



Lord Adonis

'Never forget - Rome fell: What London needs to do to remain the world's greatest city'



'The Golden Arrow: London 2030'

Andrew Adonis, Inaugural Lecture as Visiting Professor of King's College London

Guildhall, 14 November 2017

Guildhall is one of the wonders of London – so by definition one of the wonders of the world – and it is one of the greatest privileges of my life to be speaking here.

My gratitude to Sir Mark Boleat and his fellow chairs of the City's Policy and Resources Committee over the past 20 years extends to far more than hosting this event. Since the launch of the Academies programme 17 years ago, the City and its livery companies have played a vital role in the renaissance of London's state schools. Judith Mayhew Jonas was the first leader of a London enterprise to commit to establishing an Academy – now the fantastic City of London Academy in Southwark. I vividly recall the meeting in the state dining room of 10 Downing Street where we sealed the deal. I deliberately held the meeting in Sir John Soane's great dining room because it is the only venue in

No 10 which is a match for this Guildhall and the Lord Mayor's magnificent Mansion House.

More than 30 Academies have been established by the Corporation and the livery companies, and they have reinvented the City's social mission.

The City Corporation also does a brilliant job maintaining the second and third greatest city parks in the world: Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest. The greatest, of course, is Regent's Park and its rose garden. Then there is the City's contribution to the arts and culture, particularly the Barbican Centre and the Museum of London, which will become greater still when the new museum and concert hall are built.

I also pay tribute to the City as a champion of Crossrail and transport infrastructure London-wide. And for your generous support for King's College London's Commission on London, which I chair. Our director is Tony Halmos, a dedicated servant of the Corporation and of London over many decades.

Can I particularly highlight your role as a conscientious and quality provider of social housing. We need far more of it, and if I can abuse my hospitality can I suggest the next social mission for the Corporation? That you set a target for doubling the Corporation's stock of social housing in the next decade – 5,000 new homes – to make a difference and to show leadership in the face of London's great crisis, the shortage of affordable housing? I can't think of any greater work you could do and you are brilliantly equipped to do it.

King's College is another powerful force for social and civic progress in this city and it is a high honour that King's has invited me to be a visiting professor and to deliver this inaugural lecture.

Ed Byrne leads King's College with distinction. I much enjoy being part of the Strand Group under its highly entrepreneurial leader Jon Davis. Jon's team, including the evergreen John Rentoul, are building a British version of the Kennedy School of Government on the banks of the Thames, and it is a worthy match. I particularly thank Martin Stolliday, today's organiser in chief, and Jack Brown, who helped me with my research. My most useful research was reading Jack's PhD on the transformation of Canary Wharf from wasteland to a vast networked extension of the City of London in just 15 years. The prime mover? Michael Heseltine, a great practical visionary, who I am proud to call a mentor.

Let me start by transporting you to another great global city.

‘In the last days of Pope Eugenius the Fourth [in the 15th century], two of his servants, the learned Poggius and a friend, ascended the Capitoline Hill, reposed themselves among the ruins of columns and temples, and viewed from that commanding spot the ... prospects of desolation ... The place and the object gave ample scope for moralising on the vicissitudes of fortune, which spares neither man nor the proudest of his works, which buries empires and cities in a common grave.

‘The hill of the capitol, on which we sit,’ [wrote Poggius] was formerly the head of the Roman Empire, the citadel of the earth, the terror of kings ... this spectacle of the world, how it is fallen! How changed! How defaced! The path of victory is obliterated by vines, and the benches of the senators concealed by a dunghill. Cast your eyes on the Palatine hill, and seek, among the shapeless and enormous fragments, the marble theatre, the obelisks, the colossal statues, the porticoes of Nero’s palace ... The forum of the Roman people, where they assembled to enact their laws and elect their magistrates, is now enclosed for the cultivation of pot herbs and thrown open for the reception of swine and buffaloes. The public and private edifices that were founded for eternity lie prostrate, naked, and broken, like the limbs of a mighty giant; and the ruin is the more visible from the stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune.’

That was Edward Gibbon writing 240 years ago about Rome, tragic and broken, nearly a millennium after the destruction of its empire.

Even today, a century and a half after the Risorgimento, Rome remains ‘the limbs of a mighty giant’; ‘stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune.’ Even within Italy, Milan has an economy twice the size of Rome’s and is a stronger cultural magnet for everything except classical remains and Catholicism. And the ‘universal’ church is not what it was either – no doubt to Gibbon’s posthumous approval, since he saw Christianity as the most insidious force enfeebling Rome. I love Gibbon’s verdict on monasticism: ‘painful to the individual and useless to mankind.’ It is precisely my view of Brexit!

So London beware. Great cities, capitals of Europe no less, rise and fall. Let our grandchildren not wander around Parliament Square amid swine and

buffaloes; or to a Canary Wharf overtaken by vines and pot herbs. Let this great Guildhall not become an architectural graveyard like the Roman Forum, while Parisians admire Nelson's Column re-erected next to the Arc de Triomphe.

By my estimation, London is the tenth capital of Europe since Athens. Only one of the other nine – Paris – remains a great city. Venice is a great museum, partially submerged. Istanbul is becoming a great prison. The other former citadels of the earth are now mostly stupendous relics. Cordova was Europe's foremost city in the 11th century. Palermo overtook it a century later, when London was barely a large town. Grenada assumed the mantle in the 14th century, soon overtaken by Paris. In 1500 Paris was five times larger than London. The capital of England – an England then beset by civil and religious strife – was on a par with Bordeaux, Lyons, Marseille and nine Italian cities.

The stability and toleration of the long and wise reign of Elizabeth I turned London in one of Europe's great commercial cities. The civil wars and unwisdom of Charles I and James II turned the clock back in the next two generations and it took the long-run stability and liberalism after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 for Britain and its capital city to really flourish.

Only for the last 150 years has London clearly outshone Paris, thanks to an era of French revolutions, military defeats and decadence which took the Versailles of Louis XIV to the calamities of Verdun and Vichy.

I say all this because Britain – and London – are at one of those critical moments when it could all start to go wrong.

Rome, Athens, Constantinople, Venice, Paris, Cordova, Grenada, Palermo, Amsterdam. All depended on the vitality of their national and international settings. The fate of Rome was sealed by the Goths and Vandals. Constantinople was doomed when the Ottomans over-ran Byzantium. Also, the walls of Constantinople were breached by gunpowder, because Constantine XI failed to modernise his city's infrastructure.

Trade is crucial. Venice, already in decline, could not survive the commercialisation of the Cape route from Europe to the Indian Ocean.

Cultural and intellectual vitality is equally essential. Salamanca was Europe's greatest university of the Middle Ages. The Counter Reformation turned it into

a branch of the Inquisition, while the Reformation and constitutional government propelled Oxford and Cambridge – scholastic extensions of London – to the greatest heights.

Simply because London is capital of Europe now does not mean it will remain so. Only wise policy and leadership will keep it there.

Consider for a moment what has made London so great.

Political stability and military security unmatched by any nation in Europe – indeed the world – for 330 years since 1688.

Huge and generally secure international trade also since the late 17th century, first by British naval dominance and the British empire, and more recently by the European Union and a benign international regime for trade. When the French captured Amsterdam in 1795, much of the city's wealth fled across the Channel, as it did from Antwerp during the Napoleonic wars and from Paris itself and other cities of continental Europe during the wars and revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries.

With trade, prosperity and toleration came people: Chinese, Irish, French, German, Jews, Africans and Afro-Caribbeans, Cypriots even; and latterly Poles and central and East Europeans. Merchants, refugees, intellectuals, economic migrants. The super-rich - Barings from Northern Germany, Rothschilds from Frankfurt, Cazenoves from Huguenot France – but also the poor just about able to pay their passage, like my Dad who in 1959 came by boat and train from Famagusta via Venice, aged 18, ending up in Mornington Crescent.

London's population grew from one to seven million in the 19th century, on the back of transformed infrastructure – railways, parks, schools, roads, housing, hospitals, public buildings, bridges, and perhaps best of all Sir Joseph Bazalgett's amazing sewers which abolished cholera and provided London with sanitation matched by few other cities at home or abroad. In 1800, Greater London made up around 12% of the population of England and Wales. By 1900, it was 20%.

London's economy has always been broad and deep, with extraordinarily successful what I call 'brain-service' specialisms. Financial services didn't spontaneously ignite with the Big Bang: Lloyds of London was founded in 1686, the Bank of England in 1694, the modern London Stock Exchange in 1801. In

1900, more than half of the world's trade was financed in sterling, half the world's shipping tonnage was British, and more than half the stocks quoted on the Stock Exchange were overseas securities.

Then there is London's excellent university system. The Benthamite UCL was established in 1826, King's – as a gesture of semi-friendly Anglican retaliation – in 1829, the University of London in 1836, Imperial College and the great South Ken museums which were all legacies of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the LSE in 1895. Together with Oxford and Cambridge, a 'golden triangle' was born of internationally unrivalled universities in terms of both quality and proximity.

And to make all this possible, a national government, based in London, which became a byword for uncorrupt and fairly efficient administration, and a London government – including this City Corporation – which did an increasingly efficient job, however quaint its ceremonies, providing the services and institutions for a world city. The Metropolitan Board of Works was set up in 1855. The London County Council in 1889. The London boroughs in 1899. The London Passenger Transport Board in 1933. The Greater London Council, and the new boroughs, in 1965.

And so again in our generation. The post-war decades were not great for London, partly because they were not great for Britain – austerity, acute industrial unrest in the 70s and 80s, and a country which had 'lost an empire but not found a role.'

The 40 years until the 1980s were particularly bad for London because of the mistaken policy of industrial relocation: a policy of deliberately trying to move jobs, businesses, indeed whole industries, out of the capital, because it was supposedly overheated, seeking to locate them instead in the Midlands and the North. The 1966 selective employment tax introduced a levy on service jobs – which of course were disproportionately in London and the south – intended to subsidise manufacturing jobs, which were assumed to be the forte of the Midlands, the North and Scotland. The London Government Act of 1963 went as far as to make it illegal for the GLC to advertise industrial opportunities in London. This, by the way, is one of the most amazingly discriminatory British legislative provisions I have ever come across: the 1963 Act said, 'nothing shall authorise the Greater London Council to give publicity in the United Kingdom, whether by advertising or otherwise, to the commercial and industrial advantages of Greater London; and nothing shall authorise the publication of any advertisement, or the establishment or maintenance of office

accommodation, by the Greater London Council in any place outside the United Kingdom.'

The effect? London's population fell sharply; unemployment rocketed, public services decayed – the London Underground in the 1970s looked as if it had witnessed the fall of Rome – and swathes of Inner London became ghettos of poverty, crime and hopelessness. But the same happened in the cities of the Midlands and the North too. Except that they got it even worse: the population of Liverpool halved in the 60 years after 1937.

What we learned then was that less London does not mean more Liverpool, or any other city well beyond London. The prosperity of the North is not founded on the suppression of the South; on the contrary, the prosperity of London breeds the prosperity of Liverpool, and I have a lot more to say about this in a moment.

However, that was the dismal 1970s, which I remember vividly growing up on a deplorable Camden council estate, regarding with awe and wonder the City Corporation's much better estate at the end of the road. The policy of 'decongesting' London came to an end in the 1980s; so did the decline of Britain, after the UK's highly successful membership of the European Community after 1973, especially with the development of the Single Market by Margaret Thatcher which was of especial benefit to London because of its strong service sectors. Hence the transformation of the City of London and the creation of Docklands as a new City, complete with its own light railway, tube and even airport.

And forget not the National Lottery, a great innovation of John Major's, which transformed London's cultural institutions. Tate Modern was founded in the formerly derelict South Bank power station in 2000, thanks to the lottery. It is now among the most visited and influential museums on the globe.

Since the 1980s London's population has risen two million to 8.6 million – matching its peak on the eve of the Second World War. Its economic region, stretching far beyond the boundaries of Greater London and the M25 to Oxford, Cambridge, Brighton, Reading, Bedford, Ipswich and the new city of Milton Keynes, is larger and stronger than it has ever been. So too its international connectivity – not least because of Heathrow, the most successful single airport in the history of aviation. All this has sustained

unprecedented depth and breadth of trade, employment, and higher education, London's universities being one a jewel in the crown.

The creation of the Mayoralty of London was among the most inspired acts of the Blair Government; there were, of course, many others. Crossrail, the 2012 Olympics, the extension and upgrading of tube, bus and cycle networks, the Shard and other tall buildings which beautify the London skyline as much as St Paul's, Big Ben and St Pancras. All the work of three bold mayors – Ken, Boris and Sadiq.

Gladstone, the greatest peacetime prime minister of Britain and in many ways the creator of the prosperity and successful liberalism of Victorian Britain, said: 'my first principle of foreign policy is good government at home.'

As we face Brexit, Gladstone's words cannot be repeated too often.

In the wake of Brexit, and the collapse of 50 years of British foreign and trade policy, the whole strategic direction of Britain's international and trade policy needs to be resolved. Just as Harold Macmillan had to reinvent Britain's foreign and European policy in the ruins of Suez, and did so with courage and fair success, we now need a political leader – hopefully of vision and competence – to do the same again.

My own view is that the wisest leadership is to stop the whole Brexit fiasco and to tell the British people, straight, that on June 23rd 2016 they were sold a pup by political fraudsters; that that was a vote which can and should be reversed for the good of them, their children and their grandchildren; and that, as David Davis so wisely put it, a democracy which cannot change its mind is not a democracy.

The truth is this. Modern Britain can't have greater prosperity by succumbing to a nationalist fever and pretending that we can leave our continent of Europe in terms of trade, security and the intense multilateral co-operation needed to deal with the world's ever present madmen and dictators.

There is no such thing for modern Britain as 'splendid isolation'. Actually there wasn't in the past either, which is why – even when Britannia ruled the waves and an empire on which the sun never set – we still got sucked into European conflagrations in 1914 and 1939. These days we don't have an empire. As for the Royal Navy, it now has more admirals than ships and aircraft carriers with no aircraft. Without European peace, security and trade, we are in serious

jeopardy as a country; so the sooner we stop this national self-mutilation the better.

However, whatever happens to Brexit – and I think you have got the gist of my views – the future will be bleak without good government at home. This evening I want to offer a big bold Gladstonian prospectus for what we should do to tackle two of the biggest challenges facing the country: the north-south divide, and ensuring that London's future development is much more securely linked into the development and success of the great cities of the north and Midlands – Birmingham, Coventry, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Derby, Newcastle, Hull – than it has been in the past, and without which the prosperity of London, as well as the rest of England, will be stunted.

This is an inaugural lecture, so I need a commercial break to highlight two pieces of theory which underpin the plan I am about to set out for the 'Golden Triangle.' I promise they are brief and hopefully interesting.

First, there is 'Marchetti's constant,' which suggests that, throughout history and regardless of changes in urban planning and transport technology, the average worker spends an hour commuting each day. The rule states that, ever since Neolithic times, people tend to adjust their behaviours (including where they live) to keep a rough commute time of 30 minutes to and from work. The centre of any city or village is therefore the point where most people living within it can reach in approximately 30 minutes, and most car and rail commutes are of a similar duration. Pompeii – another stupendous Roman relic – bears this out for classical times in terms of its layout and road plan.

Yacov Zahavi, a transport engineer with whom Cesare Marchetti worked, made a related argument that people have a constant 'time travel budget' that they allocate to commuting. In other words, better transport infrastructure doesn't cut travel times; rather, it enables people to commute from farther afield, which may or may not be a good thing – but certainly is when they are commuting to such economic powerhouses as central London and central Manchester.

By the way, when people say commuting is bad, or that commuter towns are boring, I haven't met many people in St Albans, Guildford, Brighton, Oxford and Cambridge, the last three of which are considerably more than 30 minutes out, saying that they wished they lived instead in Blackpool or Burnley or that they could get equivalent jobs there.

Because London is so strong an economy, and its hinterland so magnificent in terms of desirable places to live, I introduce to you the ‘Adonis constant’: that in respect of London, there is a readiness to commute up to three hours a day – an hour and a half each way – provided that all-told quality of life is good enough, that is, whatever the trade-off between housing costs and amenities that works for each individual and family.

This links directly to my second piece of theory: the insight of Professor Henry Overman of the LSE that great cities are powerful locations both of ‘production’ and ‘consumption’ – that is, that they are not only places with good enough that produce things, they are places where people want to live because they offer good quality of life: not just enough jobs or the potential to commute towards good enough jobs within the ‘Marchetti constant’, but also good housing, schools, green and pleasant spaces, sports, the arts, all that, with our differing eyes and requirements, we regard as the good life.

This insight is important, because although it is undoubtedly true that most of the cities of the Midlands and the North have had an economically hard time of the last two generations – in Professor Henry Overman’s language, they haven’t done well as centres of production – they are mostly nonetheless still excellent centres of ‘consumption.’ In particular, they have large stocks of good quality, spacious housing, a fraction of the cost of London’s; they have excellent civic amenities, built by the same Victorians who endowed London so phenomenally; and they have proximity to many of the most beautiful places in England – some of them almost as beautiful as Regent’s Park, like the Peak District, the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales.

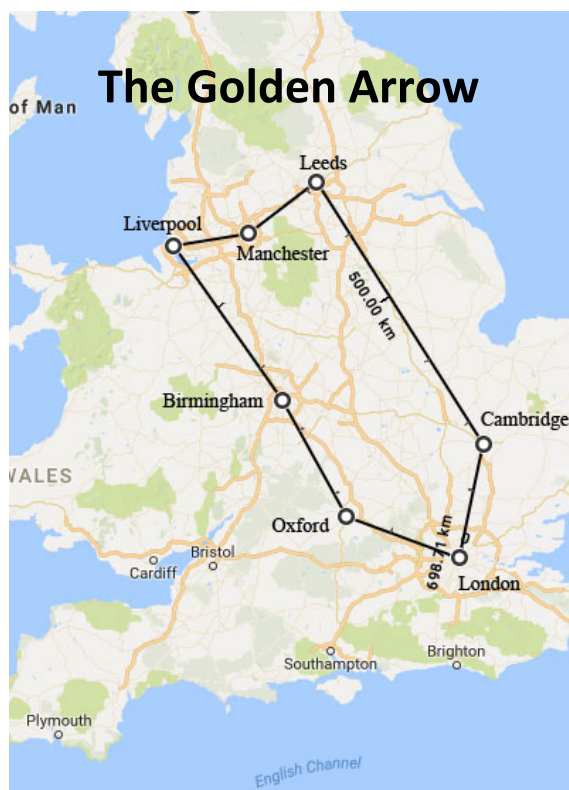
I want now to put together the following 12 pieces of jigsaw: the Overman insight, the Marchetti constant, the Adonis constant, HS2, Crossrail 2, ‘turning south London orange,’ a third runway at Heathrow, Crossrail of the North, UK Central, the Midlands hub, the Midlands Metro and the Leeds metro. [HS2: the high-speed line from London to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Crossrail 2: the proposed new north-south rail line in London including a new tunnel linking Wimbledon-Tooting-Clapham Junction-Victoria-Tottenham Court Road-Easton-Kings Cross/St Pancras-Islington-Hackney-Seven Sisters. ‘Turning south London Orange’: extending the high-frequency London Overground to include all south London’s heavy rail commuter lines. Crossrail of the North: a new high-speed line linking Liverpool-Manchester-Leeds-Hull/York-Newcastle. Midlands hub: new high frequency connectivity from the new HS2 station at

Birmingham International to Coventry and other major towns and cities of the West Midlands. Midlands Metro: extending the new Birmingham tram to serve the wider conurbation. Leeds Metro: a Leeds-Bradford tram transforming connectivity between these two cities which are only six minutes apart from but require an irregular 20 minute train journey at present.]

Put these 12 pieces of jigsaw together in the right order and you get the 'Golden Arrow.' Let me explain.

HS2 both trebles transport capacity between London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds, while also cutting the journey time between all these destinations to under an hour – so an hour and a half end to end for most HS2 journeys using HS2, provided there is good connectivity to/from each HS2 station within the regions that they serve. Taking the Adonis and Marchetti constants, this will transform the ability of people to live and work across the conurbation of the south, Midlands and North. Given house prices in the Midlands and the North only a fraction of those in London and much of the South-East, the impact of this in helping to solve the housing crisis could be immense.

This is the Golden Arrow.



The proviso of requiring good connectivity to/from each HS2 station is critical. If you get to Euston and can't get to the Underground because it is congested, and can't get anywhere else very fast even when you do get to the Underground, the Adonis constant isn't much use. Ditto in Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. So it's critical that each of the HS2 stations also have good metro and other fast, high capacity connections to get passengers from the HS2 stations across the respective cities and regions.

If all this is done, and planned with good local transport including cycling facilities, then Overman's insight comes into effect, the great centres of 'consumption' in the Midlands and the North also become highly competitive and collaborative centres of 'production' – not least, competitive and collaborative with London, and the effect is indeed a Golden Arrow of intense new economic activity – a single super-networked metropolitan economic zone driving the whole British economy forward.

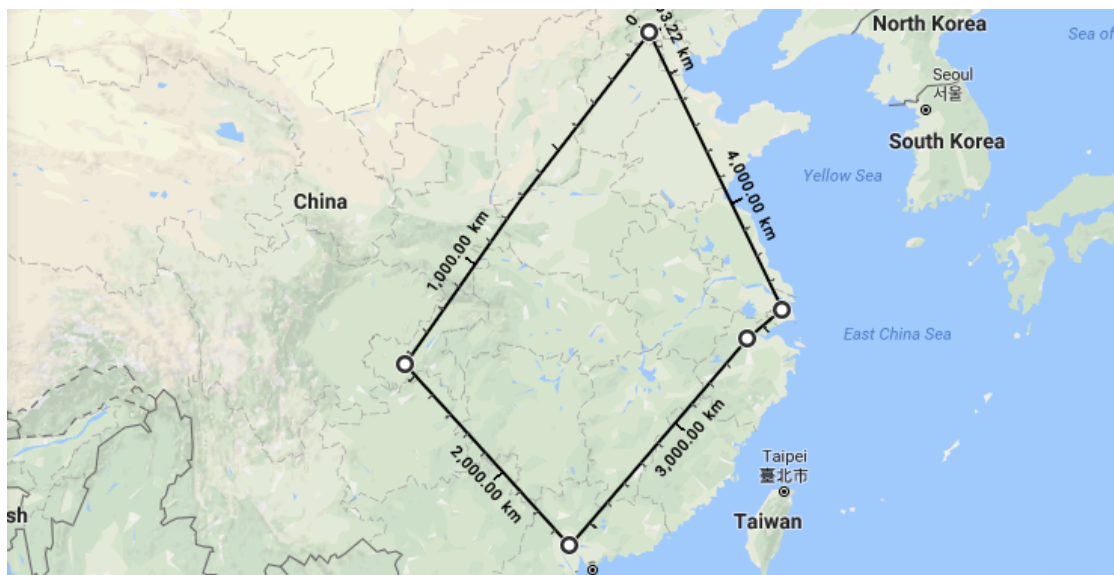
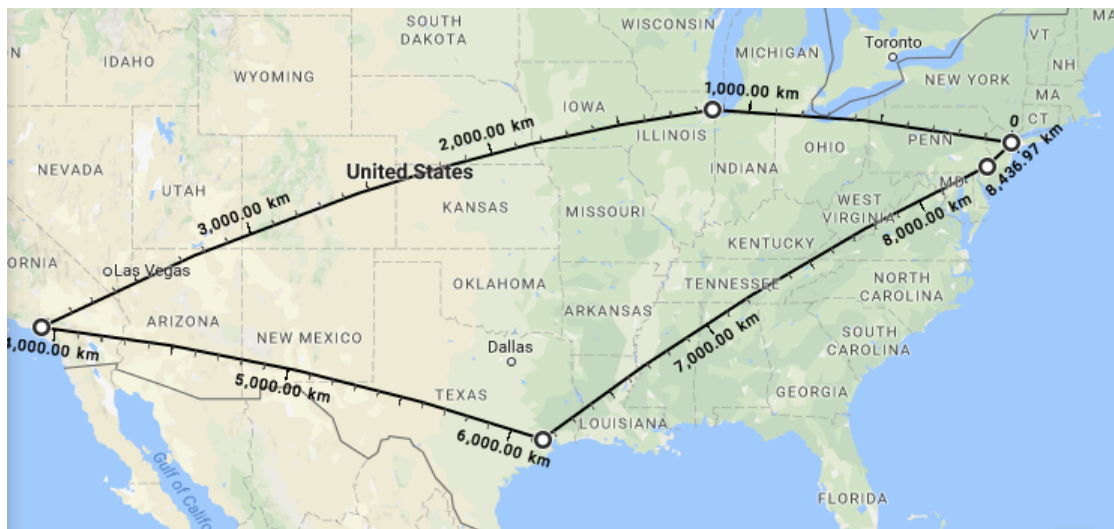
Note also that the Golden Arrow includes Heathrow, Birmingham and Manchester airports. Heathrow is the most successful airport in aviation history, and its connectivity will be further radically improved with a combination of HS2, a third runway, and new rail accesses to both the west and the south, as are under consideration as part of the plan for the 3rd runway and should definitely be included as part of the expansion project.

So we need to complete HS2 as fast as possible – which is 2030 if we pull all the stops out. We also need HS2 stations to be integrated into their regional districts and towns through modern metro systems across London, the Midlands and the North. In London this means that Crossrail 2 is critical and must open at the same time as HS2 in 2030. Crossrail 2 serves Euston, the terminus for HS2, and connects it to other London transport interchanges, notably Victoria, Clapham Junction and Wimbledon, as well as opening up major new housing development zones north of Tottenham to development with rapid, high capacity rail connectivity to HS2 and central London.

The vital arc north of London – Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge – is a crucial part of the Golden Arrow. The proposed new 'east-west' rail line linking Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge should produce dramatic agglomeration effects between these three high productivity cities. But they are all also less than an hour from London and close to the Midlands, and via HS2 to the North,

so their economic and intellectual vitality will spread north as well as south and help power the whole 'golden arrow' – indeed help make it golden.

There is another reason why the 'golden arrow' is so golden. It will give Britain the most highly networked agglomeration of major cities close to each other of any country in the world. Look at these maps – each of them shows the proximity of the largest five cities by population in each country. The United States. China. Japan. Germany. France. And finally the UK.







In all the five other countries, the five largest cities are further apart than in Britain, and in none are they all remotely close to an hour apart, although all these countries have high-speed rail except the United States – and high-speed rail isn't much use crossing the whole US from New York to LA, a journey which takes over six hours by plane, and which involves some of the most congested airports in the world.

Brexit, or no Brexit, Britain needs a plan. The Golden Arrow is that plan. It can, and must, be done by 2030. There was a dream that was Rome: ours is the dream that will be London.