



"It's a good time to be a policy analyst, not so good to be a policy maker"; so said Professor Michael Clarke, just before he ended his tenure as Director General of the Royal United Services Institute in 2015. With this book he and his co-author Helen Ramscar, have taken a deep dive into the whirlpool of contemporary British policy making and come up with a real pearl, says Nick Watts, an analyst himself, on the next page.

Contemporary British policy making has become mesmerized by the Brexit effect. This book enables the reader to regain a sense of perspective. It combines the academic rigour one would expect from a professor and an associate fellow of RUSI (Ramscar), with a very readable text. Clarke and Ramscar step back from the immediate concerns of policy makers, to set the context in which Britain will find itself in the decade to come. They also cast their intellectual net wider than the usual debate about how much should be spent on the defence budget.

The world of the 2020s will be a very different place from that of the end of the 20th century; such is the rate of change in technology and the shift in economic power. The analogue era is now long past; the digital era means things move faster, and policy makers have to navigate a constantly evolving world. The era of the post war 'rules based international order' is changing. Demagogues now vie for the acclamation of the people who are disillusioned with the 'Washington consensus'. The developing world is transforming into emerging economies, who no longer accept the benign world order imposed upon them by the victors of 1945.

So what does all this mean for British security? The US politician T P 'Tip' O'Neil once said; "in

politics, everything affects everything". It will be difficult to entirely detach security policy from the wider economic competition we are now seeing. The result of the 2019 General Election will provide an answer of sorts; the medium term will be determined by how Britain re-sets its relationship with its closest neighbours in the EU. This in turn will be affected by the result of the 2020 Presidential election in the USA. If Europe takes a strongly anti-American line, then Britain's negotiations with the EU and with the USA will be fraught.

This situation will not be new to many British policy makers, except for the rise of competing centres of power and influence around the world. The levers of both soft and hard power which have worked previously may not be quite so effective in the future. Many of Britain's Commonwealth partners in Asia and Africa are feeling the effect of the Belt and Road policy in their neighbourhoods. How will this affect their voting behaviour at the UN, or the likelihood that they will choose a British partner for their next development project? How might they feel about efforts to promote closer defence and security links?

Clarke and Ramscar's analysis of how Britain formulates its security policy goes wider than the conventional 'defence policy' approach; they begin with an understanding of the state of Britain today. As well as international turmoil, Britain is in turmoil too. The Brexit vote in 2016 uncovered a society not at ease with itself. The potential break-up of the Union, if Scotland secedes, also infects the British body politic. So the first step to having a credible security policy is to have a country that is socially cohesive and confident in itself. This does not just mean feel good platitudes from politicians, but real measures to address the tensions inherent across what the authors call the 'Five Kingdoms' of the UK.

The authors recommend that Britain will need to undertake a 'strategic surge' in resources for at least five years in diplomacy, defence, aid, intelligence, research and development to give meaning to 'Global Britain'. This will require an additional £20 billion a year through to 2025/6. This figure will enable Britain to bolster its thinly spread resources, in an era when other powers are investing heavily in defence expenditure as well as into the business of 'influence'.

This book should be delivered to the new intake of MPs who will take their seats in December. In politics there is a saying that 'the squeaky wheel gets the oil'. The thinking behind Britain's Defence and Security policy and its place in the world has been squeaking loudly since 2016, but Westminster and Whitehall have tuned it out. This book is a timely reminder of the changing

world we live in, and that it needs some serious thinking about.

Tipping Point; Britain, Brexit and security in the 2020s. Prof Michael Clarke and Helen Ramscar.  
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