

JACK STRAW



UK's Foreign Secretary (2001-2006)

Jack Straw was Foreign Secretary 2001-06, Home Secretary 1997-2001, and Leader of the House of Commons (2006-07) under Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary 2007-10 under Prime Minister Gordon Brown. He has been described by The Guardian as a “Big Beast” of British politics.

Straw was a Member of Parliament for Blackburn from 1979 to 2015, when he retired from the Commons. His approach won praise from Margaret Thatcher, who once declared “I would trust Jack Straw’s judgement. He is a very fair man”. Before becoming an MP, Straw practised as a Barrister, and then worked as a Special Adviser in the 1974-79 Labour Government. Appointed Foreign Secretary in 2001, Straw played a leading role in the dramatic foreign policy problems arising from the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and the resulting interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. He was instrumental in helping to avoid an extremely dangerous armed conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir in 2002. He was a member of the European Council for five years. In 2005 he led successful efforts to open formal EU membership negotiations with Turkey. With his French and German counterparts, Jack initiated the “E3” (later “P5+1”) negotiations with Iran over their nuclear programme, and has taken a close interest in Iran ever since, having visited it many times.

He is a Visiting Professor at University College London School of Public Policy. Since 2015 he has been Chairman of the Blackburn Youth Zone, and from 2017 a Trustee of the Star (Tauheedul) Education Trust, which runs over twenty mainly Muslim state-funded schools. Straw is a Trustee of the Global Strategy Forum, and of the Atlantic Partnership. He is a Distinguished Fellow of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), and a Bencher of the Inner Temple. He is an adviser to a number of companies. He is Honorary Vice-President of the Blackburn Rovers Football Club.

Often challenged for his firm approach to civil liberties, Jack remains a popular politician, not least for his deft self-deprecating humour: as Home Secretary he joked that his large department was “full of civil servants working diligently on projects that might ruin my career”. His experience in countless significant policy areas enables him to talk to international audiences about the role and workings of government, the EU, the Middle East, South Asia, international relations, international law, security and the reform of global institutions. As a senior Minister for 13 years Jack has managed three large government departments, responsible both for internal management and outward-facing policy-making, he is therefore also a sought-after speaker at corporate and governmental events.

Topics (Selection):

- Society
- Global Institutions
- Government and Governance
- International Legal Systems
- EU - Rest of The World
- Brexit
- Security

Publications (Selection):

- Straw, J: English Job: Understanding Iran and Why It Distrusts Britain, 2019
- Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor, 2013