

Background

This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of new Party policy in relation to International Security. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the response generated and on the deliberations of the working group a full policy paper will be drawn up and presented to Conference for debate.

The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Dr Christine Cheng. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside

bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party.

Comments on the paper, and requests for speakers, should be addressed to: Joseph Wright, Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats, 1 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PN. Email: policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk

Comments should reach us as soon as possible and no later than 27 March.

Further copies of this paper can be found online at:

<https://www.libdems.org.uk/members/make-policy/policy-consultations>

1 Introduction	5
2 A Liberal Democrat International Security Strategy	7
3 Military Defence	16
3.1 Introduction	16
3.2 The UK Armed Forces	16
3.3 Defence Procurement	23
3.4 Europe and NATO	29
4 Domestic Security	34
4.1 Introduction	34
4.2 The Intelligence and Security Services	35
4.3 Policing, Cross Border Crime and Terrorism	39
5 Soft Power	44
5.1 Introduction	44

5.2 Soft Power	44
5.3 Diplomacy and Development	49
6 Civil Resilience	58
7 Social Sustainability	68
Remit	75

1 Introduction

1.1 Thirty years ago, after the defeat of communism, the Western world entered a new era of cooperation and prosperity. That peaceful vision has since given way to a new global rivalry between the US and China. These rising geopolitical tensions have been further exacerbated by three major foreign policy shocks: Brexit, Covid, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Each one of these shocks has uncovered fragility in our economic supply chains, problems with our defence capabilities, and the continued erosion of our soft power. So far, this government's response has been to bluff, spreading ourselves too thin without playing to our strengths. But we can't defy

economic gravity. And so we must prioritise.

1.2 We need a national security strategy that capitalises on our existing strengths while acknowledging the generous nature of the British people. More than ever, we need a liberal, internationalist response to the changing world. We need a new approach to the UK's national and international security– an approach that is grounded in our democratic values and that commits us to defending our homeland in these uncertain times.

2 A Liberal Democrat International Security Strategy

2.1 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. Getting Brexit 'done' has eroded our special relationship with the United States and Rishi Sunak's muddled approach to China and his inability to work constructively with Europe has left the UK isolated.

2.2 We need a pragmatic 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 strengths. In different ways, Brexit, COVID, and the Ukraine war have each shown how the UK's interests are bound to Europe's. The choice to continue aggravating our closest trading and security partners in the EU *only* to make a political point hurts our national interests. Geography is destiny and British foreign policy needs to come to grips with this.

A Liberal Foreign Policy

2.3 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.

2.4 A world of liberal democracies would be a world that is safer, freer, and more prosperous than one dominated by autocrats. A key goal of UK foreign policy should be the defence of liberal democracy and human rights - both at home and globally.

2.5 The UK also needs coherence in how we promote our values and our security. At the moment, the key tools for defending the UK are separated into several pots; Defence, Overseas Development Aid, the

Diplomatic Budget, UK Border Force, counter-terrorism policing, the Coast Guard, and a range of other agencies which operate independently of one another. This lack of coordination hurts us when it comes to dealing with issues like 'small boats' migration across the English Channel.

2.6 We think there is a case for a single combined National Security Budget worth 3% of GDP, with at least 2% of GDP allocated to Defence and 0.7% of GDP allocated to Overseas Development Aid. To ensure tighter coordination in spending this money, we would publish a publicly accessible National Security report on an annual basis. This will improve scrutiny and

ensure that the way we spend our money across government departments actually matches our goals.

Defending the UK and Europe

2.7 We believe that our defence policy and conventional forces should be focused on defending British territory and our immediate neighbourhood. To that end, the UK must rebuild trust and security cooperation 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 and to the invasion of

Ukraine, we have relied on Europe just as Europe has relied on the UK.

2.8 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.

Global Security

2.9 With the rise of China and Russia's attempt to take Ukraine, the principal challenge of our age will be the struggle between authoritarianism and liberalism. We believe that the UK should double its

efforts to cooperate with democracies and build diplomatic, economic and security partnerships with them. We believe we should prioritise our closest neighbours in Europe as well as those threatened by aggressive authoritarian states - like Taiwan, Japan, South Korea.

2.10 We would also support emerging democracies globally. We've seen democracies fall back into authoritarianism over the last decade and democratic movements violently repressed in Sudan, Iran, Myanmar, and beyond. We must halt this trend and strategically provide economic, political and logistical support for democratic movements across the

world where we are best-placed to help them succeed.

Security in the Mid-21st Century

2.11 Although Putin's Russia remains a traditional security challenge, the number of threats to the UK and the world have proliferated extensively; the environment, energy, health, the economy, refugees, cybersecurity, terrorism and more. In a world of limited resources, we must focus our efforts on the threats which pose the biggest challenges to our national security.

Questions

1. Should we focus our conventional forces on the defence of Europe?

2. What should be our primary foreign policy objective?
3. Should we have a combined National Security Budget of 3%?
4. What will be the biggest security challenge in the mid-21st Century?

3 Military Defence

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine has shown that conflict and war are never as far away as we might hope. The armed forces will always be essential to the UK's security and defence, and we want to see them strengthened and improved to face the challenges of the future.

3.2 The UK Armed Forces

3.2.1 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.

3.2.2 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.

3.2.3 Both Tory and Labour governments have let down our armed forces this century. 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.

3.2.4 We are committed to the principle of collective self-defence as laid out in the North Atlantic Treaty and to spending two per cent of GDP on defence in line with NATO obligations. We believe we should work with other 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.

3.2.5 The UK armed forces needs to be structured to meet our strategic goals, with procurement and training aligned with our strategic priorities. We will work across government to ensure that weaknesses in key areas of recruitment, retention, and training are fully addressed.

3.2.6 We need to strengthen and deepen our collaboration with allies that share our strategic goals and our democratic values. We would expand joint training exercises and exchange programs 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 FCDO.

3.2.7 We support the Armed Forces Covenant and will increase efforts across government departments and veterans' agencies to improve training, employment, and health provision for veterans. 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.

3.2.8 We would improve the quality of housing for service personnel by bringing

the Ministry of Defence into line with other landlords, giving tenants the same legal rights to repair and maintenance as private tenants. This ensures a basic level of dignity for our military and their families. We would also look to take back some support functions that have been outsourced to private companies back into public control to ensure better outcomes for our personnel.

Questions

5. Should we continue to advocate for a public enquiry into the UK's engagement in Afghanistan in order to capture the lessons of that conflict?

6. If a political settlement is reached between Ukraine and Russia, would you support sending British forces to Ukraine on a peacekeeping mission?
7. Which key allies outside of NATO should we be strengthening ties with?
8. How can we strengthen the rights of personnel and veterans?

3.3 Defence Procurement

3.3.1 We must ensure that the UK's armed forces are properly equipped, trained and supported to conduct the roles and missions the nation asks of them.

3.3.2 In 2022-23, the UK defence budget will be 2.3% of GDP, comprising £32.1bn of day-to-day spending and £19.5bn of capital spending which includes equipment procurement. Defence spending is forecast to fall to 2.1% of GDP in 2024/25. The Conservatives have abandoned plans to increase spending as a percentage of GDP and also ditched their manifesto promise to increase the defence

budget by at least 0.5% above inflation each year.

3.3.3 Despite the large (by international standards) budget, defence procurement continues to be plagued by delays and cost overruns on many projects. Sometimes, our inefficient procurement processes have left our armed forces struggling with under-performing or obsolete equipment and with capability gaps where equipment is retired before its replacement is available. This has left our troops unnecessarily vulnerable.

3.3.4 The size of the UK's armed forces mean that we do not enjoy the same economies of scale as the US. This often

makes the development of complex, all-new equipment prohibitively expensive unless it is done collaboratively, with allies. We recognise the importance for the UK of maintaining an indigenous capability to develop and manufacture military equipment. However, this capability must be sustained by a dependable pipeline of business to retain skills and encourage investment in this sector. Interoperability with allies through NATO and beyond is key to the UK's ability to support major operations.

3.3.5 We will provide the UK armed forces with reliable, high-quality equipment, and the associated training and logistic support to deliver capability to

match or exceed our adversaries. Our focus will be on providing 'capability' rather than 'kit' while ensuring value for money for the UK taxpayer.

3.3.6 In selected areas, we will focus on maintaining sovereign technical and manufacturing capabilities that enhance strategic resilience and provide employment opportunities across the UK.

3.3.7 We will renew the UK's Defence Industrial Strategy by championing innovation, increasing spending on research and development, investing in upskilling, and delivering economic growth via partnerships between Government and business.

3.3.8 With Defence accounting for 50% of the UK's central government greenhouse gas emissions, we support transitioning Defence to meet sustainability goals. This encompasses equipment procurement, operations, housing and buildings estate, and the logistic chain which provides energy, supplies and water to our armed forces. Significant investment will be required, but if managed successfully, this will result in improved resilience and self-sufficiency, in addition to creating new employment opportunities and supporting the green economy.

Questions

9. To what extent should the UK prioritise sovereign, domestic capability to develop, manufacture and support military equipment, as opposed to procuring 'kit' at lower cost from allied countries?
10. Should defence budget expenditure support employment in the UK, even where similar equipment can be purchased at lower cost from allies, or on the consumer market?
11. What is the right balance between the UK Government partnering with 'national champions' to develop and support equipment, as opposed to full and open competition?

3.4 Europe and NATO

3.4.1 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.

3.4.2 It has also shown the importance of the UK working cooperatively with the European Union and its member states on foreign and security policy, on our own and through NATO.

3.4.3 We continue to fully support NATO, and meet all of our treaty obligations, including spending at least 2% of GDP on defence, and coming to the defence of any NATO member.

3.4.4 For Britain to be secure, we need a comprehensive security and defence agreement with the European Union, along the lines of that promised by the former Prime Minister Theresa May. She pledged a deep and comprehensive security and defence agreement with the European Union, one that would *“protect all EU citizens wherever they are in Europe”*.

3.4.5 Subsequent 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.

3.4.6 It is time to take this proposal, strengthen and to make this a priority for our relations with Europe, which would cover security arrangements in Europe that NATO doesn't cover, such as terrorism, policing, hybrid warfare, intelligence sharing, cybersecurity, and social resilience. The Labour Party has said they want a similar arrangement, but their refusal to

3.4.7 In doing this, we would ensure that any security and defence agreement doesn't undermine or compete with NATO in any way, with two clear and separate approaches: NATO for military defence and the new security pact for other less tangible, but ever-present threats.

3.4.8 There is also the newly established European Political Community. At the time of writing, it's not clear what role this organisation might play. Will it be more of a talking shop which would undermine existing structures like the Council of Europe? Or does it have the potential to allow EU and non-EU members to informally resolve disputes and agree on common positions?

Questions

12. As EU member countries move towards closer security and defence integration, could the UK potentially be left as a security policy 'taker', rather than a security policy 'maker'?

13. If we do succeed with our EU allies to better secure and defend European borders, will this weaken US support for the NATO alliance?
14. Should we establish a new security treaty with the European Union? What should be covered in the treaty?
15. What are your views on the European Political Community? What should be the UK's involvement?

4 Domestic Security

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Alongside our armed forces, the UK is also kept safe by a wide range of security and intelligence agencies. These are essential to modern security, helping combat misinformation, cyberwarfare, organised and transnational crime, terrorism and other non-military threats.

4.1.2 With the rise of hybrid warfare and the proliferation of domestic and global terrorist groups, these services will be at the forefront of our domestic security.

4.2 The Intelligence and Security Services

4.2.1 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 the agencies do in the UK and abroad. As a result, there is very little transparency or accountability or public knowledge about their activities.

4.2.2 As liberals, we believe that all institutions should be as transparent and accountable as possible. This means transparency in what an organisation does,

as well as ministerial accountability to parliament. Currently, security and intelligence is split between the dysfunctional Home Office, the Foreign Office, the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Defence, with junior ministers being nominally in charge.

4.2.3 We want to see greater accountability to parliament and greater openness to the public in what our security services are doing, as well as clear, democratically agreed priorities. Our security and intelligence agencies should be supervised by parliamentary select committees whose membership is controlled by parliament, not by the Prime Minister, as is currently the case.

4.2.4 At the same time, with the ever-increasing role of hybrid warfare, our security services need to be aware of 'whole society' attacks by hostile states. Whilst these agencies are highly effective operationally, they have not been able to deal with foreign subversion of our political systems via disinformation and the influx of dirty Russian money.

Questions

16. What is the right balance between transparency and secrecy in the security and intelligence services?
17. How do we reform the Intelligence Select Committee to make it more independent of the government?

18. How do we better equip our security services to deal with new challenges and hybrid warfare?

4.3 Policing, Cross Border Crime and Terrorism

4.3.1 Major and organised crime, such as the international drug trade, people trafficking, major financial crimes like money laundering and smuggling of weapons are a significant threat to the UK and the world's security.

4.3.2 As a result of the Conservative's weak Brexit agreement, 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.

4.3.3 The Conservatives have also failed to address the refugee crisis in the Channel. The long-term solution is to create safe, legal routes for refugees. Currently, this does not exist. In the more immediate term, the Conservatives' antagonistic and short-sighted approach to relations with France have undermined efforts to tackle the issue.

4.3.4 We also need to get the UK's house in order. The UK is home to some of the world's largest money laundering operations, with UK financial and legal services facilitating the moving of dirty money. The UK must clamp down on this activity, so that the world's most dangerous groups and individuals no longer have a safe haven for their money. This includes clamping down on laundering Russian money in the UK. LibDems have wholeheartedly supported these actions, including the use of parliamentary privilege to name 35 Russian oligarchs who LibDems felt should have been sanctioned in February 2022.

4.3.5 Britain's offshore territories in places such as the Caribbean and the Channel Islands have become notorious centres for money laundering and facilitating kleptocracy. This is a choice made by successive British governments, and one which other European countries like France and the Netherlands which retain colonies, do not do on the same level. We should enact policies that render the tax haven and offshore finance model obsolete.

4.3.6 Terrorism is also an ever present threat, with far-right terrorism rapidly rising. We have long been committed to scrapping PREVENT and replacing it with a community-led ENGAGE programme.

Questions

19. Should we rejoin the European Arrest Warrant and European data sharing systems?
20. How should we work with Continental Europe to tackle the migrant crisis in the Channel?
21. How should we build long-term relationships and co-operative channels to counter global crime?
22. How should we get dirty money out of the UK?
23. What principles should underpin our ENGAGE strategy?

5 Soft Power

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Alongside conventional forces and domestic security services, security in the 21st Century is built around the effective use of diplomacy, development aid and economic and cultural output, known as soft power. We believe we should harness these strengths to promote the UK and our values to the rest of the world.

5.2 Soft Power

5.2.1 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' Brexit fiasco has wrecked our reputation around the world, undermining the UK's credibility and standing. More reliable partners like Germany and Japan have surpassed us in influence since the 2019 election.

5.2.2 The good news is that even though Brexit has caused undeniable damage to our international standing, the UK's cultural output and diplomatic reach can still be felt across the globe.

5.2.3 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.

5.2.4 Our world-class universities welcome millions of students from around the world - enhancing the UK's reputation, boosting our economy and exporting our liberal and democratic values around the world.

5.2.5 We think we should make better use of our cultural output to promote our democratic and liberal values, as well as combating global authoritarianism.

5.2.6 The UK also has a privileged position in a variety of multinational

organisations. We are on the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Nations which we provide the ceremonial head of through the Royal Family, as well as holding 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.

Questions

24. How can we use our soft power to support threatened democracies?
25. What other actions should we take to enhance our soft power?

26. How should the UK best make use of its roles in the Commonwealth and UN Security council?

5.3 Diplomacy and Development

5.3.1 The UK has some of the most respected and effective diplomatic services and overseas development assistance programmes in the world. The Conservatives with their abolition of DfID, and diplomatic incompetence aimed at winning good headlines at home rather than promoting the UK's interests, have dramatically diminished our strength in these areas.

5.3.2 The United Kingdom's commitment to development assistance has been one of our most effective foreign policy tools in recent decades, and we reaffirm our commitment to supporting

the world's most vulnerable communities in the face of threats from climate change, conflict, displacement, poverty, and human rights abuses.

5.3.3 The Conservatives have approached Overseas Development Aid (ODA) with cruel cynicism, and their cuts and lack of strategic leadership have harmed some of the most vulnerable communities on earth. 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. This

is money that should be going to support communities affected by war, famine and displacement in nations such as Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan, all of whom have seen huge cuts to their support under the Tories.

5.3.4 Well planned and coordinated assistance increases opportunities for women and girls, LGBTQ+ people, along with other marginalised communities, can help mitigate the effects of climate change, can support peace building and reduce displacement and can build economic and cultural prosperity in recipient countries as well as improving trading opportunities and political capital for the UK.

5.3.5 We are committed to restoring the UK commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA and re-establishing DfID as a separate Department of State with its own Cabinet Minister.

5.3.6 We will ensure that the UK plays a significant role in supporting recipient countries in addressing the economic and health consequences of coronavirus, 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.

5.3.7 We will ensure that the use of ODA continues to be consistent with the OECD/DAC rules/guidelines, and with UK legislation. In particular, its 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 aid-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 aid.

5.3.8 We believe that the five 'Ps' of Prosperity, People, Planet, Peace and Partnerships provide an overarching framework for progress, and we will focus assistance on programs that are co-designed with local communities and local civil society groups. This includes re-establishing the development education programme to increase public understanding of the links between progress elsewhere and the UK, and the universal nature and applicability of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5.3.9 We believe that ODA spending can help reinvigorate internationalism and multilateralism to tackle cross border challenges, and we will focus on programs which are situated at the nexus of climate, conflict, and migration. Where democracy is threatened, 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 assistance programming.

Questions

27. How do we best make the case for 0.7% aid spending in target seats when faced with the cost of living crisis?
28. Should we shift to giving aid strategically, as a counterpoint to authoritarian regimes such as China? Or should we retain our focus on alleviating extreme poverty and stay focused on where we can do the most moral “good”?
29. How can we better link development and diplomacy? What can we learn from other countries that have done this successfully?

6 Civil Resilience

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The last 15 years have seen repeated social crises, with “unprecedented” economic, energy and health shocks becoming the norm. The 2008 Financial Crisis has exposed the UK’s dependence on financial services, the COVID pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have highlighted how vulnerable the UK is to global health, economic and energy shocks, and the 2022 Mini-Budget Crisis has shown how vulnerable the UK is to global financial markets.

6.1.2 We must make the UK more resilient to economic, health, and digital shocks.

6.2 Economic Security and Supply Chains

6.2.1 The UK has 13 sectors considered to be critical to a functional economy: Chemicals, Civil Nuclear, Communications, Defence, Emergency Services, Energy, Finance, Food, Government, Health, Space, Transport and Water. Each of these need to be made more resilient to external shocks. Several options include diversification of import and export markets, shortening global supply chains, and cementing economic partnerships with political

partnerships so that they can withstand robust interruptions during challenging times.

6.2.2 “Friend-shoring” has been proposed as a strategy for promoting economic security. Critical supply chains, trade and investment are focused on reliable and friendly nations instead of being motivated solely by maximising economic efficiency. This means that supplies are less likely to be disrupted by conflict, political change or major economic shocks.

6.2.3 Friend-shoring does come with its own risks and challenges. For instance, moving supply chains and investment

towards reliable democracies in practice means moving investment out of the Global South and towards developed countries in Europe, North America and parts of East Asia. This has ethical, as well as geostrategic and economic implications, potentially creating hardship for the world's poorest, antagonising friendly countries, and raising costs.

6.3 Health

6.3.1 The COVID Pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable the UK and the world is to sudden pandemics and health shocks. The UK ranked 7th on the Global Health Security Index in 2021, although the COVID pandemic saw the UK suffer some

of the highest number of deaths in both absolute and per capita terms.

6.3.2 The rapid development of a vaccine in the UK and the courageous work undertaken by health and care workers, in contrast to the poor procurement of PPE equipment and staff shortages, show that the UK has both strengths and weaknesses in the health sector. We need to improve our skills and supplies in areas we are currently weaker in, to ensure that there are no shortages in the next health crisis.

6.3.3 The other key lesson from COVID is that infectious diseases will regularly return to the UK if the globe lacks appropriate medical supplies, notably

vaccines. We need to work with the WHO as well as pharmaceutical and medical companies to ensure a more equitable and less wasteful distribution of medical supplies. Poor planning should not be an excuse for binning vaccines and other valuable medical supplies in a global health crisis.

6.4 Cybersecurity and Digital Infrastructure

6.4.1 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.

6.4.2 Social media is also a key part of security. We already have extensive policies for regulating online platforms, public education and awareness on online threats, and disinformation in policy paper 145 *Democracy and Public Debate*, but we need to go further in changing the UK's culture and increasing our skills base to be more resilient to these threats.

6.4.3 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.

6.4.4 Digital resilience in local government is key to how communities survive and thrive. Ignoring this threat leaves local community services– like GP offices, hospitals, police stations, schools, libraries, and magistrate courts– all vulnerable to digital attacks. We feel it is essential that all these issues should be better understood and better funded by governments and government agencies. We also need to identify and invest in more special protections for essential digital infrastructure.

Questions

30. Which critical industries should be prioritised for our economic security and how should we seek to secure them?
31. Should we engage in friend-shoring? If so, who with?
32. How do we improve the UK's governmental and societal response to the next pandemic?
33. How do we ensure there is an equitable global distribution of medical supplies during the next pandemic?

34. How can we change the UK's culture so that cybersecurity is acted on by everyone?
35. What digital infrastructure should be given extra protection and what should that protection look like?

7 Social Sustainability

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 As well as ensuring that our public services and essential infrastructure are resilient to external shocks, we also need to put our economy and society on a sustainable footing for the long term. This means tackling the three big challenges of the 21st century; the transition to low carbon energy production, climate and environmental change and global food insecurity driven by climate breakdown.

7.2 Energy Security

7.2.1 Energy security was considered an issue of the past by many until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The

ensuing energy security crisis has shown how interdependent global energy markets are and how vulnerable we are to energy price shocks. Despite the UK's commitment to Net Zero by 2050, we continue to import fossil fuels from dictatorships in Russia and the Middle East.

7.2.2 The most effective long-term solution is a rapid transition away from fossil fuels towards domestically-produced renewable energy, set out in policy paper 129 *Tackling the Climate Emergency*. The question is how best to achieve this in a sustainable way in an insecure world.

7.2.3 Many of the materials and technology required for producing

renewable energy come from abroad, often in unstable or potential hostile regions. For instance, lithium, used in the production of rechargeable batteries, is predominantly found in South America, Australia and China. Most of the world's solar panels are also made in China.

7.3 Environmental and Climate Security

7.3.1 Climate change, and the extreme weather conditions that can result from it, is increasingly threatening the world's environmental security. Air pollution alone causes around 7 million deaths globally and around 30,000 deaths in the UK each year, far more than die in wars and conflict.

7.3.2 In other countries, especially around the equatorial regions, environmental decline can lead to conflict and refugee crises. Inhospitable conditions, desertification, drought and famine will be made worse in the coming decades by climate change. This will ultimately drive regional instability, and impact on the UK's own security. It is in our national interest to help these countries adapt and mitigate the impact of climate change.

7.3.3 Improving the UK's environment and the health and wellbeing of the UK's population is addressed in the upcoming FPC paper *The Natural Environment*.

7.4 Global Food Security

7.4.1 The UK currently ranks 9th on the The Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Food Security Index, making us one of the most food secure nations in the world. Despite this, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown how vulnerable the world is to disruptions to the food supply chain. The recent floods in Pakistan have also highlighted how quickly regional famine can break out due to environmental shocks.

7.4.2 We think there is a case for diversifying the UK's food supply chains as well as using private and public investment in the underdeveloped world to increase their food production capabilities - replacing inefficient and environmentally

harmful 'slash and burn' practices with modern, sustainable farming. This will enhance the UK and the world's food security.

7.4.3 Domestic food production, and getting the balance between competing land uses, is addressed in the FPC's upcoming *Food and Farming* paper.

Questions

36. How should we ensure we have reliable supplies of the materials and technology needed for creating low carbon energy?
37. How should we tackle refugees created by environmental breakdown?

38. How should we help the most vulnerable regions adapt and mitigate climate change?
39. How do we develop global systems to manage food crises such as famines and conflict?
40. How should we help increase production of food sustainably in underdeveloped countries?

Remit

The remit of this group is to review the party's policies on International Security, and make updated proposals which communicate our values of liberty, equality, democracy, community, internationalism and environmentalism in a way which helps secure the election of as many Liberal Democrats as possible, at local, regional and national level, in order to promote our vision of society and remove from power a Conservative government that is failing the country.

The group will be expected to build on existing policy proposals as set out in the

2019 Election Manifesto, Policy Paper 132 Britain at the Heart of a Changing World and Policy Paper 123 Safe and Free. The group is expected to consider and address Liberal Democrat principles on diversity and equalities in developing their proposals.

This group will as a top priority:

- Develop up to three headline policies on International Security which the party can communicate widely to win votes.

The working group will develop policies on:

- How we can ensure the UK's security in an uncertain world
- How the UK can promote security around the globe
- The International Security Institutional Architecture
- The role of International Development in promoting global peace and security
- UK Defence Policy
- European Security and Defence Cooperation
- Promoting our environmental security (inc Energy Security)
- Promoting our economic security (eg vulnerabilities of supply chains)
- Global food security

- Combating International terrorism
- Novel threats e.g. Cyber Warfare
- Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution
- Promoting democracy and liberal values internationally
- Responding to the rise of hostile authoritarian states

The group will not look at food security and nuclear weapons policy, which will be covered by the Food and Farming working group and an upcoming Spokespersons Paper respectively.

The group will also consider the need for institutional change at central, regional and

local government levels to embed these approaches firmly in policy.

The group will take evidence and consult widely both within and outside the party. This evidence should inform the group's proposals, which will be presented alongside an analysis of costs and an Equalities Impact Assessment.

A policy paper of no longer than 10,000 words should be produced for debate at Autumn Conference 2023. Prior to that a consultative session should be held at Spring Conference 2023, and a draft policy paper should be presented to the Federal Policy Committee by June 2023.

