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What is a 'National Strategy for the Next Generations'?



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The time is ripe for a new approach to designing a long-term, outward-facing national strategy for the UK out to the middle of the century. The national strategy we need is one that will shape and define our country's role in the world after a crossroads moment in our national story, given Brexit and COVID-19.

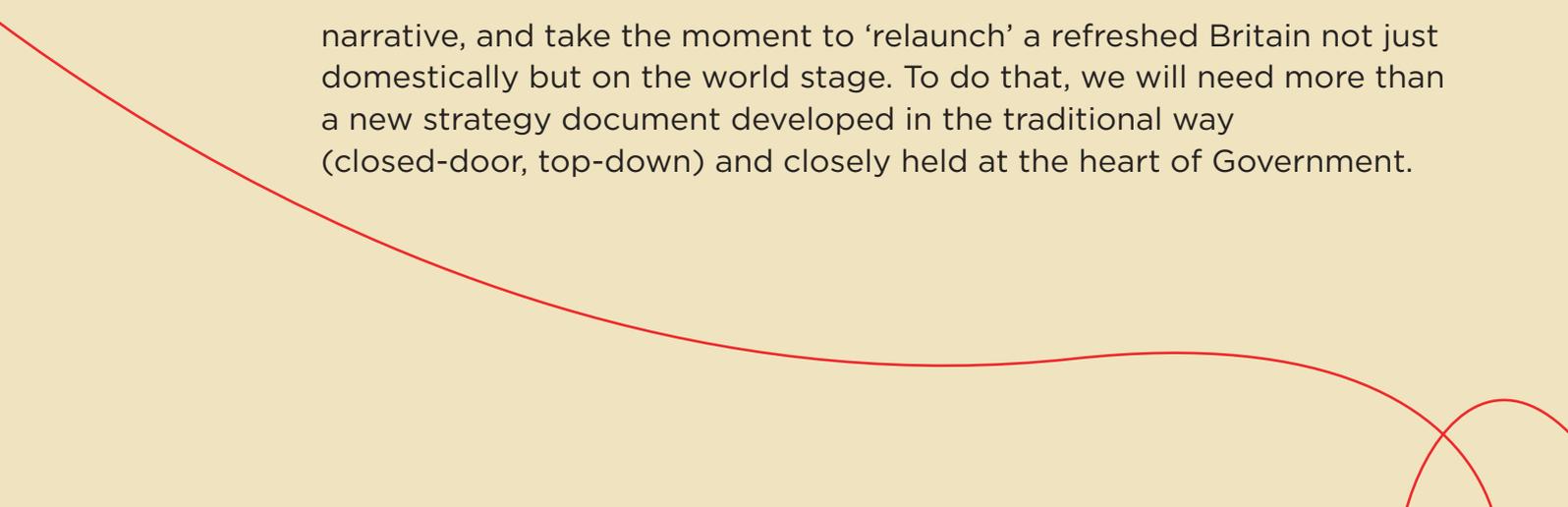
There is a pressing national need and, based on consultations, both inside and outside HMG, a strong interest in:

- thinking from first principles about Britain's role in the world; and
- designing a new long-term national vision and positioning that puts at its heart the needs, wellbeing and interests of future generations of Britons (young and old alike).

The country — all generations, all ages — have jointly experienced a period of uncertainty unprecedented in recent decades. Faced with existential risk and an intense collective experience, many people are more willing to:

- look beyond short-term self-interest towards future generations' long-term interests; and
- move beyond divisive narratives and re-hashing ideological interpretations of history to focus on a better shared future for the generations that come next.

There is a growing sense that we need to collectively build 'a new normal' after the COVID-19 crisis with a more uniting national narrative, and take the moment to 'relaunch' a refreshed Britain not just domestically but on the world stage. To do that, we will need more than a new strategy document developed in the traditional way (closed-door, top-down) and closely held at the heart of Government.



Our approach

Definitions: When we talk about ‘national strategy’ we mean this in the widest sense – not just a moment for HMG to develop ‘a national strategy’ on paper or in concept, but a moment when we set the overall orientation and direction of travel for the country’s future direction. Any good ‘future-ready’ strategy must also be ‘emergent’ – capable of change as conditions change.

Our approach has three interdependent features: an integral role in the strategy-formation process for foresight, applied history and public participation. The combination is distinctive:

The discipline of strategic foresight.

Taking a systematic, analytical approach to explore possible futures for Britain’s role in the world in the context of an uncertain and complex global environment, shaped by technological disruptions and other external drivers.

Applied history

Building in an even-handed appreciation of the impact and lessons of Britain’s global past; applying, where appropriate and with due care, historical insight; and developing a deeper understanding of global perceptions of the UK

A central role for the public.

Engaging broadly and deeply to explore the future and the past to help the UK build a new national strategy using a diversity of fresh views and with greater legitimacy.

This programme has been initiated through a collaboration between the School of International Futures (SOIF) and the KCL Centre for Grand Strategy, with support and input from the centre of government, and key civil society and participation experts.

SOIF brings international expertise and networks in intergenerational policy-making, government foresight, and participative, emergent national strategy development. KCL academic rigour in tackling questions of Grand Strategy and ‘applied history’.

Outcomes

Starting now, we will assemble a coalition of interested parties who share our belief and commitment to develop a new kind of national strategy for the UK, and to start a new independent nation-wide, participative conversation about Britain's future place in the world.

This coalition will include organisations and groups working in national strategy, industry, tech, civil society, civic participation and public engagement, community organising (particularly representing younger, less-heard voices), and media - a wider constituency than is usually involved in policymaking and strategy development.

a

Co-create, design and draw on global best practice to run a facilitated foresight public dialogue and build a national vision, systematically exploring uncertainty, scenarios, and strategic options, reaching the widest possible public and informed by expert inputs.

b

Explore insights from applied history insights and alternative futures for strategy-making today. Including through a series of seminars run by KCL and futures workshops and outreach run by SOIF).

c

Build momentum behind Government engagement in this approach. We will take key HMG stakeholders 'on the journey, building on existing capabilities and interest. Our findings and recommendations will include those for enhancing HMG machinery and capability, and strengthening the network.

d

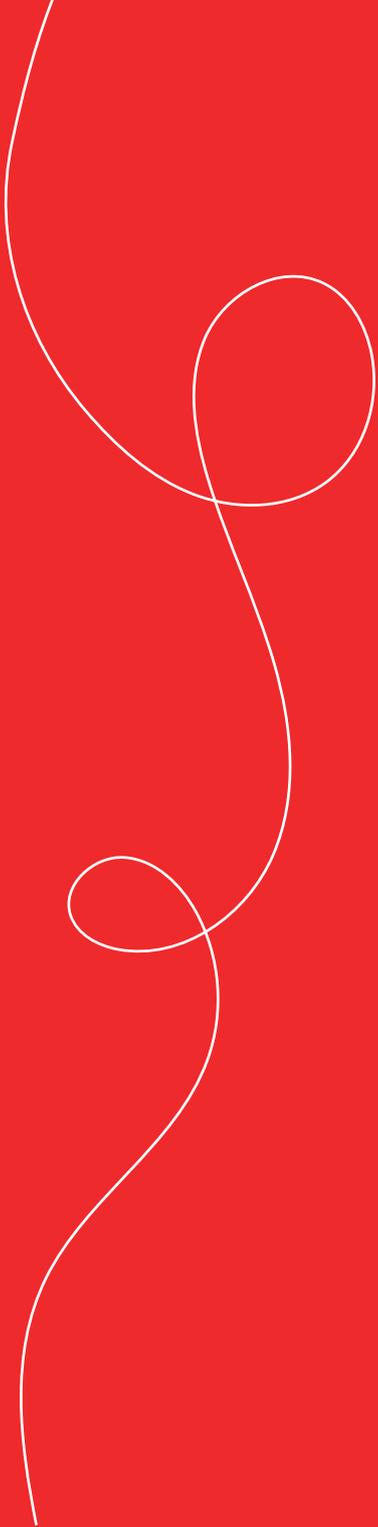
Inform the Integrated Review process being led from the Cabinet Office, and (more widely) future national strategy development processes, including by building an enduring network of stakeholder and groups interested in this approach to national strategy.

Why ‘next generations’?

Our vision is of a national strategy for Britain’s future in the world that actively designs in the (future) needs, wellbeing and interests of future generations (young and old alike). This isn’t about pitting generations against each other. Terminology differs (SOIF have worked on intergenerational fairness for Portugal’s Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Vision 2040 for Government of Oman, and future generations with the Welsh Government; here we talk in terms of the next generations). The key point is to put the needs of future citizens at the heart of the decisions we make today.

Get involved

Let us know if you’d like to join our discussions, participate at a strategic level on guiding the project, or contribute in different ways (contact Sophie Middlemiss on sophie@soif.org.uk).



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