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## **OPEN LETTER FROM DEFENCE UK AND DEFENCE SYNERGIA**

It is essential that the political classes, not just in Britain but across the West generally, realise that the balance of power is shifting worldwide. We do not live in the same world today as we did 20 years ago. At that time the United States Navy was as powerful as the next ten navies combined. Today the Chinese Navy is numerically larger, and China's ambition is to supplant the US as the world's predominant political, economic and military power. In 2003 the US and her allies were able to invade Iraq, following a long, uncontested, logistical deployment as if we were untouchable. Now the United Kingdom is within range of a myriad of Russian cruise and hypersonic missiles that could do to the UK what the US did, 20 years ago, to Iraq. The Indian Navy is equipped with an anti-ship missile better than anything the Royal Navy has. The air force of the United Arab Emirates has almost as many fast jets as the Royal Air Force. It is not only China and Russia that have grown stronger relative to the West, but numerous other countries have expanded their armed forces and the UK has, relatively speaking, diminished.

For some time now the UK has been operating a de-facto '10-year-rule'; we have acted as if we were confident no major war would break out within the next decade. Now there is speculation that war might break out in the Western Pacific, over Taiwan, or the illegal Chinese seizure of bases in the South China Sea. There is no certainty that the US would win such a conflict. This threat alone is siphoning off US resources, diverting attention to this region and away from NATO and Europe generally. Should a conflict break out in the Pacific, Russia would be presented with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to carry out whatever aggression they might be contemplating in Europe. It is questionable as to whether the US can fight two wars at the same time, so the UK and our European Allies might be faced with confronting Russia with severely restricted US help.

It needs to be recognised that defence planning is an exercise in risk assessment and that risk is a function of probability and consequence – not just 'how likely it is that a particular threat might materialise?' but also 'how serious would it be if such a threat did materialise?' A conflict with Russia might not be the most probable conflict scenario but it is certainly the most dangerous currently and in a European context. Within NATO we are now directly facing Russia across her various borders in Eastern Europe with no buffer zones; i.e. an area where we can fight without damaging our respective home bases! Thus a conflict in the NATO area could possibly involve attacks into Russian territory at which time the Russian philosophy for defence of the 'Motherland' could, according to 2020 Russian Nuclear Doctrine, lead to a response with nuclear weapons following an '*attack by adversaries against critical governmental or military sites of the Russian Federation, disruption of which would undermine nuclear force response actions*' and '*aggression against the*

*Russian Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is in jeopardy*' (<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45861> Russian Nuclear Doctrine 2020 examined by US Congress). At that point the incoherence that is endemic in the security and defence of Western Europe would be no match for Russian determination. It is one thing to be unsuccessful in Afghanistan, quite another to be defeated by Russia.

Such a scenario is not so improbable that we can afford to cross our fingers and just hope that it does not happen. The 10-year-rule must be abandoned and we must start taking security and defence seriously. 'We' means the political classes, the press and the public. Security and Defence has to be pushed up the political agenda, be openly debated in concert with our allies, and properly funded. The BBC in particular has an obligation to inform and educate. Where defence and security are concerned, its coverage of the subject is sparse and confined to 'human interest' stories.

Within that debate it must be realised that while Global Britain's position in the world and the effect of her military influence overseas has often been stated, the defence of mainland UK has been sorely neglected. There has been much talk about the threat to electricity supplies etc. from cyber-attack but there remains a threat from physical attack. Should we find ourselves in a conflict with Russia, she may realise that the most effective way to neutralise the UK would be by use of her extensive missile stocks, which would wreak havoc if aimed at our power stations, the points where power from wind-farms comes ashore and joins the national grid, Milford Haven where LPG tankers from the Middle East discharge their cargo and the five terminals where gas is brought ashore from offshore fields. These strikes need not go as far as hitting centres of habitation but would effectively bring the country to a stop. In the winter such an attack would leave much of Britain in the cold, in darkness, with hardly any telecommunication and with the food distribution systems shut down. Hunger, and the fear of it, would quickly cause a break down in law and order, such that the government would be overwhelmed by events. Military targets, such as ships and submarines in harbour and control hubs such as GCHQ, RAF Northolt and Northwood, would of course be on the list of targets for Russian missiles, including their hypersonic missiles.

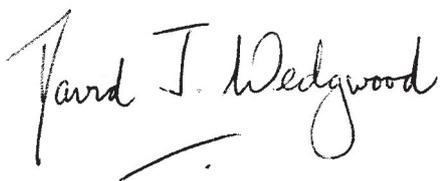
Short of the RAF's 8 squadrons of Typhoon fighters, operating from undefended airfields, which themselves might be subject to attack in a Suppression of Enemy Air Defences operation, the UK has no integrated air defence system or anti-ballistic missile system. It must also be recognised that, without sufficient air-to-air refuelling, those Typhoon fighters do not have the range to intercept Russian bombers launching their cruise missiles from stand-off positions. The Royal Navy has a handful of destroyers and frigates with an air defence capability but they are very few. The chances of them being where needed at the right time has to be doubted and the army's short range air defence systems, with the exception of LandCeptor, of which there aren't many, can be discounted as a credible defence against the cruise missile threat. The Russians have invested heavily in updating their non-nuclear ballistic and cruise missile forces such as the Granit, KH101 and Kalibr systems which have now been tested operationally. They can be launched from aircraft, ship, submarine and the land. As well as the inability of UK based fighter aircraft to intercept Russian bombers before they launch their missiles, the Royal Navy's anti-submarine capability, one of its previous strengths, has been allowed to atrophy, so that Russian submarines are virtually free to stand off our coast and fire dozens of missiles into mainland UK.

Defensive missile systems such as ASTER and CAMM (LandCeptor) are part UK products and they have been purchased, in minimal quantities, for the destroyers, frigates and, in mobile form, for the army. The government therefore have the ability, procure and deploy UK produced systems to defend these islands from missile attack. It is about time we did.

Of course, as important as it is, defence of the UK home base is greater than just a missile defence for the main focal points. The aforementioned anti-submarine capability is vital for ensuring lines of supply by sea (95% of the UK's imports come via that route) and the security of our seabed communication cables. Effective army units are required to support our alliance in the eastern republics of NATO and elsewhere, so that they can take part in deterring a situation from developing where those homeland defences would be needed. In this context, it is worthy of note that the UK's heavy armoured units are based in the UK and would take months to deploy into Europe. Russia recently demonstrated the ability to mobilise 150,000 troops at 72 hours' notice and could strike quickly to achieve all of its objectives before the EU/NATO could form a coherent response. For these situations to be put right, all three of our services need to be properly funded, despite the present difficult financial circumstances. The balance of world power is tilting away from us and countries like the UK are getting less and less powerful, less and less influential. If this decline continues we won't be shaping history, we will be the victims of it.

The central point of the Government's new Defence Policy must be a statement declaring this country's Grand Strategy. What are our national interests? What are the threats to those interests? What are the threats to our neighbours and partners that we could not stand idly by and do nothing about? This should determine the size of the defence budget rather than some arbitrary 2% of GDP figure. If we could assure our security and those of our friends and neighbours by spending 1% of GDP on defence, then that would be the appropriate amount to spend. If 3% is required, then 3% should be spent.

It is very clear that the peace dividend in defence spending of the past 20 or 30 years has now been spent. That dividend came about because of a perceived reduction in the threat level. That level is increasing fast so now is the time to increase the funding for defence. To that end we will leave you with a 1937 Churchillian quote, derived from the proverb: he who rides a tiger is afraid to dismount. *'Dictators ride to and fro upon tigers which they dare not dismount. And the tigers are getting hungry.'* Our potential foes are governed by effective dictators!



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