# Keir Starmer’s national security stance undermines Labour’s credibility on defence spending



In his inaugural address during last year’s General Election campaign, Keir Starmer posed a question designed to address the deep-rooted concerns of swing voters regarding the reliability of the Labour Party: “Do I trust them with my money, our borders, our security?” His affirmative response, claiming to have irrevocably transformed Labour, now seems naïve in light of his recent handling of national security issues, raising significant doubts about his leadership.

The past 48 hours have seen alarm bells ringing. Starmer, who positioned himself as a stabilising force compared to Jeremy Corbyn, is now confronted with the uncomfortable truth that Labour continues to falter on security matters. Defence Secretary John Healey's assertion that the UK's minimum defence spending should reach 3% of GDP was swiftly undermined by Treasury officials claiming it was merely an ‘ambition’. Starmer’s own dismissal of any immediate financial commitment has many questioning his government’s seriousness about defence, with his cautionary words appearing more like evasion.

Unlike Corbyn, whose foreign policy views, albeit misguided, stemmed from genuine conviction, Starmer's fluctuating stance presents a concerning lack of resolve. His rhetoric about threats from Russia and China sounds robust, yet it is undermined by his hesitance to translate words into actionable commitments. Recently, he described the geopolitical landscape as a ‘generational challenge’, yet when pressed to articulate a serious defence strategy, his efforts have emerged as muddled and tentative.

This vacillation is particularly worrying against a backdrop of increasing global threats. The 2025 Strategic Defence Review aims to recalibrate military readiness in the face of significant threats posed by Russia and China, including plans for a sizeable expansion of the Royal Navy and investment in modern warfare technologies. However, critics are right to question how this ambitious programme will be funded, especially given the inevitable consequences for other critical public services.

With Starmer's announcement of a potential £68 billion investment to modernise the armed forces, the implications are stark: an aim to elevate the UK’s nuclear submarine fleet to twelve and construct new munitions factories. This retrogressive approach hints at a Cold War-era mentality while lacking the detailed funding timeline that military experts insist is essential for public confidence.

The glaring absence of a coherent, funded strategy has not gone unnoticed. By painting a picture of vague threats without presenting a decisive plan, Starmer risks emboldening adversaries who will inevitably scrutinise the UK’s readiness to respond assertively to aggression. His call to action rings hollow amidst uncertainties about funding, potentially projecting an image of Britain as hesitant and indecisive in the face of rising hostilities.

This pivotal moment could redefine both Starmer’s leadership and his claims of having transformed Labour. He committed to prioritising national security in his manifesto, promising a comprehensive Strategic Defence Review. However, the absence of a definitive funding timeline raises troubling questions of political credibility, suggesting that Labour’s reassurances on security may merely be empty promises.

As political dynamics shift, the perception of the Labour Party’s capacity to safeguard national interests is increasingly under scrutiny. The stakes have never been higher, not just for Starmer or Labour, but for the UK’s geopolitical stature. It remains to be seen whether he can re-evaluate this critical aspect of his leadership at a time when resolute action is essential against the backdrop of international instability.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14776559/DAN-HODGES-Keir-Starmer-lie-Prime-Minister-lifetime-Labour-War.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/db21c372-0dbb-45c7-992b-109658d87d53> - The UK's 2025 Strategic Defence Review outlines a major shift in military priorities towards 'warfighting readiness' amid growing threats from Russia and China. The Royal Navy is the primary beneficiary, with plans to expand its fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines from seven to twelve under the Aukus partnership by the late 2030s, marking nearly 50% of projected weapons spending. The navy's focus will revert to North Atlantic defense, echoing Cold War priorities. The Army's size will remain at 73,000 regular troops, but aims to boost effectiveness through technology, including a £1bn investment in AI-driven battlefield targeting systems. The review hints at potential tactical nuclear capabilities, though without confirming plans. It also promises closer collaboration with industry, a reform of procurement processes, and investments in advanced manufacturing, drones, and long-range weapons. Major defense contractors such as BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, and Lockheed Martin stand to benefit significantly. Despite being a 10-year plan, past patterns suggest it may be reviewed sooner due to shifting geopolitical realities. The primary focus has shifted from the Indo-Pacific to the North Atlantic, with Russia identified as the most pressing threat.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/uk-expand-submarine-fleet-defence-review-calls-warfighting-readiness-2025-06-01/> - The UK government has unveiled a transformative defence strategy aimed at addressing emerging threats from Russia, nuclear risks, and cyber-attacks by investing in modern technologies like drones and digital warfare. Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced the largest sustained boost in defence spending since the Cold War, pledging to increase it to 2.5% of GDP by 2027 and aiming for 3% in the next parliament. The strategy prioritises technological capabilities over troop numbers and includes plans to expand the fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines, build at least six new munitions plants, procure 7,000 long-range weapons, and enhance cyber capabilities through a new Cyber and Electromagnetic Command. Despite the army's historically small size of 70,860 full-time trained soldiers, the government emphasized readiness and deterrence. The Strategic Defence Review, developed with experts like former NATO chief George Robertson and ex-White House adviser Fiona Hill, recommends prioritizing personnel growth post-2029 depending on funding. Critics, including the opposition Conservatives, questioned the financial viability of the plan. Defence Secretary John Healey emphasized adapting to modern warfare trends, citing lessons from Ukraine. The announcement boosted shares in defence firms such as BAE Systems and Rolls Royce. The policy supports NATO and aims to boost the UK’s economy and job market.
4. <https://www.elpais.com/internacional/2025-06-02/el-reino-unido-anuncia-la-construccion-de-12-submarinos-nucleares-para-enfrentar-las-nuevas-amenazas.html> - El Reino Unido, liderado por el primer ministro laborista Keir Starmer, ha anunciado la construcción de 12 submarinos nucleares SSN-AUKUS como parte de una nueva estrategia de defensa centrada en la preparación para la guerra y la protección del territorio nacional. Esta decisión, incluida en la Evaluación de Defensa Estratégica, responde a amenazas crecientes como la guerra en Europa, ciberataques, y la agresividad rusa. Actualmente, el Reino Unido cuenta con nueve submarinos nucleares, siete de la clase Astute con misiles Trident, que constituyen su disuasión nuclear. El proyecto, en colaboración con Australia y EE. UU. bajo la alianza AUKUS, contempla una inversión superior a 80.000 millones de euros en la próxima década, incluyendo 18.000 millones para mantener la disuasión nuclear continua en el mar y 1.800 millones para seis nuevas fábricas de munición. La estrategia también propone mejorar las Fuerzas Armadas y modernizar el Establecimiento de Armas Atómicas. Se espera aumentar el gasto en defensa al 3% del PIB, aunque sin fecha concreta. El documento de defensa, preparado por el ex secretario general de la OTAN George Robertson, identifica a Rusia como una amenaza directa y a China como un desafío constante.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/347608084fa80b10aa212a7f006bd053> - Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a significant boost to the United Kingdom’s defense capabilities, marking the biggest changes since the Cold War. In response to ongoing threats from Russia and global instability, including the reelection of U.S. President Donald Trump, the initiative includes building up to 12 nuclear-powered submarines through the AUKUS alliance, expanding munitions factories, investing in long-range weapons, drones, and a 'hybrid Navy,' and creating a UK cyber command. A new home guard is also planned to protect critical infrastructure. The review, led by George Robertson, includes 62 recommendations that the government will adopt, focusing on land, air, sea, and cyber threats. The defense budget aims to reach 2.5% of GDP by 2027 and potentially 3% by 2034, though funding remains uncertain. The initiative aims to reassure NATO allies and respond to U.S. criticism of European defense spending while signaling a commitment to collective security. Despite criticisms regarding the lack of detailed funding plans, the strategy is intended to transform Britain into a modern defense-ready nation.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/britain-plans-least-six-new-weapons-factories-defence-review-2025-05-31/> - Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a £1.5 billion ($2 billion) initiative to construct at least six new weapons and explosives factories in the UK, as part of broader efforts to prepare the nation for potential conflict with advanced military states. This move precedes the release of a comprehensive Strategic Defence Review, which aims to reassess threats and required military capabilities. Starmer emphasized the growing global tensions, particularly citing Russia’s actions in Ukraine and its alliances with Iran and North Korea. Defence Minister John Healey said the investment sends a strong signal to Moscow and will help revitalise the UK’s economy. The Ministry of Defence plans to procure up to 7,000 British-made long-range weapons, bringing total munitions spending to approximately £6 billion within the current parliamentary term. Starmer’s government, in power since July 2024, intends to raise defense spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, targeting 3% in the longer term. Additional initiatives include significant investments in artificial intelligence for battlefield enhancements and £1.5 billion to improve military housing. Reports also suggest interest in acquiring U.S.-made tactical nuclear-capable fighter jets, though the MoD has not confirmed this.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/47947223-7b91-47c9-956f-c22115dc7e22> - A new UK strategic defence review recommends an investment of approximately £68 billion to modernise its military in the face of evolving global threats and technological advancements. The review outlines plans to enhance the armed forces with drones, autonomous vehicles, AI, and advanced weaponry while maintaining traditional capabilities such as nuclear warheads, submarines, and fighter jets. It proposes significant expenditures, including £15 billion on nuclear warheads, development of up to 12 Aukus submarines, and procurement of F-35 and GCAP sixth-generation fighters. The government has pledged to raise defence spending from 2.3% to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, with a longer-term goal of reaching 3%, though no firm timeline has been set. The review emphasises digital capabilities and learning from Ukraine’s recent warfare experiences, aiming to dramatically increase the army’s lethality without expanding troop numbers. Accepted by the government, the 62 recommendations could challenge public investment in other sectors. Analysts warn that further fiscal trade-offs may be required to meet the ambitious defence spending targets.