

Labour's Strategic International Policy Review: Submission by the Labour Campaign for International Development

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Introduction

LCID is a socialist society affiliated to the Labour Party. The two issues of most concern to us are the defence of aid and development, and upholding the Responsibility to Protect civilians. As such, our answers are written primarily through the prism of these two issues.

Threats, risks and opportunities

- 1.) What are the key threats and risks facing the UK over the next decade?
- 2.) What are some opportunities for the UK over the next decade?
- 3.) How should we approach measuring and prioritising risks, threats and opportunities?

Our primary motivation for supporting development, and the protection of civilians, is a moral one. Any movement for social justice should pursue these causes not because they benefit us, but because they are the right thing to do.

There are also good reasons why aid, for example, should not be tied to a donor country's national interests – the Pergau dam scandal under the Tories is a well-worn example of this. Indeed the International Development Act of 2002 explicitly demands that UK aid be spent on poverty reduction.

That said, it is nonetheless also in the UK's interest to engage actively in helping the world become a safer, more sustainable and more prosperous place.

Reducing poverty and inequality in poorer countries opens up the opportunity for more customers for British goods. Trade deals that are fair – that is, not demanding unreasonable access to a poor country's market, or tying aid to favourable trade deals or eroding workers' rights – offer a potential win-win: helping that country develop, whilst also giving UK businesses the opportunity to sell their goods to a growing middle class.

Labour must always ensure Britain is a safe haven for our fair share of refugees. Additionally, it is logical that if we try to address the issues causing people to flee their homes – poverty, inequality, climate change, conflict and instability – we will ease the refugee crisis and the associated tensions it can cause.

A robust approach to protecting civilians will also benefit Britain's national security. Failed states are often safe havens for terrorists to train, organise and plan attacks that kill citizens here at home. Allowing authoritarian regimes to operate with impunity (e.g. Russia and Iran in Syria) does nothing to develop a safer and more prosperous world.

Finally, infectious diseases do not respect borders, so tackling them at their source will spare thousands of lives as well as save taxpayers money. Britain played a leading role in curbing the spread of Ebola across Africa in 2015, and must now do the same with COVID and its many variants across the developing world.

Context and trends

- 4.) What are the key trends in defence, development, trade and broader foreign affairs shaping the global environment?
- 5.) What emerging issues must we prepare for?

We hope that the election of President Biden paves the way for a rebuilding of global multilateralism, but we fear there are trends over the past few years that will continue for some time.

One is the decline of democracy and rise in authoritarianism, which has implications for both development and civilian protection. How do we help reduce poverty in a country that is not a democracy? It will mean working with organisations instead of that country's government, which may not be permitted by the government in question, and brings its own inefficiencies (it is more sustainable to build universal healthcare or education via a centralised system (as we have in the UK) than it is through a series of individual projects). UK aid has conditions aimed at improving good governance and transparency in a country, but this is being undermined by China (and increasingly Russia) giving aid without those particular strings attached. It remains to be seen whether China's 'wolf warrior' / debt trap diplomacy may make other governments more wary of taking their assistance in future.

Russia and China's support for authoritarian strongmen around the world is further undermining our ability to protect civilians and human rights. Our sanctions have less impact when they are still getting support from Russia and China, such as in Syria and Burma. Then there is direct military support – Assad has been able to wage a war of impunity against his own people with the support of Russia's warplanes and Iran's militias. Even if this were not the case, it is difficult to envisage a world in which they do not use their P5 veto to block action at the UN Security Council to protect civilians. As such the UK will have to find ways to work with allies - such as through NATO – if we are to take action to protect civilians.

For this and other reasons, there seems little prospect that long running conflicts will be resolved or fragile states transformed by the time a Labour government comes to power in 2024 – from Afghanistan to Syria to Somalia to Libya, these countries will demand our attention.

Meanwhile, progress towards reducing poverty has been undermined and in some cases reversed by the COVID pandemic and its economic impact, which could impact global development for years to come. Even before the pandemic hit, the UN estimates that inequality was growing for more than 70% of the global population. International aid together with debt relief and creative financial instruments such the IMF issuing Special Drawing Rights will be vital tools in the years ahead. There remains a lack of leadership on global economic reform, though the Biden administration's proposal for a global corporation tax is a promising development. The G20 was, under Labour, a good forum for pushing forward this agenda, and we should seek opportunities to push forward a progressive agenda on issues such as tax, debt and SDR allocations in the years ahead.

COVID will not be the last pandemic. It will be necessary to invest in stronger, universal and public healthcare systems to make us all less vulnerable to global pandemics and draw on the historic expertise of DFID and the NHS in global health security, science and research.

Finally, whatever the progress made at the UNFCCC talks in Glasgow this year, climate change is already happening, so it will continue to be necessary to help the poorest communities to adapt to climate change. It is unclear how the commitment to provide poor countries with \$100bn a year in climate finance will be met.

Ambitions and internationalism

6.) What should it mean to be 'internationalist' in the contemporary context?

- 7.) How do we place Labour's values at the heart of our policy?
- 8.) What should be the ambitions of UK international policy under a Labour government?
- 9.) What assumptions that have guided UK international and security policy in the past now need to be revisited or revised, particularly post-Brexit?

We would obviously argue that support for international development and protecting civilians are core Labour values, or at least should be.

It was a Labour government that supported independence for India in 1947 to start British decolonisation, it was a Labour government that established the first Ministry for Overseas Development in 1964, and re-established DFID in 1997 and put Britain on course to reach 0.7%, whilst also securing a global deal to cancel debt.

But it is also a Labour government that has helped protect civilian life, whether through the establishment of NATO, or the interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, or signing the UN Responsibility to Protect civilians in 2005 or driving forward progress towards a UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

There have been, however, inconsistencies in how Labour's values have been applied over the years. One example is the relationship with Saudi Arabia, preferring a close relationship on security despite the government's many human rights abuses. More recently, whilst it is reasonable to be concerned about job losses, Labour MPs should have been united in support of upholding the UK's obligations under the ATT in the case of the Saudi's war crimes in Yemen, and it is regrettable that a *small* number were not. We recommend that Labour use this time in opposition to try and scenario plan now how it will work through the ethical dilemmas that come from governing (such as testing old assumptions about our relationships with states like KSA and Egypt, dialogue with unions over the UK arms industry and a possible furlough scheme for when arms need to be suspended in a particular case due to the requirements of ATT).

Meanwhile, we must be clear that we are social democrats and that means supporting social democracy across the world. Since social democracy cannot exist in a country that is not a democracy, that means the Labour Party and UK labour movement must never support authoritarian regimes, whether or not they are notionally 'left-wing,' such as Cuba, Venezuela or elsewhere. Furthermore, we must never again allow our foreign policy positions – as they were in recent years on Syria – be driven by anti-Western ideology. What matters is what is best to protect civilians in any given conflict.

Narratives and legitimacy

- 10.) How should Labour articulate a narrative about Britain's role in the world across the realms of foreign affairs, defence, development and trade?
- 11.) How can Labour make connections between the global and the local and between its domestic reform agenda and its international policy?
- 12.) What does the public think about foreign and security policy and how should this inform Labour's approach?
- 13.) How can we better represent the interests of all our nations and regions in international policymaking?

We must always be seeking the UK public's money to spend their money and deploy their sons and daughters abroad. As with all communication efforts, it must be driven by what works. Fortunately, the UK development sector is investing in polling and focus group research and building a wealth of evidence of how to communicate effectively on development (for example, this [recent polling](#) of 'Red Wall' voters by the Coalition for

Global Prosperity). We will be happy to share the latest summary of this with you, but it will be important to keep up to date with the latest research.

With that caveat, we think that clear, compelling stories about the difference UK aid is making will be necessary. Stories of how UK aid helped tackle Ebola or COVID, for example. Where possible, these stories should be told by people – be they UNISON nurses that went on an exchange, or people from Kosovo who can talk about the positive role Britain's armed forces played in protecting them. [LCID's speakers network](#) is an attempt to do this in the Party, by linking up CLPs with speakers from around the world.

A Labour government must also restore the grants given previously to UK CSOs to run development awareness in schools and campaigning in the UK. Funding to this was slashed by the Tories, and has undoubtedly undermined public support for aid. This is because charities have struggled, on their own, to raise the unrestricted funds needed to do such activities.

Coherence and effectiveness

14.) How can Labour take a cross-government approach to international and security policy?

The next Labour Government must learn from the many successes and failures of our foreign policy decisions. Every situation is different, but we will always be guided by our internationalist principles and by our international obligations such as the Responsibility To Protect Civilians, which we signed up to with each and every government in the U.N. in 2005.

This principle acknowledges that when a government either wilfully fails to protect the security of its citizens, or is unable to do so, the international community has a clear obligation to intervene, choosing timely and decisive action from a wide range of approaches, including diplomatic means, sanctions and in the most extreme cases, military operations.

Through our development work and following any direct interventions Britain must always stand ready to support communities and countries to rebuild with a long term development plan to secure safety, stability and prosperity for their people.

The merits of any actions we take or decline to take must always be carefully considered and scrutinised, recognising that both action and inaction are a choice and each has a consequence. The lessons of Iraq will be important in those considerations – so too must be the lessons of Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Syria. The next Labour Government must make the case for an ethical foreign policy and champion a progressive approach to humanitarian intervention.

'The Cost of Doing Nothing', based on work begun by Jo Cox MP, and completed by Alison McGovern MP and Tom Tugendhat MP, [sets out some guiding principles](#) for how Britain can act to uphold its responsibility to protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities. They are recommendations that LCID backs fully, and we include here in full because of their importance:

- Military intervention should be saved for only the most egregious and appropriate cases; there are many other forms of pressure which can be effective.
- We should act early, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the conflict dynamics, and in concert with other actors, wielding diplomatic tools first.

- Responding quickly to unfolding events can save the most lives. Ethnic cleansing and mass atrocities often occur in the early phases of conflicts, as in Rwanda and Bosnia.
- Interference in the affairs of other states is an inherently political act and cannot be devolved solely to the diplomatic or military professionals: we should take a cross-government approach, drawing on the knowledge base and capabilities of all relevant ministries and agencies.
- Any intervention – military or otherwise – should be predicated on a clear strategy, with a clear goal, that calculates the probability of success and takes into account the cost of not acting.
- In the case of military intervention, the strategy should acknowledge at the outset the long-term challenges of reconstruction, political reconciliation, and economic development.
- Whatever form intervention takes, states should set explicit and limited political goals and communicate these clearly to other actors (including their opponents) to avoid violence spiralling beyond control.
- Legitimate humanitarian interventions must ideally, and where appropriate, be supported by as broad a coalition as possible and comprise international, regional, and local actors.
- Allies should anticipate and have the ability to withstand opposition from domestic constituencies and demands for early exits.
- If force is needed, using the appropriate level to avoid retaliation and further conflict is essential. Overwhelming force deters and ultimately saves lives – both of combatants and civilians.
- The credibility of military intervention depends on access to enough military power to back up a commitment to protect civilians and to prevail even if things do not go according to plan.

15.) How can the UK ensure its foreign and domestic policies are consistent and mutually reinforcing, including its economic, trade and industrial policies?

Britain's role in the world – and our ability to reduce inequality and help people, communities and countries lift themselves out of poverty and fulfil their rights – is about so much more than aid, and stretches beyond what Labour's flagship Department for International Development (DFID) is able to achieve on its own.

LCID believes in a pro-rights, pro-equality and multilateralist approach to development that not only lifts people out of poverty but fundamentally redistributes power and addresses structural injustices, especially gender inequality. Aid remains central – but we need to look beyond it. To do this, we need to mainstream global social justice across UK Government policy.

This includes prioritising international development from the heart of government. The fantastic achievements of the last Labour government did not only come from DFID – they came from the leadership shown by Blair and Brown and Prime Ministers, putting development/aid/debt relief/trade on the agenda of the G7 summit, G7 finance minister meetings, IMF/WB Spring meetings, G20, UNFCCC COPs, and so on. LCID would like to see that from a future Labour government.

Policy coherence matters on two levels: within our aid policy and across all UK Government policies that have a global impact. Policy coherence has to begin with coherence of objective. If coherence of objective is achieved then, with the right mechanisms in place, coherence of delivery will follow. That is the only way to ensure that we do not entrench poverty (or repression, LCID welcomes Labour's support for a ban on trade deals with states committing acts of genocide) with one hand whilst trying to

relieve it with the other. An open, globally-minded Britain should aim to be a development superpower.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be achieved with a cross-government approach and ensuring all goals are seen as cross-cutting and not in silos. In prioritising some SDGs over others, there is a risk that governments, private sector companies and other stakeholders adopt a 'pick and choose' approach. Further to a cross-departmental approach to the SDGs the UK must ensure it is delivering the SDGs for the many and not the few, ensuring that no-one is left behind.

The next Labour government should:

- Ensure that all policies – on trade, tax, immigration, defence, energy, climate change, foreign policy alliances and growth – are 'pro-development'.
- This includes ensuring that the next Labour Prime Minister and Chancellor ensure that actions to tackle global poverty and inequality, and protect civilians in conflict, are always an agenda point in meetings or summits with other world leaders.
- Create a cross-departmental working group to monitor the implementation and success of delivery against the SDGs both at home and abroad, creating a national plan for the UK to deliver from at home.

16.) How can a Labour government support other channels of influence – social, economic and cultural?

17.) How can the UK take a long-term approach to international policymaking?

Relationships, alliances and multilateralism

18.) How should Britain rebalance its international relationships in the post-Brexit world?

19.) In particular, how should Labour approach the UK's relations with:

- Europe and the EU in foreign and security policy?
- The United States?
- China?
- Other emerging economies?

20.) Should the UK increase its cooperation with countries beyond its traditional allies and partners or prioritise working with other democracies?

We recommend strengthening ties with parties involved in the [Progressive Alliance](#), and working with them and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to foster ties and increase the number of alliance members from developing countries.

21.) What role could or should the Commonwealth play in UK foreign policy?

22.) How should we cooperate with other states and organisations through multilateral institutions such as the UN and the WTO?

Reform of the UN Security Council, and specifically the problems associated with the way Russia and China have been vetoing most efforts to protect civilians, are unlikely to be resolved any time soon, so it would be unwise to dedicate time or political capital to trying. Instead the UK will have to find ways to work with allies - such as through NATO – if we are to take action to protect civilians.

In negotiating bodies such as the WTO or UNFCCC, we should consider financial support developing countries to bolster their capacity to negotiate (without negative conditions).

We further suggest that the next Labour government seeks to reinvigorate the G20, or else find other ways to try and push forward global economic reforms aimed at reducing

global poverty and inequality, from tax justice to debt relief to SDR allocations and promoting workers rights.

The London G20 Summit was critical in preventing a global recession turning into a global depression, and it was a Labour Prime Minister who was at the centre of driving this forward. Unfortunately since 2010 the G20 has diminished as a forum, but with the right investment in leadership and diplomatic energy that we previously provided, could again be a forum for making progress towards global economic reform. If not, a Labour government should seek other ways to push this agenda forward, forming new coalitions of willing governments.

- 23.) How should the UK approach global networks and so-called 'minilateralism'?
- 24.) How should Labour work with other progressive forces around the world, including sister parties and trades unions on shared priorities?

As above we should recommend strengthening ties with parties involved in the [Progressive Alliance](#), and working with them and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to foster ties and increase the number of alliance members from developing countries.

Progressive Alliance appear to be made up of actual social democrats, unlike the highly questionable Socialist International (of which Egypt's dictatorship is a member). The Labour Party and trade union must shun any association with authoritarian regimes – Labour Party members, MPs, and elected officials should be banned from being members of groups such as Cuba and Venezuelan Solidarity Campaigns, and Stop the War, and they must be banned from appearing on the state media of these regimes, or appearing on panels or at events in defence of those regimes (or appearing on panels alongside those who do). Furthermore, the PLP rules should change so that MPs are not allowed to go on a paid delegation to a non-democracy without a very good reason, with that trip approved by the whips office only in exceptional circumstances.

Resources and delivery

- 25.) How should a Labour government prioritise the allocation of resources?
- 26.) What potential investments and enhancements might be necessary now the UK is outside of the EU?
- 27.) What machinery of government or Whitehall reorganisation might be necessary to deliver a Labour approach to international and security policy?

The creation of DFID as an independent department is one of the greatest achievements of the last Labour government. We set the UK on the path to spending 0.7% of GNI on aid, and by the time we had left office, UK aid was helping lift 3 million people out of poverty each year.

The scrapping of DFID is a shameful decision by this Tory government. By law, UK aid is meant to be focused on poverty reduction, not for any other reason. The best way to ensure that is through an independent department, with a Secretary of State around the Cabinet table.

The quality of aid is of utmost importance and we all want taxpayer's money to be spent well. DFID's expertise is second-to-none. It is globally recognised as one of the world's most effective and transparent aid donors, raking 3rd globally and scoring as 'very good' in The Transparency Index. Meanwhile the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not historically spend aid as well, receiving a 'poor' rating in the Transparency Index. In fact,

despite DFID previously spending over 70% of the ODA budget most newspaper stories on aid 'waste' relate to money spent by Departments other than DFID.

To deliver value for money, aid needs to be spent by the real experts. DFID already has the experts and capabilities. Post-Brexit, the UK's diplomats need to focus on their core role of building new alliances for the UK – not on trying to administer the aid budget,

When development agencies sit under the Foreign Office, that focus gets subverted. Before DFID was created by Labour, the Pergau dam affair saw Tories spend hundreds of millions of pounds in UK aid linked to a major arms deal. In Australia, the scrapping of AusAid has seen them lose much of their expertise and money diverted house refugees within Australia instead of development projects.

Development also flies the flag for Britain around the world. As one of the most widely respected aid agencies, DFID provided Britain with prestige and power on the world stage. DFID's world-class reputation opened doors at the highest level, including at the United Nations, strengthening our hand in global diplomacy.

An International Development Secretary of State around the Cabinet table is also essential, because it is meant to mean that development issues are discussed at the highest levels of government - that when the Cabinet discusses the UK's approach to a global crisis or G20 or G7 summit, the Secretary of State is there to push for development issues to be part of the agenda.

The UK should also have an international development voice sitting back on the National Security Council, similar to the appointment of Samantha Power on Biden's National Security Council.

Quite obviously, there is a global crisis happening right now that Britain and DFID should be playing a leading role in tackling – one that is hitting the world's poorest hard. Just at a time when DFID, with its two decades worth of expertise, should be helping lead the global response, they have been side-lined.

The decision by the Conservatives to go back on their manifesto commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid is short-cited and dangerous in the middle of a global pandemic. The UK stands alone in retreating from its international development commitment while all other G7 members are either maintaining or increasing their commitments. Labour must show it is an internationalist party and remain committed to the 0.7% aid target.

The next Labour government should:

- Re-establish DFID as an independent department on day 1, with a Secretary of State that attends Cabinet and the National Security Council
- Keep the 0.7% aid target in place
- Push for the OECD DAC guidelines to be strengthened so that ODA is focused on poverty alleviation
- Increase aid to budget sector support – to help countries develop their own well funding universal health care and education systems

28.) How can it build effective partnership with NGOs, the private sector and other non-state actors to bring about global change?

As argued above, a Labour government must also restore the grants given previously to UK CSOs to run development awareness in schools and campaigning in the UK.

When developing, and implementing, a strategy to protect civilians in a particular conflict, it will be important to listen to civil society voices from those conflicts. As much as possible, our policies should be driven by what people in those countries wish to see. We are grateful, for example, that the frontbench team are now engaging with the Syrian British Council on Syria policy.