



## Strategic Digest

November 2021

### Upcoming RNSSC Events

- 25 November 1700-1900: **2049 or 2050: What should drive the Royal Navy strategy for the next 30 years?**  
A Naval Review and RNSSC joint event debating strategic drivers in the shape of China and climate change. Please contact the mailbox for the diary invite.

To contact us with questions and feedback, or to subscribe to the Digest email:  
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The RNSSC's Strategic Digest is a monthly collection of relevant and thought-provoking articles and podcasts. The Digest aims to keep the Royal Navy (RN) abreast of global strategic developments and promote critical thinking. Topics have been selected due to their relevance to recent or upcoming events, and if they contain newly published innovative thought. This month's edition focuses on China; its militia, trade aspirations and the threat to Taiwan. Other topics include defence carbon emissions and the adoption of new technologies.

The Digest is sent to the RN's senior leadership team, with the request to **please cascade**. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please send an email to [NavyStratPol-RNSSC@mod.gov.uk](mailto:NavyStratPol-RNSSC@mod.gov.uk).



### On China and Trade...

#### 'Pulling Back the Curtain on China's Maritime Militia', CSIS

Link: [Read here](#)

Since 2016, China has been growing its militia fleet, with an estimated 122 vessels identified and a further 52 highly likely to be militia. The paper examines the make-up of this fleet and argues that grey-zone tactics are being employed in violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, primarily by creating the risk of collision. With thanks to Dr Ed Hampshire, Naval Historical Branch.

#### 'The Polar Silk Road will be Cleared with Chinese Icebreakers', Jeremy Greenwood

Link: [Read here](#)

If presence results in influence, then China is starting to win in the Arctic. This article looks at the China's build-up of capability in the High North and compares it to the US's relative lack of commitment to the region. With thanks to Commander Chris L'Amie, RN.

### On China and Taiwan...

#### 'Why the Chinese Military Has Increased Activity Near Taiwan', Commonwealth Magazine

Link: [Read here](#)

Increasing PLA aircraft movements around Taiwan over the past year are shifting the politics in the region. This article outlines the current ramp up of threatening Chinese behaviour and possible reasons behind it, including a reaction to AUKUS. With thanks to Commander Iain Ritchie, RN.

#### 'T-DAY: The Battle for Taiwan', David Lague and Maryanne Murray

Link: [Read here](#)

Looking at the future of Taiwan, this article goes through six possible war-gaming scenarios from the blockade of the Matsu Islands to all out Chinese invasion of the island. The opening provides a good introduction to the topic and clever semi-interactive visuals map out each scenario.  
With thanks to Commander Iain Ritchie, RN.

**'Righting a Wrong: Taiwan, the United Nations, and United States Policy',  
Michael Mazza and Gary Schmitt**

Link: [Read here](#)

Useful background to the Taiwanese situation and relation with the United States. Also brings up some important points about a country which does not have UN representation but is becoming increasingly important to Allied thinking about containing the Chinese threat.

With thanks to Mary Thompson, RNSSC.

On NATO...

**'From Lisbon to Madrid', Rachel Ellehuus**

Link: [Listen here](#)

NATO hasn't updated its strategic concept since 2010. The world looks very different today with old and new challenges facing the Alliance and, at times, bringing its relevance into question. This podcast lifts the lid on these ideas and tracks the 'road to Madrid' in 2022 when the new concept will be approved and adopted.

With thanks to Captain Kevin Rowlands, RNSSC.

On Freedom of the Seas...

**'Sir Stephen Lovegrove speech at IISS: Manama Dialogue'**

Link: [Read transcript here](#)

The National Security Advisor used the opportunity of his speech at the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain in November to focus on maritime issues. He commented in the importance of the oceans as the world's connective tissue, UNCLOS, freedom of navigation, and the pivotal role of the Royal Navy.

With thanks to Stephen Prince, Naval Historical Branch.

On Utilising Emerging Technologies...

**'Sun Tzu Versus AI: Why Artificial Intelligence Can Fail in Great Power Conflict',  
Sam J. Tangredi**

Link: [Read here](#)

The key message of this article is that 'the future is about information not AI', and warns about how AI algorithms can be easily deceived. Despite coming from a US perspective, the danger of misunderstanding the potential of AI is just as prevalent in the UK defence context.

With thanks to Major Tom Hastings, RM.

**'Leading Edge: Key Drivers of Defence Innovation and the Future of Operational Advantage'**

Link: [Read here](#)

A short read which outlines the key factors that need to be in place to allow successful adoption and exploitation of new technologies in the defence context. It argues these factors are the same in any nation, and are vital in a time of renewed great-power competition.

With thanks to Captain Kevin Rowlands, RN.

### On Climate Change...

#### **'The Environmental Impacts of the UK Military Sector', Stuart Parkinson**

Link: [Read 2020 report here](#) or [view COP26 presentation here](#)

A 2020 report into UK military carbon emissions was brought back into light at COP26 negotiations in Glasgow earlier this month. At his presentation in Glasgow, Parkinson argued for a reduced military to help reach Net Zero and while this is an extreme approach, the Royal Navy must be prepared for defence emissions to have an increasing presence in popular opinion.

With thanks to Mary Thompson, RNSSC.

#### **'The EU Military Sector's Carbon Footprint', Stuart Parkinson**

Link: [Read here](#)

This article highlights the poor reporting of carbon emissions by militaries in the EU, and argues that consolidated data reporting is an initial step required to be able to reach Net Zero targets for both the EU and NATO.

With thanks to Mary Thompson, RNSSC.

### On the US Navy...

#### **'U.S. Military Forces in FY 2022: Navy', Mark F. Cancian**

Link: [Read here](#)

Article outlining expected changes to the US fleet in the next financial year, under the emerging Biden defence direction. This includes keeping ship numbers similar, 296 ships, but reducing active-duty personnel by 1,600, despite the focus remaining on manned platforms.

With thanks to Commander René Balletta, RN.

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