



# Hansard Society written evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee's 'Global Britain' inquiry

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## Summary

This submission proposes that the Committee instigate the regular collection and publication of a set of indicators that would constitute 'Metrics for Global Britain'. The submission thus addresses the second point in the Committee's terms of reference, "metrics against which the success of 'Global Britain' can be assessed".

The submission outlines the proposal (section A) and its rationale (section B). It then outlines possible options for its delivery (section C), and issues for the Committee to consider in selecting (section D) and interpreting (section E) indicators, should it decide to take up the idea. An annex lists possible fields that the indicators might cover; possible indicators; and, in some cases, possible sources.

## Background

The Hansard Society is a research and educational charity working to strengthen parliaments and parliamentary democracy in the UK and overseas. Established in 1944, it is the UK's leading source of independent research and advice on Parliament and parliamentary affairs.

Dr Brigid Fowler joined the Hansard Society in December 2016 to lead its work on Parliament and Brexit. She has over 15 years' professional experience in EU and European affairs and UK foreign and European policy, across academic research, commercial political risk and political settings, including seven years (2007-2014) as a Committee Specialist for the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. In 2010 she was among the parliamentary staff who participated in the UCL Constitution Unit research project on select committees<sup>1</sup>. In January-July 2016 she was a Senior Researcher for Britain Stronger in Europe, the official 'Remain' campaign in the UK's June 2016 EU membership referendum.

The Hansard Society welcomes the Committee's decision to make its 'Global Britain' inquiry a long-term piece of work. It is pleased to have the opportunity to make this submission to the Committee as part of the Society's long-running work aimed at improving the effectiveness of select committees.

## Submission

### A. Proposal

1. The Hansard Society proposes that the Committee should instigate the collection and publication of a set of indicators that it regards as collectively constituting reasonable indicators for 'Global Britain'. If it decided to take up the proposal, the Committee should put arrangements in place to ensure that the set of 'Metrics for Global Britain' are collected and published not just once but several times, to allow

comparison over time. The proposal would thus require a greater commitment from the Committee than simply publishing a report and awaiting the Government response.

2. In terms of frequency, an annual exercise would seem to be the most appropriate: many of the indicators that the Committee might wish to include are not published any more frequently than once a year, while a less-frequent exercise could risk missing developments as the Brexit process works through. However, the most appropriate frequency for the exercise could depend on the indicators that the Committee decided to include, were it to proceed with the proposal.

3. Presentation of the indicators need not be complicated - a spreadsheet or set of tables would suffice. However, in the interests of accessibility and impact there would also be scope for the Committee - should it so choose and have appropriate resources available - to make use of charts, graphs and digital presentations, including interactive formats, especially as the repeat sets of indicators began to build up over time.

## B. Rationale

4. There would be value both in 'Global Britain' indicators being regularly published, and in it being the Foreign Affairs Committee which instigates and ensures this process.

### The value of 'Global Britain' metrics

5. As the Committee noted in its initial inquiry report in March, Global Britain (HC 780), the concept of 'Global Britain' has become the organising principle of UK foreign policy while remaining broad, vague and apparently unattached to specific priorities, objectives or indicators of achievement.

It is not clear how the present Government's conception differs from those of its predecessors. The then-Foreign Secretary David Miliband made the concept of the UK as a 'global hub' central to his tenure from 2007<sup>2</sup>. His successor William Hague saw the UK as needing to operate in a 'networked world'<sup>3</sup>, which - among other objectives - involved the strengthening of bilateral relations with emerging powers outside Europe (and the direction of FCO staff resources accordingly).

Furthermore, the environment for the current use of the term 'Global Britain' is highly politicised. If the concept remains unattached to any more seriously-grounded meaning or set of indicators, there is a risk that it comes to be used by all sides in the political battle simply as an instrumentalised slogan - including in connection with random and irrelevant news items - in a way which obstructs rather than advances clear, substantive and constructive policy debate.

There would therefore be value in attaching the concept of 'Global Britain' to a set of indicators, simply as a matter of good governance. The exercise would help to hold the Government to account and improve the quality of public debate.

### Value-added from the Committee

6. If the Committee took up the proposal, the prospect would be of a cross-party body, with experience in international affairs and the workings of government, and responsible to the House of Commons, reaching agreement through a transparent process on a set of metrics which it regards as collectively constituting reasonable indicators for 'Global Britain'. No other body is in a position to do this.

7. The Committee would not need to agree that the UK becoming 'more global' according to each and every one of its selected indicators would necessarily be a 'good thing'. (Indeed, the Committee should be alert to the fact that it often seems simply to be assumed that a 'more global' Britain is a desirable or popular objective, when - in the absence of greater clarity about the content of the idea - this may be just an assumption.) Rather, the value-added from the Committee would come from it agreeing that each of its selected metrics was a reasonable indicator for 'Global Britain'.

Subsequent debate - by the Committee, in government and more widely - on the specific indicators by which the UK should or might become 'more global' could help to refine what different people mean by 'Global Britain'. The process might therefore enable the debate to move on from a situation in which there are simply competing claims to the label 'Global Britain' to one of debate between clearer policy options. In other words, the debate might become about the substance rather than the slogan.

### Value-added for the Committee

8. In its 2012 joint submission to the Liaison Committee's inquiry into select committee effectiveness, with the Institute for Government and the UCL Constitution Unit, the Hansard Society recommended that committees should resist "too great a focus on short-term, 'headline seeking' inquiries at the expense of topics that require longer-term attention", and that they improve follow-up to inquiries. It noted that select committees "are often most successful in areas where they are most persistent"<sup>4</sup>. In that context, the Hansard Society welcomes the Committee's decision to make its 'Global Britain' inquiry into a longer-term piece of work, and considers that this increases the prospects of it proving an effective contribution.

9. In our 2012 submission, we also noted that select committees "can be at their most effective when they conduct original research, providing a new, clear evidence base for their recommendations". In particular, select committees can wield their

strongest influence where they command specific factual knowledge and base their work on it. By committing to the repeated publication of a set of factual indicators, the Committee would show that it is serious about evidence-based scrutiny work. This could enhance the Committee's reputation and that of select committees in general.

**10.** Regularly repeated publication of a set of numerical indicators is also a well-tested 'hook' to attract media and public attention. This could stimulate public debate and facilitate the Committee's public engagement.

### C. Delivery options

**11.** There would seem to be three possible means of delivering the proposed set of metrics:

i. Make the collection and publication of the data a requirement on the FCO, by making it a recommendation in a Committee report.

This would oblige the FCO to monitor its own performance against its declared central policy concept. If the FCO fulfilled the recommendation, this option would also spare Committee resources.

However, if the FCO were reluctant to fulfil the recommendation, the Committee would ultimately have no means of obliging it to do so. Even if the FCO agreed to publish indicators, one can imagine disagreement or potentially awkward negotiations with the Committee over the indicators to be included, especially if the Committee wanted to include indicators outside the FCO's sphere of responsibility. The Committee could lose control and be unable to guarantee publication of the indicators it wished to see. In any case, if the metrics were to be a means for the Committee to hold the Government to account, it might be most appropriate if they were published by a body other than the Government.

ii. Commission a third party, such as an academic or think-tank, to compile the indicators, for publication by or in conjunction with the Committee.

This would presumably depend most importantly on the availability of funding for the Committee to use for such a purpose.

The Committee would also need to ensure that it retained control of the metrics to be collected; that the person or body collecting the data was impartial and seen to be so; and that conditions were in place to ensure that the data could be collected over several iterations on a consistent basis.

iii. The Committee collects and publishes the indicators itself, as a short report each time.

Through this option, the Committee could best retain control of the metrics to be collected and, indeed, ownership of the project as a whole.

The greatest risk to this option would be the Committee - perhaps as a result of a change of chairmanship or membership - dropping collection of the indicators before the exercise had been conducted sufficiently often to generate useful findings. The best insurance against this would be for the Committee, if it decided to launch collection of the metrics, simultaneously to commit itself to the project at least for the remainder of this Parliament. If it were to be an annual exercise, this would potentially enable at least four iterations (2018-2021).

This option would also involve a greater commitment of parliamentary staff resources than the commissioning of an external body. However, the 'heavy lifting' involved in the project lies in the selection of indicators, which would fall to the Committee either way. The subsequent collection of the data need not be especially onerous, especially after the first exercise.

This would be the case particularly if the task were spread beyond Foreign Affairs Committee staff. The Committee might well decide that the notion of 'Global Britain' encompasses indicators that fall within the remit of other committees (eg Defence, Education, International Development, International Trade, Treasury). (The Committee may wish to note that, in government, the new National Security Capability Review establishes a "Global Britain Board to coordinate Global Britain activity across departments, agencies and our overseas network".<sup>5</sup>) There is a plethora of expertise among committee staff, in the Scrutiny Unit and in the House of Commons Library that could be drawn on to ease, accelerate and improve the collection of the data.

If the Committee wished to encourage buy-in and cooperation from other committees and the Committee Directorate for what would be FAC leadership on, in effect, a cross-committee project, it could invite the Liaison Committee to endorse and communicate any request for input.

## D. Data requirements

12. There are two broad types of indicator that the Committee might consider for inclusion in its selected metrics:

i. UK performance/scores/rankings on indicators such as the international openness of the economy or share of worldwide patents, in some international public 'favourability'-type surveys, or in international comparative exercises (such as the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, the various published 'soft power' indices, or the various published 'best place to do business' or 'best place to live'-type rankings published by think-tanks or private-sector/media organisations). However, change in the UK's



score or ranking on such indicators indicates how well the UK is doing in global competition, not necessarily whether it is becoming more or less 'global'. An improvement in a country's score on this type of indicator could reflect improvement in its performance in just one other country or region, rather than a spread to more countries/regions. For this reason, indicators of this type are not included in the rest of this submission, but the Committee could of course decide to use them. The distinction between this type of indicator and the second type can sometimes be fine.

ii. Indicators of the extent to which the UK is 'global'. The rest of this submission refers to indicators such as these.

**13.** The Committee's selected indicators should be available on a consistent basis over time, so that the Committee could generate a time series to track change, or the lack of it. It would be for the Committee to decide how far back to go to start the collection of data. It would be advisable if the data collection could start far enough back at least to establish some pre-Brexit benchmark levels and allow any effects from the Brexit referendum to be seen.

**14.** The prime aim of the data collection would be to enable the tracking of absolute change in the UK's own performance over time. However, even if it published data only on the UK, the Committee might wish to be able to compare the UK's performance to other countries, so that it could see whether the UK was becoming 'more' or 'less global' than, say, France. It would therefore be advisable if the Committee chose datasets which covered the UK alongside other states.

**15.** Whether 'global' refers to 'Europe and the rest of the world' or just 'the rest of the world' goes to the heart of the UK's current Brexit and post-Brexit debate. So that the Committee could facilitate - rather than close down - debate and accountability, it would be advisable if it selected indicators that could be used in accordance with the first (ie whole-world) interpretation, but were also available in a Europe/RoW breakdown.

**16.** Any indicator selected by the Committee should be publicly accessible and generated using a transparent methodology and sources.

## **E. Considerations on the use and interpretation of the indicators**

**17.** The use of metrics can have a diversionary effect. If it went ahead with the current proposal, the Committee would need to make clear to the Government that it would not regard improving the UK's performance on 'Global Britain' indicators as any substitute for policy development and delivery.

**18.** Many elements of a 'Global Britain' policy might not be susceptible to measurement - such as, in many respects, international 'leadership' or 'influence'.

Or, for example, rather than any change to measurable immigration outcomes a change in immigration policy to one without geographical discrimination (eliminating EEA preference) might in itself be seen as the UK becoming 'more global'.

**19.** Using metrics also risks creating perverse incentives. In the present case, this would apply especially to military deployments overseas for combat purposes. The same might apply to overseas development assistance, if, for example, the provision of ODA to more countries were taken as an indicator of a 'more global' Britain. 'Global Britain' metrics might well capture the number/size and geographical spread of free trade agreements, or FDI inflows, but not their quality or political and socio-economic impact.

**20.** Performance on some indicators of 'Global Britain' might have little or nothing to do with the Government (such as decisions by UK citizens to emigrate or return). The Committee would need to decide if it wished to adhere narrowly to its responsibility to hold the Government to account, in which case it might select only indicators which directly reflect Government action (such as diplomatic numbers overseas). Alternatively, the Committee could take a more expansive view and collect data on 'Global Britain' as a description of the country and aspects of its population and way of life. This would make the collection of 'Metrics for Global Britain' a larger exercise.

**21.** As the Committee well knows, correlation is not causation. The Committee would need to publish and use any 'Global Britain' indicators with due caution about what they might show about the effects of Government action, or Brexit. For many of the indicators that the Committee might select, change might reflect very long-term trends. Annex: Possible indicators for 'Global Britain'

This annex lists possible fields that 'Global Britain' indicators might cover; possible indicators; and, in some cases, possible sources.

The items on the list are suggestions, intended to stimulate and aid the Committee's initial discussions. The list is not intended to be exhaustive. An indicator's inclusion on the list does not mean that it is necessarily available in a Europe/RoW breakdown. Inclusion on the list of an indicator from a named source does not indicate endorsement, or any vouching for its quality.

## Existing 'Global Britain'-type metrics

Some organisations publish or have published 'Global Britain'-type indicators of which the Committee might wish to be aware, if it is not already:

- The United Nations Association of the UK has published a 'Global Britain Scorecard' assessing the UK's performance on a range of policies according



with UNA-UK preferences, using a traffic light system. UNA-UK says that it intends to update the scorecard “annually, or when significant changes to policy occur” (<https://www.una.org.uk/scorecard>).

- As part of its ‘Global Britain’ research programme, the Henry Jackson Society published a report in 2017 assessing the UK’s overall strength and capabilities. Its methodology overlaps to some extent with some of the indicators the Committee might wish to include (<http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Towards-Global-Britain.pdf>).
- The Elcano Royal Institute/Real Instituto Elcano in Spain produces an annual Global Presence Index which again incorporates some of the indicators the Committee might wish to include (<http://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/en>).

#### Diplomatic presence (Source: FCO)

- No. of UK overseas (sovereign and other) posts
- No. of countries with, and covered by, a permanent UK diplomatic presence
- No. of FCO and UK government staff in UK overseas posts
- No. of UK-based diplomats in UK overseas posts
- The Lowy Institute in Australia publishes an annual Global Diplomacy Index which details and compares the international diplomatic networks of OECD and some other states (<http://globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org>)

#### International diplomatic influence (Possible sources: FCO; international organisations; academic/think-tank studies)

- No. of international organisations of which the UK is a member
- No. of international treaties to which the UK is a party
- No. of countries with which the UK has international agreements of any sort
- No. and geographical spread of outward and inward ministerial visits
- Scale of UK government funding of international organisations (the Brookings Institution published a calculation for this in early 2018: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/09/who-actually-funds-the-un-and-other-multilaterals>)
- If possible, some measure of the number of UK-instigated or UK-sponsored resolutions passed in the UN Security Council/General Assembly
- If possible, some measure of the number of UK citizens working in international organisations
- Some measure of the UK’s contribution to international peacekeeping missions
- No. of current world leaders to have studied in the UK

- No. of countries of citizenship of recipients of Chevening Scholarships and Chevening Fellowships

Military presence and capability (Possible sources: MoD; defence/security think-tanks such as RUSI or IISS)

- Bearing in mind the considerations outlined in 12. and 19. above, no. of UK military personnel deployed overseas
- Again bearing those considerations in mind, no. of countries with a UK military presence
- Some measure(s) of international force projection capability

Overseas Development Assistance (Possible sources: DFID; international organisations such as OECD/World Bank)

- Bearing in mind the considerations outlined in 12. and 19., the Committee may wish to decide whether meeting the international 0.7%/GNI ODA target should in itself be taken as an indicator of 'Global Britain'
- Again bearing paragraph 19. in mind, the Committee could include some measure(s) of the geographical spread of the UK's ODA

Internationalisation of the UK economy (Possible sources: OECD/IMF/World Bank/Bank of England/HMT/World Economic Forum)

- The OECD publishes a set of 'Measuring Globalisation' indicators which may include relevant items ([https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/data/oecd-statistics-on-measuring-globalisation\\_global-data-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/data/oecd-statistics-on-measuring-globalisation_global-data-en))
- International trade as % of GDP
- Some measure(s) of the scale of FDI in the UK economy and the geographical spread of its sources
- Some measure(s) of the position of the UK in global financial flows
- No. and geographical spread of free trade agreements to which the UK is party

Internationalisation of the UK citizenry (Possible sources: ONS; Home Office; UN Statistics Division; for languages, British Council)

- Foreign-born UK citizens as % of total
- Naturalised UK citizens as % of total
- No. of countries of birth of UK citizenry
- No. of native languages of UK citizenry
- % of UK citizenry speaking at least one foreign language
- UK citizens living outside the UK as % of total
- Number of countries with resident UK citizens

Internationalisation of the UK population (Possible sources: ONS; Home Office; UN Statistics Division; for languages, British Council)

- Foreign-born as % of population
- No. of countries of birth of UK population
- No. of native languages of UK population
- % of UK population speaking at least one foreign language

Higher education (Possible sources: Dept. of Education; British Council; Universities UK)

- Foreign students as % of total in UK higher education
- No. of countries of citizenship of students in UK higher education
- Foreign academic and research staff as % of total in UK higher education
- No. of countries of citizenship of academic and research staff in UK higher education
- No. of UK universities with an overseas campus or other operation
- Travel and tourism (Possible sources: ONS; Home Office; Visit Britain)
  - Number of overseas countries/destinations served from UK airports
  - No. and geographical spread of overseas tourist arrivals to UK
  - Scale and geographical spread of outward visits by UK citizens/residents
- Cultural reach (Possible sources: British Council; BBC/other broadcast producers; Premier League)
  - No. of countries with a British Council presence
  - No. of people engaged by British Council events, and teaching and other programmes
  - No. of BBC World Service language services
  - No. of countries served by BBC World Service and BBC World News
  - Global audiences for BBC World Service and BBC World News
  - No. of broadcast rights deals/size of global audiences for leading international UK TV programmes (Dr Who, Downton Abbey, The Crown, etc)
  - No. of overseas broadcasters with Premiership broadcast rights/No. of countries they serve

UK public attitudes (Possible sources: British Council; UK opinion polling firms; international polls such as those produced by the Pew Research Center, the German Marshall Fund of the United States or sometimes Chatham House; World Values Survey)

- Bearing in mind the considerations outlined in 12., some measure(s) of UK public openness or favourability to internationalisation/foreign countries or peoples

International public attitudes towards UK (Possible sources: British Council; UK opinion polling firms; international polls such as those produced by the Pew Research Center, the German Marshall Fund of the United States or sometimes Chatham House; World Values Survey)

- Again bearing in mind the considerations outlined in 12., some measure(s) of the UK's standing in international public opinion

1. M. Russell and M. Benton (2011), *Selective Influence: The Policy Impact of House of Commons Select Committees* (London: Constitution Unit, UCL), <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/publications/tabs/unit-publications/153.pdf>
2. 'Miliband sees nation as 'global hub'', *Financial Times*, 8 July 2007, <https://www.ft.com/content/f49555aa-2d88-11dc-939b-0000779fd2ac>
3. William Hague, 'Britain's Foreign Policy in a Networked World', 1 July 2010, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/britain-s-foreign-policy-in-a-networked-world--2>
4. House of Commons Liaison Committee, *Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers: Written evidence* by Dr Ruth Fox, Hansard Society, Rt Hon Peter Riddell, Institute for Government, Dr Meg Russell and Prof Robert Hazell, The Constitution Unit (UCL), February 2012, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmliaisn/697/697wr02.htm>
5. Cabinet Office, *National Security Capability Review*, March 2018, p 30, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/696305/6.4391CONationalSecurityReviewweb.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696305/6.4391CONationalSecurityReviewweb.pdf)