

Warpod S2E7:

Where next for the UK Integrated Security Fund?

Large Format Accessible Transcript

Charlie

Welcome to Warpod. A podcast brought to you by Saferworld, asking experts from around the world about the impact of security policy on contemporary conflict.

I'm Charlie Linney, Project Coordinator in the Arms Unit at Saferworld.

In this episode, we're going to take a look at the UK Integrated Security Fund, or ISF.

I'm joined by Dr Gaurav Saini, co-founder of the Council for Strategic and Defense Research (CSDR), a think tank based in New Delhi, India. He has a PhD in International Politics where he focused on contemporary Indian strategic thought, and at his organisation CSDR he leads on project design and partnerships – which includes engaging with the UK ISF.

I'm also joined by Lewis Brooks, UK Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Saferworld. Lewis usually appears as my co-host on Warpod, but today he's coming on to speak about his experience of engaging with the UK Integrated Security Fund in his role at Saferworld.

For anyone not familiar with the UK ISF, it is a cross-government fund designed to support a wide range of projects that address UK

national security priorities, with a budget of £1 billion British pounds. The fund has gone through quite a few iterations, starting in 2001 when the Labour government at the time created the Conflict Pool. In 2015, it evolved into the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, or CSSF, and then evolved again in 2023 to become the UK Integrated Security Fund or ISF.

It is worth mentioning that we are recording this episode one week after the 2024 UK General Election, where we have seen a change of government with the Conservatives conceding to the Labour party. We should also note that Saferworld has received funding from CSSF in the past, and currently from the UK ISF, to implement programmes around the world with partner organisations.

Over the course of this episode, I'm going to ask Lewis and Gaurav to speak about their experiences of engaging with the UK Integrated Security Fund – covering what it does well, where any gaps in its approach might be, and what we hope to see from the ISF moving forwards.

So let's dive straight into the discussion.

Lewis, I've just given a very brief introduction to the UK ISF, but could you give us a bit more detail about what it does, and how it works?

Lewis

Thanks, Charlie. It's strange to be on this side of the microphone for a change. The UK Integrated Security Fund; it's a billion pound UK government fund for addressing UK national security challenges. It's cross government, so it sits in the Cabinet Office, but is able to

support Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence, the Home Office, Military, Border Force and other government departments as well. Since 2023, it's been able to work both overseas and domestically within the UK on national security initiatives. And it does a whole range of activities, so everything from training overseas security forces, investing in cyber capabilities.

It's done high level dialogues between warring parties and geopolitical rivals, funds women's rights organisations addressing gender-based violence and discrimination, involvement in demining; it was a huge part of the Ukraine response. We had an earlier episode of this podcast on Somalia and UKISF has had a Somalia programme for some time involved in different security activities and development activities there.

So yeah, if you want to understand UK security and conflict policy around the world, then you need to understand this fund.

Charlie

Thanks, Lewis. That was a really useful introduction. Could you just tell us a little bit more about the characteristics of the fund and what it's designed to really achieve?

Lewis

Yeah, so it works towards national security objectives that are sort of handed down from the National Security Council and the National Security Strategy. That's taken different forms over the

years, so it changes somewhat. It funds all kinds of people as well, I should have said that. So, it funds anything from other government departments, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organisations, including Saferworld as we mentioned, civil society organisations from the countries it's programming in and also private sector companies as well that might be delivering on government programmes.

In terms of the characteristics and attributes, it's got kind of four that the fund talks about. So one is being 'cross integrated', it means cross government, we talked a bit about that. 'Catalytic', so trying to use its investment to kind of build bigger change or to encourage other donors to come in and support new initiatives. The fund sort of tries them out, pilots them, proves that they work, draws in other donors. 'Agile', so being very responsive to the changing nature of conflict and insecurity. That might be changing circumstances around a coup or an outbreak of fighting or a peace opportunity, you know a successful peace negotiation, or a change in willingness to return from conflict and things like that.

And then finally, 'high risk'. So being able to pilot things in this very dynamic environment where there's a high possibility that they might not be successful. So just trying something in a very volatile environment, maybe it doesn't work, but maybe it was the right thing to do. And I think that risk appetite is something that the UK ISF seeks to adopt for its programming. And for us, these are exactly the right attributes for engaging in conflict affected areas in the way that this fund does.

Charlie

Thanks Lewis. Those attributes of the fund that you've described are really helpful to understand the UK ISF's approach, and also the way it sees itself and its role. Now Gaurav, you work for an Indian think tank and you have lots of experience of engaging with the UK ISF, including under its previous iteration as CSSF. Could you tell us a bit about the work that you've been doing, and how you see the UK Integrated Security Fund?

Dr. Gaurav Saini

Sure. First of all, thanks, Charlie, and thanks, Lewis, for having me, I'm really happy to be having this conversation with you.

To your question, I think before I get into the kind of work that we have been doing with now the ISF and before the CSSF, I would also like to add a point on what the ISF means to me and organisations like ours. I think at a more sort of theoretical level, funds like these are supposed to essentially be one part of a state strategy in making sure that its national goals, whether national security or financial goals, economic goals, are somehow ensured and they are met. So within that part, I think it is important, therefore, for me to also look at the source of such funds. And when I say source, it's not the money I'm talking about, but the ideology, the intellectual capital that goes behind designing such policies and such funds.

And in that sense, I think the Integrated Review Refresh 2023 is very important because essentially that is the UK's threat assessment of its environment, both immediate and far flung, right? And based on

that, certain priorities are laid out and essentially any fund or any expenditure by the government has to meet those priorities and has to address those threats. So in that sense, I think the ISF is very reflective of how the UK looks at its environment, how the UK looks at its own role in the present context. And therefore, you know, it is not simply a fund. I mean, that's one part of it, but it is also an indicator of what the UK feels like today, in today's world.

So on the second part of the question, Charlie, in terms of our experience with working with the ISF and before this, the CSSF and our sort of experience has been actually even before 2015 when CSSF came to be because some of the projects that we've been doing are as old as 2008, 2009.

And I think we've been extremely thankful to the British government, to the UK government for their support for our projects, because sitting in New Delhi and generally the region, South Asia, you know that it's one of the most conflict-prone regions. We have experiences from what's happening in Afghanistan. We have obviously the most difficult bilaterals: India, Pakistan. And there's always one or the other ways in which conflict sort of bubbles up.

And you need processes and need people who can make sure that when such eventualities happen, when such escalations happen, they can be controlled, there are enough off-ramps, are enough stakeholders in all these states that are interested in stability, peace, and therefore, our relationship with the fund has been extremely beneficial, not just this, but generally, the support that we've received, has been extremely crucial in making sure that

these kinds of conversations, this kind of work can continue in South Asia.

Charlie

Those are really interesting insights, and I wish we had more time in this episode to hear more about your organisation's work in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. But just turning back specifically to the UK ISF, could you talk to us a little bit more about your experience of actually working with the UK Integrated Security Fund?

Dr. Gaurav Saini

So I think on that, Charlie, what I have observed is that there is a different focus altogether with the ISF. So there's a shift from the CSSF to the ISF, and I think Lewis already mentioned the focus on security. But I think what I've observed is that there is additional pressure to make sure that the outputs of whatever we do can be justified, have more value for money, but from UK security core interests.

What that leads to is adjustments in reporting mechanisms, adjustments in the objectives that you want to meet, adjustments in the way in which you carry out your work. Sometimes those are just semantics. So you change your word here, you change your word there, and make sure that ultimately it is justifiable to somebody who is going to review it.

But at the same time, there is an ideological overhang which impacts the work that you do. For example, you know the shift away from Afghanistan, for example, the shift away from, let's say, and this this becomes sort of a joke in South Asia, the shift away from India-Pak to Indo-Pac. So, from India-Pakistan to Indo-Pacific, right? And that is something that you're seeing.

In one way, you can also see it as, and I don't mean in terms of money, earlier I think the objective was to give something out in terms of options, in terms of indigenous solutions that could emerge. In a way, it was about giving an opportunity to people in different regions, conflict-ridden regions, especially vulnerable people who could then sort of come up and build their own resilience.

And I have a sense, I might be wrong, it might change with the new government now, that now perhaps the focus is more on what can we get in return. So that's an important shift. Now I'm not saying that it's all bad or anything, but we can sense that a lot of the people that we work with, especially the programme teams, they really struggle now to sort of make us or talk to us in a way that can really tick boxes with the new ISF requirements. And I don't mean in terms of monetary requirements, but in terms of what its objectives are. So essentially what you are seeing is that issues which were seen as in sort of central to UK security interests are no longer being seen as issues that are central to UK security interests, right? So it's almost like from an outward looking approach, we have become more inward looking. And from where we sit in South Asia, I think it makes absolute sense. What's happening in Europe is very well known to

us. So we don't sit here and criticise the UK for its new direction. We see absolute sense in it. We also see a lot of opportunity. Because whatever I just said applies to certain aspects, for example, conflict prevention, conflict resolution.

But there are also opportunities in the ISF; there are opportunities on new technologies, on AI, on disinformation. There's a lot of focus on science and technology collaboration. Countries, for example, like India, for them, it's a huge opportunity to get those technologies to have built collaborations. But we have to remember that there are also countries like Afghanistan that still exist, where people are still suffering. Not every country and not all these countries.

So in many ways, the opportunities are there, but there are fewer stakeholders. Earlier, I think the stakeholder net was also wide because there's so much more conflict in the world than there are opportunities, unfortunately.

Charlie

I think that was really well articulated that the shift and the different ways in which you're seeing ISF evolve from your perspective. Lewis, I wondered how some of what Gaurav was saying resonates with your experience of engaging with ISF, both in terms of the shift in objectives and this focus on deliverables, the scope for partners – how are we seeing all of that play out in the UK government, but also in the work that you do at Saferworld?

Lewis

Yeah, a lot of what Gaurav was saying does resonate. I mean, my entry point to the UK ISF is less on the programmatic end and more engaging with their leadership and their secretariat in Whitehall in London; lots of meetings in and out of the Foreign Office at King Charles Street. I think the experience that Gaurav has just talked about in terms of what him and other partners and organisations that work with the fund are feeling out in Asia and in other parts of the world, I think we see the drivers of it happening within the UK.

So we've seen the fund going back to when it was the Conflict, Stability, Security Fund, used to articulate both international security or national security objectives from the UK National Security Strategy, and it would articulate objectives from the International Development Strategy and would have this balancing act between perhaps a more narrow vision of what the UK's national security interests were, and a more universal understanding of what international challenges were. You see a kind of displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure, human suffering, all those kinds of things, massive economic impact in the places where you see conflict and instability.

But then we also see that ripple impact to the UK's own national security interests in terms of it being potentially a breeding ground for more authoritarian tendencies, armed groups that may have a transnational agenda, serious and organised crime and corruption, and things like that.

So, you used to see that balance more articulated at the top of the fund. I think in recent years and particularly since the Integrated Review Refresh in 2023, which Gaurav mentioned, I think you've not

seen the conflict side and the international development side being articulated as much. And yet that fund still has around about £400 million worth of UK aid money that it spends in its annual budget.

So it should be articulating an international development objective if it wants that amount of money, or we need to look at other parts of government which should take that up. I think we do see that, and I think we've seen criticism of that as well. So, it was only, I think last year, one of the parliamentary committees, the Joint Committee on National Security Strategy, criticised some of the aid cuts, which did impact the CSSF. And that committee talked about that these cuts would likely 'impair the ability of the UK government to anticipate conflict, prevent escalation, and respond effectively to areas of known instability'. And the committee went on to say that that might be a false economy in terms of the kind of savings that they were trying to make. I think there is danger of that imbalance happening at the central level and clearly what Gaurav saying is they can feel that ripple down the chain as well.

Dr. Gaurav Saini

I'd just like to add to the discussion and the points that Lewis was making. I have not seen a detailed document on the ISF in terms of what does it entail, right? Please correct me if I'm wrong.

I'd like to see that. And I think there is an opportunity that the document comes out because I think there is some confusion in terms of the changed security environment and the internal drivers,

what existing conditions of conflict around the world that the CSSF was responding to. So for example, in the Integrated Review Refresh, that's why I keep going back to this documentation because that's all I have. The first thing is 'shape the international environment'.

So in 2015, the international environment for the UK and for a lot of other countries was much stable. There wasn't a turn that we're seeing right now. So a much more stable international environment in which a much more comfortable and confident UK existed, no matter the problems, economy, X, Y, Z, was able to therefore do issue-based collaborations, were able to look at far-flung regions and the conflicts there, and give something out to those regions, without expecting something directly. But now this has become a priority because the international environment is quite in flux. There are too many challenges from too many domains. There are challenges from traditional domains like geopolitics, in terms of the rise of China and the competition between the US and China, et cetera, revisionist Russia in Europe, at the same time also new domains, like technologies.

So in a sense, the UK feels that it needs to be on a table that, you know, attempts to stabilise the environment instead of, let's say, being engaged in conflict prevention somewhere in a small part of the world, right?

Charlie

So one of the things that I think I've spoken with both you, Lewis and you, Gaurav about in the past is the issue of gender inequality and the women, peace and security agenda. And I think we've heard from a few sources that under the UKISF, there's been a declining focus on these issues in recent years. I wonder Gaurav, if you have any thoughts on this or if this is something that you've seen in your own programming. And if you have any reflections on what that means for the fund's overall ambition to tackle conflict and security in a holistic way.

Dr. Gaurav Saini

So for example, the UK WPS National Action Plan, 2023 to 2027. The first strategic objective was 'decision making', which was increasing women's meaningful participation, leadership and representation in decision making processes. And this was important. This is closely tied with conflict prevention, with conflict resolution. There's huge theoretical sort of knowledge behind this.

But if you look at the Integrated Review Refresh, I mean, the word 'women' is mentioned twice, especially page 26, where it says 'providing women and girls with the freedom they need to succeed', which I mean, I'm not really sure if that can be a policy statement. And the second is page 27, which is 'coalescing a collective response to accelerating wealth finance and organising attacks on the rights of women and girls, including online', which again is quite

a wide statement. Now, you can put that under a WPS agenda, but I'm not sure if it still retains the real meat of your own policy, which is the UK WPS National Action Plan. But it's not the UK alone. We are seeing reduction in commitments to WPS all across the board. So it's not like I'm trying to paint the UK in a certain light.

The second part is that that's the reason I said that I would like to see a document, because I still see that there's confusion because I think there are opposing forces here. One force is the Integrated Review Refresh 2023, which is inward looking. We have a problem at home in our backyard, we need to sort this out first. The other is all the legacy that had been built of great work through the CSSF, right? I don't think bureaucracies anywhere around the world can suddenly switch. It doesn't happen, right? So for example, if you see the three or four calls that have come out: Integrated Security Fund Afghanistan programme, 24 to 25, on WPS. This is a grant for 500,000 GBP. Then there is one from Ukraine, again on WPS. Then on the Indo-Pacific, again from the ISF, on WPS. So you see how there is very little in the document, there's a lot of criticism.

A lot of other people who also pointed this out. For example, I think it was Eva Tabassam, Director of Gender Action for Peace and Security, who said that the ISF looks really bad when it comes to WPS. So there's a lot of that criticism, but we are seeing indications that maybe the commitment is not completely over. Because as I said, we will proceed, can't switch overnight. So, therefore, think that is one of the reasons why I decided to have this conversation, because I see this as an opportune time with a new government.

Nothing is written in stone yet. Nothing is written on paper. There's an opportunity for us to sort of make sure that whatever is written carries forward the legacy without also compromising on the immediate needs that a new security environment across the world is asking for.

Charlie

That leads us on really smoothly to the next part of the discussion, which is thinking about how the UK ISF should evolve and what its priorities should be moving forwards, particularly under a new government. So we're recording this episode about one week after the UK's general election, where we've seen the Labour party come into power, after being in an opposition role for 14 years.

And we mentioned right at the top of the episode, Labour were the ones who in 2001 introduced the Conflict Pool, which then became CSSF, which then became the Integrated Security Fund. So, Labour clearly have a lot invested in this. However, this is a really long time to be in an opposition role. So Lewis, I wonder if you could talk to us a little bit about how you think the ISF might evolve under the new Labour government – will they bring some of the principles that they had before when they set up the Conflict Pool? Or will it look slightly different? And have you heard any rumours around Whitehall on these topics that you can share with us?

Lewis

Great question. I don't think I have heard any rumours about the UK ISF, specifically from Labour, and I think they have been quieter about it, I think, than perhaps I was expecting. The bureaucracy of how different funds are managed is not a particular vote winner. So we wouldn't necessarily expect political parties to talk about them too much on their way into power.

But I do hope that they look at the Fund with some detail now that they are the new government, because I think they need to take stock of some of the changes that Gaurav and I have spoken about today. And some of those changes are really important. Like we talked about needing conflict capabilities that are agile, and the UK ISF is that to an extent.

You know, the fact that it's looking at cyber security in a bigger way, the fact that it's looking at state threats in a bigger way is really important because that is what is happening out there in the world. I think there are other things that need to be looked at as well. So I think the new government needs to look at the UK ISF as one thing, but it also needs to look across government at the UK's conflict prevention capabilities, its ability to reduce conflict or de-escalate conflicts. We have seen some positive indications on that. So the new development minister, Annalise Dodds, I think in her first couple of days in office released a 90 second Twitter video, which talked about enhancing the UK's conflict prevention capabilities. There was a similar commitment in the Labour Manifesto. So I think that's really important and they need to look at the UK ISF, and the balance between that and other capabilities that we might find in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as well.

I think in that, one of the shifts that they need to make to keep up with the changing nature of conflict that Gaurav was talking about, is about thinking about how you de-escalate conflicts when there are big state powers involved. And Gaurav's own work and that of his organisation in having those types of dialogues between geopolitical rivals is really key. And the UK government needs to be learning from that and thinking about other learning points in terms of how they replicate similar kinds of models or adapt similar kind of models for other tensions around the world. It might be that we need to do more of that than we were before when, as we were saying, we might be looking at an intrastate conflict, so a civil war, that actually we need to be thinking about different dialogue mechanisms, that can de-escalate or prevent great power conflict breaking out, or the interventions of great powers into other areas as well. Because I think we could see civil wars that are becoming increasingly internationalised and we need the kind of dialogue mechanisms to de-escalate some of those tensions. So I think that's a key area that we need to see Labour take stock of, as well as what's happened to other conflict capabilities.

I think the other thing I'd just quickly mention is taking stock of the kind of attributes of the fund. So we talked about agility, we talked about the high-risk appetite. And there are many ways in which the Fund do uphold those and live out those kinds of attributes. So we do see them trying new things, we do see them innovating, we do see them acting in a way in which other donors can come in.

But a frequent complaint I hear from colleagues, both at Saferworld, from other organisations, other international organisations, and

other organisations from conflict affected countries that work with CSSF and UK ISF. They talk about a mismatch between this kind of political pivot to change to the evolving circumstances or to a new crisis, and the ability of the bureaucracy to keep up and the reporting mechanisms and the negotiation over contracts and when funds might be dispersed and things like that. And that's just, some of the logistical challenges of operating where it's still possible to operate, but you can't use the same bureaucratic structures and processes that you can use to build a school in a peaceful nation, right? It's not the same environment. And I think there's something there that the new government needs to look at as well.

Charlie

Yeah, I think all of the points that you've mentioned there just highlight the number of tensions within which UKISF needs to operate and navigate.

There's also a question that springs to mind, which is actually based on something that you mentioned earlier, Gaurav. You talked about opportunities that have come from the changing nature of conflict and the changing nature of the fund. You talked about the increasing complexity of conflict, the role of science and technology, also disinformation. So, we're now contending with a really complex world which the previous iteration of ISF, the CSSF, didn't necessarily have to deal with in the same way. I wonder how you see all of these things coming together, and what you think the future of the UK ISF looks like, given all of these tensions and being pulled in different directions, while also having to balance national

security and development priorities. There's a lot going on at once here. And I wonder if you could reflect on what it means for you as someone who works with the UK ISF, how you think that it's changing and where you'd like to see it go in the future.

Dr. Gaurav Saini

Thanks, Charlie. I think that's a very, important question. First, I think Lewis had also started talking about a new government. I don't want to be pessimistic too much, but I think that the changes that have led to the transition from the CSSF to the ISF, I think those changes are fundamental changes. I think even the new government will find its hands tied in terms of really making a shift back to the kind of approach. And that's what I was saying earlier. The approach is very different. I'm not sort of criticising it from the point of saying that it doesn't make sense. It makes absolute sense. So I think even the new government would be, it wouldn't have complete freedom to really look at the world differently. The international environment, security environment in Europe, the kind of pressures that that puts on foreign policy. You cannot deny that.

And therefore, I think what we are going to see is that the language might be improved. You might get a document which will mention all the things that the CSSF was mentioning. But in terms of action, in terms of how things work on the ground, the shift will remain. It will have to remain. And I think organisations like ours and others who are able to adapt to the new reality and to the new priorities of the Fund will adapt. But unfortunately, a lot of such organisations and a lot of such people who need that support might get left

behind. So that's a huge risk. And there's a reason for it. I mean, even though, and I'll just give you an example of why I said that you might see better wording, you might see all-inclusive wording, all of that. For example, you say high risk, right? You say the ISF is high risk. So was the CSSF. But the meat is always in you know, how that high risk is interpreted. For me, for the ISF now, high risk will be, I would say that they would be actually preferring things that are low risk. And I'll tell you why. Because in an uncertain world, where your political relationships become more important than let's say your conflict prevention objectives, you would be less likely to take risks with certain processes, because that carries the risk of not being liked by an ally that you're trying to cultivate.

If you're working on a bilateral relationship with an ally you meet in the Indo-Pacific, or in Europe, or in Southeast Asia, and within that ally or in that region, if there is a conflict prevention process, it will be less likely to support that process because you want to make sure that political relationship is safe, right? So in that sense, think even though I said we will try high risk things, but I would not think that that was what actually will happen, because the change is structural. Now, what does that mean for all of us? I think, as I said, we will have to adapt.

And I would hope that certain crucial things like WPS agendas and how important they are to anything that the UK does. I hope that they are not compromised in how they're affected on the ground. No matter what the priorities change. I mean, even in a terrible security environment and the global world in disorder X, Y, Z, you cannot, because there's a lot that went into creating that agenda, there's a

lot that still contributes to the problems that lead to that issue, right? So I think I would still hope, even if, let's say, our priority changes from conflict prevention in Africa or in South Asia to, let's say cyber security, I'm fine with that. I'll adapt. But something as crucial as WPS, I think that should not be given up.

Charlie

Yeah I completely agree on the need to keep the women, peace and security agenda front and centre. But we're almost at time, so I wonder if I could ask both of you for your top two recommendations to the new Labour government, as they start to review the UK Integrated Security Fund. We've heard that the government is also intending to conduct a Strategic Defence Review within its first year, and we know they'll also be reviewing government spending. So Lewis, if you could kick off first – what are your top two recommendations for the new Labour government on the ISF?

Lewis

Yeah, with a slightly more optimistic note than Gaurav. I hate to disagree with him, but I do slightly. I think Labour have to approach this with bureaucratic creativity. I think number one is reinvest in those conflict capabilities. Yes, prevention is key, but also de-escalation, also kind of stabilisation as well. And that might be through the UKISF, or it might be through other parts of the FCDO, that might be through embassies, or it might be having some centralised funding that can innovate and do research and analytics

as well. So I think there are different ways in which the new government can approach that and make good on their own commitments. I think the other one, and really this has been sort of percolating in my mind, but I think what Gaurav has said is important as well, framing how our security engages with other people's security, right? This is something we used to have going back to Strategic Defence and Security Reviews back in 2015, and to some extent the Integrated Review in 2021. But I think if Labour are serious about their commitments to re-engage as respectful partners to the rest of the world – which again is some of the rhetoric that we've heard from Labour – then I think reframing how our security and other people's security are linked and then building partnerships based on that, I think is really key.

And I think that speaks to some of what Gaurav was saying about how partners like his own organisation are interpreting the signals that the UK is sending. So I think there's something that can be done that, not just again within the UK ISF, but in that wider kind of strategic articulation that we'll see coming as well. I think those are the two. If I was going to jump into a third one, I'd say address the kind of consistency in the risk appetite as well, which I mentioned before.

Charlie

That was cheeky, sneaking a third one in! Gaurav, over to you.

Dr. Gaurav Saini

I don't have too much to add. I think Lewis has really given two really good recommendations. But I think what I can say is, for example, one is that maybe what we've missed is that funds like the CSSF do much more than just, let's say, give UK taxpayer money to a far-flung region. I think they also add to how the world looks at the UK and its role in the world. I think in the global south, at least that's been my experience, I think the UK is seen a certain way, it's seen as a certain interlocutor. I don't want to use the word soft power because that has its own meanings in terms of media and Bollywood, X, Y, Z. But I think the UK has played this role for a long time, especially in South Asia and other regions.

And if you were to take that away, if that was to shift we have to really ask ourselves, okay, what is the UK's contribution? If the contribution is going to be standard setting on AI regulation, that is great. That can anyway happen. But there are contributions that *impact* lives and there are contributions that *save* lives. I think there has to be a distinction somewhere. So in many ways, as I said earlier, it is understandable where the UK is coming from and what's this a result of. But I think there's more to the UK than what is reflected in the ISF. Again, I'm saying it out of hope, not from a point of criticism. I completely understand why this is happening and what it means.

Lewis

There's some optimism then, Gaurav!

Charlie

Exactly. I think that's a really nice place to end. Thank you both for joining me, and thanks for listening!

Charlie

Warpod, from Saferworld.

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