

on International Affairs
FOCUS



**GENERAL ELECTION 2005:
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO FOR
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**



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Some would have you believe that international issues do not greatly impact on a general election in Britain. I disagree.

The reaction across the country to the Asian tsunami reinforced the fact we British care deeply about the plight of those in other countries. People didn't wait for the Government to lead – they gave their time and money in whatever way they could.

In today's interdependent world, no country can afford to go it alone. The damage being done by climate change and pollution does not respect borders. Global trade and communications mean that you can move money at the touch of a button. The threat of international crime and terrorism is one that all countries need to address.

Isolationism is not an option. The Liberal Democrats are an instinctively internationalist party; pro-UN and pro-Europe. We believe that strong international institutions, underpinned by international law, are the best way to ensure that countries work together to tackle common problems.

Britain has a central role to play. Our membership of organisations such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the EU, G8 and World Trade Organisation puts us at the centre of a web of influence. We should use that influence to promote peace and security and support the rule of international law; to tackle climate change and international poverty; and to encourage the spread of democracy and human rights.

But Britain's international reputation has been damaged by the way Tony Blair took us to war in Iraq. And it has damaged relations with our partners in Europe.

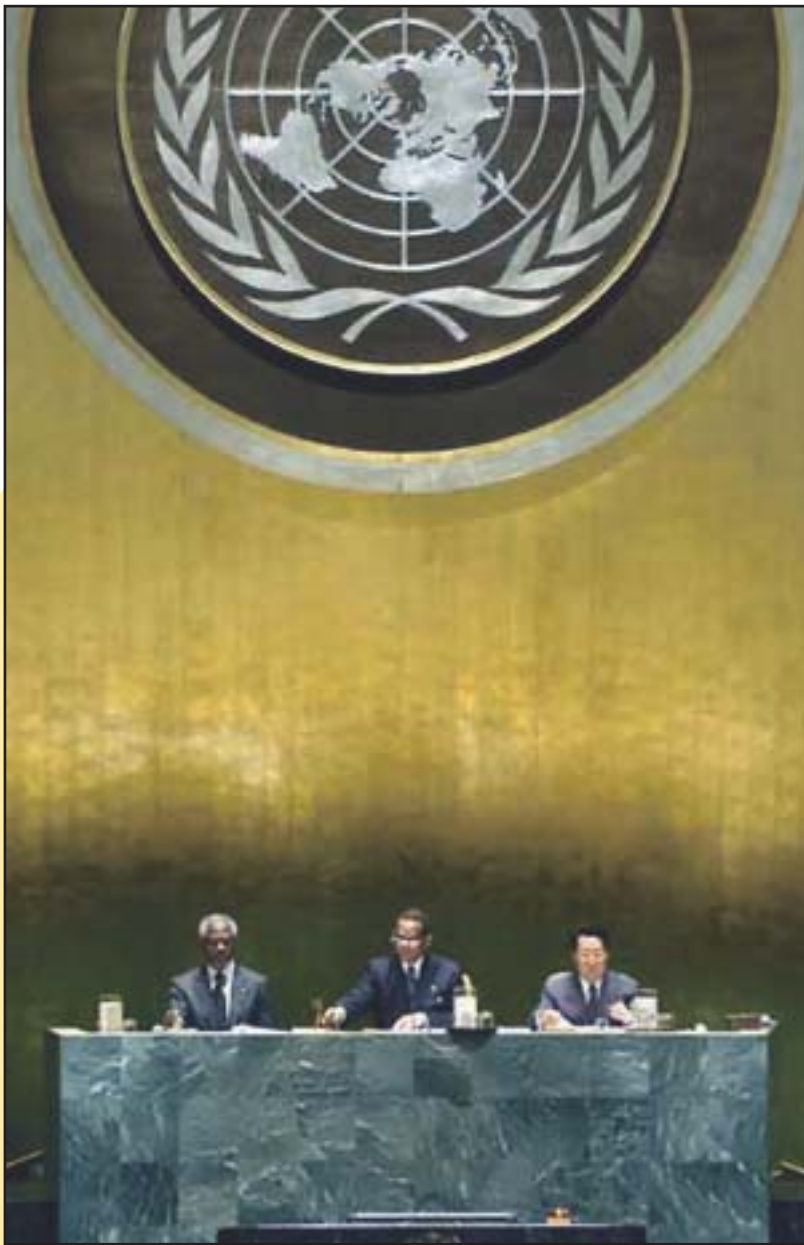
The claims that were made about the threat from Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction have turned out to be false. At home and abroad, many find it difficult to trust Tony Blair and that will make it much more difficult for Britain to address the difficult issues facing the world today.

The Liberal Democrats took a principled stand before the Iraq war. We asked the important questions then and we continue to do so now. Now that there have been elections in Iraq, we want to know the exit strategy.

The British troops currently in Iraq are doing a superb job in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Their peace-keeping record in the southern sector reflects their dedication to a professional job well done. But by taking part in the initial invasion, both British and American troops are seen by many Iraqis as occupiers rather than liberators. For many Iraqis and for many Arabs in neighbouring countries, the mere presence of British and American troops in Iraq is unacceptable and is feeding the insurgency. The Government's objective should be a phased withdrawal of British forces by when the current UN mandate expires at the end of this year.

It will take a lot of work to restore Britain's reputation. This manifesto sets out how the Liberal Democrats would use Britain's influence in the world.

Charles Kennedy



Top 6 Liberal Democrat International Affairs policies

- **Reform and strengthen the UN.** - respect international law and defend human rights.
- **Looking after our armed forces** so that they can look after us.
- **Tackle the arms trade** – stop selling weapons to oppressive regimes.
- **Make free trade fair** so that poor countries can trade their way out of poverty.
- **Work with other countries to tackle climate change** - by setting challenging reduction targets for the long-term, aiming to give every country an equal population-related allowance for emissions.

A vision for the 21st century

The Liberal Democrat vision is a world in which there is free exchange and cooperation among different peoples, states, regional groups, and cultures. Within Europe we welcome progress towards a democratic and accountable union of states, which promotes internal diversity and openness towards the rest of the world. We will help developing countries by increasing financial aid and breaking down barriers to free trade. We will work with the international community to foster democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the world. Underpinning this is a commitment to making the UN more effective, and to enhanced international cooperation in addressing global threats and challenges.

Promoting democracy and preventing conflict

The principles of freedom, justice and responsibility are central to Liberal Democrat beliefs. We are committed to democratisation and human rights. Military intervention should only be used when it is legitimate and as a last resort.

We will:

- Strengthen the UK's role in conflict prevention:
 - Ensure that UK foreign, defence, aid and trade policies are fully integrated and firmly based on principle.
 - Promote active cooperation between states to address threats posed by terrorism, the proliferations of weapons and trans-national crime.
 - Support multilateral action through the United Nations and EU to address the underlying causes of conflict, including poverty, the abuse of human rights and repression.
- Tackle the arms trade and work

for the elimination of nuclear weapons:

- Press for a new round of multilateral arms reduction talks, retaining the UK's current minimum nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future, until progress has been made towards the global elimination of such weapons.
- Press for the EU Code of Conduct on arms sales, which is voluntary, to be made legally binding, the establishment of a mechanism to monitor and ensure conformity, and a requirement that states produce regular compliance reports.
- Establish a cross-party Parliamentary Select Committee to monitor arms exports and scrutinise individual licence applications.
- Require arms brokers to register under a statutory Code of Conduct and revoke the licences of those who break the code.
- Support the establishment of an International Arms Trade Treaty which would set out common standards for the regulation of arms transfers.
- Seek to strengthen and reform the UN:
 - Press for the implementation of the recommendations of the UN High Level Panel report on Threats, Challenges and Change 2004, which proposes major UN reform.
 - Strengthen the ability of the UN to hold member states to account for gross and persistent breaches of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
 - Require the Secretary General to conduct an annual audit to determine outstanding state obligations and action required.
 - Initiate a review of transparency, accountability and efficiency in the UN Secretariat.
 - Strengthen UN finances and impose speedy and effective penalties for non-payment of dues.

- Enhance the Secretariat's ability to rationalise and co-ordinate the work of the various UN agencies.
- Improve UN coordination with regional organisations, especially in peacekeeping and conflict prevention.
- Strengthen UN peacekeeping capabilities by promoting the establishment of a Staff College for training and a Peace-building Commission.
- Advocate the formation of a UN Rapid Reaction Disaster Task Force.
- Promote good governance and fight corruption:
 - Ensure that the UK meets its obligations under international conventions to fight corruption, such as the UN Convention Against Corruption.
 - Actively enforce the OECD Convention on Bribery and support the OECD Financial Action Taskforce.
 - Promote institutional capacity building programmes in developing countries in the implementation and enforcement of anti-corruption initiatives.

Defending the future

The primary task of UK armed forces is to provide security for our citizens and to defend vital interests at home and abroad. The UK also requires the capability for military operations to promote international stability.

Recent years have brought a series of new demands on our armed forces, for humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, natural disasters and in response to the threat from international terrorism. Given the size of the government's planned future equipment programme, the current level of activity cannot be sustained at current budget levels.

We will:

- Safeguard and strengthen our armed forces:

- Secure a better balance between procurement spending and overseas commitments, and maintain the size of our armed forces.

- Achieve a greater degree of coordination of capabilities with our European allies.

- Tackle equipment delays and over-spend which have led to capability shortfalls; we will make military procurement more open and competitive, and ensure value for money.

- Ensure that our forces are not sent on missions without the necessary equipment to do the job.

- Seek more effective ways of sharing the military burden, by working with allies through NATO and the EU. Our foreign policy must be realistic about what we can, and should, take on, and our forces must always be ready to deal with emergencies at home, such as terrorism or disasters.

● Provide for forces personnel:

- Invest more in protecting the welfare of our forces, which is fundamental to improving recruitment, retention and morale; We would ensure that they are well-trained, well-equipped and well-housed by reallocating funds from costly and unnecessary projects, such as the third tranche of the Eurofighter programme.

- Undertake a review of all aspects of the Armed Forces conditions of service, in view of the fact that service life is at times dangerous, lacking in stability and can restrict opportunities for partners to work.

- Ensure recognition of service qualifications in civilian life, building on the Learning Forces Initiative.

- Introduce a Service Families Charter that would press for the delivery of confidential, consistent, standardised welfare services to a minimum specification.

- Implement measures to stamp out bullying, harassment

and discrimination and undertake a comprehensive review of the presently inadequate military complaints procedures.

International Development

Aid enhances global welfare and enables people in poverty to become productive and active contributors to their community's economic and social development. Urgent action is required to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015 – which includes tackling global poverty, providing universal primary education and combating HIV/Aids. While additional resources are vital, there is also a need for reform in the delivery of aid to ensure that it is efficient, effective, and truly reaches those in need. Aid should seek to promote good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

For long-term sustainable development, developing countries must be given the opportunity to trade freely, in order to generate growth and employment and to reduce their reliance on outside assistance. Measures to protect the environment and to address climate change will be essential for the achievement of effective, sustainable development.

● Provide more and better aid:

- Increase UK aid spending to meet the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2011 at the latest and will press other members of the G8 and EU donor countries to meet the targets of 0.5% of GNI by 2009 and 0.7% by 2013.

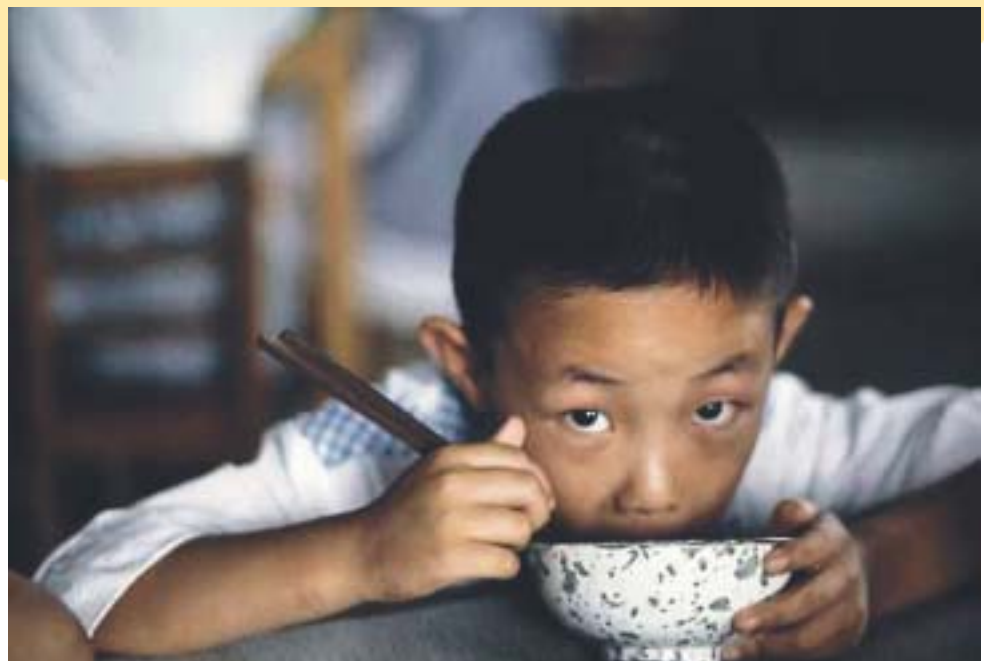
- Establish better donor coordination mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of aid delivery and to avoid unnecessary duplication; and improve coordination with regional and sub-regional organisations.

- Ensure greater transparency and accountability in the way funds are distributed in recipient countries.

- Maintain bilateral aid as a substantial part of our overall support for international development, with the long term aim of channelling more aid through international organisations.

- Improve the predictability of aid to allow poor countries to plan effectively and take control of their own budgets in the fight against poverty.

- Ensure that basic services funded by development assistance are provided in ways which guarantee access for the poorest and most marginalised in all recipient countries; we would ensure concerted action against gender inequalities and gender related poverty.





- Develop enhanced measures to address poverty and instability in the Least Developed Countries, especially in Africa.

- Promote a permanent exit from debt for poor countries:

- 100% debt cancellation for the world's poorest countries. The IMF and the World Bank should not impose inappropriate economic conditions, such as the privatisation of basic services, before poor countries can qualify for much-needed debt relief.

- Seek the establishment of a new International Financial Authority to regulate the international financial system; this would reduce instability, support development and help developing countries manage their debt.

- Press for a fundamental review of the World Bank, including consideration of support for health and education grants rather than loans.

- Make free trade fair:

- Break down the tariff and quota barriers that prevent the poorest countries in the world selling their goods to wealthy countries on fair terms.

- Press for reductions in agricultural subsidies in wealthy countries.

- Seek to prevent wealthy countries dumping subsidized agricultural exports in developing

countries, which causes enormous damage to farmers and their communities.

- Introduce measures which actively promote trade and inward investment in developing countries.

- Lead the fight against HIV/Aids:

- Lead international efforts to secure a fully funded, timetabled target for universal access to comprehensive care and treatment in developing countries

- Prioritise working with international agencies in the development of a Global Prevention Strategy to sustain research and development into HIV prevention technologies.

- Act to achieve a more sustainable world:

- Initiate a review of the World Bank, World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund to ensure that they are sensitive to the needs of the poorest countries and promote sustainable and effective development outcomes.

- Seek to add a sustainability clause to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), setting out agreed principles of environmental policy – including a 'Precautionary Principle' which would require international environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biodiversity to be

taken into account by the WTO.

- Ensure that development aid is targeted on projects that are environmentally sustainable, such as renewable energy, clean water or sustainable agriculture.

- Take measures to build markets in the richer countries for sustainable products from developing nations.

- Increase support for international environmental agreements of particular benefit to the developing world.

- Protect endangered wildlife by using development aid to reduce pressure on endangered habitats in developing countries

- Press for action on climate change:

- Put Britain at the forefront of climate change negotiations and ensure that we achieve our targets from the Kyoto Protocol well before the deadline.

- Lead negotiations for the next stage of international agreements on climate change, prioritising inclusion of the USA and Australia and bringing in the developing countries, on the basis of the long term goal of 'contraction and convergence' of CO₂ emissions.

Making Europe work for us

Historically, the EU has had a fundamental role in guaranteeing peace and freedom in Europe. By promoting trade and investment, protecting the environment, supporting global development and promoting human rights, the EU brings enormous benefits to Britain. We believe that the EU must have the power to act where problems are better dealt with collectively, than at a national or regional level. We will continue to press for a Europe that is diverse, democratic and decentralised. We are pro-Europe, but clear about its limits and the need for reform. We will seek to enhance

accountability, to streamline EU powers and secure political stability.

- Support the European Constitution in Parliament and in the forthcoming referendum campaign. The Constitution will define and limit the powers of the EU ensuring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level. It will increase the powers of the European and national Parliaments over the Commission; set out the roles, responsibilities and powers of EU institutions in relation to member states; provide a stable and legitimate framework to reinforce democracy and restore public confidence in the EU.

- Focus the scope and enhance the effectiveness of EU action. We support measures to improve the quality of EU governance; and EU policy measures should be in those areas where there are clear benefits of collective action. This means ensuring that the principle of subsidiarity – that the EU acts only where it adds value - is fully respected.

- Maintain the veto in areas of vital interest to the UK. We favour the application of majority voting in the Council where necessary to ensure that the EU functions effectively. But we strongly support the UK veto on defence, foreign affairs, tax and social security matters.

- Improve Parliamentary scrutiny of European legislation. We will establish new mechanisms to scrutinise draft EU laws and the activities of UK ministers and officials in Brussels.

- Put the environment at the heart of Europe. We believe that all draft EU policies should be analysed and assessed for their likely environmental impact, and policies formulated accordingly.

- Reform the Common Agricultural Policy. We will support substantial cuts in production subsidies, promote the sustainability of agriculture and redirect assistance towards small

and family farms. We will seek to refocus payments on achieving public, environmental and social goals rather than encouraging unnecessary production.

- Enhance economic stability. The adoption of the Euro would not only eliminates exchange rate instability, but also enhance competition, promotes trade and investment, and reduce the costs of cross-border commerce. Once the right economic conditions for Euro-entry have been met, we believe it would be in Britain's interests to join. The decision should be made by the British people in a national referendum.



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