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Conference Summary

# After 1.5°C: Climate adaptation, security and resilience in a warmer world

**16 – 18 October 2025**

DITCHLEY

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Ditchley's October conference asked what fast-evolving changes to Earth's climate would mean for security, and how societies could build resilience while reducing risks in a fraught geopolitical situation. While overshooting the 1.5°C increase in global warming since pre-industrial times in 2024 does not transgress the Paris Agreement ambition (which would need an average temperature rise over 20 or so years), it takes us into *unprecedented and uncertain territory*. Meanwhile, as one participant put it, "climate is the collateral of conflict", with leaders' attentions and budgets devoted to near-term hostile threats and competitiveness in a time of trade wars.

The conference came nine months into the second Trump administration**,** which has made clear its antipathy to terms such as climate change and energy transition, and in the run-up to COP30, being hosted by Brazil. At the same time, leaders in Brussels and London were figuring out how to deliver on their enlarged NATO commitments. Many in the group had low expectations of the UNFCCC process, especially now that the US had pulled out of the Paris Agreement.

Most saw the space for global collective action on climate change shrinking with the return of great power rivalry between China and the US and more transactional geopolitics. Divergent views on fossil fuels and energy systems led some participants to cite the "electrostates" (China, EU) versus "petrostates" (US, Saudi Arabia, Russia) framing.[1] Meanwhile, military, political and climate threats are combining, from hostile actors manipulating public perceptions in the wake of climate disasters to military operations hampered by intense heat, storms and flooding. Multiple breadbasket failures and knock-on impacts on food prices, humanitarian crises, conflict and migration would all need new approaches to deterrence and readiness.

As we fail to curb global warming, geoengineering could arise as a new front for international tensions. While geoengineering remains highly controversial and was described as a "false promise" by one participant, the group generally recognised the value in preparing for unilateral attempts at it.

While the Trump administration's position on climate change and energy transition makes explicit collaboration on these issues all but impossible, participants sought common ground. Weather extremes are a clear and present concern for the US. Vast swathes of the US population are vulnerable to flooding, hurricanes and wildfires. Addressing these issues remains salient as failure to protect populations can quickly move electorates.

Managing dependence on China for critical minerals and technologies needed for energy transition and defence dominated discussions of the transatlantic alliance. Both European and US participants were alert to the dangers of over-reliance, given China's strategic control of exports and cyber threats to infrastructure. They acknowledged that there was no

[1] These terms were coined by Tatiana Mitrova and Anne-Sophie Corbeau in PetroStates and ElectroStates in a World Divided by Fossil Fuels and Clean Energy, The National Interest, 27 May 2025.

reasonable cost alternative to China right now. However, US participants tended to favour a harder, collective line. Loss of soft power was a shared challenge that should bring Western countries together, said one participant, referring to the way in which adversaries were managing to wield narratives of colonialism, extraction and exploitation to draw Global South actors into their sphere of influence.

Win-win-wins for security, resilience and mitigation or jobs were suggested throughout. In terms of European country action, *no regret measures* included a mix of decentralised electricity and cross-border grid connection. Bringing down energy costs through retrofitting homes and public buildings for extreme weather and efficiency is an obvious one for the UK. Development of battery storage technologies and circular economy investments fits reindustrialisation agendas and could benefit from transatlantic company cooperation. Massive investment in water resilience was flagged for all countries. Sharing of monitoring (e.g. in the Arctic) and early warning systems were other areas ripe for cooperation.

Over US$18 trillion is estimated to have been spent on climate disasters since 2000, yet only a fraction of that is being spent on resilience for the future. Financing adaptive measures on a purely commercial basis rarely happens as there is no clear return on investment. Government too can be slow to invest in such public goods, given election cycles and the discount rate for future generations. The role of central banks in macroeconomic stability means they have a duty to mandate risk assessment and spot insurance gaps, but several participants noted that current scenarios for risk assessment do not reflect reality. In light of these challenges, participants identified four key areas for development: legal duties, financial reporting standards, credit risk assessments, and valuing avoided losses.

Paying for adaptation does not square with an economy that has evolved around short-term profits, with national success being measured by quarterly GDP growth. New metrics for prosperity were not discussed. However, bodies that could help overcome economic myopia, such as citizens' assemblies and a "Ministry for the Future" were mentioned.

Political acceptability of measures nationally depends on what resonates most with people and their level of trust in implementing institutions. Examples were given of where solidarity against Russia had fast tracked more secure, decarbonised electricity in the Baltic States. In the UK, health and welfare were considered more politically salient. Here, the NHS was proposed as a trusted centre through which to run a campaign on climate resilience, which would also improve health outcomes. Local authorities would need to be equipped for an increasing role in preparedness in ways that could transcend changes in government.

Regarding the transatlantic relationship, it was suggested that adaptation could provide a scaffolding for cooperation. "Mutually assured resilience" was agreed to be a good framing for climate-resilient infrastructure and defence cooperation. Cold War tactics were invoked several times but there were doubts as to how far such a zero-sum geopolitical approach could take us. In the context of greater uncertainty over climate impacts and economies in transition, neglecting multilateral foundations and laws risks driving further pull-up-the-drawbridge responses, e.g. on trade and migration, or aggressive expansionist tactics from other states to shore up resources and power. "Coalitions of the willing" addressing climate change without the US, alongside engagement with the US on a more limited set of shared interests, was the best option some could see going forward.

**Context and why this was important**

Where once climate and traditional security domains were considered discrete threats, they must now be considered together. The world's current rate of warming has not been witnessed for the past 10,000 years. In 2024, average global temperatures surpassed 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures[2]; while the impacts of warming and related weather extremes are increasing humanitarian crises and economic disruption. State responses (such as export bans, land grabs and migration), are difficult to plot, but will have cascading geopolitical impacts.

Even rich countries are not prepared for the national and transnational implications of this. Instead, near-term economic competitiveness and military threats currently dominate western political leaders' attention and spending priorities. Political polarisation at home and challenges to multilateral cooperation complicate the landscape for long-term planning and investment. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, measures to reduce dependence on Russian gas and oil have meant energy security overriding decarbonisation in Western political agendas. Meanwhile, associated inflation and cost of living crises have enabled the politicisation of climate action ("net zero" in the UK and the "Green Deal" in Europe, for example). A second Trump administration in the US has brought greater divergence with Europe and the UK on global environmental threats, with the US again pulling out of the Paris Agreement and defunding climate-related programmes.

In this context, key questions for discussion then were: **can security provide a more effective framing for decisive action on adaptive measures, and if so where and how?** Are there key win-win priorities for spending in this regard which will deliver on security and climate adaptation? Can these also deliver on reducing emissions to deter increasing future extremes and be politically acceptable? How can the transatlantic security alliance be maintained in the face of differences over climate and energy trade, particularly with China? And what opportunities are there for fostering dialogue and cooperation over environmental threats in the absence of shared basis in science and language?

**People**

Participants, comprised of senior practitioners and experts, came from the UK, US and continental Europe. There was a mix of security and defence, civil resilience, climate science, and business and investment expertise, as well as several people actively involved in informing public and military strategy on adaptation.

**FULL REPORT**

"We are entering a world with no analogue", said one participant. In 2024, we surpassed 1.5°C for 12 consecutive months. This takes modern human society into unprecedented territory. Climatic conditions are no longer a constant. This has widespread ramifications for

[2] The **overshoot does not mean that we have transgressed the 1.5°C ambition** enshrined within the Paris Agreement, which offers the chance to remain within manageable warming limits. To declare that would mean having passed that threshold on average over 20 to 30 years. Our current trajectory is linked to cumulative emissions. Historical GHGs already in the atmosphere define our pathway to around 2050. What happens thereafter depends on actions taken now to rapidly curb emissions. The science has shown unequivocally that every fraction of a degree matters in terms of extreme weather.

societies and the way we govern them. Yet at the current time, threats from hostile actors, cost of living concerns and increasingly political divides tend to dominate both space and budgets.

As we alter the climate, ecological systems that sustain our current societies and economies are changing, participants heard. Changes to the hydrological system impact the ability to grow food. Coral bleaching destroys marine life affecting coastal communities, forest fires increase and reduce our resilience to future heat and flooding, while melting polar ice changes sea levels, which in turn have an impact on coastal infrastructure. Scientists have identified a number of "climate tipping points", at which systems can reach an irreversible state of change, forcing greater warming (e.g. due to rainforest loss and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the sea and melting permafrost).

Even without breaching these, it is difficult for anyone to take on board the enormity of what our current climate change trajectory will mean for the way we currently live and govern, even in the next 25 years. Multiple breadbaskets could collapse simultaneously, and a vicious cycle of climate extremes, hoarding and uninsurability could undo the global financial system, participants pointed out.

**Can we geoengineer our way out of this mess?**

Participants expressed different views on the importance and inevitability of geoengineering. Geoengineering poses political and physical risks ranging from reducing the sense of urgency to bring down emissions due to the idea of a future "techno-fix", to the physical consequences that could change weather patterns and even increase future warming. Its consequences could incite blame and reprisals from countries or communities on the receiving end of real or perceived negative impacts. Cloud-seeding for example, could lead to blame for preventing rain elsewhere. For some, geoengineering was considered a dangerous "false promise". No one however disputed the idea that individual states or actors would attempt to deploy larger geoengineering solutions – e.g. solar radiation modification – unilaterally. And with no global coordination mechanisms to deal with such actions, better understanding of the science was generally considered necessary.

Climate has become the "collateral of conflict", moving down governments' priority lists, as hostile security threats have moved centre stage. "With a changing climate, we will have to work on twin priorities in public spending," said one European participant, "yet chronic threats like climate change don't blend well with acute threats such as military and cyber-attacks…" So how to inject urgency into the conversation and put climate threats on a level with military ones? It was noted that climate was absent from the June NATO Summit talks to appease the US, while the UK's latest Defence White Paper only focused on immediate aggressions. Yet in 2022, there were at least 20,000 excess deaths due to heat across Europe, equivalent to three times the number of global deaths from terrorism. Climate volatility, and issues surrounding water and food insecurity that arise from it, will increasingly become issues of "persistent immediacy" for governments, similar to the threat to their legitimacy posed by terrorism.

"We should learn to walk and chew gum at the same time," said another particpant, drawing attention to "the other 1.5". "We've exceeded 1.5°C but we have the 1.5% investment or more to allocate to resilience and tech." This was a reference to the increase in NATO

defence spending agreed in June 2025 in which 1.5% of GDP (out of 5%) could be spent to "protect critical infrastructure, defend networks, ensure civil preparedness".

"Climate security is national security" was a sentiment that resonated. Several participants referred to the 9 October speech by Canadian Minister of National Defence David McGuinty, in which he stressed the imperative of protecting and reinvesting in nature as a form of deterrence as nature is irreplaceable in sustaining us, *and* of climate change mitigation and adaptation as operational policy because with "supply chains at risk from climate disruption, fleets cannot move, bases cannot function, and operations cannot be sustained".

**Energy resilience and cooperation as defence**

Energy security, a term which took over politically from energy transition in 2022, was discussed as another as aspect of national security. What did energy security entail in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine? And how can that experience – as well as others such as the Texas and Iberian outages – inform robust investments which also align with emissions reduction? The Ukraine case demonstrates the vulnerability of power infrastructure as a target of both physical and cyber-attacks during war. Its ability to connect to the European electricity grid and switch its data to alternative satellite systems provided some resilience. Large domestic thermal and hydropower stations became a target for attack, so the government has gone strong on deployment of decentralized solar, wind and battery technology, aided by Germany. Ukrainian leaders have been clear that energy security means speed of replacement: one day to replace a solar panel versus 5-7 years to replace a coal-fired power plant. Likewise, dispersed wind turbines and solar panels are much more expensive to physically destroy than single thermal power plants.

The ability of Europe to come off Russian gas was seen as a powerful example of security driving transition – although this also entailed an uptick in coal use – at least temporarily. Renewable plants and bioenergy now produce more electricity than fossil fuels in the EU. Examples such as the fast-tracking of a Finnish nuclear plant to enable supply to Estonia when Russia cut off its electricity were raised as testament to the speed at which countries could cooperate in the face of a security threat. After Russian shadow fleet tankers dragged their anchors over an undersea gas pipeline in an act of assumed sabotage, both countries stepped up cooperation on shared remote sensing and deeper burying of pipelines. In these cases, resilience was enabled by pre-existing cooperation: the path set in motion for standardisation and synchronisation with the European grid since 2017 enabled Ukraine to shift from the Russian to the EU one. Finland and Estonia built on strong Baltic cooperation through NATO and the EU, including on energy.

Thus, two strategies are needed for energy security: both cross-border electricity connectivity and the ability to "operate in island mode" through greater use of decentralised renewable energy options. Participants generally viewed this as a defence strategy which could (with some caveats) foster both energy security and low carbon transition.

**Transatlantic rifts and shifts**

The emotion apparent in the working group on the transatlantic relationship was symptomatic of the momentous changes in US direction and diplomatic stance that took place over the last nine months. The rise of transactionalism in international relations and right-wing populism on both sides of the Atlantic provided the contours for a heated

discussion about how the security alliance could endure in the face of different views on climate and energy.

"The sense that America is bailing out the world is a strong one and is justified," said one participant, capturing the public support that seemed to belie US tariffs and recalibration of funds for multilateral agencies, including NATO. There needed to be a return to greater "sportsmanship" on Europe's part, particularly relating to carbon border adjustments, they argued. Likewise, there was a feeling that Europe was too soft on China, for example buying cheap Chinese wind turbines based on allegedly stolen US patented technology.

The Trump administration was recognised for its ability to move at speed compared with Europe. However, as a result of recent policies, it was noted that that the US would lose its competitive edge in some industries critical for transition. "For the motor industry, there is no incentive for EV production – we are seeing the closure of battery making plants as a result – instead, businesses are talking to Japan for other opportunities."

**Chinese minerals and clean tech dominance**

The shift to clean energy technology as well as greater reliance of military on high tech equipment raised the challenge of increased dependency on China. China currently holds and processes around 90% of the global market's critical minerals needed for these applications. Both European and US participants were alert to the dangers of over-reliance on Chinese supplies for these areas of critical national security, given China's ability to control these strategically.[3] Regarding technology and industry investment, there remained concern about foreign control and ability to sabotage critical systems; although it was pointed out that there is a difference between the risks involved in a solar panel (low) compared to a wind farm operating system (high).

A clear divergence in approaches between US and European participants opened up, with US participants perceiving China as a clear and present threat while Europeans saw a challenging, sometimes malign, but also essential trading partner. With regard to critical minerals and clean technology dependence, it was acknowledged that there was no reasonable cost alternative to China right now. But US participants tended to favour phase out, whilst Europeans viewed some level of dependence as a necessity.

This was a focus for the working group on the transatlantic relationship where a "collective action problem" was noted by some. There were calls from some for a clear shared China policy with coordinated responses from Western nations in the face of intellectual property theft, cyber-attacks or trade machinations. "China is targeting our industries. When this happens, we need automated responses in banks with payments processing," said one attendee. "When the CCP plays games in critical sectors, tariffs…. if everyone uses the same rules consistently then you don't have to use them."

Others favoured working together to foster a "Western solution" to these technologies, which would require joint R&D, patents, standardization, regulation and joint procurement to provide assurances to investors and to help lower costs. The development of battery storage technologies, something the UK's National Wealth Fund is backing, was considered

[3] As it has through export bans and restrictions for materials used in the semi-conductor industry.

key to resilience with regard to military and trade risks on the one hand and net zero on the other. Developing high efficiency lithium batteries, and non-lithium, solid state (e.g. sodium-ion, graphene) batteries were suggested as areas of priority. Military or industrial use could provide an anchor client to help bring down costs and scale these technologies.

In contrast, it was cautioned that positioning towards China should be careful and pragmatic. Learning from China was also suggested. After all, state-led capitalism – now en vogue in the West as much as the East – is its forte. China's five-year plans get things done and provide certainty for investment. China's distributed battery storage being built into their grid structure, enabling the roll out of EVs in the transport system and greater capacity to manage renewables variability is one example. Developing rare earths to service China's own industry and then as a geostrategic priority is another.

Whilst a cultural and philosophical convergence across the Atlantic was noted, this pertained more to people and business than to governments. It was remarkable that the hope for maintaining the alliance was vested more in a mutual position vis-à-vis China than it was in shared democratic values. One participant raised a *shared risk* that should bring the US and Europe/UK together: the way that adversaries are wielding narratives of extraction and exploitation to draw Global South actors away from the West's sphere of influence. "China's narrative push of "aid with strings" or "climate change is a Western problem" and Russia's rubbing salt in post-colonial wounds and perceived double standards is proving effective," they warned. "We are collectively losing the battle of ideas."

**Valuing adaptation, drawing in investment**

Whilst over US$18 trillion is estimated to have been spent on climate-related disasters since 2000, only a fraction of that has been spent on resilience for the future. Financing adaptive measures on a purely commercial basis rarely happens as there is no clear return on investment. As one participant put it: "Long term plans for afforestation, or wetland restoration might take 20-50 years for payback; CEOs don't think in those terms". Government too can be slow to invest as a public good, given election cycles and the discount rate for future generations. Some saw opportunities for tweaks to the current system to unleash capital flows. A policy and subsidy approach had proven extremely limited with respect to mitigation, argued one participant. If we can improve the efficiency of the ways we allocate, they said, this will open up space to spend on adaptation.

Regarding climate vulnerable countries, the evolving discussion at the G20 was raised as positive, with development of instruments such as debt for nature swaps. In contrast however, one participant felt that trying to make the current financial system work for adaptation was "like hammering a round peg into a square hole" due to its systemic misalignment with the realities of climate-vulnerable communities. They viewed this system as heading for collapse under increasing climate volatility.

The role of central banks arose, given that their mandate is precisely to prevent such collapse at the national level. This means they have a duty to ensure risks are being adequately assessed and covered by insurance. The European Central Bank (ECB)'s work on macroeconomic threats was cited whereby physical climate risks, rather than Paris alignment, were now central.

Participants drew attention to four developments with promise:

**1. Legal duties to invest in future proofing** to a reasonable level of risk, supported by benchmark scenarios. "What we see is the increase in the frequency [of weather extremes] increasing and the costs – from 10 to 50 billion euros a year for the EU alone,"[4] explained one participant. For this reason, a climate resilience plan is being tabled which would attribute "risk ownership". "There would be an obligation to look at spending in light of a climate reference scenario that will correlate to reality – like China is doing." This idea resonated with UK participants, one of whom raised the problem of the Thames Barrier, which protects London from tidal surges and flooding. This will need upgrading within 15 years if, for example, Canary Wharf is to be protected. But the legal duty is not in place to make sure that the specification is right for a changing climate, or that it gets done on time.

And on what temperature scenario should such a legal duty be based? The group heard that France has already mandated planning for a 4°C degree scenario. "That does drive system change. We cannot operate on a business-as-usual basis," remarked one participant in relation to France's decision. "Unless we get ahead of the impacts, we are going to be overwhelmed by them." The UK's Climate Change Committee had just released a letter to government advising to prepare for 2°C by 2050 and 4°C by 2100, but to continue to aim for 1.5°C (in terms of national emissions targets) by 2050. This did not mean we should expect 4°C, but would mean, for example, building for impacts expected under a 2°C scenario for the UK, while enabling buildings to be retrofitted to withstand worse.

Some disagreed with pegging too much to a scenario. "It's absolutely bonkers to consider anything over 2°C," said one participant, referring to the vast unknowns involved even at above 1.5°C. "I find it shocking that we're still talking about global averages," said another. To inform adaptation, they countered that we need to consider the *tail risks* (high-risk, low-probability events), combinations of impacts, regional and temporal variability, and compound physical and socio-economic trends. They suggested that it would be best to decide what resilience would look like (e.g. for the built environment) and then work backwards to define what would be needed to meet a worst-case scenario on current trends. Then it would be a case of choosing what level of resilience is "acceptable".

**2. Financial reporting standards.** The IFRS S2[5] reporting standard will be mandatory for some UK companies from 2027, which requires an entity to disclose climate risks and enables the banking system at the loan level to link each financing element to a change in emissions. This means that it supports transformation of brown (high emissions) industries to green ones. Likewise, the People's Bank of China's carbon emissions reduction facility was mentioned. This allows "brown to green" industrial projects to receive lower financial risk, and lower cost of capital. Wider mandatory adoption of the IFRS S2 was expected to be game-changing, although it currently lacks a framework for valuing each dollar of spending on adaptation.

[4] This likely refers to a comparison between the 2006-09 period compared with the 2021-24 period. Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes in Europe, European Environment Agency, 14 October, 2025.

[5] IFRS S2 Climate-related Disclosures https://www.ifrs.org/issued-standards/ifrs-sustainability-standards-navigator/ifrs-s2-climate-related-disclosures/

**3. Credit risk assessments**, for example, which can help incentivise companies to invest in water resilience. Although it was noted that credit ratings that punish countries for high vulnerability to climate change make matters worse in increasing indebtedness and deterring investment. Regions in conflict and famine cannot attract any climate finance.

**4. Valuing avoided losses over a period of time**. "We must value adaptation," said one participant, and this means both regulation and better understanding future impacts on returns on investment. They gave the example of the potential to stabilise the cashflow and present value of a national rail company over say 10 years, due to reduced weather disruption to its infrastructure. Another cited Dutch utilities, which have to pay for any time that power is out, driving investment on this basis.

**Political acceptability**

It was widely agreed that "resilience" to both hostile and environmental threats was a suitable framing that could work for widespread cooperation, including between UK, European and US partners.

Heightened security fears can enable fast-tracking of measures that also support decarbonisation (such as the example of the nuclear power plant in Finland) and long-term adaptation. Participants heard how, in the Baltic states, the near and present threat of Russian invasion had enabled hitherto politically unpalatable measures, such as reflooding wetlands on the borders to prevent Russian tank invasion. This would also function as a biodiversity, carbon storage (peatland restoration) and flood resilience measure. It was controversial, with people living close to the forest to be reflooded, but accepted as a necessary response to a security threat.

However, it was noted that measures must be context-appropriate and align with what people care about most. The perception of such a security threat does not override local interests in the UK and other parts of Europe. In this respect, a number of participants felt that health and public wellbeing may be a safer focus than defence. "Adaptation is local in a way that mitigation wasn't," said one participant. "People do not talk about adaptation and mitigation on a day-to-day basis; they talk about healthcare, electricity prices, flood readiness," said another.

Public trust in institutions was raised as essential for effective adaptation measures throughout. The working group on food and water security focused on "finding a golden thread" for local adaptation. Given the way that climate policy had become a political battleground (also manipulated by media and external hostile actors), regaining trust through listening and acting at the local level was seen as critical. "If people think the social contract is broken," said one participant, "they will not support the changes being recommended." For the UK, the NHS was identified as a starting point for a campaign that could boost local resilience and be a vote-winner.

Ensuring the vulnerable are not left behind in any strategy, particularly with regards to emergency planning such as flooding, was also considered vital to the social contract. Citizens assemblies on climate change had also shown that people were "much kinder in thinking forward to future generations" than governments, noted one participant.

Upgrading building standards and bringing down energy costs through retrofitting homes and public buildings for efficiency offer clear win-win-wins that can also create jobs. The working group on energy and infrastructure stressed that this would need to make sure measures could both insulate for warmth in winter and cooling in summer. This group also explored societal preparedness – what to do if your phone stops working, or where to go when there is no food in the supermarkets. Observing how other states are adapting to these threats, e.g., telling citizens to have a bag packed, contingency measures, can help speed up the learning curve and increase local preparedness, suggested one person.

**Diplomatic narratives**

In terms of potential ways forward for transatlantic cooperation, the concept of "mutually assured resilience" was tabled as a solid framing for transatlantic cooperation. Energy security was also considered an apt reframing, with cooperation on avoiding Russian oil and gas. US financial and business sector appetite for stronger cooperation on enhanced climate and energy resilience was stressed, but it was recommended that transatlantic relations be framed on the basis of *national security*, not climate. Concern was raised however, over the push to airbrush out terms such as climate change and net zero, having developed so much expertise and momentum around them. "There is also a danger in changing semantics, it's not a costless process," said one attendee, meaning that we delay action through shifting titles and expertise, just as we need to accelerate.

Building trust with the US would be essential for cooperation on adaptation, but neither the UNFCCC nor the Munich Security Forum are the place to have these conversations anymore. In terms of the existing major forums, NATO was considered the best route (others mentioned were EU, Five Eyes and G7). Softer dialogue in carefully curated communities outside of these major forums was welcomed. There is rather a need for bridging fora to keep high-level dialogue going at any cost and to bring in dissenting voices on climate change to discussions like this.

Pitfalls are many, with strongly diverging views on fossil fuels and potentially positioning vis-à-vis China. The Arctic offers an area of common interest, which could be an opportunity for new transatlantic cooperation (scientific, e.g. permafrost monitoring) or it could descend into competition over the wild west of minerals, where extraction is also climatically and environmentally damaging.

**Conclusion and reflections**

The enthusiasm for further "After 1.5°C" discussions and rich content pave the way for future work in several areas, as well as raising additional questions.

Topics recommended for dialogue and cooperation with the US government were:

- Energy security: supply chains, critical minerals and cyber security, and China;
- Shared military energy infrastructure and sensing; forecasting where AI could be integrated for mutual benefit;
- Adapting to new environmental realities: managing water stress and food security, including water for data centres.

Strengthening coalitions of the willing outside of that (including US states, business and other domestic groupings) arose as a diplomatic priority. What shape could that diplomacy take? The Baltic states had shown how security had fast-tracked shared resilience. What other groupings are building on shared security interests such as shared energy infrastructure and urban preparedness for weather extremes for example?

At the UK level, communicating and reforming energy costs[6] and the urgent need for upgrading the built environment demand concerted attention. How could they be addressed in ways that create more system resilience, decarbonise and grow business and jobs?

"Do no harm" was only raised in the final session, but it seems critical as we lurch toward a world of greater conflict and expanding extractive linear economies which are exacerbating climate vulnerability in other parts of the world. This in turn heightens risks such as commodity price spikes, conflict and human displacement. This issue is linked to the *valuing adaptation* problem that permeated discussions. Both implicate a global economy that has evolved around short-term profits with national success measured by quarterly GDP growth. Would new metrics and accounting being variously developed and proposed as we speak, help drive more aligned practices? Could new institutions such as a "Ministry for the Future" help, asked one person.

And finally, are we speaking the same language? On more than one occasion, the group was reminded that every fraction of a degree counts in terms of preventing more climate extremes. "No adaptation will be enough if we take our foot off the gas with mitigation," said one participant, in a rather ironic turn of phrase. But with terms being either divisive or too abstract, do we need new framing, approaches and tools in order to tackle both adaptation and the causes of climate change?

*This summary reflects the writer's personal impressions of the conference. No participant is in any way committed to its content or expression.*

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[6] An issue to be addressed that also arose at a January 2025 Ditchley Conference on *Great British Growth*.

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