

ROYAL NAVY STRATEGIC STUDIES
CENTRE (RNSSC)

Strategic Digest

April 2023



Highlights This Month

The Age of American Naval Dominance is Over

Journal Article, *The Atlantic*

Jerry Hendrix | 13 March 2023

In this pithy and often critical article, retired US Navy officer Jerry Hendrix issues a worrying warning for the US and its allies: “the United States has ceded the oceans to its enemies. We can no longer take freedom of the seas for granted”. The US, following decades of the Cold War, has been the world’s largest and most powerful naval power. Ruling the waves through a vast fleet of technologically advanced surface vessels and submarines, with the mighty supercarrier functioning as the epicentre of America’s global maritime hegemony. However, this hegemony is now being challenged by China that is acquiring a suite of maritime capabilities to rival the US Navy.

[Read The Article Here ...](#)

Understanding AI – ChatGPT and Large Language Models

Video Interview, *Defnet*

Professor Meers and Professor Woolridge | 8 February 2023

Arguably the hottest topic in technology right now, ChatGPT has taken the world by storm. But what is ChatGPT, and how is it important to Defence? In this video series, Meers and Woolridge break down the functions of this type of AI, its shortfalls and how it could be integrated into Defence in the future.

[Watch the Interview Here ...](#)

The Baltic States as NATO Heavyweights

Podcast, *Foreign Policy Research Institute*

Tomass Pildegovičs | 22 March 2023

At the forefront of Russian-NATO tensions, the Baltic states are arguably the key focal points of any military escalation that could spread from Ukraine outwards. In this half hour podcast, Tomass Pildegovičs, PhD student at the University of Cambridge, dives into the dynamics of small state positioning within multilateral organizations. This is a fantastic podcast that looks at the history motivating the Baltic's security worries and scrutinises how they perceive NATO as a means of achieving their foreign policy objectives.

[Listen to the Podcast Here ...](#)

U.S. and China Wage War Beneath the Waves – Over Internet Cables

Journal Article, *Reuters*

Joe Brock | 24 March 2023

Subsea cables are central to the US-China technology war. Across the globe, there are more than 400 cables running along the seafloor, carrying over 95% of all international internet traffic, according to TeleGeography, a Washington-based telecommunications research firm. This insightful article looks at how these data conduits, which transmit everything from emails and banking transactions to military secrets, are now vulnerable to sabotage attacks and espionage.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Xi's Visit to Moscow Exposed Russia's Weakness

Journal Article, *IJSS*

Nigel Gould-Davies and Meia Nouwens | 3 April 2023

Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Moscow on 20–22 March 2023 was the first since Russia's second invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As Gould-Davies and Nouwens demonstrate, despite the effusive public respect that always marks their summits, it revealed mismatches in power and interests exacerbated by war and exposed tension between Russia's needs and China's choices.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

How Refreshing? An Initial Assessment of the UK's

Integrated Review Refresh

Article, *RUSI*

Will Jessett CBE, Tom McKane and Peter Watkins | 27 March 2023

'How Refreshing? An Initial Assessment of the UK's Integrated Review Refresh' provides commentary on the headlines of the UK's recently published update to the 2021 Integrated Review and looks ahead to the big issues the DCPR will need to address.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Reflections on the Iraq War 20 Years On

Podcast, *Arab Digest*

Renad Mansour | 17 March 2023

Since the invasion by coalition forces 20 years ago, Iraq has not only grappled with increased interference by Iran, but also has witnessed the rise, fall and resurgence of the Islamic State. To mark the 20th anniversary of the start of the Iraq War, Renad Mansour, Director of the Iraq Initiative at Chatham House, reflects upon the implications of the invasion not only for Iraq, but also for global politics altogether.

[Listen to the Podcast Here ...](#)

Next Year in Moscow: A Podcast About Russia's Future

Podcast, *The Economist*

Arkady Ostrovsky | 22 April 2023

When the shelling of Ukraine began a year ago, free-thinking Russians faced a fateful choice: hide, fight or flee. Hundreds of thousands decided to leave. Because for them the war meant Russia itself had lost its meaning and its future. Now they must rebuild their lives and their hopes for Russia from exile. Can they get their country back? In this podcast series, *The Economist's* Arkady Ostrovsky travels across Europe and the Middle East to find out. The answer may hold the key to ending the war.

[Listen to the Podcast Here ...](#)

Why the China-Brokered Iran-Saudi Deal Heralds a New Era of Geopolitics

Article, *The Telegraph*

Michael Stephens | 11 March 2023

The China-brokered agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia announced last month has generated huge buzz, with some going as far as to assert the end of U.S. dominance in the Gulf. Certainly, it brings attention to Beijing's increasing attention to the Middle East, where Xi's long-term foreign policy objective of positioning China as an alternative to the United States is finding fertile ground. However, as Michael Stephens explains, whilst China's foray into Gulf politics is important, it should not be overstated.

[Read the Article Here ...](#)

Events and Notices

Politics of the Arctic

Samuel Jardine
16 May 2023
13:00 - 14:00 GMT
MS Teams

The RNSSC are very happy to host Samuel, Head of Research at London Politica and a Research Fellow at the Open Lunar Foundation, for the **May Lunchtime Lecture**. June's lecturer is programmed to be Dr Fotios Moustakis (timing and subject to be confirmed).

Want to Attend the First Sea Lord's Sea Power Conference?

Please fill in the form to attend the conference on 16th-17th May remotely [here](#)

Read or Listened to Something that Merits Inclusion in this Digest?

Please send, with a summary, to the RNSSC mailbox (NavyStratPol-RNSSC@mod.gov.uk).

The Digest is sent to the RN's senior leadership team, with the request to **please cascade**. To contact us with questions, feedback or to be added to the mailing list please send an email to NavyStratPol-RNSSC@mod.gov.uk.