

## **‘A New Bletchley’ - New Order Thinking**

**What is it?** “Just as Bletchley Park harnessed brilliant talents from outside the government machine... so in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we need a strategic engine of thought that can produce the uncomfortable thinking of which Whitehall is culturally and politically incapable. This new set-up should co-ordinate a network of top think tanks, universities, proven leaders and young minds. Such a spread of talents of all ages will always elude the Civil Service”. Nigel Hall, Daily Telegraph 26 Dec 2016.

**Why is it needed?** Whitehall is incapable of coping with the disintegration of the old world order, and the unprecedented speed and complexity of national and global change. The Whitehall groupthink has been caught out repeatedly on many big issues. It only did ‘one way’ thinking on Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, the Scottish Referendum and Brexit. It is now overwhelmed by managing Brexit, adjusting to the new US administration, and missing opportunities to move upstream in anticipating the next really big issues. In this digitally disruptive age, it lacks the intellectual horsepower required to meet multiple interrelated challenges. It must, therefore, outsource much of its thinking and be connected to increasing numbers of intellectual and information networks. However, outside of Whitehall, Britain’s thinking and research is far too fragmented to provide critical mass on the truly urgent national and global issues.

**When?** It is needed now. The cost of doing nothing - ‘business more or less as usual’ - is too great. The world is at its most volatile and unpredictable for decades, and there are signs of big trouble ahead. Among these signals are a mounting tensions in the international political and economic order, accelerating arms races, economic protectionism and rising populism.

**Who will be involved?** The core of a ‘New Bletchley’ is a small nucleus of stipendiary members, noted for their original and critical thinking, ability to join the dots, and to spot and harness the intellectual outputs from a very diverse range of sources. This will include top think tanks, centres of innovation and research, and academic organisations, and experts of all ages. The nucleus of the members will convene working groups, drawn from global networks.

**How will it work?** In keeping with the original Bletchley Park spirit, working groups can be brought together for short periods ‘on site’ at residential facilities, devoid of other distraction. ‘New Bletchley’ would be a hub and fusion centre delivering more than the sum of the parts from groups and networks across the globe. It must be fiercely independent of the Civil Service, its core value being its independent thought. It will be a global asset and resource, dealing with many issues that can be shared. It will also be a national asset, hosted in the United Kingdom and recognised as a truly 21<sup>st</sup> century world-class intellectual centre of excellence. Whitehall will need to incorporate its outputs into its own policy making and contingency processes, and to raise its game around delivery (‘Steve Hilton meets Elon Musk.’). Creating the initial coalition of think tanks and other organisations will be critical to promoting a collective purpose and vision. ‘New Bletchley’ is a new model thinking approach that can give Britain and Whitehall an edge, and deliver value to friends, allies, and partners across the world.

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