



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Areas of Research Interest 2017-2018

A more secure and prosperous UK

November 2017

Introduction

1. While the FCO does not generally fund or commission academic research, this document sets out geographical and thematic areas on which research would be of most interest to support the department's [Single Departmental Plan](#) (SDP) and vision "...of a more secure and prosperous United Kingdom with global reach and global influence – a major player on the world stage, tackling threats to our security and prosperity, protecting British interests, and upholding British values".

FCO Research Functions

2. Within the FCO, two cadres have a research function: The Research Analysts cadre and the Economics Unit. However, neither conducts original academic research. In addition, although not a specific research cadre, Legal Directorate conducts legal research which informs its provision of legal advice across the FCO.

3. The Research Analysts (RAs) form a specialist cadre of geographical and thematic experts who provide timely, high quality, evidence-based research and analysis to FCO Ministers and senior officials. They are divided into nine research groups, each attached to a Directorate or Directorates in the FCO. Most RA work is commissioned by the relevant policy directorate or initiated by RA to inform the Directorate: RAs are an integral part of the policy process.

4. The Economics Unit is the centre of the FCO's economic expertise in London. It produces work across all foreign policy priorities. It works with the overseas economic network ensuring work produced draws on local expertise. Its three functions are: to strengthen the economic underpinning of our international policy; to provide direction and leadership for the economics network overseas; and to strengthen the economics training provided to staff.

5. Overseas, the FCO led [Science and Innovation Network](#) (SIN) has over 100 science officers embedded in British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates, in over 40 countries. SIN officers work with the local science and innovation community in support of UK policy overseas, leading to mutual benefits to the UK and the host country. SIN does not undertake original research itself, but does work to facilitate connections between innovative UK industries and scientific expertise and international opportunities to grow prosperity; deliver solutions to global challenges such as anti-microbial resistance (AMR), health, energy, the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, and enhancing resilience to natural disasters; and works to support international development goals, matching UK expertise to international need.

6. Other parts of the FCO occasionally work with think tanks or agencies on discrete projects, to help inform new thinking or evaluate front-line services to the public.

Overarching Research Themes

7. All parts of the FCO have an interest in academic research findings that would add to existing knowledge to inform the FCO's departmental priorities (below). This could be expert, specialist knowledge of foreign countries and geographic regions; the

drivers and consequences of instability; the conditions required for sustainable economic growth; the role of multilateral institutions; global challenges; emerging trends; future forecasting.

Protect our people: Safeguard our national security by countering terrorism, extremism, weapons proliferation, and other state and non-state threats in cooperation with allies and partners. Assist British people living, travelling and working around the world when they are most in need.

Project our global influence: Protect and promote the values and influence of Global Britain, strengthening our partnerships and the rules-based international system. Support good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights; prevent and resolve conflict; and build stability overseas.

Promote our prosperity: Promote our prosperity by opening markets, driving economic reform, championing British business, and supporting free trade and sustainable global growth.

Evidence Needs and Shortfalls in Research

8 Core to the FCO's work is preparing for and responding to new and sometimes unexpected natural and political events whether opportunity or crisis. Research findings on current and emerging trends to improve future forecasting, or metrics to evaluate the success or otherwise of interventions, would be of interest. Examples include:-

- The future of relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union.
- The future trajectory of the European Union and the wider European integration process.
- Analysis of future potential for political instability and/or armed conflict in the former Soviet space.
- The impact of Brexit on the Overseas Territories.
- Military power in Asia Pacific to 2050.
- The trajectory of military reform across South-east Asia.
- Grassroots and local political dynamics across Africa and the Middle East.
- The impact and effectiveness of different approaches to economic sanctions and wider economic levers.
- Valuing diplomacy and the economic benefits generated by diplomatic activities.
- The nature, value and changes in global economic architecture and the interconnections in the global economy.
- The dynamics and changing nature of globalisation and inequality.
- The future of work and trends in the global economy.
- Global or national economic risks or threats.
- Detailed analysis of successful transitions from struggling to prosperous economies.
- Comparative studies of triggers to violence in different social groups.
- Why people disengage from violent extremist organisations.

- The relationship between security responses to violent extremism and increases in civil disobedience or recruitment to violent extremism networks.
- What works and what does not work in degrading and eventually possibly defeating Islamist terrorist organisations.
- Metrics for cyber resilience: what to consider for comparing the resilience of states and their computer networks.
- Metrics for the impact of R&D on future economic growth.
- Metrics for the quality of research and relative quality comparisons between international research collaboration and domestic.

Contacting the FCO

9. Research enquiries should be submitted to email: fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk

Science and Innovation Network enquiries may be addressed to the general mailbox: ScienceandInnovationEnquires@fco.gsi.gov.uk or to individual SIN teams overseas at the addresses listed [here](#).