



ANTICIPATIONS

YOUNG FABIANs SPRING 2025



OUR DARKEST HOUR?



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Editor's Welcome

YUSUF AMIN

I want to give you all a wholehearted welcome to another edition of *Anticipations*, and I hope that everyone's VE Day was full of joy and celebration. The local election results this spring have been damning and disheartening for us all as we see the long and hateful arms of Reform UK grab hold of councils all over the country. I encourage all of you to keep fighting the good fight against Nigel Farage and his band of thugs.

However, outside of Reform, another threat is facing not just us, but the entire globe. Not since the even the most tense days of the Cold War have we seen the globe in such a state of military tension. War has consumed Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and currently threatens to ignite between India and Pakistan. Even global peacekeepers like the United States threaten to take Greenland and Canada by military force, with China's eyes staring more intensely at Taiwan. The world seems to be on the brink of destroying itself as we experience even more unprecedented flux.

Britain's days of being the global policeman are long gone, and we no longer have the military capabilities that once made us the most powerful nation on Earth. But this period of heightened militarism offers Britain a chance to redefine its global role, not through domination, but as a principled force for diplomacy, peace and justice. While championing de-escalation through our international influence, we must also utilise our military not for aggression, but for humanitarian interven-



tion, peacekeeping and the protection of civilians where diplomacy fails. Britain may no longer command an empire, but we must strive to still have a voice on the international stage, one that speaks to clarity and purpose.

Our Young Fabians will be discussing this very topic in this wonderful edition of *Anticipations*. You will be reading nine thought-provoking articles that get to the very bottom of what Britain can do militarily in this new and dangerous world order. From how we should defend Taiwan and Eastern Europe, to how we can reconcile multiculturalism with the military, these articles will be looking at every angle of policy within this topic. I'd like to give a massive thank you to Mike Tapp MP for writing a brilliant foreword for this issue. His incredible experience in the military will provide us with great insights into how this Labour Government will handle defence policy, and I believe him to be one of the most promising MPs of the 2024 cohort. I now invite you to turn the page and discover what our Young Fabians propose we do in what could once again be our darkest hour.

Co-Chairs' Foreword

FRANCESCA REYNOLDS & ROSANNA JACKSON



Like us, most Young Fabians will have taken peace in Europe for granted throughout their lifetime. We grew up without conflict that significantly impacted us and this privilege we took for granted (it is certainly not the same in many parts of the world). However, this meant that when Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022, we were left not just shocked at the act of violence, but that a core assumption of our own security had been shattered.

Despite many thinking this war would destroy Ukraine, instead the resulting years have shown the strength and resilience of the Ukrainian people. But also, it has provided us in the UK with a source of national pride as we stood by Ukraine and offered our support – with some people even opening their homes to refugees. We hope the Young Fabians share this pride and openness and use this edition to explore options to strengthen our military and prepare for the multipolar world order we are now facing.

With this unfortunately rather gloomy context, we welcome you to this quarter's edition of the Young Fabians Journal - Anticipations. We are yet again, incredibly proud of the work that has gone into these articles and owe an incredibly large thank you to our editor Yusuf Amin.

MP's Foreword

MIKE TAPP

We are living through one of the most unstable geopolitical moments since the Cold War. War has returned to Europe. Global alliances are under strain. New threats; cyberattacks, disinformation, hostile state actors, move faster than many governments can respond. This isn't the future we feared. It's the present we're living. The stakes could not be higher. Yet in Westminster, too often the response remains paralysed by ideology.

We cannot afford that anymore.

As someone who served in the Armed Forces and later worked in counter-terrorism, I've seen firsthand what happens when decision-makers are too slow to act or too wedded to old assumptions, lives are put at risk and opportunities to lead are lost.

Now is the time for Britain to rediscover its sense of strategic seriousness.

We are a nation with the capabilities, alliances and history to shape the future of global security. But if we are to play that role, we must shift from debating what defence means ideologically to what it actually delivers.

As President Kennedy once said: "Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer." We must do the same in Britain, rejecting the tribalism of left and right to find the right answer for Britain's security in a dangerous world. That means investing in credible, modern defence capability, not as a show of strength, but as a guarantee of peace.

It means reaffirming our commitment to NATO, and working closely with democratic allies who share our values and interests. And it means preparing for new forms of warfare, from the battlefield to cyberspace, with the same seriousness we once applied to Cold War doctrine.

The upcoming Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) must be a turning point, not just a bureaucratic exercise. It should deliver a clear, costed, long-term



plan to ensure our Armed Forces are ready, our alliances are strong, and our country is resilient. If we get it right, Britain can lead not just by what we say, but by what we do.

But defence is not just about what happens abroad. It's about what we protect at home. Firm, functional border control is not a talking point, it is a national security imperative. That's why we must stop the criminal smuggling gangs, fix our broken asylum system, and restore integrity to our immigration rules. This is not about pulling up the drawbridge. It's about managing our borders with order, compassion and credibility.

Solutions-based politics means rejecting the false binary between being tough and being fair. We can and must be both.

We must also bring the public with us. After years of drift and defence cuts, rebuilding trust won't be easy. But when the British public see leadership grounded in facts, driven by results, and committed to keeping them safe they will respond. Because the British people aren't asking for ideology. They're asking for answers.

I'm proud to support the work of organisations like the Young Fabians and their Defence, Technology and Cybersecurity Network. They're asking serious questions, exploring practical solutions, and injecting much-needed urgency into the national conversation.

Defence policy is not a niche concern. It is the foundation of our national sovereignty, our global credibility, and the safety of the public.



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Educating for Modern Conflict:

Why the UK must revitalise education to strengthen modern warfare, recruitment and national security

By George Marshall

In February, Keir Starmer vocalised a growing consensus amongst governments and armed forces around the world: we are in a “dangerous new era” where “everything has changed”. Labour has emphasised that our military readiness must align with the threat and modernity of war hovering over us. Yet, in the same month, The Times conducted a survey showing only 11% of young people aged 18 to 27 would fight for Britain. Whilst defence spending may be increasing in the UK, its young people show a reluctance to contribute should they be called upon.

Policies to engage the youth have been proposed in recent years, notably the Conservatives’ proposal of mandatory national service in the General Election. Nonetheless, such proposals underestimate the role of education in attracting our younger generations to serve, as well as its value in preparing for modern and future modes of war. Conflict is becoming increasingly shaped by advanced technologies, cyber operations, AI and autonomous systems as highlighted in the Ministry of Defence’s Integrated Review Refresh 2023, yet much of Britain’s education lacks these features.

Relying on outdated ways of war preparation and recruitment and berating the youth for their unwillingness to serve will only distance our younger generation further. Instead, revitalising our education system can allow young men and women to learn necessary skills, explore careers in the Armed Forces, and foster the foundations to empower students to contribute to our national security – all of which is failing to be done on a national level presently.

The most urgent area of improvement in our education system – if it is to support defence and recruitment – is STEM education. In 2016, a report by The Royal Society revealed that 54% of English secondary schools did not offer GCSE Computer

Science. Though this may have improved, it is still likely a reflection of current issues where young people are still going without basic technological knowledge due to a lack of skilled teachers. The Royal Society of Chemistry also noted in 2023 that 64% of schools in the UK are understaffed in at least one of the three sciences, limiting young people’s ability to pursue these fields and ultimately reducing the number who can bring skills into the Armed Forces.

Stronger STEM education (particularly in technological fields) would inspire learners to apply those skills in areas like defence, cybersecurity, autonomous technology, and AI – if the curriculum is reformed to enunciate this – generating a larger workforce dedicated to creating technologies to aid national security. Increasing STEM teachers and updating the curricula to reflect modern technological demands would undoubtedly build a defence-capable workforce and grow interest in our Armed Forces.

In this vein, the UK can learn partly from countries like Estonia, where cybersecurity is embedded into its national curriculum after a cyberattack in 2007. Students in Estonia today are taught basic and advanced computing skills from primary school in the ‘Tiger Leap’ programme, and national competitions like the “CyberOlympics” seek and train talent in the cyber field. These opportunities channel into Estonia’s cyber defence strategy and offer a multitude of military career paths, allowing it to keep aligned with modern threats.

Another area requiring revitalisation is vocational education. Strengthening vocational pathways would offer practical and engaging routes into the Armed Forces, substantially aiding recruitment. These pathways need significant promotion, alongside clear information of how students can use them to attain roles within the military.



George is a first-year History student at the University of Warwick. He is passionate about twentieth century social history, education and its role in society, and current global affairs.

Stronger partnerships between vocational institutions and the Armed Forces would be immensely beneficial, allowing students to gain hands-on experience, visit military bases and meet role models as vocational courses already do with other careers. The expansion of vocational internships and partnerships with institutions has been associated with increased applications to technical support and engineering roles, as demonstrated by initiatives from the MoD and major defence employers like BAE Systems. Making the Armed Forces a visible and accessible career through vocational education, as we have seen on a small-scale level with RAF STEM Ambassadors working with schools, would help more young people be able to see defence as a viable career path, giving it greater promotion than current outreach methods.

In an era of unpredictable threats and different modes of conflict, Britain must change its approach to national security and traditional defence strategies. Yet there is no need to resort to propositions of compulsory national service, only making young people less willing to serve. Instead, the adjustments to our education system I have outlined above, would pave the way for more young people being enthusiastic about protecting this country. By embedding technological and digital skills further into the curriculum, investing in more STEM teachers, and encouraging more vocational pathways with close connections to our Armed Forces, our education system can create more individuals with the necessary skills and willingness to protect this nation’s national security in future years.

If the UK is to be fully prepared, committed, and modernised when it comes to defence, the classroom is the place to start.

"But What About Taiwan?"

Defending Taiwanese sovereignty to uphold the United Kingdom's role in a challenging world order

By Alexandra Whitehead

Since Xi Jinping's ascension to the Presidency in March 2013, China's crusading leader has vowed to achieve the "Chinese Dream" of so-called "national rejuvenation," whereby historical injustices at the hands of Western imperialists are unwound by the creation of a strong nation and even stronger military. "National rejuvenation" (zhenxing zhonghua) is a central component to Xi's governing philosophy, strengthening national pride and reflecting a desire to move away from the West's sphere of influence.

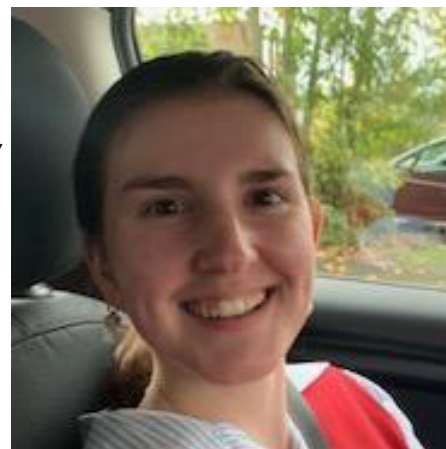
So where does Taiwan fit into all of this? National rejuvenation is not solely a domestic goal and Xi views powerful international assertiveness as the key to China's rebirth. Cross-Strait relations have long been contentious: a Qing colony, Han-Chinese settlers on Taiwan viewed their Qing overlords as colonial archetypes; under Japanese imperialism, Taiwanese citizens were forced to fight against the Republic of China (ROC) in the Second World War; following Chiang Kai-shek's defeat at the hands of Mao's communist forces, the disgraced generalissimo moved the ROC's seat of governance to Taipei and vehemently opposed the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) up-to his death in 1975. There is currently a status quo that adopts a 'you do things your way, we'll do things our way' sort of approach, maintaining a quasi-peace, however Xi views the fractured and very complicated "historical unity" as something that will make Taiwan's reunification "inevitable" and denies ruling-out the use of force in achieving this goal. He completely disregards Taiwan's well-established status as a thriving liberal democracy independent from China and opposes Taiwan's entrenched national identity.

As a foreign policy initiative, Britain's Indo-Pacific "Tilt" was first enacted under

the Johnson administration in the 2021 Integrated Review. Hesitant to touch upon Taiwan, Sunak had the Integrated Review refreshed in 2023 so that it was far more outspoken in Xi's aggressive handling of the Taiwan issue, identifying China as an "epoch-defining challenge" for the first time. Unfortunately, there is limited evidence that Sunak's "three-point approach" to countering Chinese aggression via open diplomacy, economic engagement, and increased deterrence has actually contributed anything towards the maintenance of Taiwan's sovereignty. China's assertive posture has only increased, and the PLA continues to conduct military exercises around Taiwan.

If Britain seriously wishes to combat the challenging world order we find ourselves in, we must mobilise our military towards the geopolitical flashpoint that is the Taiwan Strait. Doing so provides multiple opportunities for (1) Britain regarding strengthening our global prowess post-Brexit and restoring faith in our regional allies, the (2) new(ish) Labour Government through upholding core democratic values and appearing strong on defence, a narrative popular with Conservative-leaning voters, and (3) sending British military personal to the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea has strategic advantages for our armed forces regarding training, discipline, and maintaining readiness.

Such a move is certainly not without its risks. The British Army has been significantly reduced and is struggling to achieve its 2025-2026 recruitment goals. It is well worth noting mobilisation towards Taiwan is an expensive, resource-heavy operation that will put significant strain on the army's capacities. Furthermore, with cost-of-living continuing to rise, defence spending may be met with criticism at home and escalating tensions with China risks economic retaliation



Alexandra is a sinologist with a keen interest in Taiwan and Cross-Strait affairs. She holds a BA in Chinese History and MA in Taiwan Studies. When she is not analysing the current political situation of the Greater China region, she's working hard on improving her Mandarin and enjoys sitting with a good book and mug of coffee.

tion which, in the age of US tariffs, although not as extreme as other nations, is not something we would necessarily want. However, for the United Kingdom to be able to rise to the geopolitical challenge, we must face these risks head on and rally our troops for action.

The majority of the British Army's young recruits were not around in the days of fighting in the Middle East, and mobilisation towards the Taiwan Strait would provide a dysfunctional army with real-world experience in tackling complex, high-risk situations, thus optimising logistical readiness and rapid deployment. Given a Chinese assault on Taiwan will likely be amphibious, naval exercises around the island could act as a warning sign for the Chinese and, again, optimise our army's capacity in conducting amphibious landings.

For a Labour Government, the presence of British troops sends a message of commitment to our regional allies, reinforcing the UK's image as a reliable and active partner which is incredibly beneficial in the face of geopolitical uncertainty. Mobilisation in the Indo-Pacific will allow Labour to seamlessly continue past Conservative policies of "Global Britain" and will provide it with a more multilateral tone, better befitting of Labour's values. Lastly, through emphasising defence, Labour can maintain a firm-but-measured stance on China, honing in on how Britain won't tolerate aggressive expansionism.

To come to a hasty conclusion, if Britain wishes to adequately combat the world threats facing us, a more active role around the Taiwan Strait should be considered if we wish to stand-up to at least one of these challenges.

A Bevinite Blueprint for Britain's Foreign Policy

By Charlie Davies



Charlie has a Master's in international security studies and a BA in Politics and International Relations. He is interested in the intersection of security and democracy, with a particular interest in how rising populism is reshaping international politics.

In the summer of 1945, Britain stood at a crossroads. The war had been won, but victory came at a colossal cost. The economy was broken, the empire was crumbling, and the country's place in the world was no longer secure. Yet amid this uncertainty, Clement Attlee's Labour Government entered office with a bold vision - not just for domestic reconstruction, but for a renewed role on the global stage.

At the heart of that vision was Ernest Bevin. A former trade unionist with no formal education, Bevin became the most consequential Foreign Secretary in post-war British history. He helped lay the foundations of NATO, resisted Soviet expansionism, and positioned Britain as a key player in Western security - all while managing the contradictions of decolonisation and economic decline.

Today, Keir Starmer faces a similarly daunting global landscape. Russian aggression threatens European stability, while uncertainty remains towards America's long-term commitment to NATO. Climate shocks, rising authoritarianism, and technological disruption are reshaping the international order. As in 1945, Labour has returned to power with a mandate for domestic renewal, while our place in the world is in flux. To meet this moment, Starmer would do well to revisit Bevin's blueprint.

Bevin's genius was to marry hard-headed realism with a commitment to international cooperation. He understood that British influence could not rest on moral standing alone - but also that power, if it was to be legitimate, had to serve more than narrow national interest. This remains a compelling model for progressive foreign policy today.

In the aftermath of war, Bevin recognised that Britain could not stand alone in a world of new superpowers. His answer was to anchor Britain in a collective security framework - NATO - even at the cost of some

autonomy. Today, Starmer inherits a military hollowed out by years of underfunding and strategic drift; the British Army is the smallest it has been since the Napoleonic Wars. Investment is essential if Britain is to remain a credible voice in global security.

Of course, Starmer cannot rely on a war economy or the material resources of empire. In 1945, Britain was spending over 50% of GDP on defence; today, with a stagnant economy and mounting pressures on the welfare state, anything approaching that level is unthinkable. But that makes clarity of purpose all the more important. Security must not be treated as an afterthought, but as a core pillar of national renewal, just as Bevin treated it.

Bevin championed NATO not out of blind Atlanticism, but from a sober understanding that no European state could face Soviet power alone. He recognised that Britain's postwar recovery depended on a stable and economically integrated Western Europe, leading him to support both the Marshall Plan and the rehabilitation of West Germany.

Today, the stakes are again existential. With Trump's return, NATO's reliability is no longer guaranteed. Countries like Poland and Estonia - acutely aware of the Russian threat on their borders - are ramping up defence spending. If Labour is serious about security, it must follow suit in preparing for a world where American guarantees can no longer be taken for granted.

This means looking seriously at deeper defence integration with Europe. Starmer has already moved to repair relations with France and Germany, but this cannot stop at photo ops. Britain should pursue joint military exercises, intelligence-sharing arrangements, and collaboration on defence manufacturing to reduce supply chain vulnerability. None of this requires rejoining the EU, but it does require pragmatism over

post-Brexit pride.

Crucially, Starmer must level with the British public. There remains a persistent illusion in British political culture: that the UK can enjoy global status without shouldering global responsibilities. Bevin saw through that myth. He knew Britain's standing depended on strength, clarity, and commitment. Starmer must make the case that modern defence policy is not a diversion from progressive goals - but a way to protect democracy, support allies, and promote stability in a dangerous world.

The war in Ukraine shows this argument can resonate. Public support has remained strong across party lines - not out of abstract geopolitical concern, but because Ukraine's struggle evokes something deeply rooted in Britain's historical memory. That instinct offers Starmer a bridge: he can connect domestic renewal to a foreign policy that is both moral and muscular.

Bevin's enduring legacy was not only in institutions, but in a strategic culture that lasted decades. He rejected the naive disarmament instincts of the left and the imperial nostalgia of the right. He carved out a third way: principled, cooperative, and realistic.

Starmer should do the same. He must reject isolationism on one hand and performative patriotism on the other. Instead, he can offer a vision of Britain as a leading European power - confident, collaborative, and clear-eyed about both its limits and its strengths.

If he succeeds, Starmer won't just revive faith in progressive foreign policy, he could reshape Britain's role in the world for a generation, just as Bevin once did.

Britain and the Return of History:

Peace and cooperation through strength

By Nicholas Corti

Peace is a product of a strategic environment that allows it to thrive, and that strategic environment is now changing. On February 22nd 2022, the sound of Russian guns shattered Kantian dreams of perpetual peace which had besotted Europe for decades. Incredulity had preceded the return of inter-state conventional war in Europe. As a result, concerns over the state of readiness of the British armed forces were raised by the full spectrum of British politics. These concerns are somewhat warranted: the British armed forces have not been prepared for war on the continent since 1991. Instead, the current British armed forces were built around a strategic environment in which wars had become “hybrid” and “irregular”. Now that large scale conventional war has made a return, Britain must build its forces with like-minded allies and increase its defence capability to create the conditions for peace to exist and prosper.

Only when the Trump-led administration threatened to disengage from European regional security that Britain and its European allies finally made considerable economic commitments to their defence. The Labour government’s commitment to increase British defence spending to 2.5% by 2027 is a step in the right direction. This is in tune with the wider ambitious European “ReArm Europe” plan which will see €800 billion invested in procurement, interoperability and military readiness. Whilst the UK was identified as “an essential European ally” in the White Paper for Readiness 2030, it has been locked out of defence loans offered by the EU via the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) initiative due to the consequences of Brexit. The British government

needs to take effective steps to overcome these inherited difficulties to complete the negotiations over the security and defence pact with the EU, which would also include British participation in the SAFE. Participation in SAFE would drive innovation, create jobs and strengthen our supply chains resulting in economic benefits which would be in line with the Government’s commitments to growth and industry. It would also bring military and strategic advantages by making our armed forces more interoperable with our European allies. This is particularly important as the US disengages from Europe and focuses on China: there is now an opportunity for Britain to take a leading role in Europe.

Britain now faces two global actors, Russia and the US, who perceive the world to be a political field where the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. The US’s treatment of its allies and Ukraine is in fact coherent with this worldview. Britain must, for its own sake, demonstrate that this is not the case as our own security is inevitably linked to an international system that preserves peace through deterrence and strength. The UK should continue to work with the US where possible. However, the recent revelation by The Times of Russian sensors monitoring our nuclear deterrent with underwater sensors and the US’s treatment of Ukraine and Europe are stark reminders of how close the renewed Russian threat is and the growing distance between Europe and the US.

At the time of writing, three British warships have sailed for CSG 25, one of the UK’s most impressive commitments to international security. A true testament to the dedication and skill of the thousands of ser-



Nick currently works in defence and is studying a MA in International Affairs and Cybersecurity at King's College London. He is passionate about history, politics, defence and international development.

vice personnel from all three services who will contribute to this incredible deployment. This is no easy feat, and it is a testament of our advanced defence capabilities. However, this is not a single country task. On its way to the Indo-Pacific theatre, CSG 25 will not only face renewed global challenges but will also be working with several partners: from Australia to Norway and across the Mediterranean. British deployment will also demonstrate to allied nations, shocked by the US’s antagonist turn that there is also the means for like-minded powers to continue cooperating and aligning with each other. We are not alone in Europe in doing this. France and Italy have also sent their aircraft carriers to the Indo-Pacific recently. Aligning with Europe would not mean abandoning our global approach.

As tensions rise across the world, Britain’s armed forces must necessarily build themselves around a new strategic approach that places cooperation and integration with our international partners at its heart. Joint procurement and operations with our allies would be an effective use of Government spending in defence but also align with our strategic interests and needs. In turn, a more collaborative and trust-generating international arena would maximise the power and effectiveness of our defence assets. Many will feel a sense of déjà vu with the current international politics; however, we should not be led astray again by distorted memories of our past, rather we should grab strategic opportunities that shape a future shaped by internationalism and cooperation.

Resilience as Deterrence

Preparing the UK for grey-zone

By Alexander Gavin

A war need not be declared to inflict real damage to a society - cyber-attacks, online disinformation campaigns or covert attempts to sabotage a country's critical infrastructure can be just as disruptive. These are all examples of an emerging genre of threat the UK and its allies have been facing called 'grey-zone' warfare. This denotes coercive tactics and actions by a hostile state that fall short of open conflict but have the potential to destabilise societies, undermine institutions and deal economic damage. With this broadening range of security threats the UK is facing, mainly from Russia, Britain must shift its defence response from purely reactive measures to building long-term societal resilience.

The term 'grey-zone' was popularised after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, and implies that rather than being a mutually exclusive binary, military action and peaceful competition both exist on a spectrum of policy options that further states' interests. 'Grey-zone' warfare refers to hostile actions that exist in the grey-area between these options, embracing a strategy of ambiguity and deniability.

In recent years, the UK has experienced a string of disruptive incidents that fit within this category. The 2017 WannaCry ransomware attack crippled NHS computer systems, delaying surgeries and patient care. Russian actors have been linked to co-ordinated disinformation campaigns aimed at sowing division around events such as the 2016 US presidential election. More recently, concern has grown over the vulnerability of critical infrastructure- particularly undersea cables that carry the UK's internet traffic and financial transactions- to sabotage.

These threats are asymmetric by design, and often blur the lines between civilian and military domains. Traditional defence

structures, aligned around military responses, are ill-suited to address them in isolation. The UK cannot predict hostile actions in advance, but must rather build societal resilience so that these tactics' power to disrupt is minimised.

In testimony given at a recent Defence Committee inquiry into this topic, Rand Europe, a policy research organisation identified resilience as the ideal deterrence. While the UK cannot control the actions of its adversaries, it can control its own capacity to respond. By ensuring that society can absorb shocks, adapt quickly and recover stronger, the UK can increase the costs of 'grey-zone' activities taken by our adversaries and limit their options.

Resilience is not just about emergency response, but also about preparation, co-ordination and public trust. Disruption to essential systems that keep society functioning - power, communications, food, water, banking and medicine - can cause widespread panic. A prepared and informed public reduces this impact and frees up resources for public services to deal with high-priority crises. A 'whole-of-society' approach to resilience requires involving all sectors of society in emergency planning. The government provides strategic oversight and threat assessments. The private sector invests and plans for business continuity and secures supply chains and community groups and charities build social cohesion and act as trusted messengers in times of crisis.

This approach draws from Nordic examples of resilience such as Sweden's concept of total defence which includes individuals, communities, and businesses in the protection of the nation. Total defence includes civil defence, which stresses the role of citizens in defending society, encouraging everyone from schoolchildren to business leaders to contribute to national security



Alex is a recent politics graduate from the University of Sheffield, currently pursuing an MA in Government Studies at Kings. He writes about policy in areas such as foreign affairs, devolution and transport.

in some way. This mindset is ingrained in Swedish society through regular training exercises, public education campaigns and a general culture of preparedness.

What the UK must take from the Nordic model is the emphasis on building robust infrastructure that can continue to function even under attack.

Polling research has found that the Nordic countries have far higher trust in government than the UK, suggesting that the total defence model can have a positive impact on building democratic consent for national defence efforts. Individuals are more likely to endorse government security plans if they involve others in their community who they trust. With ever declining public trust in government, the UK could perhaps benefit from the increased social cohesion an integrated resilience strategy could bring.

There are already some promising domestic examples of this in action, including the London Communities Emergencies Partnership, which embodies the same principle of bringing together voluntary organisations, charities and local authorities to prepare for and respond to emergencies. LCEP supports community groups by hosting training events and facilitating connections between voluntary and state sectors in crisis response efforts, and has already convened groups in response to events such as the racist summer riots of 2024.

Grey-zone threats are not on the horizon. They are already here and pose a danger to societal resolve in the face of Russian aggression. While the nature of these threats is by design covert and constantly evolving, by responding with a resilience approach to deterrence the UK can not only build a buffer against a crisis, but build a foundation for national unity and renewed civic trust.

Reflections on Victory in Europe 80:

Lessons from the Central-Eastern European zeitgeist, the prevention of an age of appeasement and the defence of peace with principle

By Kasia Kramer

In Central-Eastern Europe, the collective consciousness tiptoes along a war-footing, all-out conflict looming on the horizon of NATO's Eastern flank, Trump threatening Washington's nuclear umbrella. In London, the Prime Minister steadily escalates the United Kingdom's commitment to Ukraine – militarily, diplomatically and rhetorically. Whilst this support is undoubtedly welcomed, questions remain as to whether the level of commitment pledged by Starmer will be sufficient to actively combat the threat of an appeasement rhetoric. Whilst Russian aggression remains at the forefront of the Central-Eastern European political consciousness, in the UK, distance affords a level of ambivalence.

Whilst YouGov found that 67% of Britons care a great deal that Ukraine wins the war, the current national narratives of the Second World War fundamentally fail to convey the moral case against Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Never better has this contradiction been illustrated than the dichotomy of the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe.

On the occasion of VE 80, Europe stands divided. In London, the red, white and blue trails of the Red Arrows colour Westminster's skies. In Vilnius, Kyiv and Warsaw, no such scenes occur, as conflicts of past and present cast long shadows over the prospect of celebration. The enduring national legacy, and narrative, of the Second World War in the United Kingdom is a victorious struggle, won alone and on principle. Celebrations of Victory in Europe Day serve to enshrine this national narrative, Britain as the victorious, moral crusader for a rules-based world order. The question of conflict in Europe appears settled, concluded.

In Central-Eastern Europe, the Second World War stands as testament to the suffering wrought by appeasement, the peril of sacrificing Eastern Europe the altar of 'peace in principle'. In light of the war in Ukraine (ongoing since 2014), this rhetoric

presents a full-scale epistemological crisis.

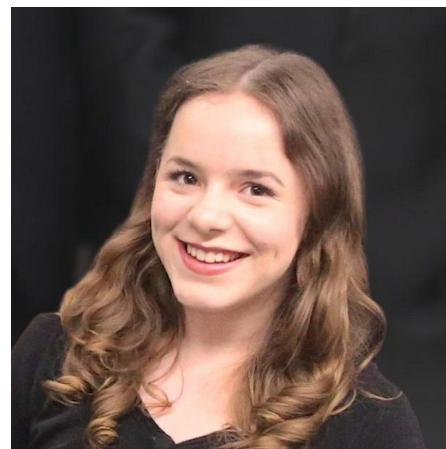
"With the Germans we risk losing our liberty; with the Russians our soul" – Winston Churchill, 1948

In Central-Eastern Europe, the historical legacy of the Second World War casts Russia firmly as aggressors, occupiers and architects of post-war suppression. In firm contrast, in the United Kingdom, Soviet Russia is presented as an unconventional ally, the Anglo-Soviet alliance a common-sense, albeit necessary evil to defeat the common enemy. During this alliance, the British government actively suppressed public knowledge of Soviet crimes against humanity such as the Katyn Massacre (1940) and role in the Warsaw Uprising and Wola Massacre (1944). These symbolic neglects, born of wartime pragmatism, have remained. Today this pragmatic, post-Potsdam approach to Russian imperialism, historic and continued, cannot stand if the Labour Government continues to pose the UK as a staunch opponent of Russian aggression.

At the heart of this challenge lies the fundamental moral imperative: the rejection of appeasement rhetoric. The Russo-Soviet conception of the 'Great Patriotic War' is the fundamental justification of armed conflict in Ukraine. Confronting this revisionist Russian mythology is not just an issue of rhetoric, but of strategic necessity.

In the wake of VE 80, the Labour Government must act decisively to correct the British public's misconceptions of the Second World War. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive overhaul of historical rhetoric, including revisions to the national curriculum and commissioning of reports into British suppression of Soviet crimes.

The Prime Minister's coalition of the willing is a testament to the power of diplomacy, reinforcing the moral case against isolationism and civic apathy in the face of



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Russian aggression. This civic coalition must be rooted in the shared histories of Britain and Central-Eastern Europe during the Second World War, alliances forged in the crucible of war. Winston Churchill famously uttered the words "never was so much owed, by so many, to so few". Over the course of the war, this 'few' included thousands of servicemen from Central European countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland. My Grandfather, Squadron Leader Alfred Kramer, was among them, serving within the Polish Bomber Squadrons under British Command.

These untold stories of wartime service of Central-Eastern Europeans, stories of resistance, sacrifice and unwavering commitment to democratic values, highlight the vital role played by allies in the defence of the United Kingdom. In order to tear down Russian mythology and the burgeoning isolationist voice of Reform UK, the Labour Government must build rhetoric on this tradition and shared history.

Peace with principle at home and abroad.

The solemn mission of the Labour Government is to construct this 'coalition of the willing' within Britain's civil society. The defence of 'peace with principle' depends on reframing the historical narratives of Russian crimes. We must recognise Russia as an imperialist force. Hear this call: if the Labour Government does not confront the revisionist, post-Potsdam narratives of Russia's actions during the Second World War, Russia will fill this silence with its own version of history. The next invasion will be built on this historical revision.

Central-Eastern Europe paid the price for post-war peace. An epistemological overhaul is urgently needed to prevent the return of appeasement and its consequences.

Service Without a Story:

Multiculturalism and the identity crisis behind Britain's military decline

By Kulraj Atkar



Kulraj is a BSc History and Politics student at Aston University with a strong passion for politics, policy, and social justice. He is particularly interested in how public policy shapes lived experiences and in making meaningful contributions to policy discussions and civic dialogues.

Britain is losing its will to serve and the consequences could be catastrophic. The global balance of power is shifting. War rages in Ukraine and Gaza. Tensions flare across Africa and the Balkans. Even the United States, once the architect of the postwar order and champion of international institutions like the UN, now talks of annexing Greenland. Meanwhile, India and Pakistan, two nuclear armed rivals, edge ever more towards confrontation. A new era of global instability is forming, and Britain is increasingly unready to face it.

But that is not the greatest danger. A nation's military is more than guns, ships and fighter jets. The military is a symbol of a nation's pride, and a mirror, reflecting citizens' commitment to their country. Yet recruitment is sliding. In 2023-24, the Royal Navy only achieved 60% of its recruitment target, the British Army 63%, and the RAF 70%. But why? The decline of the military is often attributed to various factors, the Iraq syndrome, widespread public distrust in government and the prevailing sense that the state no longer serves its citizens but merely extracts from them. Yet one potentially critical dimension has gone unexamined, while it remains a hot topic in modern British political discourse.

An analysis of census data from 2001 to 2021, has revealed a significant transformation in the UK's demographic makeup, particularly in England and Wales. The proportion identifying as White British fell from 87.5% to 74.4%, a shift reflecting not just changing pop-

ulations, but changing cultural foundations. As the country becomes more diverse, the concept of Britishness shifts too. British Social Attitudes Survey, identified the proportion of people who view being born in Britain as essential to being 'Truly British', declined from 74% in 2013 to 55% in 2023. Additionally, those who see British ancestry as a defining feature of national identity fell from 51% to 39% in the same period. The national identity of Britain has shifted, from a traditional emphasis on birthplace and ethnic heritage to a more civic conception rooted in shared values and legal norms.

Why does this matter and why does this correlate with declining military support? A nation is not a physical entity, it is an abstract concept, a shared and unifying story which unites all the people in the land. In a time when the UK is undergoing such an ideological transformation, once an empire where the sun never set, to one of the most culturally diverse nations in the West, Britain needs a unifying narrative that all people can rally behind. When birthplace and bloodline and other traditional markers of British identity lose their grip, and no widely accepted framework emerges, people struggle to understand what they're being asked to defend. Enlistment is not just a career choice, it's a declaration of allegiance, and as the sense of national identity becomes more diffuse, the motivation of that allegiance weakens. The armed forces ask people to risk their lives for Britain, but what is Britain? Multicultur-

alism is not a culprit, rather it is the failure to give it a home in the British story.

So, what can be done? If decline in military engagement stems partly from an identity unmoored from shared meaning, then the solutions lie not in nostalgia, but in renewal of a modern and inclusive national story which allows citizens, regardless of heritage, to see themselves as rightful heirs to the nation and potential protectors of it. This means investing not just in recruitment campaigns, but in civic education, national rituals and cultural institutions. Because without a story, there is no service, and without service a nation forgets how to stand.

Rebuilding Britain Through Defence:

A securonomics approach

By Issy Waite

This new Labour government is hungry for growth, making it their central mission and urgently searching for it wherever it might be found. Defence is already recognised as a key industrial sector, creating high skilled jobs, strengthening supply chains and driving innovation. But there is still more to be done, and the increase of the defence budget to 2.5% of GDP provides fresh opportunities to harness the defence industry as a powerful driver of economic growth.

The fact that Britain in recent decades has experienced lower levels of economic growth, just as defence spending has been at a historic low, is no coincidence. But spending more is not enough, we must spend wisely. This is where 'securonomics' comes in.

Seconomics is about ensuring that the economy serves British people. This means treating increased defence spending not as a sunk cost, but as an opportunity to secure good jobs, generate regional growth and industrial renewal. This government has a responsibility to ensure that the economic boost from this increase is felt by British people. This won't just happen on its own, it depends on our ability to adapt and think strategically. If we don't invest in British made equipment and support domestic supply chains, we will simply miss out on the benefits.

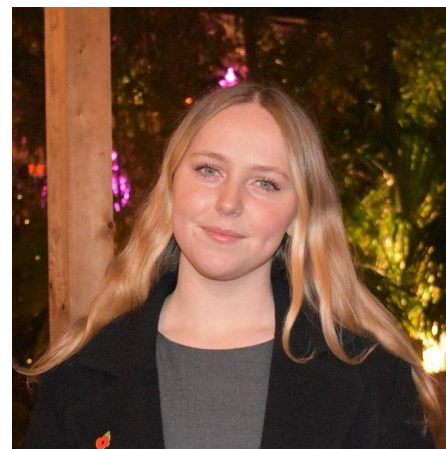
There is a clear link between increased defence spending, and increased growth. It boosts demand, supports our manufacturing industries, and stimulates skilled employment. But we cannot get this wrong, if we fail to en-

sure that growth happens here in Britain we will only end up investing in other people's economies. That is why taking a securonomics-driven approach to defence is essential. It requires strategic thinking, and long-term planning. We must not allow procurement to flow to overseas suppliers, or sleepwalk into a reliance on fragile global supply chains. Instead, we must anchor investment in firms based here in Britain, whilst supporting innovation and resilience across the supply chain.

Defence investment is undeniably expensive, but the cost of keeping the status quo in an uncertain geopolitical climate is far greater. The growing threat has necessitated this increase in spending, there is no alternative. This makes it all the more important to target this new budget to generate as many economic multipliers as possible. This is the essence of securonomics, ensuring that investment increases both security and economic prosperity.

This change also presents an opportunity to maintain and strengthen military personnel at bases here in Britain. These bases are more than military infrastructure, they bring revenue to their local community, helping to support local businesses and workers.

Thinking strategically about defence investment also includes getting the balance of spending right. History offers a stark warning. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union diverted resources away from civilian sectors, such as agriculture, consumer goods and public services in favour of excessive military investment. This resulted in stagnated growth, and a



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reduced standard of living. The excessive increase in defence spending did not yield productive returns, but rather ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet economy. The warning is clear: investment must create productive returns, not just military capacity.

Increasing our defence spending cannot just make British people feel more secure in the face of increased international threat, but also more secure in their jobs and financial futures. This increased spending, if we think strategically, can both drive economic growth, and ensure that growth is felt in people's lives. Securonomics is the framework at the heart of this strategy, ensuring that security and prosperity go hand in hand.

We must be careful not to view defence policy as just a line in the budget, but rather a driver of the national renewal this government has dedicated itself to delivering. If done right, defence policy will not just protect this country, but help to rebuild it.

After Brexit, Beyond NATO:

Reimagining Britain's role in European defence

By Liam MacLua-Hodgson

// The world is more uncertain than it felt a few months or years before - we're in a new era." These were the words of the Prime Minister, Keir Starmer on a visit to the UK aircraft carrier, HMS Prince of Wales on April 24th. It's hard to disagree, particularly from a European perspective. Since 2014, the continent has witnessed the return of military aggression in the form of a resurgent Russia. Moreover, as a result of comments that have been made publicly and in supposed to be private circles by the current US administration; for the first time in generations America may no longer be seen as Europe's security guarantor. The question around the European continent's defensive capabilities post-Cold War has never felt more urgent.

Post-Brexit, the United Kingdom, long one of the central pillars of the continent's defence, now faces the challenge of redefining its role outside the European Union within a shifting geopolitical landscape. In the dawn of this new era, the UK's choices today will shape its relevance in the security architecture of Europe tomorrow.

To simply contextualise recent history, the UK has been indispensable to European freedom and defence. From being a thorn in Napoleon's side, to leading the fight against fascism in World War II, before then playing a key role in shaping NATO and anchoring the Western alliance. Britain's modern military capabilities including its nuclear deterrent, advanced air and naval forces, and global intelligence networks have made it a cornerstone of collective defence.

These capabilities mean Britain remains a key player in European security. But like many fellow European nations, defence cuts have left some experts to question the operational effectiveness of Britain's armed forces. One such warning arrived in De-

cember 2024, with a former Army Major stating that if the UK was embroiled in a war on the scale of what is happening in Ukraine, its army would likely be wiped out within six months.

With a stuttering economy, an aggressive, expansionist state in Russia on Europe's doorstep and a volatile US administration; it's vital that Britain's relationship with its European neighbours and allies, in the shape of the EU is mended. Indeed, in an authored article soon after Labour's victory in the general election, Foreign Secretary David Lammy shared that "European security will be this government's foreign and defence priority."

Since Brexit, the formal link between the UK and EU defence efforts has weakened. The UK has no structured defence agreement with the EU, a gap that reflects both political hesitancy and strategic ambiguity on both sides. Simultaneously, President Macron has continued France's long-time call for greater "strategic autonomy," a doctrine that envisions a more self-reliant Europe, less dependent on the US and NATO. Considering recent events, particularly the political state of the US, this call has begun to gather momentum. European nations including most notably Germany, have started announcing rearmament programmes. The EU commission has similarly announced a plan to re-arm Europe. For the UK, this must represent the opportune moment to collaborate with the EU and individual European nations to bolster the continent's (and its own) defence.

There are positive signs that the UK's relationship with the EU is beginning to progress. In March 2025, a joint article by David Lammy and his EU counterpart, Kaja Kallas encouragingly stated: "European security is indivisible. The UK may no longer be a member of the EU, but when it comes



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to keeping our continent safe, Europe cannot afford to be less than the sum of our parts".

In this turbulent time amidst the economic and diplomatic challenges that are faced it's clear that Europe is stronger together. Joint initiatives and learnings from the Ukraine war must be considered. But it requires political will and leadership to enable all this to happen. For Britain, Brexit may have been damaging to its reputation in Europe but its steadfast support for democracy in Ukraine has shown its value of leading in European defence.

However, if the UK is to be taken seriously as a European security actor, it must now clarify its strategic vision with European allies and show sustained political will to engage with its neighbours. Symbolism and ad hoc leadership aren't enough; long-term investment in defence diplomacy and joint planning are essential. To achieve this, we must come together with like-minded partners and support the development of European strategic autonomy.

Ultimately, the war in Ukraine has reminded Europe what's at stake when deterrence fails. Likewise, it's rekindled an understanding that security is a shared burden. The UK has shown it still has the tools and ambition to be a key contributor to European security. Now it must decide whether it wants to lead in the building of a new Europe or watch it being shaped from the periphery.

A British Approach to a New World and why a Strategic Realignment is Desperately Needed

By Joshua Litter-Jennings

The rules based international world order that has sustained the globe since the allies defeated the Nazis eighty years ago this May is in a perilous situation. Russian tanks have rolled into Kyiv, the PLAN threatens the sovereignty of Taiwan and Tehran wages war through proxies and its intelligence services across the Middle East. Our strongest and longest ally, the United States, threatens to invade NATO allies and advance the agenda of our adversaries. Conflict rages in Yemen, South Sudan and, of course, in Gaza. Put simply, the world we have curated since the beginning of the Cold War is in ruin. The question at the heart of this article is how can Britain mobilise militarily to meet these threats so that we can once again rule the land, skies and sea? In an era of increasing domestic troubles, economic hardship and a rapidly changing world, how can Britain "rule" the land, skies, sea as well as cyber and space also.

The answer: we can't. To truly adapt to the geopolitical situation of today a critical realignment of our military approach is needed. The question asked here is framed in the idea that we remain a significant player on the global stage. This could not be farther from the truth. While our military has declined over decades of peace, not only have our adversaries gained immense strength, but warfare has rapidly evolved. Before we even consider how we mobilise to meet the challenges of today, we must first acknowledge that Britain simply cannot be a world leader in all the areas of warfare today.

Firstly, to address the phrasing of the question directly regarding how we can rule the five different arenas of warfare once more. Eighty years ago, when Britain defeated fascism, we were a considerable global player. While our power declined as the Cold War dominated, we retain some key influence. In a post-Brexit world and with an increasingly unreliable

White House, our role globally has diminished further. We are no longer a bridge between Brussels and Washington, with the white house being increasingly unreliable. In President Trump's first 100 days he has threatened to invade Greenland and Canada, two staunch allies of the West. To build a defence and foreign policy that could address our adversaries, we need ironclad US support. We simply cannot dominate any arena of warfare without the support of the US.

Secondly, we face an increasingly challenging domestic situation. Fourteen years of Conservative Government have seen our public services broken and battered. Waiting lists for hospital treatment rose to a record of 7.7 million in September 2023. The Crown Court backlog now stands at 67,573, the highest on record. The annual rate of inflation peaked at 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high as part of the ongoing cost of living crisis. Social care, schools, prisons and many more public services are all failing. Economically, we are facing significant issues. While these points may seem slightly contradictory to an edition focusing on UK defence and foreign policy, they provide vital context when approaching this issue. The UK public does not have the stomach nor the desire for a ramped-up defence and foreign policy. A YouGov poll from June 2024, a month before the most recent general election, saw the cost of living, health and the economy as the top three issues when deciding their vote. Defence policy came in at 9% in comparison to the cost of living at 45%. The conflict in Gaza was at 5%.

This may seem a mere regurgitation of a well-known fact, but to many voters, foreign policy is not a priority because it does not impact them directly. But to understand this point is vital in relation to determining how we approach the challenges of today. With little public appetite or frankly interest in how we approach global affairs, we must



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realign our interests to suit the public to maximise our success. Do we really have the capacity to project British power in the Indo-Pacific? How can we counter Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait without a reliable US ally? But above all else, how can we afford a stronger defence and foreign policy when there is no appetite for it from the public?

We face an increasingly uncertain world with old allies and new adversaries alike disrupting the world order. At home, domestic troubles dominate the political landscape, making it increasingly difficult for Britain to once again rule the land, skies, sea, cyber and space. In short, it is vital that we first contextualise our international role as a regional, European power, and we must focus first on Europe before we can even contemplate going beyond. We do not have the capacity and we, as a result of domestic pressures, will not be able to secure the capacity to compete with China as it seeks to become the global superpower or as Iran is determined to expand its regional influence.

While we have certainly begun making progress on a strategic realignment of our global position and we have increased defence spending to 2.5% from April 2027, we must go further and faster with our foreign policy strategy. We simply must accept that we are not a global power and realign our approach to this increasingly volatile world immediately.





