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# British Interests in the Asia-Pacific Region and the Potential for Military Involvement

**Wing Commander Jon Allen**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study catalogues British interests in the Asia-Pacific; both historic and contemporary, before analysing each through the lens of its potential to generate a UK military response. The research identified two military affiliations: the Five Powers Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and the Korean War (since technically a peace agreement has never been signed). Two historic ties were also explored, that of: Hong Kong and Brunei. The military mission of Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) was identified as a key soft power regional 'lever'. With regard to intergovernmental organisations, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was recognised as a focus area for the UK and its 2021 award of 'Dialogue Partner' status to the UK, serving to create the potential for future influence. In a similar vein 'the Quad' presents comparable future possibilities if the UK continues to court greater regional influence.

This rich tapestry of contemporary UK interests in the region all serve as 'levers' (of varying degrees of likelihood) that are predicted to act in concert to influence the UK government into potential future deployment(s) of military forces. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates that the Asia-Pacific did not become 'more important' to the UK when it entered into the AUKUS pact in September 2021. The region already possessed a significant ability to embroil UK forces and the AUKUS announcement is better described as a logical step that serves to ratify the region's significance to the UK.

# BEYOND AUKUS: BRITISH INTERESTS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC AND THE POTENTIAL FOR MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is two-fold. It will catalogue British interests in the Asia-Pacific region; both historic and contemporary. Each identified 'interest' will then be analysed through the lens of its potential to generate a UK military response. Military mission sets will not be limited to conventional warfighting; the full spectrum of military activities will be considered throughout, to include humanitarian and training missions. As part of the conclusion, and only where evidence permits, an attempt will be made to differentiate between the likelihoods of each 'interest' consequently driving a military action. No attempt will be made to predict future events or military deployments; comparisons will only be made between the identified 'levers'.

**The Australia, UK & US Pact (AUKUS).** The announcement in Sep 2021 of the formation of a new military alliance between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS) has served to re-focus public and academic attention[1] towards this region. Many commentators are assessing this new alliance as serving to deter Chinese growth in the region, with an emphasis on the preservation of the US hegemony[2]. Scholarly work on this regional re-emphasis has focused primarily on US foreign policy; with the advent of AUKUS attracting research pertaining to potential future implications for the collective as

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[1] Two of the four 'headline papers' from the proceeding issue of Foreign Affairs focusing on Sino-American tensions: Hal Brands and John Lewis Gaddis, "The New Cold War," *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (Nov/Dec, 2021), 10-20.; John J. Mearsheimer, "The Inevitable Rivalry," *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (Nov/Dec, 2021), 48-58.

[2] "Putting Global Britain and AUKUS into Perspective," last modified Sep 28, accessed Apr 29, 2022, https://defense.info/global-dynamics/2021/09/putting-global-britain-and-aukus-into-perspective/.; "The AUKUS Deal: A Moment of Truth for Europe and for Security in the Indo-Pacific Region," last modified Oct 1, accessed Apr 29, 2022, https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/the-aukus-deal-a-moment-of-truth-for-europe-and-for-security-in-the-indo-pacific-region/.

a whole. This study found that little is written to explore the implications from a solely UK perspective. References to its regional interests and historic ties, in this context, are few and far between.

If the primary driver for AUKUS is to bolster military effect in the Asia-Pacific then the real question is why did the UK join? Clearly the region is important, but why? Through the two-fold process described above, this work will answer both of these questions and demonstrate that even without the advent of AUKUS, the UK's interests and history with the region is what creates the 'need' and that AUKUS membership is a logical step because of these factors. To quote the 2021 UK security and defence review (released six months earlier than the AUKUS announcement): "the UK needs to engage more deeply… the region is at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with multiple potential flashpoints: from unresolved territorial disputes; to nuclear proliferation and miscalculation; to climate change and non-state threats"[3]. The combination of the increased regional emphasis within this defence review and the subsequent AUKUS announcement becoming commonly referred to as a strategic geo-political 'tilt' (mirroring the 'pivot' phraseology used by Obama to describe the US change in regional priorities[4]).

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[3] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (London: Crown copyright, 2021), 66.
[4] Michael J. Green, "The Legacy of Obama's "Pivot" to Asia," *Foreign Policy* (Sep 3, 2016). https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/03/the-legacy-of-obamas-pivot-to-asia/.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper will showcase the importance of the Asia-Pacific to the UK; not through an analysis of AUKUS but by researching the many other 'levers' in the region that already exist and could easily draw the UK into military action. Whilst studies already exist into the alliances and ties that will be analysed, several of these facets have little written that focuses purely on a UK perspective. Much of the analysis contained therein breaks new ground by studying the implications specific to the UK military. Furthermore, this study is unique in its breadth of UK specific regional interests and 'levers'. It would be impossible to claim a complete collation but the aim has been to undercover, compile and subsequently analyse as comprehensive a list as is practicable.

This paper will ultimately demonstrate that the region possesses a significant and varied array of mechanisms that could politically draw the UK into the use of military effect. The study, whilst framed by the advent of AUKUS, will consciously avoid its implications and leave these to other studies. The UK has multiple historic ties, military allegiances and affiliations with intergovernmental organisations in the region and it is a study of these that will truly demonstrate the region's importance to the UK and its potential military implications.

### Why the Asia-Pacific?

The correct bounding of the region for this study is crucial in order to delineate an area with a high concentration of UK interests that have the potential to influence future UK military activities. That said, definitions of the Asia-Pacific can vary greatly. Thematically speaking, the more expansive definitions seem to adopt an 'Asia or Pacific' criteria. Conversely, this study wants to focus on Asian states adjacent to the Pacific Ocean (Asia & Pacific). To that end, this study will adopt the definition as outlined by

Kaup in her 2021 book on the region. She bounds the region as "China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, East Timor and the ten member states[5] of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)[6]".

**South East Asia?** This area was discounted for two distinct reasons. Firstly, it has become synonymous with the ASEAN members states. This would limit the study to that of the UK's relationship with a single political body (ASEAN). Secondly, (and owing largely to its ASEAN connotations) the region is typically bounded in the north by: Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam. With the intent of the study being to create a 'compendium' of potential levers to embroil the UK military; a study area bounded in this way would exclude a number of key interests and consequently dilute the analysis. Moreover, the advent of AUKUS and its immediate narrative and employment of military power projection[7] in the enforcement of 'freedom of navigation' at sea, means the study must examine all territories along the eastern Asian landmass up to the China-Russia border.

**Indo-Pacific?** The most expansive (and now commonly cited) region has also been dismissed as a study area; that of the 'Indo-Pacific'. The proliferation of the term 'Indo-Pacific' amongst nation states is a relatively recent development. Heiduk and Wacker (2020) cite the first strategic replacement of 'Asia-Pacific' with 'Indo-Pacific' as being President Trump's 'vision' in November 2017[8]. Whilst a number of commentators,

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[5] The ASEAN member states are: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

[6] Katherine Palmer Kaup, *Understanding Contemporary Asia Pacific* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2021), 1.

[7] "UK, US AND Australia Launch New Security Partnership", accessed Apr 29, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-us-and-australia-launch-new-security-partnership.

[8] Felix Heiduk and Gudrun Wacker, *From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific* (Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2020), 12.

like Kuo (2018) cite earlier uses of the term (India and Japan in 2006[9] for example), their work does not change the assertion that the term's prevalence at the state level is a modern terminology, reflecting contemporary geopolitics.

The adoption of 'Indo-Pacific' was neither universal nor immediate. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018, three of the four ASEAN countries that spoke[10] referenced the 'Asia-Pacific'[11]. This preference for the 'Asia-Pacific' was also employed by the New Zealand Defence Minister Ben King who stated that "the term Indo-Pacific may not resonate in New Zealand yet"[12]. However, when questioned about it in the proceeding press conference he did concede that "we may need to adjust our terminology somewhat… we recognize the importance of India & the Indo-Pacific region"[13]. In 2020 New Zealand formally adopted the 'Indo-Pacific' nomenclature[14].

Whilst, not all nations found the adoption of the term as uncomfortable as New Zealand, it clearly has broader connotations. Heiduk and Wacker (2020) deftly demonstrate that the term is "primarily conceived by all actors as a response to the challenges associated with China", which goes a long way to explain any discomfort in the uptake amongst some states. Furthermore, they purport that because of the varying "foreign and security policies" of each nation that both the geographical boundaries and the "interpretations and emphases differ widely"[15]. This author's research did nothing to

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[9] "The Origin of 'Indo-Pacific' as Geopolitical Construct," last modified Jan 25, 2018 accessed Apr 29, 2022, https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-origin-of-indo-pacific-as-geopolitical-construct/.
[10] Indonesia spoke of the 'Indo-Pacific' whilst the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam all used 'Asia-Pacific'.
[11] Brookings, Jun 8, 2018, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/06/08/negotiating-the-indo-pacific-security-landscape-what-the-shangri-la-dialogue-tells-us/.
[12] David Scott, "New Zealand Picks Up on the Indo-Pacific," *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, no. 502 (Mar 17, 2020).
[13] "Indo-Pacific Dominates at Shangri-La: Where does that Leave New Zealand?" last modified Jun 7, accessed Apr 26, 2022, http://www.incline.org.nz/1/post/2018/06/indo-pacific-dominates-at-shangri-la-where-does-that-leave-new-zealand.html.
[14] Scott, "New Zealand Picks Up on the Indo-Pacific".
[15] Heiduk, *From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific.*

discount these conclusions and consequently, the Asia-Pacific presents as a more appropriate area for study as it unites research (for an extended period of time) and avoids connotations as a 'counter' to another actor (China).

**The UK and the 'Indo-Pacific'.** At the time of writing, the UK has adopted the 'Indo-Pacific' as its preferred designator; using it consistently in official documentation. However, it must be noted that as recently as 2015, the lexicon of UK foreign affairs sat firmly with the established 'Asia-Pacific' terminology. The security and defence review of 2015[16] and its subsequent reissue in 2021[17] neatly highlighting the wholesale shift in nomenclature.

**Regional Terminology.** Since the evidence base for this study is predominantly literary research, it is essential to use quotes that date back to the start of decolonisation. An interesting aside that this study has anecdotally raised is the shifting use of terminology through time; much like the aforementioned shift from 'Asia-Pacific' to 'Indo-Pacific'. No attempt has been made to qualify this observation but a clear trend was identified whereby regional definitions are preferred in a given time period. Post war, the term 'South East Asia' appears to give way to 'Asia-Pacific' as the predominant definer for the region. To add to the confusion, the almost euphemistic 'East of Aden' was highly popular with (and unique to) the UK military and politicians alike during the post war era of decolonisation.

The consequence being that it is impossible to use one homogenous regional designator throughout this paper, as the sources used by way of research all exhibit a

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[16] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015* (London: Crown copyright, 2015).

[17] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.*

variety of regional determinants. Where terms other than the 'Asia-Pacific' are used, the author is doing so with attributable evidence that the reference is pertinent to this study and every effort has been made to clearly signpost this.

**The United Kingdom or Britain?** The term Great Britain refers to the island made up of the principalities of: England, Scotland and Wales. The United Kingdom (or UK) is the correct name for the sovereign state that includes Northern Ireland; yet the correct adjective for the UK curiously is 'British'. It is therefore commonplace to refer to the state of the UK as Britain (not Great Britain). Ordinarily, official documentation would favour the more formal 'United Kingdom'. However, the UK Government's official tagline for the 2021 security and defence review "Global Britain"[18] suggests that this formality is now suspended and that the two names (UK and Britain) are interchangeable. When referring to matters of foreign policy and international relations the term UK will be favoured throughout this study. Whilst the author is able to adhere to this convention, the essential quotes therein cannot. Reference to Britain, the UK and the 'British Empire' will appear throughout this paper. Since they all refer to the same country, this should not detract from the point each quote is making and the technical differences can be treated as semantics.

**Beyond Scope.** Any countries which fall outside of Kaup's aforementioned definition of the 'Asia-Pacific' will not be studied in isolation. For this reason, the nations of the continent of Oceania[19] have been consciously omitted. For the purpose of this study they are considered to be extra-regional actors, much like the US. That said, where

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[18] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.*

[19] Chiefly: Australia and New Zealand but a significant number of the Pacific islands of Oceania were part of the British Empire and many are still members of the Commonwealth.

membership of alliances and forums with an Asia-Pacific focus bring extra-regional actors to the fore, they will be examined under the umbrella of that alliance or forum. To focus specifically on these (non-Asia-Pacific) states would be to deviate from this work's unique lens and return to the mainstream.

Another conscious omission of this study is that of specific reference to widely acknowledged potential regional 'flashpoints', such as Taiwan. Taiwan is a key actor in the Asia-Pacific (although not explicitly named in Kaup's regional definition because, much like Hong Kong, it is not independent of China). The well-publicised potential for hostilities between China and the US[20] over democratic Taiwan falls firmly outside of the scope of this study as Taiwan does not reveal itself as having historic or contemporary links specifically to the UK. Hence, 'flashpoints' such as Taiwan will not be explored even though such a conflict has the potential to embroil US allies such as the UK.

[20] Mearsheimer, "The Inevitable Rivalry", 48-58; Kevin Rudd, "Why the Quad Alarms China" *Foreign Affairs* 100, no 4 (Aug 6, 2021); Brands, "The New Cold War", 10-20.

## UK MILITARY 'AFFILIATIONS' IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Whilst the formation and public announcement of AUKUS in 2021 cemented a new and highly publicised military alliance that from its outset established an agenda of increased focus on the Asia-Pacific[21]; AUKUS is not the only military union in this region to which the UK is 'affiliated'. This study has identified two other military alliances to which the UK is formally tied:

### The Five Powers Defence Arrangements

**History.** In July 1967 the British announced that they would be militarily withdrawing their permanent presence from 'East of Suez'. Whilst this had implications across a number of broader regions, the biggest impact in the Asia-Pacific was to Malaysia and Singapore; whose defence had been a British responsibility throughout their inclusion in the British Empire[22]. Military equipment and personnel from all three services (Navy, Army and Air Force) were stationed in both countries at the time of this decision, signalling the scale of change required.

This sparked significant pressure on both of the UK governments who served between decision and enactment (1967–1971), to take some responsibility for the future security of the two states. This pressure came from three distinct sources. Firstly, there was significant domestic political imperative to withdraw in a manner that ensured these ex-colonies would be "sufficiently prosperous, democratic, and to adopt the Westminster model"[23]. Secondly and in a similar vein, the UK diplomatic and political elite was

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[21] "Enter AUKUS." *The Economist* 440, no. 9264 (Sep 25, 2021), 20.
[22] Ang Cheng Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), July 1970-November 1971" *War & Society* 30, no. 3 (2011), 207.
[23] Geoffrey Till, Ralf Emmers and Daljit Singh, "A Little Ray of Sunshine: Britain, and the Origins of the FPDA – A Retrospective on Objectives, Problems and Solutions" in *The Five Power Defence Arrangements at Forty*, eds. Ian Storey, Ralf Emmers and Daljit Singh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), 3.

concerned about the potential for the spread of communism in the region, specifically via Chinese influence. In an official report from 1966, Sir Burke Trend (Cabinet Secretary) declared, “We should not wish to see South East Asia submerged in Communism or otherwise reduced to satellite status by Peking”[24]. The third source of pressure came from the US, who were heavily embroiled in the Vietnam conflict at that time and “wanted the British to manage the Commonwealth and its continuing responsibilities in the area as a means of containing the communist challenge”[25]. Whilst the deterrence of communism sat at the heart of each of these three distinct sources of pressure, they all combined to force the UK to take steps to bolster the security of Malaysia and Singapore going forward.

At the time of the decision to withdraw, there already existed the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement (AMDA); signed in 1963 to include Singapore prior to its separation from Malaysia in 1965. This agreement chiefly facilitated the positioning of British, Australian and New Zealand troops in Malaysia and Singapore post the establishment of their independence in 1957[26]. This legacy military pact was incompatible with the pressing British need to withdraw from ‘East of Suez’. It was from the AMDA that the UK was able to forge a new alliance that would satisfy both US and domestic sources of pressure. On 1 November 1971, The Five Powers Defence Arrangements (FPDA) entered service (with AMDA only being dissolved on the preceding day). This

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[24] B. Trend, "CAB 148/28, OPD(66)54 ‘Indo–Pacific Policy’: Report to Ministers by an Official Committee of the Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy Committee on the Future of Britain’s Military Role in South-East Asia," in *British Documents on the End of Empire: East of Suez and the Commonwealth 1964-71*, eds. S. R. Ashton and W. R. Louis (London: The Stationary Office, 1966), 76.

[25] Till, "A Little Ray of Sunshine: Britain, and the Origins of the FPDA – A Retrospective on Objectives, Problems and Solutions", 4.

[26] Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), July 1970-November 1971", 208.

achievement "reflected a process of often vigorous negotiation designed to maintain a viable Commonwealth defence structure"[27]. In doing so, providing the UK with an "instrument to be engaged in Southeast Asian security"[28].

**Commitment?** It is key to note that the FPDA is a set of 'arrangements', not an 'agreement' or an 'alliance'. This is the result of some careful statecraft conducted by Lord Carrington on behalf of the British Government. Throughout, he made it clear that the British "wanted to participate, not as a leader but as a partner on an equal basis"[29]. It was important that the new 'agreement' removed AMDA's formal commitment to armed action but Sir Trend (Chairman of the Overseas Policy Committee) likened the FPDA (during its conceptual stage) as "having similarities, though on a much more restricted scale to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation"[30]. This quote serves to act as a counter to the more prevalent and non-committal rhetoric of 'arrangements only' and suggests that at conception, the replacement for the AMDA could have 'teeth' if all five nations were to act together and that such action sat, in the UK's case, with the political will of the serving government.

The official communique released at the time chose its words carefully: "in the event of any form of armed attack… their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or

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[27] Guan, "Malaysia, Singapore, and the Road to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), July 1970-November 1971", 207.
[28] Ralf Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," *Asian Security* 8, no. 3 (2012), 271.
[29] Kuan Yew Lee, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings, 1998), 65.
[30] Trend, "CAB 148/28, OPD(66)54 'Indo–Pacific Policy': Report to Ministers by an Official Committee of the Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy Committee on the Future of Britain's Military Role in South-East Asia", 80.

separately"[31]. Whilst the stark lack of a Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) dilutes this alliance's potency, Ho (2011) declares this "a masterpiece of strategic ambiguity" and argues that it still achieves "psychological deterrence" as any potential aggressor "would have to guess whether an attack or threat might trigger a combined response from the five powers"[32].

**Malaysian – Singapore Relations.** Till (2011) describes the relationship between Malaysia and Singapore, during the 1970s, as "potentially fractious"[33] a view shared by Thayer (2011)[34]. The senior military officer during the transition, General Michael Carver[35] later described in his autobiography a potential "arms race" as each nation demonstrated a determination to develop military capabilities. This, he hypothesised, may have engendered a sense competition between the two nations as opposed to the advance of regional security[36]. Till (2011) believes the FPDA "deserves some of the credit" for fostering a spirit of cooperation where otherwise a competitive arms race might have taken root. Hostility between ex-colonial states would have been a strategic failure of the UK's withdrawal from 'East of Suez'; the role FPDA has played in harmonising this relationship demonstrates that UK diplomacy and statecraft can still exert a positive influence in the contemporary Asia-Pacific.

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[31] "Communique Issued at the Conclusion of the Five Power Ministerial Meeting on the External Defence of Malaysia and Singapore" (Apr 15-16, 1971).
[32] Peter Ho, "FPDA Still Relevant 40 Years on: The Five Power Defence Arrangements Remains a 'Quiet Achiever' that Adapts to Evolving Needs" *Straits Times,* 2011. https://go.exlibris.link/3sFXy00v.
[33] Till, "A Little Ray of Sunshine: Britain, and the Origins of the FPDA – A Retrospective on Objectives, Problems and Solutions", 17.
[34] Carlyle A. Thayer, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements Exercises and Regional Security, 2004–10" in *The Five Power Defence Arrangements at Forty*, eds. Ian Storey, Ralf Emmers and Daljit Singh (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute Singapore, 2011), 60.
[35] Commander-in-Chief of Far East Command.
[36] Michael Carver, *Out of Step: Memoirs of a Field Marshal* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 375-77.

**Indonesia and the 'Konfrontasi'.** Between 1963 and 1966, Indonesia undertook a campaign of 'Konfrontasi' (confrontation) to oppose the formation of the independent Federation of Malaysia, which they perceived to be a "British neo-colonial design"[37] owing to the UK's support for this new federation (to include Singapore)[38]. Tuck (2018) refers to the Konfrontasi as a "low-intensity" conflict but does go on to acknowledge approximate casualties that suggest fiercer fighting than might otherwise be conveyed (1,600 for the Indonesians and 300 for commonwealth combatants[39]).

The British military response to the Indonesian aggression came as an obligation under the previously discussed AMDA treaty[40] (the forerunner to the FPDA) as a 'peace-support' operation to use the contemporary vernacular. The outcome was heralded at the time as a British success; not just because of the favourable difference in casualty numbers but largely due to Indonesia formally recognising Malaysia as an independent state within the determining peace treaty (Aug 1966). This 'state on state' conflict between the UK and Indonesia, no matter how 'low intensity', clearly went on to shape not only the formation of the FPDA but to influence the announcement (the following year) pertaining to the withdrawal from 'East of Suez'.

**Indonesia and Communism.** With the regional spread of communism already established as a 'prime driver' for the UK's need to establish the FPDA (US and domestic political pressure). Not only did Indonesia present a threat to Malaysia and Singapore in the late 1960s because of its potential for hegemonic aspirations (coupled with a distrust

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[37] Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", 274.
[38] Christopher Tuck, "Measuring Victory: Assessing the Outcomes of Konfrontasi, 1963-66," *The Journal of Military History* 82, no. 3 (2018), 875-76.
[39] Tuck, "Measuring Victory: Assessing the Outcomes of Konfrontasi, 1963-66", 873-898
[40] Tuck, "Measuring Victory: Assessing the Outcomes of Konfrontasi, 1963-66", 877.

of any enduring colonial influence), the country also possessed a significant potential to be swayed towards communist rule. Consequently, the opposition and suppression of Indonesia is widely considered to have been the FPDA's primary mission in its formative years. Huxley (2017) describes this role as to "act as a hedge against a resurgence of an unstable and threatening Indonesia which might endanger the security of Malaysia and Singapore, and perhaps also the wider sub-regional balance"[41].

Indonesia boasts the longest history of communist politics in Asia, through the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), which predates the Chinese Communist Party by one year (established in 1920). The party's first major attempt to seize power came in 1948 (subsequently referred to as the Madium Uprising) which was brutally foiled by the government who used the Republican Army to execute key communist leaders and thousands of followers[42]. The PKI subsequently adopted the more restrained 'Maoist' approach to influence and began to flourish[43].

By the 1960s, such was the PKI's popularity that the then president, Sukarno publicly began to ally with them; partly as a mechanism for retarding the ever-growing power of the army but also as a result of the active courtship pursued by (Maoist) China[44]. A division began to form in the country with the Army fervently opposing the atheist PKI. As the health of the president deteriorated, the PKI decided to draw first blood, as they saw the president's impending death to signal a loss of their protection against the army. On 30 September 1965, the country bore witness to the brutal slaying of seven

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[41] Tim Huxley, "The Future of the FPDA in an Evolving Regional Strategic Environment" in *The Five Power Defence Arrangements at Forty*, eds. Ian Storey, Ralf Emmers and Daljit Singh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), 119.
[42] Katharine McGregor, "A Reassessment of the Significance of the 1948 Madiun Uprising to the Cold War in Indonesia" *Journal of Malaysian Studies* 27, no. 1-2 (2009), 87.
[43] Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*, 1st ed. (London: Random House, 2019), 155-60.
[44] Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*, 157-58.

(anti-PKI) generals of the Indonesian Army. An army general named Suharto took charge of the country, 'side-lining' president Sukarno and subsequently going on to hold the presidency for 31 years.

What followed was a truly brutal period in Indonesia's history as the PKI were 'smashed', 'crushed', 'buried', 'annihilated', 'wiped out', 'exterminated' and 'destroyed down to the very roots'[45]. Retribution against anyone identifying as communist or PKI continuing into 1966 whereby PKI membership became illegal; although reports suggest that, many 'retributions' were conducted without trial anyway[46]. These events have had a huge influence on modern Indonesia. As of 2017, Mayrudin reported that the discussion of communist ideology was still considered a "sensitive", "scary" and "taboo" issue[47].

**Indonesia as a Contemporary Threat?** The 1970s saw Indonesia annex East Timor, which only served to further suspicions that the state harboured hegemonic ambitions[48]. Whilst conversely, Jakarta viewed the FPDA as "an insurance against Indonesia's possible reversion to her old ways"[49]. This friction continued into the early 1990s with the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusmaatmadja calling for the "FPDA to be disbanded and replaced by a trilateral defence relationship between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore"[50].

This hostility appearing to cease when a spike in piracy forced a bilateral maritime agreement for the security of the Malacca Strait (in 1992) between Singapore and

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[45] Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*, 174.
[46] Yeby Ma'asan Mayrudin, "Construction of Ideological State Apparatus in the New Order Regime Against Communism in Indonesia" *JILS (Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies)* 2, no. 2 (2017), 115.
[47] Mayrudin, "Construction of Ideological State Apparatus in the New Order Regime Against Communism in Indonesia", 113.
[48] Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", 275.
[49] Chin Kin Wah, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: Twenty Years After," *Pacific Review* 4, no. 3 (1991), 201.
[50] Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", 276.

Indonesia[51]. Further deterioration in maritime security at the turn of the century led to the expansion of this group to include Malaysia and the subsequent formation of the Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP) in 2004. Whilst this period could be heralded as an end to any perceived threat from Indonesia, Huxley (2011) reminds us that these advances in relations were achieved against a turbulent domestic political backdrop that included the ousting of President Suharto in 1998. He suggests that these events "may have reminded FPDA members… of the origins of the Arrangements in the wake of Jakarta's Komfrontasi"[52].

Thayer (2011) purports that "Indonesia no longer represents a potential threat to either Singapore or Malaysia"[53] a notion supported by Emmers (2011) who believes the country can be regarded as "an emerging middle power that seeks… to play a greater leadership role in regional security"[54]. This is in contrast to Sulaiman (2019) who uses quotes from both the head of the Indonesian army and the defence minister (from 2016) to demonstrate that the threat posed by communists from within is still a chief concern to the country's leadership and policymakers[55].

**Communism inside Indonesia.** Sulaiman (2019) further suggests that Indonesia's focus on economic growth, in lieu of regional security, is proof of this threat, as "communists always grow stronger when the economy is weak"[56]. Huxley (2011) goes further still, warning that "there remain disquieting domestic political trends that could

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[51] The 'Indonesia-Singapore Coordinated Patrols in the Singapore Strait'.
[52] Huxley, "The Future of the FPDA in an Evolving Regional Strategic Environment", 119.
[53] Thayer, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements Exercises and Regional Security, 2004–10", 60.
[54] Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", 277.
[55] Yohanes Sulaiman, "What Threat? Leadership, Strategic Culture, and Indonesian Foreign Policy in the South China Sea" *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, no. 4 (2019), 613-14.
[56] Sulaiman, "What Threat? Leadership, Strategic Culture, and Indonesian Foreign Policy in the South China Sea", 614.

lead to the world's fourth most populous country becoming a less congenial neighbour in the future"[57]. Alarmingly, Mayrudin (2017) accuses the state of historically manipulating and controlling the narrative surrounding communism and the PKI[58]. As recently as 2021, Pradheksa warned that whilst "it is no longer possible to identify communists as an actual political party, they still exist as a discourse that manifests itself through many forms of texts, symbols, institutions and individuals"[59].

The Indonesian threat has been an important chapter in the FPDA's genesis and evolution. Whilst many scholars believe this chapter to be closed, this study has uncovered a body of research to the counter. This suggests that the UK, along with the other FPDA members, should continue to monitor and track Indonesia's internal politics as tensions there may once more grow.

**The Contemporary and Future Importance of the FPDA.**

In addition to scholarly research, it is important to analyse the UK Ministry of Defence's (MOD) view of regions and security threats. The future importance of FPDA is highlighted within two separate contexts:

> First, the MOD predicts a regional decline in the significance of international organisations such as the UN Security Council, these giving way to establishments that reflect a more "multipolar" world becoming of greater relevance. The resultant impact is predicted to be a change to the UK's role in the

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[57] Huxley, "The Future of the FPDA in an Evolving Regional Strategic Environment", 119.
[58] Mayrudin, "Construction of Ideological State Apparatus in the New Order Regime Against Communism in Indonesia", 121.
[59] Pratama Yudha Pradheksa, "Islam and Reimagining Communists in Post-New Order Indonesia: An Analysis of White Book of the PKI Terror in Kanigoro" *South East Asia Research* 29, no. 4 (2021), 529.

region, which is assessed as "likely" to increase the importance of the FPDA "as the century progresses"[60].

Secondly, the same regional survey predicts a decline in the UK's regional influence, going as far as to declare the UK a "junior partner". Acknowledging this stark realisation, the document does stress the importance of regional stability on UK security and prosperity. It therefore determines, once more, that military engagement is key and cites the FPDA as a potential means to "retain influence"[61].

The 2021 UK Integrated [Defence] Review identifies the FPDA as one of nine 'focus areas' for the region; stating that the UK will "strengthen defence and security cooperation… enhancing our engagement and exercising with our FPDA partners, and increasing our engagement with regional security groups"[62]. This pledge not only reinforces the importance of regional security for the prosperity and future engagement of the UK but it also makes it clear that the FPDA is the primary vehicle for delivering that security in the region.

**How capable is the FPDA?** The capability of any military entity is almost impossible to quantify. The FPDA does boast a regular and varied exercise programme which can serve to provide a window by which to discuss the combined capability whilst signposting the commitment and intent of each contributing nation. UK participation is of particular significance owning to the distances involved, which make all exercise contributions a sizeable undertaking.

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[60] DCDC, *Regional Survey - South Asia Out to 2040* (Shrivenham: Crown copyright, 2012), 18.
[61] DCDC, *Regional Survey - South Asia Out to 2040*, 22.
[62] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 67.

Thayer (2018) analysed the FPDA exercises conducted between 2004 and 2010. His work demonstrated that nations were showing ambition in terms of both scale and breadth of mission sets. The 2010 BERSAMA SHIELD exercise involving an impressive "59 aircraft, 19 ships, 2,500 personnel"[63]. Potentially, the most potent and impressive development to arise from this series of progressive exercises is the FPDA's ability to operate under a single command; this capability giving the FPDA nations the capacity to combine both fighting forces and the Command & Control (C2) elements essential to generate combat capability[64]. Emmers (2011) describes the combined exercises as "having enabled the participants to enhance professionalism, personal relationships, capacity building, and interoperability"[65].

It must be noted that information from academic analysis of the FPDA beyond 2010[66] is scarce. Whilst this makes a balanced determination of the contemporary UK attitude and commitment challenging, it does also serve to validate the paucity of scholarly emphasis identified in the introduction. Member states themselves have all produced official material pertaining to FPDA exercises and futures:

The 2021 UK Integrated [Defence] Review reported that "Naval visits and defence diplomacy across the wider Indo-Pacific grew in 2019"[67] but the lack of specifics and a suitable baseline make quantifying this growth untenable. The document goes on to declare that the UK "will reinforce our commitment to the FPDA"[68]. A Malaysian report,

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[63] Thayer, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements Exercises and Regional Security, 2004–10", 54-60.
[64] Thayer, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements Exercises and Regional Security, 2004–10", 61.
[65] Emmers, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements and Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", 279.
[66] The fortieth anniversary seems to spark in increase in scholarly attention; if the (2021) fiftieth anniversary has attracted the same attention, the works have not published in time for this research.
[67] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 67.
[68] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 73.

released in 2021, talks specifically to the period 2010 to 2020 and posits that this period demonstrates "the evolution of FPDA in keeping up with various new non-conventional threats while at the same time continuously focusing on its high-end conventional warfighting"[69]. The Singaporean Minister for Defence (Dr Ng) issued a news release in 2021 further supporting this joint narrative and declaring the "FPDA remained relevant, responsive and robust despite a radically changed security environment"[70].

**The FPDA as a Mechanism to Embroil the UK.** Regardless of the fidelity of analysis beyond 2010, the FPDA has clearly been identified as an important obligation for the protection of British interests in the Asia-Pacific. The extant government direction, captured through a number of official publications identified therein, is unwavering in its commitment to the FPDA. The historical ties, coupled with a military association that is now over 50 years old, means that even without the formality of a Mutual Defence Agreement there exists an obligation to support and potentially therefore an imperative to act that may yet be realised.

**Korea**

Another significant legacy British military affiliation endures in the Asia-Pacific. Global press ensures the media consuming public at large are kept well informed of the volatility of the on-going tensions that persist on the Korean Peninsula. Whilst many academic studies have analysed potential futures for the Koreas and many ask questions specific to US interests, few studies have analysed the UK military's potential future role. This section will explore the recent history as it pertains to the current stalemate; focusing

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[69] "FPDA Achievement Over the Last Five Decades", accessed Feb 3, 2022, https://www.mod.gov.my/images/mindef/article/fpda/FPDA-ACHIEVEMENT.pdf.

[70] MINDEF-Singapore, "FPDA Defence Ministers Reaffirm Highest Commitment to FPDA" Singapore Government Agency (Oct 21, 2021).

on the UK's involvement and specifically its ongoing commitments. This will consequently demonstrate a breadth of 'levers' that could see the UK called upon to provide military support to the peninsula.

**The End of Japanese Rule (1945).** Towards the end of World War II, the USSR declared war with Japan and invaded the then Japanese territory of Manchuria (the land that immediately borders the Korean Peninsula). The modern boundaries now see Manchuria returned to its pre-twentieth century position as a sovereign region of China. It is worth noting that the USSR immediately, upon declaration of war with Japan, acknowledged China's sovereign claim to this territory. However, they covertly "allowed Chinese Communist forces to enter and establish effective control over strategic locations before their withdrawal in 1946"[71]. Consequently, Manchuria fell to the communists in 1948 and proved to be a stronghold, paving the way for Mao's eventual victory in 1949 and China's adoption of a communist ideology[72].

This campaign against Japan consequently saw the USSR go on to occupy the North of Korea. Fearing the potential for communist USSR's influence to expand south[73], in September 1945 American troops were positioned to occupy the southern part of the peninsula[74]. The previous description of the USSR's influence in Manchuria serves to demonstrate their commitment to the promotion of communist ideology and can be further cited to justify the US counter-actions, based on these observations.

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[71] Patrick Shan, "Manchuria," in *China at War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Xiaobing Li (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 256.
[72] Shan, "Manchuria", 256.
[73] William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 15.
[74] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 12.

**Trusteeship.** Throughout the second half of World War II, the allies had regularly discussed the subject of Korea's future independence and self-governance. A press release following the conferences at Cairo and Tehran (1943) declared that the "aforesaid three great powers [US, UK and China], mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent"[75].

Four countries would go on to take responsibility for this transition. Growing influence in the region through their occupation of Manchuria and Northern Korea, securing the USSR's addition to the aforementioned three 'great powers'. The group, ultimately proposing, at the Yalta conference (Jan 1945), that a 'trusteeship' was the most effective mechanism to bring independence and unification to Korea[76].

Effectively, the Cold War had begun; the communist USSR along with China could not afford to allow the US to lead Korea down a democratic path. The trusteeship not only presented a seemingly assured transition from Japanese colonial rule to self-governance for Korea but also (and potentially more importantly) offered a resolution that was permissible to both occupying forces. It allowed the US to achieve an important democratic hub in the region whilst the Chinese and the USSR would create a communist land 'buffer' between their sovereign territories and the opposing democratic ideology.

**The UK as a Korean Trustee.** The UK commissioned a study prior to providing support for the trusteeship plan. Published early in 1945, the report analysed Korea's likelihood of successfully operating as an independent state in the wake of 35 years of Japanese rule. Its findings were largely unsupportive of immediate self-governance,

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[75] "The Cairo Declaration". United States Government Printing Office, Nov 26, 1943, 1961.
[76] Bok-ryong Shin, "The Decision Process of the Trusteeship in Korea, 1945-1946" *Pacific Focus* 19, no. 1 (2004), 205.

determining that the country, at that time, lacked a number of the criteria required to enable effective stewardship. However, it did conclude by purporting "there is no reason to suppose that, given the requisite opportunity and experience, the Korean people would not in time become capable of managing a modern state"[77].

This evidence supported the US's belief in the need for a mentored transition; but why did the UK feel the need to be one of the four trustees? It did, after all already have a number of colonial responsibilities in the region, of which Korea was not one. Shin (2004) cites a number of factors in the UK's stance: firstly, suggesting that the UK "could not tolerate being left out of superpower status after the war"[78]. This argument chimes given the timeline; the UK was just transitioning away from six years of total war and had yet to adjust to the new world order in which the UK simply did not have the financial reserves necessary to maintain her empire. This theme of a 'financially imposed need' to reduce the colonial and discretionary responsibilities (post World War II) has already been identified as a key driver for regional British foreign policy change, within the analysis of the FPDA and its genesis. The second factor being the need to "use Korea as a [regional] balance of power"[79]; this again being closely linked to the need to assure economic stability through the UK's key regional trading partners (of which Korea wasn't one[80]). The final reason (again sharing familiarity with the advent of the FPDA) was the need to act and influence in concert with the US, even if the UK's new role was that of a

[77] Shin, "The Decision Process of the Trusteeship in Korea, 1945-1946", 191.
[78] Shin, "The Decision Process of the Trusteeship in Korea, 1945-1946", 190.
[79] Shin, "The Decision Process of the Trusteeship in Korea, 1945-1946", 189.
[80] Michael J. Seth, *Korea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 76.

'junior partner'. Shin (2004) describes this as the UK being fully aware that "it could not be totally independent of the US dominance in the post-war measures"[81].

Trusteeship means that the UK's involvement in post-World War II Korea does not start with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 but before World War II had even officially ended. The UK has irreversibly woven itself into modern day Korea through its foreign policy and its consequential eagerness to take an official role in nation building. The trustee agreements (signed at the Yalta Conference in February 1945) came into force as soon the Japanese surrendered (15 August 1945). Trusteeship was only intended to last for five years and in terms of official obligations and arrangements, the subsequent outbreak of the Korean War has truly overtaken this agreement and consigned it to history. That said, the UK's decision to stand as a 'trustee' adds to the rich tapestry that is the UK's neo-history with Korea and which could be leveraged to draw the UK's military into the region.

**The '38th Parallel'.** However 'pure' the motives for managing Korea's transition from (Japanese) colonial rule to full independence; the split ideologies between democracy and communism started a geographic rift that set the conditions for the war that would follow. The terms of the Japanese surrender (drafted by the US) detail a split surrender, using the (now infamous) '38th parallel' to delineate the areas of responsibility between the Soviets and US forces[82]. Stueck (2004) reminds us that "the thirty-eighth parallel was a line on a map, nothing more. It followed no political boundaries or physical features within Korea"[83].

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[81] Shin, "The Decision Process of the Trusteeship in Korea, 1945-1946", 189.
[82] Shannon McCune, "Physical Basis for Korean Boundaries" *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1946), 272-89.
[83] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 12.

In the north, as soon as the surrender was signed, the USSR immediately began redistributing the land previously held by Japan to the 'poor' farmers, bypassing and alienating the historic 'landed classes' and leading to the eruption of protests; over eight hundred thousand Koreans fled south between 1945 and 1950[84]. The protests escalated into military campaigns against these 'insurgents'[85]. The plan to 'unify' Korea was never fully realised, as the split surrender to 'occupying forces' (with such differing ideologies and motivations for their involvement) created a rift in the peninsula that could not be resolved; even following the advent of a "unified administration"[86] in December that year.

**The Korean War.** On 25 Jun 1950, North Korean Forces led by Communist dictator Kim Il-sung invaded the Republic of Korea (crossing the 38th Parallel). Whilst an analysis of the Korean War itself is out with the core hypothesis of this paper, a few observations surrounding the roles of the key players is of value. Both the USSR and China were in favour of military action however, Kim was forced to actively lobby both Stalin and Mao from early in 1949 in order to officially obtain support for a campaign[87]. Even then, he was only successful in securing 'clandestine' and 'deniable' support from the USSR. China however, agreed to reinforce if coalition forces were to successfully repel the attack and consequentially "non-Korean troops enter the North"[88]. This goes on to be a significant causal factor in the eventual stalemate in and around the 38th parallel.

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[84] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 66.
[85] Matt Clayton, *History of Korea* (Bolton, ON: Amazon.ca, 2020), 72.
[86] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 14.
[87] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 70-76.
[88] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 89.

The addition of these 300,000 Chinese troops[89] creating the deadlock that the US and her allies could not overcome.

The key factor to derive from the Korean War itself is the sheer scale of the UK's commitment to the peninsula; demonstrated initially through its trusteeship, then carried forward into the contribution it makes to the war effort. The UK goes on to deploy the second largest contingent of personnel[90] (native Koreans make up the largest body of combatants and the US was the greatest contributor from overseas). These commitments alone could be identified as 'levers' with the potential to be used by the Republic of Korea (ROK) to politically coerce the UK to task its military into the region. However, the overriding source from which the Korean Peninsula derives its greatest potential to draw UK military attention is the fact that the Korean War has never officially ended.

**An Armistice not a Peace Agreement.** On 27 July 1953, both sides signed a temporary 'armistice' agreement, which remains extant to this day. Crucially, the opposing sides have failed to ever reach a 'peace agreement' as recommended to occur within three months of the armistice by the military signatories of that document (Article IV, para 60)[91]. Consequentially, "the two Koreas remain at war, and the 38th Parallel remains one of the Cold War's lone outposts"[92].

**Tensions.** Whilst the lack of a peace agreement could potentially be perceived as semantics and the almost 70 years without full-scale conflict cited to herald the success of the armistice agreement; the peninsula has been far from peaceful during this period. The

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[89] Spencer C. Tucker, "Korean War" in *China at War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Xiaobing Li (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 208.
[90] "United Nations Command", accessed Feb 23, 2022, https://www.unc.mil/Organization/Contributors/United-Kingdom/.
[91] "The Korean War Armistice Agreement," UNC, last modified Jul 27, accessed Feb 23, 2022, https://www.usfk.mil/Portals/105/Documents/SOFA/G_Armistice_Agreement.pdf.
[92] Tucker, "Korean War", 211.

armistice drives down the threshold of activity but the 'active' nature of the war provides a platform on which both sides can frame the use of lethal force. Beavers (2021) assesses the 2013 decision by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to declare their withdrawal from the armistice[93] as an indicator that "they see the war as merely on pause and ready to erupt again at any moment"[94]. A full analysis of all reported hostilities would serve as futile but the following short precis should demonstrate the regularity and severity of incidents and serve as a reminder of the fragility of this 'status quo':

> **1968.** The first of a series of attempts were made on the life of the South Korean President. 31 communist guerrillas were sent from Pyongyang to assassinate President Park Chung-hee. They were stopped only 100 meters away from the presidential Blue House. Gunfights erupted and "about two dozen South Koreans and four American soldiers"[95] were killed, along with 28 of the attackers. Choi (1994) cites "jealousy [of] the speedy economic rehabilitation of South Korea" as the driving motivation for attacks against President Park[96].
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> **1968.** North Korean gunships seize the US 'intelligence collection' ship, the USS Pueblo, killing an American sailor in the process[97]. Whilst this action alone demonstrated an appetite for provocation against the regional hegemon (the

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[93] Rick Gladstone, "1953 Armistice is Nullified, North Korea Declares" *New York Times,* Mar 12, 2013. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/12/world/asia/north-korea-says-it-has-nullified-1953-korean-war-armistice.html.

[94] Elizabeth Beavers, "Peace Powers: Could the President End the Korean War without Congress?" *UCLA Pacific Basin Law Journal* 38, no. 1 (2021), 118.

[95] Anna Fifield, "A Not-that-Short History of North Korean Assassinations and Attempts" *The Washington Post,* Feb 15, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/02/15/a-not-that-short-history-of-north-korean-assassinations-and-attempts/.

[96] Yoon Soo Choi, "North Korea's Terrorism Against South Korea: An Historical Analysis of their Political Background and its Characteristics" *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 18, no. 1-2 (1994), 4.

[97] James Duermeyer, *The Capture of the USS Pueblo: The Incident, the Aftermath and the Motives of North Korea* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2018), 73.

US), the subsequent imprisonment of the ship's surviving crew of 82 personnel for 11 months displayed a resolve to escalate that could have transcended into full-scale conflict[98].

**1983.** North Korean agents attempt to assassinate President Chun Doo-hwan using a bomb implanted on a roof. The attack killed 21 people, including four South Korean cabinet ministers. Not only does this attack show the threshold that previous North Korean regimes are willing to attain in an attempt to destabilise the South but it also demonstrates an audacity and disregard for sovereign territory in that the attack was undertaken in Burma (now Myanmar)[99].

**1987.** A South Korean plane flying from Baghdad to Seoul exploded over the Andaman Sea killing 115 people. One of the perpetrators went on to confess; both having been captured and both attempting to commit suicide in captivity via pre-concealed poison. In a UN council debate, the South Korean Foreign Minister claimed the attack "was intended to disrupt the Olympic games in Seoul"[100] that were to be held later the following year. It is of note that the DPRK never accepted responsibility for the attack but instead accused the ROK, US and Japan of a "false drama"[101].

**2010.** The South Korean warship 'Cheonan' was sunk by a torpedo while conducting a routine mission in the vicinity of Baengnyeong Island. 46 sailors were killed as a result. Although North Korea denied the attack, an independent

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[98] Andrew T. H. Tan, *The Politics of Maritime Power: A Survey*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 210.
[99] Er-Win Tan and Brian Bridges, "Revisiting the 1983 Rangoon Bombing Covert Action in North Korea's Foreign Relations" *Korea Observer* 50, no. 1 (2019), 86-87.
[100] "Charges on Korean Plane Crash Aired in Security Council," *UN Chronicle* 25, no. 2 (1988), 61.
[101] "Charges on Korean Plane Crash Aired in Security Council", 61

report attributed the damage to a North Korean built weapon (CHT-02D torpedo)[102].

**2020.** In response to continued sanctions enforced on the country by Washington and Seoul[103], North Korea deliberately destroyed a Joint Liaison Building in demilitarised zone[104]. The choice of target was designed to send a clear message, with the liaison building "symbolising inter-Korean reconciliation"[105].

The persistence, severity and recency of these attacks highlight the continued threat the DPRK presents to the South. Whilst only a 'snapshot' of activity, this abridged timeline serves to demonstrate the historic and contemporary volatility of the region. Stanton et al (2017) describe the prospect of nuclear disarmament by the current DPRK Supreme Leader, as "he will do so only under duress so extreme that it threatens the survival of his regime"[106]. Their analysis demonstrates a state that will continue to grow and develop its weapon stocks unabated.

North Korea's nuclear arsenal is one of the complicating factors making the prospect of a 'peace agreement' so challenging. Freidman (2018) describes any prospect of a peace treaty as being merely "the capstone to a grand bargain in which the North

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[102] Korea (South). Ministry of National Defense, *On the Attack Against ROK Ship Cheonan: Joint Investigation Report,* Myungjin Publication, 2010.
[103] Sue Mi Terry, "The Unravelling of the U.S.-South Korean Alliance" *Foreign Affairs* (Jul 3, 2020). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2020-07-03/unraveling-us-south-korean-alliance.
[104] Sang-Hun Choe, "North Korea's Wrecking of Liaison Office a 'death Knell' for Ties with the South," *The New York Times* (Jun 16, 2020). https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/16/world/asia/north-korea-explosion-liaison-office.html.
[105] Terry, "The Unravelling of the U.S.-South Korean Alliance".
[106] Joshua Stanton, Lee Sung-Yoon and Bruce Klinger, "Getting Tough on North Korea: How to Hit Pyongyang Where it Hurts" *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 3 (May, 2017). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2017-04-17/getting-tough-north-korea.

agrees to completely dismantle its nuclear arsenal"[107]. Stanton et al (2017) remind us that "Pyongyang has already signed and then unilaterally withdrawn from two International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and violated an inter-Korean denuclearization agreement"[108].

**United Nations Command (UNC).** When war was declared in 1950, the United Nations passed UNSCR 82 and called upon member states for support[109]. The UNC was established as part of the UN mandate from Security Council Resolution 84[110] and was the warfighting command for the ROK and her allies (1950 to 1953). Subsequently, following the signing of the armistice and in lieu of a peace agreement, the Command's role evolved to "an international military organization charged with enforcing the Korean Armistice Agreement"[111].

As highlighted already, this 'enforcement' has not been without armed (and mortal) incident; hence, an immergence of any sort of 'peace' (conceptual or physical) still evades the peninsula. The Command remains active to this day, with a permanent headquarters located in South Korea and staffed by eight of the original sixteen 'sending-states' to include military personnel from the UK[112]. Whilst the scale of the UK's enduring commitment to the UNC might be particularly modest and the associated public (media) attention imperceptible; a very real and legally established commitment quietly endures.

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107 "The Deceptively Simple Promise of Korean Peace", accessed Feb 25, 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/north-south-korea-peace-treaty/558932/.
108 Stanton, "Getting Tough on North Korea: How to Hit Pyongyang Where it Hurts".
109 "United Nations Command (History of the Korean War)", accessed 5 January, 2022.
110 "Resolution 84 Complaint of Aggression upon Republic of Korea", accessed Jan 7, 2022, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/84.
111 "United Nations Command (Post-1953)", accessed 5 January, 2022.
112 "UNC Headquarters", accessed Feb 25, 2022, https://www.unc.mil/Organization/UNC-Headquarters/.

**The UK as a Sending State.** In a speech given at the 'Shangri-La Dialogue' in 2017, then US Secretary of Defence, General Mattis was keen to emphasize that the UNC was a multi-national enterprise built on historical commitments. The following extract from that speech makes clear the expectation placed on each of the sixteen Sending States: "Because that war was never ended, those nations are still committed to maintaining the peace on the peninsula"[113]. His comments not only serve as a reminder that the military commitment to the people of the ROK came from a (UN mandated) multi-national coalition but also acts to reinforce the legal perspective that a state of war persists in Korea[114]. Whilst the US has maintained its leadership role of the UNC since 1950, it clearly does so in the expectation that any return to conventional warfare is a commitment for all of the original 'sending states'.

**The 'Special' Relationship.** The pressure the US could apply to the UK to respond to any escalation in hostilities on the peninsula could be considerable and Mattis' comments serve to forewarn the UK of their likely tact. The US has a history of applying such pressure to the UK in order to foster support for its policies in Korea. Lee (2013) cites the decision to suspend paragraph 13(d) of the truce agreement, thus allowing additional 'reinforcing materiel' to be stationed in Korea, which ultimately allowed the US to hold nuclear weapons in the ROK[115]. In this example, the US acted as a hegemon and only later informed the 'sending states' (including the UK) of their decision to forward base nuclear weapons in the ROK; no prior consultation was undertaken.

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[113] "Remarks by Secretary Mattis at Shangri-La Dialogue" U.S. Department of Defense, last modified Jun 3, accessed Jan 7, 2022, https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/1201780/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-at-shangri-la-dialogue/.

[114] Beavers, "Peace Powers: Could the President End the Korean War without Congress?", 116.

[115] Steven Lee, "The Korean Armistice and the End of Peace: The US-UN Coalition and the Dynamics of War-Making in Korea, 1953–76" *Journal of Korean Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013), 184-85. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/528255/summary.

Whilst many years have passed since these events, the US retains hegemonic aspirations in the Asia-Pacific and the UK has a proven and contemporary record of supporting them in military undertakings. Whilst actions taken under political pressure from the US could fall under the auspices of AUKUS, it is worth analysing the relationship between the UK and the US under a separate lens. It is conceivable that the US could take a unilateral decision about action in Korea, then subsequently look to lobby support from the sending states. If unanimous support was not forthcoming and with the three members of AUKUS all being sending states, the US would no doubt look to leverage this military alliance. The likelihood of an Australian declination of support is well beyond the scope of this paper but should it occur the US would almost certainly still leverage the UK as it has done historically. Thus, there exists two mechanisms (albeit heavily intertwined) to draw the UK into hostilities or escalation on the Korean Peninsula: a UNC response or a US led action.

The fact that only US generals have commanded the UNC serves to demonstrate their desire to politically and militarily exert influence in the region. Ban (2021) goes as far as to describe how the "The UNC's existence has provided the double function for maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the US hegemony politically as well as militarily over many decades"[116]. In 2019, the US did select an Australian as only the second non-American Deputy Commander of UNC. Whilst this could be seen as progressive and a sharing of UNC power and responsibility on the peninsula; Ban (2021)

[116] Kil Joo Ban, "The Two-for-One Entity and a 'for Whom' Puzzle: UNC as both a Peace Driver and the US Hegemony Keeper in Asia" *Asian Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 1 (2021), 1.

offers the counter opinion, declaring this action to be "the US exercising its political clout to control the actions of member states of the UNC"[117].

In line with this assertion of both US regional hegemony and their leadership role in the on-going Korean conflict, it is worth noting that the ROK were not signatories to the 1953 Armistice Agreement[118]. "The ROK political leadership had, in fact, strenuously opposed the truce negotiations"[119]. President Rhee's decision to cease opposition for the armistice agreement was heavily tied to the co-timed drafting of a Mutual Defence Treaty. Whilst this document held short of the full commitment of an MDA calling for a "response in accordance with its [each signatory's] constitutional processes"[120]. This was signed just days after the Armistice Agreement. The 'sending states' had to wait until the following month to sign an additional document that officially recorded their support for the US signed armistice[121].

**Regime Collapse?** Thus far, this paper, in line with many others, focuses much attention on the potential for escalation on the Korean Peninsula. However, there exists an alternate scenario for sudden change and the embroilment of external militaries. Despotic dictatorships are inherently unstable; to quote the US undersecretary Thomas Shannon (2006) who likens authoritarian regimes to helicopters: "When the rotors come off a helicopter it crashes. When a supreme leader, disappears from an authoritarian regime… it flounders"[122].

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[117] Ban, "The Two-for-One Entity and a 'for Whom' Puzzle: UNC as both a Peace Driver and the US Hegemony Keeper in Asia", 8.
[118] "The Korean War Armistice Agreement".
[119] Donald W. Boose, "Korean War Armistice Agreement (July 27, 1953)" in *China at War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Xiaobing Li (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 212.
[120] Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*, 192.
[121] Boose, "Korean War Armistice Agreement (July 27, 1953)", 212.
[122] "Cuba Policy" last modified Aug 11, accessed 5 January, 2022, https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2006/70370.htm.

Whitehead (2016) identifies eleven "autocratic regimes" that have experienced an "abrupt collapse"[123] since WWII. Whilst Whitehead does go on to balance this argument of 'inherent instability' by referencing a number of regimes that have demonstrated "surprising resilience" during this same period. The evidence suggests that North Korean regime collapse must be considered a viable eventuality for the current dynasty even if the likelihood cannot be quantified. Furthermore, the secretive and oppressed nature of the state's governance may mean that indicators and warnings of such an occurrence might be sparse and therefore if it does happen, the actual event could appear sudden or rapid.

A number of academics and politicians have hypothesised this scenario. Jackson (2019) believed US "planning for North Korea's eventual implosion was a Pentagon priority"[124] during the early stages of the Obama administration. At a speech delivered in Washington in 2016, the former US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Wendy Sherman argued that the US and South Korea should plan for "unexpected scenarios like a sudden regime collapse or a coup"[125]. Her insight having come from her work as the Policy Coordinator for North Korea (for the Clinton administration). Whilst the likelihood of such an event occurring is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to catalogue this hypothetical trigger as yet another mechanism that could easily force a response from the UK military; albeit potentially not as part of a conventional 'fighting force'.

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[123] Laurence Whitehead, "The 'Puzzle' of Autocratic Resilience/Regime Collapse: The Case of Cuba" *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016), 1668.
[124] Van Jackson, "The Rebalance, Entrapment Fear, and Collapsism: The Origins of Obama's North Korea Policy" *Asian Perspective* 43, no. 4 (2019), 608.
[125] Yi Yong-in, "Wendy Sherman: Must Prepare for Possible North Korean Coup or Collapse", *Hankyoreh,* May 5, 2016. https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/742632.html.

**A More Peaceful Resolution?** Richey et al (2017) proffer two further mechanisms for sudden regime change to supplement "regime collapse" and the "unification by military invasion" (following a DPRK defeat post a return to full-scale conflict). They describe the potential for a system of 'reform' by "following the developmental dictatorship models of countries such as China, Vietnam or Myanmar"[126]. Additionally they look at the feasibility of a "gradual and peaceful transition of the country's politico-economic system"[127]. Their insight is important as it reminds us that a number of scenarios exist, beyond the popularised view of simply 'stalemate' or 'total war', which could enact significant change on the Korean Peninsula.

Furthermore, whilst peaceful in their nature, these additional two change vehicles would still enact a huge shift in the security landscape of North Korea. The UK would do well to expect a requirement for some form of military contribution to all of these efforts. The responses will clearly vary greatly across the full spectrum of military mission sets. Having hypothesised this variety of change mechanisms, Richey et al (2017) go on to collectively describe the middle-term outcome for all as "doubtlessly chaotic crisis management" and make particular reference to "numerous human security challenges facing a Korean Peninsula in the process of unification"[128]. Bennet (2013) reiterates the point that the UK "remains ready to provide manpower in defence of the ROK" but goes

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[126] Mason Richey et al., "Be Careful what You Wish for: Security Challenges Facing the Korean Peninsula during a Potential Unification Process" *Asian Security* 14, no. 3 (2018), 265.
[127] Richey, "Be Careful what You Wish for: Security Challenges Facing the Korean Peninsula during a Potential Unification Process", 265.
[128] Richey, "Be Careful what You Wish for: Security Challenges Facing the Korean Peninsula during a Potential Unification Process", 269-270.

further to suggest the UK "would likely be prepared to also support operations in North Korea after a [DPRK] collapse"[129].

**Korea as a Mechanism to Embroil the UK.** This analysis has not only demonstrated Korea to be an entirely valid 'lever' for making future demands on the UK military but has highlighted a breadth of 'triggers' that could initiate this. Should hostilities be resumed, the UK has a responsibility as a 'sending state' coupled with a moral obligation through 'trusteeship' that predates the Korean War. Beyond armed conflict, the volatile nature of the autocratic state means that any transition away from the current autocracy (multiple credible scenarios for this have been identified) will create a security vacuum that will likely see the ROK calling for international support. Potential military responses range from full-scale conflict to peace support operations as a partner to nation building activities. Not only should Korea be considered a credible 'lever' for the embroilment of UK forces, the broad spectrum of potential mission sets must also be considered.

**Military 'Affiliations' a UK Perspective.** It must be noted that the UK openly acknowledges both of these military 'affiliations' (FPDA and Korea). However, it makes it clear through its official literature that it does not recognise any legal obligations to act in either instance. With regard to Korea, a UK Government report explains that: "The United Kingdom has no treaty obligations to come to the defence of South Korea if it is attacked". However, it does go on to acknowledge that "it has made a strong – but not automatic – commitment to take part in resisting renewed aggression"[130]. A sentiment

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[129] Bruce W. Bennett, *Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse*, Vol. RR-331-SRF; RR-331-SRF. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2013), 294.
[130] Louisa Brooke-Holland, *UK Defence Obligations to South Korea* (London: Crown copyright, 2017).

backed up in response to a parliamentary question in 2011, which added that "the UK frequently demonstrates its support for South Korea in the face of North Korean provocations"[131]. With regard to the FPDA, an official 2021 report on the UK's regional 'pivot' tempers its positive narrative of increased cooperation with the stark reminder that "there is no specific commitment for military intervention"[132]. These legal nuances were acutely captured within this analysis. Furthermore, it makes complete sense for a state (such as the UK) to guard against any 'enforced' future action through the reiteration of such facts. However, the analysis therein has comprehensively covered these aspects and focused on where pressure to act could effectively be applied. Both 'alliances' (FPDA and Korea) have demonstrated ample political leverage.

[131] "UK Obligations to South Korea", accessed Apr 29, 2022, https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/110111w0001.htm#11011155000206.
[132] Louisa Brooke-Holland, *Integrated Review 2021: The Defence Tilt to the Indo-Pacific* (London: Crown copyright, 2021).

## HISTORIC TIES

Two more important historical (colonial) ties prevail in the Asia-Pacific: Hong Kong and Brunei. Whilst no formal military 'affiliation' exists, in the way the previous chapter identifies for the FPDA and Korea, they still demand independent analysis. Each has the potential to present 'levers' that the respective governments could draw on, in an attempt to secure military support and/or action from the UK. This section will further demonstrate the contemporary impact of the British Empire's once expansive footprint in the region.

### Hong Kong

Hong Kong [Island] was ceded to the British in 1842 as part of the Treaty of Nanking which formalised the end to the first Sino-British 'Opium War' (1839-42). The territory grew after the 'Second Opium War' (1856-60)[133] to include the Kowloon Peninsula[134]. In 1898, Britain was granted an additional 99 years of rule over Hong Kong under the Second Convention of Peking[135]. This meant that Hong Kong remained a prosperous 'commercial gateway' for the UK up until World War II when Japanese success at the Battle of Hong Kong saw the British surrender the territory after eighteen days of intense fighting[136].

The pressure the UK government felt, in the wake of World War II, to reduce its footprint 'East of Suez' has already been discussed in the analysis of Malaysia, Singapore

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[133] For more info on the Opium Wars see Frank Sanello and W. Travis Hanes III, *Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville: Sourcebooks, 2004).
[134] John D. Wong, "From the Treaty of Nanking to the Joint Declaration: The Struggle for Equality through State Documents", *Law and Literature* 30, no. 2 (2018), 320-21.
[135] Wong, "From the Treaty of Nanking to the Joint Declaration: The Struggle for Equality through State Documents", 321.
[136] Chi-Man Kwong, "Military History" in *Hong Kong History: Themes in Global Perspective*, eds. Man-Kong Wong and Chi-Man Kwong (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 42.

(FPDA) and Korea. Once more, this key factor, imposed financially upon the British Government plays a critical role in shaping this key relationship. However, unlike Malaysia and Singapore (following the Japanese surrender) the UK elects to retain Hong Kong as a colony for as long as possible.

There were a number of factors that led to this decision. The first being common to the UK's embroilment in post war Korea's nation building and the subsequent war of opposing ideologies. That is to say that the need for regional security made a complete withdrawal untenable and a footprint 'East of Aden' (albeit greatly reduced) had to be retained. With regard to the more specific question of; why Hong Kong? Seah (2017) purports that "Hong Kong was important for reasons of 'prestige' and political and moral implications" going on to exclaim that "where Singapore was a military fortress, Hong Kong was a political fortress"[137]. This was demonstrated when Singapore was selected to be the main base from which the UK would fight the 1962 Bruneian Rising (to be discussed further) and the 1963 Indonesian Konfrontasi (already explored within the FPDA analysis)[138]. Hong Kong was however utilised heavily during the earlier Korean War, playing a vital role in the supply and staging of British troops but its role in subsequent military actions are in line with Seah's conclusions.

The rise of communism in the Asia-Pacific is once more a prevalent issue. Chu (2022) suggests that immediately after Mao's victory in 1949 that the UK government

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[137] Joshua-John Tian Ser Seah, "Imperial Outposts and the War Beyond: Singapore, Hong Kong and the British Empire's Land Force Contribution to the Korean War" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 4 (Jul 4, 2017), 673. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03086534.2017.1298273.

[138] Seah, "Imperial Outposts and the War Beyond: Singapore, Hong Kong and the British Empire's Land Force Contribution to the Korean War", 686.

began to view Hong Kong as "the Berlin of Asia to contain the Chinese Communism"[139]. Geography and competing ideology, again driving the UK's foreign policy decisions in the region. Identifying the exact reasons behind the UK's post war colonial reduction decisions falls beyond the purview of this study. It is enough to note that Hong Kong was selected for retention for an amalgamation of the hypotheses identified above, whilst others were surrendered.

The UK's decision to retain Hong Kong was ultimately to prove impermanent, as the Chinese would go on to take the UK by "surprise" by refusing to extend further the previously discussed 99 year lease[140]. By the late 1970s it became apparent to the British government that they would be unable to maintain sovereignty of the colony and diplomatic efforts were diverted into the construction of a transition plan that would best serve the UK's economic imperatives whilst projecting a duty of care towards the citizens of Hong Kong. In 1984 a 'Joint Declaration' was signed by both governments (UK and China) formalising the end of the lease and Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule. This treaty, which was submitted to the UN, declared that "socialist policies shall not be practiced in Hong Kong… and that Hong Kong's previous capitalist system and life-style shall remain unchanged for 50 years… and shall enjoy a high degree of autonomy"[141]. This narrative was underpinned by detailed plans for the maintenance of capitalist financial infrastructure along with a locally elected governance architecture. The policies established within the treaty have become known as 'one country, two systems' a phrase

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[139] Wai-Li Chu, "Cold War and Decolonisation" in *Hong Kong History: Themes in Global Perspective*, eds. Man-Kong Wong and Chi-Man Kwong (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 85.
[140] Alvin Y. So, "One Country, Two Systems and Hong Kong-China National Integration: A Crisis-Transformation Perspective", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41, no. 1 (2011), 102.
[141] China and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, "No. 23391. Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong" in *Treaties and International Agreements Registered Or Filed and Recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations*, Vol. 1399 (New York: United Nations, 1984), 63-64.

initially used in the early 1980s (during the negotiations) by the then Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Deng Xiaoping.

Although China initially implemented the treaty with great diligence, they subsequently began incrementally diluting the prescribed "autonomy". As Summers (2020) described it "Hong Kong's politics has become increasingly polarized and radicalized"[142]. In response, in June 2019, protests broke-out across Hong Kong; the trigger being the creation of a controversial national security legislation. The 2019-20 protests built on the (generally) more peaceful demonstrations seen as part of the 'umbrella movement'[143] of 2014.

Some British MPs shared concerns with the protesters that China was potentially "not adhering to the spirit of the Declaration and preserving Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms"[144]. The UK has consistently maintained the stance that "the Joint Declaration is a legally binding treaty" and that "it remains as valid today as it did when it was signed"[145]. This sentiment is echoed with great regularity; the UK Foreign Secretary issuing a statement in 2019 to declare unwavering commitment to the Joint Declaration but offering no greater action than to "closely monitor events"[146] (referencing the aforementioned protests that year). A government report issued later that year only marginally increasing the tone: "the UK has an obligation and a right to monitor". Even

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[142] Tim Summers, "What should the UK do about Hong Kong?", *Chatham House* (May 28, 2020). https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/05/what-should-uk-do-about-hong-kong.
[143] For more information of the 'umbrella movement see popular press or Stephan Ortmann, "The Umbrella Movement and Hong Kong's Protracted Democratization Process", *Asian Affairs* 46, no. 1 (2015), 32-50.
[144] Louisa Brooke-Holland, *Hong Kong: The Joint Declaration* (London: House of Commons Library, 2019).
[145] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Written Evidence (CIR0018)* (London, 2018).
[146] "Anniversary of the Handover of Hong Kong: Foreign Secretary Statement", accessed Mar 22, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-the-anniversary-of-the-handover-of-hong-kong.

though the Foreign and Commonwealth Office openly assessed "a serious breach of the Joint Declaration"[147].

This sits against a backdrop of far more visceral Chinese rhetoric. The response they issued to these (and similar) UK communiques in 2019 was to continue to challenge the status of the Joint Declaration[148] and are quoted in a UK governmental report (2019) as declaring that it is "ridiculous for the UK to pose itself as a supervisor and make irresponsible remarks on Hong Kong affairs" going further by stating "the so-called 'responsibility' that the British side claimed for Hong Kong does not exist"[149]. The US reaction was to declare that "the Chinese Communist Party has systematically dismantled Hong Kong's political freedoms and autonomy in violation of its international commitments"[150]. Although, Summers (2019) does contextualise this much stronger narrative as "Washington's tendency to use the city [Hong Kong] as a political football in a wider strategic rivalry with China"[151].

**A Hostile Future?** With half of the treaty already elapsed and China taking ever more bold steps to increase control of Hong Kong; it seems unlikely that the UK would develop the appetite to amplify its rhetoric towards China. The US has identified itself as willing to be more pointed in its official correspondence pertaining to Hong Kong but there is clearly a larger power struggle playing out in the Asia-Pacific to which this public condemnation is just another 'salvo'.

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147 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Written Evidence (CIR0018).*
148 Brooke-Holland, *Hong Kong: The Joint Declaration.*
149 House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *China and the Rules-Based International System* (London: Parliamentary Copyright, 2019).
150 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practises: China - Hong Kong* (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2021).
151 Tim Summers, "British Policy Toward Hong Kong" *The Asia Dialogue* (Dec 4, 2019). https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/12/04/british-policy-towards-hong-kong/.

Summers (2020) believes the current UK narrative to already be too closely aligned with "Washington's political goals" and he calls for greater consideration of the "impact on Hong Kong and the UK's interests there"[152]. Ahead of the protests of 2019, So (in 2011) had already hypothesised that a unification process through 'one country, one system' was always going to see a 'pendulum swing' between the demands of 'one country' and the needs of the 'two systems'. Hypothesising that it was inevitable that the initial interpretation of the single set of rules that governed the 'unification' in 1997 would not endure until 'integration' and the obsolescence of the Joint Declaration 50 years later. His theory sits well with another of Summers assertions: "clear recognition of Beijing's legitimate role still needs to underpin London's longer-term strategy towards its former colony"[153]. The extrapolation of So and Summers' logic being that: the most favourable outcome for the UK's regional and financial interests is that China recognises the benefits of extending the 'two systems' beyond 2047. This would suggest why the UK's condemnation of Chinese activity in Hong Kong is consistently moderated when compared to that of the US.

**The UK Military and Hong Kong.** Whilst this case study has highlighted a legal obligation, along with a rich colonial history and a significant financial dependency; no credible trigger for Hong Kong to embroil the UK military has been identified. Beyond the obvious mismatch in scale between the armed forces of the UK and that of China[154], even the prospect of increased political animosity presents a real risk to British interests

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[152] Summers, "What should the UK do about Hong Kong?".
[153] Summers, "British Policy Toward Hong Kong".
[154] "Comparison of China and United Kingdom Military Strengths (2022)", accessed Mar 24, 2022, https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-comparison-detail.php?country1=china&country2=united-kingdom.

with few benefits other than currying favour with the US regional hegemony. The UK government has already demonstrated that it is not even willing to match US rhetoric; applying caution and control to each official communique. With the prospect of even the 'lightest' of sanctions appearing highly unlikely; the concept of military tasking in Hong Kong falling to the UK armed forces must be discounted as incredulous by this study.

**Brunei**

Brunei is one of three states that share lands on the island of Borneo. Residing on the northern coast, it is surrounded on all sides by the Malaysian state of Sarawak. Sarawak's history is also that of colonial Britain, becoming a 'protectorate' in 1888[155] before being subsumed by Malaysia as part of its formation in 1963[156]. Whilst its history is different to that of modern day Malaysia, research did not uncover any factors that could create unique aspects pertinent to this study of contemporary embroilments. The third country to possess lands on Borneo is Indonesia, who possess the largest territory, dominating the south of the island. These lands (known as Kalimantan) revealed a rich and interesting history along with many cultural differences to other Indonesian islands. However, the colonial Dutch heritage[157] of Indonesia being the primary reason why no factors were identified that demanded closer analysis of Indonesian Borneo.

**The UK and Brunei.** The once British colony of Brunei achieved 'self-governance' in 1959, before going on to attain 'full independence' in 1984. Dayley (2020) suggests that the delay was the result of reticence on the part of the Sultan who saw British retention of "foreign and military affairs" as protection against potential

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[155] Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 91.
[156] Jackson, *The British Empire*, 109.
[157] Matt Clayton, *History of Southeast Asia* (Bolton, ON: Amazon.ca, 2021), 57-60.

attack from both neighbouring states[158]. Ironically, it was to be the British proposal to form the state of Malaysia from its colonies of: Malay, Singapore and the three British Borneo territories of Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo, that would realise the Sultan's fears of armed conflict:

**The Bruneian Rising.** A British military intervention in Brunei was necessitated in 1962 when a militant wing of the dominant political party (Parti Rakyat Brunei) launched an insurgency in response to the plan to incorporate Brunei into Malaysia; the insurgents also citing corruption within the Sultanate government[159]. The movement only lasted a matter of weeks, being supressed by British soldiers from the Gurkha Regiment who were deployed from Singapore[160]. As much as the violent protest was easily quashed, the uprising can still be considered successful in that it influenced the Sultan's decision to refuse the British plan for Brunei to join the [at the time] proposed Malaysian federation and to remain a British 'protectorate'. Soon after, in 1963, the previously discussed Konfrontasi (Indonesia's campaign, also in opposition to the formation of the federation of Malaysia) was fought predominately on the island of Borneo[161]. Both armed uprisings added to the Sultan's sense of vulnerability and went on to enhance his efforts to secure an enduring British military presence.

**Contemporary UK Military Connections to Brunei.** An infantry battalion of the Gurkha Regiment has remained garrisoned there since the aforementioned uprising of

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158 Robert Dayley, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, 8th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020), 259.
159 Alexander Nicholas Shaw, "British Counterinsurgency in Brunei and Sarawak, 1962-1963: Developing Best Practices in the Shadow of Malaya", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 4 (2016), 702.
160 Shaw, "British Counterinsurgency in Brunei and Sarawak, 1962-1963: Developing Best Practices in the Shadow of Malaya", 703.
161 David Phillips, "Confrontation and Insurgency in Borneo, 1960–90", *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no. 3 (2019), 594-618.

1962[162]. The presence of British forces was further bolstered when the UK school of jungle warfare relocated to Brunei from Malaysia in 1971. Brunei is considered by the UK to be an important jungle training area owing to its "tropical climate and terrain"[163]. Both the school and the infantry are supported in-country by a dedicated flight of helicopters (Bell 212s) and a boat section[164] so as to enable manoeuvre amidst the jungle terrain.

Brunei is a particularly wealthy (oil and gas rich) state[165] that, since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship in 1888[166], has countered its perceived regional vulnerability through British protection. The permanent present of a jungle acclimatised (Gurkha) infantry battalion is not solely in the UK's interests; since full independence in 1983 this military presence (which is easily construed as a deterrence) has been funded by Brunei[167]. This arrangement is reviewed periodically with the last update being issued in 2020[168]. Gagliano (2019) identifies the contemporary threat as "internal uprising, whether originating from the populace or inspired by external interests in Malaysia or Indonesia"[169]. He still identifies a threat from the competing neighbours but predicts any action to be pursued through in-country proxies.

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[162] "Keeping the Empire Running: Britain's Global Military Footprint" Newstex, last modified Nov 25, accessed Apr 4, 2022, https://southfront.org/keeping-the-empire-running-britains-global-military-footprint/.
[163] "Brunei", accessed Apr 4, 2022, https://www.army.mod.uk/deployments/brunei/.
[164] "British Forces Brunei", accessed Apr 4, 2022, https://www.britishforcesbrunei.co.uk/about-bruneigarrison.
[165] Joseph A. Gagliano, *Alliance Decision-Making in the South China Sea* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 124.
[166] Leonard Rayner, "Brunei and Britain", *Round Table* 73, no. 290 (1984), 153.
[167] "Royal Gurkha Rifles: Finance," last modified Oct 11, 2010, accessed Apr 6, 2022, https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2010-10-11d.16292.h.
[168] "PM Meeting with His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei: 4 February 2020," last modified Feb 4, 2020, accessed Apr 6, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-his-majesty-the-sultan-of-brunei-4-february-2020.
[169] Gagliano, *Alliance Decision-Making in the South China Sea*, 126.

**Brunei and the US**. In the wake of the attacks of 9/11 Brunei has courted US favour, at a time where the US was actively seeking "closer relations with Muslim-majority states as a means of implied political support"[170]. Brunei quickly and publicly pledging international solidarity to "fight terrorism"[171]. Although, the US struggles to resolve issues with Brunei's "significant human rights issues"[172] as detailed annually in the State Department's Country Reports. Brunei will continue to promote its appeal to the US as a western facing Islamic state that condemns communism and is willing to support the US military both at home and abroad. Brunei needs a 'security patron' and whilst the US are struggling to resolve the cultural disparity with respect to human rights, "its long and positive historical experience with Britain" creates an apprehension that avoids the severing this relationship[173]. Consequentially the UK continues to fulfil this role as 'security patron'.

Brunei has proven itself to be transparent with respect to its intentions for the UK to continue to play this role as a 'security patron'. The overt funding for the positioning of specialist UK troops in the Sultanate acting as the clearest signal of Brunei's intent should its long held perception of vulnerability be realised. Whilst history affords the UK less constraints when dealing with the Sultanate; an internal uprising might prove challenging owing to the aforementioned contrast in human rights policies. The Sultanate is well aware of the internal risk and provides an expansive welfare system, without levying

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[170] Gagliano, *Alliance Decision-Making in the South China Sea*, 116.
[171] Roger Kershaw, "Partners in Realism: Britain and Brunei Amid Recent Turbulence", *Asian Affairs* 34, no. 1 (2003), 47.
[172] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Brunei* (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2021). https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/brunei/.
[173] Gagliano, *Alliance Decision-Making in the South China Sea*, 125.

taxes against Bruneians. The Sultan couples this with his leadership of Islam to create a state with little dissention[174].

Brunei perceives membership of ASEAN as another 'pillar' of security to mitigate external threats. Gagliano (2019) uses its "near simultaneous [six days] independence and accession [into ASEAN]" as evidence for the importance placed upon its perceived protection by the Sultan[175]. Brunei has manoeuvred within ASEAN to attain a political position akin to that of a much larger nation. This has been achieved through the use of Brunei's considerable wealth. They have invested "heavily in other ASEAN states that desperately need economic development to lift their populations out of poverty"[176]. Since the ASEAN 'pillar' of security is attributed intrinsically to the nation's wealth, it can be assessed that a decline in prosperity is likely to have a detrimental effect on this security 'pillar'. Current estimates predict that "Brunei's oil and gas reserves will be exhausted by 2040"[177]. As Brunei looks to diversify economically, the British security 'pillar' may yet resurface as the primary means of support against both external and internal threats. Brunei demonstrates a credible and realistic mechanism to embroil not only the forces pre-positioned in the Sultanate but shows the potential to make significantly greater demands from the old colonial master.

**Historic Ties as a 'Lever'?** The two historic ties that have been identified and analysed have returned starkly different findings. Whilst Hong Kong could potentially boast the richest regional history and even the most complex contemporary geo-political situation, it fails to provide credible evidence for UK military involvement. The UK must

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[174] Dayley, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, 264.
[175] Gagliano, *Alliance Decision-Making in the South China Sea*, 127.
[176] Gagliano, *Alliance Decision-Making in the South China Sea*, 119.
[177] Dayley, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, 264.

protect its financial dependency by balancing a rhetoric of human rights and treaty transgressions against the need to recognise the sovereignty of the state. This will become more pertinent as 2047 approaches. Brunei shows all the hallmarks of a state that could easily look to ‘leverage’ its historical ties with the UK. This study has identified a number of triggers for both internal unrest and external threat. Brunei is highly likely to make demands of the UK should the stability it has grown to enjoy be disrupted.

**SOFT POWER**

Thus far, this study has focused primarily on the more traditional 'levers' that exist within the Asia-Pacific that could influence a future decision by the UK to bring its armed forces to bear in the region. It is, however, worth analysing the relationship between the military and soft power, as this avenue will present yet more insights into potential mechanisms to embroil all three services of the UK's armed forced into action in the region.

The term soft power was originally coined by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s[178]. He defines soft power as "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment"[179]. The UK government fully embraces this concept and references it broadly in national strategy. In 2015 the UK government set itself the ambitious goal of becoming "the leading soft power nation"[180] before dialling up the narrative in 2021 by declaring the UK "a soft power superpower" and boasting about "consistent top three" rankings in soft power indices[181]. UK military doctrine has its own definition of soft power, building on Nye's concept: "soft power may influence others to adopt a preferred course of action through cultural or ideological means by encouraging emulation"[182]. Having established that the application of soft power sits at the heart of UK defence strategy it is necessary to identify the methods through which it can be employed.

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[178] Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
[179] Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power.*
[180] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, 47.
[181] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 49.
[182] Chief of the Defence Staff, *UK Defence Doctrine* (Shrivenham: Crown copyright, 2014), 66.

The current UK military doctrine recognises 'defence engagement' as the "only military contribution to soft power"[183] and defines it as "the means by which we use Defence assets and activities, short of combat operations, to achieve influence"[184]. Since this is clearly a proactive activity, it falls outside of the scope of this study because such tasking is discretionary and therefore cannot be a mechanism for 'embroilment'.

The UK government contradicts the military's perspective above and singles out disaster relief (to include the use of the armed forces) as a lever of soft power it intends to utilise[185]. Moreover, multiple academics and other governments recognise the military mission sets of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) as contributing to soft power[186]. This anomaly could potentially be a result of the inherent 'lag' in the production of official literature (the referenced military doctrine predating government policy by 5 years). Regardless, this paper will adopt the general academic consensus and analyse HADR missions and the future potential for a UK military contribution to such.

**Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR)**

**Can HADR Generate Soft Power?** Nye (2019), the aforementioned originator of soft power theorem, believes that HADR operations can. He uses the 2004 tsunami in the Asia-Pacific as a tangible example of a country's (in this case the US') ability to achieve soft power through the provision of aid and relief. He declares that the US' response "helped to reverse in part the precipitous slide in the United States' standing in

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[183] Director Concepts and Doctrine, *Shaping a Stable World: The Military Contribution* (Shrivenham: Crown copyright, 2016), 121.
[184] Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, *Defence Engagement* (Shrivenham: Crown copyright, 2015), 4.
[185] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 49.
[186] The academic debate does not centre on the credibility of HADR as soft power, more the effectiveness and applicability to differing global powers.

Indonesian polls that began after the Iraq War"[187]. Capie (2015) also makes the case for the promotion of military HADR capabilities in order to foster soft power and influence. He uses survey data from multiple Asia-Pacific countries, both pre and post HADR operations to quantitatively demonstrate increased public perception and positive attitudes towards the US in the wake of their relief efforts[188]. Scholarly research clearly supports the UK government's pro-HADR posture.

**UK HADR Operations.** Whilst a comprehensive, government endorsed, list of previous military HADR operations proves elusive; a RAND report from 2021 details the headline events that are also widely published through the 'popular press'. The more stark revelation from their work is the insight that the UK has undertaken a pre-emptive naval deployment into the Caribbean on an annual basis since 2017; specifically timed to be coincident the hurricane season[189]. The historic regularity of UK HADR operations was of little revelation and is widely publicised, however the proactivity of prepositioning military forces is a clear signal of the UK's intent to deliver on its soft power and HADR pledges[190]. Whilst this example might be one from the Caribbean and not the Asia-Pacific; the trend and emphasis is unmistakable.

**FPDA Disaster Relief.** As Till observed back in 2011: "The steady and developing pattern of FPDA exercises into new areas, such as disaster relief, has also

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[187] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Revisited", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2019; 14, no. 1-2 (2019), 14. doi:10.1163/1871191X-14101013. https://go.exlibris.link/46d0XJwf.

[188] David Capie, "The United States and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in East Asia: Connecting Coercive and Non-Coercive Uses of Military Power", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 3 (2015), 316-320.

[189] Lucia Retter et al., *Crisis Response in a Changing Climate: Implications of Climate Change for UK Defence Logistics in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) Operations* (Cambridge: RAND Corporation, 2021).

[190] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.*

been an invaluable means of helping Singapore and Malaysia build up their military skill base"[191]. This demonstrates a trend that has only increased since. In the aftermath of the disastrous Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, the defence ministers of the FPDA nations met in Singapore and "strongly endorsed, broadening the [FPDA training] scope to be more joint and more complex in nature, including tasks such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief"[192]. Official direction such as the following example from the Malaysian government (2022) providing evidence that this trend is tangible and endures. Using the 2004 tsunami along with the 2005 Kashmir earthquake as prompts for the "FPDA to explore ways [to] build capacity and enhance inter-operability in the area of HADR. In 2007, Ex[ercise] Suman Protector was introduced and it incorporated… HADR elements"[193].

The Singaporeans have demonstrated their commitment to HADR operations through the establishment of the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) in 2014. It's published mission being to "facilitate military to military coordination in HADR, supporting the military of a disaster affected state in coordinating assistance provided by foreign militaries"[194]. Although the RHCC is not an FPDA asset, this demonstrates Singapore's desire to play a key regional role in HADR and drive forward the development and coordination of future responses. This gives a clear indication of: the future progression of FPDA, Singapore's priorities and under what circumstances they are most likely to lobby for extra-regional support.

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[191] Till, "A Little Ray of Sunshine: Britain, and the Origins of the FPDA – A Retrospective on Objectives, Problems and Solutions", 17.
[192] Andrew T. H. Tan, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Continuing Relevance", *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (2008), 295.
[193] "FPDA Achievement Over the Last Five Decades"
[194] "About RHCC", last modified Apr 5, accessed Apr 11, 2022, https://www.changirhcc.org/elpisweb/app_pages/Main/AboutUs.cshtml.

**A Humanitarian Disaster in North Korea?** Whilst blending two different themes in this manner could be seen as alarmist, a short exploration validates that it has merit in demonstrating that not only do very few of these geo-political factors exist in isolation but that the potential for true complexity in execution does exist and is conceivable. Bennett (2013) explores this contingency, both as a trigger for regime collapse and as a potential consequence thereafter[195]. In both instances he exposes a viable problem-set that is better addressed ahead of time by the UK and it's military. HADR operations require a timely and precise response; the range the UK must project if it wishes to contribute meaningfully into the Asia-Pacific only exacerbating this. The prospect of the recipient nation being hostile and/or in the process of 'collapse' and the likely turmoil created by attempting to 'cling to power' have the potential to create a HADR mission of the greatest conceivable complexity. Moreover, as scientists continue to assess an increasing likelihood of natural disasters in regions such as the Asia-Pacific[196]; this method for embroilment must be assessed as plausible and the complexities therein should not be underestimated.

**UK HADR Missions in the Asia-Pacific?** It seems an almost certainty that this mechanism will trigger action from the UK armed forces in the region. The UK's defence doctrine survey for the region identifies the clear need to support future humanitarian crises, citing the UK's "cultural associations" as a driver for "an enduring requirement to supply economic and humanitarian aid in times of crisis"[197]. As identified, the FPDA is

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[195] Bennett, *Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse*, 139-60.
[196] Retter, *Crisis Response in a Changing Climate: Implications of Climate Change for UK Defence Logistics in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) Operations.*
[197] DCDC, *Regional Survey - South Asia Out to 2040*, 23.

increasing its focus on this mission set and Korea possesses the potential to generate a humanitarian disaster without conventional conflict or natural disaster.

The environmental sciences suggests that this region is the most vulnerable to natural disasters globally, as a result of climate change. Canyon et al (2020) use UN and WHO data to declare that "those living in Oceania and Southeast Asia have experienced a disproportionate and increasing number of weather-related disasters"[198]. To quote Nye (2019): "on transnational challenges such as climate change, soft power can help build the trust and networks that make co-operation possible"[199]. If the attraction of soft power alone is not enough to trigger a UK response or should disaster strike at a time whereby there is a reticence or difficulty in responding; all of the previously identified historical ties and alliances could be leveraged both in diplomatic circles and if required, in the public arena, in order to apply pressure for a UK military response. This mechanism is assessed as both highly credible and highly likely.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

### The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN is a union of ten states[200]. It was founded in 1967 by five states[201] and has subsequently grown its core membership. In 2008 all member states signed a charter that promotes the key facets of the association: political-security, economic and socio-cultural

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[198] Deon V. Canyon, Benjamin J. Ryan and Frederick M. Burkle, "Rationale for Military Involvement in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief", *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 35, no. 1 (2020), 92.
[199] Nye, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Revisited", 19.
[200] The ASEAN member states are: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
[201] The founding states were: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

promotion and development[202]. The charter is considered 'legally binding' and has subsequently been registered with the UN[203].

**The UK and the ASEAN.** In 2015 the UK began to signal its intent towards the ASEAN; that year's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) pledging to "strengthen engagement with the ten [ASEAN] member states"[204]. A subsequent UK document predicted that this enhanced level of engagement with ASEAN is likely to extend to other non-regional partners[205]. The 2021 update to the SDSR went further still and formalised the UK's strategic 'tilt' towards the region, articulating the preferred route to enact this 'engagement'. It spelled out the clear ambition to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner, describing an aspiration "to work together on global challenges, support ASEAN's central role in regional stability and prosperity and enable sustainable development"[206].

The UK is taking these ASEAN ambitions seriously and has gone as far as to appoint a dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN (2019), along with a new Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Director General with a solely regional remit[207]. Soon after the release of the 2021 SDSR, the UK was rewarded for its persistence and public ambition; the UK secretary of state accepting the position of

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[202] "Significance of the ASEAN Charter", accessed Apr 22, 2002, https://asean.org/about-asean/asean-charter/.
[203] Pursuant to Article 102, paragraph 1.
[204] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*, 59.
[205] UK MOD Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, *Global Strategic Trends the Future Starts Today* (Shrivenham: Crown copyright, 2018).
[206] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 67.
[207] Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 67.

'ASEAN Dialogue Partner'[208] at a 'conferment ceremony' with ASEAN foreign ministers and representatives[209]. This backdrop provides concrete evidence of the UK's growing interest in partnership with the ASEAN. Whilst the rationale behind the declared 'prosperity' associated with these strengthened bonds is obvious (taken collectively, ASEAN is the fifth largest economy globally[210]); the UK does talk of 'regional stability' as a driver. Though the military is far from the only mechanism for stability; this clearly has implications for this study.

**The Mercurial Evolution of ASEAN.** As well as growing in its core membership, ASEAN has demonstrated an ability to spawn multiple sub-committees and forums, many of which involve the addition of extra-regional actors. The benefits of increased regional dialogue and cooperation fostered within ASEAN led to the establishment of regular East Asia Summits, which allowed for increased participation without expanding membership of ASEAN itself. The first East Asia Summit (EAS) was held in 1997 and participation was extended to include: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. This collective of cooperating nations has subsequently become widely known as ASEAN Plus Three (APT).

What the evolution of both the APT and the EAS demonstrate is that ASEAN is capable of growing and morphing. This ability to generate other forums (of enhanced participation) shows that the stakeholders of South East Asia are deft proponents of manoeuvre and evolution in their formal alliances, especially where security is concerned.

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[208] The other 'ASEAN Dialogue Partners' are: Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.
[209] "UK-ASEAN Factsheet", last modified Feb 11, accessed Apr 14, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-asean-factsheet.
[210] "ASEAN's Economy", accessed Apr 22, 2022, https://www.usasean.org/why-asean/asean-economy.

**The ASEAN Approach to Defence and Security.** Whilst the origin of the APT can attribute financial incentives as the primary driver[211], the subsequent EAS was billed as a framework to enhance both political and security cooperation. In the Chairman's report following the first summit, maintenance of peace and security were put ahead of prosperity and progress as the quorum's long-term goals[212]. However, security is an area that ASEAN has historically faced much criticism pertaining to its relevance and effectiveness[213]. When analysing the collective regional security picture in the 1970s, Tan (2008) draws exactly this conclusion about ASEAN's security prowess and identifies it as another factor in the advent of the FPDA: "The inability of ASEAN to cooperate militarily resulted in Singapore and Malaysia turning to other vehicles to improve transnational military cooperation. Conveniently, FPDA provided such a vehicle"[214].

Whilst such doubts and questions are not without substance, a number of scholars celebrate the peace which the ASEAN members have enjoyed since inception. Hsueh (2016) analyses three of the more popular theories for this 'peace': the liberal view that commerce is the reason, the potential that the ASEAN focus on security management has driven this eventuality and finally the hypothesis that a capitalist trajectory drives peace. Ultimately, he purports that a nuanced rational best explains the peace and that the "socioeconomic backgrounds [of the member states] impel the leaders to push for nation

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[211] Kai He, "Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia", *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 3 (2008), 508-09.
[212] *Chairman's Statement of the First East Asia Summit* ASEAN, 2005.
[213] "South-East Asia's Regional Club Faces its Greatest Tests Yet" last modified Oct 30, 2021 accessed Jan 13, 2022, https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/10/30/south-east-asias-regional-club-faces-its-greatest-tests-yet.
[214] Tan, "The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Continuing Relevance", 292.

building and economic development"[215]. Sulaiman (2019) puts this view more bluntly whilst spelling out the perceived security threat: "the region is currently peaceful simply because ASEAN states find it far more profitable to make economic deals with China than to challenge it"[216]. He (2008) also addresses China as a potential security threat and goes as far as to suggest that when Japan, Indonesia and Singapore proposed an increased membership, that they did so to "prevent China dominating the regional community"[217]. Whilst peace has prevailed thus far; the region is far from free of security threats.

**The Growing ASEAN Security Architecture.** In 2006 the inaugural ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) was held giving the forum its first dedicated defence and security platform. Its self-stated goals are to "promote mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding of defence and security challenges"[218]. Soon after, in 2010 a further ASEAN meeting was founded amongst regional defence ministers. This expanded grouping being formally referred to as the ADMM-plus[219]. The chairman's statement that encapsulated the first of these meetings acknowledged that "there existed complex and transnational security challenges that are beyond the scope of any one

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[215] Chienwu (Alex) Hsueh, "ASEAN and Southeast Asian Peace: Nation Building, Economic Performance, and ASEAN's Security Management", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 16, no. 1 (2016), 57.
[216] Sulaiman, "What Threat? Leadership, Strategic Culture, and Indonesian Foreign Policy in the South China Sea", 607.
[217] He, "Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia", 509.
[218] "About the ASEAN Defence Ministers", last modified Feb 6, accessed Apr 21, 2022, https://admm.asean.org/index.php/about-admm/about-admm.html.
[219] The additional ('plus') defence ministers representing: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the US.

country to handle alone"[220]. The ADMM architecture continues to broaden its remit, with the fifteenth ADMM announcing an expansion into cyber[221].

A number of scholars are starting to counter the traditional negative narrative about the ASEAN's security and defence prowess. Tan (2020) cites an increase in frequency and complexity of joint activities amongst his evidence base for declaring that "Asia-Pacific countries are getting multilateralism right through the ADMM"[222]. Beyond ADMM and ADMM-plus, ASEAN identifies two other sub committees that are ASEAN-led and have a security agenda: the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asian Summit (EAS). It describes them as being "at the centre of the regional order for peace and security"[223]. "The ARF can be celebrated as the largest multilateral security dialogue forum including all the major powers in the Asia-Pacific"[224].

**ASEAN and HADR.** Many of the levers identified in this study can act in unison to amplify pressure. ASEAN and HADR are an example of this. ASEAN is focusing on HADR response through its 'One ASEAN, One Response' (OAOR)[225] scheme. This means that a UK response in the region can be of benefit to its relation building not only with the effected countries but also with an increasing influential regional organisation that the UK government is actively trying to curry favour with. This suggests that a

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[220] "Chairman's Statement of the First ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus" last modified Oct 12, accessed Apr 21, 2022, https://asean.org/chairmans-statement-of-the-first-asean-defence-ministers-meeting-plus-admm-plus-strategic-cooperation-for-peace-stability-and-development-in-the-region-ha-noi/.
[221] MENA Report, "Singapore: 15th Anniversary of ADMM: Preparing for a Future-Ready, Peaceful and Prosperous ASEAN", *MENA Report* (Jun 17, 2021). https://go.exlibris.link/HpTtSBs9.
[222] See Seng Tan, "Is ASEAN Finally Getting Multilateralism Right? From ARF to ADMM", *Asian Studies Review* 44, no. 1 (2020), 37.
[223] Dato EP Yusof, *Annual Security Outlook 2021* (Brunei Darussalam: ASEAN, 2021).
[224] He, "Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia", 497.
[225] "ASEAN Declaration on ONE ASEAN, ONE RESPONSE", last modified Sep 9, accessed Apr 22, 2022, https://asean.org/asean-declaration-on-one-asean-one-response-asean-responding-to-disasters-as-one-in-the-region-and-outside-the-region/.

HADR event in an ASEAN country is even more likely to instigate a UK military response.

**The Future for ASEAN?** ASEAN has set out its own manifesto for its short-term future: 'ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together'. It is significant that this document contains a dedicated blueprint for security[226]. Whilst lacking in tangible goals, it clearly articulates a desire to enhance collaborative development in the security realm. Weatherby (2019) offers a predictive commentary to this blueprint. He suggests that the "transnational and integrative links [amongst ASEAN members] are strong enough that the use of force against each other is unlikely"[227]. He is less optimistic about ASEANs security prospections with respect to 'extra-ASAEN' actors. He suggests that "policy coherence does not exist… at a level of common security interests that will enable it to meet the challenges facing it in the contemporary regional security environment"[228]. Acharya (2021) also charges ASEAN with needing to "step up" and to "develop a transformative agenda"[229] with respect to security. Beyond security, 'ASEAN 2025 outlines a number of economic goals. UK defence literature interprets from this that "ASEAN is likely to develop its economic interconnectivity between member states but it is unlikely to emulate the EU's aspiration to be a supranational power in its own right"[230].

**ASEAN as a Mechanism to Embroil the UK Military.** Prior to the 2021 SDSR and the subsequent award of 'dialogue partner'; ASEAN would realistically have been

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[226] The ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together* (Jakarta, 2015).
[227] Donald E. Weatherbee, *ASEAN's Half Century: A Political History of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019), 261.
[228] Weatherbee, *ASEAN's Half Century: A Political History of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, 261-62.
[229] Amitav Acharya, *ASEAN and Regional Order: Revisiting Security Community in Southeast Asia* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 134.
[230] DCDC, *Regional Survey - South Asia Out to 2040*, 53.

dismissed as an unlikely lever by which the UK military could be embroiled in to the region. However, the UK's overt courtship of closer liaison has created a relationship that could now be leveraged should the need arise. As already discussed, HADR is assessed as the most likely initiator of such pressure. However, this research has demonstrated sufficient concerns regarding ASEAN's extra-regional security prowess. A conventional threat against an ASEAN state seems unlikely to be deterred by this collective union of states. This consequently increases the likelihood that a threatened ASEAN state will have to look for support outside of ASEAN and potentially beyond the wider region. An analysis of each of the ten states would prove futile but thematically speaking this research can derive that: those states that have already been identified as having historic (colonial) links to the UK (Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore) must be considered much more likely to prioritise the UK as an ally under such an eventuality. Moreover, the military links between these countries and the UK (as already identified in the study) would act in unison, rendering the UK's ASEAN aspirations to be just one of a compound of levers.

**The Quad**

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), commonly known as 'the Quad' refers to a diplomatic and military arrangement between: Australia, India, Japan and the United States. The group's roots can be derived from a HADR mission set with the foursome initially meeting to form a 'Tsunami Core Group" in the wake of the tragic events of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. The four nations going on to (unsuccessfully) attempt to establish the QSD in 2007, with a remit expanded beyond HADR.

**Quad 1.0.** Rudd (2021) suggests that the quad's initial failure was due to reticence to commit on behalf of three of the countries. He purports that: the US couldn't afford to

alienate China during the 'war on terrorism', India prioritised its ties with Beijing as an "imperative necessity" and that Australia was concerned about undermining its economic ties with China[231]. Kleim (2020) along with Rudd (2021) both cite the then Japanese Prime Minister, Abe Shinzo, as the Quad's "initiator"[232] and its "driving force"[233]. His resignation towards the end of 2007 being coincident with the in-year failure of the initiative. Its subsequent resurrection inspiring a number of academics to delineate the 2007 aborted attempt by the use of the term 'Quad 1.0'.

**Quad 2.0.** The resurrection of the quad in 2017[234] has therefore become known as 'Quad 2.0' to those academics that adopt this nomenclature. After a ten year hiatus, two important things had changed that created the conditions for a resurgence. Firstly, Abe Shinzo came out of retirement and successfully regained his position as Japan's Prime Minister. Secondly, the geopolitical situation between all of the Quad member states and China had changed. As Rudd (2021) puts it "the strategic calculus on China had evolved in all the Quad capitals"[235]. The hypothesis behind Kleim's (2020) paper being even more pointed, he purports that "both the diplomatic and military arrangements between the Quad members are most immediately a response to the ever-increasing economic and military power of the [People's Republic of China] PRC"[236]. What we see here is the Quad being referenced as a security and defence architecture from its [2.0] inception. Whilst the military implications of this are immediate for the four member states, to

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[231] Rudd, "Why the Quad Alarms China".
[232] Frederick Kliem, "Why Quasi-Alliances Will Persist in the Indo-Pacific? The Fall and Rise of the Quad", *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2020), 272. doi:10.1177/2347797020962620. https://go.exlibris.link/fDxr2ZSW.
[233] Rudd, "Why the Quad Alarms China".
[234] "Australia-India-Japan-United States Consultations on the Indo-Pacific", accessed Apr 25, 2022, https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/media/Pages/aus-india-japan-us-consultations-on-the-indo-pacific.
[235] Rudd, "Why the Quad Alarms China".
[236] Kliem, "Why Quasi-Alliances Will Persist in the Indo-Pacific? The Fall and Rise of the Quad", 273.

analyse the inferences for the UK, the possibility of an expansion of the Quad must first be explored.

**Growth of the Quad?** Before its initial 'failure' in 2007, the Quad successfully delivered a military exercise (Ex Malabar 07-02)[237]. Curiously, this inaugural naval exercise included a fifth nation; Singapore. When analysing an organisations appetite for expansion; this willingness to enlarge its inaugural exercise beyond member states could be interpreted as an indicator (at that time) of an interest to court enhanced membership or foster greater 'partners'. As already discussed, this is a familiar model to the South East Asian states that form the ASEAN and all members of the Quad benefit from ASEAN influence through a number of these expanded, extra-regional forums. The benefits of reciprocation through expanded forums must appear apparent to the Quad states.

In 2020 the US Deputy Secretary of State made the following proclamation as part of a press interview: "the Quad is a partnership driven by shared interests, not binding obligations, and is not intended to be an exclusive grouping"[238]. The joint statement, released following the 2021 meeting by the Quad heads of state, did nothing to oppose this narrative; defining the Quad's goals with respect to the broader Indo-pacific region[239]. By deliberately not bounding its goals within the sovereign territories of the members' states it sends a clear message to both potential allies and non-conformists alike.

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[237] Modern diplomacy, Aug 29, 2021, https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2021/08/29/as-exercise-malabar-turns-25-the-quad-edge-makes-it-sharper-today/.

[238] "U.S. Says 'Quad' Nations Ready to Work with Others for Free, Open Indo-Pacific", last modified Oct 12, accessed Apr 25, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/india-usa-int-idUSKBN26X2AZ.

[239] "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: The Spirit of the Quad", last modified Mar 12, 2021 accessed Apr 25, 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/.

In 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Quad held a number of expanded forum meetings. New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Vietnam were the additional ('plus') attendees. Rajagopalan (2020) uses this series of meetings to support the hypothesis that "the slow and steady institutionalisation of the Quad suggests that its future expansion is a real possibility"[240]. However, Grossman (2020) interprets these COVID-19 meetings of the supposed 'Quad Plus' in a different way. He asserts that it was a "noble" adaptation of the group and that it "harkens back" to the Quads roots in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. His thesis stems from a firm belief that the Quad's primary mission is "to counter China's growing assertiveness in the region". To that end he purports that the three states that formed the COVID-19 'plus' are likely to be highly reticent about "publicly appending their names to a group that seeks to counter China"[241]. The eventuality Grossman does not account for is a future expansion with other states who are more comfortable with a counter-China rhetoric. His pessimism is specifically focused on the immediate politics of the three 'plus' states, brought in to discuss COVID-19 responses.

**The UK and the Quad?** In her 2021 study into Indo-Pacific strategies, Paskal gives independent credibility to the potential of an expanded Quad. Her research is conducted into the perceptions surrounding a number of countries that are heavily linked to the region. She undertook a combination of surveys, interviews and roundtables with over 200 'experts' from the strategic and policy communities. Her study finds that the

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[240] "Towards a Quad-Plus Arrangement" last modified May 7, accessed Apr 26, 2022, https://www.orfonline.org/research/towards-a-quad-plus-arrangement-65674/.

[241] "Don't Get Too Excited, 'Quad Plus' Meetings Won't Cover China", last modified Apr 9, 2020 accessed Apr 26, 2022, https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/04/dont-get-too-excited-quad-plus-meetings-wont-cover.html.

assembled panel of experts believe there to be an "interest in expanding the Quad". Of even greater significance to this study are the two countries that Pascal's panel identify as worthy of greater discussion with regard to potential Quad membership; those being the UK and France[242]. This is a view shared by Shea (2021) who sees it as a likely eventuality that "the UK and France will be associated with the Quad in a +2 format"[243].

Whilst Pascal's panel present many doubts specifically concerning the UK ascension to the Quad; that fact that the discussion was deemed credible by an assembly of subject matter experts means this study must assess this potential future as possible if not likely. The feasibility of which becomes even more probable if the previously discussed ASEAN model of sub-groups, extended meetings and 'dialogue partners' was to be adopted. This study has exposed a credible future of expansion for the Quad coupled with the aforementioned 'tilt' from the UK. Should this prediction be realised and the Quad grow and spawn sub-committees; it would follow that the UK would covet such a position.

**Could the Quad Embroil the UK's Military?** The assessment of the Quad's ability to apply pressure for the UK to commit military forces into the region must be assessed as credible and likely. Even without formal membership of the group or any sub-committee, the fact the UK is assessed as desiring such a seat would inevitably influence any future decisions; both in terms of a potential UK response and the likelihood of requests being forthcoming. The counter-China aspect to the group's policy would be a

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[242] Cleo Paskal, *Indo-Pacific Strategies, Perceptions and Partnerships* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2021).
[243] "The AUKUS Deal: A Moment of Truth for Europe and for Security in the Indo-Pacific Region".

neat fit with current UK foreign policy[244] and the Quad membership of the other two AUKUS states can only serve as a catalyst to embroilment.

## AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This study has highlighted a number of areas whereby adaptations of this mechanism for research are likely to prove insightful and fruitful:

**The Indo-Pacific.** Discounted from this study because of its recent immergence and the Sino-American connotations; the Indo-Pacific offers a rich vein of research if studied through a similar lens to this analysis. A separate companion study would serve to 'complete' the region in accordance with the favoured grouping being used in official UK governmental communiques (at the time of writing). It must be noted, that if this study was to be expanded to the 'Indo-Pacific', it would introduce a considerable number of countries that were once part of the British Empire (chiefly, the modern states of: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka). The inclusion of India alone would demand enhanced analysis of the 'Quad' which would in-turn, likely bring Chinese ascension into greater focus. The danger being that such research could easily start to look like many other studies of the 'Quad' and the US' counter to China; it could quickly lose the unique perspective that this study boasts.

**A Revisit.** The Asia-Pacific has the potential for rapid change. From armed conflict to peaceful regime change and alliance forming to climate disaster. It may not take many years to signal an opportunity to revisit such a study. In a similar vein, a new

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[244] Brooke-Holland, *Integrated Review 2021: The Defence Tilt to the Indo-Pacific*; Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.*

regional descriptor may emerge to replace ‘Indo-Pacific’ in the popular officious lexicons of the UK and other key regional actors; signalling an opportunity to expand or contract the study accordingly.

**An Alternate Lens.** This research has demonstrated that regional-compendium studies of this nature tend predominately, to exist mostly through the lens of the superpowers. For middle powers to analyse regional impacts it is often necessary to interpolate and derive inferences from a multitude of sources that each identity a broad audience of actors (both nation-state and alliance). Whilst a similar study could be conducted through the lens of any extra-regional (middle power) actor; the other twentieth century European colonial powers present as the best fit.

## CONCLUSION

The UK entered World War II with colonial territories in modern states of: Brunei, Hong Kong and Malaysia (to include Singapore). Whilst the war cost the country dearly, it was the financial constriction of the post-war era that was to drive wholescale change to the Commonwealth in the Asia-Pacific (as it did in multiple regions globally)[245]. In the decades that followed, the UK was forced to reduce its military footprint in the Asia-Pacific in order to curtail overall global defence expenditure.

A full-scale (post-war) withdrawal from the Asia-Pacific was not possible as much of the UK's economy at the time was tied to the region[246]. The diversity of tradeable goods that had first drawn the UK to the Asia-Pacific had become intrinsic to the British economy. With a pressing need for prudence in all matters fiscal, the Asia-Pacific was both a net provider and a drain on funds. A reduction in forces was financially essential but the UK had to keep a military footprint that could contribute to the security of the region, which remains essential for trade and prosperity. The consequences of such radical change from colonial power to trading ally are what shapes the UK's multi-faceted contemporary interests in the Asia-Pacific. This study has identified a rich tapestry of affiliations and historic ties coupled with aspirations pertaining to both soft power and greater influence through (varying degrees of) membership in regional associations like the ASEAN.

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[245] Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

[246] Derek McDougall, "The Wilson Government and the British Defence Commitment in Malaysia-Singapore," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore)* 4, no. 2 (1973), 229-240.

**Thematic Trends**

Beyond the economic and security issues previously highlighted, the following factors have been common throughout this study. Their effect may vary with each case study but their persistence throughout can be used to describe the key factors that have shaped UK foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific from World War II to the present:

**Communism and the Cold War.** Whilst the spread of communism throughout the region could be considered under the heading of 'regional security', it is important to break them apart. The UK's motivations for suppressing this opposing ideology are starkly different to its rather more business-like and transactional distribution of military power to contribute to straightforward security. In effect, however, the two factors can quickly blur as conflict between opposing ideologies is just as 'bad for business' as piracy and terrorism.

**The US.** Whilst the US' motives for action in the Asia-Pacific remain independent of the UK's, all of the case studies analysed therein find reference to US influence. They too have economic and ideological drivers that shape their foreign policy but the omnipresence of their influence is of note. This clearly demonstrates their widely accepted regional role as hegemon. The UK's consistency in bending to the will of the US suggests this hegemony is perceived to extend further and is global. The UK is seen to align with the US not just for influence in the Asia-Pacific but owing to the greater effect this favour affords the UK in other regions.

**Global Positioning.** Even as a 'victor' of World War II, the crippling financial demands of sustained global conflict forced the UK and its pre-war colonial empire to 'reposition' in the new world order. Whilst the UK had no option but to accept that the US has emerged as the global 'superpower', it found itself jockeying for geo-political

position. This created a strong drive to establish a new international role and whilst successive British governments were resigned to a reduced global footprint; prestige and influence remained as important as ever to the UK.

**Likelihood?**

Such was the body of evidence pertaining to each of the identified 'levers' that it presents as credible to attempt to rank these (against each other) with reference to the 'likelihood' of each going on to foster UK military involvement. The following cannot serve as a prediction of the future, it is merely an extension of the summary of findings. It draws a spotlight on the facets of contemporary UK interests whereby the weight of evidence supports a higher likelihood for military action. At the same time, drawing together the research that is more dismissive for other British interests.

To that end, this study has identified Hong Kong as the least likely place to see a UK military deployment. Not only is the Chinese military overmatch so great[247] but some scholarly discussion is already focused on reducing, not increasing, the UK's hard-line against China[248]. The UK's financial inter-dependency with Hong Kong is significant; the UK simply cannot afford to antagonise China too much. It appears likely that the UK will continue to quote the handover treaty agreements[249] and highlight disparities (especially where they pertain to human rights). However, this study could not find any suggestion that the UK would attempt to actively enforce the terms of this treaty (before it expires in 2047) through any lever of power (not even political or economic ones); the military lever therefore presents as inconceivable. HADR might complicate this assertion but since

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[247] "Comparison of China and United Kingdom Military Strengths (2022)".
[248] Summers, "What should the UK do about Hong Kong? British Policy Toward Hong Kong".
[249] China, "No. 23391. Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong", 33-73.

China possesses by far the largest military in the region, even this eventuality seems somewhat unlikely.

At the other end of the spectrum sits HADR. This study has highlighted the UK's contemporary preference for this mission-set. It has also used Nye's theory of soft power[250] to demonstrate how localised activity can foster regional and often global favour. HADR as a soft power mechanism to enact UK military activity could easily be considered in isolation. The deployment of UK forces to support disaster relief operations will (according to soft power theorem) generate goodwill from an audience far greater than just the recipient state. However, once more, the 'layering' effect of these factors must be considered. Intergovernmental organisations actors such as ASEAN and the Quad are just as likely to be influenced by such military undertakings. Moreover, it is risk free; deploying forces for a HADR mission cannot damage relations with these intergovernmental organisations. Military forces of the member states of these organisations are likely to respond too; creating yet more layers of pressure to act. For all these reasons, HADR presents as the most likely initiator of a UK military deployment to the Asia-Pacific. Scholars such as Canyon et al (2020)[251] cite data from the environmental sciences to suggest the region is the most vulnerable globally to natural disaster too, again – increasing the likelihood of enactment. It is assessed as highly improbable that the UK would not respond to a natural disaster in the Asia-Pacific given the current geo-political climate.

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[250] Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*.
[251] Canyon, "Rationale for Military Involvement in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief", 92-97.

After HADR, Korea must be considered the next most likely trigger. Conscious that the UK officially denies any 'obligation' to act[252], this study has compiled much official rhetoric to temper and potentially counter this[253]. Add to this the legal argument that the 1953 war has never ended[254] and whilst it can be dismissed as semantics, it does present a powerful lever for both the political realm and the 'court of public opinion'. This study has identified multiple routes to potential intervention on the Korean Peninsula; beyond the more broadly hypothesised return to conventional fighting. Jackson (2019)[255] and Richey et al (2017)[256] show us that any change in the DPRK regime, be that 'collapse' or an acceptance of moderation, could easily require external assistance. HADR once again must be considered, as for all of the DPRK's military might, its ability to respond to a natural disaster must be questioned. That said, its likely willingness to accept external aid was not something this author could find reference to; we must infer that this is therefore far from assured. Thus the potential for a truly 'wicked' scenario exists: a disaster inside North Korea with a regime that subsequently refuses life-saving aid and assistance. The likely responses from the UK and other western governments sits well outside of the scope of this study. What this analysis of Korea does highlight, once more, is the complexity of 'triggers' that the Asia-Pacific presents and the tendency for factors to compound and 'layer'.

Sitting between Korea and Hong Kong, by way of 'trigger' likelihood is the FPDA. Not only are the arguments for the existence of an 'obligation' to act that much

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252 Brooke-Holland, *UK Defence Obligations to South Korea.*
253 "UK Obligations to South Korea".
254 Beavers, "Peace Powers: Could the President End the Korean War without Congress?", 109-130
255 Jackson, "The Rebalance, Entrapment Fear, and Collapsism: The Origins of Obama's North Korea Policy", 593-619.
256 Richey, "Be Careful what You Wish for: Security Challenges Facing the Korean Peninsula during a Potential Unification Process", 263-281.

more dilute (than Korea); the current threat picture to FPDA nations (specifically Malaysia and Singapore) is significantly reduced. That is not to say these countries are without threat. Global terrorism, organised crime and the (albeit long suppressed) pockets of communist support are all potential 'triggers'. The importance of shipping and the sea-lanes of communication must be re-iterated, especially with regard to terrorism and international crime syndicates. Security threats in the region can not only harm the interests of these close (and affiliated) allies of the UK but they can have significant impacts on UK revenue too. The 'need' to assure regional security whilst reducing the footprint 'east of Suez' that saw the advent of the FPDA during the era of decolonisation has in no way diminished.

The enduring garrisoning of UK troops in-country and the historical relationship with Brunei also serve to create the conditions for military action under certain circumstances. Whilst this study has shown the populous of Brunei to be (unusually) content with their autocratic government; this is wholly dependent on state wealth. The depletion of in-country fossil fuels may destabilise Brunei in the near future. Consequently, the 'pull' for UK military action might as easily come in the form of internal stability and peacekeeping operations instead of the more mainstream counter to an external threat. Whilst the waters off the coast of Brunei might not be quite as much of a 'choke-point' as the Malacca and Singapore Straits; terrorism and organised crime must be detailed as credible security threats that could create the political will to lobby the UK government for military support. As much as any qualitative, research-based study allows for the determination of probability, this work must assess Brunei and the FPDA as sharing a similar 'likelihood'; albeit, for very different reasons. Both are assessed as less likely than Korea but more likely than Hong Kong.

In summary, this study has demonstrated multiple British interests in the Asia-Pacific that can act as ’levers’ to initiate military involvement. Whilst all of these ‘levers’ can be analysed in isolation; this work has shown this eventuality to be unlikely. British interests in the region are a ‘rich tapestry’ of historic ties, military ‘affiliations’ and intergovernmental organisations. The UK has demonstrated an appetite for the growth of a number of these relationships which will both influence the way the UK itself acts going forward whilst creating opportunities for others to influence the UK’s regional undertakings. Soft power has been shown to be at the fore of many decisions and consequently HADR missions will be of enduring importance (in a region highly susceptible to natural disasters). The Asia-Pacific did not become ‘more important’ to the UK when it entered into the AUKUS pact in September 2021. The region already possessed a significant ability to embroil UK forces and the AUKUS announcement is better described as a logical step that serves to ratify the region’s significance to the UK.

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