Aleppo, Syria: a teenager looks on as people walk through rubble left by a missile attack. (Photo: EPA/Bruno Gallardo)

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD

The UK needs a safe world to trade and invest in, and to be free from the security threats caused by conflicts or fragile states. Yet spiralling inequality and climate change, among many other factors, threaten to create a more dangerous world.

As the tragedy in Syria shows, the world's old and new powers have not yet found a way to unite to end conflicts. The age of interventions, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, is over. But a new rule-based world in which China, India, and others unite with Western powers to protect civilians and end conflicts has not yet come into being.

Whoever wins the 2015 UK general election, the greatest test for UK foreign policy will be how much it can do to help build that world.

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SUMMARY: A MANIFESTO FOR ACTION

The UK cannot be safe and prosperous in a world fraught with tensions and conflict. To be secure at home, it must help build security abroad. To build trade and prosperity, it must help build peace wherever the UK wants to trade and invest.

These economic and security imperatives coincide with a moral imperative to curb human suffering in conflicts, and a political imperative to guide a still-emerging multipolar world in a constructive direction – helping to bring the world's new and old powers together to end conflicts.

This paper is about these imperatives for an active and effective foreign policy. It is about how the UK could contribute more, even more than it does, if it more consistently learned some of the lessons of the past.

Seeing the interest in peace

Every day, Oxfam sees the human cost of conflicts in Syria, South Sudan and far too many other crises around the world. The most basic human empathy drives millions of British people to help, through donating to aid appeals, joining campaigns, or simply wanting the UK government to do all that it can to protect civilians from the horrors of war.

The UK has an interest in doing so too. The risks to the UK's security from crises such as Syria are widely acknowledged; those to the UK's economic wellbeing rather less so. But UK prosperity is vulnerable to conflicts and crises that limit its ability to trade and invest around the world. It is far from immune from the shocks provoked by, for example, Syria's escalating conflict last August. Shares on the London stock exchange fell as the market reacted to 'the largest geo-political risk since the start of the Iraq war'.[1]

David Cameron has argued that UK trade and prosperity must be 'even more strongly at the heart' of foreign policy.[2] But that trade and prosperity will rely on peace and stability – in a world in which more than a quarter of all countries are described by the OECD as 'fragile'.[3] British investment in Egypt, for example, fell by almost half as violence spread in 2011.[4]

Politicians of all parties should spell out to the public the UK's interest in peace more clearly than they have, to help tell the story of why the UK's active contribution to the world is so vital for the future. In the shadow of Iraq and Afghanistan, too much debate is still dominated by what the UK cannot do rather than what it can, or as one Labour-leaning analyst put it 'by arguments about the past rather than visions of the future'.[5]

As parties prepare for the 2015 general election, they should do two things. They must make clear the great contribution the UK *can* make with diplomatic, development and, where necessary, defence commitments – almost always without the kind of military force that has been so

contentious in the past. And they should look beyond the immediate crises to show how climate change, rising inequality and other factors will lie behind many of the threats that the UK and the world will face in the future.

Facing the threats

The spark that lit South Sudan's conflict in December 2013 was a political dispute. But the environment it ignited was not merely a 'fragile state', but a society riven by extreme poverty, where long-term tensions have not been overcome and armed young men, for example, with few opportunities loot cattle to pay the 'price' of a bride, and perpetuate tit-for-tat feuds between rival groups.

South Sudan is one of many countries menaced by the 'dangerous conditions of a warming planet', as the UK's Chief of the Defence Staff put it in December 2013.[6] Syria is too. Its conflict arose from a combustible mix of political and other factors; but one, among many others, was a severe drought, which had impoverished two million people and was already in its fourth year when the conflict began.[7] According to the latest climate models, large parts of southern Europe, as well as the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, Japan and Latin America may face increased threats of drought as early as the 2030s.[8]

Before 2011, the forces that drove Syria towards conflict also included rising inequality, as falling government subsidies and public sector job losses affected some groups more than others.[9] Like Egypt and many other countries, it showed the futility of assuming – as many Western governments seemed to do – that a state which combines inequality and repression will ever be stable.

No single factor causes conflict. But it is becoming increasingly clear that inequalities of wealth and power, and climate change are significant parts of this complex mix.

Shaping the future

The UK will face such threats in a rapidly changing world where power is flowing – at least in relative terms – from West to East, and from North to South. China and others have joined the USA as powers of global importance. Russia's resurgence is obvious. The UN sits in a more diverse multilateral landscape than there once was, filled with the G20, the G77 and many others. The EU is not alone but is one of many regional organizations in almost every corner of the world.

In this landscape, the old powers of the West and the new ones of Asia and elsewhere have not yet found a way to come together to tackle global threats such as climate change, or – as Syria shows – to protect civilians from conflicts. Finding that common path is one of the greatest challenges to ensuring that the still-emerging multipolar world upholds universal human rights. Recent events in Ukraine may have just made that more difficult. But the world must somehow find that common path to prevent international divisions from continuing to fuel conflicts in the future.

The UK's almost unique membership of so many international organizations means that it has a vital role in helping to achieve this. That does not mean that the UK should be any less vigorous in standing up for human rights; quite the opposite. But it does mean building unity wherever possible, not only among the key emerging powers, both those on and off the UN Security Council, and within the EU. The rise of China, India and others, and the resurgence of Russia, makes it more important, not less, to multiply the UK's influence through the EU. Without uniting with EU partners in response to crises, and on issues such as climate change, the UK can never tackle the threats to its prosperity and security.

None of that will be any simpler than it has been. The UK may continue to struggle to find international consensus on the right course of action. But it should be confident in its contribution to the world if its diplomacy consistently upholds human rights and is informed by the best possible analysis from the ground.

A commitment to multilateral solutions will never mean accepting the lowest common denominator of what the world agrees on crises such as Syria. Trying to forge a consensus to uphold human rights will mean working with different groups of governments and institutions on different crises to do so.

Getting it right

In opposite ways, the UK got it terribly wrong in its responses first to Bosnia and Rwanda – where it stood on the sidelines of genocide – and then in the disastrous invasion of Iraq. Now, however, it is beginning to get some things right. It has championed the need to include civil society, including women's groups, in the agonizingly slow process of bringing Syria's conflict to an end. And both Labour and the Coalition demonstrated global leadership in the drive for the Arms Trade Treaty, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013.

That same year, the UK budgeted for the first time to dedicate 0.7 per cent of national income to overseas aid. That was a historic achievement built on a brave cross-party consensus The UK ranks highly compared to most other rich countries for its development-friendly policies beyond aid.[10]

Much more, however, is needed to tackle the threats of inequality and climate change. And in some parts of the world, the UK fails to multiply the impact of its generous aid – by not combining it with high-priority promotion of human rights and conflict prevention. In the Central African Republic, the FCO is absent entirely, despite the scale of its crisis or the fact that the UK has to take vital decisions on it in the UN Security Council. And while UN peacekeepers struggle to cope in countries such as South Sudan, the UK languishes 47th in the global league of contributors of soldiers and police to peacekeeping operations.[11]

Grasping the challenge

The UK needs a peaceful and secure world, without which its long-drawn-out recovery from recession can never succeed. It also exists in a

changing world that will, if the current generation of politicians get it wrong, relegate the UK to a minor power.

Under different governments, UK foreign policy has had great successes and failures. Some lessons have been learned. Others could still be.

Whichever party guides UK foreign policy from 2015 must redouble efforts to protect civilians and help resolve the world's conflicts; to tackle inequality, climate change and other driving forces behind conflict; and to demonstrate the important contribution the UK can make in helping to shape the still-emerging multipolar world in a constructive direction.

Five tests for a foreign policy

In practice, what should that mean? It is impossible to predict what events the next government will face. Foreign policy priorities are often dictated by events, as in Syria or Ukraine, that few people see coming. But there are pertinent questions that should be asked of any new policy.

What would make it more likely that the UK would challenge governments more consistently on human rights **before events like the 'Arab Spring' take place**? Or support civil society, including women's rights groups, in the struggle for justice **more quickly than the almost 10 years it took to set up a fund for that purpose in Afghanistan**? Or speak out about, for example, the inequalities and climate-related disasters that increase fragility, before it is too late?

The chances of the next government making the right choices will be improved if it ensures that its policy towards any country meets the following five tests.

Five tests for any foreign policy

1. **Serving long-term global and UK interests**: *Is the policy informed not only by immediate commercial or other interests, but by listening to a diverse range of voices, including local civil society, for the best analysis of how to build societies in which human rights are respected?*

2. **Reducing inequality**: *Does it specifically aim to reduce the dangerous inequalities between different groups than can fuel violence?*

3. **Promoting women's rights**: *Does it specifically aim to protect women from violence and promote women's equality and participation in all aspects of society, including negotiated solutions to conflict?*

4. **Supporting an international rule-based order with human rights at its core**: *Does it reinforce international rules and structures, including the UN, and encourage emerging powers to uphold universal human rights in helping to solve the world's conflicts?*

5. **Joined-up thinking**: *Does it use every relevant tool of UK policy to meet those aims – so that the impact of aid is multiplied by consistent diplomacy?*

Seven practical ways forward

Beyond these tests for each relevant policy, the next government should take the following steps in its foreign and wider international policy.

> **Seven practical ways forward**
>
> 1. Dedicate at least one senior diplomat in every relevant embassy to leading the analysis of and response to potential causes of insecurity; giving priority to engaging with local civil society(including women's groups), promoting human rights, and taking other steps to tackle dangerous inequalities.
>
> 2. Open up the National Security Council to more input from outside government, modelled on the 'Arria formula' informal briefings of UN Security Council members.[12] This should not only include briefings from UK-based NGOs, academics, and media, but also from civil society organizations in the country under discussion, including women's groups, when the National Security Council addresses relevant crises.
>
> 3. Vigorously use the UK's permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and its annual presidency of the Council, to take action on impending crises, to deliver the protection of civilians that peacekeeping missions are intended to ensure, and to encourage all permanent Security Council members to renounce the use of their veto in the case of mass atrocities.
>
> 4. Implement the Arms Trade Treaty to the highest possible standards, encouraging other states to do the same, and ensure the Treaty has the greatest possible humanitarian impact.
>
> 5. Use the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review to set out a plan to increase military and police contributions to UN peacekeeping and support, for example, making security forces more accountable to civilians – both of which are about choices, not increases, in UK spending.
>
> 6. Promote ambitious global agreements on climate change, including taking a leadership role in efforts to achieve a global deal at the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015. Promote a climate change goal as part of the global development framework that will replace the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.
>
> 7. Ensure that the global development framework also contains goals and targets on peace and governance, as proposed by the UN High Level Panel in 2013. This must include strong targets on disaster risk reduction, and champion stand-alone goals to rapidly reduce income inequality (with targets for closing extreme gaps in wealth within and between countries) and on gender equality and women's rights.

1 THE UK IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

Foreign Secretary William Hague has summed up the UK's interest in Syria as follows: to contain extremism, prevent a wider Middle East conflict, and because 'Our foreign policy is inseparable from upholding human rights, protecting lives, and supporting international law.'[13] All these are true, and applicable to conflicts far beyond the Middle East as well. According to the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Houghton, dangerous instability affects 'increasing areas of ungoverned spaces in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and, potentially still, astride the Afghanistan–Pakistan border [and] North Africa.'[14]

That instability hampers the UK's ability to trade and invest in many parts of the world. UK investment in Egypt fell by almost half between 2010 and 2011,[15] and the country's continuing instability makes it, as UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) diplomatically puts it, 'not conducive' to foreign investment.[16] Other crises, such as those in Libya[17] and Syria,[18] make the price of oil higher and more volatile. Conflicts over resources in many countries – oil in South Sudan, opium in Afghanistan, minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – deprive investors of legitimate opportunities and fuel organized crime and the drugs trade. Some 95 per cent of heroin in the UK comes from Afghan-sourced opium.[19]

To most analysts, this is painfully obvious. But the media debate fails almost completely to move beyond the latest atrocity or the question of how not to repeat the disaster of Iraq. 'Who is responsible', the parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy asked David Cameron in January 2014, 'for engaging the public so that their perception of risk is not just a knee-jerk reaction to the latest problem?'[21]

The Prime Minister admitted that he did not have 'a great answer, but in the end we must have a strategy and explain what it is… That is probably the best you can do.'[22] This paper argues that politicians of all parties can do more, and that the moral imperative to curb human suffering in conflicts coincides not only with its economic and security interests, but also with its political interests in helping to shape the emerging multipolar world.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

The UK's standing in the world rests to a large extent upon its contribution to a peaceful world and an international rule-based order. Its championing of the Arms Trade Treaty shows how much it can achieve. But climate change, inequality, and other factors are increasing the risk of violent conflict, and the world is still fumbling towards a multipolar order in which the so-called BRIC and MINT countries and others[23] will have to work together with the established Western powers.

The UK has not been a superpower since the 1950s, but it is still able to exert influence to an extent that other like-minded but smaller states cannot hope to replicate.
Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Royal United Services Institute[20]

The challenges facing this emerging world include not only the question of how to reach global deals, for example on climate change. They also include the need to find a way of working together to resolve the world's most terrible conflicts; overcoming the divisions in the UN Security Council and elsewhere that crises such as those in Syria and now Ukraine have repeatedly brought to the fore.

Bridging those divisions is vital for the world, and for the UK. More than any other country, perhaps, it relies on its membership of multiple international bodies – including the UN Security Council, the G20, the G8, the EU, NATO, the Commonwealth, and many others – to maintain its role in the world.[25]

Such a role will increasingly depend on the UK's effectiveness, not only in protecting its immediate interests, but in helping to lead the struggle against the world's great challenges, such as inequality and climate change, and in guiding the emerging multipolar world in a constructive direction.

The UK cannot turn back the clock; its economic and military role in the world will never be what they once were. But it can still play a vital role in the world, and do so in an affordable way, if it can multiply the value of its diplomacy, development and defence commitments in an active approach that consistently and comprehensively supports human rights, development and peace.

As we move towards the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, we continue to bear witness to the most brutal violations of human rights in conflict – from Syria to South Sudan to the Central African Republic. It is vital that we step up our efforts to prevent and respond to such atrocities.

Peter Wilson, Deputy UK Permanent Representative to the UN, February 2014[24]

2 ACTING WITHOUT INVADING

In August 2013, parliament's rejection of plans for military action in Syria prompted an outpouring of doubt over the UK's role in the world. Alongside the continuing withdrawal from Afghanistan, it seemed to mark the end of the UK's most recent age of intervention that started in Kosovo in 1999.

The intervention in Kosovo, as Tony Blair explained when justifying it,[27] was a reaction against the world's failure to stop the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia earlier in that decade, when the UK had been at the forefront of arguments against international action. In 1997 the new Labour government began a far more activist approach to foreign policy, even before this became associated with military intervention in Kosovo and then Sierra Leone.

More controversially, the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq followed and continued for years – so many years, indeed, that the Coalition government which followed has had to manage the military withdrawal from Afghanistan as one of its foreign policy priorities. Fifteen years after Kosovo, the UK's latest age of intervention is only now drawing to an end. So, in 2015, are there lessons from the past that still must be learned?

LEARNING THE RIGHT LESSONS

Each of the great crises since the Cold War has taught different lessons. Rwanda and Bosnia showed how vital it is to act quickly and assertively to prevent appalling atrocities. But the invasion of Iraq showed that the wrong kind of action can make a terrible situation even worse, particularly when there is too much confidence in what military action can achieve, and too little preparation for everything else. [28]

Then the Arab Spring showed how states that combine inequality and repression may be far more fragile than even decades of apparent 'stability' suggest. All these crises were very different, and the UK was far from alone in failing, for example, to predict the dramatic events of the Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere. More worryingly though perhaps, in all these situations UK policy seems to have reflected a more structural failing also ascribed to Western policy in Afghanistan:[30] with too much policy being based on relatively limited knowledge of the countries in question, and driven by preconceived views and misapplied lessons.

Progress has certainly been made since then. The UK's approach to Syria compares favourably with the hubris of Iraq or, in 1994, the terrible disregard for Rwanda. But, on Syria and beyond, there remain lingering doubts as to how well the lessons of the past have been learned.

There is a dangerous mood of isolationism. We must make a clear decision whether this is the path we want, or not. Maybe [the Syria vote] is the start of a new Britain, as the Tory isolationist right, Labour's pacifist left and some further-flung voices claim. If it is to be so, then let it be so because we have chosen it. Not sleepwalked into it.

Lord Ashdown,
31 August 2013[26]

In 2012, just one in 40 British diplomats was fluent in the language of the country in which they worked.

Rachel Briggs,
Institute for Strategic Dialogue[29]

SYRIA AND BEYOND

There are many good things that can be said about the UK's approach to Syria, not least the generosity of its aid, its support for civil society organizations (including women's groups) having a voice in 2014's peace talks, and its role in the UN Security Council's High Level Group on humanitarian challenges. This February in New York, it successfully pushed for unanimous support for the Security Council's Resolution 2139 on the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

But, at the same time, the UK's faith in the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) has jarred with the evidence that the SNC represents only a fraction of Syrians. Moves to arm opposition fighters in 2013 seemed to owe less to a careful analysis that that would do more good than harm in Syria now, and too much to a contentious lesson from the 1990s that arming Bosnian soldiers then would have been the most effective way to prevent the appalling atrocities such as Srebrenica that took place.

By the end of 2013, the UK had stopped even non-lethal assistance to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) after Islamist fighters seized FSA bases, precisely the danger critics had warned of for months.[32] But the greatest criticism of talking up the prospect of arming the opposition was that it fuelled division, not unity, among the UN Security Council, the EU and the countries – from Qatar to Iran – that must still come together to press for peace on the ground. This was not just the wrong policy for Syria, but not conducive to what must be an overarching aim of UK policy: to help unite, wherever possible, the still-emerging multipolar world in a constructive direction.

That does not mean agreeing to every proposition from other governments, or failing to challenge those that pour arms into conflicts or suppress civil society and citizens in their own countries. Nor does it mean that the absolute sovereignty of governments, rather than universal human rights, should be the basis of the rule-based world that the UK should be seeking to help build. But it does mean building unity wherever possible among the key emerging powers, the UN Security Council – and the EU.

Though the EU remains far less effective than it could be, it is hard to think of a threat to any part of the EU to which the UK could remain immune. Without uniting with EU partners on particular crises, and on issues such as climate change, little progress will be possible. Since the UK's share of the world's military and economic resources will never be what they once were, its influence in the world will be limited, unless it uses the EU as a vital partner, and speaks as part of a single European voice wherever a useful consensus is possible.

None of that will be simple. The UK will often struggle to find international agreement on the right course of action. But, if its diplomacy consistently upholds human rights and is informed by the best possible analysis of conflict-prone countries, it can be confident in its contribution. A commitment to multilateral solutions will not mean accepting the low common denominator of what the world agrees to on crises such as

The US, UK and France have oscillated on Syria between explicit demands for Assad to leave and implicit acceptance of him as a viable partner in UN-brokered peace negotiations.
Chatham House, December 2013[31]

Syria. Trying to forge consensus to uphold human rights will mean working with different groups of governments and institutions on different crises to do so.

But the guiding principle should be clear: to seek multilateral solutions to uphold human rights, protect civilians, and resolve conflicts. That does not mean sacrificing human rights in pursuit of a valueless multipolar world. In each crisis, what to do will continue to be difficult. What not to do, however, should include some of the arguments of the past, such as over sending arms to Syria, that have done more to divide than unite the EU, UN Security Council and the world towards peace.

AID IS NEVER ENOUGH

What the conflict in Bosnia and countless crises since then have shown is that aid is never enough. The UK's generous response to humanitarian appeals is not in doubt: in 2012, its government gave more humanitarian aid than almost any other in the world – behind only the US and the European Commission – even though this represented only eight per cent of the country's total overseas aid spending.[34]

But 20 years after the 'fig leaf' of generous aid that concealed diplomatic failure in Bosnia, UK diplomacy towards some countries still raises some difficult questions:

- Does the UK diplomatic effort really match the scale of the problem and the investment of aid?

- Does it stand up for human rights and the protection of civilians, and support a vibrant and effective civil society as much as it could?

In some countries, the answer is 'yes'. But in others it is more difficult to find a consistent approach. For example, when David Cameron came to power in 2010, he said that 'Gaza cannot and must not be allowed to remain a prison camp.'[35] But since then the UK has stepped back from calling for the blockade of the enclave to be ended, and has moved from pressing Israel to lift its restrictions on Palestinian movement to asking it merely to 'ease' them.[36] Meanwhile, exports from Gaza are still only 3 per cent of what they were before the blockade began.[37] While DFID provides significant aid to its impoverished 1.7 million people, without more diplomatic pressure that will not be enough to end their suffering.

None of that, or the examples below, belies the substantial efforts that current and previous UK governments have made to promote human rights and the protection of civilians. Nor the means, such as William Hague's Advisory Group on Human Rights, by which the government has tried to engage with Oxfam, Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and others on these vital subjects. But it is a reminder that the struggle to apply the UK's values consistently in real crises is never over.

Promoting global policies is sometimes more straight forward and, on some key global themes, the UK has certainly led from the front.

Only an outcome on the political track will provide a lasting solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria.
Sir Mark Lyall Grant, UK Permanent Representative to the UN,
22 February 2014[33]

One of the challenges we face is ensuring that the UK government are consistently raising human rights with its international counterparts. In these challenging economic times they must not be tempted to avoid these difficult conversations in the pursuit of commercial and 'strategic' relationships.
Kate Allen, Director,
Amnesty International UK, March 2014

GLOBAL PROGRESS

In 2012, William Hague launched the UK government's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, which has deployed teams of experts to relevant conflicts and led to G8 and UN declarations on the subject. In November 2013, the Development Secretary, Justine Greening, hosted an international conference calling for action on violence against women during emergencies, at which development agencies (including Oxfam) pledged to step up their work to prevent such violence. In June 2014, the UK will host a global summit on the initiative (in which it will hopefully emphasize the importance of women's participation in peace-building and gender-sensitive security forces).

Such a focus on women's rights is entirely right. As William Hague and John Kerry wrote in February, 'preventing sexual violence isn't just a great moral cause of our generation. It is a national security imperative. It fuels conflict, forces people to flee their homes and is often perpetrated alongside other human rights abuses, including forced marriage, sexual slavery and human trafficking.'[39] Without involving women fully and fairly in peace processes, it is all too easy to find that the 'peace' eventually agreed on does little to answer women's needs.

In countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen, and Syria, standing up for women's rights is one of the main ways in which UK diplomacy demonstrates a vital added value. From the start of the Syrian conflict, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) raised women's rights with opposition figures and ensured that women activists were included in human rights training.[41] In 2013 and 2014, William Hague has been at the forefront of diplomatic pressure to try to make sure women can eventually take part in the painfully slow progress towards peace, specifically at the Geneva II talks that began in January 2014.

However, much more can be done. The challenge to prioritize ending violence against women remains a constant. In Afghanistan, for example, the UK provides substantial funds to support women's rights, but on the important area of increasing the number of women police officers – vital to help make Afghan women feel safer – the UK has not been a leader, and the UK earmarks no specific funds to expand and improve female policing in Afghanistan.

Controlling arms is another vital issue. Both Labour and Coalition governments played an important leadership role in the development and agreement of the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013, after a decade of global campaigning and six years of diplomatic negotiations. And yet doubts remain over how consistent the UK is when applying its arms controls. In 2013, the Commons Committees on Arms Export Controls noted that in the previous year the government had issued over £12bn worth of export licences to 32 countries where human rights were a concern,[42] including Syria and 26 other countries on the FCO's own human rights watch list.[43]

I commend the leadership of the United Kingdom in bringing key international support and momentum to the crucial fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, speaking in Security Council debate on sexual violence,

24 June 2013[38]

It is extraordinary that the Government's approved arms export licences to Bahrain include licences for small arms ammunition, pistols, gun silencers, assault rifles and machine guns.

Sir John Stanley MP,

Chairman of the Committees on Arms Export Controls,

21 November 2013[40]

COMPREHENSIVELY RIGHT?

One outcome that almost all recent crises have produced is a call for a more 'comprehensive approach'; moving beyond simply providing aid to also ensuring the protection of civilians and the diplomatic, development and, where necessary, defence engagement to help turn a fragile society into a resilient one.

Such an approach has become a mantra of governments around the world. In 2011, the UK's new *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* set out to combine diplomatic, development, and defence policies to build 'societies in which human rights are respected, basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development open to all – [and thereby] resilient and flexible in the face of shocks'.[44] In December 2013, the EU followed suit with a comprehensive approach which added that 'as economic and financial resources remain under pressure, the case for such a comprehensive approach, making optimal use of all relevant instruments – be they external or internal policy instruments – is stronger than ever.'[45]

Such approaches still face considerable challenges. Government departments must work together effectively, but in a way that respects the vital independence and impartiality of humanitarian aid. That means that decisions on humanitarian aid must be driven solely by human need.

Other challenges revolve around departments' different priorities. The Home Office, for example, took an extraordinary amount of time to offer resettlement in the UK to a small number of vulnerable Syrian refugees situated in neighbouring countries; a reluctance that never appeared consistent with the actions of DFID and the FCO on the ground. DFID, quite rightly, invests heavily in some countries where the UK's diplomatic presence is small, and where some doubt the UK's ability to multiply the impact of its aid with effective diplomacy. In others like the Central African Republic, the FCO is absent entirely, despite the scale of its crisis or the fact that the UK has to take vital decisions on it in the UN Security Council.

Some challenges could be solved by the National Security Council doing more to resolve differences among government departments. Others could be solved, for instance, by opening up the Council to more analysis from outside government, including from NGOs, academics and media with relevant expertise, and civil society organizations from the countries under discussion.

This is not because NGOs or civil society organizations are always right or united, any more than governments; nor that there are no dilemmas for the UK in engaging with civil society. There are, for the suppression of civil society in a number of countries is driven in part by their governments' suspicion that civil society organizations are Western-funded subversives.

But without access to diverse views from civil society and others, it is difficult for the UK to form a good analysis of the present or possible

Investing in sustainable peace means understanding conflict contexts and responding to underlying tensions before violence breaks out – making appropriate use of UK diplomatic, development or defence engagement.
Paul Murphy,
Executive Director, Saferworld,
March 2014

futures in any crisis. And, as Oxfam's research funded by DFID has shown, helping to build a vibrant and effective civil society is central to making societies less fragile.[46] The answer to the dilemma of how to engage with local civil society, without fuelling suspicion, is not to disengage, but to work with as broad a range of civil society organizations as possible.

Attempts to deliver a constructive, comprehensive approach face profound challenges too, including how to ensure that the UK always:

- uses aid for its true purpose (to reduce poverty and human suffering), rather than to further foreign policy objectives which may, for example, point to different geographical priorities;

- remembers that material progress is never enough without building societies in which all human rights are respected, and in which all people have a voice in their future.

Development and humanitarian agencies have traditionally highlighted the former, and human rights agencies, the latter. Both are real dangers, and the UK must deliver its comprehensive approach to avoid them both.

Spending aid to give people equal access to accountable security and justice, alongside health, education and other services, is laudable. But spending that aid disproportionately in places that are security priorities for the UK is not.

The point about security and development aid is not that security is not vital; it is that aid must follow the priorities of people living in poverty in the affected country, rather than the UK's foreign policy priorities.

Any comprehensive approach that truly supports human rights, development and peace must demonstrate the highest:

- **humanitarian commitment** to providing aid which is not only generous, as UK aid certainly is, but always impartial, irrespective of the politics on the ground;

- **development commitment** to tackling the inequalities that can drive not only poverty but also violence;

- **diplomatic commitment** to multiplying the impact of aid by combining it with high-priority promotion of human rights and conflict prevention;

- **defence commitment** to UN peacekeeping and conflict prevention, such as supporting mechanisms to make security forces more accountable to national and local communities;

- **political commitment** in the UK – after years of contention over Iraq, Libya and Syria – to rebuilding the public and political will to support substantial investment in resolving foreign conflicts.

None of this means a return to large-scale interventions, like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it does imply increased commitments to relevant diplomatic, development and, where necessary, defence initiatives, and an approach to managing the public finances after 2015 so that the relevant departments do not compete for resources in quite the way that they sometimes have.

Before Tunisia's uprising erupted in 2010, many saw it as a development success. Economic growth was close to four per cent. But for many Tunisians higher incomes and better access to services did not compensate for corruption, repression, inequality and powerlessness.

David Mepham,
UK Director, Human Rights Watch,
January 2014[47]

DIPLOMACY, DEVELOPMENT AND DEFENCE

These commitments also imply, in some cases, the better use of resources already available. For Oxfam, obviously, the good use of aid is the first priority. The great majority of DFID aid is well used, and DFID deserves great credit for bucking the global trend of declining aid to the world's most conflict-prone countries. [49] But aid is never enough without sufficient diplomatic and, in some cases, other commitments.

The FCO's resources are stretched and increasingly geared towards markets for UK goods and investments. According to David Cameron, UK trade and prosperity must be 'even more strongly at the heart' of the new National Security Strategy.[50] But the refocus of the FCO's resources raises difficult questions. What happens to countries that are not priorities for UK trade and investment? And what happens when the promoting of exports clashes with efforts to build societies where human rights are enjoyed by all?

The lack of any diplomatic post in the Central African Republic has already been mentioned. Some fear that, in other countries, such as South Sudan and the DRC, the UK offers a lop-sided engagement, with generous aid but insufficient diplomatic endeavour, particularly after an immediate crisis; and that, because of this limited presence on the ground, UK diplomacy can be informed by rose-tinted analysis that exaggerates progress towards peace, and pays too little attention to early warnings of violence to come.

Any new shift in the FCO's resources must not further erode its analysis and influence in the most conflict-prone countries.

Some others – like the Parliamentary Committees on Arms Export Controls – wonder what steps the government can take to ensure it reaches objective decisions when economic interests and other priorities may collide, as in the case of arms exports to countries of concern. This raises the broader question of how business and human rights can be compatible. The government has been very clear that UK companies should uphold human rights and, in 2013, it produced an Implementation Plan showing how it would put the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights into effect. But this looks likely to have only a modest impact without further steps such as a mandatory requirement on UK corporations to report publicly on their policy and implementation on human rights.

The previous Labour government, as much as the Coalition, failed to support UN peacekeeping with large numbers of troops or police (though the UK does provide generous funding). Despite the fourth-highest military budget in the world,[52] the UK offers few troops for peacekeeping, and now languishes between Ireland and Bolivia, 47th in the league table of contributors.[53] It has also not provided troops (though it has supplied some funds) to the EU Force sent to help stem the violence in the Central African Republic. By making the right choices within the defence

If you think conflict prevention is expensive, try conflict.
Overseas Development Institute, February 2014[48]

It is strategically wise to be a development superpower as the UK has become. Our development assistance has huge benefits for our international standing and relationships.
Douglas Alexander, 21 January 2014[51]

budget, the UK could change that, while also focusing on, for example, the vital training that UK personnel can provide to help build accountable armed forces in post-conflict countries.

LOOKING TO 2015

What does all this mean for 2015 and beyond? The government's main international departments, the FCO, DFID, and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), will always have to justify their budgets and the effective use of them. But they should not have to compete for resources in the way that they did around the 2013 Spending Review, when, as the Treasury made cuts on defence as well as the UK's domestic departments, the ill-judged idea of using DFID money to help pay for military assets was floated.

The 2015 Spending Review must not only protect DFID's budget to allow the UK to keep its promises on aid, and to maintain the international reputation that the country's generosity gives it. In Oxfam's view, it must also tackle deficit reduction in a fair way (with progressive taxation) to allow all relevant departments to play their role in the UK's contribution to the world.

When one section of the population sees that it doesn't have the same opportunity to access economic resources as others that creates frustration, identity introversion and an explosion. Some people manipulate that, especially the religious aspects.

Catherine Samba-Panza,

President of the Central African Republic,

21 January 2014[54]

3 TACKLING THE DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

The unrest in the Central African Republic is not the only conflict rooted, in part, in inequalities between different groups. Among many other factors, Syria's hidden fragility before 2011 was, in part, caused by rising inequality, as falling government subsidies and public sector employment affected some groups more than others.[55] Syria had liberalized its economy and cut taxes; as some people got richer, a Chatham House report in 2007 warned that the tax reforms 'will hurt most Syrians and… have the potential to create more poverty, and more frustration.'[56] In 2008, subsidies for fuel oil were slashed and prices increased significantly.[57] And even before the severe drought that begun in 2007, the drift to Syria's towns and cities had produced huge numbers of people living in illegal settlements that the UN described as 'time bombs which could detonate at any moment.'[58]

Indeed, Syria represents how two key trends in global poverty can come together. People living in extreme poverty are increasingly found in either middle-income countries or those affected by conflict and fragility. Syria was just such a middle-income country,[59] but one in which inequality and other factors made it more fragile.

While inequality, more than any other single factor, does not crudely 'causes conflict'; it has become increasingly clear that, in many countries, inequality is part of the combustible mix of factors making conflict or substantial violence more likely.

- In 2010, men and women in six fragile states listed inequality, alongside poverty and competition over scarce resources, as key drivers of conflict.[61]
- In 2011, the Institute for Economics and Peace found a strong correlation between levels of violence and the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index.[62]
- In 2013, Oxfam's own research found that insecurity increases with rising income inequality.[63]

Extreme inequality is dangerous as well as morally contemptible. It threatens security, whether inequality in income, access (to resources, services or justice) or power – including the inequality of power in which civil society, citizens, and particularly women have little voice in their future, and no recourse against an arbitrary rule of law.

Among analysts this is increasingly recognized. Research funded by DFID at Oxford University's Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity found that 'large horizontal inequalities, or inequalities among salient identity groups, increase the risk of violent conflict', and that such inequalities may be economic, social, political or cultural.[64] But the UK and other governments have been slow to apply this insight to policy, including the world's new Sustainable Development Goals that are due to succeed the Millennium Development Goals after 2015.

Countries with high levels of income inequality are afflicted by homicide rates almost four times higher than more equal societies.

UN Global Study on Homicide 2011[60]

David Cameron co-chaired the High Level Panel that developed an indicative set of goals in 2013. He championed the need for them to include peace as a cross-cutting issue across the development agenda; not merely peace defined as an absence of conflict, but a positive peace that includes respect for human rights, participatory politics, and accountability. The panel has also proposed a stand-alone goal on gender equality, which aims to eliminate violence against women, and targets to build resilience to shocks of all kinds.

The Prime Minister deserves much credit for all this. But he has failed to champion tackling the inequality that helps drive conflict – without which the new goals will be seriously flawed. If these goals are to be achievable, the new framework must also include a stand-alone goal on income inequality with targets that provide a roadmap towards closing extreme gaps in wealth within and between countries.

CLIMATE OF CONFLICT

Darfur was once called the 'first climate conflict'. Such over-simplifications are not helpful, but there is evidence that disasters, particularly drought, can exacerbate conflicts, as happened in Balkh in Afghanistan in 2006, when drought encouraged young men to join armed groups.[66] It can increase fragility and, when combined with other factors, can make conflict more likely in the first place.

Syria's conflict started in 2011 in the fourth consecutive year of severe drought.[67] As early as 2008, wheat production had halved,[68] malnutrition cases among pregnant women and children under five had doubled,[69] and the UN warned, long before the Arab Spring, of the dangers of drought-driven instability.[70] In 2010, the drought drove 300,000 rural families into Damascus, Aleppo, Deraa and other towns.[71] In September of that year, six months before violence erupted, the UN warned that the drought was plunging two to three million people into extreme poverty.[72] Unfortunately, and in contrast to its generosity now, the UK gave nothing, and the whole world precious little, to the UN's Syria drought appeals in 2008 to 2010 while these warnings were being made.[73]

Syria's conflict cannot be ascribe to drought alone; the political factors both inside and outside the country may have proven fatal without it. It is also very difficult to ascribe a single drought with any certainty to climate change, and yet it is difficult not to see such events as part of the 'dangerous conditions of a warming planet' highlighted above.[74] Between the 1970s and 2000, the drought-affected proportion of the earth doubled.[75] And the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it clear that 'drought can increase competition for scarce resources, cause population displacements and migrations, and exacerbate ethnic tensions and the likelihood of conflicts.'[76]

The latest climate models point to large parts of southern Europe, as well as the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, Japan, and Latin America facing increased threats of drought as early as the 2030s.[77] Around the Mediterranean, the fall in precipitation predicted in

The tragic conflict in Syria provides a terrifyingly graphic example, where a severe drought for the last seven years has decimated Syria's rural economy… driving many farmers off their fields and into cities where, already, food was in short supply.
HRH The Prince of Wales, World Islamic Economic Forum, 29 October 2013[65]

the decades to come is of similar magnitude to what has happened in Syria in the last hundred years.[78] Recent research in the Sahel region of West Africa has already shown how climate change has reduced the availability of resources, and has combined with population growth, unjust land tenure, and other factors, to increase competition and violence over land and water.[79] A comprehensive synthesis of the rapidly growing literature on climate and conflict, published in 2013, concluded that each one degree change toward warmer temperatures increases the frequency of intergroup conflict by 14 per cent.[80]

The danger is that far more of the world will suffer from such effects in the future.[81] Unfortunately, international aid for drought-affected countries has often been too little and too late, as repeatedly seen in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.[82] DFID now has a welcome new focus on anticipating disasters and building the resilience of communities to them; this could and should be followed by looking at how all its long-term work could reduce risks to disasters, and developing flexible resources to allow its programmes to respond swiftly to deteriorating situations.

At the UK's instigation, in 2007, the UN Security Council held its first debate on the links between climate change and security.[84] In 2011, the *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* recognized that climate change may increase the potential for conflict.[85] By the time of the next general election, it will be only months before the vital December 2015 Paris Climate Conference that governments have set as the deadline to agree a new global climate deal. Before and after the election, climate change must rise up the FCO's agenda once more.

That is not because more climate change means more conflict – at least not in any direct, simple way, any more than inequality causes conflict in a crude way that ignores all the other factors that make conflict more likely. Yet both extreme inequality and climate change are in that combustible mix of risks.

That is one more vital reason to tackle both.

If we do not cut emissions, we face... migrations of hundreds of millions of people away from the worst-affected areas. That would lead to conflict and war, not peace and prosperity.

Nicholas Stern, February 2014[83]

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAY 2015

The Chief of the Defence Staff said in December 2013 that 'the grand strategic challenge of the age could be seen as how to accommodate change whilst maintaining stability'.[86] However, in Oxfam's view the challenge is not merely that. It is to encourage **the right kind of change** that will improve stability while making the lives of millions of people better. The UK has to meet this challenge in a world which has lost the certainties of the past without yet finding a rule-based multipolar model for the future. It can only succeed by building a shared approach – however difficult that sometimes is – between the new powers of Asia and elsewhere and the old ones of the West.

Military action is not usually the best way to protect civilians, though there is an urgent need for far more UK support for UN peacekeeping. More importantly, the UK should be more self-confident that an active get-out-in-the-world approach can achieve much. Such an approach needs diplomacy as well as aid, for example to stand up for women's rights as UK troops leave Afghanistan, or in countries like the DRC or South Sudan where the UK's investment in aid could be multiplied by sufficient diplomacy.

UK diplomacy at its best can achieve so much, as seen in the Arms Trade Treaty and the UK's initiative to prevent sexual violence. But the UK must still be more consistent and truer to its values than it has sometimes been in the past. For too long, for example, the UK has seemed happy to accept the false stability of many Middle Eastern countries – before the Arab Spring and, in some places, still now.

It is impossible to predict what world events the next government will face. But the chances of making the right choices will be improved if it ensures that its policy towards any foreign country meets the following five tests.

Five tests

1. Serving long-term global and UK interests: Is the policy informed not only by immediate commercial or other interests, but by listening to local civil society and others for the best analysis of how to build societies in which human rights are respected?

2. Reducing inequality: Does it specifically aim to reduce the dangerous inequalities between different groups than can fuel violence?

3. Promoting women's rights: Does it specifically aim not only to protect women from violence, but to promote women's equality and participation in all aspects of society, including negotiated solutions to conflict?

4. Supporting an international rule-based order with human rights at its core: Does it reinforce international rules and structures, including the UN, and encourage emerging powers to uphold universal human rights in helping to solve the world's conflicts?

5. Joined-up thinking: Does it use every relevant tool of UK policy to meet those aims – so that the impact of aid is multiplied by consistent diplomacy?

Beyond these tests for each relevant policy, whatever government comes to power in 2015 should include the following priorities in its foreign and wider international policy.

Seven practical ways forward

1. **Dedicate at least one senior diplomat in every relevant embassy to leading the analysis of and response to potential causes of insecurity** – giving priority to engaging with local civil society, including women's groups, promoting human rights, and taking other steps to tackle dangerous inequalities.

2. **Open up the National Security Council to more input from outside government**, modelled on the 'Arria formula' informal briefings of UN Security Council members – to include briefings not only from UK NGOs, academics, media, and others, but from civil society organizations from the country under discussion, including women's groups, when the NSC addresses relevant crises.

3. Vigorously use the UK's permanent UN Security Council seat, its annual Presidencies of the Council, and its lead in the Council on the protection of civilians, to:

    a. **take action on impending crises**, using every available piece of early warning including the Council's ' Horizon Scanning sessions that the UK initiated itself;

    b. **deliver the protection of civilians that peacekeeping missions are intended to ensure** – through giving that protection top priority in all relevant missions' mandates, and demanding that all peacekeeping deployments report on civilian protection, including quarterly reports to the Security Council that present in-depth analysis of the concrete measures taken to protect civilians, and what the impact of those measures has been.

    c. **encourage all permanent Security Council members to renounce the use of their veto in the case of mass atrocities**.

4. **Implement the Arms Trade Treaty to the highest possible standards** – in order to encourage other states to do the same and ensure the treaty has the greatest possible humanitarian impact. Offer technical and legal assistance to states that may need it to put in place or improve import/export control mechanisms, export control/customs officer training, security sector reform measures (particularly stockpile safety and security), and other necessary measures. To achieve this, the UK should give significant donations for ATT implementation purposes, and should encourage other countries to do likewise.

5. Use the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review to **set out a plan to increase military and police contributions to UN peacekeeping, and investment in conflict prevention** (see below) –both of which are about choices, not an increase in spending.

6. **Promote ambitious global agreements on climate change**, including by taking a leadership role to achieve a global deal at the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015, and promoting a climate change goal as part of the global development framework that will replace the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

7. **Ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals after 2015 also include goals and targets on peace and governance**, as proposed by the UN High Level Panel in 2013, strong targets on disaster risk reduction, and **champion stand-alone goals to rapidly reduce income inequality** (with targets for closing extreme gaps in wealth within and between countries), and on **gender equality and women's rights**.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Prime Minister and the whole government

- Continue to protect DFID spending in the 2015 Spending Review, ensuring that the overall approach to deficit reduction focuses on progressive taxation over continuing cuts to other departments – and resist the pressure that preceded the 2013 Review for elements of the MOD budget to be paid for by DFID or other departments.

- Spearhead a whole-government strategy, co-ordinated through the National Security Council, to build cross-party, media, and public support for an active UK role in the world, making clear how the country's trade and prosperity, the world's peace and security, and the public's humanitarian values fit together.

- Use the National Security Council to ensure that comprehensive approaches to building stability in specific crises:

  - respect the independence and impartiality of humanitarian aid, including in the EU's comprehensive approach to crisis management, and in UN integrated missions;

  - support development to tackle dangerous inequalities, while never accepting that progress in one development goal should stem criticism of repression or abuses;

  - invest sufficient diplomatic energy, including challenging relevant governments, opposition groups, and UK allies on their commitment to human rights, the protection of civilians, a free civil society, and the reduction of inequality, and using public as well as private statements to do so.

- Commit to not using the UK's veto at the UN Security Council in mass atrocity situations – and challenge the other permanent members of the Council to do the same.

- Commit to raising human rights abuses and other issues that threaten peace in all ministerial meetings with relevant governments.

- Continue to play an international leadership role on sexual violence, helping to keep it high on the international agenda, providing support and resources for documenting crimes of sexual violence, assisting in bringing perpetrators to justice, and supporting the building of local capacity and the provision of care and support services.

- Introduce a mandatory requirement on UK corporations to publicly report, in their Annual Reports, on the key risks identified, as well as their policy and implementation relating to human rights, and social and environmental impacts. Their Annual Reports should provide links to full information, publicly available online, on the due diligence undertaken by the company, and a detailed assessment of impacts.

Foreign Secretary

- Continue to improve the access of civil society organizations – particularly those from crisis-affected countries – to UN Security Council members, including by hosting more Arria formula informal meetings.

- Wherever possible, help ensure that the EU speaks and acts with one voice in international fora such as the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Peacekeeping

- Urge, and support, regional organizations given authority to use force by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to report back regularly and in detail to the Council on steps taken to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, mitigate civilian harm, and, if mandated to do so, protect civilians.

Preventing sexual violence

- Continue to call for action to prevent sexual violence, including through women's participation in peace-building processes, and by ensuring support for gender-sensitive security sector reform, as well as diplomatic support for women's rights groups and activists working to uphold women's human rights.

- Ensure that action on sexual violence and in particular the new UK National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, due to be launched in 2014, are integrated across UK policy.

Building space for civil society

- Meet with local civil society organizations, including women's rights organizations, as a matter of course on all ministerial visits (by the Foreign Secretary and junior ministers) to countries where human rights or potential conflict are of concern.

- Urge governments to protect a 'space' for civil society by ensuring free association, assembly, and expression, including by positive legislation on civil society, media, unions, faith groups, etc.; and to

give civil society organizations opportunities to participate in peace processes, budget monitoring, etc.

- Seek to ensure that civil society groups are fully represented in all relevant peace processes – including women's rights organizations as part of upholding UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Arms exports

- When assessing applications to grant arms export licences:
  - consider whether a country has signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty as being among the most important factors (under the 'international obligations' of the National Consolidated Criteria and for a country's inclusion in Open General Export Licences).
  - shift the balance in considering applications for countries of human rights concern or other significant risk, so that it is incumbent upon applicants to demonstrate that the arms will not used for human rights abuses, and to put in place proactive mitigation measures where risks exist, as well as ensuring that UK officials can monitor the use of the arms once exported. In the absence of such steps, the government should reject all applications for arms exports to countries of human rights concern.

Defence Secretary

- Prioritize funding more effectively by focusing on areas that represent key security demands and **at the same time** opportunities to demonstrate:
  - to the world, the UK's vital contribution to international efforts;
  - to the UK public, the UK armed forces' ability to use force to successfully protect civilians from conflict.
- Beyond the UN peacekeeping mentioned in the seven priorities above, this means prioritizing conflict prevention through:
  - focusing on human rights as much as technical capacity when supporting military training in, for example, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy opening in 2014;
  - disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants;
  - transferral of defence assets towards civilian control and oversight, and supporting mechanisms that make security forces accountable to national and local communities, thereby responding to the needs and upholding the rights of both women and men;
  - reform of the police and judiciary;
  - control of the legal and illicit arms trade, and removal of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

International Development Secretary

- Continue to commit to the vital importance of funding humanitarian aid not only generously, but impartially according to affected people's needs.

- Ensure that humanitarian aid is used to prevent and respond to violence against women in emergencies, through measures to mitigate risks, by supporting long-term efforts to tackle the causes of violence in recovery and transition strategies, and by helping to ensure survivors' access to safe, confidential services. Such measures should complement broader approaches to humanitarian assistance to meet the different needs of women and men as well as looking for opportunities to promote women's rights and gender equality.

- Where appropriate – where governments support human rights and have transparent systems in place – use budget support (among other forms of aid) to invest in and promote universal, free public health care and education services to tackle inequality, including in societies at risk of violent conflict. Budget support provides an effective and predictable funding source that strengthens countries' own systems – in particular financial management and essential public services systems and builds country ownership of the development process.

- Ensure that when providing budget support, clear and transparent criteria for disbursing and suspending budget support agreements with the recipient country are set out from the beginning. In situations where budget support is to be suspended, the UK must do this in a graduated manner and maintain the overall amount of aid to the country, so that the poor do not suffer.

- Use UK aid not only to strengthen the rule of law and to help build an accountable state – but also to strengthen civil society organizations' relationship with citizens and the state, so that they can genuinely represent communities and constituencies, including women and all vulnerable groups; and help make the state effective and accountable in delivering pro-poor development, security, and human rights. In the case of budget support, a proportion must be allocated to civil society organizations (including women's groups), the media and parliamentarians who play a key role in holding governments and donors to account to ensure the aid is spent well.

- Influence other donor governments to reverse the global decline in development aid to the most conflict-prone countries.

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