



The trilateral initiative: A minilateral to catalyse Russia's defeat?

By James Rogers and William Freer

Executive summary

- Ukraine is at a critical moment. Victory is possible but there is no clear strategy to secure a Russian defeat.
- Although the United Kingdom (UK) has been on the front-foot, other allies, particularly Germany and the United States (US), have feared that the Kremlin may escalate by using nuclear weapons or attacking a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ally. They have also favoured NATO cohesion more than a Ukrainian victory.
- Russia will not relent. A Russian victory is still possible. It can take many forms, from the seizure of Kyiv to the 'freezing' of the conflict while retaining lands captured since February 2022.
- There should be no uncertainty: a Russian victory would open Pandora's box in Europe (and globally), emboldening the Kremlin, endangering NATO



unity as countries such as Poland do more to secure themselves, and giving ammunition to the perspective that ‘might makes right’.

- The economic consequences would also be severe, especially for the UK. The missions to deliver economic growth and Net Zero – ‘securomics’ – would be jeopardised, not least because Britain would be forced to invest a significantly higher proportion of its national income into defence to meet the reinvigorated and growing threat from Russia.
- With administrations in Germany, France and the US looking increasingly insular and irresolute, the new government in Britain, backed by a large majority, has the opportunity to maximise its authority in Europe by pushing for an agreed, clear path to victory.
- On taking office, the new British government should embrace a phase of disruptive, creative, and dynamic British leadership involving the use of unilateralism.
- This ‘neo-Bevinite’ approach would focus on rekindling the so-called ‘trilateral initiative’ formed between Britain, Poland and Ukraine in early February 2022 as the centrepiece – the ‘Three Eyes’ – for forging a broader coalition to underwrite NATO and secure Ukraine’s victory. This should involve:
 - Identifying with Ukraine the path to victory while taking measures to resist the Kremlin’s reflexive control by pushing back against escalation fears in other NATO allies;
 - The mobilisation of Britain’s innovative defence and dual-use sectors in a co-ordinated project with Ukraine and Poland to deliver victory;
 - The provision of Ukraine with an array of longer-range, uncrewed systems to enable mass, targeted campaigns to strike Russian military, communications and logistical targets along the frontier zones. The objective should be to dislocate the Russian offensive against Ukraine from the rear, where it is weakest and most vulnerable;
 - Pushing for additional deliveries of armoured vehicles and artillery to Ukraine from other allies;
 - Supplemental measures to divert Russian attention in the Baltic and harden potential targets – especially Moldova – in the Black Sea region;
 - A campaign of economic and political warfare against Russia to grind down the Russian war machine and reduce the Kremlin’s influence in



so-called ‘middle ground’ countries, not least in Africa, South America, and elsewhere.

- If Britain can succeed, not only would it reconnect London to European allies and partners, but it would also demonstrate, decisively, the new government’s emerging doctrine of ‘progressive realism’.

1.0 Introduction

- **The Euro-Atlantic order is at the precipice. Unless Ukraine receives significant financial and military assistance throughout 2024 and into 2025, the country may suffer defeat.** And ‘defeat’ does not need to come with Russian armour trundling through Kyiv. It could also come in the form of a stalemate or ‘frozen conflict’, whereby Russia retains control of Crimea and much of the lands seized since 24th February 2022, and gains allies in Europe for international recognition of its annexations, opening the door to Russia’s rearmament by the People’s Republic of China (PRC).
- **Notwithstanding its military setbacks, particularly during the spring of 2022, if Russia is allowed, ultimately, to prevail, the Kremlin may conclude that the United Kingdom (UK) and its allies and partners lack the will to prevent the further destabilisation of the Euro-Atlantic order.**
- **Time, however, is not on the Kremlin’s side:** if Ukraine can remain in the fight, the Russian Armed Forces will start running out of major weapons systems in the second half of 2025 and the Kremlin will likely find the war financially unsustainable in 2026, if it continues to suffer attrition and expend resources at the current rate.¹
- **But this does not mean that Ukraine will prevail, either.** Ukraine depends on its partners for military and financial aid. Just under 60% of that allocated assistance has been provided by the UK and its European allies, while the United States (US) has provided approximately 40%.² However, the Americans have led in providing military equipment and some of the most technologically-potent weapons. The problem is that these are not being delivered in sufficient quantities or they come with caveats which prevent Ukraine from taking war to the enemy.

¹ Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, ‘Russian Military Objectives and Capacity in Ukraine Through 2024’, Royal United Services Institute, 13/02/2024, <https://www.rusi.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

² In ‘Ukraine Support Tracker’, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 06/06/2024, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



- **The inconsistency of American support is currently the primary strategic threat facing Ukraine;** it is not clear whether a future administration – irrespective of whether it is led by Joe Biden or Donald Trump – will be able to deliver further assistance, particularly not at the scale Ukraine needs to prevail. **In addition, notwithstanding Olaf Sholtz’s ‘Zeitenwende’, German support for Ukraine has been very cautious, even though Berlin has provided the second-largest quantity of aid, both military and financial.**
- **The current US aid package is projected to provide adequate levels of military assistance until April 2025 to keep Ukraine in the fight, but there is great uncertainty as to whether future administrations will be able to get Congress to provide additional resources.**
- **Moreover, the longer the war drags on, the more likely it will be that authoritarian and hostile states such as the PRC, Iran and North Korea will intervene to provide the Russians with assistance, tipping the balance in the Kremlin’s favour.** It is in the PRC’s interest to keep the Americans, British and French pinned-down in the Euro-Atlantic to prevent them from focusing more on the Indo-Pacific.
- **Due to these circumstances, a new approach is needed. Not only does a new coalition need to take shape to provide Ukraine with the means to win, but Kyiv needs a new vision to secure victory.**
- **Based on current opinion polls, the Labour Party looks set to win the General Election on 4th July 2024.** Indeed, it is projected to hold a commanding lead in the House of Commons, putting it in a position to organise the levers of British state power to affect strategic change in Europe in Ukraine’s favour.
- **Just as the government of Clement Attlee acted decisively to contain the Soviet Union after 1945, the new Labour government should use its position of domestic strength and international influence to ensure Russia’s defeat.³ The achievement of this aim would demonstrate proof of concept of the incoming government’s stated approach of ‘progressive realism’.⁴**
- **To shift the balance in Ukraine’s favour, the UK needs to be bold, creative and disruptive in equal measure – as it was in the second half of the 1940s under Ernest Bevin’s guidance.** For many years, the UK has prioritised relations with Western European nations, particularly France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. While these countries will remain important, the next British government ought to focus on deepening relations with Poland, the Nordic and

³ For an overview of Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin’s role in creating the Euro-Atlantic order, see: John Baylis, *Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of Nato, 1942-1949* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

⁴ See: David Lammy, ‘The Case for Progressive Realism: Why Britain Must Chart a New Global Course’, *Foreign Affairs*, 05/2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



Baltic states, Romania, Moldova, and of course, Ukraine. Indeed, when juxtaposed against the political instability and irresolution of the French and German governments, Poland looks set to become Britain's most stable and reliable ally.

- **This Point Paper explains how Britain can work with Poland and Ukraine through a minilateral framework established in February 2022 – the trilateral initiative – to help secure Russia's defeat.**⁵ Consequently, it begins by outlining the implications of a Russian victory against Ukraine for the new government's political objectives, before identifying how a Ukrainian victory can be secured. It then explains how Britain should embrace minilateralism and the trilateral with Ukraine and Poland to lead in the Euro-Atlantic order and boost prosperity at home and abroad.

1.1 Implications of a Ukrainian defeat

- **Despite the challenges facing Russia, a Ukrainian victory is far from certain.** Although the Kremlin failed to secure its initial geopolitical objectives – seizing Kyiv and decapitating the Ukrainian government – it has dug in for the long haul. Putin has staked his own credibility on the invasion. Given his willingness to initiate the largest and bloodiest interstate war in Europe since the Second World War, the objectives he established in his essay 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians' in July 2021, and his proposed 'draft treaties' from December 2021, should be taken at face value.⁶ He seeks to turn nations surrounding Russia, particularly Ukraine, into vassal states so they do not become inspirations for the Russian people. And he seeks to reorder the Euro-Atlantic system – which the UK, and particularly the Labour government of 1945-1951, did so much to create – to secure and expand the power of his kleptocracy.
- **While Ukraine can only win by ousting Russian forces from occupied territories, a Russian victory could come in several forms, from the fall of the Ukrainian government to the most likely: a stalemate, or 'frozen conflict', where Russia would be left in control of the territories it seized in 2014 and since 2022, respectively.** Russia's playbook of 'non-linear warfare' would then come into play; recall that since Russian fighters – so-called 'little green men' – first entered Ukraine in 2014, the Kremlin has fomented conflict in the Donbas, using the situation to strengthen its hand in the Black Sea region. Either way, whether

⁵ For an overview of the history of this initiative, please see: Przemysław Biskup, James Rogers and Hanna Shelest, 'The trilateral initiative: Rekindling relations between Britain, Poland and Ukraine', Council on Geostrategy, 01/02/2023, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁶ See: Vladimir Putin, 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians', President of Russia, 12/07/2021, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/> (checked: 30/06/2024) and 'Press release on Russian draft documents on legal security guarantees from the United States and NATO', Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Russia), 17/12/2021, <https://mid.ru/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



an outright victory or a 'frozen conflict', Russia would be left in a stronger position – with geopolitical, military, diplomatic, and economic consequences.

- **Geopolitically, any form of Russian victory would weaken NATO's credibility, especially after warnings that Ukraine faced an unwinnable war. It would leave Russia free to reassert control over the Black Sea. It would embolden those who believe 'might is right'. Equally, a victorious Russia may lead NATO allies to believe that the alliance is no longer sufficient as a deterrent. There is even the risk that Poland and/or a rump Ukraine (or both, together) may start to take their security into their own hands and/or seek nuclear weapons to guarantee their own survival. Not only would this undermine the non-proliferation regime, but it would also set off an intra-European security dilemma and reduce the leverage the UK has over its allies as a nuclear custodian of the alliance.**
- **Militarily, in keeping with the geopolitical influence resulting from the domination of Ukraine, Russia would be well positioned to re-establish dominance over the Black Sea, jeopardising NATO's southeastern flank. Moldova, already weakened by the Kremlin's frozen conflict in Transnistria, would be a prime target for further destabilisation or annexation, depending on the extent of the Russian victory in Ukraine. Moreover, Russia may seek revenge against those, such as Britain, which were the most forward-leaning in supporting Ukraine; this may result in further assassination attempts or other forms of grey zone attack.** Regardless of whether its predecessor was responsible for past policy toward Ukraine, the next British government would shoulder the blame for any domestic consequences.
- **Diplomatically, Russia would become even more brazen, using its victory to practise 'discursive statecraft' in 'middle ground' countries, where it already has a foothold, to reposition NATO and the UK as declining forces. Also, the Kremlin would attempt to propel fissures into the Euro-Atlantic order by courting allies in southern and western Europe which took a more conciliatory stance towards Russia before Russian forces lunged into Ukraine.**
- **Economically, a Russian victory would be disastrous for the UK. It would have direct economic repercussions for a new Labour government's capacity to pursue 'securonomics' and economic growth. A triumphant Russia would:**
 - **Dominate Ukraine's economy and foreclose opportunities resulting from the 2020 Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement between London and Kyiv and the broader 100 year partnership envisaged by both countries.⁷ It should not be forgotten that Ukraine is Europe's**

⁷ See: 'UK-Ukraine political, free trade and strategic partnership agreement', Department for International Trade, 09/11/2020, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024) and 'Ukraine and UK to Sign 100-Year Partnership Agreement', Kyiv Post, 03/05/2024, <https://www.kyivpost.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



second largest country by land area (after Russia), rich with agricultural resources and raw materials, containing the continent's 9th largest population.⁸ A Ukrainian victory would generate substantial commercial opportunities for British industry and companies, whereas a Russian victory would foreclose them;

- **Gain pervasive influence over world grain prices**, which would enable the Kremlin to use inflation as a political tool, suppressing growth in the UK, and strengthening Russia's hand in relation to 'middle ground' countries where there is a battle between London and Moscow to shape and influence perceptions and international narratives;
- **Recapture gas and oil markets in Europe, particularly if it succeeds in convincing European governments that it either will not take any additional Ukrainian territory or that it has changed its ways.** This may have implications for transatlantic relations, particularly if a future American president feels the US is 'subsidising' European defence while European countries are filling Russia's coffers with revenues for energy;
- **Dominate the control of critical minerals in Ukraine**, which may hamper British access to technologies vital for the new government's Net Zero mission; these reserves are largely unexploited and the nightmare would be Russian ownership merged with Chinese industrial exploitation;
- **Oblige the UK to spend significantly more on defence and in the long-term to compensate for a more volatile security environment in Europe.** During the Cold War (1949-1989), Britain spent on average 6.3% per year on defence, far more than the 2.23% it is currently spending or the 2.5% it plans to spend by the early 2030s.⁹

2.0 Establishing a path to victory

- **Despite its military setbacks in 2022, Russia is still a significantly more powerful country than Ukraine and the Kremlin has demonstrated dogged persistence in pursuing its war objectives.** Russia's total population – 143,957,079 compared to

⁸ In 2024, the top ten European countries ranked by population are: Russia, Turkey, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Ukraine, and Romania. See: 'Total population by sex – Russia, Turkey, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Ukraine, and Romania.', United Nations Population Division, 2024, <https://population.un.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁹ James Rogers, 'How much should Britain be investing in defence?', *Britain's World*, 15/03/2024, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



Ukraine's 37,937,821 – is 3.8 times larger.¹⁰ In terms of strategic resources, Ukraine's defence budget of US\$64.8 billion for 2023 pales in comparison to Russia's US\$109.5 billion; worse, whereas Russia invested only 5.9% of its GDP on defence in 2023, Ukraine is being forced to invest over 36.7% – and it is heavily reliant on foreign assistance to maintain such a high level of expenditure.¹¹ In short, Russia possesses far more Net Power – 2.96E+16 versus 1.07E+15 for Ukraine – making it 27.7 times stronger.¹²

- **These factors ensure that it would be difficult for Ukraine to develop the overmatch in terrestrial warfare capabilities needed to punch through Russian fortified lines.** True, Russia has been losing approximately 19.5 pieces of equipment per day, while Ukrainian losses amount to roughly 7.1 pieces of equipment per day.¹³ And since February 2022, the Russian Armed Forces have lost over 9,500 armoured fighting vehicles – including in excess of 3,000 tanks. But the Kremlin's deep pockets, mobilisation efforts, and growing support from other authoritarian states (such as the PRC, Iran and North Korea) means that it may be able to generate sufficient forces to maintain offensive operations for at least another two years.¹⁴
- **Ukraine has powerful friends, though.** The combined Net Power of the Group of Seven (G7) industrialised countries is 3.38E+18 – making them over 114 times stronger than Russia.¹⁵ There is no reason for why they – and their allies and partners, including other NATO allies – cannot bring Russia to heel and in a way which avoids escalation.
- **Besides the asymmetry in power between Russia and Ukraine, Kyiv nor its partners have a strategy to secure victory.** This may seem primarily to be a

¹⁰ 'Total population by sex – Russia and Ukraine', United Nations Population Division, 2024, <https://population.un.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹¹ 'Military Spending Database', Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2024, <https://milex.sipri.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹² Net Power is Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (as a proxy for total resources) multiplied by GDP per capita (as a proxy for technological prowess). For a detailed explanation as to why this system is superior to other measures, particularly crude GDP, see: Michael Beckley, 'The power of nations: Measuring what matters', *International Security*, 2018, <https://direct.mit.edu/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹³ Jakub Janovsky, Naalsio26, Aloha, Dan, Kemal, and Alexander Black, 'Attack On Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine', *Oryx*, <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹⁴ See: Jakub Janovsky, Naalsio26, Aloha, Dan, Kemal, and Alexander Black, 'Attack On Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine', *Oryx*, <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024) and Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Sofiya Azad, 'Equipment losses in Russia's war on Ukraine mount', *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 12/02/2024, <https://www.iiss.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹⁵ Net Power is Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (as a proxy for total resources) multiplied by GDP per capita (as a proxy for technological prowess). For a detailed explanation as to why this system is superior to other measures, particularly crude GDP, see: Michael Beckley, 'The power of nations: Measuring what matters', *International Security*, 2018, <https://direct.mit.edu/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



Ukrainian problem, but without the signal of support from capitals such as London, Warsaw, Paris and Washington, Kyiv can do little but continue to act as a punchbag, absorbing Russia's blows one by one in the hope that the Kremlin will eventually exhaust itself and give up.

- **This must change – fast.** The most important objective for the new British government is to help Ukraine identify a path to victory and devise a suitable strategy to secure its military objectives.
- **This is where another problem kicks in: many NATO allies, including the US and Germany, appear to fear Russian escalation more than a Ukrainian defeat.** It is unclear the extent to which these governments have arrived at such conclusions rationally or whether they have fallen for Russian 'reflexive control'.¹⁶ What is clear is that for years prior to February 2022, Russia attempted to massage perceptions in Euro-Atlantic countries.¹⁷ It threatened to use nuclear weapons, paradoxically, to de-escalate crises, to promote the perception of unpredictability. It used force in decisive ways, albeit against far weaker actors, such as Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014), Bashar al-Asad's opponents in Syria (2015-), to re-establish the perception of its position as a first rank military power after years of post-Soviet decline. And it attempted to assassinate political opponents (and often succeeded), even in major powers, such as the UK, to promote the perception that it is determined to do whatever it takes to prevail.
- **Since Russia's renewed lunge into Ukraine, the Kremlin has continued to practise forms of reflexive control and narrative projection.** For example, Russian officials threaten to use nuclear weapons to subdue Ukraine, while talk shows on Russian state television fantasise about the invasion of NATO countries or the annihilation of British cities. Putin has also continued to link the very survival of Russia with victory in Ukraine; speaking in Vietnam on 20th June 2024, he even claimed that Russia's failure in Ukraine would lead to 'the end of the thousand-year history of the Russian state'.¹⁸ By promoting the perception that Russia's interests in Ukraine are existential, the Kremlin seeks to deter Euro-Atlantic democracies from doing more to assist Kyiv.
- **Nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that the Kremlin would pound Ukraine with nuclear warheads or strike NATO countries.** Putin knows that an attack on NATO

¹⁶ Reflexive control is a uniquely Soviet tactic of conveying to 'an opponent specifically prepared information to incline him/her to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action.' See: Mark Mateski, 'Russia, Reflexive Control, and the Subtle Art of Red Teaming', *Red Team Journal*, 13/10/2016, <http://redteamjournal.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹⁷ See: James Rogers and Andriy Tyushka, "'Hacking" into the West: Russia's "anti-hegemonic" drive and the strategic narrative offensive', *Defence Strategic Communications*, 01/03/2017, <https://stratcomcoe.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

¹⁸ Cited in: Martin Fornusek, 'Strategic battlefield defeat would be end of Russia's statehood, Putin claims', *The Kyiv Independent*, 20/06/2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



would risk colossal escalation. Russia would no longer be facing an adversary less powerful than itself, but the combined military strength of much of the developed world, backed by British and American nuclear might. Given Russia's inability to capture Kyiv, it is hard to believe the Kremlin would order Russian troops to march on heavily defended capitals such as Warsaw or Helsinki. Furthermore, despite heavy setbacks in Ukraine and Britain and Poland pushing through Putin's self-proclaimed red lines, Russia has not deployed its most potent weapons. At any rate, the effectiveness of such weapons remains questionable. Ukraine has dispersed its forces, mitigating the impact of a 'tactical' nuclear strike, and the Ukrainian people, surprisingly, have not fallen for the Kremlin's nuclear threats.¹⁹ It is also worth noting that the Soviet Union did not resort to nuclear attacks to induce shock during the Afghan and first Chechen campaigns, despite facing an increasingly impossible military situation.

- **The next British government should cultivate the trilateral – as a kind of ‘Three Eyes’ – to advance an outright Ukrainian victory and challenge and deactivate Russian narratives, including those attempting to achieve reflexive control.** Just as Bevin formed the Western Union with France and the Low Countries to draw Canada, the US and other European countries into a broader Atlantic alliance, the next British government could use the trilateral with Poland and Ukraine to form a more forward-leaning coalition within NATO. The ‘Three Eyes’ would sit at the nucleus of this powerful new ‘**advocacy coalition**’, but they could also involve the countries of the JEF, as well as Romania and France.
- **In any case, Ukraine has in Britain and Poland two powerful partners.** With 1.99E+17 of combined Net Power, Britain, Poland and Ukraine hold an economic and technological powerbase over 6.7 times more capable than Russia's.²⁰ Significantly, this does not include the resources other JEF countries can bring to bear, to say nothing of the large continental European NATO states and Canada. Even with reduced American support, a British-led and Polish-supported European coalition has the potential to help Ukraine defeat Russia. **One idea would be for London and Warsaw to call on all European members of the prospective coalition to pledge at least 0.5% of their GDP to arming Ukraine from 2025 until Russia is defeated (the Baltic states have already exceeded 1%).** If Britain and Poland alone did this, it would generate approximately US\$22 billion per year for

¹⁹ ‘Gallup International Association “End of Year” Global Polling Tradition: Fears of War are Serious and Economic Prospects are Gloomy’, Gallup International, 28/12/2023, <https://www.gallup-international.bg/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

²⁰ Net Power is Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (as a proxy for total resources) multiplied by GDP per capita (as a proxy for technological prowess). For a detailed explanation as to why this system is superior to other measures, particularly crude GDP, see: Michael Beckley, ‘The power of nations: Measuring what matters’, *International Security*, 2018, <https://direct.mit.edu/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



Ukraine's war effort – just under half of what the US provided in the two year period from February 2022.

- **As the advocacy coalition takes shape, the trilateral partners should push for:**
 1. **A Ukrainian deep strike campaign** to allow Ukraine to degrade military targets within Russia with productive and logistical utility, as well as command and control nodes, particularly those in Crimea and those close to the Russian-Ukrainian border. *This campaign would avoid the targeting of Russian nuclear forces or any early warning systems used to scan for incoming long-range ballistic missile attacks;*
 2. **A diversionary approach** to distract Russia in the Baltic and harden countries such as Moldova to Russian destabilisation or escalatory attack;
 3. **Diplomatic and economic warfare** to cut support for Russia globally and degrade Russian power.

2.1 Boost Ukrainian deep strikes along the Russian frontier

- **Ukraine cannot win the war by fighting in Ukraine on Russia's terms. A different approach is needed.** In particular, the UK and Poland ought to work with Ukraine to generate **strategic advantage** by developing catalysts to **amplify** and **extend** the Ukrainian Armed Forces' striking capability, while simultaneously **accelerating** the speed at which longer range offensive weapons become available to Ukraine.²¹ Ukraine's best pathway to victory lies in leveraging superior technologies *at scale* to overwhelm the Russian air and missile defences covering their rear areas. The ability to provide Ukraine with sufficient long-range munitions to maintain a *prolonged*, as opposed to *sporadic*, strike campaign is vital to wearing down Russia's air defences and systematically destroying key military infrastructure.
- **The Ukrainian Armed Forces need to be able to go on the offensive: they need the capability to strike at great scale into Russia's frontier zone adjacent to Ukraine to degrade the Russian war machine – its military industrial base, communication and logistics lines, and command nodes.** By attacking exclusively *operational military targets*, and *not politico-strategic ones* (particularly Russian nuclear forces and warning systems, etc.), which the Kremlin finds highly sensitive, Ukraine would retain a high degree of escalatory control. It would also strike where Russia's posture is at its weakest:

²¹ For more on strategic advantage, see: Gabriel Elefteriu, William Freer and James Rogers, 'What is strategic advantage?', Council on Geostrategy, 23/11/2023, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



- **By striking Russia's military industrial base within the frontier zone, Ukraine would reduce the speed at which military equipment can be made available to the Russian Armed Forces;**
- **By hitting communication lines – including bridges, roads, railway depots and stations, ports and air facilities – into the frontier zone the Ukrainian Armed Forces would smash the systems Russia uses to sustain its forces in Ukraine.** Key choke points should be singled out for particular focus, such as those providing access to Crimea (especially the routes across the Kerch Strait) and western Ukraine:
 - **The Kerch Bridge – the artery and symbol of Russian power in Crimea – should be completely destroyed.** Not only would this maroon Crimea and its 2.4 million inhabitants, complicating Russian logistics, but it would also stymie Russia's military operations in southern Ukraine and, potentially, block access to the Sea of Azov. By assisting (indirectly) Ukraine in wrecking the bridge, the UK would signal, decisively, its resolve to the Kremlin;
- **By attacking armaments factories and communications, a more significant Ukrainian strategic counter-offensive would encourage the Kremlin to focus investment on air defence – money which would otherwise be dedicated to capabilities to attack Ukraine.**²² Longer range weaponry would also open up an extended list of potential targets, forcing the Russians to spread their air defences even thinner;
- **Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by targeting the command and control nodes of the Russian Armed Forces at scale, Ukraine has the potential to collapse Russia's offensive from behind.** This is because the Russian way of war tends towards a more centralised form of command and control. Russia's large conscript force is vulnerable because it lacks agility and responsiveness; by taking out the commanders and their bunkers and posts, order would break down along the Russian front lines. This would allow Ukraine to regain the initiative and choose the optimal times and places to attrite Russia's poorly supplied and led forces in its own territory.
- **Given the limits of British and Polish deep strike systems, much of the initial buildup will need to come from other allies and partners, particularly the US and Germany (who sit on thousands of Army Tactical Missile System (ATACM), Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff, and Taurus missiles in addition to 227 millimetre guided and unguided munitions for rocket artillery such as the High Mobility Artillery**

²² One is already underway, but Ukrainian efforts have been hobbled by limited stocks of long-range weapons and strict limits on what they can use them against. Ukraine must instead rely on small numbers of domestically produced long-range weaponry.



Rocket System (HIMARS)). This will require an intense and coordinated British-Polish-Ukrainian diplomatic and public relations campaign to counter the fear of escalation and encourage, especially Germany, to provide Ukraine with what it needs to hit the Russian frontier zones.

- **However, the trilateral is well placed to support a Ukrainian deep strike campaign in the medium- to longer-term against Russia.** Both Britain and Poland have defence companies capable of producing long-range strike weapons, for example MDBA UK and the Polish company Mesko, enabling autonomous decision making as to what capabilities Ukraine should be provided with. Along with their allies and partners, they also have sufficient economic resources.
- **The trilateral should establish a working group with high-level political backing to determine how the three countries can lead the European coalition to manufacture a very large number of low cost Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) with extended-range, large payloads, and adequate protection against Electronic Warfare to augment the lack of more capable long-range cruise missiles.** Several of the UK's Banshee target UAVs have already been augmented to carry a payload to function as one-way attack drones. Others are in development (QinetiQ is reported to have a 3D-printed demonstrator as part of Task Force KINDRED).
- Working together, the UK, Poland, and Ukraine should aim to produce large quantities of these UAVs, making use of lower production costs in Poland and Ukraine compared to the UK, to provide the bulk of the deep strike campaign's weaponry. Here, Task Force HIRST may serve as a model to draw in Polish participation.

2.2.1 Boost Ukraine's terrestrial mechanised forces

- **Although the dislocation of Russia's warfighting capabilities will depend on boosting the Ukrainian deep strike campaign, ensuring Ukraine is able to maintain sizable and well equipped formations, despite the constant attrition in the field, will continue to be a pressing challenge.**
- **Ukraine's casualties must be kept to a minimum as the war progresses to help preserve the country's limited reserves of personnel, particularly given that, since February 2022, Ukraine's population has fallen by nearly 6.5 million – a reduction of 14.9%.²³ Preserving Ukrainian personnel will require as much protected mobility – infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), armoured personnel carriers (APCs), and mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles (MRAPs) – as possible. To date, based on the better protected NATO-specification IFVs and APCs**

²³ 'Ukraine: Report reveals war's long-term impact which will be felt "for generations"', UN News, 22/02/2024, <https://news.un.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



provided, minus those lost to fighting, Ukraine has the ability to provide armoured protection at any one time for around 25,000 troops – yet it reportedly has approximately 700,000 under arms.²⁴ The secondary focus should be on further building up Ukraine’s armoured forces to respond to Russian attacks (including possible, albeit unlikely, breakthroughs) and enable the Ukrainian Armed Forces to regain the initiative through their own selective offensive actions.

- **The UK and Poland have already sent a great deal of equipment, but there remain further possibilities.** For example, the British Army’s Warrior IFV fleet – 625 remain in service – will be replaced by the Boxer from 2024 onwards.²⁵ Despite their age, as they are replaced, these vehicles could be transferred to the Ukrainian Armed Forces and put to good use in Ukraine.
- **Poland and the UK should also establish a joint Coordination Cell to persuade (and facilitate) allies to send more of their own equipment, and to source equipment from third parties.** For example Australia has recently begun to replace its fleet of 59 M1A1 Abrams tanks with 75 of the more modern M1A2 variants.²⁶ Another possibility would be the establishment of reconditioning facilities in Poland and Ukraine to bring old equipment back into working order (Russia has been able to refurbish thousands of armoured vehicles). As the ‘Czech initiative’ has had success in sourcing ammunition for Ukraine, an British-Polish initiative should source and refurbish equipment in a similar manner.
- **The trilateral nations should establish a joint task force for exploring cost-effective drone defences and counter-mine systems for armoured vehicles building on Ukraine’s battlefield experience and British-Polish funding and technical expertise.** This would reduce the proportion of Ukrainian losses due to Russian drone strikes and mines.

2.2 Distract Russia

- Although Russia decries its ‘encirclement’ by NATO, it has had no qualms in relieving its vulnerable Baltic flank to support operations in Ukraine. **It is time to exert pressure around Russia to discourage the redeployment of additional**

²⁴ See: Jakub Janovsky, Naalsio26, Aloha, Dan and Kemal, ‘Answering The Call: Heavy Weaponry Supplied To Ukraine’, *Oryx*, 11/04/2022, <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024) and Maxim Tucker, ‘Ukraine has one million ready for fightback to recapture south’, *The Sunday Times*, 10/07/2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

²⁵ UK Armed Forces Equipment and Formations 2023 Tables, Ministry of Defence (UK), 21/09/2023, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

²⁶ ‘Enhancing the ADF’s armoured combat capability’, Australian Government: Defence, 10/01/2022, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



Russian forces or encourage the Russian Armed Forces to deploy to meet new threats – beyond Ukraine.

- **Britain and Poland should agitate for a bolder Black Sea strategy and a diversionary approach in the Baltic.** While this would be supplemental to boosting Ukraine's war effort, it may have a positive geostrategic effect by distracting Russia and forcing it to respond by holding troops in the rear.

2.2.1 Black Sea strategy

- **Ukraine has had significant success in the Black Sea; it has hit Russia's Black Sea Fleet hard, sinking 19 Russian warships and damaging several more.** This is a spectacular feat given the size of the Ukrainian Navy, showing how important UAVs, Unmanned Surface Vehicles (USVs) and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) have become to modern warfare. In keeping with the deep strike campaign, Britain and Poland should provision Ukraine with the necessary support to cripple the Black Sea Fleet's remaining sea- and shore-based assets. Besides reducing Russia's capacity to strike Ukraine or grain shipping, it would also erode further Russian power in the Black Sea region and reduce the Kremlin's capacity to make war in the future.
- **Russia should also be deterred from destabilising Moldova.** Moldova is a logical target should Russia seek to escalate or attempt to encircle Odesa: the Kremlin has long backed the breakaway Moldavian territory of Transnistria, and the Moldovan government accused Russia of fomenting a coup last year.²⁷ A pro-Russian Moldova would present Kyiv with a new and potentially dangerous threat to guard against.
- **To preclude Russian intervention, London and Warsaw should offer to deploy an 'assurance force' to Moldova, comparable to those established in the Baltic states as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence.** However, as Chişinău has expressed a desire to join the EU but not NATO, the NATO framework may not be the most ideal to deter Russia in Moldova.²⁸ **The trilateral initiative may hold potential here.** And given that France has led with the Tailored Forward Presence in Romania, London and Warsaw could invite Paris and Bucharest to contribute troops and equipment. At the same time, the UK and Poland should advocate for Moldova moving towards an 'Intensified Dialogue Status' with NATO (which Ukraine and Georgia have already secured).

²⁷ 'Moldova's pro-EU President Sandu accuses Russia of coup plot', *BBC News*, 13/02/2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

²⁸ Sandor Zsiros, 'Staying neutral: Moldova's PM Natalia Gavrilița says yes to joining the EU but no to NATO', *Euronews*, 08/03/2022, <https://www.euronews.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

2.2.3 Baltic strategy

- Russia has re-deployed many of its forces from across the country to throw into the frontlines in Ukraine. Here, the Kremlin has a distinct advantage over Kyiv as the Ukrainians must keep a significant portion of their own forces to defend their extensive border with Russia and Belarus to guard against potential new axis of advance. **The UK and Poland should take actions which may encourage Russia to deploy less forces in Ukraine.**
- **Russia has pulled a large portion of its military away from the border with Finland.**²⁹ Of the frontline combat units stationed closest to Finland there are usually five motorised brigades, a naval infantry brigade, and an air assault division – as well as supporting units.³⁰ Of these, at least three motorised brigades and the air assault division have been confirmed as present in Ukraine.³¹
- Finland is considering different options for NATO presence including ‘extended exercises, a rotational model, or some other type of activity.’³² **London and Warsaw should seize on the opportunity to deepen collaboration with Finland and draw Russia to re-deploy forces back to the Baltic (thereby preventing them from being used against Ukraine).**
- **This could be achieved by the establishment of a permanent JEF and Polish division in Finland.** The makeup of the division itself could be built around one permanent Finnish brigade (of eight total) and two rotating brigades from other JEF members and Poland.³³
- **There is no guarantee this approach would compel Russia to redeploy forces to its northern flank, but by complicating Russia’s geostrategic picture, it may force the Kremlin to respond by bolstering its presence in the area.**³⁴

²⁹ Robbie Gramer and Jack Detsch, ‘Russia’s Stripped Its Western Borders to Feed the Fight in Ukraine’, *Foreign Policy*, 28/09/2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³⁰ Mason Clark and Karolina Hird, ‘Russian Regular Ground Forces Order of Battle’, Institute for the Study of War, 12/10/2023, <https://www.understandingwar.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³¹ ‘Deployment Map of Ukrainian and Russian Units’, *MilitaryLand*, No date, <https://militaryland.net/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³² ‘Defence chief: Finland may permanently host Nato troops’, *yle*, 11/04/2024, <https://yle.fi/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³³ ‘About us: Army’, *Maavoimat*, No date, <https://maavoimat.fi/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³⁴ Another option, beyond the Baltic, would be to foment trouble within Russia – such as in Chechnya or Dagestan – though this would be more risky and may play into the Kremlin’s own narratives of NATO ‘encirclement’ and disrespect for national sovereignty.



2.3 Wage economic and political warfare

- **The sanctions campaign imposed by the Group of Seven has been less successful than hoped in curtailing Russia's access to critical war materials or asphyxiating the economic base it depends on for war.**³⁵ While the Russian economy shrank by 1.2% in 2022, it is estimated to have grown by 3.6% in 2023 and may expand by 3.17% in 2024.³⁶ And although Russia cannot directly import Euro-Atlantic countries' technological components for its military equipment, it is no coincidence that European exports to central Asian countries have exploded since February 2022.
- **To take one country as an example, Germany's exports to the following countries grew by the subsequent amounts in the first quarter of 2023: Kyrgyzstan by 949%; Georgia by 92%; Kazakhstan by 136%; Armenia by 172%; and Tajikistan by 154%.**³⁷ In another case, Spain and Turkey were found to be importing grain from areas of Ukraine under Russian occupation.³⁸ Allowing allies to evade sanctions by trading with Russia through 'shadow fleets' or third countries is unconscionable. It is the antithesis of securonomics.
- **It is hard to gauge the impact sanctions have had on Russia's industrial base, but Russian war factories have continued to churn out new equipment.** Production of the T-90M (Russia's most modern tank) has almost doubled from a pre-war production rate of roughly 40 per year, while the manufacture of other hardware, including strike missiles, has increased.³⁹ It should be noted, however, that Russia's output will not be sufficient to replace what is lost to attrition at the current rate: once the Kremlin has burnt through what is left of the usable vehicles and weapons from its vast stock of legacy Soviet equipment, it will be unable to maintain offensive operations to the same extent as it has since February 2022.
- **To degrade Russia's war potential, London and Warsaw should push not merely for sanctions but coordinated economic warfare against Russia.** All remaining sanctions loopholes should be closed and new waves of more stringent penalties should be imposed to reduce not only Russia's potential for military output but to hurt its finances more generally. There should also be less concern about causing

³⁵ See: Lucy Fisher, 'UK sanctions are failing to hamper Russia's economy, says senior MP', *Financial Times*, 29/04/2024, <https://www.ft.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³⁶ 'Russia: At a glance', International Monetary Fund, No date, <https://www.imf.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³⁷ Rene Wagner, 'Higher German exports to Russia's neighbours fuel sanctions evasion fears', *Reuters*, 17/05/2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³⁸ Maksym Savchuk and Maksym Dudchenko, 'How Russia Exports Ukrainian Grain As Its Own: An Investigation', *Radio Free Europe*, 22/06/2024, <https://www.rferl.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

³⁹ Michael Gjerstad, 'Russian T-90M production: less than meets the eye', International Institute for Strategic Studies, 11/06/2024, <https://www.iiss.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



economic harm to the Russian people, a population which is still generally supportive of the war and whom the Kremlin relies on to wage war.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the trilateral should agitate for the requisition of Russian frozen assets in British and European banks for the Ukrainian defence effort.

- **The incoming British government needs to understand in the starkest terms that Russia is engaged in political (inclusive of the economic domain) warfare against Britain and its allies and partners, and that all of politics – including the major parties – is a battleground.**⁴¹ Russia’s political warfare is very sophisticated and comes from different directions, simultaneously. It is designed to undermine the very foundations of liberal democracy, the Euro-Atlantic order, and British and NATO support for Ukraine. Russia has also spent great time and treasure promoting false and fictitious narratives in so-called ‘middle ground’ nations, particularly in Africa, if only to ‘deactivate’ them as potential foes.⁴²
- **In response, London, Warsaw and Kyiv – as the ‘Three Eyes’ – should set up a special trilateral working group to coordinate a counter-response, and attempt to map in real time the tactics and narratives Russia is projecting into their respective societies.** This should involve the centralisation and coordination of counter-political warfare strategies – mobilising the security apparatus, state institutions, and civil society groups into an overt and covert effort to neutralise the attack.
- **As part of the ‘Three Eyes’, the three partners could set up a tri-national version of the Information Research Department established by Bevin in the Foreign Office in 1948 to engage in political and economic warfare against the Kremlin.** Initially, this trilateral entity should identify the countries Russia (or companies in NATO/EU allies and partners) is using to evade sanctions, how sanctions loopholes can be closed, and how Russia’s economy can be ravaged in a systematic way. If properly funded, this entity could also be tasked to engage in a forceful politico-discursive campaign against the Kremlin and its allies. It could leverage think tanks in Poland, Ukraine and the UK – and elsewhere – to target elite thinking in Euro-Atlantic allies and partners, as well as in ‘middle ground’ countries, to shift the dial in Ukraine’s favour. In particular, it could:
 - Highlight Russian political incompetence and the price paid in blood for it to Russian-speaking audiences outside of Russia;

⁴⁰ See: Christian Caryl, ‘What Do Russians Really Think About Putin’s War?’, *Foreign Policy*, 30/04/2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁴¹ See: James Rogers and Andriy Tyushka, “‘Hacking’ into the West: Russia’s “anti-hegemonic” drive and the strategic narrative offensive’, *Defence Strategic Communications*, 01/03/2017, <https://stratcomcoe.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁴² John P. Connor, ‘Countering Russia’s African Strategy’, *The National Interest*, 17/06/2024, <https://nationalinterest.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



- Remind and justify to audiences within NATO of the need to expand defence-industrial investment and amplify support for Ukraine;
- Explain how Russia's approach towards Ukraine is naked neo-colonialism. As countries once under foreign occupation, Poland and Ukraine have the requisite moral standing to push back against Russia's new imperialism.

3.0 Rebuilding British leadership in Europe

- **Since it became apparent in July 2021 that the Kremlin intended to seize the rest of Ukraine, the UK's position at the forefront of Euro-Atlantic efforts to, at first, deter Russia, and then, to provide assistance to Kyiv, has not gone unnoticed.⁴³** British leadership was particularly apparent during the early phase of the Russian offensive, and did much to offset some of the damage inflicted on Britain's reputation by the Brexit process.
- **But London could have gone further. Part of the problem is that Britain still seems to fear internal division within NATO more than it fears a Russian victory against Ukraine, even though a Ukrainian defeat would lead to a greater threat on the eastern flank of the alliance and increasing division and acrimony within it.** Initially, it may have been possible to galvanise NATO and secure a Russian defeat, but it is becoming clearer that this may not be the case. Moreover, two significant political developments in two key allies loom over the horizon:
 - The possible victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential elections;
 - A surge to the extremes – National Rally and the New Popular Front – in the legislative elections in France.
- **It is unclear how either party or character will shape their respective country's policy towards Ukraine, but they may take a more accommodating approach towards Russia than their predecessors.** Trump has already announced that he intends to force Ukraine to negotiate with Russia should he get elected in the November 2024 presidential election.⁴⁴ Also, both countries may be racked with political instability if the elections are not particularly conclusive (a particular issue for France). And Germany remains irresolute.
- **The case for British leadership in Europe has not been as strong for many years.** A Labour government with a large parliamentary majority has the foundation and the influence to draw Europe – or at least a significant part of it – together to see

⁴³ Jean-Philippe Lefief, 'Why is the UK at the forefront military aid to Ukraine?', *Le Monde*, 28/05/2023, <https://www.lemonde.fr/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁴⁴ See: Gram Slattery and Simon Lewis, 'Exclusive: Trump handed plan to halt US military aid to Kyiv unless it talks peace with Moscow', *Reuters*, 25/06/2024, <https://www.reuters.com/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



down the common foe and prevent a close British partner, Ukraine, from being usurped.

- **But this will require a step-change in British geostrategic thinking: even greater priority would need to be placed on the caucus of countries stretching from the Nordic and Baltic terrains to the Black Sea.** New structures will need to be created and forms of coordination established.
- **An enhanced *minilateral* approach should be developed. By working together with like minded countries through semi-structured or structured, formal or informal, relationships, nations can multiply their strength for strategic effect.** Minilateralism has flourished in Europe and elsewhere over the past few years: the Weimar Triangle, the Visegrad Group, the European Intervention Initiative (EII), the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), even AUKUS and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, have all been initiated or joined by countries as means to pursue national objectives more effectively.
- **Minilateral groups can draw together specific countries to ‘force multiply’ in defence of a geographic region or act as a vanguard for a specific approach – an advocacy coalition – particularly if other alliance members are divided or need time to reach a broader policy.**
- **Bevin, as Foreign Secretary in 1948, understood this problem very well.** His role in establishing the Western Union in 1948 with France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg was a genuinely strategic example of minilateralism. Not only did the Brussels pact galvanise Western European nations under British leadership, but also it was instrumental in convincing the US and Canada to become involved in what became NATO.⁴⁵ With deep and pervasive implications for European security, it is difficult to imagine how the European or even world order would have evolved without it.
- **Minilateral groups are also useful because they can buttress multilateral frameworks if a small group of allies come together to provide decisive intra-alliance leadership.** For example, both the JEF and the EII were conceived as bulwarks for NATO. Given the irresolution in Washington, Berlin and Paris, the case for Britain and Warsaw to step into the void is clear.

3.1 Rekindling the trilateral initiative

- **With this in mind, the trilateral initiative established between Britain, Poland and Ukraine exactly one week before Russia’s renewed lunge into Ukraine in**

⁴⁵ See: John Baylis, *Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of Nato, 1942–1949* (London: Macmillan, 1993).



February 2022, has considerable potential. Back then, the British, Polish and Ukrainian foreign secretaries agreed to deepen work on cyber and energy security, disinformation, and the International Crimea Platform.⁴⁶

- **Their decision to cooperate was visionary.** Despite the transition of governments of different political colours in London and Warsaw, the three countries have shown that they are ‘natural partners’ because of their similar worldview on the threat posed by Russia. A common set of interests is essential if a minilateral group is to be successful.
- **While the format proved useful during the first three months after Russia initiated its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it then lost momentum.** In part, this was because Ukraine focused on stopping the Russian advance and securing broader support within the Euro-Atlantic structures to defend itself and secure membership in the future. However, during the first year of the war, Poland and the UK used the initiative to work together to provide leadership – e.g., the ‘Tallinn Pledge’ – while France and Germany came to terms with their past failures and difficulty in setting a new approach towards Ukraine and Russia.
- **Indeed, Britain and Poland have done more than any other partner to lead from the front:** from being the first-movers in providing Ukraine with modern weapons, logistical support, and intelligence, to calling out Germany’s growing energy dependency on Russian gas and oil – which resulted in transfers in excess of €1 trillion from European countries to Russia between 2010 and 2019 – London and Warsaw have not held back.⁴⁷
- **The new British government should rekindle the trilateral initiative and, working alongside its Polish ally and Ukrainian partner, flesh it out as a mechanism to agitate for a Ukrainian victory in NATO.** This does not preclude the UK from looking to the mid- and long-term, where the trilateral also holds promise. In fact, the two dimensions should be addressed simultaneously. There is, after all, a risk that Britain invests considerable political input and treasure into securing a Ukrainian victory only to find that others – particularly EU countries – move in afterwards to secure the ‘spoils’, not least because of Ukraine’s desire to join the EU. This is a risk that trilateral cooperation could also help mitigate against: the Poles and Ukrainians have both expressed interest in a

⁴⁶ ‘United Kingdom, Poland and Ukraine foreign ministers’ joint statement, February 2022’, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 17/07/2022, <https://www.gov.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁴⁷ See: Alexander Lanoszka, James Rogers and Patrick Triglavcanin, ‘A new energy policy for Europe: The significance of Ukraine’, Council on Geostrategy, 08/06/2022, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



trilateral reconstruction format, which would help cement the envisaged 100 year UK-Ukraine partnership.⁴⁸

- **If embraced, the trilateral initiative would serve as a force multiplier for British influence in Europe at all levels, not least because Poland and Ukraine, in their respective ways, will be central to the evolution of the European order over the next 18 months:**
 - Poland's economic and political gravity is increasing; France and Germany have focused more on the Weimar Triangle in recent months;⁴⁹
 - Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland, has made a special effort to deepen relations between his country and its Baltic and Nordic allies since taking office in December 2023;
 - Warsaw will also assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first half of 2025, giving it great influence in how EU policy towards Ukraine evolves, especially in terms of Kyiv's bid to join the bloc;
 - Highly aware of the challenge posed to the US by the PRC, Warsaw is also particularly well positioned to help convince Washington of the importance of the Euro-Atlantic in the event that a new American administration decides to prioritise the Indo-Pacific;
 - With the appointment of Kaja Kallas, Prime Minister of Estonia, as High Representative of the EU – she is noted for her robust but sophisticated thinking on the threat posed by the Kremlin – Britain now has a close and friendly ally in charge of the EU's foreign policy portfolio.

4.0 Conclusion

- **With the stars increasingly in alignment, the new British government has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to embrace its inner Bevin and rekindle the trilateral initiative formed with Poland and Ukraine in early February 2022, and utilise it to catalyse a broader coalition of allies and partners. This would put the UK at the apex of a powerful new trilateral partnership with Poland and Ukraine, which could be leveraged to draw together a plethora of interlocking unilateral**

⁴⁸ For more on the initiative's long-term potential, see: Przemysław Biskup, Alexander Lanoszka, Maria Piechowska, James Rogers, Hanna Shelest and Marcin Terlikowski, 'The trilateral initiative: How Britain, Poland and Ukraine can shape a post-war Europe', Council on Geostrategy, 29/04/2024, <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/> (checked: 30/06/2024).

⁴⁹ See: Judy Dempsey, 'The Timely Revival of the Weimar Triangle', *Strategic Europe*, 18/06/2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/> (checked: 30/06/2024).



and multilateral formations, which could be further wrought to rebuild Britain's European position and secure British interests, particularly economic growth.

- **But all of this depends on the defeat and containment of Russia's regime and a Ukrainian victory. For the next 18 months, Britain and Poland should be at the vanguard of a new coalition dedicated to helping Ukraine generate the mass in UAVs, USVs and UUVs and other long-range strike weapons to disable Russian military assets, communication lines, and command and control nodes in the frontier zone.** Diverting the Kremlin's attention, preventing Russia from broadening the conflict to Moldova, and containing Russian narratives globally will form part of this approach.
- **Backed by the authority which only comes from holding a large parliamentary majority, and facing political irresolution in France, Germany and, potentially, the US, it falls to the new British government to provide the requisite leadership.** There is no better way to confirm the doctrine of 'progressive realism'.

Acknowledgements

The Council on Geostrategy would like to thank Dr Alexander Lanoszka, Paul Mason and Dr Marc de Vore for their intellectual contributions in relation to this paper. We would also like to thank the participants, particularly from Poland and Ukraine, who attended the hybrid workshop held on 20th June 2024 to test and generate ideas. Of course, the final content, as well as any errors or omissions, remain with the authors.

This paper was funded by the Secretary of State's Office for Net Assessment and Challenge (SONAC) in the Ministry of Defence. The views expressed in the paper are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Ministry of Defence or His Majesty's Government.



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ISBN: 978-1-914441-84-4

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