Executive Summary

After a prolonged period of introspection and tensions with longstanding partners, this publication shows the many different ways in which a Global Britain can reinvigorate its relationships with allies, alliances and institutions. The UK can show that it is willing to do the hard work to retain and build alliances with like-minded countries to make regional and global systems work in both the national and international interest. In order to build trust the UK should demonstrate that it still believes in the intrinsic value of international cooperation as more than simply an instrumental tool in its foreign policy kit because as an internationally focused middle power the UK benefits enormously from promoting wider global acceptance of international institutions and established norms.

Irrespective of the UK’s Asia-Pacific aspirations, the UK’s security priorities are still overwhelmingly focused on Europe and so the UK needs to find a new way of working with the EU once the current sound and fury has subsided. This can start at an operational level where UK Embassies and EU Delegations can re-establish cooperation and information sharing on the ground in third countries and international institutions. In the future it may be possible to revisit issues such as formal foreign policy and security cooperation, as part of a future EU-UK Partnership and Cooperation Agreement or Strategic Partnership. Irrespective of the state of UK-EU relations Britain will need to redouble its efforts in the other European focused forums such as NATO, the OSCE and Council of Europe, with an emphasis on supporting the work these institutions do to promote democratic values.

Globally the UK must build on its strong position at the UN and take full advantage of its leadership of both the COP and G7 in 2021 to set out an ambitious agenda for the UK’s future foreign policy. It should seek to build on ideas around a ‘Democracies-10’ (D10), by promoting expanded G7 membership to include South Korea and Australia. It should find new ways to promote engagement with the democracies of the global south and support UK NGOs and institutions such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to play a bigger role in democracy promotion. The UK will need to work flexibly and creatively with longstanding partners in new formats such as the Alliance for Multilateralism, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) coalition, as well continuing current efforts to build greater collaboration between the ‘CANZUK’ countries, though recognising the geographic and economic limitations to the scale of such ambitions.

Based on the findings put forward in this collection, there are a number of recommendations that the UK Government and other partners could consider including:

- Finding a future framework for UK-EU cooperation in foreign and security policy and other non-trade areas, while rebuilding operational-level information sharing and cooperation;
- Enhancing parliamentary cooperation between the UK and European Parliaments and strengthening UK delegations to the NATO, OSCE and CoE Parliamentary Assemblies;
- Funding projects conducted by the OSCE and Council of Europe’s human rights mechanisms and supporting election observers as well as secondments and leadership candidacies;
- Working with the Commonwealth on modern slavery and supply chains, while promoting the Commonwealth Charter and the use of aid and trade to improve compliance with its principles;
- Using the UK Presidency of the G7 to refocus the organisation as the group of leading democracies by expanding its membership to include South Korea and Australia, while reinvigorating outreach to global south democracies;
- Supporting the UK’s role in democracy promotion by supporting British NGOs and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy; and
- Working creatively with forums like the Alliance for Multilateralism and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) coalition, while developing further CANZUK cooperation.
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1. Introduction: Partnerships for the future of UK Foreign Policy

By Adam Hug

Alliances and partnerships have been at the heart of the UK’s foreign policy throughout its history and they will be central its future. While at different points in history the UK has been more or less engaged, diplomatically and militarily, with its neighbours on the continent or others around the world, despite popular myth in some quarters to the contrary, Britain has rarely stood truly alone for long.

However, this publication comes at a time when the precise nature of the UK’s future relationship with the EU remains unclear, though irrespective of the outcome of the negotiations the immediate scope of formal cooperation is significantly diminished, even from the May-era plans. As the UK seeks to move forward from this tumultuous period it will need not only to rethink how it works with the EU and its Member States but how it plans to work with other partners around the world not only bilaterally but particularly in existing multilateral institutions and new forums. The UK will need
to show that it understands the interests of its partners as it tries to build on existing areas of cooperation and find new ones if it is to move forward effectively as a ‘Global Britain’.

So this publication examines both the UK’s relationship with some of the most important existing multilateral and international institutions including the UN system, NATO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth. It looks at the scope for future UK-EU collaboration around shared interests and values, in the absence of a deep and structured partnership in foreign and security policy, while also examining the future of the US-UK relationship in a challenging and potentially changing environment. It also explores the possibilities of new formal and informal coalitions of like-minded countries to defend human rights and liberal democracy against growing authoritarian threats.

**The importance of multilateralism**

The delayed, but hopefully imminent, Integrated Review will provide an important opportunity to lay out what the Government sees as its vision for the UK’s future engagement with multilateralism and the international rules based order. There are clear signs in its statements and actions that the Government is moving away from seeing the international rules based system as an end in itself and towards a more instrumental approach, though it has talked in terms of still supporting the core tenets of multilateralism. This may stem not only from this Government’s particular concerns of being bound by agreements that limit its freedom of action, a desire expressed clearly in its Brexit end state policy preferences, but also from the a realpolitik assessment of the emerging shape of the international order and the Government’s response to it.

It is undoubtedly true that the UK and its allies no longer dominate the creation and shaping of the rules to the same extent that it used to, with countries in the global south more strongly asserting their interests. While such a more instrumental approach may seem attractive to some from a tactical perspective, it poses the obvious question as to why others who have not had a dominant role in setting the rules should be expected to follow them (something successive UK Governments have encouraged them to do for decades). A world where China is a major international force and the global south is more coordinated and confident in a range of different forums is not something that has come a surprise to the UK and other Western powers. It is only right that global power becomes more equitably distributed in many areas, while recognising the risks posed to the international system by authoritarian states as set out in the ‘The principles for Global Britain’ publication.³

However many, including this editor, still believe that the international rule-based world order does have an intrinsic value, both morally and in terms of global stability, which is worth defending. This is particularly true for an internationally focused economy and society such as the UK, which benefits from having an international order with consistent rules and relative reliability rather than one red in tooth and claw. As the outgoing President Trump has shown, it is hard to make a transactional approach work even for a country the size of the US and it is not a way of operating that will prove effective for the UK.

This publication does not seek to beatify the UN or other international bodies, nor to ignore the dysfunction that many of them face. As is set out in this and previous publications in the series the UK will have to do a lot of hard work to retain and build alliances with like-minded countries in different areas to make the global system work in both the national and international interest but it is imperative that it does so. The UK will also need to be able to have a functioning relationship with China, Russia and other powers that it has principled disagreements with on issues that transcend

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political systems and ideology such as climate change and the maintenance of international peace and security in areas that do not threaten the interests of respective parties.

**Traditional partners and institutions**

It is something of an understatement to point out that the Conservative Government has substantially shifted its approach to the future relationship with the EU since September 2017 when it said that the UK: ‘will seek to agree new arrangements that enable us to sustain close UK-EU cooperation that will allow us to tackle our shared threats. The UK therefore envisages cooperation on external action to be central to our future partnership, complementing broader national security and law enforcement collaboration to tackle complex, multi-faceted threats.’

Under Boris Johnson’s leadership there have been no substantive discussions (at least not that have been shared with the public) between the UK and EU about a future foreign policy relationship forming part of any putative post-transition deal. Efforts to pin the blame for potential failure in the negotiations on the other party will sap mutual goodwill into the medium term, even if a last minute fix is found. Even after passions have cooled and the focus is able to rise from the minutia of trade negotiations it is unlikely the UK Government in its present form will want to pursue a particularly deep or structural future partnership on foreign and security policy with the EU. As Rosa Balfour says in her contribution to this collection the time for pragmatic proposals for future UK involvement and association with EU foreign and security policy have gone, for now. The UK has already taken steps to proactively partner with non-EU powers on initiatives and statements, most notably and fruitfully in Canada, and the Foreign Secretary has actively encouraged diplomats to act in ways which show the UK has left the EU. However, it is important to ensure diplomats, and where political will exists, are not discouraged from continuing to find ways, both traditional and creative, to keep working together with the EU institutionally where it is in the UK national interest, a new modus vivendi that recognises the enduring nature of many still shared values. The UK may wish that more could be achieved by purely bilateral initiatives with key EU partner countries but as the progress of the trade negotiations have shown member states are loathe to do things that could potentially undermine or side-line EU institutions in areas where the EU has competence on their behalf. The UK is no longer a member state seeking to build alliances to shape EU decisions on which it has a say, but it is now a third country and which will necessitate working with the EU External Action Service and EU Commission where these institutions are delivering the agenda of member states.

So in the medium to longer term it would still be extremely helpful for the UK have some form of structured agreement or at least a semi-structured engagement with the EU around foreign and security policy. This is in recognition of: the somewhat process-driven ways in which the EU conducts its foreign policy (managing the interests of 27 member states), shared values between the UK and EU and the EU’s institutional weight in areas of interest to the UK. As Professor Jamie Shea points out in his essay: ‘the UK had the opportunity even from outside the EU to associate itself with these developments when it concluded the Political Declaration on the Future Relationship at the same time as the Withdrawal Agreement.’ The Declaration opened up many prospects for cooperation on terrorism, intelligence and data exchange, UK participation in CSDP missions, observer status at some EU foreign and defence ministers meetings and European Councils and third party access to certain EU capabilities programmes where it has something to contribute’ but that these are not opportunities the UK has decided to take up. He also points out that the absence of the UK in the EU is likely to further expedite the expansion of EU competences in the area of defence and security, which will hamper both the British desire to expand bilateral defence cooperation with EU member states.

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states and shift certain discussions away from NATO, the UK’s long-preferred venue for security cooperation.

As Shea points out the Government currently sees ‘Brexit as giving it equality of status with the EU and therefore will not accept to be a non-voting participant or observer at EU meetings’. Even if a future government is not as wedded to this particular view it will be a continuing issue of political contention. Irrespective of whether a trade deal can be done, either now or in the future, it is to be hoped that the UK and EU can find a way to agree either a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement or a Strategic Partnership Agreement that can formalise future non-trade cooperation and facilitate peer to peer level structured engagement and dialogue, including periodic summits and official meetings. A way could potentially be found within such a framework to operationalise greater information sharing and dialogue over the development of both the EU’s Common Foreign and Security policy and the UK’s foreign policy.6

Another feature of such an agreement could be to provide structure to future dialogue between Parliaments. For far too long the level of understanding about how EU institutions operate at Westminster has been sub-optimal, with the average UK Parliamentarian’s previous engagement with the European Parliament often mediated through interactions with their party’s MEPs, usually in either social or political campaigning situations that didn’t provide particular illumination about the European Parliament’s role or ways of working. At present, there is no EU Parliament Delegation to the UK, though the European Parliament retains a liaison office in London based at Europe House, home to the EU Delegation to the UK.7 International engagement overall by the UK Parliament is something of a patchwork with formal delegations reserved only for participation in the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE, NATO and Council of Europe.8 At the other end of the spectrum of formality are the All-Party Parliamentary Country Groups, ad hoc groupings of MPs have no funding or administrative support other than that provided by the MPs themselves or external sponsors (including often the Embassies of the country in question).9 In the middle sit the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the British-American Parliamentary Group (BAPG) whose UK chapters have offices within the Parliamentary Estate and coordinate collaborations between parliamentarians from countries within their memberships.10 It is the BAPG, with alternating annual conferences, Governmental-backing and part financing from the UK Parliamentary Authorities, which could provide the model for the UK side of a future structured dialogue between the UK and European Parliaments that both sides would benefit from.

As the UK completes its withdrawal from its structured relationship with the most significant pan-European institution it is important that the UK seeks to find ways to redouble its efforts to engage with the other major institutions that bring the UK in to contact with its European partners, notably the OSCE, Council of Europe and NATO. The particular challenges the UK needs to respond to in relation to these organisations are addressed in the essays by Anna Chernova, Prof Jamie Shea and

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6 The UK would have to think creatively about what that might look like given that it would not be appropriate for EU representatives to sit in on existing ministerial level meetings. A recent paper by Ian Bond of CER provides a more substantial analysis of the range of different cooperation models open to the UK and EU. See: Ian Bond, Post-Brexit foreign, security and defence co-operation: we don’t want to talk about it, CER, November 2020, https://www.cer.eu/publications/archive/policy-brief/2020/post-brexit-foreign-security-and-defence-co-operation-we-dont


8 Delegations to Parliamentary Assemblies, UK Parliament, https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/delegations/


10 There is also the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly, which is clerked by officials from the British Parliament and the Irish Oireachtas which has a formal standing under the Good Friday Agreement since 1998. See: Secretariat, British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, http://www.britishirish.org/secretariat/
by Dr Alice Donald and Prof Philip Leach respectively. All three institutions have faced significant structural challenges in recent years, the first two due to increasing tensions driven by growing authoritarian assertiveness from Turkey, Russia and a number of others in the post-Soviet space; the latter by the interaction between the Trump Presidency’s abusive approach and the long-standing failure of many members to meet their agreed defence spending obligations.

The incoming Biden administration provides NATO with some breathing space but the structural problems remain around funding, capability, the US pivot to Asia, the role of Turkey and the EU’s growing competences in the defence and security arena. The UK has long opposed this latter development but will find it harder to raise such objection from outside the EU and in the absence of a structured agreement with the EU, as mentioned above, the UK will have to find new ways to make NATO structures for collaboration more attractive if it wishes to stem the further flow of responsibility from NATO to the EU.

The OSCE and Council of Europe have a lower profile in the British public debate, though the latter sometimes gets thrust into the limelight when a row over the findings of its European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) reaches tabloid attention. Their Parliamentary Assemblies, though deeply flawed, provide important opportunities for international dialogue between Parliamentarians. However perhaps more importantly both institutions provide the architecture for a number of human rights bodies and conflict resolution mechanisms that play an important role, particularly in the post-Soviet space, in underpinning the values Britain seeks to promote. These include not only the ECtHR, but the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, the Venice Commission (the European Commission for Democracy through Law), the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE’s Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and its High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). As part of the Integrated Review and new thinking about the use of UK aid, the Government could explore ways to directly fund projects by these mechanisms to promote open societies and human rights in countries that meet the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for aid eligibility.

As Donald and Leach point out the UK’s occasionally fraught debate about the ECtHR already has helped give political space for Russia and other authoritarian countries to downgrade their level of compliance with Court rulings. The long-promised but recently announced review of the UK’s Human Rights Act, includes a focus on the relationship between domestic courts and the ECtHR, carries the risk of undermining the situation still further if not handled with care and an international perspective that ensures the UK’s adherence to the European Convention on Human Rights and ECtHR rulings are maintained. Both the Chernova and Donald and Leach essays also raise an important point, made previously by this author as well, that the UK should find ways to improve the stature and relevance of UK delegations, something that could include enhancing their cooperation with Government, relevant Select Committee (particularly the Foreign Affairs and Defence Select Committees in the Commons and the Lords International Relations Committee(s)) and the Joint Committee on Human Rights, as well as loosening control of party whips and the Prime Minister by allowing direct election by MPs.

With democracy under threat throughout the region, the Government should find ways to protect and expand its active participation in the OSCE ODIHR’s gold standard independent election

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observation missions that often provide the only credible assessment of democratic performance on the ground within the OSCE region. If opportunities arise the UK should be more proactive in putting forward qualified candidates to head in country offices on secondment and it should find ways to encourage and support UK officials who wish to take time out of their FCDO careers to work in the administrations of these organisations, as well as considering potential candidates for the top jobs in future.

Once touted as the future of the UK’s post-Brexit foreign and trade policy the Commonwealth itself has not been place at the centre of the recent British debate, with focus narrowing to collaboration with its largest and most developed members as set out in the next section. This is perhaps in recognition of the divergent global priorities of many of the Commonwealth’s members, many of whom often operate through global south bodies such as the G77 at the UN. In their essay in this collection, Sanjoy Hazarika and Sneh Aurora highlight ways in which the UK could be proactive in working with and through the Commonwealth to promote human rights and good governance. They argue that the UK could lead the Commonwealth in addressing issues around Modern Slavery and abuse in supply chains that link both developed and developing members of the organisation.

One further idea might be looking at ways in which the Commonwealth Charter, adopted by the 53 member states in 2012 and signed by the Queen in 2013, could be increasingly used by the UK as a framework to underpin its relationships with Commonwealth countries and promote the values contained within it. Although the document is not a binding treaty it is an agreed statement of shared values and aspirations by the member countries made less than a decade ago. The UK could utilise charter as a tool alongside UN treaties to shape its emerging approach to greater human rights conditionality in the distribution of UK aid.

At a global level the UK’s position as a member of UN Security Council’s permanent members, the role as the third largest financial contributor and significant diplomatic presence give it a continuing position of institutional influence as Richard Gowan and Enyseh Teimory point out in their essays. The UK is currently seen to have played its hand effectively at the UN, on issues including the Iran nuclear issue, climate and Sudan. The UK’s re-election to the UN Human Rights Council until 2023, having recently served a term ending in 2019, will continue to give the UK a platform to advocate for its values. The UK could, however, do more in this regard by supporting more UK nationals to serve on UN Treaty Bodies and as UN Special Rapporteurs (SRs) and for the Government to respond in a more considered fashion when SRs’ criticise the UK’s own policies, even though it may not agree with them, given that it regularly encourages other countries to work with SRs and adopt their findings.

This section started with the future of the UK’s relationships with the European pillar of its traditional alliance structure and ends with the relationship with Washington. Despite the ongoing tumult and further damaging of democratic norms as President Trump heads for the exit, the
incoming Biden administration should provide an opportunity to bring greater stability and focus to transatlantic relationships including with the UK, particularly by cooling concerns over the future of NATO. Much has already been made of the Biden team’s scepticism towards Brexit and how the change of administration pauses any immediate opportunity for a UK-US trade deal, a process that was already replete with political challenges. Given the scale of Trump’s unpopularity with the vast majority of the British public, including the majority of Conservative voters, a Biden Presidency could take considerable political heat out of future US-UK cooperation.\(^\text{19}\)

In London, the Government has been energetically trying to use the UK’s leadership of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and its commitment to tackling climate change as a way of redefining perceptions in the Democratic Party about the British Conservatives under Johnson. Given the level of priority being given to climate by Biden, the COP in Glasgow provides an essential mechanism for facilitating collaboration between London and Washington but the UK’s withdrawal from the EU will still shift the nature of the relationship over the medium term. Despite the British political elite’s obsession with US politics, the row over the Northern Irish protocol suggests a lingering blind spot in terms of understanding Congressional priorities. There may be scope for encouraging the US Embassy in Washington to expand its bipartisan congressional outreach, to balance its traditional focus on engaging the Administration of the day. This could be complemented by enhancing Parliamentary engagement beyond periodic visits by Select Committees and support for the British-American Parliamentary Group.\(^\text{20}\)

**New partnerships**

In addition to climate, another central pillar of the incoming Biden Administration’s foreign policy agenda is likely to be the promotion of democracy, including a pledge to convene a ‘Summit of Democracies’. Similar ideas have been floated by previous US leaders with President Obama suggesting the need for a ‘Concert of Democracies’ or former Senator John McCain’s calls for a ‘League of Democracies’ but the scale of democratic retrenchment gives greater urgency to such initiatives. There has been a flurry of different suggestions about how to formalise such initiatives in to new organisational structures, with the idea of a ‘D10’ that adds countries such as South Korea, Australia and potentially India to the G7 gaining traction. The still lingering shock to the international system of the Trump years, the continuing rise of China, the spoiler role played by Russia and the expansion of authoritarianism around the world provides a clear impetus to such efforts. Another separate but often interlinked driver is a desire to increase cooperation in the field of digital cooperation and regulation to prevent authoritarian powers from setting the rules of the game including in emerging areas of AI and cyber security.

As the UK holds the Presidency of the G7 in 2021 it has the ability to play a pivotal role in shaping the evolution of such efforts. One central challenge it faces is in deciding which ‘D’ is most important for any such project. Since the decision to exclude Russia from the G8, the G7 has in effect reverted to being a forum for the larger economically advanced democracies but one, bar the notable exception of Japan, with a traditional transatlantic focus.\(^\text{21}\) The idea for a D10 has its genesis in US State Department-led convening policy planners of allied states since 2008 that has evolved into a broader set of initiatives since 2013, involving participating Governments and organisations such as the Atlantic Council, the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMFUS) and the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI- home to Aaron Shull and Wesley Wark who write in this

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\(^{21}\) The G20 has increasingly taken over the G7’s former role in providing leadership on Global issues.
collection). The D10-Strategy Forum, where the ‘D’ stands for Democracies, brings together the G7 member nations, the EU (which attends G7 meetings) plus South Korea and Australia, meets annually since 2014, and there have been a number of calls for G7 to formally expand to mirror this format.

Yet particularly during 2020, in the context of increasing tensions with China, discussions have turned to use such a forum as the backbone of a new digital security alliance, overlapping with discussions about using the current Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance as the basis for similar collaboration. The question of whether the ‘D’ stands for Democracy or Digital would not only shape the institutional priorities of the new organisation but potentially its membership. A critical decision would be over the inclusion of India – a country whose security ties with the US, Japan and Australia are expanding through the role of ‘the Quad’ in the Indo-Pacific region and that continues a low-level conflict with China over border disputes in the Himalayas, but which also has for many years acted with different priorities to the current G7 at the UN and in other international forums.

However, under Prime Minister Modi there is every sign that democracy, certainly in the sense of a liberal democracy subject to rule of law and with protections for minorities, in the country is in significant retreat. So if the promotion of ‘Democracy’ is the paramount goal for this new organisation, then now is not the time for India to be welcomed into such a forum, and the G7 expansion should be limited to bringing in South Korea and Australia to mirror the existing informal arrangements of the D10-Strategy Forum.

This is not to say there is not scope for further economic and security cooperation but any engagement needs to try to avoid legitimating Modi’s erosion of democratic norms and ensuring the new format can proactively respond to the global crisis of democracy. The UK should try to avoid its post-Brexit desire to boost trade with India from becoming interlinked with such decision-making. Also for issues relating digital infrastructure more thought be given on how to involve the EU and member states, notably Sweden and Finland given their tech companies (Ericsson and Nokia) are central to efforts to provide alternatives to Chinese made systems. So there is a strong case for new architecture for managing digital threats being complimentary, potentially overlapping with, but broader than the focus for any new ‘D’ format institution.

While building and strengthening relationships with other consolidated democracies it is essential to find ways to improve relations with a broader range of likeminded partners, particularly in the global south, something that is both inherently of value but also essential to prevent isolation on the world stage. So irrespective of whether or not India under its current leadership is included in any revised group of large democracies, there is clearly a need to also reach out more to a large group of democracies in some capacity. In his essay Thomas E. Garrett makes the case that his organisation, the Community of Democracies (to which the UK is an active contributor), could be a platform to do this. There is certainly an important case to avoid unnecessarily reinventing the wheel, given the existing infrastructure and signatories to the Warsaw Declaration, however thought would need to

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23 Such as: Ash Jain and Matthew Kroenig, Present at the re-creation: A global strategy for revitalizing, adapting, and defending a rules-based international system, Atlantic Council, October 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/present-at-the-re-creation/


27 The EU is already included in the G7 format and needs to play an active part but any plans for full membership could not feasibly work if unanimity under the Common Foreign and Security Policy was required to agree to communiques and other agreements through the forum.
be given to setting more exacting standards for democratic compliance (given some of the currently participating states) that in turn led to greater benefits for participants.\textsuperscript{28} New ways should be found to promote the experiences of countries like Mauritius and Costa Rica to ensure that democracy promotion is not only about modelling behaviours found in the ‘West’.\textsuperscript{29}

Increased cooperation between democracies must try to avoid creating unnecessary divides with members of the G77 (the group of 134 developing nations that often make joint statements in concert with China), particularly those who are themselves democracies or genuinely seeking to reform.\textsuperscript{30} If such democracy focused alliances end up being used primarily to drive the economic objectives of rich powers in opposition to the interests of developing economies rather than shared objectives it would be an enormous strategic error. It would exacerbate rather than reduce the structural inequalities in the international system and open the door for authoritarian powers to further position themselves as the friend of developing nations against Western arrogance. Similarly, as Teimory and others point out, the UK and others need to avoid falling into a rigid cold-war style binary as there are issues, particularly climate change, that require active collaboration with non-democracies and where interests and values may align irrespective of government type. Active and nimble diplomacy will be needed to avoid pro-democracy initiatives triggering additional authoritarian collaboration unnecessarily.

Any UK diplomatic leadership on new global initiatives should be bolstered by efforts to enhance its support for democracy promotion, governance and human rights. This has been a common theme of the previous publications in this series, which looked at ways that the FCDO’s new priority on supporting Open Societies could be used to buttress initiatives by British NGOs and academics, as well as better aligning aid and trade with human rights objectives.\textsuperscript{31} In addition to such initiatives, the UK has an opportunity to support the further expansion of both the capacity and scope of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the UK’s arms-length democracy promotion institution.\textsuperscript{32} Despite its recent growth it remains far smaller the US’s National Endowment for Democracy (and its related institutions NDI, IRI and the Solidarity Centre) or a number of the Government supported German Stiftung (such as the Konrad Adenauer or Friedrich Ebert Foundations).

As set out above, the UK needs to find new forums to engage with European partners and the Alliance for Multilateralism, a Franco-German led initiative, discussed in Thorsten Benner’s essay, could provide a flexible platform to do that, particularly in the context of flexibility being a core objective of the UK’s emerging approach and the strong track record of notably Anglo-German cooperation at the UN, as noted in Gowan’s contribution.\textsuperscript{33} The UK has so far participated in this forum at official and junior Ministerial Level but involving the Secretary of State in future would boost British presence and profile in these forums.

\textsuperscript{28} The Community’s breadth is both a strength (in terms of potential reach that can help those on genuinely democratic transitions) and a weakness given that Governing Council includes countries such as Morocco and Mali (in the wake of its coup) that are not democracies as well as countries such as Hungary and Poland that can no longer be classed as Liberal Democracies. See: Community of Democracies, Governing Council, https://community-democracies.org/values/governing-council/


\textsuperscript{30} The Group of 77 at the United Nations, Latest Statements and Speeches, https://www.g77.org/


\textsuperscript{32} The WFD is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Its funding for the most recent financial year, 2019-20, was £16.2m, over double its position in 2015-16. See: Funding and Accounts, WFD, https://www.wfd.org/transparency/funding-and-accounts/

\textsuperscript{33} Alliance for Multilateralism, www.multilateralism.org
As touched on in earlier publications in this series, the UK is also looking to build on its close historic and cultural ties with Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Recent partnership working has been most pronounced with Canada, through initiatives such as the jointly chaired Media Freedom Coalition and joint statements on Nagorno-Karabakh and Hong-Kong (where they were joined by Australia). As Shull and Wark point out the UK and Canada “have a number of comparable interests in the conduct of global affairs […] both benefit from a stable rules-based global order and from certainty within international institutions” and, perhaps something that still needs internalising for some British commentators, “both Canada and the UK are too small to throw their weight around, like China and the United States.” There may well be scope to further expand collaboration within an informal ‘CANZUK’ grouping given the range of shared interests and values but this will not fully overcome the realities of geography that shape differing regional economic and security priorities for each partner. The UK may see its links to Australia and New Zealand as a springboard into the Pacific but more thought needs to go into identifying what either country would get out of such an approach. Proposals to turn such CANZUK cooperation into a formal alliance (of any great depth) should be treated with some scepticism given these differing priorities, pre-existing regional ties and primary economic relationships. The UK needs to ensure it is proactively engaging with these countries on the basis of mutually agreed current priorities rather than assumptions about a shared past.

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What our authors say

Rosa Balfour writes that mutual trust between the EU and the UK has been in freefall during the tense year of negotiations with the British government. Yet it is in the interest of both sides to find ways to cooperate on foreign and security policy in the future. The change of guard in the US offers a unique opportunity to give a new lease of life in relations across the Atlantic, including between the EU and the UK. In light of continuing tensions across the Channel and the primacy of promoting key interests – ‘sovereignty’ for the UK and the Single Market for the EU – this essay offers some recommendations on how to start rebuilding trust and where to seek opportunities for pragmatic cooperation.

Professor Jamie Shea notes that the Brexit saga has not focused much, if at all, on the future role of the UK in security and defence. In part, this is because of the acrimony surrounding the UK withdrawal agreement and subsequent trade talks, which has not allowed London and Brussels to lift their sights towards more strategic vistas or to define future common threats and security interests. Yet the lack of interest by the British Government is also explained by its belief that UK membership of NATO gives them most of the influence and advantage they need in European security debates. There is also an assumption that ‘Global Britain’ will be done with the US and Asia-Pacific partners rather than with the EU countries just across the Channel. The UK also believes that if it needs to operate with EU member states this can be done via bilateral or regional frameworks rather than working with the Brussels institutions. Yet are these assumptions correct? This essay argues that NATO is unlikely to satisfy the UK’s need for a regular, structured strategic dialogue with its continental neighbours and as it faces many of the same threats and challenges, such as illegal migration, terrorism and organised crime, it will inevitably seek to re-engage with the EU. Moreover as the EU pursues its goal of ‘strategic autonomy’ and develops its own defence industry base and capability projects the benefits to the UK from closer cooperation can only grow.

Dr Alice Donald and Professor Philip Leach analyse the UK’s relationship with the Council of Europe. Traditionally, a strong supporter of the Strasbourg mechanisms, relations in recent years have been decidedly rocky. Nevertheless, in the post-Brexit era, the time is ripe for the UK to reset its relationship with the Council of Europe and reclaim the moral and political leadership that it once showed. A range of Council of Europe entities are carrying out essential work on issues which are key areas of focus for the UK, including media freedom, LGBTI rights and gender-based violence. The UK should also grasp the opportunity to bolster the European Court of Human Rights as a bastion of judicial independence for the continent, especially at a time when such independence is under serious threat in EU states including Poland and Hungary. By pressing for the implementation of certain key Court judgments, the UK would help shore up regional and international security and support the development of open societies across Europe. The Council of Europe is the preeminent means for the UK to exercise ‘soft power’ influence across the continent and thereby to champion the rules-based international order.

Anna Chernova argues that the UK enters a year of change in foreign policy, multilateralism and the Global Britain agenda is taking center stage. To maintain global standing post-Brexit, a Global Britain must seek to reinvest in strategic relationships, championing the rules-based international order. She believes the UK’s membership and political investment in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is a critical space for effective UK investments on issues of conflict prevention and mitigation, as well as upholding rule of law, democracy and human rights – all critical components of human and collective security. Given reduced national foreign policy capabilities, and shifting UK geo-political focus to Asia, while managing risks in the Sahel and Eastern Europe, the FCDO, Parliament and others have an opportunity to maximise security and development impact through the broad OSCE membership.
Sanjoy Hazarika and Sneh Aurora set out a vision of how the UK can work to promote human rights more effectively through the Commonwealth. They argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated many existing human rights challenges across the Commonwealth, particularly for millions trapped in modern slavery and other abusive working practices, including in global supply chains. To ensure that government intentions to uphold human rights do not remain only on paper, they say that the UK, as the current Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, should proactively push for the implementation of commitments and action plans previously made by Commonwealth members.

Richard Gowan’s contribution addresses how the UK’s role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and as an influential player in the UN more generally, provide an example of London’s leadership role in multilateralism that can help show that Britain’s withdrawal from the European Union is not a rejection of international institutions and cooperation more broadly. He looks at the way the UK, fairly successfully, collaborates with a range of different partners at the UN to achieve its goals.

Enyseh Teimory writes that at a time when Britain’s place within the global order is changing, its role within international organisations - particularly the UN - must be a foreign policy priority. In this time of flux, Britain must recommit fully to multilateralism and play its part in strengthening and upgrading our global institutions. Through ensuring it is a model member state, and by forging new cross-regional alliances, the UK can strengthen its position at the UN, help efforts to reform the organisation, and positively support the multilateral action needed to tackle global challenges.

Thorsten Benner argues that despite Brexit there is a lot that Britain and the EU can do together to strengthen multilateralism where they share a similar analysis of the challenges at hand. Berlin in particular would welcome UK support for the Alliance for Multilateralism, a flexible platform to defend international law and agreements, revitalise international institutions as well as deepen cooperation in new areas. In 2021, the UK will assume the G7 presidency and also host the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. This gives the post-Brexit UK a chance to leave its mark on the multilateral stage. It will be good for the UK to have EU partners by its side in this endeavour. And Benner believes it will be good for EU members to be able to count on the UK as a partner in the efforts to strengthen multilateralism.

Aaron Shull and Wesley Wark’s essay focuses on the urgent need to reconceptualise doctrines of national security through international coordination and collaboration. Specifically, it emphasises that a sufficient response capability is needed to identify pandemics as a national security threat, while largely dissociating this threat from a traditional understanding of the role and functions of security and intelligence systems. The Five Eyes alliance is identified as an important forum for discussion of a new approach; for instance, for countries such as Canada who have never produced an overarching biosecurity strategy, much can be learned from the tactical efforts of states such as the UK. More pointedly, there is also an opportunity for the UK and Canada who have several comparable interests in the conduct of global affairs, to work together to advance their mutual interests in a range of international fora as we push into an increasingly uncertain and unstable world.

Thomas E. Garrett argues that there is an undeniable need for the UK to participate in universal membership-based bodies such as the UN and, as seen in the current COVID-19 pandemic, in international organisations like the WHO. Increasingly, policymakers in the FCDO identify the added importance of UK membership in values-based multilateral bodies to defend human rights and democracy. In this context, he addresses the role his organisation, the Community of Democracies, is and can play in taking such initiatives forward.
2. After Brexit: Recasting a UK-EU dialogue on foreign policy

By Rosa Balfour

2020 will be remembered for the Coronavirus pandemic, the end of Donald Trump’s US Presidency, and the year in which Britain finally left the EU. It was also the year in which London and Brussels missed the opportunity to lay the foundations for continued cooperation on foreign policy because of the unfolding of Brexit politics on both sides of the Channel.

Looking at the past year from its tail end, with the imminent arrival of a staunch Transatlanticist at the White House and the world in disarray, a framework to support UK-US-EU cooperation on global challenges would have energised the optimism about a different steer to international politics after four years of roller-coasting uncertainty.

Instead, in 2021 the conversation between the UK and the EU on foreign policy will have to start from scratch. Whereas the British Government led by Theresa May had expressed an interest in working with the EU on foreign and security matters which was reflected in the Political Declaration,

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the negotiating team of the Johnson Government showed no interest in the subject matter.37 Throughout the year, negotiations wilfully ignored any foreign and security issue.

What does Britain want?
Throughout 2020, the signs coming from the UK Government suggested that the politics of Brexit and the affirmation of British sovereignty included a deliberate detachment from any appearance of cooperation with Brussels on foreign and security policy; also for public consumption. The UK wants to move out of its European circle and take a worldwide horizon. As Boris Johnson himself put it, “we have the newly recaptured powers, we know where we want to go, and that is out into the world.”38

This is underscored by both the rhetoric and the poverty of practical collaboration on matters of common concern. But the rhetoric on Britain’s vision of its place in the world is still confused and confusing. The ideas circulating include the ambitions of Global Britain, the group of ten democracies, even a revival of the Five Eyes group as a political forum.39

To give substance to the vision of Global Britain, the Government launched an unprecedented wide-ranging Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, the results of which are still to be published. Yet the signs that Britain’s foreign policy of the next four years will be driven by ideology are strong. Ahead of the publication of the Integrated Review, the Prime Minister announced a massive investment in defence spending and a cut in overseas development aid, abandoning its international commitment of spending 0.7 per cent of GNI on development aid, a choice widely criticised as undermining the UK’s credibility as an international player.40

Events on the other side of the Atlantic, however, ruffled up the British Government’s feathers, which had hedged its bets on transactionalist and divisive international politics. President-elect Joe Biden’s reiteration that the US would not support any agreement with the EU that would undermine the Good Friday Agreement and his repeated insistence on reaching out to allies, with a strong emphasis on the EU, does not bode well for the UK’s Brexit-driven ideology. Since then Johnson has been playing ‘catch up’ to reach out to Washington.41 A US Administration focused on rebuilding international cooperation will create a context more favourable to rebuilding EU-UK relations.

Haphazard EU-UK coordination
Brexit politics imposed a policy of minimal and inconspicuous cooperation outside the public eye with the partners with whom the UK until recently consulted or coordinated large parts of its foreign

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and security policy. Private and informal conversations and information exchanges still take place at the level of practitioners, but public statements are geared towards giving the appearance of an autonomous British foreign policy and selective engagement with partners – with the EU as the least favoured, as the Brexit-driven public discourse imposes.

Recent instances show a marked preference for ad hoc cooperation only if necessary and convenient, with few key states and within formats other than the EU. On sanctions, for example, coordination has been haphazard. With respect to Belarus, the UK (with Canada) issued negative measures against individuals in Minsk before the EU (and the US) had agreed on their packages. The EU and US coordinated their respective measures, but the EU was then blocked and delayed due to its own internal divisions – a case in which EU internal shortcomings affect its international credibility. By contrast, the response to the poisoning of Alexei Navalny saw the two sides coordinate their responses, following the blueprint of the Skripal case of 2018.

Britain once was deeply involved with the EU on crafting policy towards Libya and Turkey. With France, it led the military intervention in Libya in 2011; with respect to Turkey, it was among the architects of the EU-Turkey relations that have been in freefall for the past few years. Today, cooperation on Libya and Turkey is ostensibly confined respectively to the UN and NATO formats.

The only European format in which the UK has continued its engagement since the 2016 referendum is the E3 group formed by the France, Germany and the UK, which has continued to meet and issue joint statement regardless of Brexit negotiations. Originally formed to engage in talks with Iran, and still focused mostly on JCPOA-related matters, the group has gradually started to discuss broader issues, including since the Brexit referendum, and may be seen as an embryonic European Security Council as proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron.

The view from Brussels

Seen from Brussels, the struggling talks have led to a progressive loss of trust in the UK as a future partner and a hardening of the EU’s position. From the very start of Brexit talks, the EU coalesced around an unexpectedly strong defence of the Single Market and of Ireland’s sovereignty, fending off every attempt from London to undermine the unity among the member states. These have only served the purpose of bringing the EU closer together in ways that are rarely seen in other matters and that could help the EU “bounce back.” Until the very end, the EU refused to grant the Prime Minister access to his peers to discuss the negotiations and was forced to engage with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

The biggest hit to trust in the UK was the Internal Market Bill and its breach of good faith obligation of the Withdrawal Agreement with respect to the solutions found to protect the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement. Eventually, following the launch of legal procedures, the EU and the UK
solved their differences, but the loss of trust in the UK’s commitment to international law will take time to rebuild.\textsuperscript{48}

In the EU, so long as the negotiations were ongoing, the debate on how to cooperate with Britain on foreign and security policy was frozen. The unit to deal with the UK was created in the directorate dealing with Western Europe, the Western Balkans, Turkey and the UK of the European External Action Service – the EU’s diplomatic arm – but crafting a policy and rebuilding the relationship, even at an operational level was put on hold pending the outcome of the negotiations. British diplomats stationed in Brussels do entertain informal channels for dialogue, also with officials of EU member states’ representations, but there is no official protocol or method for engagement.

**The case for rebuilding relations UK-EU relations**

The erosion of trust between the two sides casts a dark shadow over the future of cooperation between them. The UK, determined it can do better without the chains of the EU, has taken every opportunity to prove so; the EU has sought comfort in the notion that without Britain it can move ahead more easily. The case for turning the page after these difficult years of negotiations is harder to build but is still compelling. Cooperation is in dire need at a time of great international turbulence. Joe Biden’s victory in the US Presidential elections present a unique opportunity. His Administration will insist on bringing allies closer together and on strengthening US dialogue with the EU.

From the point of view of the EU’s security policy, the departure of one of the two European countries with meaningful defence and military capacity is a net loss. And on foreign policy, the UK was a key player in shaping EU foreign policy, thanks to its global network of relations and diplomats.

But even from the point of view of the UK, cooperation with the EU can provide benefits. However, Global Britain’s ambitions, Europe’s neighbourhood is also Britain’s neighbourhood. Britain’s preferences with respect to Russia, for example, will benefit from cooperation with both the US and the EU—on sanctions and intelligence sharing, on fighting money laundering and organised crime, and on countering foreign interference in domestic politics.

The global balance of power has been shifting towards rising actors which position themselves in adversarial contrast to a shrinking ‘West’ and giving space to actors promoting disorder and confusion on regional scales. The return of the US to global governance and to the politics of alliances is a unique opportunity to strengthen the international values Britain claims to hold dear and strengthen the ‘West’. Doing so will require working with the EU.

**What can be done?**

Prior to the abysmal negotiating year of 2020, there were plenty of pragmatic proposals to keep the UK involved and even associated to EU foreign and security policy through formal and informal procedures and solutions.\textsuperscript{49} The time for those ideas has gone. EU needs to forego, for now, the hope that the UK will participate in any institutionalised arrangement. The foreign policy of the British Government is ideologically driven; EU action is heavily process-driven. The gap between the two is one of the causes of Brexit. But this does not exclude the possibility of ad hoc cooperation where principles and interests converge.

Still, there are plenty of other areas where the UK and European counterparts can re-engage, especially under the rubric of resetting the Transatlantic relationship. Europeans will be expected to


lean heavily into supporting the Washington’s return to the JCPOA. Here France, Germany and the UK have an uninterrupted history of cooperation at the level of the E3 in which the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was present as a key negotiator vis-à-vis Iran.

At the multilateral level, the EU and the US are likely to work in tandem on health, vaccine distribution, and reform of the World Health Organization. The UK should join these efforts as a natural partner and avoid the temptation of competing with peers on vaccines. WTO reform, trade issues, taxation of digital revenue flows, and fighting the climate crisis are all areas where there could be joint action, especially in 2021 when the UK will chair the G7 and COP26 conferences. If such cooperation is framed under the aegis of the Transatlantic relationship, the UK Government may avoid giving the impression that it is working with Brussels.

The EU recently approved the rules to engage third parties in defence cooperation. The UK is highly unlikely to be interested, but other forms of engaging the UK on security and military affairs can be found through NATO. NATO-EU cooperation has been an achievement of recent years and is likely to be strengthened. This could provide a venue for the European NATO members and the UK to engage. It will then be a responsibility for the EU to bring the EU non-NATO members up to speed on security policy – as well as on all matters of EU relevance conducted outside the EU format, such as the E3 talks.

Sanctions and human rights, now that the EU too has caught up with the US and the UK in giving more teeth to its sanctions toolbox, could offer other opportunities for cooperation. Here, however, the EU will need to show its worth as it often lags behind its partners in condemning human rights abuses as well as following up with policy.

Even if the current British Government will evade any appearance of institutionalised cooperation with Brussels, dialogue can restart at the operational level to share information and exchange views of emerging challenges and approaches to solve them. In particular, the EU Delegations working in third countries and international institutions can find ways to engage systematically with British representatives alongside the EU-27. Cooperation in the field, a daily feature of the work of diplomatic staff posted abroad, is a strong vehicle for rebuilding trust bottom-up and could be helpful in recreating formats from which the UK is excluded because of Brexit.

The EU too needs to learn its lessons from Brexit. The EU’s preference for process and institutionalisation, which is one of its strengths, also has its downsides. It is unattractive and burdensome to engage with third parties – and in this case the third party is allergic to it. In the likelihood of a new investment on rebuilding transatlantic and multilateral alliances, the EU needs to be flexible in how it presents itself to the world and facilitate engagement in various forms. Once trust is rebuilt, the time will have come to make sure those new relations between the EU and the UK are anchored to a firmer ground.

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3. The UK and European defence: Will NATO be enough?

By Professor Jamie Shea

During her time as British Prime Minister handling Brexit, Theresa May was fond of pointing out that “the UK is leaving the European Union but it is not leaving Europe”. How could it be otherwise? UK security and defence policies have always been tied to the premise of not allowing a hostile (or a single power for that matter) to dominate the continent or to disrupt the “tranquillity of the European balance of power” (as the Congress of Vienna put it). Britain tended to achieve this in the past, not by entering into permanent alliances with continental powers, but by concluding shorter-term arrangements as needs dictated. Its participation in five out of the seven coalitions against Napoleon and later in the Crimean War and two world wars is a case in point. Wherever possible Britain tried to pay others to restore the balance of power on its behalf or it offered preferential trading agreements. Where necessary, it dispatched an army to the continent to provide a helping hand. Unsurprisingly in the world wars this was known as the British Expeditionary Force, which nicely conveyed the impression that once the troublemaker had been defeated, and following a short period of occupation to ensure compliance with the terms of peace, the force would be withdrawn. Britain sought no permanent role on the European continent but saw itself as the ‘offshore balancer’. In this role, Britain fought against most of the major European powers, and against some of the smaller ones as well, at one time or another.

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Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street and Rt Hon Theresa May MP, We have voted to leave the EU, but not Europe: article by Theresa May, Gov.uk, February 2017, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-have-voted-to-leave-the-eu-but-not-europe-article-by-theresa-may

Finding Britain’s role in a changing world
It is worth recalling this tradition of continental disengagement as once again the UK renounces a European commitment and looks again to the deep blue sea rather than the Channel (although lasting for 47 years this latest European entanglement has had a larger impact on Britain’s domestic politics, economy and society than the previous, mostly military ones). This time round, the withdrawal is in the area of economics and politics rather than in security and defence. So it is the mirror image of Britain’s traditional foreign policy which was to achieve precisely the opposite. It is also only a partial reorientation. The UK is leaving the EU but not NATO. Indeed UK ministers have been at pains to reassure their allies in central and Eastern Europe that the UK’s permanent military commitment to the collective defence of their territories will not change as the result of Brexit. It is a commitment ultimately backed by the British strategic nuclear deterrent, which is included in NATO’s nuclear planning (contrary to that of France). The UK has doubled down on NATO to underline this policy continuity. It is one of only seven European allies to meet the NATO target of spending of at least two per cent of GDP on defence. Indeed it was, together with Greece, the first to do so after NATO took this collective decision back in 2014. It is one of four allies to lead a multinational battalion in Eastern Europe as part of the alliance’s forward deployment to deter Russia. The UK contributes significant forces to NATO’s major exercises and regularly sends fighter aircraft to the Baltic States and Romania for air policing duties.

The UK has also over the years played a key role in all of the alliance’s operations, sending large contingents and occasionally assuming command, as in Kosovo or Afghanistan. Indeed two of NATO’s most controversial missions post-Cold War, the air campaigns in Kosovo and Libya, largely happened not because of American but British leadership. Tony Blair rallied NATO into action over Kosovo and David Cameron over Libya. On both occasions, the US was rather reluctant. The UK also hosts NATO’s maritime command (Marcom) at Northwood and a number of US air and naval bases too. In short imagining NATO without the UK role and contribution would be like trying to imagine the EU without Germany. Even in the years when the UK was a happier and more enthusiastic member of the EU (for instance working on the internal market in the 1980s or enlargement policy in the 1990s), it was always sceptical about the added value of an EU role in security and defence. NATO was there already to ensure US participation and a strong Article 5 collective defence guarantee. Consequently, the alliance’s proven mechanisms of joint commands, integrated defence planning and multinational operations would only be fragmented - and thus fatally weakened - by any attempt by the EU to muscle in on the NATO success story. The fact that the EU’s aspirations for security and defence cooperation at this time seemed to London to be driven more by motives of closer political integration and international profile than by any hard security needs or insufficiencies in the workings of NATO made the UK doubly sceptical.

The British could not stop the EU going ahead with setting up its own defence structures (such as a Military Committee and planning staff or an EU Defence Agency) nor from launching its first missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). However, London did put on the brakes by trying to limit duplication with NATO and to hold up the establishment of an EU operational headquarters, which for London seemed redundant given the presence of thousands of NATO military planners at SHAPE. Under the so-called ‘Berlin Plus’ arrangements worked out in the 1990s these planners would be available to assist the EU with its own missions and NATO could supply the British Deputy Supreme Allied Commande4 (DSACEUR) to function as the coordinator between the two institutions. So why the need for expensive additional EU planners? The UK has rarely adopted positions based on ideology rather than pragmatism. It commanded the EU naval counter-piracy operation (Atalanta) in 2012, given its concern to keep vital maritime trade routes open. It was also happy to participate in any European (or EU financed) technology and capability programme that offered real value, as in the Tornado and Eurofighter jet aircraft, the European Space Agency or the Galileo satellite development. Yet this said the UK saw the new EU security and defence policy more
as an example of over-reach by the EU and a threat to its sovereignty than as an opportunity to have an extra and more versatile instrument than that offered by NATO for Europe to defend its interests in the neighbourhood. In addition to these political aspects, London also expressed constant scepticism that the Europeans were ever likely to come up with the common strategic vision, resources and capabilities to achieve real ‘strategic autonomy’. So why invest in something that was unlikely to take off in the first place?

The UK was fortified in its opposition to a high level of ambition for the EU’s security and defence policy by the enlargement of the EU in the early years of this century. It brought into the EU countries from Central and Eastern Europe who historically have been suspicious of Russia and doubtful of the validity of purely European security guarantees. These countries have looked overwhelmingly to the US and NATO for their security and have been wary of additional solidarity burdens that the CSDP and Brussels would be put on them (for instance in joining French forces in the Sahel or having to take an expansive view of the solidarity commitments under Articles 42.7 and 222 of the EU’s 2010 Lisbon Treaty).56 This said, it has been easy for these central and Eastern European countries to hide behind the UK in the past so as to not unduly upset Paris or Berlin in their joint ventures to take the CSDP to the next step. Brexit will make this balancing act less comfortable for them. They may not want to send troops to Mali but they will certainly be interested in drawing the financial and technology benefits from participating in the new EU funded capability programmes like Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund. Yet one thing is clear. The departure of the UK from the EU is both an opportunity and a risk for greater EU efforts in security and defence. On the one hand, it lifts the UK brake and allows the remaining EU members to move forward - if that is indeed what they are resolved to do. On the other hand, it takes out of the EU defence equation a major military power with a global reach and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The UK has currently around 25 per cent of overall EU spending and would contribute 20 per cent of its overall capabilities, particularly at the more combat related, high end of the spectrum where electronic and cyber capabilities and intelligence, reconnaissance and space based communications are ever more important.57

Some observers have predicted a declining UK military power post-Brexit due to the six per cent contraction in the UK economy that leaving the EU even with a minimal trade deal is forecasted to cause. Sooner or later the defence budget would be cut and the armed forces subject to a severe spending review. The break-up of the UK if Scotland becomes independent has also been invoked as it would lead to the potential loss of military bases, shipyards and the Scottish regiments that have been the backbone of the British army for centuries. Yet, at least for now, these prognosticators of UK military decline have been contradicted by the defence spending plans of the current Conservative Government. Despite massive borrowing to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, it recently announced an extra £16.5 billion for defence over the next five years with the building of 13 new frigates for the Royal Navy, the establishment of a Space Command and a rocket launch in 2022, an AI agency and a National Cyber Force. According to Prime Minister Johnson, this major spending effort “ends the era of retreat” for Britain’s power projection capabilities.58

Of course, the Government had made generous spending promises to a large number of stakeholders (particularly in the new Conservative constituencies in the north of England). With the bulging COVID driven deficits there is no guarantee that the defence commitments will be

58 Helen Warrell and George Parker, Boris Johnson promises biggest UK defence investment for 30 years, Financial Times, November 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/684a9881-c964-478b-b87b-84aa697810f2
honoured. Moreover already the legally binding commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of GDP to overseas aid has been jettisoned (cut to 0.5 per cent) which suggests that the Government sees the future of ‘Global Britain’ more in terms of its ability to send its new Queen Elisabeth 2 aircraft carrier to the South China Sea than to profile itself as a development aid superpower. Yet, if the Conservative Government stays in power for the next few years and is able to modernise and upscale the UK armed forces the loss of all this extra capability to the EU CSDP will make it even harder for the remaining 27 EU countries to project the EU as a geo-political heavyweight on the world stage. Particularly when it comes to a military role and presence in a demanding operation beyond the immediate periphery of EU territory. EU credibility is not helped by the fact that, with Brexit, 80 per cent of NATO spending will be done by the non-EU members of the alliance, even though together they represent only a third of NATO’s current membership of 30 countries.

So the military minus to the EU of Brexit is clear. Yet where does this leave the UK in terms of its future relationship with Europe in security and defence? Is a minus for Brussels automatically a plus for London? What does the UK stand to gain or lose?

In the short term the UK’s stepped up defence efforts (already welcomed by the incoming Biden administration) will increase the weight of the UK as Washington’s primary global ally. During the Obama years, there was talk of the US transferring this role to France as it took on new counterterrorism roles in the Sahel and Syria often alongside US special forces. France could project some (limited) power to the Asia-Pacific - where it retains territory - and was willing and able to engage elsewhere in Africa and the Middle East (Djibouti and the UAE) at a time when the intervention weary UK was pulling back from Afghanistan and Iraq. The talk - no matter how vague - about ‘Global Britain’ backed up by the new forces should help to make London the first place that Washington calls when crises loom. A strong Washington-London axis increases the UK’s weight in NATO as it reassures the allies in central and Eastern Europe (and Scandinavia as well) that they have a European partner who can lobby for their interests in Washington while at the same time helping to drive forward within the alliance reforms that the US wants to see; such as meeting the two per cent spending target, focusing more on disruptive technologies and standards and putting China on the table at the North Atlantic Council.

The question here for the UK is: how does it see the future of NATO? In the past the UK has sometimes had an ambivalent attitude towards the alliance. While in public it has always been a loyal supporter, in private it has questioned the effectiveness of the NATO bureaucracy, the relevance of its defence planning process, the transparency and accountability of its financial management and its ability to quickly adjust to new security threats and challenges. The UK has always kept the option of working through smaller groups and coalitions of the willing. So its perception of NATO’s role and relevance today will determine its own ambition for the alliance and the amount of resources and effort it is ready to put in. Does it see NATO largely in its traditional role as a watching and waiting collective defence organisation keeping a check on Russian assertiveness? One which gives the UK considerable strategic influence in Europe, even if it is no longer in the EU, as well as in Washington, and allows it to conduct a large number of diplomatic relationships via NATO both bilaterally and multilaterally? For instance by being part of the informal Quad in the alliance, alongside the US, Germany and France, or a valued member of other smaller and influential groupings, such as the Group of Experts which the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, has set up to advise allies on how to improve the political functioning of the alliance. Or will the UK have a much higher level of ambition for NATO? In recent years, the UK has been at the forefront of efforts to turn NATO into a much more comprehensive security organisation doing much more than simply collective defence. It has put cyberattacks, hybrid warfare scenarios, disruptive technologies, space as a fifth domain of military operations and most recently climate change on the alliance’s agenda. It has pushed for NATO to extend its relationships with like-minded democracies.
in the Asia-Pacific, and has advocated the Open Door of continued NATO enlargement to countries in the Balkans at a time when some of the European allies (such as France and the Netherlands) have gotten cold feet. At the moment, and given the rising awareness of the systemic challenge posed by China particularly in the area of tech sovereignty, there is interest in both London and Washington in a ‘D10’, a new alignment of the major democracies to uphold liberal values and the rules based form of multilateralism. Could NATO, with its new focus on broader security and tech issues and its network of partnerships, be associated with this emerging order or even be the hub where the dialogue of the democracies is structured and coordinated? Will Johnson and Biden see eye to eye in transforming NATO to take on this greater political role as the venue for the transatlantic strategic dialogue, and to enshrine this in the alliance’s new Strategic Concept, which should be updated in 2021?

Many former NATO Secretary Generals have called for NATO to be given a more political dimension but so far without success. Allies have gone their own ways (most recently Turkey) with little prior consultation or warning. The US for its part preferred to work bilaterally with individual capitals or with an emerging EU superpower as an extension of the US-EU trade talks or the G7. But now there is a new opportunity to reposition the alliance and Stoltenberg has already invited Biden to attend a NATO summit soon after his inauguration in January. How will London try to shape these developments and can it put NATO rather than the EU in the driving seat? The EU has produced its own strategy paper calling for an EU-US alliance on global issues and offering to defuse transatlantic trade disputes. It is also looking for an early summit with Biden who has more sympathy for both sides of the Brussels institutional jigsaw than his predecessor, Trump. So which way will the cookie crumble? President Macron and Chancellor Merkel will clearly welcome a more vocal US commitment to NATO (and in the case of Merkel a decision by Biden to overturn the withdrawal of 12,000 US troops from Germany that President Trump announced suddenly last summer). Yet they are also committed to the goal of EU Strategic Autonomy and military self-reliance even with a more EU and NATO friendly occupant in the White House. They have seen Americans elect a nationalist-populist once and come close to doing it a second time. So they know that this was not a blip or an aberration but a sign of a changing US where the Trumpian America First course of a superpower gone rogue could be resumed in four years’ time.

Consequently, France and Germany are likely to want to promote the EU as the European pillar of the transatlantic dialogue. They will argue that it handles the current agenda of trade, supply chains, pandemics, tech security and data and norms in a way that NATO does not. It was ironically Macron who started the debate on NATO’s future when he called NATO ‘brain dead’ last year in his interview with The Economist. Yet neither Macron nor Merkel will want to see big global issues decided in a forum where the US has a majority of supporters and the EU has no caucus or common position - even if EU leaders attend NATO meetings more frequently these days to brief on their activities. They will try to convince Biden to support overtly the goal of EU Strategic Autonomy as the only way to have effective European burden-sharing and more responsibility in stabilising the EU’s neighbourhood at a time when the US will inevitably be pivoting more towards the Asia-Pacific and China. Beyond demonstrating that it is still in the military big league, the political question is how does the UK position itself in this emerging EU-NATO tussle in a way that it keeps its credibility with both sides but is not reduced to a simple go-between? Will the UK derive the diplomatic influence and strategic leverage from all the extra cash and capabilities that it is now putting into NATO?

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59 Trump announced this withdrawal on Twitter last June. It was subsequently confirmed by the Pentagon. However the funding for the withdrawal and relocation of the US troops has not been included in the current Defence Authorisation Act that Congress has approved. This makes some European policymakers hopeful that the incoming Biden administration will not go through with it.

There are two other aspects to the UK’s future role in security and defence that will make this a continuing and difficult issue post-Brexit.

The first is the fact that the EU institutions are not going to go away. They will suffer from the UK’s departure but they are already moving on. The EU has set up its Battlegroups, its annual defence review process (CARD), its Strategic Compass threat assessment exercise, its crisis response cells and its airlift and logistics commands. The EU is currently running 16 CSDP operations and EU member states are heeding the calls from Paris for more solidarity - as the despatch of special forces from Estonia, Denmark and the Czech Republic to join the French in the Sahel has shown. The EU is now putting serious if still insufficient funding into its multinational capabilities programmes and military mobility to move forces across Europe. The European Defence Agency reports that it has a capability programme now up and running to cover all the shortfall areas identified in its Capability Action Plan. The strong advocates of EU Strategic Autonomy would no doubt like to go faster but the direction of travel is clear. Step-by-step the EU is developing into a security union and gradually gaining control of its technology, data and critical supply chains.

The UK has once again chosen to ignore these developments or to play down their significance. Yet EU institutions have a habit of grinding down the differences among its member states, and the sense that the EU is now living in a far more carnivorous world where it needs hard power and to be comfortable in using it is gaining hold across the bloc. So do not bet against the EU. The UK had the opportunity even from outside the EU to associate itself with these developments when it concluded the Political Declaration on the Future Relationship at the same time as the Withdrawal Agreement. 61 The Declaration opened up many prospects for cooperation on terrorism, intelligence and data exchange, UK participation in CSDP missions, observer status at some EU foreign and defence ministers meetings and European Councils and third party access to certain EU capabilities programmes where it has something to contribute. The Political Declaration is a non-binding document and the UK Government has so far chosen to ignore it. It sees Brexit as giving it equality of status with the EU and therefore will not accept to be a non-voting participant or observer at EU meetings. Instead of a structured institutional relationship, with defined obligations and benefits, it much prefers an ad hoc and topic driven dialogue where it sees value in joining EU initiatives. It also prefers bilateral arrangements as part of ad hoc coalitions of the willing stemming from its multiple existing partnership frameworks. These include close cooperation with the Scandinavians in the Northern Group, with France as part of the Lancaster House treaties and its joint expeditionary force or with the Netherlands and the combined amphibious brigade. For some time already, the UK has pursued European defence integration through these bilateral and regional frameworks outside the EU institutions and often building on practical cooperation achieved in operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans.

EU leaders have tried to accommodate the UK’s desire for informal cooperation. President Macron has established a European Intervention Initiative to pool experience and undertake joint planning for operations in Africa and other counter-insurgency zones. The EU has also invited the UK to be a third party participant in its PESCO and European Defence Fund (EDF) projects. Some former EU leaders have proposed a European Security Council where France, Germany, the UK and the NATO Secretary General and EU Council President could gather to coordinate grand strategy or manage breaking crises. 62 So far, the UK has not picked up on these ideas although it is sending 250 soldiers to reinforce the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali. Where the UK has had to withdraw from EU

62 Decision of the EU Council on third party participation in EU defence collaborative programmes, October 2020. The conditions attached to this participation are that the EU decision must be unanimous and the invited third party country must share the EU’s values and have something concrete to contribute. The European Security Council was first proposed by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and has been much debated in Brussels since.
capability projects it has begun work on its own national alternatives, such as for the Galileo military encrypted signal or its sixth generation Tempest fighter aircraft project (together with Sweden and Italy). Yet as more and more European security and defence activity is pulled into the formal EU structures, and the EU exerts its geo-political weight, the UK’s own security interests are bound to be impacted by what the EU does or does not do. Over time, the bilateral and regional frameworks will count for less and the UK may well regret passing up on the Political Declaration and the opportunity to negotiate a position of influence with the EU while it still had maximum negotiating leverage as a departing member. Ultimately, influence can come only from being within formal decision-making circles. There will be one in Washington and one in Brussels and the UK will not be in either. It will be a medium sized power with good intelligence, insights and useful pragmatic advice; but it will not be able to play the role of transatlantic inter-connector as it could when it was part of the EU.

The second challenge concerns the future NATO-EU relationship. As NATO takes on new security tasks it is becoming more reliant on EU expertise and resources. This is true in terms of exchanging data real time during big cyberattacks like WannaCry, or medical information on the COVID-19 pandemic, or on the vulnerabilities to critical infrastructure like telecoms and power grids on which NATO relies for its military operations and exercises. The EU is due to spend €1.5 billion on upgrading its long distance road and rail transport links between Western and Eastern Europe and this will enhance also the alliance’s military mobility. The EU and NATO are also cooperating actively on spotting and countering hybrid warfare campaigns. They have set up units to work together to track and rebut fake news and disinformation and they are now organising parallel crisis management exercises to harmonise their procedures and operational cultures.

Based on two Joint Declarations, the NATO-EU relationship now embraces 74 areas of practical cooperation. As the overlap between the two institutions intensifies, the major influence will clearly go to those countries which are members of both the EU and NATO and which can steer the harmonisation process from both sides of Brussels. Given the shocks it has faced in recent years from terrorism, cyberattacks, pandemics, chemical weapons attacks, illegal migration and power outages, the UK has a special interest in these homeland defence and resilience issues that are now the driving force of the NATO-EU rapprochement. Yet the problem here is that the EU is far less forthcoming than NATO when it comes to giving third party partner countries a special status in its security debates. Whereas NATO has granted EU members Sweden and Finland a high degree of access to its political consultations, force planning and exercises, the EU has offered no reciprocal arrangement to the non-EU allies. This has long been a bone of contention in its relationship with Turkey. Ankara has expressed its displeasure by limiting the scope of NATO-EU talks in the past to military operations in the Western Balkans. The EU has argued that due to its legal treaties and pillar structure it has less flexibility in blurring the lines between member and non-member states. At least Turkey can stake its claim to greater participation rights in the CSDP based on its membership application to the EU and the ongoing (if stuttering) accession negotiations. The UK, leaving the EU, has less leverage here. So the big question for the UK post-Brexit is does it encourage more NATO-EU overlap in order to foster a common approach to resilience and perhaps other issues such as how to stabilise the European neighbourhood? Or does it try to keep the EU and NATO permanently apart in order to avoid the constitution of an EU caucus or pillar within the alliance that would supplant the old Quad? By asserting the primacy of NATO in defence the UK preserves its own leading role, particularly at a moment when the EU has just proposed to the incoming Biden administration the formation of a new EU-US Council on Security and Defence. Yet at the same time would it be putting its politics of sovereignty and freedom of manoeuvre ahead of its security interests, which lie in a more cost-effective synergy of EU and NATO resources and efforts? There needs to be a debate here.
Finally, we come to Global Britain. It remains an idea in search of a concept. It is all very well building more military capabilities to project power beyond Europe and the North Atlantic. Yet for what purpose? During the 19th century the Royal Navy protected Britain’s global trading routes. It had a network of ports and coaling stations across the globe and was ready to intervene to prevent challenges or disruptions to the global trading system. But in an age when data is transmitted globally within seconds from screen to screen, and wealth is based on knowledge more than goods, there is no need to go back to policing the oceans. UK deployments will no doubt be part of coalitions, but who will be the partners here and for which contingencies? Mainly humanitarian and disaster relief or for geo-political roles as well? Is the UK giving up a European commitment to take on new commitments elsewhere, for instance in the Middle East or Asia? Is it going to try to acquire bases in these regions and return to an ‘East of Suez’ posture, for example by having one of its carriers and a naval or air task group deployed east at any one time? Woody Allen once said that “ninety percent of success in life is just showing up.” Yet what is needed as part of the ‘Global Britain’ debate is a serious political consideration of what the UK’s security and defence interests are beyond Europe and its neighbourhood; and how military power projection can support its diplomatic goals and counter threats beyond the immediate satisfaction of nurturing partnerships or showing the flag.

In the final analysis, the UK’s security priorities today are still overwhelmingly focused on Europe. It is Russia that carries out chemical attacks in Salisbury; illegal migrants arrive from Calais; Russia flies its planes close to British airspace; terrorists from Libya strike a concert hall in Manchester; and foreign fighters returning from ISIS criss-cross Europe on their way home. The key roles for the armed forces still lie in defending NATO allies in Eastern Europe and keeping the lines of communication across the North Atlantic open. Despite Brexit and the rhetoric of ‘taking back control’, the UK has continued to rely on Europol for vital information on terrorism and organised crime. It appreciated the solidarity of its EU partners in collectively expelling Russian diplomats after the Salisbury Novichok attack. Moreover, on issues like Belarus, the Russian incursion into the Donbas, the Iran nuclear deal, the Arab-Israeli peace process, handling China or advancing climate change goals at the upcoming COP26 in Glasgow, or working through the WTO and other multilateral bodies, the UK has found itself more aligned with EU positions than the US during the Trump years. In conclusion, Europe is losing the UK in terms of its grand project of political unity. But the UK cannot afford to lose Europe as it tried to do in the past. Its security and defence interests are now too bound up with those of its European neighbours for a redefinition, let alone a clean break to be feasible.

The years since the Brexit referendum have been spent talking about the terms of separation and divorce, about regaining sovereignty and setting off in totally new directions. The drama of the new has compensated for its vagueness. Yet eventually politics have to re-align with core security interests, particularly those that are most shared in common with neighbours. The UK can best tackle the challenges of a more dangerous world in alliance with the Europeans and working closely with the EU as well as NATO. Going it alone in a world of big power blocs and rising geo-political rivalries risks a dispersal of resources and energy for little strategic gain. After the years of throwing off its EU shackles and minimising its involvement, there will come a time of reconstruction and a more sober minded appraisal of the UK’s interests and priorities. Public opinion does not stay the same, governments change and political debates can be led for good, as well as bad. The time is not far off when the UK will have mature discussions about Europe. It will not rejoin the EU after all that has happened but it can still have a close relationship with it. After all, we are talking about European Strategic Autonomy and European security and defence rather than just the EU here. So these are issues for all the Europeans working together. The mistake is to think that the objective can be achieved without putting the EU at the centre - and working only around it.
4. Engaging with Europe after Brexit: Time to reset the UK’s relationship with the Council of Europe

By Dr Alice Donald and Professor Philip Leach

The UK’s relationship with the Council of Europe presents a paradox. In many ways, the UK is an exemplar within this organisation of 47 states. The UK was a founding member of the Council of Europe in 1949 and an early signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950—leading the effort to unify a war-shattered continent on the three pillars of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It was British lawyers who, from the 1970s, pioneered litigation before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, shaping its early and most influential case law. The UK is one of the five largest financial contributors to the Council of Europe. The UK’s own human rights record is comparatively strong: the Court finds violations in only a handful of UK cases annually (on average, six per year since 2010), and, with the notable exception of prisoner voting,
those judgments are complied with.\textsuperscript{65} The parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (the JCHR) is regarded as a model across Europe.\textsuperscript{66}

Yet, this record is clouded by the negative and sometimes intemperate discourse surrounding the UK’s relationship with Strasbourg; indeed, no mature democracy has done more to destabilise the Council of Europe in recent years than the UK. Calls by judicial figures and politicians for the UK to resist the authority of the Court and even consider leaving the Convention, based on the perception that judges tie the hands of elected politicians, mark the nadir of this debate.\textsuperscript{67} The Brexit vote took Strasbourg out of the firing line—and continued adherence to the Convention is a red line for Brussels in its negotiations with the UK.\textsuperscript{68} Yet, the damage is already done. Mere discussion of rupture with the Council of Europe emboldens states such as Russia to flout their human rights obligations; for example, the UK’s protracted refusal to implement prisoner voting judgments was cited in the Duma as a basis for Russia to do the same, and paved the way for a Russian law which empowers the Constitutional Court to declare rulings of any international human rights body ‘impossible to implement’.\textsuperscript{69}

Not only that, but Conservative MPs who are delegates to the Council of Europe’s deliberative arm, the Parliamentary Assembly, have used it as a venue to mount an ideological defence of illiberal rule in,\textit{ inter alia}, Turkey, Hungary and Poland—and to scupper (successfully in Hungary’s case) attempts to intensify scrutiny on these states by means of the Assembly’s monitoring procedure.\textsuperscript{70}

In the post-Brexit era, the time is ripe for the UK to reset its relationship with the Council of Europe and reclaim the moral and political leadership that it once showed. The UK’s relinquishing of its formerly exemplary role is not only corrosive of the organisation and its values, but also weakens the UK’s ability to use the Council of Europe as an alternative forum within which to engage with 46 other European member states—including those within strategically important geopolitical regions such as the former Soviet states and Turkey. The organisation’s inter-governmental arm, the Committee of Ministers, as well as the Court and the Parliamentary Assembly, each provide opportunities to further the UK’s foreign policy objectives of strengthening national and international security and supporting the development of open societies.

The crucial intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe
A range of Council of Europe entities are carrying out essential work, on an inter-governmental basis, on issues which are key areas of focus for the UK, including media freedom, LGBTI rights and gender-based violence. Established in 2014, the Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists acts as an early warning system and protective network to address threats to the media. Its latest annual report describes 2019 as ‘as an intense and often dangerous battleground for press freedom and freedom of expression’ in Europe, including physical attacks, detention and

\textsuperscript{65}Figures taken from Annual Reports of the European Court of Human Rights, Annual Report 2019, https://echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=court/annualreports&c=; As a snapshot, on 31 December 2019, the UK was responsible for only 0.3 per cent of cases (16 out of 5,231) pending before the Committee of Ministers, i.e. judgments whose implementation was still being monitored (see Annual Report of the Committee of Ministers, 2019, p. 62, https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-2019/16809ec315).
\textsuperscript{69}Philip Leach and Alice Donald, Russia defies Strasbourg: is contagion spreading?, EJIL Talk, December 2015, https://www.ejiltalk.org/russia-defies-strasbourg-is-contagion-spreading/
\textsuperscript{70}Donald, Alice and Speck, Anne-Katrin. Forthcoming 2021. ‘Time for the Gloves to Come Off? The response by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to rule of law backsliding. ECHR Law Review.
harassment. The threat has only escalated with laws that suppress free expression being enacted under the guise of emergency responses to COVID-19. Meanwhile, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity unit of the Council of Europe showcases the working being done, for example, to combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, to counter the particular threats created by COVID-19, and to support the policing of hate crimes against the LGBTI community and the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships.

The UK espouses a strong commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, and has established cross-party support on the issue, but it is the only western European state that has not yet ratified the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention, often described as a ‘gold standard’ of treaties on gender-based violence and domestic violence. Eight country reports have been produced since its inception in 2014 by the Council of Europe’s watchdog, GREVIO, propelling this issue to the forefront of public debate, increasing societal awareness of the urgent need to combat it and leading to improved legislation and policies. Engagement at the Council of Europe level, having ratified the Istanbul Convention, would undoubtedly enhance the important work being done on this at the national level in the UK. There are, in addition, many other vital areas of work within the Council of Europe which the UK should be supporting, and learning from, including how artificial intelligence can be used to counter the threat of COVID-19, the ways in which human rights law can be used to protect the environment, and combatting human trafficking.

The European Court of Human Rights - a bastion of judicial independence

The most well-known Council of Europe institution is the European Court of Human Rights, which is arguably also the most effective single human rights body across the globe. Given the Court’s position at the fulcrum of legal systems across the 47 Council of Europe states, the UK should grasp the opportunity to bolster it as a bastion of judicial independence for the continent, especially at a time when such independence is under serious threat in EU states including Poland and Hungary. The continued engagement of the highest UK courts in the Superior Courts Network (which includes 93 courts from 40 states) ensures a healthy dialogue between national courts about the effective application of the European Convention at the national level.

When the European Court issues its judgments, it is the Committee of Ministers which supervises their implementation in a peer-to-peer based system that operates largely behind closed doors. This is the body which needs strengthened engagement from the UK (and indeed concerted effort with other states), so that judgments on key issues and from particular regions can be enforced more quickly. Focusing on the implementation, for example, of cases relating to gross abuses by the Russian security forces in Chechnya, or cases brought by the victims of the Nagorno-Karabakh

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71 HANDS OFF PRESS FREEDOM: ATTACKS ON MEDIA IN EUROPE MUST NOT BECOME A NEW NORMAL, 2020 Annual Report by the partner organisations to the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-final-en/16809f03a9
73 See further: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Council of Europe Portal, https://www.coe.int/en/web/sogi
75 See: 1st GENERAL REPORT ON GREVIO’S ACTIVITIES, April 2020, https://rm.coe.int/1st-general-report-on-grevio-s-activities/16809dcd82. The Istanbul Convention has been signed but not ratified by the UK.
conflict, would serve to shore up security in those regions, and internationally.\textsuperscript{78} In doing so, there would also be a synergy with the UK’s new Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations, introduced last year, whose priorities include protecting the right to life and the prohibition of torture.\textsuperscript{79} It would also be in line with the Foreign Affairs Committee’s call for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to prioritise mediation, conflict resolution, and atrocity prevention.\textsuperscript{80} The failure to date to take resolute action on abuses in Chechnya has led to a prevailing climate of impunity in that region, which the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre and Human Rights Watch have argued, has led to their perpetuation amongst an ever-widening circle of victims, including the LGBTI community.\textsuperscript{81}

Similarly, the UK’s goal of giving succour to open societies would be enhanced by its promotion of judgments highlighting, for example, the political prosecution of opposition politicians in Russia and Turkey, and human rights defenders and journalists in Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{82} Also on its radar, for the same reasons, should be the case in Strasbourg challenging the notorious ‘foreign agents’ law’ in Russia, which continues to have such detrimental effects for civil society in that country.\textsuperscript{83} The fact that a number of these judgments have directly led to the applicants being freed from imprisonment or having their convictions quashed, demonstrates that these mechanisms have real teeth, and further engagement and leverage from states like the UK would lead to more far-reaching impacts in a broader range of cases.\textsuperscript{84}

There is also the opportunity for the UK to lead in utilising the machinery available within the Court system that is rarely, if ever, invoked. This includes the infringement procedure (to take a recalcitrant state back before the Court if it refuses to rectify violations); third party interventions (whereby the UK could assist the Court in its adjudications by providing information in non-UK cases), and the possibility of bringing inter-state proceedings (as, for example, the Netherlands did recently against Russia in respect of the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in 2014).\textsuperscript{85}

The Parliamentary Assembly - a diminished body in need of leadership

The Parliamentary Assembly, comprising 324 national parliamentarians from the 47 states (18 from the UK Parliament) has a proud history of achievements such as the de facto abolition of the death penalty across Europe.\textsuperscript{86} The Assembly has, however, had a tempestuous decade. The low point was the revelation that Assembly members had been bribed to work in favour of the Azerbaijani government—a long-held suspicion confirmed in 2018 by an independent investigation established by the Assembly itself.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{78} See, for example, the two European Court Grand Chamber judgments from 2015 which remain unimplemented: Chiragov v Armenia and Sargsyan v Azerbaijan.


\textsuperscript{82} Navalny v Russia; Selahattin Demirtaş v Turkey; Rasul Jafarov v Azerbaijan and Khadija Ismayilova v Azerbaijan.


\textsuperscript{84} See, for example, the decision of the Committee of Ministers in the Mammadli group of cases of 3 September 2020, https://hudoc.coe.int/eng%7B%7B%22%22%7D%7D%7D%7D%7D%7D%7D/"


\textsuperscript{86} See the membership of the UK delegation: https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/delegations/coe2/membership1/

The enfeeblement of the Assembly is regrettable. Not only does it have important powers, such as electing judges of the Court, but also, through its deliberations in quarterly sessions in Strasbourg and the work of specialised committees, it underpins the democratic legitimacy of the Council of Europe. The Assembly’s monitoring procedure is, moreover, one of the main political tools that the Council of Europe has to confront states engaged in rule backsliding. Assembly debates and resolutions, in turn, frequently rely on opinions of the Venice Commission (an expert body within the Council of Europe that advises member states on constitutional matters)—and may result in recommendations for action by the Committee of Ministers. In this way, synergy can be achieved between multiple arms of the Council of Europe to resist the erosion of the rule of law and human rights and foster the development of open societies.

As noted above, UK Conservative delegates, as members of the conservative group in the Assembly known as EC/DA (European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance), have consistently defended illiberal regimes. Analysis of verbatim records of Assembly debates suggest that delegates from other UK parties are largely invisible in Strasbourg, perhaps reflecting the low prestige assigned to membership of the parliamentary delegation.88 We suggest that this is a missed opportunity to advance agendas that are conducive to the UK’s professed goals.

Individual parliamentarians can exercise significant influence by seizing the initiative within the Assembly. For example, the Swiss Senator Dick Marty did so in his pioneering investigation into CIA rendition and secret detention operations in Europe, a process of accountability-seeking that ultimately drew in all the main organs of the Council of Europe, including the Court, the Committee of Ministers, the Venice Commission and the Commissioner for Human Rights.89 We suggest, too, that the work of the Council of Europe could achieve greater recognition in Parliament if the procedure for selecting the UK delegation were to be changed from the present system of Prime Ministerial appointment to a more transparent and accountable means, i.e. direct election by MPs, as happens for most House of Commons select committees.90 It would also be beneficial if some overlap could be guaranteed between membership of the Assembly delegation and the JCHR, in order to ensure greater coordination within Parliament on human rights matters.

Conclusion - championing a rules-based order
The Foreign Affairs Committee recently concluded that, as competition between nations intensifies, it falls on democratic nations to uphold the rules-based international system, including democracy, human rights and free trade. The Committee was urged by numerous contributors to its inquiry on the Integrated Review to exhort the UK Government to articulate the universal values at the heart of its international policy.91 The UK needs to show greater ambition, the Committee concluded, if it is to effectively challenge ‘revisionist’ powers that seek to subvert the international system and weaken rights. As the UK moves decisively into the post-Brexit era, the Council of Europe is the preeminent means for the UK to exercise ‘soft power’ influence across the continent, in the direction recommended both by the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Integrated Review itself. The Chair of the JCHR, Harriet Harman, has called on the UK to lead by example.92 This requires a fundamental recalibration of relations with Strasbourg. Damaging rhetoric that has done so much to undermine the Council of Europe must cease and the UK must, as the Foreign Affairs Committee implores, put itself back on the right side of the battle between the competing visions of autocracies and those that champion a rules-based order at home and abroad.

88 See above no.8.
89 See for a chronology of developments: http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/FeaturesManager-View-EN.asp?ID=362
91 See above no.18, para 4.
5. Global Britain in 2030: Multilateralism and the importance of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

By Anna Chernova

The UK plays a leading role in responding to global challenges and has traditionally excelled at maximising foreign policy opportunities for national security and development. However, within a shifting geo-political, security and economic landscape, influence is increasingly dispersed and contested amongst a plurality of state and non-state stakeholders. These factors impact how the UK Government projects influence (including soft power) and protects its national interests. The shifting global economic centre of gravity to Asia, a global pandemic and its significant secondary economic impacts, a new relationship with Europe, and the need to deliver more with finite resources.

This paper was drafted by Anna Chernova (FPC Research Associate and former Programme Director for the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, where she led the work of the General Committee for human rights and democracy). It features input from Adam Hug (FPC Director), Dame Audrey Glover DBE CMG (Chair of the Foreign Policy Centre, former Director of ODIHR and currently head of multiple ODIHR Election Observation missions), Craig Oliphant OBE (FPC Senior Adviser, former head of the FCO’s Eastern Research Group and Senior Adviser to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities) and current OSCE officials. It builds on the findings of the 2016 publication Institutionally blind? International organisations and human rights abuses in the former Soviet Union (see sections from Adam Hug, Anna Chernova and Dr Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz) and the 2017 paper Institutionally Blind: The next steps in reforming the Council of Europe and the OSCE [https://fpc.org.uk/publications/institutionallyblind]. While this submission does not have the scope to fully address other institutions being covered by this inquiry the 2016 Institutionally Blind publication examines structural problems faced by Interpol [https://fpc.org.uk/institutionally-blind-next-steps-reforming-council-europe-osce/], as does the December 2017 publication Closing the Door: the challenge facing activists from the former Soviet Union seeking asylum or refuge [https://fpc.org.uk/publications/closing-the-door/]. Image by Manfred Werner (Tsui) under (CC).
requires the UK to review and adapt its strategic security, defence, development and foreign policy objectives.

To maintain a global standing, a Global Britain must seek to reinvest in strategic relationships, championing the rules-based international order. A strong pandemic recovery at home and abroad and the recognition that the two are interlinked speak to the UK’s historical strengths in championing rule of law, democracy and human rights. The UK is pioneering strong justice and accountability instruments like human rights sanctions, demonstrating commitment to hold those who commit gross human rights abuse to account through global ‘Magnitsky’ legislation. The UK is also well placed to take a stronger leadership role in promoting human security values across the wider Eurasia region and globally by investing more in multilateral organisations mandated to promote and protect these shared values. The UK had made some important steps in designing and adopting human rights and good governance accountability mechanisms, from tools such as unexplained wealth ordinances keeping dirty money out of Britain and its democratic processes, to the innovative Magnitsky sanctions (now adopted also at EU level across member states).

The case for multilateralism and UK foreign policy tools

Uniting development and diplomacy under the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) offers an opportunity to maximise value for money for British soft power, re-shaping policy, taking full advantage of comparative diplomatic freedoms and has a clear value add of Global Britain to UK’s own, national human security.

As the dialogue around the Integrated Review was initially closely aligned with the Spending Review (to ensure that ambition, capabilities and budgets can be closely coordinated), this gave an opportunity for the Government to review its capacities and investments in multilateral institutions. Greater investment of political capital in structures like the OSCE, the Council of Europe and strategic UN structures and offices would amplify the voice of British foreign policy across regions strategic to UK national interest and boost UK’s thematic thought leadership globally. Strategic political and budgetary support to UK parliamentary delegations, civil service and project-based investments in these multilateral structures is good value for money in uncertain economic times. Working collectively and collaboratively among like-minded states that share the UK’s values in foreign affairs, the UK can position to the benefit of its national interest as well as global reach and leadership. The dramatic cuts to British soft power manifested in the cut to UK aid spending this year could risk undermining British multilateral standing, especially on issues of human security, Women Peace and Security (WPS) and conflict resolution. Foreign policy analysts are finding it hard to reconcile UK’s imminent 2021 plans to lead the G7 and the climate summits with cuts to the resources needed to lead these institutions. Leading UK academics and key leaders in the security sector rightly point out that cutting aid, while increasing defence will not make Britain safer and could undermine collective human security – regionally and globally.

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66 Foreign Affairs Committee, Parliament Live, September 2020, https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/5b75d2d0-6922-4d87-b88f-dc8f6d0cffe4

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35 Finding Britain’s role in a changing world
Preventing and mitigating conflicts, the transactional costs of discord

It is estimated that more than 200 million people could need humanitarian assistance by 2022 as a result of climate change and conflict.\(^{100}\) The UK is rightly investing heavily into addressing climate change challenges. Likewise, addressing underlying causes and drivers of conflict requires concerted and systematic political and economic investment. The UK is lauded for its commitment to human rights, democracy and inclusion, including through the WPS agenda, as well as its solid track record in supporting peacebuilding, stabilisation and related human security efforts. Investing strategically in gender equality and women’s meaningful political inclusion is critical to national security.\(^{101}\) Prioritising democracy in the WPS agenda has been proven to make peace agreements more sustainable and preventing costly armed conflict.\(^{102}\)

The COVID-19 pandemic followed a record year of global instability and violence. Last year, the highest number of state-based conflicts in decades, with half the world’s population coming into contact with political violence.\(^{103}\) The typology of armed conflicts have been changing for some time, with non-international armed conflicts increasing, and a proliferation of non-state armed groups (some of a terrorist nature – posing a persistent global risk) further complicating national and global accountability, conflict resolution, and challenging political will to support the application of international humanitarian law, as well as human rights and refugee law.\(^{104}\) Large-scale displacement, both internal and global refugee flows persist. In the period the Integrated Review is intended to cover, it is projected that some 80 per cent of the world’s population will find itself living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.\(^{105}\) In Afghanistan, as the US and allies like the UK prepare to withdraw forces amidst persistent record violent death tolls - sustainable peace remains elusive.\(^{106}\) The pandemic response has triggered further security risks, a rise in domestic violence, as well as a rise in extremism and terrorism – at home and abroad.\(^{107}\)

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks on the United States, and (in many ways) the launch of the global counter-terrorism agenda. UK’s alliance with the US, as well as the effectiveness of the wider counter-terrorism agendas will be under global scrutiny.\(^{108}\) UK’s support for multi-lateral spaces where human security (rights-based) approaches are applied to

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counter-terrorism agendas will be an important test of HMG’s commitment to human security. critical ally, the US president-elect Joe Biden (similar to the isolationist calls made by US President Trump) in calling for an end to American ‘forever wars,’ leaving civilians, especially women, in the most violent conflicts on earth – like Afghanistan to weak governance and powerful non-state armed groups. UK military engagements will have to reconfigure to this new reality. This draws attention to the need for greater British investment in bilateral and multilateral peacebuilding, WPS, humanitarian aid and related human security agendas.

Addressing root causes and drivers of political violence requires UK investment in human security frameworks and multilateral mechanisms bringing together human rights, rule of law and democracy for shared security in wider Europe and beyond. The case for regional approaches/regionalties

Given the shifting geo-political landscape, the FCDO will need to make difficult decisions in foreign policy priorities. While there is much focus on regional and global powers like Russia and China, and their influence globally and regionally, the FCDO should consider value for money investment in regionalties and investing soft power political capital in smaller states and strategic regional partnerships from the Sahel to the Middle East to Eurasia. In Eurasia, UK would benefit from closer regional engagement with countries like Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan as well as maintaining ties with resource-rich, struggling to meet their democratic commitment states like Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Recent developments in Uzbekistan, as well as Kyrgyzstan, deserve UK attention. The human development situation in Tajikistan is particularly dire and will take on a security dimension if unaddressed. Civil society in many of these states (balancing political, economic and military regional interests amidst more powerful states from China to Russia) looks to Europe and the US to counter-balance authoritarian and elite capture trends. While democracy continues to broadly backslide in the region, with civic space under threat globally, the potential for political shifts and inclusive development in some Eurasian states is higher than in others.

The UK can afford to be bold and lead the OSCE in investing more political capital and further expanding relations across the three dimensions with its Partners for Co-operation in Europe’s eastern and southern neighbourhoods. Given persistent instability in Afghanistan (where the UK has long-standing commitments), and given the world’s economic centre of gravity shift toward often unstable parts of Asia, there is a clear value add for UK’s engagement both economically and politically. A stable Afghanistan, where rule of law, democracy and human rights are respected is

important to achieving UK’s interests in region.\textsuperscript{116} From support to stabilisation efforts in the Sahel to supporting economic and regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, the UK should work to capitalise on historical links, diplomatic and trade track records to invest in regional stability likely to yield human security and economic, trade dividends. Recent events in fragile Lebanon underscore the importance of regional cooperation along the values of good governance. Lebanon should not be seen through the prism of the humanitarian crisis in Syria, or regional security tensions alone. A vibrant civil society indicates the need for greater UK human security support. Encouraging the OSCE to include Lebanon as a Partner for Co-operation is a small political investment for a much larger possible stabilisation dividend. Regional security institutions like the OSCE are important instruments for stability in some of the world’s most complex conflicts and contexts.\textsuperscript{117} UK support for expanding the OSCE’s investment in Partners for Co-operation (and even possible future membership) to fragile and conflict affected states, like Lebanon and Afghanistan, would demonstrate UK’s strategic foresight in global security.\textsuperscript{118}

The case for greater UK political priority to the OSCE

The OSCE has a uniquely comprehensive approach to security, which covers a broad range of issues across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. The UK Government has made clear its commitments to the OSCE’s approach to human security by supporting and leading the Human Dimension work, including championing gender equality, the WSP agenda, as well as substantive and welcome support to OSCE’s democratisation and rule of law efforts.\textsuperscript{119} The UK Ambassador’s selection to be Chair of the Permanent Council’s Human Dimension Committee for a number of years until 2018 was seen positively in this regard. The UK Delegation to the OSCE has also worked to protect the UK’s people and values through an efficient OSCE, which aims to deliver a comprehensive approach to security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area and a strengthened rules-based international system across issues from democracy and human rights, to arms control and conflict resolution, and emerging challenges such as cyber-security.\textsuperscript{120} In its closing statement at the most recent OSCE Ministerial meeting, the UK rightly emphasised that the recent military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the tragic loss of life, livelihoods and trust among communities further underscores the vital importance of OSCE’s mediation formats.\textsuperscript{121} The UK has also It is critical that the UK continue to lend increased political support to the conflict resolution agendas, including highlighting conflict mediation and confidence-building measures as key foreign policy tools.\textsuperscript{122} As UK leaves the European Union – multi-lateral security dialogue with states that share British values of human security, rule of law, democracy and gender justice becomes increasingly business-critical.

With the UK identifying key national security threats lying within the OSCE area, greater investment is needed in conflict prevention and dialogue in multilateral institutions able to bring key stakeholders to the table. The OSCE’s current institutional challenges provide evidence of a crisis in national and institutional governance, with an alarming decline in shared values. The OSCE is the only security-focused inter-governmental body to include both western powers and Russia.

\textsuperscript{118} Partners for Co-operation, OSCE, https://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation
\textsuperscript{120} UK and the OSCE, Government, https://www.gov.uk/world/uk-delegation-to-organization-for-security-and-co-operation-in-europe
As the most recent crisis in Belarus has demonstrated, UK regional leadership is needed in the wider European community, in support of democratic values, civil society engagement and human rights in each OSCE participating State – on its own national (domestic) merit.\textsuperscript{123} In addressing tensions and conflicts at critical junctures, the UK is well placed to lead the OSCE in applying strategic conflict mitigation tools like the ‘Vienna Mechanism’ and the ‘Moscow Mechanism’ to support human rights accountability, as well as to continue to show leadership in helping to uphold core human security and democratic principles, signed up to by participating states like Belarus and the UK alike.\textsuperscript{124}

From Hungary to Tajikistan, civic space in the OSCE area remains at risk.\textsuperscript{125} Without enabling democratic spaces with freedom of assembly, association, media and related OSCE Human Dimension commitments, transparency and accountability are harder to achieve. Civil society space is shrinking at the national and regional level with fewer and more dangerous influencing channels remaining open to human rights defenders and civil society organisations. Civil society access to the OSCE (subsequently) is also at risk.\textsuperscript{126} As the democratic indicators for national governance and rule of law are worrying within the EU (i.e. Hungary, Poland), the UK has an important role to play in being a vocal and unapologetic voice for the inalienable nexus of human rights and shared European, trans-Atlantic security. As the UK proceeds to make new arrangements following its departure from the EU, the FCDO – in combining diplomacy and development is in a position to speak more clearly and independently in the OSCE Permanent Council.\textsuperscript{127} The political priorities articulated in these diplomatic spaces as well as continued and renewed articulation of UK’s human rights, human security and the ‘leave no one behind’ agenda in the OSCE space would be timely. Now is the time for the UK review, to re-shape old alliances and to build new relationships across the OSCE area.

UK’s influence in the OSCE has both political and operational dimensions. Given the post-Brexit dynamics, the UK has opportunities to lend political weight to strong British and allied candidates for key executive posts in the OSCE structures. In order to counter possible vulnerabilities in operations, including human resources, the UK must be more active in investing in British thought leadership (supporting academic institutions, think tanks, media freedom agencies and other spaces where British technical and regional expertise needed in the OSCE structures is generated). This requires the UK FCDO to support the UK Delegation to the OSCE in Vienna in identifying and supporting rights-oriented candidates, including British nationals with a strong record on human security.

Furthermore, there are many tracks for the UK’s use of diplomacy: with many British traditions and a long diplomatic record as it relates to the OSCE, including parliamentary diplomacy, conflict prevention, mediation and stabilisation and the focus on leaving no one behind, particularly around the inclusion of women and girls. FCDO should seek to actively participate and pioneer OSCE reforms around transparency in the Permanent Council and accountability of the participating States, reforming consensus-based decision-making. The UK must work to de-politicise managerial decisions and avoid misuse of the consensus rule by reviewing and reducing operational spaces where the


\textsuperscript{125} Countries and Territories, Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores

\textsuperscript{126} Discussion paper: Ensuring unhindered NGO access to OSCE events, Civic Solidarity, August 2020, https://www.civilsociety.org/article/1675/discussion-paper-ensuring-unhindered-ngo-access-osce-events

consensus rule applies (this will limit situations where political disagreements block key operational posts at key junctures).

The FCDO is well placed to provide analysis and strategic steer, maximising the use of British diplomats and UK thought leadership (academia, think tanks, private and public sector stakeholders). FCDO is also well placed to invest more in soft power – from think tanks to the British Council, including greater engagement with British civil society and this broad range of stakeholders – especially around the OSCE’s Political and Human Dimensions (election observation and other key elements of ODIHR’s mission-critical mandate); conflict prevention and stabilisation; security cooperation and law enforcement; as well as the WPS and related agendas.

**OSCE’s governance vulnerabilities, obstacles to reform and policy recommendations to the UK**

The UK has a decades’ long history of engaging with the Helsinki Accords, supporting human rights and security at the national and regional level in Eurasia. Regional tensions and transnational threats have made the OSCE mandate ever more relevant, despite operational vulnerabilities and geopolitical challenges. At a time when some COVID-19 pandemic response measures could have a disproportionate impact on marginalised and vulnerable groups (especially women and girls), the UK must increase support to the independence of OSCE’s institutions in ensuring human rights are not forgotten and that no one is left behind.128

There are alarming political capture trends and institutional vulnerabilities that have recently been well documented by the European Stability Initiative and allies, drawing attention to institutions like the Council of Europe where sufficient checks and balances are needed to prevent institutional capture through ‘Caviar Diplomacy.’129 As a consensus-based inter-governmental institution in a region where human rights and democracy are at risk, the OSCE has also suffered from political capture and abuse of internal rules and procedures, with calls for OSCE reform increasing over the years.130

OSCE’s 2020 institutional crisis undermined collective security in wider Europe and should have been a political priority for the UK Government and Parliament, given the UK’s consistent commitments to the Human Dimension, particularly to rights defenders – all issues at the heart of the OSCE institutional crisis this year.131 UN human rights officials noted that it was the OSCE participating States with some of the worst human dimension track records that lead the organisation into this coordinated and deliberate institutional crisis, undermining its leadership and business continuity.132

The OSCE’s participating States of Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkey (all states with dismal track records in meeting their OSCE human dimension commitments) had cited a range of ‘national security’ reasons to block key leadership appointments of the OSCE’s oversight institutions.133 Russia and other former Soviet states with rapidly shrinking civic spaces (in democratic decline) have long played leading roles in complicating the appointments to OSCE executive institutions of people with

132 Agnes Callamard, Twitter Post, Twitter, July 2020, https://twitter.com/AgnesCallamard/status/1281685028796346369?s=20
a strong human rights record. The current OSCE institutional crisis dates back to a national shift (democratic backslide) in Russia and other countries in the region. The Russian Ambassador to the OSCE articulated the 2020 institutional crisis as something that will serve Russia well in pushing Moscow’s agenda in OSCE reform processes.134

Moscow and others, whose values are not aligned with the UK, are taking advantage of the vacuum and crisis of confidence (of the West) in multilateral institutions like the OSCE – leaving these institutions open to political capture. Russia has been calling for more geographic diversity in the leadership of OSCE executive institutions (while blocking Western and non-Western candidates with strong rights records) and drawing attention to ‘systematic’ problems (some of them legitimate) in the Organisation. Russia had argued this institutional crisis could be good for organisational reform, at a time when there are so few democratic checks on Eurasian participating States’ power – this furthered concerns for the future of human security in the broader region.

The UK must remain active and vocal in protection the mandates of OSCE institutions and missions as well as helping reform the consensus-based appointment processes. The FCDO is well placed to work with Parliament and British civil society in articulating OSCE’s value-add and pioneering much needed institutional reform in such multilateral spaces in order to achieve the most value for money. The High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM) and the Representative for Freedom of the Media (RFOM) in particular have narrow mandates and smaller offices, risking institutional paralysis when heads of these institutions are not (re-)appointed promptly. The long-awaited December 2020 Ministerial Meeting appointments to heads of OSCE institutions came at a time of critical junctures for the region – from military conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, to ongoing armed conflict against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, to unresolved ‘frozen conflicts’ and democratic revolution in Belarus – conflict prevention, mitigation through the human security lens remains key to OSCE’s value add.135 While delayed and detracted by Brexit, the UK remains well placed to advance human security through these OSCE institutions, building on its solid track record in promoting rule of law, human rights, justice and democracy multi-laterally, as well as bilaterally. The UK remains active in a number of institutions and OSCE thematics from security to democracy, and should use this political influence to continue institutional, organisational reforms as well as to extend post-Brexit political will on issues of human security to the OSCE regions to the East and South of Europe.136

A force for good and the role of UK diplomacy in the OSCE area:

- The UK works to improve military security by encouraging greater openness, transparency and co-operation.137 OSCE participating states have developed the world’s most advanced regime of conventional arms control and confidence-building measures, with the UK contributing to addressing conflicts, including in Ukraine. The UK is also active in countering evolving transnational, non-military threats such as terrorism and organised crime. The UK holds participating States to account over their commitments on human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, as well as wider corruption and governance issues, and seeks to advance those commitments where possible. The UK Delegation supports OSCE’s autonomous institutions, including ODIHR;

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134 “Such a development of events is only beneficial”, Kommersant, March 2020, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4441230
136 OSCE PA President George Tsereteli steps down, Vice-President Bowness to serve as President, OSCE, December 2020, https://www.osce.org/parliamentary-assembly/473634
137 UK Delegation to the OSCE, Gov.uk, https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/organization-for-security-and-co-operation-in-europe
• Smaller OSCE participating States look at the UK to contribute leadership based on its long track record in rule of law, stabilisation and media freedom.\textsuperscript{138} Some OSCE states have drawn attention to the relative value-for-money of the OSCE in terms of conflict prevention, management and shared defence mechanisms through strong multilateral coordination and cooperation, urging Western states not to be complacent against the very real threat to universal human rights values on the continent;\textsuperscript{139}

• While effective action at the OSCE will require close collaboration with European allies there are advantages to the UK being able to speak out more freely in OSCE meetings, rather than deferring to the (often reached through compromise/shared) EU caucus positions. With Brexit, UK-OSCE performance indicators could be the amount of technical support (resources) and political support (articulating human rights positions on the record, and successfully ensuring British OSCE appointments with strong human rights track records);

• A further way in which the UK could show leadership is by deploying the Foreign Secretary to represent the UK at certain OSCE Ministerial Meetings, for example as part of efforts to restart the mechanisms. In the past the Foreign Secretary would have led diplomatic efforts in this forum but in recent years the task has often fallen to the Europe Minister;

• The newly combined FCDO should take more opportunities to second staff to play key roles in OSCE field operations, including at particularly at Ambassadorial level; and

• For postings to Vienna and to the OSCE’s autonomous institutions the UK needs to consider further ways to encourage UK nationals to play a greater part in the operation of these bodies. As well as encouraging applications from civil society activists, it should be flexible in allowing diplomats and civil servants the ability to take career breaks to deploy into these institutions (as has often been the case for placements in industry). Greater diplomatic pressure may need to be brought to bear to support British candidacies for director level positions within the institutions.

Parliamentary diplomacy - oversight and accountability tool
There should be efforts to increase support to the UK Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, including resourcing parliamentary hearings, participation in OSCE activities, like election observation missions where appropriate and encourage related forms of public engagement.\textsuperscript{140} The Assembly, which does not require consensus agreement, if used effectively and avoiding issues around caviar diplomacy could be a platform for advocating some of the reforms mentioned in this submission. More needs to be done to raise the status of the UK delegation to encourage participation by a wider pool of parliamentarians, particularly from the House of Commons. There could be a role for greater coordination between the FAC and the UK delegation on matters taking place in the OSCE region. This provides transparency and oversight channels, as well as maximises British soft power in integrated foreign policy. The structure and positioning of the US Helsinki Commission is an excellent example of a cross-government, cross-party use of soft power to engage a broad set of traditional, as well as new and emerging stakeholders across a wide geography of great politico-military and economic significance to the UK. The UK should consider elaborating a similar structure in the Houses of Parliament.\textsuperscript{141}


\textsuperscript{139} Benno Zogg, The OSCE leadership crisis and Switzerland’s role, Swiss Info, August 2020, https://www.swissinfo.ch/ru/%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%81-%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B2-%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%82-%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%90%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%8C-

\textsuperscript{140} Role of the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly on the OSCE, UK Parliament, https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/delegations/osce1/role-of-the-delegation/

\textsuperscript{141} Our History, CSCE, https://www.csce.gov/about-csce/our-history
It should also remain open to opportunities that may arise. While traditionally some bigger states have been discouraged from taking the Chairman in office role to avoid stoking competition with Russia, if the opportunity arises the UK should consider taking the chairmanship in office, something that would help firmly underscore the UK’s continuing commitment to the region.

Managing the UK’s strategic interest in the OSCE:

- Declining commitment to sustainable multilateral institutions would pose significant challenges to OSCE efficiency and by extension – shared European and trans-Atlantic security. This comes at critical juncture for global security: dealing with issues of terrorism and extremism, as well as a pandemic – all requiring consistent and efficient international cooperation around shared principles.\textsuperscript{142} Polarised national positions in the OSCE area have complicated Albania’s already complex 2020 OSCE Chairmanship year. The post-Brexit UK is well placed to support the incoming 2021 Swedish OSCE Chairmanship, including through its institutions;\textsuperscript{143}

- The UK should use the opportunity of the UK’s Integrated Review to further embed human security principles in national frameworks, and ensure these principles are adequately supported in organisational structures, leadership and priorities, like those of the OSCE;

- Mandates: while carefully examining any emerging opportunities for genuine institutional reform the UK must remain vigilant to protect existing human dimension commitments in the face of Russian-led efforts to water down such capacities. This includes for the time being avoiding attempts to amend or reform the admittedly flawed core mandate of the HCNM (which excludes issues relating to terrorism in part due to historic UK concerns over Northern Ireland) as given the current institutional climate any tinkering could open a pandora’s box and undermine the relative autonomy in which officials are currently able to operate;

- Particularly in the context provided by the integration of DFID and the FCO there may be new opportunities for creative use of budgets to support human dimension projects, in a similar way to which the EU has funded ODIHR projects in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus.\textsuperscript{144} Such extra-budgetary funding mechanisms help avoid the gridlock of the OSCE’s consensus mechanisms being engineered by authoritarian participating states (often led by Russia) to undermine ODIHR, the RFOM and the HCNM;

- Retain and enhance the UK’s active involvement in the ODIHR’s long-term election observation mission, as well as UK’s role in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. At a time when authoritarian regimes are increasingly encouraging the use of fake or co-opted election monitors (sometimes including the sometimes more easily swayed international politicians) it is essential to protect the credibility and capacity of the ODIHR’s gold standard monitoring missions; and

- The principle of human security is fundamental to our shared, collective security. As the UK reviews its foreign policy objectives and priorities, it is critical that UK increase support to the OSCE as its failure would constitute a security risk on the wider European continent.

\textsuperscript{142} Lessons learned from COVID-19 crisis should help revitalize multilateralism, OSCE Secretary General Greminger tells PA leaders, OSCE, May 2020, https://www.osce.org/parliamentary-assembly/453474

\textsuperscript{143} OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – Committees, Parliament, https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/delegations/osce1/osce-committees/

\textsuperscript{144} European Union, Council of Europe and OSCE/ODIHR launch three regional projects to improve situation of minorities and vulnerable groups in Western Balkans, OSCE, July 2012, https://www.osce.org/odihr/91869
6. The UK and the Commonwealth: Leading the rights path

By Sanjoy Hazarika and Sneh Aurora

With the COVID-19 pandemic battering the world socially and economically, both the Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, cautioned against the damage being done to human rights across the globe. In separate but similar statements, they sounded the alarm on attacks on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the targeting of the marginalised and most vulnerable, parallel pandemics of gender and child violence, and the abuse of governmental power.

Dr. Ghebreyesus poignantly painted a stark picture of the reality so many have witnessed over the past year: “The pandemic has brought out the best – and worst – of humanity... [i]t exposes the fault lines, inequalities, injustices and contradictions of our modern world. It has highlighted our strengths, and our vulnerabilities.”

According to Mr. Guterres, “…in many places around the world, participation is being denied and civic space is being crushed. A global pushback on human rights has placed participation in its crosshairs.”

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Despite these and other warnings by international leaders, we continue to see adverse effects on human rights that have been amplified by economic contraction, as well as social inequalities and instability. The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), an international NGO with offices in New Delhi, London, and Accra, has been monitoring many of the human rights implications of the pandemic. The Commonwealth, a diverse group of 54 nations, has seen extensive direct and indirect adverse impacts of either indifference or acute prejudice by State or non-State actors on vulnerable, voiceless, and virtually invisible groups. CHRI’s research, engagement and advocacy work in the areas of access to justice, contemporary forms of slavery, and access to information throughout the world has revealed key challenges for Commonwealth countries.

The UK has the responsibility to act as a strong international leader on core areas of protection of and support to human rights and the imperiled open, participative civic spaces of which Guterres spoke. Since the start of the pandemic, CHRI has monitored many of the emerging human rights situations throughout the Commonwealth. Rights violations were extensive under restrictive conditions, with serious punishments meted out for breaching regulations.

In Bangladesh, enforced disappearances continue to take place even during the COVID-19 pandemic, targeting opposition political activists and individuals who are critical of the Government’s response to the pandemic. Nationwide lockdowns and severe punishments in numerous countries for breaking restrictions allowed law enforcement agencies to act with impunity. Enforcement came at the cost of rising police brutality in many countries. In response to vivid accounts of police violence and arbitrariness across India during the initial months of a nationwide lockdown, CHRI framed a set of guidelines to assist police departments to enforce the restrictions with care and within the Constitutional framework.148

Across the world, outrage and demonstrations against police abuses surged after the brutal killing of George Floyd, an African-American man, by a police officer in Minneapolis, US. Among these agitations is the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, against a special police unit known for arbitrary violence.

In addition, COVID-19 has caused major, visible disruptions in criminal justice mechanisms as courts and legal systems struggled to minimise physical contact. The alternative of video conferencing has been slow to develop in many countries as a result of creaky infrastructure and poor connectivity. Consequently, there are fewer recourse options in the face of human rights violations and abuses. Yet, there is hope in the pioneering role of pro-active higher courts such as India’s Supreme Court, which has ruled positively on issues of same sex relations and the need to video record conditions at police stations.149

Human rights assaults against highly vulnerable groups have persisted. Economic hardship, lockdowns, border closures and increased government authority have worsened the situation. In many countries, the rights of migrants have been largely ignored during the pandemic. Border shutdowns, travel restrictions, quarantine measures and lack of access to services in host countries have placed migrants and their families in conditions of great risk. COVID-19 has also highlighted gaps in protection such as lack of access to sick leave or health care, forcing migrant workers to choose between making a living or going to work while ill.

In May 2020, a member of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network in Bangladesh found that undocumented migrants were at risk of being deported and also reported high infection rates

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among migrant workers. Restrictions on movement have also increased the vulnerability of migrants to trafficking and exploitative smugglers. In the UK, recent months have seen an increase in dangerous Channel crossings; reports of abuse at the hands of smugglers are widespread.

Among those facing the greatest harm as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are over 40 million men, women and children worldwide who live in conditions of contemporary forms of slavery, including people who are vulnerable to human trafficking. The Global Slavery Index reports that 40 per cent of those living in conditions of modern slavery reside in the Commonwealth, yet not nearly enough is being done to identify, assist and protect victims and survivors.

Exploitation and conditions of slavery within supply chains have been significantly exacerbated and highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased demand for the production of certain goods such as personal protective equipment and hand sanitisers has resulted in workers being forced to work longer hours without adequate physical distancing measures and other protections against the virus. Conditions of slavery have recently been brought to light in the production of PPE sourced by the UK from China. In sectors such as the garment industry, workers have been left without income as large retailers such as British-owned Primark have cancelled orders and refused to honour payments for goods that have already been produced.

Lack of regulation of labour risks in supply chains have made conditions worse. Only the UK and three other Commonwealth countries have laws or policies in place to address the risk of modern slavery within public procurement or business supply chains. No Commonwealth country has yet enacted legislation imposing a mandatory human rights due diligence requirement on businesses. The British Government must lead by example by better regulating international supply chains and addressing potential risk. The UK has an opportunity to use its position within the Commonwealth and its soft power as a global leader for human rights to press for further supply chain regulations abroad and hold countries to account.

Indeed, the UK as current Commonwealth Chair-in-Office should press for the implementation of all commitments previously made by Commonwealth States to uphold human rights. At the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), States reinforced their commitment to achieve SDG Target 8.7 to take effective measures to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking. Yet, for the most part, very little has been done across the Commonwealth to implement these promises.

In addition to working with foreign governments to protect human rights, the UK must also do more to support civil society both at home and abroad. CIVICUS, a global research collaboration that rates

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150 Ibid.
153 Ibid.

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and tracks respect for fundamental freedoms in 196 countries, has found that in 2020 there has been a contraction of civil society freedoms. CIVICUS, ‘People Power Under Attack 2020’, December 2020. Government travel restrictions, border closures, localised lockdowns and curfews have been obstacles to civil society organisations (CSOs) from delivering vital services and have restricted their operations when their services are most in need. CSOs and service providers are having to quickly learn to respond to issues in their new working circumstances. Due to physical distancing and the reprioritisation of public resources, these organisations and services are facing challenges in the provision of essential care. Disappointingly, the majority of governments have failed to provide direct financial assistance to CSOs to enable them to continue providing essential support services and continue their effort to protect human rights. Funding cuts and budget deficits that will extend far beyond the end of the pandemic will further undermine human rights across the world by weakening the CSO networks which depend upon them.

In this time of COVID-19, the free flow of accurate and reliable information is more essential than ever, as well as a need to ensure journalists and the media can perform their professional duties to exchange vital information and support open dialogue, without fear or intimidation. Yet, journalists on the frontline face restrictions from both state and non-state actors while going about their daily work. These pressures include arrests, detentions and criminal investigations; restrictions on access to information; censorship of COVID-19 news; excessive fake news regulation; and direct verbal or even physical attacks. The culture of transparency and access to information has been eroded and the struggle to contain ‘fake news’ has legitimised measures used to stifle independent media and critical journalism.

While restrictions on human rights and freedoms were imposed in the name of public health, many human rights violations have resulted from the deliberate opportunistic use of the pandemic as a cover to restrict human rights and freedoms. Thus, it is critical for the UK to support the promotion of human rights everywhere by taking a stronger leadership role at the Commonwealth and through UN mechanisms. Though the Commonwealth is a collective and voluntary association of states, the Queen and the UK Prime Minister both currently serve in key governance roles as the Head of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, respectively.

To fulfil its duties to the Commonwealth, the UK must not only lead by example, but actively advocate for protection of human rights and freedoms. Raising awareness of human rights at meetings of Heads of Governments and Ministerial Groups, and agreeing joint action is a start. Pushing for implementation of commitments and action plans, and follow up is vital to ensure that intentions do not remain only on paper. There is an urgent need for the creation and resourcing of a monitoring mechanism at the Commonwealth Secretariat to ensure implementation of commitments to uphold human rights in accordance with Commonwealth and international frameworks. This too is a key area where leadership must be demonstrated. These are essential steps if we are to make progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 to which all nations have committed.

As the UK wraps up its technical leadership of the Commonwealth and hands over to Rwanda at the Kigali Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), it is incumbent upon it to address these issues on a time bound basis for all Commonwealth members. The UK must flag its determination to pursue these goals and raise them, even if inconvenient to fellow members - for human rights are not hemmed in by national boundaries. They are fundamental to enable hundreds of millions of ordinary people to live with and in dignity.

7. Brexit Britain at the United Nations

By Richard Gowan

Following the 2016 Brexit referendum, successive governments have been keen to emphasise that Britain’s withdrawal from the EU is not a rejection of international institutions and cooperation more broadly. Advocates of ‘Global Britain’ have highlighted UK’s role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and as an influential player in the UN more generally, as an example of London’s leadership role in multilateralism. This contribution discusses and tries to answer some of the key questions about the UK’s role at the UN.

How has the UK performed at the UN in the eleven months since Brexit?
The most striking feature of UK diplomacy in New York this year has been the high degree of continuity with Britain’s approach to the UN prior to Brexit. There has been quite a lot of speculation that, once outside the EU, the UK would shift much closer to the Americans on many issues. But instead we have seen the UK stay quite close to its former EU partners, especially France and Germany in the ‘E3’ format. This was particularly clear in the summer, when the US attempted to reimpose UN sanctions on Iran, basing its approach on a disputed reading of the 2015 nuclear deal. At the start of the year, European officials were quite worried that the UK would support the American approach. But the British were very firm in standing with the E3 and rejecting the US approach, which ran out of steam quickly.

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The UK has also had a notably good relationship with Germany in the Security Council. The Germans were on the Council for a two-year term starting in January 2019, and I think both Berlin and London were keen to show they would keep working together through Brexit. To emphasise that, they agreed to act as co-leads in the Council on Libya and Sudan, and their day-to-day cooperation seems to have been very good. Ironically, the Germans have actually found it harder to coordinate with the French, who worry that Berlin wants them to sacrifice their national privileges as a permanent council member, and establish an EU Council seat.

More generally, European diplomats in New York say that they have been pleasantly surprised by how well relations with the UK have turned out to date. The British are outside EU formal coordination structures, but there is a lot of quiet sharing of information and ideas. Obviously, it helps that British diplomats and their counterparts from the EU27 have personal ties that pre-date Brexit, so everybody has a good idea who to call and where people stand on specific issues. It is possible that these relationships will weaken with time, as the current generation of European diplomats in New York move on. But overall, the UK and the EU27 have common priorities on most UN issues, whether its finances or human rights, so it’s natural to stay close.

One European diplomat told me that he thought COVID had also had an impact on the UK’s options, as UN missions have spent a lot of the year just trying to keep the wheels of diplomacy turning, and there has not been much space for radical new policies. Very few officials in London and other capitals have had the bandwidth to propose new initiatives at the UN, except on COVID itself. And on COVID itself, the UK has been among the leaders of the multilateral response to the crisis – along with France and the EU institutions – and has again taken a very different approach to the Trump administration’s unilateralist stances.

How has the UK worked with other groups, such as CANZ (Canada, Australia and New Zealand)? UK diplomats had good relations with their counterparts from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and that seems to have continued. But I can only think of one case in which the UK prominently adopted a ‘CANZ plus UK’ identity in UN debates in 2020, and that involved negotiations on a declaration to celebrate the UN’s seventy-fifth anniversary in the summer.

Sweden and Qatar has led the process of drafting this declaration – a big non-binding commitment to multilateralism—and at the last moment the UK blocked consensus on the document because China wanted to include some language based on ‘Xi Jinping thought’ in the text. The CANZ countries and US (in other words the Five Eyes intelligence community) backed the British position, but the EU did not. This was once case where European diplomats noted that the British were adopting a firmer line than they might have done before Brexit, although in the end a compromise was found and it all proved to be a bit of a flash in the pan.

More broadly though, I don’t see the UK shifting away from its old EU partners to an alternative bloc with CANZ at the UN. To be honest, it is not an idea that makes sense in the UN context for the simple reason that eight or nine times out of ten the UK, CANZ and EU are on roughly the same page on policy problems in New York. So it’s not a meaningful distinction.

How does China’s power at the UN play into UK calculations in New York?

China has gained a lot of leverage at the UN in the last five years in particular, and Western countries (and in fact many non-Western countries too) are worried about the spread of its influence. After Brexit, some UN watchers thought that the British would have to tread softly with the Chinese for trade reasons. But British officials have been prominent in criticising Beijing for its treatment of the Uighurs and, unsurprisingly, Hong Kong in UN forums. As the story about the UN75 declaration
suggests, the UK and Europeans sometimes differ on how firm to be with Beijing but most EU members have been tough over the Uighurs in particular.

That said, both the UK and most of its allies (including EU and CANZ members) felt that the Trump administration went too far in its attacks on China over COVID-19 this year. We saw this during the virtual high-level session of the UN General Assembly in September this year, when President Trump attacked China in fierce terms, but Boris Johnson gave quite a measured call for clarity about the origins of the pandemic, without mentioning China by name. Overall, I think UK diplomats want to establish that they can be firm with China in multilateral institutions, but also to avoid a ‘new Cold War’ logic by which everything that happens at the UN is framed as a zero-sum game between the US and China and their allies.

**How will the arrival of the Biden administration affect the UK’s position at the UN?**

The Biden administration is good news for the UK in the multilateral sphere. It validates the UK decision to stand up to Trump over Iran alongside the E3, for example, and it is clear that the US is going to want the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow next year to be a big success. It is not clear how Biden will approach the Chinese at the UN – although he is likely to be quite a bit subtler than Trump has been – but overall the UK and US should get along nicely.

In a funny way, having Biden in the White House could actually complicate UK-EU relations at the UN. On a lot of topics in 2020, Trump’s lines at the UN were so outrageous that it was only common sense for the UK to align with the EU. With Biden in office, the US is likely to be much less disruptive, but the British may also feel more of a pull to stand with the Americans in those cases where there are transatlantic divergences. That said, the UK has always tried to stay as close as it can to the US in the UN as it can, so this is not exactly new.

**Will the UK decision to revoke its commitment of 0.7% of GNI to aid affect its standing at the UN?**

The UK decision on 0.7 per cent will come back to bite it in UN debates. It gives diplomats from developing countries (and indeed big non-Western UN members like China and India) an easy line of attack in debates about economic issues. That said, I suspect that we will sadly see a lot of major aid donors having to make similar choices so the UK won’t be alone in this.

I argued after Brexit that the UK should stick with the 0.7 per cent goal as a flagship example of its commitment to multilateralism, and I am sorry it has slipped. I think that London can try to compensate for that by doubling down on other areas of cooperation, like making COP26 work out. Overall, I have been impressed by the way the UK has navigated a difficult diplomatic 11 months at the UN since Brexit, but there are still a lot of challenges ahead.
8. Recommitting the UK to multilateralism through the United Nations

By Enyseh Teimory

The global order is changing: traditional champions of international cooperation work to undermine the system of rules they helped build and multilateral organisations face a crisis of legitimacy at the time we need them the most. Britain’s place within this order and its systems is changing too; as the House of Lords International Affairs Committee warned in 2019 - the UK’s influence in the world cannot be taken for granted.

In light of this, the UK’s role within international organisations - particularly the UN - must be a foreign policy priority. The UK should in turn recommit fully to multilateralism and, with due consideration to its capacities, play its part in strengthening and upgrading our global institutions. By ensuring it is a model member state and upholding the principles it espouses, the UK will strengthen its position at the UN. It will also create opportunities for the new alliances that will enable the UK to bolster its position at the UN General Assembly. By forging new cross-regional alliances, the UK will also help progress efforts to reform the UN and positively lend its support to the multilateral action needed to tackle global challenges.

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UK’s position in the world today

‘Global Britain’ has been the banner under which the UK has branded its foreign policy in recent years. From the inception of the UN, the UK has held a leading role which it has maintained, perhaps disproportionately, through its privilege in being a permanent member of the Security Council, and has been a longstanding proponent of an international rules-based system.

The UK continues to invest in this system. It is a strong supporter of UN Peacekeeping, both politically and financially. Its support as a troop contributor has waxed and waned over the years, but UNA-UK has welcomed the Government’s confirmation that the recent increases in contribution will continue beyond 2020 and will be upgraded in the years to come.166 Moreover, we applauded Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s announcement at the General Assembly in September that the UK would become the largest single state funder of the World Health Organisation, committing £541 million in funding to COVAX, a new initiative to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is distributed to all countries of the world, and ending all tariffs and export controls on medical supplies for COVID-19.167 The UK also stepped up to host COP26, the UN’s climate summit, which has been rescheduled for November 2021. Global leadership of this form maintains the UK’s position as one of the key stakeholders of the international system.

However, a number of recent developments have raised the concern that the UK is pivoting towards a more unilateralist and exceptionalist foreign policy strategy.168 One example is the decision to reduce overseas development assistance and reverse the 0.7 per cent pledge enshrined in UK law.

Last year, UNA-UK commissioned research on the potential impacts of exiting the EU on the UK’s position at the UN.169 A key recommendation from the report was “Maintaining resolutely the UK’s 0.7% commitment to foreign aid – a major source of soft power and influence.”170 The report, which drew on interviews with current and former British and international diplomats and civil servants, also noted growing resentment around its permanent Security Council seat and a perceived sense of entitlement, concerns about its commitment to allies and to international law, and the gaps between its rhetoric and actions.

In light of these challenges, UNA-UK has long called on the UK to set out a clear strategy for the UN within its wider foreign, development and defence policy.171 Earlier this year, the UK Government committed to the largest review of the UK’s foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War. The Integrated Review offered an opportunity for the Government to define its contribution to multilateralism in this fast-changing world, as well as to engage with a range of stakeholders on approaches for the future of partnerships for UK foreign policy.172 Crucially, it presented an opportunity for the public to provide input. Public support for foreign policy is essential for national security. An informed and engaged public can support ‘resilience’ at the
community level - the ability of the public to resist misinformation and extremism, and actively participate in shaping a nation better able to achieve its objectives on the world stage.

It appears however that this review has been rendered moot, as government has prematurely taken many of the major decisions that will shape the future of UK foreign policy, such as the merger of the FCO and DFID and injection of £14 billion for defence spending over the next four years, in advance of the review’s findings.

Becoming a model member state
The UK can seek to offset these factors by ensuring that it is a model Member State and a model permanent member on the Security Council. The UK already has a longstanding principled objection to the use of the veto and has not used it in the last 31 years. It could build upon this by listening to and representing the voices of states that do not have a permanent seat. In addition, the UK could support changes to the Security Council’s working methods to strengthen the role of elected members and advocate for greater transparency and inclusion (building on its role in securing changes to the Secretary-General selection process, for instance).173

A model member state is a self-reflective member state. We have seen that a failure to thoroughly scrutinise the application of the UK’s own policies, despite the continuing demand of civil society to do so, has undermined commitments to international treaties and weakened its perception in the eyes of the global community.174 Britain’s arms exports and its wider relationship with Saudi Arabia is just one, but a totemic example of the wider review that urgently needs to take place.175 The UK has faced repeated calls to reconsider its role as ‘penholder’ on Yemen at the Security Council. Since the conflict began in 2015, the UK has licenced over £4.5 billion worth of arms exports to Saudi Arabia, despite calls from UNA-UK and other civil society organisations to halt arms exports to all parties to the conflict.176 Britain’s claim to operate one of the most robust defence export control regimes in the world was discredited when the UK Court of Appeal ruled in 2019 that such exports were unlawful.177

New, principled alliances
More broadly, the UK will also need to put more effort into forging wider alliances, especially those that cut across traditional lines. This approach will open up opportunities for effective partnership to tackle global challenges, and enable the UK to ensure it is not wedded to traditional alliances that could potentially undermine its principles where the attitude of allies and the UK do not align.

Recent debates around Hinkley Point power plant and Huawei have led some senior parliamentarians to call for an alliance of democracies to counter Beijing’s influence and more broadly the influence of those who share different values to the UK.178 While on certain issues, notably human rights, it is right for the UK to convene allies to counter pressures to the UK’s agenda, a blanket attitude will not serve the UK or UN well, and could play into a cold war dynamic - a dynamic that has historically been very damaging to international institutions. Dividing the world

173 While the UK hasn’t officially used the veto since 1989 the threat of use of veto can also shape negotiations on outputs.
into an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ is likely to exacerbate diplomatic impasses at the United Nations, and risk creating a ‘two speed’ global governance. Furthermore, many issues cross traditional lines of alliance; the allies of the UK on an issue like human rights are not the same as the allies of the UK on an issue like climate change.

As the 2019 House of Lords report *UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World* outlined “a more agile, active and flexible approach to foreign policy must now be developed.”179 A foreign policy centred around issues, rather than actors, strategic partnerships rather than de facto alliances, will counter the prevailing risks of compromising the UK’s positions on key issues such as gender equality and women’s empowerment, human rights, climate change, disarmament and atrocity prevention that the UK could then build into core elements of a principled foreign policy. And these fresh partnerships could help strengthen the UK’s networks in places where it is currently weak, notably the UN General Assembly, and counter the loss of the diplomatic network that will come from no longer being a member of the EU.

One such example could be through caucusing progressive states such as the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) coalition. In doing so, Britain could lead from behind in pursuit of policies and stimulate positive cross-regional action. The UK could even convene such coalitions itself. For example, as we recently suggested in evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, the UK should work to encourage states to defend funding for human rights mechanisms within the UN system, particularly at the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly.180

**Recommittng to multilateralism**

In recent months, we have seen a renewed interest in ‘minilateralism’ or smaller sub-UN coalitions of the like-minded on the part of a number of pundits such as Richard Haass, the Government, and other politicians such as the Shadow Foreign Secretary.181 Such coalitions can be powerful tools for increasing UK influence at the UN, and increasing the level of ambition states show - we may not have had a Paris Climate Agreement worth the name without the ‘High Ambition Coalition’.182

However, minilateralism cannot take the place of multilateralism, or of the UN. It leaves too many people behind, at a time when it is vital that our global system reach out to include those who currently feel excluded by it. Despite the challenges it faces, the UN still holds unmatched legitimacy and universality, and remains the global platform through which international norms and standards are agreed.183 It is vital, therefore, that Britain recommits to multilateralism and looks to strengthen both its position within the UN and the UN itself, by being an exemplary and principled part of the global system, willing to work with any and all in order to pursue a values driven foreign policy agenda.

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180 UNA-UK, UNA-UK gives evidence on multilateral institutions to parliament, una.org.uk, October 2020 https://www.una.org.uk/news/una-uk-gives-evidence-multilateral-institutions-parliament
9. Kindred spirits: How a post-Brexit Britain and the EU can work together to strengthen multilateralism

By Thorsten Benner

In December 2016, in a speech at Chatham House, then UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson talked about the promise of a post-Brexit UK “to be more outward-looking and more engaged with the world than ever before.” He stressed that as “Global Britain, our range is not confined to the immediate European hinterland as we see the rise of new powers.” The past four years have provided a taste that assuming the role of ‘Global Britain’ may not be quite the liberating moment Johnson promised it to be. Much of the UK’s energy has been absorbed by negotiating its economic relationship with the EU while trying to secure favorable trade deals with the rest of the world. The negotiations between Britain and the EU have created little positive energy. And the focus has been too little on what the UK and Europe can do together.

In 2021, the UK and the EU will open a new chapter in their relationship, a chapter that will no longer be dominated by negotiations over a Brexit agreement. That gives the UK and the EU a chance to focus more on what they can do together in order to shape global order. Here the UK’s and the EU’s outlooks are remarkably similar. For all the cozying up to US President Donald Trump, now UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson never embraced the assault on multilateralism pursued by Trump. With regard to the EU, Johnson peddled the sovereigntist slogan of ‘taking back control’, painting the EU as a threat to British democracy. But Johnson never applied that sovereigntist vision

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Finding Britain’s role in a changing world

to global agreements. He never raged against the Paris Agreement on climate change, the International Criminal Court or other UN bodies the way his supposed populist kindred spirit in the White House did. And, yes, a post-Brexit Britain will invest a lot in shoring up its bilateral relations with the US, Japan, Australia, Canada and others. But there is a lot that Britain and the EU can do together to strengthen multilateralism where they share a similar analysis of the challenges at hand. In the ‘Global Britain’ speech, Johnson looked back at the failure of the efforts to ‘globalise’ the liberal international order after the end of the Cold War:

“We stood together, with our west European allies, throughout the cold war and when that cold war ended 26 years ago we hoped that our rules-based liberal order would catch on and embrace the whole world. Alas, that vision has not really come to pass.” Johnson then issued a call to arms to defend international institutions and a warning: “If we fail, then we risk reverting to an older and more brutal system where the strong are free to bully or devour the weak. Where might is always right and the rules and institutions we have so painstakingly built fade away into irrelevance. We cannot allow this to happen.”

This reveals that in fact it is the EU and the UK who are kindred spirits when it comes to multilateralism. Johnson’s thinking matches exactly the thinking of democratic middle powers like many of the EU members (especially Germany). Democratic middle powers have a lot at stake in terms of the health of multilateralism, a lot more at least than great powers that can much more afford a ‘might is right’ attitude — or as German chancellor Merkel put it, rely on the ‘rule of the stronger’ (Recht des Stärkeren) instead of the ‘rule of law’ (Herrschaft des Rechts). Therefore, they have a strong incentive to invest in multilateral institutions since they generally see them as serving their interests. Middle powers also have significant ability to invest in multilateralism. They can do agenda-setting, start new initiatives, defend rules and laws against attacks, and mobilise support for global public goods.

That is exactly the approach of the Alliance for Multilateralism, a French-German initiative that was born out of the crisis of multilateralism following the election of Donald Trump.\textsuperscript{186} It is not a formal alliance, rather a flexible platform to strengthen multilateralism. That pragmatic approach should sit well with the UK. Britain has already supported several of the Alliance’ initiatives, such as the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, Principles for lethal autonomous weapons systems, the Partnership for information and democracy, and the joint position on climate and security. The Alliance for Multilateralism therefore would be a good platform for the UK to flexibly engage with European partners in strengthening multilateralism. The door is very much open for this. The German Government has not made it a secret that it would very much welcome continuing close cooperation with the UK post-Brexit.

The Alliance last met at ministerial level on the occasion of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2020, one year after the presentation of the Alliance for Multilateralism during the UNGA ministerial week in 2019. This latest Alliance meeting brought together 70 participants from across the world at Ministerial level.

The Alliance concentrates on three broad goals:

- To protect, preserve and advance international law and internationally agreed norms, agreements and institutions when they come under pressure or are attacked;
- To reform and to update existing international institutions, in order to make them more representative, agile and effective; and
- To advance multilateral initiatives in new or underregulated areas.

\textsuperscript{186} Alliance for Multilateralism – see: https://multilateralism.org/
In each of these areas, the UK can make a distinct contribution to advance the work of the Alliance for Multilateralism.

In terms of protecting and defending international norms and law, strong cooperation of democracies is critical. The UK can bring this push to the Alliance, reinforcing the efforts of President Biden who as candidate vowed to convene a ‘Global Summit for Democracy’. The UK has also supported the idea of a ‘Democratic 10’ (D10) made up of the G7 members (including EU) plus Australia, India and South Korea as a format to better coordinate multilateral policies among the world’s strongest democratic economies. This can be a basis of a democratic core of the Alliance for Multilateralism, which the UK can help to strengthen. Especially after shedding ‘Golden Era’ delusions about cooperation with Beijing, the UK can get the Alliance to push back against Beijing’s economic and political coercion and violations of human rights and international law (such as in Hong Kong). Beijing has not paid nearly enough of a political price for its brazen decision to take Canadian citizens Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor as hostages in order to bully Ottawa into releasing Meng Wanzhou, the daughter of Huawei’s founder, who Canada arrested at the request of the US. There is also too little of a concerted pushback against Beijing’s acts of economic coercion for example against Australia.

With regard to reforming existing international institutions the UK has long advocated strengthening global health governance and can very much add to the Alliance for Multilateralism’s efforts to reform the WHO and to strengthen new public-private ventures such as GAVI and CEPI that have proved crucial in dealing with the corona pandemic. Together with EU members, the UK can convince the US to join the COVAX facility to ensure global access to corona vaccines. The UK can also work with Europe to hold Beijing to its commitment to not use access to corona vaccines as a lever in bilateral relations with poorer countries. At the same time, the UK can also encourage Europe to let go of some overcome privileges such as holding on the IMF’s top job. After Brexit, the European candidate for IMF managing director will unlikely be a UK citizen. Therefore, it is easier for the UK Government to tell Europeans that this sends a fatal message to countries like Argentina, Mexico, South Korea or South Africa; Europeans want to hold on to their privileges as long as possible, and they will fiercely defend them. But the buy-in of these countries that are not traditional members of what used to be the ‘West’ is exactly what is needed for successful coalitions to advance multilateralism.

The work on principles for autonomous lethal weapons and against disinformation that the Alliance for Multilateralism has undertaken is also something the UK can align with. As Boris Johnson stated in 2016: “We work on security with our European friends – and as I have said before, our role is to be a flying buttress, supportive of the EU project, but outside the main body of the church.” In this spirit, in addition to the work of the Alliance for Multilateralism the UK and European partners can also continue the work of the E3 on Iran and other international security matters.

In 2021, the UK will assume the G7 presidency and also host the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. This gives the post-Brexit UK a chance to leave its mark on the multilateral stage. It will be good for the UK to have EU partners by its side in this endeavor. And it will be good for EU members to be able to count on the UK as a partner in the efforts to strengthen multilateralism.

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187 GAVI: The Vaccine Alliance – see: https://www.gavi.org/; CEPI – see: https://cepi.net/
10. The UK and Canada: National Security and collaboration in uncertain times

By Aaron Shull and Wesley Wark

The contemporary world of international relations is marked by two major countervailing trends. First, is a number of complicated existential threats, like climate change and pandemics, which require earnest international coordination and collaboration to address. Second, is a trend in the opposite direction toward isolationism and nationalism, with the quintessential examples being Brexit and ‘America First’.

On top of these trend lines, with COVID-19, we have seen cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns launched by adversarial state actors; the domestic deployment of the Canadian and Australian militaries, among other national forces, to protect vulnerable populations; the disruption and vulnerability of just-in-time global supply chains; worrying domestic political tensions and fractures in many states; and an erosion of international cooperation. All of this is taking place amid...
ongoing tectonic geopolitical shifts, bookended by an overdue discussion about data, tracking, commercial surveillance and the attention economy.

Given this, there are two key and congruent lessons to be learned from COVID-19. First, is the urgent need to reconceptualise doctrines of national security. Second, is to develop a better appreciation of where alliances with likeminded states can be found in the tumultuous sea of global affairs.

A notable feature of existing national security doctrine is the willingness to identify pandemics as a national security threat, without building a sufficient response capability, and while largely decoupling this threat from a traditional understanding of the role and functions of security and intelligence systems. In our view, this needs to change, and change needs to be driven by exchanges among like-minded states and, ultimately, by public debate.

One important forum for discussions of a new approach to national security is the Five Eyes alliance (comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the United States). The Five Eyes partnership has, over the past decade, expanded its scope beyond intelligence sharing to incorporate dialogue on key geopolitical and economic concerns. While it is a small and tight club of ‘Anglosphere’ states, it could serve as an important sounding board.

Within this context, it is important to note that the UK produced its first national security strategy in March 2008, which took a quite broad view of national security.189 It set out a new understanding of national security for the UK, explained in this way:

“In the past, the state was the traditional focus of foreign, defence and security policies, and national security was understood as dealing with the protection of the state and its vital interests from attacks by other states. Over recent decades, our view of national security has broadened to include threats to individual citizens and to our way of life, as well as to the integrity and interests of the state. That is why this strategy deals with transnational crime, pandemics and flooding — not part of the traditional idea of national security, but clearly challenges that can affect large numbers of our citizens and which demand some of the same responses as more traditional security threats, including terrorism.”

This was a bold statement. It elevated the understanding of the threats posed by pandemics and climate change impacts to a high level and, just as important, argued that the approach to these non-traditional security threats contained many elements similar to those deployed against more traditional concerns, including terrorism. These elements included monitoring (intelligence collection) and risk assessment, the development of response capabilities and the inculcation of societal resilience. Subsequent iterations of the British national security strategy suggest the bold new outlook never fully took hold. The most recent update to the British national security strategy was produced in 2018.190 Pandemics were included in a general category of national security threats, labelled “diseases and natural hazards affecting the UK.” Discussion of specific responses to pandemic threats was off-loaded to a separate biosecurity review, produced in July 2018.191

The UK Biological Security Strategy extolled the capabilities and systems available within the UK while calling for greater integration of effort, sustained attention to the threat and support for developing countries to help improve their capabilities. Disease outbreaks were identified as a major globalised threat to society while accidental release of a virus or deliberate biological attacks were

seen as less likely (high impact but low probability). The UK strategy maintained a traditional distinction between the role of intelligence services in collecting information regarding deliberate threats (largely from malicious state actors), and the conduct of epidemiological intelligence by civilian public health authorities and experts in Britain and through international partnerships. The key role played by the WHO’s Health Emergencies Programme was acknowledged alongside Britain’s financial contribution to it.\textsuperscript{192} The WHO was described as having “a world leading surveillance and information network filtering 5000 disease signals a month looking for outbreaks of pandemic potential.”

It is safe to say that key assumptions built into the 2018 UK Biological Security Strategy, such as the distinction between state-sponsored biological threats and naturally occurring pandemics, and the singular reliance on the WHO for global surveillance, have been made dangerously obsolete by COVID-19. The creation of a new Joint Biosecurity Centre in May 2020 to act as an intelligence fusion and response mechanism is one early indicator of new thinking.\textsuperscript{193}

Where does Canada fit? The answer is: on the margins. Canada has never produced an overarching biosecurity strategy, unlike Britain and the United States. Its one attempt at a national security strategy was produced 16 years ago and has been forgotten. The 2004 Securing an Open Society: Canada’s National Security Policy deserved a better fate.\textsuperscript{194} It might have served as a useful construct if it had been sustained and adapted to a changing national security environment. Its emphasis on an ‘all-hazards’ understanding of national security threats, its identification of intelligence as the country’s first line of defence against all manner of threats, its attention to public health threats in the aftermath of the severe acute respiratory syndrome epidemic, and its call for closer integration of public health and national security were all important attributes. But this concept of national security withered away, to be replaced by more sectoral attention to individual threats posed by terrorism, cyberattacks and violent extremism.

A long-overdue reappraisal of Canadian strategic approaches to national security will have to emerge in a post-COVID-19 environment. The groundwork needs to be laid in a clear-eyed appraisal of the Canadian Government’s response to the pandemic and the nature of the role played by security and intelligence agencies, which has been largely obscured by doctrines of secrecy, failures of transparency and glib political messaging. Canada should not be content to continue to sit on the margins of strategic thinking about national security. As Canada revamps its own approach to national security, there are things it can learn from efforts by its Five Eyes partners – and the UK in particular.

There is also an opportunity to build on the long history between the UK and Canada, as both push into an increasingly uncertain and unstable world. At risk of stating the obvious, states do not have ‘friends’, they have interests. But, if they did – Canada and the UK would be the best of friends. They have a common language. A similar culture. Plus, a range of shared experiences.

However, more pointedly, they also have a number of comparable interests in the conduct of global affairs. Both Canada and the UK are too small to throw their weight around, like China and the United States. Both benefit from a stable rules-based global order and from certainty within international institutions (as much as that is possible). During this period of upheaval, it will be imperative for countries like the UK and Canada to work together to advance their mutual interests in a range of international fora, from the G20 to the ITU. After all, in tough times, it is nice to know who your friends are.

\textsuperscript{192} WHO in emergencies, World Health Organization, https://www.who.int/emergencies/en/
\textsuperscript{193} Joint Biosecurity Centre, Gov.uk, May 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-biosecurity-centre
11. Another look at values-based multilateralism

By Thomas E. Garrett

Every few years, Western leaders raise the idea of democracies working in 'alliance' or 'concert' on global challenges. The late US Senator John McCain, an esteemed supporter of transatlantic cooperation, included a 'League of Democracies' in his 2008 presidential campaign platform. And President-Elect Joe Biden ran for office in 2020 with a written pledge to convene a 'Summit of Democracy' in his first term.

When American President Donald Trump suggested including Russia in the G7 this year, the UK proposed instead a 'D10' gathering of democracies. This suggestion of adding Australia, India, and the Republic of Korea to form a group of ten democratic nations turned attention again to relevance of values-based multilateral groups.

Close cooperation between democracies is especially urgent. For years, Russia and China have been seeking to export their authoritarian model of governance around the globe. Moscow’s ongoing...
violation of Ukraine’s sovereign borders and Beijing’s deployment of ‘warrior wolf’ diplomacy finds expression in undiplomatic behaviour and aggressive actions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have argued that only complete state control over personal liberty and democratic freedoms can successfully solve problems like a global health crisis.

Their disregard of the global rules-based order serves as a stark reminder for UK diplomats and foreign policymakers of the need for strengthened ties with other democracies. Whether the democratic model of governance can prevail over its authoritarian rivals will have profound implications for the international order for the rest of the 21st Century.

For two decades, the UK has engaged with a multilateral coalition of democracies committed to defending the rule of law, human rights, and democratic values: The Community of Democracies.

Towards a Community of Democracies
20 years ago, the UK joined 106 other nations in Poland in what was then the largest gathering of countries identifying as electoral democracies. The gathering produced an historic 19-point statement called the Warsaw Declaration, named after its host city, that committed participants to the protection of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy; such explicit support for the essential values of democracy had seldom been so central in previous international agreements.

The Warsaw Declaration is a ‘checklist’ for established democracies to ensure adherence to fundamental democratic principles while also providing transitioning political systems a ‘roadmap’ to democracy.

Principle One of the declaration states that the will of the people for its government is to be expressed through regular, free, and fair elections. The right of every person to equal access to education forms Principle Six. Principle Seven supports freedom of the press to collect, report, and disseminate information, news, and opinions subject only to legal restrictions in a democratic society. Other principles in the Warsaw Declaration address freedom of peaceful assembly, equal protection of the law for minorities, independent judiciaries, and the right of those elected to form a government.

But the Warsaw Declaration, and the Community of Democracies (CoD) that emerged from the gathering in Poland, almost didn’t happen. Some thought it wholly unnecessary.

In the three decades before the year 2000, electoral democracies had risen in number from 30 primarily Western-based governments to nearly 120 nations spread across every region on earth.

In foreign ministries around the world, diplomats asked, ‘Why do we need a summit about democracy?’ ‘Aren’t democracies ascendant, especially following the dissolution of the Soviet Union?’ Regional-based bureaus expressed concern a membership body of democracies would cause more problems than it was worth. Would there be friction as a result of creating a new ‘club’ of nations that invited some countries but excluded others? And would governments truly commit to democracy as an overriding principle if their specific interests failed to benefit?

Months of planning by meeting organisers, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, sought to address these concerns. In the end, the states in attendance represented a generously broad array of political systems, from the established

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parliamentary democracy of the UK, to the Russian Federation and Indonesia only two years after emerging from decades of one-person rule. The diversity of democracy, as represented in the three-day conference, was widely acknowledged. The generally held assumption was that participants might be at different places along the democratic path but the worldwide direction towards representative government was a linear process.

Publicly, Geremek tempered the celebratory atmosphere of the year 2000 by cautioning that ‘democracy doesn’t only move from triumph to triumph,’ but would face ongoing and new challenges. Indeed, the notion of an inevitable path of democracy as the ideal global governance system has cracked. Today, Russia, Egypt, and other countries have turned away from democracy and even well-established democracies are struggling with serious governing challenges.

That the conference produced the Warsaw Declaration was an immense achievement. Despite the variety of states in attendance, participants agreed that certain unalienable principles had to be present for any political system to claim the label of democracy. For Foreign Minister Geremek, a noted intellectual and Solidarity activist, it was personally important to connect the name of the city he loved with a community of democracies, overcoming its previous association with Soviet totalitarianism (the Warsaw Pact).

Role of the UK
If you Google the UK’s foreign policy statements over the past several years, the word ‘democracy’ shows up often. There is also official and regular acknowledgement by UK diplomats of the vital role of civil society in fostering and maintaining democracy. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO—now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office FCDO since September 2020) has been a consistent participant in the Community of Democracies Ministerial Conferences since its inception.

British policymakers recognise the role the group can play as part of its multilateral efforts. While the UK sees the value of universal membership-based bodies such as the UN and its agencies like the WHO, it also recognises the importance of a values-based coalition like the Community of Democracies to defend human rights and democracy.

“In a world where democratic values are under attack on many fronts, the countries which believe in those values must stand together and resist the forces that threaten them,” said then FCO Minister for Human Rights Baroness Anelay of St. John’s DBE in 2016 when the UK sought to expand its role with the Community of Democracies by applying for membership to its 28-member Governing Council. Three months later, the UK application was unanimously approved, and it joined the council as a member state. The FCDO’s Human Rights and Democracy unit serves as the primary interlocutor between Whitehall and the Community of Democracies.

Former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt once said the UK should be part of an “invisible chain, linking the world’s democracies.” An example of the UK’s engagement with the Community of Democracies is the work to advance democratic consolidation in transitioning countries such as The Gambia. This year, CoD partnered with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, another pro-democracy organisation supported by the FCO, in a virtual training program in Banjul for women’s empowerment. The FCO has joined its diplomats to Community of Democracy high-level...
delegations, and funded a CoD publication on ‘Best Practice in Community of Democracies' Member States' Engagement with and Protection of Civil Society.’

The UK has much to share with other democracies about its own experience. As Baroness Anelay has said, the UK and others must “work to perfect our own democracies—for there is always work to be done at home.”

During the UK’s six-month chairmanship of the Community of Democracies, an FCO-hosted Governing Council meeting in London in 2019 was briefed about how the process of devolution, for example in regard to Wales, is a route to increasing democratic participation. Lessons learned were shared by experts of the Constitution Group of the Cabinet Office. The Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, spoke to the best practices and the work still to be done of ensuring all citizens eligible to vote were able to vote.

The FCO host illustrated another essential issue—democratic resiliency—with a presentation by the Maldives’ Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid, who discussed his country’s return to elected and constitutional government through peaceful means. Shahid was joined by the Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin MP, who spoke about the human rights aspect of UK foreign assistance.

A significant change to CoD practice was introduced by the UK host, that of adopting an Outcome Statement in twice-annual Governing Council meetings. Previous ‘declarations’ occurred in bi-annual Ministerial Conferences but at the 29th Governing Council the FCO guided a Statement on Media Freedom and Violence against Journalists to adoption by the Governing Council.²⁰⁵ This Statement was designed to complement FCO work in other multilateral venues on the issue.

Renewed commitment
Of the many multilateral bodies in which the UK participates, the Community of Democracies is unique in significant ways. Unlike the Commonwealth, or NATO, or the G7, the membership of the intergovernmental body is not based upon economic, regional, linguistic, or historic criteria, but on the universal human rights and democratic values of the Warsaw Declaration. And, although composed of an intergovernmental coalition of like-minded nations, the Community of Democracies differs from related-bodies in its substantial inclusion of civil society in its operations.

A recent example of the mutually beneficial relationship between the UK and Community of Democracies is the Bucharest Anniversary Statement, which provides the member states’ view on the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰⁶ The statement articulates that the response to the global health crisis must not be worse than the virus itself; authoritarian regimes should not use the pandemic as an excuse to consolidate power, punish political enemies, and restrict basic human rights.

Rather, it recognises that “Times of crisis can also be an impetus for change. The mobilization of civil society, innovations to democratic processes, and demands for reformed institutions and increased accountability point to opportunities for positive developments emerging from the pandemic.”

As a values-based organisation, the Community of Democracies provides additional opportunities for the newly-configured Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to continue to declare and defend its support of human rights and the rule of law. The Community of Democracies welcomes the UK’s involvement with its democratic allies to confront ongoing global challenges to democracy.

12. Conclusions and recommendations

By Adam Hug

The contributions to this essay collection highlight the range of different opportunities that a truly engaged Global Britain can take advantage of on the world stage as it seeks to move on from post-referendum instability and introspection. The UK needs to provide some reassurance to its partners that it still wants to play well with others, by showing it is still willing to muck in as well as to lead. So the UK will have to do a lot of hard work to retain and build alliances with like-minded countries to make regional and global systems work in both the national and international interest. In order to build trust the UK should find ways to demonstrate that it still believes in the intrinsic value of international cooperation as more than simply an instrumental tool in its foreign policy kit. As an internationally focused middle power, the UK benefits enormously from promoting wider global acceptance of both international institutions and established norms.

The UK will need to work effectively at a number of different levels and through a range of different vectors, so the FCDO will need to be properly resourced to prevent overstretch at a time of tightening budgets. Irrespective of the UK’s aspirations to pivot to the Indo-Pacific as Prof Jamie Shea reminds us the ‘UK’s security priorities today are still overwhelmingly focused on Europe’. So the UK needs to find a new way of working with the EU once the current sound and fury has subsided. This can start at a local level where as Balfour suggests UK Embassies and EU Delegations re-establish cooperation and information sharing on the ground in third countries and international

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208 As addressed in previous publications in the Finding Britain’s Role in the World series.
institutions. In the future it may be possible to revisit issues such as formal foreign policy and security cooperation, as part of a future EU-UK Partnership and Cooperation Agreement or Strategic Partnership. Irrespective of the state of UK-EU relations Britain will need to redouble its efforts in the other European focused forums such as NATO, the OSCE and Council of Europe, with an emphasis on looking creatively at how to support the work these institutions do to promote democratic values.

At a global level, the UK must continue to build on its strong position at the UN and take full advantage of its leadership of both the COP and G7 in 2021 to set out an ambitious agenda for the UK’s future foreign policy. It should seek to build on ideas around a ‘Democracies-10’ (D10), by promoting expanded G7 membership to include South Korea and Australia. It should find new ways to promote engagement with the democracies of the global south and support UK NGOs and institutions, such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, to play a bigger role. The UK will need to work flexibly and creatively with longstanding partners in new formats such as the Alliance for Multilateralism, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) coalition, as well continuing current efforts to build greater collaboration between the ‘CANZUK’ countries, though recognising the geographic and economic limitations to the scale of such ambitions.

Building on the findings put forward in this collection, there are a number of recommendations that the UK Government and other partners could consider including:

- Finding a future framework for UK-EU cooperation in foreign and security policy and other non-trade areas, while rebuilding operational-level information sharing and cooperation;
- Enhancing parliamentary cooperation between the UK and European Parliaments and strengthening UK delegations to NATO, OSCE and CoE Parliamentary Assemblies;
- Funding projects conducted by the OSCE and Council of Europe’s human rights mechanisms and supporting election observers as well as secondments and leadership candidacies;
- Working with the Commonwealth on modern slavery and supply chains, while promoting the Commonwealth Charter and the use of aid and trade to improve compliance with its principles;
- Using the UK Presidency of the G7 to refocus the organisation as the group of leading democracies by expanding its membership to include South Korea and Australia, while reinvigorating outreach to global south democracies;
- Supporting the UK’s role in democracy promotion by supporting UK NGOs and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy; and
- Working creatively with forums like the Alliance for Multilateralism and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) coalition, while developing further CANZUK cooperation.
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