

## Written evidence submitted by Dr Basil Germond (TIP0012)

### 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 affairs<sup>1</sup>. I have published two books (on European seapower) and in excess of 25 peer-reviewed journal articles and academic book chapters on the topic. I am an expert in maritime security, seapower, naval affairs as well as the maritime dimension of Global Britain. My response to this 'Call for evidence' is based on my academic knowledge of the maritime dimension of Global Britain in the Indo-Pacific region. It is given in a personal capacity and reflects my personal opinion as an academic researcher.

### Executive summary

- The UK's economic and security interests in the Indo-Pacific region have a strong maritime dimension.
- To deliver the ambitions set up in the 2021 *Integrated Review*, it is crucial for HM Government to prioritise the maritime dimension of Global Britain.
- In the Indo-Pacific region, this requires striking the right balance between upholding freedom of navigation, reassuring partners, and constructively engaging competitors.
- Recommendations: HM Government should 1) Implement a cross-ministerial strategy to uphold freedom of navigation, 2) Embrace a 'collective seapower' strategy whereby like-minded maritime nations share the burden and benefits of a stable maritime order in the region, 3) Sustain Britain's maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific region beyond 2021 to produce long-term positive effects on freedom of navigation and on the UK's soft power.

I address three general questions listed in the Call, with a focus on the maritime dimension of Global Britain in the Indo-Pacific region.

### 1. What are the UK's main interests in the Indo-Pacific region, and what are the main threats and opportunities?

#### 1.1. UK's interests in the Indo-Pacific have a strong maritime dimension

The Indo-Pacific region is a global hub for trade, innovation, and investment. However, the region is host to several geopolitical contentions that have the potential to degenerate into large-scale armed conflicts (Korean peninsula, Taiwan, South China Sea). It is thus in the interest of the UK to contribute to the stability of the region and, in particular, to the freedom of its sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). This requires:

- Being visible in the region, especially at sea.
- Proactively contributing to partners' security, notably in the maritime domain.
- Upholding freedom of navigation.

#### 1.2. Main threat: Barriers to freedom of navigation

Freedom of the sea in the Indo-Pacific region is of uttermost importance for the UK. Similarly, commercial and strategic partners in the region shall remain in a position to freely trade and operate

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

in a way that benefits the UK's economic and security interests. Challenges to freedom of navigation are not only military but also legal and diplomatic. Therefore, it is crucial for HM Government to implement a cross-ministerial strategy (perhaps under the auspice of the Joint Maritime Security Centre) to uphold freedom of navigation beyond operational maritime coordination.

### *1.3. Opportunities: Toward a 'Global Maritime Britain'*

The 2021 *Integrated Review* and the accompanying *Command Paper* account for the fact that the UK's economic and security interests have a strong maritime dimension; there are opportunities for Global Britain to seize in the maritime domain<sup>2</sup>. R. Adm. (rtd.) Dr Chris Parry coined the expression 'Global Maritime Britain'<sup>3</sup>. It accounts for the fact that the defence, security and prosperity of the UK strongly depends on the sea and on the ability to defend one's interests at and from the sea<sup>4</sup>.

In 2021, HM Government has demonstrated its commitment to the maritime dimension of Global Britain in the Indo-Pacific region with the maiden voyage of Carrier Strike Group 21 (showing the flag, reassuring partners, confidence-building measures with traditional allies and non-Western partners such as Vietnam), HMS Richmond transiting through the Taiwan Strait in September 2021 (upholding freedom of navigation, reassuring partners, confidence-building measures), and with the AUKUS partnership between Australia, the UK and the US. These initiatives need to be sustained in the long term, so as to produce positive effects.

Global Britain is also about the status of the UK on the world stage. The *Integrated Review* makes it clear that the UK has a comparative advantage in soft power, which is a power of attraction, linked to prestige and to Britain's 'rank' within the international pecking order<sup>5</sup>. In the Indo-Pacific region, the UK has an opportunity to cement and raise its leadership and power of attraction among partners by upholding values linked to the freedom of the sea.

## **2. How can the UK's Indo-Pacific strategy complement that of allies, such as the US Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy? What are the specific areas of competition and cooperation with European partners such as France and Germany?**

AUKUS provides HM Government with strategic and symbolic benefits in the Indo-Pacific region. AUKUS is an anchor for Global Britain in the Indo-Pacific<sup>6</sup>. However, it is crucial to address France's position within the new maritime security architecture.

The AUKUS partnership is a blow to France's naval industry. But France's reaction can also be explained by its deeply rooted foreign policy decision-making guiding principles: pragmatism and the search for prestige.

France's prestige has been directly affected by AUKUS, hence the cold diplomatic reaction to the announcement of the partnership. However, pragmatism means that France might also make the

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<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, March 2021, 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> Chris Parry (2020), "Global Maritime Britain", *Maritime 2020*, British Maritime Foundation (available [online](#)).

<sup>4</sup> Basil Germond (2021), "AUKUS: The realisation of 'Global Maritime Britain'", *Britain's World*, Council on Geostrategy (available [online](#)).

<sup>5</sup> HM Government (2021), *op.cit.*, see pp.49-50.

<sup>6</sup> Germond (2021), *op.cit.*

most of AUKUS to achieve foreign policy goals: to strengthen the unity of EU member states around the question of European defence, to advocate the importance of European 'strategic autonomy', and to justify France's leadership role in the European security architecture. However, it is also in France's interests to further push the EU towards the Indo-Pacific region by seizing opportunities, including by cooperating with the US and the UK in the region.

France is an important ally of the UK in the Euro-Atlantic space and Africa. France is also an important player in the Indo-Pacific region with large overseas territories and sovereignty over related maritime areas in the Pacific. It is thus crucial to find a way to co-opt France (and to a lesser extent the EU with its 'Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'). In addition, since France is a Pacific Ocean player, where the UK's diplomatic and military presence is more limited, France can eventually become a partner of choice within the strengthened liberal, maritime security architecture initiated by AUKUS.

### **3. What should be the resource priorities for the FCDO's new Indo-Pacific Directorate? Where should the FCDO focus on increasing its footprint in terms of Posts and staff?**

The maritime dimension of the UK's security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region is not limited to naval/defence considerations. Showing the flag in defence of freedom of navigation is but one response to the challenges facing the UK in the Indo-Pacific region. Diplomacy and soft power require the FCDO to play an important role when it comes to confidence-building measures and reassuring partners.

The Indo-Pacific Directorate should liaise with relevant ministerial stakeholders that also have responsibilities in regard to the maritime dimension of Global Britain: in particular the Ministry of Defence (which is central in upholding freedom of navigation) the DfT (with its interest in maritime security), the National Security Secretariat and the Joint Maritime Security Centre.

### **4. Recommendations for HM Government**

- 4.1. To implement a cross-ministerial strategy to uphold freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region, since this is not a task that is limited to the MoD.
- 4.2. To embrace a 'collective seapower' strategy whereby like-minded maritime nations share the burden and benefits of a stable but free maritime order in the region.
- 4.3. To sustain Britain's maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific region beyond 2021 in order to produce long-term positive effects on freedom of navigation and on the UK's soft power.

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

- 5.1. What are the guarantees that the efforts put into maritime confidence-buildings measures with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region in 2021 can be sustained over a long enough period to produce tangible effects in terms of 1) securing the UK's interests around freedom of navigation, and 2) increasing the UK's soft power in the region?
- 5.2. What are the plans (notably at the level of the National Security Secretariat and the Joint Maritime Security Centre) to implement cross-ministerial synergies (beyond operational maritime coordination) to contribute to upholding freedom of navigation in line with the *Integrated Review*?

The Committee might want to further explore the naval dimension of Global Britain in the Indo-Pacific region, including naval cooperation, confidence-building measures, freedom of navigation operations, and 'Global Maritime Britain'. I am willing to provide further oral or written evidence on such questions or to advise the Committee in any way that is deemed useful.

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