

POLICY PAPER 157
Liberal Values
in a Dangerous
World

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1 Liberal Democrat Values in a Dangerous World

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Thirty years ago, after the defeat of communism in Europe, the Western world entered a new era of cooperation and prosperity. That peaceful vision has since given way to an unstable and uncertain shift in the rules-based international order. As tensions between the US and China have mounted, we are witnessing a realignment of geopolitical influence and alliances, as liberal values come under attack across the world.

1.1.2 At home, Britain has felt the aftershocks of major foreign policy events: the UK's exit from the European Union, Covid, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and an increasingly aggressive China. Each one of these shocks has uncovered fragility in our economic supply chains, problems with our defence capabilities, and the continued erosion of our influence due to the Conservatives short term decision making and inconsistent policies.

1.1.3 More than any other country, Britain's global influence and its seat at the table depends on being seen as an unwavering champion for human rights, democratic values, and economic prosperity for all. For the rest of the world, our credibility rests on the legitimacy of the rules-based international order. But over the past nine years, the Conservatives have deliberately sacrificed our international reputation for short-term political gain.

1.1.4 In Britain, we are increasingly seeing the Conservatives divorcing our foreign and defence policies from reality, preferring to win short term headlines at the expense of our global reputation.

1.1.5 This policy paper sets out the Liberal Democrats principles and values in the face of these global challenges; the rest of this paper shows how we will put those principles into action.

1.2 Countering Authoritarianism and Promoting Liberal Values

1.2.1 Democracy is a core value for Liberal Democrats. But for us, democracy is more than just a mechanism for counting votes. It is about holding the powerful to account. It represents a system where every citizen is empowered to make their voice heard and where their rights and dignity are respected and upheld. But a world of thriving, robust democracies is not just good for individual citizens, it is also a safer and more secure world.

1.2.2 Liberal and Liberal Democrat Leaders have always been the most vocal supporters of democracy, human rights and equality around the world. From the Liberal Party opposing Rhodesia and Apartheid South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s long before anyone else, to Paddy Ashdown fighting for the rights of Hong Kongers and Bosnians in the 1990s - we have always championed the rights of the oppressed. Later in this paper, we set out how we will build on this legacy.

1.2.3 We see the coming decades as a conflict between authoritarianism and democracy, with most countries falling somewhere in the middle. Liberal Democrats would forge closer partnerships with democracies, and double our efforts to engage and reach out to those countries who are on the democratic path, but at risk of slipping into authoritarianism.

1.2.4 We will consistently support those who are threatened by hostile authoritarians - in particular we will support Ukraine throughout its struggle with Russia and its rebuilding after the war is over and continue to

advocate for the rights of Hong Kongers, whom Britain owes a special debt to. We will also support Taiwan, should China's aggression towards the island democracy continue.

1.3 Supporting the Vulnerable through Internationalism

1.3.1 Liberalism is based on the belief that every individual has worth, and should have their rights and dignity protected. That's why Liberal Democrats are committed to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and protecting the world's vulnerable people from conflict, climate change, poverty, the rollback of human rights and displacement. We believe that the most effective way to protect and empower individuals is to work with and through the international community, collaborating with like-minded partners to promote the common good.

1.3.2 Liberal Democrats are proudly internationalist because we see economic opportunities, groundbreaking ideas, and existential challenges through the lens of global cooperation. We know that problems like the climate transition and the nature crisis cannot be managed alone. We cannot stand up to corporate power by ourselves. We have already seen the disastrous consequences of responding to the pandemic in isolation. And Russia's invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated, once again, that the UK is strongest when it speaks in one voice with the democratic partners. Coordinating with our allies to maximise our clout should not be taken as a sign of weakness, but a show of strength and unity.

1.3.3 There is no healthy future for our country if we do not work with others to tackle these problems.

1.4 Playing to Britain's Strengths

1.4.1 Liberal Democrats understand Britain in a way the other parties don't. We understand that Britain has many unique strengths that few other countries are lucky to possess. We will base our approach to global affairs on these strengths, rather than undermining them as the other parties would do.

1.4.2 The Conservatives fundamentally don't understand the modern world or contemporary Britain; they fail to play to our strengths, and in many cases actively undermine Britain's security through recklessly antagonising our closest allies in Europe and undermining Britain's development superpower status by abolishing the Department for International Development and cutting the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget.

1.4.3 The Labour Party has an inconsistent and muddled history on national security. Tony Blair enthusiastically followed the United States into the Middle East, but former leader Jeremy Corbyn described Hamas and Hezbollah as friends - Labour can't be trusted to be consistent.

1.4.4 Meanwhile, the SNP have arrogantly assumed that a vote leading to Scottish independence would automatically result in EU and NATO membership, the automatic transfer of British defence assets, and no accompanying debts; the SNP are just as guilty of nationalist exceptionalism as the Conservatives.

1.4.5 All of Britain's other parties fail to understand either Britain and its capabilities, or how the rest of the world really works - they are not grounded in reality.

1.4.6 Liberal Democrats have consistently understood the world and Britain's role in it. We will play to Britain's strengths; our first class development, diplomatic and cultural sectors, and ensure that our armed forces are equipped and trained for the conflicts that we might find ourselves in.

1.5 Scope of the Paper

1.5.1 Although comprehensive, this paper does not seek to tackle every security issue facing the UK. Security in this paper is defined as being safe and free from external deliberate human threats - for that reason issues such as energy security, food security and economic security are tackled in other policy papers and motions. Instead, this paper focuses on the core elements of foreign and security policy, diplomacy, development, defence, policing, intelligence and global soft power.

1.6 Conclusion

1.6.1 Unless we make an effort to apply liberal values and principles to our foreign policy, we will be reduced to transactional case-by-case bargaining. If we stand for nothing but power at all costs, this undermines both other countries' trust in us, and our ability to influence and shape world affairs. Liberal Democrats would base our international security strategy on upholding and promoting our core values, both at home and abroad.

1.6.2 The rest of this paper sets out how we will uphold the key values and principles we have set out in this chapter, and build a more liberal, safe and secure world.

2 Liberal Democrat International Security Strategy

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Under the Conservatives, the UK's foreign policy and national security has drifted aimlessly without coherence or purpose. We are trying to be all things to all countries and our limited resources are being spread far too thin. The Conservative's approach to Northern Ireland and international law has eroded our special relationship with the United States. Rishi Sunak has muddled the UK's approach to China. And the Conservatives inability to work constructively with Europe has left the UK isolated.

2.1.2 Liberal Democrats would adopt a principled strategy for our national and international security – one that is grounded in the liberal values of democracy and international cooperation, that plays to the UK's unique strengths. We will ensure that our positions on Defence, Diplomacy and Development are strategically aligned to deliver the greatest impact in our foreign and security policy in line with our values.

2.2 A Liberal Democrat International Security Strategy

2.2.1 As liberals and internationalists, we know that long-term security has several components. Ensuring a first-class military, with good training, equipment, morale, and living conditions is vital, but so too, is ensuring that we prevent wars from starting by investing in diplomacy and development.

2.2.2 Our military power should be focused on the defence of Britain, our overseas territories and playing a leading role in our immediate neighbourhood - the North Atlantic, Europe and the Mediterranean, as it

was for most of the 20th Century. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the United States pivoting towards Taiwan and China, the UK must step up to the challenge Russia poses.

2.2.3 We will sign a new security and co-operation agreement with Europe, and ensure that Britain goes above and beyond its NATO commitments. We will also adopt a long-term industrial strategy that builds on our existing capabilities, so that our defence industry is put on a sustainable footing.

2.2.4 Meanwhile, our diplomatic, cultural and developmental power should be utilised far more effectively in the rest of the world where Britain's vital interests are at risk: China and the Far East, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. We will immediately restore our ODA budget to 0.7% of GNI, and increase investment in the skills and knowledge of the Foreign Office, so that the UK can reclaim its position as a diplomatic and development superpower and increase our ability to shape and influence global affairs.

2.3 Defence of the Realm - Russia and Europe

2.3.1 We believe that our defence policy and conventional forces should be focused on defending British territory and playing a leading role in our immediate neighbourhood. To that end, the UK must rebuild trust with our European neighbours. The UK's national interest and security has always been tied to Europe's - the defence of one was the defence of all. From World War II through the Cold War to the War on Terror to the invasion of Ukraine, we have relied on Europe just as Europe has relied on the UK.

2.3.2 As a committed member of NATO, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made it clear that the UK should work to rebuild security and defence cooperation with Europe. We need to focus our military power on

defending and securing Europe. It is in the UK's interest for Europe, our own backyard, to be safe and secure.

2.4 China and the Far East

2.4.1 China's rise since the 1980s has been remarkable, raising millions out of poverty. However, China has also become increasingly authoritarian, aggressive towards its neighbours, and commits massive human rights violations at home - orchestrating genocide against the Uyghurs.

2.4.2 Liberal Democrats believe that the UK should always stand on the side of democracy, human rights, international law and multilateralism. That is why the status quo with China is no longer a viable option.

2.4.3 Liberal Democrats would build new diplomatic, economic and security partnerships with democratic countries threatened by an increasingly authoritarian and aggressive China - like Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. We will also support the rights of Hong Kongers, both in Hong Kong itself and those who have been forced to flee.

2.4.4 We will also seek to make the UK more economically and socially resilient, by diversifying our economy and reducing our reliance on China through a modern and active industrial policy. We have seen the Biden administration in America adopt this approach with its CHIPS and Science Act - the Liberal Democrats would support a similar investment in our future that is tailored to the UK's needs and capabilities.

2.4.5 We will also stand with Taiwan, which faces increasing aggression from China. Liberal Democrats believe that standing with democratic allies is of vital importance - just as we have supported Ukraine in its struggle against Russia.

2.4.6 Globally, we will make use of our diplomatic, development and soft power, outlined in other chapters, to tackle China's influence globally, partnering with countries in the Global South on the basis of equality and cooperation.

2.4.7 But we will not seek to bury our heads in the sand by avoiding reality. Cooperation with China will remain essential for tackling the world's challenges, like climate change and pandemics, and vital for our prosperity. We will not seek to pull up a drawbridge and isolate China in a new Cold War - it is both impractical and undesirable, but we will firmly push back wherever our interests or values come under threat.

2.5 The Global South

2.5.1 Britain has a mixed record in the Global South; it has been the home to some of the UK's greatest military and diplomatic disasters from the First Boer War through to the Iraq War. But Britain also has historic ties to many nations in the Global South, through a variety of other international institutions.

2.5.2 Africa will be one of the biggest areas of global economic and population growth over the coming decades. It will also be one of the areas where climate change will act as a threat multiplier, driving instability and refugee flows across the region and into the UK and Europe. It is therefore a region of vital strategic and security interest for Britain.

2.5.3 The Middle East and central Asia will also be vital to the UK's economic and security interests in the coming decades; essential chemicals, minerals, foodstuffs and economic exchange will take place, and the ongoing refugee crisis will never end until this part of the world is prosperous and flourishing.

2.5.4 Britain used to have considerable diplomatic and cultural influence in the region, much of which has been lost. It's been estimated that only a third of British diplomats based in the region speak Arabic significantly curbing the UK's ability to influence and respond to developments in the region. Following a damning report in 2013 little has been done to improve the UK's language barrier. Liberal Democrats would rebuild our expertise and cultural understanding in this region, improving our ability to influence and shape affairs towards the UK's interests and promoting the values of liberalism and democracy.

2.5.5 Liberal Democrats would build positive economic and political partnerships in the Global South, countering the influence of authoritarian regimes like China and Russia who have sought to use the Global South as a new colonial playground. In contrast, our approach would be needs based and focused on providing diplomatic and economic support to countries and groups trying to build more inclusive and democratic societies. We will strongly anchor this on the principles of equality, partnership and leaving no one behind.

2.5.6 Liberal Democrats would work on the basis of equality and partnership with countries in need of development assistance. To achieve this goal, we will restore the ODA budget to 0.7% of national income, and re-establish a department for international development as its own ministry with a seat at the Cabinet table,

2.6 Conclusion

2.6.1 Liberal Democrats understand the modern world and modern Britain; we clearly understand that the direct threats to Britain are found close to home in Europe and the North Atlantic, so that is where our armed forces and military alliances should be focused. We also know that we can't

ignore the rest of the world, but that Britain's reach in Africa, Asia and the Middle East should be built around our diplomatic, cultural and development power.

2.6.2 We understand that Britain must confront the rise of an authoritarian and illiberal China, and that this confrontation requires Britain to work closely together with democracies around the world to resist Chinese influence.

3 Diplomacy

3.0.1 Liberal Democrats would strengthen the UK's diplomatic reach in the world by:

- Consistently supporting democracies and human rights at home and abroad, particularly supporting Ukraine, Hong Kong and Taiwan against authoritarian aggression
- Investing in the skills and training of the diplomatic service
- Deepen cooperation with our European and democratic allies, particularly on sanctions and the environment
- Leading by example and making use of our diplomatic and aid tools to tackle the climate and nature emergencies
- Working collaboratively through multilateralism and with our sister parties abroad

3.1 Supporting Democracy and Human Rights Globally

3.1.1 Diplomacy is the first tool of foreign policy; it is our first line of defence and the first tool in our kit for promoting our strategy.

3.1.2 For Liberal Democrats, our priority would be to defend democracy and promote human rights globally. We know that a democratic and liberal world is one that is safer and more prosperous than one dominated by autocracy - by promoting liberal values and democracy, we promote all our other interests at the same time.

3.1.3 Liberal Democrats would intensify diplomatic engagement with democracies threatened by hostile authoritarian powers. This would include support across the "full spectrum" of modern conflict. In particular, we will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes and during the rebuilding

after its war with Russia, with Hong Kongers suffering the oppression of the Chinese government and with Taiwan, who face encroaching authoritarianism from the mainland.

3.1.4 We will also increase our diplomatic presence and engagement with countries that are on the democratic path, but are not yet fully fledged democracies. We have seen in Russia what happens when democracies fail to support and engage with countries looking to move away from authoritarianism; all too easily they slip back into dictatorship.

3.1.5 We will support and engage with civil society in countries like Turkey and Hungary, who are at the cross-roads between democracy and authoritarianism.

3.2 Investing in our Diplomatic Service

3.2.1 Britain's diplomatic service is one of the best in the world; it is well respected, professional and a credit to the ethos of the civil service. However, its capacity has been undermined in recent years by cuts, as well as inconsistent Conservative foreign policy.

3.2.2 We will invest in the skills and training of the diplomatic service, particularly language and cultural expertise. For instance, scarcely a third of UK diplomats in the Middle East speak Arabic, compared to two-thirds of US diplomats, and only 14 Foreign Office officials are being trained to speak fluent Mandarin each year on average. This has led to the UK often not understanding the situation 'on the ground' and being caught unprepared, such as in the Afghan withdrawal.

3.2.3 Although steps have been taken to reverse the trend of declining language proficiency, such as the opening of the FCO Language Centre in

2013, we still need to go further. We will invest in language and cultural training, and encourage longer postings, working collaboratively with the civil service, so that staff are better able and incentivised to learn local languages and customs - after all there is little point learning Mandarin if you're going to be moved away after two years.

3.2.4 Finally, we will reverse many of the cuts that the FCDO have seen - ensuring that embassies have the staff, resources and expertise they need to do their jobs properly, including by supporting British citizens abroad during national and international crises.

3.3 Multilateralism and Collaboration with our Sister Parties

3.3.1 Liberal Democrats are proud internationalists, and we know that the most effective way of tackling the shared problems the globe faces, like climate change, economic development, conflict and the global refugee crisis is through effective partnerships.

3.3.2 The UK has a privileged position in a variety of multinational organisations. We are on the Council of Europe, our King leads the Commonwealth, and we hold a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. How we might reform these institutions is set out in policy paper 132, *Britain at the Heart of a Changing World*, but we think there is a case for the UK to utilise its position to promote our values globally.

3.3.3 We will also collaborate more closely with our democratic allies in Europe. We will establish formal cooperation mechanisms with Europe on foreign and security, including regular ministerial meetings.

3.3.4 These arrangements would include deepening coordination of sanctions policy, particularly with regards to Russia. In a globalised world

where assets can be rapidly moved from one country to another at the click of a button, it is essential that Europe and the UK coordinate sanctions policy, so that those who profit from autocracy cannot hide their wealth anywhere on our continent.

3.3.5 We will also strengthen efforts to tackle the climate and nature emergencies globally. Liberal Democrats would start by leading by example, enacting policies laid out in policy papers 139 *Tackling the Climate Emergency* and 156 *Tackling the Nature Crisis*. We will make use of the UK's considerable convening power to support institutions and nations to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change, whilst directly supporting affected nations through aid and expertise.

3.3.6 Liberal Democrats would also continue to work constructively with our sister parties in the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and Liberal International. We are a uniquely internationalist party in the UK and are better placed than with the Conservatives and Labour to work with countries around the world to promote liberal values and the common good.

3.4 Conclusion

3.4.1 Liberal Democrats would restore Britain's diplomatic credibility, by consistently standing up in favour of liberal democracy, human rights and against authoritarianism. We invest in the skills and training of the diplomatic service, as well as working collaboratively with our partners around the world for the common good.

4 Development

4.0.1 The Liberal Democrats would tailor the UK's international development spending to support conflict prevention, economic development, and global social justice by:

- Immediately restoring the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget to 0.7% of national income and committing to maintaining that as a legal minimum
- Restoring an independent department to oversee international development spending with its own cabinet minister so that the UK can regain the international influence it has lost under the Conservatives
- Support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and encourage partner countries to support this framework for human security and human development.

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 International development spending is our second tool for building a more peaceful world. The UK's commitment to development has been one of our most effective foreign policy tools in recent decades, and Liberal Democrats are committed to supporting the world's most vulnerable communities in the face of threats from climate change, conflict, displacement, poverty, and human rights abuses.

4.1.2 Liberal Democrats are committed to restoring the UK commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA and re-establishing a separate Department for development with its own Cabinet Minister to oversee these activities.

4.1.3 The Conservatives with their abolition of the Department for International Development (DfID), and diplomatic incompetence aimed at winning headlines at home rather than promoting the UK's interests, have dramatically diminished our ability to help the most vulnerable around the world and effectively tackle the scourges of poverty, ignorance, and fear.

4.1.4 The tragic cut in spending commitment to 0.5% of GNI has been further compounded by the disingenuous reallocation of aid funds to support UK-based refugees. In 2021 7.5% of the aid budget was spent in the UK to support refugees, almost £900 million even before the start of the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, UK international development spending in communities affected by war, famine and displacement in nations such as Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan has seen huge cuts.

4.2 Promoting and Defending Liberal Values

4.2.1 Well planned and coordinated assistance increases opportunities for women and girls, LGBTQ+ people, and other historically marginalised communities. We believe that tackling poverty, ignorance, injustice and fear enables individuals and communities to make the best use of their resources and human capital. A focus on children and young people, including universal primary and secondary education, is increasingly vital as lower-income countries experience a demographic surge. Effective ODA programmes that are designed in partnership with recipient communities, including young people themselves, can build economic and cultural prosperity in those societies as well as improving trading opportunities and political capital for the UK.

4.2.2 Where democracy is threatened, or ineffective due to corruption or complacency, we will use ODA spending to support civil society and social movements that strengthen democratic norms and challenge elite

corruption. Throughout our development programming, the needs of women, girls, LGBTQ+ and other marginalised communities will be at the forefront of our strategy and planning.

4.2.3 We will ensure that the use of ODA continues to be consistent with the OECD/DAC rules/guidelines, and with UK legislation. ODA spending's primary purpose of economic development and poverty reduction within partner countries should stay as is. Where appropriate, we will increase the capacity and scope of Development Finance Initiatives to raise money for development from both the UK and within recipient countries. Equally, we will create new trade and investment opportunities for assistance-receiving countries to export to the UK because we believe that countries can help themselves out of poverty. At the same time, we will make it easier for British businesses to trade with and invest in small and medium businesses in countries which receive UK assistance.

4.3 Peacebuilding at the Nexus of Climate, Conflict and Migration

4.3.1 We believe that ODA spending can help reinvigorate internationalism and multilateralism and help develop cooperative frameworks that focus on tackling cross border challenges. The climate crisis is destabilising traditional weather patterns, bringing persistent drought and extreme heat to some areas, and severe flooding to others. The resulting disruption to local economies has exacerbated the scope of existing conflicts and forced people to move in large numbers. Climate change now acts as a threat multiplier for future conflicts, putting enormous strain on already fragile social structures. We will focus on programmes which are situated at the nexus of climate, conflict, and migration and work with local partners to come up with sensible, sustainable solutions that help build peace.

4.3.2 Internally displaced people and refugees will be at the heart of our programmes. We will support them to build lives with dignity and hope in their new locations, and support host communities to develop appropriate infrastructure and social support structures. Where people are unable to return to their homelands, we will help communities develop long-term, sustainable approaches to resettlement.

4.3.3 Liberal Democrats will ensure that the UK plays a significant role in supporting recipient countries in addressing the economic and health consequences of Covid, including through playing a proactive role in debt forgiveness and relief initiatives. We will ensure that the UK plays a global leadership role in increasing funding to help mitigate and build resilience against the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. Where possible we will seek innovative solutions to funding climate adaptation and mitigation programmes with our partners, and with local communities.

4.3.4 Domestically, Liberal Democrats would show leadership on refugees and asylum. This means upholding the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, and scrapping the Illegal Migration Act and Rwanda scheme which has already proved to be unworkable, immoral and incredibly expensive for the taxpayer. Crucially, we will provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees.

4.4 Conclusion

4.4.1 Liberal Democrats would ensure the UK plays its part in tackling shared global challenges, particularly climate change, conflict and global migration. We will restore our ODA budget to 0.7% of national income with its own cabinet-level department, and make the UK a development superpower again; showing leadership where the Conservative's have failed.

5 Defence: The UK's Armed Forces

5.0.1 The Liberal Democrats would support our armed forces to defend our freedoms, interests, and allies by:

- Ensuring the UK armed forces have the right training, equipment, and policies to defend Britain and our overseas territories, while fulfilling our obligations to NATO and other key allies
- Ensuring our Defence posture is strategically aligned with our Diplomatic efforts and Development priorities so we promote international peace, security, and justice.
- Prioritising interoperability with NATO allies and other strategic partners
- Tackling the recruitment and retention crisis in the armed forces by reversing the Conservative's planned cuts to the British Army and delivering a fair deal for our Service personnel, their families and veterans

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 We should be rightly proud of the work our armed forces do to keep us safe and to defend our values and freedoms. In a time of increasing international instability and challenge, we need to ensure that our armed forces have the equipment, training, policies, and support in place to do their jobs effectively whilst ensuring that our service people have decent living and working conditions at home and when deployed.

5.1.2 Supporting our armed forces includes setting realistic and achievable operational goals, and providing transparency when there are lessons to be learned and things to be improved upon. This means being

courageous enough to analyse our failures in recent conflicts and putting in place improved processes to avoid repeating past mistakes.

5.1.3 Successive Conservative governments have let down our armed forces. Our armed forces have been asked to do too much with too little support, and as a result morale and retention are low. A Liberal Democrat vision for the armed forces would put our soldiers, sailors and aviators first, allowing them to build meaningful careers while working alongside allies to defend our freedoms.

5.2 Strategic Coherence and NATO

5.2.1 We are committed to the principle of collective self-defence as laid out in the North Atlantic Treaty and to spending at least 2% of GDP on defence in line with NATO obligations, and coming to the defence of any NATO member whoever they are attacked by, no matter the circumstances.

5.2.2 We believe we should work with NATO partners to define the key UK roles and responsibilities within the alliance, with a focus on air and naval defences in the Euro-Atlantic region, as well as building on our proven capabilities with global reach including, ISTAR, special operations, and humanitarian relief operations.

5.2.3 The UK armed forces need to be structured to meet our strategic goals, with procurement and training aligned to meet our international commitments and responsibilities. This includes ensuring our defence posture is aligned with the work of our diplomatic service and development professionals so we can build resilient international frameworks that promote peace, security and justice as well as being able to respond effectively to crises and shocks.

5.3 Allies and Partnerships

5.3.1 We need to strengthen and deepen our collaboration with allies that share our values and our operational goals. We will expand joint training exercises and exchange programmes with other democracies both within and outside NATO, extending to the realm of Defence Diplomacy with increased joint training and planning with allied nations and the Foreign Office. We will leverage our armed forces to strengthen relations with existing partners and seek to develop relationships with new partners, particularly those in the Global South that we share values and history with.

5.3.2 We will prioritise interoperability and coordination with allies across the spectrum of defence activities to promote new frameworks of cooperation and to increase effectiveness and value for money. NATO, the EU and the Commonwealth are the strategic pillars of our international relations, and our armed forces should be embedded into our wider relationships with partners in these alliances. We should also recognise that we have key allies who share our values outside these blocs, such as Japan and South Korea, and seek to build our partnerships with them.

5.4 Recruitment and Retention

5.4.1 Liberal Democrats would work across government to ensure that weaknesses in key areas of recruitment, retention, and training are fully addressed with the aim of reversing the Conservative's planned cuts to the British Army. The Haythornthwaite Report identified numerous problems in armed forces retention, and we will build on that report to improve the lives of our service personnel, their families, and veterans.

5.4.2 We will work to put in place better structures to guard against discrimination and harassment in the armed forces and support the

implementation in full of the recommendations of the Atherton report of 2021.

5.4.3 We will improve the quality of housing for service personnel by requiring the Ministry of Defence to provide housing above minimum standards and giving service personnel stronger legal rights to repair and maintenance as private tenants. This ensures a basic level of dignity for our military and their families and that all of them have access to a high quality home.

5.4.4 Liberal Democrats would also allow families of armed forces personnel access to military medical and dental facilities and improve mental health support and treatment for the whole armed forces community. We will also reclaim public control over some support functions that have been outsourced to private companies to ensure better outcomes for our personnel.

5.5 Veterans

5.5.1 We will also deliver a fair deal for veterans, the full details of which are set out in the Autumn 2023 motion *A Fair Deal for Our armed forces Community*. We support the armed forces Covenant and would strengthen it so that ministers and government departments come under its scope, as well as supporting local authorities to meet and exceed their duties within the armed forces Covenant and encourage councils to appoint a member as armed forces Champion. We will also bolster the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme to ensure more employers achieve accreditation, and instil an expectation that all public sector organisations should be working towards Gold Award.

5.5.2 Liberal Democrats would also reform our benefits system so that military compensation which is awarded because of illness or injury does not count towards means testing for benefits. We will also support members of the armed forces community who are unpaid carers, by increasing Carer's Allowance and providing unpaid carers with greater rights in the workplace and more broadly.

5.6 Nuclear Weapons

5.6.1 Liberal Democrats have always believed that the first duty of any UK government is keeping the people of this country safe. And we also have a long-held desire to negotiate towards a world where all nuclear weapons are put beyond use.

5.6.2 The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shown that unprovoked imperialist aggression is not something confined to history; that's why we support the UK retaining its continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent and the building of new Dreadnaught submarines. We recognise that taking a step down the nuclear ladder at this time would risk sending the wrong signal to Putin and also to our NATO allies about our willingness to come to their defence.

5.6.3 However, Liberal Democrats want to see a world where nuclear weapons are a thing of the past. That's why we will adopt a no first use policy, and pursue global disarmament, maximising opportunities for disarmament initiatives when they arise.

5.7 Future Proofing Our Forces

5.7.1 We recognise that the changing global climate is a key driver of insecurity and conflict. We must ensure that our armed forces are supported to play a leading role in developing and refining the technologies

of the future that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support international climate adaptation policies. This will bring economic benefits for our nation and provide better long-term resilience and energy security for our armed forces.

5.7.2 We must recruit our personnel so that our armed forces reflect the diversity of modern Britain throughout the rank structure. This is the only sustainable way of deepening the social contract between the armed forces and the wider population and will allow us to attract the most able volunteers and allow us to address any strategic blind spots in our force structures.

5.8 Conclusion

5.8.1 Liberal Democrats would put our armed forces on a sustainable footing, tackling issues with recruitment and retention and treating our veterans with the respect they deserve. We will meet all our NATO commitments, and strengthen our partnership within the alliance, and make sure that we have the equipment and training we need to keep the country safe.

6 Defence: Procurement and Industrial Strategy

6.0.1 The Liberal Democrats would tackle the longstanding problems in defence procurement by:

- Replacing the current system of Defence Reviews with a more flexible system of continuous reviews of security threats and evolution of defence plans.
- Ensuring that defence procurement is part of a comprehensive Industrial Strategy, to secure a reliable long-term pipeline of equipment procurements
- Collaborating with European and NATO partners on development of new defence technologies, equipment, systems and training
- Making defence capital spending allocations more flexible to reduce 'annuality' and focus on meeting required in service dates
- Investing in recruiting, training and retaining staff at the MoD with specialist skills and reducing its dependency and expenditure on external consultants.

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Defence procurement has been subject to investigation and criticism over many years, with frequent failures, delays and overspends.

6.1.2 Liberal Democrats would tackle these long standing issues, principally by adopting a more flexible approach to budgeting and planning, investing in the skills and training of the civil service and improving communications and accountability within the Ministry of Defence (MoD). We will also take a longer term view in defence procurement, adopting a long-term industrial strategy to ensure jobs, skills and investment are secured into the future.

6.2 Replace the Defence Review and Command Paper process with a Adaptable Annual Review

6.2.1 The current system of defence procurement is both simultaneously short-sighted and too cumbersome to respond to changes quickly. Strategic Defence Reviews are conducted around every five years, with each Review triggering the release of a Defence Command Paper which sets out how the MoD will attempt to implement the requirements of the Review.

6.2.2 The Strategic Defence Review is a political as well as strategic document, identifying risks and threats, but also setting out a posture that the Government of the day wishes to present. However, by the time the Review is published, the defence budget is usually fixed. With the budget fixed, the follow-up Defence Command Paper becomes an exercise in spreading the available budget as thinly as is necessary. Historical Reviews have consistently failed to deliver on their promises, and when the Government's aspirations exceed the available budget, our armed forces are left with insufficient resources, obsolete equipment and capability gaps.

6.2.3 The five year wait between Defence Reviews is itself too long and doomed to be overtaken by events. For instance, the 2021 Review and Command Paper announced cuts to numbers of personnel as well as armoured vehicles, combat aircraft, surface warships and helicopters. The 2023 Refresh did not reverse those cuts despite a major war in Europe. Further, transformation plans are never completed because another Defence Review arrives half way through implementation and re-sets priorities and budgets.

6.2.4 Liberal Democrats will transition away from the rigid process of

major but infrequent Defence Reviews and Command Papers to a flexible system of continuous risk and threat assessments.

6.3 Industrial Strategy and Equipment Pipelines

6.3.1 The Conservative Government has a poor record on Industrial Strategy across all sectors of the economy. Even when it has issued such policies, they have come disastrously late, (e.g. the acquisition of Newport Wafer Fab by a Chinese-owned company, which never should have been permitted in the first place) or have simply been aspirational statements without proper implementation plans.

6.3.2 The MoD uses a mix of competitive bidding and sole-source contracts to procure equipment, yet its record shows that competitive procurements rarely result in better outcomes in terms of cost overruns and on-time delivery. In addition, there is a lack of a long term pipeline of future equipment investments. The existing Defence Equipment Plan and Acquisition Pipeline documents are inconsistent and incomplete, and do not look far enough ahead.

6.3.3 To maintain industrial capacity and capability requires a joint public and private approach. The private sector will only invest if they feel confident there will be a reliable market; the UK's history of cuts, delays and programme cancellations, coupled with a lack of clarity as to whether the Government is committed to maintaining domestic capability has undermined confidence. Consequently, there has been a reluctance to make investments in facilities, recruitment, and training.

6.3.4 The lack of a long term acquisition and upgrade pipeline also affects the armed forces. For example, the Ajax programme has been criticised for

overly complex requirements and specifications, with around 1,200 Key User Requirements. The predecessor to the Ajax has been in service for over 50 years, so the Army demands Ajax have capabilities that will last 50 years as well. Instead of this approach - future upgrades should be planned into equipment ('spiral development') so that current equipment procurements just need to be good enough to win on the battlefield tomorrow, but kept effective and relevant into the future by planned enhancements.

6.3.5 Liberal Democrats would adopt a long term industrial strategy with a long-term pipeline of equipment procurement and upgrades, which will ensure the UK retains the skills base, jobs, infrastructure and investment to maintain domestic manufacturing capabilities. Our focus will be on the delivery of world-leading capability for our armed forces, maintaining critical sovereign capabilities where necessary, while securing the financial and industrial benefits of collaborating with and exporting to our allies. We will partner with industry to provide the confidence to boost private sector investment in R&D, training and facilities, securing key skills and employment opportunities, and ensure that the economic benefits build the prosperity of UK regions.

6.3.6 We will also cooperate with our NATO and European partners on defence industrial issues. We will undertake joint research and development of new defence technologies and equipment, together with extensive cooperation over defence-industrial issues between the UK and our European and NATO partners. This would include joining common equipment procurement projects and supporting innovative defence technologies, with a strong emphasis on interoperability.

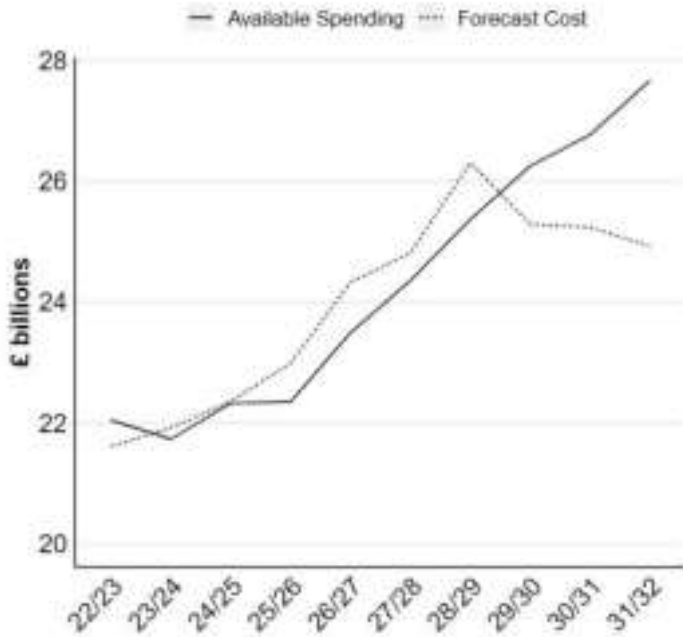
6.3.7 We've seen the Royal Navy's type 31 Frigate, built by Babcock International and based on a Danish design, being purchased by the Polish

and Indonesian navies and being considerably more affordable than comparable ships - clearly showing the need and the benefits of shared designs and collaboration in many areas.

6.4 Defence budgets and 'annuality'

6.4.1 The MoD receives multi-year spending settlements from the Treasury and then needs to plan its spending on a year-by-year basis while managing multiple complex procurement programmes, several of which at any given time may be running behind schedule.

6.4.2 Because of the well known tendency for defence procurements to be late, planning spending in each given year is difficult. There is also great reluctance on the part of the Treasury to allow under-spends in the annual budget to be carried forward. The MoD therefore fears under-spends on the basis that funding not spent in any year will be lost permanently, and compensates for this by 'over-programming' which involves planning to spend more money than is actually available in early years to ensure that there is always a home available for all of its annual budget. This has been illustrated by the National Audit Office in a recent report:



6.4.3 This results in the bizarre situation where the MoD is relying on delays to help its numbers add up each year. Some procurements will run late due to programme delays, but the MoD also sometimes needs to make a choice to push back purchases to meet its annual spending limits, and in doing so inevitably increases the eventual total cost of the procurement due to inflationary price rises and the need to maintain old equipment in service for longer. This is inefficient, increases total costs over time, and distracts from the focus on improving delivery performance, whilst also affecting industry’s ability to plan future resource and capacity requirements.

6.4.4 The Liberal Democrats will ensure that the defence budget is spent efficiently by introducing greater flexibility to the budgeting process, matched by greater discipline in project planning. Within limits, restrictions

on carrying forward budget under-spends will be relaxed, and the MoD will be prevented from “over-programming” its planned annual spend, allowing greater focus on timely delivery instead of in-year budget juggling. This will assist industrial capacity planning in the short-term whilst reducing total costs in the longer term.

6.5 Investing in Armed Forces and Civil Service Personnel

6.5.1 A lack of personnel resources and skills within Defence is an issue hampering progress and preventing the timely delivery of programmes. The UK Infrastructure and Projects Authority 2022/23 report revealed that a shortage of resources, skills and/or experience was a risk factor affecting 16 of the largest defence projects.

6.5.2 In addition, the UK Government has developed an excessive dependence on the use of external consultants across all departments, including the MoD. This has accelerated in recent years under the Conservatives and is indicative of both a lack of investment in, and distrust of, the civil service. The UK public sector spent £2.8bn on consultants in 2022, three times as much as the French with a similar-sized economy and public sector. Over £200m of this was by the MoD, and earlier in 2023 the Government further relaxed limits on spending with consultants.

6.5.3 Within the civil service and armed forces, career progression favours generalists rather than specialists. As a result, pay for experienced professionals such as commercial, project or supply chain managers in the private sector can be 30%+ higher than in the public sector, and procurement or acquisition is not considered a long-term professional career path for serving Officers.

6.5.4 The dependence on external consultants coupled with uncompetitive pay for specialists and the need to frequently rotate through different roles to ensure career progression leads to a lack of retained skills and the institutional knowledge and experience necessary for effective management of complex programmes.

6.5.5 The Liberal Democrats would invest in the skills and training of personnel and ensure that career development opportunities and rewards are enhanced to promote the recruitment and retention of staff with key specialist skills. In parallel, the use of, and dependence on external consultants will be reduced to save money and ensure that institutional knowledge and experience is retained.

6.6 Conclusion

6.6.1 Liberal Democrats would tackle the longstanding challenges of defence procurement, that have persisted under governments of all types. We will change the defence review process, develop a long-term industrial strategy, allow greater flexibility in how the MoD allocates its budget and invest in the skills and training of the civil service.

7 European Security

7.0.1 Liberal Democrats would work with our NATO and European allies to promote our security by:

- Standing with Ukraine and leading the way in containing the threat posed by Russia.
- Working hand-in-glove with NATO countries to support Ukraine during the war, and one day, to rebuild the country
- Signing a comprehensive security treaty with the European Union
- Prioritising interoperability with NATO allies and other strategic partners, so that we can support each other during peace and war

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The Liberal Democrats have always been committed to NATO and the principles of collective defence of Europe. The war in Ukraine highlights the military threats that the continent still faces and why we must work decisively with our European neighbours to present a united, unshakeable front. It is time for Britain to step up and take a leading role in European defence and security and lead the way in standing with Ukraine and containing the threat posed by Russia.

7.1.2 Alongside our commitment to NATO outlined in chapter 5, we need to strengthen collaboration with our democratic European neighbours.

7.1.3 Our defence mindset needs to shift away from doing everything on our own to one of mutual support in concert with NATO allies. Going forward, it is the most effective and efficient way to fully defend ourselves, with full spectrum capabilities. Against larger countries with greater military might, greater interoperability and a common defence approach is the UK's greatest deterrent. If nothing else, the invasion of Ukraine has underscored

just how important it is for the UK to deepen our already close military relationships with our NATO allies.

7.2 Supporting Ukraine and Containing Russia

7.2.1 Liberal Democrats believe in standing shoulder to shoulder with threatened democracies - that's why we will continue to support Ukraine for as long as Russia's unprovoked war of aggression continues. We will continue to supply arms, ammunition and training, as well as working with close allies to ensure that they are doing the same.

7.2.2 We are also committed to the rebuilding of Ukraine after the war. We have seen the disastrous consequences of leaving war torn countries to fend for themselves. We will make use of our international development budget to rebuild Ukraine and build a prosperous and democratic country.

7.2.3 At home, we will take steps to tackle the influence of Russian money in the UK, as well as developing closer cooperation with democratic partners to ensure that individuals with links to the Putin regime aren't able to escape justice.

7.2.4 We will continue to provide strong support to the Northern Group, a like-minded group of countries committed to securing the Euro-Atlantic region and providing military assistance to Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression.

7.3 A Comprehensive Security Treaty with Europe

7.3.1 Although NATO is an essential pillar to UK and global security, it is ultimately a conventional military alliance only, focused purely on inter-state war and conflict. It does not cover other essential components of security in the modern age such as counter terrorism, cross-border

policing, intelligence, humanitarian assistance, and hybrid warfare among other issues.

7.3.2 For Britain to be secure, we need a comprehensive security and defence agreement with the European Union. Conservative governments have rejected this co-operative and pragmatic approach to Europe, jeopardising the security and safety of our citizens due to their ideological posturing.

7.3.3 The Liberal Democrats would take this treaty forward, and make it a priority in our relationship with Europe. The treaty would cover security arrangements in Europe that NATO doesn't cover, such as terrorism, policing, hybrid warfare, intelligence sharing, cybersecurity, social resilience and greater defence industrial co-operation. In developing the treaty, we will rebuild relationships with the European External Action Service and undertake to rebuild bilateral relations with our European neighbours.

7.4 Collaboration and Cooperation

7.4.1 Alongside a new treaty, Liberal Democrats would also put Britain back at the forefront of European security by collaborating on a range of other areas. We will rejoin one or more of Europe's existing Common Security and Defence Policy missions. For instance, Britain could take part in the UN-mandated peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR)

7.4.2 We will also engage with Europe's Permanent Structured Cooperation projects, such as the Military Mobility Scheme which the US and Canada also participate in, to improve the transfer of military equipment across Europe. Britain was invited to join in 2022, but with the Conservatives domestic turmoil has yet to take part.

7.4.3 We would also fully participate in the new European Political Community, ensuring that Britain plays its part in promoting the priorities outlined in this paper; namely peace, democracy, liberal values and a sustainable future at a pan-European level.

7.4.4 Taken together, this would significantly increase not just British influence abroad, but also promote peace and stability in Europe and strengthen the UK's armed forces as our troops gain greater experience of operating abroad alongside allies and in logistical and operational planning. Liberal Democrats would reverse the Conservatives withdrawal from the world - and promote peace and security in Europe.

7.5 Conclusion

7.5.1 The security, stability and peace of Europe can never be taken for granted. Liberal Democrats would work together with our democratic European partners to counter shared challenges and threats, defend and rebuild Ukraine and develop our capabilities together; standing together for greater security.

8 Policing, Terrorism and the Security Services

8.0.1 Liberal Democrats would tackle organised crime, terrorism and keep our security services accountable by:

- Tackling dirty money by properly resourcing the National Crime Agency and Serious Fraud Office, and strengthen economic crime legislation to remove loopholes
- Working with Europol and Eurojust to develop and implement a joint strategy for dealing with cross-border threats, with the closest possible cooperation on shared priorities.
- Tackling terrorism by replacing the Prevent strategy with a community-led Engage strategy
- Developing a national cybersecurity and digital infrastructure strategy, through investing in skills and training and developing a UK Chips Act to secure semiconductor supply chains.
- Ensure that the Intelligence and Security Committee has teeth and is independent from government interference
- Tackle new online threats with a range of policies set out in policy paper 145 *Democracy and Public Debate*, and joining the Agency for Cybersecurity

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Alongside the three foreign policy tools of Diplomacy, Development and Defence, the UK is also kept safe by a wide range of police, security and intelligence agencies. These are essential to modern security, helping combat misinformation, cyberwarfare, organised and transnational crime, terrorism and other non-military threats.

8.1.2 With the ever-increasing role of hybrid warfare, our security services need to be increasingly aware of 'whole society' attacks by hostile states, especially Russia which has engaged in such activities for decades. China is also a threat with regards to its infiltration.

8.1.3 We need to safeguard our democratic and liberal values of freedom, democracy and an open society, whilst ensuring the safety and security of the UK. Liberals believe in transparency, openness, human rights and internationalism, but maintaining those values in policy can be problematic when our enemies often have no such concerns.

8.2 Ending Dirty Money

8.2.1 Under Labour and Conservative governments, the UK has become a laundromat for dirty money, allowing huge amounts of capital and property to be acquired by individuals with links to despotic regimes, notably Russia. Successive governments have also allowed vital infrastructure to be acquired by companies with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party. This has made huge amounts of money for some in Britain; but at a huge security and moral cost - leaving our economy and our politics hugely vulnerable to foreign interference and weakening the UK's freedom to act in the national interest.

8.2.2 For too long, members of Britain's elite have profited from the proceeds of autocrats' money; under the Liberal Democrats this stops. We will strengthen economic crime legislation to remove loopholes exploited by oligarchs such as those in the Register of Beneficial Ownership and significantly increase funding to economic crime-fighting organisations like the National Crime Agency and the Serious Fraud Office.

8.2.3 We will also introduce much tougher vetting for major investments and purchases in the UK; no longer will London's property market be used to hide the assets of those who profit from autocracy.

8.3 Pan-European Crime, Policing and Counter Terrorism

8.3.1 Major and organised crime, such as the international drug trade, human trafficking, major financial crimes like money laundering, smuggling of weapons and terrorism are a significant threat to the UK and the world's security. Liberal Democrats would make the UK safer by fully and positively engaging with our democratic partners on these issues - regaining the influence and access we once had.

8.3.2 As a result of the Conservative's botched deal with Europe, the UK lost access to the European Arrest Warrant. Since its introduction, it enabled 18,000 suspects to be arrested in the UK, and 2,000 suspects to be extradited from elsewhere in Europe to face justice in the UK. We have also lost access to EU-wide data-sharing systems, particularly the Schengen Information System (SIS-II). This system allowed police officers to receive alerts on foreign criminals in the UK and to issue alerts about criminals who may have fled abroad. In 2019 alone, the UK accessed the Schengen Information System more than 570 million times.

8.3.3 It is essential for the UK and Europe's security that we collaborate fully on these issues. The Conservative Party's threats to leave the European Convention of Human Rights and scrap GDPR rules will drive a further wedge between the UK and Europe on police and crime collaboration. Shared rules are essential for collaboration and sharing of information - without it we will see deportations taking longer, information being withheld and British citizens put at needless risk.

8.3.4 We will also work with Europol and Eurojust – the pan-European agencies for law enforcement and criminal justice – to develop and implement a joint strategy for dealing with cross-border threats, with the closest possible cooperation on shared priorities. We would also renegotiate access to European databases and deepen collaboration on the exchanging of information and extradition of criminals.

8.3.5 As well as rebuilding our policing connections with Europe to tackle cross-border crime, Liberal Democrats would also work to ensure that the police have the powers and training to tackle the other major security threats we face. Liberal Democrats have long been committed to scrapping Prevent and replacing it with a community-led and holistic Engage programme.

8.4 Cybersecurity and Digital Infrastructure

8.4.1 Cybersecurity has been a growing concern for decades now. Although GCHQ has a new National Cyber Security Centre in London, the UK has failed to prepare itself adequately, either culturally or through its technological infrastructure. From government ministers to society in general, people, businesses, and institutions frequently do not take cybersecurity seriously enough.

8.4.2 Local government, in particular, is not adequately funded for general digital protection. As a sector, it remains vulnerable. At the moment, very few full-time staff in local government work on emergency planning. Ignoring this threat leaves local community services – like GP surgeries, hospitals, police stations, schools, libraries, and magistrate courts – all vulnerable to digital attacks.

8.4.3 Liberal Democrats would enact a comprehensive strategy to ensure that the UK's digital infrastructure and vital digital technologies are secure.

The US and EU are already moving ahead in this direction, each developing their own Chips Act. Liberal Democrats would enact an equivalent strategy for the UK's economic context, as well as strengthening cooperation with Europe and our other close democratic allies and partners, showing leadership where the Conservatives have dithered.

8.4.4 Further details on how the Liberal Democrats will make the UK a more digitally secure country will be set out in the upcoming FPC paper on Science and Technology.

8.5 Accountability in the Intelligence and Security Services

8.5.1 The UK's three main intelligence and security agencies GCHQ, MI5 and MI6, supported by Defence Intelligence and the Joint Intelligence Organisation, are essential to our national and international security. Inevitably, there is a lot of secrecy around what these agencies do in the UK and abroad. As a result, there is very little transparency or accountability or public knowledge about their activities.

8.5.2 Liberal Democrats believe that all institutions should be as transparent and accountable as possible, but we know that much of what these agencies do must remain secret. We will strengthen the powers of the Intelligence and Security Committee, by removing control from the Prime Minister over its membership and removing the ability of the Prime Minister to prevent the publication of reports. Parliament will appoint members, and the committee will decide what it publishes. We will also give the committee greater powers and resources to undertake investigations, including into potential Russian interference in the UK's democracy.

8.6 Protecting our Democracy from New Threats

8.6.1 Liberals have been greatly concerned in recent years about an erosion of democracy both in the UK and worldwide. Our British democracy is under threat from internal and external actors. The intelligence system has sometimes failed to deal with subversion of our political systems via disinformation and dirty money. Liberal Democrats would make protecting our democracy a national security priority.

8.6.2 We believe that countering these actors should be given a high priority; it is essential that our elections are free and fair and not deliberately undermined via social media and disinformation campaigns. The situation can only get worse with the proliferation of AI.

8.6.3 As well as enacting wider reforms to our education, online regulation and public awareness, as set out in policy paper 145 *Democracy and Public Debate*, we will widen the remit and resources of the security services, so that they are able to help tackle the new forms of warfare.

8.6.4 We will also seek closer global cooperation. At an international level, we want to see a Global Treaty on Misinformation, modelled on similar agreements made on arms control, with funding and a forum for exchanging best practices. More immediately, we will take advantage of unused provisions within the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with Europe to facilitate greater cooperation on cyber defence and security, including offering resumed exchanges of personnel and cooperating with the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity on shared digital and online threats.

8.7 Conclusion

8.7.1 Liberal Democrats exist to safeguard a fair, free and open society which means a society where people don't live in fear of crime, terrorism or threats from hostile states, and where democracy is protected and rights upheld. This security does not need to come at the expense of liberty and accountability, and Liberal Democrats would enact policies that keep us safe from these threats without excessive government control.

9 Soft Power

9.0.1 Liberal Democrats would promote the UK's security and global standing with our cultural and soft power by:

- Protect and defend the BBC, Channel 4, S4C and BBC Alba as independent, publicly-owned, public service broadcasters
- Properly fund the impartial BBC World Service from the Foreign Office budget and restore its global, multilingual reach
- Promote and defend Britain's universities and think tanks, so that our openness to inquiry and educational values can be promoted around the world

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Alongside conventional forces, domestic security services, diplomacy and development, security in the 21st Century requires us to utilise our soft power to promote and defend our values. We believe we should harness our strengths in the cultural, media, sport, and educational spheres to promote the UK and our values to the rest of the world.

9.1.2 The UK has long held a proud reputation as a world leader - from international development to culture, to governmental and democratic stability. But the Conservative Government has undermined this at every turn - attacking our institutions, weakening our public service broadcasters, and eroding fundamental ethical standards in public life. Liberal Democrats would stand up for our institutions and make the UK safer and stronger in the process.

9.2 Soft Power

9.2.1 Soft power is the UK's secret weapon. It will be the key to the UK succeeding in the 21st Century. In 2012, 2015, and 2018, several global surveys found the UK to be the most influential country in the world. But the Conservatives' incompetent domestic and foreign policies have wrecked our reputation around the world, undermining the UK's credibility and standing. More reliable partners like Germany and Japan have surpassed the UK in influence since the 2019 election.

9.2.2 The good news is that even though the Conservatives botched deal with Europe has caused undeniable damage to our international standing, the UK's cultural output and diplomatic reach can still be felt across the globe. From the sporting juggernaut of the Premier League to the neverending creativity of music festivals such as Glastonbury and the Proms and to the multicultural fusion of British fashion – the UK remains a cultural force to be reckoned with. Liberal Democrats would defend and enhance what makes Britain great by building on our soft power and promoting our great cultural institutions globally.

9.3 Defending the BBC

9.3.1 The UK's media and the BBC is one of the most trusted sources of news around the world. The BBC World Service is listened to by over 200 million people each week, and the BBC's productions are watched by billions of people each year. Its credibility as a reliable source of news has made it an instrument of soft power.

9.3.2 Under the Conservatives, public service broadcasting has come under increasing attack; they have undermined financial certainty with poorly conceived threats of privatisation and licence fee reform and they have baselessly challenged their credibility and impartiality.

9.3.3 Liberal Democrats would defend and promote impartial public service broadcasting. We know that disinformation, the spreading of hateful and violent ideologies is becoming widespread online; the public need a reliable source of trusted information which they can rely on.

9.3.4 But it is not just informing the UK public that makes these institutions so valuable; they also can promote Britain's standing and security globally as well. By showing Britain in a positive light, our TV shows, films, musicians and other forms of media and entertainment, we demonstrate our values globally and increase our influence.

9.4 The BBC World Service

9.4.1 The BBC World Service remains one of the most powerful weapons against authoritarianism and disinformation. For decades, the World Service provided hundreds of millions of people, many living under dictatorships that restricted news access, with reliable information. In recent years, autocracies like Russia and China have created an ecosystem of disinformation globally - the World Service is a key element in tackling this.

9.4.2 The Conservatives have made contradictory financial decisions on the World Service. Until 2014, it was funded directly by the government, and since then through a mixture of the licence fee, advertising, BBC profits and FCDO grants. During their time in office, they have oscillated between increasing the budget and decreasing it offering little stability. This has made it harder to strategically plan ahead, and undermined the effectiveness of the Service.

9.4.3 We will ensure that the World Service is funded completely from the FCDO as it was previously, with a budget set independently of ministerial interference, so that it can act strategically to promote the UK's

soft power. In doing so, we can counter the authoritarian media that is being pushed globally. The budget would be sufficient to ensure global reach, and counter misinformation globally.

9.5 British Universities and Think Tanks

9.5.1 Our world-class universities welcome millions of students from around the world - enhancing the UK's reputation, boosting our economy and promoting our liberal and democratic values around the world. The Conservatives have needlessly undermined the sector as part of their culture wars and their botched deal with Europe.

9.5.2 Education is a key tool in promoting global security and Britain's standing. When students from abroad come to study in the UK, they will take home with them aspects of our culture, our liberal values and a positive opinion about our country. In future years many of those students will go on to be journalists, politicians, civil society and business leaders in their own countries.

9.5.3 This will help promote both Britain's society and economy - but also our security. Countries with leaders who have a favourable opinion towards Britain and her values are more likely to work constructively with us on key global issues, and more likely to promote the positive values we have in Britain at home.

9.5.4 In the more immediate term, we will look to strengthen collaboration and investment between British universities and institutions in the Global South. This would enable Britain to build social and political capital in regions of the world where the UK has a light footprint.

9.5.5 British also has an array of respected think tanks like Chatham House, RUSI, IISS, Global Witness, Crisis Group, Saferworld and

International Alert. These institutions help project British values and British influence abroad. When their voices are stronger, British diplomacy and British influence benefits. Liberal Democrats would review the funding system in place for think tanks, to ensure that they are put on a sustainable footing.

9.6 Conclusion

9.6.1 Britain has tremendous strengths; its cultural output, its public service broadcasters and its universities. The Conservatives have undermined them all, with their ill thought through and chaotic approach to government. Liberal Democrats would defend our prized institutions, and strengthen them so that Britain is able to regain its lost influence on the world stage.

10 Conclusion

10.0.1 The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.

10.0.2 In this paper, we have laid out an international security strategy that will promote the Liberal Democrat vision of a democratic, safe and prosperous world.

10.0.3 We will ensure that our armed forces are trained and equipped to fight, tackling the problems in recruitment and retention that have grown under the Conservatives.

10.0.4 We will tackle the longstanding problems in defence procurement, by adopting a flexible approach to risk assessments and implementing a national industrial strategy, guaranteeing jobs and investment for decades to come.

10.0.5 We will work with our democratic partners in Europe and NATO, working collaboratively to tackle shared threats and challenges.

10.0.6 We will reclaim our diplomatic credibility that has been undermined by the Conservatives by investing in our diplomatic service and adopting a fair and humane approach to global issues.

10.0.7 We will restore Britain's development superpower status by restoring an independent Department for International Development, and returning the ODA budget to 0.7% of national income.

10.0.8 We will tackle dirty money, organised crime, terrorism and strengthen our digital security by properly resourcing the National Crime Agency and Serious Fraud Office, and work collaboratively with our European and democratic partners.

10.0.9 We will defend Britain's soft power, cynically undermined by the Conservatives, by protecting public service broadcasters, funding the BBC World Service and promoting our universities and think tanks.

10.0.10 Liberal Democrats understand Britain's unique strengths and place in the world - we will take advantage of these strengths to promote a safer, more democratic and more prosperous world.

International Security

Policy Paper 157

This paper has been approved for debate by the Federal Conference by the Federal Policy Committee under the terms of Article 7.4 of the Federal Constitution.

Within the policy-making procedure of the Liberal Democrats, the Federal Party determines the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom.

The Party in England, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Welsh Liberal Democrats and the Northern Ireland Local Party determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any or all of them may confer this power upon the Federal Party in any specified area or areas.

The Party in England has chosen to pass up policy-making to the Federal level. If approved by Conference, this paper will therefore form the policy of the Federal Party on federal issues and the Party in England on English issues. In appropriate policy areas, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland party policy would take precedence.

International Security Working Group

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Note: Membership of the working group should not be taken to indicate that every member necessarily agrees with every statement or every proposal in this paper.

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