

Written Evidence submitted by Dr Alessio Patalano

The Navy: Purpose and Procurement

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This is a submission in response to the House of Commons Defence Committee inquiry on the purpose and procurement of the Royal Navy. It relates to the UK policy concerning the expected roles for the Royal Navy over the next two decades and whether procurement plans will deliver and sustain the required capabilities, by addressing the questions indicated below.

Executive Summary:

This submission addresses the questions of UK ambitions for the Royal Navy over the next two decades, the type of naval threats and commitments to meet them, what naval forces and capabilities will be needed, and how cooperation with partners and procurement plans will enable the government to deliver them. In addressing the above questions, this submission makes the following specific points:

1. The UK has three main ambitions for the Royal Navy: first, to represent the UK frontline contribution to systemic stability in the age of Sino-American competition; second, the forward-deployed manifestation of a militarily 'networked' and 'global' Britain; third, a major means to strengthen the union at home and project an image of leadership in industrial innovation abroad.
2. The return of state on state competition at sea has expanded the canvass of surface, sub-surface, and air threats to navies, with threat levels being particularly elevated in case of crises or combat scenarios in the littoral areas of the Black and Baltic seas, the straits of Hormuz and Taiwan, and the East and South China seas.
3. Whilst preparing for high-intensity conflict must be taken as an important goal, the more frequent naval challenges will be defined by military and constabulary activities aimed at asserting control and impeding the conduct of routing signalling and presence missions.
4. The Royal Navy will have to balance standing commitments to NATO with other international obligations through a posture that prioritises core warfighting capabilities in Europe and capabilities for presence and shaping missions in the Indo-Pacific region.
5. Capabilities should focus on attaining an expeditionary leaning posture, with a maritime strike and ASW centric fleet, capable of operating with key partners in an interchangeable fashion, as Carrier Strike Group 21 is proving.
6. Access to a global support system to sustain forward deployed forces and enable high levels of availability will be central to the ability of the navy to remain globally relevant.
7. The Royal Navy's ability to deliver on the Integrated Review's ambitious agenda rests heavily on the ability of major equipment procurement programmes to deliver on time and on budget to avoid significant gaps.

• What is the UK's ambition for the Navy's role over the next 20 years?

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The navy's role over the next 20 years is going to be central to UK's ambitions in three crucial ways.

The UK frontline contribution to systemic stability in the age of competition. The United States remains the UK's closest ally and the UK considers this relationship as a cornerstone of the international order and stability. An unfettered use of shipping lanes underwrites global stability through maritime connectivity which, in turn, sustains the circulation of goods and resources and ultimately prosperity – the lifeblood of such an order. Without maritime stability the openness of the international order stands critically vulnerable. The emerging 'Biden doctrine' recognises state-on-state competition against authoritarian regimes like Russia and China as the defining challenge of our time, an assumption shared by the UK Integrated Review.² More specifically, in distinguishing between Russia and China, senior American officials have specifically stated that the latter is the 'pacing' military challenge for the United States.³ This is a point of crucial significance since the friction points of the Sino-American competition are at sea, notably in the East and South China Seas and across the Strait of Taiwan, and the Chinese declared intention to become a maritime power has direct repercussions on global maritime stability.⁴ The Royal Navy is going to be the frontline of the British commitment to ensure the stability of the international order, renewing the role of trans-Atlantic ties in maintaining its openness in the face of authoritarian challenges. Within this context, whilst the integrated review process clearly states that Russia represents the main military threat to the UK, Chinese military – and especially naval – power should represent the benchmark against which the capabilities of the Royal Navy are developed and pursued if a global posture is to be maintained.

The forward-deployed manifestation of a 'networked' and 'global' Britain. The above does not mean that the UK should just aspire to match the Chinese challenge on a one-on-one basis. Rather, the second ambition for the Royal Navy is to become the most visible manifestation of *how* and *why* Britain still matters globally. The Integrated Review and Command Paper have stressed how Britain's future defence posture will rely considerably on the ability to be fully integrated at the national level, and more interoperable and interchangeable with key partners and allies internationally. Beyond meeting requirements for the security of territorial waters and EEZs from the English channel to the South Atlantic, Royal Navy assets will continue to stand at the heart of NATO's rapid reaction forces, US-led security and deterrence groups, and emerging bilateral and multilateral mechanisms from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific. Plans concerning the balance of the fleet suggest that the Royal Navy will be more forward-deployed, with different assets taking advantage of a support structure that focuses on what a recent Policy Exchange report defined as a 'places, not bases' approach.⁵ The aim is to favour a more persistent form of engagement, focused on shaping security rather than reacting to crises. Different types of capabilities, from presence type of assets like offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) to anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and carrier-enabled strike capabilities, will be deployed on the basis of the specific security circumstances of different operational theatre. Across different missions and

² Hal Brands, 'The Emerging Biden Doctrine: Democracy, Autocracy, and the Defining Clash of Our Time', *Foreign Affairs*, 29 June 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-06-29/emerging-biden-doctrine>; The White House, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: March 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>, 7-8; HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (CP 403, London: March 2021), 28, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf.

³ Jim Garamone, 'Task Force Looks to Prioritize, Synchronize, DOD Response to China', *DOD News*, 11 February 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2501858/task-force-looks-to-prioritize-synchronize-dod-response-to-china/>.

⁴ On China's maritime ambitions, cf. Michael A. McDevitt, *China as a Twenty First Century Naval Power: Theory, Practice, and Implications* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020).

⁵ Policy Exchange's Indo-Pacific Commission, *A Very British Tilt: Towards a New UK Strategy in the Indo-Pacific Region* (London: Policy Exchange, 2020), 47, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-Very-British-Tilt.pdf>.

regions, the Royal Navy will need to be fully interoperable with allies and partners. Compared to any potential adversary, the UK has a unique advantage in quality partnerships the world over. Elevating them to new levels of interoperability will ensure that the Royal Navy is a global force and, in the process, that the UK remains a relevant international security actor.

A major means to strengthen the union at home and project an image of leadership in innovation abroad. The third ambition for the Royal Navy is to be an important contributor to future UK prosperity – across the country – by ensuring a continued commitment to national shipbuilding capacity and cutting edge know-how in the defence sector. This ambition is not only inherently relevant to the ‘levelling up agenda’ promoted by the current government, but it also sets the foundations for a stronger international industrial profile, with major contracts creating potentially significant opportunities overseas. The Type 26 frigate programme represents one such example of how the Royal Navy can fulfil this ambition. According to the National Audit Office, the Type 26 ASW frigate is currently considered to be one year ahead of schedule in terms of delivery of the first unit, albeit concerns remain on the suppliers’ ability to project manage effectively.⁶ These observations notwithstanding, the government has plans to procure eight units with the steel cut for the third ship as of July 2021.⁷ Importantly, all the ships will be built in Scotland, sustaining 1,700 jobs there, and some 4,000 jobs across the UK across the wider supply chain. Equally significant, these ships will include cutting edge solutions to reduce environmental impact and employ 3D printing and virtual reality to ensure the design is refined earlier in the process.⁸ Abroad, the design has enjoyed success with nine Australian *Hunter Class* and fifteen Canadian *Surface Combatants* based on the Type 26. Whilst the *Hunter class* has raised concerns in terms of growth margins for systems upgrades through the programme’s expected life-cycle, the point remains that future capabilities have a role to play at home and abroad in renewing British industrial competitiveness and in strengthening the union as a result of it.

- **What naval threats is the UK likely to face and what standing commitments, including for NATO and UK Overseas Territories, does the government intend the Navy to undertake? In particular what is the implication of a tilt to the Indo-Pacific?**

Meeting a wide range of advanced surface, underwater, and missile threats. Benchmarked against existing naval competitors, the Royal Navy is likely to face three different types of threats. Russian, Iranian, and North Korean naval capabilities all encompass some of these threats, but not on China’s scale and complexity. Indeed, in this context, it is worth making two preliminary observations. First, the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) stands today as the world’s largest surface fleet, with a recently built force of technological sophistication comparable to advanced Western navies – a condition unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.⁹ Second, the Chinese navy is expanding and modernising at a pace that has no equal albeit in some areas, notably in ASW, Chinese capabilities are still improving and not qualitatively on par to the UK’s.¹⁰ Within the timeframe defined by the Integrated Review, it is safe to assume that the PLAN will be capable of contesting American sea-control within the waters of the East and South China Seas (including around the Strait of Taiwan) and of projecting power in a sustainable expeditionary capacity from the African continent to the

⁶ National Audit Office, *Improving the Performance of Major Equipment Contracts: Ministry of Defence* (London June 2021), 29, 39, <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Improving-the-performance-of-major-equipment-contracts.pdf>.

⁷ UK Ministry of Defence, ‘First Steel Cut for HMS Belfast’, *Press Release*, 29 June 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-steel-cut-for-hms-belfast>.

⁸ Ibid..

⁹ Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020* (Washington, DC: 2020), 44, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

¹⁰ Ibid., 45, 78.

South Pacific, as its recent regular forays indicate. Underwater capabilities encompassing more stealthy and silent submarines, sea mines, and deep-sea capabilities – developed by a number of actors including Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea – present a significant challenge to modern ASWs as well as underwater sea-cables. These, combined with modern long-range land-based air and missile strike capabilities present an unprecedented multi-layered threat to naval forces seeking to operate in littoral areas at a time of crises or war, notably in the Baltic and Black Seas, the Straits of Hormuz and Taiwan, and the China Seas.

Subthreshold military and constabulary coercion represent a key naval threat. The high-end capabilities highlighted above represent a significant concern especially in war-type scenarios. Currently, whilst it is sensible to assume that tensions among states will remain frequent, the likelihood of such tensions leading to major war remains a matter of some debate. Coercion at sea, therefore, represents the more immediate threat to naval activities. Recent experiences in the Black Sea, North Atlantic, South and East China Seas, have highlighted two types of coercion at sea. Coercive ‘military’ activities are conducted by navies and other military assets such as land-based fighter jets and include missions such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), patrol deployments, and training.¹¹ Their coercive nature is defined by attempts to test foreign naval capabilities and probe opportunities to assert presence and contest foreign militaries operational access and manoeuvre; military coercion encompasses activities to shadow, harass, interfere with, and deter operations by foreign militaries in international as well as territorial waters. The main aim is to tactically shape the operational environment to favour one’s conduct of military operations and limit and obstruct those of other state actors. Russian and Chinese behaviours in their respective areas of operation represent a case in point. Constabulary coercion, on the other hand, has focused more narrowly – as one senior Chinese military author from the Department of National Defence Mobilisation at the National Defence University described them – on low-intensity maritime rights protection operations.¹² They are aimed at achieving the goal of declaring, supporting, or enforcing territorial claims. The key difference between the two categories therefore relates to whether the activity in question can be directly linked to the defence of a specific maritime territorial claim or not, whether Russian claims in the Black Sea or Chinese ones in the China Seas. Constabulary coercion has been predominantly performed by coastal, paramilitary, and law-enforcement agencies, including militias. Military and constabulary coercion have significant strategic and political value, especially to authoritarian regimes with revisionist agendas, and should be expected to remain a regular currency in the practice of naval affairs.¹³

Balancing standing responsibilities with international commitments and formal obligations. The Command Paper has set an ambitious plan to meet national and international commitments. The Royal Navy has standing commitments in UK waters and EEZ, including British territories and dependencies overseas. These responsibilities encompass presence missions from assistance to nationals to fishery patrols and the decision to develop an affordable class of OPVs such as the *River* class, batch I and II, was essential to plant the seeds for meeting the availability and sustainability requirements inherent to such commitments in places as diverse as the Falklands, Gibraltar, the Indian and the Pacific Oceans.¹⁴ Beyond the defence of UK maritime sovereign spaces, other standing commitments derive from the UK’s role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and as a major member of NATO, and the Five Powers Defence Agreement (FPDA). In particular, the Royal Navy will continue to meet its commitment to NATO’s power projection

¹¹ Alessio Patalano, ‘When Strategy is ‘Hybrid’ and not ‘Grey’: Reviewing Chinese Military and Constabulary Coercion at Sea’, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 31, 2018:6, 820.

¹² Conor M. Kennedy, ‘Maritime Militia Operations and Trends – Gray Zone Tactics’, paper presented at the conference *China’s Maritime Gray Zone Operations*, China Maritime Studies Institute, Naval War College, RI, 2-3 May 2017, 110.

¹³ Patalano, ‘When Strategy is ‘Hybrid’ and not ‘Grey’’, op. cit., 820-24.

¹⁴ Ministry of Defence, *Defence in a Competitive Age* (CP 411, London, March 2021), 49, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974661/CP411_-_Defence_Command_Plan.pdf.

credibility and Euro-Atlantic defence through its sea-based nuclear deterrent capabilities, its Carrier Strike group (CSG), and its Littoral Strike Forces (LSF). The Command Paper also indicated that the UK intends to use its capabilities to meet wider obligations to international stability.¹⁵ In this respect, it is worth stressing that the UK remains part of the UN Command overseeing the Korean War armistice and has been involved in implementing at sea sanctions against North Korea since the ship-to-ship transfers started to be monitored in 2018. Unlike standing commitments to NATO, the UN Command membership implies no automatic commitment of UK forces in hostilities on the Korean Peninsula, but there is nonetheless international expectation that the UK would be involved in meeting such a challenge.¹⁶ Similarly, the FPDA does not commit UK forces to regional crises in Southeast Asia, but members are required to consult each other ‘immediately’ in the event of a threat or an armed attack. This creates a reasonable expectation for the UK to retain a degree of commitment to regional stability, if anything to reduce the risk of armed attacks to occur.¹⁷ Emphasis in the Command Paper on OPVs and Littoral Response Groups (LRG) – centred on the converted *Bay* class support ships - as the main naval components to meet standing commitments outside the Euro-Atlantic area, suggest an approach that prioritises military deterrence in Europe, and shaping activities beyond its boundaries.¹⁸

Prioritising shaping activities in the Indo-Pacific. From 2013–17, tensions in the Indo-Pacific region increased significantly in light of North Korea’s missile and nuclear brinkmanship and Chinese behaviour in maritime disputes in the East and South China seas, including across the strait of Taiwan. As a result, close UK defence partners – notably Japan – faced heightened security challenges, and deployed British military power in the region was notable by its absence. From 2018-20, consecutive, and at times, overlapping deployments by Royal Navy ships did much to address the UK’s prior absence, enabling defence planners to test the requirements for a more persistent presence.¹⁹ The maiden deployment of *HMS Queen Elizabeth* CSG will likely cement and further enhance progress made thus far. The experience of the past three years has been invaluable to provide the Royal Navy with the raw materials to develop a desirable and affordable posture for the region. The Command Paper’s emphasis on shaping activities – notably capacity building, partnerships management and enhancement, and disaster prevention and response – directly build on recent experience and indicate an understanding of the importance of such tasks. It is notable that the OPVs currently earmarked for Indo-Pacific deployments have received ‘dazzle’ camouflage colour schemes.²⁰ This is a tactically smart choice for the theatres in which these ships will be operating because it makes visual detection difficult. It is also a statement to crew members and external audiences alike that the Royal Navy will be conducting its activities as part of what the integrated operating concept regards as the mindset and posture of ‘campaigns’ in an age of coercion and competition.²¹ In this respect, the OPVs and LRGs

¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹⁶ Louisa Brooke-Holland, ‘UK Defence Obligations to South Korea’, *Briefing Paper* (London: House of Commons Library, no. CBP08100, 5 October 2017, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8100/>).

¹⁷ Tim Huxley, ‘Developing the Five Power Defence Arrangements’, IISS Analysis, 1 June 2017, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2017/06/fpda>; Government of the UK, ‘UK is Extensively Involved in Southeast Asia: Speech by Scott Wightman’.

¹⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Defence in a Competitive Age*, op. cit., 48. The use of the Bay class for forward deployed activities is also central to the argument proposed in Alessio Patalano, *UK Defence from the ‘Far East’ to the ‘Indo-Pacific’* (Foreword by RT Hon Sir Michael Fallon, MP, Policy Exchange, 2019), <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/UK-Defence-from-the-%E2%80%98Far-East%E2%80%99-to-the-%E2%80%98Indo-Pacific%E2%80%99.pdf>.

¹⁹ Alessio Patalano, ‘The United Kingdom and Indo-Pacific Security’, in Lyn Kuok and Tim Huxley (eds.), *Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2021: Key Development and Trends* (London: IISS, 2021), 153-170.

²⁰ UK Ministry of Defence, ‘HMS Tamar Dazzles as Iconic Wartime Paint Scheme is Revived’, *Royal Navy News*, 21 April 2021, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2021/april/27/20210427-dazzle-paint>.

²¹ UK Ministry of Defence, *The Integrated Operating Concept* (London, 30 September 2020), 10, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922969/20200930_-_Introducing_the_Integrated_Operating_Concept.pdf.

should be sufficient for a persistent form of Indo-Pacific engagement, albeit one optimised for presence more than combat missions.

- **What naval forces (vessels, capabilities and bases) are required to combat these threats and to deliver these standing commitments?**

An expeditionary postured, maritime strike capable, ASW centric navy. On the basis of the above threats, and in light of UK coalition and alliance opportunities, the Royal Navy will need to maintain a balanced force to convene, deter, and strike. Such a force should be based on a carrier enabled strike group to convene alliance formations and lead in maritime campaigns aimed at maintaining or gaining sea control in a contested battle space with significant air and sub-surface opposition. The surface fleet should be adequately complemented by a submarine force capable to deliver conventional and strategic strikes to complete the UK's deterrence posture. To shape international security and deter conventional threats, the navy's carrier strike core should be complemented by an expeditionary and presence components led by support ships, OPVs and frigates. ASW and Anti-air warfare (AAW) capabilities should be pursued to enable the fleet to operate in contested spaces, and the current plans to upgrade capabilities on the Type 45 destroyers are an essential step in the right direction.²² Such capabilities should be complemented also by early warning (EW) and long-range standoff capabilities for the CSG air wing to ensure maximum effect. Crucially, based on current force levels projections, the Royal Navy's ability to sustain high readiness and availability will depend upon a robust logistical support with base access agreements in place to support extended deployments overseas. This is going to be especially true in the eastern sector of the Indo-Pacific, with Japan and Australia being partners of primary importance for support.²³ The recent restructuring of the UK defence network around a series of British Defence Staff (BDS) in Africa, the Gulf, and in the Asia Pacific region is also an important enabling step in supporting a forward leaning posture and adequate sourcing should be ensured to deliver on both engagement and support requirements.²⁴

- **What are the implications of cooperation with vessels from allied nations, for example allied vessels participating in carrier strike groups?**

UK naval posture should aim to develop enhanced levels of 'interchangeability' with key partners. CSG 21 represents the potential template for future UK carrier strike groups as well as other types of task formations.²⁵ In an international defence environment in which resources are limited and demands of availability are high – and likely to increase – cooperation with allies should become an inherent feature of UK naval policy. This observation recognises that the military defence of the UK as fully interlinked with the wider defence of the Euro-Atlantic maritime space.²⁶ Current operational arrangements with countries like the US, France, Norway and the Netherlands represent models that should be actively explored with additional close partners like Italy (in the Mediterranean region), India (in the Indian Ocean), Australia (in the Southeast Asian and South Pacific regions), and Japan (in the East and Northeast Asian regions). The pursuit of greater interoperability with a wider group of partners demands regular training and shared approaches to doctrine and command and control functions. Crucially, these efforts need to be sustained over time for the desired capabilities to

²² UK Ministry of Defence, 'Destroyers' Firepower Enhanced with Addition of Sea Ceptor', *Royal Navy News*, 06 July 2021, <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2021/july/06/20210706-sea-ceptor>.

²³ Patalano, *UK Defence from the 'Far East' to the 'Indo-Pacific'*, op. cit., 26-27.

²⁴ UK, Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'UK's International Defence Engagement Strategy', 17 February 2017, p. 8, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596968/06032017_Def_Engag_Strat_2017DaSCREEN.pdf.

²⁵ George Allison, 'Composition of UK Carrier Strike Group Confirmed', *UKDJ*, 01 April 2021, <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/composition-of-uk-carrier-strike-group-confirmed/>.

²⁶ HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, op. cit., 18.

produce effects in peace and war. The aim should be sustained ‘interchangeability’ of kind currently experienced with the mixed UK and US F-35B on *HMS Queen Elizabeth*.²⁷ The ultimate implication of greater cooperation is, however, a need to balance the strategic advantage of enhancement of national military power against the political limitations of greater dependency on allies’ capabilities.

- **Are naval procurement and support plans delivering the capabilities required for this role?**

The Royal Navy’s ability to deliver on commitments will depend upon an improved procurement process. Naval procurement is a crucially important aspect of the ability of the integrated review process to deliver on its ambitious agenda. In November 2020, the UK government made a pledged to increase defence spending by some 24.1bn GBP over the next four years to ‘restore Britain’s position as the foremost naval power in Europe’, with some of the budget to develop new warships like the Type 32 frigate.²⁸ The commitment to increase defence spending is particularly important for the navy as the fleet has been undergoing significant changes in capabilities – especially with the introduction of the new carriers and related assets. This modernisation will continue throughout this decade in terms of its frigate force, essential for the fleet to meet its diverse requirements over the next two decades. Navies are technology-intensive organisations and for that reason demand significant ‘down payments’ to develop a critical mass of capabilities. Recent reports from the National Audit Office (NAO) suggest, however, that the Ministry of Defence’s record to manage its procurement plans remains mixed. On the one hand, the carriers programme has been delivered – including 18 F-35B jets – roughly on time and at just 3% above the revised figures announced to Parliament in 2013.²⁹ This is a particularly remarkable achievement given the complexity of the project. On the other, the equipment plan 2020-2030 remains unaffordable with pressure likely to mount on naval projects currently in early stages of development (notably the type 31 and 32 frigates) and on projects like the carriers which still require crucial supporting capabilities such as the Crowsnest radar system.³⁰ In all, a close review of recent reports from the NAO continues to cast a shadow on the feasibility of procurement plans and the affordability of essential support activities.

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²⁷ Sam Lagrone, ‘U.K., U.S. F-35Bs Launch Anti-ISIS Strikes From HMS Queen Elizabeth’, USNI News, 22 June 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/06/22/u-k-u-s-f-35bs-launch-anti-isis-strikes-from-hms-queen-elizabeth>.

²⁸ Greg Heffer, ‘Boris Johnson Vows to Make UK “Foremost Naval Power in Europe” with Boost to Defence Budget’, *Sky News*, 19 November 2020, <https://news.sky.com/story/boris-johnson-vows-to-make-uk-foremost-naval-power-in-europe-with-boost-to-defence-budget-12136302>.

²⁹ National Audit Office, *Carrier Strike – Preparing for Deployment* (London: 26 June 2020), <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/carrier-strike-preparing-for-deployment/>.

³⁰ National Audit Office, *The Equipment Plan 2020-2030* (London: 14 December 2020), <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Equipment-Plan-2020-2030-Report.pdf>; National Audit Office, *Carrier Strike*, op. cit., 24-30, 36.