



Project Paper

Rethinking the UK's International Ambitions and Choices

UK Foreign Policy: Statements by the Three Main Political Parties

April 2010

This compilation of the three largest UK political parties' international policy has been produced as part of the Chatham House project on Rethinking the UK's International Ambitions and Choices. The views selected are not intended to be comprehensive but to highlight key elements from the parties' manifestos and key individuals' recent public statements.

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

LABOUR PARTY

'The challenge for Britain:

To harness our strengths and values, as we develop Britain's world role in a global era, using our alliances and networks in order to promote security, economic prosperity, development and to safeguard the environment.'

Labour Election Manifesto 2010¹

Foreign policy philosophy

'Hard-headed internationalism' (Gordon Brown, speech to the Lord Mayor's Banquet, 2007):

'My approach is hard-headed internationalism: - internationalist because global challenges need global solutions and nations must cooperate across borders - often with hard-headed intervention - to give expression to our shared interests and shared values; - hard-headed because we will not shirk from the difficult long term decisions and because only through reform of our international rules and institutions will we achieve concrete, on-the-ground results.

Building a global society means agreeing that the great interests we share in common are more powerful than the issues that sometimes divide us. It means articulating and acting upon the enduring values that define our common humanity and transcending ideologies of hatred that seek to drive us apart. And critically [...] we must bring to life these shared interests and shared values by practical proposals to create the architecture of a new global society.'²

Building a 'global society' (Gordon Brown, Kennedy Memorial speech, 2008):

'For the first time in human history we have the opportunity to come together around a global covenant, to reframe the international architecture and build the truly global society. So today my call is not

¹ Labour Party, [The Labour Party Manifesto 2010: A future fair for all](#), 12 April 2010, p. 66 (10:2)

² Gordon Brown, ['Prime Minister's Speech to the Lord Mayor's Banquet'](#), London, 12 November 2007

just to the public purpose of this generation but to the idealism of this and the next generation.’³

Europe

‘We are proud that Britain is once again a leading player in Europe. Our belief is that Britain is stronger in the world when the European Union is strong, and that Britain succeeds when it leads in Europe and sets the agenda for change. Sullen resistance and disengagement achieve nothing.’⁴

Manifesto proposals:

- advocate reform of the EU budget;
- promise a referendum on any future Euro membership;
- in favour of further enlargement (including Croatia, future accession negotiations for the Western Balkans and membership for Turkey);
- believe that the EU’s foreign policy role should be focused on ‘conflict resolution’ and the ‘promotion of security’;
- support the creation of a European Peace Corps.⁵

Global security and reform of the international system

‘Human rights and democracy are a central feature of our foreign policy for a simple reason – we believe human rights are universal, and it is the job of strong and mature democracies to support the development of free societies everywhere – while upholding our own legal and moral obligations.’⁶

On the nature of 21st-century power:

‘Power is shifting from West to East. It is shifting from the national to the international level. But there is a third shift – in the balance of power between government and people.’⁷

³ Gordon Brown, ‘[Kennedy Memorial Lecture](#)’, John F Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, 18 April 2008

⁴ Labour Party, *The Labour Party Manifesto 2010: A future fair for all*, 12 April 2010, p. 68 (10:4)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68 (10:4)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69 (10:5)

⁷ David Miliband ‘[Change the World Keynote Speech](#)’, speech at the Fabian Society Conference – ‘Change the World’, London, 19 January 2008

'In today's world, power is shifting, flowing downwards and outwards towards new non-state actors, networked by modern communications. Governments and global institutions must respond to this change – and reform to meet new challenges. They need to be more effective but also more inclusive.'⁸

Manifesto proposals:

- continue leadership to establish a Global Arms Trade Treaty;
- act to shape the international consensus on the 'responsibility to protect';
- support a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, as well as 'engagement and pressure on the Iranian regime' to safeguard against the nuclear threat;
- 'an extension of the G8';
- 'clearer mandate[s]' for the World Bank and IMF;
- in favour of wider UN Security Council membership;
- on international security, support for NATO reform and for capacity-building at the regional level (e.g. African Union);
- an 'enduring role' for the Commonwealth.⁹

Development

Manifesto proposals:

- committed to the target of 0.7% GNI by 2013 for aid spending;
- propose to 'allocate at least five per cent of all funding developing country budgets for the purpose of strengthening the role of Parliaments and civil society';
- 'building on legislation to clamp down on vulture funds'.¹⁰

⁸ Labour Party, *The Labour Party Manifesto 2010: A future fair for all*, 12 April 2010, p. 70 (10:6)

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71 (10:5-10:7)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70 (10:6)

Key speeches

Gordon Brown, [‘Prime Minister’s Speech to the Lord Mayor’s Banquet’](#), London, 16 November 2009

Gordon Brown, [‘Afghanistan – National Security and Regional Stability’](#), speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, 4 September 2009

Gordon Brown, [‘Kennedy Memorial Lecture’](#), John F Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, 18 April 2008

Gordon Brown, [‘Prime Minister’s Speech to the Lord Mayor’s Banquet’](#), London, 12 November 2007

Gordon Brown, [‘Meeting the Terrorist Challenge’](#), speech at Chatham House, London, 10 October 2006

David Miliband, [‘The War in Afghanistan: How to End it’](#), Compton Lecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 10 March 2010

David Miliband, [‘Strong Britain in a Strong Europe’](#), speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 26 October 2009

David Miliband, [‘Change the World Keynote Speech’](#), at the Fabian Society Conference – ‘Change the World’, London, 19 January 2008

David Miliband, [‘Europe 2030: Model Power Not Superpower’](#), speech at the College of Europe, Bruges, 15 November 2007

David Miliband, [‘The New Diplomacy: Challenges for British Foreign Policy’](#), speech at Chatham House, London, 19 July 2007

CONSERVATIVE PARTY

'A stronger Britain in a safer world:

A Conservative government will defend our national security and support our brave Armed Forces in everything they do. We will promote our national interest with an active foreign policy. We will work constructively with the EU, but we will not hand over any more areas of power and we will never join the Euro. We will honour our aid commitments and make sure this money works for the poorest nations.'

Conservative Election Manifesto 2010¹¹

Foreign policy philosophy

Liberal Conservatism:

'A Conservative government's approach to foreign affairs will be based on liberal Conservative principles. Liberal, because Britain must be open and engaged with the world, supporting human rights and championing the cause of democracy and the rule of law at every opportunity. But Conservative, because our policy must be hard-headed and practical, dealing with the world as it is and not as we wish it were.'¹²

Five key tenets of a future Conservative foreign policy outlined repeatedly by William Hague in his set-piece foreign policy speeches:

'a major reform of decision-making in foreign policy, a renewed commitment to the transatlantic alliance, the cementing of relationships with old allies and the elevation of links with new partners, the reform and development of international institutions, including the European Union, and the upholding of our values.'¹³

¹¹ Conservative Party, [The Conservative Manifesto 2010: Invitation to Join the Government of Britain](#), 13 April 2010, p. 103

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 109

¹³ Quotation from William Hague, '[The Foreign Policy Framework of a New Conservative Government](#)', speech at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London, 10 March 2010. For an earlier exposition of the five themes see: William Hague, '[The Future of British Foreign Policy with a Conservative Government](#)', speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 21 July 2009 and William Hague, '[Thinking Ahead: The Foreign Policy Of The Next Conservative Government](#)', speech at Chatham House, London, 31 January 2007

Europe

'We will be positive members of the European Union but we are clear that there should be no further extension of the EU's power over the UK without the British people's consent. We will ensure that by law no future government can hand over areas of power to the EU or join the Euro without a referendum of the British people. We will work to bring back key powers over legal rights, criminal justice and social and employment legislation to the UK.'¹⁴

Manifesto proposals:

- work with other European countries to 'boost global economic growth, fight global poverty, and combat global climate change';
- the only one of the three main parties opposed outright to membership of the Euro;
- propose to 'restore democratic control' of the EU by creating a 'referendum lock' on any further transfer of power by amending the 1972 European Communities Act, drawing up a UK Sovereignty Bill, and introducing safeguards against 'ratchet clauses' in the Lisbon Treaty;
- negotiate return of powers on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, criminal justice, and social and employment legislation;¹⁵
- support continuing EU enlargement, including Turkish accession.¹⁶

Global security and reform of the international system

On the nature of 21st-century power and threats:

'We no longer inhabit a world in which foreign and defence issues can be separated from domestically-generated threats. Instead, we live in a world in which dangers, events and actions abroad are inter-dependent with threats to our security at home. We must meet the threats we face with a concerted response from the state. That response cannot just come from how we conduct our foreign affairs, or organise our defence and internal security – it must cut across

¹⁴ Conservative Party, *The Conservative Manifesto 2010: Invitation to Join the Government of Britain*, 13 April 2010, p. 113

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110

energy, education, community cohesion, health, technology, international development and the environment too.¹⁷

Manifesto proposals:

- establish a 'new special relationship with India';
- in favour of 'permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council for Japan, India, Germany, Brazil and African representation';
- propose to 'strengthen the Commonwealth as a focus for promoting democratic values and development';
- 'committed to NATO as the ultimate guarantor of Europe's security';
- in favour of a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.¹⁸

Development

Manifesto proposals:

- commitment to the target of 0.7% GNI by 2013 for aid spending;
- continue to have an independent DFID;
- introduce independent assessment of DFID programmes and in some cases implement 'payment by results';
- improve transparency of aid spending;
- establish a 'MyAid Fund' to give UK citizens a voice on aid spending;
- stop UK aid to China and Russia;
- improve integration of post-conflict reconstruction with the military and establish a 'new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force'.¹⁹

Key speeches

David Cameron, '[How Britain Can Best Address the Threats of the 21st Century](#)', speech at Chatham House, London, 15 January 2010

¹⁷ Conservative Party, *The Conservative Manifesto 2010: Invitation to Join the Government of Britain*, 13 April 2010., p. 103

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 110

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 117-118

David Cameron, '[A Europe Policy that People can Believe in](#)', speech after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, London, 4 November 2009

David Cameron, '[Democracy should be the Work of Patient Craftsmanship](#)', speech in Islamabad, Pakistan, 3 September 2008

David Cameron, '[A New Approach to Foreign Affairs – Liberal Conservatism](#)', Annual JPMorgan Lecture at the British American Project, London, 11 September 2006

William Hague, '[The Foreign Policy Framework of a New Conservative Government](#)', speech at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London, 10 March 2010

William Hague, '[The Future of British Foreign Policy with a Conservative Government](#)', speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 21 July 2009

William Hague, '[Thinking Ahead: The Foreign Policy of the Next Conservative Government](#)', speech at Chatham House, London, 31 January 2007

William Hague, '[The Special Relationship](#)', speech at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Washington DC, 16 February 2006

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PARTY

'Your world:

Britain must work together with our partners abroad if we are to have the best hope of meeting the challenges the world faces. We believe in freedom, justice, prosperity and human rights for all and will do all we can to work towards a world where these hopes become reality. Above all, climate change is the greatest challenge facing this generation.'

Liberal Democrat Election Manifesto 2010²⁰

Foreign policy philosophy

A principles-based 'ethical approach'²¹ to foreign policy fit for the 21st-century, based on the values of fairness and the rule of law.²²

Europe

'Liberal Democrats believe that European co-operation is the best way for Britain to be strong, safe and influential in the future. We will ensure that Britain maximises its influence through a strong and positive commitment.'²³

The Liberal Democrats believe that working through the EU is the best means of 'managing the impacts of globalisation',²⁴ and they are wary of the implications of a 'subservient relationship with the United States'.²⁵

Speaking at Chatham House (March 2010) Nick Clegg warned of the 'default Atlanticism which has prevailed so strongly since Suez', suggesting that what Britain requires is 'self-confidence, a rebalanced partnership with the US, a repatriated foreign policy which is in British interests alone, articulated through a strong, united and forceful EU.'²⁶

²⁰ Liberal Democrats, [Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010: Change that works for you. Building a fairer Britain](#), 14 April 2010, p. 56

²¹ Edward Davey, ['Foreign Affairs speech to the Liberal Democrat Conference'](#), Liberal Democrat Conference, Bournemouth, 20 September 2009

²² Liberal Democrats, [Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010: Change that works for you. Building a fairer Britain](#), 14 April 2010, p. 67

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 66

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63

²⁶ Nick Clegg, ['What Next for Britain?'](#), speech at Chatham House, 10 March 2010

Manifesto proposals:

- committed to 'an in/out referendum the next time a British government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU';
- advocate a referendum on membership of the Euro, which is regarded as in Britain's 'long-term interest';
- support reform of the EU budget;
- in favour of continued UK participation in policing and justice cooperation (European Arrest Warrant, Europol, Eurojust and the European Criminal Records Information System).²⁷

Global security and reform of the international system

Manifesto proposals:

- support efforts to create an International Arms Trade Treaty;
- will establish a 'code of conduct' for arms brokers;
- propose a 'full judicial inquiry into allegations of British complicity in torture and state kidnapping';
- the only party to rule out military action in Iran, instead placing an emphasis on diplomatic engagement, including targeted sanctions if necessary;
- committed to the two-state solution for Israel-Palestine, and acting through the EU to 'put pressure on Israel and Egypt to end the blockade of Gaza'.²⁸

Development

Manifesto proposals:

- committed to the target of 0.7% GNI by 2013 for aid spending;

²⁷ Liberal Democrats, *Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010: Change that works for you. Building a fairer Britain*, 14 April 2010, pp. 66-67

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68

- on development financing, committed to a 'financial transaction tax and a cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions from aviation and shipping';
- in favour of World Bank and IMF reform;
- support a 'global fund for social protection';
- act against 'vulture funds'.²⁹

Key speeches

Nick Clegg, ['What Next for Britain?'](#) speech at Chatham House, London, 10 March 2010

Edward Davey, [Foreign Affairs speech to the Liberal Democrat Conference](#), Bournemouth, 20 September 2009

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 62-63

FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEBATES

[Daily Politics Election Debates – Foreign Affairs](#)

19 April 2010, BBC 2

Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Foreign Secretary

Rt Hon William Hague MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary

Edward Davey MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Foreign Secretary

[Britain's Place in a Changing World](#)

3 March 2010, Chatham House

Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Foreign Secretary

Rt Hon William Hague MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary

Edward Davey MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Foreign Secretary

MEDIA COVERAGE

[‘And for the Lib Dems’ Next Trick? Electrify the Foreign Debate’](#)

Jackie Ashley, *The Guardian*, 18 April 2010

[‘National Security Chief Planned’](#)

James Blitz, *The Financial Times*, 15 April 2010

[‘Showing the Flag: There are Big Choices to be made about Britain's Role in the World’](#)

The Economist, 7 April 2010

[‘How to End the War in Afghanistan’](#)

David Miliband, *The New York Review of Books*, Issue: 29, April 2010

[‘The Tories can’t Muzzle Election Talk of Europe’](#)

Timothy Garton Ash, *The Guardian*, 7 April 2010

[‘Britain’s Election Need not be a Requiem’](#)

Philip Stephens, *The Financial Times*, 5 April 2010

['Cameron's Tories Point to Isolation'](#)

Gideon Rachman, *The Financial Times*, 5 April 2010

['Hague Proffers EU Olive Branch'](#)

George Parker, Jean Eaglesham and James Blitz, *The Financial Times*, 9 March 2010

['Conservatives would not be 'Slavish' to US'](#)

Adrian Croft, Reuters, 28 February 2010

['Empty Gestures on the European Stage'](#)

Adrian Hamilton, *The Independent*, 4 February 2010

['A Conservative Vision for British Foreign Policy'](#)

Nile Gardiner, *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 4 January 2010

['An Open Letter to David Cameron'](#)

Charles Grant, Centre for European Reform *Bulletin* – Issue 69, December 2009 / January 2010

['Europe is Still a Looming Crisis for Cameron'](#)

Max Hastings, *The Financial Times*, 16 November 2009