



Defence, Diplomacy, and Development: Building a Safer, Fairer and Cleaner World

Debate on 30 January 2020

On 30 January 2020, the House of Lords is due to debate a motion moved by Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Labour) that “this House takes note of the role played by defence, diplomacy and development policy in building a safer, fairer and cleaner world”.

Summary

In the December 2019 Queen’s Speech, the Government announced an “integrated security, defence and foreign policy review [...] covering all aspects of international policy from defence to diplomacy and development”. The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, stated that it would be “the most radical reassessment of our place in the world since the end of the Cold War”. The review will take place in 2020. The new Government has made other announcements on various aspects of international policy, such as girls’ education and tackling human rights abuses. Commentators have described the changing world order that forms a backdrop to these initiatives: for example, in the ‘America First’ stance of the US, the rising power of China, the influence of Russia and the impact of climate change.

Prior to completion of the integrated review, these areas are covered by a number of policy documents, including the national security strategy. These have increasingly emphasised the linkages between the various aspects of policy: for example, between peace and poverty reduction in the developing world, or between security, overseas aid and climate change.

Governmental structures reflect these linkages. The conflict, security and stability fund is cross-departmental, while the stabilisation unit also includes military, police and civilian representation. The Ministry of Defence (MOD), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) all have objectives to enhance the UK’s global influence using a range of tools. The new Government has not announced any changes to departmental responsibilities, but speculation continues about whether DFID might be made part of the FCO after Brexit.

Various parliamentary committees have produced relevant reports. The House of Lords International Relations Committee recommended investing more in the UK’s “global diplomatic presence and supporting resources”. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee called for a more “coherent strategic direction for UK foreign policy”. The House of Commons International Development Committee said that all UK overseas aid should be consistent with both poverty reduction and tackling climate change.

Chris Smith | 23 January 2020

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I. New Government's Announcements

I.1 Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review

In the December 2019 Queen's Speech, the Government announced a full review of its international policies. It said:

My Government will work to promote and expand the United Kingdom's influence in the world. An integrated security, defence and foreign policy review will be undertaken to reassess the nation's place in the world, covering all aspects of international policy from defence to diplomacy and development.¹

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, stated that the review would take place in 2020. He said that it would be "the most radical reassessment of our place in the world since the end of the Cold War".²

The background notes to the speech provided more details about the review. These included that it would:³

- be led by 10 Downing Street;
- include the armed forces, intelligence services and counter-terrorism representatives;
- consider deterrence and the ways in which a "technological surprise" could threaten the UK's security;
- develop the UK's foreign policy, "with a focus on our alliances and diplomacy [and] trends in shifts of power and wealth";
- cover how the UK "can best use our international development resource";
- develop an "integrated plan for all forces engaged in security", including a "technological upgrade of our national security capabilities";
- strengthen cooperation with Europe on security and intelligence, in the context of leaving the EU;
- examine how Whitehall can be reformed to support integrated policymaking; and
- consider how the Government can collaborate with scientists and technology companies.

The Government said that it would publish the "scope and criteria" of the review early in 2020.⁴

Opposition Response

In the House of Lords debate on the Queen's Speech, the Shadow Spokesperson for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Collins of Highbury, expressed concern that the "lead departments for the review are the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Cabinet Office—but not the Department for International Development (DFID)".⁵ He argued that

¹ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 9.

² *ibid*, p 5.

³ *ibid*, pp 141–2.

⁴ *ibid*, p 142.

⁵ [HL Hansard, 7 January 2020, col 43](#).

DFID was “the leading aid agency, which is vital to Britain’s soft power, security and trading relationships, just as much as it is a force for ending global poverty”.⁶ He called for a dedicated unit to coordinate action on the United Nations’ (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs).⁷

Commentary on the Review

Dr Robin Niblett, chief executive of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), has written about the challenges in defining the UK’s international policy in the current geopolitical environment.⁸ He argues that Britain’s position “needs to be crafted with a sharp eye to what is possible”.

Summarising the country’s strengths, Dr Niblett said that Britain remained economically, politically and culturally influential, and had “an eminent diplomatic and security position at the heart of all of the world’s major international institutions and alliances”.⁹ Considering challenges, however, he listed international developments such as the ‘America First’ stance of the US, the growing power of China and the influence of Russia. He also highlighted a “back-tracking” from democracy in some countries. This background could, he argued, make trade deals harder to strike. In addition, he suggested it might mean more calls on the UK’s armed forces.

Dr Niblett concluded that the UK should adopt a two-stage process. He said it should first establish an “effective partnership” with the EU and its member states, which face the same international risks and threats. Then, he suggested, the UK should turn to “crafting its new relationship” with the US. However, he argued that balancing the two might be difficult, for example if the US and EU take different approaches to China and Russia. Dr Niblett proposed that improving ties with other countries, such as Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, might help.

James Rogers, director of the global Britain programme at the thinktank the Henry Jackson Society, argued that the review is “as urgent as it is necessary”.¹⁰ He called for “radical new thinking” to come to terms with new international challenges, in particular the “connection between globalisation, the rise of revisionist autocracies and climate change”. He said that Britain should “position itself as a bastion of national democracy and put itself at the forefront of revolutionary technologies to combat climate change”.

1.2 Other Announcements in the Queen’s Speech

This section sets out other key announcements in the Queen’s Speech which are relevant to the debate.

⁶ Soft power has been described as “the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives”: Soft Power 30, [‘What is Soft Power?’](#), accessed 14 January 2020. For more information, see House of Lords Committee on Soft Power and the UK’s Influence, [Persuasion and Power in the Modern World](#), 28 March 2014, HL Paper 150 of session 2013–14.

⁷ [HL Hansard, 7 January 2020, cols 43–4](#). The SDGs include targets on poverty, peace, economic growth, equality, environmental sustainability and climate change. They form part of the objectives of the FCO and of DFID (see below). For more information on the SDGs, see United Nations, [‘Sustainable Development Goals’](#), accessed 14 January 2020.

⁸ Robin Niblett, [‘Britain Must Balance a Transatlantic Heart With a European Head’](#), Chatham House, 19 December 2019.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ James Rogers, [‘Global Britain: The UK’s Policymakers Need New Operating Assumptions’](#), *Times* (£), 10 January 2020.

Foreign Policy

The Queen's Speech contained a number of pledges on foreign affairs.¹¹ It stated that the UK was the "only major country" meeting both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence and the UN target of spending 0.7 percent of gross national income on international development, and pledged to continue to do so.¹²

It also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the UK's membership of: the UN and the UN security council; NATO; the Commonwealth; the World Trade Organization; the 'five eyes' group of countries, which share intelligence information; and the G7 and G20 groups of major economies.¹³

Free and Fair Trade

The background information on the Queen's Speech set out the Government's goals for UK trade policy after leaving the EU.¹⁴ One stated aim was for trade deals to "not only be free but fair". This, it said, would include ensuring that "we will not compromise on our high environmental protection and food standards". Ensuring "fair" trade deals was, it said, particularly relevant for developing nations.¹⁵

International Development

The Queen's Speech set out the Government's intention to be a "global leader" in international development. It said that it would:¹⁶

- Contribute to efforts to end all preventable deaths of mothers, new-born babies and children by 2030.
- Lead the way in eradicating Ebola and malaria.
- Do more to help countries receiving aid to become self-sufficient by raising resources through private investment and tax revenues.
- "Uphold our peace-building and humanitarian efforts around the world to assist war-torn and divided societies".

Girls' Education

The notes to the Queen's Speech included a series of commitments aimed at providing all girls globally with twelve years of quality education by 2030. It stated that between 2015 and 2019, the UK had supported 5.8 million girls to gain a "decent education". It then repeated a further pledge of

¹¹ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 143–6.

¹² *ibid*, pp 128 and 143–4.

¹³ *ibid*, p 143.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p 144. This briefing does not cover the economic aspects of trade deals or progress towards them: on these, see, for example, Department for International Trade, '[UK Trade with Trade Agreement Continuity Countries: Statistical Ad Hoc Release](#)', 4 December 2019; House of Commons Library, '[Trade in Services: Parting with the EU](#)', 20 December 2019; and House of Commons Library, '[Brexit: Trade Issues for Food and Agriculture](#)', 5 November 2019.

¹⁵ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 144. On the possible interactions between human rights and international trade deals, see House of Lords Library, '[Human Rights and Trade Deals](#)', 26 September 2019.

¹⁶ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 144–5.

£515 million to help over 12 million children—half of them girls—into school in the poorest countries in the world.

Sanctions

The Queen’s Speech said that the UK “promotes and defends the full range of universal human rights, and strongly encourages all states to fulfil their obligations under international law”.¹⁷ The Government stated that this would include continuing to promote freedom of religion and belief, media freedom and tackling modern slavery. It also pledged to develop an independent sanctions regime designed to place financial restrictions on individuals responsible for human rights abuses—known as Magnitsky sanctions.¹⁸

The Queen’s Speech also proposed a ban on public bodies from “imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, divestment or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries”.

Environmental Policy

In his introduction to the Queen’s Speech, Boris Johnson said that the Government had an “absolute priority to protect our planet for future generations”.¹⁹ This briefing will not cover domestic environmental policies.²⁰ However, the Government also stated that the UK would “bring countries together to tackle global challenges, including climate change”.²¹

The Conservative Party manifesto said that the Government had already doubled international climate finance, supporting developing countries to respond to the challenges and opportunities of climate change.²² The Prime Minister made this commitment in September 2019 at the UN General Assembly.²³ The Queen’s Speech further explained that climate finance support through the International Climate Fund would double, from the existing commitment of £5.8 billion to at least £11.6 billion between 2021/22 and 2025/26.²⁴

Other international environmental initiatives included in the speech were:²⁵

- Up to £1 billion of aid available to British scientists to develop and test new technology targeted at tackling climate change in developing countries (the Ayrton Fund).²⁶
- Hosting the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow in November 2020 (COP26). The Government said it would ask countries attending this summit to match the UK’s 2050 net-zero target for

¹⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 145.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 5.

²⁰ For further information on the proposals set out in the Queen’s Speech and Conservative Party manifesto, see House of Lords Library, [Queen’s Speech: Debate in the House of Lords Day 1](#), 3 January 2020, pp 18–21.

²¹ *ibid.*, p 143.

²² Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 55.

²³ Department for International Development, [‘UK Aid to Double Efforts to Tackle Climate Change’](#), 23 September 2019.

²⁴ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 118.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p 116.

²⁶ For further details, see Department for International Development et al, [‘British Scientists to Help Tackle Climate Change Through New £1 Billion Fund’](#), 23 September 2019.

greenhouse gas emissions.

- A ban on the export of plastic waste to non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.
- Establishing a new £500 million Blue Planet Fund to help protect our oceans from plastic pollution, warming sea temperatures and overfishing.
- Leading diplomatic efforts to protect 30 percent of the world's oceans by 2030.

1.3 New Cabinet Committee on Climate Change

In October 2019, Boris Johnson announced that he would chair a new cabinet committee on climate change.²⁷ He described it as an opportunity to bring together ministers from across government, including the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Business Secretary, the Environment Secretary, the Transport Secretary, the International Development Secretary and the Housing Secretary.

1.4 Aid and Fossil Fuel Projects

In a speech on 20 January 2020, Boris Johnson said that UK aid would no longer be spent on projects which supported thermal coal mining or coal power plants.²⁸ The Government stated that this was part of the UK's commitment to help African countries transition from fossil fuels to "renewable, sustainable forms of energy".²⁹

The International Institute for Environment and Development welcomed the move, but said the Government should go further and stop subsidising all fossil fuel exploration and production.³⁰

2. Existing Government Policy

Prior to the new Government's review, foreign, defence and development policy has been the subject of a series of papers. This section summarises some of the key documents.

2.1 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015

The background notes to the Queen's Speech described how the integrated security, defence and foreign policy review would succeed the 2015 *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review* (SDSR).³¹ The Government said that the need for an update was because "the world has moved on since 2015, bringing new opportunities and challenges and exposing the need for an approach that is more fit-for-purpose".

²⁷ Prime Minister's Office, '[Prime Minister to Chair New Cabinet Committee on Climate Change](#)', 17 October 2019.

²⁸ Prime Minister's Office, '[Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Address to the UK-Africa Investment Summit](#)', 20 January 2020.

²⁹ Prime Minister's Office, '[Prime Minister Hosts First Ever UK-Africa Investment Summit in London](#)', 20 January 2020.

³⁰ International Institute for Environment and Development, '[IIED Statement on UK Government Decision to Stop Aid for Coal Investment](#)', 20 January 2020.

³¹ Prime Minister's Office, '[Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#)', 19 December 2019, p 141. The 2015 review can be found at: Prime Minister's Office et al, '[National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#)', 23 November 2015, Cm 9161.

The 2015 review proposed that national power would be exercised through a “full-spectrum approach” combining:³²

- military capability;
- security and intelligence;
- diplomacy;
- aid and development spending;
- soft power; and
- working with allies around the world on areas such as climate change and terrorism, and promoting the rule of law, democracy and free trade.³³

The review described the links between the UK’s values and its foreign policy goals. It said:

Democracy, the rule of law, open, accountable governments and institutions, human rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equality of opportunity, including the empowerment of women and girls, are the building blocks of successful societies [...] Their absence limits opportunities for the individual and drives resentment, political instability and conflict.³⁴

The SDSR discussed how development policy could be used to reduce global conflicts. For example, it included a new commitment to spend at least 50 percent of DFID’s budget in “fragile states and regions”.³⁵ This was described as “a major investment in global stability”. The review also reiterated the UK’s continuing support for multilateral institutions, in particular the UN. The Government promised to double the number of UK military personnel available for UN peacekeeping operations.³⁶

The SDSR argued that there were links between global security and environmental issues. It said that climate change “leads to and exacerbates instability overseas, including through resource stresses, migration, [its] impact on trade, and global economic and food insecurity”.³⁷

In July 2019, the Government published the most recent review of the SDSR.³⁸ It described, for example, the UK’s response to the Russian use of a chemical nerve agent in Salisbury in March 2018. It said that the approaches set out in the SDSR and the later national security capability review (see below) allowed a “rapid, robust cross-government response, involving over twenty departments and agencies, supported internationally by partners and allies and our world-leading diplomatic network”.³⁹

2.2 National Security Capability Review

In March 2018, the Government published a National Security Capability Review (NSCR) in support

³² Prime Minister’s Office et al, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 23 November 2015, Cm 9161, pp 5–6.

³³ *ibid*, pp 6 and 52.

³⁴ *ibid*, p 10.

³⁵ *ibid*, p 64.

³⁶ *ibid*, p 60.

³⁷ *ibid*, p 65.

³⁸ Cabinet Office et al, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: Third Annual Report](#), 22 July 2019.

³⁹ *ibid*, p 3.

of the SDSR.⁴⁰ The NSCR introduced a new approach to national security, the ‘fusion doctrine’, described as a “more accountable system to support collective cabinet decision-making”.⁴¹

2.3 Modernising Defence Programme

More recent plans for reforming the armed forces were contained in the modernising defence programme (MDP), which published its conclusions in December 2018.⁴² It emphasised, for example, adopting new technologies and working more closely with the UK’s allies and partners.

The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy criticised the separation of the consideration of defence policy from other areas of the national security review, stating that it risked undermining the NSCR’s purpose of improving security policy on a cross-government basis.⁴³ The Government response rejected this, stating that “the MDP is building on the firm foundations of the SDSR and is being informed by work undertaken as part of the NSCR”.⁴⁴

2.4 Building Stability Framework

In 2016, the Department for International Development (DFID) published a “building stability framework”.⁴⁵ It indicated a shift in emphasis of DFID activity away from shorter-term “development gains” such as poverty reduction. Instead, the report argued, “the highest development returns may lie in the long-term foundations for a future free of violence”.⁴⁶ It therefore went on to suggest that all of DFID’s projects should have a “real impact on building stability”, including programmes dedicated to “peacebuilding, statebuilding and conflict reduction”.

3. Government Departments and Cross-Government Bodies

The three departments most actively involved in overseas interventions are the FCO, the MOD and DFID.⁴⁷ However, there are two bodies—the conflict, stability and security fund and the stabilisation unit—which operate on a cross-departmental basis to coordinate reconciliation, mediation, peacekeeping and disaster response. This section first describes the roles of these two cross-government bodies, and then summarises the objectives of the three departments in promoting a “fairer, safer and cleaner world”. It also refers to the debates about the possible merger of the FCO and DFID.

⁴⁰ Cabinet Office, [National Security Capability Review](#), 28 March 2018.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p 10.

⁴² Ministry of Defence, ‘[Modernising Defence Programme Public Consultation](#)’, 7 March 2018; and ‘[Modernising Defence Programme—Update](#)’, 18 December 2018.

⁴³ Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, [National Security Capability Review: A Changing Security Environment](#), 23 March 2018, HL Paper 104 of session 2017–19, p 3.

⁴⁴ Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, [National Security Capability Review: A Changing Security Environment: Government Response to the Committee’s First Report of 2017–19](#), 17 October 2018, HL Paper 197 of session 2017–19, p 4.

⁴⁵ Marcus Lenzen, [Building Stability Framework 2016](#), Department for International Development, 2016.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p 3.

⁴⁷ House of Commons Defence Committee, [The Comprehensive Approach: The Point of War is Not Just to Win but to Make a Better Peace: Government Response to the Committee’s Seventh Report of Session 2009–10](#), 1 September 2010, HC 347 of session 2010–11, p 2.

3.1 Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

In April 2015, the Coalition Government established the conflict, stability and security fund (CSSF).⁴⁸ Its aim is to tackle “the causes and effects of conflict and instability in countries of strategic importance to the United Kingdom”.⁴⁹ The CSSF is cross-departmental and directed by the National Security Council (NSC), which is chaired by the Prime Minister. When it was established, the Government said the CSSF would:

[D]raw on the most effective combination of defence, diplomacy, development assistance, and national security assets at Her Majesty’s Government’s disposal to promote peace and stability and to tackle threats to UK interests arising from instability overseas.⁵⁰

In July 2019, the CSSF said that it was an “important driver” of the fusion doctrine, introduced by the NSCR as described above.⁵¹ In evidence to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, the then Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, said that the CSSF gave “equal weight” to national security and aid objectives in the design of its programmes.⁵²

3.2 Stabilisation Unit

The stabilisation unit was formed in 2007 (although it originated in the post-conflict reconstruction unit, established in 2004).⁵³ In the national security strategy, the unit was described as an “innovative, expanded civil-military” group that “will continue to support more effective cross-government crisis response, stabilisation and conflict prevention in fragile states”.⁵⁴ Since 2015 the stabilisation unit has reported to the NSC.⁵⁵

In its 2018/19 annual review, the unit said that it brings together “civilian, police and military expertise and staff from 12 government departments”.⁵⁶ Its activities include specialist training on conflict and stability, and the deployment of civilian experts to locations around the world (for example, Yemen) in support of national security priorities.⁵⁷ The unit has also promoted gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected states.⁵⁸

The unit stated that while the UK’s approach to stabilisation in fragile states may begin with military

⁴⁸ Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, ‘[About Us](#)’, accessed 17 January 2020.

⁴⁹ Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund](#), 7 February 2017, HL Paper 105 of session 2016–17, p 6.

⁵⁰ House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Settlement, Financial Year 2015/16](#)’, 12 March 2015, HCWS392.

⁵¹ Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, [Annual Report 2018/19](#), 18 July 2019.

⁵² Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, [Oral Evidence: Conflict, Stability and Security Fund](#), 19 November 2018, Q1.

⁵³ Jude Howell, ‘[National Security Concerns Continue to Dictate Britain’s Government Aid and Development Agendas](#)’, London School of Economics and Political Science, 4 October 2010.

⁵⁴ Prime Minister’s Office et al, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 23 November 2015, Cm 9161, p 64.

⁵⁵ Suzannah Brecknell, ‘[Greater Than the Sum of its Parts: How the Stabilisation Unit Joins Up Whitehall’s Response to Global Crises](#)’, Civil Service World, 23 October 2017.

⁵⁶ Stabilisation Unit, [Annual Review 2018/19](#), 25 July 2019, p 3.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, pp 3 and 7.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p 8.

force, the emphasis is on a politically-led approach.⁵⁹

3.3 Ministry of Defence

In its 2019 single departmental plan, the MOD described its five objectives as:

- Protect our people.
- Project our global influence.
- Promote our prosperity.
- Transform the way we do business.
- Support the delivery of EU exit.⁶⁰

Under the heading of projecting global influence, for example, the department included aims to “strengthen the rules-based international order through capacity building, international defence training and nuclear weapon counter-proliferation”.⁶¹

3.4 Foreign Office

In its 2019 plan, the FCO said that its objectives were to:

- Protect our people.
- Project our influence and demonstrate diplomatic leadership.
- Promote our prosperity.
- Manage our business and provide the platform for the whole of the UK Government internationally.⁶²

The plan also stated that the FCO will support delivery of the UN’s sustainable development goals which, it said, “embody the principles of security, freedom, prosperity and opportunity and address some of the most important global challenges of our time”.⁶³

3.5 Department for International Development

DFID’s 2019 plan said that its goal is to “reduce poverty and deliver the sustainable development goals in line with the UK aid strategy, helping deliver HM Government’s wider national security objectives”.⁶⁴ The department described two of its key areas of focus as “peace” and “the planet”. In relation to the former, in June 2018, the then Minister for International Development, Alistair Burt, discussed how diplomatic efforts to secure peace can be coupled with economic measures and, if necessary, force. He said that the UK could attempt to:

⁵⁹ Stabilisation Unit, *The UK Government’s Approach to Stabilisation: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners*, March 2019, p 7.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Defence, ‘[Single Departmental Plan 2019](#)’, 11 July 2019.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘[Single Departmental Plan—2019](#)’, 27 June 2019.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Department for International Development, ‘[Single Departmental Plan](#)’, 27 June 2019.

[A]dd momentum to highly political deal making between warring parties. We have the diplomatic assets, expertise and influence to build trust. We have political and economic levers to help bring parties to the table and make deals stick. We have military and peacekeeping assets at our disposal to provide security guarantees.⁶⁵

In relation to “the planet”, DFID said that it was helping countries to become “more resilient” in the face of the “climate crisis”.⁶⁶ It also argued that the two goals were linked, saying that “sustainable development is all but impossible without peace and security”.

3.6 Possible Merger of Foreign Office and Department for International Development

During and immediately after the 2019 general election campaign, there was speculation that a Conservative government might alter the structure of several departments, including making DFID a part of the FCO.⁶⁷ No such move has been announced, although reports suggest that it is still being considered for after the UK’s departure from the EU.⁶⁸

The *Times* suggested that “the case for change is overwhelming”, because there is currently a “lack of clarity about who speaks for Britain overseas” and because the size of the DFID budget “dwarfed” and “handicapped” other outward-looking departments.⁶⁹ However, in December 2019, a group of more than 100 charities issued a statement arguing that “merging DFID with the FCO would risk dismantling the UK’s leadership on international development and humanitarian aid”.⁷⁰

4. Parliamentary Committees

Several parliamentary committees have published recent reports relevant to the debate. This section summarises a selection of these, focusing particularly on reports that have considered the combined effects of defence, diplomacy and development policies.

4.1 House of Lords International Relations Committee

In December 2018, the House of Lords International Relations Committee published a report on UK foreign policy in the context of a changing world order. The committee’s recommendations included:⁷¹

- Resisting US challenges to the multilateral system and working to strengthen key global

⁶⁵ Stabilisation Unit, ‘[Minister Alistair Burt’s Address to Chatham House on Deal Making and Peace Building: A New Approach to Reducing Conflict](#)’, 18 June 2018.

⁶⁶ Department for International Development, ‘[Single Departmental Plan](#)’, 27 June 2019.

⁶⁷ For example, Christopher Hope, ‘[Merging International Aid Department with Foreign Office “May Harm British Asset”](#)’, *Telegraph* (£), 16 December 2019.

⁶⁸ Esther Webber, ‘[Reshuffle Could Hand Dominic Raab a Second Ministry](#)’, *Times* (£), 8 January 2020.

⁶⁹ *Times* (£), ‘[The Times View on Merging DFID With the Foreign Office: Global Britain](#)’, 16 January 2020. However, several correspondents disagreed: see *Times* (£) ‘[Times Letters: Merging the Machinery of Aid and Diplomacy](#)’, 18 January 2020.

⁷⁰ Bond, ‘[Over 100 Charities Warn that Plans to Merge DFID with FCO Risks Britain Turning its Back on the World](#)’, 16 December 2019.

⁷¹ House of Lords International Relations Committee, [UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order](#), 18 December 2018, HL Paper 250 of session 2017–19, pp 3–4 and 26.

- institutions, for example the UN.
- Engaging with new multilateral groups, such as those led by China, and other groups such as the Commonwealth.
 - Investing more in the UK’s “global diplomatic presence and supporting resources”.
 - Strengthening the UK’s soft power assets.
 - Ensuring that the public understands and is supportive of foreign policy objectives.

4.2 House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee

In March 2018, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee published a report on the UK’s foreign policy ambitions, summarised by ministers at the time as ‘global Britain’.⁷² The committee commented that the objectives of global Britain had not been well defined.⁷³ It then set out a list of questions it said the Government needed to address to set a “coherent strategic direction for UK foreign policy”.⁷⁴ These included: what the UK wants to achieve in the world; what the UK’s “unique selling point” is as a global player; and what other countries want from the UK.⁷⁵

In June 2018, the then Government’s response agreed on the need for a coherent strategic approach to foreign policy, and reported that a new cross-government body, the global Britain board, had been set up.⁷⁶

4.3 House of Commons International Development Committee

The House of Commons International Development Committee explored the use of UK aid for combatting climate change in an April 2019 report.⁷⁷ The committee said that “it will be the least developed countries and the most vulnerable people who will be hit the first and the hardest by climate change”.⁷⁸ It stated that the UK had “historically shown international leadership in advancing both the climate change and sustainable development agendas”.

The committee welcomed the Government’s international climate finance (ICF) initiative, referred to in section 1 above, but found it “highly disconcerting” that there was no “active strategy” underpinning how the fund was spent. It also suggested that the management structures around ICF should be reformed to ensure greater cross-departmental collaboration.⁷⁹ The committee further argued that climate change should not only be addressed through ICF alone, but that it should be

⁷² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Global Britain](#), 12 March 2018, HC 780 of session 2017–19. For a more recent statement of the meaning of Global Britain, see Dominic Raab, ‘[Global Britain is Leading the World as a Force for Good](#)’, *Telegraph* (£), 23 September 2019. Following its initial report the committee went on to investigate several aspects of Global Britain in more detailed reports, for example on sanctions policy: House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, ‘[Inquiries: 2017 Parliament—Former Enquiries](#)’, accessed 17 January 2020.

⁷³ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Global Britain](#), 12 March 2018, HC 780 of session 2017–19, p 3.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, pp 15–6.

⁷⁶ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Global Britain: Government Response to the Sixth Report of the Committee](#), 20 June 2018, HC 1236 of session 2017–19, pp 5–6.

⁷⁷ House of Commons International Development Committee, [UK Aid for Combatting Climate Change](#), 8 May 2019, HC 1432 of session 2017–19.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p 3.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, pp 3 and 4.

“comprehensively integrated across all development assistance strategies”.⁸⁰ It reported a witness as saying that DFID’s economic development strategy “pays little more than ‘lip service’ to climate change”. While acknowledging the trade-offs in aid spending between addressing climate change and tackling poverty, the committee said that all UK aid should be consistent with both these goals.⁸¹

In July 2019, the Government (then that of Theresa May) accepted many of the recommendations, stating, for example, that DFID was updating its strategic approach to reflect climate change.⁸² However, it rejected the proposal to change ICF management structures, arguing that there was already “strong and effective working across the departments”.

In evidence to the committee in October 2019, the Secretary of State for International Development, Alok Sharma, said that climate change was one of the department’s four priorities—along with economic development, girls’ education and ending preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children by 2030.⁸³

5. Further Information

- House of Commons Library, [‘UK Foreign Policy: Difficult Choices’](#), 8 January 2020
- Gideon Rachman, [‘Boris Johnson’s Chance to Forge a New Role for Britain’](#), *Financial Times* (£), 13 December 2019
- Policy Exchange, [Making Global Britain Work: Eight Ideas for Revitalising UK Foreign Policy for the Post-Brexit Age](#), July 2019
- Bob Seely and James Rogers, [Global Britain: A Twenty-First Century Vision](#), Henry Jackson Society, February 2019
- House of Lords Library, [Reconciliation in British Foreign, Defence and International Development Policy](#), 29 November 2018

⁸⁰ House of Commons International Development Committee, [UK Aid for Combatting Climate Change](#), 8 May 2019, HC 1432 of session 2017–19, p 3.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p 4.

⁸² House of Commons International Development Committee, [UK Aid for Combatting Climate Change: Government Response to the Committee’s Eleventh Report](#), 18 July 2019.

⁸³ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Oral Evidence: Priorities and Future of the Department, HC 116](#), 21 October 2019, Q5.