will be needed to avoid falling back onto ad hoc deals between ministers that may lead to disjointed policymaking. However there may be scope for the 'extra throw weight and megawattage' of the FCDO to more clearly lead and shape the discussions on international issues particularly given the current Foreign Secretary's role as First Secretary of State, helping to deliver on the whole of Government strategic blueprint laid out by the Integrated Review. While yet more departmental reorganisation is probably unwise in the short-medium term, further thought needs to be given to the relationship between the FCDO and the Department for International Trade (DIT), considering that at a country level DIT officials are reporting to UK Ambassadors and the importance of integrating trade relationships with other aspects of the UK's foreign policy, both bilaterally and strategically.

Given that the UK often relied on working collaboratively with EU partners in-country around intelligence sharing and other joint working there is a need, as and when scarce resources become available at this difficult time, to invest in new British diplomatic capacity.<sup>7</sup> Only so much can be achieved by rebadging and re-tasking former DFID officials in-country for the purposes of burden sharing, particularly to avoid development delivery suffering dramatically as a by-product. There would seem to be a need for additional support for UK Ambassadors who have now been made responsible for former DFID functions and as well as the work of DIT officials on trade. There may be scope to expand the use of UK Special Representatives, particularly former Ambassadors and subject experts, to support the work of the Ambassadors and the FCDO to address cross-cutting regional and thematic issues, with the South Caucasus and Western Balkans as areas of the world to consider.

### **Building shared strategies**

As set out in the first publication in this series - The principles for Global Britain - having a clearly defined values statement and an overarching strategy for UK Foreign Policy is essential for the

<sup>6</sup> Ian Plewis, DfID was one of the government's most data savvy departments. Preserving these skills will be a test of Whitehall reform, Civil Service World, September 2020, <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/in-depth/article/dfid-was-one-of-governments-most-data-savvy-departments-preserving-these-skills-will-be-a-test-of-whitehall-reform>

<sup>7</sup> Some have understandably written about hypothecating money previously spent on international objectives being reallocated to support the development of the UK's diplomatic reach, albeit that demand for any available spending in government is high. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/post-brex-it-resources-global-britain>

development of effective public policy.<sup>8</sup> That publication made clear there is an important role for public input in to the long-term development of foreign policy that combines both public education and the Government soliciting feedback and opinion.

One area that could be the subject of ongoing public and stakeholder engagement is around the development of the UK's country strategies. The Prime Minister has announced that the 'Foreign Secretary will be empowered to decide which countries receive – or cease to receive – British aid, while delivering a single UK strategy for each country, overseen by the National Security Council, which I chair.'<sup>9</sup> There may be scope to reconsider and open up the processes by which the UK develops these strategies with increased opportunities for domestic civil society, academic, diaspora and, where there is interest, citizen input into a process of producing publically available country strategy papers that set out the core objectives for UK engagement across all areas of activity, from diplomatic objectives to aid to trade to human rights and other values objectives.

As part of the process of leaving the EU, the UK has developed a series of new Partnership and Cooperation Agreements that somewhat mirror arrangements between the EU and those countries, hopefully in the future when there is time and political space to revisit and build on these new arrangements there will be scope for greater stakeholder and public engagements in their contents.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the FCDO may well benefit from the development of new substantive and public cross-country Regional Strategies, created with stakeholder and citizen input, that can help give UK more strategic coherence to the UK's international approach. There should be a role too for Parliamentary engagement and scrutiny with country and regional strategies, as well as in related trade agreements- a subject that was previously addressed in the Finding Britain's role in a changing world: Building a values-based foreign policy publication.<sup>11</sup>

### Transparency and Accountability

As a number of authors in this collection point out there is huge importance in retaining and building on the current remit of the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) and as well as strengthening Parliamentary scrutiny of aid spending through a standalone, crosscutting Official Development Assistance (ODA) Committee along the lines of the Environmental Audit Committee or the European Scrutiny Committee.<sup>12</sup> This is particularly relevant in helping ensure that best practice from DFID is not lost in the merger and providing reassurance to a sceptical development sector.

In the spirit of accountability, the Government should continue to report annually on aid levels across government. It should also retain the existing commitment to consider gender inequality impact ahead of allocating aid and other resources - perhaps as part of the 'Global Britain values

<sup>8</sup> Adam Hug (ed.), Finding Britain's role in a changing world: The principles for Global Britain, Foreign Policy Centre, September 2020, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/the-principles-for-global-britain/>

<sup>9</sup> DFID, FCO, Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons: 16 June 2020, Government, June 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-16-june-2020>

<sup>10</sup> For example see: FCO, UK/Georgia: Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement [CS Georgia No.1/2019], Government, November 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukgeorgia-strategic-partnership-and-cooperation-agreement-cs-georgia-no12019>; and, FCO, UK/Uzbekistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement [CS Uzbekistan No.1/2019], Government, December 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukuzbekistan-partnership-and-cooperation-agreement-cs-uzbekistan-no12019>

<sup>11</sup> FPC and Oxfam, Finding Britain's role in a changing world, March 2020, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/finding-britains-role-in-a-changing-world/>

<sup>12</sup> ICAI website: <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/>; Government confirmed the continuation of ICAI's existence but it is important that its role scrutinising ODA is retained as part of any reform process that comes out of the Government's Review that is due to report in late 2020, Theo Clarke, Twitter Post, Twitter, August 2020, <https://twitter.com/theodoraclarke/status/1299752590079660032?s=20https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-commits-to-more-effective-and-accountable-aid-spending-under-new-foreign-commonwealth-and-development-office>; The Prime Minister gave his backing to Parliament being able to create a new ODA committee in his evidence to the Liaison Committee of Select Committee Chairs on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2020, BBC Parliament, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-54175481>

test' policy evaluation mechanisms suggested in the 'The principles for Global Britain' publication.<sup>13</sup> Given the ongoing importance of climate and the UK's leadership of the COP in 2021, the UK will also need to continue to build on its record integrating the principles of sustainable development throughout its aid programme. While the direction of travel to amend UK aid priorities to look at more areas beyond traditional poverty reduction has been set out by the Prime Minister, the Integrated Review can provide reassurance by again restating the Government's commitment to existing ODA legislation and OECD DAC rules.<sup>14</sup>

As Joe Powell argues in his essay it is important that the UK actively supports open government and rule of law, including through coalition of governments to promote stronger institutions on these issues such as his own Open Government Partnership that the UK is a member of.<sup>15</sup> Similarly as Powell recommends, the UK should give 'support for anti-corruption reforms that promote an international rules-based system in which UK businesses can engage, and which promote open markets and tackle money-laundering, terrorist financing and elite capture. Key anti-corruption themes include open contracting reforms for public procurement'. Ensuring transparency and accountability in procurement is particularly important given the fast pace at which decisions are being made in the UK and around the world to invest large amounts of public money to address the challenge of COVID-19.<sup>16</sup> As well as transparency the Government's approach to procurement should incorporate the principles of social value and the values and ethical priorities underpinning the idea of Global Britain, as set out in the previous 'The principles for Global Britain' publication.<sup>17</sup>

As part of supporting the Government's transparency objectives, it will be important to maintain UK leadership in global initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. There is also an important role to play in supporting independent civil society and media organisations that are able to hold governments to account in these difficult times, building on the joint work with Canada around the UK-Canada Media Freedom Summit of 2019 to produce clear deliverable outputs from the project commensurate with the level of political attention given to it.

A further area the UK could improve on is around financial transparency for lawmakers. As suggested by the Intelligence and Security Committee's Russia report, Members of the House of Lords should align their declarations of interests with the policies of the House of Commons so that all forms of employment generating more than £100 should be declared, rather than the current £500 level.<sup>18</sup> Many members of the House of Lords undertake considerable amounts of employment outside of their duties in the Upper House and their remuneration for their duties is attendance based, but just as local councillors who also have a similar mix of work and official duties have to declare such income, so should all those who make the country's laws. Members of the House of Commons could also take steps to improve transparency about share ownership, requiring declarations of any potential conflicts of interest for assets held in trust if their contents are known. There is also scope to reduce other efforts by authoritarian states to influence Parliamentarians,

<sup>13</sup> Amy Dodd, Anna Hope and Rob Tew, Merging DFID and the FCO: Implications for UK aid, Development Initiatives, June 2020, <https://devinit.org/resources/merging-dfid-and-fco-implications-uk-aid/>; FPC, Finding Britain's role in a changing world: The principles for Global Britain, September 2020, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/the-principles-for-global-britain/>

<sup>14</sup> Official development assistance – definition and coverage, Definition of ODA, <http://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm>; The Government has so far committed to maintaining the ODA requirements for aid within the 0.7%.

<sup>15</sup> United Kingdom, Member Since 2011, Action Plan 4, Current Action Plan – 2019-2021, Open Government Partnership, June 2019, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/united-kingdom/#current-action-plan>

<sup>16</sup> This essay by OGP Chief Executive Sanjay Pradhan gives a number of examples of effective pandemic procurement practices, Sanjay Pradhan, Making Trillion Dollar Stimulus and Safety Nets Work for All: The Essential Steps We Can Take Now, Open Government Partnership, July 2020, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/making-trillion-dollar-stimulus-and-safety-nets-work-for-all-the-essential-steps-we-can-take-now/>

<sup>17</sup> Adam Hug (ed.), Finding Britain's role in a changing world: The principles for Global Britain, Foreign Policy Centre, September 2020, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/the-principles-for-global-britain/>

<sup>18</sup> Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, Russia, House of Commons, July 2020, <https://docs.google.com/a/independent.gov.uk/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=aW5kZXBlbnRlbnQuZ292LnVrfGlzY3xneDo1Y2RhMGEyN2Y3NjM0OWFI>; Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords, Authority of the House of Lords, July 2020, <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-commissioner-for-standards/hl-code-of-conduct.pdf>

including through All Party Parliamentary Groups, paid work, funded visits, and the actions of MPs and Peers in international forums.<sup>19</sup>

### Soft power

When assessing the UK's international assets that underpin UK foreign policy, as the Integrated Review is doing, it is important reiterate the importance of building upon the UK's existing soft-power capabilities. This includes the role played by longstanding and important institutions such as the BBC (particularly but far from exclusively its crucial World Service) and the British Council.

Sir Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive of the British Council, makes an important contribution in this collection addressing his vision for the future of British soft power in his own words. However it is also worth saying, in the view of the editor of this collection, that the unique nature of the British Council is something to be protected and cherished. It could be to the detriment of British soft power if it was to lose some of the power of hybridity, the scope for (pre- and post-COVID) cross subsidy and freedom of action it currently has to integrate its cultural and English language promotion work in a space set somewhat apart from both Government and pure commercial pressures. Organisations that bring people into closer contact with the UK or create a deeper understanding of it, have a crucial role in helping people around the world form bonds of affinity with the UK that can underpin future economic, diplomatic or cultural engagement. So, when assessing the UK's soft power assets it is important to remember not only the British Council but also the more narrowly targeted work by groups such as the John Smith Trust or the people-to-people work undertaken by many British NGOs.

Pre-pandemic serious questions were being asked about the future of the BBC, including if it was likely to continue in its current form as the result of the Government's mid-term review of its charter.<sup>20</sup> Whatever decisions are taken domestically, it is important that they do not undermine the BBC's ability to act as a beacon for Britain on the world stage. The BBC is one of the most globally recognised and trusted 'brands' in the world, helping shape global public understanding of the UK.<sup>21</sup> In 2020 the BBC's output reached an average of 468.2m people outside the UK each week.<sup>22</sup> According to public opinion data, its news output is also the most trusted in the world.<sup>23</sup> The World Service, with a weekly audience of 292.1m, provides access to reliable news coverage in countries that are hard to reach due to either the lack of local capacity or the closure of local media environments by oppressive regimes. Its English language news outputs, BBC World Service English (radio and podcast) and BBC World News (the commercially funded television channel), reach 97m and 112m people per week respectively, including in developed economies and amongst the global business community where such soft power engagement can have a more commercial dimension. This outreach is buttressed by its BBC Studios creative output, whose influence reaches far beyond the BBC's own channels, with international streaming services providing new viewers to shows that bring with them a UK perspective and often an insight into British culture from Dr Who to

<sup>19</sup> This was documented in Adam Hug (ed.), *Institutionally Blind? International organisations and human rights abuses in the former Soviet Union*, February 2016, Foreign Policy Centre, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/institutionallyblind/>

<sup>20</sup> Lizzy Buchan, *Attacking BBC and licence fee will 'weaken' UK*, Johnson warned, *Independent*, February 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/bbc-boris-johnson-licence-fee-funding-david-clementi-a9330336.html>

<sup>21</sup> 2017 Global CSR RepTrak: Reputation and Corporate Social Responsibility, Reputation Institute, September 2017, <https://www.rankingthebrands.com/PDF/Global%20CSR%20RepTrak%20100%202017,%20Reputation%20Institute.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Tony Hall: UK must "unleash the full global potential of the BBC" – as new all time record global audience is announced, BBC, July 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/global-reach#:~:text=The%20BBC's%20global%20reach%20increased,53%25%20in%20BBC%20News%20users;CharlotteTobitt,BBCreachesrecordglobalaudienceof468.2mpeopleeveryweek,PressGazette,July2020,https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/bbc-global-audience/>

<sup>23</sup> News media consumption, Global Web Index, <https://www.globalwebindex.com/reports/news-consumption-report>; Reuters Institute study finds BBC News is America's most trusted news brand, BBC, June 2020, [https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/worldnews/2020/reuters-institute-study-finds-bbc-news-is-americas-most-trusted-news-brand#:~:text=In%202018%2C%20the%20BBC%20was,from%20MediaPost%20and%20Brand%20Keys.&text=Reuters%20Institute%202020%20Digital%20News%20Report%20surveyed%20%2C055%20respondents%20in,news%20in%20the%20past%20month;NicNewman,RichardFletcher,AnneSchulz,SingeAndi,andRasmusKleisNielsen,June2020,ReutersInstituteDigitalNewsReport2020,ReutersInstituteandUniversityofOxford,https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/worldnews/2020/reuters-institute-study-finds-bbc-news-is-americas-most-trusted-news-brand#:~:text=In%202018%2C%20the%20BBC%20was,from%20MediaPost%20and%20Brand%20Keys.&text=Reuters%20Institute%202020%20Digital%20News%20Report%20surveyed%20%2C055%20respondents%20in,news%20in%20the%20past%20month;NicNewman,RichardFletcher,AnneSchulz,SingeAndi,andRasmusKleisNielsen,June2020,ReutersInstituteDigitalNewsReport2020,ReutersInstituteandUniversityofOxford,https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/DNR_2020_FINAL.pdf)

David Attenborough. Any further changes to the BBC as an institution need to be handled with extreme care, so as not to weaken the foundations on this soft power giant rests.

More broadly at a time where COVID has shut theatres, hampered film and TV production and forced sporting events to take place without fans the UK needs to not only consider the economic and domestic entertainment benefits provided by the UK's cultural and sporting sectors, but their contribution to international awareness of and affection for the UK with fans of its films and football clubs spread across the globe. Future publications in this series will look at how to use this soft power in new ways, learning from the experience of the 2012 London Olympics, but the country's creative capacity must be supported to enable it to thrive once more in a post-pandemic world. Failure to do this risks dimming the UK's power of cultural attraction, a soft-power asset perhaps unmatched by all but the United States.

UK universities are also a central part of Britain's soft power and again COVID-19 has put the sector at particular risk, threatening not only a major component of the economy but institutions that burnish the UK's reputation and enhancing international understanding of our country through international students, research collaboration and leadership. However, as John Heathershaw, Saipira Furstenberg, and Tena Prelec write in the publication COVID is not the only worry around retaining that reputation for excellence. UK universities have faced a significant challenge to their reputations and academic freedom on campus as the result of authoritarian influences. Their essay identifies the need for an establishment of a code of conduct for Universities – on foreign donations and overseas campuses, on protecting expatriate students and faculty, and on training and support for fieldworkers – that should be backed both by academic leaders and by the Government to retain the credibility and vitality of this important resource.

UK civil society plays a vital role for Britain in the world by helping the UK develop policy, delivering services on its behalf and, beyond their relationship with Government, acting to enhance the prestige and intellectual leadership of the UK writ large. So, it is an important dimension of the UK's soft power even beyond the work many groups do on the ground. However many civil society organisations are facing real challenges to survive in a giving and fundraising environment hugely impacted by COVID-19, the loss of access to EU-wide funding mechanisms and through the £2.9bn GNI related cut in UK aid funding.<sup>24</sup> It is imperative that the FCO-DFID merger does not lead to more unplanned process delays, as there is a clear need to get money out of the door quickly to avoid losing significant civil society capacity unnecessarily or by accident, and to stabilise the sector ahead of any major planned shifts in donor funding as a result of the priorities of the Integrated Review.

### **Protecting current UK strengths in promoting its values**

As the UK assesses what it should focus on in the future it is important that it does not neglect areas where it has shown leadership in the past, a concern the closure of DFID has not helped to dispel.

It is to be hoped that the UK can sustain and build on its areas of longstanding international values leadership such as on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), women's and LGBTQ rights, media freedom and the abolition of the death penalty, working in partnership with UK civil society and local partners.

There is a strong case for the development of a cross Government Human Rights Strategy, made particularly clearly in the essay in this collection by Benjamin Ward. Having such clear human rights strategy could ensure greater policy coherence on human rights, democratic institutions and rule of law, across UK foreign policy. It could also help facilitate a common approach across Whitehall, including the FCDO, the National Security Council, Home Office, BEIS and Department for International Trade, provided it had the necessary level of political buy-in from No.10. Having a clear strategy to measure progress against could also improve democratic scrutiny of the UK's human

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<sup>24</sup> The FPC does not receive UK aid funding.

rights approach by Parliament. It could also help tackle the problem Ward identified in his essay around inconsistency in bilateral relations, helping to ensure that diplomats and politicians do not overlook rights abuses that take place in countries that have strategic ties and alliances with the UK.

A coherent overall strategy could help with the better integration of different parts of the Government's values agenda. For example as part of a future rebalancing of the UK's Aid priorities, as Joe Powell rightly recommends in his essay, the FCDO should explore ways to prioritise additional development support to countries in 'moments of democratic transition', or 'where reform efforts are underway that could help lift countries out of low-income status onto the road to self-reliance'.

The potential for UK leadership on climate change as part of chairing the COP in 2021 will be addressed in more detail in the upcoming publication, 'Projecting the UK's values abroad'. However in order to strengthen the UK's hand in the negotiations next year the UK has to be in a strong a place as possible in terms of its domestic position in tackling the climate crisis. One area of concern remains the uncertainty around the UK's future link to the EU's Emission Trading System (ETS), something as yet unresolved in the UK's negotiations with the EU and seemingly far down the priority list. The Government has stated that the UK's ETS credits will migrate to a new UK Emissions Trading System from 2021, but hopes that it will be able to be linked to the EU ETS in a way that allows for tradability.<sup>25</sup> In the event of no-deal an additional carbon tax of £16 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> is due to be imposed but this is much lower than the current €30 per tonne EU ETS price.<sup>26</sup> Particularly given the current Government is likely to wish to actively promote market-led mechanisms for tackling climate change, the loss of international tradability would be a setback, given the lack of well-established national level cap and trade scheme elsewhere in the world that the UK could alternatively partner with.<sup>27</sup>

So given the testing international environment the UK finds itself facing, it is important that it builds from its existing strengths, protecting them from short-term impacts of COVID, budget cuts or sudden policy change, while improving its transparency, efficiency and accountability.<sup>28</sup>

### What our authors say

**Mark White** writes that for a successful integration of the FCO and DFID to take place it will need to be a resource intensive process, involving compromise and adaptive approaches to suit the differing institutional cultures and incentives of the departments that have merged to form the FCDO. However, the benefits of fully utilising the range of tools and approaches the Government has at its disposal outweigh the challenges. It is clear that the political appetite and imperative for integration will not abate, and as such, there is a need to embrace the political direction provided. The Government must ensure that as structures and systems evolve, the best of both DFID and the FCO can align to ensure that the FCDO continues to play a constructive role in the promotion and protection of British values and interests overseas.

**Harpinder Collacott** argues that the new FCDO has a unique window of opportunity in unprecedented times to create an ambitious approach to the UK's aid programme that enhances its impact and effectiveness and helps Britain grow its global standing. To achieve this, it must sustain DFID's strong culture of transparency and clear mandate to target poverty and those most in need. This has been key to the UK having a world-leading development agency that has ensured the British

<sup>25</sup> The future of UK carbon pricing, UK Government and Devolved Administrations' response, June 2020, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/889037/Government\\_Response\\_to\\_Consultation\\_on\\_Future\\_of\\_UK\\_Carbon\\_Pricing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/889037/Government_Response_to_Consultation_on_Future_of_UK_Carbon_Pricing.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Josh Burke, Baran Doda, Luca Taschini and Linus Mattauach, The future of carbon pricing: Consultation response, LSE policy publication, August 2019, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/the-future-of-carbon-pricing/>

<sup>27</sup> Senned Research, Replacement for the EU Emissions Trading, Scheme (EU ETS) – Part 1 Research Briefing

<sup>28</sup> Set out in more detail: FPC, Finding Britain's role in a changing world: The principles for Global Britain, September 2020, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/the-principles-for-global-britain/>

people can have confidence in UK aid spending and been a crucial part of growing Britain's soft power globally. Crucially, there is the opportunity to go further and succeed in an area that DFID and many other aid donors have been grappling with for some time; breaking down longstanding and highly problematic artificial silos. Greater policy coherence across development, humanitarian and crisis response, diplomacy, defence, trade, and climate change will significantly improve the way the UK undertakes development cooperation. It will ensure aid spending and development efforts are more effective, sustainable and targeted where most impact can be had. Coordination and collaboration must be core operating principles to achieve this – across government, with those who stand to play a role in meeting today's significant global challenges, or indeed with those who stand to be most impacted by them. The FCDO could do well to remember the formula for success of the four 'C's – Culture, Coherence, Coordination and Collaboration.

**Joe Powell** writes that the Government needs to step up democratic reforms within the UK for it to genuinely become a greater force for good in the world. In July this year, the UK's first round of Magnitsky-style sanctions showed a determination to prioritise action against human rights violators and stand up for democratic freedoms. This type of leadership is vital given the rising global tide of authoritarianism, civic unrest, attacks on basic freedoms, and closing civic space for journalists and civil society — all of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the UK to become a greater force for good in the future, the Government will need to lead by example with domestic reforms that enhance the UK's own democracy and accountability, and by developing a more coherent approach to democracy support overseas.

**Benjamin Ward** argues that the UK government has an inconsistent approach to human rights in its foreign policy. This undermines its objectives and sends a confusing message about the UK's global role after Brexit. Having a clear consistent strategy on human rights would make its approach more effective, allowing for a greater coherence between human rights, democratic institutions and rule of law across UK foreign policy, as well as help the UK meet its wider objectives as it embarks on Global Britain. The Integrated Review provides an ideal opportunity to develop such a strategy.

**Sir Ciarán Devane** examines the Government's use of hard and soft power as it charts a fresh course outside of the EU. A strategic view of sources of hard and soft power is a vital part of any nation's foreign policy, particularly at a time of an upheaval caused by technical changes, a rebalancing of economic and geo-political power, and of course of a global pandemic. Crucially, he argues that a country's soft power both enables and legitimises the UK's hard power, providing the vital foundations of international reputational resilience that is at the heart of any national foreign policy. To ensure a successful Global Britain, a strategic alignment backed up with sustainable finance for the whole spectrum of UK capabilities is needed.

**Prof. John Heathershaw, Dr Saipira Furstenberg, and Dr Tena Prelec** set out that the UK's universities are not national institutions but international ones, many of which are regarded as some of the world's leading centres of research and education. But this internationalisation and the market forces of the sector expose them to risks to academic freedom emanating from partnerships with authoritarian states and reliance on external funding. These include the erosion of academic integrity under authoritarian influencing and the transnational repression of expatriate staff and student communities in the UK. Both are increasingly visible in international partnerships on UK campuses, overseas fieldwork and foreign ventures. The protection of universities is not a matter of national security but one of managing risk through adequate support to staff and students and common nationwide standards of institutional transparency and accountability.



## 2. Protecting the UK's ability to defend its values

By Mark White<sup>29</sup>

On 16 June 2020, the Prime Minister announced that DFID and the FCO will merge into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. This decision has united development and diplomacy in one new department, fusing together the majority of Britain's international policy and programming. In so doing, the PM brought an end to just over two decades of autonomy for the UK's international development assistance effort, during which time DFID developed a reputation for being the most effective aid agency in the world.<sup>30</sup>

Intriguingly, this decision was made ahead of the 'Integrated Review', not as a result. There is a certain irony that a department that prided itself on using evidence as the cornerstone of its decision making was denied the opportunity to make an informed case to justify its existence.

In the absence of such a process, we can only take the PM's own words at face value, and conclude that the underpinning logic behind the merger is that by consolidating all assets, capabilities and instruments of foreign policy within one department the UK will be better able to both promote and protect national values and interests overseas, as well as project greater influence internationally. Thus, through greater internal consolidation and coherence it will achieve enhanced international effect.

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<sup>30</sup> Better Aid Score Cards, One, <https://scorecards.one.org/dashboard.html>

So far, so logical in theory. Few would dispute that economies of scale can often be achieved through unification, and that if time spent on tiresome internal bureaucratic bickering could be reoriented towards external effort HMG would be all the better for it.

The creation of the FCDO is a further advancement of the 'integrated' or 'full spectrum' approach strongly advocated by the Conservatives since their election victory in 2010.<sup>31</sup> The concept itself is not new – the 'comprehensive approach' was a term regularly cited by the Labour Government during their term of office. However, the shift from 'comprehensive' to 'integrated' is a subtle but important one, and is an area in which HMG, like many Western governments, has experienced challenges.<sup>32</sup>

Over the past decade, many HMG country teams in both Whitehall and at post claimed to be delivering 'comprehensively'. Usually this amounted to the articulation of HMG's objectives for that particular country in the form of a UK country strategy, signed off by the Ambassador or High Commissioner, with limited external consultation with external stakeholders. The division of responsibility for the objectives contained within that document were then allocated to the various different departments at post, each of whom would have their own staffing and funding streams designed to deliver against those aims, as well as their own internal institutional incentives to plough their own furrow. The result was often somewhat less than the sum of its parts, and in some cases, there was limited appetite from any of the departments involved to expend effort or resources delivering for each other.

Two reasons oft cited by senior Government officials outside of DFID for this lack of collective delivery were that DFID had the lion's share of the resources, and that their staff were primarily motivated by the interests of the poor in the countries of focus rather than the UK national interest. Upon re-election in 2015, the Conservatives adopted a twin-track approach to resolving these complaints: the increasing reallocation of Official Development Assistance (ODA) away from DFID to other departments, and in so doing, a softening of poverty reduction as the prime focus of ODA spending. Hence, in the past five years, DFID's share of ODA spending across government has reduced from 95 per cent to just under 75 per cent.

The primary route through which these alternative ODA allocations were channelled was collective funding streams, such as the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and Prosperity Fund. However, these also have not always promoted integrated working. Both these cross-Whitehall funds allocate resources departmentally, so despite being collective funding streams, it is rare that programmes were actually delivered jointly between government departments. Thus, at best HMG would generate a collective approach at the strategic level but have operational siloes for delivery, and at worst, where strategies had been developed on the basis of the totality of the activities being delivered rather than on the basis of a clearly articulated set of overarching objectives, would yield duplicatory or occasionally contradictory activity between departments.

The creation of FCDO provides several opportunities in this regard. The intent behind the integrated approach that has seen the creation of the FCDO therefore is for there to be greater collective analysis, which leads to more coherent strategic objective setting, followed by enhanced collective operational delivery. As such, a priority for FCDO should be to ensure that when country strategies are updated they are informed by current analysis and reflect the views of the new integrated department, as well as HMG more widely. The second is that these strategies are subject to greater input from and discussion with informed external stakeholders. Thirdly, the risk of incoherence between country strategies could be reduced through a greater investment in regional approaches

<sup>31</sup> William McKernan, Fusion Doctrine: One Year On, RUSI, March 2019, <https://rusi.org/commentary/fusion-doctrine-one-year>

<sup>32</sup> The Comprehensive Approach, Parliament UK, July 2010, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmdfence/writew/comp/m01.htm>

from which country specific objectives cascade. This is already being implemented in regions like North Africa, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

It will be no longer acceptable for the former departments that comprise the FCDO to deliver their objectives in isolation; instead where their skills, knowledge and experience can make a positive contribution to wider diplomatic or development endeavours these should be prioritised if HMG's collective priorities require it. It is for this reason that the option of 'full integration' has been selected for FCDO, which will see no duplication of either thematic, geographic, or functional effort within the new department. Every section of the FCDO will have both DFID and FCO staff operating within it, and the days of buildings separating DFID and FCO staff at home and abroad will soon be over.

Whilst there is an inherent logic to such an approach, the transition to a new organisational culture will not be straightforward. There are significant differences between DFID and FCO staff that will require institutional incentives to overcome in order to maximise coherence.

The first issue is in whose interest are those in the department working? Much to the frustration of UK diplomats posted to developing countries, their DFID colleagues were guided primarily by the International Development Act (2002), which mandated them to act primarily in the interests of the poor within the population, rather than in the interests of the UK.<sup>33</sup> This resulted in many a heated discussion within Embassies and High Commissions as to where allegiances lay. Further, because many DFID staff were development professionals rather than career civil servants, tensions arose where there were contradictions between policy outcomes informed by technical expertise and established best practice and those which were primarily driven by UK political interest. FCDO will need to find a means to incorporate development into the wider foreign policy specialism of the new department.

It will be imperative as FCDO evolves to achieve clarity as to the mission and values of the new department, and to ensure that wherever possible the interests of the UK and those with whom we seek to partner align. Where this is not possible however, and UK interests differ from those with whom we work, it will be necessary to ensure that staff involved in such scenarios are clear of their objectives and are willing to deliver accordingly. Without such clarity, there is significant risk of UK effort being undermined.

The second issue will be for FCDO to articulate an institutional culture, which seeks to preserve the strengths and alleviate the weaknesses of both of its parents. Again, this will not be straightforward. As one would expect, the FCO was a department that placed primacy on geography and context, and hence was staffed with diplomats with linguistic and cultural, rather than thematic expertise. Beyond languages, the FCO prides itself on a level of 'gifted amateurism' that sees bright and motivated staff apply themselves to a number of tasks using a set of core competences in which they are honed. DFID on the other hand placed precedence on thematic or programmatic expertise, and therefore prioritised proficiency in health, education, or governance issues over geographical knowledge. There is a level of intellectual rigor to the advisory cadres, which sees subject matter expertise often take precedent over broader management and inter-personal skills.

Given this approach, it is perhaps unsurprising that both departments had management and leadership challenges. It became apparent in FCO that the individualistic skills and experience required to excel in diplomacy did not always readily translate to wider organisational and leadership and management positions. DFID similarly recognised that an extensive knowledge of a thematic area also did not compensate for the wider inter-personal and emotional intelligence skills necessary for either leadership roles or cross-Whitehall skirmishes. The future FCDO will require geographical, thematic, strategic, managerial, programmatic, political, and bureaucratic skills to be

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<sup>33</sup> International Development Act 2002, Legislation UK, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/1/contents>

successful, but how they will be fused together in FCDO's embryonic stages will provide a strong indication to staff as to which will take precedence in the future. Staff will be watching initial appointments carefully, on the basis of which they will determine their own suitability in their new department. The formation of FCDO could provide a helpful opportunity to establish alternative diplomatic, development and departmental management career tracks within the organisation as a means of ensuring that those in leadership roles are assigned positions appropriate to their skill set.

The third issue will be the balance of effort afforded to content and process both at home and abroad. By the time of its demise, DFID had smothered itself in process and became obsessed by results, with the ability of the department to be innovative, take risks and learn from failure significantly diminished. Whilst this was largely due to the burden of the 0.7 per cent target, the intense media and public scrutiny that accompanied it, and a permanent political sword of Damocles hanging over the department, this ponderous and inflexible approach was the other factor that prompted the reallocation of ODA to other government departments.

In contrast, whilst the FCO embraced the allocation of in excess of £2bn worth of ODA onto its baseline via the CSSF and Prosperity Fund, it cannot be said that the department had adequately developed the infrastructure to accompany such large allocations of programme funding. Whilst this had the initial advantage of genuine innovation and experimental activity being implemented, over time significant criticism was directed by Parliament and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) regarding transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of their programming. The knack moving forwards will be finding a happy medium between DFID's 'oil tanker' approach of large, often complicated, and cumbersome programming, and a nimbler, problem focused approach seen within the CSSF's better interventions. Ironically, DFID could learn from itself in this regard, as many of the approaches it used during its first decade to provide proof of concept, create catalytic effect, and fill the space between what was required in the short-term and the more lumbering approaches of the EU, UN and World Bank are exactly what is needed today. It will also be necessary for the FCDO's programmatic delivery systems to retain DFID's focus on value for money whilst also learning from the FCO's more insurgent approach through the CSSF to procure swiftly when required and evolve over the course of delivery where needed.

The final challenge will be establishing consensus on FCDO timeframes. Whitehall joked that 2030 to DFID meant the year, whereas to the FCO it was half-past eight in the evening. As an organisation primarily focused on understanding, engaging, and influencing, it is perhaps inevitable that the FCO's outlook was more pragmatic and short-termist, whereas DFID's was longer-term given the intractable nature of the problems with which it engaged.

It will be necessary for FCDO to embrace both approaches, and continue to provide their political masters with timely responses to political imperative, whilst also retaining focus on longer-term more strategic challenges. Developing systems that are able to cope with the 'tyranny of the now' whilst not allowing the urgent to be all encompassing will be a priority for the FCDO leadership in its formative stages.

Such an approach will be important for programming also – one dangerous consequence of the 'results' over 'development' mantra of recent years has been an obsession with focusing solely on activities which can be counted, or changes which can be swiftly delivered rather than the underlying problems that have created such symptoms in the first place. If the UK is to meaningfully engage in international activity it will be important that FCDO does not limit itself to simply pursuing short-term symptoms, but instead affords attention to root causes.

In conclusion, achieving successful integration will not be easy. It will be resource intensive, involve compromise, and will need to adapt approaches to suit the differing institutional cultures and incentives of the departments that have merged to form the FCDO.

Despite this, the benefits of fully utilising the range of tools and approaches HMG has at its disposal clearly outweigh the challenges. It is clear that the political appetite and imperative for integration will not abate, and as such, there is a need to embrace the political direction provided, and to ensure that as government structures and systems evolve, so that the best of both DFID and the FCO align to ensure that the FCDO continues to play a constructive role in the promotion and protection of British values and interests overseas.

**Recommendations:**

- FCDO should use the opportunity of its formation to undertake extensive internal and external consultation to achieve collective agreement on the future mission and values of the new department. Such a process would provide an opportunity to restore confidence among staff, partner and beneficiary governments, and the extensive range of external FCDO stakeholders that the department is clear on its vision and mandate.
- Building on the NSC led country and regional strategy process, effort should be expended in updating all country and thematic strategies in line with FCDO/HMG (rather than DFID or FCO) objectives. Strategies should be informed by updated political and developmental analysis, and should involve informed external stakeholder consultation.
- Consideration should be given to an FCDO specific competency framework that seeks to align diplomatic and developmental expertise with civil servant core competences, and within this process assess whether multiple diplomatic, development and management career tracks are appropriate and what mandatory skills are required for all three specialisms.
- Specific investments should be made internally on training and promotion of the new FCDO culture and working practices, rather than risk operational siloes emerging between former FCO and DFID staff.
- As part of the re-alignment of Official Development Assistance (ODA) within FCDO, consideration to be given to creating dedicated pools of funding for smaller, innovative, and/or catalytic programming, as well as clarifying levels of political risk appetite (including for failure) for UK funded interventions.



### 3. Four 'Cs' for Britain to protect and build its standing as world-leading player in global development

By Harpinder Collacott<sup>34</sup>

Over the last few decades, the UK has secured a strong reputation for its role in advancing global development as a major donor of aid and a leader in promoting effective and impactful policy and practice. Global poverty has halved over the course of the Millennium Development Goals and we now live in a world where ending extreme poverty altogether is believed possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic is going to knock us off course – to what extent will depend on the actions governments take today. As economies head into recession, the UK has already announced cuts of £2.9 billion for 2020 alone and the International Monetary Fund June 2020 World Economic Outlook allows us to predict that the global aid budget could fall to US\$141 billion in 2021 – a drop of US\$12 billion compared to 2019.<sup>35</sup> It is therefore crucial to ensure an approach guaranteeing every penny of aid is spent as effectively as possible and Britain's legacy in poverty eradication and sustainable development is maintained.

A new vision for the UK's role in the world, set out by the Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, must ensure the FCDO maintains DFID's culture

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<sup>35</sup> Amy Dodd, Rob Tew, Anna Hope, Covid-19 and financing projections for developing countries, Development Initiatives, June 2020, [www.devinit.org/resources/covid-19-and-financing-projections-developing-countries/](http://www.devinit.org/resources/covid-19-and-financing-projections-developing-countries/)

of transparency and commitment to poverty eradication. There is also an opportunity to strengthen the coherence, coordination and collaboration that will enhance the impact and effectiveness of Britain's aid spending. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, unprecedented numbers living in humanitarian crises, and the climate emergency, a truly 'Global Britain' must take this opportunity to demonstrate that it can and will deliver shared stability and prosperity that leaves no one behind.

### **Protecting the UK's world-leading reputation through transparency and a focus on poverty**

The UK has set a high bar for what development agencies can achieve. The UK is a widely trusted and respected development actor across the world. At the heart of the UK's approach has been a commitment to transparency and a clear, strong mandate on poverty reduction.

Transparency is critical for UK aid spending in two key ways. First, the British people must have confidence in the new department to spend aid well and trust it to deliver both value for money and impact that justifies taxpayers' money being spent on international objectives. Second, governments of countries receiving aid, other aid donors, implementing partners and aid beneficiaries need to have visibility on what is being spent, where, and by whom. Open, timely and forward-looking information about UK aid spending and commitments is essential to maximise its impact and effectiveness. Aid is one of many resources going into countries – full visibility of what it is for and where it is spent is essential for country governments to make decisions on how they allocate precious domestic resources. Furthermore, the FCDO will be responsible for administering over £13 billion of taxpayers' resources compared to the FCO's £2.4 billion. DFID's culture of transparency must be carried over to the FCDO to ensure scrutiny, effective spending and good resource management are at the heart of the new department. DFID consistently ranked highly for transparency – in 2020 it ranked 9th in the world compared to the FCO which ranked 38th. The new department must be brought up to DFID standards.<sup>36</sup>

The commitment to put evidence at the heart of decision-making by the FCDO is critical and will set the right direction for government ministers to follow independent advice from expert bodies such as the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI). The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab has already confirmed that ICAI will continue to play its role in scrutinising UK aid spending.<sup>37</sup> Additional parliamentary scrutiny of UK's aid spending must also be confirmed – to have oversight of all UK aid spending across all government departments, starting with the FCDO.

In terms of maintaining a mandate to focus on poverty, reaching the very poorest has been and continues to be the primary objective of UK aid. Not only is this morally right, it is a vital part of achieving shared global prosperity, stability and a peaceful world for all. We know that investing in health and education both improves lives and enhances human capital to benefit sustained economic growth.<sup>38</sup> Social protection offers a safety net that prevents people from becoming entrenched in chronic poverty and ensures they stand the best chance at having a decent future as well as making a positive contribution to wider society. Empowering women and girls is vital for their wellbeing, ensures sustainable poverty reduction, and drives social progress. So, to focus on the poorest and elevate them up in sustainable ways is a win-win. A mandate to focus on poverty reduction and tackle inequalities to ensure no one is left behind must underpin the new department's global objectives in how it delivers on its development priorities. Without this,

<sup>36</sup> Aid Transparency Index 2020, Publish What You Fund, 2020, [www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2020/](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2020/)

<sup>37</sup> DFID, FCO and FCDO, Press release: Foreign Secretary commits to more effective and accountable aid spending under new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Government, August 2020, [www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-commits-to-more-effective-and-accountable-aid-spending-under-new-foreign-commonwealth-and-development-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-commits-to-more-effective-and-accountable-aid-spending-under-new-foreign-commonwealth-and-development-office)

<sup>38</sup> World Bank Group, The Human Capital Project, World Bank, October 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30498>

evidence suggests that poverty reduction quickly becomes diluted – the FCO, for example, has traditionally targeted significantly lower proportions of its aid spending than DFID on poverty (nine per cent vs 61 per cent on the poorest countries) and gender equality (24 per cent vs 65 per cent where gender is significant or primary objective).<sup>39</sup>

### **Building Britain's standing and impact through greater coherence in policy and practice**

Ensuring the FCDO builds on the solid foundations laid by DFID to make sure development is an equal partner alongside diplomacy and other key areas will be critical to the success of this merger. Coherence across policy and practice in the department and beyond is essential. The world is watching as the UK takes a new course following Brexit and UK taxpayers are going to want high levels of transparency and accountability on government spending as the economy shrinks as a result of COVID-19.

Coherence has been an ambition of development and foreign policy for many years but the silos that limit the ability to respond effectively to the people and places most in need have not been satisfactorily resolved. Some progress has been made, but the merger offers the opportunity to make significant headway across Whitehall. The Rt Hon Dominic Raab spoke of 'artificial lines' that exist between aspects of government policy, and that bringing them into alignment is key.<sup>40</sup> There is indeed the need for a new, shared, ambitious international strategy, that gives the new department a clear mandate, and a clear statement of the problems it is seeking to fix. There must also be strong scrutiny and accountability mechanisms to ensure this principle translates into practice. The Government must develop a new strategy that puts coherence across government at the centre to ensure a truly Global Britain that delivers an agenda of building a sustainable, stable and prosperous world.

As a result, the FCDO could become a leading department that coordinates and collaborates across government. It could, with its network of relationships and reach through diplomacy and defence, help bring together development agendas and ensure coherence with trade and climate policy. 2021 will be an important year for the UK to demonstrate coherence of policy as the Government hosts the G7 gathering and co-hosts with Italy COP26 Climate Change Conference.

So, with urgency, artificial silos between policy areas need to be bridged through better coordination between and within departments, sectors and in countries. When it comes to development cooperation, recent research on the UK's progress on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus indicates key areas the FCDO should focus on.<sup>41</sup> First is overarching policy and operational strategy where all policy frameworks must include an explicit steer to build in complementarity, coherence and collaboration with operational guidance to ensure top-level policy feeds right down to local level implementation. The second is systematically ensuring integration of interdependent policy areas in aid programming. The coherence that this should create then needs to be measurable and held to account. Third is operational structure, leadership and staffing. It will be critical that the highest level of FCDO management makes coherence a cross-organisational collective priority and ensures there are dedicated staff with the skills and responsibilities to support and catalyse colleagues and partners to implement this shift.

In terms of how the Government works with external stakeholders, the UK should be much more responsive to developing country leadership to align with country plans and priorities and

<sup>39</sup> Amy Dodd, Anna Hope, Rob Tew, Merging DFID and the FCO: Implications for UK aid, Development Initiatives, June 2020 [www.devinit.org/resources/merging-dfid-and-fco-implications-uk-aid/](http://www.devinit.org/resources/merging-dfid-and-fco-implications-uk-aid/)

<sup>40</sup> Rt Hon Dominic Raab, DFID-FCO Merger, Hansard Volume 677, June 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah Dalrymple and Sophie Swithern, Key questions and considerations for donors at the triple nexus: lessons from UK and Sweden, Development Initiatives, December 2019, [www.devinit.org/resources/questions-considerations-donors-triple-nexus-uk-sweden/](http://www.devinit.org/resources/questions-considerations-donors-triple-nexus-uk-sweden/)

strengthen local ownership of development. There must be strong alignment to shared and globally agreed goals. The FCDO must see itself as a true partner to those with whom we must work to tackle the significant global challenges we are faced with today in a way that is sustainable and truly responsive to needs.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The merging of DFID and FCO has caused alarm bells for many about what this might mean for the future of the UK's approach to global development and commitment to poverty eradication. The FCDO can and should protect the best of DFID's culture – maintaining high levels of transparency, scrutiny and accountability and retaining UK aid's poverty mandate. Going further and developing a new global strategy with coherence at its heart, and collaboration and coordination central to its implementation, may well achieve what DFID and many other countries' development agencies have struggled with to date. This is a unique opportunity for the UK government to grow Britain's standing further as an exemplar of best practice in global development and beyond. The FCDO would do well to remember the formula of **four 'C's – Culture, Coherence, Coordination and Collaboration** – to maintain Britain's world-leading status in global development and beyond:

- **Culture of transparency** - maintain the strong commitment within the department itself and with the partners FCDO works with
- **Coherence** - strengthen the coherence of policy nationally, internationally, and with the SDG agenda
- **Coordination** - facilitate cooperative working across Whitehall on critical agendas including trade and climate
- **Collaboration** - work in close partnership with stakeholders and strengthen local ownership of development



## 4. Reforming the UK to be a greater force for good

By Joe Powell<sup>42</sup>

The UK has a proud record of support for open societies, open economies and open democracies around the world. In July this year, the UK's first round of Magnitsky-style sanctions showed a determination to prioritise action against human rights violators and stand up for democratic freedoms. This type of leadership is vital given the rising tide of authoritarianism, civic unrest, attacks on basic freedoms, and closing civic space for journalists and civil society — all of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the UK to become a greater force for good in the future, the Government will need to lead by example with domestic reforms that enhance the UK's own democracy, and by developing a more coherent approach to democracy support overseas.

The *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, the *2020 Comprehensive Spending Review*, and the 2021 G7 Presidency all provide excellent opportunities for the UK to restate its core values and build on its recent role as a leader and anchor point for multilateral efforts to support democracy and good governance.

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As Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chair of the World Health Organisation's ACT-Accelerator programme, recently reminded us all:<sup>43</sup>

*The world will not be rid of COVID-19 until we have a safe and effective vaccine available to everyone. We will not recover from the far-reaching economic impact of the pandemic without a new social compact between governments and citizens based on transparent, accountable and trustworthy governance.*

Citizens around the world are demanding a post-COVID-19 social compact based on better governance, especially in countries with poor records on democratic freedoms and human rights - as recent events in Lebanon have so tragically demonstrated. The UK government has been one of the most generous donors in tackling the health and economic crisis of COVID-19, but can complement this in the next phase of the recovery with support to governance reforms that enable a more sustainable long-term recovery, and also enhance the effectiveness of UK aid spending overall.

Governments in many countries have lost the trust of their citizens due to corruption and waste in procurement of medical equipment, mis- and disinformation campaigns online and failing public services. To turn this situation around, we urgently require open and accountable systems to enable citizens to participate in the management of scarce public resources, from effective tax administration, through procurement and expenditure management, to efficient public services. A transparent and accountable government will promote self-reliance and help aid-dependent nations to strengthen institutions, the rule of law and establish credibility with investors that will lead to greater domestic resource mobilisation and financial independence.

There is overwhelming evidence that an open and accountable government contributes to tax confidence and higher payment rates, lessens tax evasion, raises and improves the quality of social spending, and lowers the cost and improves competition and quality in public procurement, ultimately resulting in improved public services. Countries that achieved strong improvements in fiscal transparency levels were able to increase their Millennium Development Goal (MDG) spending faster and saw better progress in meeting these goals. Openness also increases the transparency, accountability and quality of aid spending, while reducing overall dependence on aid, and strengthens the tax bond between citizens and government, improving civic cohesion, open markets, and democracy.

This vision of rebuilding and refreshing the compact between government and citizens starts with action in the UK. The UK has been an early champion of many leading transparency practices and policies, such as opening up opaque company ownership structures, open budgeting and contracting, extractives transparency, open data, and the Bribery Act. Implementation of these reforms has been mixed, and for the UK to have credibility as a renewed champion for democracy and openness internationally, it must get its own house in order too. This should include greater vigilance of foreign interference in the UK's elections, and an expansion of innovative democratic practices such as citizen assemblies and participatory budgeting which give citizens a greater say in how they are governed beyond the ballot box.

The dividends of leading by example will extend to UK companies operating overseas. Support to reforms that help promote fair competition, for example in the public procurement process, will help prevent bribery undercutting well-run UK companies. UK companies are also well positioned to take advantage of the need for digitalisation, better procurement and open data that the pandemic has highlighted. New global anti-corruption and governance norms - such as open contracting, public registers of beneficial ownership and open budgets - will strengthen the international rules-based

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<sup>43</sup> Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, To beat Covid-19, Governments Need to Open Up, 11 July 2020  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-07-11/covid-19-economic-recovery-requires-more-transparent-governments>

order, and disadvantage governments whose comparative advantage is tax avoidance, worker oppression and environmental degradation.

Internationally, the UK government has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position itself at the front of a much-needed renewed global coalition of democracies, which stand up for the international rules-based order and can show the world a more hopeful path away from authoritarian or illiberal democratic models. UK citizens believe their country is a force for good in the world, and are highly sceptical of the respective governance models of Russia and China. With some notable exceptions, however, traditional champions of liberal democracy have been distracted in recent years, allowing authoritarian leaders space to export their playbook and contributing to the 14 straight years of decline in global freedom reported by Freedom House.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly, the Brexit vote and its fallout have meant the UK is one of the traditional champions who have been distracted.

There is now an opportunity to take some specific steps that would renew UK leadership:

- Put open societies, open economies and open democracies at the heart of the new FCDO priorities.
- Ensure that the FCDO prioritises support to countries in moments of democratic transition, or where reform efforts are underway that could help lift countries out of low-income status onto the road to self-reliance (including FCO-DFID priority countries like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria).
- Ensure support to open societies, open economies and open democracies features prominently in the spending review.
- Promote a G7 priority that liberal democracies work together more effectively to support open societies and open economies (including on trade), and create a stronger coalition to push back against rising authoritarianism.
- Ensure UK values are strong and present across all multilateral fora, including the UN's special session on anti-corruption, the G20 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

These steps will build on the UK's track record of leadership across policy areas that support healthy democracies, including protecting civic space and media freedom, open governance, anti-corruption, extractive industries and inclusion. These are essential components of the UK's own democracy, and should form the backbone of the FCDO's priorities, including:

- Speeding up **recovery from COVID-19** by building public resources or fiscal accountability systems to track COVID-19 emergency relief packages, procurement, spending and service delivery. This includes support to independent civil society organisations and free media that are able to hold governments to account.
- Standing up for **civic space and media freedom**, including building on the UK-Canada Media Freedom Summit of 2019 so that reforms to increase transparency lead to a more accountable government through scrutiny, and providing support for civil society working on democratic reforms in places like Hong Kong, Armenia and Ethiopia who are either transitioning to liberal democracy or at risk of backsliding.
- Support for **open government** and a coalition of governments to promote stronger rule of law institutions, including the Open Government Partnership, which was co-founded by the UK government in 2011 and has advanced over 4,000 specific reforms to enhance democracy and tackle corruption in 78 member countries, and support the implementation of SDG 16.
- Support for **anti-corruption** reforms that promote an international rules-based system in which UK businesses can engage, and which promote open markets and tackle money-laundering, terrorist financing and elite capture. Key anti-corruption themes include open

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Repucci, *Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy*, Freedom House, February 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>

contracting reforms for public procurement to address government's number one corruption risk, especially in the time of COVID-19, and open budgets, which enable citizens to shape priorities and follow the money, and facilitate the identification and recovery of stolen assets. Reforms should extend to public registers of beneficial ownership as pioneered by the UK since 2013, which provide a means to know who owns and controls companies.

- Support to developing countries to ensure **oil, gas and mining resources are openly and fairly governed**, enabling countries to finance their own recovery, increase economic resilience, and create stable operating environments for UK companies abroad. Maintain UK leadership in global initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, founded by the UK in 2003, and provide independent support for credible civil society institutions that promote open dialogue on extractive governance. Such support is essential to ensure that countries accelerate the transition to green energy, reduce dependency on fossil fuels, and access the minerals that are critical to renewable energy sources.
- Increase support for **gender-responsive and inclusive** citizen engagement involving underrepresented groups (including people living with disabilities and youth) as well as in procurement, which is central to how governments spend their money. Some of these communities have been among the hardest hit by the pandemic, and it is critical to ensure that they are supported to have a voice at the table to inform policies on reform and recovery.

The decision to create a combined foreign and development office was undoubtedly a controversial one. DFID has a proud record of supporting governance and anti-corruption work around the world, in service of reducing extreme poverty, while the Foreign Office has provided impressive leadership on issues like media freedom and civic space. The opportunity of the new department is to bring more coherence across all of these policy areas, and place them at the centre of the UK's bilateral and multilateral partnerships. This will inevitably result in some tough decisions, for example around arms sales to autocratic and repressive regimes, but if this approach is combined with a commitment from the Government to stepping up democratic reforms within the UK, then the UK could genuinely become a greater force for good in the world.



## 5. The value of a UK strategy on human rights

*By Benjamin Ward<sup>45</sup>*

It can be hard to understand sometimes where the UK government sits on human rights in its foreign policy.

Sometimes it takes a leading role in championing rights. At other times human rights appear to be missing in action. This inconsistent approach undermines the UK's foreign policy objectives and sends a confusing message about its global role after Brexit. Having a clear strategy on human rights would make its efforts to promote them more effective and help the UK meet its wider foreign policy goals.

There is no doubt that promoting respect for human rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law are objectives for the newly merged FCDO. They are mentioned explicitly in its foreign policy priority outcomes on diplomatic leadership and multilateralism and implicit in some of its other priorities, including Europe, conflict and stability, and Euro Atlantic security.

The importance of respect for human rights in UK foreign policy is a regular theme of statements by the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and other ministers including through reference to Global

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*Image by FCO under (CC).*

Britain: the idea of the UK, and its commitment to the rules-based international order, as a force for good in the world.

The FCO, now FCDO, produces an annual report on human rights around the world, and cites countries about which the UK is “particularly concerned about human rights issues, and where [it] consider[s] that the UK can make a real difference.”<sup>46</sup>

The UK leads a number of international inter-state initiatives on human rights including the Equal Rights Coalition for LGBT rights and the Media Freedom Coalition. It has recently created a global human rights sanctions system that allows the UK to impose asset freezes and travel bans on individuals and entities responsible for gross human rights violations, with initial designations relating to Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Myanmar, and Russia.<sup>47</sup>

Yet the UK's approach to promoting human rights in its foreign policy is inconsistent and sometimes contradictory at times in mutually reinforcing ways.

First, there is inconsistency across its bilateral relations. The UK takes strong positions on human rights in some countries, while on others it tends to downplay the same concerns, including countries that it lists as priorities for promoting human rights. The UK is rightly strong on human rights abuses in Russia, Venezuela, Syria and South Sudan. Yet it is reluctant to speak out forcefully on abuses on Bahrain and Egypt (both FCDO human rights priority countries), Turkey (which ought to be), and Rwanda.

In some cases, UK policies towards a particular country contain contradictions, with some strands of policy aiming to improve respect for rights while others undermine them.

On Yemen, the UK has played a leading role in humanitarian and peace efforts. Yet it has battled in the UK courts to be able to continue to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, despite the Saudi-led coalition's horrific record of abuse in Yemen.<sup>48</sup> The UK has also done little to pressure the Saudi-led coalition to take real steps towards accountability for those abuses, despite having a formal leadership role on Yemen in the Security Council. UN-appointed rights investigators have said the UK's arms sales make it potentially complicit in war crimes in Yemen.<sup>49</sup>

On China, the UK has offered a safe haven for Hong Kongers with UK ties in the face of Beijing's crackdown on freedom in Hong Kong, and spoken out at the UN on Hong Kong and Xinjiang. But the UK has been reluctant to support human rights sanctions on officials responsible for those abuses or multilateral action that might create accountability for Beijing's abuses. The result is the impression that the UK cares about human rights in China but is unwilling to take tough, transformative action.

Second, there is inconsistency between positions the UK takes in multilateral bodies and those it takes in bilateral relations. The UK is often keen to support human rights in UN bodies, including on Saudi Arabia. But in its bilateral relations with those countries, human rights can get short shrift. In other cases, the UK appears reluctant to use its position of leadership at the UN to address serious rights abuse in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, even while raising these abuses bilaterally with those countries' governments.

<sup>46</sup> FCO, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon and The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, Human Rights and Democracy Report 2019, Government, July 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2019>

<sup>47</sup> FCO and The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, UK announces first sanctions under new global human rights regime, Government, July 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-first-sanctions-under-new-global-human-rights-regime>

<sup>48</sup> UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia unlawful, court rules, BBC News, June 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48704596>

<sup>49</sup> Patrick Wintour, UK, US and France may be complicit in Yemen war crimes – UN report, The Guardian, September 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/03/uk-us-and-france-may-be-complicit-in-yemen-war-crimes-un-report>

That undermines the force of joint efforts and allows other states to discount the UK's contributions in those fora. The UK also fails consistently to stand behind multilateral bodies that promote human rights, notably the Council of Europe.

Third, there is inconsistency between support for human rights through global thematic priorities such as media freedom, prohibition of torture, and protection for human rights defenders and the UK's willingness to pursue those priorities when applied to specific countries – in particular to speak out publicly about persecution of human rights defenders and journalists.

If the UK's own objectives to advance human rights internationally are to be met, what really matters is how the UK responds when those principles are put to the test - when Saudi state agents were implicated in the grisly murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, for example. Or when journalists from *Iwacu* newspaper in Burundi were jailed for doing their jobs, or when a human rights defender like Osman Kavala is jailed for years in Turkey without any real charge and in defiance of a European Court of Human Rights ruling.

Fourth, there is an inconsistency between UK leadership internationally and its actions at home. The UK is a co-chair of Equal Rights Coalition and sees itself as champion of LGBT issues in other countries. Yet, despite considerable progress in some areas of LGBT rights, its efforts to protect the rights of transgender people at home have faltered and it went to court to prevent the use of 'X' as a non-binary gender marker on UK passports.

The UK seeks to promote justice, rule of law, and the importance of democratic institutions around the world. Yet since 2019, the Government suspended parliament, has obstructed proper functioning of parliamentary committees seeking to scrutinise its record, pledged to weaken judicial review and shown a willingness to break international law to sever its ties with the European Union.

International justice provides a further illustration. The UK is a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has historically backed international justice in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. More recently it has pushed for accountability over Syria and Libya. Yet the UK government is actively contemplating immunising historic abuses by its own forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup>

The UK has been among a handful of ICC member countries pressing for arbitrary limits to the court's budget at a time when its workload is growing. It has also called for timelines for completion of the prosecutor's preliminary inquiries, one of which concerns the allegations of abuse involving UK forces in Iraq. This is not good enough from a country that helped create and codify international humanitarian law.

Taking a consistent approach matters because it is a demonstration that the UK's engagement with the world is rooted in deep values. With those values under attack by governments in many parts of the world, including in democracies, defending them only when it is convenient risks emboldening authoritarian populists. It is much harder for the UK to be critical of power grabs by Orban, Erdogan, or Duterte if it fails consistently to stand up for those values at home and abroad.

Acting more consistently does not mean pretending the UK never has countervailing interests in a particular context or ignoring the need for the UK to work with states with questionable rights practices to advance common interests – climate change and COVID-19 among them. It means recognising that a world in which increasing numbers of states respect the rights of their inhabitants, the rule of law and have strong democratic institutions is a world that is in the UK's strategic interest.

Having a clear human rights strategy would ensure greater policy coherence on human rights, democratic institutions and rule of law across UK foreign policy in ways that could help the UK meet

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Ward, *The UK is inconsistent in its commitment to human rights. If we truly want to be a force for good in this world, greater cooperation is vital*, Fabian Society, May 2020, <https://fabians.org.uk/leading-the-world/>

its policy objectives. Having such a strategy could facilitate a common approach across Whitehall, including the newly merged FCDO, the National Security Council and Department for International Trade, and between the actions of UK diplomatic posts and those in London. It would also facilitate democratic scrutiny of UK human rights policy by Parliament. The Integrated Review provides an ideal opportunity to commit to and develop such a strategy. Having one could help the UK truly be a force for good in the world.



## 6. Can the UK afford not to invest in Global Britain?

By Sir Ciarán Devane<sup>51</sup>

The UK's security, prosperity and influence in the world is generated through a complex mix of soft and hard power; an open economy and a strong military, a significant aid programme and cultural and educational institutions which are admired the world over, our people and our values. Through each of these elements, we say to the world that we are a partner, which is trustworthy and easy to work with. One which demonstrates generosity and respect in sharing the best we have to offer.

A strategic view of sources of hard and soft power is a vital part of any nation's foreign policy, particularly at a time of an upheaval caused by technical changes, a rebalancing of economic and geo-political power, and of course of a global pandemic. Crucially, a country's soft power both enables and legitimises the UK's hard power, providing the vital foundations of international reputational resilience that is at the heart of any national foreign policy.

Our soft power is crucial to the UK's international credibility and capacity to effect change. Whether it is persuading other countries to sign a trade deal, agreeing to collective targets for reducing carbon emissions, promoting British and universal values or deterring rivals from hostile acts, trust matters. And trust is built on experience, example and attraction.

International relations theory talk of realism in which the strength of the economy and size of the military create power, influence and security. If one cannot trust the neighbours one should carry a big stick. Theory also talks of institutionalism in which a rules-based international system in

<sup>51</sup> Sir Ciarán Devane took up the role of Chief Executive of the British Council in January 2015. Ciarán has focused on ensuring that all stakeholders understand and value the contribution that soft power, cultural relations and the British Council makes to security, prosperity and influence, and that the organisation and staff are aligned behind that vision. *Image by Biswarup Ganguly under (CC).*

underpinned states working together through multilateral institutions and global issues addressed through multilateral action. By working together, the collective resources are deployed for the national and common interest. Constructivism on the other hand believes that shared values and experiences create a cohesive community with common norms and common beliefs. One is less likely to invade a country one has an affinity with.

All three theories of course have merit and all are indeed true. As the British Council's first annual report, written in 1940 in the heat of war, put it creating a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding between people leads to a sympathetic appreciation of one's foreign policy. Indeed, it is the role of the prudent state to foster this interchange of knowledge ideas and discoveries, in time of war and in time of peace. If this was the view of Churchill's government in the 1940s, it is no less valid today. Foreign Policy needs to look at problems through all three lenses. How do hard power capabilities help be they kinetic or sanction based? What about diplomacy and aid? And what is the role of soft power assets which created affinity, influence and understanding through leveraging the UK's education, science, and creative assets through our people and our institutions.

A good foreign policy stance needs hard capabilities, playing well with partners, and high levels of connection, relationship and trust. The Government's Integrated Review aims to take this holistic approach, assessing and redefining the UK's international capabilities with a view to developing a full spectrum, 'smart power' strategy to deliver the Prime Minister's vision of Global Britain.

However, even the most comprehensive strategies are only turned into reality when they are backed up by investment and it is this necessity, which creates the critical interdependence between the Integrated Review and the Comprehensive Spending Review in the Autumn. Combined, these dual reviews represent a once in a generation opportunity to reset the UK's international capabilities. However, rarely has a Foreign Secretary - or a Chancellor, for that matter – had a greater set of external challenges to contend with to get the job done, not least the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UK and global economy.

What then for Global Britain? How can the UK afford to make real the vision of a Britain that is a leading power, both worthy and capable of holding on to its seat at the top table of leadership and its place at the top of the league table of soft power nations? How can the ambitious aims and objectives of Global Britain be achieved against the backdrop of a contraction of the economy and ever rising demands in health, welfare and social care?

Economic data this week does appear to show a modest bounce back but, even if the COVID-19 recession is followed by a mercifully rapid recovery, the challenges of an ageing population and other long-term structural issues will continue to put huge pressure on limited resources. Add to this the fact that the Government will be navigating its way through all of this at the same time as pressing ahead with the Prime Minister's ambition to level up the entire country and the scale of the challenge becomes clear.

In making the case for Global Britain, the Government's own communications hint at the difficulties and opportunities that lie ahead, and the need for greater agility and adaptability: the shifting global context, a new relationship with Europe, and the need to deliver more with finite resources, requires us to evolve and enhance how we achieve our goals. We need to use government assets more cohesively and efficiently to maintain our global standing. Global Britain is about reinvesting in our relationships, championing the rules-based international order and demonstrating that the UK is open, outward looking and confident on the world stage.<sup>52</sup> This goal may be difficult but it is absolutely the right ambition.

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<sup>52</sup> FCO and FCDO, Global Britain: delivering on our international ambition, Government, June 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/global-britain-delivering-on-our-international-ambition>

As a precursor to the outcomes of the Integrated Review, the Government has forged the FCDO as a means of using 'finite resources... more cohesively and efficiently'. Such a move will allow for greater strategic alignment and cohesion across the UK's international capabilities. It will in all likelihood generate savings that will go some way but not all the way to levelling up the UK's foreign policy tools across all three lenses.

Cuts are the default in a recession, but the case can be made for breaking with precedent and actually increasing investment in the UK's international footprint. It is widely recognised that defence spending promotes scientific innovation, generates economic activity and supports thousands of UK jobs in places like Barrow-in-Furness and Dunbartonshire. Similarly, investing in soft power has a direct, measurable economic impact.

A study by the University of Edinburgh found that cultural institutions, like the British Council and Goethe-Institut are unsurprisingly highly influential in attracting international students and international tourists.<sup>53</sup> A quarter of all international students who come to the UK cite the British Council as being a key driver of their decision to study in the UK. That is worth billions to UK education and to the cities, towns and communities, which house them.

Equally, cultural relations underpins the propensity to trade with the UK and the propensity for the UK to be the destination of foreign direct investment (FDI). The more countries that host a state's cultural institute, the better the return for the parent state. A one per cent increase in the number of countries a cultural institution from a given country covers results in an increase of almost 0.66 per cent in FDI for that country. In 2016 when the study was undertaken, such an increase was calculated as being worth an additional £1.3bn for the UK, significantly more than the entire turnover of the British Council. In addition, it prompts a 0.73 per cent increase in international students choosing to come to the country. Again, using the figures from 2015/16 the researchers calculated that this would be equivalent to almost 3,200 additional international student enrolments at UK institutions.

The hard-nosed economics of these gains means that the tax receipts and additional economic activity generated by the increases in FDI and students are more than enough to justify an increase to the grant-in-aid Government funds the British Council with, particularly if it allowed for some additional non-ODA money to ramp up our engagement with the developed world, which is the source of much of our education exports and our FDI.

Over the long term, investment in soft power builds trust, increases attractiveness and bolsters the UK's reputational resilience. The strategic use of long-term commitments and arms-length expertise to build relationships before they are transactionally useful creates conditions favourable for diplomacy, greatly increasing the likelihood of success in negotiations around bilateral trade, collective security or multilateral action on global challenges like climate change.

A forthcoming study by IpsosMORI has found that across the G20 69 per cent of people who had been involved in a British Council programme said they trust the people of the UK, compared with 63 per cent who had been involved in a non-British Council cultural programme, and 58 per cent who had never been involved in a UK cultural relations activity. That trust is hugely important to the UK's prosperity – 15 per cent of people who say they trust the UK say they intend to do business or trade with the UK, compared to only eight per cent who say they distrust the UK.<sup>54</sup>

The activities of the British Council are especially impactful on levels of trust in the UK government. On average trust in government stands at 64 per cent for those that have had a cultural relations

<sup>53</sup> Professor J.P. Singh and Stuart MacDonald, *Soft Power Today: Measuring the Influences and Effects*, Commissioned by the British Council from the University of Edinburgh, October 2017, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/3418\\_bc\\_edinburgh\\_university\\_soft\\_power\\_report\\_03b.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/3418_bc_edinburgh_university_soft_power_report_03b.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Alice Campbell-Cree and Mona Lotten, *The value of trust: How trust is earned and why it matters*, British Council, June 2018, [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the\\_value\\_of\\_trust.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_value_of_trust.pdf)

experience with the British Council versus 51 per cent for those that have had a non-British Council cultural relations experience and 48 per cent who have not had any kind of cultural relations experience with the UK.

According to Joseph Nye, the guru of soft power academic and the inventor of the term 'soft power', investing in diplomacy and soft power is more important than ever before in this new world, networks and connectedness become an important source of power and security. In a world of growing complexity, the most connected states are the most powerful.<sup>55</sup>

Nye was referring to the US but what applies to the US, still the world's leading superpower, applies even more strongly to a middle power like the UK which faces significantly greater competition for influence within its larger class of rivals.

Being a middle power can be uncomfortable when caught between rival great powers, but it can also be a path to success. Nimbleness, openness, a willingness to engage and collaborate characterise the successful middle power. South Korea punches above its weight in the G20 and other international fora because it finds common ground with others to forge mutually beneficial alliances. This is the model for Global Britain. It is a focus on networks, mutuality and the common good, on building familiarity, trust and attraction. And the best way to build trust in the UK is to help people experience it.

The Integrated Review and Spending Review provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to recalibrate the UK's international engagement and chart a fresh course outside of the EU. While the economic realities require hard decisions of Ministers, instead of asking the question as to whether the UK can afford Global Britain, we should actually be asking can the UK afford not to invest in it? For me, the business case is overwhelming and the evidence is clear.

To realise the Government's ambitions and make a success of the many international opportunities available to the UK while simultaneously addressing the very real threats to our security and prosperity will require additional funding for the overall UK effort overseas. Effective deterrence of revanchist powers will only be possible with increases in the MoD and Intelligence budgets. Likewise maintaining the UK's comparative advantage in soft power and its reputational resilience depends on continued support for the cultural and educational assets that contribute so much to the UK's international appeal. At the heart of that work sits the British Council which provided with appropriate funding can deploy those assets in the UK's interests, connecting the best of this country to potential friends, partners and allies around the world. The UK's national power is - or at least should be - greater than the sum of its many hard and soft assets. Strategic alignment backed up with sustainable finance for the whole spectrum of UK capabilities are the recipe to ensure a successful Global Britain.

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *The Other Global Power Shift*, Belfer Center, August 2020, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/other-global-power-shift>



## 7. The UK's internationalised universities and the protection of academic freedom<sup>56</sup>

*By Prof. John Heathershaw, Dr Saipira Furstenberg, and Dr Tena Prelec<sup>57</sup>*

The higher education sector is one of the UK's strengths, which is sometimes presented as part of British soft power. In fact, our universities are increasingly international institutions whose teaching and research, personnel, funding, and even campuses are global. Universities have their own 'foreign policies' where they decide with whom to cooperate and trade, where their members may travel, and so on. However, these activities rest on the protection of the academic freedom which forms the fundamental basis for disseminating knowledge and fostering independent thinking of students and staff members, and requires self-governance and academic job security to ensure this independence.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This article is a revised and abbreviated version of "The Internationalization of Universities and the Repression of Academic Freedom", Freedom House, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/internationalization-universities-and-repression-academic-freedom/>. Image by Antoine Taveneaux under (CC).

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<sup>58</sup> The UK University and College Union's statement on academic freedom outlines five rights: freedom in teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out research without commercial or political interference; freedom to disseminate and publish one's research findings; freedom from institutional censorship, including the right to express one's opinion publicly about the institution or the education system in which one works; and, freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies, including trade unions.

The phenomenon of the 'internationalisation' of universities is a broadly positive force for UK institutions. But these partnerships make them increasingly reliant on income from state sponsors and donors in countries where academic freedom is unknown or severely curtailed. According to Scholars at Risk (SAR), there has been an increase of academic persecution around the world: between September 2018 and August 2019, there were 324 attacks on higher-education communities in 56 countries.<sup>59</sup> In parallel, an erosion of universities' financial and institutional autonomy has been recorded in liberal democracies.<sup>60</sup> The need for funding has forced many major universities to collaborate with governments in authoritarian states, whose policies delimit the space for freedom of expression and thinking by controlling what is taught, researched, and discussed on university campuses and in online partnerships.<sup>61</sup>

The internationalisation of the university presents an opportunity for authoritarian states to assert their influence across borders. *Authoritarian influencing* in universities constitutes an attempt to shape their research and teaching agendas and thus threatens the academic integrity of the institution.<sup>62</sup> *Transnational repression* in this context occurs when individuals—typically but not exclusively students or faculty from an authoritarian state—are subject to repressive measures against their academic freedom and wider human rights. There are four areas of internationalisation that are vulnerable to authoritarian influencing and/or transnational repression: international partnerships and funding; expatriate students and faculty; fieldwork; and overseas campuses. Our findings suggest a fraught environment where authoritarian influencing and transnational repression combine with market dynamics and national security responses to put academic freedom at risk.

### International partnerships and funding

The UK's leading universities have accepted sponsorship from authoritarian regimes accused of human rights violations and links to terrorism, with hundreds of millions of pounds funneled into British higher-education institutions to establish research centers and other kinds of partnerships.<sup>63</sup> Such actions, which may first occur as benign, might have an outward-facing political agenda to gain international respectability. More importantly, they represent new mechanisms for authoritarian regimes to influence the structures of research and be recognised, informally and internationally, as legitimate.

The universities that are most vulnerable to such mechanisms are those relying most heavily on foreign income sources. In 2011, the London School of Economics (LSE) infamously accepted a £1.5 million donation from a charity run by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad al-Qasimi, the ruler of Sharjah—one of the most conservative emirates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—has given more than £8 million to the University of Exeter over the course of twenty years.<sup>65</sup> In 2012, the University of Cambridge received a £3.7 million donation to establish a professorship for Chinese development studies, funded by a charity controlled by China's former prime minister Wen Jiabao.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Scholars at Risk, Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, Free to Think, November 2019, <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Scholars-at-Risk-Free-to-Think-2019.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Scholars at Risk, Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, Academic Freedom & China's Quest for World-Class Universities, September 2019, [https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Scholars-at-Risk-Obstacles-to-Excellence\\_EN.pdf](https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Scholars-at-Risk-Obstacles-to-Excellence_EN.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Kevin Kinser, Global campuses, academic freedom has its limits, The Conversation, October 2015, <https://theconversation.com/on-global-campuses-academic-freedom-has-its-limits-46920>

<sup>62</sup> Thorsten Benner, An Era of Authoritarian Influence, GPPI, September 2017, <https://www.gppi.net/2017/09/15/an-era-of-authoritarian-influence>

<sup>63</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee, Oral evidence: Autocracies and UK Foreign Policy, HC 109, House of Commons, October 2019, <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/foreign-affairs-committee/autocracies-and-uk-foreign-policy/oral/106581.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Jeevan Vasagar, Gaddafi donation to LSE may have come from bribes, inquiry finds, The Guardian, November 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/nov/30/gaddafi-donation-lse-bribes-inquiry>

<sup>65</sup> Exclusive: MPs demand British universities stop accepting donations from dictatorships, The Telegraph, August 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/08/12/exclusive-universities-should-not-accept-donations-dictatorships/>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Such one-off donations, often for capital projects, garner headlines. However, a less visible but more prevalent form of authoritarian influencing occurs through state scholarship programs for study and faculty visits. These are important to universities as they support students paying fees at the lucrative international fee level. At present, UK universities host more than 100,000 Chinese students, which represent an important part of universities' revenue streams.<sup>67</sup> Chinese authorities, for instance, have threatened to withhold Chinese students from the University of Oxford in an unsuccessful bid to force the school's chancellor, Chris Patten, to cancel a visit to Hong Kong.<sup>68</sup> While there are few examples of overt censorship, there are academic testimonies that self-censorship is increasingly widespread.<sup>69</sup> Without a transparent system of recording donations and allowing university faculty and students to hold the institution to account, the integrity of the university can be called into question.

### Expatriate students and faculty

The students and faculty on state scholarship programs, such as Kazakhstan's Bolashak program, are routinely subject to surveillance by their home government security services and often exercise self-censorship accordingly.<sup>70</sup> Unless academic freedom is explicitly protected in these arrangements, collaborations with authoritarian regimes end up curtailing the freedom of academic staff and students to express their views on politically and socially sensitive topics, as well as their freedom to teach and conduct research on topics that are thought to be at odds with the state sponsors' visions.

Sponsorships by foreign regimes create obligations that may encourage UK-based academics and students to steer their research agenda to avoid controversies with their donors. The spectrum of countries mentioned by respondents also goes beyond what we would normally think of fully-fledged authoritarian states. It includes: "very strong pressure placed on UK institutions by the Israeli embassy"; cases of Russian co-authors pulling out of conference presentations "out of fears of repercussion from [their] home university"; Saudi Arabian students asked "to report to their embassy once a month"; and China's surveillance of student societies, which "influences students' choices of dissertation topics away from controversial ones."<sup>71</sup>

However, more common is an indirect threat to academic freedom in the form of self-censorship. One academic stated that he has "observed self-censorship among state-funded Turkish students . . . who avoided making critical comments about their country's politics in front of their Turkish peers and were worried about their MA dissertations being read by their funding institution or others in their country of origin." Students from China, too, were said to be "clearly worried that they would be reported on by other Chinese students." Sometimes, these faculties would themselves indicate the need to tone down criticism of what is taught in the classroom, as per this testimony: "I have censored in classes with Chinese students as I have received difficult pressure from them not to assign anything critical of China."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> British universities must stand up to Chinese pressure, Financial Times, November 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/df27ad90-017d-11ea-b7bc-f3fa4e77dd47>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Saipira Furstenberg, Tena Prelec, and John Heathershaw, The Internationalization of Universities and the Repression of Academic Freedom, Freedom House, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/internationalization-universities-and-repression-academic-freedom/>

<sup>70</sup> Adele Del Sordi, "Sponsoring student mobility for development and authoritarian stability: Kazakhstan's Bolashak programme," *Globalizations* 15, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>71</sup> Saipira Furstenberg, Tena Prelec, and John Heathershaw, The Internationalization of Universities and the Repression of Academic Freedom, Freedom House, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/internationalization-universities-and-repression-academic-freedom/>

<sup>72</sup> Saipira Furstenberg, Tena Prelec, and John Heathershaw, The Internationalization of Universities and the Repression of Academic Freedom, Freedom House, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/internationalization-universities-and-repression-academic-freedom/>

### Fieldwork and partnership with foreign researchers

Restrictions on academic freedom are also found in the practice of research and data collection. This may take the form of depriving academic critics of their personal liberty and individual freedoms or banning those scholarly activities that are not aligned with the regime's vision. Scholars have been attacked, killed, detained, or prosecuted conducting fieldwork, with the recent cases of the long-term detention and maltreatment of Durham's Matthew Hedges and the killing of Cambridge's Giulio Regeni garnering worldwide attention.<sup>73</sup>

Much more commonplace than these high-profile cases is the fact that a large part of the world remains a politically unfree environment for academic research, a phenomenon increasingly discussed in the academic literature on fieldwork in practice.<sup>74</sup> Scholars working on sensitive topics are often forced to limit the scope of their investigations due to the difficulty of obtaining visas or the risk of endangering their fieldwork contacts. While conducting fieldwork, foreign academics work with local research assistants, translators, and other academic partners. However, local partners are often subject to far greater state surveillance and pressure from authorities.<sup>75</sup>

The responses of the UK security services may be counter-productive where they are treat these issues as matters of security. One academic noted that "British intelligence, specifically MI5, asked me to secretly debrief students returning from China about their Chinese contacts," while another mentioned "Home Office pressure regarding activism—perhaps not explicit pressure but investigation into [our] activities."<sup>76</sup> Such actions merely feed the perception that UK-based students and staff are agents of the British state.

### Overseas campuses

The internationalisation and commercialisation of universities has increased the outsourcing of higher education abroad. The opening of campuses overseas has raised a number of controversies due to the choice of host countries, which have oftentimes coincided with states oppressing civil liberties and human rights. According to data compiled by the Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT), as of 2017, most UK overseas campuses are based in China (9), in Malaysia (6), and in Middle Eastern countries (11).<sup>77</sup> The establishment of these branches is, in the majority of cases, financially subsidised by the foreign government. Yet, sometimes this support comes with restrictions on subjects to be taught or researched.

In most cases, the university selects a range of topics to be taught that are not controversial, posing no challenge to the domestic political or social order. As noted by John Nagle, Reader in Sociology at the University of Aberdeen, who spent four months as a visiting professor at the UAE's national university: "Rather than encouraging critical thinking, education in the UAE rests on a technocratic logic. Education is supposed to help its society resolve tricky social problems and maintain the status quo."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Emma Snaith, Matthew Hedges: British academic jailed by UAE for 'spying' says government did not do enough to help him, *The Independent*, May 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/matthew-hedges-uae-spy-durham-government-foreign-office-a8900546.html>; Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Ruth Michaelson, Cambridge University professor at centre of row over Giulio Regeni death, *The Guardian*, January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/03/cambridge-university-professor-row-giulio-regeni-death>

<sup>74</sup> For example, Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Morten Boas, *Doing Fieldwork in Areas of International Intervention: A Guide to Research in Violent and Closed Contexts*, Bristol University Press, June 2020, <https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/doing-fieldwork-in-areas-of-international-intervention>

<sup>75</sup> Kirsten Roberts Lyer and Aron Suba, *Closing Academic Space*, ICNL, March 2019, <https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Uni-restrictions-rpt-final-March-2019.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Saipira Furstenberg, Tena Prelec, and John Heathershaw, *The Internationalization of Universities and the Repression of Academic Freedom*, Freedom House, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/internationalization-universities-and-repression-academic-freedom/>

<sup>77</sup> Cross-Border Education Research Team, *A Robust Hub for Cross-Border Education*, <http://cbert.org/>

<sup>78</sup> Academic freedom: I spent four months at UAE's national university – this what I found, *The Conversation*, October 2018, <https://theconversation.com/academic-freedom-i-spent-four-months-at-uaes-national-university-this-is-what-i-found-105254>

## Conclusions

The internationalisation of higher education has enabled authoritarian states to exert new forms of influence and effectively 'transnationalise' everyday forms of censorship and political repression to students and faculty both at home and abroad. Many of these forms of influence appear to be indirect, in that they derive from self-censorship or risk management. These include the risk of the loss of the right to travel, of the right to host students, or of the likelihood of receiving donations. Evidence remains scattered, and further research on this under-studied topic is ongoing by the authors.

The risk to academic freedom, however, is not solely from such states. These risks are enhanced by market mechanisms that generate unregulated competition between universities over the funding they offer and national security responses from democracies, which directly restrict academic freedom.<sup>79</sup> Neither market forces nor a security-based approach is likely to help protect academic freedom from transnational repression and authoritarian influencing.

What can be more effective is the establishment of a code of conduct – on foreign donations and campuses, on protecting expatriate students and faculty, and on training and support for fieldworkers – such as the draft proposed by the Academic Freedom and Internationalisation Working Group. Ultimately, adoption of such common standards and measures must be transparent, allowing for a relationship of accountability between university leaders and their students and staff.

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<sup>79</sup> The US has begun to dramatically restrict links with China and arrested a number of U.S. academics, while Australia has introduced stronger new guidelines; The University Foreign Interference Taskforce – Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector, Australian Government, <https://www.education.gov.au/ufit>



## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

*By Adam Hug<sup>80</sup>*

This publication has brought together a range of different perspectives that recognise the need to build on the UK's existing international capacities and activities, while reforming, refining and where necessary refocusing them. This will mean bringing together the right blend of the best parts of both the FCO and DFID to create an institutional culture combining expertise, flexibility and transparency; ensuring there is policy and operational coherence both within the department and with its international obligations; effective policy coordination across Government; and ensuring it can lead cooperation with external partners both in the UK and overseas, Harpinder Collacott's four 'Cs'.

The FCDO needs to find new ways to bring in the stakeholders, the public and Parliament into the development of new country, regional and cross-departmental strategies, including a Government-wide human rights strategy. It needs to ensure that capacity is expanded rather than lost to enable diplomats to deal with the department's growing workload. To help improve effective government and its global leadership efforts, it must protect existing transparency mechanisms such as ICAI and ensure its procurement policies are robust, accountable and in keeping with the UK's values.

If the Integrated Review is going to set out the UK's new international strategy, it must build from a clear assessment of its existing assets. While sometimes difficult to quantify, it is clear that soft-power remains one of the UK's enduring strengths, something to nurture and build on to help Britain continue to get a hearing around the world. At this time of pandemic and pressure on the public purse it is imperative for the UK's long-term strategic reach that institutions like Universities, the

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BBC and the British Council, its globally relevant civil society, cultural and sporting sectors are able to survive and thrive, avoiding short-term asset stripping. The UK's role as a cultural, civil society, media and higher education hub is of huge importance to help it maintain its international relevance in the years to come. It should also seek to protect institutions such as Universities and Parliament from the influence of authoritarian powers. While it responds to new challenges and identifies new priorities, the UK must also not forget areas where it has shown past leadership. Whether it is on Women's and LGBTQ rights, PSVI, abolition of the death penalty, support for the rule of law and the rules based international system, protecting and building on its existing strengths will help the UK to prepare for the future and ensure its foreign policy remains firmly rooted in its values. So protecting and reforming the UK's institutions, soft power assets and its capacity to govern should be at the heart of the Integrated Review.

**This publication makes a number of recommendations for Government. It should consider:**

- Ensuring the FCDO builds on the best traditions of its predecessor departments by:
  - Improving diplomatic capacity, including direct support for Ambassadors and through the use of Special Representatives;
  - Protecting and nurturing expertise;
  - Promoting the four 'Cs'- a Culture of transparency, policy Coherence, Cooperation with stakeholders at home and abroad and Collaboration across Whitehall;
  - Developing new publically accessible country, regional and human rights strategies, through enhanced public, stakeholder and parliamentary engagement;
  - Sustaining longstanding UK leadership on PSVI, Death Penalty, Rule of law and the importance of multilateral institutions; and
  - Retaining full aid scrutiny through ICAI and a new parliamentary Select Committee.
- Enhancing transparency, accountability and the importance of values in the operations of Government, particularly in areas such as procurement.
- Protecting the soft power strength of the BBC, British Council, the UK universities, civil society, cultural industries and sporting sectors.

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