

Written evidence submitted by Dr Basil Germond (MAR0002)

The Security Dimension of Maritime 2050

Information on the respondent

I am a Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University, with over 15 years of experience as a researcher in naval and maritime affairs¹. I have published two books and in excess of 25 peer-reviewed journal articles and academic book chapters on maritime security, seapower, navies, and the maritime dimension of Global Britain. My response to this Call is based on my academic knowledge of the question and is given in a personal capacity.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. My evidence addresses the security dimension of *Maritime 2050*, with a focus on the progress made considering the 2021 *Integrated Review* and the current geopolitical context.
- 1.2. *Maritime 2050* has set up **ambitious** maritime security **objectives**, including strengthening the UK's risk assessment and analysis capabilities to respond to emerging maritime security threats. Success depends on a 'whole-of-government' approach as well as international cooperation.
- 1.3. Since the publication of *Maritime 2050*, the importance of upholding **freedom of navigation** has grown significantly. The current geopolitical context is initiating a move towards the militarisation of maritime security and ocean governance.
- 1.4. The main gap identified is the need to account for the links and dependencies between **climate change** and the occurrence of **maritime criminality**.
- 1.5. The **refresh of the National Strategy for Maritime Security** will be key to delivering the security objectives of *Maritime 2050*.

2. The security objectives of *Maritime 2050*

- 2.1. *Maritime 2050* recognises the interplay between ocean's resilience and maritime security. Investments and growth in the maritime economy are

dependent on a safe and secure maritime domain. *Maritime 2050* sets up ambitious maritime security objectives.

- 2.2. The UK has global security interests that have a maritime component, from freedom of navigation and counter-piracy to anti-terrorism and maritime cyber security². Responding to evolving maritime security threats requires to improve risk assessment and analysis mechanisms and capabilities.
- 2.3. *Maritime 2050* emphasises the importance of adopting a ‘whole-of-government’ approach to maritime security, to develop public-private partnerships as well as international cooperation, including reinforcing diplomatic and military connections and collaborations.

3. Strategic prioritisation of freedom of navigation

- 3.1. *Maritime 2050* stresses the importance of upholding freedom of navigation, which can be disrupted by accident, criminal actors, and foreign state competitors.
- 3.2. Maritime trade can be accidentally disrupted. Minor incidents can engender substantial shortages and cost. For example, maritime trade has recently been disrupted due to the unexpected closure of the Suez Canal as a result of a maritime accident. In another example, the shortage of maritime labour resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, although limited in time, demonstrated the vulnerability of the maritime supply chain.
- 3.3. Maritime crimes (such as piracy, trafficking, and illegal fishing) still pose a threat to the UK’s maritime security objectives. But since the publication of *Maritime 2050*, the global geopolitical landscape (and seascape) has evolved. The likelihood of freedom of navigation being disrupted on purpose has increased.
- 3.4. The Ukraine war has demonstrated the fragility of freedom of navigation, e.g. closure of the Turkish Straits, collateral damage to commercial ships, Ukraine cut off from global sea lanes of communication. Similarly, and perhaps even more importantly for international commerce, China’s assertive claims over the South China Sea, indicates that freedom of the sea cannot be taken as granted in the current geopolitical context.

- 3.5. The 2021 *Integrated Review* emphasised the importance of the sea for the defence, security and prosperity of the UK³. Political decisions have been made to devote more resources towards Britain's contribution to the stability of the global maritime order.
- 3.6. In 2021, the maritime dimension of Global Britain (or Global Maritime Britain) has been realised with the deployment of the carrier strike group CSG21 (led by the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth) to the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific. The UK has also upheld freedom of navigation as and when possible (e.g. June 2021 HMS Defender incident in the waters off Crimea; HMS Richmond transiting through the Taiwan Strait in September 2021)⁴.
- 3.7. In this context, an important challenge for HM Government is to address the growing militarisation of maritime security and ocean governance. Maritime security is not only about tackling maritime crime and disruptive non-state actors, but it is also about upholding freedom of navigation in opposition to the disruptive actions of authoritarian states (in particular the UK's named competitors). Thus, there is a naval dimension to it.

4. A gap in *Maritime 2050*: climate change's impacts on maritime security

- 4.1. Research has shown that the effects of climate change on natural systems (e.g. warming oceans, sea level rise) put pressures on human systems by engendering or reinforcing poverty and food insecurity. This, in turn, contributes to societal insecurities, grievance and violence, as well as the search for alternative sources of income and livelihood.
- 4.2. In turn, this impacts negatively on the occurrence of maritime crime (piracy, illegal fishing, trafficking) as well as on the incentive for maritime migration⁵.
- 4.3. The security and resilience of the oceans as well as the interplay between them are being impacted by climate change. Early warning and analysis mechanisms shall account for this process. In the context of the *Integrated Review's* emphasis on the importance of 'resilient oceans'⁶, the gap in policy regarding the links between climate change and maritime security shall be addressed.

5. The way forward: the refreshed National Strategy for Maritime Security:

- 5.1. The questions of ocean resilience from a security and safety perspective will be addressed by the refreshed National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS)⁷.
- 5.2. Assessing the progress made and the limitations of *Maritime 2050* will benefit from a scrutiny of the new NSMS by the Transport Committee.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

- 6.1. Based on the above, I have the following three recommendations:
 - 6.1.1. To continue to prioritise freedom of navigation as a central component of the UK's maritime objectives, both for security and economic reasons.
 - 6.1.2. To account for the climate change dimension of maritime security in the assessment of *Maritime 2050* and to include this maritime security challenge in future policies as mentioned by the House of Lords' International Relations and Defence Committee⁸.
 - 6.1.3. To include the forthcoming NSMS into the evaluation of *Maritime 2050*.

7. Suggested questions for HM Government

- 7.1. How does HM Government plan to tackle the impacts of climate change on the occurrence of maritime insecurities that constrain the UK's maritime objectives?
- 7.2. What progress has been made in regard to the refreshed National Strategy for Maritime Security?

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Endnotes

¹ Lancaster University page for [Dr Basil Germond](#).

² Department for Transport (2019), *Maritime 2050: Navigating the future*, DfT (accessible [here](#)).

³ HM Government (2021), *Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, CP 403 (accessed [online](#)); B. Germond (2021), Response to the Call for evidence: "The Navy: purpose and procurement" (Defence Committee, House of Commons), NAV0004 (accessed [online](#)); B. Germond (2021), "Global Britain and Seapower", *Maritime 2021*, British Maritime Foundation (accessed [online](#)).

⁴ B. Germond (2021), "Global Britain and the Search for Collective Seapower", *The National Interest* (accessed [here](#)); B. Germond (2021), "AUKUS: The realisation of 'Global Maritime Britain'", *Britain's World*, Council on Geostrategy (accessed [here](#)).

⁵ B. Germond & A. Mazaris (2019), "Climate Change and Maritime Security", *Marine Policy*, Vol.99, pp.262-266

(accessed [here](#)); House of Lords, International Relations and Defence Committee (2022), *2nd Report of Session 2021–22, UNCLOS: the law of the sea in the 21st century*, Ordered to be printed 10 February 2022 and published 1 March 2022, Published by the Authority of the House of Lords, HL Paper 159 (accessed [here](#)) [Para 11 of the report refers to the points I made in the written [evidence](#) I co-submitted with SafeSeas to the HoL, para 3.2].

⁶ HM Government (2021), *Global Britain in a competitive age*, *op.cit.*, pp.92-93.

⁷ Maritime UK (2021), *Maritime 2050: Where are we now?*, London (accessible [here](#)); Department for International Trade (2022), “Embracing the ocean: a Board of Trade paper”, 10 March 2022 (accessed [here](#)).

⁸ House of Lords, International Relations and Defence Committee (2022), *op.cit.*, para 113.