

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

SECURITY & DEFENCE PLUS

LONDON
DEFENCE
CONFERENCE

2025





ABOUT SECURITY & DEFENCE PLS

Security & Defence PLS is the flagship program of PLS Alliance, a global partnership which combines the strengths of three leading research universities on three continents – Arizona State University, King's College London, and the University of New South Wales – to solve global challenges. Security & Defence PLS deepens this partnership, advancing research, education, and policy to support statecraft in the spirit of the AUKUS trilateral agreement.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is a privilege to present this annual report for Security & Defence PLS (S&D+), reflecting a year of consolidation, growth and sharpened strategic purpose.

Over the past twelve months, S&D+ has continued to mature as a genuinely trilateral enterprise linking Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Our core proposition remains clear: to bridge policy, academia, industry, and practitioners to generate practical, decision-relevant insight for an increasingly contested security environment.

In a year marked by accelerating geopolitical risk, technological disruption and pressure on national resilience, that mission has only become more urgent.

Operationally, we strengthened our foundations. Our research portfolio expanded across deterrence, force design, emerging technologies and sovereign capability, with particular emphasis on AUKUS, Indo-Pacific security and workforce development.

We deepened engagement with defence, government and industry partners, ensuring our work is informed by real-world challenges rather than abstract theory. Importantly, S&D+ continued to invest in education and leadership development, supporting the next generation of security professionals while connecting them directly to senior decision-makers.

This year also demonstrated the value of trusted networks. Through flagship initiatives such as the Athena Series, the Future Security Forum with New America and the Future Security Initiative, the Indo-Pacific Security Forum in Hawaii, and our joint conference with Kyoto University, as well as policy discussions with the governments of the UK, US, Japan, and Australia, S&D+ provided safe, credible spaces for frank discussion across national and institutional boundaries. These conversations, often off the record but always consequential, are central to building shared understanding and strategic alignment among allies.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of our partner universities, sponsors, Joint Standing Committee members and the outstanding S&D+ team. Their professionalism, intellectual rigour and willingness to challenge assumptions remain our greatest strengths.

Looking ahead, S&D+ will focus on impact: more planned research and collaboration in 2026, closer alignment with national and partner priorities, and a continued emphasis on translating ideas into action.

In an era where security and prosperity are inseparable, S&D+ stands ready to contribute.

Brigadier (Ret.) Dr Ian Langford, DSC and Bars
Executive Director, Security & Defence PLS



EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

PORTFOLIO EXPANSION

New short courses were added to the Security & Defence PLuS education portfolio, expanding topical coverage and academic depth.

+8
Online Short Courses

31
Total Online Short Courses

ENGAGEMENT

Growing demand driven by digital visibility and integration with the S&D+ ecosystem.

2,500
Course referrals from the S&D+ website

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



Introduction to Radioactivity, Radiation, Fission, and Nuclear Materials
Foundations of Naval Propulsion Reactors, Nuclear Weapons and Nonproliferation



Ethics and Decision-Making in Modern Warfare
Ethics and Leadership
Introduction to the Just War Tradition
Military Healthcare Ethics



Mission Engineering Integration
Strategic Foresight: Thinking About Security

EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS



MBAX SECURITY & DEFENCE PLuS

A new UNSW Business School MBAX (Security & Defence) program was launched, designed and delivered by the Australian Graduate School of Management and UNSW Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), in partnership with S&D+.

Learners explore a broad range of subjects from international relations and military strategy to financial management and economics.

Key Features:

100% Online

Flexible Program

Designed for working professionals

Business-focused electives + Defence and strategy courses



UNSW
SYDNEY



NEW EDUCATION MARKETING VIDEO



IN DEVELOPMENT...

King's MA International Security & Policy
Security & Defence PLuS Indo-Pacific
Foundations Course

RESEARCH & PARTNERSHIPS HIGHLIGHTS



Track 1.5 Dialogue on Emerging Space Norms (1–2 December, Washington DC) seed grant team collaboration with Meridian International Center



DARPA Contract - Ethical Readiness of Autonomous Systems

UNSW and ASU were awarded a multi-year contract through DARPA's ASIMOV program to pioneer new research in military ethics and autonomous technologies. The project *Adversarial Generative Ethics for Autonomous Weapon Systems*, was supported by S&D+.

UK Government AUKUS Audit

S&D+ provided input to the HMG AUKUS Audit led by UK Government AUKUS Advisor Sir Stephen Lovegrove. We received a mention in the final report: "UKRI funding should be identified for bespoke AUKUS initiatives such as "Security PLuS" between Kings College London, Arizona State University and University New South Wales to support an enhanced national awareness of AUKUS and a more public informed public debate."

World in Transition Programme

World in Transition is a multidisciplinary research and engagement programme on Australian statecraft and national preparedness, funded by a UNSW Canberra internal strategic grant. Developed with S&D+ partner Professor Ryan Shaw from ASU, it convenes policymakers, academics, and industry to advance understanding of resilience, vulnerability, and strategic competition.

US-Japan Foundation

Supported by S&D+, ASU colleagues received funding to run a two-wave survey experiment of security attitudes in Japan. The project, *The Microfoundations of Japanese Public Support for the US-Japan Security Relationship*, is led by Associate Professor Thorin Wright, Dr Fabian Neuner and Dr Cana Kim.

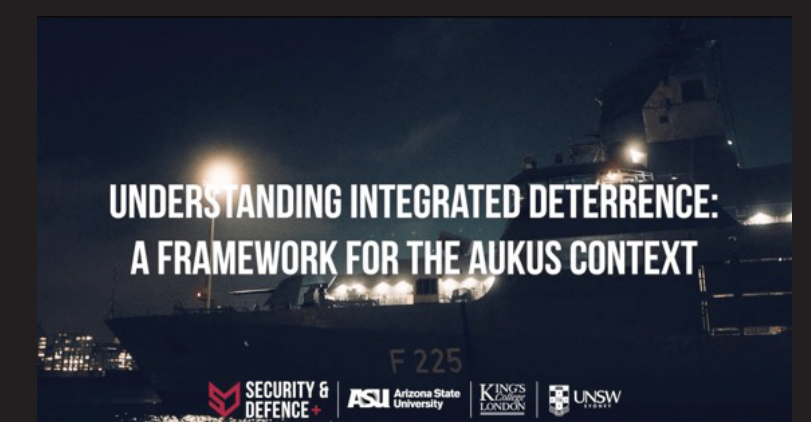
Dr Ian Langford – Australian Defence Engagement

S&D+ Executive Director Dr Ian Langford played a key role supporting UNSW Canberra's defence engagement, including the Australian Army Future Threat Symposium, delivery of counterinsurgency education for the Department of Defence, and the Regional Intelligence Analyst Symposium convening Indo-Pacific analysts and policymakers.

S&D+ SEED GRANT SCHEME

Three Projects Awarded Second-Round Seed Funding

We awarded a second year of seed funding to three standout projects originally supported through the inaugural S&D+ Seed Grant Scheme. This second round helps teams move toward sustainable funding pathways and/or commercialisation.



RESEARCH & PARTNERSHIPS HIGHLIGHTS



Professor Wyn Bowen, Head of the School of Security Studies and S&D+ Lead at King's College London, at the London Defence Conference



Eight New Research Collaborations Awarded Seed Grants

Eight innovative research collaborations were awarded S&D+ seed grant funding for projects spanning critical areas, from space and artificial intelligence to advanced manufacturing and public opinion on nuclear policy. The funding enabled in-person meetings and the development of a white paper, supporting the earliest stages of academic-led research and helping projects establish a strong foundation for future development.

Workshops and events supported through the scheme included the *Electoral Foreign Interference Workshop* (Phoenix / online, 19 November), the *Materials for Security and Defence Symposium* (Sydney, 27 November), and the *Semiconductor Supply Chain across AUKUS Partners* workshop (Canberra, 28 November).

Project teams also contributed to public debate through thought leadership, including an article for *The Conversation* examining how efforts to “democratise space” raise critical questions around sustainability and sovereignty.



LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

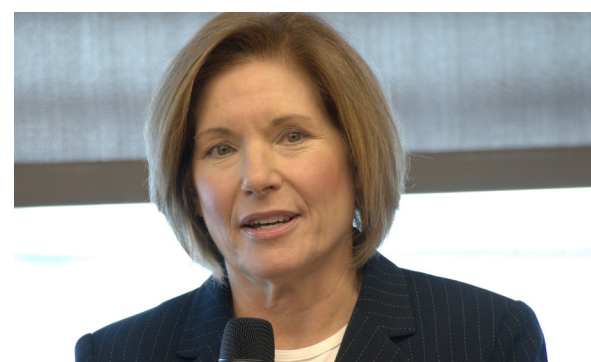


Dr Thorin Wright, Dr Ian Langford, Dr Chris Howard, Lauren Mellows, and Charlie Bailey at the Athena Series, Phoenix

The Athena Series: Women in Strategy Conference Phoenix, 11 March



We hosted the second Athena Series event at ASU, bringing together women from across the military, government, academia, and industry to explore the evolving trends, challenges and opportunities in their fields.



Keynote: Retired US Army General Laura J. Richardson, Former Commander of US Southern Command



Global Power Dynamics, Grand Strategy, and Gender Perspectives panel with Professor Miki Kittilson, Dr Lily McElwee, Professor Candace Rondeaux, Brig Gen (Ret) Kim Field



Fireside chat: Dr Evelyn Farkas, McCain Institute, and Professor Linda McKie, King's College London

The Athena Series: Women in Strategy Conference Canberra, 7 April



The third event in the series convened some of Australia's most influential leaders and expert voices in strategy, and security and defence to reflect, challenge, and imagine a more inclusive future in these fields.



Women's Leadership and the Critical Challenges of our Time panel with Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness CSC, Australia's National Cyber Security Coordinator



Pioneering Leadership in Strategy, Security, and Defence panel with Professor Verity Firth AM, Jacinta Carroll, Danielle Cave, Justine Greig, and Dr Cathy Moloney



Women's Pathways into Defence and Inclusive Military Reform panel with Jennifer Parker, Rear Admiral Letitia Van Stralen AM, CSC, RAN, Brigadier Caitlin Langford, and Susan Hutchinson

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

DEFENCE CONFERENCE



British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer at King's College London



AmCham Alliance Summit 16-21 March, New York and DC

Dr Ian Langford joined a delegation of 25 senior Australian executives for a week of high-level engagements in the financial and political epicentres of the US.

London Defence Conference 8-9 May, London

We participated in the London Defence Conference 2025, hosted at King's College London, and keynote by British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer.

Indo-Pacific Security Forum 12 May, Honolulu

We hosted our inaugural Indo-Pacific Security Forum in Honolulu, Hawaii, bringing together military leaders, policy-makers and security experts to explore military deterrence, diplomatic strategies, emerging regional threats, and the critical role of partnerships in sustainable security. Key participants included: the Hawaii Governor, three three-star US Army Generals, Chief of the Australian Army and Deputy Chief of the General Staff, UK Army.



1. Dr Thorin Wright, Matt Steinhelfer, MG (Ret) Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum, COL Aidan Shattock
2. Panel: Prof Craig Stockings, LTG Matthew McFarlane, Sophia Gaston, and Dr David Santoro
3. Panel: Prof Ryan Shaw, COL Carol Stauffer, Prof Dave Kilcullen, RADM Gary Montalvo, Dr Kori Schake
4. Hawaii Governor Josh Green, MD and Professor Linda McKie, King's College London
5. Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of the Australian Army
6. Fireside chat: LTG Joshua Rudd, Deputy Commander, INDOPACOM and Dr Ian Langford
7. Panel: Dr Alicia Ellis, Col (Ret) Brian Hill, LTG James Glynn, Paul Tennant

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS



S&D+ Executive Director Dr Ian Langford at the Future Security Forum



Future Security Forum 22 October, Washington DC

For the second year, we joined New America and ASU's Future Security Initiative to co-host the Future Security Forum. The Forum convened policymakers, military and government leaders, analysts and scholars to discuss the evolving landscape of global security, from alliances and diplomacy to national intelligence and leadership, AI and defence technology to food security and warfare strategy.



1. Anne-Marie Slaughter and UK Acting Ambassador James Roscoe MVO
2. Wyn Bowen and Candace Rodeaux
3. Senator Mark Kelly
4. General (Ret.) Stanley McChrystal

Deterrence Crisis Simulation, 23 October, Washington DC



We hosted a crisis simulation and stakeholder dialogue at the ASU Barrett & O'Connor Center, led by an S&D+ Round II seed grant research team. The exercise brought together a distinguished group of security leaders, including a retired three-star U.S. Air Force general, former ambassadors and State Department officials, and leading defence academics, to explore the complexities of deterrence and coalition decision-making.



The afternoon featured remarks from King's Vice-Chancellor Professor Shitij Kapur on academic collaboration and innovation, followed by a panel with Professors Wyn Bowen, John Bew CMG, Nadya T. Bliss, and Brigadier (Ret.) Dr Ian Langford.

LEADERSHIP ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS



Professor Huw Davies, Lauren Mellows, Vanessa Morrison, Professor Ryan Shaw, and Professor Wyn Bowen at FASI's Defence Question Time



Freeman Air and Space Institute: Defence Question Time 16 June, London



S&D+ Senior Lead at ASU, Professor Ryan Shaw, joined a panel of experts at FASI's 2025 Summer event, 'Defence Question Time'.

He brought a US perspective to the discussion, while his S&D+ counterpart at King's, Professor Wyn Bowen, opened and closed the event.

ASPI Panel 8 October, Canberra



Dr Ian Langford, Professor Dave Kilcullen, and Dr Andrew Maher participated in a panel on "Rethinking deterrence: Irregular answers to conventional problems", in-conjunction with the release of their report: *Unconventional Deterrence in Australian Strategy*.

Joint Conference on Comprehensive Security in the Indo-Pacific 14 & 17 November, Japan



We partnered with Kyoto University and the Kajima Institute of International Peace (KIIP) to deliver a two-part conference in Tokyo and Kyoto. The conference brought together experts, academics, and policymakers from Japan, Australia, the UK, and the US for a programme of closed dialogues and public engagements, with contributions from the three PLuS Alliance institutions. Sessions focused on: cybersecurity; stable supply and safe sea lanes for energy, rare metals, and food; and regional leadership and burden sharing.



Taguchi Seiichiro, DDG European Affairs Bureau, MOFA; Emil Levendoğlu, Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy in Tokyo



Alessio Patalano, King's College London and Michito Tsuruoka, Keio University

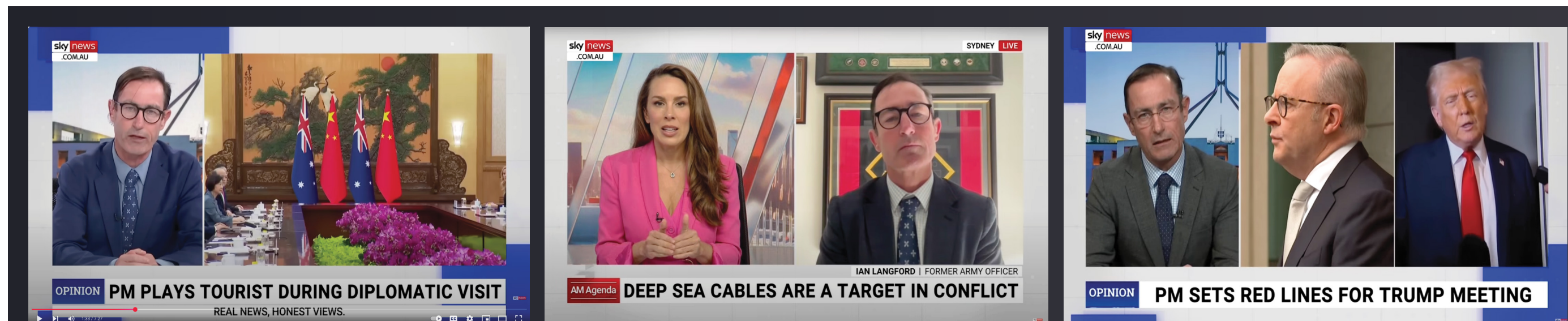


Kyoto University Campus Tour

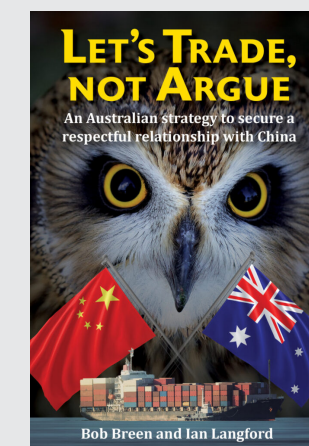
MEDIA, CONTENT & PUBLICATIONS



Professor Alessio Patalano, S&D+ Research Lead at King's, news interview with France 24



Across 2025, S&D+ Executive Director Dr Ian Langford authored 8 commentary pieces for Defence Technology Review, 11 op-eds for The Australian and was interviewed by Sky News Australia 10 times.



Let's Trade, Not Argue
by Dr Ian Langford and Bob Breen



S&D+ research lead at King's, Professor Alessio Patalano authored a piece for Wall Street Journal and was interviewed by multiple news outlets, including Al Jazeera, France 24, CNN World and South China Morning Post.



S&D+ lead at ASU, Professor Ryan Shaw, penned opinion pieces for outlets including Time and War on the Rocks, and S&D+ education Chair, Dr Alicia Ellis wrote for Small Wars Journal and appeared on various podcasts.


In development...

AUKUS Edited Volume

Co-edited by Dr Sarah Tzinieris (King's), Professor Craig Stockings (USNW), and Dr Thorin Wright (ASU), with contributions from across the PLuS universities.



MEDIA & CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS



65+

Director & Primary S&D+ Team
Media & Commentary

1,000

Newsletter Subscribers



NEW FLAGSHIP VIDEO

Where Academia, Industry &
Statecraft Intersect

Highlighting our unique position to deliver transformational leadership, pioneering research, and future-focused education to address the most pressing security and defence challenges of our time.



61,832

LinkedIn Members Reached

in

10+

News Mentions of S&D+

11,869

Total Newsletter Sends




14

University News Mentions of S&D+


3,435

YouTube Views



100,873

Website Users



3,075

LinkedIn followers

in

LOOKING TO 2026: MAJOR EVENTS

<div>JANUARY</div> <div>2026 Seed Grant Scheme: Applications Open</div> <div>★</div>	<div>FEBRUARY</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>MARCH</div> <div>The Emerging Voices Series: S&D+ Conference at ASU</div> <div>★</div>	<div>APRIL</div> <div>2026 Seed Grant Scheme: Announcements & Funding Begins</div> <div>★</div>
<div>MAY</div> <div>The Indo-Pacific Security Forum: S&D+ Annual Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii</div> <div>★</div>	<div>JUNE</div> <div>The Emerging Voices Series: S&D+ Conference at King's</div> <div>★</div>	<div>JULY</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>AUGUST</div> <div></div> <div></div>
<div>SEPTEMBER</div> <div>The Emerging Voices Series: S&D+ Conference at UNSW</div> <div>★</div>	<div>OCTOBER</div> <div>The Future Security Forum: S&D+ Joint Conference with New America & FSI in Washington, DC</div> <div>★</div>	<div>NOVEMBER</div> <div>S&D+ Joint Conference with Kyoto University (TBC)</div> <div>★</div>	<div>DECEMBER</div> <div></div> <div></div>

CONTRIBUTORS & SUPPORTERS

We extend our sincere gratitude to the partners, collaborators, and contributors whose dedication and support have been integral to the successes of Security & Defence PLoS in 2025. This collective effort has strengthened our impact and advanced our mission. Our special thanks go to:

Professor Michael M Crow
President, Arizona State University

Professor Shitij Kapur
Vice-Chancellor and President, King’s College London

Professor Attila Brungs
Vice-Chancellor and President, UNSW

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Additional thanks to the following for significant contributions to S&D+ events:

Professor Debi Ashenden
Dr Andrew Corbett
Sophia Gaston
Dr Chris Howard
Professor Linda McKie
Dr Manolis Priniotakis

