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JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE
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Strategic Failure. Unfreezing the United Kingdom's Arctic Strategy

by

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28 May 2021**

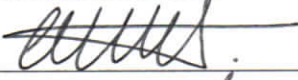
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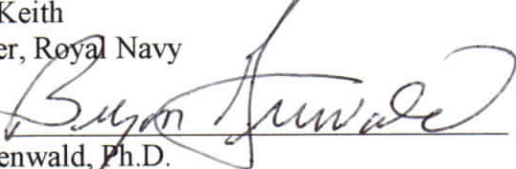
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.


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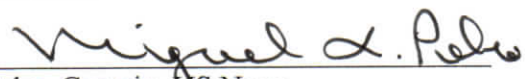
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Abstract

The current UK Arctic strategy is based on hopeful “Arctic exceptionalism”, utilizing science and environmental soft power initiatives, sporadic international leadership, and ad hoc alliance-building. However, the actions of Russia, China and Brexit have changed the strategic environment and the UK’s strategy needs to fundamentally change. Russia has already militarized the Arctic; China is a new global power, and the UK government has yet to understand all the consequences of Brexit.

The UK government must be more assertive in the North Atlantic and Arctic domains, as part of a deliberate push to build British influence. The UK should base its strategy on the realization that it does not have the resources to project power and influence across the globe. By focusing its military, economic and information resources, and efforts, it would assert itself as the lead player in the North Atlantic and Arctic, and thus still project global influence. This achieves two important goals. Firstly, the UK would have something truly tangible to offer its allies, shouldering the weight in one region of the globe so others can focus their resources elsewhere. Secondly, the UK can break the cycle of overextending and failing to support international organizations or honor alliances of national importance. Instead of spreading its resources too thinly, it can focus on becoming the regional Arctic leader.

This paper analyzes each of the three current Arctic UK policy goals that make up the UK Arctic policy; protecting global influence, protecting people and the environment, and promoting prosperity. Within each of these goals, the paper examines the current strategy to achieve said policy goal, and how the change in the strategic environment has impacted those strategies. Each chapter concludes by proposing alterations to these strategies to achieve the proposed policy goals. Throughout the analysis and proposed strategic changes, this study shows that through a change in strategic mindset and reallocation of resources, the UK can become a significant regional power with global influence.

The analysis highlights that the UK is misallocating its resources based on a belief that the country can replicate its previous global great power status. Along with this belief comes a perception that failing to achieve this historic status results in insignificance on the world stage. This is not the case. Through the strategy suggestions laid out in this proposal, the UK can be a vital regional player, which also wields global influence through the respect of its allies and standing in international institutions and organizations. This requires the UK government to change its mindset and focus a large majority of national resources on the Arctic and North Atlantic. The age of Arctic exceptionalism is over.

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Dedication

To my wife, thank you for your incredible patience, understanding and unwavering support. A second career as psychiatrist awaits.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United Kingdom was once a global power, but since 1945 it has not had the capacity to live up to its global pretenses. Instead, at its worst, it is guilty of harking back to the days of Empire. The UK's declining global political influence over the last two decades makes this obvious, and, regardless of one's stance, the process of Brexit has worsened it.¹ However, the UK can exert regional, and by extension, global influence by refocusing its resources and rejuvenating its traditional strength as a maritime and financial power. By embracing a refined and effective Corbett-style emphasis on sea control, particularly regarding the North Atlantic and the Arctic, the UK can re-establish itself as a regional maritime power. Moreover, given the influence of climate change on the increasing trafficability of the Northern Sea Route (NSR), and the potential for global trade across said route, the UK's emerging maritime dominance in the region would confer a greater degree of global influence, without having to maintain at high political and fiscal costs, a global presence.²

To achieve this goal and punch above its weight, the UK must defrost or change its Arctic strategy from one of passive watchfulness to that of aggressive pro-action. Importantly, three factors, mandate that the UK do so. Russia and China's unbalanced influence in the Arctic should motivate the UK to become more assertive or suffer political, economic, and potentially military consequences. Additionally, the UK's role in Europe is currently in flux due to Brexit.

¹ Mia Hunt, "Former UK Diplomatic Chief Warns of Declining Influence Overseas – Government & Civil Service News.", Global Government Forum, last modified 14 August 2020. <https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/former-uk-diplomatic-chief-warns-of-declining-influence-overseas/>.

² HM Government, Ministry of Defence. Defence in a competitive age. March 2021, p7.

Therefore, to achieve its Arctic policy goals, the UK must refocus its Arctic strategy away from hopeful “Arctic exceptionalism,” soft power initiatives, sporadic international leadership, and ad-hoc alliance-building. Instead, it must advance a strategy that fully engages its political, economic, information, and military levers of power, and reassert itself as a regional power. It must lead the international community in enforcing international laws and norms, and commit to meaningful alliances within the North Atlantic and Arctic regions.

Published in 2018, the UK’s overarching Arctic Policy *Beyond the Ice*, reiterated the three core policy goals first put forward in the 2013 Arctic policy *Adapting to Change*: Protecting global influence, protecting people and the environment, and promoting prosperity. Since 2013 the global strategic environment has changed, and this approach is not sufficient. This paper focuses on the three most important and relevant factors driving change in the strategic environment since 2018, Russia, China, and Brexit. Most significantly, the Russian Federation has continued to militarize the NSR and Arctic at large, and from May 2021 will lead the Arctic Council for two years. Concurrently, China’s global influence continues to grow and spread, with Beijing now challenging Washington’s 30-year global hegemony both economically, and by attacking the liberal democratic international rules-based system. As part of this, China has displayed increasing ambitions in the Arctic via its Polar Silk Road. Finally, the UK is still dealing with the implications of Brexit. Despite leaving the EU the relationship with Europe remains vital to the UK Arctic strategy. Alliances and international organizations are of even greater importance to the UK in 2021 than they were in 2018. How Brexit impacts

the UK's current alliances and its standing in international organizations is a key consideration for any future UK strategy.

This paper proposes a fundamental change in strategy. As part of a deliberate push to build British influence, and as per the recent published UK Defence Commander Paper, *Defence in a Competitive age*, the UK government must focus its military, economic, and information resources and efforts to be more assertive in the North Atlantic and Arctic domains.³ The UK should base its strategy on the realization that unlike in earlier eras, today it has limited resources to project power and influence across the globe. Beijing and Moscow are employing greater resources more effectively, not only in support of their own aims but often directly counter to that of the UK. By asserting itself as the lead security player in the North Atlantic and Arctic, the UK can still project global influence. This influence will not come from trying to be all things to all people. Instead, the UK must focus its efforts and resources on being an expert in a region it can influence. This achieves two important goals. Firstly, the UK would have something tangible to offer its allies, shouldering the weight in one region of the globe so others can focus their resources elsewhere. Secondly, the UK can break the cycle of overextending and offering meek support to international organizations. Instead of spreading its resources too thinly, it can focus on becoming the regional Arctic leader. The UK government, and nation, must appreciate that the changes in the strategic environment over the last 75 years mean the country cannot achieve policies by reusing old strategies. However, and just as importantly, Britain still can influence, grow, and be prosperous. The choice is not binary - Empire or insignificance. The UK still holds

³ HM Government, Ministry of Defence. *Defence in a competitive age*. March 2021, p13.

significant political sway in global politics when leveraged properly and relevantly.

London remains a hub of global financial power. The country has a strong tradition of innovation and invention based within the university-research network. The UK military is highly respected by partners across the globe and is one only three Blue Water Navies to operate two 5th generation aircraft carriers.⁴

Refocusing resources against the changing threats in the new environment provides an opportunity and needs scrutiny. In some areas, it is a case of further supporting and enforcing plans already in place. Published on 15 August 2018, the House of Commons Defence Committee's *On Thin Ice: UK Defence in the Arctic* provided advice on updating the 2013 Arctic policy. *On Thin Ice* began to recognize the changing strategic environment driven by climate change and discussed how Russia and China are potentially taking advantage of these changes. The report went some way to bringing the UK government's attention to these changes, but more was needed.⁵

The time to hover in the middle ground is gone; Russia's intention in the Arctic is aggressive. In 2018, the Ministry of Defence committed to publishing an Arctic Defence Strategy in 2019. Whilst this still has not materialized, part of the 2018 announcement, by then Minister of Defence Gavin Williamson MP, included the commitment to "put the Arctic and the High North, central to the security of the United Kingdom."⁶ If the UK wants to assert regional, and by extension, global influence it must follow through on this commitment. *Defence in a competitive age* goes a long way to support increased resources through support to the adherence to international humanitarian law, investment

4 HM Government, Ministry of Defence. *Defence in a competitive age*. March 2021, p48.

5 House of Commons Defence Committee. *On Thin Ice: UK Defence in the Arctic*. London: August 15, 2018.p53

6 Duncan Depledge et al., "The UK and the Arctic: Forward Defence." *Arctic Yearbook*, 2019.

in military and civilian assets to push back against Russia and increased integration with NATO and European Allies. However, it makes major commitments of resources to the Indo-Pacific and Middle East, a strategy this paper will argue is unsustainable and counterproductive.⁷

To illustrate the deeper malign intent by Moscow, and Beijing, this thesis seeks to challenge some of the historical norms put forward by these adversaries as part of a sophisticated strategic communications strategy. As several New War theorists propose, Russia and China have an alternative view on how to use violence and the information sphere against the West. Russia and China actively seek to keep the West fixated on the warfare of the past, as they pursue their objectives via new methods in the new strategic environment. Unless the UK adjusts its strategies to deal with this environment, it will fail to compete on the same level. The Arctic and High North will become another South China Sea, where smaller powers operate only by the grace of Russia and China.

Over the next three chapters, this paper analyzes each of the three current Arctic UK policy goals that make up the overarching UK Arctic policy. Within each of these policy goals, it examines the currently proposed strategy to achieve each goal, and how the change in the current strategic environment in the form of Russia, China, and Brexit has affected those strategies. Each chapter concludes by proposing changes to these strategies to achieve the proposed policy goals. Through the analysis and the proposed strategic changes, this study shows that the UK, by changing its strategic mindset and reallocating its resources, can become a significant regional power with global influence.

⁷ HM Government, Ministry of Defence. Defence in a competitive age. March 2021, p8. P32.

Chapter 2: Protecting Global Influence

The UK holds fast to a vision of a Global Britain that is respected abroad, engaged in the world, and working with our international partners to advance prosperity and security in the Arctic. UK science and innovation helps advance global understanding of how changes in the arctic have global consequences and help to find new solutions to the challenges.

-Beyond the Ice, UK Policy in the Arctic, 2018.

The UK's strategy to achieve the first Arctic policy goal, protecting global influence, "operates across five broad areas: work with the Arctic Council, bilateral relations with the Arctic states, multilateral engagement, support for UK research, and international engagement."¹ In more detail this strategy intends to champion the Arctic Council as a primary vehicle for UK influence in the region having become an observer state in 2016.² The intention as an original observer state is to influence Arctic Council policies by providing scientific analysis and evidence in its working and expert groups. The second layer within the UK's support to the Arctic Council is the building of bilateral relationships directly with the Arctic states. It specifically notes the updating of a high-level agreement with Norway in 2017, strengthening the United Kingdom-Norway co-operation on polar research and cultural heritage, and extending and enhancing the existing bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The strategy seeks close cooperation with both Finland and Canada through similar MOUs. The third layer of strategy is multilateral engagement, specifically with multilateral organizations, treaties, and conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the Convention for the

¹ HM Government. Beyond the Ice: UK Policy towards the Arctic. Polar Regions Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 04, April 2018. p4

²Ibid. p7

Protection of Maritime Environment of the Northeast Atlantic (OSPAR). Underpinning this strategy is the UK's reliance on science as a lever of power. The current UK policy believes that by supporting scientific research the UK achieves influence and sway in the Arctic.

The above strategy requires a change in its methods of implementation. To exert tangible influence through the Arctic Council and other organizations described above, the UK must be relevant. This is especially important when Russia assumes its 2-year leadership of the Arctic Council in May 2021. The UK must show political, economic, informational, and even military power and influence within the region.

Changes in the Strategic Environment Caused by Russia, China, and Brexit

Russia's military focus in the Arctic has traditionally been its Bastion defense, and this is likely to continue as its nuclear arsenal remains at the core of its national defense policy.³ While Russian policy remains unchanged- *launch on attack*, Russia's military leadership gives absolute priority to perimeter defense of the Kola Peninsula, to ensure the survivability of second-strike nuclear assets.⁴ Russia designed the perimeter defense around the Kola, and the extension of the Bastion defense concept to give it defense in depth. "The Bastion concept seeks to ensure both the security of the Kola Peninsula and the access of the Northern Fleet to the North Atlantic and beyond. It relates

³ Shannon Bugos, "Russia Releases Nuclear Deterrence Policy" Arms Control Association." July/August 2020. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-07/news/russia-releases-nuclear-deterrence-policy>.

⁴ Dara Massicot, "Anticipating a New Russian Military Doctrine in 2020: What It Might Contain and Why It Matters," War on the Rocks, September 09 2019. <https://warontherocks.com/2019/09/anticipating-a-new-russian-military-doctrine-in-2020-what-it-might-contain-and-why-it-matters/>.

to creating space for sea control and sea denial activities.”⁵ During the Cold War, the UK, as part of NATO, ran regular patrols into Arctic waters and the Barents Sea to maintain a military presence in these waters, and to keep this Bastion as far North as possible. However, since the fall of the Berlin wall, these activities diminished due to, military budget constraints and the prioritization of resources to other areas such as the Middle

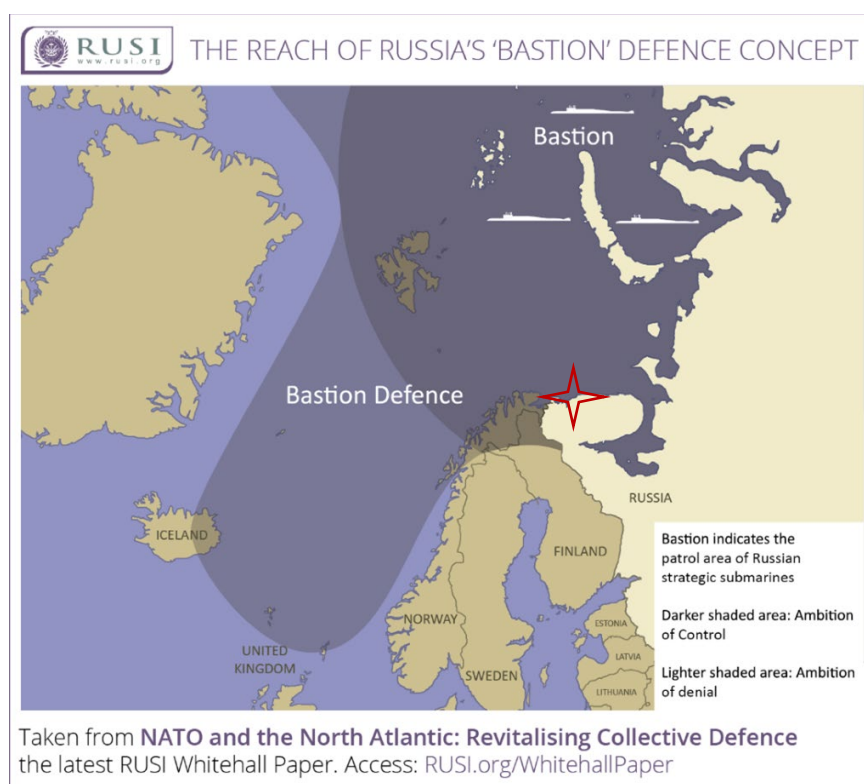


Figure 1: Russian Bastion Defense and the location of the Kola Gulf (Star). RUSI.

and the Far East.⁶ Russia used this time to its advantage focusing its efforts and resources on modernizing its Bastion defenses. To match the sea denial and interdiction remit for protecting the Kola Peninsula, the Russian Northern fleet now operates a hardened, Arctic capable, multi-layered air defense and sea denial system. More importantly, it has

⁵ Mathieu Bouleque “Russia’s Military Posture in the Arctic” Chatham House, June 28, 2018, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/06/russias-military-posture-arctic/2-perimeter-control-around-bastion>.

⁶ Duncan Depledge, et al “The UK’s Defence Arctic Strategy: Negotiating the Slippery Geopolitics of the UK and the Arctic,” The RUSI Journal, 164 (25 April 2019):1, 28-39, DOI 10.1080/03071847.2019.1605015.

also pushed its Bastion perimeter out into the Northern Atlantic.⁷ Vitaly, this has changed the balance of power of maritime operations in the North Atlantic, to a situation where large Russian maritime operations are occurring off the coast of the United Kingdom with increasing regularity.⁸

Moscow has expanded the Bastion defense area and now conducts offensive operations. In December 2017, then Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, stated Britain and NATO needed to prioritize protecting the lines of communication that “crisscross the seabed.”⁹ Air Chief Marshal Peach warned that the Russian’s new underwater technology posed a direct threat to the underwater cables that ran between mainland Europe, the UK, and the North American continent.¹⁰ This poses an enormous threat to the underlying structure of the western, and global economic system. It is also further evidence that Russia is not just interested in defense against NATO but looking to prepare the environment to gain advantage outside of the conventional way of war.¹¹

Mary Kaldor in her work *New and Old Wars*, Herfried Munkler in *The New Wars*, and James H Mittel in his book *Hyperconflict: Globalization and Insecurity* all put forth a change in the ways wars are fought. Western democratic States can no longer simply go to war, as society and domestic politics is too fractioned and fragile to provide the necessary support. A duality exists where power now rests with people and in

7 Mathieu Boulegue “Russia’s Military Posture in the Arctic” Chatham House, June 28, 2018, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/06/russias-military-posture-arctic/2-perimeter-control-around-bastion>.

8 “Royal Navy Monitors Russian Warships Off Scotland.” The Maritime Executive, last modified 20 November, 2020. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/royal-navy-monitors-russian-warships-off-scotland>.

9 “Russia a ‘risk’ to Undersea Cables, Defence Chief Warns” BBC News. Last modified December 15, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42362500>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ HM Government, Ministry of Defence. Defence in a competitive age. March 2021, p9.

information. The ability to influence, or manipulate, both entities become vital. As one of its strategies to achieving great power, Russia needs military dominion over the Arctic. It is here that Putin plays on the historic fear of enemies on all sides. A conventional, industrial, old war in the Arctic is highly unlikely. Russia and likely China have changed the ways they fight wars. The danger for the West is in planning for old war, which it is far more comfortable with. Total war is now unlikely, limited wars with limited means are more plausible. The decoupling of war from the state but not subthreshold violence is a growing area used by adversaries. The UK's enemies are not necessarily trying to defeat but degrade, deny, and possibly conduct some destruction to achieve the aim. It is more likely that the attack against the UK will come against the structure of its society – war won by discredit. The strategy employed against the UK is for a limited defeat, contain, hold, and collapse.

Currently UK and NATO maritime operations into the Arctic and Barents are exceptionally rare. Russia is adept at the manipulation of the infosphere as a method of attack. Moscow understands the importance of strategic communication, which it wields to great effect. Any NATO exercises, whether bilateral or unilateral, that come near the Bastion waters are met with widespread and damning criticism of purported aggressive behavior. The influence on the current global strategic environment of the infosphere and how it is employed is enormous. Unless the UK government resources and aligns its Arctic strategic communications plan across the government, Moscow will maintain the advantage both physically and psychologically.

Russia's own strategic narrative is that rather than militarizing the Arctic, they are merely securing a threatened Northern border that until recently was virtually

inaccessible. In October 2020 Russian released *Foundations of Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic to 2035*, as part of a coordinated strategic communication plan, that continues to portray any military buildup as purely defensive, search and rescue related, or directly linked to the aforementioned perimeter defense of the Kola Peninsula and Bastion defense.¹² This strategic narrative rests on the argument that ongoing climate change and its effect on sea ice levels, whilst not linear, has challenged the Russian notion that a conventional military attack on its Northern border is unlikely, and fueled long-held Russian fears of encirclement. For years, both allies and adversaries of Russia, and the Kremlin itself, have seen this as deep in Russian strategic character, and at the heart of Russian military and security policy. However, this strong strategic narrative of defending against an ever-present NATO threat is a false flag or obfuscation. It masks a longer-term strategic narrative that allows the creation of a network of military installations providing Russia with military dominance over the NSR, and future possible Arctic resources. This increase in activity and capability is visible along the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF). It began with reform undertaken by Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov in 2007 and therefore predates both the war with Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.¹³ Reshaping of the Arctic command structure occurred with the creation of the Operational Strategic Command (OSK) Sever in 2013 and a primary focus on air and naval operations, creating an integrated combined-arms force for the region.¹⁴ Regular aviation patrols and maneuvers resumed in early 2013 along the NSR and over

¹² Russian Federation. Decree of the Russian Federation No 164. Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the period of up to 2035. Incorporating the changes into the Decree by the President of the Russian Federation issued on 02 May 2014 No 296. Translation, Anna Davis and Ryan Vest. Moscow, 5 March 2020.

¹³ Mathieu Boulegue "Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic" Chatham House, June 28, 2018, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/06/russias-military-posture-arctic/2-perimeter-control-around-bastion>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

the Arctic Ocean. Since 2017, Russia has been routinely simulating mock air wing attacks on Norwegian assets- primarily against the coastal radar stations of Vardo, which are funded by the US. The Northern Fleet carried out more than 100 patrols over the Arctic Ocean in 2018.¹⁵

Thus far, the debate over the offensive or defensive nature of Russian intentions in the Arctic focuses heavily on capabilities. However, one cannot analyze and assess Russian intentions in the Arctic purely by that standard. The Kremlin's intent for the region needs greater scrutiny. After President Putin's re-election in 2018, Sir Andrew Wood in his paper *Putin and Russia in 2018-24: What Next* put forth that Putin would continue to follow his three main policy guidelines laid down in 2012 "significant structural economic reforms because of the political risks attached to them; control the population; and to pursue Great Power ambitions."¹⁶ The Arctic plays a large part within Putin's ambitions.

Moscow wants to control trade along the NSR for its economic value and the resources that could become accessible in the Arctic. Russian naval vessels in constant conflict with NATO vessels are unlikely to achieve this control. However, what is more plausible, and in line with Russian strategy in both Georgia and Ukraine, is a gradual buildup of forces, under many different guises, to control lines of communication, and the infosphere, ready to act if and when needed. The result will be Russian physical intimidation in a very inhospitable environment combined with public affairs coercion.

¹⁵ Mathieu Boulegue "Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic" Chatham House, June 28, 2018, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/06/russias-military-posture-arctic/2-perimeter-control-around-bastion>.

¹⁶ Andrew Wood, "Putin and Russia in 2018-24 What Next?", Chatham House, March 2018, p3

Increased Chinese interest and influence in the Arctic present a second growing threat to UK global influence. Over the last decade, China has dramatically shifted its position in the global order. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States went unchallenged as the global hegemonic power. Following the terrorist atrocities conducted on September 11, 2001, the US brought its considerable might to bear in the War on Terror and mainly focused its attention on the Middle East. During this period, China took the opportunity to advance its national interests whilst carefully studying the West's actions. China's growth in power, and its methodology, finally caught the attention of the Obama administration, and in 2011 the President announced his pivot to Asia.¹⁷

Since first authorized by President Obama in 2015, the US has conducted Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in the SCS.¹⁸ Along with the UK and other allies in the Pacific, the US conducted 10 FONOPS in 2019 and 8 in 2020.¹⁹ The UK has taken great pride in its close relationship with the US. However, fractures have appeared in this relationship due to a combination of reduced UK resources, a lack of willing and poor political strategy. Between 2017 and 2021, the UK has increased the number of maritime units that it has sent to the Pacific. However, considering the starting threshold was zero, the high point remains three consecutive units in 2018, with HMS Albion conducting FONOPS around the Paracel Islands. These actions are a perfect example of the UK over-promising and underdelivering due to limited resources and poor

¹⁷ Kenneth G. Libenthal, "The American Pivot to Asia." Brookings, December 2, 2011. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-american-pivot-to-asia/>.

¹⁸ David B. Larter "In Challenging China's Claims in the South China Sea, the US Navy Is Getting More Assertive." Defense News, February 5, 2020. <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/02/05/in-challenging-chinas-claims-in-the-south-china-sea-the-us-navy-is-getting-more-assertive/>.

¹⁹ Karen Leigh, Peter Martin and Adrian Leung "Troubled Waters: Where The U.S. And China Could Clash In The South China Sea." Bloomberg, December 17, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-south-china-sea-miscalculation/>.

strategy. Speaking in Australia in July 2017 Boris Johnson, then Foreign Secretary, alluded to the possibility that the UK would send its new aircraft carrier and fleet flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth to conduct FONOPS in the SCS.²⁰ As of January 4, 2021, the new aircraft carrier has achieved initial operating capability and remains likely to deploy to the Indo-Pacific region. However, what operations she will conduct, and their location remains unannounced.²¹ Whilst the UK is committed to remaining a key ally its efforts are hampered by a lack of focused resources. These limitations are reflected in *Defense in a competitive age* which commits to an unknown quantity of offshore patrol vessels, and episodic deployments of the Littoral Response Group (LRG) in 2023 to the Indo-Pacific. Further deployments to the Indo-Pacific region are promised, while on the same page the UK commits to similar deployments to the Euro-Atlantic under NATO and JEF constructs. The UK, under the Global Britain strategy, is again stretching too far with too little despite the budgetary increase. A simple change in the UK strategy to focus more closely to home provides an opportunity for the UK to contribute meaningful support to the United States' current operations enforcing UNCLOS in the South China Sea (SCS) by enforcing the same rules in the Arctic.

The United States primary focus remains the Pacific and it look to its allies to support its effort in confronting China and upholding the international order. The unrestricted freedom of movement on the high seas, especially in the Indo-Pacific region is vital to the international system. However, this competition is no longer just in the

²⁰ "UK Carrier Strike Group – Heading for the South China Sea?" Navy Lookout, last modified July 30, 2020. <https://www.navylookout.com/uk-carrier-strike-group-heading-for-the-south-china-sea/>.

²¹ Brad Lendon "UK Says Aircraft Carrier Strike Group Is Ready to Deploy. China's Already Watching" CNN, nlast modified January 5, 2021. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/05/europe/uk-aircraft-carrier-strike-group-intl-hnk-mil/index.html>.

Pacific. In January 2021, the United States Department of the Navy released its strategic blueprint for the Arctic titled *a Blue Arctic*. It highlights the danger of growing Chinese influence in the Arctic along with joint Sino-Russian joint ventures.²² The UK has an opportunity to help its ally in its escalating competition with China through a focus on upholding UNCLOS in the Arctic.

When it comes to the policy goal of protecting global influence, Brexit produces a uniquely complex issue as the UK remains unsure of its eventual outcome. Geopolitics, and a state's own national goals, will influence whether individual states view Brexit in a positive or a negative light for the UK. Much like the European referendum vote itself, the opinion in the UK media, and globally, is split. Some believe that the country has done irreparable damage to its reputation on the world stage. Others view it as the UK shedding the dead weight of the EU and forging a new position. However, in line with the thesis that the UK needs to assert itself as a regional power, the UK's future relationship with Europe is what remains vital. Brexit has not changed the United Kingdom's geographical position on the map. The EU and the UK are dependent on each other for large parts of their trade. However, there is no doubt that the Brexit process has affected the UK's relationship with the EU, more with certain countries than others. How the UK manages these relationships, and what the UK does next, post-Brexit is what now matter when it comes to regional and global influence and achieving its goals in the Arctic.

The UK's global influence is also profoundly affected by the strain Brexit has put on the strength of the Kingdom's union itself. The 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum narrowly voted in favor of remaining in the UK. However, in 2016, and in

²² U.S. Department of the Navy. *A Strategic Blueprint for the Arctic*. US National Ice Center. January 5, 2021, p8

conflict with the votes in England and Wales, Scotland voted overwhelming to remain in the EU. This has caused significant strain on the Union. Despite the description of the 2014 referendum as one of a generation, the long-running Brexit negotiations have given rise to demands of a second referendum on the heels of a Brexit deal.²³

Scotland has a successful economy, with strengths in energy, financial services, and tourism. It has a first-class university sector, is rich in natural resources, and can count on trusted institutions.²⁴ Due to the proximity of the Arctic, Scotland has a long history of shared links with Arctic nations and peoples. The Scottish Government announced, at the Arctic Circle Forum in Edinburgh in November 2017, that it would develop its own Arctic strategy on devolved matters, and the current SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon, launched Holyrood's own Arctic policy framework in September 2019 whilst attending the annual Arctic Assembly in Reykjavik, Iceland.²⁵ The framework plays very heavily on claims of shared cultural and historical experiences with other Arctic peoples and the increased cost of living that Scottish citizens pay, 7-9% more, than the average British person.²⁶ These claims are merely a single arrow in a quiver of grievances harbored by many in Scotland and are unlikely to gravely impact the United Kingdom's global influence. However, Scotland's actions provide an indication that it is laying the groundwork to form new alliances outside of the UK. A Scottish vote to leave the United

23 Akash Paun and Jess Sargent "A Second Referendum on Scottish Independence" The Institute for Government. November 23 2020. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/second-referendum-scottish-independence>.

24 Beth Daley, "Scottish Independence Referendum: Why the Economic Issues Are Quite Different to 2014.", The Conversation, January 28, 2021. <https://theconversation.com/scottish-independence-referendum-why-the-economic-issues-are-quite-different-to-2014-154119>

25 Duncan Depledge et al., "The UK and the Arctic: Forward Defence." Arctic Year Book, 2019.p6

26 Ibid.

Kingdom, and in time rejoin Europe, will not only have a devastating impact on UK's global influence but also have economic and social implications.

Proposed Changes to UK Strategy

The changes in the strategic environment have made the UK's current soft strategy to achieving its goal of protecting global influence near impossible. The UK must become one of the leading regional actors, as a bulwark against Russia. This means reallocating resources from other areas of the globe, specifically the Indo-Pacific and Middle East, and refocusing them in the Arctic and the North Atlantic, rather than overextending assets around the globe, where it achieves neither regional power nor global influence. This focus towards Russia must be whole of government and include political, economic, information, and military levers of power, all behind a common well-coordinated strategic narrative. With an increased focus of resources, the sliding scale of available options for establishing this bulwark increases in range and credibility.

Over the last decade, Russia has pushed out its Bastion and shifted the balance of power. The UK must turn the tide of this advance by Moscow. By deploying the Royal Naval and UK flagged vessels into the North Atlantic, Arctic, and NSR, either as part of an individual sovereign effort, an alliance with the United States and other close allies or as part of a NATO task group, the UK will enforce UNCLOS and message Moscow and the international community of its intent. Furthermore, the UK shows its allies, especially the United States, its resolve to enforce UNCLOS. Persistent well resources actions in the Arctic show solidarity on a much more tangible and effective scale than the occasional deployment warships to the SCS for only a few weeks a year.

Due to the UK and NATO history of conducting military operations in the Barents and North Atlantic during the Cold War, Russia paints itself as the victim, framing current operations as an aggressive Western return to heightening tensions thus justifying their increasing military capabilities in the Arctic. Here the UK must use a coordinated strategic communications plan to message allies, the international community, and Russia, as to what it is trying to achieve—the enforcement of UNCLOS. In turn, the UK stops being purely reactive to Russian aggression and instead proactively pushes back against the Bastion boundary and shifting balance of power it represents.

This change in posture and focus of resources, if communicated correctly, can take place in a non-aggressive manner. In 2017, HMS Trenchant became the first Royal Navy Submarine in more than a decade to surface through the Arctic ice pack as part of the U.S.-led Ice Exercise (ICEX). More emphasis should be given to sub-surface exercises unilaterally, and with Allies in the Arctic, an area where the UK still holds some expertise. The direct and likely ongoing threat against the underwater cable network system in the North Atlantic makes these sub-surface events even more important. The UK can meet and repel the threat by focusing its resources against this Russian sub-surface and surface threat. The UK must also incorporate a wider strategic communications strategy to support these efforts and counteract the Russian use of misinformation.

An integral part of the UK's maritime power comes from its two new Aircraft Carriers-HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales. The difficulties faced in

funding, building, and now manning these new strategic assets are well documented.²⁷ A change in strategy that effectively utilizes these carriers would do much to alleviate the criticisms. The UK should cycle HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales through deployments in the North Atlantic, Arctic, and, on occasion, the Mediterranean – not sporadically further afield. This achieves several goals. Firstly, UK sailors and airmen develop expertise in operating in these environments, particularly the challenges of the Arctic. Secondly, the UK can fulfill all its commitments to NATO, and other allies such as the US, by having these major strategic assets available for multinational exercises, bilateral missions, or response to world events. This also demonstrates, as part of an integrated strategic communications plan, that the UK is serious about resource allocation.

A final hard power strategic upgrade comes through increased use of the Royal Marines, in combination with Scandinavian, U.S., and Dutch allies. The Royal Marines have trained in the Arctic since the 1960s, developing globally renowned and respected expertise. In line with much of the UK military assets, their numbers declined with the end of the Cold War falling from 2,000-3,000 to 200-300.²⁸ As part of the proposed strategic shift of resources, the UK should commit to return to a figure of 2,000 to 3,000. By doing so, the UK develops and maintains niche skills available to allies regionally as well as globally. Additionally, the UK increases ties with Scandinavian partners and reinforces its serious commitment to the region.

²⁷ Andrew Chuter, “Here’s Why Britain Is Struggling to Form a Fully Effective Carrier Strike Group.” Defense News, June 26, 2020. <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/06/26/heres-why-britain-is-struggling-to-form-a-fully-effective-carrier-strike-group/>.

²⁸ House of Commons Defence Committee. On Thin Ice: UK Defence in the Arctic. London: August 15, 2018.p53

There are further-reaching consequences for this increased use of hard power in the Arctic. The enforcement of UNCLOS throughout the Arctic and along the NSR is vital to UK global messaging. Not only will this achieve the UK's policy aims of projecting power, but it will allow a refocusing of U.S. resources toward China. Since President Obama introduced the pivot to Asia in 2011 the United States has altered its focus more towards China and the East.²⁹ President Trump reinforced this pivot, and the shift is likely to remain under President Biden.

The United States seeks to maintain the international world order and as part of that conducts FONOPS in the SCS. The current strategy sees the UK government making commitments to send units, including HMS Queen Elizabeth, to the Pacific to take part in the operations. However, due to the lack of assets, the distance that these units must cross, and the cost, their time in theatre is often very short. Sending single units for short periods to the Pacific region to take part in a few operations is a waste of maritime resources. Instead, the UK should focus its resources on conducting FONOPS in the Arctic and along the NSR.³⁰ Through Arctic FONOPS, the UK would inspire confidence in an ally and increase pressure on an adversary that the UK would be unable to tackle alone. The UK's pride in a long-extinct Empire must not blind it to a better strategy that would bring global influence.

Brexit introduces unique changes and therefore new threats to achieving the overall UK Arctic policy. The direct loss of influence both regionally and globally due to

²⁹ Kenneth G. Libberthal, "The American Pivot to Asia." Brookings, December 2, 2011. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-american-pivot-to-asia/>.

³⁰ Ian Storey, "Can the UK Achieve Its Naval Ambitions in the Indo-Pacific?" The Diplomat. November 07 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/can-the-uk-achieve-its-naval-ambitions-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

the manner that Brexit has proceeded, and the possible implications of Scotland leaving the United Kingdom and rejoining the EU counteract the UK's goal of protecting global influence. The UK must redouble its commitment to its Northern European and North Atlantic neighbors. These commitments must work in direct parallel with efforts to work with Holyrood and all the UK's devolved centers of power, to strengthen the Union. A cross-government strategy is vital. The UK will not be able to project a global influence, whether it has regional power or not if it is fighting an internal battle. Westminster must take Scottish concerns seriously, in the spirit of being stronger together than apart. The UK cannot view this as another zero-sum game. It is not either the end of the Union or another fifty years to Scottish subjugation to English rule. With Scotland working as part of the UK, the legitimacy of actions conducted in the Arctic is increased, due to the historical ties of the people and the actual geography of the UK islands.

Westminster should seek to rebuild its global influence from the position of a United Kingdom. Only as a United Kingdom can a focus on Northern Europe, Scandinavia, and the North Atlantic take place. The current UK policy talks of committed relationships with Finland, Norway, and Canada. These relationships need tightening, and the relationships with the United States and Norway need greater emphasis. One further area to develop is the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force bringing together Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK. Notably, the involvement of Finland and Sweden, neither of them a NATO member, contributes additional high-readiness forces for potential operations should they and the Alliance determine a crisis merits joint action.³¹ Finally, the UK should partner with

³¹ HM Government, Ministry of Defence. Defence in a competitive age. March 2021, p28.

Norway to see how Royal Naval ships could be semi-permanently based at Norwegian port facilities. This level of interoperability would not only smooth logistics and lines of communication, but further add to the committed combined message to Moscow that the UK can react quickly, over shorter distances, and with its allies.

Risk

This new proposed strategy comes with risk. Due to the strong understanding of the infosphere in which Moscow and Beijing already operate expertly, an immediate reaction should be expected. The Kremlin will likely continue to message that the UK is overly aggressive seeking to bring international pressure to bear on the UK. This is not atypical, and the UK's strategic communication response must be robust. Of greater concern, although unlikely would be a direct physical and or military response. In recent years, Russia has not looked to conventional state on state aggression. It is more likely that any response from the Kremlin will be in the sub-threshold arena. The UK has previously experienced this with the poisoning of ex-Russian spy Sergey Skripal in 2018.³² This highlights the importance of a whole government approach to this policy. UK intelligence agencies and law enforcement must be part of the wider strategy discussions, as it is they who will need to remain vigilant. Furthermore, the exposure of these subthreshold attacks, should they occur, directly ties into the importance of a coordinated and prepared strategic communication plan.

With an increased overt military and political strategy, there will come an increase of miscalculation. The UK must not let this possibility stifle its actions. Despite

³² "Russian Spy Poisoning: What We Know so Far" BBC News, last modified 08 October 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43315636>.

the claims of overt risk, both Beijing and Moscow do not hesitate to use hard power where necessary. In both the Baltic and the Black Seas, Russia has conducted numerous close-quarter incidents using both air and naval power.³³ China has done the same in the SCS.³⁴ These are dangerous actions, and the UK should not join in tit-for-tat engagements. Once again, a strong strategic message must accompany all of the UK's actions to warn adversaries and inform allies.

Russia and China will likely expel diplomats and impose economic penalties on their competitors. Of greater concern to the UK are actions that intend to divide the UK from its allies. Russia and China use the international system to their advantage, and the UK should expect attempts to isolate them from that system. The UK, US, and their allies are strongest as a cohesive unit. Brexit allows the UK's adversaries to drive a wedge between the UK and its allies. It is at this crucial moment that the UK government must turn a threat into an opportunity. Outside of the EU, the UK must strive to be a political entity that works to bring allies together.

³³ Orina Pawlyk, "US Pilots' Close Encounters with Russian Aircraft Likely to Continue." Insider. May 1, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-pilots-close-encounters-with-russian-aircraft-likely-to-continue-2020-5>.

³⁴ Richard Javad Heydarian., "US, China in Another near-Miss Clash in South China Sea" Asia Times, December 24, 2020. <https://asiatimes.com/2020/12/us-china-in-another-near-miss-clash-in-south-china-sea/>.

Chapter 3: Protecting People and the Environment.

When the United Nations set the Global Goals for Sustainable Development in 2015, it recognized the importance of taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impact; conserving and sustainably using marine resources; and life on land. The UK is firmly committed to delivering these Goals at home and around the world.

-Beyond the Ice, UK Policy in the Arctic

The UK's current strategy to achieve this second policy goal involves focusing on climate change, the people of the Arctic, the environment, safety, and finally gives a very small nod to defense.¹ The strategy lays out the Arctic's considerable change in climate over the last four decades, and how the UK is combatting further impact on the global climate. These actions involve international conferences and agreements, as well as the UK's commitments to be at the forefront of global efforts to protect the climate.

Intertwined with this, is a commitment to the protection of rights and wellbeing of the indigenous people of the Arctic, as well as further commitments to marine conservation and reductions of marine litter and pollution. For the first time, the UK puts forward defense as part of a commitment to preserving stability and security in the Arctic region, which would involve working with international partners and allies through defense engagement, bilateral, and multilateral security cooperation. This would also include essential cold-weather training exercises and a commitment to NATO's involvement in the Arctic noted in the previous chapter. The strategy ends with a focus on safety and the role the UK can play in keeping the Arctic safe for both British nationals and others throughout the region, through aeronautical and marine search and rescue.

¹ HM Government. Beyond the Ice: UK Policy towards the Arctic. Polar Regions Department. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 04, April 2018.p3

Despite the brief mention of defense, the second strategy is again based around UK influence. More than the first policy goal, this strategy is heavily reliant on the soft power influencing of Russian and China. While the UK and European allies should correctly lead by example, protection of the Arctic people and environment demands direct influence over Russia and China.

Changes in the Strategic Environment caused by Russia, China, and Brexit

Taken at face value, Russia's interest in the Arctic aligns with that of the UK. In its 2018 foundations Arctic policy document, Moscow places the well-being of its Arctic population, including indigenous minorities, as part of its primary national interests.² Russia strategy is to improve healthcare and education at all levels, provide affordable modern housing, improve social and state infrastructure, and increase transportation and financial quotas.³ The document also discusses Russia's commitments to the protection of the Arctic environment, and to science and technology. However, as previously discussed, Russian intent in 2021 is not what it seems. This document is more propaganda than policy incorporating Moscow's well-developed strategic communications plan for the Arctic, which links to the wider Russian national policy.

Climate change alone is a major threat to the way of life for all the indigenous people of the Arctic. The Russian indigenous peoples' movement represents 40 indigenous peoples. On the face of it, Moscow affords some protection to them with article 69 of the Russian constitution guaranteeing their rights and reporting suggests that

² Russian Federation. Decree of the Russian Federation No 164. Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the period of up to 2035. Incorporating the changes into the Decree by the President of the Russian Federation issued on 02 May 2014 No 296. Translation, Anna Davis and Ryan Vest. Moscow, 5 March 2020. p4

³Ibid.p 6-7

“Unlike in many other countries, indigenous groups do not face discrimination in Russia, have equal rights, are encouraged to keep their culture and language and are generally well integrated in Russian society.”⁴ However, this reporting does not give the full picture.

Recently, Moscow has weakened protections put in place to help reduce further effects of climate change. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, many indigenous people-led environmental movements pressed for modest environmental controls to protect local environments. The Russian government undermined these groups, and, in some cases, the environmental movements suspected elite interest groups infiltrated their movements. These groups lacked the legal infrastructure that supports civilian suits and enforces existing environmental regulations. Further, the Putin regime has declared many indigenous and environmental NGOs as foreign agents, which often creates additional legal difficulties.⁵

A series of environmental disasters in the Arctic in 2020 demonstrates disparity between the Kremlin projections and the reality of its actions in the region. Paragraph five of *Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the period up to 2035* states that protecting the environment in the Arctic is a primary national interest of the Russian Federation. Throughout the document, it continually refers to environmental protection and environmental security, lays out eight primary objectives that range from the protection of natural areas and waterways to safeguarding sustainable

⁴ Maria Stambler, “The Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Peoples Has Received Little Attention in Russia” Climate Scorecard, August 31, 2020. <https://www.climatescorecard.org/2020/08/the-impact-of-climate-change-on-indigenous-peoples-has-received-little-attention-in-russia/>.

⁵Ibid.

resources.⁶ Despite these policy claims, in 2020 Russia was responsible for three major environmental disasters in the Arctic including the massive Taymyr peninsula oil spill.⁷

On 29 May 2020, a tank containing diesel oil at the Nadezhda plant on the Taymyr peninsula burst and spilled over 20 thousand tonnes of oil products into the local environment, contaminated more than 20km of watercourses, turning the Ambarnaya River red. A division of Nornickel operates the plant. Nornickel's factories have reportedly made the city of Norilsk one of the most heavily polluted places on Earth. This was one of the Arctic's biggest oil product accidents, which reinforced the opinions of many environmental activists that there is no guaranteed safe way to extract or store fossil fuel products in the Arctic region.⁸

Having failed to live up to its policy goals in climate change action, safeguarding the interests of the indigenous people, and protecting the environment, Russia has shown its inability to maintain maritime safety. During a weapons test in the White Sea in August 2019, reports came to light about an accident involving a nuclear missile. After initially denying the incident, the Russians later confirmed an incident had taken place. On 21 August, some 13 days after the event, and following a state funeral, President Putin confirmed scientists died during the testing of a weapon.⁹

⁶ Russian Federation. Decree of the Russian Federation No 164. Foundations of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Arctic for the period of up to 2035. Incorporating the changes into the Decree by the President of the Russian Federation issued on 02 May 2014 No 296. Translation, Anna Davis and Ryan Vest. Moscow, 5 March 2020.pp 9

⁷ "Explainer: Russia's Arctic Environmental Disasters" The Moscow Times. Last modified June 29, 2020. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/06/29/explainer-russias-arctic-environmental-disasters-a70730>.

⁸ Olesya Vikulova, "The River Runs Red – Catastrophic Oil Accident in the Russian Arctic" - Greenpeace International.05 June, 2020. <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/43553/oil-spill-russian-arctic/>

⁹ Charles Digges, "Russia Says Small Nuclear Reactor Blew Up in Deadly Arctic Accident." The Maritime Executive, August 12, 2019. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/russia-says-small-nuclear-reactor-blew-up-in-deadly-arctic-accident>.

Russia's policy and actions do not align. The UK cannot sit back and accept what the Moscow information machine puts out. Current UK policy imagines the Westminster working with Russia and the various Arctic nations. This fits exactly into Moscow's plan. During Russia's two years leading the Arctic Council, it can continue to hold all other states to a set of rules it has no intention of following. The UK must highlight these clear transgressions to the international community as part of its integrated strategic communication strategy.

China, much like Russia, has a strong information campaign when it comes to its commitment to the climate, its people, the environment in which it operates, and the safety it affords to these actions. However, throughout the operational environment are numerous examples where Beijing does not live up to these claims. China's poor record of implementing climate change measures is well documented. However, on the face of it, China seems to be presenting a greener attitude. China will soon publish its 14th five-year plan, and there are already indications that it will include environmentally minded changes.¹⁰

In September 2020, at the United Nations General Assembly, President Xi Jinping pledged China would reach peak carbon-dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. Questions remain over whether this is achievable and why China suddenly announced this goal, since until recently economists considered carbon neutrality a constraint to growth. Despite this, the CCP now seems committed to renewable energies and the reduction of its massive use of fossil fuels, especially coal.

¹⁰ Dorcas Wong, "What to Expect in China's 14th Five Year Plan After the Fifth Plenum?" China Briefing, November 12, 2020. <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/what-to-expect-in-chinas-14th-five-year-plan-decoding-the-fifth-plenum-communicue/>.

This change seems driven by the enormous damage already done to China and its population, especially the urban middle class, which is unwilling to tolerate the current appalling conditions in the cities.¹¹

However, while the Chinese populace may be putting pressure on the CCP for change domestically, this should not be confused with an ethical change of heart in how China produces energy or operates around the world where it seeks resources. The BRI continues to cause devastation to the environment and climate globally. China's overall ambition for the BRI is enormous, with more than sixty countries, two-thirds of the world's population, signed on to projects or interested in doing so. China's largest project so far, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, estimated at \$60 billion, is a collection of projects connecting China to Pakistan's Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea. In total, China has spent an estimated \$200 billion on such efforts, with an estimated \$1.2–1.3 trillion to be spent by 2027.¹²

The environmental cost is two-fold. While the CCP is looking to hit its carbon aims for 2060, it has no such desires for its BRI partners, where it actively sells Chinese coal. China is far more interested in finding markets for its resources and jobs for its population. In this way, China has nullified any benefit it may bring from its carbon reductions. The CCP claims it provides cheap energy to its partners, but instead, it has found a convenient way to placate its population, and still profit at the expense of the environment. Additionally, one must combine these issues with the damage done by the

¹¹ Larry Luxner, "What China's March to Net-Zero Emissions Means for the World" Atlantic Council, January 20, 2021. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-chinas-march-to-net-zero-emissions-means-for-the-world/>.

¹² Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative" Council on Foreign Relations, January 28, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

various projects themselves. The BRI development in the Mekong Delta has had devastating effects on the water table, Kenya's development resulted in deforestation and harm to the wildlife, and the proposed hydroelectric dam in Northern Sumatra, Indonesia, if built, would threaten the survival of the Tapanuli Orangutan, one of the most vulnerable species of great ape on the planet.¹³ All these projects come at a cost – ecological, economic, and often political.¹⁴ China is now a world leader in renewable energy and yet it offers none of these technologies to its BRI partners.

Much like Russia, whose continued environmental and climate devastation occurs behind a disinformation campaign, China also has a history of human rights abuse. An estimated eleven million Uighurs live in China's Xinjiang province. Over the past three years, it is reported that at least one million of them have been detained in forced labor camps, though some claim the number is even higher. The CCP claims the Uighurs are being sent to factories as part of a labor transfer program, which helps provide Uighurs with well-paying jobs and alleviates poverty in the region. However, news reporting from former detainees suggests Uighurs inside these camps are subject to 24-hour-a-day surveillance, mental and physical torture, and constant indoctrination in CCP ideologies. Uighur women are subjected to forced sterilization and abortions.¹⁵ Whilst not an Arctic people, the details of the treatment of the Uighurs by the CCP has shocked the global community. How can the UK reconcile providing support to one set of indigenous people

¹³ Kumuda Simpson, "Just How Green Is the Belt and Road?" The Interpreter, January 23, 2019. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/how-green-belt-and-road>.

¹⁴ Jan Ellen Spiegle "The Potential Climate Consequences of China's Belt and Roads Initiative", Yale Climate Connections, February 17, 2020. <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/02/the-potential-climate-consequences-of-chinas-belt-and-roads-initiative/>.

¹⁵ Peter O'Dowd and Samantha Ralphson, "U.S. Declares China's Human Rights Abuses Against Muslim Uighurs 'Genocide'" Here & Now, January 25, 2021. <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/01/25/china-uighurs-genocide>.

without providing the same support to another? If the UK does not speak out against all mistreatment of indigenous people globally, it completely nullifies its strategic communication message.

To achieve its second policy goal, the UK must rely heavily on soft power. However, Brexit causes the UK a different set of problems. One can easily find clear examples of how Russia and China only pay lip service to their published policies, holding the protection of the people and the environment second to national aims. Brexit has dampened the voice needed to highlight the clear misdeeds of Moscow and Beijing. Leaving the EU means that the UK loses the powerful voice that comes with being associated with a globally powerful and respected organization. The UK is still able to build a strategic communication strategy, but it must now execute it as an individual actor rather than as part of an already functioning group. However, before this can happen the UK must get its own house in order.

One of the relatively unpublished impacts of Brexit is the number of organizations and institutions that the UK has separated from as part of the deal, including many focused on the environment.¹⁶ In the 1970s, Britain was widely known as the Dirty Man of Europe when it came to the environment. EU membership transformed the UK into an important player and global leader on environmental matters offering a venue for environmental policymaking and a transnational forum to bring states together.¹⁷ Environmental pollution does not respect boundaries. Grand environmental challenges, such as climate change, demand global collaborative action. The EU provides a

¹⁶ Professor Charlotte Burns, “Brexit’s Implications for Environmental Policy” UK in a Changing Europe, 08 August, 2020. <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/long-read/Brexits-implications-for-environmental-policy/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

structured forum to bring together states. One can also argue that EU decision-making tends to be insulated from day-to-day political pressures, particularly advantageous for environmental policy, which benefits from long-term stable policy frameworks. The EU provided such stability.

There is the possibility that Brexit could create significant environmental governance gaps. Before Brexit, there was EU involvement throughout the UK policy cycle: developing policy, providing expertise and data gathering, monitoring, implementation, and enforcement. The UK benefited from being able to draw upon expertise from the European Commission and a range of agencies, including the European Environment Agency and the European Chemicals Agency, and other EU states. With Brexit, these repositories of expertise and innovation are no longer as freely available.¹⁸

One of the key components of a strategy based around a positive strategic communication message is the ability to lead by example. When challenged, Moscow and Beijing will likely retaliate in kind, highlighting any misdemeanours perpetrated by the UK. With Brexit, the UK has left the jurisdiction of the European Commission and European Court of Justice. Many pro-Brexiteers heralded this as a triumph. However, it was these institution's rules and regulations that kept the UK on the straight and narrow when it came to environmental policy.

The UK government is desperate to sign new trade deals. Many of these trade deals, are likely to have conditions that would never have passed muster when the UK was part of the EU. Economic repercussions will occur, and must be accepted, in the

¹⁸ Charlotte Burns and Neil Carter, "Brexit and UK Environmental Policy and Politics." *French Journal of British Studies*, March 18, 2018. <https://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/2385#tocto2n1>.

short term, as recently identified by the UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Rabb, following a realization that there may a reduction in trade partners available to uphold ethical values.¹⁹ Westminster must not drop its standards and invite accusations of hypocrisy.

Proposed Changes to UK Strategy

The UK can accomplish this second policy goal with the use of a clear, well-structured, and defensible Arctic strategic communications strategy woven within a wider national UK voice. Wars may be won on the ground, but they can easily be lost in the information sphere. The current UK Secretary of State for Defense, Ben Wallace has stated “We must actively champion those shared values of liberty, justice and tolerance that have given billions of souls the world over the chance of a better life, and to do so through our actions not just our words”.²⁰ The UK must live up to these words as information runs through every part of the global network and the new operational environment is the greatest lever of power a government can wield. A state could use information to shame other states, inform its populace, and instigate international action, however it can also have what has been said against it.

Many of the threads in place such as commitments to the environment, the indigenous Arctic people, and safety in the Arctic are commendable. However, the UK can no longer expect that changes will occur simply based on the example it sets, or that others will follow suit. Like the vital importance of meeting Russian aggression and enforcing UNCLOS in the first policy goal, actions that add to climate change or policies

¹⁹ Andrew Woodcock. “Leaked Video Shows Raab Telling Officials to Trade with Countries Which Fail to Meet Human Rights Standards” *The Independent*, March 17, 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/dominic-raab-trade-human-rights-b1818126.html>.

²⁰ HM Government, Ministry of Defence. *Defence in a competitive age*. March 2021, p2.

that deliberately target the indigenous people of the Arctic in the pursuit of resources need tangible punishment. As a regional leader, the UK must identify these actions, and the nation associated with these actions, communicate them to the global community, and then pursue real consequences, political or economic, for the offending state. This cannot stop at just the Arctic. The importance of a whole of government powerful, legitimate, and respected strategic communications plan is again vital. Whether it be the persecution of Uighurs in China, the Rohingya in Burma, or Tamils in Sri Lanka, the UK government must be willing to speak out on the international stage, despite the inherent risk, and then be willing to act whether that be politically or economically. Once again by using the tools the UK still has such as its economic power and communications network it can wield international influence. However, this also means the UK must hold itself to the highest standards and be prepared to suffer in turn when the inevitable retaliation occurs. Working closely with the US and EU once again becomes vital.

In the UK's regional power role, and in particular its competition with Russia and China, its words and actions leveled against one offender need to be the same as against all others. Earlier in the chapter, the author put forward a litany of abuses against the environment, climate change, and indigenous people by Beijing and Russia. However, Russia and China have embraced the importance of a strong strategic communications plan. Whether it is the resource development by the Russians in the Arctic or the devastation of the global environment by the BRI, these actions are fronted by an interwoven message reaching from policy to carefully placed news articles and government-funded news channels.

The UK must realize that in the interconnected global environment information is the front line of warfare. As autocracies, China and Russia can move quickly and with mass when putting out disinformation, either ahead of an event, or in response to one. The UK must not only have a versatile information strategy of its own but have sufficient resources behind it to respond quickly to world events. The ironic flaw of the transparency of liberal democracy is the inherent weakness of slow decision-making. The UK needs to elevate its focus on the information capabilities to the same levels as its economic, diplomatic, and military levers of power.

In the information war with Russia the UK cannot put forward a comprehensive and strong information campaign if its foundations are weak. For example, the US has declared the CCP is committing genocide against the Uighurs. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called China's actions "crimes against humanity."²¹ The Biden administration agrees that the mass internment, forced labor, and sterilization of Uighur women constitutes genocide.²² Whilst the UK government has previously stated that the Chinese action against the Uighurs constitutes human rights abuses, they have not gone as far as to describe them as genocide. ²³ In March 2021 the UK government defeated a genocide amendment to its trade bill which would provide power to cancel British trade deals with any state found to have acted in such a way.²⁴ The UK must show the strength

²¹ Peter O'Dowd and Samantha Ralphson, "U.S. Declares China's Human Rights Abuses Against Muslim Uighurs 'Genocide'" Here & Now, January 25, 2021. <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/01/25/china-uighurs-genocide>.

²² Ibid.

²³ James Lundale, "Uighurs: 'Credible Case' China Carrying out Genocide" BBC News, February 8, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-55973215>.

²⁴ Andrew Woodcock, "Government Sees off Tory Rebellion to Defeat 'Genocide Amendment'" *The Independent.*, March 22, 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/china-xinjiang-genocide-trade-bill-b1820812.html>.

of character that does not put trade before human rights. This is not an easy choice for the government to make considering the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit. Global influence can only be gained through our allies. In turn, the UK's allies will only take it seriously if it can back up its claims and rhetoric. Challenging the information campaigns of Russia and China will bring retaliation and can only be successfully done from a solid foundation. Much like the US "shining city on the hill" the UK can only gain long-term international influence by focusing its resources on a credible and well-supported strategic communications strategy, that calls out Moscow and Beijing for its misdeeds and then absorbs the repercussions.

As is so often the case with the impact of Brexit, the UK is faced with threats and opportunities. While it has likely lost some of the power that comes from being part of a major international organization, it is also no longer constrained by it. The UK has often been a driving force within the EU, and it is exactly this attitude that it must continue to maintain.

The greatest threat faced by Brexit is if the UK falls away from the high standards it helped set as part of the organization. Once again, the UK must continue to follow its current commitments, such as the £3 billion new investment, a ban on new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, new robust environmental disclosure standards, and be a vocal part of the international community to do more. Trade and ethics will clash. The government must not water down environmental standards just to obtain trade deals with countries such a China. Of more importance to the UK would be working with the EU, its biggest trading partner, and sustaining its current environmental commitments.

Risk

Much like the previously proposed new political/military strategy, this new information-based strategy comes with risk. By highlighting the hypocrisy and disinformation produced by Moscow and Beijing, the UK will make itself a target with disinformation attacks and grey space operations a current and ongoing threat. The UK must embrace this challenge. The UK's imperial past is often used as a weapon to embarrass and shame it on the international stage. The UK cannot change its past and should not be shamed into inactivity by it. The UK should use its imperial misdeeds as a reason to lead the globe in supporting those people and states now being oppressed by Moscow and Beijing. Hiding from the past achieves nothing, using it as a reason to help others is the only way forward.

The largest risk the UK would face is that of an economic impact. Seeking trade deals with those who have similar human rights and environmental abuse records as Russia and China opens it up to cries of hypocrisy. If the UK wishes to challenge the behavior of others, it must make sure its own actions are beyond reproach. This may mean picking future trade partners more carefully which in an economy struggling post COVID and post Brexit, is a path some in the UK believe unaffordable.

Chapter 4: Promoting Prosperity

Promoting the Arctic as a place where economic and commercial development occurs in a sustainable and responsible manner. Where the people of the region benefit from the prosperity that a changing Arctic may bring. Supporting UK companies investing in the Arctic; making them aware, and connecting them to, the opportunities available.

-Beyond the Ice, UK Policy in the Arctic, 2018.

The UK government aims to achieve the third policy goal via the maintenance of trade routes, energy and extractives, fisheries, connectivity, and financial services. The strategy encourages British companies to become part of the Arctic Economic Council, to facilitate business and responsible economic development through the sharing of best practices, technological solutions, and standards.¹ The strategy again notes the importance a navigable NSR would bring to global trade routes. There is a significant focus on another level of soft power - the UK Hydrographic Office and its expertise in producing charts and supporting international navigation. Whilst the strategy mentions energy and fishery stocks, it is only in terms of being part of organizations that responsibly use the resources available. Finally, the policy brings together a commitment to use the UK's expertise in connectivity and financial services, to help those Arctic states that need and request it.

This last policy aim focuses entirely on prosperity, and whilst there is mention of the increase in Chinese and Russian shipping in the Arctic, it views the UK's role as more of a hydrographer, being able to offer core skills to the Arctic nations. However, as the NSR becomes more accessible, free movement on the high seas is of enormous financial importance. As much as the NSR is an opportunity for the UK, there is an equal chance

¹ HM Government. Beyond the Ice: UK Policy towards the Arctic. Polar Regions Department. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 04, April 2018, p23.

of the NSR becoming a threat to prosperity, should Moscow dictate who gets to use it and at what price. If the Kremlin's gatekeeping of the NSR comes to fruition, and relations between Beijing and Moscow continue to improve, Chinese companies are likely to reap the economic rewards². This will have a double impact on the UK if this flow of maritime wealth uses Ireland or the Northwestern ports of mainland Europe rather than the UK, due to Brexit.

Changes in the Strategic Environment caused by Russia, China, and Brexit

The threat to UK prosperity comes from Russia being able to pick and choose whom it allows to use the NSR. The NSR sits at the heart of Russian national politics. Released in 2008, the Russian policy document *Foundation for Arctic policy* spoke of, "exploitation of the Northern Sea Route as a national unitary transport communication".³ As it became clear the Arctic ice melt was going to continue, Russian policy evolved into, *the 2013 Arctic Strategy*. Fueled by the Kremlin's writing style, international hopes lent towards a NSR open to all and reflected a belief that liberalization and a more market-based approach were necessary to encourage traffic on the NSR.⁴ This echoed the hopes of the Clinton-era belief, that globalization and the Liberal Democratic system, if open to all, would encourage positive, responsible involvement by all. These hopes have not materialized.

Following two years of growing international tension in 2015 Russia proposed a very different initiative, with the NSR law and accompanying regulations came into force

2 Tianming Gao and Vasilii Erokhin. "China-Russia Collaboration in Arctic Shipping and Maritime Engineering." *Polar Journal*, 31 August 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2020.1799612>.

3 Arild Moe. "A New Russian Policy for the Northern Sea Route? State Interests, Key Stakeholders, and Economic Opportunities in Changing Times." *Polar Journal*, Vol 10, issue 2, August 19 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2020.1799611>.

⁴Ibid.

in 2018. The expressed objective of the new proposal was to limit the use of foreign tonnage on the NSR.⁵ This was the Kremlin's first publicly published and ratified documentation by the Kremlin pointing towards greater control over the NSR than allowed under UNCLOS. Furthermore, it presented the first evidence of a future possible direct impact on promoting UK prosperity.

From 2015, as recognition of the importance of the NSR grew further, and therefore gained higher priority in Moscow, indications of internal disputes over which interested parties should have this control, military or political, began to surface. In 2016, when the government announced that it wanted to reform the management of the NSR, a struggle emerged between the Ministry of Transport and the state nuclear corporation Rosatom.⁶ These internal fights among factions within the Kremlin serve as an indicator of how important control over the NSR is to the future of Russia. The Russian military had the task of publishing the most up-to-date Russian claims over territorial water by the 2020 release of the Russian Arctic policy. That they have failed to do so is highly unlikely to be because of limited resources, as the Arctic, and especially the NSR, is of high priority to the Kremlin.⁷ It is far more likely this is an example of Moscow giving itself the space to work in the sub-threshold, or grey zone, that it has utilized so well since President Putin first came to power. As argued in Chapter 2, the nature of warfare is changing and states, especially Russia and China, no longer see the use of conventional forces as the main tool of achieving political goals. Violence, diversion, misdirection, and

⁵ Arild Moe. "A New Russian Policy for the Northern Sea Route? State Interests, Key Stakeholders, and Economic Opportunities in Changing Times." *Polar Journal*, Vol 10, issue 2, August 19 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2020.1799611>. .

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

manipulation of the infosphere are tools of Putin's Russia used since the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the ensuing seizure and occupation of Crimea in 2014.

Russia under Putin is episodic, acting when opportunities present themselves. Moscow has also sought to continually test how far it can push the US and the rest of NATO without incurring a military response, witnessed in Georgia, then Ukraine, and finally in Syria in 2017. Each time, Russia has shown an increased sophistication in the use of violence through multiple means such as proxies, allies, mercenaries, special forces, and finally conventional forces, as well as showing an excellent understanding and control of the infosphere to its advantage. Russian is now deploying its sub-threshold strategy to gain control of the NSR through non-conventional means. The infighting is one of the very few outward indications of this coming to fruition. Further, the victors of these internal struggles give further indications on the future administration of the NSR. Moscow has just as keen an interest in natural resource development, should the use of the NSR by the international community not develop at the pace it desires. Development of the NSR by Russia could become primarily part of a bigger project focused on extracting resources for the Russian and international markets.⁸

As with the first policy goal, the key to protecting prosperity, comes from the free movement of shipping through the NSR. From this viewpoint, it does not matter if Russia prioritizes an increase in international shipping or the exploitation of resources as its key economic driver. The UK or any other state can drive the Kremlin's economic agenda and, in both cases, control over the movement of maritime vessels is the key.

⁸ Arild Moe. "A New Russian Policy for the Northern Sea Route? State Interests, Key Stakeholders, and Economic Opportunities in Changing Times." *Polar Journal*, Vol 10, issue 2, August 19 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2020.1799611>. p13.

China became observers to the Arctic council in 2013. Indicated by the publication of China's most recent Arctic policy documents in January 2018, which identifies the NSR as a maritime highway of the Polar Silk Road, China's public intentions in the Arctic are primarily scientific and economic.⁹ But China has been increasing its commercial presence in the region, including substantial investment in mining operations in Greenland, and in gas projects on Russia's North and Arctic coast.¹⁰

Rhetoric behind the Polar Silk Road claims halved transit times, and fuel and shipping costs reduced by 40%. In turn, this will supposedly halve carbon dioxide emissions from the ships taking the new route.¹¹ While shipping through the NSR may be limited at this time compared with the one billion tonnes which pass through Suez each year, shorter transit times, the absence of queues, and lower risks from piracy will create attractive opportunities for shipping coming to or from Asia. Given that almost one-third of the world's container traffic is represented by trade between Europe and East Asia, there is incredible potential for the UK.

China now competes with the US for global hegemony. Beijing's global economic influence, most recently into Europe and specifically Greece, has been enormous.¹² The UK ports industry is the biggest in Europe, giving strong foundations on which to base further investment into the opportunities offered by the Arctic. The House

⁹ Tianming Gao and Vasilii Erokhin. "China-Russia Collaboration in Arctic Shipping and Maritime Engineering." *Polar Journal*, 31 August 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2154896X.2020.1799612>. p3.

¹⁰ HM Government. *Beyond the Ice: UK Policy towards the Arctic*. Polar Regions Department. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 04, April 2018, p10.

¹¹ Tim Yoe, "The UK Needs to Be Proactive on the Northern Sea Route." *Sustainability Times*, November 28 2019. <https://www.sustainability-times.com/expert-opinions/the-uk-needs-to-be-proactive-on-the-northern-sea-route/>.

¹² Frans-Paul Van Der Putten, "European Seaports and Chinese Strategic Influence. The Relevance of the Maritime Silk Road for the Netherlands Clingendael Report." Clingendael, December 18 2019. www.clingendael.org.

of Lords has already found that northern and eastern UK ports are well placed to benefit from the opening of the NSR.¹³ Should the Chinese be able to secure a deal with Russia that would make the use of the NSR more favourable to Chinese vessels, would present a direct economic threat to the UK. China would possess a significant advantage in controlling the shipment of goods through the NSR and how those goods arrived in Europe. This could completely exclude UK markets and ports.

The EU, taken as a whole, is the UK's largest trading partner. In 2019, UK exports to the EU were £294 billion (43% of all UK exports). UK imports from the EU were £374 billion (52% of all UK imports).¹⁴ Despite the initial trade deal, the UK is currently attempting to renegotiate every trade deal that it has ever had. However, this study looks to highlight two specific concerns regarding Brexit and the changes in the strategic environment that has had an impact on promoting UK prosperity. Firstly, in leaving Europe the UK has also left a set of institutions that imposed sanctions on Russia. Secondly how will the increased flow of maritime traffic through the NSR affect the UK's economy considering the UK is no longer part of the European Trade Area.

Since April 2014, the EU has imposed financial and trade sanctions on Russia in connection with the situation in Ukraine. These measures include asset freezes and travel restrictions on people and entities associated with the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, sectoral economic sanctions targeting Russia's oil sector, primary and secondary capital markets, a ban on arms sales and dual-use military goods, economic

¹³ Tim Yoe, "The UK Needs to Be Proactive on the Northern Sea Route." Sustainability Times, November 28 2019. <https://www.sustainability-times.com/expert-opinions/the-uk-needs-to-be-proactive-on-the-northern-sea-route/>.

¹⁴ UK Parliament, "Statistics on UK-EU Trade." House of Commons Library. November 10, 2020. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7851/>.

sanctions against Crimea and Sevastopol, as well as diplomatic restrictions between EU bodies and the Russian government.¹⁵ The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 and entered a transition period, which concluded at the end of 2020. During this transition period, EU sanctions were implemented in the UK through EU law. To provide a legal framework to ensure the continued ability to impose, update and lift sanctions autonomously after the end of the transition period, several regulations imposing sanctions were enacted under the UK's Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 (SAML).¹⁶

By leaving the EU, the UK can no longer influence EU sanctions. Correspondingly the UK is also no longer held to EU sanctions. Despite statements from both the UK and EU that they will continue to share the same values and work together, this does provide a seam that can be exploited – an area in which Moscow excels.¹⁷ More importantly, the question remains whether any UK-issued sanction would have any real impact without the backing of the United States or the United Nations. Further, it remains to be seen how aggressive the United Kingdom will be in enforcing its blacklist. Since its inception in 2016, the government's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) has been relatively reluctant to issue fines for those entities found to be in breach of sanctions, only handing out its first multi-million-pound penalty in April 2020, when

¹⁵ Dominik Istrate, "Post-Brexit, What Happens to the EU's Sanctions Policy" Emerging Europe, January 31, 2020. <https://emerging-europe.com/news/post-Brexit-what-happens-to-the-eus-sanctions-policy/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Standard Chartered was fined £20.4 million for breaching EU sanctions targeting Russia.¹⁸

Outside of the possible future impact of Beijing's use of the NSR, Brexit adds a further layer of threat to protecting prosperity in the UK. The UK needs to act quickly to secure its place, both financially and diplomatically, in the future of maritime trading. Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and especially Ireland carefully monitors what is happening in the UK and how they might be able to offer better access to the European market for increasing NSR trade. Furthermore, over 90 % of the UK's international trade passes through its seaports. A significant part of that trade is with Arctic Council Member States, four of whom – the US, Russia, Canada, and Sweden – are among the top 20 trading partners. Brexit, and this proposed change in strategy, now demands a reassessment of Britain's global trade, and particularly its trade relationships outside of the EU.

Proposed Changes to UK Strategy

The UK wields considerable power through finance and communications. It is through the resourcing and allocation of these tools that it must do more. This new strategy of economic strength must intertwine seamlessly with a comprehensive and resilient information campaign mentioned previously. To combat Moscow's strategy to control the movement of trade through the NSR the UK must put in place a two-pronged approach. Firstly, it must be willing to continue to uphold current sanctions in place against Russia, as mentioned above, and go further. Secondly, it must simultaneously

¹⁸ David Povey, "Assessing U.K. Sanctions in a Post-Brexit World" Compliance Week. August 26, 2020. <https://www.complianceweek.com/sanctions/assessing-uk-sanctions-in-a-post-Brexit-world/29373.article>.

reallocate its economic resources to support future activity in the Arctic and North Atlantic.

The UK must remain committed to the current sanctions in place against Russia and be ready to go further. Not only should the UK remain supportive and aligned with the EU sanctions, but it must also bring itself into line with those imposed by the US. The US has issued wide-ranging financial and trade sanctions since 2014 in connection with actions that undermine the sovereignty of Ukraine. Further sanctions have also been imposed based on concerns of cyber-attacks and in response to the chemical attack in Salisbury. The US has also imposed almost a total embargo on trade and services with the Crimea Region.¹⁹

These sanctions are having a real effect on the Russian economy.²⁰ Estimates of the extent of the economic loss vary, however, most support the view that sanctions have reduced Russia's economic development. The prohibition of long-term financing for certain large state-owned companies, including the major banks Sberbank and VTB, has been particularly significant. Another notable measure has been the export ban on certain sensitive technologies that can be used for oil production because it hinders the exploration of important future resources in deep water, Arctic, and shale deposits.²¹ However, the biggest impact from sanctions may be psychological, as businesses try to avoid political risks and become hesitant to invest. Sanctions have worked by reducing foreign direct investment and even investments by Russian companies because of the threat of fresh restrictions and reputational risk. Almost simultaneously with the

¹⁹ Tim Stoker "Russian Sanctions - a Guide for EU Businesses". OUT.LAW Guide, December 20, 2020. <https://www.pinsentmasons.com/out-law/guides/russian-sanctions-guide-eu-businesses>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

introduction of the sanctions in 2014, the price of crude oil decreased drastically. The drop in the price of oil had a much bigger impact on the Russian economy than sanctions, but it would be wrong to conclude that sanctions had an unimportant effect. On the contrary, sanctions can be expected to have a bigger effect in a generally weak economic climate, where it is more difficult to mitigate their impact.²²

However, the UK cannot just stop at sanctions. The UK is among the top 10 investors in Russia. Its accumulated assets amount to \$23.8 billion. Concurrently, according to the Russian Embassy in London, Russians have accumulated \$11 billion of assets in London. However far more important and linked with the second proposed strategy of a strong strategic narrative safe from accusations of hypocrisy, is the UK's, and specifically London's, association with money laundering.²³

The UK needs to move away from its history of being a center for Russian money laundering if it is to be able to conduct its strategic communications plan and hold Russia to account through sanctions. This involves some serious self-examination. Over the past decade, £68 billion has flowed from Russia into Britain's offshore satellites such as the British Virgin Islands, Cayman, Gibraltar, Jersey, and Guernsey.²⁴ In 2017 Transparency International published a report, which, relying only on public sources of information, identified 160 properties in the UK, together worth £4.4 billion, that had been bought by what it called high-corruption-risk individuals. Most of those properties were in London.

²² Tim Stoker "Russian Sanctions - a Guide for EU Businesses." OUT.LAW Guide, December 20, 2020. <https://www.pinsentmasons.com/out-law/guides/russian-sanctions-guide-eu-businesses>.

²³ Oliver Bullough, "How Britain Let Russia Hide Its Dirty Money" The Guardian, May 25, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/may/25/how-britain-let-russia-hide-its-dirty-money>.

²⁴ Ibid.

Resources must be allocated to the National Crime Agency and UK police forces. Many attempted prosecutions have failed because of the required collaboration of Moscow. In extreme circumstances those linked to investigations in Russia have been killed. It is theorized that this is what happened to Alexander Litvinenko, murdered with radioactive polonium-210 in 2006, and who was working with Spanish and British authorities to expose Russian money flows. Reporting has also suggested it could explain the death of Alexander Perepilichny, a 44-year-old banker who was helping to understand the destination of the \$230m stolen from the Russian budget, and who died while jogging in Surrey in 2012. Investigators at first thought he had suffered a heart attack, but it appears that he may have been poisoned with a rare plant extract.²⁵

In July 2020 Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, as part of parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, announced London is not the place to launder Russian money.²⁶ However, there must be meaningful action to back up these claims. London remains a significant financial maritime hub and the UK government should work with financial institutions such as Platts and Argus to make sure the trading houses and floors are run with integrity and complete transparency. Big businesses such as BP should also be brought close to the government strategy. BP has a 30% share in Rosneft and this can be leveraged both ways.

These short-term changes in strategy must be combined with long-term adjustments. Russia's economy and power are directly linked to its natural resource development,

²⁵Oliver Bullough, "How Britain Let Russia Hide Its Dirty Money" The Guardian, May 25, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/may/25/how-britain-let-russia-hide-its-dirty-money>.

²⁶ Reuters Staff, "London Is Not the Place to Launder Russian Money, British Minister Says" Reuters, July 22, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-moneylaundering/london-is-not-the-place-to-launder-russian-money-british-minister-says-idUSKCN24N0OZ>.

specifically oil and gas. It holds this power over countries across Europe. Much like China as part of its BRI, Russia's control of energy flows to Europe is used as a threat. In 2018, around 40% of EU natural gas imports came from Russia. In the same year, Gazprom, supplied a total of 200.8 billion cubic meters of gas to European countries, with 81% heading to Western Europe.²⁷ While it is not practical to drop all supplies overnight, the UK can help the EU in diversifying its suppliers to include the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, and even the US. Furthermore, this should take place at the same time as a longer move to renewable energy. The Russian economy relies on selling its resources. Reducing or removing that market, while a difficult and long-term aim, should be a significant part of the UK's strategy. Once again this will mean a focus of resources on renewables and diversification. This will likely cost more but this is not the reason to shy away from a strategy that produces long-term benefit and fits with the strategic communication message that the UK leads by example with integrity. Short-termism will not bring international influence.

The opening of the NSR has drawn companies all over the world to take advantage. However, ice breaker escorts are often necessary even when the sea ice is at its lowest. Russia has the world's only fleet of nuclear icebreakers 75% of which will be replaced over the next decade at an estimated cost of between \$500 million and \$1.5 billion each. According to President Putin, by 2035, Russia's fleet will include at least 13 icebreakers, including nine nuclear-powered vessels.²⁸ The United States has

²⁷ Nemanja Popovic, "The Energy Relationship Between Russia and the European Union." *E-International Relations*, February 24 2020. <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/24/the-energy-relationship-between-russia-and-the-european-union/>.

²⁸ Nastassia Astrasheuskaya and Henry Foy, "Polar Powers: Russia's Bid for Supremacy in the Arctic Ocean", *Financial Times*, April 27, 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/2fa82760-5c4a-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40>.

already recognized this problem and is currently programmed to produce six new icebreakers, including the first heavy icebreakers in 40 years. Congress has already funded the first vessel, which should undergo sea trials by 2024. The Coast Guard has requested funding for the second vessel.²⁹ In comparison, the UK has invested £200 million in a single new vessel the Royal Research Vessel Sir David Attenborough which is currently conducting sea trials, before its maiden voyage to the Antarctic in 2021.³⁰ Despite this being a state-of-the-art research vessel it remains just one ship and it is another example of the UK government's poor use of resources.

The UK government needs to follow the example of the United States and put in place a long-term shipbuilding program for vessels capable of icebreaking, research, and search and rescue. This is an expensive undertaking. *Defence in a competitive age* promises an increase in ship building investment of £1.7 billion which includes a Multi Role Ocean Surveillance Capability. However, the same document looks to provide 3 fleet solid support ships so CSG can operate globally and upgrade Challenger III tanks – two examples where resources are being in the first case focused in the wrong direction and the second case wastefully. Whilst the support ships remain useful assets using them in support of a global CSG is strategically wasteful. Furthermore, this author would argue updating our main battle tanks harks back to the old wars way of thinking and is exactly what the UK adversaries desire.

²⁹ Sen Roger Wick and Sen. Dan Sullivan, “Polar Icebreakers Are Key to America’s National Interest.”, Defence News, October 19, 2020. <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/10/19/polar-icebreakers-are-key-to-americas-national-interes>

³⁰ Jason Cairnduff, “Britain’s New Polar Ship, the Sir David Attenborough, Set for Sea Trials” ArcticToday, October 21, 2020. <https://www.arctictoday.com/britains-new-polar-ship-the-sir-david-attenborough-set-for-sea-trials/>

Much like Russia's use of its energy resources as a weapon, China also uses its economic might, through the BRI, to cajole, bully and intimidate. Despite not being directly linked to the Arctic, the UK must help confront this behavior to help expand its international influence. Throughout Asia, Africa, and now Europe, China offers financial aid with seemingly no strings attached. However, this is very rarely the case. The UK must join the US in both helping those countries who now find themselves economically indentured to China, and convince those states in need of economic assistance that international institutions like the IMF and World Bank are more stable long-term investors, despite more stringent conditions on the loan.

As with the two previous chapters Brexit has only made actions taken by Russia and China worse or presented them with an opportunity to sow dissent. In this case, there is a risk that Brexit will help undo the good work that EU sanctions have done against Russia since 2014. While the UK has looked to make efforts to continue those efforts put in place through the UK's Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, continued vigilance is necessary.³¹ The biggest weakness in sanctions has always been a lack of unified front. The EU and the US have often disagreed on sanctions leaving gaps to be exploited. The UK must neither create nor widen any gaps in place and instead look to its new role in the international community post Brexit, to fill the gaps.

To continue to increase the pressure on Moscow the UK should look to be the facilitator that helps the EU and the United States revive tighter sanctions' coordination. Coordination will never be easy because both sides have their interests and different

³¹ Max Colchester and Stephan Kalin, "U.K. Sanctions Saudis, Russians for Human-Rights Abuses" Wall Street Journal, July 6, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-sanctions-saudis-russians-for-human-rights-abuses-11594060840>.

constraints. For example, the EU's approach might occasionally seem overly legalistic from the US point of view, as EU law lays down strict requirements to protect the rights of the targeted individuals and entities. Further the US recently increased the role of Congress in sanctions policy. Deep international coordination may be a painstaking process, but good sanctions policy must be built on solid foundations. The coordination on the recent Belarus sanctions between the EU, the United States, and the United Kingdom was a positive sign. Sanction policy deserves a central place in future transatlantic relations.³² The UK must continue to make sure that it applies the legal rigor necessary to maintain the sanctions put in place by the EU, and encourage Europe as a whole, often deeply influenced or pressured by Moscow, to not only hold the line but go further.

Risk

As with the previous two policy goals, these new strategies come with an inherent risk. Due to COVID-19's devastating economic impact, any risk is magnified. It is highly likely if not guaranteed that both Moscow and Beijing will respond to sanctions from the UK. On 12 February 2021 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that Russia was willing to break ties with the EU based on sanctions imposed following the poisoning of Alexi Navalny. Of note, and in line with the typical Russian information campaign described throughout this paper, was the statement "If you want peace, prepare for war".³³

³² Juha Rainne, "Russia Sanctions Bite and Remind Us of the Value of Transatlantic Unity" Atlantic Council. October 29, 2020. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russia-sanctions-bite-and-remind-us-of-the-value-of-transatlantic-unity/>.

³³ "Russia Warns EU It Could Cut Ties over Sanctions" BBS News, February 12, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56039075>.

The UK must expect Russia to react in the sub-threshold areas both diplomatically and economically. In this case, being separate from the European Union once again brings both opportunity and threat. Alone the UK lacks the protection of the larger political and economic bloc. However, it also releases the UK to act independently free of some of the links between the EU and Russia, such as Hungary, that have tried to taper sanctions. To meet this risk, the UK must hold the line of a united front with the US and the EU despite the inevitable pressure.

There is also a risk in the proposed strategy of investing in ice breakers and supporting the maritime industry. Like the rest of the globe, the UK has suffered an economic slowdown due to COVID-19. However, the risk is not in spending money, but investing in the wrong areas. The importance of a free movement in the maritime commons is vital to the UK economy.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

To achieve its Arctic policy goals, the UK must refocus its Arctic strategy away from hopeful “Arctic exceptionalism,” soft power initiatives, sporadic international leadership, and ad-hoc alliance-building. Instead, it must advance a strategy that fully engages its political, economic, information, and military levers of power, and reassert itself as a regional power. It must lead the international community in enforcing international laws and norms and commit to meaningful alliances within the North Atlantic and Arctic regions.

Resources are finite, and how they are employed is a continual argument at the highest level of all governments. At the core of this paper, is that the UK is misallocating its resources based on a historical belief that the UK can again be the exact great global power it used to be. With this has come the belief that if the UK does not return to these same heights then it is insignificant. This is not the case. Through the strategy suggestions laid out in this proposal, the United Kingdom can be a vital regional player, wielding global influence through the respect of its allies and standing in international institutions and organizations. This will involve the change in mindset by the UK government, and a focusing of a large majority of national resources on the Arctic and North Atlantic. The age of Arctic exceptionalism is over. Russia has already militarized the Arctic, China is a new global power and Brexit has consequences that are still to be understood. UK political leaders must take the lead in supporting, and where necessary leading, international institutions, through both hard and soft power. Its actions must show both global and regional allies that the United Kingdom is prepared to lead the way where others may be afraid of the repercussions. In building its reputation as a regional leader, the UK will grow its influence despite not having many physical assets in situ.

There is a risk in this. The strategy suggested will draw the focus of Moscow and Beijing, and the UK will be labeled as an aggressive party. The UK will likely come under a continual strategic communication onslaught and may feel the brunt of a wide range of subthreshold warfare – economic, legal, informational, and even physical and political intimidation. The UK should not and cannot shy away. Through a solid strategy, backed by appropriate utilization of resources the UK will become a dominant regional player with international reach. Furthermore, it will achieve this alongside allies who see the tangible benefits that would come from a United Kingdom that is willing to take a stand in defending the international order it helped create.

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