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sir - Britain is a member of some select naval clubs. For example, the Royal Navy is one of only three in the West that operate aircraft carriers, strategic nuclear ballistic and attack submarines. The new carriers offer Britain the highest level of strategic capability.

However, there is a more rarefied club of one - the US - in ballistic missile defence (BMD), which provides a shield against incoming missiles. The Navy could easily join this club in order to protect Britain as well as our partners.

The Navy has, in its Type 45 destroyers, the ideal platform for BMD. The Defence Secretary is right to highlight the limitations that come with a defence budget of 2 per cent of GDP; but while the Navy is making a fine fist of its resources, its fleet lacks the scale required to support a global Britain after Brexit.

Today, 96 per cent of British goods are shipped by sea, and our economic, defence and diplomatic interests extend from the Atlantic, Baltic and Mediterranean through to the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. However, it is along that axis that the greatest threat exists.

Our soft power is perhaps greater today than it has ever been - but it can only be maximised if set alongside hard naval power. While the Navy will proudly "get on and make do", the reality is that without fleet growth, incorporating complex vessels, the Navy will miss the opportunity to realise its full potential overseas.

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