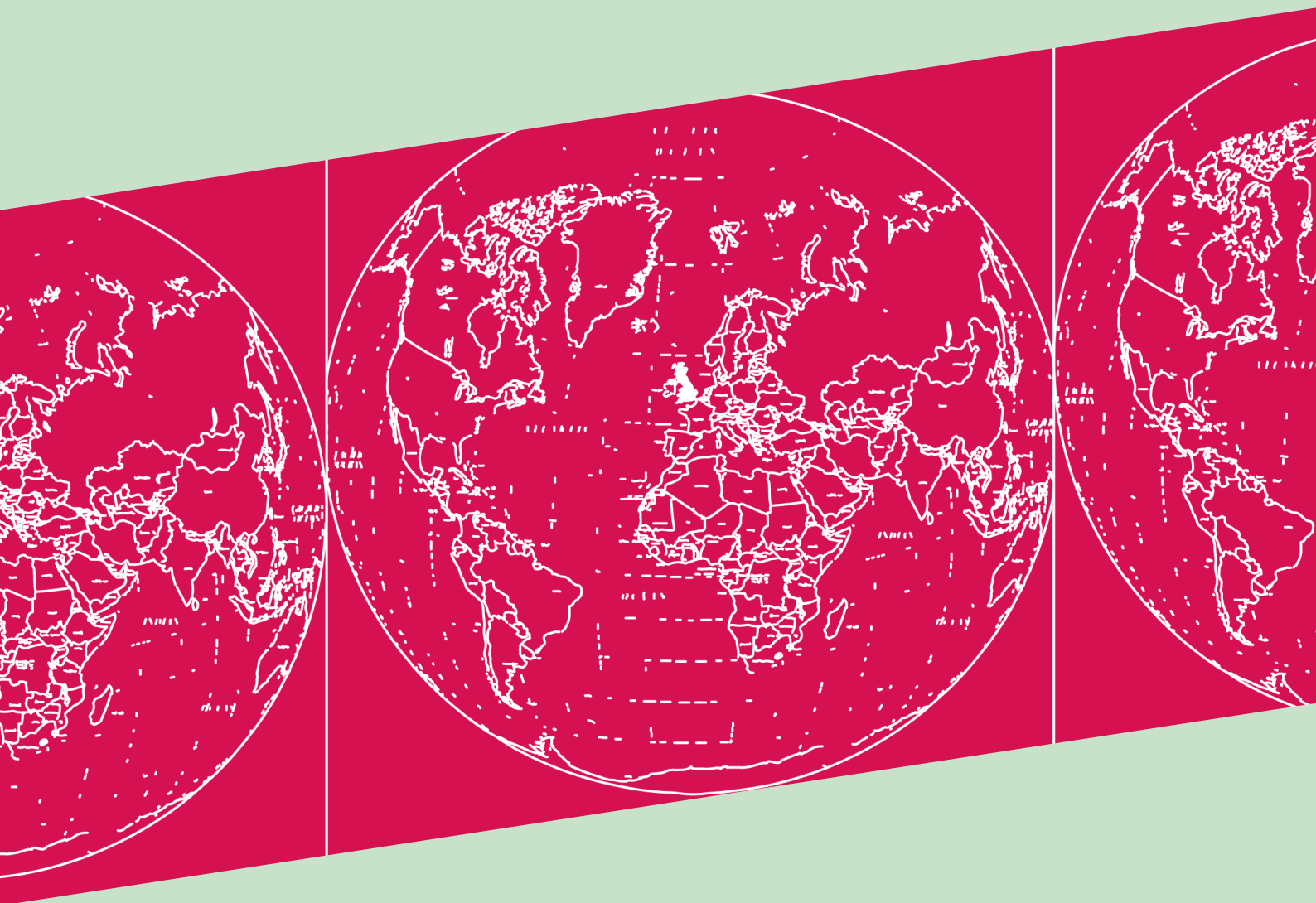


A FUTURE SECURED

THE ROLE OF A MODERN LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

November 2024



**PROGRESSIVE
BRITAIN**

**FABIAN
MEMBERS**

DEFENCE
AND SECURITY
POLICY GROUP

FOREWORD

Nobody gets into Labour politics to fight a war. People do it to build schools and hospitals and drive the cause of justice to make Britain a fairer, better place. That the Party has won its first election in 19 years at time when major conflict is both active and escalating around the world might be a fact we, as 'Labour people', try to ignore. But we must not.

The success of Keir Starmer's government will be defined by the impact of its domestic agenda. But the scale of the conflict that is raging in the world, and on our own doorstep in Ukraine, means that agenda – indeed the whole future of Britain and Europe – cannot be disentangled from defence.

The reality, that there is a war going on which menaces us all is one that leaders have been painfully slow to face up to and one from which voters are still by and large comfortably insulated. Other conflicts, especially in the Middle East, have exacerbated global instability and reinforced the resolve of nations hostile to our values.

But with Donald Trump in the White House, and after a very tough year for Ukraine on the battlefield, previously unthinkable options are now thinkable, or even likely.

There is therefore an urgent need for a popular re-learning of what defence and security means today. That is why we are proud to publish this collection of papers, collated by Fabian Defence Policy Member Committee Chair, Marcus Storm which takes on important dimensions of defence thinking, and how it intersects with other areas of policy. Inside you will learn about the intersection of defence and climate change, research and development, public procurement and trade, and Britain's place in the world.

It is rightly focussed on the spiralling geopolitical danger from, and the need to urgently react to, the war in Ukraine but recognises this conflict is neither the only significant one for British interests nor one that can be isolated from other flashpoints around the world.

If this is not, and we all hope it never becomes, a 'world war' - it is definitively a globalised conflict. While western leaders threaten each other with tariffs and declare the end of globalisation, raw resources, munitions, soldiers and intelligence are being traded between Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. These countries also pursuing greater influence over non-aligned nations and western publics, harmful to our interests but carefully staying below the threshold for war.

Our domestic challenges have led us to this point, and we hope by helping grow the awareness in the general policy community of the defence and foreign policy situation we can start to move towards a politics that works at home and abroad. We hope this collection goes some way to starting these conversations.

Thomas Collinge
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SUMMARY: THE ROLE OF A MODERN LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

Marcus Storm, Chair, Fabian Society's Defence & Security member policy group

Today, we find ourselves in a world that feels unfamiliar, volatile, and unsettling. A world where British values and interests are tested not just by distant threats but by issues that strike close to home, impacting our security, our prosperity, and our very way of life. Labour should not have come to power simply to address these crises in isolation; rather, it can demonstrate a new, forward-looking vision for a Britain that stands tall on the world stage while delivering justice and opportunity for all.

The truth is that Labour's historic mission—its calling to build schools, hospitals, and a fairer society—cannot be achieved without first securing Britain's place in a turbulent global landscape. As we face real and pressing threats, not least in Ukraine and the Middle East, we must reawaken a deep understanding of what defence and security mean for Britain in the 21st century. This collection of insights is our first step in forging that vision.

Chapter 1: The Rings of Power Framework. I present the “rings of power” framework to clearly justify to the public the ways Britain should spend its defence money. This is a strategy to strengthen Britain's security from the inside out, ensuring that we are secure at home so we can project our values and leadership abroad. It's not just about defence; it's about creating a secure platform for all our ambitions as a nation, empowering Britain to be a force for good.

Chapter 2: Fixing the Procurement System. Let's be frank: our defence procurement system has been a morass of inefficiency and waste. Ollie's work shows us how we can make procurement fit for purpose—a modern, streamlined system that channels every pound to where it's most needed. This is not just cost-cutting; it's about making government work in the interests of the people, delivering a robust defence at a time when every penny counts.

Chapter 3: Science, Technology, and Britain's Unique Advantage. Gautam's proposals remind us of what Britain uniquely offers: our world-leading science, our innovation, and our technology. These are not just advantages but essentials in the new global race where the UK competes with giants. By harnessing these strengths, we can secure Britain's future, not just as a resilient player but as a true leader on the world stage, ready to face whatever challenges the 21st century holds.

Chapter 4: Climate Security and Defence. Finally, we come to Louise's groundbreaking work on climate security—a concept so crucial and yet so often overlooked. Climate change is not a future threat; it is here now, destabilising communities, igniting conflicts, and threatening livelihoods. Louise's vision is clear: Britain's defence policy must address climate security as a core priority, recognising that the battle for our planet is inseparable from the battle for peace and stability.

A Conclusion with Purpose. As we look forward, let us remember that Britain's role in the world is not an abstract concept. It is the firm ground on which we show the world how to build a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. This collection, taken together, is a roadmap to a future where Britain is secure, resilient, and true to its values. In the words of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government, we will not stand by as conflicts rage and threats grow. We will step forward, shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies, committed to a safe, just, and prosperous Britain.

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RINGS OF POWER - THE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF BRITISH SECURITY INTERESTS

Marcus Storm, Chair, Fabian Society's Defence & Security member policy group

INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE OF MODERN SECURITY

It's safe to say that we're all feeling less safe. Against the backdrop of the invasion of Ukraine and conflict in the Middle East, new technology has enabled decentralised, lower level acts of violence and terrorism which extend the battlefield well beyond our soldiers on the front lines to civilians and citizens in their own homes.

These threats are diverse and evolving. 2017 saw a North-Korea originated virus leading to [British deaths in National Health Service \(NHS\) hospitals](#). [AI-enabled drones](#) raise the fearsome spectre of cheaper, accessible terrorism. And the Internet is the instantaneous way hostile state actors reach into your lives - not just through [social media](#) and financial crime, but also through poorly-secured smart watches, fridges, and cameras.

With ever more affordable ways to attack British citizens - whether through lone wolf attacks, cyber intrusions, ransomware, or drone warfare - the pressure on the state to fulfil its core mission has intensified. This mission - to protect citizens from harm and safeguard peace and freedom - faces mounting challenges. In an ageing economy with limited defence funding, the urgent task is twofold: eliminate waste while maintaining public support and political will for long-term defence spending programs that currently exceed £70 billion annually.

Purpose and Scope

This document presents a plain English vision of British defence and security and examines how that shapes Britain's place in the world. It advocates for clear priorities for the British Government to follow and provides a framework for the public to assess defence spending effectively. While this broad structural framework cannot cover every country and region, nor analyse all possible angles, it offers a guide for ruthless prioritisation and challenges the cultural and institutional conservatism that often paralyses strategic planning.

In recent years, short-termist, turbulent, Britain has lost the ability to [form and execute long-term strategy](#) - a deficiency that creates crisis when strategic thinking is most needed, affecting all our public services. The more complex the field, the easier it becomes for politicians to bypass public discourse by dismissing it as electorally irrelevant. This text aims to change that dynamic for defence policy, ensuring non-expert voters can understand and evaluate major defence expenditures.

THE RINGS OF POWER FRAMEWORK: BRITISH SECURITY PRIORITIES

The priorities for UK security under this framework, in order of importance, are:

1. The British people – counter terrorism; societal cybersecurity; counter-espionage; industrial security; British Overseas Territories
2. The border – the North Sea; the Channel
3. The Arctic – protecting the Greenland, Iceland, and UK (GIUK) gap; maintaining understanding and control over Northern shipping lanes
4. The Allies – force multiplication through partnerships with the Scandinavian and northern European countries. Selective global engagement; the US-UK relationship; Five Eyes; Australia-UK-US

5. The Eastern Front – Baltics; Poland; Germany – what contribution to a NATO core which can counter an offensive from the East
6. The Gateways to the World – where nearly all British imports and exports travel through and need to be safeguarded against piracy and hostile actions: the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, Suez, Malacca, Panama
7. The Middle East – Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iran, and their neighbours
8. Global Peace – the Taiwan Strait
9. The New World

Why the Rings matter

The prioritisation of these concentric circles rests on three fundamental principles:

1. Distance Matters. Physical proximity increases control while reducing costs and complexity of military operations. Closer geographic relationships facilitate more effective training, surveillance, and understanding. Additionally, trade and cooperation naturally flourish between neighbouring nations.
2. Credibility Requires Consistency. Both domestic and international credibility depend on realistic incentives and sustained commitment. Adversaries—whether autocratic regimes or guerrilla forces—excel at outlasting democratic nations' resolve. Without core interests that ensure long-term public support, such as critical resource dependence or clear security threats, democratic appetite for armed engagement becomes vulnerable to exploitation.
3. Risk Management, Not Elimination. Complete security remains impossible. The goal must be efficient risk management within available resources.

These principles dictate prioritising security aspects geographically and culturally closest to Britain, building credibility for broader international engagement through demonstrated competence in our immediate sphere.

AIR AND NAVAL ASSETS: CONTROLLING CRITICAL PASSAGES (RINGS 3 AND 6)

The Arctic Gateway

The Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap represents a critical strategic chokepoint. As the only route for Russian naval forces—including nuclear-armed submarines—to access the Atlantic, one of Britain's primary NATO responsibilities involves maintaining comprehensive surveillance of this corridor. Recent years have seen increased threats to undersea infrastructure, particularly internet cables. These vital communication links face multiple risks:

1. Physical sabotage
2. Espionage activities
3. Data interception systems

Climate change adds another strategic dimension as Arctic ice recedes. The Northeast and Northwest Passages become increasingly navigable, creating new maritime routes. The Northeast Passage, in particular, represents a potential friction point between Russia and China, as Beijing seeks greater access while Moscow attempts to maintain control.

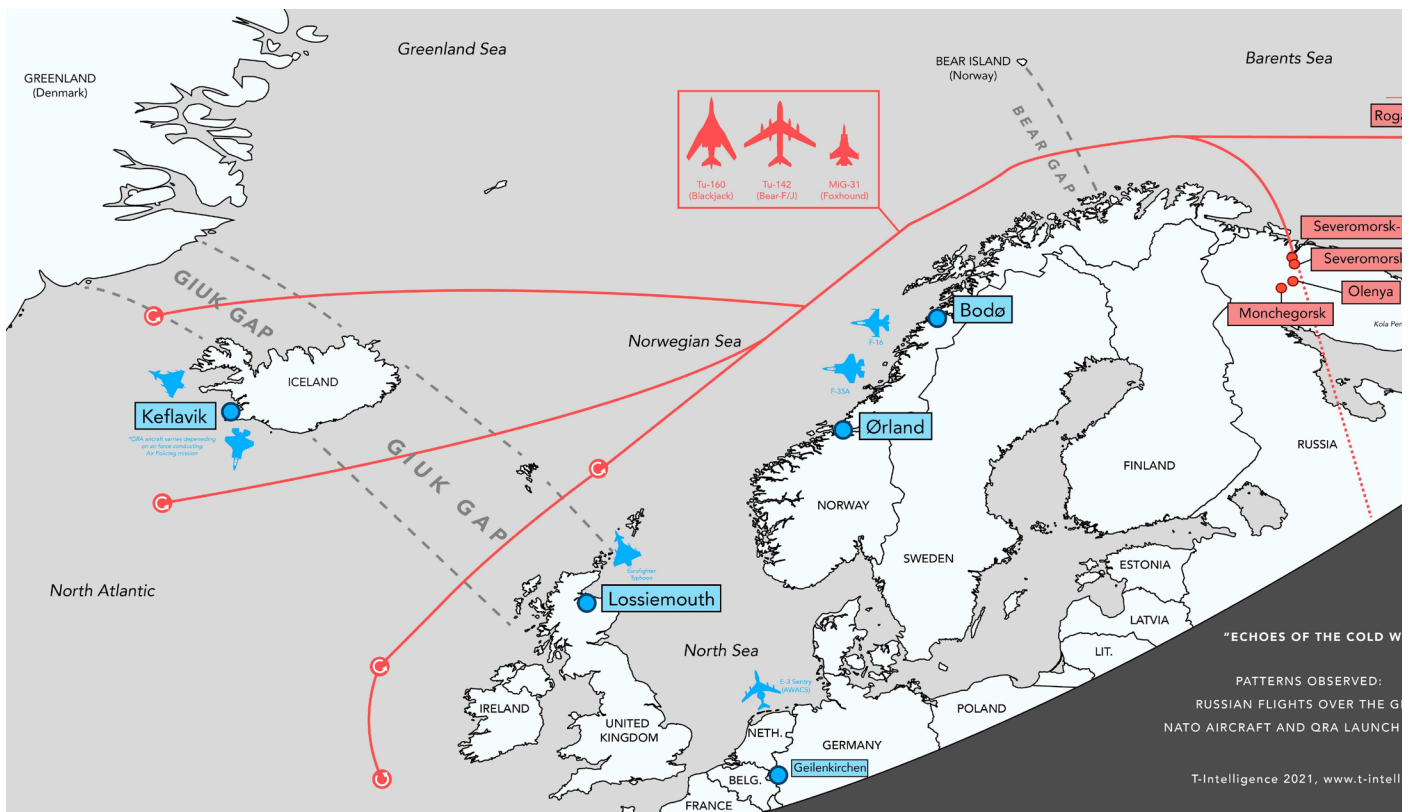


Figure 1: Russian flights over the GIUK Gap. Source: <https://t-intell.com/2021/03/30/echoes-of-the-cold-war-why-bears-like-the-g-i-u-k-gap/>

International Engagement

Britain exercises influence through several key international bodies:

1. The Arctic Council

- Though not a permanent member, Britain holds a privileged position as:
 - o The closest geographical observer state
 - o One of the longest-serving observer states

2. The Northern Group

- UK-led format established in 2012
- Comprises 12 nations: Baltic states (3), Nordic countries (5), Poland, Netherlands, Germany
- Serves as a consultative forum for:
 - o European security issues
 - o NATO-EU relations
 - o Regional concerns (military mobility, transformation technologies, climate change)
 - o Meets twice yearly at Defense Minister and Policy Director levels

3. UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)

- British-led force including nine partner nations:
 - o Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway
 - o Provides rapid-response capability
 - o Enhances regional coordination

GLOBAL MARITIME CHOKEPOINTS

Five critical maritime passages shape global trade and security:

1. Gibraltar
2. Suez Canal
3. Bab-el-Mandeb (Gate of Grief)
4. Strait of Hormuz
5. Strait of Malacca



Figure Two, Global maritime chokepoints. Source, [The American Journal of Transportation](#).

The significance of these chokepoints cannot be overstated. All are vulnerable to piracy and hostile action from countries, especially those with a presence near the chokepoint. Various studies place the cost of maritime piracy at around the order of tens of billions of USD per year. The 2021 Ever Given incident in the Suez Canal demonstrated their economic impact: each day of blockage held up \$9.6 billion in trade - approximately \$400 million per hour or \$6.7 million per minute.

Recent events in the Bab-el-Mandeb demonstrate this vulnerability. British consumers experienced price increases and businesses saw shipping times significantly lengthened and insurance prices increased due to the disruption wrought by Houthi militants in the Red Sea.

Among these chokepoints:

- Gibraltar presents the lowest risk
- Middle Eastern passages face ongoing regional tensions
- The Strait of Malacca, while crucial, lies beyond Britain's primary force projection capabilities

Of the five chokepoints, Gibraltar is the least risky, the three Middle East flashpoints are linked to tensions in the region, and the Straits of Malacca are linked to tensions in Southeast Asia, mainly between China and other countries in the area. Britain clearly has the least force projection in Malacca, around which a more long term role through diplomatic, trade and export agreements is more suitable.

It is clear that the Royal Navy's focus needs to continue being divided between both the Arctic and the Middle East.

The Arctic is about projecting deterrence against Russia, whereas the Middle East is mainly about protecting shipping and global trade from unstable political and military actors, as we must assume that stability in the region will remain fragile for an extended period. To these ends, diplomatic and procurement efforts must be aligned.

THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE (RINGS 1 THROUGH 5)

The closest threat to the UK is Vladimir Putin's Russia, who has shown a revanchist and ruthless calculus in expanding (or, in his view, reclaiming) power for his country. We touched upon the necessity of securing the Arctic against potential sabotage or espionage attempts. We also need to recognise that the UK's much-diminished Army still plays a key role in NATO's eastern defences which face Russia.

There are plainly not enough resources to significantly boost up the Army to offer a substantive contribution to NATO's land warfare capabilities whilst retaining the Royal Navy's capabilities in the Arctic and Middle East, even if defence spending were to be boosted to 3 or even 4% of GDP. Without a long-term or guaranteed plan to bring tensions down in the long term, would this be paid for by ever-higher taxes on the British public?

This point is the key conflict behind defence spending, and in all likelihood, politicians will choose to re-prioritise and must choose to spend wisely rather than trying to do all things ineffectively.

If one had the opportunity to allocate these roles within European NATO countries from a blank slate, it would be Germany and Poland, with contributions from other Eastern European nations would form the mass that is needed to hold back and retaliate against any attack from the east.

It would be the Italian and Spanish navies which play leading roles in securing the Mediterranean, and the British and French relied upon with extensive experience and force structure geared around expeditionary forces to deploy further afield and in rapid deployment scenarios, particularly in the Arctic circle and in the Middle East.

All this points to an unavoidable fact: the recent, gradual restructuring of the British Army towards an expeditionary, rapid deployment fighting force over the past few decades has been a correct reading of the realities of British defence spending prioritisation, even if sceptics point to austerity as the cause, and not a strategic objective. Even with this, we are stuck in a reality in which Germany in particular is not ready to take the leading role over from Britain, which has had a historically stronger connection to NATO. However, for British defence commitments to be sustainable, this transition needs to be acknowledged and planned for within NATO.

The proportion of British forces trained in winter or Arctic warfare should increase, likely at the expense of the proportion trained in jungle warfare. Sweden and Finland's accessions will benefit the alliance greatly from opportunities to train with both the British and allies in the Baltics.

Britain's role in Estonia is a good example of the type of support that can be extended to winter operations. Whilst a permanent or semi-permanent presence in Finland, Sweden or Norway is clearly up to their own governments to decide, increasing the preparedness for operations in and around the Baltic Sea is clearly a prime focus for the UK, and there is an argument to reallocate (or better, to allocate new) resources to this mission above almost all others.

With the Baltic Sea now firmly enveloped by NATO allies, joint training operations there involving all three services would be seen as a very good use of defence spending.

TAIWAN: PEACE THROUGH TRADE? (RING 8)

Taiwan merits specific analysis, as although the influence the UK has in the region is minimal, the consequences of a conflict there would be a devastating shock unseen in the UK since World War II.

The turbulence in the oil markets in the 70s and 80s or the economic realignments during the Covid-19 pandemic would seem insignificant blips compared to the extreme inflation of the price of computing power that would happen should any disruption to the semiconductor foundry operations on Taiwan occur. Think of the price of any electronic operation involving a smartphone or a computer, from email to any business software to consumer apps such as Apple Maps, and because no new chips can arrive onto the market, multiply the price of those operations by any whole number which takes your fancy. That's how Bloomberg Economics arrived at their estimate of a conflict at \$10tn, or around 10% of world GDP.

Taiwan is an instructive example of how to manage relations in a world region that Britain cares much about but has little hard power to wield - that is, realistically speaking, the vast majority of the world. An approach derived from the Rings framework can be summarised by the slogan Peace through Trade. This tagline is a deliberate evolution on the German "Wandel durch Handel" (change through trade) and the aphorism "Armed Strength for Peace".

Wandel durch Handel is usually used to refer to the economic engagement strategy by Germany to Russia as part of its Ostpolitik, with some believing that deeper economic ties could eventually effect democratic change in Russia. However, a similar line of reasoning was also used by the Clinton administration in the 90s to support more economic engagement with the increasingly open China of the time. History has shown that apparent resultant changes are fragile, illusory, or both. Human societies adapting very quickly and resiliently to large structural shifts, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or extensive economic sanctions in certain countries, lends itself particularly well to the fragility thesis.

Armed Strength for Peace reflects classical deterrence theory, but as critics correctly point out, an arms race which delivers no structural advantage to any one actor also drastically increases the cost of any resultant conflict. Key to the tensions in Taiwan is the notion that relative military strength, if reflecting relative economic strength, will peak for China in the next few years. If conflict can be prevented through the peak, the risks of conflict will recede and peace will become easier to uphold.

The goal of prevention of force on Taiwan takes precedence over the goal of safeguarding and promoting liberty and democracy, although these are somewhat interlinked. This must be clarified as trying to pursue two competing strategies can result in ineffectual execution which fails at both.

How does Britain decrease the chance of war? Counterintuitively, then, the most effective way is to increase trade, investment, and personal links between the UK and Taiwan. Increasing these links increases the commitment the UK has to preserving peace in Taiwan, as it increases economic, democratic, and political pressure on the government. This is a credible commitment in game theoretic terms. Whether for good or for ill, the conflict in Gaza and Israel from October 7 2023 has had a real impact on UK politics, shaping election results in 2024 and beyond - over a conflict and a region that the UK has little influence over. If the CCP were to believe that such a strong public reaction were to occur in the UK, France, and other similar countries, it would force the CCP to change its calculations of military success, knowing that a very strong political and military commitment would be encouraged and supported by the demos.

Is this an oven-ready blueprint for every other region in the world? No. Taiwan has an Anglophile nature - the fourth largest Scotch importer in the world, its governments are very keen to build good relations with European countries, and its people have very high opinions of British culture. This strategy could not take place in a hostile environment, which serves to highlight the enduring importance of soft power. Despite its limitations, it remains an enabler and multiplier of strategies that involve civilian populations. We conclude this section with a few action points which are derived from this strategy.

1. A strategy to improve cultural and interpersonal understanding in Britain, to ensure democracy functions properly in an event which involves British interests. Popular opinion towards China has shifted massively over the past decade – which means we don't understand it deeply enough. Core facts around the structure of the CCP, direction of travel, and attitudes towards Taiwan have changed little – so if a new narrative is able to take hold quickly, it must reflect a relative ignorance of the subject. Soft power needs to be managed. [A survey from the Economist](#) shows attitudes towards the West actually worsen after foreign students study here, challenging another Wandel durch Handel-like assumption that exposure alone will reconcile people of different beliefs.
2. Moving from a failing 'free market model' of international students towards a better targeted framework to welcome and integrate them into the country. A 'user-first' approach mapping the pathway of an incoming student should suffice, auditing university experience, visa pathways, and participation in local democratic institutions.
3. Mandarin for Mandarins. A commitment to fix Britain's uniquely poor record of multilingualism, which hurts us more the further away the language family is away from our own – poor French or German has a [lesser impact on cultural understanding than poor Mandarin](#).
4. Keep the British Council open in Mainland China – this implies a 'monitor and manage' stance on Confucius Institutes, as the CCP will very likely close the British Council in retaliation to the closing of Confucius Institutes. The British Council's influence for the UK outweighs Confucius Institutes' influence for the CCP, and is one of the last ways that many Mainland Chinese can engage with Britain directly.
5. Using Defence assets wisely. White ships and humanitarian missions are projects which can shape perceptions of Britain for a long time, and can be often the only exposure to our country for many people in regions further afield.
6. Respecting reunification efforts. The core of the grand pivot struck between the PRC and the USA in the late 1970s rests on an abstraction of language regarding the 'sole legitimate government of China', and the belief that there may be a peaceful solution to reunification is a key force driving the CCP away from military action. Few international efforts have been devoted to creating concrete solutions to reunification. Keeping these efforts alive is important to lower the temperature and risk of conflict, but in a neutral, facilitative way that respects the agency of the actors concerned.

CONCLUSION - AN HONEST PRIORITISATION OF SPENDING PRECIOUS DEFENCE MONEY

The Rings Framework provides clear justification to prioritise spending taxpayer money on Britain's role in the world. From military equipment to diplomatic efforts to R&D, we strongly argue funding and resources necessary for 'completing' rings geographically and physically closer to Britain before spending on projects further afield.

If a security incident were to occur close to home for which Britain was inadequately prepared for – for example, sabotage in the North Sea – there would be rightful accusation of resources spread too thinly across the globe and accusations of not Britain being able to protect its own backyard.

An instinct sorely missing from contemporary UK politics and certain areas of civil society – arguably since the golden era of humanitarian intervention in the 90s – is the willingness to face the public and justify why Britain is not acting in a region, even diplomatically or with other resources such as foreign aid.

Any person with significant decision-making power in this area should take any chance to accompany British forces on a military exercise in Europe. Even in tiny Estonia, appearing so little on a map, the vastness and emptiness of the never ending cold, trees, snow and ice should quickly bring about a realisation of the utter smallness of a single soldier with a gun.

THE RINGS FRAMEWORK

The Rings framework provides clear justification for defence spending prioritisation. Key principles include:

1. Complete security requirements in closer rings before expanding outward
2. Maintain credible home defence capabilities
3. Build public understanding and support for strategic choices
4. Balance global ambitions with realistic capabilities

Decision-makers should regularly experience military exercises, particularly in frontier regions like Estonia, to maintain perspective on defensive challenges and resource requirements.

The framework offers a practical approach to:

- Allocating limited resources effectively
- Building public support for defence spending
- Maintaining strategic focus in complex situations
- Balancing domestic and international priorities

Success requires honest assessment of capabilities, clear strategic communication, and sustained commitment to prioritised objectives.

Strategic Realignment

Constructing an ideal NATO force distribution from scratch would see, given relative strengths of each country:

- Germany and Poland, supported by Eastern European allies, providing primary land-based deterrence
- Italian and Spanish navies securing the Mediterranean
- British and French forces focusing on expeditionary capabilities for:
 - o Arctic operations
 - o Middle East deployment
 - o Rapid response scenarios

The British Army's gradual transformation toward expeditionary, rapid-deployment capabilities reflects this reality - even if critics attribute changes to austerity rather than strategy. However, Germany's current unpreparedness for a leading role requires careful transition management within NATO.

Resource Reality

Current defence resources cannot simultaneously:

- Significantly strengthen Army contributions to NATO land forces
- Maintain Royal Navy capabilities in the Arctic and Middle East

Even increasing defence spending to 3-4% of GDP would not resolve this dilemma without clear prioritisation.

Arctic Focus

Recommended adjustments include:

- Increasing the proportion of forces trained in Arctic warfare
- Reducing emphasis on jungle warfare training
- Leveraging Swedish and Finnish NATO membership for enhanced Baltic training
- Building on successful models like the British presence in Estonia
- Expanding joint service training operations in the Baltic Sea

Taiwan

Action Points:

1. Cultural Understanding
 - o Improve British public understanding of China and Taiwan
 - o Recognise shifts in popular opinion require deeper cultural knowledge
 - o Manage soft power effectively
2. Education Reform
 - o Restructure international student programs
 - o Adopt user-focussed approach to:
 - University experience
 - Visa pathways
 - Democratic participation
3. Language Capability
 - o Address Britain's multilingual deficiency
 - o Prioritise Mandarin language skills in government service
 - o Maintain British Council presence in mainland China
4. Military Engagement
 - o Utilise "white ships" for humanitarian missions
 - o Build positive regional perceptions through military diplomacy
5. Diplomatic Balance
 - o Support peaceful reunification efforts
 - o Maintain neutral facilitation role
 - o Respect regional actors' agency

LABOUR & DEFENCE PROCUREMENT: CLOSING THE CAPABILITY GAP

Ollie Welch, Managing Director at FTI Consulting and former MOD civil servant

It is the nature of a specialised field such as defence that it is too often a closed world except to those on the inside. Comparatively low on the list of funding priorities for much of the electorate, there is nevertheless an innate assumption that when the situation demands it, our armed forces will always be there to meet whatever challenge is thrown at them.

And yet, for those on the inside, the daily crises brought about by austerity, Brexit and political chaos that we all see unfolding in our schools and hospitals, have been just as evident in the Ministry of Defence. Under successive Conservative governments, real terms spending on defence equipment and support has seen decline on decline. This has institutionalised the capability gaps across the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force that mean our service personnel can no longer be confident that they are equipped with the tools they need to do the difficult and often dangerous tasks asked of them.

Yet the stoicism of the armed forces has been too often exploited by ministers. Doing more with less, using ingenuity to solve seemingly intractable problems, and maintaining morale in the face of insurmountable odds are the stock-in-trade of our service personnel. The answer to being told to do more with less is invariably, 'Yes, Sir!'. The Tory government may have introduced the Armed Forces Covenant but they might stand accused of having done so only as an exercise in how comprehensively it can be broken.

It must be a priority of the Labour government to reverse this trend; our national security depends upon it. The damning dossier of waste published by Labour in January 2022 detailed a catalogue of mismanagement in the MOD equipment procurement system since 2010. It stands as testament not only to a succession of individual programme failings, but institutional malpractice driven by a political culture that has been accepting of failure and driven by short-term decision making.

Of course, defence procurement is, by its nature, difficult. The most complex capability development programmes are often decades in realisation. At the outset, the technologies required to deliver the desired effect have probably not been invented yet. And we live in an increasingly complex and multipolar world in which the threat assessments that drive capability requirements are constantly evolving.

It is a cliché, but nonetheless true for it, that militaries plan to fight the war of yesterday, but end up fighting the war of tomorrow. The constant risk is therefore that failure to keep technological pace with our rivals puts our armed forces in greater jeopardy, undermines our national security and, ultimately, restricts the options available to governments in times of crisis.

As a result, it is understandable that militaries are fixated on operational advantage; the guarantee that, when sent into battle, you will be armed with the capabilities required to defeat your adversary at lowest possible risk and cost. And, of course, it is incumbent on ministers to ensure that, when it chooses to deploy our service personnel into the line of fire, they are properly equipped for the job.

This drives a technological arms race as rival powers seek to ensure that their military capabilities keep pace with each other. But it also creates a paradox. It becomes the propensity of the armed services themselves to continually revise and update capability requirements in the face of new and emerging threats. This forces cost growth and delays procurement programmes that, at its worst, denies our service personnel the capability that they so desperately need. Moreover, it restricts future investment decisions by draining a necessarily finite defence budget.

Take, for instance, the miserable story of the delivery of the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle, years late and blighted by technical problems. Many assessments have put the root cause at the vehicle's ballooning weight, the result of attempts to accommodate ever more capability onto a mature base platform in order to keep pace with the threat it is expected to face on the battlefield. At some point in the process the detail became more important than the whole and, as a result, the Army is left severely denuded of capability as older platforms are withdrawn from service with little sign on the horizon that their replacement is ready.

Of course, the onus is on any Defence Secretary to ensure better discipline among capability requirements setters to prevent programmes from spiralling out of control in such a manner. Service chiefs and their senior officers must be answerable for decisions made under their authority in the manner that industry is contractually bound. However, it is not as simple as ministers making rhetorical commitments to never veering from a chosen procurement pathway once contracts have been signed. The time and expense taken to bring complex military platforms into service mean that they are rightly expected to remain a part of the armed forces' frontline capability for a generation or more. Such inflexibility would inevitably result in capability with a much-reduced window of operational utility, potentially even unfit for purpose from the outset.

Indeed, it is a challenge that is more acute than ever. Assumptions around redundancy have dated badly in the face of the digital revolution, where the pace of change is now measured in months rather than decades. Whereas once the potency of a capability would have been primarily judged by the robustness of its hardware, it is now the underpinning software and operating systems that determine its continued operational effectiveness.

It is therefore no longer the case that a platform with a 30-year lifespan on entry into service can be sustained by a single mid-life upgrade to accommodate technological advancements in the intervening period. The answer is to borrow the approach to technology being pioneered in other industrial sectors. Committing to modularity at the outset of a programme is now vital to ensuring that the initial operating capability of a new platform has a defined path to capability growth as technology matures and advances, and that this can be exploited in a manner that is cost effective and quick to realise. Open design architecture will enable novel solutions from non-traditional suppliers to be built into existing platforms to exploit adjacent and unforeseen technology advances that have utility in defence.

Such procurement models will not only serve our armed forces. Modularity and open architecture will incentivise and make easier our interoperability with allies; it will promote iterative technology development in industry and provide greater competition; and it will support our economy by introducing more flexibility of design to potential export partners.

But it comes with an upfront cost. Design flexibility and futureproofing must be instituted at the outset of a programme if it is to have any effect. By definition, it cannot be reverse engineered. But it is also true that the benefits from doing so will not be immediate; the cheapest route to minimal operational capability will always be to strip out redundancy and optionality. The cost of doing so may not be immediately apparent. Indeed, the full advantage of building in modularity and open architecture is likely to take longer than a parliamentary term to emerge. Successive Conservative governments have shown repeatedly that they are willing to trade out long-term operational advantage in order to achieve short-term cost savings; cost savings that invariably come at great opportunity cost over the life of a programme. Labour must commit to a different vision – and industry must meet that challenge by sharing the commercial risks and reward.

Modularity and open architecture will also help to provide certainty for industry as it demands the type of strategic engagement that provides confidence in future investments. Regrettably, the Tory government has specialised only in obfuscation and delay. This unpredictability has hindered industry's ability to invest and resulted in significant inefficiencies that make the defence sector less productive and, ultimately costing the taxpayer more.

Defence programmes by their nature have long lead times and require commitment from governments across multiple parliaments to achieve their stated aims. This is a reality Labour should readily acknowledge and plan for.

Tory austerity has driven a succession of short-term budgetary planning rounds for MOD that only serve to drain industry confidence regarding future investment that would ensure that the innovation and infrastructure needed to bring future planned programmes to fruition will be available when it is needed. Of course, the government should not be expected to take on all the commercial risk. However, the defence industry is uniquely reliant on a central government customer. If the MOD's 10-year equipment plan serves as little more than an uncosted and unaffordable wish list of capability pushed out as far towards the end of the decade as it can be, then the investment risk for industry and its shareholders will simply prove too great to countenance. The strategic defence review promised by Labour as soon as it enters office must do more than outline the MOD's capability ambitions. It must also guarantee the principle of multi-year budget assessments to provide confidence in its ability to deliver against them.

What has instead been allowed to prevail is a feast and famine approach to contracting, drip feeding orders for equipment in ever smaller tranches accompanied by less-than-convincing projections of yet to be funded follow-on orders. This only serves to jeopardise the underpinning architecture vested in the defence industry - the skills and experience vested in the workforce, and the capital invested in the infrastructure and intellectual property. It inevitably leads to inefficient and ineffective procurement where industry sheds vital competence that make future UK procurement cycles ever harder. In the most extreme circumstances, it threatens the loss of the domestic supply chain in whole sectors, which would be almost impossible to reconstitute without massive reinvestment.

This is a lesson being learned the hard way following the support offered by the UK for the defence of Ukraine. The urgent need to recapitalise UK weapon stockpiles has reached a critical stage. However, because the Tory government has delayed and obfuscated over investment in stockpiles the shelves have been emptied at a remarkable rate. In an ideal world, multi-year investment in production lines would have ensured they remained functional, ready to respond to increased demand. Instead, industry must now try and reconstitute these, as the inevitable expense of the taxpayer. A Labour Government must learn these lessons and take decisions that protect our capacity to surge.

Skills depletion is not just a threat to industry. To be an intelligent customer, MOD must nurture and retain its own commercial skills to ensure that Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) continues to be fit for purpose. It is an old adage that MOD gets the industry it deserves, and certainly the huge depletion of commercial skills over the course of the past 13 years and MOD has decimated the number of specialists at Abbey Wood and made for a poor custodian of some of the largest and most complex procurement programmes in government; successive major project reports by the National Audit Office bear this out. Labour must end the demonisation of public servants, particularly those in unique and critical functions like DE&S, and recognise that allowing MOD to invest in its people will result in an institution that delivers better procurement outcomes for the armed forces, for UK industry, and for the taxpayer.

In fact, the Tory approach has been far more pernicious. The hollowing out of the UK's defence equipment capabilities over the past 13 years has been a calculated study in cynicism. It is eloquently summed up by the mismanagement of Army tank numbers. The 2010 austerity SDSR announced the reduction of Challenger 2 main battle tanks by 40%, from 386 to 227. It was justified because those 227 would be upgraded (an inherited Labour plan) to meet the operational demands of the 2020s. Fewer tanks, but better. 11 years later, with not a single tank having received the promised upgrade, the 2021 defence review announced a further 35% reduction in fleet size to just 148. Justified, of course, because they would soon be upgraded to meet the operational demands of the 2030s. That's a 62% reduction in fleet size, presided over piecemeal that hollows out the Army's fighting strength at a time when conversations about mass and force readiness have never been more pertinent. A microcosm of the calamities heaped upon the underpinning capabilities across our armed forces.

A RENEWED DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Lord Drayson's 2005 Defence Industrial Strategy continues to be widely hailed as the high-water mark for far-sighted defence procurement decision-making. It took an expansive and detailed view of the industrial capabilities that then demanded an onshore supply chain to "maintain appropriate sovereignty and thereby protect UK national security". Adopting a sector-by-sector approach, Lord Drayson reinstated the concept of national industrial champions in technology and capability areas deemed to be of particular importance, either due to the sensitivity of the technologies in question or to protect the UK's existing industrial prowess. It provides a ready model for how Labour can deliver on its commitment to sustain the UK defence industry by establishing a higher bar before approving procurement from overseas.

The advantage of national industrial champions is most apparent where either volume or technical complexity means that it is unrealistic to expect a competitive domestic market to sustain itself organically, yet it would compromise national security to source from overseas. In such circumstances, industry understandably requires confidence about future revenue in order to justify to their owners and shareholders new investments in infrastructure, workforce and R&D. It has shown itself to be consistently true that around half of the UK's defence procurement spend is single-sourced from a domestic supplier. Properly regulated, with risk and reward shared equitably between government and industry, and fair profit margins are applied, national industrial champions are a vital component of the UK defence procurement landscape. Nevertheless, single source procurements have too often been viewed in isolation under the Conservatives. A Labour government must take a more holistic view of industrial sustainment, recognising that favouring national champions in competitive tenders can drive better efficiency and outcomes in adjacent single source procurement.

Of course, what constitutes sovereign capability is a more complicated calculation than it might first appear. If money were no object, then governments of all persuasions would invest in an fully independent domestic supply chain, removing external reliance in order to guarantee utmost freedom in political decision-making; while domestic competition might be favoured where sustainable, it would not be artificially induced. However, such an approach would never survive contact with reality. If the 2005 Strategy stands accused of criticism it is because the scale of its ambition in trying to engender national champions across multiple industrial sectors resulted in a defence procurement budget too thinly spread. The 2007-2008 financial crisis saw to it that Lord Drayson's vision never had the opportunity to succeed, choked as near-term budgets became ever more constrained.

Cynicism from a defence industry about unkept promises in the 2005 Strategy provided the platform for the Conservatives to introduce an ideologically-motivated swerve towards free-market libertarianism in defence. The 2012 Defence and Security Industrial Strategy reversed the fundamental underpinning philosophy of its predecessor, abolishing the concept of industrial sovereignty and imposing a suffocating principle of 'best value on the global competitive market', expressly designed to prevent the favouring of procurement from domestic suppliers. Parochial investment appraisals would no longer take account of the wider economic contribution to the economy that comes from investing in UK supply chains. The opportunity to ensure the sustainment of skills and infrastructure in the UK for future use would hence be disregarded. Potential export revenues generated from the development of capabilities in the UK would now be deemed too uncertain to count. The misplaced confidence that this would lead to a lean, competitive sector instead pitched British businesses into an unfair battle against foreign suppliers who benefited from the financial backing of their domestic governments. Obsessed with price, MOD lost sight of value.

Of course, it is indisputable that, on unit price alone, procurement officials might find an overseas solution to meet a specific capability requirement at a cheaper upfront cost. The irony should not be lost that this will almost certainly be provided by a business that in their own jurisdiction constitutes a 'national champion'. As a result, what is given up when a viable UK tender is overlooked in favour of a cheaper solution is not merely the commercial value of the contract in question.

Without contracts, there can be no forward investment; whole industrial sectors in the UK face withering on the vine. Next time, there might be no UK solution and, as a customer government, the risk emerges that the MOD finds its operational capabilities dependent on the willingness of other nations to provide them.

It is the supply chain that this threatens the most. Under the Conservative government, MOD has consistently failed to live up to its own commitments to SMEs. In 2016, the Department set a 25 per cent target for UK SME procurement spend by 2020 (that is the sum total of spend reaching SMEs both directly and indirectly through supply chains). Pre-empting its own failure, MOD re-baselined the target in 2019 when it updated its SME Action Plan in 2019, pushing the deadline out to 2022. The January 2022 update to the same policy didn't include any percentage target in its formal list of priorities at all.

One of the regular mitigations that MOD points to when it misses its own SME targets is that most of the equipment budget is tied up in procurement programmes of high-value, with a prime contractor who is responsible for appointing its own supply chain. Seeking to transfer as much commercial risk onto the contractor as possible, conditionality in this regard is rarely imposed. The result is freedom to subcontract independent of any internal MOD target for how much spend reaches UK SMEs.

Labour should not fall into the trap of such arbitrary targets. Instead, it should see the contribution of UK SMEs to the defence supply chain as a critical component of its broader approach to procurement. It does not take too much imagination to postulate that awarding a contract to a foreign supplier will result in more work flowing overseas. Industrial hubs invariably evolve organically in the regions where primes operate. The historic defence industrial centres in Bristol, the North-West and Glasgow are populated by numerous SMEs who are trusted existing suppliers to our largest defence businesses. Done well, Labour's Build in Britain policy will ensure that, as more MOD contracts are awarded to companies undertaking design, manufacture and sustainment of that equipment here in the UK, more of this work flows down the domestic supply chain.

This matters not just for its own sake. SMEs are, by their nature, fleet of foot. They are experts in their technology and industrial specialisms, pioneering innovation and responding quickly to changing demand signals. Many are critical suppliers without whom our armed forces would not be able to operate effectively. There is little requirement for defence suppliers to map their supply chains and identify potential points of failure. The example of Sheffield Forgemasters, a critical supplier into the UK submarine programme that had to be rescued by government and industry investment, is well exercised. Given that MOD can never contract out the operational risks of programme failure, Labour should consider making this mandatory.

Of course, the best way to ensure a robust supply chain is to invest in it. Labour's 2008 creation, the Centre for Defence Enterprise, rebranded in 2016 as the Defence and Security Accelerator, is designed to find and fund exploitable defence innovation that otherwise may not be bought to market; its primary target is SMEs and there are many examples of projects brought to fruition through its support. It is an example that Labour must seek to build on. It should be the ambition to get kit in the hands of our troops much more quickly, not allowing a rigid requirement-setting process to stifle innovation.

But money is of course finite, and never more so than at present. It is not realistic for a Labour government to commit to unfunded spending and defence is not, and should not be, immune from Labour's ironclad fiscal discipline with regard to public spending in order to restore the economy to good health. This will necessarily demand decisions regarding MOD investment priorities where the economics of importing capability from overseas will be compelling. There will be other occasions where the technological and capability advancements in allied nations simply outmatches anything that can be sourced domestically. In both cases, it will be legitimate for a Labour government to buy from abroad. Nevertheless, the onus must be on officials to prove to ministers that such exceptions are valid on their own grounds and do not threaten the long-term viability of UK industry.

Ministers must also ensure that the most favourable accompanying promises regarding domestic industrial participation are secured, and that these are delivered on. The Ajax programme promised much greater workshare for South Wales than was realised in practice. The same cannot be allowed to stand with regard to the promises made to Northern Ireland following the award of the Fleet Solid Support contract to Navantia, the Spanish national shipbuilder.

This will be vital if the UK is to maintain its privileged seat at the table of international defence collaboration. By sustaining strategic national champions - and their underpinning domestic supply chains - investment will ensure the UK's enduring industrial credibility in front of our allies. Done well, international collaboration serves only to protect our sovereign capabilities. The Eurofighter Typhoon programme - a four nation collaboration between the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain - has been the cornerstone of the UK's sovereign combat air sector for a generation, sustaining the knowledge, infrastructure and skills in a sector in which the UK can rightly claim to be world leading.

The 2018 Combat Air Strategy correctly identified that the next generation of UK combat air capability will necessarily be driven through an international collaborative programme of like minded countries. Concerningly, it did not rule out joining a partnership in which the UK would play a junior role, most likely alongside the United States, rather than a partnership of equals with either European allies or similarly minded nations.

While the UK's status as the only Tier One partner on the US-led F-35 programme reflects the unique value that the UK's combat air sector brings, it has no sovereignty equivalence with Typhoon. Of course, its economic value should not be dismissed, this is high value work that sustains thousands of skilled jobs. But to replicate the partnership model in order to meet the requirement for a successor to Typhoon would effectively end the UK's independent sovereignty in combat air. In the long run, it would risk the UK becoming little more than another export customer to someone else. Early commitment to the Tempest programme would instead provide the robust basis that the UK combat air sector requires to ensure its robust health for another generation.

Such a sectoral strategy that will have positive impacts across the United Kingdom, sustaining and growing both the civil and defence aerospace industries in hubs in Bristol, the North West, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Indeed, a renewed defence industrial strategy must recognise that defence does not operate in isolation. It exists in an ecosystem of overlapping sectoral interests that must be considered holistically. Many of the MOD's largest suppliers have strategic sectoral interests across a wide range of outputs and their sustainment, so vital for our national security, is reliant on wider industrial outcomes.

Yet the Conservatives have been entirely inconsistent on joining up industrial strategy. In defence, the 2012 Defence and Security Through Technology White Paper effectively abolished the formal strategy for industry sustainment or growth in the defence sector introduced by Labour in 2005; the open market would ensure the UK defence industry would thrive. Except it didn't. The failure of this plan was ultimately acknowledged with a policy reversal in March 2021 with the publication of the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy. It finally marked a lukewarm return to the type of sector-by-sector approach championed by Labour.

The accompanying irony was that the long-delayed DSIS landed almost exactly as Boris Johnson was merily dismantling the overarching industrial strategy he inherited from his predecessor in No.10, Theresa May. Replaced with the characteristically hollow boosterism of Build Back Better, more slogan than science. As a result, in a matter of months, the defence sector went from being deprived of the type of industrial strategy espoused across other industry sectors, to being encumbered with just such a strategy now considered an anathema in the Johnson Downing Street.

And joined-up government matters. Only through a holistic approach to the sustainment of our strategic industries can the most desirable outcomes be achieved. The most prescient example is that of Rolls-Royce's development of small modular reactors for future nuclear power. This world-leading technology is ultimately derived from skills and experience built up in Rolls-Royce as the key supplier of nuclear propulsion to successive generations of Royal Navy submarines. As a result, the UK is ready to lead the world in next generation nuclear power. In return, Rolls-Royce's success with SMR offers much greater resilience, and potential economies of scale, to Dreadnought and other future submarine programmes, helping to sustain the technological base, workforce and skills that underpin the UK's nuclear deterrent. It is ironic then that successive Conservative governments have failed to acknowledge the overlapping benefits of an early investment decision, despite cross party commitment to new nuclear as a vital component of the UK's energy mix. Instead they have favoured competition that invites tenders from foreign suppliers, while international competitors threaten to steal a march on the UK. Without knowing the technical and commercial detail of the bids on the table, it is impossible for Labour to pre-empt the decision of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. However, Labour must hold the Government to account if short-term thinking leads to long-term compromise.

It is important because Labour is unequivocally committed to the renewal of the UK's nuclear deterrent as the absolute guarantor of our national security. But the obligations enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons should not be viewed as contradictory to this. Indeed, multilateral disarmament becomes only more vital as a result. Des Browne was, in 2008, the last Defence Secretary to oversee a material reduction in the UK's nuclear warhead stockpile linked to the UK's NPT obligations. It was a move that consolidated the UK's leading role as the most proactive of the nuclear weapon states in advancing the cause of multilateral disarmament.

The Coalition Government's austerity SDSR of 2010 might be casually read as a continuation of Labour's commitments to multilateral disarmament. But it was no such thing. Despite the announcement of a reduction to warhead numbers to "no more than 180" this was justified by David Cameron primarily on the grounds of cost savings. One can only assume that the throwaway commitment "vigorously to pursue multilateral global disarmament" was inserted at the behest of the complicit Lib Dems. Indeed, in the 2015 SDSR we found out that it was a target that was still a decade away from being reached. In the intervening 13 years, multilateral disarmament has seemingly fallen completely from the UK's foreign policy agenda.

Then, seemingly from nowhere, in April 2021 the Government announced it intended to raise the UK's warhead stockpile ceiling from 180 to 260 – a 44% increase against its own target. Not only did this reverse the work of previous Labour governments; more importantly it threatened to undermine the proactive reputation for multilateral disarmament that the UK had worked so hard to achieve.

The operational environment that led to this about-face is unknown to us beyond a generic attribution to "risks to the UK from major nuclear armed states, emerging nuclear states, and state-sponsored nuclear terrorism." Of course, it would be reckless for a shadow defence secretary to make binding commitments on issues as grave as warhead numbers without full recourse to the facts. But it must be a driving ambition of the Labour government to once again champion the cause of multilateral disarmament.

Never has this been more critical than now, following the alarming reversal of almost all the Cold-War era checks and balances agreed between the United States and Russia. The world is not safer with more nuclear weapons, particularly at a time when relations between the nuclear powers are at a nadir. The UK is safer when our minimal credible deterrent is understood to be just that. Labour must commit to reviewing warhead numbers within the context of our legal obligations to pursue multilateral disarmament. Only then can we once again play a leading role in the discourse that will lead to enduring de-escalation.

That is not to argue that the UK should undermine its obligations to NATO, of which the nuclear deterrent is a fundamental part. The tradition of internationalism – propagated through our alliances – has been at the heart of the Labour movement from its inception.

This commitment cannot just be rhetorical. In an ever more complex and interdependent world the propagation of democracy and social justice is a fundamental pillar of our own national security.

In the gravest of circumstances, it is the credibility and the capability of our armed forces that provide democratically elected governments with the means to put this tradition into action. In the face of wanton and belligerent aggression by Russia, the UK's unshakeable cross-party support for Ukraine has only been given practical effect due to the equipment, training and support we have been able to provide thanks to investment in our armed forces.

The war unleashed by Russia in Ukraine threatens collective pan-European security in a manner not seen since the Second World War. The response of the UK and our NATO Allies has been one of firm and resolute unity. Yet this applies not only to our collective diplomatic and operational objectives. In order to provide the long-term guarantees not only of Ukrainian sovereignty, but peace and prosperity across Europe, western allies must win the collective race to ensure that, technologically, our armed forces remain ahead of those of our adversaries. This is as much about deterrence as warfighting; the collective strength of NATO remains the best bulwark against incursions on the sovereignty of the UK and our allies.

That technological race is not one that the UK can or should try to win on its own. The pace and cost of innovation means we will always be stronger when we work collectively. Across Europe, our allies, notably France, Germany and Poland, are embarking on extensive recapitalisation programmes to ensure that their armed forces are ready for the immediate security challenges presented by a bellicose Russia and at the same time preparing for the evolving nature of that threat over the coming decades. Regrettably, Tory short-termism means that the UK is in danger of failing to keep pace.

The wounds inflicted by Brexit continue to act as a drag on our ability to work collaboratively with our European allies. Nobody voted to leave the European Union in order to weaken our security relationships with our closest geographical neighbours. Yet it is the UK Government that has rejected any discussions with EU institutions on a strategic defence and security partnership. Rejected out of hand by London during the fraught negotiations leading up to the signing of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, even in its aftermath there has been little evidence of progress. This despite the European Commission forwarding a proposal that, while lacking UK input, continues to provide the basis for constructive talks in good faith.

Yet it remains abundantly clear that there is no political appetite from the Conservative Party to embark on a dialogue with EU institutions. This is a position not arrived at due to any strategic evaluation about the UK's national security interests. Instead it is rooted in the persistent Tory taboo regarding anything that hints at broader European cooperation. The prevailing mantra remains that there will be no strategic defence and security partnership lest this appears to be the rolling back of Brexit.

Labour must be clear. National security can never be achieved in isolation. Our nearest geographical neighbours are also those with whom our security interests most overlap. A defence and security partnership with the EU would not represent any rolling back of Brexit. Instead, it would allow the UK to participate fully in the shared common security endeavours that secure all our borders. In relation to procurement of capability it will help deliver interoperability and commonality, making joint operations easier to execute. Moreover, it will ensure that investment in technology is coordinated, eliminating redundancy and overlap, driving down collective cost.

The application by MOD to join the EU Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) programme on military mobility, lodged in November 2022, is welcome. But it also serves as a case in point. UK involvement was both late – the US, Canada and Norway had all already confirmed their participation – and reluctant, the emphasis being put on this being a single project and a special case, not the first step on the road to broader partnership.

A Labour government should commit to the fullest possible third-party participation in both PESCO and the European Defence Fund, seeking early negotiations with the EU about favourable terms of entry. The case should be made as to the mutual benefit from allowing UK industry to engage early in programmes to achieve better outcomes, providing our European partners with the ability to pull on UK industrial expertise. Anything less than this leaves UK industry in an invidious position; while MOD might 'pay to play' in any particular project, decisions about industrial workshare will invariably have been determined much earlier in the concept phases of a programme, leaving the UK with little more than that of any export customer.

NATO of course remains the cornerstone of the UK's collective national security and the Government is correct to be promoting Alliance-wide enthusiasm for increasing capability development and procurement cooperation between member states under an institutional framework. Nevertheless, the UK will fail if it seeks to position initiatives such as the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) as a rival to EU frameworks for defence capability cooperation. Instead, a Labour government should seek to align these initiatives, playing an active participatory role in both.

Multilateral institutional frameworks are complementary to bilateral nation-to-nation partnerships. We should give credit to the Coalition Government for the significant achievement that was the 2010 UK-France Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty signed at Lancaster House. It provides a model example of an institutional framework for advancing joint capability development. But the ambitions it contains across a variety of technologies have never been fully delivered upon. While early collaborative energies proved fruitful in the complex weapon domain, these largely ground to a halt in the malaise of Brexit. In other areas, such as unmanned combat air systems, submarines and satellites, cooperation has been barely noticeable.

Reviving our bilateral defence and security relationship with France must be at the heart of Labour's strategy for defence. Labour's commitment to seeking an equivalent relationship with Germany is also eye catching. Importantly, this momentum must follow through into practical industrial cooperation that protects UK sovereign capability and our strategic industries. The value from such international agreements begins with their signing, not ends.

Defence exports are an uncomfortable topic for many in the Labour movement. Yet they play a fundamental role in the UK's defence procurement ecosystem. Sharing the cost of development programmes through collaboration with partners or export to allies helps to ensure that the costs associated with staying ahead in the global race for technological superiority can continue to be met. Moreover, as the war in Ukraine has shown, ensuring our allies are properly equipped to deter aggressors and defend themselves in the event of conflict is a vitally important component of collective international security. It is morally right to support, sustain and grow our defence industry, and ensure that our capability expertise is shared with our allies.

Of course, no Labour government would commit to anything less than fully accountable – and demonstrably ethical – defence export agenda, ensuring that military equipment manufactured in the UK can never fall into the hands of those who will misuse them. Labour must reaffirm this position and demonstrate its application.

The enduring defence partnerships with the UK's Middle Eastern allies, which have been supported and promoted by successive Labour and Conservative governments, are a critical component of this. Not only do they support the retention and development of key strategic technologies in the UK by spreading the cost of capability across more than just the UK customer, they also form the cornerstone of our wider diplomatic influence in the region. There is little to be won from estranging our relations with our key security partners in the Middle East, recognising that our ability to influence domestic reform in those nations relies on the closeness of our partnership.

Nevertheless, UK industry has become too reliant on certain export customers, not least Saudi Arabia. This reliance reduces the leverage the UK has when establishing the expectations and conditions that accompany the signing of industrial and security partnerships. It must be a Labour priority to diversify the UK's defence export markets, which will serve both to reduce commercial risk from geopolitical shocks, and ensure that the diplomatic leverage that can be exercised via enduring strategic security and industrial partnerships is balanced in the favour of UK interests.

A Labour government can maximise export potential in Defence by properly taking into account exportability considerations from the outset of its domestic requirement setting and procurement processes. This concept has existed inside MOD for a long time. However, it has rarely been applied in practice, shunned by vested interests within the armed forces who believe that exportability will only lead to capability compromises.

The 2023 Defence Command Paper refresh promises to put a premium on exportability in capability development and selection by making exportability an intrinsic factor in the acquisition process. A Labour government must put this fully into action. Requirement sets tailored to meet the needs of our allies from the outset will help industry to be competitive when international export opportunities, and opportunities for international collaboration, emerge. Confidence in future export success will allow industry to make long-term investments that only serve to strengthen the UK's domestic industrial base and put capability into the hands of our own armed services more quickly and economically in future.

This need not come at the detriment of our own capability requirements. Done well, exportability is not a trade-off between increasing profitability for our defence industry at the expense of putting the right kit in the hands of our own troops. While the upfront costs of designing exportability into a capability may increase development costs at the outset, the risk should be equitably shared between customer and supplier. The rewards from export success can then be shared with MOD, who see a reduction in unit price and/or can reinvest that income in the next generation of technologies. This virtuous circle, known as gain-share, has been proven in the complex weapon domain, which provides a model for exportability that is often cited by ministers as the gold standard. And yet its wider application across the defence industrial landscape has remained scant. Labour should make it a priority to change this.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Dr Gautam Kambhampati

INTRODUCTION

“Powerful enemies must be out-fought and out-produced. It is not enough to turn out just a few more planes, a few more tanks, a few more guns, a few more ships than can be turned out by our enemies. We must out-produce them overwhelmingly, so that there can be no question of our ability to provide a crushing superiority of equipment in any theatre of the world war.”

US President Franklin Roosevelt, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

There is a tendency in defence circles to trade numerical advantage for increasing technological sophistication. For example, a common retort to complaints of declining ship numbers in the Royal Navy is that the ships we do have are some of the most technologically advanced in the world. It does not matter that we have fewer ships, the saying goes, so long as each remaining ship has sufficiently increased lethality. Unfortunately, the trade-off is not as straightforward as it first appears.

What matters in an all-out-war between peer-powers is both lethality and production: “out-fought and out-produced”. If your enemy is producing ten ships a month and you are producing one ship a month, it does not matter if each of your ships is five times as lethal as each of the enemy’s ships. Your stock of ships will dwindle, and you will lose the war.

Throughout much of the 20th century, the West enjoyed a significant advantage in both lethality and production. However, the increasing sophistication of our weaponry has already had a visible negative impact on production across all branches of the Armed Forces. The cost of building a Type 42 destroyer in 1968 was £23 million. The cost of a single Type 45 destroyer in 2003 was £650 million. Adjusted for inflation, that is an over three-fold increase. At the same time, there has been a nearly three-fold reduction in the number of destroyers procured. The Eurofighter Typhoon and F-35 each cost nearly twice as much as a Panavia Tornado, in real terms. The number of fighters operated by the RAF has decreased by a similar amount.

In parallel, the lethality advantage which justified these rising costs and lower production numbers has been eroded and will continue to be eroded through the 21st century. The rise of peer-powers such as China narrows the gap in an obvious way. However, possibly more fundamentally, the primarily software-based innovation of the 21st century will narrow the gap even with non-peer powers and non-State actors. The implementation of these software-based innovations, such as AI, is low-cost and straightforward, and it can significantly increase the lethality of even the cheapest war-fighting hardware. AI-enabled drones used by terrorists waging a guerrilla war are just the tip of the iceberg.

As technology continues to advance and the various horizon threats of the 21st century loom ever larger, there will be a temptation to lean into the false ‘high tech makes up for low numbers’ narrative. It will be tempting to look for tactical gains from strategic horizon scanning research. If given into, this temptation will result in white elephant defence-technological products. These will provide only marginal lethality gains at great cost and reduced production.

A Labour Administration should, therefore, ensure that public STRD funding for defence projects is primarily spent on the twin core tactical zones of increasing lethality and improving production. However, it must also have a long-term strategy on the horizon threats of the 21st century. It will be vital to enlist the aid of the private sector to ensure that Britain retains the skills and knowledge needed to face these threats whilst retaining scarce public funds for more immediate projects.

We will now turn to each of the three key funding zones of increasing lethality, improving production, and horizon threats in more detail.

INCREASING LETHALITY — WORKING WITH RESEARCHERS

Projects to increase lethality should be assessed based on the projected lethality gains — which should be quantified — and the cost of rollout of the end product. STRD funding should not be allocated solely on the basis of the up-front cost of the research, as low R&D costs leading to high production costs will only serve to worsen the military's procurement problems.

It is natural that the projects with lowest rollout costs will be software-based projects that can be retrofitted to existing hardware. Therefore, AI-based research will likely be a major candidate for STRD funding to increase lethality. The use of AI in warfare naturally provokes ethical concerns, but consideration of these should not prevent the exploration of such use. Rather than making pre-emptive judgements, an analysis of the ethics should form part of the research itself.

The second corollary of this guideline is that expensive, hardware-intensive, blue-sky projects should not be pursued. It was noted in [our response](#) to the Conservative government's Integrated Review that investment in such 'science fiction fantasies' results in already-scant STRD funding being stretched even more thinly. In addition, we note here that projects such as these likely have extremely high roll-out costs and so will simply further inflate the already high cost of military hardware. If a Labour administration wishes to pursue any such projects, a careful analysis of the projected increased lethality per pound spent on rollout should be carried out first.

IMPROVING PRODUCTION — LINKING DEFENCE TO INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The bulk of defence STRD funding should be spent on improving Britain's production capabilities. The present global climate — war in Europe, an increasingly unstable Middle East, and the rise of China — has already put [pressures on our defence stockpiles](#) and this is only set to worsen through the 21st century. Funding in this zone should focus on three key areas: securing supply chains, onshoring key capabilities, and reducing the cost of manufacturing.

These three areas are intimately linked to one another, and to the wider industrial policy. The new Labour administration has pledged to set up 'Great British Energy' as a keystone policy. At the heart of this policy is a recognition that instability in global supply chains has [weakened Britain's strategic position](#).

The policy can thus be understood as onshoring a key capability of the British State. However, the project also aims to improve Britain's capacity for building energy sources through, for example, planning reform and scaling up domestic manufacturing capability. Thus, the policy, in reality, integrates all three areas identified above. The same principle of integration should be applied more broadly across the government's industrial policy, and in the defence industry in particular.

SECURING SUPPLY CHAINS

STRD projects have a small, but vital role to play in improving the security of Britain's supply chains. As supply chains become increasingly complex and interwoven, the mere identification of weaknesses has become a difficult challenge. New technologies leveraging [big data and machine learning have the potential to dramatically improve the speed](#) with which these weaknesses can be identified.

International development also has a key role to play in securing supply chains. Many of Britain's key supply lines pass through regions which are unstable. A key example is the Suez route, from the western Indian Ocean, through the Gulf of Aden, the Bab al-Mandeb strait, and then into the Red Sea.

In accordance with a Progressive Realist agenda, British Aid should be targeted towards the development of States along these supply lines. As these supply lines are also vital to the security of all European States, the Labour administration should cooperate closely with the EU on this subject. France, as the only significant naval power on the continent, will have a significant role to play.

The use of British and European Aid in stabilising strategically important countries would significantly reduce costs for shipping companies associated with security and risk hedging. It will also ease the policing burden placed on the Royal Navy, which co-ordinates international anti-piracy operations in the area. Finally, it will provide a British and European counterpoint to Chinese initiatives such as the Belt and Road and the String of Pearls.

ONSHORING KEY CAPABILITIES

As noted above, the military has become accustomed to increasingly sophisticated hardware. This makes use of semiconductor technologies with some of the most vulnerable supply chains in the world. There are only three manufacturers, globally, capable of making cutting-edge microelectronics: Intel, Samsung, and the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). Of these, only Samsung and TSMC regularly make semiconductors on contract to the design specification of a third party. Both are located in geopolitically unstable regions (South Korea and Taiwan, respectively), and the shipping lanes to both pass through multiple chokepoints: the Straits of Malacca, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the Suez Canal.

An obvious response to this challenge is to attempt to [onshore semiconductor capabilities](#). However, it is not feasible to onshore advanced semiconductor manufacturing. Britain has neither the [resources nor the know-how](#) to do so.

Instead, STRD funding should be directed towards developing domestic alternatives to advanced semiconductor technologies. For example: is it possible to use dedicated hardware that could be produced domestically, or in Europe, rather than programming imported advanced general-purpose microelectronics? Questions such as this are complex and do not have obvious answers, making them ideal candidates for STRD funding.

REDUCING MANUFACTURING COSTS

STRD projects in engineering and the social sciences both have a key role to play in the reduction of manufacturing costs.

Funding for engineering projects should be made with a view to improving the efficiency of manufacturing. In consumer goods sectors, market pressures provide the incentives for companies to engage in engineering R&D to reduce the cost of manufacturing. However, the lack of an open, free market in the defence sector means that such research must be directed centrally. It is vitally important that Britain remains a centre of innovation in defence engineering and manufacturing.

Funding for social science projects should be directed towards an analysis of the way government bureaucracy prevents dynamism and inflates costs in the defence industry. The Conservative government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that the British State still has the capacity to move quickly and accelerate manufacturing capabilities in times of crisis. However, as the inquiry has shown, it was only able to do this by cutting through the safeguards that exist to ensure transparency and prevent corruption.

STRD social science projects should work to find a way to improve the way these safeguards function so that they are flexible and able to respond to urgent challenges, whilst still protecting the taxpayer's interests.

In this way, the government should aim to reduce manufacturing costs by cutting down bureaucratic overheads, whilst still maintaining a good balance in respect of the public interest.

HORIZON THREATS — LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The 21st century will be dominated by a number of existential horizon threats. These are threats which are currently distant, but visible and growing. Two of these: the rise of quantum computing and the spectre of space warfare, are of the most direct relevance to defence policy. However, the climate crisis is so all-encompassing that every area of government policy must touch upon it, including defence policy.

With that said, it is important not to become distracted by these horizon threats. There is a broad consensus within British society that STRD projects could ["benefit future generations, keep people healthy and keep the UK safe and secure"](#). However, this comes with the caveat that the public also view it as a luxury the government can cut back on in times of financial strain. As such, it is important to direct scarce central-government funding on the core zones of increasing lethality and improving production.

In contrast, the private sector has comparatively large resources available to it. It also has the capacity to work on long-term open-ended projects without clear returns. The Government should leverage this, working in cooperation with the private sector to develop our knowledge of horizon threats.

CONCLUSION

The 21st century will be a time of vast change and challenge for humanity in general, and for Britain in particular. In facing challenges of such a vast scale we must not allow ourselves to become distracted from the core tenets of sound defence policy. This is particularly true in the heavily resource-constrained environment the country is presently in.

As such, the Government's centralised resources should be directed principally towards the core zones of increased lethality and improved production. Research projects in these zones should be Government-funded and directed in order to compensate for the comparative lack of an open, free market in defence. They should have clear, quantifiable outcomes, and should only be funded if they serve to increase the lethality per pound of our armed forces.

The Government should strive for an integrated approach, incorporating aspects of a progressive realist foreign policy and its industrial strategy into defence and security policy. This will involve directing international aid towards States whose security is vital to Britain's own security. It will also involve working closely with the private sector to ensure that, as a nation, we have the knowledge and skills to face the horizon threats facing humanity in this century.

CLIMATE AND SECURITY: THREAT LEVEL RISING

Louise Selisny

"Climate change shapes, amplifies, and multiplies security threats to the UK. Floods, droughts, and heat-waves drive global instability and conflict. We must work together, today, to safeguard our tomorrow."

Lieutenant General (ret) Richard Nugee

Ministry of Defence Climate Change and Sustainability Non-Executive Director and author of the MOD 'Climate Change and Sustainability' Report

INTRODUCTION: WHY IS CLIMATE AND SECURITY A FOCUS FOR POLICY?

Climate and Security is an urgent policy issue. Climate change hazards include rising sea levels, reduced biodiversity, and droughts. The resulting primary (natural systems) and secondary (human systems) impacts will create a network of compound cascade risks, including food shocks, economic instability, and migration/displacement. These risks, individually and combined, will result in defence and security implications at local, regional, and national levels.

Climate and Security is a uniting policy issue. Climate and Security enshrines the concept of 'Human Security' – a concept used by a number of Western militaries, including the UK and the US. It is also used by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to integrate relevant socio-economic and development factors into climate change security considerations. The 'Human Security Approach' of the UN presents five fundamental principles that should steer decision making. Security considerations should be: people-centred; comprehensive; context-specific; prevention-orientated; and facilitate protection and empowerment.

Climate and Security is a Labour policy issue. The most economically and socially vulnerable members of our communities will be the hardest hit by climate change. Increased food insecurity, increased job insecurity, and increased energy insecurity. Rising prices and fewer options. A roll back of state provision as the socio-economic impacts begin to bite harder and deeper – a vicious cycle of less tax revenue, less public spending, and less opportunity for individual and collective development. The overlap with robust climate and security policy and fundamental Labour values is clear.

WHEN IS CLIMATE AND SECURITY IMPORTANT?

Past

Climate change was highlighted as a security threat by the [United Nations Security Council in 2007](#), with the environment and security interface the subject of [academic research since the 1990s](#). The 2018 UK Ministry of Defence, '[Global Strategic Trends: The Future Starts Today](#)' (6th Edition) was heavily focussed on the threat posed by "increasing environmental stress," with a dedicated thematic overview and cross-cutting geographical specifics. It considered "increasing disruption and cost of climate change" to be a 'high impact – high certainty' trend. Further, it predicted that climate change hazards would disrupt trade, reduce biodiversity, and increase migration, that, "if not handled effectively" could lead to increased tension and conflict.

Present

Building on near universal military consensus, [NATO defines the relationship between climate change and security](#) as “the implications of climate change include drought, soil erosion and marine environmental degradation. These can lead to famine, floods, loss of land and livelihood, and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls as well as on poor, vulnerable or marginalised populations, as well as exacerbate state fragility, fuel conflict, and lead to displacement, migration, and human mobility, creating conditions that can be exploited by state and non-state actors that threaten or challenge the Alliance”.

Future

The US Biden-Harris Administration has prioritised a focus on climate security, tasking the [National Intelligence Council](#) with producing its first 20 year climate and security forecast. “We assess that climate change will increasingly exacerbate risks to US national security interests as the physical impacts increase and geopolitical tensions mount about how to respond to the challenge... Global momentum is growing for more ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reductions, but current policies and pledges are insufficient to meet the Paris Agreement goals. Countries are arguing about who should act sooner and competing to control the growing clean energy transition. Intensifying physical effects will exacerbate geopolitical flashpoints, particularly after 2030, and key countries and regions will face increasing risks of instability and need for humanitarian assistance.” Despite scepticism in terms of climate change drivers, the US Trump-Vance Administration has pledged to prioritise US security interests at home and abroad.

WHO IS CLIMATE AND SECURITY IMPACTING IN THE UK?

Polling

In the UK 84% of people are concerned about climate change – with over half supporting net-zero being brought forward. 72% believe that the effects of climate change are already being witnessed ([IPSOS, August 2022](#)). Three in four people across the Global North view climate change as a major threat to their country ([Pew Research Centre, 2022](#)). Specific policies on climate and security will appeal to most constituents.

Predictions

By 2050 [3.4 billion people will be facing catastrophic ecological threats](#), with the potential for [1.2 billion climate refugees](#). In our complex and interconnected international system, global impacts are felt locally. [The Institute for Economics and Peace](#) highlight that 27 countries already, “face catastrophic ecological threats, while also having the lowest levels of societal resilience. These countries are home to 768 million people... the cyclic relationship between ecological degradation, societal resilience and conflict cannot be over-emphasised...The total population of the 40 least peaceful countries is projected to increase by 1.3 billion by 2050, representing 49.5 per cent of the world’s population. These countries also face the worst ecological threats.”

Political and Security Implications

As summarised in the chain of causation below, there are a number of possible pathways that lead from climate change hazards and impacts to political and security implications for the UK. Specific climate and security policies would strengthen UK defences and politico-economic interests at local, regional, and national levels.



Figure Three, Climate and security causation model. Credit: The author.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CLIMATE AND SECURITY CONCERNS?

Water security

[Over half the world will face water scarcity](#) (i.e. not enough water to sustain both the human population and natural ecosystem) by 2025 – with some 700 million people displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030. This situation will likely drive disputes in the coming decades as competition over this most vital of resources increases. The human security implications for vulnerable and marginalised groups will be further exacerbated as water is increasingly weaponised and commoditised by malign actors. As well as enhancing the recruitment of terrorist organisations, ongoing water scarcity undermines the perception of state legitimacy, leading to political instability and armed conflict.

Food security

If global heating increases by 2-2.5°C, the IPCC predicts that by 2070, [large parts of the world will be unable to support food production](#). This will drive displacement, ferment social unrest, and undermine food security globally. This situation will also drive geopolitical repositioning as allies, competitors, and aggressors attempt to secure long-term access to food. At the local level, as with water, food is weaponised, with access used to punish resistance within communities and expose weaknesses of government/ other external agencies. 'Violent Extremist Organisations' (VEOs) disrupt and divert aid distribution to gain power and control, as well as influence over 'hearts and minds'.

Energy Security

The transition to renewables presents security challenges in terms of maintaining adequate energy supply and creating an alternative energy infrastructure. The minerals and metals required by the renewable energy industry are most heavily concentrated in parts of the world that are controlled or (in)directly influenced by adversaries and competitors. Further, extraction creates its own environmental damage, as well as being linked to exploitative labour practices. The price volatility of commodities is also a concern, given how price spikes can exacerbate existing tensions in fragile states.

It is also worth noting that Russia's invasion of Ukraine also vested control of major lithium, cobalt and nickel deposits – essential minerals for renewables technology. Further, the Russian proxy, 'Wagner Group, / Africa Corp' is [dominating terrain across Africa](#) with a view exerting control over known deposits and mining concessions.

Migration

The [UN secretary general, António Guterres](#), warned of a climate-related "mass exodus" of "biblical scale" - forecasting over 1 billion climate migrants by 2050. Given how divisive the political issue of migration is in many countries, strategic shocks can occur which are far larger than, for example, the recent Mediterranean and Syrian refugee crises. Large scale migration will increase pressure on local resources and increase the potential for conflict. As such, the optimal solution addresses the drivers of migration at source. The UK should support and invest in upstream capacity building and resilience programmes that reduce conflict, preserve environments, and provide sustainable economic and subsistence prospects.

Military Capability

Without sufficient civilian capacity building, Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Military Aid to Civilian Authorities (MACA) deployments will increase. In response to domestic emergencies in the UK, in recent years the military has been mobilised to support relief efforts following floods, droughts, and disease. As global temperatures rise, climate change hazards will increase in scale, frequency and intensity. Unless civilian capabilities are enhanced, military resources are likely to become increasingly committed to assist with 'emergency' responses. The UK must not risk diminishing the pool of specialised equipment and trained personnel that provides military capability and projects influence internationally.

WHERE ARE THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL GAPS IN UK CLIMATE AND SECURITY PROVISION?

Currently, the UK does not focus enough resources on climate and security. This has the potential to undermine operational outcomes, as well as reducing overall preparedness and resilience in relation to localised climate conflict. Failing to coordinate climate, nature, and security intelligence in a central hub/office responses undermines UK efforts at home and abroad:

- Failing to provide comprehensive policy and doctrine responses prevents the coherent targeting of resources required to support stabilisation, mitigate threats, and strengthen decision-making.
- The lack of specific climate and security training compromises effective operational and tactical decision-making, undermining understanding relating to how climate-induced scarcity escalates sectarian violence, shapes sentiment towards government, drives civil unrest, and exacerbates displacement (internal and cross-border).
- Holistic approaches are needed in order to assess the economic implications of climate change on an area of operations, including issues of capital flight, re-configuration of supply and demand, health shocks, out-migration of skills and labour, and foreign food aid undermining local markets.

- Climate change increases the requirement to integrate planning across in-theatre military, police, and civilian actors - with increasing planning and provision as well as information sharing.
- Operations in climate change-impacted environments amplify the requirement for specialist kit that is designed specifically for temperature and weather extremes and health challenges.
- Increased temperatures exhaust soldiers on patrols more quickly requiring a re-evaluation of expectations for tactical level engagement in terms of distance, duration, and tasking.
- Pre-deployment training (PDT) should include coverage of climate change threats, including how impacts become drivers of conflict at the local level. This should include a focus on second and third order effects. Failure to respond to threats created and driven by biodiversity loss significantly reduces future resilience and potential for adaptation.
- Female engagement offers significant potential to understand dimensions of the battlespace, human terrain, and the impacts of climate change on security. The training and deployment of female engagement personnel should be prioritised in climate change impacted theatres.
- When areas become uninhabitable, out-migration becomes the most effective mode of adaptation. Enhancing upstream capacity and resilience in terms of maintaining habitable areas is key to reducing displacement.
- Failure to deliver on commitments relating to climate change mitigation, such as the distribution of food aid and completion of water access projects, significantly reduces positive sentiment towards military and government actors.

CONCRETE BENEFITS OF DETERMINING SPECIFIC CLIMATE AND SECURITY POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR THE UK

Interior

Domestic resilience and preparedness – climate change shapes, amplifies, and multiples threats to UK security and interests. Policies to enhance defences against climate hazards will reduce the impact on natural and human systems.

Influence

International relevance and authority – the UK is a world leader in climate change response, facilitating some necessary adaptation of military and civil assets. However, much more needs to be done, more quickly, to ensure that the UK maintains and increases this readiness, and the influence it supports.

Industry

Economic opportunity and advantages – policies to support specific climate and security responses directly and indirectly will result in new business opportunities and increased market capitalisation across relevant sectors such as a renewables technology, consultancy, and risk analysis.

CAN LABOUR PROTECT BRITISH VALUES AND WAYS OF LIFE IN A CLIMATE CHANGED WORLD?

Climate change is already impacting both natural and human systems around the world in ways that will significantly exacerbate food and water scarcity, displacement and migration, as well as humanitarian and economic challenges. In the short and mid-term, climate change disruptions will generate new geostrategic flashpoints and compounding cascade risks. In turn, these will result in both political and security risks, including increased inter/intra-state competition and conflict.

The UK must enhance overall understanding of how climate change is shaping strategic and operational contexts, and urgently integrate climate security considerations into relevant analyses and decision-making. Only comprehensive policy and action, that is adequately resourced, can maintain defence and security provision in the medium to long term. There is a need for increased:

- Coordination of climate security (intelligence) analysis and response - through a single, central hub/office;
- Climate security policy, response, and action that is genuinely cross-party (and interdepartmental), delivered at scale and pace as a matter of urgency;
- Climate security literacy, understanding, and competence;
- Commitment to Net Zero initiatives;
- Resources to maintain effective Defence capabilities in a climate changed world;
- Data and evidence-based analysis to support informed decision making, policy and procurement;
- Multilateral and bilateral coordination and collaboration on climate security;
- Climate security cooperation and integration across Domestic, Defence, Development, and Diplomacy, within the context of a wider 'whole of system' approach;
- Domestic early-warning provision for the impacts of climate security shocks such as mass migration, agricultural failure, and economic instability;
- Scale, diversity, and number of partnerships with nations and networks on the front line of climate change insecurity; and
- Resources to maintain increased military and civil contingency planning and preparation to build resilience for expanded HADR/MACA intervention.