

Increase UK aid to 2% of GNI

In March, the British Foreign Policy Group published a survey¹ which found that “72% of Britons support reducing or stopping the UK’s foreign aid spending during the pandemic”. I expect that the government will believe that this demonstrates popular approval for their cut from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI.

I would argue, however, that this is a moment when legislature and executive need less to be swayed by public opinion and more by the moral imperative incumbent on the governance of any nation which sees itself as humane and benign. There can be fewer priorities higher in human affairs than the right just to continue existing. More than half a billion people live in extreme poverty, according to the World Bank. Private donors and charities can only do so much. Individuals already entrust a big slice of their earnings to government through taxation. The worldwide gambling-industry is estimated² to be worth more than \$66bn, compared with \$8.5bn given³ to the World Food Programme last year.

What I am asking for is a cross-party alliance to bring about the reversal of these cuts and, indeed, the implementation of an aid budget of 1% of GNI, rising to 2% by the end of this decade. Such an eventual spending level would match our 2% commitment to Nato, and it seems only right that we should spend as much on aid as we do on defence.

Britain’s record on aid spending is exemplary, ranking high in many of the UN’s donor-leagues. The UK needs to continue to signal to the world that it is a force for good; that its people care not just about economic progress and social justice at home, but also about their fellow-members of the human family. This is especially the case given our colonial legacy, and the links which subsequent migration has forged between our nation and those countries which we once ruled.

I have little actual evidence to offer for this view, except for the assertion that it just strikes me as absolutely the right thing to do.

I thank the committee for considering this.

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¹ [bfpg.co.uk/2021/03/public-opinion-foreign-aid](https://www.bfpg.co.uk/2021/03/public-opinion-foreign-aid)

² www.statista.com/statistics/270728/market-volume-of-online-gaming-worldwide/

³ www.wfp.org/funding/2020