



bright blue

Centre Write

Autumn 2021

Target secured?

Sir Alan Duncan | Tobias Ellwood MP | Jill Rutter | Sir David Lidington

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

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Editor's letter

Editor **Joseph Silke** introduces this edition



The honeymoon period of Western triumph that followed the collapse of Soviet tyranny is over, with Pax Americana challenged by a rising China and an increasingly multipolar world. The Afghanistan fiasco has shaken the alliance of free nations, so now is the moment to take stock of the United Kingdom's position.

Long past its imperial glory, Britain still struggles to determine its place among the international community, as the rancour over Brexit shows. The Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, has conceded that the UK is not a superpower, but the country has an active role to play on the world stage. The Government has called this role 'Global Britain' – but what does that really mean?

After the publication of the *Integrated Review* earlier this year, this magazine brings together defence, security, and foreign policy experts to answer the tough questions about Britain's strengths and vulnerabilities in 2021 and beyond.

Opening *Centre Write* is an essay by **Sir David Lidington CBE** (p.6), the former *de facto* Deputy Prime Minister, who outlines the main security threats facing the UK and how we can overcome them.

Director of the British Foreign Policy Group, **Sophia Gaston** (p.8), argues that building Britain's resilience to threats will require a whole-of-society approach with social cohesion at home.

Associate Fellow at Bright Blue, **Michael Stephens** (p.9), writes about Britain's enduring entanglement with the Middle East, which means we cannot afford to withdraw our engagement with the region.

Counterterrorism and extremism expert, **Nikita Malik** (p.11), sets out how the threat from terrorism has evolved in recent years since the War on Terror began.

Leading Russia and disinformation

analyst, **Chris Hernon** (p.12), insists that we can win the fight against Vladimir Putin and Russian aggression.

Associate Fellow at Bright Blue and environmental economist, **Helen Jackson** (p.13), stresses the ongoing threat posed by zoonotic diseases, and that failing to respect nature could lead to another Covid-19.

Chair of the Defence Committee, **Tobias Ellwood MP** (p.15), warns that the UK's shrinking military capability leaves us vulnerable as our threats multiply and grow in strength, and undermines our relationships with key allies.

National security and communications expert, **Lauren Protentis** (p.16), explains how techniques developed for counterterrorism purposes can also be applied in the fight against disinformation campaigns.

Our interview is with the former Minister of State for Europe and the Americas and deputy to Boris Johnson at the Foreign Office, **Sir Alan Duncan** (p.20). We discuss whether 'Global Britain' is a sufficient foreign policy, the Government's record on LGBT issues and Covid-19, and his infamous diary.

Hong Kong pro-democracy activist, **Nathan Law** (p.22) urges us to see China's crackdown in the former British colony as a warning sign to the world.

Former High Commissioner from New Zealand to the United Kingdom, **Sir Lockwood Smith** (p.23) encourages the UK to see the Asia-Pacific as the new land of economic opportunity, as well as where to compete with China.

Co-founder of the Coalition for Genocide Response, **Luke de Pulford** (p.24) denounces the UK Government's record on genocide as unworthy of a country that claims to stand up for human rights.

Associate Professor at the DKI-APCSS in

Honolulu, **Dr John**

Hemmings (p.27), examines the case for creating a 'D10' club of the G7 plus Australia, South Korea, and India, to defend against digital authoritarianism.

Journalist, broadcaster, and China expert, **Isabel Hilton OBE** (p.27), argues that despite our differences, China remains an indispensable partner for tackling global problems like the climate crisis.


Senior Research Fellow at UK in a Changing Europe, **Jill Rutter** (p.29), writes that the UK and the European Union need a cooling off period after Brexit and to build a more constructive working relationship.

Chief Executive of CANZUK International, **James Skinner** (p.30), makes the case for greater ties between Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK to increase prosperity in all four nations.

Chair of the Commonwealth APPG, **Andrew Rosindell MP** (p.31), insists that the Commonwealth deserves more respect and has been neglected.

Director of the UK Trade Policy Project, **David Henig** (p.33), relays the truth about trade, that non-tariff barriers have become the biggest obstacles to free exchange.

Chief Executive of the Coalition for Global Prosperity, **Ryan Henson** (p.35), argues that foreign aid is a critical soft power tool that can improve lives as well as project our values.

Finally, Chief Executive of Oxfam GB, **Danny Sriskandarajah** (p.36) claims that the UK's international deeds do not match its ambition, and calls for more action on vaccines and climate aid. 

Joseph Silke is the Communications Officer at Bright Blue

Director's note

Despite the own goal in Afghanistan, the West can still win, argues **Ryan Shorthouse**



Coming of age around the turn of the millennium, it seemed the American-led advance of freedom – at home and abroad – would march on forever.

Then there was September 11, as planes crashed into the heart of Western civilisation, the Twin Towers collapsing, and sending tsunamic dust clouds around the corridors of Manhattan. Hearing the news on the car radio is a vivid memory: I stared out the passenger window at the pine trees in the distance. The shadows beneath them seemed to grow longer.

The Bush Administration announced a new War on Terror, making no distinction between those who commit and harbour terrorism, starting America's longest war in Afghanistan.

Crucially, though, the number of democracies worldwide has continued to rise this century. Terrorism – though more suicidal and indiscriminate – kills fewer people than in the past. The Chinese and Russian regimes act belligerently towards us, but are tamed by their reliance on a globalised, capitalist economy.

So, is the West – and its values – really in retreat? A commonplace argument is that liberalism was over-optimistic and overreached. A 'communitarian correction' in domestic politics followed, where our politicians have finally recognised – after the unexpected EU referendum result – stronger public appetite, among all social groups, for security over freedom. There is little public enthusiasm for military adventurism abroad anymore, saving lives, and repairing nations.

The sudden, sometime chaotic, departure of allied military and diplomatic personnel from Afghanistan, unnecessarily handing victory and power back to the ghastly Taliban, is for some a stand-out symbol of the escalating deterioration of

American-led assertiveness over world affairs in the past decade or so. Yanis Varoufakis, the socialist former Greek finance minister, gloated: "Liberal-neocon imperialism is defeated once and for all."

Those arguing that the US and its friends are always the evil oppressors, intervening in countries for no good reason, other than for dollars and domination – will soon find out who the real oppressors are. The women and girls we have left behind – educated, working, leading, after two decades of allied presence – will soon tell us that.

Khaled Hosseini's bestselling semi-autobiographical book, *The Kite Runner*, hauntingly depicts life in the 1990s under the Taliban: "Two Talibs with Kalashnikovs slung across their shoulders helped the blindfolded man from the first truck and two others helped the burqa-clad woman. The woman's knees buckled under her and she slumped to the ground. The soldiers pulled her up and she slumped again. When they tried to lift her again, she screamed and kicked. I will never, as long as I draw breath, forget the sound of that scream."


"It was the cry of a wild animal trying to pry its mangled leg free from the bear trap. Two more Talibs joined in and helped force her into one of the chest-deep holes. The blindfolded man, on the other hand, quietly allowed them to lower him into the hole dug for him. Now only the accused pair's torsos protruded from the ground. A chubby, white-bearded cleric dressed in grey garments stood near the goalposts and cleared his throat into a handheld microphone. Behind him the woman in the hole was still screaming. He recited a lengthy prayer from the Koran, his nasal voice undulating through the sudden breath of the stadium's crowd."

I fear Tom Tugendhat, the Chair of the

Foreign Affairs Committee, was right: "We are swapping patient achievement for a second fire and a second war." The civil war is likely to intensify: the Taliban will fight various rebels, from the even more extreme ISIS-K, responsible for the recent terrorist attack at Kabul Airport, to the more moderate National Resistance Front, based in Panjshir.

As Rory Stewart, the former International Development Secretary pointed out, there were ten times as many soldiers in South Korea this year as there were in Afghanistan just before the total withdrawal. If there can be a continuing presence there 70 years after the Korean War, why not in Afghanistan? Even before the Doha Agreement between Trump and the Taliban in 2020, there was a relatively low deployment of allied troops and low casualties among our soldiers. NATO-lite was keeping the Taliban at bay.

The debate in Britain on foreign policy has been dominated by the merits or otherwise of militarily intervening in a country, but it strikes me that the bigger impact on the stability of a fragile state often flows from when allied forces actually leave a country. If we do so prematurely, the consequences are dire: as they were when President Obama did so in Iraq in the early 2010s, when ISIS subsequently thrived.

It is a long road fraught with setbacks, but – slowly but surely – the West really is winning. The full withdrawal from Afghanistan was an own goal, conceding defeat when success was being secured. 

Ryan Shorthouse is the Chief Executive of Bright Blue

Letters to the Editor

Submit your letters to joseph@brightblue.org.uk

Regarding John Cope's piece ('Ditching disadvantage', Spring 2020), anyone who has dealt with university admissions knows of the advantages of the middle-class applicants: music lessons, dance and drama classes, sports, foreign travel, additional language tuition, and so on. Two reforms would benefit those without these, with university entrance, and help the wider 'levelling up' agenda. An expansion in extra-curricular activities would keep schools open until 6pm on weekdays and for parts of the weekend. These could be available to the community as well as pupils, and expand the basic offering of the National Curriculum. A revival and expansion of the House system that withered with the growth of comprehensive schools, named to reflect the ethnicity of the catchment area (Seacole, Mandela, Kumar, Joshi, Yousafzai, and so on), could provide pupils with positions of responsibility, offer non-academic competition, and give a framework for community service and the support of charities.

Dr Catherine M. S. Alexander | Bright Blue member

Kwasi Kwarteng's piece ('Green growth', Spring 2021) offers a comprehensive view of the Government's current and planned climate policy, combining recovery from the pandemic with the need for climate leadership ahead of COP26. While Kwarteng rightly highlighted the poor air quality's effects on vulnerable communities, he understates the potential impact of policy measures on these groups. Rising energy costs threaten to hit many households hard, and the costs of making sustainable upgrades to homes are simply unaffordable for many people. This is especially true after the Government scrapped the Green Homes Grant in March. The challenge for businesses of balancing competitiveness with sustainability could result in costs being passed to the consumer. The Government faces a tough challenge to protect the most vulnerable from the costs of the transition to a greener economy and society.

John Walter | Bright Blue member



Ana Tavares

Dr Tim Bradshaw's piece ('Unleashing universities', Spring 2021) highlights the potential universities offer for levelling up. The process by which UK universities commercialise their research is an area of potential improvement. US institutions negotiating with potential spin-offs typically demand a lower share of equity, lower revenue royalties and lower intellectual property licence fees than European counterparts, fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Government investment in research could be more beneficial to the wider economy if we were willing to consider this model.

Henry Yates | Bright Blue member



ESSAY

The biggest threats to the UK

Following the withdrawal from Afghanistan, **Sir David Lidington CBE** outlines how the UK can navigate the changing geopolitical landscape

Royal Navy

The political shock of the West's defeat in Afghanistan has hammered home the truth that we can no longer take for granted some of the key assumptions that have underpinned much of the public and parliamentary thinking about our country's security.

First, the international order established after the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union is visibly and rapidly fraying.

Putin's Russia occupies parts of Georgia and Ukraine, seeks to subvert democracy in Eastern and Central Europe and has used both radiological and chemical weapons to kill people in the United Kingdom.

China not only rails against the 'unequal treaties' imposed on it during its period of weakness in the nineteenth century – about which it has a reasonable point – but also exults in the erosion of Western influence and presents its own system of authoritarian rule coupled with the ruthless use of surveillance technology to identify and suppress dissent as a model for other

nations to follow.

Second, the United States is questioning its own international priorities. 'America First' is a slogan associated with Donald Trump, but the idea predates his presidency. President Obama insisted that Britain and France had to take responsibility for leading allied action in Libya, and now President Biden has decided to stick with his predecessor's commitment to a speedy withdrawal from Afghanistan, with scant regard paid to the views of coalition partners.

This is not isolationism, but rather a ruthless focus on those things that matter most to US interests. Allies, especially those in Europe, including the UK, are expected to spend more on their own security and take responsibility for leadership in regions like Africa and the Balkans, which are a lesser priority for Washington.

Third, it is becoming more difficult to define a neat boundary between peace and conflict. Our adversaries deploy hard and soft power together to promote

their strategic objectives. The Belt and Road extends China's strategic as well as its commercial influence. Russia deploys troops in Georgia, Crimea and Transnistria; mercenaries in the Donbass, Syria and Libya; cyberattacks, economic muscle, information warfare, and cultural organisations to advance its interests.

“[US] allies, especially those in Europe, including the UK, are expected to spend more on their own security and take responsibility for leadership

Fourth, there is no longer any demarcation line between domestic and international security. The Salisbury attack was the most stark recent illustration of this, but any chief constable will tell you that there is now almost no serious and organised crime that lacks an international dimension. Digital communications enable the transfer across continents of extremist

>> doctrines, laundered money, and nuclear and biological know-how. Our security is threatened by criminal enterprises, from terrorists to cyber-gangs to drug and people traffickers, which are every bit as professional and well-organised as any legitimate transnational business. As I learned when in government, criminal gangs may also have close connections with hostile states and serve, in effect, as surrogates for them.

“ Any chief constable will tell you that there is now almost no serious and organised crime that lacks an international dimension

Fifth, our security will depend in large part on whether the democratic world can renew its capacity for innovation and technological advance. China is openly aiming for a leading position in all the key twenty-first century technologies, from synthetic biology to quantum computing, by 2025. It aspires to global dominance in those markets by the centenary of the communist revolution in 2049, with the geopolitical clout that that would give. This is not about Huawei or TikTok – the Chinese

Communist Party’s treatment of Jack Ma, and now of China’s online education sector, shows that it cares little about individual companies. Rather the challenge is whether, by mid-century, the UK, the US or any other democracy will have any choice other than to rely on Chinese suppliers of advanced telecoms, robotics, or AI.

So, what is to be done? We face hard choices. The UK will need to modernise its hard power – spend more on robots, drones, cyber, and space – and maintain, rather than cut, our soft power capabilities like our aid programme and the British Council.

Alliances and international institutions can amplify Britain’s influence, but there will still be limits to what we can do.

The Government’s *Integrated Review*, published earlier this year, identified technology as key to our security interests. We now need the leadership and the difficult, detailed work to turn its ambitions for a new technological revolution into a strategic plan to implement the necessary policy reforms on education, skills, and industrial development.

We have to keep persuading the US that it should continue to see the security of Europe, including the UK, as a vital national interest of the American people. That means maintaining the quality of our

armed forces and intelligence agencies and their relationships with US counterparts and also showing that the UK can be effective in convening and leading groups of allies to defend Western, including American, interests through both diplomatic and military means.

The UK is a European power with global interests and a global outlook. We should work more with countries like Japan, Australia, and South Korea, but also build a new strategic security relationship with our European neighbours. Some of that can be done through NATO, for example through the UK’s leadership of the Northern Group. Outside NATO, the E3 diplomatic network of UK, France, and Germany has continued to function well throughout the travails of Brexit.

“ An effective set of security relationships with our European neighbours is an integral part of Global Britain, not an alternative to it

Alongside our bilateral relationships we will need to rebuild a strategic security relationship with the EU as an institution. Even France and Germany seek to influence and are in turn influenced by European Union decisions. The EU has responsibilities under its treaties for police and justice cooperation, for data sharing, sanctions policy, and a lot of soft power capability – from development spending to police and military training. An effective set of security relationships with our European neighbours is an integral part of Global Britain, not an alternative to it.

I hope that defeat in Afghanistan will spur a willingness to make a reality of the vision embodied in the *Integrated Review* and make the hard policy choices that that will entail. We have no time to waste. 6

The Rt Hon Sir David Lidington is the Chair of the Royal United Services Institute



UK Government

Building Britain's resilience

Strength abroad requires cohesion at home, argues **Sophia Gaston**



When the UK Government published its long-awaited *Integrated Review of Defence, Security, Development, and Foreign Policy* earlier this year, the frequency with which the word 'resilience' featured in the 114 pages of sprawling analysis was especially striking.

The terminology of resilience reflects a risk perception framework that extends well beyond the traditional understanding of national security. It is responding to an awareness that the threats we face as a nation are rapidly evolving – infiltrating our economy, our democracy, and our society. Although primary responsibility for managing these risks will lie with the Government, all citizens, businesses, and institutions will need to play a role in defending our sovereignty.

The notion of building resilience from the ground up is by no means unique. It is a concept that has taken root in periods of existential threats, whether the Second World War or the Cold War that followed in its wake. Both the Allies and the Axis powers during the Second World War investigated ways to target civilians outside of the battlefield – considering the health of citizens' morale at home central to the framework of political and military decision-making. The UK's Mass Observation project closely monitored citizens' mental health and wellbeing, and aerial bombardment on both sides was often motivated by a mission to break the

resolve of communities. Social cohesion and the strength of the contract between citizens and their political institutions are the bedrock of a well-functioning democracy, and also the necessary precondition to undertake bold actions on the world stage.

“Cohesion and the strength of the contract between citizens and their political institutions are the bedrock of a well-functioning democracy

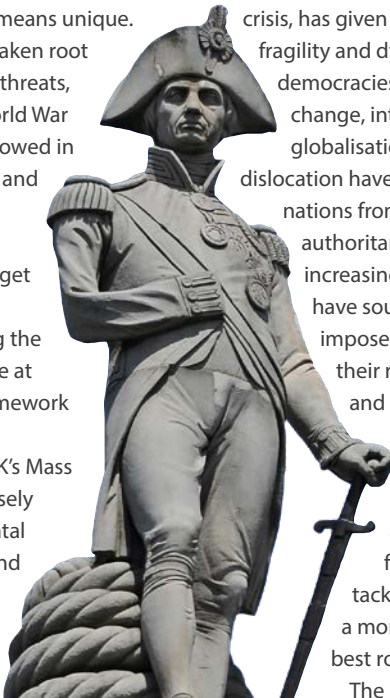
It says something about the moment we are living in that this whole-of-society approach to resilience is back on the agenda. A period of sustained economic prosperity, mediated by the War on Terror, and then derailed by the financial crisis, has given way to a period of fragility and dysfunction in advanced democracies. Social and demographic change, intergenerational conflict, globalisation, and economic dislocation have destabilised liberal nations from within. At the same time, authoritarian nations have become increasingly risk-tolerant and have sought to more confidently impose their ideologies within their regional neighbourhoods and inside global institutions. This combination of escalating and fragmenting internal and external threats may feel overwhelming, but tackling these risks together in a more holistic way will be the best route to overcoming them. The resilience agenda requires

us to break down the hard walls we have established between our domestic and international policy. Foreign policy has long been considered outside the realm of everyday 'ballot box' concerns, and therefore there seemed to be no need to engage with the British people on this subject. Our international policies were forged with an eye to our global partners and rivals, focused on the projection of our power and influence, and the defence of the realm – with little consideration given to the health and social fabric of the nation. Foreign policy was conducted in an abstract space of global diplomacy and international institutions, and citizens' scepticism, mistrust or discomfort with our foreign policy choices was held up as proof to justify their estrangement.

“Authoritarian nations have become increasingly risk-tolerant and have sought to more confidently impose their ideologies

The past five years have made clear that such an approach is now unsustainable. Citizens have a stake in foreign policy choices and expenditure, and are a crucial underpinning of the legitimacy with which Britain can pursue its international objectives.

The British Foreign Policy Group's research makes clear that citizens' interest in foreign policy has been increasing exponentially since the EU referendum, and attitudes on international affairs are




>> now an expression of domestic social and political identities. This question about how best to balance openness and security is one of the most essential challenges of governance in the twenty-first century, and our international role will be most effective if it is backed by a strong foundation of public consent.

The UK Government is not alone in seeking to bring together its domestic and international renewal projects. US President Joe Biden is also on a mission to integrate foreign and domestic policy – both substantively and conceptually – by

appointing former National Security Advisor and diplomat Susan Rice as Director of the Domestic Policy Council. His American Jobs Plan clearly sets out the centrality of domestic social and economic reform to the nation's competitiveness against a rising China, and he promotes a foreign and trade policy that delivers 'for the middle class'. As in Westminster, there has been a reckoning about the fragility of domestic political mandates and the need to bring citizens along for the ride in order to justify and strengthen a moral mission in the world.

The fusion of domestic and international

resilience is non-negotiable in an age of grey-zone warfare and must extend beyond incidental policy alignment. It will require a fundamental shift in how we organise government and an embedded monitoring and assessment process to ensure that policy choices reinforce, not undermine, one another. Our voice on the world stage will be more powerful and persuasive if built on the foundation of a prosperous, cohesive, and inclusive society at home. 

Sophia Gaston is the Director of the British Foreign Policy Group

Britain entangled?

We cannot afford to withdraw from the Middle East, writes **Michael Stephens**

The United Kingdom's relationship with the Middle East region is one that is chequered by colonialism and repeated military interventions, but also a deep familiarity which today is both romanticised and abhorred in equal amounts.

Alongside the United States, the UK has deployed its military into the Middle East countless times since the end of the Cold War. It supported the US-led War on Terror, and Tony Blair and David Cameron sent British armed forces to force regime change in Iraq and Libya, and dabbled in regime change in Syria. All the while propping up monarchies in the Arab Gulf States with armaments, and large-scale forward deployments of troops and logistical material.

However, these days it is common to talk about a US-led retreat from the Middle East as it turns eastward to face a rising China. The hope being that they will eventually disentangle US interests from the chronic instability and conflict that exist in many parts of the region; thereby freeing up the

mental, fiscal, and military space to focus on the great geopolitical game of the day.

In recent months, London has been trumping its own Indo-Pacific tilt, stressing the importance of the region as a large potential trading bloc. However, while Washington may be able to afford to pick and choose what parts of the world it can be interested in, the UK does not have such luxuries. Britain may be an island, but its geography and history link it closely to the Middle East, whether its policymakers want it or not.

“ Britain may be an island, but its geography and history link it closely to the Middle East, whether its policymakers want it or not

British influencers take selfies in Dubai; lawyers and bankers run successful branch operations in Doha and Abu Dhabi; and, the British Armed Forces train in bases in Oman, UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain, alongside another

250,000 British expats that reside across the Gulf. Only Australia has a larger number of working-age British nationals.

Direct British control ended in the 1970s, but the famous saying goes that London “left through the front door, and returned through the back window.” Large investments in British real estate, as well as Britain's need for hydrocarbons, have meant that the two sides have never really separated.

Although the US is tiring of conflicts abroad, in less prosperous areas of the region, large ungoverned spaces still exist, providing safe haven for militants alongside offshoots of Isis and Al Qaeda. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on almost all Middle Eastern states has been severe, with only the tiny gas rich state of Qatar showing any real signs of returning to economic growth in the coming year.

Meanwhile, ongoing wars in Syria,



>> Yemen, and Libya continue to bubble away without solution, providing havens for extremist organisations, and sustaining an arena of competition between external actors, both international and regional, who are all intent on forcing their various agendas upon these broken polities.

Additionally, the ever-present threat of escalation between Israel and Iran, and the ongoing tension surrounding the latter's nuclear enrichment programme mean that the UK must stay engaged with regional security. Unless London wishes to do the unthinkable and rescind its UN P5 Security Council status, or walk away from the E3 grouping it shares with France and Germany, Iran will remain of high importance and necessitate continued engagement.

“ British control ended in the 1970s, but the famous saying goes that London “left through the front door, and returned through the back window

The outcome of this is that security issues emanating from the Middle East region are likely to remain prevalent for years to come. This means that among the




three competing pillars of foreign policy - security, prosperity and values - it is security considerations that will win out above the others, closely followed by prosperity, with values sadly bringing up the rear.

The Arab uprisings which engulfed the region in 2011, and the subsequent uprisings in Sudan, and Algeria in 2019, demonstrate that ignoring questions of governance, human rights, and the fair application of justice only leads to wider stability and security issues in the long run. The cut in UK overseas aid from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income will only compound the problem. Inevitably the UK will be seen as a more transactional and emotionally disengaged actor that cares little for the wellbeing of the region and its peoples.

Balancing security, prosperity, and

values is always a challenge, but in the Middle East these three pillars of foreign policy are challenged more keenly than almost anywhere else in the world. To be a genuinely Global Britain, London must decide how and in what ways it can muddle through the Middle East's unstable politics, while retaining a healthy return on its military and financial investments. It is likely to involve a constant balancing act between ambition and necessity.

The UK may well have to accept that China's authoritarian non-interventions appear more attractive to regional actors than the hyper interventionist liberalism of the West. 

Michael Stephens is a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and an Associate Fellow of Bright Blue

Terror transformed?

Nikita Malik sets out how the threat from terrorism is evolving

The year 2017 was a pivotal one in illustrating the impact of terrorism on UK soil, with five serious terrorist attacks taking place in quick succession.

Immediately following the attacks, in which 36 lives were lost, MI5 and Counter Terrorism Policing launched a number of reviews to identify what was known about the attackers prior to each attack, and to

review their assessments and actions.

Partly due to the popularity of magazines such as Islamic State's Dabiq, terrorist attacks have become increasingly low grade and high impact. Attacks involved materials that could be found at home, magazines that could be downloaded online, and made use of spaces that were becoming more difficult to monitor.

It is true that some of the attacks in 2017 were linked to, and claimed by, the global terrorist organisation Islamic State. Yet with Islamic State claiming attacks without any on the ground training, it has become more difficult





>> to ascertain whether attacks by these so-called 'lone wolves' were actually directed by or simply inspired by the group.

While hundreds of British nationals left the UK to join Islamic State in Syria, MI5 was aware of more than 43,000 people who remained in the country and continued to pose a potential terrorist threat to the UK. These included frustrated travelers who were unable to, or were prevented from, travelling abroad. At times, these individuals attempted to commit plots from the United Kingdom instead. This created a situation where the UK's 'homegrown' threat was difficult to distinguish from the presence of a charismatic and dangerous international movement.

“ From 1998 to 2015, 72% of Islamist-inspired terrorism offenses were committed by UK nationals or individuals holding dual British nationality

Is the international link to contemporary terrorism therefore overblown? Unlike other countries, the United Kingdom is unique in its 'homegrown' threat, due to the history of its own extremist groups, such as Al-Muhajiroun, that predated the growth of

Islamic State. Data reveals that from 1998 to 2015, 72% of Islamist-inspired terrorism offenses were committed by UK nationals or individuals holding dual British nationality. During the same period, 56% of individuals linked to one or more proscribed terrorist organisations were directly linked to the UK-based group al-Muhajiroun, 24% were linked to al-Qaeda, and only 11% were linked to the Islamic State.

The 'homegrown' threat has been further bolstered by the growing presence of nationalist, far-right movements. Right-wing extremism is often described as the fastest growing threat to the UK, including by the country's most senior counter-terrorism officer. Unlike Islamist-related terrorism, the far-right threat involves individuals who have less interest in travelling abroad. It is therefore harder to catch these individuals at airports and use prevention methods such as the removal of passports.

Moreover, while the far-right have made their presence known online, cloaking rhetoric in nationalism can mean that their extremism and hate-based content is harder to moderate than the symbols and language used by Islamist groups.


Nonetheless, in 2020, the largest number of referrals to the Government's Prevent programme were for concerns regarding

right-wing radicalisation. Prevent figures show that in the last year alone, 1,387 people were referred to the programme due to concerns related to right-wing radicalisation, and – concerning – more than one in ten terror suspects arrested in Britain were children.

The scale of the threat has meant that systems and processes in the United Kingdom have needed to focus inwardly to prevent terrorist incidents. This has often been through measures such as Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs), increased use of stop and search powers, and making terrorism sentencing longer to deter attacks.

An inward focus has also meant altering systems and processes to protect critical infrastructure. For example, temporary physical security barriers were installed on eight central London bridges by the Metropolitan Police Service, following the 2017 terrorist attacks on Westminster Bridge and London Bridge. These were intended to stop cars from mounting the pavement and thus disrupt attacks that sought to use vehicles in pedestrian areas.

Two further changes will affect the impact of international terrorism on homegrown attacks. First, and most obviously, is the relative reduction in the power of international terrorist groups like Islamic State. Second is the growth of extremism online, due partly to the Covid-19 pandemic, where people have increasingly spent time indoors on their computers.

The national threat level for international terrorism is set and assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, and – until 2018 – did not include domestic extremism in its threat assessments. The inclusion of right-wing extremism, as well as other, non-ideological extremism in 'homegrown' threats will be increasingly important as the international terrorism threat ebbs. 

Nikita Malik is an expert in counter-terrorism and extremism

Active threat

We can win the fight against Russian aggression, insists **Chris Hernon**



There may be no public declaration of war, but it is clear that liberal democracies are in conflict with Putin-ruled Russia. The answer to how we deal with Russian aggression starts with accepting this grim fact.

Constant conflict with liberal democracies is one of the main pillars of the Putin regime's domestic rule, and an integral part of its foreign-policy worldview. Putin does not share the Western vision of a Europe at peace, and is not going to stop attacking and undermining Western countries. Putin and his gang of KGB thugs see any attempt at conciliation as weakness and an encouragement for whatever destructive and murderous acts they are currently committing.

The dangers of appeasement were made horrifyingly clear by Belarusian

President Lukashenko's outrageous air piracy, forcing down an EU flight to arrest an opposition figure. He was later displayed on TV showing obvious signs of his brutal treatment to make a false 'confession', reminiscent of Stalin's times. It's unlikely that Putin didn't approve this move, and indeed when asked at the St Petersburg Economic Forum if Russia might do the same to capture opposition figures again, his answer was far from a definite 'no'.

Similarly, when

President Biden stated he would waive sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, Putin pounced immediately and announced that Ukraine remaining a transit country for Russian gas depended on it showing "goodwill". In other words, a nation that has had Crimea stolen from it and has lost thousands of people fighting a bitter trench war against forces controlled, led, manned, armed, and supplied by Russia has to show "goodwill" for the Kremlin to not wreak further damage to its economy.

“ Putin's claim of entitlement to a 'sphere of influence' is highly offensive to nations that lived for decades with the Soviet jackboot on their necks

Nord Stream 2 is entirely a geopolitical weapon for the Putin regime, designed to further undermine Ukraine's dream of building a Western-style state and economy, as well as to increase leverage over other European states.

Ukrainians rightly see the US move as a betrayal. Western countries should be extremely concerned about the further power such a move would place in Putin's hands. It should be stopped.

Attempting to murder an ex-intelligence officer on the streets of the United Kingdom with a nerve agent; constantly trying to encourage political division on social media and with actual agents infiltrating parties and organisations;

running a vast, well-funded propaganda machine based in Western countries pretending to be 'alternative' media; co-opting Western politicians and other figures to spread Kremlin-friendly messages and influence; bombing hospitals to prop up the evil Assad regime in Syria; and, hacking government systems. The list of hostile and damaging acts is growing as efforts never cease.

However, we can push back. Doing so robustly gives the Kremlin pause for thought. Ukrainians, for example, rallied as a nation and fought back against the Russian-instigated 'civil war'. Although it has cost them dearly, it has averted the possible end of Ukraine as a country. UK support has helped, but we must do more to make it plain to Putin that it's not in his interests to prevent Ukraine from choosing to follow a Western path.

“ Those who profit from being close to Putin, who finance his aggression against us, should not be free to enjoy the fruits of the system they undermine

Putin's claim of entitlement to a 'sphere of influence' is highly offensive to nations that lived for decades with the Soviet jackboot on their necks. They are independent nations, who do not want to live under brutal authoritarian and corrupt regimes. The West must be confident about sending our forces to reassure them, and make it plain to the Kremlin that we will not abandon these nations to its mercy.



>> Moreover, we must reject Russia's claims that NATO is encircling and threatening it for the baseless and cynical propaganda they are. The idea that the West would attack or invade Russia is laughable, and we should say so loudly.


As Theresa May, when she was Prime Minister, showed over the Skripal assassination attempt, when we do act with purpose and in concert, we can show the Kremlin we mean business. Her Government's work to unite allies in

response to the heinous act in Salisbury startled the Kremlin with its display of Western unity and resolve.

Sanctions do work, over time. In addition, dubious Russian money, often acquired at the expense of ordinary Russians, should not be welcomed in the West. Those who profit from being close to Putin and who finance his aggression against us should not be free to enjoy the fruits of the system they undermine, by sending their children to study and party here. Even Russian

propagandists who spew anti-Western rhetoric from Russians' TV screens prefer to spend their time in London. This must end.

It is uncomfortable to face the fact that we are in a conflict without a foreseeable end, but it is a fact nonetheless.

Recognising it is the first step in not losing the fight. 

Chris Heron is a leading Russia and disinformation analyst and a former journalist for the BBC Monitoring service

Back to nature? Preventing pandemics

Helen Jackson stresses the ongoing threat posed by zoonotic diseases

Given the suffering and economic damage of the past year, citizens across the world have every right to expect their governments to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic with meaningful plans to prevent future pandemics.

No doubt governments have learned many lessons on how to limit the spread of viruses, urgently procure medical equipment, and develop affordable vaccines. Recognising that international cooperation is key, a group of Presidents and Prime Ministers — including Boris Johnson and Emmanuel Macron — have called for a new international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response.

“ The role intact natural habitats play in mitigating the risk of novel virus emergence needs to be recognised internationally

International efforts to plan for the next pandemic must not be stuck in a public health silo. As well as improving pandemic responsiveness plans for next time, we need

to examine where novel viruses come from in the first place — and act to stop them at source. To do this, pandemic prevention must be informed by the ecology of zoonotic disease emergence.

In truth, the call for a new treaty recognises this, describing the need for a 'One Health' approach that “connects the health of humans, animals, and our planet”. While the source of the SARS-CoV-2 virus outbreak is still unknown, close relatives to the virus have been found in bat populations in Southeast Asia. Zoonotic diseases first recorded in humans over the past 70 years include Zika fever, Ebola, AIDS, and Nipah virus infection.

Ecologists believe potential hotspots for emerging infectious disease to be tropical forests with high mammal biodiversity undergoing land conversion. Conversion of natural habitats is thought to increase the likelihood susceptible humans and livestock will come into contact with infected wild hosts, with the process actually favouring host species such as bats and rodents.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the role intact natural habitats play in

mitigating the risk of novel virus emergence needs to be recognised internationally for what it is — a major global public good.

One of the main messages of the recent government-commissioned *Dasgupta Review into the Economics of Biodiversity* is that natural ecosystems underpin human welfare in a variety of ways. But the economic system, left to its own devices, will underinvest in these assets because they provide public goods. Markets are very good at delivering goods and services which benefit individuals with the desire and means to pay for them. They are extremely bad at navigating trade-offs between the provision of private and public goods. People don't tend to voluntarily forgo income and consumption which immediately benefits them for small changes in diffuse public goods.

That is why governments need to step in to protect public goods. International institutions and treaties, however, have so far failed to adequately protect biodiversity





>> over the past decade. A criticism of previous international biodiversity targets has been that they stimulated the creation of protected areas on paper, but failed to ensure that these protected areas are effectively managed or resourced, or created in areas of high conservation value.

The easiest way to meet an area-based target is to protect areas with low opportunity cost, that is, little in the way of alternative economic uses. But the areas most at risk of zoonotic spillover are those undergoing land conversion — areas with high opportunity cost. A nature conservation strategy aiming to reduce zoonotic spillover risk would need to bite this bullet.

Such a strategy would require concerted international political commitment and

effort to fill the implementation gap being left by international treaties and targets. It would need financial resources, willingness, and goodwill from tropical forest nations, penalties for companies profiting from uncontrolled deforestation, and transparent, fair, and financially stable mechanisms for ensuring poor people living close to forests have alternative, sustainable livelihoods. It would also mean policy being made on the basis of scientific evidence which is complex and evolving, on the understanding that research needs to be supported in tandem with policy.

According to one estimate, the annual cost of achieving a 40% reduction in an area at high risk of virus spillover would be \$2-10 billion. This is not a trivial amount. But it is small compared to the \$5.6 trillion in

lost GDP from Covid-19, not to mention the millions of deaths, the 110+ million people pushed into extreme poverty and/or food insecurity, and the larger global social costs of longer-term disease and lockdowns.

Tropical deforestation is not a politically easy problem to solve, as those working on existing efforts to tackle it know far too well. But if we are here in ten years' time amidst the fallout of another pandemic caused by a virus which once confined itself to bats or monkeys — having failed to read the signs — we will be looking at not just another lost decade for conservation, but one of the great public policy failures of our time. [b](#)

Helen Jackson is an environment and natural resource economist and an Associate Fellow of Bright Blue



Latest report

Green money: a plan to reform UK carbon pricing

Josh Buckland

The UK's current system for carbon pricing is inadequate, inconsistent and unequal. Not only must carbon pricing go much further if the UK is to reach net zero by 2050, but taxes on pollution must also be made fairer in order to equalise the impacts of carbon pricing on different sectors of the economy and build political support for reform.

This report proposes a three-part plan for reforming the UK's carbon pricing framework. The UK must place a consistent price on all carbon emissions; take effective action by 2030; and build a lasting political and public consensus around carbon pricing.

Fighting fit

Tobias Ellwood MP warns that our shrinking military leaves us vulnerable



There is a 1930s feel to the world at the moment. Authoritarianism is on the rise once again, geopolitical power bases are shifting, international institutions are unable to hold errant states and non-state actors to account, and rival states are seriously upgrading their hard power. To make matters worse, there is a clear absence of Western resolve and leadership – over what we collectively believe in, stand for, and are truly willing to defend.

If there was one welcome outcome from the most recent G7 summit in Cornwall, it is the realisation that unless the West becomes less risk averse, regroups, and re-unites, the next decade will get very bumpy indeed.

“ There is a clear absence of Western resolve and leadership – over what we collectively believe in, stand for, and are truly willing to defend

Russia is an acute threat to European interests as Vladimir Putin seeks to revitalise its superpower status by expanding influence in his backyard. China is the long-term geopolitical threat. An ever confident and assertive Beijing seeks to lure evermore states into its infrastructure, technology, and military programmes, progressively expanding its soft power influence across Asia and now Africa.

Three fresh factors make today's situation more dangerous than in the lead up to the Second World War.

Changes in technology are altering how we communicate, do business, socialise, and indeed fight. Our openness offers access to both state and non-state actors to disrupt our lives beneath the threshold of direct conflict through disinformation, intellectual

property theft, election interference, and cyber attacks.

Covid-19 has seen nations retreat from global exposure, become more siloed and protectionist. Many states have introduced emergency draconian legislation that they will be slow to relinquish.

Finally, climate change is already impacting security and governance in some of the world's most vulnerable regions. Storms, floods, and droughts will affect agricultural productivity, damage economies, and lead to mass migration, most notably from Africa to Europe.

Large-scale food shortages will unsettle populations leading to intensified competition over resources and regional conflict. Even if COP26 is a success, the damage done to our fragile planet to date will not prevent sea levels from rising before the danger passes.

How the West acts over the next few years will determine how the next few decades play out. As the UK starts to lift its head after the distractions of Covid-19 and Brexit, we must recognise that our options are narrowing to change course.

The Government's recent *Integrated Review of Defence, Security, Development, and Foreign Policy* recognises the individual pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, but it hasn't fitted them all together to form comprehensive grand strategy, nor committed the necessary funds to ensure our defence powers are suitably upgraded for the looming threats we face.

We know we are more vulnerable than during the Cold War, when we spent 4% of GDP on defence. We cannot possibly match today's threats on a peacetime budget of 2.2%. Although the *Integrated Review* has got us investing in our cyber and space resilience, without an increase in overall defence spending, our conventional military power will wither on the vine.

“ Our failure in Afghanistan is an extreme example where the wise use of soft power was trumped by faith in hard power alone

Over the next five years our Royal Navy surface fleet will become smaller than Italy's. The British Army is the smallest it has been for 200 years. Tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, and nearly 10,000 troops will disappear. We won't be able to transport or protect what's left as we also lose 24 Typhoons, all our Hercules and Puma

aircraft, and some of our Chinooks.

Most worryingly, only 48 of the

138 F-35 Lightning jets are ordered.

It's not just about hard power, but soft power too.

Our failure in Afghanistan is an extreme example where the wise use of soft power was trumped by faith in hard power alone. Now is not the time to




>> cap our defence spending, and we certainly should not be reducing our overseas aid budget.

The international 'to do' list could not be more daunting. Repairing our international institutions; reinvigorating Western resolve; and, addressing Russia's acute aggression and China's increasing economic, technological, and military clout are bad enough. Convincing friend and foe that we,

not mother nature alone, need to tackle climate change is even tougher.

We are a nation that steps forward when others hesitate. The world would be a very different place if we hadn't stood firm – and often alone – against Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler. Today is no different. "No man is an island" said the poet John Donne. Too many, I fear, have turned in on themselves, confused by a complex world, and fearful

of it. It's often much easier to ignore threats than confront them in time, but never forget that, as with appeasement, political drift preceded decisiveness.

This time, we can't afford to sleep while our enemies are wide awake – and ever more dangerous. 

The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP is the Chair of the Defence Committee

Disrupting disinformation

Counterterror techniques can apply to tackling disinformation, says **Lauren Protentis**



Disinformation campaigns from hostile state and non-state actors continue to thrive and to undermine democracies, leveraging a vast array of communications platforms to exploit elections, referendums, the Covid-19 pandemic, and more.

The fundamental goals of disinformation remain the same: to undermine democracy, international cohesion, and trust in institutions; and to increase polarisation and promote geopolitical goals.

This reached a dramatic height when angry mobs stormed the US Capitol on 6 January 2021. Related violence, incited by a web of conspiracies and domestic and foreign disinformation efforts, demonstrate how online disinformation and conspiracies can shake democracy to its core and cause real-world harm to people and the democratic process.

Western democracies must take notice of the real and emerging threat of disinformation-fuelled radicalisation and violence that hostile state and non-state actors will continue to exploit to achieve their geopolitical goals. Luckily, there's a vast body of research and practiced methodologies that disinformation practitioners can borrow from the counter-

radicalisation and counter-terrorism playbooks to curb it.

Disinformation and radicalisation experts alike study how offline and online behaviors and discourse might predicate real-world harm. At the onset of the mass migration of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria in 2013 and the increase in related domestic terrorism events, radicalisation and counterterrorism practitioners began considering 'push' and 'pull' factors as indicators or vulnerabilities around which to shape their prevention programmes.

“ **Artificial intelligence enabled disinformation could serve as a similar accelerant of disinformation-fuelled mobilisation to violence**

Push factors may be socio-economic, psychological, ideological, and circumstantial (such as discrimination or marginalisation) factors that might make some people more likely to consider or physically mobilise towards violence. Pull factors would include influences, messages, and groups that exploit these vulnerabilities. With these factors in mind,

experts and practitioners could begin understanding the drivers, external influences, and different stages of the radicalisation process and thus recommend and tailor prevention programmes accordingly.

Practitioners and global institutions should think about disinformation through a similar lens. Identifying predispositions or push factors will help governments and global institutions avoid one-size-fits-all approaches to disinformation-related prevention programmes, predicated on local-level drivers and influences, and co-opting appropriate credible influencers as part of the resilience building process.

As Peter Kreko, Director of Political Capital Institute in Budapest states: "Vulnerabilities are easily exploited by malign state and non-state actors who then tailor influence operations to each audience by tapping into these underlying complexities." By tailoring prevention programmes to address known vulnerabilities, state and non-state actors may see the impact of disinformation campaigns wane.

>> Just as social and traditional media have become accelerators of terrorist recruitment and radicalisation, artificial intelligence (AI) enabled disinformation could serve as a similar accelerant of disinformation-fuelled mobilisation to violence, if not adequately addressed.

“Curbing free speech in the name of countering terrorism could infringe on protected free speech and cause irreparable damage

Deepfake videos online are dramatically increasing. A report from Deeptech indicates that in 2019, over a ten-month period, there was an increase from 7,964 to 14,678 in deepfakes circulating online. The creation and distribution of sophisticated deepfakes, forged documents, or doctored images presents yet another tool for nefarious actors to exploit. Anne Neuberger, White House Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology, echoed this concern by saying that “artificial

intelligence could generate disinformation scale in a way that brings real concern.”


Governments must be proactive by investing in detection tools and technologies, and domestic and global planning, and put processes in place for information-sharing with social media companies when AI-enabled disinformation has the potential to cause real-world harm.

Institutions should break down the silos between counterterrorism and counter-disinformation efforts to ensure real-time information sharing, analysis, and future planning, as the lines between counter-radicalisation and counterterrorism efforts and counter-disinformation efforts overlap. While elections, referendums, and the Covid-19 pandemic all present vectors for disinformation-fuelled violence, global institutions and governments should begin anticipating future threats or vectors that could lead to another 6 January-style event.

While it is imperative for global institutions and governments to take critical and swift steps to combat the rising tide of disinformation-related violence, there are important limitations. Not all disinformation

or extreme discourse leads to violence. Curbing, or appearing to curb, free speech in the name of countering terrorism or extremism could infringe on protected free speech and cause irreparable damage to democracies while also exacerbating distrust in governing institutions.

Finally, governments can't curb the spread of disinformation alone, nor should they be solely responsible. Social media and communications platforms must become less hospitable to the spread of disinformation on their platforms.

As disinformation enters this new phase and poses an increasing risk to democracy, institutions must act quickly to create plans and programmes that build resilience against this threat. Leveraging the broad array of lessons learned, resources, and tools from recent counterterrorism and counter-radicalisation programmes is a good place to start. 

Lauren Protentis is a national security and communications expert. The views expressed are the author's own and not necessarily those of the US Government.



A close-up portrait of Sir Alan Duncan, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a green patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In the background, a portion of the Union Jack flag is visible on the left side.

THE INTERVIEW

Sir Alan Duncan

Joseph Silke speaks with former Foreign Office deputy about what 'Global Britain' means, the Government's record on LGBT issues, and his infamous diary

Who has most influenced your political philosophy, particularly your attitudes to foreign affairs?

No single person, and if you hark back to old names who are seen to be great influencers, the thinking you might take on from appreciating them will have become out of date. The important thing to remember is that understanding foreign policy is not just looking at Palmerston, Churchill, and Thatcher, it is about understanding Britain's current place in the world and what is going on in that world. We have to think for ourselves and the problem with modern Britain is that we do not have a foreign policy. No substantial politician has given it any thought, or come up with any credible modern approach as to what our policy should be.

The Government currently has this concept of 'Global Britain' which they claim is central to how they approach foreign and defence policy. Do you think it hasn't been developed enough?

'Global Britain' is utterly meaningless, until they explain the details of what it means in practice. It is nothing more than a slogan which conjures up a wish to play our part in the world, whatever that means, and to signal that we still think we matter, without saying how, where, and to what extent. Rather like 'levelling up', these vacuous slogans amount to nothing unless properly defined.

In the current context, do you think it is still possible for Britain to be what one might call a global player?

We do matter, but we probably only matter if we act as part of a broader alliance. We seem to have literally no moral conviction when it comes to areas where it takes courage to express that conviction. Anybody can sound off about China or Burma, or something like that, because it doesn't require you to stick your neck out when it comes to domestic politics. When it comes to more difficult issues, whether in Africa or the Middle East, we are pretty vacuous.

The Prime Minister clearly wants COP26 to be a big moment for Global Britain taking an international lead. Do you expect that Britain can fulfill this leadership role, or with the Cumbrian coal mine and a new North Sea oil and gas project, are we still failing to live up to that role?

Your question shows our problem. We are so stuck on everything else, we think that COP26 is an issue of foreign policy. It's not; it's an issue of collective environment policy, which is not the same as having to deal with conflicts and differences of culture. Although it is indeed global in one sense, it's literally a 'cop' out.

You were a Minister for International Development: to what extent has the abolition of DfID and the aid budget cut undermined the UK's soft power and moral standing?

You don't just win soft power by signing a big cheque. My favoured approach at DfID was to focus on tangible things like clean water, good health, and basic education, rather than programmes that cost a lot of money, but are wishy-washy, like 'freedom for women'. Such

a thing is important, of course, but it is rather difficult to measure. I always said we should only have a programme in a country if two conditions were met: massive control of waste and refuse, so you don't just throw stuff into the nearest river; and, the right to visit any of their prisons. Both of these were consistently rejected by the DfID hierarchy. Nonetheless, DfID did some very good things. No cogent argument has been presented, in any detail, to justify the merger of DfID and the FCO. If part of the plan was to spend DfID money on a better FCO, which I would like to see, you can only do so by changing the International Development Act, because you need to spend Official Development Assistance (ODA) on things that the current definition doesn't permit. Instead, the Government has this messy merger; they've cut a lot of DfID programmes that matter, such as vital relief in Yemen; they probably haven't added to anything at the FCO; and they have muddled the law by deliberately reducing the aid spending from 0.7 to 0.5. We have ended up with incoherence and incompetence when it comes to the management of our aid budget by those who have preconceived notions about what it is, and who don't know how it should be used.

In terms of the cut that has been made, it is estimated to be roughly £4 billion. The excuse given is that we are in a fiscal emergency, but we have continued to spend many more billions on other areas. Do you think the cut was just a cynical ploy to please a certain section of the electorate?

Yes, I'm sure it was, and there's no point in denying it. Of course it was. What I dislike about this most is that it is a little huddle directing decisions, with their prejudices, rather than a properly argued and formed policy, presented to the British public in a reasoned way. That is true of almost all policies at the moment, and it is one of the main failings of the Government. We have become very shallow.

Is Russia still the UK's biggest "active threat" as proscribed in the *Integrated Review*, and do you think there's any hope for better relations while Vladimir Putin is in power?

There probably isn't hope. Putin is going to push the frontiers as far as he dares, whenever he can. I always say that the difference between us and Russia is that, whenever we see a problem in the world, we try to solve it, whereas Putin will do his best to destabilise the situation and stir things up. There aren't many issues in the world that you can point to, that you can say have been solved by Russia.

There's Russia, and then there's China. Tensions have been rising between the West and China over Hong Kong, Xinjiang, even the lab leak theory. The

***Integrated Review* called China a "systemic challenge". Taiwan remains a major flashpoint. How concerned should we be about a new Cold War?**

The greater issue is that we have ceded economic prosperity to China by letting them loot the world to make things cheaply, that we then buy. We have transferred our pollution so we can, at least in the short term, benefit economically. I want us to be making more things closer to home, with less shipping and air travel. We will be more expensive than China while there is a difference in environmental standards. It is of both foreign and domestic policy importance that we be more self-reliant. I think it will be one of the lessons from the pandemic, but it's true with or without Covid-19, in terms of both food and manufactured goods. This also applies in the European context, but we have now left that European bloc that might have worked together to achieve this.

“ ‘Global Britain’ is utterly meaningless, until they explain the details of what it means in practice. It is nothing more than a slogan... Rather like ‘levelling up’, these vacuous slogans amount to nothing unless properly defined

At this time one hundred years ago, the British Empire was at its greatest territorial extent. Nobody can claim that the UK is that superpower now. Do you think that the UK has handled that transition well, or are Brexit and nationalist movements indicative of a country still in existential crisis?

That's a brilliant question and if I had to say whether we have handled it well, I would say no, we've not handled it well. We are now at the top end of a cluster of medium powers. We remain far more important than Russia, with a bigger economy, even though we have a much smaller land mass. In terms of decolonisation, all that has gone very well to a large extent. I'm not saying all the countries are now thriving, but the moral way we have disentangled has been solid. Where it all goes wrong is the way that politicians talk in hyperbolic superlatives like 'Global Britain' and claiming that we are still the best in the world. We need to get real, be dignified, and recognise that we are an upper-medium power, with good alliances and prospects, but we are not the hub of a massive empire anymore, and the language that we use sometimes is self-deluding, and converts in some cases into distasteful and risible nationalism. You cannot build a foreign policy or a lasting national reputation on

the back of such idiocy.

Pivoting away from foreign and defence policy, the Government has come under significant criticism for some of its policies relating to LGBT people. Why do you think the Government has delayed the ban on so-called 'conversion therapy' which was promised under Theresa May?

I don't know and I don't understand it. I can understand that when it comes to gender identification, it's a complicated issue and people get very emotional about it, so it's difficult to make legislative progress. When it comes to conversion therapy, I simply don't understand why it is facing obstacles to be put into law. The problem with this Government in general is that nobody explains the decisions they take. My successor as MP for Rutland and Melton, Alicia Kearns, has been vocal on this, and pushed the issue very hard. There shouldn't be any exceptions when it comes to the ban. It is either a correct piece of legislation or it isn't.

Are you concerned about the Government's decision to withdraw from the Stonewall diversity scheme?

No, I think some of the Stonewall agenda has become so apart from what one might call mainstream thinking; they've become a bit odd. I don't see the decisions on Stonewall as anti-LGBT at all. I see it as the Government having difficulty embracing what Stonewall is saying. In any case, I don't think the Government should have anybody else's agenda on these issues, apart from their own. The Government should set an example by having their own diversity policy and by making it an example for others to follow. The Government shouldn't contract out these things, and instead take ownership of it themselves.


You released private diaries earlier this year which caused quite a stir. You certainly said some nice things about people, but the more inflammatory remarks went particularly viral. What did you make of the reaction you received?

The reaction was massively approving. The serialisation was not a fair reflection of the diary itself, although it was a teaser to encourage people to go and read the diary. It does monster two or three people, but it is far more complimentary of people than they are critical. There is a lot of exasperation and frustration in it because it is a day-to-day chronicle of the Brexit civil war in Parliament and outside it. So far, it is the only day-to-day account of the period from literally 'in the thick of it'. There is quite a lot of reflection in it about the state of foreign policy and the degradation of government. To

some extent, it's a bit of a lament about the decline of standards in Parliament and our standing in the world. It is more than just a diary. Had I written it with a view to publishing it, I might have had more reflection and thoughtfulness, but I had never intended to publish it. The thing about a diary is that, if you have offended people, it's because you were angry at the time, and the golden rule of publishing a diary is that you cannot change it. As I say in the introduction, I'm sorry if I hacked off a few people, but for one or two who received particularly fierce criticism, I certainly don't retract what I said.

“ Policy seems shallow and none of it is adequately expressed and argued in public. We have no thoughtful political process. What we have instead is government by press releases, spending announcements, and slogans

The Brexit process was a particularly pressurised moment for those working in government at the time; it seems to have been fundamentally unpleasant for many of them. We've now gone from that crisis to an even bigger one with Covid-19. Have you revised any of your opinions on anybody in the meantime?

I blow hot and cold about Boris. Although the criticism tends to be what gets picked out, there's a lot of praise in there too. Likewise in the Covid-19 crisis, he has had good moments and bad moments. I don't think that anybody else could have galvanised the country into lockdown at the start like he did. Could anybody really see Jeremy Corbyn doing that? Of course, he was sick himself for a bit, he made a mess of PPE because he can never grasp any detail, and the appointment of Dominic Cummings was totally wrong because the worst aspect of modern government is the rise of special advisers who think they are more important than ministers. They are not; they are a constitutional aberration that should be largely pruned. Yet, despite these mistakes, we are finishing on a high. Now, I don't actually accept your view that Covid-19 has been a bigger problem than Brexit. The pandemic is a worldwide problem that, in the UK, will have lasted around two years, but Brexit is much more complicated. It has fast and slow consequences, some of which are still unknown like the status of Northern Ireland and Scotland. The trouble is, and this is my broadest point, that all current policy seems shallow and none of it is adequately expressed and argued in public. We have no thoughtful political process. What we have instead is government by press releases, spending announcements, and slogans. 

The flickering flame of freedom

Events in Hong Kong should be a warning to the world, urges **Nathan Law**



Following the passage of the National Security Law last year, Beijing has been tightening its grip on Hong Kong.

Since the outbreak of the city's Movement in 2019, 10,242 people have been arrested, with a quarter of them prosecuted. The majority of the lawsuits entail speech crimes. Forty seven pro-democracy figures were prosecuted because of participating in the recent primary election. Campaigners who have participated in the annual vigil to mourn the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre have also been imprisoned because of their protests.

The totalitarian power intensified soon after Beijing passed the 'patriots ruling Hong Kong' resolution — the authorities persecuted journalists, froze media mogul Jimmy Lai's assets, indoctrinated extreme nationalism in classrooms, censored textbooks, screenings, and even stopped broadcasting the Oscars award ceremony.

For a long time, it was assumed that the 'One Country, Two Systems' arrangement would ensure the city's liberty, autonomy, and our democratic dream. However, it is clear that the new National Security Law has become a cage for Hongkongers: our liberty

is under siege. When China consistently violated the UN-filed Sino-British Joint Declaration, the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework effectively came to an end.

Beijing's brutal persecution not just stifles dissent, but it ruins the city's long-term aspirations. According to a recent survey of those aged 15 to 30 by the Chinese University's Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, respondents rated Hong Kong's future on average as 2.95 out of 10, down from 4.37 three years ago. Nearly sixty percent would like to leave the city if given the chance. This world city, especially the youths who campaigned tirelessly during the 2019 Movement to protest for a world of justice and liberty, is finding that Beijing's tightening hold is putting an end to their dreams.

During the city's darkest hour, the UK Government launched a new visa scheme for Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO) status holders. In the first two months of this year, 27,000 applications were submitted. In April, a welcome programme was also revealed to help newcomers. Without doubt, this arrangement serves as a safe haven for those escaping Beijing's

reign of terror, particularly after the Beijing-dominated legislature passed immigration legislation authorising police to enforce exit bans to deter people from leaving the city.

“ It is clear that the new National Security Law has become a cage for Hongkongers: our liberty is under siege

The new BNO visa demonstrates the UK's dedication to upholding its role in the evolving 'Global Britain' agenda. By providing shelter to oppressed vulnerable people, the UK shows its commitment to stand on the side of freedom fighters against authoritarianism. The UK's new visa scheme can be seen as a way to assist Hongkongers to rebuild our crumbling civil society overseas, which can offer support for the city's democratic movement in the long run.

The UK Government should now take the lead and sanction officials responsible for Hong Kong's democratic backsliding. In May, I launched a petition demanding action in response to Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong. The petition received 10,000-strong signatures from British people and residents in less than a week. The persecutors of human rights should expect to face consequences.

In the midst of China's growing assertiveness, Hong Kong is far from alone in facing authoritarian intimidation. Beijing employs deceit to whitewash its human rights abuses in Xinjiang. China's military




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>> threats against Taiwan, Bhutan, and the South China Sea also endangers the region's peace and stability. Following the overflight of over 5,000 warplanes into Taiwan's airspace last year, nearly 300 Chinese militia ships were sent to the Philippines earlier this year. Concurrently, China has expanded its

ties and strategic alliances with Russia.

Such an expansion of authoritarianism will erode democracy globally, unless the world's democracies coordinate their anti-autocracy efforts. Individual countries will only strengthen their immunity to China's coercion by cooperating with democratic

allies. To assert its influence on the world stage, the UK must play a more important role in the Indo-Pacific. 

Nathan Law is a Hong Kong pro-democracy activist and former legislator who has been granted political asylum in the UK

Tilting tensions

The Asia-Pacific is the new land of opportunity, argues **Sir Lockwood Smith**

The centre of gravity of global trade shifted towards the Asia-Pacific in the first two decades of this century. In fact, it could be claimed that consumer demand out of China helped drag a number of economies through the Global Financial Crisis.

More recently, however, trade tensions have risen. The threat to global economic wellbeing is real.

The geopolitical landscape started to change when the new Trump Administration withdrew from the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) during the final stages of its negotiation. Paradoxically, the whole idea of such a trade grouping was originally a United States idea, first formulated during the Clinton years.

The Trump exit from TPP was part of a wider withdrawal of US leadership from the rules-based global trading system. Intransigence on judicial appointments at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) also started to destabilise that critically important disputes resolution process.

At the same time, President Trump entered into a tit-for-tat trade war with China. Unsurprisingly, China also seemed to attach less importance to WTO rules and we saw partial product bans and tariffs being imposed on imports in what appeared to be retaliation for political criticism.

For example, when Australia called for

a more rigorous inquiry into the origins of Covid-19, hefty tariffs were slapped on products not essential to the Chinese economy, such as barley and wine.

Until now, China has had a pretty good track record of compliance with WTO rulings. As the first trade minister in the world to sign China up to the WTO, I hope that will continue.

But political tensions induced by a diversity of issues from the South China Sea, to the treatment of Uyghur Muslims and Hong Kong protesters; the place of Taiwan in the One China future, not to mention alleged malicious cyber activities by the Chinese Ministry of State Security, all require careful, clear diplomatic handling if they are not to further destabilise trade.

For Australasia, much is at stake. China takes at least 40% of Australia's exports and about 30% of New Zealand's.

There were intensified efforts to conclude negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), involving Australia, New Zealand, the ten members of Association of Southeast Asian Nations; as well as China, India, South Korea, and Japan. Sadly, at the last minute India withdrew. That was a significant blow as RCEP was seen as a pathway for bringing India more widely into the global trading system.

The net result of all these manoeuvrings

isn't great. What's more, the Biden Administration seems in no haste to re-engage with the multilateral trading system.

All is not lost, however. The TPP was finally concluded as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with world-leading work on good regulatory practice and a valuable chapter introducing, for the first time in an FTA, sensible remedies for dealing with members failing to implement their own environmental regulation.

“ The chance for Britain to ease open the door to free trade with India is real. If anyone can do it, Britain can

Moreover, we saw Japan emerge as a leader in ongoing trade liberalisation work. The question now is – can Global Britain also step up to a leadership role in helping navigate this changed geopolitical landscape?

First, acceding to CPTPP would have an impact way beyond the narrow economic



>> cost-benefit analysis. It would engage the UK with one of the most rapidly growing parts of the world. But more importantly, it would help bring the dynamism of the Asia-Pacific to the doorstep of Europe. As New Zealand has seen with all our trade agreements, the potential to open minds is enormous.

The UK's membership of CPTPP may also encourage the US to rethink its position. A transatlantic UK-US free trade agreement seems fraught. Achieving it via CPTPP offers wider benefits to both sides.

The role for Global Britain, though, doesn't stop there. All are aware that the full


potential of the Asia-Pacific region won't be realised without India. Hence the current thinking around the Indo-Pacific.

Many countries have tried to negotiate free trade agreements with India. Most have struggled and developed countries have failed to achieve anything like a comprehensive FTA.

Britain's relationship with India goes back a long way and is deeper rooted than most. The chance for Britain to ease open the door to free trade with India is real. If anyone can do it, Britain can.

The United Kingdom has the heft. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Global

Britain captures the vision. The first steps are underway - agreement in principle on what looks like a quality FTA with Australia, negotiations close to completion with New Zealand, and accession to CPTPP started.

Dialogue partner status by ASEAN has also recently been granted. It's a welcome sign from the Asia-Pacific. If Global Britain could help lead a new chapter of economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the benefits would be enormous. 

The Rt Hon Sir Lockwood Smith is the former High Commissioner of New Zealand to the United Kingdom

A shameful record

Luke de Pulford denounces the UK Government's inaction on genocide

What do you think when you hear the words genocide denial? For most, odious Holocaust denier and pseudo historian David Irving springs to mind. Either that or lizard loon David Icke.

I think of the UK Government. The UK has a truly terrible record on genocide. Indefensibly terrible, and, unlike messrs Irving and Icke, the opinion of the UK Government actually matters.

“ Governments of all hues have stuck to the same policy for 40 years, that: ‘genocide determination is for competent courts, not politicians’

The Genocide Convention was signed in 1948. We didn't accede to it until 1970. When we did finally accede, we built a policy which would ensure that the UK wouldn't have to do anything to stop developing genocides, or anything at all.

Governments of all hues have stuck to

the same policy for 40 years, that: ‘genocide determination is for competent courts, not politicians’. The logical consequence of this policy is that the UK Government has not, and will not, use the term genocide unless a court has convicted someone of it.

This is a disastrous, immoral, and arguably unlawful policy. On the face of it, it might seem reasonable to defer to a court. The problem is that convictions for genocide are exceptionally rare and normally come decades after atrocities have ended, if at all.

In the Armenian Genocide, 600,000 people died. It is probably the reason Raphael Lemkin first coined the term ‘genocide’, but the UK refuses to recognise it. Here's former Minister Baroness Ramsay, in a typically obstinate rebuttal: “We do not believe it is the business of governments today to review events of over 80 years ago with a view to pronouncing on them.”

How about Cambodia? Khmer Rouge's massacre of millions surely qualifies, but not according to then Foreign Office Minister

Ted Rowlands:

“While I, too, have read with great concern the recent reports of events in Cambodia, I do not think they constitute a threat to world peace. Nor, I should add, have I any means of verifying the truth of the allegations that have been made.”

Rwanda? Here's one of Blair's early junior foreign ministers, Tony Lloyd: “Since I May 1997, we have not had cause to seek legal advice on whether the massacre in Rwanda in 1994 constituted genocide under the terms of the Genocide Convention.”

Was 800,000 thousand people getting hacked to pieces by machetes not sufficient cause to seek some legal advice? The Rwandan Genocide is one of the least contested in history, but the UK was nowhere to be seen, and refused to call it genocide until at least a decade after everyone had been killed.

The Genocide Convention is a much





Yá shàng

>> misunderstood document. It isn't just about punishment. The Convention binds signatory states to "prevent and punish" genocide. The UK can't be expected to prevent a developing genocide if all of the UK's action on genocide is contingent upon a conviction.

So it's no surprise that we find ourselves in 2021 with a Government absolutely insistent that nothing should be done about the atrocities endured by Uyghurs and other minorities at the hands of the Chinese Government.

There is no hint that our solemn duties under the Genocide Convention will be invoked and honoured. We don't have much evidence of mass killing, but the crime of genocide does not require mass killing. We have overwhelming evidence of birth prevention, family separation, torture, mass extrajudicial detention, and more.

We also have a rapidly expanding body of evidence appearing to show genocidal intent, which is always the most difficult aspect of proving 'state genocide'.


Any state requiring genocide to be proven to a criminal standard before acting is shirking their duties to victims. Making action contingent on court determination is not what the fathers of the Genocide Convention intended.

Aside from precluding the possibility of prevention, it sends a message to those suffering that their atrocities are only worthy of recognition when such recognition costs us nothing.

There isn't even a court to hear a genocide case about China. A genocide conviction would require either a referral from the UN Security Council to the International Criminal Court, which China would veto, or action at the International

Court of Justice, whose jurisdiction in such matters China does not recognise.

This is what the Genocide Amendment, which I was responsible for, was all about: creating the possibility for genocide determination in domestic courts so this circular policy can be made operable. Sadly, the Government whipped MPs within an inch of their lives to oppose it.

It would take a courageous government to do it, but this embarrassment of a policy needs to be overturned and replaced with something worthy of a truly Global Britain; one ready to stand by the commitments we made in the aftermath of the Holocaust and actually mean them. 

Luke de Pulford is the co-founder and Director of Arise, an anti-slavery charity, and co-founder of the Coalition for Genocide Response

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Data kings?

Dr John Hemmings explains how a D10 could defend against digital authoritarianism



At the G7 summit, the UK's bold strategy to recast the G7 economic group into a larger D10, the world's ten leading democracies, was the first multilateral effort by the democratic powers to wrestle with a new geopolitical reality – that of the rise of authoritarian powers at a time of technological change. It highlights both the geopolitical and strategic nature of data-related technologies – the information communications technologies (ICT) that carry data, the computing power to process data, and the algorithms to make data useful and actionable.

There are two really important questions that deserve our attention. The first is, why was this needed? The second is, now that we're here, what should the D10 do?

At the very heart of the D10 concept are two ideas. The first is that communication technologies are dual-use – strategic in the same way as aerospace – affecting a state's ability to function and to defend itself. The second follows from the first: ICT supply chain security is a matter of national security, something that had fallen by the

wayside in the post-Cold War neoliberal era.

The United States began this conversation first in 2012 when the Obama Administration unveiled a 'National Strategy for Global Supply Chain Security'. This thread was picked up in numerous US Department of Defense studies during the Trump administration that looked at how US manufacturing had gradually outsourced much production to China, putting many vital parts of its own supply chain into foreign hands. The off-shoring of cheap technology components, the subsequent rise of Chinese tech giants, and Chinese state-backed venture capitalism means that these lines have been blurred at the outsourcing, development, and financing levels.

From his first days in power, Xi Jinping has understood the power of data and data-related technologies and sought three outcomes through his technology policies. First, that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would use these new technologies to forge a new style of governance — a new relationship between the Party and the

People. Second, China's position as the manufacturer of the advanced economies, combined with state support for its own companies, would give it the ability to dominate global standards and markets for these technologies.

“ Xi Jinping has understood the power of data and data-related technologies ... It is a case of Marxism-Leninism meeting Silicon Valley

Third, that new technologies would provide China the opportunity to scale the heights of the global economy, leapfrogging other states to establish itself as a leading cyber superpower, manufacturing power, and cultural power. It is, therefore, a case of Marxism-Leninism meeting Silicon Valley.

The leaders of the D10 must decide on a number of things. The first is whether the



>> D10 should replace the G7. The issue is a red herring and can be sidestepped until certain members of the latter get over their concerns about enlargement. There's no reason the two must be merged. Primarily the D10 should be about securing the supply chains of democracies in an age of digital authoritarianism.

Initially, at least, the D10 need not be an economic grouping at all, but a standard – a list of countries from whom it is acceptable to source data-related technologies – and a way of handling data in a lawful manner. In order to create this standard, the D10 member states will have to take three steps.

First, they will have to carry out intensive investigations into their own supply chains – such as the sort of inventories that the US has been undertaking since 2012 – in order to see the extent to which they are compromised.

Second, they will have to create market-intelligence functions within their intelligence agencies, commerce, and foreign departments so that they are aware of which firms are operating in their technology sectors, which are working

with domestic start-ups, and which are funding or acquiring other firms. There is no point accepting technology from a Silicon Valley-based company if it is owned by a Chinese or Russian government agency or investment body.


“ There is no point accepting technology from a Silicon Valley-based company if it is owned by a Chinese or Russian government agency

The D10 will have to institutionalise information-sharing between their market-intelligence departments in real time, which requires a high-level of trust and institutionalisation, something that will be difficult.

Third, the D10 will have to align their investment policies to prevent malign investors from poaching critical companies. There is no point in creating a trusted network of companies if those are going to be poached by China's hungry state investment companies. We already know

that the wave of Chinese-inward investment in 2017 was in part down to the *Made in China 2025* strategy.

All of this needs to be explained to the public and a globalist-minded tech sector. Jinping has revived and renewed the concept of technology as a major facet of inter-state competition. He believes it is how China will win the future. The Marxist-Leninist approach that his vision encapsulates means that the democratic way of life would intrinsically be at peril were that to occur. The D10 must wrestle with all that and more, but it is a worthy goal.

It is perhaps a fitting notion that the United Kingdom – once the leading capitalist power of the industrial age – is bringing together the world's democracies to defend our data in the digital age from this new threat. 

Dr John Hemmings is an Associate Professor at the DKI-APCSS in Honolulu Hawaii. The views expressed are the author's own and not necessarily those of the US Government.

Collaborating with China?

China remains an indispensable partner, stresses **Isabel Hilton OBE**

There is no good moment to have a national identity crisis, but the UK's continuing confusion about what it wants to be when it grows into its post-Brexit identity has come at an especially delicate time. Its position is big on rhetorical grand promises, but it falls between a series of conflicting pressures that present some very difficult and important choices.

The recent G7 summit in Cornwall was the first of two big 2021 moments for the UK; the second occasion, of course, is COP26, the UN climate conference in

Glasgow later this year. Both come with big responsibilities to deliver key outcomes beyond domestic public relations. G7 should have laid ground for COP26, but the disintegration of the UK's relations with the EU offered the unifying spectacle of a British host apparently happy to sacrifice global leadership at a critical moment for short-term domestic politics.

In addition, the UK wriggled uncomfortably over how to deal with China, a question ever more deeply entrenched in global politics. Already torn between its

flagging effort to present China as a great business opportunity that Brexit has somehow enabled, and the need to claim close friendship with a United States that sees China as its main strategic threat, the Johnson Government must also reckon with an increasingly uncompromising response on its own backbenches to China's actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.



>> The EU and the US reached for similar formulae as they each grappled with an increasingly assertive China. The EU defined China as a partner, a competitor, and a systemic rival, recognising that while it cannot be ignored, the values of the People's Republic are deeply unpopular with European electorates. The US, despite the passing of Trump's age of incoherence, continues to see both a strategic rivalry that has quickly become the main organising principle of US foreign policy, but also a key trading relationship. Decoupling, however catchy it might seem on a campaign platform, remains devilishly difficult to imagine in reality.

None of this will grow easier as the consequences of the pandemic play out. One global crisis is bad enough, but we simultaneously face the escalating climate and biodiversity crises. Without skilful, resolute, and far-sighted diplomacy, one crisis will get in the way of dealing with the other and together they spin off more. We are in that fractious moment, and the day-to-day attrition of global tensions risks derailing the cooperation that is essential to addressing the climate crisis.

In an ideal scenario, COP26 would deliver much more ambitious national mitigation pledges, marking a clear pathway to the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of limiting global average temperature rises to 1.5°C before

it is too late. At present, we are on track for a catastrophic three degrees, and time is running out. China is directly responsible for nearly 30% of global emissions, and indirectly responsible for even more through its overseas investments. The climate crisis cannot be addressed without China, so if that cannot be achieved, the outlook for human society everywhere is, frankly, bleak.

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We risk a toxic escalation of tensions. In China, as in several industrialised democracies including the US, it is not hard to find ultra-nationalist voices who argue that no collaboration is desirable, or even possible. But China cannot deal with the climate crisis alone any more than the US or the UK


can and, as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts, China has much to lose from any collective failure.

Many in the UK argue that China's violations of global norms render cooperation

immoral or impossible, but it is not clear that a refusal to cooperate on climate change would bring relief to the victims of human rights abuses. When Western democracies have maintained relations with states with appalling domestic records, they have argued that they must balance perceived gains against action on human rights.

The US stayed close to Argentina throughout the Dirty War, as it did with El Salvador at a time of savage repression; Saudi Arabia's penchant for medieval punishments has not notably harmed relations, and throughout the Cold War, a strategic dialogue continued with the USSR on critical issues such as arms control. However uncomfortable such policies are, it is hard to argue that the impending climate threat is less important than the considerations in any of those cases.

“ It is not clear that a refusal to cooperate on climate change would bring relief to the victims of human rights abuses

Both John Kerry and Xie Zhenhua, China's veteran negotiator, understand that they must somehow maintain forward motion in their climate relationship, despite the mounting volume of noise from their respective domestic constituencies. It will not be easy: Biden seeks to balance his own domestic pressures by framing both his green industrial revolution and the Build Back Better World initiative as competitive, if not full blown, anti-China policies. The EU, so far, has been slow to sign up for full spectrum confrontation. The UK fidgets uncomfortably in the middle. It will have to do better than it did in Cornwall if it is to keep its balance: failure this year will neither be forgotten nor forgiven. 

Isabel Hilton OBE is a journalist, broadcaster, and China expert



Roman Kubansky

Good neighbours?

The EU and UK need a cooling off period after Brexit, writes **Jill Rutter**

It has been five years since the referendum, but only just over six months since the UK left transition to fulfill the wishes of the majority who voted to Leave the EU in 2016. Both sides are – at the moment – yet to emerge from the post-break-up trauma, as evidenced on the beach in Cornwall at the G7 summit.

“ A series of semi-spurious successes are chalked to Brexit, whether it is the efficient vaccine roll-out or the demise of the European Super League

The EU is determined to move on – while attempting to ensure that their deserting partner can point to as few benefits as possible from its decision to quit the partnership. A once influential member state had been downgraded to bit part player – useful for bilateral security cooperation, but otherwise airbrushed out of the picture. The EU can be pretty satisfied that it secured a trade deal that delivered relatively hassle-free access for its goods

exports to the UK. At a low cost of reduced fishing rights, it has won considerable safeguards to the single market and a big opportunity to snatch a good chunk of the UK's dominant services share.

The UK, on the other hand, is still in the state of bristling from terms of divorce that weren't quite what it envisaged when it decided to quit; feeling that the wounded other side tried to impose an unreasonable cost for leaving the family home. The Government is determined to assert the benefits of new-found independence, however tenuous. So a series of semi-spurious successes are chalked to Brexit, whether it is the efficient vaccine roll-out or the demise of the European Super League, while rolled over EU trade deals are hailed as bright new opportunities.

As with any marital break-up, the biggest impact may not be on the two principals who can weather the storm, ride-out the immediate disruption, and then try to reestablish a functional relationship in the longer-term. What Brexit means for stability in Northern Ireland or the future of Scotland in the UK is still far from settled, and this

may preoccupy British politics for the next decade. The risk is that the ambition of Global Britain is supplanted by the necessity of 'Introverted Britain'. It's hard to square world leadership while significant chunks of your home citizenry are debating whether they would be better off breaking away.

Brexit may be done. However, the consequences of Brexit are still very much in play.

It is in both the interests of the UK and the EU to settle back down into a normalised relationship as soon as they can. Turning the Trade and Cooperation Agreement into a 'Tension and Confrontation Agreement' serves neither party well. The UK and the EU have a lot of common interests – whether it is in reacting to Russian provocation, managing security threats from China, or collaborating with a reengaged US on issues as wide-ranging as climate change, global pandemic response or rebooting the world trading system. On these, cooperation should win out over competition. It may be hard to admit now, but both sides benefit if their respective economies flourish too.

“ Stability in Northern Ireland or the future of Scotland in the UK is still far from settled, and this may preoccupy British politics for the next decade

At the moment, some in the UK Government seem determined to put the EU back in its box with a strong preference for bilateralism. The UK needs to accept,



Roman Kubanskiy

>> however, that it is up to the sovereign member states of the EU to decide where they want to act individually and where they would prefer to act collectively.


Meanwhile, the EU needs to accept that it has weathered any existential threat from Brexit. The bruising process the UK experienced seems to have deterred most tempted to follow suit.

The EU needs to pocket its huge negotiating success, made easier by the UK's prioritisation of autonomy over economy, and realise that it does not

need to react allergically to every crowing statement made by a UK minister. This may be hard until some long-term balm is found for the open wound of the Northern Ireland Protocol – but if the UK is prepared to accept that the Protocol is here to stay, the EU should accept that it is in Northern Ireland's, Ireland's, and ultimately in the EU's own interest, for it to be as dedramatised as soon as possible.

In the short-run, both sides would be well served by a period of lofty indifference, where they go about their business without

feeling the need to define every move through the prism of Brexit.

In the long-run, the UK will have to accept that, like Canada with the US or New Zealand with Australia, it needs to be aware of the elephant in its neighbourhood, but does not need to be defined by it. And the EU needs to realise that it will be strengthened, not undermined, by positive relations with a post-Brexit Britain. 

Jill Rutter is Senior Research Fellow at UK in a Changing Europe

The Anglosphere revived?

Closer CANZUK ties would boost prosperity for all four, argues **James Skinner**

The United Kingdom finds itself in an exciting situation.

Free to act autonomously outside of the European Union, our small island in the North Atlantic can now explore a world of opportunities in trade, mobility, and beyond.

However, the question remains: where do we begin? Many will continue to propose reunification with our friends in Europe, and likely for a long time into the future. Yet, there is a much greater initiative on the horizon that will ensure work, travel and business opportunities for generations to come. That initiative is CANZUK.

“ One might say the CANZUK format is superior to EU freedom of movement, given the common-sense limitations it imposes for national security

CANZUK — an abbreviation of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom — has been championed by many think tanks and politicians across the

four nations. Since gaining political and media attention in 2015, it has evolved from a post-Brexit dream to a recognised multinational campaign, and has gained support from senior Cabinet Ministers, MPs, and Senators in the process.

What's more, this geopolitical alliance appeals to all segments of our society: Brexiteers, Remainers, businesses, professionals, and the average person in the street.

The organisation CANZUK International, spearheading this initiative, seeks to establish three main objectives in pursuing a truly Global Britain, which are: reciprocal migration, free trade, and foreign policy cooperation between its four members.

Reciprocal migration would permit citizens of the UK to live, work, and travel across Canada, Australia, and New Zealand without the hindrance of obtaining time-limited visas, sponsorships, and work permits. This concept not only restores Britons' rights and privileges to live and work freely in other countries — removed since our departure from the EU — but is also widely supported by over 70% of the

British public, according to a variety of polls.

Reciprocal migration could be simply implemented by Canada and the UK joining the already existing Trans-Tasman Travel Agreement between Australia and New Zealand, which allows citizens of these countries to live and work in the other, but imposes travel bans on those with criminal records, infectious health conditions, and security concerns.

One might say the CANZUK format is superior to EU freedom of movement, given the common-sense limitations it imposes for national security, while affording greater opportunities to our citizens who speak the same language and share historic ties with these nations.

Free trade within CANZUK would also promote economic growth and prosperity for the UK. Not only would bilateral trade deals — or even a multilateral trade deal — remove tariffs on \$3.5 trillion worth of goods and services between these countries, but



>> would also segue to bespoke agreements for the benefit of our citizens.

As an example, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for CANZUK in Westminster and senior MPs are currently working on formulating a mutual skills recognition agreement to be implemented by each of the four nations.

Adopting this concept as part of a CANZUK trade deal would mean that British qualifications and skills credentials would be recognised across Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, saving thousands of pounds and years of retraining should a British citizen choose to relocate to any of these countries and practice their profession, or vice versa.

Naturally, the United Kingdom would also receive highly-skilled workers from these three nations in return, who can practice their profession or trade upon arrival and contribute to 'building back better' following the Covid-19 pandemic.

And finally, foreign policy cooperation would ensure that our four countries speak

on the world stage in one voice and guard against foreign aggressors who wish to see the downfall of Western values.

Already, the CANZUK countries work together as part of the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance, along with the United States, to take a stance against human rights abuses by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and act as a barrier to hostile actions by state actors including Iran, Russia, and North Korea.

“ We can ensure that our combined defence budgets of \$110 billion collectively safeguard democracy, human rights, and the rule of law

As like-minded and trusted partners, the four nations share signals, military, and human intelligence for the benefit of global security. Through increased cooperation under a CANZUK arrangement, we can ensure that our combined defence budgets

of \$110 billion collectively safeguard democracy, human rights, and the rule of law throughout the world.

A case could be made, of course, that the United Kingdom rescinded a small part of its global perspective when it left the European Union in 2020. However, a far stronger case exists to suggest that our country needed to take one step back to vault ten steps forward.

Through pursuing closer relations with our closest partners on the world stage, the UK can vault into a new era of prosperity and opportunity. Where better to start than a strengthened partnership with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand? Both publicly and politically, these three nations are eager to work with us and promote a thriving and prosperous Global Britain for generations to come.

The future is bright. Let us secure it through CANZUK. 

James Skinner is the Chief Executive of CANZUK International

Global family

The Commonwealth deserves more respect, insists **Andrew Rosindell MP**

Over recent weeks and months, all the talk has been about the G7, NATO, and the role that the United Kingdom can — and should — play in these enormously significant international institutions. Now that we have left the European Union, the UK Government is rightly expending significant energy on looking at alternative international mechanisms through which to exercise our extensive soft power and influence.

However, Global Britain must be much more than these alliances of developed, Western nations. Global Britain must be about ensuring that the UK doesn't simply

play second fiddle, and instead plays a role in the international arena that truly matches our history, ambitions, and values.

To do this, the UK needs to take advantage of the enormous opportunities that our role at the centre of the Commonwealth affords us. The Commonwealth is undoubtedly one of the greatest products of British history, and acts as an undeniable force for good in international affairs. Our participation and leadership of the institution can allow the UK to exercise truly global leadership in advancing our values, security, and economic interests.

The Commonwealth brings together people from a dazzling array of backgrounds, who nevertheless share a common identity. It began with intrepid Brits setting sail, and has now been transformed into a voluntary association of 54 independent countries, with Britain at its centre. These include some of the largest and most populous — such as India, with 1.6 billion people — and some of the smallest — such as Nauru, with a population of 12,000. All 54 countries sign



>> up to 16 core principles, which include human rights, freedom of expression, and the rule of law.

Economically, the Commonwealth is dynamic. The combined GDP of members tops \$10 trillion, or 14% of total global GDP. Half of the top 20 global emerging cities are in the Commonwealth, including Mumbai, Nairobi, and Kuala Lumpur.

“ The Commonwealth has observed over 160 elections in nearly 40 countries since 1980, providing invaluable support for fledgling democracies

Although the Commonwealth has been criticised for being toothless — an example being in 2013, when a summit was held in Sri Lanka despite serious human rights concerns — its record is more positive than critics suggest. On democracy promotion, the Commonwealth has observed over 160 elections in nearly 40 countries since 1980, providing invaluable support for fledgling democracies. On trade promotion, it costs member states on average 21% less to trade with each other than with non-member states. On good governance, Commonwealth nations make up 7 of the top 10 spots on the Ibrahim Index, which ranks African nations using metrics such as human development, economic opportunity, and commitment to the rule of law.

The Commonwealth has demonstrated it can and will take action against members when there are clear violations of Commonwealth norms. For example, Nigeria was suspended in the late 1990s, Pakistan was



Sergeant Donald Todd (RLC)

suspended in 1999, and Zimbabwe was suspended in 2002.

Yet if the argument is that the Commonwealth is not sufficiently effective, this is surely also an argument for greater UK involvement, both to ensure that our values and interests are properly advanced, and to ensure that the Commonwealth can be the force for good that it undoubtedly can be. As the home of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and as one of the world's most prominent and forceful proponents of liberal democratic values, the Commonwealth's effectiveness requires our active involvement.

Unfortunately, the UK's current approach does leave a bit to be desired. Take the recently published Integrated Review. While the G7 is mentioned on 20 occasions, and NATO a whopping 45, the Commonwealth only gets 12 mentions, excluding when the document refers to the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office. The document does describe the Commonwealth as “an important institution in supporting an open and resilient international order” but puts forward nothing in the way of a policy approach or strategy

towards this vital international institution.

This is regrettable. In 2012, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on which I sit criticised the UK Government for not having a “clear and coordinated strategy for its relations with the Commonwealth.” We have not come far enough since then in treating this international institution with the respect it deserves.

The UK can, and should, revive its Commonwealth approach by promoting its expansion — bringing countries such as Ireland into its orbit, for example. The UK should also work to promote free trade between member states. To reflect this greater emphasis, the UK should fly the Commonwealth flag outside all British High Commissions.

Finally, we must also learn to cherish and take pride in British history once again. Our national conversation about the British Empire is parochial and myopic. The success of the Commonwealth, the enduring influence of British culture and in particular Her Majesty The Queen, are all indicative of a far more nuanced reality in which the British Empire helped to connect the world and spread British values. The Commonwealth is a force for good because Britain was, is, and will continue to be a force for good. 

Andrew Rosindell MP is the Chair of the APPG for the Commonwealth



Michael Gornett

The truth about trade

David Henig asks what free trading relationships mean in the twenty-first century



The truth about trade is that most countries have their closest relationships with neighbours, and trade deals are rarely transformational. But a post-Brexit Britain has many strengths and opportunities. In a growing age of protectionism, promoting free trade and investment can be a winner, but only if we understand that this is about more than just zero tariffs.

“ We have to recognise that freeports and Free Trade Agreements are not really free trade, and the EU single market is free trade

Perhaps inconveniently for both sides of the interminable Brexit wars, in trade we are already Global Britain. We sell goods and services around the globe, and are the home to world-class brands including Rolls Royce, JCB, the English Premier League, the City of London, and Shakespeare. It is true that around 50% of our trade is with Europe and a further 15% or so with the US, but it is entirely normal to trade more with neighbours. It is important

we seek to maintain this.

Free trade, though, is out of fashion. We can clearly see this in both US and EU discussions on ‘bringing back jobs.’ Equally, in the UK, most self-proclaimed devotees of free trade are having to adopt the nineteenth century definition of tariff removal, rather than a more realistic definition covering different regulations and barriers to service provision.

Being blunt, we have to recognise that freeports and Free Trade Agreements are not really free trade, and the EU single market is free trade. The overwhelming majority of modern trade barriers are regulatory, while tariffs are negligible. That is politically inconvenient having left the EU, but it is the reality. It also does not invalidate leaving, because we can like the economics, but not the politics. Recognising all of this is the path to a sensible trade debate in the UK.

We can say that the UK is, on balance, more friendly to free

trade than either the US or EU. That provides us with a platform.

We don’t need to be a ‘leader’ at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) — whatever that means. Rather, we should seek a closer relationship than so far negotiated with the EU, but equally also thicken ties with the US and others. The priority should be services and regulatory barriers: the principle that with a roughly agreed regulatory level, we seek to eliminate barriers to trade. Some readers might recognise a modernised UK form of the single market in this vision.

We could thus solve the sort of debates we have seen over Australia or US trade deals. Share our approach to a broad range of challenges such as climate change or animal welfare, and compete on absolutely equal terms with UK producers. May the most competitive win. This also helps tackle the rather tired regulatory debate, the answer being that regulatory agreements enabling international cooperation are a better path than outdated and unrealistic deregulatory programmes.

“ As a services exporter, we are a reluctant superpower, the second largest in the world, but slightly ashamed of being so

Sadly, right now, it seems like the UK Government would rather take the easy path of largely meaningless tariff reduction agreements. But whether the approach is tariff reduction or a single market minus, we need to think about the UK’s competitiveness and internal



>> distribution, with particular reference to the former manufacturing areas of the 'Red Wall'. Although often blamed on trade, the reduction in manufacturing jobs is mostly related to increased productivity, such that more is made with fewer staff.

In fact, the UK remains a strong manufacturer of goods including Rolls Royce engines, Scotch Whisky, JCB diggers, and McLaren cars. We also participate in the supply chain for many other products from cars to chemicals and pharmaceuticals to engineering. Those supply chains are predominantly regional and a reason for prioritising thickening EU ties.


As a services exporter, we are a reluctant superpower, the second largest in the world, but slightly ashamed of being so. Thus governments only seem to, at best,

tolerate our universities, broadcasting, sport, culture, fashion, and financial services sectors, to name but a few. Any sensible vision for trade has to tackle this, valuing much more highly those contributing to our services success, and perhaps allowing us to move on from the nostalgia for factories.

Most of all, the UK has to be a much more welcoming environment for people and investors. Special schemes for Nobel prizewinners are gimmicks compared to the serious business of welcoming those who want to trade with us, which means a total change of mindset at the Home Office. Just as a stable and international regulatory approach will help attract international business, so a better approach to visas likewise.

There is perhaps a surprising level

of goodwill towards the UK from other countries, an implicit trust in our institutions certainly when compared to international competitors. Our anguished debates of the last few years and a Brexit they didn't fully understand are explained away by a thought that we may well know better, or at the very least that we have our own ways of doing things.

The rest of the world thus believes in our ability to find new paths to trade success in the twenty-first century. There is no reason we can't do so, forging an updated Global Britain, once we abandon our sterile Brexit debate and views of a previous industrial world. 

David Henig is the Director of the UK Trade Policy Project

Research update

Patrick Hall highlights Bright Blue's research output since the last edition



It's been a busy six months for the research team since the last magazine. We have been busy producing both extensive research papers as well as punchier analysis pieces, on policy areas ranging from electric vehicles to experiences on Universal Credit.

In March we produced our analysis *Shaky foundations*, exploring how the increase in claims for state support for housing during the pandemic differs by each English local authority. It highlighted the consequences of the pandemic on geographic inequality. Following this, we assessed the financial experience of Universal Credit claimants during the pandemic in our analysis *Benefit to all?*, which was released in June.

And it isn't just those claiming state support who have been adversely affected by the pandemic. In May, we released our analysis *Increasingly precarious?*, looking

at the impact of the pandemic on young adults aged 18 to 34.

In the same month, we also launched the first report commissioned by our cross-party Tax Commission: *Home truths*. The report set out a new approach to taxing English residential property to mitigate the regression and distortions of the current system, and to help achieve Government aims of levelling up and delivering net zero.


Following that, in July we published *Green money*, proposing a three-part plan for reforming the UK's carbon pricing framework. Reforming carbon pricing will be absolutely essential for putting the UK on a credible, and fair, path to net zero by 2050.

In the same month, we released our major *Nature positive?* report exploring public attitudes towards the conservation of the natural environment, both here in the UK and abroad. Our findings in that report,

along with earlier findings in our *Global green giant?*

paper, have informed the launch of our new petition calling on governments across the UK to increase fines for littering, to protect nature and the taxpayer.

Later this year, we will be attending Conservative Party Conference and COP26, hosting a range of discussions. Keep up to date on all of Bright Blue's forthcoming events via our website.

We have no plans to slow down. Bright Blue will continue to produce high quality, impactful, evidence-based research to defend liberal society. 

Patrick Hall is a Senior Research Fellow at Bright Blue

Smarter aid

British aid can improve lives as well as project our values, argues **Ryan Henson**



Aid is about our values. It offers our generation an opportunity to save and transform the lives of the world's poorest people, and thereby build a better world.

Aid is also in our national interest. It stops the spread of epidemics, clears landmines, resolves conflicts, and builds free and fair democracies, making Britain healthier, safer, and more prosperous. As we adjust to a post-pandemic world and the rise of an increasingly hostile China, aid can remain both an expression of our values, and a pillar of our foreign and defence strategies. To do so it must become more effective, flexible, and smarter.

“ A five-year time scale would strengthen long-term aid objectives as well as delivering better outcomes to aid recipients

To make aid more effective, the Prime Minister should appoint a Minister for Development of a similar calibre to

Samantha Power, the head of the US Agency for International Development. A former Ambassador to the United Nations and Pulitzer-prize winning war correspondent, Power also sits on the US National Security Council, emphasising the interconnectedness of defence, diplomacy, and development. Although the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) was established to better integrate diplomacy and development, Samantha Power has no opposite number in the UK Government.

To deliver maximum impact, aid needs a senior champion in Whitehall with sufficient political clout to support the Foreign Secretary, prevent waste, and ensure aid is focused on poverty reduction, while supporting our foreign policy and defence objectives. A senior figure such as the former Leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Ruth Davidson, might also communicate the lifesaving work of British aid to those sceptical taxpayers on whose generosity aid depends.

To make aid more flexible, the aid target should be moved to a multi-year rolling

time frame. The Independent

Commission for Aid

Impact (ICAI) has found that “Frequent delays in the disbursement of funds, combined with the FCDO’s 80% rule – requiring that 80% of funds be spent by December of the financial year of disbursement – often reduces a 12-month programme to effectively nine or even six months with little notice.” Rushing to spend a legally imposed target before a tight deadline risks bad practice. A five-year time scale would strengthen long-term aid objectives as well as delivering better outcomes to aid recipients, while helping to ensure better value for money. The aid target should also be synchronised with the Comprehensive Spending Review. This would offer greater alignment with departmental allocations and provide reassurance that aid is being spent both strategically, and in keeping with our foreign policy and defence objectives.

“ In the coming years China will continue to weaponise international development with its Belt and Road Initiative and push into Africa

Finally, delivering smarter aid depends on the full aid budget being replenished as quickly as possible. The Prime Minister said at the time the cut to aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) was announced that “the UK will remain a world leader in international development and we will return to our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on development when the fiscal

>> situation allows."The Government has since revealed that will be when the Office for Budget Responsibility's fiscal forecast shows that, "on a sustainable basis, the UK is not borrowing to finance day-to-day spending and underlying debt is falling". By 2023, the temporary cut to aid will have already saved approximately £10 billion, more than double the amount set aside for the Levelling Up Fund that will support town centres and high street regeneration. All who recognise the enormous extent to which the UK's soft power is supported by its commitment to the 0.7% target will wish to see it return as soon as possible.

Protecting the British people and our democracy is the first duty of all governments. It is only right, then, that


the UK should be undertaking the biggest programme of investment in defence budget for 30 years.

Similarly, as the *Integrated Review* made clear, the FCDO was created as a springboard for the UK's post-Brexit international efforts, fully integrating diplomacy and development to better address the clear link between extreme poverty and the impact of climate change in the developing world, and our security and prosperity at home.

Defence, diplomacy, and development are the three pillars holding up Global Britain, and our success on the world stage depends on the integrated impact of all three.

In the coming years China will continue

to weaponise international development with its Belt and Road Initiative and push into Africa, while Russia will seek to maintain its geopolitical position by working to prevent peace in failed states and places like Syria. Meanwhile, the pandemic has revealed that none are safe until all are safe. The world needs Britain's leadership in international development.

Smarter aid, in support of our diplomacy and defence objectives, can both save and improve lives, defend vulnerable people from authoritarian advances, and keep British values at the heart of international affairs in the twenty-first century. 

Ryan Henson is the Chief Executive of the Coalition for Global Prosperity

Global force for good?

The UK's foreign deeds don't match its ambition, asserts **Danny Sriskandarajah**



The Government's pledge to project a post-Brexit 'Global Britain' is hugely welcome and timely. With no shortage of global challenges, I believe the UK has the potential to play a critical role as a thoughtful, responsible global citizen. As the Prime Minister says, we need "to use the full spectrum of our abilities ... to engage with and help the rest of the world."

Yet the gap between words and action seems scarily wide. Take the recent G7 Summit. This was an opportunity for Boris Johnson to prove that Global Britain had the diplomatic clout to drive forward urgent collective action to respond to the biggest global challenges of the day: a once-in-a-century public health catastrophe, which has already killed millions of people, and the climate emergency. Yet the summit spectacularly failed to deliver an adequate plan to vaccinate the world against Covid-19, or to agree ambitious

new emissions cuts and climate finance.

In this pivotal year, the decisions the Government makes will show whether the UK can live up to aspirations to be a meaningful player on the world stage.

" The UK is holding vaccine recipes hostage by blocking the proposal at the WTO to temporarily suspend rules on intellectual property

A key test will be its willingness to pull out all the stops to ensure everyone on the planet has a coronavirus jab as quickly as possible, building on the leadership shown in the successful domestic rollout. Rich countries like the UK hold the key to unlocking the vaccine supply shortage. As the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) put it: "There is no diplomatic way to

say it:

a small group of countries that make and buy the majority of the world's vaccines control the fate of the rest of the world."

Around three quarters of all doses have been administered in ten countries, while mass vaccination in developing countries may not happen till 2024 at the earliest. Right now parts of Africa are being hit by a third deadly wave, delays are putting lives at risk, increasing the threat of vaccine-proof mutations, and costing the global economy an estimated \$9 trillion.

While it is undoubtedly a matter of national pride that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, around 97% taxpayer-funded, is being sold at cost price for the duration of the pandemic and is the main supplier to the COVAX scheme for developing

>> countries, it is wrong for the Prime Minister to suggest that Global Britain's responsibility to the world ends there. Firstly, COVAX's main manufacturer, the Serum Institute, won't be able to supply more doses this year due to demand in India. Secondly, the UK's commitment to donate 30 million doses to developing countries this year, as part of a billion pledged by the G7, is welcome, but far below the 11 billion doses the WHO says are needed.

Most importantly, the UK is holding vaccine recipes hostage by blocking the proposal at the WTO to temporarily suspend rules on intellectual property for Covid-19 vaccines and know-how, so that more qualified manufacturers can make enough vaccines for everyone. If the UK wants to be taken seriously as a guardian of global health security, through its newly established International Pandemic Preparedness Partnership, then this position needs an urgent rethink. The fact that this proposal is supported by 100 countries including the US and France could leave the UK looking isolated, insular and in danger of losing friends.

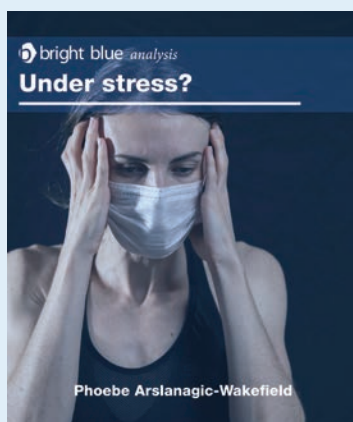
Likewise on climate, the UK's deeds do not yet match its stated ambition. With nine

years left to prevent climate breakdown, the UK has a particular responsibility as COP26 host to set the world onto a safer track, ensuring countries commit to their fair share of carbon cuts to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Yet the UK's laudable target to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels is undermined by approving a new coal mine in Cumbria and new licenses for North Sea oil and gas exploration. Furthermore, flagrantly breaking its own promises to the world's poorest by cutting the aid budget to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) will make it an uphill struggle to persuade other nations to increase funding to communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

Reversing these decisions would help the UK to boost its credibility among

international partners and increase its ability to make a significant contribution to tackling global challenges, at a time when coronavirus is pushing millions into poverty and widening the divide between rich and poor. With nationalism rising and civic space shrinking around the globe, there's a need for a Britain that can stand up for a liberal, rules-based world order and multilateralism, and play a part in forging more inclusive processes and new alliances based on shared values. The choices Britain makes now will have consequences far beyond our borders. When we look back in ten or 20 years, will we be able to say with confidence that we were on the right side of history? 

Danny Sriskandarajah is the Chief Executive of Oxfam GB



Latest analysis

Under stress? The experiences of benefit claimants during the pandemic

Phoebe Arslanagic-Wakefield

As part of Bright Blue's ongoing project examining the inequalities of home working during the Covid-19 pandemic, we investigated differences in the experiences of benefit claimants and the rest of the public in the first year of the pandemic.

Our analysis uncovers two types of experience during the pandemic where significant differences between benefit claimants and the rest of the public emerge: financial and relational.

FIXING THE BROKEN PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM

THE  TIMES

 THE Sun

MPs urge cut to stamp duty and council tax on 'red wall' homes

GET RID, RISHI Scrap council tax and stamp duty, Rishi Sunak urged in plan backed by 100,000

THE CASE FOR REFORMING OUR UNFAIR PROPERTY TAXES IS BECOMING HARDER AND HARDER FOR POLITICIANS TO IGNORE.

Council tax is outdated and unjust. It provides significant advantages to those who have - or are from families with - substantial wealth, and is quite punishing to those with relatively little.

To fix the problem, Bright Blue recently backed an Annual Proportional Property Tax on the current capital value of houses. Fairer Share is pushing for this kind of reform as well. We propose scrapping council tax and stamp duty and bringing in a proportional property tax set at a flat rate of 0.48% of a property's value.

This would mean lower bills for 76% of households across England. On average, households would pay £435 less property tax a year. With a proportional property tax we would also make a major stride forwards towards achieving intergenerational fairness. No longer would struggling renters face high council tax bills while many older homeowners in expensive properties get a better deal.

Time for action

There is no reason for ministers to delay. Work by the International Property Tax Institute shows there is no technical problem with revaluations. Furthermore, our model has measures in place to protect 'asset rich, cash poor' homeowners with a cap on any increase at the point of implementation of £100 per month and the option to defer payments at notional interest rates until point of sale. And all households would benefit from the permanent abolition of stamp duty.

Senior figures from across the political spectrum - such as David Gauke, Margaret Hodge and Vince Cable - have all backed radical property tax reform. At the Fairer Share campaign, we have significant support from both Conservative and Labour MPs.

As the Government prepares to publish its levelling up white paper later this year, now is the time for action. If levelling up is to be a reality, then we need to have a fairer property tax system.

To support our campaign please head to www.fairershare.org.uk



Shuggie Bain

Douglas Stuart debuts with a tragic yet beautiful story of familial love

Ryan Shorthouse

Chief Executive, Bright Blue

Some of the best dramas of recent years – on screen and in books – have documented the vicissitudes of motherhood. Talented feminist writers are ensuring we really do recognise the shit, quite frankly, that women can go through raising children.

Maggie O'Farrell's book, *Hamnet*, puts the mother of Shakespeare's dead boy, Agnes, at the centre of events. On television, we've had the side-splitting *Motherland*. More solemnly, *Mare of Easttown*, and more brutally, *The Handmaid's Tale*, have electrified.

Douglas Stuart's award-winning, semi-autobiographical debut novel, *Shuggie Bain*, offers a new perspective: a little boy, who worships, and is eventually left to care for, his alcoholic mother, another Agnes.

“ Agnes leaves her children neglected and hungry, reaching for lager to puncture the depression, living solely for the... short-term respite

Set in sink estates on the periphery of Glasgow in the 1980s, the Bain family descends and deteriorates alongside communities that once centred around coal mines. The rather glamorous and good-looking Agnes leaves a steady Eddie, whom she nicknames “the good Catholic”, for the cockier “Big Shug”, a protestant taxi driver, who is a violent womaniser. The first marriage provides two children: Leek and Catherine, the much older stepsiblings of the protagonist, little Shuggie, the quirky and only offspring of the second.

Big Shug's brutality and infidelity makes Agnes' desperate. Eventually, he leaves a once proud woman to the dole and drink. Life in Pithead becomes bleaker: Agnes leaves her children neglected and hungry, reaching for lager to puncture the depression, living solely for the froth to start a sweet but short-term respite. It overwhelms her, so much that ‘uncles’ keep visiting the house, to ensure a steady supply.

On one New Year's Eve, Shuggie panics when his mother is missing. He shrewdly redials to locate her, at a party on the other side of town. After a taxi ride, paid for with the last bit of money for the meter, he finds her on a bed under some coats: “Slowly she emerged, half-naked and crumpled, from the heap... From beneath the heavy coats emerged her white legs and small feet. Shuggie stopped and looked at her there, and in the tangle and the hallway light he saw that her black Pretty Pollys had been ripped from toe to waist.”

This is grinding and graphic destitution, difficult to read. Indeed, the author does have a tendency at times to pack sentences with too much description, necessitating rereading. Which is frustrating: because the story, though terribly sad, is so gripping.

It sounds sadistic, but the storytelling is so suspenseful, that you want to find out whether life could become any more dangerous or tragic than it already is for Shuggie and his beloved mother.

Despite her behaviour, the author makes you want the best for her.

Cheerfully, a year of hope does come. Agnes goes to an AA group, on the other side of town to avoid any neighbourly embarrassment. She's inspired and abstains. A regular night shift at a petrol station follows, where taxi drivers circle to chat with attractive Agnes. One becomes a boyfriend, the widower Eugene, “solid and true”.

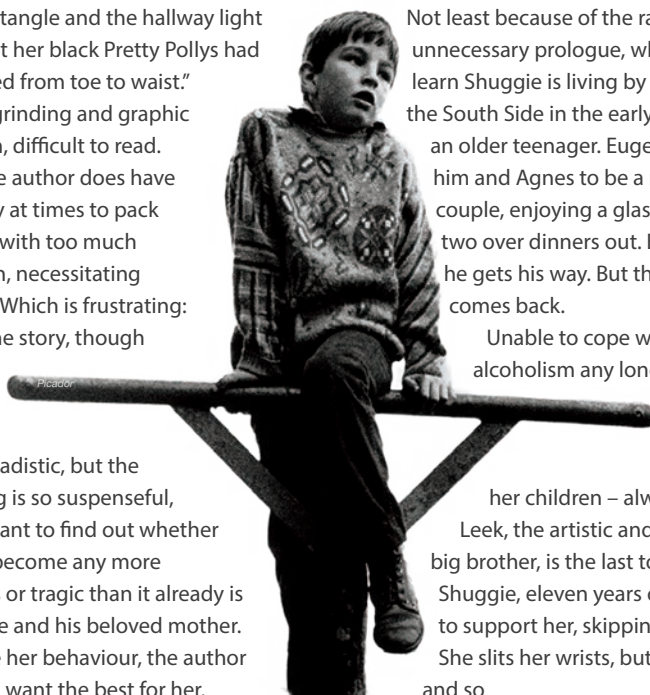
“ It sounds sadistic, but the storytelling is so suspenseful, that you want to find out whether life could become any more dangerous or tragic

You know this won't last, though.

Not least because of the rather unnecessary prologue, where we learn Shuggie is living by himself in the South Side in the early 1990s as an older teenager. Eugene wants him and Agnes to be a normal couple, enjoying a glass of wine or two over dinners out. Eventually he gets his way. But the addiction comes back.

Unable to cope with her alcoholism any longer, people around Agnes – her lovers, her children – always leave.

Leek, the artistic and protective big brother, is the last to go. Only Shuggie, eleven years old, is left to support her, skipping school. She slits her wrists, but recovers, and so




>> they seek a new life in the East End. Nothing changes: she's straight on the drink the day they arrive. Some time later he notices she's not breathing after another session; but, sitting painlessly and peacefully, he does not have the will to fight her passing.

All the gloominess is bearable because of just how marvellous, hilarious, and exceptional Shuggie is. He's 'different': he just doesn't get football and likes playing

with ponies. He is highly defensive of his mother, even when she is falling apart: "Shuggie heard the nurse say to a male attendant that she thought for sure Agnes was a working girl. 'She is not', said Shuggie, quite proudly. 'My mother has never worked a day in her life. She's far too good-looking for that'."

Towards the end of the book, after his mother's death, he deepens his friendship with Leanne Kelly, a girl from the South Side,

who a boy from his block initially tried to set him up with. Both had mothers on the bottle. He, at first cautiously then playfully, divulges his homosexuality to her. Finally, he is free. 

Shuggie Bain;
Douglas Stuart;
Picador;
448 pages.
Published 6 August 2020.

Climate and the clash of nations

Daniel Yergin sets out the geopolitical landscape of the world in climate crisis

Andrew Leming

Researcher, Bright Blue

Daniel Yergin's *The new map: energy, climate, and the clash of nations* charts the dynamic landscape of energy geopolitics in the twenty-first century, set against the backdrop of accelerating climate change. The result is a highly engaging work that combines in a coherent narrative a collection of nationally-focused energy case studies, drawing together Yergin's analysis of emerging technologies, market dynamics, and international relations, as well as the key players driving them.

Yergin builds on themes explored in his 2011 book, *The quest: energy, security, and the remaking of the modern world*. But rapid change in global energy affairs over the last decade means that the historical trends outlined in *The quest* are brought into sharper relief in *The new map*. He carefully analyses how current trends of energy production, resource competition, and climate change are converging in "new cold wars" between major powers, especially the United States and China.

Yergin contends – correctly, in my view

– that we have entered a new era of energy geopolitics. For instance, Yergin traces the origins of the "shale revolution" in the US and demonstrates how hydraulic fracturing technologies dramatically increased the size of its existing oil and gas reserves. These technologies helped the US overtake Russia and Saudi Arabia as the world's leading exporter of oil and natural gas. However, Yergin does not engage with a key question here: namely, whether the booming oil and gas industry in the US will undermine the country's commitment to upholding its climate obligations under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

“ China is the world's largest producer of steel, aluminium, and computers, and one of the most important rare earth mineral producers

Similarly, Yergin also analyses China's position in the energy landscape. The author stresses that China aims to reassert its geopolitical sovereignty and power by "redrawing the energy map", especially across Eurasia and Africa, through its

sprawling Belt and Road Initiative.

Another key flashpoint in China's approach to shifting its own energy map is the South China Sea, the waterway through which 80% of its energy imports flow and the site of rising geopolitical tensions with the US.

Indeed, these two flashpoints illustrate how the US and China are shifting to "strategy rivalry." He argues that these countries form a de facto G2, more powerful and influential in world politics than the G20 states combined. However, while the US and China together comprise 40% of the world's GDP and 50% of its military spending, their energy maps diverge significantly: whereas China imports 75% of its oil and 40% of its gas, the United States has become a leading exporter of both.

Nonetheless, Yergin slightly understates just how important China is for making the green energy transition. China's dependence on fossil fuel imports continues to prop up the markets of key oil and gas states, in particular Russia. The author shows how the Chinese Communist Party's




>> “prepayment” of \$80 billion in 2005 to Rosneft, the Russian state oil company, ensured that oil and gas will flow between them for until 2030.

On the other hand, if the “marriage of Germany’s environmental politics with Chinese manufacturing prowess” brought solar panels to global energy markets in the 1990s, the same can be said of the West’s relationship with China today. China is the world’s largest producer of steel, aluminium, and computers, and one of the most important rare earth mineral producers – all of which are required for the West’s electric vehicles and wind turbines.

Yergin argues that competition and

conflict are inevitable along “the path toward a lower-carbon world”. But the author does strike an optimistic, if measured, tone on the potential for technology to assist our efforts to address climate change. He correctly states that energy systems will include high-carbon energy over the coming decades, but lower-carbon sources will take a greater share, with solar panels, wind turbines, and nuclear being the “main engines” of meeting our climate goals.

Whereas other energy transitions were primarily driven by commercial and technological factors, the acceleration of climate change adds a new dimension to

the green transition: the volatility of climate politics, set against the dramatic physical changes to come. While climate has risen to the top of the political agenda among powerful states, precisely how Yergin’s energy maps and climate politics combine to shape geopolitical competition will likely be the defining question of the twenty-first century. 

The new map: energy, climate, and the clash of nations;

Daniel Yergin;

Penguin Press;

512 pages.

Published 15 September 2020.

A swim in a pond in the rain

George Saunders delivers a tour of the weird and wonderful of Russian classics

Phoebe Arslanagic-Wakefield

Senior Researcher, Bright Blue

The premise of George Saunders’ *A swim in a pond in the rain* is deceptively simple. Saunders, a renowned creative writing professor at Syracuse University, presents us with seven translated short stories: three from Chekhov, two from Tolstoy, and one each from Turgenev and Gogol.

They range from the surreal to the quietly devastating. In Gogol’s *The nose*, Major Kovalyov awakes to find that his nose has abandoned its post on his face in favour of gallivanting across St Petersburg. After tracking it down, Kovalyov is flummoxed to find his nose wearing the uniform of a high-ranking official, and is unsure of the social etiquette of approaching it. Meanwhile, in Chekhov’s *The cart*, an underpaid, worn-down school mistress ponders her dreary rural life and the things she has lost.

Alongside this is Saunders’ commentary.

Accompanying the reader through each story, we are invited to take the place of a student on Saunders’ extremely competitive Russian short story course at Syracuse.

It is good to be a student again. With warmth and humility, Saunders pries open each of the seven stories and prompts us to interrogate their mechanisms. What is Chekhov showing us about Marya Vasilyevna, the unhappy school mistress? How does Tolstoy make us afraid as two men travel out into the snow on a cold day? Why is Turgenev taking so long to get to the point?

Saunders uses these questions to deftly extract vital lessons about the nature of good writing. In Tolstoy’s *Master and man*, a peasant and a landowner set out for a short journey by sleigh in wintertime. They get lost. Twice. And reach safety. Twice. Neither of these times do the travellers appear to comprehend the lurking danger, even as the reader does. They get lost a third time. The lesson that Saunders draws out

here is

“always

be

escalating”.

He shows us

how Tolstoy uses structure and pattern to manipulate the tension of the narrative.

“ Saunders avoids an overly technical approach by asking us to consider the humanist capability of these stories to morally transform us

Saunders teaches us that “pattern creates propulsion”. In Chekhov’s comic, but pathos-laden, *The darling*, the beautiful Olenka, the titular ‘darling’, falls in love with Kukin the theatre owner. She falls hard, and so does he. Soon, the theatre is her greatest passion and sole conversation topic. They are very happy together. But tragedy strikes! Kukin dies, Olenka grieves.



>> Not to worry, however, because Vasily the timber merchant arrives. She falls hard, and so does he. Soon, timber is her greatest passion and sole conversation topic; the concept of the theatre now appears to repulse her. They are very happy together. But tragedy strikes! Vasily dies, Olenka grieves. Chekhov establishes this pattern with a comedic and ruthless efficiency, and then proceeds to subvert it and surprise us.


Alongside these writing lessons, Saunders avoids an overly technical approach by asking us to consider the humanist capability of these stories to morally transform us. In Tolstoy's *Master and man*, we watch a flawed man make a despicable decision. And then the right one. Saunders posits that Tolstoy intends us to

learn something about being human, about what it means to be good and our capacity for it.

In Chekhov's *The cart*, precious little takes place in the way of action. But when Marya undergoes a temporary but powerful mental shift, we are there. Marya might slip back into her dreary and hopeless world, but our understanding of her has irrevocably transformed. Marya has not changed, but we have. Chekhov has pulled back the curtain into a stranger's inner life and made us more empathetic in the process.

Saunders' optimistic faith in the ability of these stories, and fiction in general, to make us better people borders on the naïve. But his defence of narrative as a tool of

ethical and philosophical communication is also intensely appealing, particularly in the context of the brevity and skill of the short stories he has selected for analysis.

While instructive for would-be authors, *A swim in a pond in the rain* is enthralling and restorative for those of us who find less time and patience for reading fiction than we once did. Short and unpretentious, it is also a perfectly-formed gateway drug into the Russian greats — you will undoubtedly find yourself reaching for more. 

A swim in a pond in the rain;

George Saunders;

Bloomsbury Publishing;

432 pages.

Published 12 January 2021.

TV: Is Covid racist?

David Harewood investigates the impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minorities

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In an explorative documentary by the BBC called *Why is Covid killing people of colour?*, actor David Harewood takes us through a journey of questions and discovery to examine the worrying correlation between being a person of colour (POC) and the probability of becoming seriously ill from Covid-19.

A bleak picture is painted of the many underlying inequalities which mar our healthcare system, which have all been exposed and exacerbated during the pandemic. Speaking to a number of medical professionals including Dr Tariq Husain, Dr Marina Sultan, and Dr Guddi Singh, Harewood unravels a few key concepts which are crucial to making sense of the correlation.

He begins his journey in the London

Borough of Brent. The borough had the highest overall Covid-19 mortality rate out of all regions in England from March to June 2020, and was the first to need an emergency testing centre, he explains. Residents of this borough were noted to be five times more likely to contract the virus and suffer serious symptoms. It is also the most ethnically diverse borough in the UK.

Dr Guddi Singh explains that what is seen in Brent is mirrored throughout the UK. The disparities aren't to do with genetics, supporting her argument well by stating that many African and Asian countries have lower rates of Covid-19 deaths compared to countries like the US and the UK. However, within these Western countries, the incidence of Covid-19 is disproportionately seen in POC.

She also rules out income as an exclusive variable, explaining that doctors from ethnic minority backgrounds, who earn well, made

up 95% of the doctors who died during this pandemic. Ultimately, POCs are more likely to be key workers, where they are more likely to contract and spread the virus, whereas white people are more likely to be in management roles. Similarly, ethnic minorities have more overcrowded homes which leads to less social distancing.

“This documentary should act as a call to arms to address these inequalities, which have led to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic

Another important concept known as ‘weathering’ was explained by Professor



>> Arline Geronimus. She broke down how there is a cumulative and physical consequence of the anxiety an individual bears when they are bullied, taunted, or treated in a prejudiced manner over a lifetime. Weathering ages the body and causes defects in our immune systems.

Many ethnic minorities develop underlying health issues which are caused by factors such as weathering, being housed in poor air quality areas and poor diets due to not being able to afford healthy meals. These underlying conditions then mean that they are more likely to suffer poorer health outcomes and die from Covid-19.

Harewood hesitantly suggests that the healthcare system could be institutionally racist, but not in an overt way. He and Dr Singh agree that it is the subconscious biases which aggregate into a divergent experience for different patients based on their ethnicity. For example, a study found that doctors incorrectly assumed black patients could endure more pain and interpreted their expressions as aggression. This leads to black patients receiving less

pain management.

Such experiences help to explain why POCs are less likely to want to take a vaccine: because they have underlying health issues to which they fear the vaccine has not been adjusted, and because they have a general lacking of trust when it comes to the healthcare system, feeling like healthcare professionals wouldn't understand their symptoms or concerns.

The documentary ends with a brief conversation with the Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch MP. She dismissed the notion that systemic racism played a part in disproportionate infection and deaths rates by Covid-19. She also stated that POCs can progress up the social ladder due to the education system. Harewood rightly challenges her comments stating that society operates in a way which disadvantages POCs through either conscious or unconscious racism in institutions such as employment, education, and healthcare.


This documentary captures the struggles and inequalities faced by POCs during

the pandemic and successfully took into account intersectional issues regarding race and socioeconomic status.

Harewood ends the documentary with a pivotal statement: "If those in power don't acknowledge the damage that systemic racism is doing to the health of millions of people, we face an uphill struggle to affect positive change."

Harewood sheds light on pressing issues that need to be addressed: inequalities within healthcare, employment, and housing systems. POCs may have found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to stay safe due to their front-facing jobs, overcrowded homes, and lack of safe working conditions.

Badenoch fails to acknowledge there is an immense struggle POCs face to work their way up the social ladder due to such institutional inequalities.

This documentary should act as a call to arms to address these underlying inequalities, which have led to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on POCs. 



James Eades

