

James,

I see your rose-coloured glasses are well burnished. At the other end of the bar, there will always be a man who plays fast and loose with fidelity in order to substantiate his view of the world and contrives high dudgeon (as an Irish friend of mine would say) at every concocted affront. **"Everyone seems to agree ...", "The PM and Carrie had real status ...", "... the only nation in the world who until now has paid 2% of GDP on defence ..."** (I presume that you mean the only full NATO nation (France spends 2.1%, others e.g. Russia, Saudi Arabia spend far more)), **"... providing the world with this British-invented and (largely) manufactured vaccine"** (the first MHRA-approved vaccine was the Pfizer; if you are talking of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, AstraZeneca is a Swedish company which manufactures the vaccine), **"... great trading nation ..."** (we see the results of unnecessary worldwide trade in 'normal' and accidental pollution (ref the recent container ship fire off Sri Lanka) and the enormous cost in terms of climate change (at the COP26 conference in Glasgow, we (and others) will presumably be paying lip service to climate change while increasing our global trade significantly) also see paras below). **"All of these events and more mean that we are able to stand proud alongside the greatest nations in the world. We are the masters of our own destiny. We control our own currency and economy; we make our own rules. We are freeing ourselves of the shackles of European bureaucracy, leaving behind the mediocrity, the lowest common denominator which the EU is forced to be. We now have our moment in history - once again to be a true International Leader. So let's cast aside the habitual British syndrome of 'doing ourselves down'. No-one admires false modesty. Let's salute these great early achievements; and thank and congratulate the ministers who are achieving them."** (see paras below).

If we examine the real world rather than your dreamworld, then we find a different picture. Our national problems had little to do with our membership of the EU. Your final two paras, highlighted above, continue the trademark, Tory bluff and bluster many instances of which may be found across the years of Tory governments. You echo the sentiments of Captain Kydd, the first captain of HMS Queen Elizabeth, when he said that the purpose of the ship was to project Britain's power and influence across the globe. The reality in the home country is somewhat different. The basic requirements for a good life in a successful country are missing.

Starting with **education**, the chairman of John Lewis said recently "Young people starting work at John Lewis stores lack basic literacy and numeracy skills". She was incredulous that these youngsters had been in the education system for between ten and twelve years and lacked functional literacy and numeracy. At a personal level, we have found the same situation: recently, at the checkout of a local store, a youngster could not calculate 10% of £70.

A decent **home** should be a necessity in a civilized society. In 1972, we bought our first home, in Corsham, for £6,000. At that time, you could borrow up to 2.5 times your annual salary (so my salary would have been, incredibly, around the £2,500 mark!). Now, with the average salary at £26k and the average house price at £256k (ONS stats), any/all homes are unaffordable without taxpayer-supported schemes which provide only partial ownership (at Dickens Gate, one of our local **greenfield** developments, the prospective homeowner may acquire 40% of 3-bed home for £126k - this is still 5 times an average salary). The elephant in the room here is immigration (a subject of which politicians 'dare not speak its name'). According to Immigration Watch, since the turn of the century, the 6-7 million rise in the UK population has been driven by immigration. Your government's policy has been to limit annual, net immigration to 5-figures (what shall we say, 50,000?) but in reality, thanks to the lack of proper immigration controls (whether EU or non-EU),

the figure has been getting on for an order of magnitude greater (313,000 in year-ended March 2020). Yet nobody makes the link between uncontrolled immigration, the requirement to build significant numbers of new homes and the cost of these homes both in terms of price and the environment (ref the Amersham and Chesham by-election result). Your government (not the EU) is at fault here. Apart from immigration, the other principal driver of house prices is purchase by overseas 'investors' (inter alia by oligarchs, crooks, money launderers). Hundreds of thousands of homes across the UK are foreign-owned; in a relatively small country, such purchases should be significantly limited (as Denmark does) - see **infrastructure** below..

'Everyone' (I'm taking your lead here!) knows that our **care homes** are in crisis. According to Age UK, "the care system is broken and needs immediate funding and long-term reform". My better-half worked in the care system for decades; she chronicled a significant change for the worse when 'ownership'/management passed from the local authority to private providers (and the profit motive became involved). The lack of coordination between the health system, social services and care homes is alarming. I have recently been involved in the case of a friend with significant mental health problems and special educational needs who was passed from pillar to post across the agencies involved with no one grasping the nettle to resolve his case (I forwarded his 'dossier' to you but you were unable to help - see the **justice** para below). The care of our elderly and those with mental health issues should be another fundamental requirement of a civilised society.

The **justice system** is also in crisis - there is a massive backlog of cases. The reason (at least a significant contributory reason), according to the Law Society, "Between 2010 and 2019, over half the courts across England and Wales were closed". So your government closes half the courts as a money-saving exercise and then finds a system in crisis! Regarding the 'dossier' mentioned above, a contrived police case resulted in four magistrates court and three crown court appearances for my friend with mental health problems and his 94-year-old mother during the course of a year. He was entirely innocent but this contrived case must have cost many tens of thousands of pounds and an inordinate amount of police/CPS/court/solicitor/barrister time. And, thanks to the closure of the local multi-million pound, specially-designed structure (with anti-terrorist blast walls apparently), my friend and his mother had to travel to the out-of-date buildings of the Swindon courts seven times. How would they have been able to do this without friends to help? I was so outraged by the course of events surrounding this case that I wrote a 35,000-word screenplay (still waiting to see the light of day).

Prisons. A part of the justice system recently highlighted in the powerful TV drama *Time*. Liverpool was the location of this drama which gave a true-to-life representation of life behind bars in the UK. UK prisons are "inhumane and degrading" in the words of a court in Amsterdam in 2019, as it refused an extradition request. The judges were referring to HMP Liverpool. The cause of this damning judgment was the appalling conditions in prisons such as Walton (Liverpool), Bedford and Birmingham. Britain has the highest, per capita, prison population in western Europe. The programme highlighted the **drug** problem in prison with an officer being coerced into becoming a 'mule'. According to the official Government website (gov.uk), the UK has the largest opioid-using population in Europe.

Infrastructure. Of the 24 UK **train operating companies** (passenger TOCs), 13 are owned or part-owned by foreign (mainly European, state-owned) companies or are financed through foreign investment vehicles. If you look at the website of GB Railfreight, you will find that it is the third largest **freight operator** in the UK with 30% of the market; it is British owned. So which companies are at first and second spot with 70% of the UK market? In first place is DB Cargo (German of course) with Freightliner (American company Genesee & Wyoming) second. DB (Deutsche Bahn) also

operates the royal train. How ironic. Of the Big 6 **energy companies**, four are foreign-owned. EDF (Electricite de France) is the largest UK electricity producer (and is constructing our 'local' nuclear power station at Hinckley Point with Chinese finance; all other UK nuclear power stations are operated by EDF; the four new nuclear power stations, including Hinckley, are being built either by EDF or by EDF along with Chinese company CGN - China General Nuclear Power Group); e.on, the second largest company is German; npower is a subsidiary of e.on; Scottish Power is owned by Spanish parent company Iberdrola. British Gas and SSE are nominally British. 'Our' **water company**, Wessex Water, is owned by Malaysian corporation YTL. And just an aside, if you live in Surrey, your water may be supplied by the Sumimoto Corporation of Japan. Much **land and property** in the UK is now foreign-owned. According to recent stats, more than 100,000 UK property titles are registered to overseas companies (never mind private individuals), with more than 36,000 properties in London owned by offshore firms. What could be more English than Paternoster Square in the City, adjacent to St Pauls? Paternoster Square is owned by the Mitsubishi Corporation. The largest landowner in Scotland is Danish.

With regard to **healthcare**, none of the significant infrastructure in our hospitals is British; all the scanners (CT, MRI etc) are foreign-manufactured, mostly German (Siemens), some Phillips (Dutch), others Japanese (I recently had a CT scan by a Hitachi scanner). An acquaintance has kidney failure and needs dialysis a number of times each week. Luckily, we have a local dialysis centre at Bathford - run by Fresenius, a German company.

This is the Britain that successive governments (principally Conservative) have bequeathed to the nation. A land sold off to the highest bidder. This is the reality behind the facade of your 'true international leader'. So where does 'projecting our power and influence across the globe' come in?

Sincerely

Paul T
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From: GRAY, James <jamesgraymp@parliament.uk>

Sent: 21 June 2021 02:24

To: Mr P Turner <wirepuller@hotmail.com>

Subject: From James Gray MP - Britain in the World

James Gray MP

[Home](#) | [Contact James](#)

Dear Constituent,

Easy – if sloppy - thinking denigrates a nation's achievements. "We're the sick man of Europe... It will never be the same again.... We're a third-rate nation now..." You know the kind of thing. There's always some old bore at the end of the bar mumbling about it.

Yet this week we have really started to show our colours on the world's stage. Everyone seems to agree that the G7 meeting in Cornwall was a great success- from a social, diplomatic and even Cornish standpoint. The PM and Carrie had real status amongst the world's leaders, and we should be proud of them. That President Biden took time to stop off at Windsor Castle to celebrate the Queen's 95th birthday is a mark of great respect (although why he thought it diplomatic to liken HM to his Mother is anyone's guess.) We took our place at the NATO Summit proud of being the second largest member after the US, and the only Nation in the world who until now has paid 2% of GDP on defence and 0.7% on overseas aid. (At 0.5% we are still the fourth largest donor in the world.)

Despite the sad necessity of extending Lockdown until 19 July, we can still be proud of leading the world in our vaccine programme (which would simply not have happened had we still been a member of the EU); only as a result of beginning to beat the disease here can we now look to providing the world with this British-

invented and (largely) manufactured vaccine.
And I was so glad to see our world-beating
Oxford scientists being recognised in the
Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Meanwhile we should celebrate the fact that the
Free Trade Agreement with Australia is the
seventieth we have so far agreed (and the first
negotiated from scratch) post-Brexit, the total
value of the trade being about £1.4 Trillion. We
are once again becoming a great trading nation
in our own right, and we should be proud of it.
There's a long way to go, of course, and many a
wrinkle to be smoothed out, starting with
Northern Irish sausages. How dare President
Macron seek to describe Ulster as a separate
country from the UK? It's as much a part of the
UK as Brittany (despite its name) is a part of
France.

All of these events and more mean that we are
able to stand proud alongside the greatest nations
in the world. We are the masters of our own
destiny. We control our own currency and
economy; we make our own rules. We are
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bureaucracy, leaving behind the mediocrity, the
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We now have our moment in history - once
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'doing ourselves down'. No-one admires false
modesty. Let's salute these great early
achievements; and thank and congratulate the
ministers who are achieving them.

Britain must once again be Great.

Best wishes,

James Gray, MP for North Wiltshire

*Member, Mr Speaker's Panel of Chairmen
Chairman, All-Party Parliamentary Group for
the Armed Forces*

Chairman, Armed Forces Parliamentary Trust

*Chairman, All-Party Parliamentary Group for
Polar Regions*

Member, Commons Procedure Committee

Member, Environmental Audit Committee
Commander, Order of St John
Freeman of the City of London
Younger Brother, Trinity House
Veteran Member, Honourable Artillery
Company
Member, Royal Wootton Bassett Royal British
Legion
Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society
Patron, Operation Christmas Box
President, Chippenham Constitutional Club
Author, Poles Apart (2014); Who Takes Britain
to War (2016); Full English Brexit (2018) and
Wiltshire to Westminster (2020)