
Jack Straw



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, a renowned UK daily newspaper, as a “Big Beast” of British politics. He continues as a Member of Parliament and, having been first elected in 1979, has recently become Blackburn’s longest-serving MP.

Earlier in his political career, after having been called to the Bar and then working as a Special Advisor to Cabinet Ministers Barbara Castle and Peter Shore, Jack became the Opposition spokesman on Education and the Environment, before being appointed Home Secretary after the Labour Party won the 1997 Election. His time as Home Secretary had its share of controversies including the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and Pinochet affair. Under his tenure key pieces of legislation were also introduced, including the Freedom of Information Act and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law under the Human Rights Act.

Appointed Foreign Secretary in 2001, Jack 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 has stoutly defended these decisions, but in 2010 told the Iraq Inquiry in London that the decision in 2003 to go to war “had haunted him”. Jack was instrumental in helping avoid an extremely dangerous armed conflict over Kashmir in 2002 and is a knowledgeable speaker on both India and Pakistan.

As Foreign Secretary he was also closely involved with many top European decisions such as the negotiation of the EU Budget deal in 2005 and all the strategic EU economic issues associated with it. The same year he led successful efforts to open formal EU membership negotiations with Turkey.

Jack has long had a close and distinctive interest in Iran – visiting Tehran five times as Foreign Minister. With the French and German Foreign Ministers (Dominique de Villepin, and Joschka Fischer) Jack led the 2003 “E3” initiative for a peaceful solution to the Iran nuclear dossier. He developed good relations with Dr Hassan Rouhani, the new President of Iran, and was invited to his inauguration on 4th August 2013.

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”. In 2012 his best-selling autobiography *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor* was published and has been described by the best-selling political diarist Chris Mullin in The Times as, “engaging, humorous, occasionally self-deprecating and generally frank.” An abridged translation in Farsi, by the BBC Persian service, has attracted over 100,000 unique hits. He is co-Chairman of the British-Iran Parliamentary Group.

Jack is a consultant to ED& F Man, the global commodity broker, Visiting Professor at the University College London School of Public Policy and Honorary Vice-President of Blackburn Rovers Football Club. He is co-Chairman of the Tatlidil conference that takes place annually between the UK and Turkey. In 2012 he was awarded the Order of the Republic of Turkey by President Abdullah Gül. He is a Bencher of the Inner Temple. In 2012 he delivered the prestigious Hamlyn Lectures on “Aspects of Law Reform”, published in 2013 by Cambridge University Press.

Jack's 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.