Twitter Thread by Alessio Patalano



Alessio Patalano
@alessionaval

Two excellent questions at the end of a very sensible thread summarising the post-Brexit UK FP debate. My own take at attempting to offer an answer - ahead of the IR is as follow:

> Both the @ChathamHouse and @Policy_Exchange reports are excellent and leave a healthy tension to the UK foreign policy debate. I\u2019m left with two questions that won\u2019t go away. Is the first underestimating how the world has changed. Is the second overestimating Britain\u2019s capacity?
>
> — Ben Judah (@b_judah) January 11, 2021

1. The two versions have a converging point: a tilt to the Indo-pacific doesn't preclude a role as a convening power on global issues;
2. On the contrary, it underwrites the credibility for leadership on global issues, by seeking to strike two points:

A. Engaging with a part of the world in which world order and global issues are central to security, prosperity, and - not least - values;
B. Propelling the UK towards a more diversified set of economic, political, and security ties;

3. The tilt towards the Indo-Pacific whilst structurally based on a realist perception of the world, it is also deeply multilateral. Central to it is the notion of a Britain that is a convening power.
4. It is as a result a notion that stands on the ability to renew diplomacy;

5. It puts in relation to this a premium on under-utilised formats such as FPDA, 5Eyes, and indeed the Commonwealth - especially South Pacific islands;
6. It equally puts a premium on exploring new bilateral and multilateral formats. On former, Japan, Australia. On latter, Quad;

7. Against this, the effort will be to look beyond longstanding ties (US and NATO) and understanding how far to push new relationships with countries like India, Vietnam, South Korea;
8. All of this based on a prosperity project drawing upon Asia's emerging energy trade formats.

Truss announcement that the UK intends to apply to CPTPP Is a clear indication of this;
9. Because of the above, capabilities is an issue only if the UK's tilt is seen outside of its crucially networked nature. The UK will enable and convene;

10. This leads to the capabilities question. The IP tilt requires a maritime strategy upgraded to the 21sr cent: one in which maritime capabilities converge with cyber and space ones - the 3 essential moving parts of a future global commons. The recent MoD package does just that;

11. In all, the debate that @b_judah so nicely presented in his thread is also, in a way, a debate over the soul of the UK: a soul torned between the reluctance to leave the investment of the last century behind and the risks in the one needed for the next one to work;

12. Fwiw, what I think is admirable is the fact that this is truly a debate about the Indo-Pacific and not just about China. It is a positive debate. It is a shaping debate. One the rightfully sits in conversation with the equally important China policy one. The game is on.