

Britain's Role in the World: Discussion Guide

This guide is a brief summary of key points within the Policy Review document "Britain's Role in the World", covering the key things we've learned from conversations with Labour Party stakeholders and the public during the course of the New Politics Fresh Ideas consultation and the Policy Review. You can find the full document at fresh-ideas.org.uk/annual-conference-2011-documents.

Introduction

In government, Labour reversed the Conservative legacy of disengagement and creeping isolationism. We led the debate and set the agenda on crucial international challenges, such as cancelling third world debt, boosting foreign aid, agreeing international action to tackle climate change, and kick-starting the world economy after the global crash.

As the 'Arab Spring' and intervention in Libya have shown, world events are volatile and fast-moving and the orthodoxies of foreign affairs and international relations can soon be recast. The increased interconnectivity of the world brings with it global challenges. Some we must address and work to tackle immediately – climate change, growing pressure on resources and the ongoing threat of conflict and instability. However, we also must ensure that we are prepared for and can be responsive to unforeseeable crises as they arise. We must work together and share the responsibility for meeting these global challenges.

Labour is an internationalist party, committed to working across borders both to protect Britain's interests and promote our values. Labour will remain committed to the responsibility that we all have towards our fellow citizens – whether they live in rich, poor or middle income countries.

What people have told us to date

Five themes stand out from our conversation with the public and with members:

- The clearest message from our discussions with the public and members is pride in our Armed Forces – and a strong desire to see their bravery honoured and supported.
- Belief that national security remains the chief priority of international action.
- Continuing concern about the lives lost in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Support for playing a strong role in the world proportionate to our means and capabilities.
- Compassion for and a belief that we should take action to help the millions of people around the world living in poverty, alongside a renewed call for value for money and accountability in development work.

We want to know what you think... Suggested questions for discussion:

- What kind of role do you think Britain should be playing in the world?
- What kind of role do you think Britain should be playing in Europe?
- How can we best support our service personnel, in particular when serving on the frontline and when they return home?
- How can we strengthen and uphold the Military Covenant to support our forces and their families?
- What do you think a Labour Party approach to National Security should look like and how does this differ from the Conservative-led Government?
- How do we continue to make the case for the importance of UK aid to developing countries and ensure accountability and value for money?