

AUKUS, alliances, and exports make Britain uniquely placed to grow influence in the Indo-Pacific, former senior Royal Marine says in new paper

- New Primer highlights the AUKUS partnership as part of the UK's long-term commitment to counter Chinese competition in the region
- Paper identifies UK's unique role in the Indo-Pacific as a trusted and valued partner along with the US, Australia, and Japan
- Strengths in elite training, regulatory knowledge, and soft power offer Britain a chance to extend its influence

A new Primer from the Council on Geostrategy's Indo-Pacific Project finds that Britain can cement its long-term influence in the region by leveraging its unique strengths, alliances, and capabilities to contribute to collective deterrence.

The paper emphasises how the UK can secure meaningful partnerships and regional cooperation by balancing military engagement with diplomatic efforts, including active participation in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), further cooperation on maritime security with India on the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (launched in 2019), and aligning actions with intentions to appeal to nations seeking balance between Washington and Beijing.

Following the deployment of the Carrier Strike Group 2025 (CSG2025) and the publication of the Strategic Defence Review in June 2025, the paper finds that the UK is faced with challenges over how it reinforces its presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Primer recommends that clearly articulating the UK's commitment to collaborative defence initiatives is vital if the country is to do so effectively, with British submarine rotations as part of the AUKUS trilateral partnership starting as early as 2027 being a key example of this, alongside any technological Pillar II advancements.

Similarly, a clear communication of the UK's strategic objectives is necessary, focusing on collective deterrence and the commitment to securing freedom of navigation in contested waters. Effective deterrence against expanding Chinese claims in contested waters necessitates an empowerment of regional partners, such as Malaysia and the Philippines, to develop their capabilities in responding to Chinese coercion, notably through the development of an Indo-Pacific Open General Export Licence (IP-OGEL) to align strategic goods exports.

The paper also reflects on the balance between ambition and reality in the Indo-Pacific through Britain's rhetoric and military presence. Its focus on collective deterrence and alliance cohesion with partners is its primary role, and the CSG2025 deployment shows the reassurance that the UK offers partners with doubts over US reliability. It makes the broader point that its relationships and ongoing engagements in the region will matter more than carrier strike group fleet size; crucial when comparing UK capabilities against the sheer scale of US or PRC capabilities.

Brigadier (rtd.) Rory Copinger-Symes CBE, former senior Royal Marine and author of the paper, said:

‘Britain’s Indo-Pacific strategy cannot rely on episodic deployments alone. It should be underpinned by a wider ecosystem of influence that only the UK can uniquely offer.’

‘In light of shifting global dynamics, particularly the PRC’s rise as a central strategic competitor, Britain should navigate its Indo-Pacific defence strategy with careful consideration.’

‘Through strategic foresight and reliable engagement, the UK could position itself to contribute to a stable and secure Indo-Pacific, establishing foundations for long-term partnerships that can thrive amid evolving global challenges.’

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Notes to editors:

1. The Council on Geostrategy was launched on 2nd March 2021. More information can be found on our [website](#), including our [mission statement](#).
2. The Council on Geostrategy has an [Advisory Board](#) of 16 individuals with experience in politics, the military, diplomacy and academia.

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