

Dear Colleagues,

2023#1 Making The Case ... for Freedom

Thank you to everybody who submitted a response to help us Make The Case for Capitalism. Once we have processed all the responses, we anticipate inviting representatives from several CPF groups to explore in greater detail the most promising ideas from CPF consultations.

This briefing paper is the second in our series of consultations aimed at strengthening grassroots Conservatism. These are focusing on “Making the Case for Conservatism”, building on the Conservative values previously identified by the Party membership and applying them to what have been called the “big four” priorities facing the country—namely, the cost of living, energy security, the NHS, and our place on the world stage.

By way of reminder, we anticipate that these consultations will result in two products: firstly, our usual confidential reports for policymakers in the Party and in Government; secondly, a set of leaflets to be compiled and published as a short pamphlet “Making the case for Conservatism”. Just as policymakers in Parliament and Downing Street have invited representatives from CPF groups to explore in greater detail the most promising ideas from CPF consultations, so too we expect to invite a selection of CPF groups—based on their reports to the initial nationwide consultation—to help shape these leaflets. In this way, we hope that the CPF will make a lasting contribution to strengthening grassroots conservatism: defining what it is and helping members to make the case.

Make sure that your Conservative Association or Federation has a date in the diary to be a part of this process—and be sure to invite as many members and supporters as possible. As usual, please send your responses to the questions in this briefing paper to CPF.Papers@conservatives.com, using the associated response form published alongside the paper on the CPF website. The deadline for submitting your response is 19th March. We aim to publish our next discussion paper in this “Making The Case” series on 8th May, after taking our annual campaigning break for the May elections.

We look forward to hearing your views,

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Setting the scene

“Freedom and openness have always been the most powerful forces for progress. But they have never been achieved by standing still.” (Rishi Sunak, 28 November 2022)¹

“A society that puts equality—in the sense of equality of outcome—ahead of freedom will end up with neither equality nor freedom.” (Milton & Rose Friedman, 1980)²

Many Conservatives identify freedom as a top value underpinning their worldview. Yet, everybody believes in freedom and liberty, don't they? Perhaps so, but we need to be clear about what we mean by the terms as Conservatives. As we did for “capitalism” in our last consultation, we may need deliberately to use different terms in order to communicate our vision and values more effectively for a wider audience.

Freedom House published a report late last year on Authoritarian Expansion and the Power of Democratic Resilience, in which they found:

“Half of the countries in the study were found to be Vulnerable rather than Resilient. And even many Resilient countries exhibited weaknesses like low expertise on CCP [Chinese Communist Party] influence or the absence of laws that could enhance transparency and competition in the media sector.

“But some of the biggest risks came from actions by the countries' own governments that eroded fundamental protections for press freedom and freedom of expression, or that exploited and misdirected fears of Chinese influence for short-term political gain. In 23 countries in the study, political leaders launched attacks on domestic media or used legitimate concerns about CCP influence to justify arbitrary restrictions, target critical outlets, or fuel xenophobic sentiment.

“The events of the last several years have prompted hand-wringing in democratic states about the supposed power and efficiency of authoritarianism. The findings of this study offer reassurance that the core features of democracy—free expression, transparency, and accountability—provide a strong defense against authoritarian influence. Democracies are resilient when they embrace and protect independent journalism and civil society groups, and when their laws shed light on media ownership and the activities of foreign states. Ultimately, the protection and improvement of fundamental rights and democratic governance are powerful safeguards against a range of authoritarian threats, whether from the CCP or any other source.”³

Questions for discussion

1. If you had 30 seconds with someone to make the case for freedom, what would you say?
2. How might we best promote freedom to the next generation?
3. What international example do you think best exemplifies the benefits of freedom?
4. What international example do you think best highlights what can go wrong when freedom is neglected or abused?
5. Please share any helpful short quotes from world leaders making the case for freedom.
6. What should freedom look like when translated into policy in each of the following areas?
 - i. Cost of living
 - ii. Energy security
 - iii. NHS health and social care
 - iv. Global influence
7. Is there any other observation you would like to make?

Sources and Further Details

¹ *Prime Minister: "freedom and openness have never been achieved by standing still"*, 10 Downing Street, 28 November 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-freedom-and-openness-have-never-been-achieved-by-standing-still>

² *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*, Milton and Rose Friedman, 1980, p.148

³ *Beijing's Global Media Influence: Authoritarian Expansion and the Power of Democratic Resilience*, Freedom House, 8 September 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/beijing-global-media-influence/2022/authoritarian-expansion-power-democratic-resilience>