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# A GOLDEN NAVAL AGE

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*“Our ships reassure” Admiral Radakin.*

As Admiral Radakin, the First Sea Lord, said recently, the Royal Navy goes where trade is. It helps create the stability and security which are the prerequisites of prosperity and the fusion between all three enables our national and global prosperity.

2021 marks a year of exceptional opportunity for the United Kingdom and the Royal Navy. The UK will host the G7 and COP26. The Prime Minister has spoken of the possibility to create a new “D10” by adding India, Korea and Australia to the G7, and this speaks to the Royal Navy’s desire to be at the maritime helm of Western democracies to manage threats from Eurasian autocracies in the cyber, maritime, space, digital and trade domains.

The Royal Navy is the nation’s maritime shield, and today sees itself as a critical part of a cross-Governmental effort to fuse capability in a single strategic aim for the United Kingdom to succeed in its Global Britain and Levelling-Up agendas. For over 40 years the Navy has played its part alongside its sister services to achieve “Jointness”. To build on this today, all 3 are generating an Integrating Operating Concept (IOC) across the 5 land, sea, air, space and cyber domains to win in the state of “constant competition” with our adversaries.

For the Navy, constant global competition means constant global deployment and permanent global basing. The Prime Minister’s speech in November 2020 gave a 16% increase in defence expenditure, initiated the modernisation of the UK’s cyber and digital capabilities and created this island nation’s first maritime strategy for 80 years, with its aim being to deliver national and global security & stability, trade and prosperity.

## THE DEFENCE COMMAND PAPER & THE INTEGRATED REVIEW 2021

The Secretary of State for Defence says that the UK will be, “Better equipped for a more competitive age, as a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective ... requires UK soft and hard power to be better integrated ... a Global Britain has no choice.”

On conflict the Defence Secretary says, “The notion of war and peace as binary states has given way to a Continuum of Conflict, requiring us to prepare our forces for more persistent global engagement and constant campaigning, moving seamlessly from operating to war fighting.”

On operating, he says, the armed forces will be “working with the rest of Government ..no longer as a force of last resort, but more present and active around the world, operating below the threshold of open conflict to uphold our values and secure our interests, partner our friends and enable our allies, whether they are in the Euro-Atlantic, the Indo-Pacific, or beyond.”

On changing trends the Paper identifies 4 amidst a deteriorating global security environment in which the whole of the UK faces a wider range of state and non-state threats enabled by technology. The Integrated Review makes clear how important every part of the UK’s capabilities, including trade, to our defence and security:

- Geopolitical and geo-economic shifts in the Indo-Pacific, China and middle powers
- Systemic competition between states, democracies and authoritarian values
- Rapid technological change bringing benefits and competition
- Transnational challenges requiring collective action e.g. climate change, terrorism, serious organised crime and biosecurity

It makes clear that China’s modernisation, expansion and assertiveness within the Indo-Pacific has generated an increasing challenge with it and others adopting a civil-military fusion approach to the development of technology enablers. It establishes 4 key responses to the Integrated Review’s objectives of the 3 national interests of sovereignty, security and prosperity by:

- Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology
- Shaping the future international order by a rules-based approach
- Strengthening defence at home and overseas via allies and partners
- Building resilience at home and overseas by energetic engagement

It aims to develop an Integrated Operating Concept for the Armed Forces across the 5 domains of sea, land, air, cyber and space by being:

- Integrated and interoperable
- Engaged internationally
- Assertive
- Information led

At the heart of both papers rest a national aim for the United Kingdom to retain its global strategic advantage through 5 pillars: the UK-US strategic relationship; NATO; the UK’s network of global allies, its “tilt to the Indo-Pacific” (where 50% of the world’s economy will be by 2030) and by the intense application of Science & Technology. It finally places the Royal Navy

at the heart of our Defence Strategy. The Prime Minister states that the UK will “become the foremost Naval power in Europe” and commits to a 24-ship Frigate and destroyer Fleet by 2030. Amongst many others, it recognises the increased “threat of nuclear coercion ... by Russia” and the “systemic challenge posed by China”. It asserts the fundamental nature of the Five Eyes strategy and capabilities in “strategic analysis, capability development, interoperability, burden sharing and operational coordination”. 4 of the 5 are Pacific nations and there is consistency in the UK’s aim to maintain permanent and forward naval presence in the Indo-Pacific. The Type 26 ASW Frigate is an example of the fruits of such cooperation now that Australia and Canada have joined the UK in it.

It makes a coherent case for both our existing bases and re-activating basing agreements in the Falklands, Ascension Island, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Kenya, Oman, Bahrain, the British Indian Ocean Territory and Singapore, and recognises strategic partner allies such as Israel, India, Japan, Pakistan and South Korea and regional ones such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Jordan and the GCC. It speaks confidently of the need for our Carrier Strike Group and of our two Littoral Strike Forces, based in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific respectively and with a combined aggregation of both when required. It declares a “bigger and more consistent contribution” to the high-potential Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia and aims to “pursue closer defence co-operation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), accede to CPTPP and to coordinate the existing British Defence Staff Asia-Pacific in Singapore with a new BDS in Canberra.

It aims to forward base its fleet of Offshore Patrol Vessels from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean and the Indo-Pacific. It ends the “elegant decline” of the Royal Navy. The Navy will always do its best, but just as the oak leaves on a Naval Officer’s symbolise England, and as the Integrated Review places much-welcome Naval flesh on the hitherto bones of a Global Britain, the Navy must surely need many more complex warships and submarines to do justice to the Global Britain opportunity now before us.

## **THE CONSTANT COMPETITION CONCEPT**

The Integrated Review speaks of a world in which the United Kingdom must succeed in a new “grey zone” environment existing between peace and conflict. It speaks of the need to Compete, Contest, Co-operate and Confront with our adversaries and sensibly places Trade & Finance within the overall Defence and Foreign policy construct, recognising the vital place of the “Prosperity Agenda and Continuum” therein, whereby “greater national prosperity enables greater societal cohesion and domestic stability, financing our collective security to generate global security and global stability, which are the prerequisites to global prosperity”. The Navy is seen as vital to global trade and thus there is powerful logic to its plans to achieve global forward presence and permanent basing.

To enable the United Kingdom to compete, contest, co-operate and confront if necessary, the Integrated Review looks to Integration, Adaption and Innovation as its strategic principles, underpinned by a welcome “Whole of Government” and “Whole of Society” approach. It seeks therefore to make best possible use of each domestic and global resource that we have to make a coherent and effective contribution to the national and global “prosperity continuum” overall.

In sensibly placing trade and finance at the centre of our foreign, defence, security and development policy, the United Kingdom must however appreciate that, just as there are “grey

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zones” between peace and conflict with adversaries, so there will be, at times, between the competing national interests of ally and foe alike, and we may have to become accustomed to seeing strategic allies such as France or the EU appearing to behave like “grey zone near-hostile states” at times in specific trade and finance terms. A solution to this is to grow the Navy beyond its “foremost European Naval power” status, welcome though that is, to become a “Global Naval power” too in the contested world that the IR foresees.

## **SCIENCE SUPER POWER**

Of exciting and specific note is the Government’s recognition of the need for the UK to develop itself into a “science super power” dedicating 2.4% of its GDP to R&D, the creation of the Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), the Navy Board’s establishment of its first Chief Technology Officer and its ambitious aims to harness future technologies as force multipliers in the unmanned, underwater and engineered information domains. This is a welcome and achievable aim. For the Navy it is a vital one in a world in which our potential adversaries have advanced so quickly through the application of an array of technologies and China’s technological expansion.

The Royal Navy has an exceptional and proud tradition of technological excellence. The Integrated Review offers the nation an opportunity to “serve its Navy” by making available an element of its rich scientific and technological capabilities to it, as an act of public service to a Fleet which needs its nations help so that it can better serve us in the cause of global security and stability.

## **MARITIME CHOKE POINTS MATTER**

If the United Kingdom were to maintain “permanent naval presence” in the great maritime choke points of the world and establish digital influence over them too, where global trade and the cable network intersect, then much of China’s “maritime silk road” might be neutralised. Admiral Jackie Fisher once said that there are “five keys to the world. The Strait of Dover, the Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, the Straits of Malacca, and the Cape of Good Hope. And every one of these keys we hold.” The Integrated Review sensibly considers naval and military forward presence in Gibraltar, Cyprus, Oman and Singapore so that 4 of these can be physically influenced. If underpinned by digital influence the United Kingdom could be the very “Force for Good”, that the Integrated Review correctly sets out as a national aim so as to stabilise global security, stability and prosperity, then ample scope exists for UK Research, Innovation & Invention to help the Navy find technological solutions to protect the global maritime choke points and their undersea cables. They matter greatly.

## **BOTH THE TRADING AND DIGITAL WORLDS ARE AT SEA**

A map of today’s undersea network of cables, that enable 97% of all digital trade, mirror, remarkably closely, the global shipping routes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. 96% of all UK physical trade is transported by sea. By 2030 50% of all global trade will be in Asia Pacific, hence UK ambition to accede to CPTPP there which would comprise 16% of all global trade, if we do, in contrast to the EU, comprising 14% now that we have left. 2021 marks the first time that the GDP of

the Commonwealth exceeds that of the EU's. The Royal Navy "goes where trade is", hence the United Kingdom's tilt to the Indo-Pacific and the deployment of the Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific this year.

One consequence of the Falkland's War in 1982 was that the Royal Navy retained its complex warship capability in Frigates and Destroyers, Carriers, Amphibious, Fleet Support and Submarines. Today's shipbuilding strategy gives 40 years of work in our submarine building programme, 20 years in our warship programme and thousands of technical and research jobs within our Levelling-Up agenda and includes the design build of a dedicated Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship to focus on the critical national infrastructure that is the undersea network of cables enabling our digital world and trillions of dollars in finance daily.

## FLEET RENEWAL

Since 96% of all global trade is shipped at sea and the undersea network of cables enables 97% of our internet and digital trade, the role of the Royal Navy is fundamental to a British Maritime Strategy overall. The Defence Command Paper makes good the undertaking made in February 2019 by the Secretary of State of Defence who said,

"Our vision is for these ships to form part of 2 Littoral Strike Groups complete with escorts, support vessels and helicopters. One would be based East of Suez in the Indo-Pacific and one based West of Suez in the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Baltic. And, if we ever need them to, our two Littoral Strike Ships, our two aircraft carriers, our two amphibious assault ships Albion and Bulwark, and our three Bay Class landing ships can come together in one amphibious task force. This will give us sovereign, lethal, amphibious force. This will be one of the largest and best such forces anywhere in the world."

The Fleet that is being regenerated as its consequence will comprise Carrier Strike & Littoral Strike, the former delivering 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft from a 2-ship 5<sup>th</sup> generation carrier fleet, with an intrinsic land strike capability from the sea, SSBN Continuous-at-Sea Deterrence and power projection from the sea through the Navy's Future Commando Force programme.

The new ASW Type 26 Anti-Submarine Warfare Frigate is the world's most advanced platform, and it is a strategic export "win" for the UK, given that it has been selected by fellow Five Eyes partner nations in the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy too. Our Continuous-at-Sea Deterrence (CASD) is being maintained with the Dreadnought successor SM fleet to our existing Vanguard fleet and our Type 31 general purpose Frigates provide the prospect, through their economic design, of a 24-ship Frigate/Destroyer force by 2030. Our Type 45 Anti-Aircraft Destroyers contain the world's most sophisticated sensor and weapon combination and their successor class is named as Type 82, whilst the new Type 32 General Purpose warship as "a platform for autonomous systems" and a future export-winning one too if well-designed.

Alongside these will be a new Ocean Surveillance ship and a new fleet of Support Ships within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, meaning that the United Kingdom retains its status with the USA as the only 2 maritime nations that can both project and sustain Naval power 10,000 miles away. By 2025 the Royal Navy will have increased its size by 35% in tonnage terms but with 15% less people than in 2015. The Prime Minister has ended the long period of the Royal Navy's

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“elegant decline” as the First Sea Lord, says so well.

The Chair of the Defence Committee is rightly concerned whether the Navy has sufficient ships to meet its new and extended global commitments. Ideas that might be considered include commercial ship conversions to provide the Navy with additional platforms to support FCF and as platforms for technology arrays, and now that a “whole of society” approach to foreign and defence policy exists the possibility to engage public support is now greater.

## BUILDING A NAVY A BETTER WAY

“Every Royal Navy ship and Royal Marine is a sensor, an embassy and a launch pad for unmanned drones”. Admiral Radakin, First Sea Lord

Investment across warships, submarines, underwater drones and technologies generally to enhance the capabilities of what we have is moving at pace. A Chief Technology Officer has now been placed on the Navy Board, and equipped with a “fast track” budget to make use of commercially-off-the shelf technologies and commission bespoke research so the Navy retains a cutting edge in a competitive space.

The Royal Navy has to respond more quickly, in a more integrated manner, with the other services, our Diplomatic, Development, Intelligence and Security agencies, across all domains, more consistently and better than our adversaries, constantly. Our Secretary of State for Defence wishes the Navy to “build better” ships cheaper and more flexibly than at any time in our 500 years of maritime history. The PM wants to “bring shipbuilding home” and for the first time in our 1,000 year history we have a Secretary of State of Defence who is also the National Shipbuilding Tsar.

HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales are the world’s first 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft carriers with 5<sup>th</sup> generation F-35B aircraft. At 65,000 dwt they deliver 70% of the offensive power of their US Naval counterparts but at 25% of their operating cost. The Royal Navy is justifiably proud of CASD. Since 1969 the Navy has always had a SSBN submarine at sea 24/7. Armed with strategic nuclear missiles these have deterred would-be aggressors with the acutely credible Trident II D5 highly accurate 4,000 mile range missile. CASD is the longest ongoing operation ever delivered by the MoD. The Royal Navy’s ‘Manta’ XLUUV (Extra-large Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle) concept may be 100 ft long, perhaps with the capacity to be armed but certainly with Next-Generation sensors.

“Our Navy is the first line of defence on enemy coasts and the last line of resort at home and in deterrence”. Lord Peter Hennessy

## ‘WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT’, PERMANENT BASING & FORWARD GLOBAL PRESENCE

Faced with a global need to stabilise and secure the Royal Navy enters this new age with confidence in Forward Presence and Permanent Basing, in the South Atlantic, the North Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf and the Indo-Pacific, with permanent bases

operational in the Falklands and Bahrain and permanent basing activating in Gibraltar and Singapore with “Forward Presence” of Ships and FCF RM already in place. All of this is designed to integrate with HMG’s global resources in allies, trade and the FCDO. This is part of the Royal Navy’s role in “working for Government as the embodiment of Global Britain” as the PM said so well. The Integrated Review establishes the “future lay-down” of the Royal Navy. Asian allies, alive to the potential threats, wish to see a Royal Navy that is permanently-based there, not sporadically transiting to and from it. The Russian Far East Fleet consists of 15 submarines, and the Chinese PLAN fleet 75. The lack of expansion in the 7-SSN Submarine Service in the Defence Command Paper to cater for this extraordinary threat will, one hopes, be remedied in the future. The RAN have determined their regional need as 12 SSK’s which seems an appropriate number for the Royal Navy to mirror in its SSN Fleet.

## THE INDO-PACIFIC THREAT IS HIGH

“So densely populated are the combined Asia submarine threats that if their fleets were moored alongside each other in the Malaccan Straits, one could walk from one side to the other across their combined Conning towers”. By the Author in a letter to the Government in 2020.

In the Indo Pacific the Royal Navy and its allies face a combined Chinese and Russian threat of over 75 attack submarines and 300 warships. Whilst “mass has a quality of its own” and is always desired, sometimes it is not possible. The United Kingdom has a luxury which few others have: its membership of more multilateral organisations than any other, including its No 2 NATO position, its leading Five Powers Defence Agreement (FPDA) status in Asia, its Five Eyes membership, its lead position in the 53-member Commonwealth, its P5 status at the United Nations, its N5 status with a strategic submarine-based deterrent, a G5 economy, the world’s 5<sup>th</sup> largest exporting nation, the world’s 2<sup>nd</sup> largest exporter of services, a lead contributor to international development and with the world’s 2<sup>nd</sup> largest diplomatic network. In all of these the Royal Navy is an instrument of Global Britain, and its expansion marks a golden naval age in a maritime strategy for the United Kingdom.

## STABILITY & SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC – A VITAL UK NATIONAL INTEREST

The Strategic Importance of the Indo-Pacific region is a UK national interest. A “tilt to the Indo-Pacific” is now occurring. It accounts for 42% of global GDP and forecast to become 50% of global GDP by 2030. Every country in it is a maritime power and the majority enjoy close historical, diplomatic, military and economic UK links. The United Kingdom therefore has a national interest in maintaining Indo-Pacific stability and security. Post-COVID 19, Global Britain and the Integrated Review present a unique post-Cold War imperative for the United Kingdom to “tilt to the Indo-Pacific” acting as the guardian of the Rules-based International Order at a time when Asia’s primary economic power threatens it.

The United Kingdom can play a substantive role as the region’s “anchor of stability” and reinvigorate the Five Powers Defence Agreement (FPDA) with permanent Royal Naval Indo-Pa-

cific presence and influence. Stability and adherence to the Rules-based System is a key enabler to UK national prosperity. It delivers our domestic stability, our societal cohesion and finances our collective security in a complex world. From NATO to Japan. From the US to Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia to New Zealand. There is no place for the UK to be anywhere but at the heart of the greatest threat.

In the maritime domain, there is a potential systemic threat from China, and as its economic and diplomatic influence dilutes, following COVID 19 and Hong Kong, but its maritime belt and road and Naval capability increases, there remains potential for conflict in the region which a strong Royal Navy presence, supported by Carrier & Littoral Strike if required, and working with its closest regional allies, will deter. The UK interest in the region containing 50% of the world's GDP, whilst containing the worst possibility from China, offers the greatest hope of regional stability and security that the Indo-Pacific deserves and which our national interest requires. There exist high prospects for the United Kingdom's Foreign Policy to be a "Force for Good", upholder of the Rules-based International System and Free Trade, with significant ones, as an anchor of stability in the Indo-Pacific generally, and in ASEAN and CPTPP specifically.

## GLOBAL BRITAIN AND THE GREY ZONE

The Integrated Review defines the Government's ambition for the United Kingdom's role in the world and the strategic aims for our foreign, defence and security policy. It examines how the UK will work more effectively with allies, determine the capabilities we need, and the risks and threats that we face. It provides a future Integrated Operating Concept within its armed forces but for the United Kingdom itself across our country's complete capabilities.

The United Kingdom's relationship with the world is determined by its relationships with 4 concentric rings of influence, in its relationships with the USA, Europe and the Commonwealth, and as the former Prime Minister said in the Philadelphia Speech – the Rest of the World (RoW) adding "Global Britain" to the national lexicon. The USA is our "indispensable ally" and the Five Eye Nations of the UK, USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand our "Atlantic to Pacific" partners. We have left the EU but not Europe and their security and stability are ours. What unites every allied nation to the United Kingdom is their adherence to the rules-based international system and being maritime nations.

The 8 Core UK Strategic Capabilities can be summarised as: Defence; Diplomacy; Development; Security; Trade; Finance; the Intellectual/Educational and the Cultural/Scientific. These are based on 8 distinguishing UK values: Democracy; Institutions; Rule of Law; History; The Union; Public Service (shared by those in the private sector in a shared national endeavor); Society & Family and regulated free Markets & Free Trade. It places Trade, Finance, the Educational and the Scientific alongside Defence, Diplomacy, Development and Security in a form which the British public, UK Business, Exporters and Investors can support and contribute to in their private sector lives in post-COVID 19 Economic Recovery.

Global Britain is a rebalancing of the United Kingdom's engagement with the 3 centres of global significance in the USA, Europe and the Indo-Pacific and the 4 regions of specific interest to the UK in the Middle East, South America, Africa and Arctic by viewing our relationships with the world through an outward, free trading, democratic and rules-based maritime prism. Such a rebalancing aims to facilitate the position of the United Kingdom as a G5 economic

power capable of positively influencing global stability by assuming a leadership role in the maintenance and development of the Rules-Based International System (RBIS).

All of the above are understood to exist a what is described as new “grey zone” of competition, but which the Royal Navy can take great comfort in having operated within it in the decades of the Cold War when every patrol it undertook was an operational one, and in the undersea domain we can say with some confidence that it was won. It is often said that we won the Cold War because we “outspent” our Soviet adversary. That is correct up to a point. But since the whole purpose of the Soviet Submarine Fleet was to imperil our economic capability, and we can say with confidence that the efforts of the USN and RN Submarine Services forestalled its ability, it also follows that the very “grey zone” that we speak of today, is one that the Royal Navy has operated and succeeded in before.

## THE BRITISH DREAM & INTEGRATING CAPABILITY

The global interest is the United Kingdom’s national interest. National prosperity, stability and societal cohesion are mutually dependant on global stability through the RBIO, which enhances the UK’s collective security. Achieving this requires a shared national endeavour and sense of mission for what Global Britain means for the UK’s sense of itself.

The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone. The American Dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.

By contrast, we may define the British Dream as: the belief in the common good, and the elevation of the condition of our people at home and overseas. We see global prosperity as our national interest for it is through global advancement that we generate national success in the form of domestic stability, societal cohesion, national prosperity and international influence.

The British dream in regard to an Integrated Operating Capability across the UK capability domains is therefore a summary of the existing principles of the United Kingdom which understands there is a balance between the strategic capabilities defence, diplomacy, development and security with those of trade and finance, the intellectual and the cultural, that they are based on distinguishing national values, that all must be harnessed into a strategic whole and that all of them offer the prospect for a shared national endeavour.

External factors that affect it include: the UK’s departure from the EU; the UK’s re-establishment of an independent trade policy; the concept of constant conflict and competition, rapid technological change; an era of experimentation, climate change; change in serious organised crime; the changing relationship with China; changing trading opportunities, and security threats, in the Indo-Pacific and the rules-based international system itself.

## HISTORY & TODAY

It was a rules-based international system configured to energise a world into stability and security and naturally aligned against the Soviet Union. It helped create our worlds’ greatest ever period of prosperity and, since the Cold War, financed the growth of China itself. Since 1989 and the implosion of the Soviet Empire, against which NATO was created, many have questioned the relevance of a rules-based international order but as we look at the rise of China,

from its future 550-ship Navy, to a Belt and Road Initiative on land and at sea that have obvious military and digital application, one may see its greater wisdom exceeded anything we have today in its stead, and that if we are to recover post-COVID 19, then the sea lanes of communication that enable our global trade must be clear and free, lest we fall into a war of great speed and devastation in the Indo-Pacific, specifically at risk in the South China Seas, against an authoritarian China, with every value in stark opposition to ours, and with the potential to distort the very means we have to trade and finance itself, upholding the rules-based international system may well be the only means we have to forestall it.

COVID 19 publicly revealed the concerns generated by an authoritarian China which has militarised the South China Sea, threatened freedom of navigation and global maritime trade, created disputes with our allies from Japan to Brunei, threatened Taiwan and worsened by its breaking of the 1997 international agreement with the UK on Hong Kong. All of these present an opportunity for the United Kingdom to build on its close historical, diplomatic, economic and defence relationships, enable the UK to speak “truth” where it is distorted, and join CPTPP, become a Dialogue Partner to ASEAN, energise the existing Five Powers Defence Agreement between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia in the maritime domain and become the regions “anchor of stability” in a United Kingdom “Indo-Pacific tilt” as the Foreign Secretary has indicated.

## THE BRITISH MARITIME STRATEGY

The British Maritime Strategy is the planning and conduct of the United Kingdom’s global position in a Global Britain age, by the presence in, and influence of, the sea, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in the superhighway of the world’s trade and, by its undersea cable network, its digital enabler, that its oceans are, and in whose stability and security rests the prosperity of the members of the rules-based international system and the United Kingdom’s prosperity and of peace itself.

The British Maritime Strategy is not well-known to the public. Given its strategic importance for Global Britain it is crucial that this enabler of British foreign, defence, security, trade and development policy is realised. The same 8 maritime choke points exist now as they always have: the English Channel, the Gibraltar Straits, Suez, Bab-El-Mandeb, Straits of Hormuz, Straits of Malacca, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Panama Canal. The UK controls or has influence and presence over 5 of them via RN home ports, HMNB Gibraltar, HMNB Bahrain, British-owned and funded British Defence Singapore Support Unit (BDSSU), in support of the Five Power Defence Arrangements & the near-permanent RN/RFA presence in the Caribbean. A reason why Future Commando Force RM will re-integrate with the RN at sea. It is for this reason that a national and global maritime strategy is so critical and must be understood as integral to policy making overall. Some examples of why we will apply this for future foreign, defence, trade, security and development policy are:

- a. 96% of all UK goods and 80% of all global trade is carried by sea
- b. The sea lanes of the ocean are the world’s “superhighway”
- c. The United Kingdom is an island and maritime nation
- d. A map of the undersea network of cables which enables 97% of our digital internet is remarkably similar to one of the 18<sup>th</sup> century shipping routes, with the UK largely at its centre

The Royal Navy's future Carrier Strike [maritime air] & Littoral Strike [amphibious] Groups can combine with our SSN submarines to become one of the United Kingdom's most potent strategic influencers in a highly complex world which has never needed British values more.

## CONCERNS & OPPORTUNITIES

Recognising resource constraints and strategic intent is one thing, but one cannot help but observe that a Fleet that is more global and committed to the Indo-Pacific is one with greater resource need overall. Whilst one accepts that the combined allied Fleets of the United Kingdom are a powerful deterrent to a resurgent Russia and China, insufficient comfort is provided by that compared to an adequate resourcing of the Royal Navy's independent capabilities. Carrier Strike and Littoral Strike add unquestionable strategic advantage to the United Kingdom, just as permanent naval presence and forward basing do, and it is warmly welcomed that Global Britain has now been properly and powerfully defined.

But there is one area which has ample scope for fleet growth and it is in the United Kingdom's Submarine Service. A fleet of 7 x SSN's is constrained by maintenance scheduling and availability to support a global fleet. 7 submarines cannot be in each of the 7 seas concurrently and if 50% of the world's GDP is in 1 part of it 8,000 miles and 35 days sailing time away then the geopolitical case suggests that the Navy needs more boats in its Submarine Service. We know that the combined submarine fleets of Russia and China in the Pacific exceed 70 submarines. Thought therefore might now be given, at the time when we now have a maritime strategy at the heart of our defence policy, to grow this powerful but relatively small force of highly strategic submarines too.

The UK and the USA are the architects of our Rules-based International Order. Today, the UK also joins the USA in leading global development of full-sized unmanned underwater vehicles too. As Admiral Radakin has said, "Securing the North Atlantic is key to ensuring freedom of movement for the nuclear deterrent," he said. "We need to continue to invest here so we can maintain and extend our advantage and fulfil our commitments to the nation and to our allies." The future for Submarine fleet expansion will be greatly aided by the development of full-sized unmanned and armed submarines but the need for SSN's is high and it is hoped that its fleet size will occur.



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