

UK Government Is Pushing Ahead with Extreme US Trade Deal

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Currently, Britain has a Prime Minister who was elected not by the public, but by around 90,000 Conservative party members. With a majority in the House of Commons of just one seat, without any real political mandate, Britain is being pushed towards a hard Brexit. In little more than 80 days – it is predicted British business will need a [bail-out fund](#) to help them survive, the economy will fall straight into recession (described by the BoE as an [‘economic shock’](#)), jobs will be lost and a [constitutional and political crisis](#) will see the beginnings of the eventual [end of the union](#).

Liz Truss addressed an extreme free-market think tank in Washington DC last Friday, which saw campaign group Global Justice Now accusing Boris Johnson’s government of pushing ahead with an [extreme US trade deal](#) without a mandate from the public or parliament.

Last week both Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and Trade Secretary Liz Truss were in Washington DC to talk trade with US officials. Both ministers are well-known opponents of the sort of regulations and protections that would be threatened by a US trade deal. Liz Truss spoke at a meeting of the extreme free-market *Heritage Foundation* and has previously held meetings with several free-market think tanks to discuss US-style deregulation.

Last year, the Heritage Foundation co-developed a ‘model-free trade deal’ which would if implemented, completely restructure the British economy. Proposals include:

- Zero restrictions on cross-border data flow, threatening to hand huge powers to the likes of Amazon, Google and Facebook.
- Zero restrictions on foreign direct investment in the economy making it harder for post-Brexit Britain to control or tax the activities of big business.
- Strict prohibitions against the use of ‘nontariff barriers’, which would set off a ‘race to the bottom’ in standards and consumer protections, preventing post-Brexit Britain from being able to stop the import of industrially farmed food like chlorine chicken.
- Lock-in liberalisation of all services ensuring the continued liberalisation of our NHS.

Nick Dearden, Director of Global Justice Now, said:

“As the government snubs European leaders, so they fall over themselves to get to Washington DC to talk trade with Trump’s officials. That’s because these ministers are committed to an extreme big business agenda which would see

Britain cut rights and protections after Brexit, and they know a trade deal with the US can help push those plans forward. Today Trade Secretary Liz Truss is speaking to her friends at the hard-right Heritage Foundation. This is one of the groups that dreamt up a 'model US-UK trade deal' which would lay waste to huge swathes of our economy, including farming, and would undermine our public services.

"Even more worrying, this extreme trade agenda is being carried out by a government which has no mandate from parliament or the public. MPs still don't have the ability to stop or properly scrutinise the government's negotiations. The public are not allowed to see any details of these talks - even though we are told there are over 100 officials sometimes in the room. This is frighteningly undemocratic, and no wonder, because whenever the public are asked for their opinion about the detail of these trade deals, they are deeply hostile to them."

The Heritage Foundation (HF) is widely considered one of the world's most influential public policy research institutes. The Foundation wields considerable influence in Washington DC and is a member of the [State Policy Network](#), a web of right-wing "think tanks" that operates in every state across America. It has strong ties to the tobacco industry, is a proponent of climate science denial, has pushed hard to deny the Affordable Care Act to millions in the USA, was the originator of a policy of an individual mandate to buy health insurance and pushed for the last government shut-down for political gain. They have campaigned to stop immigrant amnesties, stoked anti-immigrant sentiment and is a political organisation feeding off the extreme right-wing Tea Party movement.

The Heritage Foundation also maintains strong ties with the London [Institute of Economic Affairs \(IEA\)](#).

This is where part of the underbelly of the extreme Brexit loop lives. The IEA faced [two official investigations](#) after it emerged that the thinktank [offered potential US donors access to UK government ministers](#) as it raised cash for research to promote free-trade deals demanded by hardline Brexiters. The IEA was caught red-handed when it was filmed in an undercover investigation that confirmed it had arranged for US donors who donated £35,000 to have a private meeting with Steve Baker MP, when he was Brexit minister. This is not just a conflict of interest - it is what most would consider to be corruption.

The IEA also got caught when [the casino industry donated £8,000 to the IEA](#) after it published a report calling for more casinos in Britain. IEA was also under investigation by the Charity Commission which raised questions about its charitable status which means it enjoys tax breaks on its £2.3m annual expenditure, when in fact, it is really clearly a hard-right political lobbyist. The Charity Commission then issued a formal warning demanding written assurances from the think tank that it will not engage in further political campaigning. And that was the extent of their punishment.

The plot thickens with the IEA. It has very strong ties with the so-called Legatum Institute - also accused of [breaching charity rules](#). Former Legatum trade chief Shanker Singham, described by a former Labour minister as a 'hard Brexit Svengali', [was advising](#) PR and lobbying agency Grayling on Brexit and trade. Singham, who has been said to enjoy "[unparalleled access](#)" to government ministers also happened to be an advisor to Liam Fox. Legatum got into another scandal when it gave Tory MP Sir Oliver Letwin a [£30,000-a-year job](#), prompting questions over whether it meets rules that say charities must not be party political, which of course, it cannot lay claim to be under such circumstances. Again, most

moral observers would consider this to be a corruption of government.

This is nothing short of a cash-for-access, cash-for-questions, cash-for-influence scandal all rolled into one with massive infiltration from a foreign state. The difference is that this time all these scandals are being drowned out by the biggest in Britain's post-war history - that of Brexit itself. And we should not make any mistake how this has indeed come about - American corporations, its think tanks along with evangelical conservative extremists with direct access to the Trump administration has pumped millions into a project to asset strip, plunder and pillage Britain.

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