



## **Policy Review: Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy**

Downloaded from: <https://research.chalmers.se>, 2026-06-25 05:15 UTC

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Von Busch, O., Palmås, K. (2021). Policy Review: Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. *Design and Culture*, 13(3): 361-366.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2021.1935549>

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.



## Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, Command Paper 403. by UK Cabinet Office

Otto von Busch Reviewed by & Karl Palmås

**To cite this article:** Otto von Busch Reviewed by & Karl Palmås (2021) Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, Command Paper 403. by UK Cabinet Office, Design and Culture, 13:3, 361-366, DOI: [10.1080/17547075.2021.1935549](https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2021.1935549)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2021.1935549>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 16 Jun 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 4841



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 3 View citing articles [↗](#)

# Policy Review

## *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, Command Paper 403, by UK Cabinet Office*

**Reviewed by Otto von Busch and Karl Palmås**

**Otto von Busch is Associate Professor at the School of Design Strategies, Parsons School of Design.**  
[vonbusco@newschool.edu](mailto:vonbusco@newschool.edu)

**Karl Palmås is Associate Professor at the Division of Science, Technology and Society, Chalmers University of Technology.**  
[palmås@chalmers.se](mailto:palmås@chalmers.se)

DOI: [10.1080/17547075.2021.1935549](https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2021.1935549)



In March 2021, the UK Government presented its “Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.” The launch of this 111-page document had been eagerly awaited by the security and international relations community, not least as this “integrated” review represented a shift from the previous practice of publishing separate, specific reviews on each topic. In the words of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the report represents “the biggest review of [the UK’s] foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War” (Johnson 2020). Indeed, the text represents a wide-ranging account of how the kingdom – not so long ago the globe’s foremost empire – imagines the future, as well as its route to continued sovereignty.

The remarkable thing about the integrated review is that this strategic document does not construe national might in terms of its military arsenal. Instead, it suggests that, to

attain influence in the twenty-first century, a nation must become a “science and technology superpower” (7). Thus, the first chapter is titled “Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology” and outlines the case for achieving national excellence in “S&T.” Here, crucially, it is not strictly military technology that is in focus, but the everyday technologies that – as we have learned in recent years – may be weaponized.

Becoming an “S&T superpower” means *controlling the design* of these everyday technologies and, thus, “ensuring that the success of [the UK’s] research base translates into influence over the design and use of critical and emerging technologies” (36). When it comes to “shaping the open international order of the future” – the theme of chapter 2 – strategic advantage in S&T will “ensure that transparency and accountability are embedded from the outset in the design and deployment of new technologies” (57). In other words, the ambition of nations to *participate in or lead the design* of everyday technological futures has been elevated to the top of the national security agenda.

### **Statecraft through Designerly Co-Creation**

In this new doctrine, “co-creation” (19) emerges as the key strategy. Co-creation is, first and foremost, played out on an international level. In order to achieve the said S&T objectives,

collective action and co-creation with our allies and partners will be vitally important in the decade ahead – leading by example where we have unique or significant strengths (such as in areas of medical science, green technologies and aspects of data and AI) and identifying where we are better placed to support others in leading the advance towards our shared goals. (19)

Co-creation thus fits into the “framework for S&T power,” which rests on the “own-collaborate-access” heuristic (38). Global Britain must strike a balance between owning, collaborating on, or simply having access to technosciences. This, in turn, is a means of “ensuring that the UK is able to access a wide range of technology without buying it outright or inventing it here.” However, “co-creation” is also a domestic imperative:

We will also explore more agile and affordable routes to innovation that strengthen our wider national security [...] establishing a cross-government network of co-creation spaces to bring together expertise and specialist facilities from across government partners, the private sector and leading academic S&T communities. This will support the development of effective, user-driven technology at pace and at scale in areas that are critical to national security, including data science, AI and protective security. (38)

In the discussion on co-design, we have seen scholars hinting at affinities with international relations, citing diplomats (Pedersen 2016,

citing Latour (2002) and quislings (Palmås and von Busch 2015) as emblematic personas. The integrated review implies a curious reversal of this connection, wherein international relations references co-design, rather than the other way around. To make sense of this development, it is productive to rehearse the recent history of how design has informed statecraft and war (von Busch 2011).

## Design and Doctrine

The influence of design in weaponized politics has intensified under modernity. First of all, it is worth noting how – as Antoine Bousquet (2009) points out – military doctrine follows overall scientific discoveries and discourse, affecting strategies and tactics as well as military theory in general. Specifically, *engineering design* has informed military doctrines: the clockwork armies of Frederick the Great were later replaced by the thermodynamic order of industrial motor armies. Indeed, as suggested by the work of Peter Sloterdijk (2011, 2014, 2016), design not only provides tools for action, it also provides tools with which to think (Elden and Mendieta 2009). Put another way, Saul Bass’s slogan that “design is thinking made visual” holds true even in military matters.

The most recent design-informed reimagining of military doctrine took place after the turn of the millennium, when the US-led invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) prompted a redefinition of the very concept of war. In 2005, the US general Rupert Smith suggested that war was no longer waged between two opposing state machines, but instead as a “war amongst the people,” involving not only soldiers, but also civilians and non-state agents. The new focus on counterinsurgency, and how to “leave the territory rather than keep it” (Smith 2005, 272), generated new conceptual models.

At this point, design thinking was introduced into military doctrine. Through the work of Roger Martin (2010) and others, military operations were reconstrued as a design problem. As usual, design was enlisted as a means to empathize with stakeholders, to question the preunderstanding of the problem, to discover the real problem, but all in the context of military invasion (Jones 2014).

Thus, design thinking was particularly useful for solving the complex social problems that emerged when the liberal idea of democratic nation-building was met with resistance and insurgency. David Kilcullen, an Australian anthropologist, construed counterinsurgency as a hybrid war in which “ill-structured” problems required better “campaign design” (Kilcullen 2009, see also Ancker and Flynn 2010). Indeed, Rittel and Webber’s notion of complex “wicked problems” were integrated into the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) manual for campaign design (TRADOC 2008, 9). The approach is still referenced in the updated field manual on Operations Process of 2019, which contains chapters on Army design methodology (ADP 5-0).

While this is largely a US story, it is worth pointing out that not only US counterinsurgency operations relied on design literature. Shimon Naveh, the Israeli general who famously introduced Deleuze and Guattari into the curriculum for training “operational architects” (Weizman 2006) within the Israeli Defense Forces, also included design scholars such as Buchanan, Krippendorf, Margolin, Simon, Thackara, and Papanek on his reading list (Naveh 2007).

### **Co-Creating the Gray Zone**

A decade has passed since the advent of the soldier-as-design-thinker. The US has signaled its withdrawal from Afghanistan, and none of the previous concerns regarding counterinsurgency are present in the UK integrated review. In many ways, the report is a reflection of the more recent concern that liberal democracies may be subverted without any shots being fired. *Global Britain in a Competitive Age* is premised on the idea that the UK must become more astute operating in the “gray zone” between war and peace. Indeed, the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica scandal, indications of meddling in the Brexit referendum, and disputes over Huawei’s control of 5G infrastructure suggest that the kingdom is already ensnared in this gray zone.

The notion of co-creation seems to provide a tool for navigating this web of treacherous interrelations. The only way to achieve sovereignty is to control the design of the very infrastructures, platforms, and everyday technologies that serve as the milieu for gray zone belligerence. In many ways, the nebulous nature of the term “co-creation” makes it a perfect name for a gray zone strategy: pretty much any activity can be classified as co-creative, and have a somewhat benign ring to it. Like the term “co-design,” it is an anodyne label for processes that are profoundly political (Palmås and von Busch 2015).

This turn to co-creation in international relations has not occurred in a vacuum. The term has already shown its stripes as a governance tool, replacing other vague “quasi-concepts” (European Commission 2013) as the go-to imperative of the European Union’s research policy. Nevertheless, the UK Government’s use of the term primarily leverages its ostensible tameness. In the context of international conflict, it is the anodyne nature of co-creation – not the vagueness of the term – that is key.

From a realist perspective, it is evident that the UK Government does not expect co-creation to yield win–win outcomes. Indeed, the integrated review adopts co-creation in the context of a zero-sum game, as a means to place the UK in a favorable situation, while placing other nations in a less favorable one. Co-creation is deployed as a tool that includes some actors in order to *exclude* others. This approach dovetails with Carl Schmitt’s definition of the political: the distinction between friends and enemies. Whereas science and technology used to be conceived in liberal terms, as a vehicle for

internationalism and betterment for the whole of humanity, S&T is now construed as divide-and-rule device. Ironically, this Schmittian tendency within contemporary international relations is an international phenomenon: China's ruling party, which is likely to be excluded from UK-led co-creation, is also turning to Schmitt for inspiration (Che 2020).

Conversely, co-creation is also mobilized as a tool for making sure that actors included in the friend category are kept in line. It is a euphemism for Machiavellian alliance-management. As such, the UK Government's turn to co-creation implies an acceptance – an *affirmation*, even – of the darker realities that underly all co-creation and co-design processes.

## References

- Ancker, Clinton, and Michael Flynn. 2010. "Exercising Command and Control in an Era of Persistent Conflict." Accessed 13 April 2021. <http://www.army.mil/article/38412/>.
- Army Doctrine Publication (ADP). 2019. *5-0 The Operation Process*. Washington, DC: Department of Army. Accessed 25 March 2021. [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/ARN18126-ADP\\_5-0-000-WEB-3.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN18126-ADP_5-0-000-WEB-3.pdf)
- Bousquet, Antoine. 2009. *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity*. London: Hurst & Company.
- von Busch, Otto. 2011. "Design at the Front." Paper presented at the Nordic Design Research Conference, Helsinki.
- Che, Chang. 2020. "The Nazi Inspiring China's Communists." *The Atlantic*, December 1. Accessed 13 April 2021. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/12/nazi-china-communists-carl-schmitt/617237/>
- Elden, Stuart, and Eduardo Mendieta. 2009. "Being-with as Making Worlds: The 'Second Coming' of Peter Sloterdijk." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27 (1): 1–11. doi:10.1068/d2701em.
- European Commission. 2013. "Social Innovation Research in the European Union: Approaches, Findings and Future Directions." Accessed 13 April 2021. [https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy\\_reviews/social\\_innovation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/social_innovation.pdf)
- Johnson, Boris. 2020. "Prime Minister's Statement to the House of Commons." June 16. Accessed 13 April 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-16-june-2020>
- Jones, Harry. 2014. "Army Field Manual 5-0: The Operations Process (U.S. Military)." From the MoMA "Design and Violence" blog. Accessed 13 April 2021. <https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2013/designandviolence/army-field-manual-5-0-the-operations-process-u-s-military/>

- Kilcullen, David. 2009. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, Bruno. 2002. *War of the Worlds: What about Peace?* Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Martin, Roger. 2010. "Design Thinking Comes to the U.S. Army." *Design Observer*, May 3. Accessed 13 April 2021. <https://design-observer.com/feature/design-thinking-comes-to-the-us-army/13478>
- Naveh, Shimon. 2007. "Operational Art." PowerPoint from presentation at Fort Leavenworth, January 2007. Accessed 13 April 2021. <http://www.slideshare.net/ubiwar/shimon-naveh-powerpoint>
- Palmås, Karl, and Otto von Busch. 2015. "Quasi-Quisling: Co-Design and the Assembly of Collaborateurs." *CoDesign* 11 (3-4): 236–249. doi:10.1080/15710882.2015.1081247.
- Pedersen, Jens. 2016. "War and Peace in Codesign." *CoDesign* 12 (3): 171–184. doi:10.1080/15710882.2015.1112813.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. 2011. *Bubbles*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. 2014. *Globes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. 2016. *Foams*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Smith, Rupert. 2005. *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*. London: Penguin.
- TRADOC. 2008. "United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) 525-5-500." Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design. Washington, DC: Department of the Army.
- Weizman, Eyal. 2006. "The Art of War." *Frieze Magazine*, Issue 99, May.