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"GLOBAL BRITAIN" AND BRITISH STRATEGIC CULTURE:
FROM TONY BLAIR TO THE PRESENT

The Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom in 2016 marked a turning point not only in the shaping and implementation of British foreign policy but also in the UK's relationships with long-standing partners and allies on the European and global political stage. Importantly, the concept of "Global Britain", which emerged as a key idea during Theresa May's premiership, revived the question of strategic culture in the country as a coherent system of values, understanding of national interests, and a vision of the state's place on the international stage. One of the key issues in British strategic culture is the idea of a "British crisis," which began after the end of World War II and is associated with the country's loss of imperial status. Since then, the strategic thinking of the British elite in shaping foreign policy has been marked by uncertainty due to different views on the nation's place on the international stage and its path of development, such as "European or Anglo-Saxon identity," "to what extent can the state delegate part of its sovereignty to intergovernmental institutions?" and "what is the role of the Commonwealth in the country's political strategy?"The "Global Britain" concept, declared in 2021, highlighted the need to study this direction of the country's activity as an attempt to overcome the aforementioned "crisis," to conceptualize the current foreign policy course, and to outline clear planning criteria for British strategic culture. The article focuses on exploring the idea of "global interdependence" proposed by Tony Blair after the end of the Cold War and the concept of "Global Britain" outlined in the Integrated Review in 2021 and 2023. The author examines the influence of these proposed ideas and concepts on addressing four dilemmas in British strategic culture: (i) debates over the nation's regional positioning and its heritage as a "maritime" empire; (ii) debates on the priority of maintaining national sovereignty versus delegating some of it to international structures; (iii) issues surrounding the use of force in foreign policy; and (iv) the role of international law in the current system of relations.

Ключові слова*: British strategic culture, global interdependence, Global Britain*

In March 2021, the UK government presented a document titled "Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defense, Development and Foreign Policy" (IR2021). This document represents the vision of British political elites regarding the country's role on the international stage, as well as the strategy for national policy in areas of international engagement, national security, and defense.

In March 2023, the "Global Britain" concept was updated through the "Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a More Contested and Volatile World" (IR2023) which supplemented and partially revised the previous document, primarily in terms of the UK's perception not only of its position internationally but also of the global environment acting in. These actions by British political elites, coupled with Brexit, which initiated this process, are a crucial focus for study. They reflect the path the United Kingdom has traversed from imperial power and global influence on the dissolution of its empire and ongoing attempts to maintain zones of influence.

A defining characteristic of this path has been the need to choose between global leadership and economic development, national, European, Atlantic, and Anglo-Saxon identities, as well as national vs. collective interests. These dilemmas have fundamentally shaped British strategic thinking, raising questions about how British elites have chosen their course and built the system of strategic planning for the state accordingly.

In these efforts, it is observed a rethinking not only of the practical but also of the ideological foundations of the UK's foreign policy, adapting to new realities in international relations. Similar reevaluations were undertaken after World War II by Winston Churchill, by Margaret Thatcher, and later by Tony Blair after the Cold War. The latter approach is the most valuable for researchers today, since it was Tony Blair who announced the idea of global interdependence with his Chicago speech.

Nevertheless, as Paul Cornish notes in "Strategic Culture in the United Kingdom," the UK is best understood as a medium-ranking economic and military power with a disproportionately high level of ambition and sense of responsibility in international security policy. At times, this ambition can seem like a historical artifact, and at other times, largely rhetorical. However, the UK's strategic history is more than a mere artifact (as evidenced by its permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council) and more than rhetorical. The UK has consistently demonstrated a willingness to be directly involved and to act – diplomatically, economically, and militarily [8].

These aspects highlight the importance of studying the role of the Global Britain idea within the strategic culture of the United Kingdom from Tony Blair to the present day, which forms the focus of this research.

The study of strategic culture on the international stage, particularly in the context of national security strategies and their relationship with "national characteristics" is not new. It can be mentioned that interest in this issue began in the mid-20th century in the United States. Researchers explored the relationship between the national characteristics of Axis powers, mainly Germany and Japan, and the use of military force.

The paradigm of "strategic culture" was introduced into academic discourse by Jack Snyder in his 1977 report, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations" [25, p. 8]. In this work, Snyder examined Soviet elites' behavior through the lens of a unique Soviet strategic culture, shaped by a specific worldview. Snyder defined "strategic culture" as a unique vision of security and military affairs formed through a set of ideals, emotional responses, and habitual behaviors acquired by members of the national strategic community over an extended period.

Expanding on this issue, Thomas Berger [8] specified the concept by introducing the term "military-political culture". This term refers to an element within broader political culture that consists of established beliefs and values impacting the interaction between society, national identity, and the military (as an institution) when making decisions about the use or non-use of force in international affairs. Charles Kupchan defines strategic culture as a nation's mindset for achieving security and well-being [19, p. 22].

A country's strategic culture has numerous sources and should be adaptable to the unique conditions of each state. These factors include geopolitical position, norms and traditions, perceptions of regional and international power balances, political systems, and power distribution (including the balance between military and civil structures). Over time, these elements become ingrained in collective memory and national identity through political narratives and historical heritage.

The formation of British strategic culture began when the British Empire was so vast that the sun never set on its borders. During this period, British strategic culture was based on traditional British conservatism, awareness of imperial status, and a desire to maintain the existing world order. Thanks to rapid industrialization and access to colonial resources, the British Empire was interested in maintaining the status quo and avoided risky strategies, engaging in them only when guaranteed advantages were present. This thinking prevailed for two centuries.

The Cold War era marked a process of rethinking British strategic thinking, which continues to this day. However, the state did not undergo radical changes in understanding its priorities. Losing its dominant global position forced Britain to pursue policies based on several key areas: firstly, close relations with the new world leader, the United States; secondly, maintaining its imperial status through the Commonwealth; and thirdly, a distinct approach to European integration.

The end of the Cold War brought a gradual shift in understanding British strategic culture. William Wallace noted that, under new conditions, British foreign policy needed a fresh sense of "rationality" since the disappearance of the Soviet threat removed the need for the old architecture of international and European security, which had been created in the context of bipolar confrontation.

This formed the basis for a new set of questions facing British elites:

(i) the first dilemma is related to debates on the country's regional alignment and its legacy as a "maritime" imperial power

(ii) the second dilemma concerns the necessity of prioritizing national sovereignty in foreign policy decisions versus delegating part of it to international frameworks within "special relationships" with the U.S. and the European community

(iii) the third dilemma block addresses the use of force in the implementation of foreign policy

(iv) the fourth dilemma deals with the role of international law in the existing system of relations.

The rise to power of New Labour marked an attempt to address these dilemmas through a comprehensive national security framework and a rethinking of the challenges outlined above.

In her memoirs, Clare Short, the Minister for International Development in Tony Blair's government, writes that Blair showed no interest in foreign policy before becoming party leader in 1994. He lacked

the desire to support a significant group of fellow party members who were deeply troubled by events starting in 1997 and called for more active state participation in the conflict [23, p. 76]. Blair's foreign policy advisor, John Sawers, stated that Blair's government's policy was a strategy developed over time, rather than a set of ideas with which he came to power [9, p. 550].

Tony Blair proposed a model for transforming the culture of strategic thinking in the state through the following interconnected categories, which constituted his personal belief system:

• enhancing the role of the liberal world within the existing system of international relations

• combining Britain's role as a leader of the liberal world and a flagship within the European community as part of it;

• preserving the primacy of national sovereignty while sharing responsibility among democratic countries for resolving global issues;

• deepening horizontal integration processes while preserving national characteristics and sovereignty in the Euro-Atlantic system of relations;

• interventionism as a means of defending the core values of liberal democracies;

• moralism as the foundation of "international law" for states within the liberal world.

Blair's 1999 Chicago speech can be considered a turning point that began bringing "Global Britain" back to the international stage. By proclaiming the idea of "global interdependence" the New Labour Party emphasized the uncertainty and potential danger of the international situation. In this context, Britain was assigned the role of one of the leaders responsible for supporting the process of addressing challenges that arose after the collapse of the bipolar system of relations. In 1998, the Security Defense Report provided an analysis of the British foreign policy environment, noting, among other things, that the effects of emerging local crises could potentially spread to other regions [20].

Clare Short stated that new thinking was crucial not only for Britain but for all nations, as closer economic integration brings risks that can impact not only the domestic situation of a single country but also the international environment as a whole [24]. The realistic approach to defining the concept of "national interest" within this framework needed to be reconsidered, as Tony Blair believed that global challenges require global solutions. Global solutions, in turn, require global alliances, and these cannot be built upon state-centric interests. Alliances should be founded on shared global values [1, p. 225].

The announced strategy began to be implemented through the concepts of "liberal interventionism" and "humanitarian interventions" – the most debated aspects of Blairism in theory and practice. As elements of the broader idea of "global interdependence," they also constitute a key component of Tony Blair's belief in the need to reconsider the concept of sovereignty within the modern international system, emphasizing the weakening of the principle of non-interference in other states' internal affairs due to two reasons: the closer link between the domestic and foreign policies of individual states on the one hand, and the interdependence of all states on the other. These elements of Blairism are typically the most criticized.

For example, Michael Ancram, a former shadow foreign secretary, was among those who criticized this position, stating, "Our role in international affairs should not be based on romantic dreams of healing the world, nor on unconditional support for U.S. policies, but on realism and what lies in Britain's national interests" [18, p. 13].

Simultaneously with his attempt to transform the elite's view on the United Kingdom's role on the international stage, Tony Blair sought to change their mindset, especially concerning responsibility and the need to act. The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of taking a proactive position without waiting for others' reactions, as it is unknown which risk might affect an actor's future actions [11]. He highlighted the emergence of a new type of warfare that compels action even when a threat may seem illusory and distant [3]. Such an interpretation undermines established norms of international law and somewhat diminishes traditional views on the term "national interest." Blair argued that if there is an opportunity to spread freedom, rule of law, and an open society, this should be considered a national interest [2]. Blair emphasized the need not just to resolve issues today, but to prevent them from arising in the first place. "The old world" could afford to wait, assess situations over time, and perhaps even refrain from intervening, but today states no longer have that option. Today, it is necessary to act when we know [3].

A consolidating component of Blair's new Labour foreign policy ideology was the concept of a "pivotal state", which he defined as being at the core of alliances shaping the world and its future. Through the idea of a "pivotal state," Blair aimed to move away from the realpolitik concept of a "great power" while justifying the UK's role not merely as a "middle power", especially considering its economic and military strength and its permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The alliances "shaping the world and its future" with Britain at their core primarily refer to NATO and the European Union. Britain's "pivotal" international position

highlights the importance of a foreign policy goal aimed at "bridging" the divided post-Cold War United States and Europe. Additionally, public opinion within the country and the international community were prepared to recognize that certain states have not only the right but the duty to intervene (referring to liberal interventionism).

The next transformed categories were those of "ally states" and "aggressor states", now viewed in terms of "members of the international community" and "rogue states", excluded from it. Typically, the latter category included authoritarian regimes that did not share liberal values and were capable of using hard power against their own population.

Early intervention was no longer merely a moral duty but also a direct interest, as today's interconnected world means financial, security, and cultural issues can no longer be contained within "traditional borders" of the Westphalian model of relations [5]. Political elites began to see globalization as a process that could make society more prosperous [22], yet also more vulnerable to external factors, forming a new strategic landscape [14]. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook outlined key principles to guide decisions on intervention participation:

- confidence in breaches of humanitarian law;
- exhaustion of all possible peaceful means of conflict resolution;
- assurance of long-term engagement capability and availability of conflict resolution tools;
- the use of force should align with stated goals and not serve hidden interests;
- preference for collective intervention participation and a UN Security Council mandate.

To implement these changes, Blair sought to harmonize the EU's and NATO's military capabilities to form the core of European and Euro-Atlantic security systems, emphasizing that all Alliance members should work to mitigate threats to its structure. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook underscored that NATO was the cornerstone of the security system not only for Britain but also for its allies. At the same time, the position on retaining "national control" over decision-making and operational planning remained dominant [20].

The 1999 White Paper by the British Ministry of Defence stated that NATO was crucial for the UK as it effectively supported British security interests. Only together with allies in Europe and North America could major future security threats be prevented [26].

The 1998 St. Malo Agreement shifted the security strategy development from the United States' central role, which dominated since the Cold War, toward autonomous European military capabilities. As noted by N. Gnesotto, at the St. Malo summit, Britain showed a change in its previously resistant stance toward including security within the EU's competencies and supported the development of a Common Security and Defence Policy. She further observed that Labour's new approach to security policy could dismantle political barriers that had hindered the Union from effectively addressing post-bipolar conflict outcomes [10].

The UK's exit from the EU became a decisive factor in reviving the idea of "Global Britain" in modern foreign policy, as it answered questions on the country's strategic culture. During a speech aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, Prime Minister Theresa May stated: "This is the biggest and most complex warship ever built for the Royal Navy… This ship is a symbol of the United Kingdom as a great global, maritime nation… Britain can be proud of this ship, and what it represents. It sends a clear signal that as Britain forges a new, positive, confident role for ourselves on the world stage in the years ahead, we are determined to remain a fully engaged global power, working closely with our friends and allies around the world" [16].

Brexit presents opportunities for a more flexible foreign policy while highlighting the risks of isolation and the need to strengthen new economic ties, especially amid strained EU relations. According to IR 2021, Britain seeks to avoid dependence on a single economic system, strengthening trade with India, Japan, and Australia as part of its effort to reduce the EU's influence on its economy.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 posed a significant test for the UK's foreign policy strategy, especially in the context of the "Global Britain" concept. Government documents, including the updated IR 2023 emphasize a strengthened focus on European security and support for collective security through close NATO cooperation. Britain has adjusted its priorities in response to growing threats from Russia, enhancing support for Ukraine as a commitment to defending democratic values and international law.

Outlined in the IR 2021, "Global Britain" reflects the country's ambition to strengthen its influence on the world stage, supporting an independent foreign policy focused on global markets and security partnerships beyond the EU. The strategy positions "Global Britain" as an ambitious approach seeking to restore the country's role in international structures, including the UN, NATO, and the Commonwealth. The "Global Britain" policy entails strengthening ties with traditional allies like the United States and expanding relations with countries in Asia and the Pacific.

According to British expert Malcolm Chalmers from the Royal United Services Institute, Russia's invasion highlighted the need for the UK to strengthen ties with European allies even after Brexit. He argues that while "Global Britain" emphasizes global ambitions, the war in Ukraine confirmed that European security remains central to the national interest.

In response to the crisis, the UK increased its military and financial support for Ukraine. According to the British Ministry of Defense, the UK has become one of the largest suppliers of arms to Ukraine, including NLAW missile systems and Challenger 2 tanks. This decision aligns with the updated "Global Britain" vision, reflecting a readiness to act independently and uphold a rules-based international order, consistent with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's statement that Britain would remain the "core of Euro-Atlantic security".

Researcher James Rogers from the Henry Jackson Society highlights that supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression is not only a moral duty but also an element of the UK's strategic positioning as a stabilizer in Europe and a defender of democratic nations against authoritarian regimes. This approach also reinforces London's global ambitions, underscoring its role in countering security threats with global repercussions. Nonetheless, an analysis of the UK's actions in supporting Ukraine shows a clear adherence to alliance policy logic, primarily in partnership with the United States [21].

All this confirms the thesis of Paul Cornish and his "Strategic Culture in the United Kingdom". The author mentions that the UK's alliance with the United States is an enduring feature both of the national policy discourse (in the form of a seemingly interminable discussion as to whether or not the UK has a 'special relationship' with the US) and in more practical terms: US and UK conventional armed forces have deployed together on operations and train together, often using similar equipment; their respective special or elite forces co-operate closely; and British armed forces do not contemplate undertaking large military operations other than in association with their US allies. Furthermore, the depth of the intelligence relationship between the two countries is unrivalled elsewhere, and the UK's submarine-based nuclear deterrent force is the product of co-operative arrangements with the US which have lasted for more than 50 years [8].

The update to the Integrated Review by the Sunak government marks a shift to the more competitive international political landscape. Russia is consistently identified as the most significant threat, with clear prioritization of support for Ukraine.

In its approach to China, London positions itself in solidarity with its allies, designating the country as an "epoch-defining challenge" to the rules-based international order, while still allowing for collaboration on multilateral matters. The core of this strategic reassessment focuses on the rising global competition that the UK and its Western partners must navigate.

To address these threats, the United Kingdom is emphasizing its partnerships and adjusting its geographic priorities. London is particularly focused on the Euro-Atlantic region, aiming to establish itself as a crucial actor in European security. The UK has built considerable credibility in Poland, the Baltic States, Sweden, Finland, and Ukraine – especially in contrast to Germany and France, which have been more cautious in their actions concerning nations bordering Russia.

In this context, the IR23 also reallocates the significance of the UK's European partnerships, with Germany being given a less pivotal role in security policy, while relationships with Poland, the Baltic states, and Ukraine are strengthened. Notably, there is an emphasis on cooperation with France, particularly in reference to the Indo-Pacific region. Concurrently, the United Kingdom is solidifying its presence in the Indo-Pacific through AUKUS, its engagement as a dialogue partner with ASEAN states, and gaining approval to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. The Indo-Pacific region, therefore, is becoming a fundamental element of British foreign policy, primarily aimed at enhancing its partnership with the United States.

Thus, we can draw the following conclusion. The strategic culture of Great Britain today is primarily determined by the geographical location of the state, the historical status of Britain as an empire, on the one hand, and the loss of this status after the Second World War and its transformation into the status of a middle power state. This gives rise to four dilemmas in the British culture of strategic thinking:

(i) the first dilemma is related to debates on the country's regional alignment and its legacy as a "maritime" imperial power

(ii) the second dilemma concerns the necessity of prioritizing national sovereignty in foreign policy decisions versus delegating part of it to international frameworks within "special relationships" with the U.S. and the European community

(iii) the third dilemma block addresses the use of force in the implementation of foreign policy

(v) the fourth dilemma deals with the role of international law in the existing system of relations.

Tony Blair's idea of "global interdependence" and Boris Johnson's and Rishi Sunak's approaches to the interpretation of the concept of 'Global Britain" offer the British political establishment a solution to this dilemma, which concerns the return of the imperial status of the state on the international arena, as well as a clear understanding of the contemporary international environment and the distribution of rejected directions collaboration for Britain in a global world. The key "pillars" on which this concept is built are: "stronger, safer and more prosperous", "an open and stable international order", "security for our citizens/protection of our people, our homeland and our democracy", "protection of the integrity of our nation against state threats", "the terrorist threat in Great Britain remains all too real", "scientific and technological superpower", "he transformation of Great Britain as a global center of services, digital technologies and data". The use of this approach in practice is an interesting material for further research.

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Прихненко М. І. «Глобальна Британія» і британська стратегічна культура: від Тоні Блера до сучасності

Референдум щодо Brexit у Сполученому Королівстві в 2016 році став поворотним моментом не лише у формуванні та реалізації британської зовнішньої політики, але й у відносинах Великої Британії з давніми партнерами та союзниками на європейській і світовій політичній арені. Важливо й те, що ідея «Глобальної Британії», що з'явилася як ключова концепція під час прем'єрства Терези Мей наново актуалізувала питання стратегічної культури в державі як узгодженої системи цінностей, розуміння національних інтересів та бачення місця держави на міжнародній арені. Однією з ключових проблем британської стратегічної культури є ідея «кризи Британії», яка розпочалася після закінчення Другої світової війни і пов'язана із втратою державою імперського статусу. З цього моменту імперативи мислення британських еліт в процесі розбудови зовнішньої політикою характеризуються невизначеністю через наявність різних бачень на місце держави на міжнародній арені та шляху її розвитку типу «європейська чи англосаксонська ідентичність», «в якій мірі держава може делегувати частину свого суверенітету міждержавним інституціям?», «яке місце Співдружності націй у політичній стратегії держави?» тощо. Концепція «глобальної Британії» проголошена у 2021 році актуалізувала потребу в дослідженні саме цього вектору діяльності держави, як спроби подолати зазначену «кризу», концептуалізувати існуючий зовнішньополітичний курс та окреслити чіткі критерії планування для британської стратегічної культури. Стаття фокусується на дослідженні ідеї «глобальної взаємозалежності» запропонованої Тоні Блером після закінчення холодної війни та окресленому концепті "Global Britain" в Integrated Review у 2021 та 2023 роках. Автором досліджується вплив запропонованих ідей та концепції на вирішення чотирьох дилем британської стратегічної культури: (i) дебати щодо регіонального розташування держави та її спадщини як «морської» імперії; (ii) дебати щодо пріоритетності дотримання національного суверенітету та делегування його частини міжнародним структурам; (iii) питання застосування сили в реалізації зовнішньої політики; (iv) роль міжнародного права в існуючій системі відносин.

Ключові слова*: британська стратегічна культура, глобальна взаємозалежність, глобальна Британія.*