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The logo for the New Diplomacy Project is a dark red square containing the text 'NEW DIPLOMACY PROJECT' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. The word 'NEW' is on the top line, 'DIPLOMACY' is on the middle line, and 'PROJECT' is on the bottom line. A small globe icon is positioned between the 'M' and 'A' in 'DIPLOMACY'.

NEW
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Labour's approach to the US–UK relationship under Biden

TOP LINES

- The US is the UK's most important diplomatic, military and intelligence partner, as well as its largest single trading partner.
- To many voters, Labour's approach to this relationship will serve as an important indicator of its ability to form a coherent foreign policy and present itself as a credible government-in-waiting.
- Historically, in office and in opposition, the party has struggled to strike the right balance when it comes to the UK's relationship with the US, finding itself at times deeply divided over support for US military interventions and sceptical of presidents from the Republican Party. President Trump in particular has marked a low point in the Labour Party's perception of the US–UK relationship.
- Having left the European Union, the UK's reliance on its relationship with the US will only increase, both in terms of trade and in other joint initiatives. Labour must be ready to work with the incoming Biden administration.
- A new approach to the US–UK relationship should consider the need for concerted engagement while maintaining strategic autonomy where possible. It should be founded upon a recognition of mutual dependence and shared values, and an understanding of the continued role the UK can play in bridging the cultural divide between the EU, other allies and the US, which has been exacerbated under Donald Trump's presidency.

BACKGROUND

The US–UK relationship is often defined in terms of military and intelligence collaboration. This view however misses a number of other key elements that also layer and shape this relationship.

Pillars of US–UK relations:

1. Five Eyes intelligence sharing

The US and the UK are each other's principal intelligence sharing partner, due in part to both countries' membership of the Five Eyes network, along with Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Under the original US–UK intelligence sharing agreement, both domestic intelligence agencies offer each other unrestricted access to raw signals intelligence unless either party specifically requests that an item is excluded.

2. Defence Partnership

This collaboration also extends to a close relationship on defence. A significant part of this is the principle of interoperability, in other words the ability to conduct integrated joint operations. This could involve shared equipment, the ability to integrate forces into combined units, or shared operational concepts such as the commitment to maintaining a nuclear deterrent. When this principle is combined with a vast array of bases underpinning a global military presence, the value for both sides is significant. The Ministry of Defence has a permanent deployment of around 750 British Defence Staff in the USA.

As founding and leading members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), British and American armed forces have a long history of serving alongside each other in joint operations. In the last decade alone they have worked together in joint military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya Syria,, the Gulf of Aden and Poland.

3. Trade & Economic Partnership

Close economic partnership and relative interdependency between the two countries has become a common feature of the relationship. The US is the UK's largest trading partner apart from the EU, accounting for a total of £201.6bn worth of trade in 2018, including £123.5bn for UK goods and services. While the US accounted for just over a quarter of stock inward FDI in the UK in 2018 and the US accounted for over a fifth of the UK's stock of investment abroad, with UK investors buying £295 bn in US stocks and US investors buying 417 bn in UK stocks respectively.

Both countries are home to global financial hubs which are increasingly integrated. While a growing number of UK citizens are employed by US companies and vice-versa. In 2017, 1.7 million people worked for US companies in the UK, and 1.3 million people worked for UK companies in the US.

4. Expat communities & family ties

Both the US and UK are home to large expat communities. At the time of the last census, there were 683,473 Brits living in the US and 173,470 Americans living in the UK respectively. Along with the shared English language, existing family ties between the two countries make this relationship somewhat unique.

5. Soft Power

Much of the US–UK relationship is underlined by each countries' respective soft power and the influence it has on the substantial amount of inward investment, tourism, educational exchanges, and joint-sports initiatives between the US and UK.

Tourism

Tourism between the US and the UK is substantial. There were 4.5million visits by Americans to the UK in 2019, spending £4.18 bn. For America, after the two countries that it borders (Canada and Mexico), the UK represented the country with the most visits to the US in 2019. This vast exchange of people not only brings significant economic benefits through tourism expenditure, but helps in building people to people links.

Education

Arguably one of the strongest ways of building these people to people links is through foreign students in higher education. In 2017-2018 the number of US students in the UK was only behind those of China and India. UK and US universities also collaborate extensively on research projects. 419 US academic institutions reported in 2017 existing collaborations with partners in the UK, making the UK the US's second largest academic research partner after China.

Culture and Arts

The UK and US are inextricably bound by a shared culture, built upon the English language, liberal values, and a shared history, which mean that the cultural links between the two countries run deeply.

Given this shared culture, it is unsurprising that the US is one of the largest investors in the UK's culture and arts sector. In early 2020, US film studio Blackhall Studios announced its intention to build a film studio outside Reading expected to be worth approximately £500 million to the UK economy per year. This is just one example of the substantial collaboration between US–UK film companies, with 18 out of 20 of the top grossing box office films in 2018 being produced in collaboration with US/UK film production companies.

Even with the decline of cinema, the UK has remained a prime location for US-based streaming companies to invest in TV and Film production. In 2019, Netflix announced that it would spend £400 million on more than 50 TV shows and films in the UK.

Recognising its huge reliance on the UK culture sector, in August 2020 Amazon Prime Video donated £1 million to UK television and film workers struggling with the economic impact of COVID, and £500,000 to the UK theatre community.

This strong cultural relationship is reflected as well by the large number of US media companies that have established their European headquarter in the UK, including CNN, NBC, and Bloomberg.

Both countries are also finding new areas of collaboration and investment, for example through their respective gaming industries, the UK's £4bn gaming sector is predicted to almost triple in value within the next three years to £10bn, with the current 27,000 employed by the sector expected to also triple within 5 years.

Sport

Although at first sight the US and UK sporting worlds appear far apart, there are important links between the two nations. Several Premier League clubs have American owners, including Manchester United, Liverpool, and Arsenal. In the US, David Beckham, Simon Fuller, and other UK owners have recently launched a new football club Inter Miami. With football (soccer) a growing sport in the US, the influence of the Premier League is likely to grow too.

Back in the UK, the NFL have been investing into the UK as one of the key growth markets for the sport. The NFL "London Games" have become a permanent fixture in the NFL calendar and every year rumours circulate of a potential London NFL team, which could bring £100m a year to the capital. This sporting rapprochement can be best seen in Tottenham Hotspur, who received funding from the NFL to build their new stadium in exchange for hosting some of the NFL London games. Spurs' recent signing of arguably the biggest name in women's football, the American superstar Alex Morgan, reinforces how the club is increasingly looking West, a symbol of a growing sporting symbiosis.

US-UK RELATIONS UNDER OBAMA

The US-UK relationship from 2009-2016 under the presidency of Barack Obama was underpinned by three trends: the continued deployment of Western troops in the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya, the need to introduce measures to deal with the economic fallout of the 2008 Financial Crisis, and differing approaches to engagement with China.

Military deployments: Libya, Iraq, Syria, & Afghanistan

The joint deployment in Afghanistan was a perfect example of the aforementioned close security relationship between the UK and the US, with both countries exchanging and embedding officers and pilots in different UK and US units. The last Labour Government and subsequent Conservative governments supported the deployment of UK troops in Afghanistan on the grounds of stabilising the country and ensuring that it could no longer be a hub for international terrorist organisations.

Following the fall out from the 2011 Arab Spring, both the UK and US took part in the NATO-led military intervention in Libya in 2011 as part of the fall out of the Arab Spring, which all parties in the House of Commons supported. However, the intervention strained relations between President Obama and UK Prime Minister David Cameron, with Obama taking a relative backseat role compared to his British and French counterparts and attacking the lack of post-war construction and follow up from the French and UK Government.

If Obama was reluctant to take part in the intervention in Libya, he was even more reluctant in Syria, with a decision of non-intervention finally agreed in the closing months of 2013. After drawing red lines regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria by the Assad Regime in the summer of 2012, and their subsequent use in August 2013, the US President's decision against airstrikes was eventually decided by the House of Commons voting against the question of intervention.

The UK Government's defeat, and subsequent decision by the US President to call off a similar vote in the US Congress, was due in part to the Labour Party's opposition to airstrikes against the Assad regime and calls for more time for UN chemical weapons inspectors to investigate their use in Syria.

Following the rise of the Islamic State and the Syrian Civil War spilling over into Iraq, the UK Parliament sanctioned joining US-led airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Iraq but no Syria in September 2014. This made the UK an outlier, compared to the US and France, which had supported airstrikes in both countries.

Labour backed the Conservative Government in launching airstrikes against Islamic State in Iraq in 2014, but in December 2015 the parliamentary party was split down the middle on the question of expanding airstrikes to cover Syria. In the end enough Labour MPs backed the proposition, allowing the Government to gain parliamentary approval.

The aftermath of the 2008 Economic Crisis

The US–UK relationship was significantly influenced by both countries' response to the 2008 Financial Crisis. In regards to their respective political leadership and the economic policies

pursued, the UK and US started in contrasting positions, with Republican President George W. Bush initially sceptical of the need for an economic stimulus package, while Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown pursued the biggest bailout of British banks in history, and led a like-minded international response through the G20, which included persuading the reluctant Bush of the need to introduce similar measures to rescue the banks in the US.

Less than three years later, the UK found itself led by a Conservative Prime Minister championing an austerity agenda, and the US now under Democrat President Obama wholeheartedly embracing the need for large-scale infrastructure spending to stave off economic recession.

The divergence in both economic policy and political ideological leaning shaped the US/UK relationship within this period, but they also played into a wider desire of the Obama White House to pivot towards the Asia-Pacific region as a way to counter the rise of China. The US invested substantial amounts of diplomatic resources in the region to expand trade links through the creation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

As the Obama White House pressed ahead with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, in contrast it struggled to strike a similar agreement with its European partners in the form of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. David Cameron championed the passing of the trade agreement in the face of criticism that it would impact the NHS, but in the end progress in negotiations grew to a halt in the face of the French Government's threat of a veto.

A differing approach to engagement with China

US attempts during this period to forge a coordinated strategy with European partners to contain the rise of China were frustrated by the decision of the Cameron Government to embark on a 'Golden Era' policy of deepening economic and diplomatic relations with China. US-UK tensions regarding China policy reached an all time high when the UK, in face of vocal opposition from the Obama White House, was the first European country to become a founding member of China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Brexit

David Cameron's pursuit of a renegotiation and referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, put him at further odds with the Obama White House who remained sceptical of any vote that risked the UK leaving the trading bloc.

At the behest of Cameron, Obama joined Government ministers, the Labour Party, and the other smaller parties in campaigning for the UK to stay in the European Union. In a visit to the UK during the referendum campaign, Obama cautioned that the UK would be at the "back of the queue" for a free trade deal with the US.

The President's visit caused a backlash from Conservative Brexiteers who attacked Obama's intervention as inappropriate, and Boris Johnson drew criticism for writing an article accusing the President of having an "ancestral dislike of the British Empire", a comment which appeared to be aimed at his Kenyan ancestry.

Britain's vote to leave the European Union in June 2016, followed quickly by the shock election of Donald Trump in November, led US-UK relations into uncharted territory. Both countries were increasingly distracted by the chaotic aftermath of these unexpected results.

US-UK RELATIONS UNDER TRUMP

Labour has been extremely critical of President Trump, focussing on his individual nature as much as his policy and citing a divergence of values between Trump's America and the UK. This critical stance has seen the Labour Party oppose every state visit Trump has made to the UK.

Trade

The Conservative governments of Theresa May and Boris Johnson hoped that Donald Trump's election would see a restoration of close relations between the UK and the US, not least because Trump had indicated support of Brexit. However, President Trump's erratic and unpredictable style of government has led to public statements undermining Theresa May, siding with Brexit rebels and advocating for a No Deal Brexit.

The UK Government has struggled to progress talks for a Free Trade Agreement with the US, despite Trump's promise of a trade deal 'far bigger and more lucrative' than any the UK could make with the EU. Stumbling blocks remain over the controversial topic of US agricultural goods and the role of private pharmaceutical companies in the NHS. Labour has consistently opposed a free-trade agreement with the Trump White House, citing concerns that it would be largely one-sided leading to the ripping up of the UK's food regulatory standards and the steady privatisation of the NHS. Public opinion in the UK is also sceptical of the benefits of a US-UK trade deal.

If Trump's foreign policy has had a singular focus, it would be its dogmatic commitment to "America First", which has seen the US renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, wage a trade war with China, introduce tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from the EU, South Korea, Mexico, Australia, Brazil and Argentina, and tariffs on aircraft imports. Labour has previously opposed Trump's trade war, particularly the decision to introduce import tariffs on planemaker Bombardier which employs thousands of people in Northern Ireland.

NATO & Multilateral Institutions

Over the last few years, President Trump's America First policy has put it at odds with the UK and other European allies. Trump has been critical of NATO members' defence spending levels and threatened to end the long-standing military alliance. Singling out Germany in particular, he accused the country of "making a fortune off US soldiers" through NATO. Trump has occasionally accompanied criticism with some action; for example, he recently withdrew 12,000 troops from Germany (although half of these are simply moving to other NATO countries).

Prior to Trump, recent US Presidents including Bush and Obama have also called for greater defence spending from NATO allies. Trump's criticisms of NATO are therefore not necessarily new or radical. However, they have been communicated in a less diplomatic manner that has raised doubts about the US's commitment to European security.

Labour has been critical of Trump's erratic approach towards other NATO member states, while remaining committed to the UK spending at least 2 percent of its GDP on defence.

The UK has largely remained unscathed from Trump's criticism of NATO members defence spending, however the criticism has led many UK and US policymakers to question the long-term viability of the defence alliance, and encouraged leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron to question Europe's reliance on the US for defence.

President Trump's distrust of multilateral institutions has often put the US at odds with the UK and other allies who believe in maintaining the international-rules based order. The UK, along with many other allies, opposed Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Change Accord, end the Iran Nuclear deal, and cut US funding for the World Health Organization in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. Labour has strongly criticised all of these decisions.

Responding to China

The UK's initial decision to allow the Chinese state-backed Huawei to build the country's 5G network had the potential to severely damage the US-UK relationship. The Trump White House criticised the decision strongly and threatened to cut intelligence sharing between the two countries. US opposition was not limited to the White House: leading Democrats in Congress, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, warned the UK against allowing Huawei to participate in its 5G network.

Under pressure from the US Government and its own backbenchers, the UK Government changed its position, banned mobile phone providers from buying new Huawei 5G equipment after the end of 2020, and set a target for the removal of all Huawei 5G equipment from the UK network by 2027. Following the UK Government's policy reversal on Huawei, Sweden and the Czech Republic have also banned the company from their 5G network citing security risks and US pressure.

Whilst it looks like the tensions around this particular case have been resolved, the scale of pressure, displeasure, and threats to future US–UK intelligence sharing show that tensions around China are likely to flare up again were the UK to take a very different approach than the US's to China. Adopting a shared approach towards China will be a key consideration in defining the future US–UK relationship.

Military intervention

Throughout his presidency, Trump has emphasised opposition to America's role as the "policeman of the world", and expressed his desire to end US entanglements abroad. This has led to Trump withdrawing some troops from Syria and Iraq, and pledging a full withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by Christmas of 2020. While this target was missed, US troops continue to be removed from the country at the time of writing.

Trump's aversion to drawn-out US military interventions has not hindered his support for targeted airstrikes in Afghanistan, Syria, and in Iraq. In January 2020, the US shocked the world when it announced that it had assassinated senior Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in a drone strike, with some fearing it would lead to an outbreak of war between Iran and America. At the time, Labour described the attack as "reckless" and called for restraint from both sides to avoid deepening conflict.

America's standing in world

Trump, through his rejection of the recent US Presidential Election result, his endorsement of conspiracy theories, and his incitement of insurrection through encouraging his supporters to storm the US Capitol has substantially damaged America's standing with its closest allies and offered a propaganda coup to authoritarian regimes across the globe. The UK Government was the first to condemn the 'disgraceful scenes in the US Capitol' calling for a 'peaceful and orderly transfer of power', while Labour leader Keir Starmer called the insurrection "a direct attack on democracy".

US FOREIGN POLICY UNDER BIDEN

The lack of foreign policy discussion in the 2020 US Presidential Election campaign means that the details of Biden's foreign policy objectives were not always apparent. Aside from pushing for US re-engagement on a multilateral level, including through signing the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and a much more hardline approach towards Saudi Arabia, it is difficult to predict which major changes we will see.

Biden has a record of opposing the use of force, opposing Obama's 2009 Afghanistan "surge", and was sceptical about the raid on Osama Bin Laden. One thing is for certain; the Biden

Administration will have its work cut out when it comes to improving America's standing in the world amongst its closest allies and even its enemies. A considerable amount of foreign policy bandwidth and time will have to be dedicated to proving to the international community that the US once again has a president who respects democracy, the rule of law and the international rules-based system.

Biden's picks for top foreign policy positions including Antony Blinken as Secretary of State and Jake Sullivan as National Security Advisor, and Bill Burns as CIA Director, give an indication that his foreign policy style will likely resemble that of the Obama White House. The Obama-era foreign policy appointments continue to be seen as other senior State Department nominations come through, indicating a desire to move as much as possible away from *America First*.

As such, Biden's first foreign policy priority appears to be to reverse Trump's foreign policy. He has pledged to sign and implement the Paris Climate Accord, renew US membership of the World Health Organisation, and potentially revive the Iran Nuclear Deal as well. Biden has pledged to continue the winding-down of US military presence in Afghanistan, which will include removing the vast majority of troops. But whilst there will likely be engagement on a multilateral level from the US, a lot of Biden's policy bandwidth could well be taken up by addressing domestic issues ranging from the Black Lives Matter movement to the dealing with the economic and public health crisis of COVID-19, with a view to being able to present a more cohesive US to the world.

An area of growing interest for the Biden Presidency is his approach to China. Some speculate that a sharp policy change from the Trump era will see the ending of the US trade war with China. This could lead to a return to the Obama-era China policy of continued engagement with the Chinese Government while pivoting towards the Asia Pacific region, which some commentators would consider to be a firm but even-handed approach.

One thing most analysts agree on is that Biden's election will help create a far more coordinated and joined approach between Western allies regarding China's growing influence, which may include the formation of a new coalition of democracies (the D10) and the US joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). While Trump has talked a strong game on China, in practice this coalition-building could be far more effective in containing the strategic threat posed by China. Biden has also been vocal in condemning China's suppression of political freedoms in Hong Kong through the National Security Law, and China's mass-incarceration and human rights abuses against the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang. While Trump's focus has been on rallying domestic anger towards China's trade policies, Biden's approach to China is more likely to be driven by principles, human rights and multilateralism. Some examples where he might seek cooperation with China include climate and global health.

Biden has also pledged to make the focus of global corruption a priority of his presidency, including the issuing of presidential policy directive that establishes combating corruption as a core national security interest. The US will increase transparency in the global financial system,

clamp down on tax havens, and target foreign leaders who attempt to hide money and assets stolen from their people in Western banks. Biden will also likely re-engage on global tax and tech negotiations, at the OECD and elsewhere.

LABOUR: KEY PRINCIPLES OF A NEW APPROACH TO THE US–UK RELATIONSHIP

Labour should use its time in opposition to redefine the principles that underpin the US–UK relationship. These principles should be woven together to create a relationship that emphasises engagement with the US as part of a wider concerted foreign policy strategy rather than simply relying on historical sentimentality. At its heart, Labour’s broader foreign policy strategy should be founded upon recommitting to the importance of this relationship, while recognising the need to restore balance between the comparative power of the UK and US.

Concerted engagement

During the previous leadership of the Labour Party, some felt that it pursued non-engagement and at times direct hostility towards the US–UK relationship in contrast to a history of close partnership when in government, particularly under Clement Attlee, Jim Callaghan, Tony Blair, and Gordon Brown. This has come at the price of undermining the party’s credibility at a serious foreign policy actor.

To be taken seriously as a government in waiting, Labour must adopt the principle of concerted engagement with the UK’s closest partner. Recognising the multifaceted nature of the relationship means it must not be simply defined and shaped by the occupant of the White House. Labour should be willing to engage with US partners at every level and branch of government, as well as in every policymaking area.

A principle of concerted engagement will not only signal to British voters that Labour is serious about taking leadership of the UK’s closest relationships on the world stage, but it also plays into the need for a future Labour Government to maintain US engagement in Europe and re-engaging US interest in shared multilateral institutions.

Mutual dependence

Despite the US clearly being the dominant partner, the US–UK relationship is one of mutual dependence. This is often missed in media coverage and analysis, which swings between the extremes of UK deference or irrelevance. Labour should emphasise that when it comes to economic alignment, the movement of people, intelligence, and defence, the two countries have a level of mutual dependence which provides the opportunity for joint policy initiatives that are of mutual benefit. The UK also has an opportunity to return to a position of thought leadership, or at

least like-mindedness, in the relationship. This should mark a sharp break from the perception that a close relationship with the US is synonymous with a one-sided partnership.

Shared values

Labour's approach to the US relationship should be underpinned by shared values between the two countries in terms of democracy, the rule of law, a free press, the promotion of human rights, and an international rules-based system. Recognising that the UK's values system aligns far more with the US than authoritarian states such as China and Russia. The shared language and cultural heritage between the US and the UK are also important.

Where the US administration deviates from these shared values, Labour should not be afraid to call it out and demand that the US lives up to its obligations as the only superpower that is a liberal democracy. This should be done within the aforementioned framework of concerted engagement.

Strategic Autonomy

As the UK leaves the European Union, there is a risk that it becomes over-reliant on its relationship with the US. A core principle of Labour's approach to the US should be to advocate carving out areas of strategic independence. When it comes to trade, this principle should align with Labour's wider trade and foreign policy objective of having a close relationship with European partners, but it should also encourage Labour to champion increasing trade with other close partners within the Commonwealth and the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition, Labour should champion the need for an independent military capability that will allow the UK to defend itself and deploy the UK armed forces abroad for a time-limited period without relying on the US for direct military assistance.

Bridging the cultural divide

Previous UK governments have made much of the claim that the UK operates as a bridge between the US and Europe, but in a modern day context where the US President regularly engages with European leaders, this argument has diminishing influence. Where the UK does offer value is bridging the cultural divide between continental Europe and America and Labour should make this principle a core part of its strategy for redefining the UK's relationship with the US.

It is no secret that anti-American sentiment under Trump has risen substantially. Germany has been shocked and deeply upset by the attacks launched at its government by Trump regarding defence spending, while France has encouraged European countries to end their dependency on American weapons systems.

As the idea of the E3 grouping between the UK, Germany, and France becomes a reality, the UK will increasingly have a role in bridging the divide between the US and the two dominant powers in Europe, particularly as Europe strains to find a third way between the US and China.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Re-engagement on the world stage

Labour should champion the re-engagement of the US on the world stage under the Biden White House, working with the Democratic Party to encourage renewed Western leadership and a joined up approach between Europe and America.

Labour should work with Democrats and the Biden White House to prioritise a new roadmap for peace talks in Israel, de-escalation of tensions in Mediterranean, and the resumption of the Iran Nuclear Deal. This has been Biden's flagship foreign policy during his campaign and there will likely be an appetite to engage on this front. It will be important to add certain new terms and conditions though, as he will want to avoid looking "weak".

A Biden administration has the opportunity to reform and reinvigorate multilateral institutions neglected by Trump, including the World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Labour should not only support and work with a Biden White House on US priorities on this front but this could present the opportunity to get US support for different areas of Western engagement that might be priorities for Labour.

US-UK partnership on decarbonisation

Both the Democrats in America and Labour in the UK have previously pledged to ambitious commitments to decarbonise their respective economies as part of the 'green new deal' agenda, which could stimulate the US-UK economies post-COVID and create new jobs. Labour should encourage the UK Government to take up joint initiatives and climate technology cooperation with the Biden White House to ensure both countries meet their carbon emission targets. As the UK hosts COP26 in Glasgow next year, there is a crucial window to ensure that Biden makes good on his pledge to sign and implement the Paris Agreement, and seek an even more ambitious agreement in 2021. This would be a key diplomatic win for the UK as hosts of this conference.

Closer coordination in pandemic response

The world has suffered from the absence of a global coordinated response to the spread of COVID-19, this in part has been due to lack of leadership from the Trump White House which

favoured putting America first. This approach has led to the US cutting funding to the World Health Organisation, buying up the global stock of COVID-19 treatment drug remdesivir, and refusing to attend the UK's global vaccine summit.

Under a Biden Presidency which favours re-engagement with the global community, it is likely that the US will work closely with partners to ensure a vaccine for COVID-19 is produced and readily available for the rest of the world. Labour has an important role to play in encouraging the UK Government to work closely with the US, not only in research and development to learn more about COVID-19 but ensuring that both countries have structures in place to respond to the likelihood of future pandemics. Given the relative absence of a co-ordinated response to this pandemic, There is also an opportunity for the UK and the U.S. to fill a current void in international leadership and help bring the international community on the same page on exit-strategy options such as vaccine research, availability and a coordinated approach to universal vaccine distribution.

Tackling financial corruption

Labour has been a staunch advocate for transparency in the global tax and financial system, fighting financial corruption and ending the use of tax havens. The fact that Biden has made this a priority of his foreign policy, should offer a natural starting point for Labour to collaborate with the incoming Democrat administration. Labour should be ready to pressure the UK Government to follow any US initiative targeting financial corruption and limiting the role of tax havens, including encouraging the UK Government to expand its Magnitsky sanctions to encompass financial corruption.

Collaboration on the delivery of international development aid

Under the Trump administration the delivery of international aid to the world's poorest was not only deprioritized but consistently attacked, with the White House trying on several occasions to slash billions in foreign assistance from the budget and place restrictions on countries eligible for US aid. Trump's antipathy towards US aid created a vacuum which in the last few years has been increasingly filled by China with its Belt and Road Initiative.

International aid will have a core part to play in the Biden White House's attempts to repair America's reputation abroad. At a time when the UK Government has abolished DFID and is considering cuts to its aid budget, Labour should be working with like minded voices in America to advocate for US-UK collaboration on the delivery of international aid to alleviate global poverty and as a counter-balance to China's debt diplomacy through the Belt and Road Initiative.

Soft Power

Since Dominic Raab replaced Jeremy Hunt as foreign secretary, soft power has dropped down the list of UK foreign policy priorities. Soft power initiatives between the UK and the US, or even UK led with US support on a global stage, are a relatively low-risk way of cementing and continuing to build the US–UK relationship. US soft power has taken a hit under Donald Trump, and therefore it is likely that the Biden administration will seek to address this and reverse the downwards trend.

Labour should promote and champion soft power initiatives between the US and UK as means to maintain the UK's international reputation, but also for the secondary reason that increasing the UK's soft power will directly lead to an increase in foreign direct investment and the creation of jobs in the UK.

Fostering engagement at a devolved, state, and city level

In the same vein of politically low-risk forms of engagement with the US, Labour should pursue the promotion of devolved trade, FDI and diplomatic engagement. Both countries have complex yet successful forms of devolution, and this presents a panoply of possibilities for UK cities, metro areas, and grouping such as the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine to engage with US cities and states in a way that can bypass the potential political tensions at federal level and challenges posed by a traditional FTA.

Developing a joint approach towards China centred around human rights

The UK should work closely with the US when it comes to forging a coordinated strategy in responding to human rights violations in China. Whether it is the question of Uyghur slave labour or the undermining of Hong Kong's autonomy, there needs to be a coordinated and consistent approach from Western countries including the USA. Labour should be encouraging the US Government to help create a new alliance of democracies to stand up to China when it comes to its abysmal human rights record, including encouraging the UK Government to collaborate closely with the US to raise these issues at the UN. One such example could include blocking market access for products of: slave labour, firms that support human rights violations, purloined technologies, or any other issues they wish to jointly tackle.

The next G7 summit which will be held in the UK in 2021, will present an important opportunity for Western countries to assemble some form of coordinated strategy in response to the rise of China. Labour should encourage the UK Government to expand the list of attendees to include other democracies who have a mutual interest in forming a D10 group to respond to China's growing human rights violations.

Ending arm sales to Saudi Arabia

Labour should renew and reinvigorate efforts to pressure the UK Government into joining forces with the incoming Biden administration in stopping arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Both Biden and Harris have made multiple statements over the past months saying they would stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Labour can engage with a Biden presidency to use their campaign promises to pressure the UK Government into doing the same thing. A joint US–UK initiative to stop Saudi arms sales would carry significant weight internationally and would arguably represent Labour’s best chance to date of getting this Conservative Government to adopt what has been Labour policy for several years.

Campaigning for the UK Government to work with a Biden administration to end arms sales to Saudi Arabia would in turn pressure the Saudi Government to end its military intervention in Yemen, which has left 24 million people (80% of the population) in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

Some in the Biden White House may be tempted to resume arms sales to Saudi Arabia as a condition for the ending of the war in Yemen. Labour should be clear with US partners that irrespective of the ending of the war, it will continue its principled opposition to arms sales to Saudi Arabia and will advocate that the Democrats follow a similar course.

Afghanistan: maintaining peace and the gains in education and poverty alleviation

Biden has pledged to withdraw the bulk of the remaining US troops in Afghanistan which will likely see the remaining UK troops also leave the country at the same time. Labour should encourage the UK Government to work with US diplomats and USAID to ensure that any withdrawal of troops does not compromise the prospect of peace in the country or lead to a deterioration in the gains Afghanistan has seen in education and poverty alleviation since the original NATO intervention in 2001.

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About the New Diplomacy Project:

The New Diplomacy Project aims to help develop Labour's foreign policy for the 21st Century. Our experienced network of foreign policy researchers provides expert advice to Labour MPs and Lords, from real-time reaction to global events to in-depth policy briefings on complex areas of foreign policy. We seek to expand Labour's capacity to think about the foreign policy, while complementing and bolstering the work of its frontbench team.

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