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**What the coming slaughter is for**

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## 0.1 as explained by the UK National Security Strategy 2025

“One look at the world today shows the security challenges we face demand nothing less than national unity. Therefore, it is no longer enough merely to manage risks or react to new circumstances. We must also now mobilise every element of society towards a collective national effort.” — The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP, *PM Foreword to the National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British people in a dangerous world* (NSS), p.5

With these words the Prime Minister expresses His Majesty’s Government’s ambition for a total mobilisation<sup>1</sup> of society<sup>2</sup> towards war readiness. When a politician demands national unity of those he governs, this is the announcement that the various private interests these people have – as “working people” (NSS, p.5), as employers, as landlords, as benefit recipients, as tax payers, etc. – will have to take a backseat to the project of the nation as defined by the Government. In a word, Sir Keir Starmer is announcing hardship to and for the public: coming sacrifices for the war effort.<sup>3</sup> The *National Security Strategy 2025* (NSS), in which he writes these lines as a foreword, explains why.

The document opens with:

“National security is the first responsibility of government and the foundation for our prosperity and way of life, along with secure borders and a stable economy. It means protecting the British people, promoting British interests and making the country stronger, more sovereign and more competitive in the long-term.” — *Introduction*, NSS, p.8

The NSS starts with a mission statement:<sup>4</sup> the first duty of the State is itself; for national security is the “security and defence of a sovereign state, including its citizens, economy, and institutions”, as [the dictionary reminds us](#).

The State’s commitment to itself is not quite as self-referential as that – the same sentence gives a reason for it – but it is worth appreciating what is identified as the highest duty of the State and what is not. It is neither the prevention of crime nor the protection of property. It is neither democracy, the rule of law nor British values. It is not the prosperity, freedom or security of the inhabitants or even citizens of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> “Just like in the era of the First and Second World Wars, in the next decade those nations that are able to harness productive power – and mobilise all their assets towards strategic objectives – will end up in a position of comparative advantage.” (NSS, p.17)

<sup>2</sup> “The UK defence industrial base will be redefined to include academia, dual-use civilian-military companies, financial services, technologists and trade unions.” (NSS, p.42)

<sup>3</sup> “The months and years ahead will see difficult compromises and trade-offs on resource allocation and prioritisation, short-term and long-term goals and, potentially, values and interests.” (NSS, p.9)

<sup>4</sup> Similarly: “National Security is the first responsibility of any government, that never changes.” (Sir Keir Starmer, NSS, p.4) “My first duty as Prime Minister is to keep the British people safe.” (Sir Keir Starmer, *Strategic Defence Review*, 2025) “This government is all about security.” (The Rt Hon Lord Cameron, *Prime Minister’s speech on life chances*, 11 January 2016)

These goals are central to the British state and it is committed to pursuing them. However, in the NSS, it makes clear what the order of priorities is: the British economy – “prosperity” – and indeed the basic functioning of society with its processes and customs, the way people live – normalcy or “way of life” – relies on the sovereignty of the State; they cannot exist without it.<sup>5</sup>

The logic of the NSS is that because the might of the British State is the absolute condition for British society, every purpose in this society is subordinated to the protection of this might.<sup>6</sup> This reversal – the means (the State) subsumes the end (society) – is not some inconsequential logical point, but is at the core of the Strategy and the logic of states at war. This document’s central purpose is to coordinate a whole-of-society preparation for mass slaughter,<sup>7</sup> involving the full arsenal available to the British State, including but not limited to weapons of mass destruction. The NSS embraces “calculated risk” (NSS, p.10), it insists that Russia’s “nuclear rhetoric” (i.e. threats of using nuclear weapons against the UK and its allies) shall not “constrain our decision making” (NSS, p.16) and it proudly declares “the biggest sustained investment in our defence since the Cold War” (NSS, p.5). It is confronting Russia and other adversaries while calculating with the risk of nuclear war – if it were to occur, certainly the end of the British “way of life”.

In this Strategy and its war plans, the British State makes clear that everything and everyone – “every element of society” – is worth sacrificing for the British State. The logic of war expressed clearly in these war plans is: first the State and then your “way of life” and “prosperity”.

To most commentators this is common sense, rather than a cue to question what kind of society so desperately requires an authority to rule over it that the idea that a large number of its members must suffer and die to protect that authority is taken for granted.

An objection to these points could be that the second sentence continues with “protecting the British people”. The British people, however, does not mean ‘the people living in Britain’ or ‘British citizens’. The people is an abstraction from the various actual people with their varied and conflicting preferences, convictions and interests living in the UK.<sup>8</sup> Used this way, the ‘British people’ is a thing in itself, separate from and asserted against actual people in Britain. As the NSS prepares the protection of the

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<sup>5</sup> The NSS identifies two other foundations: a stable economy and secure borders. However, the remainder of the document treats secure borders as an area of national security: “In support of this new approach [to national security], we will: Expand our legal and law enforcement toolkit, to ensure the UK becomes a harder target for hostile state and non-state actors including criminal gangs engaged in illegal migration.” (NSS, p.11) The UK Government, like the current US Administration, tackles irregular immigration in the same policy as it does nuclear weapons: as a foreign threat undermining sovereignty. This cannot be brushed aside as a nod to the racist electorate, but must be understood as the policy commitment to treat people wanting to settle in the UK as a foreign threat, with the potential to escalate to a military response.

<sup>6</sup> “Without security and resilience at home, we cannot deliver economic growth or any of the other government missions to improve the lives of the British people.” (NSS, p.21)

<sup>7</sup> “The Army is in transition from the force required for the interventions of the post-Cold War era to a force ready to play its part in NATO’s ‘deterrence by denial’, requiring greater lethality, mass, and endurance.” (*Strategic Defence Review 2025* (SDR), p.108)

<sup>8</sup> See also *Since you mentioned “us”*.

British people, it does so by risking the actual people who happen to be British. This is the logic of states at war: for the fatherland, its land and people, entire regions and generations are sacrificed.<sup>9</sup>

The second sentence then formulates an ambitious project. National security is not merely the protection of the homeland, but an expansive programme of “promoting British interests” in the world. While the NSS is also preparing for “the possibility of the UK homeland coming under direct threat, potentially in a wartime scenario” (NSS, p.16) its ambitions are much grander, namely the UK being a global power that deserves respect: “a seat at the table of global decision making” (NSS, p.10). The vital interest that Britain is protecting *in* the world is its power to dictate terms *to* the world.<sup>10</sup>

The NSS spells out what this means, namely being “stronger, more sovereign and more competitive”. With “more sovereign” the NSS addresses the various dependencies the British State finds itself in, due to its integration into the world market and the (military) alliances it is part of. To be able to dictate terms to the world, to bend other powers to your will, these dependencies need to be turned around from liabilities into tools to extract concessions: “This means reducing our dependence on others, including the ability of adversaries to coerce or manipulate us. But it also allows us to increase our value to allies and to strengthen our hand when we transact business with those who have sovereign assets that we seek access to.” (NSS, p.42)

The NSS speaks of a programme of “fiercer competition for resources, military modernisation, technological competition, economic coercion, increased hybrid threats” (NSS, p.14) when it talks about its adversaries and speaks of the ambition to “increase our competitiveness and sovereign strengths – in crucial areas like science and frontier technology” (NSS, p.10) and “an emphasis on greater lethality, warfighting readiness, deeper stockpiles of munitions and innovation in, and adoption of, new technologies” (NSS, p.12) when it talks about itself. In other words, the British State sees itself confronted by creatures that look just like itself – states hellbent on imposing their will on other states and willing to calculate with the risk of mass death for it – and intends to win by escalation, just like every other power in the world.

The bulk of the NSS then spells out a whole-of-society war programme:

- Pillar (i): to first secure the homeland in order to have the freedom to manoeuvre when inevitably provoking adversaries abroad,<sup>11</sup>
- Pillar (ii): to use this freedom to project strength across the globe – Africa, the Pacific, the Middle East, the Poles and<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See also *Stop conflating Ukraine and its inhabitants*.

<sup>10</sup> “The second pillar of NSS 2025 is to achieve strength abroad by using (and combining) all the levers of state and national power including defence, diplomacy, trade, intelligence, law enforcement, science, technology, education and our cultural reach.” (NSS, p.17)

<sup>11</sup> See also “Meet civil defence and resilience planning obligations under Article III of the NATO founding treaty to strengthen deterrence and assure the UK’s ability to project power in support of NATO in the Euro-Atlantic and beyond.” (SDR, p.38)

<sup>12</sup> “The hard realities of our geography, security and trade necessitate a prioritisation of the Euro-Atlantic area as part of

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- Pillar (iii): to build a national base that allows the UK to economically and militarily outcompete its rivals.<sup>13</sup>

The Prime Minister<sup>14</sup> and the National Security Strategy 2025 are adamant that all this preparation for death and destruction is to the service of “working people” who will be asked to “serve”:

“[National Interests] will be defined as the long-term security and social and economic wellbeing of the British people.” — *Introduction, NSS, p.9*

The British State measures the social and economic wellbeing of its people in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The GDP – with some statistical finesse – adds up all newly produced wealth in a society.<sup>15</sup> What is cute about this measure is that it adds up all wealth in society when in this society wealth is not commonly owned but private.<sup>16</sup> There is no such thing as “our wealth”, some people have a lot of it, others make ends meet by working for those who own enough to employ them to augment their own wealth. That is why the Government addresses its citizens as “working people”: what matters is that the vast majority relentlessly work to produce the “economic growth” the Government then adds up in its statistics as our “prosperity”. The poverty that this economic growth produces is so stark, that the British State spends more than half of its budget on the ‘welfare state’, i.e. so that the working and unemployed poor can still get by somewhat.<sup>17</sup>

The only thing the National Security Strategy 2025 has to offer for those poor souls is “economic security” (NSS, p.6), the persistence of their status as servants to other people’s wealth. In peace time, they are asked to work for it, in wartime they are asked to die for the State protecting it.

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our ‘NATO first’ approach. But evidence of countries like Russia, China, Iran and North Korea cooperating across theatres – sometimes opportunistically and sometimes by deepening strategic ties – demonstrates the interconnectedness of the Euro-Atlantic with different theatres like the Middle East and Indo-Pacific, where we already have strong partnerships. As the SDR notes, after the Euro-Atlantic, these are the two additional priority regions for UK defence. Furthermore, the dispersed and diffuse nature of international power in today’s world means that it is a matter of hard national interest that we look beyond our immediate neighbourhood.” (NSS, p.35)

<sup>13</sup> Every aspect of British society is examined in this light: “The UK’s arts, culture, education and science and technology sectors provide a significant source of soft power. These assets help us foster a positive reputation internationally, build trust, and create partnerships which support international stability. As other countries develop their soft power activity, we cannot be complacent about our traditional strengths. Our new Soft Power Council will advise government on how to focus our soft power assets more strategically and in support of our security and foreign policy objectives.” (NSS, p.45)

<sup>14</sup> “[F]oreign policy should answer directly to the concerns of working people” (NSS, p.5)

<sup>15</sup> See also *The Economists: Notes on CORE’s The Economy, Unit 1*.

<sup>16</sup> This is not lost on the NSS: “Innovation will be fuelled by flows of venture capital, private equity and institutional investments (over which democratic states have less control than authoritarian regimes)” (NSS, p.15).

<sup>17</sup> See also *The Dubious Benefits of a Workers’ State: Universal Credit*.