

# Briefing: The need for a **progressive** UK foreign policy



## Background

- On 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 the British Government published *Global Britain in a Competitive Age, the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, setting out the government's vision for the UK's role in the world over the next decade and actions that will be taken up to 2025.
- While the document places an emphasis upon homeland security, as part of the defence infrastructure, it also stresses the need to increase British presence in other parts of the world, in particular the Indo-Pacific, territory way beyond the borders of the UK but in which the government deems Britain to have 'interests.'
- In reinforcing the Global Britain doctrine the UK has made the biggest sustained increase in military spending since the end of the Cold War, exceeding NATO's 2% of GDP spending guideline and proposing to increase this further.
- Global Britain underlines the desire of the UK government to be the leading European ally in the NATO military alliance and cites the United States as remaining the UK's most important bilateral relationship.
- While recognising the need for a positive trade and investment relationship with China the Global Britain doctrine also seeks to improve the UK's ability to "respond to the systemic challenge that China poses to our security, prosperity and values – and those of our allies and partners." Implicitly positioning China as a threat against which the UK must be defended.

## AUKUS

- In September 2021 the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom announced the formation of AUKUS, described as a "security partnership that will promote a free and open Indo-Pacific that is secure and stable."
- The first major decision of AUKUS was to support Australia acquiring conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines, extending their at sea range and capability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- In March 2023 the three governments set out a timeline for the training and embedding of Australian personnel alongside the US Navy, Royal Navy and submarine fleets to accelerate the training of Australian personnel.

## NATO the unequal alliance

- The US spending commitment to military weapons at \$800 billion per annum is greater than all other NATO nations combined.
- UK military spending currently stands at \$53 billion per annum, second highest in NATO and fifth highest in the world
- NATO membership has involved the UK being drawn into a combination of illegal and unnecessary wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria in pursuit of US foreign policy goals in the Middle East, the primary source of the migrant crisis across Europe.
- In April 2022 Britain's former prime minister Johnston intervened to block attempts at mediation in face of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Britain has since been foremost among European countries in supplying Ukraine with

offensive weapons – including depleted uranium – and in pushing for NATO expansion.

- The current war in Ukraine is part of a wider NATO strategy of provocation towards Russia which has resulted in the military intervention which continues to be fuelled by weapons pouring in from NATO nations.
- The increasing belligerence shown by the US towards China and the additional weapons capability being provided to Taiwan increases the possibility of a flashpoint, leading to conflict in the Indo-Pacific region. Through its membership of NATO and AUKUS the UK will be drawn into any conflict.
- Replacing the Trident nuclear submarine fleet, at an estimated cost of £205 billion, will not give the UK an independent nuclear capability but as a member of NATO will be continue to be reliant on the US, who will have control over nuclear weapons use.

### **Priority demands for an independent foreign policy**

1. The UK to negotiate withdrawal from the NATO alliance and the AUKUS military partnership

2. No increase in military spending with an immediate freeze at present levels and planned reduction to necessary levels of conventional forces for defence purposes
3. No renewal of the Trident nuclear submarine programme
4. An immediate halt to the sale of weapons which fuel the conflict in Ukraine
5. Diversion of military budgets into spending on socially useful programmes to build schools, hospitals and develop the green energy infrastructure
6. Renounce the Stop the Boats policy and the hostile environment for asylum seekers and develop policies to make clear accessible legal routes to the UK
7. Recognise in terms of enhanced international aid, the damage inflicted on Britain's former colonies, among other countries in the global south, by the predatory pricing policies of British multinationals. The combined international profits of Shell and BP for 2022 were just short of £100B. The combined trade deficits of Ghana and Sri Lanka, both currently facing penal rescue terms from the IMF and both relying on imported energy at inflated prices, was for 2022 approximately £10 billion.

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### **About Liberation:**

Liberation opposes new forms of imperialism, or “neocolonialism” that intervenes and lays waste to the global south, perpetuating economic exploitation, inequality and racism. We work to address the legacies of colonialism. Democracy, human rights, peace and social justice are central to our goals. We reject foreign interventionism and militarism. We support popular sovereignty. We believe international solidarity and co-operation are the means to make a better world. Our main focus is Britain's former colonies and the Anglo-American sphere of influence. Liberation organises public meetings to raise awareness of current events and stimulate action. We run seminars, webinars and other educational activities. We work with UK parliamentarians to influence UK foreign policy and engage at an international level through the UN Human Rights Council. We publish a quarterly journal, and comment and analysis on relevant matters on our website, giving voice to progressive popular organisations in the Global South.