

CONSERVATIVE PARTY 2017 ELECTION MANIFESTO

SECTIONS RELATED TO UK FOREIGN POLICY

Increasing trade

Britain has always been a great trading nation. Trade will continue to be crucial to our future growth and prosperity. As we leave the European Union, we want to negotiate a new deep and special partnership with the EU, which will allow free trade between the UK and the EU's member states. As part of the agreement we strike, we want to make sure that there are as few barriers to trade and investment as possible. Leaving the European Union also means we will be free to strike our own trade agreements with countries outside the EU.

We will ensure immediate stability by lodging new UK schedules with the World Trade Organization, in alignment with EU schedules to which we are bound whilst still a member of the European Union. We will seek to replicate all existing EU free trade agreements and support the ratification of trade agreements entered into during our EU membership. We will continue to support the global multilateral rules-based trade system. We will introduce a Trade Bill in the next parliament.

We will create a network of Her Majesty's Trade Commissioners to head nine new regional overseas posts. These commissioners will lead export promotion, investment and trade policy overseas. We will reconvene the Board of Trade with a membership specifically charged with ensuring that we increase exports from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England, and that trade policy is directly influenced by every part of our United Kingdom.

We will work to forge a new culture of exporting among UK businesses, equipping them with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed in the global marketplace, and take advantage of new high-growth markets around the world.

We will take a more active role in supporting British consortia to win the largest and most innovative contracts around the world. We will ensure that small and medium-sized businesses are able to identify the right markets and sectors to win vital contracts abroad. We will put UK Export Finance, which ensures that no viable UK export fails for lack of finance or insurance, at the heart of the UK's trade promotion proposition. And we will encourage the world to visit, study and do business in the UK through the GREAT Britain campaign and Visit Britain.

Effective regulation

Regulation is necessary for the proper ordering of any economy and to ensure that people – and their investments – are protected. However, poor and excessive government regulation limits growth for no good reason. So we will continue to regulate more efficiently, saving £9 billion through the Red Tape Challenge and the One-In-Two-Out Rule.

Reducing the cost of regulation is not just about reducing its volume. The wrong regulatory frameworks can over-reward investors for the risk they are taking in backing a particular project,

new clusters of public services, private businesses and, where appropriate, universities.

We will proceed on the same basis with the arts and cultural organisations that give our United Kingdom such strength. Channel 4 will remain publicly owned and will be relocated out of London, and we will work with the nation's most eminent museums and galleries to ensure their works and expertise are shared across the country.

United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund

We believe in one nation – in helping every part of our country share in the prosperity and opportunity of our great United Kingdom. Yet there is much to do. Current EU-wide structural funding was designed to tackle disparities but it is expensive to administer and poorly targeted. As we leave the European Union, we must look at how we can better reduce and eliminate these inequalities.

We will use the structural fund money that comes back to the UK following Brexit to create a United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically designed to reduce inequalities between communities across our four nations. The money that is spent will help deliver sustainable, inclusive growth based on our modern industrial strategy. We will consult widely on the design of the fund, including with the devolved administrations, local authorities, businesses and public bodies. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be cheap to administer, low in bureaucracy and targeted where it is needed most.

LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION

Following the historic referendum on 23rd June 2016, the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union. Only the Conservative Party, under Theresa May's strong and stable leadership, can negotiate the best possible deal for our country. In her Lancaster House Speech, the prime minister laid out the twelve principles she intends to follow in seeking a new deep and special partnership with the European Union. We have explained our approach in the White Paper on the United Kingdom's Exit from, and a new relationship with, the European Union, during the passage of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act, in the prime minister's letter to the president of the European Council invoking Article 50, and in the Great Repeal Bill White Paper.

We want to agree a deep and special partnership with the European Union. This partnership will benefit both the European Union and the United Kingdom: while we are leaving the European Union, we are not leaving Europe, and we want to remain committed partners and allies to our friends across the continent.

The negotiations will undoubtedly be tough, and there will be give and take on both

sides, but we continue to believe that no deal is better than a bad deal for the UK. But we will enter the negotiations in a spirit of sincere cooperation and committed to getting the best deal for Britain. We will make sure we have certainty and clarity over our future, control of our own laws, and a more unified, strengthened United Kingdom. We will control immigration and secure the entitlements of EU nationals in Britain and British nationals in the EU. We will maintain the Common Travel Area and maintain as frictionless a border as possible for people, goods and services between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Workers' rights conferred on British citizens from our membership of the EU will remain. We will pursue free trade with European markets, and secure new trade agreements with other countries. We want to work together in the fight against crime and terrorism, collaborate in science and innovation – and secure a smooth, orderly Brexit. And we will protect the democratic freedom of the people of Gibraltar and our overseas territories to remain British, for as long as that is their wish. The final agreement will be subject to a vote in both houses of parliament.

As we leave the European Union, we will no longer be members of the single market or customs union but we will seek a deep and special partnership including a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement. There may be specific European programmes in which we might want to participate and if so, it will be reasonable that we make a contribution. We will determine a fair settlement of the UK's rights and obligations as a departing member state, in accordance with the law and in the spirit of the UK's continuing partnership with the EU. The principle, however, is clear: the days of Britain making vast annual contributions to the European Union will end.

We want fair, orderly negotiations, minimising disruption and giving as much certainty as possible – so both sides benefit. We believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside our withdrawal, reaching agreement on both within the two years allowed by Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.

Repatriating EU law to the United Kingdom

We will enact a Great Repeal Bill. Our laws will be made in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and interpreted by judges across the United Kingdom, not in Luxembourg. The bill will convert EU law into UK law, allowing businesses and individuals to go about life knowing that the rules have not changed overnight. This approach means that the rights of workers and protections given to consumers and the environment by EU law will continue to be available in UK law at the point at which we leave the EU. The bill will also create the necessary powers to correct the laws that do not operate appropriately once we have left the EU, so our legal system can continue to function correctly outside the EU. Once EU law has been converted into domestic law, parliament will be able to pass legislation to amend, repeal or improve any piece of EU law it chooses, as will the devolved legislatures, where they have the power to do so.

As powers return from the EU, we will be able to determine the level best placed to take decisions on these issues, ensuring that power sits closer to the people of the United Kingdom than ever before. We expect that the outcome will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration but we must also ensure that as we leave the EU no new barriers to living and doing business within our own union are created. In some areas, this will require common UK frameworks. We will work closely with the devolved administrations to deliver an approach that works for the whole of the United Kingdom and reflects the needs and individual circumstances of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As well as the Great Repeal Bill, we will bring forward a number of additional bills to ensure that when we have left the EU there is a clear statutory basis for United Kingdom authorities to exercise powers that are currently exercised through EU law and institutions.

We will not bring the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights into UK law. We will not repeal or replace the Human Rights Act while the process of Brexit is underway but we will consider our human rights legal framework when the process of leaving the EU concludes. We will remain signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights for the duration of the next parliament.

GLOBAL BRITAIN

The United Kingdom is a global nation. Our history is a global history; our future must be global too. We believe Britain should play an active, leading role in the world. Not because it is our right or inheritance, but because our leadership in the world is the surest way to defend and advance the interests of the British people, and to extend around the world those values that we believe to be right.

The United Kingdom is already a global power. We have a leading diplomatic service and one of the largest overseas development budgets in the world. Our armed forces are respected around the world and enable us to project power globally. Our global businesses and London's position as the global centre of finance make us more interconnected with the global economy than any other comparable nation.

Britain is already a significant influence for good around the world. Our aid is giving millions an education and an opportunity to rise out of poverty. Our naval vessels are stopping the vile trade in people and in drugs. We are at the forefront of action against global climate change.

We can and should do more, not just because acting as a force for good is an important end in itself but because the result will be greater peace and prosperity for the British people. We will continue to champion British values around the globe: freedom, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. We will be the world's foremost champion of free trade. We will expand our global efforts to combat extremism, terror, and the perpetration of violence against people because of their faith, gender or sexuality. We will continue to lead international action against climate change, and the degradation of habitat and loss of species. We will continue to lead a global campaign for the education of women and girls, which is the key to progress in so many countries. We will lead the fight against modern slavery, just as we overcame the trade in slaves two hundred years ago. We will lead a global effort to close down online spaces for those who abuse children, incite violence or propagate hate speech. We shall lead the world in the hard work to end extreme child poverty and co-ordinate efforts against microbial resistance and emerging tropical diseases. And we will take up leadership in a new arena, where concern is shared around the world: we will be the global leader in the regulation of the use of personal data and the internet.

British leadership in international institutions

The security and prosperity of the United Kingdom is built on the international institutions that we helped to found and will continue to help maintain: the United Nations and the UN Security Council, NATO – the cornerstone of our defence, the Commonwealth, the G20, G7 and the World Trade Organization. We will continue to give strong support to an international order in which rules govern state conduct; in our own behaviour we will support this system and apply it in a principled way. We shall continue to seek to reform multilateral institutions, especially in the way they distribute development funds, so that money is used to greatest effect to protect and help the world's most vulnerable people.

Global partnerships and alliances

Alongside our proposed deep and special partnership with the European Union, we will maintain the historical, cultural and economic ties that link us to our old friends and allies around the globe. We will build upon our existing special relationship with the United States, and forge new economic and security partnerships that make us more prosperous at home and more secure abroad. We will strengthen our close links with our Commonwealth allies, continuing our mission together to promote democratic values around the world and build on our existing economic relationships to further our common trading interests. We will develop alliances and co-operate more with old friends and new partners.

A global champion of free trade

The United Kingdom will be a global champion for an open economy, free trade, and the free flow of investment, ideas and information. Open and free trade is key to international prosperity, stability and security – it is an essential component of an economy that works

for everyone. We believe the UK must seize the unique opportunities it has to forge a new set of trade and investment relationships around the world, building a global, outward-looking Britain.

Promoting British culture around the world

The United Kingdom is home to some of the finest cultural institutions in the world. We will continue to promote those institutions and ensure they have the resources they need to amplify Britain's voice on the world stage and as a global force for good. We will continue to promote democracy, the rule of law, property entitlements, a free and open media, and accountable institutions in countries and societies across the world.

We will place the BBC World Service and the British Council on a secure footing so they are able to promote the best of British values around the globe and build strong ties between our local communities and other countries.

Leading the world in development

British aid helps millions and is a powerful statement of Global Britain's place in the world. It protects our interests: by building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world, we can protect our own people from disease, conflict and instability. This is the right ambition for a country with a global outlook, so we will maintain the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of our gross national income on assistance to developing nations and international emergencies.

We will continue to use our aid budget in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, to end extreme poverty, save children's lives, and provide an education for girls. We will work to end the subjugation and mutilation of women, to combat the brutal slave trade in fellow human beings and to prevent catastrophic environmental degradation. And we will continue to lead global efforts to tackle sexual violence in conflict.

British scientists and inventors have helped to address some of the greatest challenges facing the world's poorest people. A global Britain should aspire to do even more: we will significantly increase our funding of UK-led medical and technical research into the biggest threats to global health and prosperity.

There are still ways that we can improve the way that taxpayers' money is used to help the world's most vulnerable people. We do not believe that international definitions of development assistance always help in determining how money should be spent, on whom and for what purpose. So we will work with like-minded countries to change the rules so that they are updated and better reflect the breadth of our assistance around the world. If that does not work, we will change the law to allow us to use a better definition of development spending, while continuing to meet our 0.7 per cent target.

Reforming asylum

We will ensure Britain remains a place of sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers. The existing system, however, is geared towards people who are young enough, fit enough, and have the resources to get to Britain, rather than those who are most in need of our help.

Wherever possible, the government will offer asylum and refuge to people in parts of the world affected by conflict and oppression, rather than to those who have made it to Britain. We will work to reduce asylum claims made in Britain and, as we do so, increase the number of people we help in the most troubled regions. We will continue to work with other countries in Europe, and the United Nations, to review the international legal definitions of asylum and refugee status.

We will make sure our councils get the help they need to deal with people as they arrive, and establish schemes to help individuals, charities, faith groups, churches and businesses to provide housing and other support for refugees.

Protecting the global environment

The United Kingdom will lead the world in environmental protection. As Conservatives, we are committed to leaving the environment in better condition than we inherited it. That is why we will continue to take a lead in global action against climate change, as the government demonstrated by ratifying the Paris Agreement. We were the first country to introduce a Climate Change Act, which Conservatives helped to frame, and we are halfway towards meeting our 2050 goal of reducing emissions by eighty per cent from 1990 levels.

We will champion greater conservation co-operation within international bodies, protecting rare species, the polar regions and international waters. We will work with our Overseas Territory governments to create a Blue Belt of marine protection in their precious waters, establishing the largest marine sanctuaries anywhere in the world.

Modern slavery

The UK is a global leader in fighting the evil trade in human beings – both around the world and in our own country – for sex and labour exploitation. As home secretary, Theresa May brought forward the Modern Slavery Act, the first of its kind in Europe, appointed the world's first anti-slavery commissioner and set up the Modern Slavery Taskforce to bring together the heads of MI5, MI6 and the National Crime Agency to co-ordinate our response to criminal gangs operating across the world.

We now need to go further. We need to focus on the exploitation of vulnerable men, women and children for their labour, people who are moved around our own country and between nations, as if they were not human at all. We will review the application of

exploitation in the Modern Slavery Act to strengthen our ability to stop criminals putting men, women and children into criminal, dangerous and exploitative working conditions. And the UK will use its power to push the United Nations and other international bodies to make Modern Slavery a thing of the past.

STRONG DEFENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Our world is full of opportunity but is also riven by conflict, terrorism and threat. As a global power, we have a responsibility to sustain our fine armed forces so that they can defend the realm, our overseas territories and our interests around the globe. We will play a leading role in NATO and maintain the ability to conduct strike operations, peacekeeping, security missions and the deployment of a joint expeditionary force. We will maintain the overall size of the armed forces, including an army that is capable of fielding a war-fighting division. We shall expand our reach around the world. We will retain the Trident continuous-at-sea nuclear deterrent to provide the ultimate guarantee of our security.

We have the biggest defence budget in Europe and the second largest in NATO. We will continue to meet the NATO commitment to spend at least 2 per cent of GDP on defence and we will increase the defence budget by at least 0.5 per cent above inflation in every year of the new parliament.

The finest servicemen and women

We will attract and retain the best men and women for our armed forces, including by engaging them on a flexible basis. We will protect our brave armed forces personnel from persistent legal claims, which distress those who risk their lives for us, cost the taxpayer millions and undermine the armed forces in the service they give. Under a Conservative government, British troops will in future be subject to the Law of Armed Conflict, which includes the Geneva Convention and UK Service Law, not the European Court of Human Rights. We will strengthen legal services regulation and restrict legal aid for unscrupulous law firms that issue vexatious legal claims against the armed forces. We will introduce better compensation for injured armed forces personnel and the families of those killed in combat.

The best equipment for our armed forces

We plan to invest £178 billion in new military equipment over the next decade, creating high-skilled jobs across the whole country. For the first time in a generation the Royal Navy is growing. We have cut steel on the first of a new fleet of four Dreadnought ballistic missile boats and we will complete the Astute class of hunter-killer submarines. Our

two new aircraft carriers will project British military power for the next fifty years: HMS Queen Elizabeth begins sea trials in the summer and HMS Prince of Wales is due to enter active service in 2020. Alongside our new Type 45 destroyers, we will build eight Type 26 anti-submarine frigates and develop our programme for a new class of lighter, general purpose frigates so that by the 2030s we can further increase the size of our fleet. We shall also deliver five Offshore Patrol Vessels.

For the Army we will deliver AJAX armoured vehicles, Apache attack helicopters, new drones, new missile and bomb systems, and better equipment for the Special Forces. The Royal Air Force will receive, with the Fleet Air Arm, the Lightning II strike fighter, as well as new Maritime Patrol Aircraft. Taken together, this is the largest programme of investment in our armed forces for generations.

Supporting our veterans

We will support former members of the armed forces, who were willing to risk their lives for us, as they move into civilian life. We will maintain and strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant. We will help veterans to start new careers by ensuring that the skills and qualifications they gained in service are recognised by civilian employers and by introducing a one year holiday on Employer National Insurance Contributions for firms hiring service personnel after they leave service. We will improve the co-ordination of government services to veterans, including housing, employment and mental health services, by introducing a Veterans Board in the Cabinet Office.

THE HOME OF DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

This election will decide the composition of our parliament, the oldest of all large democracies. The laws that we make form the basis of judgments in our courts, which are respected around the world. This unequalled democracy and legal system is our greatest national inheritance. However, collective faith in our democratic institutions and our justice system has declined in the past two decades. It is the purpose of this Conservative Party, in responding to the historic vote on our membership of the European Union, to re-establish faith in our democracy, and in our democratic and legal institutions.

A flourishing and secure democracy

Our democratic institutions may be ancient but should not be neglected. We will continue to modernise and improve our electoral registration process, making it as accessible as possible so that every voice counts. We will legislate for votes for life for British overseas electors. We will continue with the current boundary review, enshrining the principle of equal seats, while reducing the number of MPs to 600, similar to other

More people in work

Employment is at a record high and we will continue to strive for full employment. We will continue to run the welfare system in accordance with our belief that work is the best route out of poverty, that work should always pay, and that the system should be fair both to the people in need of support and those who pay for it. We have no plans for further radical welfare reform in this parliament and will continue the roll-out of Universal Credit, to ensure that it always pays to be in work.

We will also work to help those groups who have in the past found it difficult to get employment, by incentivising employers to take them on. So for businesses employing former wards of the care system, someone with a disability, those with chronic mental health problems, those who have committed a crime but who have repaid their debt to society, and those who have been unemployed for over a year, we will offer a holiday on their employers' National Insurance Contributions for a full year. We will also provide targeted support for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 so that everyone, no matter what their start in life, is given the very best chance of getting into work.

A COUNTRY THAT COMES TOGETHER

Controlling immigration

Britain is an open economy and a welcoming society and we will always ensure that our British businesses can recruit the brightest and best from around the world and Britain's world-class universities can attract international students. We also believe that immigration should be controlled and reduced, because when immigration is too fast and too high, it is difficult to build a cohesive society.

Thanks to Conservatives in government, there is now more control in the system. The nature of the immigration we have – more skilled workers and university students, less abuse and fewer unskilled migrants – better suits the national interest. But with annual net migration standing at 273,000, immigration to Britain is still too high. It is our objective to reduce immigration to sustainable levels, by which we mean annual net migration in the tens of thousands, rather than the hundreds of thousands we have seen over the last two decades.

We will, therefore, continue to bear down on immigration from outside the European Union. We will increase the earnings thresholds for people wishing to sponsor migrants for family visas. We will toughen the visa requirements for students, to make sure that we maintain high standards. We will expect students to leave the country at the end of their course, unless they meet new, higher requirements that allow them to work in Britain after their studies have concluded. Overseas students will remain in the immigration

statistics – in line with international definitions – and within scope of the government's policy to reduce annual net migration.

Leaving the European Union means, for the first time in decades, that we will be able to control immigration from the European Union too. We will therefore establish an immigration policy that allows us to reduce and control the number of people who come to Britain from the European Union, while still allowing us to attract the skilled workers our economy needs.

Integrating divided communities

Britain is one of the world's most successful multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious societies. We are proud of our diversity, and the cultural and economic enrichment it brings.

The enjoyment and pride we take in our diversity should not cause us to ignore the fact that in too many parts of our country, we have communities that are divided, often along racial or religious lines. To address this, we will bring forward a new integration strategy, which will seek to help people in more isolated communities to engage with the wider world, help women in particular into the workplace, and teach more people to speak English. We will work with schools to make sure that those with intakes from one predominant racial, cultural or religious background teach their students about pluralistic, British values and help them to get to know people with different ways of life.

Defeating extremism

Our enjoyment of Britain's diversity must not prevent us from confronting the menace of extremism. Extremism, especially Islamist extremism, strips some British people, especially women, of the freedoms they should enjoy, undermines the cohesion of our society and can fuel violence. To defeat extremism, we need to learn from how civil society and the state took on racism in the twentieth century. We will consider what new criminal offences might need to be created, and what new aggravated offences might need to be established, to defeat the extremists. We will support the public sector and civil society in identifying extremists, countering their messages and promoting pluralistic, British values. And we will establish a Commission for Countering Extremism to identify examples of extremism and expose them, to support the public sector and civil society, and help the government to identify policies to defeat extremism and promote pluralistic values.

CONFRONTING BURNING INJUSTICES

To make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy, where your talent and hard work, not who you are or where you come from, determine your life chances, we must look beyond divisions in educational opportunity. We must tackle the burning injustices

An international settlement

These are questions with which every nation is grappling. The internet is a global network and it is only by concerted global action that we can make true progress.

We believe that the United Kingdom can lead the world in providing answers. So we will open discussions with the leading tech companies and other like-minded democracies about the global rules of the digital economy, to develop an international legal framework that we have for so long benefited from in other areas like banking and trade. We recognise the complexity of this task and that this will be the beginning of a process, but it is a task which we believe is necessary and which we intend to lead.

By doing these things – a digital charter, a framework for data ethics, and a new international agreement – we will put our great country at the head of this new revolution; we will choose how technology forms our future; and we will demonstrate, even in the face of unprecedented change, the good that government can do.

CONCLUSION

This is our plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future. This is our vision of a nation united, of shared opportunity, of safe, vibrant and sustainable communities and of a Great Meritocracy, where everyone, in every part of our country, is given the chance to go wherever their talents will take them. In this period of profound national change, we will only achieve our ambitions if we have the strong and stable leadership our national interest demands. With Theresa May and her team, we will secure the best possible deal with the European Union and chart a course to a new global future. Now is the time that we must show, once again, our strength as a nation and the character of our united people. We shall succeed, if we go forward, together.



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