

Britain's National Security Strategy prepares militarisation of society

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Britain's National Security Strategy (NSS) 2025 is Labour's blueprint for militarising society in preparation for major wars. It calls for a "hardening and a sharpening of our approach to national security across all areas of policy, already seen in a shift towards more investment in hard power and an emphasis on increasing the lethality of our armed forces."

The document's release comes just days after Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a commitment to lifting military spending to 5 percent of GDP by 2035, adopted as a common goal at yesterday's NATO summit, which the NSS hails as "the largest sustained investment in our armed forces since the Cold War, with an emphasis on greater lethality" and "warfighting readiness".

Russia and Iran are listed as the UK's primary targets, with more guarded but still adversarial references to China. Everything is framed in terms of "defence". The imperialist gang-up on Iran in the last weeks explodes this fiction. As for Russia, Donald Trump's US Presidency has further exposed the predatory interests which animated NATO's proxy war in Ukraine from the start.

The offensive nature of the wars envisaged by the Labour government was underscored this week by Starmer's announcement of a new squadron of 12 American-made F-35A jets, capable of delivering US tactical warheads to be stored on British soil for the first time in nearly 20 years. The B61-12 gravity bomb has an explosive power three times that of the weapon dropped on Hiroshima.

British imperialism's ability to exert its "hard power" abroad depends on mobilising a pro-war constituency and a technical-industrial base which are sorely lacking. The National Security Strategy announces Labour's plans to change this situation.

According to its authors, "the essence of our approach will be: to harness the nation's productive, industrial, technological and scientific strengths more closely to our national security objectives to an extent not seen since wartime; and to do more to answer the concerns of everyday British working people through a more systematic approach to pursuing national interests."

The government "will seek to partner with all parts of society, business, academia, and devolved and local governments in a new national resilience effort on the journey to 5%. This process starts with building greater public awareness of the threats we face... and builds towards a new social contract between government and the British people".

"This is the task ahead of us," the document summarises, "to mobilise the nation in the common cause of our national security."

There is something desperate and self-deluding about this. Deeply unpopular and ruling a country seething with social discontent, Labour would love to believe in the dream of social peace at home through war abroad.

But what is being outlined is a brutal restructuring of the economy and state spending to meet the demands of the military by clawing money out of the backs of the working class. Far from unifying the nation, it will bring class tensions to breaking point.

The NSS alludes to this, demanding "realism and frankness about the world in which we operate. The months and years ahead will see difficult compromises and trade-offs on resource allocation and prioritisation". Which is why Labour's agenda will be coupled with an attempt to whip up nationalist hysteria directing social tensions outwards at a foreign enemy.

The NSS warns, "For the first time in many years, we have to actively prepare for the possibility of the UK

homeland coming under direct threat, potentially in a wartime scenario.” It outlines a “new Resilience Strategy” which will “launch public communications to inform citizens about preparedness for risks” and “run annual National Exercises in order to test our whole-of-society preparedness.”

The government has also launched plans to boost military recruitment, including a thousands-strong Home Defence organisation (“potentially modelled on the Reserves,” the NSS explains) and increasing the size of the cadets by 40,000 to 180,000 school-age young people.

The *Guardian* explains how the cadets initiative will “see ‘public outreach events’ across the UK ‘explaining’ current and future threats and the rationale for more defence spending. Part of this will involve the armed forces becoming ‘more visible’ in society and the sight of people in uniform less rare in daily life.”

The Ministry of Defence will also work with the Department for Education “to develop understanding of the armed forces among young people in schools”.

These initiatives are aimed at creating a siege atmosphere, justifying crackdowns on popular protest and political opposition. References in the document to the threat of “extremist ideologies” and “viewpoints” should set alarm bells ringing in the aftermath of the decision to ban protest group Palestine Action under anti-terror laws.

The normalisation of the military personnel in domestic settings should be understood in light of Trump’s deployment of US marines against protesters in Los Angeles and threats to deploy the army more broadly against migrants. Starmer’s Security Strategy likewise repeatedly references the “scourge of illegal migration” as a security concern.

“[W]e should be optimistic,” the document concludes, more in hope than expectation. The fact is that millions of people are already fiercely opposed to Labour’s authoritarian and warmongering policies and attempts to push them further will provoke mass opposition. The government’s propaganda cuts both ways.

While the prospect of war on British soil—always presented as the result of some unprovoked attack—is put forward to demonise British imperialism’s opponents, it draws back the veil the ruling class has

placed historically over the consequences of its military aggression. By recklessly escalating conflicts with major powers like Russia, and ultimately China, they are threatening to bring the wars currently fought out by proxies back home.

Workers and young people in the UK are being brought face-to-face with this future, which they share with their class brothers and sisters in Russia, Iran and throughout the world. The task before them all is the same: building an international socialist movement against war and its cause—the capitalist system.



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