

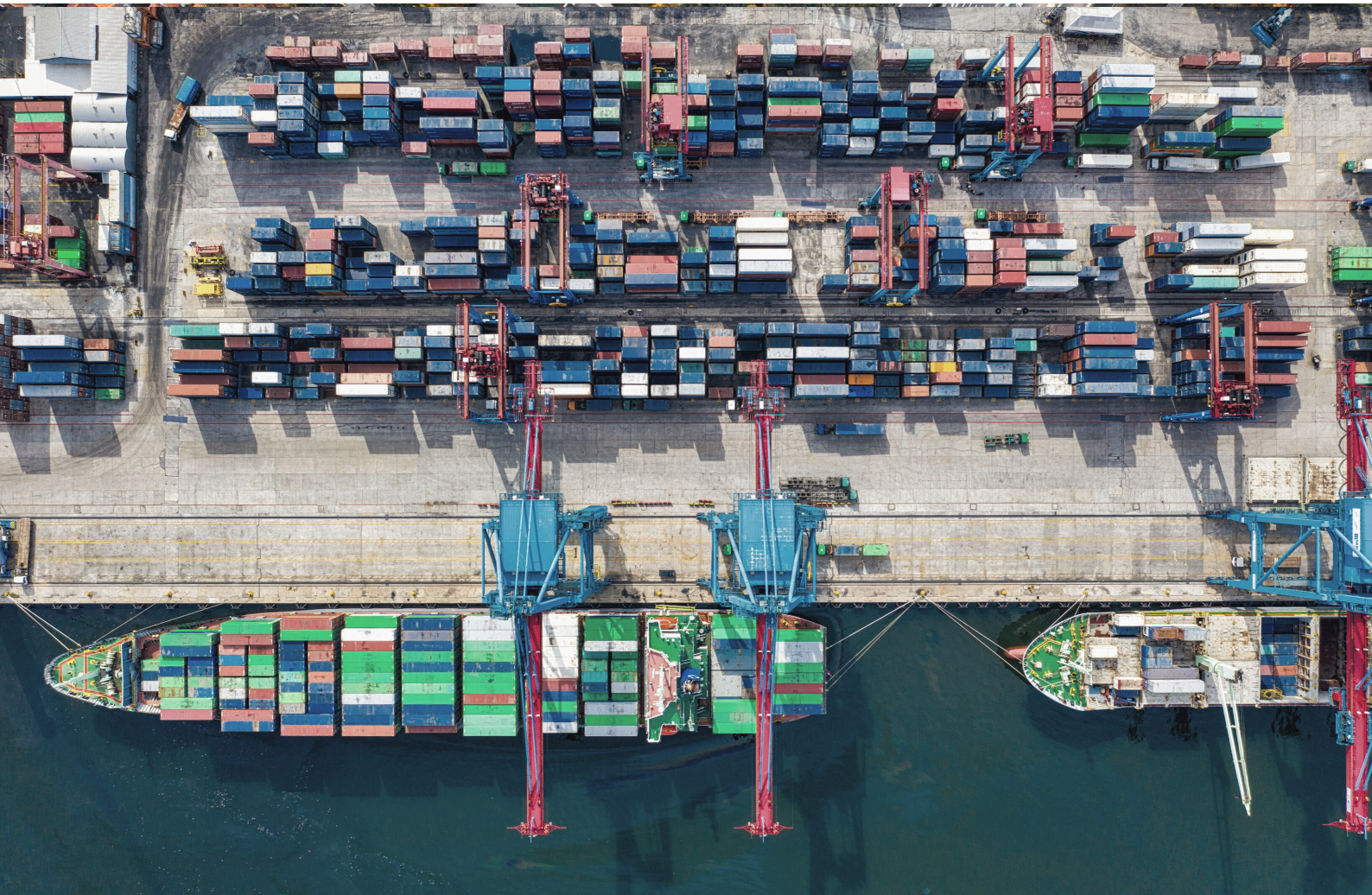


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The Whitehall & Industry Group's **Brexit & International** **Series:** **Six months in review**

April-September 2020





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Brexit & International Series: Six months in review

As the UK works out a negotiated exit from the EU, the UK government is also devising an independent trade policy, within the context of changing global trade relationships. This new trade policy will need to secure the flow of not just goods, but increasingly of services and data, into and out of key markets.

Beyond trade, the UK is at a juncture where the opportunity has opened to redefine how we will operate at the international level as an independent state, in terms of diplomacy and the exercise of soft power. With new challenges around the rise of China, the decline of the international rules-based system, and increasing trade tensions, cross-sector collaboration to ensure the UK's economic and diplomatic viability on the world stage is critical.

WIG has supported cross-sector dialogue around the role of an independent UK as a positive actor on the world stage. The main topics covered include:

- **Brexit**
- **International Trade**
- **International Affairs and Ambassadorial Insights**
- **Defence and Security**

The following reports are insights into webinars from WIG's Brexit & International series that took place in April- September 2020. This document will give you an overview of the content covered, unique polling data from our members, and themes that emerged from questions that were raised throughout the presentations.

**Best wishes,
Tom Sapsted**

Head of Content & Events





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Brexit & International Series

Page 2	COVID-19 Case Study: Taiwan's Response with Professor Steve Tsang, Director, SOAS China Institute, SOAS
Page 3	Likely scenarios for UK-EU relations Post-Transition with Prof Anand Menon, European Politics & Foreign Affairs, King's College London
Page 4	Britain on the World Stage with Stevie Spring, Chairman, British Council
Page 5	UK Freeport Policy, with James Dinsdale, Head of Freeports Policy, HM Treasury
Page 6	The challenges of cybersecurity with Ciaran Martin, CEO, National Cyber Security Centre
Page 7	Building a resilient and sustainable global supply chain with Prof Ed Sweeney, Aston Logistics & Systems Institute
Page 8	The Impact of COVID-19 on Brexit, Insight from London and Brussels
Page 9	Next Steps for the UK's proposed Free Trade Agreements with Dr Emily Jones, Oxford University
Page 10	Update on the Integrated Review on diplomacy, development and defence with Alex Ellis, Deputy National Security Adviser
Page 11	Enhancing UK trade with Australia, New Zealand & the CPTPP



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'Brexit & International' Series COVID-19 Case Study: Taiwan's Response 29 April, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Steve Tsang, Director of the SOAS China Institute to discuss the response to the coronavirus in Taiwan and the lessons we can learn from the Taiwanese experience. The key reasons why the Taiwanese have been able to keep their number of cases to a minimum are:



- The Taiwanese government has been critical of Chinese statements and has made its own judgements from the beginning, particularly due to their sense of isolation and Taiwan's experience with SARS in 2003.
- The government took the virus very seriously from the beginning, already taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus in December 2019.
- Decisive leadership by Vice President Chen, who has both political authority and expertise in epidemiology, allowed the government to act very quickly and plan their response to focus on the core issues, for example by immediately working with industry to increase the production of PPE.
- The government used technology for testing and tracking from very early on, for example by using an app to track the availability of face masks.
- The credibility that the Taiwanese government is currently enjoying and the fairness of its response inspired trust in its actions and compliance with its measures.



We must work with the Chinese government and take the information coming out of China seriously, whilst remaining critical of it

If we have to confront a second wave, decisive leadership and careful prior planning will be crucial to allow us to respond proactively and effectively

Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- How to tackle a potential second wave of infections
- Taiwan's digital response and privacy concerns over tracking and use of data
- Taiwan's capabilities to respond in comparison to Western countries
- The economic impact of COVID-19 in Taiwan
- The impact of Taiwan's coronavirus response being globally perceived as successful on its diplomatic relations and its position on the world stage

WIG members can listen to Steve's presentation [here](#)
To see our full programme of webinars, visit www.wig.co.uk



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'Brexit & International' Series

Likely Scenarios for UK-EU Relations Post-Transition

5 May, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Anand Menon, Director of 'UK in a Changing Europe' and Professor of European Politics & Foreign Affairs at King's College London.

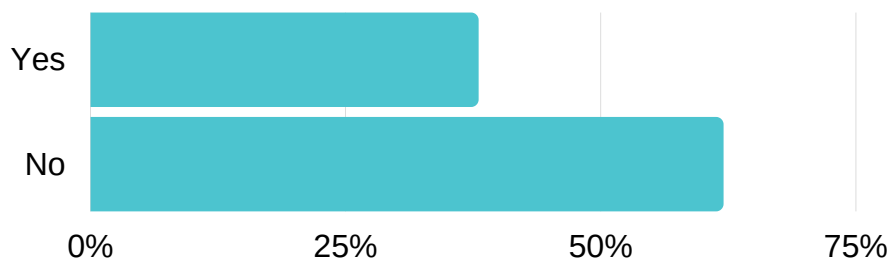
In his presentation he focused on current thinking around a possible extension to the transition period, which must be agreed by the end of June:

- The Covid-19 pandemic could be considered a 'force majeure' which permits the UK government to request an extension, and the economic downturn we are experiencing as a result raises concerns around the further impact of a 'no-deal' situation.
- Any extension to the status quo would be a deal of sorts, that would require ratification by EU member states.
- The EU could unilaterally offer mitigations but the scope and time-frame would be uncertain.
- Counter-argument is that only by leaving the transition period on schedule will the UK have the regulatory control to recover economically, and freedom to sign new trade deals.



Cross-sector Opinion

Over 180 WIG members listened live from across the sectors, during the webinar we asked them: do you expect that the transition period under the Withdrawal Agreement will be extended?



Our members' questions

Our members posed a number of questions around the nature of deal the UK might agree with the EU moving forward and subsequent impact on trading relations with other countries. Some of the big issues raised for discussion included:

- FTA negotiations made more difficult by a possible move towards greater protectionism & self-sufficiency, both within the UK and internationally, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The likelihood of agreement(s) being reached with the EU on key issues such as fisheries and defence cooperation.
- Future alignment with EU environmental policy, or the possibility of UK environmental and social standards being lowered as part of third party FTA negotiations.

WIG members can listen to Anand's presentation [here](#)
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'Brexit & International' Series

Britain on the World Stage

28 May, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Stevie Spring, Chairman of the British Council, for a webinar reflecting on Britain's role on the world stage. Discussing her 'smart' approach to 'soft power' and the British Council's crucial role at this pivotal juncture for the UK's international relations, Stevie touched upon many points including:

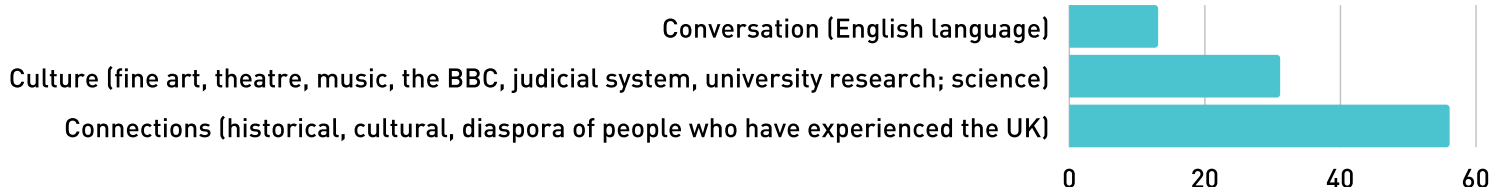
- Covid-19 has put national reputation high on the agenda. How we behave during the crisis may determine the UK's ability to operate internationally.
- Three 'C's' make up the UK's persuasive power on the world stage: 'Conversation', 'Culture', and 'Connections'.
- To be a force for positive change, the UK needs to make sure it has a relevant voice that is heard. It will therefore be vital that the UK keeps a seat at as many tables as possible post-Brexit.



Cross-sector Opinion

Over 140 attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

What is the most important role of the British Council?



Our members' questions

Our members asked some challenging questions to be answered, some of the issues raised included:

- How the UK's global reputation may have been impacted by the handling of the Coronavirus crisis
- What strategies are likely to be most effective at tackling the challenge of projecting the UK in Europe following Brexit
- The ways in which the UK's international role could support the 'Levelling Up' agenda
- The role of Britain's young people in helping Britain take place on the world stage
- The ways in which city-to-city relationships have an important role to play in promoting the UK on a world stage

WIG members can listen to Stevie's presentation [here](#)

To see our full programme of webinars, visit www.wig.co.uk



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'Brexit & International' Series

UK Freeport Policy

4 June, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by James Dinsdale, Head of Freeports Policy at HM Treasury to discuss the UK's proposed Freeport model, and associated socioeconomic benefits. James spoke within the context of the current consultation which is open until 13 July, and touched on points including:

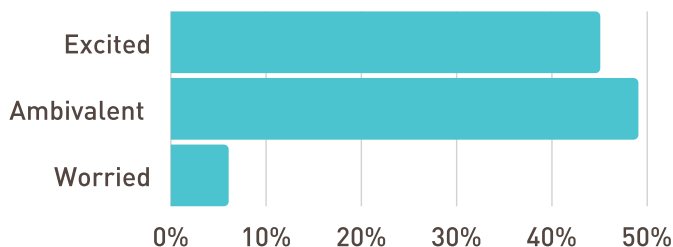
- The role of Freeports as 'growth-hubs' and focal points for collaboration; attracting trade and investment to a region.
- The proposed flexible customs model, which includes the possibility of extending Freeport conditions to adjacent sites such as business parks.
- Other levers being considered, such as tax relief to engender investment in local job creation, construction and R&D.
- Regulatory considerations to ensure a high level of safety and security is maintained within the Freeport environment.



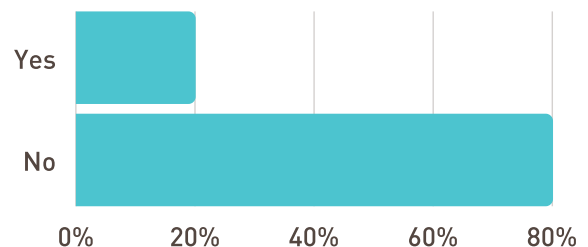
Cross-sector Opinion

Over 80 attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

How are you feeling about Freeports?



Has your opinion of the Freeports proposal changed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic?



Our members' questions

Our members across the private and public sectors raised some salient questions, both in terms of challenges from industry and highlighting the importance of joined up thinking across government departments. Some of the big issues raised included:

- The rationale behind choosing 10 sites across the UK for initial Freeport developments
- Concerns around displacement versus generating new business and investment
- The role of government and private sector in providing sufficient investment to support necessary local infrastructure, construction and skills provision
- The relationship between the Freeports model and the UK's wider trade strategy, including FTA negotiations currently underway

WIG members can listen to James' presentation [here](#)

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'Brexit & International' Series

The Challenges of Cybersecurity

16 June, 2020

Expert Insight

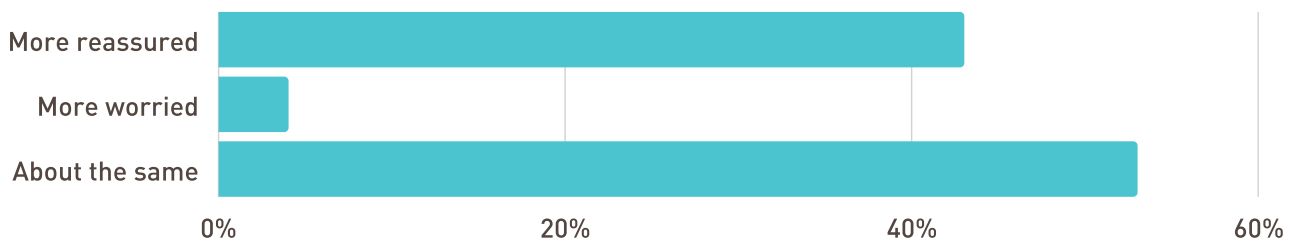
We were joined by Ciaran Martin, CEO of the National Cyber Security Centre, to reflect on his time in the role and share insight into the complex challenges that lie ahead. He touched on points including:

- For all private and public sector leaders cyber security is a serious risk, but contrary to sensationalised depictions it is a manageable one, which they need to demystify and understand.
- Nation state attacks may be for a number of different reasons, from classic geopolitics, to stealing secrets, retaliation, and access to funds.
- The internet wasn't designed with security in mind; the online economy is based around exchanging personal data for services, and has design flaws which need to be looked at from a cyber security perspective.
- NCSC recommendations to Cameron government covered: a more hands-on response to incidents and attacks, declassifying necessary information, identifying critical infrastructure most at risk of attack, moving narrative from prevention of all attacks to containment of damage.



Cross-sector Opinion

150 WIG members from across the sectors tuned in live, we asked them: how do you feel about the UK's cyber security after this presentation?



Our members' questions

The attendees raised a number of important questions, covering both the sources of cyber security threats and how to combat them. Some of the issues discussed included:

- Working together to counter the potential safety hazards associated with increased automation across sectors such as transport & manufacturing, that could be vulnerable to cyber attack.
- Whether undertaking a review in the current economically challenging climate might put future investment in the UK's cyber security defences at risk.
- How the NCSC has taken on board lessons learnt from international partners and previous attacks.
- What presents the greatest threat to cyber security in the UK: other countries' governments, individuals, non-state actors, or a lack of organisational awareness and resilience, leading to leaks and breaches?

WIG members can listen to Ciaran's presentation [here](#)
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'Brexit & International' Series

Building a resilient and sustainable
global supply chain

18 June, 2020

Expert Insight

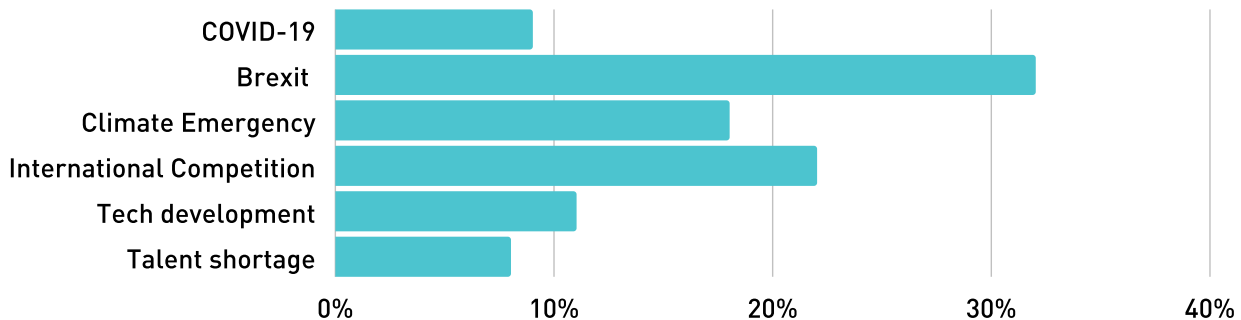
We were joined by Prof Ed Sweeney, Director of the Aston Logistics & Systems Institute, to discuss the contemporary challenges facing global supply chains, and how organisations can adapt to secure greater resilience and sustainability. During his presentation, Ed touched on points including:



- Digital technologies, when effectively deployed, enhance capabilities to manage and integrate increasingly complex supply networks. The challenge is in making sense of big data and transforming it into something usable such as predictive analytics.
- Leaving the transition period without a deal would pose significant risks to the 'just-in-time' supply chains upon which we all rely, which are dependent on frictionless trade.
- Global supply chain activities, in particular transportation, contribute substantially to Co2 and other greenhouse gas emissions - we need to seek greener logistics networks.
- Ed concluded that the 'new normal', under which global supply chains will operate post COVID-19 can be characterised as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

Cross-sector Opinion

Over 100 WIG members from across the sectors tuned in live, we asked them: which of the following is the biggest challenge facing UK-centric supply chains?



Our members' questions

The attendees raised a number of important questions, with particular focus on government support to build supply chain resilience, and lessons learnt from responses to shifting demands and consumer behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the issues discussed included:

- Which disruptive technologies, such as blockchain / distributed ledger technologies, will most greatly impact or improve supply chains?
- What are the the biggest barriers to more environmentally sustainable / circular supply chains, should the government be encouraging this shift and could moving to 'shorter' more local chains be the answer?
- Where are there lessons to be learnt from international approaches to coping with the COVID-19 crisis, and will the focus on resilience remain, or will supply chain management move back to an efficiency-orientated approach?

WIG members can listen to Ed's presentation [here](#)

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'Brexit & International' Series

The Impact of COVID-19 on Brexit, Insight from London and Brussels

23 June, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Alex Deane, Senior Managing Director and Head of UK Public Affairs at FTI Consulting, and Hans Hack, Senior Managing Director and Head of Brussels at FTI Consulting to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Brexit. They touched upon points including:

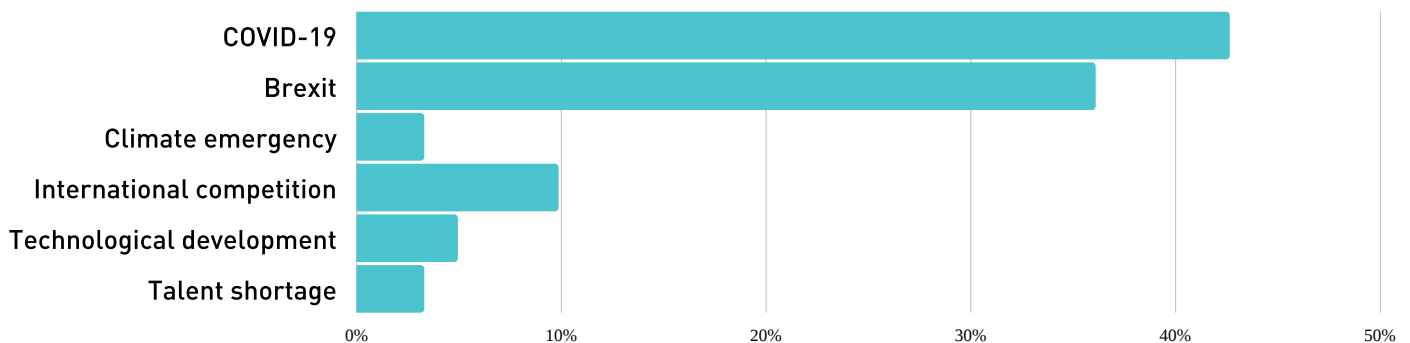
- Carrying out negotiations digitally has slowed them down and made them more difficult on both sides.
- The UK Government is currently determined to see the transition period end on time. Extending the transition period is seen to potentially harm the prospect of deals with third parties such as the USA and Australia, and to expose the UK to the risk of having to pay for EU COVID-19 bailouts.
- In the EU, unity has been particularly strong. The political priority for Brexit has been low for some time and COVID-19 has only exacerbated this.
- Brexit is even seen to open up new possibilities in the EU, such as allowing the EU to be able to consider recovery package proposals that would have previously been impossible, and opening up the chance to solidify French-German access.
- The UK government's position on Brexit has hardened and from both the London and Brussels perspectives, the chance of a no-deal is now more likely.



Cross-sector Opinion

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

Which of the following is the biggest challenge facing UK-centric supply chains?



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- The nature of the longer-term UK-EU relationship
- International trade and supply chains in context of the climate emergency in comparison to COVID-19 and Brexit
- The practical implementation of any deal by the 1st of January 2021
- The financial impact of the pandemic on the emphasis within Brexit

WIG members can listen to Alex and Hans' presentation [here](#)
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'Brexit & International' Series

Next Steps for the UK's proposed

Free Trade Agreements

2 July, 2020

Expert Insight

As the UK continues to build its independent trade policy outside the EU, we were delighted to host Oxford University's Dr Emily Jones for a webinar discussing the next steps in negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with key partners.

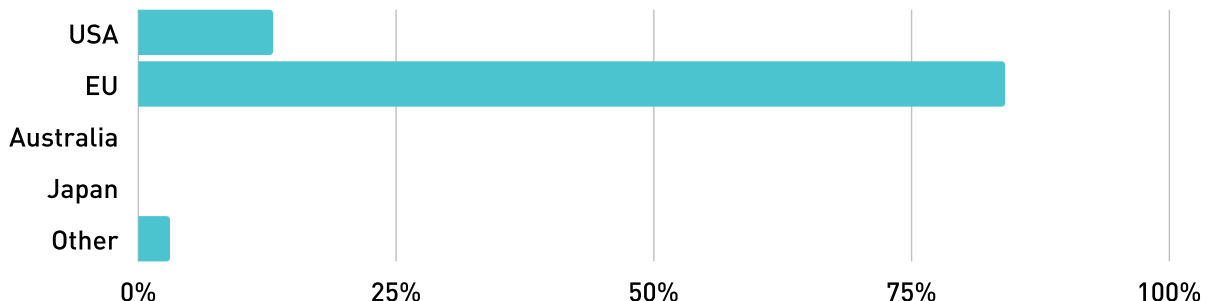
Emily touched on a number of points including:



- It seems likely that an agreement will be reached with the EU by the end of the transition period, though probably not a comprehensive one due to time constraints.
- Two rounds of formal discussions with the US have been completed, and we have reached the stage of sharing draft legal texts, however a final agreement before their November elections appears unlikely.
- Agreeing FTAs is just part of the picture; the UK will also need to establish a raft of related domestic agencies and regulators, covering everything from trade remedies to chemical standards.
- Lack of parliamentary oversight on FTAs is an area of concern for many, and the UK is an outlier compared to other countries in this area.

Cross-sector Opinion

150 WIG members from across the sectors joined us live, and we asked them: which of the UK FTAs currently in negotiation phase is most important for your organisation?



Our members' questions

Attendees raised a number of crucial questions for discussion, the key issues they highlighted included:

- The possibility of an 'implementation period' following the agreement of an FTA with the EU; what this might look like, and whether areas omitted from any initial agreement could be incorporated at a later date.
- Potential impact of the forthcoming US elections on the administration's priorities for a trade deal.
- The question of regulatory alignment with trade partners; the need for greater scrutiny around areas where FTAs will likely impact UK regulations that are no longer tied to the EU, for example food standards and data protection.
- What our future trade relationship with China might look like, and whether membership of the CTPPP would provide an alternative to choosing between the US and China in an increasingly polarised international environment.
- The impact on FTA negotiations of the current geopolitical climate, including the rise in protectionism and inefficacy of WTO dispute settling mechanisms.

WIG members can listen to Emily's presentation [here](#)

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'Brexit & International' Series

Update on The Integrated Review of foreign policy,
defence, security and international development
6 July, 2020

Expert Insight

We were delighted to be joined by Alex Ellis, Deputy National Security Adviser for The Integrated Review of foreign policy, defence, security and international development, for a webinar update on this landmark government-wide review, to re-examine the UK's international and national security priorities and objectives.

Alex spoke on what The Integrated Review (IR) is and its progress so far, sharing some insights on the issues to be considered.



Some key points included:

- The IR is a combination of vision around UK's place in the world, strategy that sits within that vision, and decisions on spend, systems reform and organisation
- The IR started at the beginning of 2020, was paused due to COVID-19, but has now restarted.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in the rate of change on the world stage and a broadened approach to what could constitute international and national security e.g. health security and the availability of ventilators.
- Other global concerns include challenges to the rules-based international order, climate change, declining biodiversity, and the fight against poverty.
- The IR will consider key areas of national interest, and what role the UK is to play in these areas; from setting standards to building and enhancing our relationships with allies and partners.
- It will also reflect on how the civil service can work cross departmentally to improve capabilities and strengthen links with private sector and academia; bringing diversity of thought and new skills into government.
- Science, data and technology are crucial components in an approach that intends to plan for both current and future problems.

Our members' questions

Over 170 WIG members from across the sectors joined us live. Attendees raised a number of crucial questions for discussion, some key themes they highlighted included:

- Balancing UK priorities such as security and trade with other concerns such as supporting democracy and development commitments.
- Accommodating the different potential contexts of the future UK-EU relationship.
- Increasing investment in defence R&D, and spotting which disruptive or emerging technologies will likely become critical for national security and resilience.
- The timeline for completing the IR and plans around consultation.

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'Brexit & International' Series

Enhancing UK trade with Australia, New Zealand & the CPTPP

26 August, 2020

Expert Insight

We were delighted to be joined by Vivien Life, Director for Asia and Australasia Negotiations at the DIT, for a webinar discussing the UK's future bilateral and multilateral trading relationships in the dynamic Asia-Pacific region as we enter a new era of independent trade policy.

In her presentation Vivien touched on topics including:

- The agreements being negotiated with Australia and New Zealand offer an opportunity to set high standards for other FTAs, due to alignment on crucial issues such as support for SMEs to enter the export market, a focus on sustainability and clean growth, and commitment to women's economic empowerment.
- The DIT estimates that these FTAs could boost UK exports to Australia by £900m, and by £100m for New Zealand.
- The UK government confirmed its ambition to join the CPTPP in June 2020, but has not moved forward to formally applying. At that stage, a set of negotiating objectives would be published following the model already established.



Presentation Spotlight

Vivien highlighted a number of crucial statistics around the UK's current trade dynamics with the region:

- We are Australia's 5th largest trading partner and second largest outside the Asia-Pacific
- UK businesses traded £18.1bn worth of goods and services with Australia in 2019
- Medicinal & pharmaceutical products (£556m) and cars (£543m) were the top goods exports to Australia
- The UK was New Zealand's 6th largest trade partner in 2019; two-way trade was £2.9bn, with the UK exporting £1.7bn
- The UK did more than £110bn worth of trade in 2019 with the 11 countries in the CPTPP
- It represents one of the world's largest free trade areas covering 13% of global GDP in 2018

Our members' questions

80+ attendees from WIG's cross-sector membership tuned in live, and posed a number of important questions. Some of the key issues raised included:

- How we can work to 'future-proof' FTAs currently under negotiation, building in flexibility for emerging areas of economic potential for the UK, such as the space industry.
- The opportunities to build on shared interests and ambitions around digital trade; both in terms of exporting digital goods and services, and utilising digital means of trade.
- How the DIT continues to engage with business and other stakeholders, through channels such as sector specific trade advisory groups (TAGs).

WIG members can listen to Vivien's presentation [here](#)
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