

## Written evidence submitted by Professor Basil Germond (IRR0030)

### *THIS EVIDENCE FOCUSES ON SEAPOWER AND FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION*

#### Information on the respondent

I am a Professor of International Security at Lancaster University, with over 15 years of experience as a researcher in naval and maritime affairs<sup>1</sup>. 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. This evidence is based on my academic knowledge of the topic and is given in a personal capacity.

#### Executive summary

- In a period of systemic challenges in term of balance of power and global leadership, **seapower is key to the UK's national interest**.
- In 2021, the *Integrated Review* and its accompanying *Command Paper* stressed that the security and prosperity of the UK depend on a free, safe, secure, and 'resilient' maritime domain<sup>2</sup>.
- In light of current changes in the strategic environment, **freedom of navigation and Western leadership of the global maritime order are top strategic priorities** that a refreshed *Integrated Review* should further emphasize.
- HM Government should commit to long-term, **sustained investments** in the Royal Navy, the UK maritime sector, and other underlying components of seapower, such as oceanography and outer space assets.

#### 1. Seapower and global leadership

- 1.1. Seapower is not limited to naval power, and it goes beyond securing and exercising 'command of the sea' in wartime. Seapower is the ability to operate at or from the sea to **protect one's interests at sea** (e.g. freedom of navigation, maritime security) and to **produce strategic effects on land** (e.g. power projection, control of the global supply chain).
- 1.2. Seapower has been **instrumental in winning global wars** (e.g. the two World Wars) and **long-term strategic competitions** (such as the Cold War) by enabling global reach and granting control of the global supply chain<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.3. Seapower is also crucial **in peacetime to stabilize the global order**<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, seapower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a collective asset of Western countries and partners, which have informally formed a

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<sup>1</sup> Lancaster University webpage for [Professor Basil Germond](#).

<sup>2</sup> 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](#)); MoD (2021), *Defence in a competitive age*, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Defence by Command of Her Majesty, March 2021, CP 411 (accessed [online](#)).

<sup>3</sup> P. Kennedy (2022), *Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London; G. Modelski and W.R. Thompson (1988), *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494-1993*, Macmillan Press, London.

<sup>4</sup> B. Germond (2015), *The maritime Dimension of European Security: Seapower and the European Union*,

“**solidaristic society of maritime nations**”. This is a key factor explaining Western leadership of the global liberal order<sup>5</sup>. The AUKUS partnership is a good example of maritime solidarity.

1.4. **Seapower is of critical importance during periods of leadership challenge**. Changes in the balance of seapower engender and/or result from changes in the cycle of global dominance (e.g. *Pax Britanica* and *Pax Americana*). These changes usually occur following a global war, but we can also expect a change of leadership without a major war<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. The maritime dimension of recent events (2021-2022)

2.1. Since the release of the *Integrated Review*, Russia’s war in Ukraine as well as tensions in East Asia have shown that 1) **the system is moving closer to a leadership challenge**, and 2) **seapower is key to global leadership**.

2.2. The war in Ukraine highlights the importance of the **global supply chain**. On the one hand, Russia’s lack of control over the global supply chain contributes to the effectiveness of **sanctions**, which weaken the regime’s capacity to sustain its war machine by affecting its economy and military-industrial base<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, **energy security** (and energy affordability) has become a weakness of Western societies. Additionally, developing nations are impacted by the **food crisis** resulting from the Russian blockade of Ukraine. Russia’s limited sea denial capabilities in the North-western Black Sea have been enough to disrupt the global food chain.

2.3. The **civilian maritime sector** plays a crucial role by contributing to sanctions against Russia. Major shipping companies have suspended their operations to and from Russia. **This significant collective effort** has a cost. For example, in its *Interim Report for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2022*, Maersk evaluates that “winding down in Russia” has resulted in “a net EBIT [Earning Before Interests and Taxes] impact of negative USD 532m”<sup>8</sup>. Declining trade with Russia and the ban on Russian (flagged, owned, or operated) ships has also impacted business in Western ports<sup>9</sup>.

2.4. From a battlefield perspective, Ukraine’s military successes against Russia’s Black Sea Fleet show that navies operating close to enemy shores are vulnerable to **land-based missiles, drones, and innovative disruptive technologies**, some of them not fully anticipated.

2.5. **Critical infrastructure at sea**, in particular pipelines (energy) and undersea cables (telecommunication), are vulnerable assets, whose protection must be prioritized. Adequate security measures rely on enhanced oceanographic knowledge.

2.6. **China’s** combined efforts to develop **naval power**, to establish a network of ‘friendly’ bases along the **Maritime Silk Road** driven by civilian incentives, and to use ‘**grey zone**’ tactics in the South China Sea that involves state and non-state actors as well as legal claims, demonstrate **Beijin’s understanding that seapower is key to global leadership**.

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Palgrave Macmillan, London and New York.

<sup>5</sup> B. Germond (2022), “The Solidaristic Society of Maritime Nations”, *Australian Naval Review*, 2022, No.1, pp.72-85; A. Lambert (2018), *Seapower States*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

<sup>6</sup> Modelski and Thompson (1988), *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> US Department of State (2022), *The Impact of Sanctions and Export Controls on the Russian Federation*, Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson, 20 October 2022 (accessed [online](#)); see also European Council (2022), *Infographic - Impact of sanctions on the Russian economy*, updated 23 November 2022 (accessed [online](#)).

<sup>8</sup> A.P. Møller – Mærsk (2022), *Interim Report for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2022*, 2 November 2022 (accessed [online](#)), p.5.

<sup>9</sup> For example see Port of Rotterdam (2022), *2022 Half-Year Report*, Port of Rotterdam Authority, 21 July 2022 (accessed [online](#)), p.3.

### **3. Recommendations to update the *Integrated Review***

- 3.1. HM Government should **elevate freedom of navigation and maritime leadership to the top tier of the UK's strategic priorities.**
- 3.2. HM Government should reiterate that the UK will play its role within the “solidaristic society of maritime nations” and will, in collaboration with allies and like-minded states, **support partners whose interests are challenged at sea.**
- 3.3. HM Government should ensure **sustained investments** (via funding, procurement, and priority planning) in the UK's means of enacting seapower. This includes:
  - 3.3.1. **Naval forces:** The Royal Navy will be at the forefront of the UK's defence of freedom of navigation. As stressed by the Defence Committee in December 2021, the Royal Navy's resources are already stretched and an increase in funding is necessary<sup>10</sup>.
  - 3.3.2. **The civilian maritime sector:** In light of the observations made under paragraphs 2.1-2.6, the whole maritime sector needs to be supported: UK shipping companies (and the UK Flag), shipbuilding industry, port authorities, maritime insurances, and fishing industry<sup>11</sup>.
  - 3.3.3. **Oceanography** (and, more broadly, ocean science): Knowledge of the maritime domain, and preventing exclusivity of this knowledge to competitors, is a key element of seapower. This knowledge will be increasingly important to devise security measures to protect undersea assets.
  - 3.3.4. **Outer space assets:** They support British seapower in wartime and peacetime. Space-based intelligence, communication, reconnaissance, and maritime domain awareness are key to successful naval operations and ocean governance<sup>12</sup>. The Defence Committee stressed in October 2022 that the commercial space sector is likely to play a growing role in “Defence Space” and noticed that “the commercial SpaceX Starlink satellite network has been used to support Ukraine's military operations”<sup>13</sup>.

### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1. Indicators point towards an **impending leadership challenge** at the global level.
- 4.2. **Seapower has been critical in maintaining Western leadership of the global maritime order.** Control of the global supply chain will be critical and must be prioritized, especially in light of China's growing civilian and military seapower.
- 4.3. The UK has a role to play in defending the interests of the “solidaristic society of maritime nations”. **Stabilising the global maritime order is intimately linked to British national interest,**

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<sup>10</sup> House of Commons, Defence Committee (2021), “We're going to need a bigger Navy”, Third Report of Session 2021–22, Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 7 December 2021, HC 168 (accessed [online](#)).

<sup>11</sup> Basil Germond, Oral evidence given to the House of Commons' Transport Committee on “Maritime 2050: implementation, objectives and effects, HC 160”, Wednesday 25 May 2022, Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 25 May 2022 (accessed [online](#)), Q97 and Q100; see also HM Government (2022), *National Strategy for Maritime Security*, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Transport by Command of Her Majesty, August 2022, CP 724; and Department for Transport (2019), *Maritime 2050: Navigating the future*, DfT (accessed [online](#)).

<sup>12</sup> HM Government (2022), *op.cit.*, p.43(§11); MoD (2021), *op.cit.*, p.10(§2.6).

<sup>13</sup> House of Commons, Defence Committee (2022), “Defence Space: through adversity to the stars?”, Third Report of Session 2022–23, Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 11 October 2022, HC 182 (accessed [online](#)), p.18.

since the UK's security depends in the short, medium, and long term on the Western control of the global supply chain.

- 4.4. Preparing for the challenges ahead requires a sustained **investment in seapower assets and capabilities**, which are not limited to the navy but encompass the whole UK maritime sector and beyond.

#### **5. Suggested questions for HM Government**

- 5.1. Does HM Government recognize that freedom of navigation and Western control of the global supply chain are core to the UK's national interest and should be a top strategic priority?
- 5.2. How does HM Government intend to address the need to (financially) support the UK's maritime assets, including the Royal Navy, the civilian maritime sector and relevant outer space assets?

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