

**SCHOOL OF
SECURITY STUDIES**

**CENTRE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES**

KING'S
College
LONDON

ISSN 2752-7786

The Integrated Review In Context: A Strategy Fit for the 2020s?

July 2021

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: PUTTING THE INTEGRATED REVIEW IN CONTEXT
DR JOE DEVANNY AND PROFESSOR JOHN GEARSON

SECTION ONE

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW IN CONTEXT: THE IMPORTANCE OF HARD CHOICES
LORD RICKETTS

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW – SECURITY AND DEFENCE
SIR MALCOLM RIFKIND

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW: LOCKED INTO AN AMBITIOUS DOMESTIC STRATEGY
BARONESS NEVILLE-JONES

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW'S CONCEPT OF GLOBAL BRITAIN – IS IT REALISTIC?
SIR MARK LYALL GRANT

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW: INNOVATIVE THINKING BUT STILL SOME BLIND SPOTS
SIR JOHN SAWERS

SECTION TWO

IMPLEMENTING THE UK INTEGRATED REVIEW: BUILDING ETHICAL CAMPAIGNS TO DEFEND UK INTERESTS AGAINST HOSTILE INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN THE GREY ZONE
SIR DAVID OMAND

SOFT POWER IN THE INTEGRATED REVIEW: MORE PROMISE THAN DELIVERY, SO FAR
MICHAEL CLARKE

CORRUPTION: THE MISSING LINK IN THE INTEGRATED REVIEW?
LADY MOIRA ANDREWS

THE REVIEW AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DR JOE DEVANNY AND DR PHILIP A. BERRY

SECTION THREE

THE BRITISH 'INTEGRATED REVIEW' AND THE ISSUE OF CHINA

PROFESSOR KERRY BROWN

THE INDO-PACIFIC 'TILT' AND THE RETURN OF BRITISH MARITIME STRATEGY

DR ALESSIO PATALANO

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW AS STRATEGY

ALEXANDER DOWNER

CHINA, BRITAIN AND THE INTEGRATED REVIEW

ANDREW MACLEOD

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY: THE CENTRALITY OF UK-INDIA RELATIONS

TIM WILLASEY-WILSEY

SECTION FOUR

THE REVIEW AND ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

DR PHILIP A. BERRY

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FOREIGN POLICY: THE REVIEW AND RUSSIA

DR MAXINE DAVID AND DR NATASHA KUERT

GLOBAL BRITAIN AND EUROPEAN DEFENCE: THE FUTURE IS FLEXIBLE

GESINE WEBER

THE UK'S INTEGRATED REVIEW AND THE GULF STATES

DR DAVID B. ROBERTS AND SARA GHAZI ALMAHRI

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW: A BRAZILIAN PERSPECTIVE

DR VINICIUS MARIANO DE CARVALHO AND DR JOE DEVANNY

THE INTEGRATED REVIEW AND THE VIEW FROM SMALL STATES: TIME TO THINK SMALLER?

DR HILLARY BRIFFA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This collection originated as an idea for an event to discuss the implications of the Integrated Review. The Johnson government had billed it as the ‘biggest’ strategic review since the end of the Cold War. The Review’s production had been understandably delayed by the coronavirus pandemic emergency, forcing multiple reappraisals of the context (global and fiscal) in which the Review’s findings would need to guide the government’s actions. It seemed like a good idea to invite a diverse range of speakers to discuss the key themes of the Review.

In fact, we quickly realised that there were too many topics we wanted to discuss, and too many speakers we wanted to invite, so we switched medium to a collection of essays. A further shift occurred more gradually, as the size of the collection slowly expanded, well beyond the point that any reader would happily scroll through the entire text in one sitting. So, what you read today is the first instalment of 20 essays, to be followed later this year by another volume focused specifically on the defence, security, and science and technology themes of the Review. Once the full set of papers has been released we will return to a short series of events to allow discussion of certain themes in the autumn of 2021.

We are immensely grateful to our excellent contributors – former practitioners, established and early-career scholars – for agreeing to take part and offer their insights into and analyses of the Review and its implications. Their contributions illuminate many different aspects of the Review, situating it in historical and strategic context. There is no uniformity of views. At times, the contributors disagree. This reflects the fact that the Review is subject to multiple different interpretations – and will continue to be so throughout its life-cycle and beyond.

We would like to thank Lizzie Ellen and her exceptional communications team in the School of Security Studies for all their efforts in bringing this collection to publication. The attractive and accessible format of this collection is entirely down to them. Particular thanks are due to Abby Bradley in the Freeman Air and Space Institute, for her help throughout the production process, as well as Danielle MacDivitt for production-editing and Ayesha Khan for her designs.

We would also like to thank our colleagues in the Centre for Defence Studies, the Freeman Air and Space Institute, and more broadly in the Department of War Studies and wider School of Security Studies at King’s. We have benefited greatly from discussing the Review with them and debating how best to structure and sequence this series of essays. We thank especially Sophy Antrobus, Philip A. Berry, David Jordan and Nina Musgrave.

Finally, we would also like to thank our respective families for their patience and support as we prepared this collection for publication.

Joe Devanny and John Gearson
July 2021

Introduction: Putting the Integrated Review In Context

Dr Joe Devanny
Professor John Gearson



**DIFFERENT PRIME
MINISTERS CAN
CHANGE THE
MACHINERY,
RHYTHM AND
DIRECTION SET
FROM THE CENTRE
OF GOVERNMENT.**



Strategic reviews don't come along every day. As Lord Ricketts notes in this volume, there was a twelve-year gap between the 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and the 2010 National Security Strategy and aligned Strategic Defence and Security Review. Constant production of full-spectrum strategic reviews would be counter-productive – tying officials up in knots, as no sooner than one review was finished, another cycle would start again. Still, twelve years was too long. In the interim, the United Kingdom's twin focus was global counter-terrorism and the defining military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the SDR itself was refreshed within 4 years following 9/11 with a 'New' Chapter – it was anything but full spectrum.

The Iraq Inquiry's report provides a good account of how the UK responded to some of these challenges, including shortcomings in decision-making and implementation. The shadow of that period continues to affect the ways in which strategic issues are framed to this day. For example, the 2010 reforms that Lord Ricketts led for David Cameron, creating a National Security Council, a Secretariat and the post of National Security Adviser (NSA), highlighted efforts to improve the quality of strategy and implementation that had been debated for much of the preceding decade. The vocabulary of 'national security' also evolved over this decade to replace Whitehall's traditional reference to 'Defence and Overseas Policy', partly reflecting a nod to long practice in the United States, but also acknowledging the need to see problems in their totality – considering defence and security, domestic and international issues as part of a holistic process. As Baroness Neville-Jones (an early proponent of a national security approach) highlights in this volume, the Integrated Review aims to emulate – in fact, to supersede – this approach to national strategy.

Different prime ministers can change the machinery, rhythm and direction set from the centre of government. The new approach under Cameron's premiership was of consistently branded National Security Strategies and Strategic Defence and Security Reviews, published every five years, and overseen by a National Security Council chaired regularly by the Prime Minister. It was the first time defence- and other security-focused departments in the UK had worked to a regular review cycle – long practiced by the United States through its quadrennial cycle – and aligned with the fixed term parliaments act of 2011. But Cameron's approach has been adapted in the five years since his resignation. First, Theresa May appointed Mark Sedwill, who had been her permanent secretary at the Home Office, to be NSA, breaking a cycle of three NSAs with more conventional diplomatic career experience. Then, in the exceptional circumstances of the illness and untimely death of Cabinet Secretary Sir Jeremy Heywood, May effectively decided to do without a full-time NSA, somewhat surprisingly – and arguably unwisely – allowing Sedwill to combine both substantial roles simultaneously.

Under May's premiership, Sedwill led an in-cycle National Security Capability Review in 2018 – complemented by a defence paper that emerged separately from the same process (revealing that the trend of defence exceptionalism had still not been resolved). Conducting such a process within the five-year cycle demonstrated adaptability, but also reflected both the changed personnel in No.10 and the Cabinet Office, and the need to reconsider assumptions made by the 2015 Strategy in light of subsequent global events and the evolving contemporary security environment.

More change has followed in Boris Johnson's turbulent first two years as Prime Minister. On Sedwill's retirement last year, Johnson first tried to appoint his Brexit adviser, David Frost, to the role of national security adviser as a member of the House of Lords – as neither a minister nor a career official. This unusual decision has since been sensibly reversed, with Frost assuming a more conventional, ministerial role focused on Europe, and the former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, Stephen Lovegrove, assuming the National



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**THIS VOLUME IS
DELIBERATELY
DIVERSE, NOT JUST
IN TOPICS, BUT IN
VIEWPOINTS. YOU
WILL SEE THAT THE
CONTRIBUTORS
DO NOT ALWAYS
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Security Adviser role. The dance over Frost's appointment revealed a continuing discussion about how political a national security adviser could and should be – the outcome revealing once again how difficult it is to reform the civil service/political interface in these key areas of policy.

And from early 2020, the coronavirus pandemic emergency has called into question whether the structures, processes and policies pursued under the national security approach have adequately prepared the UK to address a threat that was identified as a top (Tier One) priority by the 2010 Strategy. Was the problem strategy or its implementation? Announcing his Integrated Review in the months prior to the pandemic, Johnson had claimed there was already a need to conduct a much bigger, more far-reaching and comprehensive review than any undertaken by the UK government since the end of the Cold War.

Johnson's hyperbolic historical framing of his Review – the 'biggest' for thirty years – explicitly lends itself to a contextual appraisal. Judged by the metric of Johnson's rhetoric, does the Integrated Review live up to this billing? To what extent does it really differ in substance from the Reviews conducted by Johnson's predecessors, from John Major to Theresa May? And, in light of the post-Brexit ambitions of Johnson's government to develop and deliver a 'Global Britain' agenda, how should we assess the fitness for purpose of the Integrated Review as a blueprint for approaching the defence, diplomatic, development and security issues that face the UK as matters of priority, whether regionally or thematically?

These were the questions that led us, at the Centre for Defence Studies at King's College London, to commission a series of essays from distinguished former practitioners and leading scholars, most of whom are affiliated with the School of Security Studies at King's and its work on national security matters, to provide insights and reflections on the Review. We originally conceived of these essays as a single volume, entitled *The Integrated Review in Context*, but it quickly became clear that there were simply too many issues to address in the space of one volume. This series of essays has now become a series of volumes, of which this is the first instalment. A second volume will follow later in the year, focused specifically on the Review's defence, security and technology-related themes.

The current volume of 20 essays is more broadly focused, enabling our contributors to encompass a variety of themes and topics that the Review addresses or, for some, appears to neglect. This volume is deliberately diverse, not just in topics, but in viewpoints. You will see that the contributors do not always agree in their respective assessments of various issues. We believe that this adds value to the public debate about the Review and how it should be interpreted. Context is necessary to understand the Review and its implications, but that very context is amenable to different interpretations. We have aimed to make this collection accessible, informative – and occasionally provocative.

Reflections on the Review

The first section comprises five essays from distinguished former national security practitioners – two former ministers; two former National Security Advisers; and one former Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service. They use their experience and expertise to appraise the Review as a national strategy and assess its implications for domestic and foreign policy, defence and security.

Lord (Peter) Ricketts, a visiting professor in the Department of War Studies at King's, who, as the UK's first National Security Adviser (2010-12) led the 2010 national security reforms, compliments the breadth of the Integrated Review's ambition, but also highlights apparent shortcomings in its translation of ambitions into priorities. He observes that: 'In the end, good strategy comes down to making choices. I do not find any in the Integrated Review and I do not therefore see how it can provide a useful guide to resource allocation.' Lord Ricketts also notes the tension between the Review's aspiration for the UK to be seen as a global model for 'democratic governance and legal systems' and its separate threat to breach international law.



BARONESS NEVILLE-JONES: 'A MORE THOUGHTFUL ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT THAN ITS PREDECESSORS BUT DESPITE THE DARKENING SCENE PAINTED, ITS TONE IS UPBEAT, PITCHED AT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES AT LEAST AS MUCH AS AT DEFENDING AGAINST THREATS.'



Strategic reviews are not shopping lists with unlimited budgets. As Sir Malcolm Rifkind, a visiting professor in the Department of War Studies at King's and a former Secretary of State for Defence (1992-95) and Foreign Secretary (1995-97), notes in his essay, the reviews of the 1990s were framed within an immediate post-Cold War context of responding to the new threat environment against the backdrop of challenging expenditure reduction. Sir Malcolm regards the Integrated Review as 'fit for purpose' in a very different era of intensified competition with China and Russia. He notes that the UK's position as 'an Atlantic nation' explains the different emphasis placed on the immediacy of the Russian threat, as compared with the Biden administration's greater emphasis on China. He also notes with concern the Review's announcement that the upper limit to the UK nuclear weapon stockpile will be increased, observing that this: 'will weaken the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and invite severe criticism from many non-nuclear weapon states.'

Baroness (Pauline) Neville-Jones, who as David Cameron's national security adviser in opposition did much to shape the Conservative party's thinking on the merits of national security reforms prior to 2010, and then helped to implement these as a minister, offers a positive appraisal of the breadth of the Review's ambitions and intent to achieve synergies between different policy areas, particularly the importance of technological innovation. She regards the Review as a 'different kettle of fish' from previous reviews: 'It contains a more thoughtful analysis of the international context than its predecessors but despite the darkening scene painted, its tone is upbeat, pitched at taking advantage of opportunities at least as much as at defending against threats.'

Sir Mark Lyall Grant, a visiting professor in the Department of War Studies at King's and a distinguished career diplomat, as well as having been the UK's third National Security Adviser (2015-17), rejects the notion that Brexit should have an inevitably negative impact on the UK's national security or global influence. He notes that the former relies on an array of defence, security and intelligence capabilities and close diplomatic partnerships, whereas the latter 'flows from a blend of the fundamental assets of the country and its ability to impact on global events' that are cumulatively untouched by exit from the EU. Sir Mark identifies the potential, however, for indirect consequences of Brexit – economic decline and the break-up of the Union – to have a negative impact, and he suggests that this is why the Review highlights the importance of both the Union and the need to pursue an ambitious science and technology strategy.

Sir John Sawers, also a visiting professor at King's and distinguished former diplomat, as well as being the former Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (2009-14), writes in his wide-ranging essay that the Review 'puts some intellectual structure around the bumper sticker of Global Britain'. Sir John notes the similar domestic focus of both the Johnson and Biden administrations, and describes the Review as 'a creditable effort to chart a way forward for the UK in the new, more contested geopolitical environment.' Appraising the Review's 'measured' approach to China, Sir John vividly characterises the challenge of China policy: 'At one and the same time, China is a player at the table and the ghost at the feast.' The Review is strikingly muted in its treatment of Europe, which Sir John deprecates: 'Perhaps I'm old fashioned but to my mind geography remains important. Britain is still a European nation and our security and prosperity will depend above all on friendly ties and deep cooperation with our closest neighbours on both sides of the Atlantic.'

Strategic Implications of the Review

The next section of the volume, encompassing essays from both distinguished former practitioners and scholars, has the loose organising theme of assessing the Review's strategic implications. These essays overlap to some extent with those in the previous section, but they differ by taking a deeper dive into analysis of specific areas of strategy.

Sir David Omand, a visiting professor at King's, who led the development of the UK's counterterrorism strategy (CONTEST) as Cabinet Office Security and Intelligence Coordinator (2002-05), and was previously Director of GCHQ, one of the UK's three intelligence agencies, uses the Review as an opportunity to advocate for and to outline a new strategic approach for pursuing ethical campaigns to counter hostile disinformation operations in the 'grey-zone'. Noting that countering disinformation is a complex



APPRAISING THE REVIEW'S 'MEASURED' APPROACH TO CHINA, SIR JOHN SAWERS VIVIDLY CHARACTERISES THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA POLICY: 'AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME, CHINA IS A PLAYER AT THE TABLE AND THE GHOST AT THE FEAST.'



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SIR DAVID OMAND ON COUNTERING DISINFORMATION OPERATIONS: 'IT IS POSSIBLE TO PUT FORWARD OUR BEST FACE, WHILST EXPOSING THE WORST OF AN ADVERSARY, YET BE GROUNDED IN TRUTH.'

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undertaking that will require a coherent strategy and effective coordination (both within and beyond the traditional agencies and departments associated with national security), Sir David mirrors the four-stranded structure of CONTEST, proposing four strategic campaigns: Detect, Deflect, Disrupt and Deter. Emphasising the importance of an ethical approach, and the lessons the UK can learn from its 20th century history, Sir David observes that: 'it is possible to put forward our best face, whilst exposing the worst of an adversary, yet be grounded in truth.'

Michael Clarke, a visiting professor at King's and former Director of RUSI, addresses the salient topic of soft power, noting the government's intention to consolidate the UK as a 'soft power superpower' and subjecting this to incisive analysis. Professor Clarke highlights the crucial importance of soft power and the extent to which much of it lies beyond direct government control. He identifies some of the troubling inconsistencies and gaps between the Review's soft power aspirations, the resources allocated to achieve them, and some policy decisions that risk undermining the UK's soft power impact.

Lady Moira Andrews, a former senior legal official in the UK government, addresses the UK's strategy for countering corruption. She argues persuasively that corruption is a major global challenge that undermines the effectiveness of wider UK policy to promote stability and security. Lady Andrews notes the progress achieved in anti-corruption efforts by the UK in recent years, but she argues that more needs to be done. In particular, she notes the imperative to improve the UK's efforts to counter money-laundering. Lady Andrews argues that the anti-corruption agenda should be mainstreamed as the Review is implemented.

Finally, Dr Joe Devanny and Dr Philip A. Berry, part of the National Security team at the Centre of Defence Studies, take on one of the most controversial aspects of the Review and wider policy under Boris Johnson's government, namely its treatment of international development. They argue that Johnson's decision to pre-empt the Review by re-merging the Department for International Development into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as well as the subsequent cut to the aid budget, have undermined the coherence of the Review and its chances of success in achieving its 'Global Britain' objectives. Devanny and Berry question the wisdom of implementing the FCDO merger during the pandemic: 're-organising two major departments of state, forcing them to turn inwards to resolve the administrative and managerial challenges of merging two workforces totalling several thousand staff, deployed across the globe, just months into a global pandemic crisis with major implications for foreign policy and development assistance, lacked strategic foresight.'

The Review and the Indo-Pacific Tilt

Professor Kerry Brown, director of King's Lau China Institute, suggests that, alongside Britain's exit from the EU, China's rise to global prominence is the other major driver of the strategic reappraisal contained in the Integrated Review. And, as Professor Brown notes: 'the break with Europe has left Britain more isolated as it deals with China.' He argues that the Review represents a serious, pragmatic and balanced effort to address what sort of relationship the UK can and should have with China: 'The exam question the review partly sets out to answer therefore is how to work with a partner that had become far more important than was ever expected, but who has so many aspects which are antithetical to the British mission, as the review states more than once, to "act as a force for good in standing up for human rights around the world"?'

Dr Alessio Patalano, a Reader in the War Studies Department, situates the Review's Indo-Pacific Tilt within the context of a new turn in Britain's maritime strategy as it engages with an era of great power competition. He argues that the Indo-Pacific is a crucial region for the success of UK strategy: the UK not only recognises treaty obligations in the region, but also: 'some of the UK's most important ties outside the Euro-Atlantic space are with countries in the region, notably Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and India in addition to Australia and New Zealand (Five Eyes members), and ASEAN member states notably Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore (Commonwealth members).'

Dr Patalano highlights the Review's shift from a reactive to a more persistent military posture and argues that: 'Britain has entered a new phase in security policy, one in which the global nature of its international standing will be determined by the use of its maritime posture as a tool of national statecraft.'

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LADY ANDREWS ARGUES THAT THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA SHOULD BE MAINSTREAMED AS THE REVIEW IS IMPLEMENTED.

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ALEXANDER DOWNER: ‘FOR THE UK TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN SHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER, IT HAS TO BE MORE THAN JUST A REGIONAL, EUROPEAN PLAYER.’

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Andrew Macleod, a visiting professor in the Department of War Studies at King’s, argues that Britain’s historical legacy in the Indo-Pacific region explains its continued interest but also creates potential problems: ‘while the UK’s renewed interest has a valid historical grounding, the power dynamics between both potential allies and potential adversaries is vastly different now compared to the colonial era. Is the UK ready for this, or indeed relevant in this?’ He argues that the UK and its allies need to understand China’s strategy, and that such understanding requires recognition that China perceives the world differently. He notes sharply that: ‘There are many parts of Chinese policy perspectives that are different from the west’s and perhaps we need to look at some significant areas of disagreement from differing perspectives if we wish to avoid war.’

Alexander Downer, the Executive Chair of King’s International School for Government, compares the breadth and structural approach of the Integrated Review favourably with the foreign policy White Paper – Australia’s first – he commissioned during his tenure as Australia’s longest-serving Minister for Foreign Affairs (1996-2007). He argues that the Review is correct to recognise that: ‘For the UK to play a significant role in shaping the international order, it has to be more than just a regional, European player.’ Nowhere is the need for the UK to become a ‘global activist’ more apparent than in the Indo-Pacific, not least in light of China’s rising prominence, and Downer argues that the UK must expand its role and influence in the region. He argues against the pursuit of a ‘containment’ policy towards China, which would be ‘a catastrophic mistake’. Instead, he advocates both constructive engagement and the vigilant protection of national interests.

Tim Willasey-Wilsey, a visiting professor in the Department of War Studies at Kings and a former career diplomat, addresses another pivotal bilateral relationship that will be central to the success of the Indo-Pacific Tilt: the UK-India relationship. He argues that India is pivotal in two senses: as an important ally and market in the wake of Brexit; and as a key player in the strategic realignment to address the rise of China. The UK should understand that India has a more nuanced position on China than do its fellow members of the Quad (Australia, Japan and the United States). He argues that this position closely mirrors the UK’s own nuanced prioritisation of both commercial and security objectives in its own relationship with China. Despite this coincidence of interests, he also notes points of tension in the bilateral UK-India relationship, flowing from regional issues (the UK’s relationship with Pakistan) and indeed domestic issues (such as UK visa policy and the way it applies to Indian citizens).

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DR PHILIP A. BERRY: ‘PRIORITISING THE ‘SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP’ WILL NOT BE AT THE TOP OF THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION’S TO-DO-LIST; STRENGTHENING TIES WITH LONDON WILL TAKE PLACE IN A BROADER FRAMEWORK OF REPAIRING RELATIONS WITH THE US’S MAIN EUROPEAN ALLIES, INCLUDING BERLIN AND PARIS.’

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Global Views on the Integrated Review

Dr Philip A. Berry surveys the health of the (‘special’) UK-US relationship and its integral importance in UK strategy. He argues that, when Theresa May resigned in mid-2019, leader-to-leader relations had sunk to their lowest point in decades. Since then, Boris Johnson appeared to establish a better relationship with then President Donald Trump, and the Johnson and Biden administrations appear to be pursuing a similar strategic agenda. Berry notes two points of friction between these two administrations: Brexit and Northern Ireland. He observes that: ‘Biden has repeatedly expressed his disapproval of Brexit and argued that with the UK outside of the EU, US interests on the Continent have been “diminished”.’ Moreover, the US Embassy rebuked Johnson’s government over its handling of Northern Ireland immediately prior to the G7 summit meeting in Carbis Bay. Whilst the UK can breathe a sigh of relief at the end of the Trump presidency, Berry counsels realism in London about what to expect from Biden: ‘Prioritising the “special relationship” will not be at the top of the Biden-Harris administration’s to-do-list; strengthening ties with London will take place in a broader framework of repairing relations with the US’s main European allies, including Berlin and Paris.’

Dr Maxine David, a Lecturer at Leiden University, and Dr Natasha Kuhrt, a Lecturer in the Department of War Studies at King’s, address the evolution of the United Kingdom’s approach to bilateral relations with Russia. They argue that: ‘For over two decades of the post-Cold War era, UK foreign policy towards Russia was largely treated as synonymous with trade or finance policy, even in the face of dangerous provocations’ at home and abroad. Whilst the last decade has seen an enforced shift in UK policy – for example, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 – David and Kuhrt highlight continuing

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DR MAXINE DAVID AND DR NATASHA KUHRT: 'THE UK HAS BEEN A PRIME EXAMPLE OF HOW RUSSIA COULD GET AWAY WITH AN AWFUL LOT, AS LONG AS IT DID NOT DRAW THE UK INTO FEELING TOO MANY OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY ACTIONS.'

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reluctance in the UK to take tougher action, for example against Russian financial interests in London. They attribute the UK's evolving approach to Russia directly to the consequences of Russia's paranoid and counter-productive strategy: 'The UK has been a prime example of how Russia could get away with an awful lot, as long as it did not draw the UK into feeling too many of the consequences of its foreign policy actions.'

Gesine Weber, a PhD candidate in the Defence Studies Department at King's, explores an under-emphasised but crucial aspect of the Review: the role of the UK in arrangements for European defence and security, specifically how the UK might be able to engage, flexibly, with institutional efforts to improve collective European defence policies. As Weber frames the issue in her essay, the Review 'remains vague on EU-UK defence cooperation, but a successful Global Britain will most likely need a successful Global Europe.' Despite a coincidence of security interests, even areas of obvious potential cooperation between the UK and EU member states might prove difficult to progress in light of the continued domestic political sensitivities of Brexit. Weber suggests that both the UK and France have much to benefit from pursuing more flexible forms of defence and security cooperation. She concludes by recommending that: 'policymakers in London, Paris, Berlin and Brussels should assess possibilities of "going global" together.'

Beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, Dr David B. Roberts, Senior Lecturer in the Defence Studies Department at King's, and Sara Ghazi Almahri, a PhD candidate in the Defence Studies Department at King's, identify both the challenges and opportunities facing the UK in its relations with the Gulf States. As compared with previous iterations of UK strategy, the Review and aligned defence paper appear to reduce the priority given to the Middle East, and to the Gulf States specifically. Roberts and Almahri argue that this is mistaken, as the Gulf States can play an important role, including in helping the UK to make a success of its Indo-Pacific 'Tilt', and particularly in its – and its allies' – strategy for dealing with China. The Gulf States are not only important investment partners for the UK, but also defence and security partners: 'the Gulf monarchies have carved and institutionalised a critical place for themselves in the US and UK foreign policy and security furniture that no rhetoric will easily shift, at least not in the near term.'

Dr Vinicius de Carvalho, Director of the Kings College's Brazil Institute and Senior Lecturer in the Department of War Studies, and Dr Joe Devanny explore the opportunities and challenges facing the United Kingdom in its engagement with Brazil specifically and South America more broadly. Brazil and the region received relatively little coverage in the Integrated Review. This essay highlights the reasons why UK strategy should take Brazil and the region more seriously. As a committed multilateralist, Brazil should be an important partner for the UK in achieving progress in global environmental diplomacy, and in cyber and regulatory diplomacy. The authors note existing bilateral challenges and differences in perspective – for example, current disagreements about global environmental diplomacy, as well as contrasting strategic perspectives regarding the South Atlantic – but they conclude that both Brazil and the United Kingdom stand to gain from enhanced cooperation in pursuit of shared policy objectives across a range of issues.

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DR HILLARY BRIFFA: 'THE DESIRE TO ACT AS 'GLOBAL BRITAIN' CANNOT BE REALIZED SOLELY IN RELATION TO RISING OR GREAT POWERS.'

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In contrast to the other essays in this section, and their focus on bilateral relations with major and rising powers, Dr Hillary Briffa, a Lecturer in the Defence Studies Department, focuses on the significance of small states in the UK's Global Britain agenda. As Dr Briffa argues: 'The desire to act as "Global Britain" cannot be realized solely in relation to rising or great powers'. Netherlands and Norway are presented as short case studies of the importance of the UK's bilateral relationships with smaller European states. Dr Briffa emphasises the strategic utility of these relationships, but also that the UK should not take the continuation of such relationships for granted. Dr Briffa argues that the Review appears to be a mixed bag for small states, with dispiriting announcements about the nuclear weapons stockpile – of concern to small states active in the global diplomacy regarding the prohibition of nuclear weapons – but more promising signals about the UK's commitment to sustainable development. Reflecting on the need for the UK to take small states more seriously – and even to learn lessons from the policy entrepreneurship of small nations – Dr Briffa concludes that the UK needs to think 'smaller' to achieve success with its 'Global Britain' agenda.



THE ASSESSMENTS, INSIGHTS AND PROVISIONAL FORECASTS OFFERED BY OUR CONTRIBUTORS CAN BE RETURNED TO OVER THE NEXT FIVE-TO-TEN YEARS, USED AS INDICATORS OF HOW EXPERT OPINION REGARDING THE REVIEW HAS SHIFTED – AS IT WILL – OVER ITS IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE.



Conclusion

We hope you enjoy reading the 20 essays in this volume and look forward to the next, defence- and security-focused instalment of the series later in the year. As we mentioned above, our contributors do not always agree on their interpretations of the Review and its significance. Given the Review's great breadth and its many unanswered questions – punted to subsequent sub-strategies and decisions – such disagreement is hardly surprising. And whilst several months have passed since the Review's publication, this can still only be a very provisional early assessment – a series of snapshots taken early in the life-cycle of the Review. The assessments, insights and provisional forecasts offered by our contributors can be returned to over the next five-to-ten years, used as indicators of how expert opinion regarding the Review has shifted – as it will – over its implementation cycle.

Whilst the Review adopts an upbeat tone, particularly about seizing opportunities, the uncertainty and insecurity of the last five years creates a very different mood of reception for the Review's title, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*. The May and Johnson governments have struggled to define the phrase 'Global Britain' and breathe life into it, against the backdrop of five years of insular, inward-looking debate about what Brexit can and should be. This protracted, still on-going process has had a significant impact on relations between the United Kingdom's constituent parts. It has also inevitably affected the UK's relations with its closest neighbours in Europe and, to that extent, reduced the UK's utility as a US partner in some ways.

Johnson's government cannot realise its 'Global Britain' ambitions without first addressing its domestic challenges and those relating to its present and future relations with Europe. At the same time, as foreshadowed in the Review's reference to a 'competitive age,' the UK's domestic, social and political challenges will surely continue to be a target for hostile states intent on undermining the UK's capacity to act. The strength and unity of purpose required to pursue an active global role will not emerge readily from a divisive domestic agenda. In short, context matters. The Johnson government must recognise the interdependencies and system effects of the totality of its policies. Policy coherence, as much as rigorous implementation, is a pre-condition for the success of the Integrated Review.

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JOHNSON'S GOVERNMENT CANNOT REALISE ITS 'GLOBAL BRITAIN' AMBITIONS WITHOUT FIRST ADDRESSING ITS DOMESTIC CHALLENGES AND THOSE RELATING TO ITS PRESENT AND FUTURE RELATIONS WITH EUROPE.



SECTION ONE

REFLECTIONS ON THE REVIEW



The Integrated Review in Context: The Importance of Hard Choices

Lord Ricketts



**THE REVIEW
STRUCK A CAREFUL
BALANCE ON
POLICY TOWARDS
CHINA BETWEEN
VIGILANCE ON
SECURITY AND
A WORKING
RELATIONSHIP
IN OTHER AREAS
INCLUDING CLIMATE
CHANGE.**



Reading the 2021 [Integrated Review](#) brought back for me memories of the fraught early months of the Cameron/Clegg coalition government in 2010. As the UK's first National Security Adviser, it was one of my tasks to coordinate the [National Security Strategy](#) (NSS) and [Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) (SDSR). After a considerable scramble, they were published in October 2010, a bare five months after the Government took office.

At the time, it felt like a Herculean labour to put together the first strategic review for 12 years in such a short time. We broke new ground by going well beyond [the traditional scope of a defence review](#) to cover foreign policy, development, domestic security and (for the first time) the issue of resilience. We also had to contend with a £38 billion gap between the defence programme and the Ministry of Defence's budget, at a time when austerity was putting the public finances under acute pressure.

The authors of the 2021 review faced an even more daunting task. They had to grapple with the unsettling return of great power rivalries, and in particular the generational struggle which was developing between the US and China. Taken together with Britain's departure from the European Union and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, this amounted to a seismic shift in the landscape of Britain's national security without parallel since the late 1940s. The cross-government team deserve much credit for assembling a Review which ranges even wider than the 2010 version to set out a large number of ambitious goals covering complex areas of policy in clear and thoughtful terms.

Assessing the Integrated Review

The 2021 Review has many strengths. The Government was surely right to set ambitious targets for Britain's role in science and technology, in reforming the global health system and in the vital area of regulatory diplomacy, influencing the norms and standards which will govern technologies of the future. There was a welcome commitment that Britain would work to shape the international order of the future. The much-heralded Indo-Pacific tilt turned out to be a measured call for deeper economic engagement and stronger defence cooperation with Asian allies. The Review struck a careful balance on policy towards China between vigilance on security and a working relationship in other areas including climate change, which the Review indicates will be the UK's international priority through the Glasgow climate summit and beyond.

Does the Integrated Review succeed in turning the Global Britain slogan into a new national strategy? A good test is to apply the definition of a good strategy given by the Yale Professor [John Lewis Gaddis](#): 'the alignment of potentially unlimited aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities'. Measured against that yardstick, the Integrated Review marks an important first step, but falls well short of a fully-rounded strategy for post-Brexit Britain. The 2010 process was far from perfect, but I believe it can shed light on two areas of weakness which I see in the Integrated Review.

First, the issue of setting priorities and making choices. In 2010, we based the NSS on a systematic risk assessment process, which enabled us to prioritise national security risks into three tiers based on a matrix measuring both the likelihood and the impact of each risk. In the top tier, we identified two risks which were already in the spotlight: a further international military intervention, and countering the terrorist threat. The other two top tier risks were new: major cyber attacks, and natural hazards including floods and pandemics (which had not previously been considered as part of national security). The NSS and SDSR were also published on the same day as the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review setting budgets for all government departments. This gave us the opportunity to ensure that the top national security risks we had identified received extra

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GOOD STRATEGY COMES DOWN TO MAKING GOOD CHOICES. I DO NOT FIND ANY IN THE INTEGRATED REVIEW AND I DO NOT THEREFORE SEE HOW IT CAN PROVIDE A USEFUL GUIDE TO RESOURCE ALLOCATION.

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funding in the spending review. I would argue that we succeeded in combining ends, ways and means which is a necessary if not sufficient component of making good strategy.

The 2021 Integrated Review sets out bold aspirations for Britain to play a leadership role in almost every area of international cooperation, and to increase engagement in the Indo-Pacific, Africa and the Gulf, at a time when it is also pledged to be the leading European nation in NATO. Nowhere is there a recognition that resources – whether of people, budgets or ministerial energies – are finite. In the end, good strategy comes down to making choices. I do not find any in the Integrated Review and I do not therefore see how it can provide a useful guide to resource allocation.

Integration or Incoherence?

The second area of weakness is an incoherence between the Government’s declared ambitions and some of their real-life policy decisions. This may arise partly because the Review seems to have taken place separately from the budget-setting process. In fact the two funding decisions which shaped the context for the Review were taken well before it was completed, and announced in November 2020. The first, that [the defence budget would be increased](#) by £4bn a year for four years, sent a strong signal about the UK’s commitment to hard power and a leading role in NATO, which buttressed some of the themes of the Review. But the second, that [the aid budget would be cut](#) by a similar amount in 2021 and for an uncertain period beyond that, sent [an equally strong signal which contradicted the Integrated Review’s commitment](#) that the UK would remain a soft power superpower. Budget decisions for other government departments will have to wait for the Comprehensive Spending Review in late 2021, which increases the risk that some of the aspirations set out in the Review will not be followed up with the necessary resources.

Some other decisions by the Government are also hard to square with the Integrated Review’s ambitions. The threat to break international law sits awkwardly with the Review’s claim that the UK is a ‘model of democratic governance and legal systems’. The Government’s refusal to negotiate any structured relationship with the EU on foreign policy, security or defence will weaken the UK’s capacity to play a leading role in climate diplomacy or in setting the norms and standards: in both these areas and many more, the EU wields greater influence than the UK acting alone.

No document with as bold a scope as the Integrated Review can hope to resolve all the tensions which are inevitable in foreign policy. But actions speak louder than words. A lesson of 2010 is that, to be truly integrated, a review process needs not just to assemble a wish-list of ambitions, but to make choices among them, and then to join those up with resource decisions in one coherent whole.

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THE THREAT TO BREAK INTERNATIONAL LAW SITS AWKWARDLY WITH THE REVIEW’S CLAIM THAT THE UK IS A ‘MODEL OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SYSTEMS’.

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The Integrated Review – Security and Defence

Sir Malcolm Rifkind



THE REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE THREATS FROM CHINA ARE NOW MAKING THE 5 EYES INTELLIGENCE CO-OPERATION WHICH HAS EXISTED SINCE 1949 ALL THE MORE RELEVANT TODAY.



Security and Defence Reviews are announced from time to time, often when a new Government takes office.

I was responsible for one, “Front Line First”, when I was Defence Secretary in 1994. Strictly speaking it was a Defence Costs Study rather than a full-blown Review. It came four years after Options for Change in 1990 which, following the end of the Cold War, made major reductions in the defence budget and reduced military manpower and capability to a significant degree.

Front Line First, although it involved a further small reduction in the Defence budget, also increased certain military capabilities; hence its title.

I felt that Options for Change, although necessary, had gone a little bit too far. Amongst other enhancements to armed forces capabilities, we reprieved 4 infantry regiments that were due to be merged into 2. We also announced that the UK would have Cruise missiles for the first time (the UK was the only country the US would sell them to).

This Integrated Review is timely and necessary given what has happened to the world and to the UK’s place in it since the last Review in 2015.

Most important is that the UK has left the European Union after 47 years. Although the EU is not responsible for defence policy and has, not yet, developed a common foreign policy the UK’s decision has substantial implications for our foreign policy and for how other countries, both friends and foes, see us.

Also, since, 2015 it is impossible to exaggerate the transformation of China’s role in the world. Its adoption of state capitalism happened during Deng Xiaoping’s time but the emergence of Xi Jinping has led to an unapologetic and provocative foreign policy, combined with a severe deterioration in China’s respect for human rights and its greatly enlarged economic muscle.

For the UK, the ongoing destruction of Two Systems in One Country, as regards, Hong Kong, has had a profound effect on British public opinion and will continue to impact adversely on UK-Chinese relations.

China’s foreign policy under Xi Jinping has also led, in the last 5 years, to the Indo-Pacific emerging as a distinct geopolitical region. The only reason why these two oceans should be linked in this way, and why two major powers such as Japan in the North Pacific and India in the South-West of Asia should be having joint naval exercises and coordinating their security policy with each other and, with other Asian states, is that they all have China as a neighbour and have been subject to its aggressive foreign policy.

The Review highlights the degree to which the threats from China are now making the 5 Eyes Intelligence co-operation which has existed since 1949 all the more relevant today.

Created to help combat the Soviet Union during the Cold War it has become a key tool of co-operation in regard to China. Four of its five members, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, are themselves Pacific states. The fifth, the UK, has major economic and trading interests in the Far East and the Pacific Rim. Although New Zealand is unhappy to see 5 Eyes used as an organisation to advance Western policy on China this is largely because New Zealand has adopted a much softer foreign policy in relation to China than has Australia or the United States.



THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM IS NO LONGER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES TO PROTECT US ON LAND, SEA AND AIR. TO THOSE OBLIGATIONS MUST NOW BE ADDED BOTH SPACE AND CYBERSPACE.



WE NEED SOME RADICAL THINKING IN BOTH LONDON AND BRUSSELS AS TO HOW THE UK AND ITS NEAREST NEIGHBOURS CAN, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, CO-ORDINATE THEIR FOREIGN POLICY TO HAVE THE MAXIMUM IMPACT ON THE US AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.



Russia, too, has become more aggressive and truculent since 2015. Its annexation of Crimea had occurred in 2014. It, and the subsequent war in eastern Ukraine, fomented and supported by President Putin, has impacted on the UK as on other Western countries. The attempted poisoning of Skripal in Salisbury has contributed to making relations with Russia much more difficult than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

In this paper I do not try to comment on, or analyse, all aspects of the Integrated Review but offer the following comments.

Compared to many of its predecessors, the UK's Integrated Review on security and defence can be seen as fit for purpose.

It makes it clear that the defence of the realm is no longer just the responsibility of the Armed Forces to protect us on land, sea and air. To those obligations must now be added both space and cyberspace.

These are not just aspirations. The UK's Space Command, a Joint Command staffed by the Royal Navy, the Army and the RAF came into effect on 1st April of this year. Britain will have the ability to launch its satellites from the UK by 2022. The UK is already a world leader in cyberspace, including the work done in GCHQ.

It is also good to see the recognition that only by top priority being given to Science and Technology, to a degree not recognised in the past, will we achieve not just economic prosperity but, in the area of defence and security, we will be better able to thwart the malevolent objectives of hostile state and non-state actors.

Particularly significant is the acknowledgement that we can no longer rest on our laurels just because the number of Nobel Prizes that British scientists and engineers have won over the years has been world-beating. Where we have failed in the past has been to ensure that British business and industry, and not just German, Chinese or American businesses, use these British scientific discoveries to provide the products, including the military capability, that we will need.

The need for fresh thinking on technology, including by the MOD and the Service Chiefs, was seen in how astonished a reaction there was in the UK and other NATO powers to the success of the Azerbaijan military against Armenian heavy armour in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by the use of small Turkish-supplied drones. Why did it take such a relatively minor-conflict in the Caucasus to bring home to powers and superpowers how airborne drones can now change the outcome in wars?

These admissions and considerations make this report entitled to call itself an "Integrated" Review. Where it is a little disappointing is that it does not give much space to the need for the UK, post Brexit, to work with France, Germany and other EU members, not just in NATO but in regard to wider foreign policy. The Iran nuclear deal is a good example where that co-operation does continue. We need some radical thinking in both London and Brussels as to how the UK and its nearest neighbours can, wherever possible, co-ordinate their foreign policy to have the maximum impact on the US and the rest of the world.

On detail, President Biden will be pleased to see confirmation of the biggest sustained increase in defence spending in the UK since the end of the Cold War, announced by the Prime Minister some months ago. This will take the UK Defence budget to 2.2% of GDP, which the Review notes in absolute terms is a larger spend than any other European member of NATO, including France.

However, there is an interesting divergence of priorities regarding this Review and the recent Interim Review published by the Biden Administration. The US document identified China as the single overwhelming threat that the US now faces. Russia, in comparison, was bundled together with Iran and North Korea as only another serious problem. To demote Russia in this way will not have amused President Putin in the Kremlin.

The UK's defence review puts it the other way around. While China is described as "the most significant geopolitical factor in the world today", it is Russia which is described as "the greatest nuclear, conventional military and sub-threshold threat to European security". This, however, may be a distinction without a difference reflecting the geography of the UK compared to that of the US.

America is a Pacific as well as an Atlantic power. It is the dominant power in the Pacific, a status that China aspires to grab for itself in the years to come. The UK, in comparison, is an Atlantic nation, an extension of the European landmass. When Russia grabs Crimea, destabilises the Baltic region and murders, or tries to murder, UK residents living peacefully in Britain, the Kremlin becomes our most immediate threat.

Despite the wording, in reality the US and the UK are in very close agreement as to the twin threats of China and Russia and the need to counter them.

It is also refreshing that the Review emphasises that the threat from Russia is not just limited to a conventional war. Russian policy now emphasises how one can win a conflict without war fighting in the normal sense. Using cyber attacks, disinformation, "mercenaries", Russian soldiers pretending not to be Russians as in Eastern Ukraine, and general propaganda the Kremlin hopes to achieve at least some of its objectives without the risks and casualties that have been inseparable for starting a war.

There is one part of the review that disturbs me. In the section of the report on nuclear weapons, the government states that our nuclear weapon stockpile will be increased from not more than 225 to not more than 260 warheads. The only explanation given is "the evolving security environment, including the developing range of technological and doctrinal threats".

While this is non-specific, it likely refers both to recent Russian rhetoric that implies that nuclear weapons could be available for war fighting, not just as a deterrent, and the evidence that China is making significant increases to its nuclear arsenal.

Increasing the number of warheads without increasing the number of delivery vehicles is unlikely to make a significant difference to the UK's nuclear weapons capability. It may be that there may be operational issues that cannot be disclosed or the UK may be considering changing its planning assumptions now that there is a potential nuclear weapons threat not just from Russia alone.

While these anxieties are understandable, the proposed increase in warheads is disturbing. It will weaken the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and invite severe criticism from many non-nuclear weapon states.

Given that this is the first increase in the cap of UK nuclear weapons warheads since the end of the Cold War, it would be sensible for the government to provide more information as to its rationale for this proposed change. It could do that without revealing any sensitive information or changing its policy of deliberate ambiguity which is entirely appropriate.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind is a visiting professor in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. He was a Cabinet Minister from 1986 to 1997, including as Secretary of State for Defence (1992-95) and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1995-97). He is also a former chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (2010-15).

The Integrated Review: Locked into an Ambitious Domestic Strategy

Baroness Neville-Jones



MANY OF THE CAPABILITIES ON WHICH THE REALISATION OF THE GOALS OF THE EXTENSIVE INTERNATIONAL POLICY AGENDA ARE DEPENDENT ARE, IN TURN, CONTINGENT UPON THE SUCCESS OF THE VAULTING TECHNOLOGICAL AMBITION OF DOMESTIC POLICY TO GENERATE THE NECESSARY TECHNICAL CAPACITY.



THE UK HAS A LOWER PROPORTION OF INNOVATING FIRMS OVERALL THAN OTHER ADVANCED ECONOMIES, SLOWER TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION RATES AND WEAKER BUSINESS INVESTMENT.



The Integrated Review 2021 differs from its predecessors. Preceding national security strategies were ‘UK as usual’ based. They made no heroic assumptions, explicit or implicit, about the future character or performance of the UK economy or about national ambitions. The UK was pitched as a well-connected, active, loyal and law-abiding ally which sought to defend and uphold the liberal democratic order. The detail of the strategies, which were conventional in character, flowed from these premises with an increasingly heavy emphasis in recent years on the internal security of the UK: counter terrorism, cyber security and national resilience. Priorities were set – and to a large extent budgets allocated – according to threat perceptions which were tiered in the likelihood and impact of the risks to the UK that they represented.

The Integrated Review: A Different Approach

IR21 is a different kettle of fish. The Review is about a grand strategy based on a vision of a UK playing a different role in the world. It contains a more thoughtful analysis of the international context than its predecessors but despite the darkening scene painted, its tone is upbeat, pitched at taking advantage of opportunities at least as much as at defending against threats. None of the existing security obligations in the Euro Atlantic area – still seen as the UK’s main theatre of defence operations – are ditched but several new security related roles are added to the agenda in the name of Global Britain: most obviously the tilt to the Indo Pacific but also championing free and fair trade; taking on a central role in combatting climate change and a more active stance in sustaining open societies, protecting human rights, championing bio diversity and upholding global norms. The strategy lacks the priority-setting which characterised the risk-based approach of previous Reviews: this will presumably emerge separately (as the result of Ministerial horse trading?) in the budget allocations of the next spending round. It is also only a framework document with eight other strategies or reviews still forthcoming from government. The proposed Comprehensive National Resilience strategy for example, is a major undertaking in its own right.

Another striking and novel feature of the IR is the way in which it is posited on the emergence of the UK by 2030 as a Science and Tech superpower which will have established a leading edge in critical enabling technologies like AI and Quantum, which are also dual use. Thus, economic and domestic policy generally are both unspoken, but integral, elements in a Review which advertises itself as integrating Security, Defence, Development and Foreign policy. Sectors like Space for instance are avowedly civilian as well as military in scope. There is, in effect, a double integration of first, the elements comprising international policy and, secondly, between them and domestic policy. The two combined in effect constitute a national strategy. Thus many of the capabilities on which the realisation of the goals of the extensive international policy agenda are dependent are, in turn, contingent upon the success of the vaulting technological ambition of domestic policy to generate the necessary technical capacity.

The Review and the Plan for Growth

In March 2021 the government published ‘[Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth](#)’. To the dismay of quite a lot of the business community it replaced the “scrapped” Industrial Strategy and Advisory Council of Mrs May’s government which had assumed a close relationship with the EU single market. The preoccupation with a longstanding problem of the low productivity of the UK economy and the focus on skills, training and innovation is a lineal inheritance nevertheless, and the technologies selected for development – networks and data, cyber, bio sciences are fundamentally the same. There is more emphasis on Climate Change with accelerated targets with ‘levelling up’ being a driver of the location of investment. The agenda is both broad and very demanding.



DELIVERY PLANS FOR DIFFERENT SECTORS ARE BEING CONSULTED ON BUT THE DANGER IS THAT AN ATTEMPT TO BE ACTIVE IN A LARGE NUMBER OF FIELDS WILL IN THE END LEAD TO 'WATERING CAN' INVESTMENT, SPRINKLED AROUND BUT NOT IN A FLOW BIG ENOUGH ANYWHERE FOR SECTORAL INDUSTRIAL LEADERSHIP TO EMERGE IN THE UK.



The Plan for Growth legitimately takes pride in the renown of British science, much buoyed up by recent extraordinary successes in vaccination development and genome sequencing, and points to our mature venture capital market, but at the same time it admits that, despite these two long-standing attributes, UK technology companies still find financing scale-up hard with the result that commercialisation and long-term profit from technology exploitation often go elsewhere. The UK has a lower proportion of innovating firms overall than other advanced economies, slower technology adoption rates and weaker business investment. UK total investment in R&D is significantly lower than in peer economies and is only planned to reach today's European average of 2.4% per annum in 2027, just three years before the goal of becoming a tech super-power is meant to be achieved. More than 50% of the 2.4 % is expected to come from the private sector, which will have to raise its recent levels of investment for the target to be reached. Like the Integrated Review, the Plan for Growth is essentially a framework document with big headline investment target of £14.9 billion, but for which the detailed strategies and budget allocations for different sectors have yet to emerge.

The Plan for Growth is honest about the gaps in UK performance. They mean that we start from a lower industrial base than our competitors and that plugging them, which will involve significant behavioural change across society, is a formidable task which needs long-term planning, political commitment and consistency of policy as well as attention to detail – and funding. Delivery plans for different sectors are being consulted on but the danger is that an attempt to be active in a large number of fields will in the end lead to 'watering can' investment, sprinkled around but not in a flow big enough anywhere for sectoral industrial leadership to emerge in the UK.

Low carbon hydrogen as a source of clean energy, for example, featured in the Prime Minister's [Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#) of November 2020. Eight months' later the government's strategy for hydrogen is overdue. Compared with France or Germany, where options with significant funding are already selected for exploitation, in the UK, hydrogen remains under-funded and under-publicised thus far. Slow policy-making between departments with different targets is sacrificing potential. Until the government gets its act together, there is unlikely to be extensive private investment in an energy source for which public investment is an essential element in creating the market.

Conclusion

The government is certainly not wrong to be ambitious about its technology strategy; on the contrary, and putting the new Technology Office at the centre of government is welcome. But outside observers may wonder whether the government machine will have the resources to sustain delivery of so big and complex an agenda with the clarity and speed that is implicit in the 2030 deadline for transformation. Partnership with the private sector will be crucial and the public need to be co-opted to join the domestic and global endeavour. COVID has led to an appetite for change in the country – indeed, a demand for it. But the government needs to be realistic in its messaging about the scope of the agenda and the timescales and costs involved since public disillusionment would undermine what has to be a national project if the IR's (grand) strategic vision and resultant policies are to succeed.

Baroness Neville-Jones is a politician and former senior member of the Diplomatic Service. She was Minister of State for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office (2010-11) and a member of the National Security Council. She is also a former Special Representative to Business on Cyber Security, former Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, and former Chair of QinetiQ.



OUTSIDE OBSERVERS MAY WONDER WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT MACHINE WILL HAVE THE RESOURCES TO SUSTAIN DELIVERY OF SO BIG AND COMPLEX AN AGENDA WITH THE CLARITY AND SPEED THAT IS IMPLICIT IN THE 2030 DEADLINE FOR TRANSFORMATION.



The Integrated Review's Concept of Global Britain – Is it Realistic?

Sir Mark Lyall Grant



THERE WAS NEVER ANY REASON WHY BREXIT SHOULD DAMAGE BRITAIN'S NATIONAL SECURITY, OR ITS INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD.



The 2021 Integrated Review sets a high level of ambition for the UK's place in the world post Covid 19 and post Brexit. Yet some of the accompanying decisions taken, such as the (permanent) reduction in the number of soldiers, the (possibly temporary) reduction in the aid budget and the disregard of the International Court of Justice decision on the Chagos Islands – not to mention the act of EU withdrawal itself – suggest that Britain might have less hard and soft power internationally than before. So how realistic is the Government's ambitious rhetoric?

As a former UK Ambassador to the UN and National Security Adviser, my view is perhaps surprisingly positive.

Brexit

Take Brexit – clearly this is a strategic shift for the UK with significant economic implications in particular. But there was never any reason why Brexit should damage Britain's national security, or its influence in the world. Why? Because Britain's security depends not on membership of the EU, but on its own defence, intelligence and law enforcement capabilities, its nuclear capabilities, its membership of NATO and the 5 eyes Intelligence community and the bilateral defence alliances it has with, for example, the US and France.

As for Britain's international influence, this flows from a blend of the fundamental assets of the country and its ability to impact on global events. Those assets are impressive – including the size of the economy, the history, culture, democratic traditions, the rule of law, the Royal Family, the professionalism of the armed forces, diplomatic network and intelligence agencies, the elite universities, the premier league and the English language. These assets existed before the UK joined the EEC in 1973 and still exist in 2021 after we have left. They are the main reason that the UK is still ranked 3rd in the world when it comes to soft power.

As for the UK's ability to influence events, the importance of being a permanent member of the UN Security Council cannot be overstated. Even after Brexit, the UK is a member of more international organisations than any other country, from the global (such as NATO, G7, G20, Commonwealth) to the small and specialised (such as Nuclear Suppliers Group and International Whaling Commission). Presiding over the G7 summit in June and the Climate Change conference (COP 26) in November offers a valuable opportunity this year to show leadership on a range of global challenges including tackling Covid, raising the bar in combatting climate change and plotting a coordinated western response to greater Chinese and Russian assertiveness.

As Ambassador to the UN at the time of the Scottish referendum in 2014, it was clear to me that Scottish Independence would have been much more damaging to the UK's global status than Brexit ever could be. Apart from anything else, the break-up of the Union would have reduced the size of our economy and population, required a change in the name of the country and brought into question our permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

But therein lies the biggest risk. If Brexit leads indirectly to the break-up of the Union or to economic decline, then that will impact negatively on the Global Britain agenda. Which is why the Integrated Review focuses so heavily on the importance of the Union and on building a strong economy based on a turbo-charged Science and Technology sector.

If the UK's fundamentals have not significantly changed, how about recent policy decisions, which some commentators have argued undermines the Global Britain ambition?

Defence

A reduction in the overall size of the regular army from an already modest (and historically low) 82,000 to 72,500 certainly looks at odds with the steady increase in Britain's defence budget (up to 2.2% of GDP in 2020) and has attracted criticism from retired UK and American Generals. But the decision reflects two realities: the first is a pragmatic one. The difficulty of recruitment has meant that the MOD has never been able to reach the 82,000 target of regular troops included in the 2015 strategic defence review that I oversaw as NSA. Indeed, it was the only one of the 89 commitments in that review that was consistently off track. The more strategic reality underpinning the decision is that the changing nature of warfare requires a greater emphasis on Special Forces, drones, ISTAR and other high-tech capability, rather than on infantry numbers.

A more important metric, given the demand for smaller and more varied military operations overseas, is how many soldiers can be deployed overseas at one time. The UK has traditionally been weak in this area, compared to, for example, France. The UK does not need to be able to confront the Russian army, or even, arguably, to mount an operation on the scale of the Falklands task force in the 1980s. But a credible Global Britain, in addition to carrying out the core functions of homeland security and defence diplomacy, does need to be able to station a sizeable force in Eastern Europe as part of deterring Russia, support US counter terrorism operations in the Middle East and French operations in the Sahel and, at the same time, contribute more officers and soldiers to UN peacekeeping missions around the world. That represents a step up from where we are now.

Overseas Aid

From a rather different constituency, there has been much criticism of the Government's decision to resile, albeit temporarily, from its commitment to spend 0.7% of GNP on overseas development – and of the simultaneous re-merger of DFID and the FCO. Certainly, the 0.7% aid commitment was a great selling point at the UN, where for the majority of nations, development is the most important of the UN's three pillars. It was always a pleasure to be able to trumpet that the UK was the only G20 country to meet that commitment.

But I was never in favour of putting the commitment into legislation. The decision to do so in 2015 owed more to domestic politics than to aid policy and did not gain the UK significant benefit internationally. The drawback of such legislation has been demonstrated twice in the last six years – first in 2017 when the UK was unable to divert overseas aid to its Caribbean dependent territories devastated by hurricane Irma, because they were deemed too rich to benefit under the international aid rules: and then in 2020, when the Covid crisis necessitated much higher domestic expenditure than expected.

The Labour Government established DFID in 1997, as a signal of its Internationalist commitment to combatting global poverty. But DFID's operation under its first Secretary of State, Clare Short, was deeply flawed. Acting more as a giant NGO than a department of Government, DFID's largely anonymous largesse brought little wider credit or benefit to UK plc – to the frustration of many Ambassadors overseas, including myself. An eventual re-merger was therefore inevitable at some point.

Despite criticism from many quarters, I do not see either of these two decisions seriously harming the UK's interests or reputation overseas. The UK will remain one of the very largest aid donors, the 0.7% target remains for the medium term and the UK's development expertise is widely respected. There is, however, a short-term difficulty. Because, over the years, the UK has made many long-term multilateral aid commitments, this year's budget reduction means a much greater cut (up to 80% in some cases) to some key bilateral aid programmes – which will be damaging both in real and reputational terms. This imbalance between multilateral and bilateral contributions needs to be corrected quickly.

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THE 0.7% AID COMMITMENT WAS A GREAT SELLING POINT AT THE UN, WHERE FOR THE MAJORITY OF NATIONS, DEVELOPMENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THE UN'S THREE PILLARS.

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**IN MY EXPERIENCE,
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USUALLY INVOLVE
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BETWEEN OUR
ECONOMIC,
SECURITY AND
VALUES INTERESTS.**



The Values Agenda

One of the most interesting aspects of the Integrated Review is how it addresses the wider values agenda and the International order. The Review talks about the UK being ‘a force for good’ in the world, standing up for universal human rights, the rule of law, free speech, fairness and equality. And some policy decisions have been taken in this direction, such as the establishment of the so-called ‘Magnitsky Act’ in 2020 allowing the UK Government to sanction egregious human rights abusers.

But there are some important nuances. The Integrated Review states (rightly in my view) that ‘in most cases, the UK’s interests and values are closely aligned’. But it adds that ‘at the same time, our approach will be realistic and adapted to circumstances’. This signals a welcome recognition that there are always policy tensions to resolve. In my experience, the most difficult policy discussions in the National Security Council usually involved a trade-off between our Economic, Security and Values interests. These three ‘policy pillars’ were often in tension with each other and sometimes irreconcilable. Huawei’s participation in our 5G rollout, arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the future of the Chagos Islands are three examples of this tension. As Robin Cook quickly discovered in the 1997 Labour Government, a pure ‘ethical foreign policy’ is not sustainable.

Some commentators will argue that such ‘real-politik’ damages Britain’s credibility as a ‘force for good’. But that is the price that any country, which aspires to a regional or global role, has to pay. That reality is accepted, if not applauded, by all UN members.

Conclusion

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review identified the erosion of the International Rules Based Order as one of the most serious threats facing the UK. That order, fashioned largely by the US and UK after World War 2, is based on a liberal vision of open trade, the rule of law and human rights. It has greatly enhanced Western security and prosperity over the last 75 years.

Since 2015, the challenges to this liberal order have increased, not least as a result of the rise of China, where President Xi is offering an alternative non-democratic approach to global governance; and by four years of a Trump administration that made no effort to defend liberal values. Far from the ‘end of history’ as Francis Fukuyama put it 30 years ago, we have therefore entered a period of considerable uncertainty in which, for the first time since WW2, the ultimate triumph of democratic politics and liberal economics cannot be taken for granted.

As an open, democratic, trading nation, the UK and its European partners have much to lose if a new international order emerges, based more on ‘Chinese characteristics’, as President Xi puts it. But the Integrated Review is right to argue that simply defending the status quo is not realistic. If Global Britain is to mean anything, the UK Government needs to be actively involved in reshaping the international order in a way which takes account of the changing geopolitical environment, whilst preserving the key values of the current liberal order. This cannot be accomplished by force, only by positive example. The good news is that the UK has very considerable assets and alliances that it can bring to bear in this endeavour.

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The Integrated Review: Innovative Thinking But Still Some Blind Spots

Sir John Sawers



THE REVIEW ALSO SUCCEEDS IN LINKING FOREIGN POLICY TO THE UK'S DOMESTIC PRIORITIES, MUCH IN THE WAY THAT THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ASPIRES TO PRODUCE A 'FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE MIDDLE CLASSES'.



EVERY MENTION OF TECHNOLOGY COMPETITION, OF CYBER DEFENCE AND OF OUR VALUES AS A LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IS AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO THE CHALLENGE POSED BY CHINA.



The UK's Integrated Review is the latest attempt to answer Dean Acheson's famous challenge: for Britain to find a suitable role for itself in the World. There are three particular drivers of the Review: the rise of China, Brexit, and the technology revolution. The report puts some intellectual structure around the bumper sticker of Global Britain that Boris Johnson's government has adopted. Overall, the Review is a creditable effort to chart a way forward for the UK in the new, more contested geopolitical environment.

Strikingly, the Review announces a move away from defending the post Cold War 'rules based international order'. It recognises that a more dynamic approach is needed as that order fragments under greater challenge, above all from China. The Review also succeeds in linking foreign policy to the UK's domestic priorities, much in the way that the Biden Administration aspires to produce a 'foreign policy for the middle classes'.

Perhaps predictably, the main shortfall relates to Europe. But more of that later.

China

The language on China has attracted close attention. It is measured rather than combative, striking a balance between China as a 'systemic challenge' to the UK's security, prosperity and values while also pursuing 'a positive trade and investment relationship'. To that extent it echoes the language used by the European Commission in its China policy paper in 2019, rather than the more aggressive posture favoured by some backbench Conservative MPs.

But it would be a mistake to focus only on the specific references to China. The upheaval in the international system caused by China's dramatic and impressive rise permeates the whole Review. Every mention of technology competition, of cyber defence and of our values as a liberal democracy is an oblique reference to the challenge posed by China. At one and the same time, China is a player at the table and the ghost at the feast.

Technology

Nowhere is this more true than on technology. This is perhaps the most refreshing part of the Review. It rightly identifies mastery of technology as the key to future economic prosperity and to strategic power. To that extent, the Review is an oblique pushback against Xi Jinping's Made in China 2025 policy paper, recognising that the new technologies are the vital battleground for the strategic rivalry between the West and China and accepting the challenge.

Britain has real strengths to bring to the tech competition, not least our top universities. I have been struck when talking to leading international figures in technology that, after the US and China, the UK is mentioned the most frequently as a source of tech innovation. One sector where Britain stands to benefit from leaving the EU is technology as the EU's prescriptive regulation has acted as a brake on innovation.

To succeed in this domain, the UK needs stronger defences against foreign predators. Most focus has rightly been placed on China and there is now a lower threshold of national security interests to clear before the government can intervene to obstruct a foreign takeover. But in the hot competition for new tech firms, we need to have better protection against all comers. American buyers are just as keen on buying UK start-ups as Chinese ones are. We need to be more robust in stopping buyers from friendly countries as well, especially when the buyers are private equity firms with no interest beyond making money. The financial markets need to operate, but within constraints that recognise the strategic importance of

nurturing our home grown technology firms. In this sector, Britain needs more of a French style approach than we have adopted since the free market days of Margaret Thatcher.

Cyber

Cyber is one of the most obvious links between technology and security and is a tool in the hybrid warfare that the Russians in particular like to fight. Britain has been prominent in creating standards of cyber defence for the private sector as well as government agencies but these are mainly to defend against criminal groups.

The Review announces a significant step forward in dealing with State-led cyber attacks - the creation of a National Cyber Force to plan and execute offensive cyber operations. I see this as mainly a step towards better deterrence in the cyber domain. There are risks in responding to the recent intelligence gathering operation against Solar Winds, widely attributed to Russia, with a disruptive attack ourselves. But if the Russians and Chinese know we are geared up to respond like-for-like, they will have to factor that into their calculations when they launch attacks against us. We are all dependent on our IT systems for everyday life and business. Those who live in glasshouses must beware getting into a stone throwing fight. But we need those stones to hand.

Development

The Review defends the cut to the aid budget, reasonably so in terms of the other pressures on the UK's public finances. To my mind, the real damage to the UK's reputation on aid is the dismantling of DfID (the Department for International Development) which was a respected thought leader with much independent expertise. I struggle to see how the new FCDO will match that, but we shall see.

Europe

In its determination to paint Britain as having a global perspective and global reach, the Review conveniently ignores the biggest player in our own neighbourhood – the EU. The UK's commitment to NATO and to the relationships with the United States and leading European countries like France and Germany are all underlined. But the European Union is largely ignored.

Perhaps this is understandable: the EU-UK relationship is scratchy and negative, with genuine issues over vaccines and over Northern Ireland aggravated by a zero sum mindset and a determination on each side to out-do the other. But this Brexit hangover is damaging to both parties, especially in a world where European countries, whether in or out of the EU, have shared values as liberal democracies and those values are coming under severe challenge – until recently from the United States as well as from more predictable hostile sources like Russia.

The UK also needs the EU. Much attention in the Review is paid to the importance of setting standards and regulations in areas such as data and technology. This is precisely the EU's strong suit where it is on a par with the US and China, and an issue where the UK has no independent power. To achieve the Review's stated goal of the UK becoming a global services and data hub, the UK will have to follow the standards on data security and privacy set by the World's main regulatory powers, above all the EU.

Unstated, but running through the review, is the trade off that the UK has made through Brexit. The country has sacrificed the power and protection that comes from being part of a major bloc and has acquired instead greater agility and speed of response. Brexiteers point to the highly successful vaccine programme as their first piece of evidence, and with some valid reason. But outside the EU, Britain is exposed as a more vulnerable target for hostile powers. The threats to the Union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be a tempting target for those who want to weaken Britain further.



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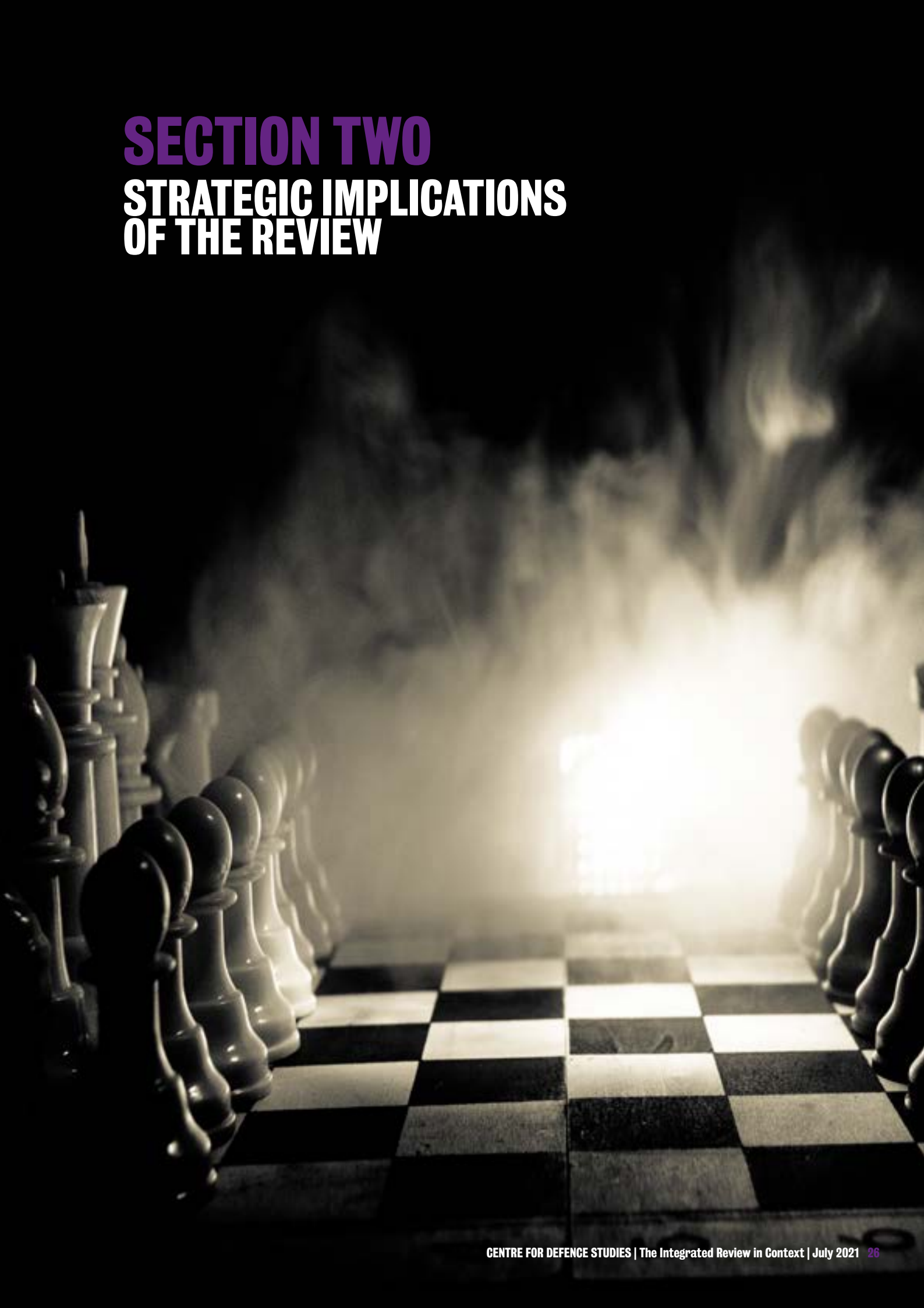
Concluding Thought

The Integrated Review makes a good fist of defining how the UK can best operate in the World in our new position. Outside the EU, we Brits will need friends and partners more than ever. Perhaps I'm old fashioned but to my mind geography remains important. Britain is still a European nation and our security and prosperity will depend above all on friendly ties and deep cooperation with our closest neighbours on both sides of the Atlantic. Of course, Asia is the growth continent and Britain needs a close engagement there. But not at the expense of our backyard.

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SECTION TWO

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE REVIEW



Implementing the UK Integrated Review: Building Ethical Campaigns to Defend UK Interests Against Hostile Information Operations in the Grey Zone

Sir David Omand



FOUR STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS ARE PROPOSED TO DETECT, DEFLECT, DISRUPT AND DETER OUR ADVERSARIES CONDUCTING SUCH OPERATIONS AGAINST US.



Introduction

The [Integrated Review](#) describes itself as a guide for action for those responsible for aspects of national security and international policy across government, including in departments that would not previously have been considered part of the national security community. As the Review concludes ‘responding to state threats can no longer be viewed as a narrow “national security” or “defence” agenda. We must bring together the elements of our work across this Strategic Framework at home and overseas, and all the instruments available to government, in an integrated response.’ Like all high-level strategies, in order to deliver its aims there will have to be coordinated funded programmes of action that engage all the relevant stakeholders in concrete, practical ways in an integrated effort to achieve the common aim.

One of those areas where an integrated response is needed following the Integrated Review is the effective countering of hostile information operations directed against the UK and our allies. There are many relevant activities relating to information operations mentioned at different points in the Integrated Review. They will need bringing together so that each contributor can see how their efforts support the strategic information objective and can be conducted in ways that manifest the values that the Review wishes to support. To that end, this note suggests a high-level simplification.

Four strategic campaigns are proposed to detect, deflect, disrupt and deter our adversaries conducting such operations against us. Such a framework would assist the fleshing out of the new Performance and Planning Framework and the work of the Evaluation Taskforce to check that progress is being made. It would contribute to wider public understanding of how the different actions contemplated fit together and complement each other. Such a framework would also make it easier to manage the inevitable ethical issues that will arise in taking a pro-active stance on information and relevant offensive cyber operations and add reassurance that the programmes will be delivered in accordance with the values set out in the Integrated Review including the need to uphold the rules-based international order. That there is such a need for ethical consideration to be built into the conduct of information operations reflects the important fact that as the former head of the National Cyber Security Centre, Ciaran Martin, [has observed](#): ‘the modern digital domain is a place of social interaction, information exchange, debate, and very, very large-scale commerce. Whatever the legitimate concerns about online harms, it remains, overwhelmingly, a domain of peaceful social and economic activity... the fundamental point is that the domain of operations and the domain of peaceful activity are inseparable’.

In defending the UK cyber domain itself, the UK has for some years exercised lawful persistent engagement that blends four types of protective activity:

1. Intelligence gathering and assessment to identify and attribute potential and actual cyber harms,
2. Encouraging an educated set of Internet users across the UK who apply sound cyber hygiene and passive defences based on authoritative professional cyber security advice from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC),
3. Conducting an active intelligence-led defensive effort by the NCSC with the critical national infrastructure, spotting vulnerabilities, proactively monitoring networks, blocking attacks and bad websites and sharing information on threats and responses across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors,



IN DEFENDING THE UK CYBER DOMAIN ITSELF, THE UK HAS FOR SOME YEARS EXERCISED LAWFUL PERSISTENT ENGAGEMENT.



4. Mounting, when necessary, covert offensive efforts, capable of imposing difficulty and cost on those engaged in online terrorist activity, cyber-crime and digital espionage and intellectual property theft.

The same broad classification can be used to define four strategic campaigns to achieve the overall goal of countering the threat of subversive information activity from overseas directed against the British public and those of our allies, including attempts at election interference.

Four Strategic Campaigns to Counter Subversion

Strategic Campaign 1. Detect. Lead Department. Cabinet Office (NSC Staff). The Integrated Review calls for the building of seamless systems to detect malicious activity and act with industry on cyber threat information at scale and pace. As part of this wider effort there will need to be enhanced capability to detect and attribute malign information activity directed at the UK in cyberspace as well as in open conventional and web media, including disinformation and malinformation, malicious web presence and amplification through sock puppets and bots. Given that the potential target of such hostile subversive activity is the British public itself the intelligence lead should be with the Security Service assisted by GCHQ and SIS and SO15, and with the Electoral Commission when activity that could be related to elections is detected. A Joint Analysis and Attribution capability is essential and must be a priority task for the Joint State Threats Assessment Team that is already located in Thames House, alongside the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre (JTAC) given the likelihood of continuing hostile information activity by terrorist groups that JTAC continues to report on. International cooperation with close allies and through multilateral groups such as the G7 will be important to this campaign.

Strategic Campaign 2. Deflect. Lead department: DCMS, with Home Office. The objective of this campaign should be to increase societal resilience in the UK to all forms of disinformation. One strand is the promise in the Integrated Review of a new regulatory framework under the Online Safety Bill and a media literacy strategy, overseen by DCMS. Another is the existing government Counter Disinformation and Media Development programme that can use the output of joint intelligence analysis to understand and expose the disinformation threat including hostile subversive activities intended to drive a wedge into existing divisions to exacerbate tensions within democratic society. Relevant too is the proposed legislation in the Queen's Speech to counter hostile State activity including a Foreign Influence Registration scheme. Investment in the Government's behavioural science expertise, horizon-scanning and strategic communications (as promised in the Review) should be directed to improve the response to disinformation campaigns and contribute to bilateral capacity-building programmes for priority partners overseas. This could include a new awareness campaign to helping the public recognise how the world of social media and ad tech works thus reducing vulnerability to hostile propaganda, disinformation and conspiracy thinking. There are important lessons to learn from the success of the campaign to protect the 2020 US presidential election, run by Chris Krebs heading the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. The UK Department for Education, with the devolved administrations, should be tasked to develop programmes to teach critical thinking and safe online behaviour from an early age in schools.

Strategic Campaign 3. Defend. Lead department Home Office. The Integrated Review proposals to revise existing offences to deal more effectively with the espionage threat and create new offences to criminalise other harmful activity such as covert influence operations conducted by, and on behalf of, foreign states and to introduce a form of UK foreign agent registration scheme will all help defend against subversion. The NCSC should expand their existing active defence cyber initiatives protecting the government domain (.gov.uk) to other sub-domains within (.uk) such as (.ac.uk). The NCSC should work with Cloud providers to promote comparable degrees of protection for their UK users. The existing cross-government Counter-Disinformation Unit should pro-actively ensure very rapid rebuttal of fake news stories that affect UK interests as part of the coordinated effort. BBC World Service, identified in the Integrated Review as a soft power strength, should be funded sufficiently to allow them to continue robust independent broadcasting of the British voice overseas.



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**THE UK SHOULD
BE A FORCE GOOD:
SUPPORTING OPEN
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DEFENDING HUMAN
RIGHTS.**



Strategic Campaign 4 Deter. Lead department Cabinet Office. The Integrated Review describes the targeted, responsible offensive cyber capability the UK is building through the National Cyber Force. Offensive operations should be conducted when necessary to raise the cost and difficulty to our adversaries of conducting information operations against us, as well as other forms of cyber-attack and espionage, recognising that these tools of coercion and interference can also be used in 'hybrid' combination with more traditional hard power methods. Such counter-subversion activity has to be integrated with the Defending Democracy programme already under way. Offensive operations can be led by the National Cyber Force, under the command of Strategic Command in accordance with the Integrated Operating Concept 2025, supported by the Security and Intelligence Agencies. But strategic direction from government will be needed, such as could be provided from an interdepartmental committee of the NSC chaired by the Cabinet Office.

Ethical Principles to Apply to Counter-Subversion Operations

UK information activity will involve vigorously putting over the UK side of any story. There are likely to be direct and indirect audiences for our messaging given the global reach of digital communications.

- ♦ The target audiences – those the UK most wishes to reach directly with its messaging.
- ♦ The rest of the world, especially in the global South, whose view of the UK and what we stand for vis a vis our competitors will be influenced both by what we say and how we say it and whether we are being seen to exercise our part of responsible stewardship of the digital environment.
- ♦ Our domestic publics, whom we need to continue to support our policies and processes and whom we must not inadvertently mislead by our overseas messaging.

Those planning and conducting strategic campaigns along the four lines set out in this paper should operate according to well accepted ethical principles, whether the campaigns involve technical operations in cyberspace, the use of Artificial Intelligence capabilities or the direct conduct of rebuttal and other overt information activity intended to influence target audiences. Oversight arrangements involving the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee and the Investigatory Powers Commissioner can help provide public and international assurance that in respect of covert activity ethical and legal standards are being upheld in accordance with the Integrated Review's goal of supporting the rules based international order. The work of all four strategic campaigns outlined above on information operations should be drawn on contribute to the wider international discussion of norms of responsible behaviour in cyberspace.

There are [six ethical principles](#) derived from the Just War tradition that underpins international humanitarian law that can help identify where ethical questions will have to be addressed and answered:

- ♦ **Right intention** – ensuring that the UK is always acting for defensible motives and with integrity, taking especial care over the effect on domestic audiences of covert information operations that are intended to influence international opinions unattributably
- ♦ **Proportionality** – keeping the ethical risks being run in line with the seriousness of the harms that UK operations are intended to mitigate, with a case-by-case justification that balances the value of the operation against the ethical risks involved.
- ♦ **Right authority** – the greater the ethical risk, the higher the level of command authority that should be required, thus providing proper accountability for decisions, oversight and an audit trail of who agreed to what – essential to defend reputations when operations become the subject of public debate, as they are occasionally bound to these days when secrets tend not to stay secret for very long.

- ♦ **Discrimination** – the ability to assess the potential for offensive activity (and the operation of defensive systems) to cause harm to individuals or property not foreseen or not tackled during development – particularly if defensive operations have to be conducted swiftly and with great agility using machine learning systems to disrupt servers and networks carrying hostile material. Information operations intended to influence directly those involved in conducting hostile operations against us should avoid harm to family members or other innocent individuals.
- ♦ **A reasonable prospect of success** – requiring operational planners to be able to provide a substantiated justification why they think an operation will contribute to achieving the desired authorized effect, in ways that are sufficiently targeted and not indiscriminate. This will require sufficient effort to be devoted to post-operational analysis of the effect of information activity that has been carried out in order to build up an evidence base.
- ♦ Finally, **necessity** – just because the UK can do it does not mean the UK should. The moral obligation rests on those planning and authorizing information operations that carry ethical risk to consider whether there is any reasonable prospect of achieving the authorized end at lesser risk.

Taken together, knowing that activity is being judged against these principles should provide international and domestic reassurance that the UK is exercising its right to defend itself from hostile activity in ways consistent with our values and commitment to the rule of law in accordance with the strategic objective of the Integrated Review that the UK should be a force for good: supporting open societies and defending human rights.

Maintaining Trustworthiness

Being seen to be trustworthy is a vital part of reaching all three audiences described in the preceding section, and of being taken seriously. Trustworthy means showing a record of behaviour that demonstrates integrity, consistency, reliability and truthfulness. BBC World Service is a prime example of a service to which target audiences listening in defiance of their own government's censorship laws, as well as a vast global audience, trust to provide reliable information. It is feared by dictators which is why they harass its staff and try to block with jamming, firewalls and splinternets to keep out unwelcome news and opinions. It is a public service broadcaster that does not charge for its output and an important part of this strategic campaign should be to develop proposals with like-minded nations to incentivise commercial media operations to operate a market in trust, and to promote standards and regulation that will support that objective (as is beginning to happen with international discussions following the Christchurch Call to eliminate terrorist and extremist content online).

A lesson learned in the work of the Political Warfare Executive during the Second World War and subsequently applied in the work of the Information Research Department (IRD) of the Foreign Office during the Cold War is that it is possible to put forward our best face, whilst exposing the worst of an adversary, yet be grounded in truth. During the Cold War for example IRD helped expose the Soviet Gulag through publicising the writings of dissidents smuggled out of the Soviet Union. Although the hand of IRD and the secret intelligence that guided it was hidden, the content of the information being spread was truthful. The [experience of the British Army in Northern Ireland in the 1970s](#) reinforced this lesson that maintaining media credibility (today, a global online media) is essential and that allowing suggestions that the UK sanctions attempts at 'black propaganda' (what today would be termed promoting 'fake news') makes strategic success harder to achieve.

Conclusion

Effective countering of external subversion involves harnessing very different kinds of activity by many different departments and agencies and outside bodies each with their own priorities to a common set of goals. The Integrated Review includes many of the activities that will need to be involved but does not describe how such synergy can be delivered. The four strategic campaigns outlined above would provide a framework for constructing counter-subversion strategy.



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Operating to higher ethical standards than our competitors by applying well understood ethical principles gives the UK an advantage, not as some might see it handicapping our efforts. That is because the essence of defending ourselves against subversion is to engage in information operations whose very purpose is to influence the minds and actions of others.

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Soft Power in the Integrated Review: More Promise than Delivery, So Far

Michael Clarke

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MINISTERS LIKE TO TALK ABOUT BRITAIN'S SOFT POWER, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO POLICY THEY NATURALLY GRAVITATE TOWARDS THE HARDER END OF THE SPECTRUM.

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Among many other things, the Integrated Review was intended to re-boot the United Kingdom's approach to so-called 'soft power' – that natural magnetism of a successful society that operates differently and largely outside any direct government control. Ministers like to talk about Britain's soft power, but when it comes to policy they naturally gravitate towards the harder end of the spectrum. That's where the more tangible levers of power seem to reside; economic manipulation, control of services, regulations, threats, inducements and, yes, coercion, policing or military action in some cases. Soft power, in any case, is much harder to define, still less to manipulate in a strategically meaningful way. And using 'soft' and 'hard' power in a judicious combination that is generally labelled as 'smart' requires the efficient mobilisation of all branches of government to a definable purpose – much easier said than done.

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister has always been an enthusiast for soft power. He [spoke about it expansively](#) at the 2016 Conservative Party Conference, highlighting the UK's 'irresistible soft power – the vast and subtle and pervasive extension of British influence around the world that goes with having the language that was invented and perfected in this country'. And the Integrated Review, [when it was formally announced in 2020](#), made clear that since it was 'the largest review of the UK's foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War', was therefore designed to consider 'the totality of global opportunities and challenges the UK faces' and 'how the whole of government can be structured, equipped and mobilized to meet them'.

In the event, [the Integrated Review declared that the UK was a 'Soft Power Superpower'](#) and it listed some of the attributes of that status – its system of law and government, institutions like the Monarchy, and its standing in education, science and innovation, professional standards-setting, creative industries, tourism, its diaspora communities, sports, entertainment and not least, its active international aid and development policies. The defence command paper, which appeared the following week, correspondingly [listed the contributions of defence to the broader 'Global Britain' aspirations](#) and highlighted the intention for UK forces to offer 'persistent engagement' and 'forward presence' overseas with both traditional and new partners, helping through technical support and mentoring to build up others' capabilities in a number of different ways.

The Integrated Review, however, is an ongoing process. Its conclusions in many areas were either to indicate the main lines of anticipated development – as in the technical transformation of the three armed services – or else to initiate yet more sectoral reviews – as in the working of the National Security Council or the creation of new policies for industry in defence. But it left its soft power aspirations assertively stated though without mentioning any obvious follow-up activity. Those parts of the Review's avowedly dynamic intentions were all left notably static. In part, this may be a recognition that the government can only control a small part of the suite of soft power capabilities of the sort it listed in the Review. But governments can also work much harder to influence the environment in which other non-governmental institutions of soft power – the education, sports and entertainment industries, for example – normally operate. While the defence component of the Review mentioned some of the things it anticipated the armed forces doing in the service of re-booting the UK's soft power, there was precious little anywhere else that indicated the government intended to take a practical grip of some of the things it might do to underpin the UK's strong – but arguably waning – soft power attributes in the world.

Three Tests for Soft Power

It is still early days to make judgements on the fate of the Integrated Review, but three tests can be defined against which its soft power aspirations, in particular, can be measured over

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THE FIRST TEST IS WHETHER THE REVIEW IS DRIVING A GENUINELY MORE INTEGRATED APPROACH ACROSS GOVERNMENT.



the next couple of years.

The first test is whether the Review is driving a genuinely more integrated approach across government – making a reality of the Fusion Doctrine, which it only name-checks in passing, but which remains nevertheless critical to the Review’s success across the board. It is in the very nature of soft power attributes that direct influence with them, or over the international environment in which they operate, resides in many different parts of the governmental system. The evidence to date of more efficient coordination within government is patchy.

The recommendations of [the Commission for Smart Government](#) to create a distinct ‘Prime Minister’s Department’, alongside the new Situation Centre, cutting into the Treasury’s natural authority over Whitehall ministries, and pulling more Cabinet Office functions directly into the Prime Minister’s orbit, suggests a powerful drive to improve the nervous system between the centre and periphery of the governmental machine. Of course, the urge to centralise data and policy discussion around No 10 is understandable among Prime Ministers (not least this one), particularly at times of national challenge. But a powerful apex doesn’t automatically make the complex machine underneath it more naturally efficient or integrated. The fact is that [the Government is still thinking \(i.e. undecided\) about how the NSC will emerge from the National Security Adviser’s review of its functioning](#), how greater ministerial control will be exercised in order to put more emphasis on ‘policy delivery’, and what other central mechanisms should galvanise more integrated thinking lower down in the machine – and not least among the devolved administrations of the UK, which regularly complain that they are not meaningfully consulted.

Most of the effort to create institutions that strategize better, it has to be said, is so far devoted more to foreign and security affairs – driven also by the shock of the Covid-19 crisis – than to the wider elements that the Integrated Review said made the UK a ‘soft power superpower’. The MoD, the NSC, and Cabinet Office structures are all evolving in response to the Integrated Review. In this respect, they may become more genuinely integrated. But the Foreign Office is still digesting its merger with the Department for International Development; the Home Office remains in permanent crisis mode; the Department for International Trade is totally focussed on pursuing its Brexit agenda; the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are both preoccupied with post-Covid recovery; and Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is not a ministry of any significant spending power. Meanwhile, the Treasury – which has had a pretty good Covid-19 crisis so far – is once again sparring with No. 10 for practical control over the government machine. Soft power, not to mention its delivery, is easily lost in the growing noise.

From a soft power perspective, the second test is the degree to which governmental strategy for it is pitched in a sufficiently long-term way. Soft power seldom manifests itself quickly. Though when it does appear, its effects can be decisive. The UK’s reactions to the Skripal poisonings were a classic case of policy operating ‘smartly’. It involved excellent forensic, intelligence and police work alongside assertive government statements that rapidly called out Russia for the attack. That was all hard-edged. But the UK’s soft power also swung in behind the policy. The rest of the world believed the UK’s intelligence agencies, regardless of anything Moscow said about the case; and the unfettered world of comment, comedy and satire just ran with the issue to the point where it did the Putin administration some real diplomatic harm. Moscow was reportedly shocked by the push-back in the international reaction.

The British Covid-19 vaccine programme, too, evolved to become an exemplar of smart power. It began with excellent international research, conducted in Britain between the public and private sectors, and then applied and eventually extended it to the UN programme and to other countries. It combined the hard power of Britain’s demonstrated ability to produce an early vaccine, with the soft power messages that this could be done transparently and safely without recourse to clumsy propaganda. While Oxford’s Jenner Institute was involved in producing the Covid-19 vaccine, it also made a massive breakthrough in anti-malarial vaccines, which could well have an even bigger impact on global health. All that was smart. These successes will continue to be occasional, however,



THE BRITISH COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAMME, TOO, EVOLVED TO BECOME AN EXEMPLAR OF SMART POWER. IT BEGAN WITH EXCELLENT INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, CONDUCTED IN BRITAIN BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, AND THEN APPLIED EVENTUALLY EXTENDED IT TO THE UN PROGRAMME AND TO OTHER COUNTRIES.





THE FEAR AMONG ANALYSTS IS THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT MAY REGARD THE INTEGRATED REVIEW AS A 'BOX TICKED' – ANOTHER OBJECTIVE IT HAS 'GOT DONE' – AND SIMPLY MOVE ON RATHER THAN SEE THROUGH ALL THE NON-DEFENCE COMMITMENTS MADE IN THE REVIEW.



CHINA'S GROWING INFLUENCE ON WORLD AFFAIRS MEANS THAT SOME VERY CAREFUL CALCULATIONS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE TO USE (SOFT POWER) VALUES AND (HARD POWER) PRACTICAL REGULATORY INSTRUMENTS IN A CONSISTENTLY 'SMART' WAY OVER CHINA-UK RELATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.



as long as governmental understanding of soft power politics rates it only as a useful adjunct to British external policy, as opposed to an important end of a power spectrum that is there to be exploited.

The fear among analysts is that the present government may regard the Integrated Review as a 'box ticked' – another objective it has 'got done' – and simply move on rather than see through all the non-defence commitments made in the Review. With the next General Election likely as early as spring 2023, new and more attractive policy targets may absorb No 10's attention rather than driving the hard yards to achieve 2021 targets.

The third soft power test might be described as policy consistency. Soft power arises from the way UK society, in the round, tends to be perceived by others. Governments can get away with some inevitable tacking in their policy – zig-zagging under the immediate pressure of events – because soft power works over the long term and can normally weather some contradictory short-term policy shifts on the part of any one government. But some policy areas like foreign aid, visa procedures for visitors, working conditions for foreign nationals, attitudes to migration, and so forth, can have a much more immediate impact on international perceptions of the UK as a society.

The UK's soft power is also expressed by the degree to which its natural soft power institutions have some shaping effect on their own international environments. Government regulatory policy – say in tax exemptions, financial services, agricultural and food standards, building safety levels and so on – can have important impacts, either favourably or unfavourably, on the ability of private institutions in the UK to influence, or even structure, their own international environments.

Strategizing for soft power and creating policy consistency in some key areas is therefore important to its sustainment and promotion. Again, the current indications are contradictory.

In 2018 the Foreign Office announced an increase in its number of overseas posts and in June 2020 the long-anticipated merger of the FCO and DFID was confirmed. In some respects, this should – eventually – create greater depth and consistency in the way hard and soft power might be instrumentalised. In a similar vein, the government made the biggest ever single investment in British culture when [the Treasury and the DCMS announced](#) in July 2020 it was putting £1.57 billion into the arts, creative and heritage industries to help them weather the Covid-19 storm and to maintain, and build, on their high international reputations. Then in May 2021, the FCDO, which had been responsible for BBC World Service funding since 2016, [announced an 8.4% increase in its funding](#) – bringing another £8 million to make up to £94.4 million what the BBC World Service would receive for 2021-22 – specifically to help counter disinformation and extend its digital presence among its 440 million weekly global audience.

In the more intangible realm of values, the government has taken a number of generally consistent stances on China since 2019, particularly in relation to its eventual decision to ban Huawei technologies from the UK's 5G network, offering refuge to many Hong Kongers who may decide to leave the territory, being ready to criticise China's treatment of its Uyghur population and its growing military threats against Taiwan. These stances all have a soft power effect in projecting democratic British values to the wider world and appear to have made some global impact on its image; though China's growing influence on world affairs means that some very careful calculations will have to be made to use (soft power) values and (hard power) practical regulatory instruments in a consistently 'smart' way over China-UK relations for the future.

There are, however, at least as many downsides to these soft power-relevant initiatives that have attracted equal attention. In terms of projected national values, while statements that stand up to Chinese bullying may bolster an international impression of the UK as a defender of the 'rules-based order', that perception is countered by the Government's threats deliberately to break international law in the Internal Market Bill, in the highly contentious Overseas Operations Act which creates, among other things, what the Law Society described as a virtual 'statute of limitation' for British troops facing certain war.

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TO STRIVE FOR THE OECD AVERAGE OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS IS HARDLY AN AMBITIOUS TARGET FOR A COUNTRY THAT AIMS TO BE A 'SCIENCE AND TECH SUPERPOWER'.

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crimes charges; and, not least, in the draconian terms outlined in the recent Nationality and Borders Bill that will be confronted by a slew of legal challenges. None of these suggest a country that is truly confident and outward-facing. And in contrast to the inclusive simplicity of the European Union's regime for the free movement of peoples, the UK must now operate [complex visa and visa-waiver arrangements alongside the new points-based immigration system](#) in respect to citizens from the EU, the European Economic Area and Switzerland.

The Integrated Review made much of the country's existing achievement and its future potential in science and technology. It placed a big bet on S&T to facilitate the transformed armed forces of the future. And recognised eminence in S&T is also a key soft power attribute in itself and an important driver of many others. In the [Prime Minister's own words in the Review](#): 'Our aim is to have secured our status as a Science and Tech Superpower by 2030, by redoubling our commitment to research and development, bolstering our global network of innovation partnerships, and improving our national skills. The pedantic observation that 'redoubling our commitment' would imply a fourfold increase in the previous level of commitment only serves to emphasise the stark reality. The Review commits itself to raising – by 2027 – the UK's total S&T expenditure, public and commercial, to 2.4% of its GDP. But it was at 3.0% in 2011 and 2.7% even in 2016. The 2.4% figure is exactly the current OECD average. To strive for the OECD average over the next six years is hardly an ambitious target for a country that aims to be a 'Science and Tech Superpower'.

In June 2021 [funding for the British Council was cut by £10 million](#), at a time when its own commercial income had collapsed, directly cutting or affecting the Council's work in more than 20 different countries. But this was merely an echo of a much more contentious decision to cut the UK's overseas aid budget from its statutory 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This decision has become something of a cause celebre in the discussion over the real meaning of 'global Britain'. Overseas aid is one of the prime instruments of soft power projection in a variety of different ways, and has a big bearing on the local images the rest of the world form of any particular donor country. The decision was described by virtually all but government spokespeople in both Houses of Parliament as strategically incoherent. The government points out that the current global average is 0.3% and the European average 0.5% of donor's GNI. But from the perspective of strategic coherence, the amount of money is not the current point. A cut in the headline figure necessitated deep and rapid cuts in those parts of the overseas development aid budget that were available to be cut immediately. The Prime Minister insisted (and was widely disbelieved) that this reduction would only be temporary. So, in the process of making 'temporary' cuts, overseas aid has been slashed in some of the countries, and on some of the schemes, that matter most to British security. Funding on conflict prevention, particularly in Africa, has been slashed in programmes covering Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria. Programmes that the UK championed on girls' education and sexual health have been cut. De-mining programmes in Afghanistan are cut and NGOs, already barred from the €1 billion funds of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, have suffered around 60% cuts in their programmes covering many parts of Africa, Yemen and Syria. UNICEF has also seen a 60% reduction in the UK's contribution to its work. The damage of all this to the UK's international reputation is still being assessed.

In terms of the third test of soft power therefore, none of this creates a consistent image of the UK as an outward-facing country, a 'problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective' as [the Review asserted in its opening pages](#). In the case of UK overseas aid policy and Parliament's confirmation of continuing cuts of at least £4 billion annually, the reality appears to be quite the opposite.

It is clear to most British policy analysts that the defence establishment is getting on with the business of implementing the Integrated Review. Since it accounts for over £40 billion of the £60-65 billion the government devotes to external affairs in all its guises, including the direct and indirect contributions to UK soft power, that is not surprising. It is not so evident that other parts of the governmental system are similarly engaged. While it is still early to make too many definitive judgements, it is possible that the grand, overarching, 'Integrated

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NONE OF THIS CREATES A CONSISTENT IMAGE OF THE UK AS AN OUTWARD-FACING COUNTRY, A 'PROBLEM-SOLVING AND BURDEN-SHARING NATION WITH A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE' AS THE REVIEW ASSERTED IN ITS OPENING PAGES.

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Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy’, will soon come to be seen as little more than another quinquennial defence review. And, in that event, one of the lost opportunities would involve the loss of a generational chance to reassess – and reassert – [the UK’s ‘precarious’ soft power assets](#).

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Corruption: The Missing Link in the Integrated Review?

Lady Moira Andrews



IN RECENT YEARS, MORE COHERENCE HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION.



Corruption is dangerous, divisive, and wasteful. It impedes the pursuit of domestic and foreign policy, and it fuels international terrorism, serious organised crime, and global instability; it can be exploited by hostile actors to threaten national security interests at home and overseas; it damages the integrity of financial markets, obstructs businesses from expanding trade by denying them a level playing field on which to compete for contracts; and it undermines confidence in government institutions and the impact of UK Aid. The challenge it poses is simply too great for any one law enforcement agency, department of government, nation, or even group of nations, to tackle alone.

Nowhere is this more so than in the field of defence and security. There are clear, well-established links between corruption and civil unrest, violence, and conflict. Ineffective anti-corruption planning can inadvertently strengthen corrupt networks and malign actors. It denies brave servicemen and women access to the equipment that they need to fight, imperils the sustainability of operational outcomes, and causes missions to fail.

In recent years, more coherence has been brought to the fight against corruption. In 2017, the year following the 2016 London Anti-Corruption Summit, the government launched a UK Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-2022 to provide a framework to guide HM Government anti-corruption policies and actions. In 2018, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the international standard setter for anti-money laundering and counter terrorist finance, assessed the UK and found it to have the strongest controls of any country assessed so far. Indeed, a plethora of tools are available to the UK authorities in detecting and punishing economic crime, whether it be Unexplained Wealth Orders, Account Freezing Orders or Restraint Orders. So far, however, these powers have not been used to their maximum effect; for example, since their introduction three years ago, only five UWOs have been made.

Much of the commentary on the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development, and Foreign Policy has focused on its treatment of the return of great power competition and the size of the UK nuclear deterrent. But there has been almost no mention of corruption and its consequences. Indeed, the word appears just seven times, four of which are in the same paragraph on the commitment to launch a second global sanctions regime on corruption as part of the [UK's Anti-Corruption Strategy](#), and one in a footnote. When the [Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regulations 2021](#), were introduced in April, 22 individuals involved in notorious corruption cases in Russia, South Africa, South Sudan, and throughout Latin America were targeted by imposing asset freezes and travel bans against them. Quite apart from some notable omissions, this rather smacks of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted rather than disrupting corrupt activity in the first place.

A commitment to tackle illicit finance, mostly in connection with serious organised crime, fares slightly better with fourteen mentions, including the recognition that by undermining good governance and faith in our economy, it tarnishes our global reputation by allowing corrupt assets to be held in the UK. But there are few clues though about how this will be addressed beyond a bland statement about how, under an [Economic Crime Plan](#) dating from 2019, the number of trained financial investigators within our police forces will be increased; the Suspicious Activity Reports regime overhauled to ensure critical intelligence informs their investigations; and the National Economic Crime Centre bolstered. Legislation will be introduced that tackles economic crime, including the use of UK corporate structures in facilitating high-end money laundering, reforming Companies House registration and limited partnerships, and creating a register of overseas entities owning property in the UK. But this reads more as a wish list than a concrete plan, particularly as it is qualified by 'as soon as parliamentary time allows.'

A total of £83 million is pledged to implement all these measures. However, there is no corresponding commitment of funds to support the UK's Overseas Territories with technical and financial assistance in order to aid them with their commitment to introduce public registers of company beneficial ownership, in line with obligations under the [Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act \(2018\)](#), by 2023.

The Integrated Review recognises that conflict and instability will continue to pose a major test to global security and resilience, marked by weakened or failed states, extreme poverty, and flourishing transnational security challenges. Again, this is not followed through beyond a general statement about working to reduce the frequency and intensity of conflict and instability, to alleviate suffering, and to minimise the opportunities for state and non-state actors to undermine international security. Although merging of the Department for International Development with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office should, in theory, bring more coherence to this area, it remains to be seen whether old rivalries can be set aside. Perhaps a test of this will be the integrated Review's stated priority to establish a more integrated approach to government work on conflict and instability, including establishing a new conflict centre within the FCDO, tightening the focus of the cross-government Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, and placing greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict (such as grievances, political marginalisation and criminal economies), atrocity prevention and strengthening fragile countries' resilience to external interference – but not, apparently, corruption. The aim is to enhance our impact and reduce the risk of 'mission creep' or of inadvertently doing harm by working with governments and civil society in regions that are of greatest priority to the UK.

Transparency International, the global anti-corruption NGO [defines corruption](#) as the 'abuse of entrusted power for private gain'. One of the ways in which corrupt individuals are able to siphon off funds from state budgets and launder the proceeds of their crimes is through secretive shell companies registered either in the UK or in one of its offshore financial centres. Despite efforts to prevent money laundering in recent years, as recognised in the [Financial Action Task Force's report](#) on the topic in December 2018, it remains relatively simple to launder the proceeds of crimes through UK companies, assisted by professional service providers.

It surely makes sense to mainstream anti-corruption responses across all the UK's security, defence, development, and foreign policy endeavours. By ensuring that anti-corruption best practice is followed by the FCDO, MoD, and the armed forces, and by investing in robust, transparent governance systems, the UK can ensure the effective delivery of policy and capabilities, and use of resources. Encouraging other countries and international organisations to follow, builds relationships and improves joint action against corruption threats. Incorporating Anti-Corruption strategies into planning for operations and other overseas interventions will improve the prospects for sustainable mission outcomes and improve the integrity of the defence and security sectors of fragile and conflict-affected states, thereby enabling civil society bodies to draw on evidence of global best practice to engage with their national defence and security institutions to assist them to confront all forms of corruption risk and how to mitigate them effectively.

Only then is the return on investment likely to live up to the rhetoric.

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The Review and International Development

Dr Joe Devanny
Dr Philip A. Berry

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THERE IS A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT'S ASPIRATION TO BE A FORCE FOR GOOD IN THE WORLD AND ITS APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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JOHNSON'S LACK OF PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS INDICATED THAT THERE WERE OTHER MOTIVATIONS – NAMELY AN HISTORIC DISREGARD FOR DFID – BEHIND THE MERGER.

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The Integrated Review (IR) is an ambitious blueprint for the UK's role in the world post-Brexit. A key component of translating that ambition into reality is maintaining the UK's position as a [‘soft power superpower’](#). There is, however, a disconnect between the government's aspiration to be a force for good in the world and its approach to international development. Its recent decisions regarding international development have, for the first time in two decades, weakened a central pillar of the UK's soft power. The cut to the official development assistance (ODA) budget has been brought into sharp focus by the fact that, in the year of its G7 presidency, [the UK is the only G7 country reducing aid spending](#). Compounding matters, Johnson's decision to merge the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), creating what he termed a ‘mega-department’ – the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) – prior to the IR's publication, has undermined the ‘integrated’ nature of the Review and further damaged the UK's international development reputation.

Creating the FCDO: Ill-Timed and Counter-Productive

The new FCDO was formed in September, with officials reportedly having been told to start preparing for the merger shortly after Johnson's emphatic election victory in December 2019. Johnson's arguments in favour of the merger lacked substance. He claimed it was necessary [because](#):

It is no use a British diplomat one day going in to see the leader of a country and urging him not to cut the head off his opponent and to do something for democracy in his country, if the next day another emanation of the British Government is going to arrive with a cheque for £250 million. We have to speak with one voice; we must project the UK overseas in a consistent and powerful way, and that is what we are going to do.

Johnson's superficial argument failed to reflect the reality of interdepartmental coordination between DFID and the FCO. It was also quintessentially Johnsonian, including its rhetorically pungent, xenophobic undertone. As discussed below, Johnson's lack of persuasive arguments indicated that there were other motivations – namely an historic disregard for DFID – behind the merger.

The timing of the move, taking place a couple of months into a major global pandemic, was also questionable. It is unclear what prompted Johnson to announce the merger of DFID and the FCO in June 2020, but re-organising two major departments of state, forcing them to turn inwards to resolve the administrative and managerial challenges of merging two workforces totalling several thousand staff, deployed across the globe, just months into a global pandemic crisis with major implications for foreign policy and development assistance, lacked strategic foresight. The merger [proved highly controversial](#) on both sides of the political divide, with several politicians questioning its wisdom. Among many dissenting voices were three former Conservative prime ministers and two former international development secretaries.

The merger was soon followed by [the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, announcing](#) that the government would temporarily abandon the enacted spending commitment of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) on ODA – although some suspect that the government plans to make the cut permanent. Sunak [reduced the total](#) to 0.5 per cent of GNI, saving an estimated £4 billion. Like the decision to create the FCDO, cutting the aid budget also resulted in widespread criticism; all five living former prime ministers have [expressed dismay](#) at the decision.

Given [the magnitude of the budget deficit](#) caused by the pandemic response, it is reasonable that Sunak has considered options to reduce public spending. However, the decision to reduce ODA spending should not be viewed exclusively as a short-term measure to ease challenging economic circumstances, but as a political act that has ended [cross-party consensus on international development that has held for approximately fifteen years](#).

The politicised nature of the cut is apparent when its economic impact is considered. According to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#), savings from the spending cut are ‘small... relative to the £250 billion of additional support provided by the government in response to the pandemic in 2020–21 (plus a further £94 billion in 2021–22).’ Arguably, Cameron’s sustained increase of development spending from 2010, during a period of painful domestic austerity, intensified anti-DFID pressure in his party and its aligned media, which Johnson was subsequently able to channel. And, it should be said, even at 0.5 per cent, the UK development budget is still large by international standards.

To understand the failure of the IR to better integrate decisions about development spending and DFID’s status, it is necessary to look beyond the pandemic. The longer view is that Johnson’s decision to abolish DFID and subordinate development to wider foreign policy is the latest turn in a decades-long political debate about the appropriate institutional home in Whitehall for development policy. In this context, it is the previous fifteen years of relative cross-party consensus on DFID’s independence that is the outlier.

Political Strategy and Development Policy

The political context in which Boris Johnson announced the FCDO merger was very different to that in 2005, when new Conservative leader David Cameron emphasised the importance of development policy as a component of his wider modernisation strategy. In 2005, the Conservatives had just suffered their third successive bruising election defeat to Labour. In June 2020, Johnson was in a commanding position, having won a substantial parliamentary majority the previous December.

The different positions that Johnson and Cameron occupy on development policy reflect differences in their respective political outlooks. Under Cameron’s leadership, the party embraced international development as part of a tilt towards the political centre-ground. Pragmatism also aligned with principle: both Cameron and his shadow International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, were committed ethically to development, as well as recognising the importance of aid in enhancing UK influence overseas. Cameron’s coalition government was the first to meet the 0.7 per cent target for ODA spending, and thanks to a Liberal Democrat private member’s bill, ultimately enacted that target as legislation in 2015.

The new departure in Conservative policy on development under Cameron and Mitchell was often associated with [the party’s social action project in Rwanda](#), in which activists and several future MPs would get first-hand experience of development. But this effort did not transform the entire party’s attitude towards aid, or DFID specifically. As mentioned previously, the juxtaposition of DFID’s rising budget and the wider domestic austerity strategy was contentious within the wider Conservative Party. Where Cameron cut the defence budget but increased DFID’s budget, Johnson has reverted to a more traditional approach for a Conservative prime minister: the IR increased the defence budget, against the backdrop of a – perhaps indefinite – cut in the ODA budget (which equals the increase in defence spending).

Johnson’s approach to DFID wasn’t a surprise. He had long [expressed dissatisfaction](#) that international development had been separated from the FCO. Having resigned from Theresa May’s Cabinet, [he argued](#) in 2019 that: ‘We can’t keep spending huge sums of taxpayers’ money as though we were some independent Scandinavian NGO... The present system is leading to inevitable waste as money is shoved out of the door in order to meet the 0.7 per cent target [for spending]’. Prominent figures in Johnson’s Cabinet, such as Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and Home Secretary Priti Patel are also on record as historic critics of DFID and wider development policy. Under Raab’s leadership of the FCDO, development policy is now subordinated to this long-established view – although it isn’t



WHERE CAMERON CUT THE DEFENCE BUDGET BUT INCREASED DFID’S RISING BUDGET, JOHNSON HAS REVERTED TO A MORE TRADITIONAL APPROACH FOR A CONSERVATIVE PRIME MINISTER.





THE MERGER APPEARS TO RETURN THE DEBATE ABOUT DFID'S STATUS TO ITS PRE-1997 POSITION AS A CLASSIC POLITICAL DIVIDE.



immediately obvious why a Cabinet and National Security Council led by Johnson and containing Raab and Patel couldn't have achieved these objectives without the need for a merger.

Whatever the merits of their arguments about the benefits of a merged FCDO, the decision was pursued in the context of a very different Conservative Party strategy. Johnson's path to victory in December 2019 did not focus on presenting an image of a modernised Conservative Party appealing to the centre-ground. Instead it focused on a more populist offering to '[get Brexit done](#),' and trying to deliver perceptible domestic benefits as part of the UK's exit from the EU. Pledging to spend taxpayers' money overseas, whether on the EU budget or aid, was not an attractive policy offer to many traditional Conservative supporters or to its new 'red wall' voters.

For the moment, the merger appears to return the debate about DFID's status to its pre-1997 position as a classic political divide. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has to date retained a separate, front-bench shadow cabinet portfolio for international development. Between Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson's creation of DFID's precursor department, the Overseas Development Ministry, in 1964, the institutional status of development policy became a political football, with incoming Conservative administrations subordinating it to the FCO and incoming Labour governments re-establishing its independence. It's likely that the next Labour manifesto will pledge to de-merge the FCDO, re-establishing the independence of DFID.

But the merger and associated aid cut have also divided, albeit to a smaller extent, the Conservative Party. For example, Cameron's former adviser, Baroness Sugg, resigned from her ministerial role in the FCDO in protest at Sunak's aid cut. And former International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell has been prominent in efforts to compel the government to return to the 0.7 per cent spending target next year. The government [recently won a vote in the House of Commons](#) – with a reduced majority of 35 – by pledging to follow a formula to restore the aid budget when fiscal circumstances allow. Interestingly, the campaign against the cut unites figures from across the party – former Brexit Secretary David Davis's support indicates that this is not simply a left-right issue within the parliamentary party. Rather, it highlights a salient argument made by the rebels that the UK's commitment to international development is more consistent with the Review's 'Global Britain' agenda than Johnson's chosen path of subordinating DFID and cutting the aid budget.

Conclusion

Not all within the Conservative Party supported the rebellion to overturn the aid cut. Amid a pandemic that has required significant government spending, and after a decade of domestic austerity, it isn't surprising that [supporters of the aid cut argued](#) that 'charity begins at home' and that the UK should pursue a policy of 'trade not aid' to enable poorer countries to trade their way out of poverty. The government can also point to [polling that indicates](#) broad public support for the aid cut. But Johnson's path diverges strikingly from Cameron's emphatic refusal in 2010 to pursue aid cuts as a way to: '[balance the books on the backs of the poorest people in the world](#).' Outside of the EU, the UK would arguably have benefited diplomatically from the 'soft power' impact of retaining the 0.7 per cent commitment in difficult circumstances.

Arguably, there is also a selfish national argument for retaining higher development spending, as the world tries to recover from a pandemic that, although it has affected different countries in different ways, has underlined the transnational nature of threats and the interconnectedness between what happens overseas and domestically. Retaining an independent DFID and the 0.7 per cent commitment would also have elevated the authority of the UK presidencies of the G7 and COP26. Instead, the 'Global Britain' ambitions of the IR were undermined by the resurgence of a strain of opinion in the Conservative Party that had been effectively buried under David Cameron's leadership. Moreover, by failing to provide a credible roadmap by which the UK will return to the 0.7 per cent commitment,

the government has confirmed that the elite worldview of the Conservative Cabinet of the 2020s looks a lot like that of its predecessors in the 1980s and 1990s.

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SECTION THREE

THE REVIEW AND THE INDO-PACIFIC TILT



The British 'Integrated Review' and the Issue of China

Professor Kerry Brown

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CHINA OCCURS THROUGHOUT THE ANALYSIS OF VALUES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE.

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The Integrated Review, issued by the British government after over a year of intense work by officials and partners outside government, was published in March 2021. Its language on China was unambiguous. 'China's growing international stature is by far the most significant geopolitical factor in the world today', [it states, before continuing](#), 'China presents the biggest state-based threat to the UK's economic security'. [Earlier in the document](#), it brands China a 'systemic competitor'. Testifying to these assessments, China occurs throughout the analysis of values, science and technology and trade. It has a ubiquity that would have been unimaginable even a decade or so ago. For a Chinese reader, this omnipresence of China, whether in negative or positive contexts, is a kind of acknowledgement and validation. China is no longer marginal. The era in which it was brushed to the sidelines is clearly over. It would be hyperbole, but in many ways there are two clear drivers to the whole purpose behind this wide-ranging review of the whole landscape of British foreign policy – the exit from the European Union, opening up the possibility of ['the UK's freedom to do things differently'](#) and the rise of the People's Republic (PRC).

One might even argue that for a country that has historically liked to see itself as pragmatic, wary of the kinds of grand plans and strategies beloved of other political cultures (of which China might be given as a more recent example), even needing to spell out in a structured form, and then try to internalise amongst state functionaries, foreign policy in this way is a new habit caused by the disruption brought on by China. In the past, Victorian Prime Minister Palmerston could be imputed with the phrase that ['We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow'](#). The problem is that in its current political shape, China does come close to something like a 'perpetual enemy' to British (and, it has to be said, American and other democratic nations) core values. And yet it is a country where, as the review ably shows, there are huge areas where something like an alliance is necessary – even unavoidable. The exam question the review partly sets out to answer therefore is how to work with a partner that had become far more important than was ever expected, but who has so many aspects which are antithetical to the British mission, as the review states more than once, to ['act as a force for good in standing up for human rights around the world'](#)? In the view of this author, the review, for its answers, gets a pass. But the huge question will be whether its necessarily complex conclusions will, in fact, be internalised and implemented by a political and bureaucratic network that, as each day goes by, seem to have jumped to some very strong conclusion on what China means to the UK and how to deal with it.

The China Policy Quandary

The problems posed by China have been a looming issue for some time. The failure through economic engagement to end up with a partner which looked like it would be performing at least some kind of political reform taking it away from a one Party Marxist Leninist model any time soon has led the US and its key allies, in Europe, Australasia and elsewhere, to an increasingly stark impasse. The time when China could have been 'dealt' with by ostracising and turning backs on it has long past – if there ever was such a moment. Perhaps in 1989, during the widescale uprising in Beijing and elsewhere, there was a chance to consolidate an international coalition to freeze China out, disengage, and ensure that it simply went the way of the Soviet Union. That chance was slight enough then, but from the 1990s, and particularly after China entered the World Trade Organisation in 2001, its economic acceleration, its integration into the global system, and its rising importance across a whole raft of areas, meant that the 'choice' has become increasingly and starkly limited, and has ended up looking more like an imperative. One has no choice but to deal with China, and yet at the same time one has to accept that many of its political values are in direct contrast to those espoused by Western liberal democracies. It is authoritarian, has

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FOREIGN POLICY IN THIS WAY IS A NEW HABIT CAUSED BY THE DISRUPTION BROUGHT ON BY CHINA.

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Rule of Law, is collectivist in its ethos, and, under Xi Jinping, the key leader since 2012-3, has overtly set itself against what it calls Western Universalism and standards of human rights.

The 'Integrated Review' (hereafter 'Review'), at the beginning, mentions the two most powerful examples of this antinomy, the clash between values and practices. The first is over Hong Kong. Over 2020, after a series of largescale protests in the city since 2014, the Beijing government enforced a National Security Law with wide remit, allowing prosecution of those accused of jeopardising the city's security both inside and outside. This prompted the Johnson government to [issue a statement saying that China had broken the Sino-British 1984 agreement governing the terms of the resumption of sovereignty in 1997 to the PRC](#). Beijing's response was savage. Over the rest of 2020 and into 2021 a number of political figures supporting democracy parties in the city were taken in by the authorities. The British offer of a '[pathway to citizenship](#)' for Hong Kong residents who qualified for British National Overseas status (up to 3.5 million people) infuriated Beijing even more. The simple fact remains that for historic reasons, Britain still has a special link to Hong Kong – and for many UK parliamentarians one they wish to speak forcibly about. This is despite the fact that under the assertive and much more muscular stance of Xi Jinping's government, the one country, two systems rubric on which the handover was agreed is now largely a matter of words, with Beijing, standing as the world's second largest economy, no longer in the mood to hear lectures from a partner it sees as much smaller and less important than it.

The second example is the reports of widespread human rights abuses in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, an area that covers almost a fifth of China's landmass, and which has a population of approximately 14 million Uyghur people. The incarceration of as many as one million of these people in 're-education' centres (labelled concentration camps in many reports) from 2017 onwards on the pretext of dealing with security concerns has sparked international condemnation. The fact that so close to the start of the report this issue is mentioned is important. Xinjiang, in fact, is not a new problem. There were serious issues that were widely known about in the region in the 1990s. Long before this, the tensions and sensitivities in the area were well documented.¹ However, the Tibet issue was one that was much more widely known at this time in the UK, largely due to the unique policy of suzerainty that London maintained till 2009. Xinjiang is taken, in Europe, the US and the UK, as an issue which is symptomatic of the utterly unpalatable nature of the Beijing regime, with many accusing it of being engaged in genocide.

With COVID19, which originated as a pandemic in China before spreading over early 2020 to the rest of the world, alerting many in the UK to China's influence and its new status, issues like Hong Kong and Xinjiang have been integrated into a narrative in which China represents an intense threat. Within the ruling Conservative Party, a China Research Group was established, stating that it wished to study and understand China better. Most of its public utterances on the country however are largely critical, and, unsurprisingly, political. When the British government, following the lead of the US and EU, placed sanctions on a small number of officials claimed to be involved in the clampdown in Xinjiang in March 2021, the Chinese government responded by similarly placing figures from the China Research Group, and the group itself, on their own sanction list.

This is symptomatic of the fact that China is clearly, in terms of values and visions, not an ally of Britain. And yet, as the 'Review' also acknowledges, on issues like '[climate change](#), [multilateral government](#), [conflict resolution](#), [health risks](#) and [poverty reduction](#)' China shifts from being a competitor to something akin to an ally. Unlike the US under former President Trump it did not draw back from the 2015 Paris Climate Change agreement. Ironically, under Xi Jinping, China has become a far more stalwart partner in combatting climate change, committing in the current 14th Five Year Plan which started in March 2021 to do more to greening the country, and reducing its dependence on fossil fuels. On pandemics, too, the disaster of 2020 showed that good quality dialogue with China on health issues like this mattered, if for nothing more than self-interest. And in early 2021, the Chinese government announced that absolute poverty in the country had been eliminated.

1. See James A Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (Hurst, New York, revised edition 2021) for a good account of the region's long and complex history.



XINJIANG IS TAKEN, IN EUROPE, THE US AND THE UK, AS AN ISSUE WHICH IS SYMPTOMATIC OF THE UTTERLY UNPALATABLE NATURE OF THE BEIJING REGIME.



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These issues, in different ways, and about different challenges, captured the constant quandary that people live with in the third decade of the 21st century – that, despite lamentations in the West, the world on most developmental measures was much better now than at any time in modern history in terms of life expectancy, literacy, and rising material life standards, largely through the achievements of China and India. Others has contributed to this success story, for sure, but first and second most populous countries could claim the bulk of the work. And while there were academic arguments about just how much credit the Chinese government could take for this, and how it was calculating its success, the simple fact was that the country was materially far better off than it had ever been in its modern history, and it just happened that the Communist Party had been in power while this happened. It might be one of the few points in common, but politicians in Communist autocracies are no more averse than their democratic opposite numbers to take credit even when it might be due others. On this point, therefore, criticising them was either churlish, or purblind, or both!

The China Quandary with British Characteristics

Over 2020, as British politicians in larger numbers than ever before woke up to the importance of China, this created a new, very local version of the broader China quandary spelled out above. This was how to deal with the inevitable shift towards a world where, for the first time ever, the most powerful capitalist economy was run by a Communist state. It is an inelegant caricature, but for brevity has to be deployed here. Broadly, the positions on China ranged between those who placed absolute primacy on values. For them, engagement with a country that presented issues like those of Hong Kong and Xinjiang was unconscionable. There should be complete decoupling, and the sooner the better. On the other hand, there were the pragmatists, those who focussed on trade and growth, for whom the UK's somewhat underwhelming links with China in terms of investment and trade meant that as the UK was freed from the constraints of the European Union (EU) it might now seek deeper and better returns from its undeveloped relations with such a huge, and fast growing emerging economy.² For this latter group, self-interest was paramount. Values were of little use if one was racing towards poverty.

The 'Review' recognises the complexity of the UK's position. Firstly, while stressing throughout the document the importance of alliances, from the US to the Commonwealth, NATO, and other fora the UK has a position in, and speaking about the continuing importance and value of the links with the EU, there is also an underlying acknowledgement that the break with Europe has left Britain more isolated as it deals with China. In the past, in terms of human rights arguments, and the broader values discourse, Britain being in a group of other important economies and partners gave it at least some measure of protection. It is striking that for the sanctions in March 2021 levelled by the Chinese, there was one list for the EU, and one for Britain. Britain now stands exposed to Chinese ire when it comes – and the signs are that it is likely to come increasingly thick and fast. Secondly, there is the important philosophical point made by the 'Review' on page 12 – that 'foreign policy rests on the strength of the economy'. This is the paradox: that one of the rationales for leaving the EU was to have more agency in seeking economic partners, that China is one of the UK's largest opportunities, but that greater direct political argument with China runs the risk of leading, increasingly inevitably, to economic consequences when things go wrong. The 'Review' refers to the concept of 'economic statecraft' and how the UK should practise this. To learn more, it might look to the PRC. China knows well the power of its economic size and of its future growth – though this is increasingly now more about the kind of growth (rising middle class consumption and the desire for services that the UK, for one might be able to offer) than its overall volume. The stark fact is that in this sort of conflict between the UK and China, despite Britain being the world's fifth largest economy, it is still less important to China than China is to it. Being an effective critic of China on the values front depends crucially on being relevant to Beijing – something that it is increasingly questionable Britain is in the way it might imagine, and which comes across in the 'Review'. That leads to the danger of just producing high sounding critical rhetoric that sounds good domestically but has no impact on its target. One could deploy the phrase

2. These are dealt with in more detail in Kerry Brown, *The Future of UK-China Relations* (Newcastle: Agenda Publishing, 2019).

‘narcissistic’ about this kind of diplomacy. At very least, it ends up being all about the originators of the condemnatory language, with little to do with the target, unaffected and mostly unheeding of the criticisms levelled at them.

The Solution

The ‘Review’ despite being furnished with a foreword which, though carrying the name of the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, must have been produced by his political advisers, and which is dense in patriotic, largely nostalgic language, is a policy orientated document. It is meant to be of utility to the officials and others who, on a daily basis, wrestle with the quandary that China presents. It does therefore attempt to spell out a solution. That solution is not a simple one, because the problem is not straightforward. But it does try to guide policy between complete break up with China on the one hand, and utter capitulation to it on the other. The elements of this solution are to create a ‘competitor, co-operator, adversary’ division within which China is located; to attempt to diversify through positing the Indo-Pacific as a key region to use to counter-balance against China; and to invest in China capacity in the UK, along the lines of the ‘know your enemy’ philosophy once enunciated by Sir Percy Craddock, a foreign policy adviser under Margaret Thatcher and John Major (and, it must be added, a sinologist).

The ‘competitor, co-operator, adversary’ trinity is one that had been prefigured by the EU in their [March 2019 communication from the European Commission to the European Council on China](#). There, as with the integrated review, China had been labelled ‘a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interests, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance’. Anthony Blinken, newly appointed US Secretary of State for the US, had used a similar division in a speech on foreign policy in early March 2021, [stating that](#) ‘Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be’. In many ways, the ‘Review’ simply folds the UK strategic response to China into this division, aligning itself with its key allies. And while the tripartite division is not spelt out as explicitly as in the case of the EU and US, it is clear that in global issues like health and climate change, China is a co-operative partner, in issues like technology it is a competitor, and for values it is an adversary. The UK defines itself as a power that will stand up for human rights and democratic values. It is clear, however, that in this arena, it will only have impact if it acts in concert with others – particularly the US and the EU. This will mean a need to constantly revise and calibrate what issues fall into which of the three areas above, and how much consensus there is with other partners on this. The UK will need to be perpetually attuned to the position of others to make sure that it does at least maintain some unity with its partners. Otherwise, it will fall into the deadly trap of both alienating them, and possible fighting on its own against China – the worst possible outcome. That raises questions about just how much strategic autonomy the newly liberated UK really has on this, one of the key issues it is facing.

For the Indo-Pacific, while this term has existed for over a decade, appearing in the language of the Australians and others as they became more sensitive to the need to have some kind of counterbalance to the looming dominance of China in their economies and region, the UK’s interest in this concept is partly driven by a need to show support for its allies, and also partly to prove that it is, once again, a truly global power with a new sense of strategic autonomy. One striking aspect of the ‘Review’ is the ways in which it outlines a Britain that seeks to be friends to everyone. Commitment to the concept of the Indo-Pacific is one such way of doing this, supporting far more important players in the region like the US, Japan and Australia. Even so, this commitment is vulnerable to the same criticism that could be levelled at everyone else engaged in creating this new region – how viable it is as a real alternative to China and its own conceptualisation through the Belt and Road Initiative of broadly the same space. Not the least of the issues is highlighted by a concise article by Muhsin Puthan Purayil in the Asian Affairs journal who, in 2021, [made a sizeable list of India’s differences with the US](#), and its increasingly desire to have greater autonomy of its own. Close links with Russia and Iran were two areas of real conflict with the US. The author lists many more. Quite how the Indo-Pacific will work when one of the key potential partners has so many reservations about the idea in the first place is one of a number of issues here.

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The final remedy is a more long-standing one. ‘We will invest’, [the Review declares](#), ‘in enhanced China-facing capacity, through which we will develop a better understanding of China and its people’. For a country that produces only 300 graduates in Chinese studies each year from its universities, this is a welcome statement. One of the great impediments to dealing with China in recent decades is that, while there have been tens of thousands of Chinese working on understanding the UK by coming to study here, learn English, and know at least something about Britain and its culture, politics and history, that has not been reciprocated. If reciprocity is often what the UK asks for in issues with China, then there needs to be some of that quality in the areas where China’s capacity is clearly beyond the UK’s. The problem here is part practical, part intellectual. For the first, it would take an immense, ongoing effort to train enough people on issues relating to China to even stand still, let alone deliver more ambitious targets. For a country where levels of foreign language study are already stagnating, this is a huge thing to ask. But on top of this is the fact that there are different kinds of knowledge, and different conclusions that can be drawn from it. The China Research Group in parliament certainly says it produced knowledge. And it probably does. But that is about a very specific area, and one that is shorn of a more nuanced, complex context. Maybe it is not so much knowledge that is lacking – even though that is true – but understanding and good quality interpretation. These are not easy things to produce overnight. The ‘Review’ therefore proposes a remedy that sounds good, and yet might be next to impossible to easily implement. But it is at least an important acknowledgement that as things stand, the UK’s position is not a strong one.

Conclusion

In the three areas where the ‘Review’ declares strong strategic aspirations, China matters. In terms of the UK being an exemplar of rule of law, democratic standards, and human rights, China is the great opponent. It fundamentally contests enlightenment values and opposes what it sees as the arrogance and hegemony of western universalism. Its hybridity and difference are huge, and increasingly important, sources of tension and challenge. The UK alone cannot face down these issues. It is a major question whether in fact anything can be done about this rather than creating an uneasy geopolitical architecture where China and the democratic world just have to agree to disagree. Rhetorically, therefore, on this issue the UK has to say what it says, but it is unclear what it will actually be able to achieve after the act of simply saying.

For the second, the aspiration for the UK to become a technological, and science global leader, China is a competitor, but, tantalisingly, perhaps a partner. For Artificial Intelligence, healthcare, and in other areas of biotechnology and engineering, China is creeping past others, producing new ideas and new processes. Its universities are already becoming globally competitive. And while it is still catching up, the amount of investment and effort it is making is a sign of serious intent. [China should not be underestimated](#). This means that the UK needs to factor in China’s complex role in this, sometimes as a key partner in research, and sometimes as a potential destination for British universities seeking new kinds of relations.

For the third, the idea of a UK able to create its own bespoke trading deals and grasp new opportunities, China also figures decisively. For all the harsh language about Hong Kong, and Xinjiang at the start of the report, therefore, there is a simple recognition that [‘we will continue to pursue a positive trade and investment partnership with China’](#). As China proceeds on the path towards becoming the world’s largest economy sometime in the next decade, this mission by the UK to have good economic benefits from a country it also has such fundamental differences in terms of values will become more critical, and more arduous.

The simple fact is that China has more options than the UK and can control the relationship on its own terms as never before. The ‘Integrated Review’ is a serious document, and offers a pragmatic, balanced approach to the challenges of China. But its implementation will offer the real test. British politicians often speak in a language perhaps two or three decades behind the times when they declare, as some do, that the UK should work with China, but tell the country strongly when it disagrees. China now can either simply ignore language it does not like, or, when it does get irritated, reject the UK. Of course, there will be costs for

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THE ‘INTEGRATED REVIEW’ IS A SERIOUS DOCUMENT, AND OFFERS A PRAGMATIC, BALANCED APPROACH TO THE CHALLENGES OF CHINA.

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Beijing in doing that – but the costs in the UK are almost bound to be higher as it seeks to achieve the three aims outlined above. The ‘Integrated Review’ talks of the importance of knowledge. It would be good that at least this knowledge about China were better understood, and its powers, and aspirations, more widely appreciated. That, more than anything else, would help make the ‘Integrated Review’ not just a successful document, but the start of a successful process. Now it is down to the politicians, rather than the thinkers, to try to carry this forward.

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The Indo-Pacific 'Tilt' and the Return of British Maritime Strategy

Dr Alessio Patalano

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BRITISH MILITARY POWER WILL SHIFT TO A MARITIME CENTRE OF GRAVITY DESIGNED TO SHAPE INTERNATIONAL STABILITY, CONVEY CAPACITY FOR ACTION, AND DETER WAR AGAINST MAJOR POWERS.

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BEYOND TREATY OBLIGATIONS, SOME OF THE UK'S MOST IMPORTANT TIES OUTSIDE THE EURO-ATLANTIC SPACE ARE WITH COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

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State-on-state competition is back as a defining feature of international affairs. The [emerging 'Biden doctrine'](#) notes as much, with authoritarian regimes like Russia and China representing [the defining challenge of our time](#). With two long and costly military campaigns in central Asia and the Middle East now firmly taking their place on the shelves of history, what does this changing emphasis in the nature of international order mean for Britain? The publication in March 2021 of the much anticipated integrated review of British foreign and security policy, aptly titled [Global Britain in a Competitive World](#), sought to answer this question. It unveiled how the government led by Boris Johnson intends to marshal different levers of national power to pursue Britain's interests, however defined, in the post-Brexit age. One of the most significant shifts set forth in the document concern the different ways in which military power will help underwriting the country's ability to influence world affairs. Moving away from a land-centric posture engaged in stabilization operations to counter non-state actors, British military power will shift to a maritime centre of gravity designed to shape international stability, convey capacity for action, and deter war against major powers.

Britain and the Indo-Pacific in the Age of Competition

The integrated review process confirmed that the United States remains the UK's closest ally and the UK considers this relationship as a cornerstone of the international order and stability. It also indicated that an unfettered use of shipping lanes underwrites global stability through maritime connectivity which, in turn, sustains the circulation of goods and resources and ultimately prosperity – the lifeblood of such an order. Without maritime stability the openness of the international order stands critically vulnerable. This is crucially significant since the main friction points of the Sino-American competition [are at sea](#), notably in the East and South China Seas and across the Strait of Taiwan, and [the Chinese declared intention to become a maritime power](#) has direct repercussions on global maritime stability. The above considerations raise the question of the increasing centrality of the wider Indo-Pacific region at the structural level of international relations. Within this context, the Integrated Review's acknowledgment of the need to shift Britain's posture to a stronger maritime core is a manifestation of an understanding of the vital importance of both maritime connectivity and the region to Britain's national security. The adoption of a specific 'Indo-Pacific tilt' in the Integrated Review as one of Britain's novel frameworks for policy action is the clearest manifestation of such a recognition.

Yet, the Indo-Pacific is more than an area of growing significance in Anglo-American relations. In this region the UK has standing commitments that derive from its role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and the Five Powers Defence Agreement (FPDA). In particular, the UK remains part of the UN Command overseeing the Korean War armistice and has been involved in implementing at sea sanctions against North Korea since the monitoring of ship-to-ship transfers of materials supporting the North Korean nuclear programme started to be monitored in 2018. The UN Command membership [implies no automatic commitment of UK forces in hostilities on the Korean Peninsula](#), but there is nonetheless international expectation that the UK would be involved in meeting such a challenge. Similarly, the FPDA does not commit UK forces to regional crises in Southeast Asia, but [members are required to consult each other 'immediately'](#) in the event of a threat or an armed attack. This creates a reasonable expectation for the UK [to retain a degree of commitment to regional stability](#), if anything to reduce the risk of armed attacks occurring. Beyond treaty obligations, some of the UK's most important ties outside the Euro-Atlantic space are with countries in the region, notably Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and India in addition to Australia and New Zealand (Five Eyes members), and ASEAN member states notably Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore (Commonwealth members).



THE AIM IS TO FAVOUR A MORE PERSISTENT FORM OF ENGAGEMENT, FOCUSED ON SHAPING SECURITY RATHER THAN REACTING TO CRISES.



The Indo-Pacific is also a central piece in the British post-Brexit global economic outreach. In January 2021, the UK government [highlighted its ambition to prioritise access to fast-growing markets and major economies in the region](#) through its submission of an application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) agreement. This, in turn, elevated the region against an already expanding trade relationship. Indeed, in 2019, Asia already accounted for approximately 20% of both exports and imports. By way of comparison, [the Americas accounted for 25% of UK exports and 16% of imports](#). More broadly, in the same year, seven of the UK's top 25 export markets were in Asia. The top three in Asia – China, Japan and Hong Kong – together account for some US\$82 billion of exports in goods and services, [a value higher than that of Germany](#) (the UK's second-largest export market). Whilst the Indo-Pacific is not understood to replace Europe in economic terms, it certainly represents an important opportunity especially in areas such as, infrastructure, services, and digital economy.

The Maritime 'Tilt' of British Strategy

Against this background, ahead of the release of the Integrated Review, the government announced that it was committed to increase defence spending by some £24.1bn over the next four years, with the specific aim to [‘restore Britain’s position as the foremost naval power in Europe’](#). Whilst this pledge did not eliminate outstanding funding problems, it did highlight how the government viewed the role of the Royal Navy as the frontline means of British international influence. In the Indo-Pacific, the defence document related to the Integrated Review, the Command Paper, further indicated that the notion of a ‘tilt’ was intended to mean that [the UK would mobilise its limited resources to shape the stability of the regional environment](#), through capacity building and engagements to maintain the maritime order and, if needed, push back against revisionist attempts at undermining it. Indeed, emphasis on offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) and Littoral Response Groups (LRG) – [centred on the converted Bay class support ships](#) – as the main naval components to meet standing commitments outside the Euro-Atlantic area, suggests an approach that prioritises military deterrence in Europe, and shaping activities beyond its boundaries.

Relatedly, plans concerning the balance of the fleet suggest that the Royal Navy will be more forward-deployed. This is another important reference to the maritime shift of British strategy in the Integrated Review, with different assets taking advantage of a support structure that focuses on what [a recent Policy Exchange report](#) defined as a ‘places, not bases’ approach. The aim is to favour a more persistent form of engagement, focused on shaping security rather than reacting to crises. British naval facilities in Oman and Singapore will be central to deliver [this forward leaning posture](#) as much as enhanced access agreements with key regional allies, notably Japan and Australia. The recent restructuring of the UK defence network around a series of British Defence Staff (BDS) in Africa, the Gulf, and in the Asia Pacific region is also [an important enabling step](#) in supporting a forward leaning posture and adequate sourcing should be ensured to deliver on both engagement and support requirements. Logistical support to maximise the effect of capabilities goes hand in hand with the recognition that British action will be integrated with those of major UK partners in the region. The UK will be an integral component of a concerted effort to convene action with actors like the United States, Japan, and indeed European partners with continuous presence in the region like France.

Is the ‘tilt’ of limited resources enough for the UK to make a valuable contribution to the Indo-Pacific? The answer to this question is difficult but the strategy behind this posture builds upon important experience. From 2018-20, consecutive, and, at times, overlapping deployments by Royal Navy ships did much to address the UK's prior absence, [enabling defence planners to test the requirements for a more persistent presence](#). The maiden deployment of HMS Queen Elizabeth CSG will likely cement and further enhance progress made thus far. The experience of the past three years has been invaluable to provide the Royal Navy with the raw materials to develop a desirable and affordable posture for the region. The Command Paper's focus on shaping activities – notably capacity building, partnerships management and enhancement, and disaster prevention and response – directly build on recent experience and indicate an understanding of the importance of such tasks. It is notable that the OPVs currently earmarked for Indo-Pacific deployments [have received ‘dazzle’ camouflage colour schemes of wartime vintage](#). This is a tactically smart choice



IS THE ‘TILT’ OF LIMITED RESOURCES ENOUGH FOR THE UK TO MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDO-PACIFIC?





BRITAIN HAS ENTERED A NEW PHASE IN SECURITY POLICY, ONE IN WHICH THE GLOBAL NATURE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL STANDING WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE USE OF ITS MARITIME POSTURE AS A TOOL OF NATIONAL STATECRAFT.



for the theatres in which these ships will be operating because it makes visual detection more difficult. It is also a statement to crew members and external audiences alike that the Royal Navy will be conducting its activities as part of what the integrated operating concept regards as [the mindset and posture of 'campaigns' in an age of coercion and competition](#). In this respect, the OPVs and LRGs should be sufficient for a persistent form of Indo-Pacific engagement, albeit one optimised for presence more than combat missions.

Conclusions

The Integrated Review brought about a significant shift in Britain's approach to the use of military power as a tool of statecraft. Such a change rests on an understanding of the strategic value of a maritime-centric posture. In this respect, the Indo-Pacific tilt represents a manifestation of how Britain views its role in the US-led international order and how it intends to apply its available material resources to sustain and strengthen it. The government's commitment to increase defence spending is particularly important for the navy as the fleet has been undergoing significant changes in capabilities – especially with the introduction of the new carriers and related assets. Equally important, however, will be the engagement with partners in the Indo-Pacific to ensure adequate support for the available means to deliver on the intended tasks. How far the implementation of the Integrated Review goes will depend, therefore, on ensuring that the maritime shift of British posture is supported by relevant policy action. What is certain is that Britain has entered a new phase in security policy, one in which the global nature of its international standing will be determined by the use of its maritime posture as a tool of national statecraft.

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The Integrated Review as Strategy

Alexander Downer



IN STRUCTURAL TERMS, THE INTEGRATED REVIEW IS AN IMPRESSIVE EXERCISE.



The differences between good governments and poor governments are many but one characteristic of good governments is they have a strategic plan and manage events within the plan. A poor government just manages events. A strategic plan, though, requires careful planning and thought and the integrated review is a good example of a government at least trying to do that.

As Australia's foreign minister, one of my first acts was to commission Australia's first ever White Paper on foreign policy. Satisfied as I may have been with this exercise – and there have been two subsequent foreign policy White Papers – it did not give sufficient weight to other related aspects of Australia's international engagement. It did not incorporate a broad security strategy by engaging both the Department of Defence and the intelligence community. Nor did it incorporate the Australian aid program.

In structural terms, the Integrated Review is an impressive exercise. It also has had the advantage of getting each of the relevant departments and agencies to think through what their broad strategic objectives are. As with the Australian White Paper, part of the strength of an exercise like this is the impact it has on the internal focus of government departments and agencies.

Where the Integrated Review has succeeded is not just in developing a medium-term plan for the UK's international engagement but in doing so has incorporated most of the strands of that international engagement. It identifies international trends, it spells out where the UK has specific strengths and leading capacity and it outlines a plan for implementing a strategy for the future.

The IR makes several perceptive observations. The most notable is that the UK and its allies must move from the Cold War mentality of defending a status quo to understanding the new and shifting geopolitical power structures and trying to shape the international order taking those shifting structures into account. To quote the document:

Geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts: such as China's increasing power and assertiveness internationally, the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific to global prosperity and security, and the emergence of new markets and growth of the global middle class.

For the UK to play a significant role in shaping the international order, it has to be more than just a regional, European player. Yet for the past 40 years, British diplomacy has overwhelmingly focused on Europe. There have been exceptions, not least the participation by the Blair government in Iraq and Afghanistan. But for the FCO and other major government departments, Europe has been the principal preoccupation of policy.

Outside of Europe, there had been an expectation that the UK would play a bigger role than it has. After all, Britain is the fifth biggest economy in the world, is a nuclear weapons state, is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and has one of the most versatile and effective defence forces in the world. The UK is also a country with very substantial soft power born out of its history, its economy, its research excellence and its media and arts.

If the UK is to play a more significant role in shaping the international order, then the UK needs to be a global activist. That means it needs to be prepared to deploy its various diplomatic, economic and military assets globally not just regionally.

Unsurprisingly, the integrated review emphasises that the Indo Pacific region is the growing region of the world economically and politically. It is also a region struggling with the consequences of China's increasing political, military and economic power. Indeed, outside of Europe, most foreign policy analysts would see the rise of China is the single most



FOR THE UK TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN SHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER, IT HAS TO BE MORE THAN JUST A REGIONAL, EUROPEAN PLAYER.



important geopolitical issue in the world today. If the UK wants to contribute to restructuring and consolidating a revised international order, it needs to be a significant player in the Indo Pacific region.

To do that the UK should take advantage of the footprints it already has in the region and try to find ways of expanding its role and influence.

Looked at from the perspective of liberal democracies in the Indo Pacific region, the UK is a force for good but it has become remote. Because the UK is perceived to be remote from the region, its influence is limited. It is no longer integrated into the mainstream architecture of the region. The UK is not a member of the East Asia Summit, it is not an ASEAN dialogue partner, it is not a member of the ASEAN regional forum, it is not a member of APEC and so the list goes on. Yet the UK is seen as one of the great champions of liberal democracy and an upholder of the rule of law.

It can only assume a significant role in the Indo Pacific gradually. It must begin by rebuilding its equities in the region and strengthening those diplomatic and economic investments it already has.

The UK does have a sound foundation in the Indo Pacific. It's historic legacy as an imperial power may carry the incubus of paternal colonialism but it also has benefits. The English language is widely used throughout the region, British designed institutions play an important role in the constitutions of countries as diverse as Australia and India, the common-law legal system is entrenched in parts of the region and, importantly, there is a residual respect for the UK and its own institutions.

In addition, the UK has very specific equities: it is a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangements with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia and this is an institution which could be upgraded if the UK were prepared to invest more energy and resources in it. Furthermore, the UK has a very clear legal obligation to Hong Kong through the treaty level Joint Declaration with China.

Given this foundation of equities in the Indo Pacific region and the Integrated Review's ambition for the UK to play an active role in crafting the international order, the UK will have to invest further in the region. It is not enough however for the UK simply to say that it will trade more with the region.

That is not to say trade and investment are not important. They are. What is more, trade and investment agreements say a lot more about a relationship than just the dollars and cents of trade. They do have geopolitical significance. The UK is already negotiating free trade agreements with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. With Australia and New Zealand, that should be fairly straightforward. With Japan and South Korea, existing EU agreements have already been transferred with slight modifications into bilateral UK agreements. The government has wisely and ambitiously propose joining the comprehensive and progressive transpacific partnership. All members of that partnership are in principle happy for the UK to join. The question will be on my terms. Then there is India. The British government will find it very difficult to conclude a free trade agreement with a country so politically fragmented, ethnically diverse and traditionally protectionist as India.

To engage more heavily in the Indo Pacific region will require more than trade agreements. It will require engagement with the region's various and diverse institutions.

Looked at from London, becoming an ASEAN regional partner doesn't sound very important. It is. ASEAN is at the heart of East Asia diplomatic architecture and the UK will not be able to participate in that architecture if it is not, as a first step an ASEAN dialogue partner. Through that process it will become a member of the ASEAN regional forum. If the UK can achieve that, it will be able to exercise more credible influence in the region because it will be seen to be part of its architecture.

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**FROM THE
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**A POLICY OF
CONTAINMENT OF
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A CATASTROPHIC
MISTAKE.**



If the UK wishes to participate more fully in the broader security arrangements of the region, it will have to be prepared to deploy assets to the Indo Pacific. Amongst the assets that should be deployed is technology and intelligence. In those fields, the UK has particular strengths and using its technology and sharing intelligence with trusted partners will make a solid contribution to regional stability. This component of security engagement is frequently overlooked but within the halls of foreign and defence ministries there is a rich understanding of the benefits a country like the UK – which has such sophisticated and forward leaning intelligence capabilities – can bring to relationships.

More conventionally, the Indo Pacific nations would expect to see an enhanced UK military presence in the region. It is understood there are serious financial limitations to what the UK can do but serious contributions to Five Power Defence Arrangements exercises as well as bilateral naval exercises with the armed forces of liberal democratic countries such as India, Australia and Japan would help to enhance the standing at the UK in the region.

Once the UK has reestablished itself as a serious contributor to the Indo Pacific region, then it can contemplate strengthening relations between those liberal democracies in the region which are working to balance the power of a growing and more assertive China. For example, as the Quad arrangements between Japan, India, Australia and the United States continue to develop, the UK could become involved in Quad military exercises. Membership of the Quad by the UK would probably be seen as impractical but nevertheless contributing to the Quad and more broadly contributing to their collaboration between liberal democracies in the Indo Pacific region will ensure that the UK makes a serious contribution to the stability of the region.

There will be those who argue that it's not the responsibility of the UK. It's responsibility is to deal with the transatlantic relationships and in particular to deter adventurism by Russia.

There is no doubt that the UK needs to do those things. But if it wants to be taken seriously as a country which is helping to re-shape disrupted global governance and to contribute to global security and stability – particularly as it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council – then the UK needs to be active in the fast growing and increasingly important in the Pacific region.

If the UK is not prepared to contribute to this task, then who is? There is no doubting China's enthusiasm to restructure the global order. The internal divisions within the United States have weakened its authority globally. The European Union struggles to gain policy consensus amongst 27 disparate countries and frequently is reduced to the lowest common denominator on foreign policy. The UK has a roll it can play in helping to lead liberal democratic societies in meeting the challenge particularly of a growing China.

As the Integrated Review states:

China's increasing power and international assertiveness is likely to be the most significant geopolitical factor of the 2020s. The scale and reach of China's economy, size of its population, technological advancement and increasing ambition to project its influence on the global stage, for example through the Belt and Road Initiative, will have profound implications worldwide. Open, trading economies like the UK will need to engage with China and remain open to Chinese trade and investment, but they must also protect themselves against practices that have an adverse effect on prosperity and security. Cooperation with China will also be vital in tackling transnational challenges, particularly climate change and biodiversity loss.

For the UK that means it needs to continue to engage with China. A policy of containment of China would be a catastrophic mistake and this would in many respects lead to a new Cold War. As the UK engages with China it must make it clear to China the nature of that engagement. Constructive trade relations, diplomatic engagement, collaboration over common issues such as climate change and even international terrorism need to proceed. At the same time, the UK needs to protect its interests. That means pushing back against cyber attacks from China, rejecting any interference by China in political processes in the UK, protecting British companies from theft of intellectual property and guarding critical

national infrastructure. The UK also has a responsibility to uphold the terms of the joint declaration on Hong Kong and to make it clear to China that all countries are expected to adhere to international norms on human rights and to respect the sovereignty of other nations as defined by international law.

Some commentators have said the British government ‘wants to have his cake and eat it’ on China. That is unfair. The British government would be best advised to define its relationship very clearly with the Chinese leadership and stick to its principles and the outline of the relationship.

The integrated review acknowledges this. It’s an aspirational document and it will be interesting to see how the FCDO, the Ministry of defence and other departments and agencies measure up now that the government has directed them to change the emphasis of Britain’s global engagement.

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**THE BRITISH
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China, Britain and the Integrated Review

Andrew Macleod



'WORKING WITH OTHERS' REQUIRES HEIGHTENED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE... TO UNDERSTAND THAT... PARTNERS, AND POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES, HAVE VERY DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF SHARED HISTORY, AND DIVERGING VIEWS OF OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE.



The United Kingdom's Integrated Review has called for the UK to deepen 'engagement in the Indo-Pacific, establishing a greater and more persistent presence than any other European country'.

Given the UK's previous role as colonial power in India, Hong Kong, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and others, it is natural for the UK to wish to look to the Indo-Pacific, perhaps in the same way France looks to Africa. Hence, an aspiration to be more involved than other European nations is perhaps understandable historically.

The Integrated Review signals a change of approach from preserving the post-Cold War 'rules-based international system' to an international system that can adapt to a more competitive and fluid international environment by working with others. The element of 'working with others' requires heightened emotional intelligence at the national level to understand that other partners, and potential adversaries, have very different perceptions of shared history, and diverging views of our collective future.

The legacy of the Opium Wars, carve up of Shanghai, and again the colonial rule in Hong Kong, does see China particularly sensitive to the UK's post-Brexit renewed interest in the Indo-Pacific.

Equally Australia, India, Malaysia, Singapore and others will not fall on the coat tails of 'Mother England' nor will China allow Gun Boats up the Yangtze River. So, while the UK's renewed interest has a valid historical grounding, the power dynamics between both potential allies and potential adversaries is vastly different now compared to the colonial era. Is the UK ready for this, or indeed relevant in this?

The UK's Integrated Review is not the only indication of growing western power interest in the Pacific. The current 'rise' of China has a lot of people rattled. The flexing of the 'Sino-military might' is, for many, upsetting a pre-existing perception of the natural order of global governance being dominated by western powers, western culture and western military, which prior to World War Two meant British domination.

This is a dangerous balance of 'previous power' versus 'future power' may lead to a clash of ideologies and militaries that could, in the worst case, lead to an unnecessary war.

Those who hold the view of a western 'natural order of governance' may perhaps like to consider that for most of the last 2,000 years India and China have dominated the globe's economy and military might. Since the birth of Jesus Christ, 'western' powers have dominated for perhaps only 25% of the time, with the UK less than 10% of the time, not that you would notice if you were brought up in a western education system.

If you, like the author, were brought up in a western education system you were likely taught that Jesus existed, the Roman Empire fell, and then the world went through roughly 1,000 years of the 'Dark Ages', where basically nothing happened.

Strange to think that there was no Roman Numeral for the number zero, and without zero one could not have our money system and decimal counting system today. So where did zero come from?

Perhaps, like the author's, your school did not teach you that Muhammad Al Khwarizmi perfected the use of the number zero and algebra in his mathematical university in Khiva, Uzbekistan, along the Silk Road in the 8th and 9th centuries. Nor were you taught the word 'algebra' derives from Khwarizmi's seminal book or that the word 'algorithm' is the anglicisation of Al Khwarizmi's name.

So why is it that we don't teach our children of Khwarizmi's work that we use every single day of our lives?

Perhaps you were not told of Mirza Ulughbeg who's work in the 15th century, also on the Silk Road, measured the length of the year to the most accurate point until computers were invented.

Both Ulughbeg and Khwarizmi are great examples of world significant work done along the ancient Silk Road during the period we were taught were the 'Dark Ages'. Far from the world going backwards, only western civilisation retreated, with massive advancements in mathematics, science and medicine all occurring on the Silk Road, outside of western culture and outside of western history books.

Perhaps you were taught that Marco Polo 'discovered' the Silk Road in the 13th Century and perhaps you were unaware that Emperor Augustus was already aware of the great trading route in 1 AD. Marco Polo was 1200 years late to the party.

The truth is the west was blind to the power of the Silk Road for over 1,000 years and not even today's history books teach it with anything like the same perspective that Arabs and Chinese look at the millennium of human advancement.

Hence, today, when we hear of China wanting to re-establish the ancient Silk Road through Xi Jinping's 'Belt Road Initiative', there is a temptation to think of the Belt Road Initiative merely through an economic lens rather than seeing it for what it is: a driver of Chinese policy desire to 'return' (not merely 'rise') China to the dominant global force in economics, politics, military, science and trade. From the Chinese perspective western dominance is the 'spike' not the norm.

The Integrated Review speaks a lot of the future, but little of the historic roles of colonial powers and the continued desire for adversaries and allies to be 'unchained' from that colonial history.

It is this difference in perspective, the lens through which the Chinese see the world, that we need to examine more closely to understand what is going on in the world and to plan so that China's rise to power does not come with an unnecessary military conflict.

There are many parts of Chinese policy perspectives that are different from the west's and perhaps we need to look at some significant areas of disagreement from differing perspectives if we wish to avoid war. Let me take just four examples: The Uyghur people, Hong Kong, Taiwan and climate change

I should say from the outset that trying to understand the Chinese perspective does not necessarily mean 'agreeing' with their perspective – but understanding those with whom you disagree is even more important when one does not agree when one seeks to avoid conflict.

Let us start with some general common ground. More or less since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 a general principle of international affairs has been that a country should not interfere in the internal affairs of another country. Absent a UN Security Council declaration of a threat to international peace and security, or a triggering of the often-ignored obligation to intervene set out in the Genocide Convention, a country should not intervene in another country's internal affairs.

Terrorism has challenged these norms though.

For most of the last 20 years western countries have been involved in what has been colloquially termed the 'war on terror'. Since September 11, 2001 various western governments have been tied up in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places in a battle with 'radical Islam'. China senses that as their economy returns to dominance it is quite possible that radical elements of Islam increase violent responses to China's dominance.

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**THE INTEGRATED
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This is particularly so as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and atheism a far more antithetical to more extreme Islamic thinking than are Judaism and Christianity, which are religions that share the same God of Abraham as Islam.

Indeed, some historians of the 8th and 9th centuries along the Silk Road called Islam, Judaism and Christianity 'sects of the same religion'. In a world where Buddhists, Hindus, Confucians all mixed with the Abrahamic Religions, perhaps one can see their point.

The Integrated Review speaks a lot of China's rise and assertiveness, but does it fully understand China's perspective on why China is doing what it does?

The Integrated Review is light on the challenges raised by this dilemma.

In April UK parliamentarians voted to declare the actions of the Chinese Government in Xinjiang a 'Genocide'. Without making a judgement as to the actions in Xinjiang it is still worth noting that the 1948 Genocide Convention in Article 1 states Genocide "is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish."

The proactive element of 'prevention' requires States to intervene to stop Genocide and is a reason why any declaration of 'Genocide' is a rare event. When looked at from the Chinese perspective, such a declaration from UK parliamentarians is a threat to Chinese sovereignty that colours the ability for the UK to act in areas more closely aligned with the UK's historical interests, such as Hong Kong.

Whose sovereignty is Hong Kong? There is no dispute that Hong Kong is Chinese sovereign territory. Hong Kong was never UK sovereign territory. It was only leased territory. Much like a tenant leases a house, but never owns it.

Hong Kong is Chinese sovereign territory and hence Westphalian non-intervention in sovereign territory applies there too. This however is tricky as the west has perceived that Hong Kong is 'more free' than the rest of China. To the Chinese though this is hypocritical hyperbole as for the vast majority of the time that the UK ruled their Hong Kong colony there was no democracy and no parliament.

Absent the international agreement with the UK at the 1997 handover, the UK calling for democracy in Hong Kong could be seen from the Chinese perspective as a bit like a tenant asking the landlord to fix a leaky pipe twenty years after the tenant left the building.

Is Hong Kong an issue over which the West should fight China, or is it a battle lost a century ago when Britain determined that the Hong Kong people were not deserving of democracy?

While Hong Kong is an emotional issue for the UK, is Hong Kong really where the UK wishes to draw a red line, or are there more important issues in which the UK could play an active role? The Integrated Review is light on the issues involving Hong Kong, save for the granting of special immigration status to Hong Kong Residents. Should Hong Kong be considered 'history' and are their bigger fish to fry?

Moving to Taiwan, we have a much trickier issue. Whose sovereignty is Taiwan's? How does the Westphalian 'non-intervention' apply to the island?

Both mainland China (in Beijing) and Taiwan (in Taipei) claim to be the legitimate government of all of China. Both claim to govern the other, and both claim sovereign territory over the other. This can be complicated when it comes to sovereignty and international affairs, as demonstrated by the Korean War.

After World War Two, the United Nations was set up with a Security Council that included five permanent members each of whom had a veto. China was one of the permanent countries with a veto. Not long after its establishment the Security Council passed a motion backing the government in South Korea, with its US allies, in a conflict against North Korea and its then Chinese allies.

So how is it that the UN Security Council voted against a Chinese ally when China had a veto?

The answer is that the China that sat on the Security Council was the Republic of China represented by the Government in Taipei not the People's Republic of China represented by the government in Beijing. Then most Governments around the world recognised the Taipei government as the government for all of China. Hence Taipei voted against Beijing's ally in Korea.

In the 1970's things changed. President Nixon is said to have 'recognised' China. He didn't recognise China for the first time, rather Nixon changed the recognition from the Taipei government to the Beijing government but maintained a 'one China' policy.

Taiwan continues to claim sovereignty over all of China as Beijing does. However there is a growing movement for a potential declaration of independence on the island of Taiwan, although it is neither official government policy nor yet overwhelmingly supported by the people. In a recent opinion poll (<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3951560>) just over half of the people surveyed supported independence and just under half supported the status quo or reunification with China. It is not as clear cut as one may think.

In terms of Westphalian sovereignty, most countries in the world, including the US, UK and Australia still have a formal policy of 'one China'. These countries formally changed their recognition of the legitimate government of China from Taipei to Beijing half a century ago.

From a Beijing perspective then, not only is Taiwan 'their' territory, western policy formally agrees that there is only one sovereignty and not even Taiwan is claiming to be independent.

Looked through that lens, do western countries want to go to war with China to defend an independence for Taiwan that Taiwan is not yet claiming, and that western policy has specifically rejected for over half a century? Looked through a Chinese lens, what is this if not inconsistent policy from the west, at best, or hypocritical at worst?

China now has the largest navy in the world when measured by ship numbers, but not yet by tonnage. One reason is that China's navy is largely built with Taiwan and the relatively shallow South China Sea in mind. China may one day have a navy big enough to take Taiwan by force, but they may already have one large enough to stop western powers from preventing them trying.

For China the question is if the west was not going to intervene to defend Crimea, would they really intervene for Taiwan? For the west the question is are we prepared to go to war over an island that is not claiming independence with the consequent death of civilians and soldiers and the resulting economic chaos?

The Integrated Review doesn't mention Taiwan nor does it mention the need to build a fleet flexible enough to respond to a coastal action should China take control in Taiwan.

The three issues of Uyghurs, Hong Kong and Taiwan are all flash points in the global relations with China. China's economic rise – no return – to global significance and their consequent rise in military power challenges the west like never before to question how economic, military and human rights issues inter-relate.

Climate Change does make a mention in the Integrated Review. Collective action is required at the global level to counter climate change. But question whether Asian collectivist cultures are more capable of responding to climate change than western 'individual liberty' cultures are? China, while being a large emitter of carbon is also investing huge amounts in post carbon technologies and is the world's largest manufacturer of batteries.

How will the UK deal with potential collaboration with China on this global level?



CHINA MAY ONE DAY HAVE A NAVY BIG ENOUGH TO TAKE TAIWAN BY FORCE. BUT THEY MAY ALREADY HAVE ONE LARGE ENOUGH TO STOP WESTERN POWERS FROM PREVENTING THEM TRYING.



There are no simple answers and no pure answers. But a closer examination of the question must take place in the minds of policy makers and the public, otherwise the danger of sleep walking into an unnecessary war and its consequent human cost will be the tragedy that marks the potential transition of power to China.

While the Integrated Review sets up a model of military response around a potential clear adversary, history of colonialism and the future post climate change both suggest a much more nuanced and empathetic and pragmatic approach to significant cultural and political differences will be required if we are to avoid unnecessary conflict.

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The Integrated Review's Indo-Pacific Strategy: The Centrality of UK-India Relations

Tim Willasey-Wilsey

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AS ONE READS THE IR THE CENTRALITY OF THE UK'S RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA BECOMES INCREASINGLY APPARENT.

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The success of Britain's Indo-Pacific tilt will not be decided by geo-strategic considerations such as membership of the Quad or the deployment of the Royal Navy in Asian waters. Instead it will stand or fall on bilateral relations with India where a transformation is long overdue. Although the Johnson-Modi connection offers real promise there remain numerous irritants. Britain's close relations with Pakistan; India's innate protectionism, the complexities of diaspora politics, differing views on terrorism and Kashmir, Modi's attitude towards minorities, and the ever-present colonial legacy all threaten to trip up both the relationship and the wider ambition.

The Integrated Review (IR) 'Global Britain in a competitive age' published in March 2021 makes much of an intended British tilt towards the 'Indo-Pacific'. The term is mentioned 32 times. The key idea is that global economic power has moved to Asia and that 'global Britain' post-Brexit is in need of new markets and enhanced relationships in Asia. There is also a security element due to "China's military modernisation and growing international assertiveness within the Indo-Pacific region" (p.29).

As one reads the IR the centrality of UK's relationship with India becomes increasingly apparent as the one country in Asia of comparable size to China and with [an economy set to become the third largest in the world by 2030](#). India is mentioned 17 times. Only China receives more references with 27. By contrast France gets 11, Germany 7, Japan 5, Australia 6, Russia 14 and the United States a mere 9.

In the IR India straddles two separate issues. One is India's bilateral role in satisfying the UK's national objective of finding new markets and allies in the wake of Brexit. The other is the multilateral realignment of global power and the place of India and Britain in addressing the threat from China.

The second of these issues takes us directly to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (better known as the Quad). In its modern incarnation the term Indo-Pacific dates from 2007 when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe used the term in a fascinating speech entitled '[Confluence of the Two Seas](#)' which, without mentioning China once, evoked an alliance between Japan and India which would also extend to Australia and the United States. The Quad was initialised by the leaders of India, Japan, Australia and the United States that same year. So the concepts of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad are joined at the hip if not quite synonymous.

The United States, Australia and Japan are fully committed to developing the Quad into a strategic alliance but India's position is more nuanced. During the stand-off against China in the Himalayas in 2020 the Quad looked increasingly important to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's national security team. However Modi himself has a long history of engagement with China dating back to his days as Chief Minister of Gujarat. Modi's overriding priority is the economic development of India and that means the avoidance of a breakdown with China. His Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar speaks of China as a problem to be 'managed'. In his book 'The India Way; Strategies for an uncertain world' he writes of India no longer being non-aligned but multi-aligned. His key message is "there will be convergence with many but congruence with none"¹. So we can expect India to stand in the way of the Quad becoming a NATO-style military alliance against China.

Britain may wish to join the Quad, where it will feel instantly comfortable with its 'Five Eyes' partners US and Australia. Yet the IR does not mention the Quad at all, presumably

1. S. Jaishankar. The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World (London: Harper Collins, 2020), p.41.

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WE CAN EXPECT INDIA TO STAND IN THE WAY OF THE QUAD BECOMING A NATO-STYLE MILITARY ALLIANCE AGAINST CHINA.

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for fear of needlessly upsetting China. In fact the only overtly military reference is the visit to the Indo-Pacific by Britain's new aircraft carrier and task force. This one-off deployment is welcomed by Quad members but the future UK permanent naval presence in the Gulf and in Singapore will be a more telling long-term statement of intent. Even the putative presence of two frigates, four minesweepers and a support tanker in the region will test the UK's already stretched defence budget.

So on the wider geo-strategic issue of the Indo-Pacific Britain will have to balance the subtly differing attitudes of the four Quad members. Although Britain has become increasingly critical of China since the days of the Cameron government's 'golden era' British Prime Minister Boris Johnson recognises the importance of retaining sound commercial connections with Beijing with carefully managed diplomatic and political engagement. In that sense London's interests regarding China are closely aligned to those of New Delhi.

Turning now to Britain's bilateral engagement with India the two chunky paragraphs on UK-India relations on page 62 of the IR brim with ambition ranging from cultural links, trade, research, investment, climate change, clean energy to global health all underpinned "by our largest single country diplomatic network anywhere in the world, with more than 800 staff spread across eleven posts".

This ambition is based on some promising foundations. There has been positive recent dialogue in the fields of space, cyber security, vaccines, water quality and the environment. Indeed there is greater potential in the UK-India relationship today than at any time since independence in 1947. This is largely because Johnson and Modi have established a relationship based on more than their shared right-wing populist politics. In spite of being [obliged to cancel his attendance](#) at New Delhi's Republic Day parade in January 2021 and again in April 2021 due to Covid-19 Johnson's positive rapport with Modi has survived. In May British Trade Secretary Liz Truss [signed the UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership](#) with Modi's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and [announced that negotiations towards a free trade agreement](#) would begin in the Autumn with the aim of doubling trade between the two countries by 2030.

This is more progress than has been made for many years. Indeed it has long been a source of frustration in Whitehall that efforts to befriend India have never been completely fulfilled. Between 1947 and 1991 India's close ties with the Soviet Union were a constant irritant as were Britain's connections to Pakistan, particularly during the war in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. The Suez invasion of 1956 infuriated India and the Indian nuclear explosions in 1974 and 1998 riled London. The close personal and cultural ties between the two countries were often frustrated by mutual irritation caused by events. This comes across clearly in Margaret Thatcher's description of her visit to India in April 1981. She evidently liked and admired Indira Gandhi but their relationship was unable to overcome their political differences and India's Moscow-leaning nonalignment.²

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic reforms of Narasimha Rao's government in 1991 presented a new opportunity for Whitehall to transform relations. Much good bilateral work was done but successive UK High Commissioners have privately expressed frustration that no breakthrough was made. Often it was happenstance (such as the nuclear tests) which obstructed progress but a frequent complaint was that British governments had not only failed to 'dehyphenate' India from Pakistan but actually tended to devote more policy and ministerial bandwidth to the Islamic Republic.

A common Indian narrative is that Britain has always favoured Pakistan just as it preferred the pre-independence Muslim League over the Congress Party. The prominent Indian commentator and former diplomat Tilak Devasher writes of "the role of Britain in propping up the Muslim League...in order to obstruct the march of the Congress towards independence"³. After 1947 Pakistan became an important listening post for Britain and the

2. M. Thatcher. *The Downing Street years* (London; Harper Collins, 1993) pp.162-3

3. T. Devasher. *Pakistan: Courting the abyss* (London: Harper Collins, 2016), p.4.



THE PUTATIVE PRESENCE OF TWO FRIGATES, FOUR MINESWEEPERS AND A SUPPORT TANKER IN THE REGION WILL TEST THE UK'S ALREADY STRETCHED DEFENCE BUDGET.





INDIAN STRATEGISTS FEEL THAT THE UK HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY HOODWINKED BY ISLAMABAD.



West as it looked northwards into Soviet Central Asia. After 1979 Pakistan became the base for efforts to expel the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and post 2001 the fulcrum for the international attempts to destroy Al Qa'ida.

And yet, at the same time, Pakistani support for the Taliban contributed towards Britain's humiliating failure in Helmand province from 2006 to 2014. Meanwhile London's persistent efforts to persuade Pakistan to clamp down on terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba bore little fruit and were viewed with barely-concealed scepticism in New Delhi. Indian strategists feel that the UK has been repeatedly hoodwinked by Islamabad and particularly by the Pakistani military establishment.

The IR makes plain that Britain will continue its close connection to Pakistan. "We have close historical links with Pakistan and will continue to develop a strong, modern relationship focused on security, stability and prosperity. We will continue to support stability in Afghanistan, as part of a wider coalition" (p.62). The relationship with Afghanistan will be hard to sustain following the Biden administration's decision (made after the IR was released) to leave. This exit will make UK's relationship with Pakistan even more important as will London's reluctance to allow China to become the sole (as opposed to prime) ally of Islamabad. Furthermore the large Pakistani diaspora in UK makes close relations essential. This will present a constant irritant between London and New Delhi.

That same Pakistani diaspora will ensure that the running sore of the Kashmir dispute is constantly raised in the UK Parliament. Most people of Pakistani origin in the UK come from the Mirpur area in Pakistan Held Kashmir (PHK) and familial ties ensure that events such as India's revocation of Article 370 in August 2019 are [never far from the Westminster agenda](#).

Another source of annoyance is the UK's tendency to view Counter Terrorism through a domestic lens, focussing primarily on threats against the UK mainland. To New Delhi this smacks of an unwillingness to push Pakistan hard enough against groups which are hostile to India's role in Kashmir such as Jaish-e-Mohammed, the group responsible for the Pulwama attack which [so nearly led to an India-Pakistan war in 2019](#). Twice in recent years (after the terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament in 2001 and on Mumbai in 2008) the UK has urged India to hold back from military retaliation against Pakistan but has then failed to deliver on attempts to get Pakistan to end all support for Kashmiri jihadist groups.

Mrs Thatcher's complaint about the innate socialism of India's Congress Party leaders changed when the BJP came to power and particularly with the arrival of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister in 2014. In a right wing populist famously enthusiastic about business David Cameron's Coalition government sensed an opportunity. The British High Commissioner took the gamble of going to see Modi in Gujarat before the election [at a time when the latter was still being vilified for communal violence](#) which had resulted in numerous Muslim fatalities. However the ploy did not pay off and the Cameron administration was later criticised for its tactical focus on trade deals rather than engaging in the sort of long-term diplomacy which the French, Germans and Japanese have successfully pursued over many decades. When Modi selected the future fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force [he chose the French Rafale over the Typhoon which Cameron had championed](#).

Meanwhile Cameron's Home Secretary was seen [as inflicting collateral damage on relations by her inflexible position on Indian student visas](#); insisting that they must be counted in overall immigration figures rather than as a separate category. Theresa May carried this policy into her short tenure as Prime Minister during which uncertainty over Brexit further hindered a breakthrough in relations.

It was only with the election of Boris Johnson that the prospects for UK-India relations suddenly improved. Johnson has long been interested in India and his brother Jo was South Asia correspondent for the Financial Times based in New Delhi from 2005 to 2008. The new British government not only had a Chancellor of the Exchequer of Indian origin but, in Priti Patel, a Home Secretary who was only too willing to reverse Mrs May's policies and [enable more Indian students to access British Universities](#).



**UK-INDIA
RELATIONS COULD
BE AT THE MERCY
OF WHICHEVER
POLITICAL PARTY
OCCUPIES NO 10
DOWNING STREET.**



Underlying these developments was a political transformation which could have fundamental implications for relations. The Indian diaspora in the UK which numbers some 1.5 million has traditionally voted for the Labour Party which was seen as more welcoming to immigrants. Partly due to Brexit and to the innate entrepreneurship of many Indians in UK, but also because of the enthusiasm for Modi's brand of nationalist politics, the diaspora has increasingly begun to vote Conservative. [This began in 2015 and grew in both 2017 and 2019.](#)

The benefits of this development are obvious for Johnson's relations with Modi but they also conceal real dangers. The large Pakistani diaspora in UK still votes Labour which is now, more than ever, seen to favour Muslims who look askance at the Tory Party's willingness to overlook Modi's Hindu nationalist policies, his increasing intolerance of minorities and dissent and his removal of the rights of Kashmiris in India's only majority-Muslim state. The problem here could not only be a threat to communal relations within some British cities but also that UK-India relations could be at the mercy of whichever political party occupies No 10 Downing Street.

Even with the Tories in power in Westminster the Modi government is already becoming increasingly vexed by activities in London. At an event hosted by the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) in March 2021 a speaker said that a debate in the UK Parliament about recent Indian farm protests had been 'unacceptable'⁴. In a separate webinar Foreign Minister Jaishankar elliptically referred to the UK press coverage being '[part of a propaganda aim with a deeper agenda](#)'. Indian irritation reached its height during violent protests over Kashmir outside the Indian High Commission in London in 2019 and at what was viewed as passive policing. Any Westminster government has very limited control over Parliamentary and press freedoms and the policing of demonstrations.

At the IISS event another Indian participant argued that India should be admitted to the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing partnership. The [Five Eyes](#) (US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) traces its roots back to the Second World War and has become a uniquely successful relationship based on shared strategic interests and a common language and heritage. The chances of India being admitted are vanishingly small but to Indians it will be tempting to see exclusion as political rejection. Similar frustration is felt over the repeated failure of the US, UK, France and Russia to obtain a permanent seat for India on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the face of persistent Chinese opposition.

A British Council report '[India and the UK: A 2050 Vision](#)' outlines the considerable opportunities presented by the shared use of the English language. It goes on to describe the 'legacy of the colonial era' as 'complex'. Ever since 1947 the shadow of both the East India Company and the Raj has hung over UK-India relations and the polemics of Shashi Tharoor have recently added fuel to the debate. The colonial scars are deeper than most British people realise and Indians are understandably sensitive to a sometimes patronising tone from London.

The next step for UK-India relations will be the discussions on a free trade deal. This may well be where the difference between potential and reality begins to bite. In spite of the reforms of Manmohan Singh which began to open up the Indian economy in the 1990s and the arrival of the business-friendly Modi in 2014 the fact remains that India is [intensely protectionist](#) and the bureaucracy is "sometimes sclerotic if not obstructionist" with "a vast array of vested interests". Modi's 'Make in India' and 'Atmar Nirbhar Bharat' (Self Reliance) policies [would have the effect of reducing foreign imports](#). Meanwhile Britain's position as a trading partner has [slipped from second place](#) in 1998 to 18th in 2019.

In a similar vein Britain's desire to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) contrasts with India's apparent reluctance to become a member of the free-trade area.

4. A meeting at IISS held on 19 March 2021 under the Chatham House Rule so speakers' words cannot be attributed.



**COLONIAL SCARS
ARE DEEPER THAN
MOST BRITISH
PEOPLE REALISE.**



If Britain makes no significant commercial breakthrough with India in the 2020s it will doubtless try and compensate elsewhere in the Asia Pacific but the IR's specific Indo-Pacific ambition will look somewhat threadbare. Any such failure will be less at the geo-strategic level than because Britain has been unable, yet again, to navigate the numerous and often neuralgic complexities of its relationship with India.

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SECTION FOUR

GLOBAL VIEWS ON THE INTEGRATED REVIEW



The Review and Anglo-American Relations

Dr Philip A. Berry



BY THE TIME MAY LEFT OFFICE, ANGLO-AMERICAN LEADER RELATIONS WERE AT THEIR LOWEST EBB IN DECADES.



NOT ONLY IS BIDEN RENOWNED FOR HIS PRAGMATISM, BUT HE HAS ALSO RE-ORIENTATED US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS WORKING WITH ALLIES AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.



The Integrated Review (IR), billed as the ‘[biggest](#)’ since the end of the Cold War, laid out the government’s vision for the United Kingdom’s (UK) role in the world over the coming decade. Crucially, the IR was an opportunity for Boris Johnson’s government to finally ‘[breathe...life and substance into “Global Britain”](#)’. Central to this concept was, out of the European Union (EU), the UK would not retreat into isolationism, but instead become an active global player. Nowhere was London keener for this message to be heard than Washington.

Anglo-American Relations in Context

As successive UK governments struggled to deal with the fallout from Brexit, American politicians feared that London would withdraw into a period of insularity. Compounding matters, the impression in Washington was that the [UK seemed preoccupied by securing trade deals](#), instead of formulating a plan to address an increasingly fractured international landscape. This perceived navel-gazing was set against a backdrop of cooling political relations between London and Washington. President Barack Obama devoted less attention to the ‘special relationship’ than his predecessor, George W. Bush, and [considered Chancellor Angela Merkel](#), not Prime Minister David Cameron, as his European partner of choice. More broadly, this shift was also partly driven by [Obama’s rebalance](#) from Europe and the Middle East towards the Asia-Pacific region.

Anglo-American leader relations declined more sharply under Donald Trump’s presidency. Despite claiming that UK-US relations were ‘[the highest level of special](#)’, Trump and his officials continually [disparaged Prime Minister Theresa May](#) and undermined her Brexit policies. By the time May left office, Anglo-American leader relations were at their lowest ebb in decades. The political relationship was somewhat rejuvenated after Boris Johnson succeeded May as prime minister. Trump was an enthusiastic supporter of Brexit and respected Johnson for his key role in the campaign. He also believed that both men shared a similar populist outlook, praising Johnson as ‘[Britain Trump](#)’. On the other side of the Atlantic, Johnson was fascinated by Trump’s political achievements and had previously even suggested that the president [could receive a Nobel Peace Prize](#). Notwithstanding close personal relations, both partners were at odds over important strategic issues: relations with Russia and China; the Iran nuclear deal; support for international organisations; climate change; and promoting free trade. That said, even under Trump, [the core of the relationship – defence, security, and intelligence – continued to flourish](#). These core components, as a recently retired State Department official told me, make the relationship special: ‘Within the US...national security agencies...there’s a clear understanding that the relationship is...a special one...Not only because of its history, but also because of its current structure and the way in which we...cooperate with each other, [such as sharing] information. From our point of view, in our special relationships... it starts with the relationship with the UK.’

Early evidence suggests that US President Joe Biden has established good relations with Boris Johnson. Concerns that Johnson’s closeness to Trump, critical remarks about Obama and Hillary Clinton, and support for Brexit would undermine his relationship with Biden have been [overstated](#). Not only is Biden renowned for his pragmatism, but he has also re-orientated US foreign policy towards [working with allies and international institutions](#). Both leaders enjoyed good atmospherics [at their first meeting](#) ahead of the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Cornwall in June 2021. After the meeting, the president acclaimed the ‘special relationship’, stating that it ‘[is stronger than ever](#)’. This tone has been welcomed in London, especially as post-Brexit, the ‘special relationship’ has taken on an extra layer of importance. Building on good leader relations, the IR provides a positive blueprint by which to align UK and US strategic priorities and strengthen the Anglo-American relationship.

The Defence of Democracy in a Competitive Landscape

Much of the IR corresponds with the main themes set out in the Biden-Harris administration's [Interim National Security Strategic Guidance](#) (INSSG). Like its US counterpart, the IR recognises the fragmented and competitive strategic landscape in which the UK must now operate. Critically, [the document states](#): 'A defence of the status quo is no longer sufficient for the decade ahead'. Instead, the UK must 'shape the international order of the future by working with others.' Unlike his predecessor, Biden has highlighted the defence of open societies as a key pillar of his foreign policy agenda and has pledged to hold a [Summit for Democracy](#) to combat corruption, challenge authoritarianism, and promote human rights. [The UK government has already demonstrated its commitment in this regard](#) by offering Hong Kong residents a route to citizenship and implementing sanctions against human rights abusers and those seeking to undermine democracy.

After four years of Trump's hyper-nationalism, disdain for the liberal international order, and his advocacy of economic protectionism, the UK should use its G7 presidency to work with the US to develop a collective approach to strengthen democracy, bolster multilateral organisations, shape global norms, and counter authoritarianism. So far, there have been encouraging moves in this direction as Johnson and Biden agreed [a new 21st century Atlantic Charter](#), updating the 1941 document that outlined the post-war liberal international order. The [new charter](#) commits the allies to cooperating on eight issues, including defending democracy, strengthening international institutions, improving cybersecurity and combatting climate change. It is unlikely that the new charter will be as impactful or long-lasting as the [version agreed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt](#). Nevertheless, the key challenge will be ensuring that the charter is more than a symbolic gesture, and that the allies can turn its aspiration into concrete action to tackle 21st century challenges.

China and the Indo-Pacific 'Tilt'

Core to this mission is developing a pragmatic, but robust approach to dealing with China. Both the [IR](#) and [INSSG](#) outline a broadly similar outlook to the challenges posed by China, although the former's language is more muted and nuanced. The IR's approach is a clear departure in substance and tone from the Cameron administration's 'Golden Age' in Anglo-Chinese relations. On the one hand, [the IR notes](#) that the UK must 'respond to the systemic challenge that [China] poses to our security, prosperity and values'. [Of concern is](#) Beijing's repressive measures in Hong Kong, human rights abuses, and potential pitfalls of becoming too reliant on Chinese technology and digital infrastructure. But, on the other hand, the IR promotes the need to foster strong trade and investment links with China and engage Beijing on climate change. Whilst the UK has adopted a measured approach to relations with China, its decision last year to permit Huawei into its 5G network [only later to reverse the decision](#) (in part because of US pressure) illustrates the difficulty of balancing economic and security interests concurrently. Moreover, Beijing has a history of preventing countries from separating out individual strands of its bilateral relationships. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the UK's approach can withstand push-back from China or a further deterioration of US-China relations.

Like the INSSG, the IR highlights the Indo-Pacific's economic and geopolitical significance and, as such, promises to enhance the UK's economic, diplomatic, and military presence in the region – although from a defence and security viewpoint, [the 'tilt' is less pronounced](#) than expected. [Much of the UK's engagement](#) will focus on economic and trading opportunities – such as acceding to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and becoming an Association of Southeast Asian Nations Dialogue Partner – and increasing cooperation with the region's key players. Nevertheless, the IR, and subsequent Defence Command Paper, make clear that NATO and the Euro-Atlantic area are still at the core of the UK's security interests; not least demonstrated by the fact that Russia is judged to be ['the most acute direct threat to the UK'](#).

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**NATO AND THE
EURO-ATLANTIC
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BIDEN HAS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED HIS DISAPPROVAL OF BREXIT AND ARGUED THAT WITH THE UK OUTSIDE OF THE EU, US INTERESTS ON THE CONTINENT HAVE BEEN ‘DIMINISHED’.

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Notwithstanding the government’s commitment to the Euro-Atlantic area, questions have been raised about the strategic wisdom of increasing the UK’s defence and security posture in the Indo-Pacific, especially the value of temporarily deploying a carrier strike group, led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, to the region this year. An enhanced UK presence in the Indo-Pacific will only be valuable to the US if it can be maintained on a consistent basis. A more prudent strategy, [according to former Chief of the Defence Staff, General David Richards](#), is for the UK to focus on the Euro-Atlantic region, which will ‘free... up US assets to...do their stuff on our behalf in the Indo-Pacific. To my way of thinking, that is a more coherent strategy that plays to our strengths... It is still militarily, materially useful to the Americans.’

From Shared Priorities to Points of Friction: Climate Change and Brexit

Another shared priority between the UK and US is combatting climate change. Despite [early inaction on the issue](#), the IR has reaffirmed the Johnson administration’s climate credentials by emphasising that ‘[tackling climate change and biodiversity loss \[is the UK’s\] number one international priority](#).’ Biden, for his part, has placed climate change at the forefront of his international agenda, having already re-joined the Paris Climate Accord and hosted a Leaders Summit on climate change. Building on the commitments made at the G7 summit, the UK’s presidency of COP26 affords London an opportunity [to work closely with Washington](#) to shape the international climate change agenda and develop an ambitious programme for success.

One key area where the IR falls short is the lack of detail on foreign and security [cooperation with the EU](#). Despite the conclusion of a trade deal in late 2020, relations between the UK and EU are still fractious and several issues remain unresolved. Of particular note is the impact of Brexit and the implementation of the Northern Ireland protocol on the Province’s delicate political balance. The situation has been exacerbated by the UK’s decision to unilaterally override elements of the UK-EU agreement, and its [threat to invoke Article 16 of the protocol](#). The UK’s relationship with the EU and, more broadly, the issue of Brexit has complicated Anglo-American relations. Biden has repeatedly expressed his disapproval of Brexit and argued that with the UK outside of the EU, US interests on the Continent have been ‘[diminished](#)’.

Just as tension over Northern Ireland [souring relations between Prime Minister John Major and President Bill Clinton](#) in the 1990s, friction over the Northern Ireland protocol has the potential to strain relations between Johnson and Biden. The president, proud of his Irish heritage, has already warned the UK about the potentially destabilising impact of Brexit on the Province. In response to the UK’s threat to [breach the Northern Ireland protocol](#) in September 2020, [Biden cautioned that](#): ‘We can’t allow the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland to become a casualty of Brexit’. Since assuming office, the Biden-Harris administration has pressed the UK to reach an amicable solution with the EU. Days before the G7 summit in Cornwall, Yael Lempert, charg   d’affaires at the US Embassy in London, was reported to have informed Brexit minister, Lord Frost that the UK was ‘inflaming’ tensions in Northern Ireland. Lampert also suggested that the UK may have to accept ‘[unpopular compromises](#)’ to reach a settlement with Brussels. Friction over Northern Ireland could have practical ramifications for London: [Biden has already warned the UK](#) that undermining the Good Friday Agreement will stall the completion of a UK-US trade deal.

Conclusion

After years of strategic disconnect under the Trump administration, the IR provides a confident, if overly ambitious, plan to coordinate Anglo-American priorities, especially in areas such as strengthening democracy and combatting climate change. Johnson and Biden’s first meeting also augurs well for a positive personal relationship. However, it remains to be seen whether the UK, pursuing its ‘Global Britain’ agenda, can generate sustained traction with the White House. Prioritising the ‘special relationship’ will not be at the top of the Biden-Harris administration’s to-do-list; strengthening ties with London will take place in a broader framework of repairing relations [with the US’s main European allies](#), including Berlin and Paris. It may also be the case that Biden [will treat the](#)

[EU, not the UK](#), as the US's main interlocutor on a range of important issues. Furthermore, a UK-US trade deal, seen by UK politicians as a key prize of Brexit, [will take years to conclude](#). With President Biden's immediate attention focused on addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, revitalising the US economy, attempting to heal a deeply divided US political landscape, reasserting the US's global leadership role, and competing with China, the Anglo-American relationship may suffer from, in the words of Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh, '[American benign neglect](#)'.

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The Consequences of Foreign Policy: The Review and Russia

Dr Maxine David
Dr Natasha Kuhrt

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FOR OVER TWO DECADES OF THE POST-COLD WAR ERA, UK FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA WAS LARGELY TREATED AS SYNONYMOUS WITH TRADE OR FINANCE POLICY, EVEN IN THE FACE OF DANGEROUS PROVOCATIONS AT HOME.

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THE MULTI-FACETED, INTERLINKED MODEL ON WHICH THE RUSSIAN THREAT OPERATES WAS NOT RECOGNISED AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT RESPONSES WERE THEREFORE THIN ON THE GROUND.

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As noted in the UK's 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, much has changed in the six years since the 2015 [Strategic Defence and Security Review](#). This is particularly evident, noticeably so, in terms of the framing of the threat that Russia poses to the UK. In the 2015 Review, it was deemed there was 'no immediate direct military threat to the UK mainland' from any actor, although it was noted that the UK's ability to secure its airspace and waters was being tested, including by Russia. Compared to the 2010 [Strategic Defence and Security Review](#), the threat perception as regards Russia has risen considerably, even exponentially. There, Russia was referred to just twice, once in respect of cooperation in energy, the other in respect of dialogue. Instead, attention was focused on the terrorist threat. By contrast, in the 2021 Review, Russia is referred to fourteen times, projected to 'remain the most acute direct threat to the UK', a threat seen as having nuclear, conventional, and hybrid elements.

The UK's Russia policy: Old Habits are Hard to Break

Russia, then, had not always been a central consideration in the formulation of the UK's foreign policy, whether positively or negatively, despite the various arenas in which the two meet, including the UN, especially the Security Council, the OECD, G20, Council of Europe and OSCE. Inevitably, it has been in those organisations, NATO and (until most recently) the EU, where the two states do not overlap in their membership, that the relationship has been most tested. Still, old habits are hard to break and hopes perhaps even more so. For over two decades of the post-Cold War era, UK foreign policy towards Russia was largely treated as synonymous with trade or finance policy, even in the face of dangerous provocations at home, such as the reckless killing of Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006, or abroad, such as the hot war with Georgia in 2008. As a result in their July 2020 [response to the Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee's Russia report](#), famously long delayed in its publication, the UK Government was forced to respond to accusations that it had 'badly underestimated the Russian threat and the response it required'.

The criticism was fair but insufficiently nuanced, as the UK was on the road to a slow acknowledgement of the scale of the threat that Russia poses to British society and the variety of means used. In the (then) [Foreign and Commonwealth Office's evidence](#) prepared in 2018 for the [House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations](#), the FCO referred to Russia as 'more aggressive, authoritarian and nationalist, increasingly defining itself in opposition to the West' using 'a range of overt and covert powers to pursue its policies - including propaganda, espionage, cyber interference and subversion'. The Skripal poisonings of 2018 in Salisbury followed this assessment of the FCO, the UK then mounting a more forceful response than it had done with regard to Litvinenko, and receiving an unprecedented levels of [support from its allies](#), including in the EU. Finally, the UK understood the lengths to which Russia was prepared to go, but also the extent to which it was unconcerned about any reputational damage. At the same time, the multi-faceted, interlinked model on which the Russian threat operates was not recognised and effective government responses were therefore thin on the ground.

Balancing Security and Prosperity – and Building Resilience

It was judiciously noted by some that while the response was stronger, the UK still appeared reluctant to crack down too hard on Russian financial interests within the UK, and specifically, to tackle the problem of [the Russian 'laundromat'](#). Thus the July 2020 report of the UK Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee acknowledged the 'inherent tension between the Government's prosperity agenda and the need [to protect national](#)

[security](#)'. Further, the report was critical of the continued failure to reallocate resources away from counter-terrorism, concluding that there had been evidence of an underestimation by intelligence services of the threat posed by Russia.

The Integrated Review of March 2021 has emphasised the need to shore up resilience more broadly, not just in the areas of defence and national security but also in terms of [societal security](#). Nonetheless, despite the heightened threat perception, there is little room for optimism that a full spectrum of effective measures will be put in place. In a [study produced for the European Parliament](#) on what constitutes best practice when trying to build whole-society resilience, measures 'include strengthening the role of critical (digital) media literacy skills, together with other civic virtues such as critical thinking and public participation, in educational programmes and curricula'; increased transparency in elections, including 'introducing regulation concerning foreign funding of political parties and associations' and 'strengthening transparency of political advertisements, including on social media platforms'. There is some understanding of this in the UK context too. In the conclusion to its February 2019 [Disinformation and Fake News](#) report, the Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport offered detailed recommendations in respect of data targeting, political campaigning and advertising and foreign influence in elections. In respect of the latter, it asked again for the Government to establish independent investigations into the 2017 General Election, the 2016 Referendum on EU membership and the 2014 Scottish referendum. In its July 2020 [response to the Russia report](#), the Government concluded 'a retrospective assessment of the EU Referendum is not necessary'. Little or nothing has been instituted in response to the Select Committee's other recommendations either. Other debates in the UK offer little room for optimism regarding a successful whole-society approach as seen so vividly in the 2021 report of the [Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](#), a report which was condemned by [experts on the UN's Human Rights Council](#).

In short, on the whole there has so far been little sign that the UK Government understands that the nature of the Russian threat is to expose and exploit weaknesses within European and other societies. Until domestic weaknesses are addressed, the Russian threat cannot be adequately managed. That being said, the 2021 Integrated Review did include a pledge to utilise the UK's G7 presidency to bolster efforts to expand the 'Defending Democracy' programme, first set up in 2019, to increase efforts to 'protect UK institutions and selected officials from intimidation, interference and espionage'.

Soon after the release of the Integrated Review, further from home, the UK was tested militarily, by an incident involving HMS Defender, when an apparently pre-planned interception by Russia of the UK ship in the Black Sea heightened tensions and drew bellicose rhetoric from Russian Defence officials who claimed to have fired warning shots, [claims that turned out to be untrue](#). Coming soon after the NATO summit, where the alliance had singled out Russia for its aggressive pattern of behaviour, the Defender incident looked like a Russian attempt to test the unity of the alliance, especially as a similar case of Russian provocation was reported by the [Dutch navy not long after](#). The UK determination to assert and reaffirm Ukrainian sovereignty may help assuage concerns from some quarters that the UK focus in the 2021 Integrated Review on the 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific implied it was becoming distracted from its [core tasks in Europe](#).

The European dimension of the UK's Russia policy

The complicated and often contradictory approach that the UK has towards relations with Russia makes this a difficult relationship to forecast. That is even more the case as the UK begins to see the consequences of its uncoupling with the EU. The EU's foreign policy remains very relevant, particularly as it pertains to consequences for the NATO context. With the UK no longer there to rein in France's ambitions to strengthen the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), both the UK and US should remain watchful for signs of EU states moving more time and resources to the EU than to the European pillar of NATO. If the UK wants to continue to contain France's ambitions, it will likely look to bilateral relations with the more pro-NATO and pro-US EU member states in the hope that will stay France's hands. Germany will be a crucial actor here, as recognised by the June 2021 [UK-Germany Joint Declaration](#). However, in the context of thinking about UK-Russia relations, the UK seeking to influence outcomes in Brussels by going via national

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**THE UK'S
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THE OVERSTRETCH
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UNDER PUTIN.**

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capitals bears a striking similarity to Russia's attempts at influencing EU foreign policy, widely decried as seeking to undermine EU unity. The UK therefore needs to be wary of employing tactics to pursue one goal, when those tactics are likely to undermine another. On the positive side, much of the language in the UK's foreign policy discourse on Russia speaks of the need to maintain dialogue with Russia on important issues, language very similar to that of the EU's on the need for [strategic engagement](#).

Conclusion

Ultimately, the UK's response – if focused, consistent, and sufficiently holistic – has the capacity to show the overstretch of Russia's foreign policy under Putin. Russia's new National Security Strategy, published on 02 July 2021 demonstrates very clearly the mindset that the West, and the UK, is dealing with: Russia sees itself as under permanent attack by the West, and this [state of paranoia](#) will fuel and justify further attacks, be they overt, or in the grey zone. The UK has been a prime example of how Russia could get away with an awful lot, as long as it did not draw the UK into feeling too many of the consequences of its foreign policy actions. By, if not persistently, at least too often, making problems for the UK on its own territory, Russia is forcing the UK to pay attention and to amplify the efforts of others.

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Global Britain and European Defence: The Future is Flexible

Gesine Weber

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THE UK DEPICTS ITSELF AS A LEADING POWER IN THE CRUCIAL THEATRES OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN THE YEARS TO COME.

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Almost five years after the Brexit referendum, the UK has now formulated the aspiration for ‘Global Britain’ in its Integrated Review. The document remains vague on EU-UK defence cooperation, but a successful Global Britain will most likely need a successful Global Europe. Especially flexible forms of defence cooperation can create positive synergies between London and European capitals, enhancing European strategic autonomy ‘through the backdoor’.

Strengthening the EU’s military capabilities, making the EU a credible actor in international security, achieving strategic autonomy— all these objectives have never been truly shared by London, sparking fierce, long-running debates and British obstruction. Indeed, [a quest to re-assert British sovereignty and independence](#) – the idea that the UK can act alone as a credible player on the international scene – were prominent claims of Brexiteers even before the referendum. Now, almost five years after the referendum, the Integrated Review finally puts flesh on the bones of the concept of Global Britain, and clearly outlines the UK’s aspirations to secure its place as a major player in international security. With a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific, nuclear deterrence, and a comparative advantage through technological innovation, the UK depicts itself as a leading power in the crucial theatres of international security in the years to come. In this context, London repeatedly underlines the importance of the ‘[special relationship](#)’ with the US as the most important partner for the UK, and also emphasises its willingness to cooperate with other major partners like France and through multilateral organisations. In contrast, the document falls short on concrete proposals for UK-EU or UK-European defence cooperation. Given the political context in which the document was drafted, this is unsurprising — and it is therefore even more important to read between the lines. Indeed, if Britain wants to live up to its aspirations, there is little doubt that it will need willing and able partners sharing its ambitions. Whether London wants to admit this or not, it is very likely to find such partners in other European capitals.

A Marathon Not a Sprint – but Still a Race Worth Running

From an EU perspective, the UK’s recently published Integrated Review speaks a clear language, to put it bluntly: We are out, for good. Beyond the suggestion that the EU and NATO should enhance their cooperation, strategists in London abstained from drawing any roadmap of what future engagement with Brussels should look like. Traditionally, the British have been reluctant to advance security and defence cooperation through the EU because the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was, in the eyes of the UK, first and foremost a complementary tool to the main military organisation in Europe, NATO. It is entirely consistent with the UK’s general conceptualisation of security and defence in Europe that the Integrated Review does not make a U-turn on this issue, and call for an integration of the UK as an additional partner in the CSDP. However, it is surprising how limited the UK’s efforts to promote security and defence cooperation with the EU have been over the last months and years. Since January 2021, the UK has officially the status of a third country, and until now, there has been no comprehensive agreement defining the EU-UK relationship in the field of security and defence. That such an agreement is not on top of the UK’s political agenda is clearly reflected in the Integrated Review: EU-UK cooperation in the field of security and defence is not an end in itself, but a means for achieving the UK’s security objectives, because that the UK, in the words of the text, will ‘cooperate with the EU on matters of security and defence as independent partners, where this is in [its] interest.’

Yet, relying only on its military and diplomatic capabilities as key assets for a strong negotiation position, and assuming that cooperation with the EU will not potentially require

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IT IS SURPRISING HOW LIMITED THE UK’S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SECURITY AND DEFENCE COOPERATION WITH THE EU HAVE BEEN OVER THE LAST MONTHS AND YEARS.

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concessions from the UK, is a risky balancing act for London. Earlier this year, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, backed up by the Foreign Ministers of the member states, has underlined [that 'cherry-picking' on security and defence cooperation is not an option](#). Even in areas where the EU's and the UK's interests converge, cooperation will most likely be challenging, especially as the British side will be concerned – from a domestic political perspective – to avoid gestures which might be interpreted as pro-European symbolism. Quick wins in the field of defence cooperation could thus potentially be achieved through factual cooperation 'behind the scenes', for instance on questions of nuclear disarmament, whereas an encompassing security and defence partnership is still a long way off, rather like the finish line of a marathon. Yet, policy-makers in London will most likely need to accept this challenge, as the recent developments in European defence, especially the development of the [Strategic Compass](#) or the [EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific](#), show that the EU is stepping up its capability to act and is becoming increasingly autonomous. After stepping up its capabilities through [Permanent Structured Cooperation](#) (PESCO), under which currently 46 joint capability projects are ongoing, and the European Defence Fund (EDF) to finance research and development, the current processes on the EU level show that the EU is now aligning its capabilities and strategy to redefine its role. Policy-makers in London will be well advised to monitor these developments closely to seize opportunities for cooperation.

While the UK will undoubtedly find common ground with the US as its most important ally on many issues, the US has limited interest in dedicating the necessary time and reassurance to military stabilisation efforts in the wider European neighbourhood. Particularly at the southern flank, military efforts can mostly be expected from the European side. Indeed, the EU's increased engagement in the Sahel through the EU Training Mission (EUTM) Mali and the EU Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) in the Sahel, and the control of the UN arms embargo against Libya through the CSDP mission Irini show that the EU is increasingly taking the lead in this region, while the US and NATO support these efforts. Likewise, the Integrated Review illustrates a much more cooperative approach of the UK towards China than the current line of the US administration, so that London might need to look for other partners here to gain leverage in any kind of relationship with China. To live up to its aspirations of becoming Global Britain and to translate its security interests into policies, the UK will, in the long run, need a global EU by its side — and it needs to be aware that this partnership is not unconditional.

The Road to Europe Leads Through Paris

In light of the difficult Brexit negotiations and the challenge to define a 'new normal', the UK's road to European defence cooperation does not, at least for the moment, lead directly through Brussels, but rather through the European capitals. Indeed, the Integrated Review could even be described as a 'pivot to Paris': the UK's aspirations reflected in the ambition of becoming 'Global Britain' rhyme very well with the French conceptualisation of the Grande Nation, a great power with global influence. Besides the fact that the UK and France share similar characteristics — similar population size and GDP, nuclear powers in Europe, permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — they both aspire to play a key global role. Similarly, both are facing the increasingly important role of China and other rising powers, and thus the threat of relative decline. While France has a traditionally more important regional focus on Africa, most recently manifest in counterterrorism and stability operations, both countries describe the Indo-Pacific as the key theatre for international security in the upcoming years, calling for more European action in this region. Consequently, there is a high level of convergence of strategic interests between London and Paris. [Franco-British security and defence cooperation is traditionally close](#) and has, in the past, often worked as a catalyst for more European action in the field. Bilateral France-UK cooperation could once again become a door opener for European defence cooperation in the age of Global Britain. The Lancaster House Treaty (2010) [facilitated cooperation on the operational level](#), but bilateral defence cooperation in terms of grand strategy-making or ambitious joint projects between London and Paris have been slowing down over the last two decades. It would therefore need policy-makers with the objective to give new impetus to Franco-British cooperation for Europe to benefit from positive synergies.

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THE UK WILL, IN THE LONG RUN, NEED A GLOBAL EU BY ITS SIDE.

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FORCES THE EU
MEMBER STATES
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THE UK.**



Besides the fact that the UK's aspirations for Global Britain have been assessed in a mostly positive manner in France, policy-makers in Paris will be keen to deepen practical cooperation with the UK. Since his election, French president Macron has regularly seen his high ambitions for European defence cooperation fail because of concessions made to other European states in the framework of the CSDP. As a reaction, Paris decided to launch more flexible formats of defence cooperation outside this existing institutional framework: consequently, the [European Intervention Initiative](#), with a small secretariat in Paris, aims at creating a European strategic culture and enabling Europeans to better act together, and the [Task Force Takuba](#), composed of European special forces for the fight against terrorism, is fully integrated in France's Barkhane mission in Mali. Interestingly, the UK participates in both formats, as it is a member state in the European Intervention Initiative and was among the countries launching Task Force Takuba, although the British support for this project remains only political for the moment. Even though the UK does not deploy special forces explicitly to the task force, [it supports the French Barkhane mission with helicopters from the Royal Air Force](#), and operates alongside the European partners and other countries within the UN Mission MINUSMA through its [Operation Newcombe](#). This underlines the willingness in London to assess opportunities for European defence cooperation on a case-by-case basis, and the general awareness that cooperation with European partners can be beneficial because of the multitude of shared security interests.

Flexibility is Key – for Successful Cooperation and Strategic Autonomy

Indeed, these flexible forms of European defence cooperation can emerge as a win-win cooperation for all sides: they allow a flexible and targeted response to a security problem through European states willing and able to participate in this grouping, and might therefore accelerate responses to security challenges in the European neighbourhood more efficiently. Besides, these formats perfectly align with the UK's quest for Global Britain by allowing the UK to participate in the concrete resolution of security challenges as a meaningful actor without abandoning its autonomy, as all these formats are intergovernmental and work without a transfer of national sovereignty or decision-making powers. For the EU member states, flexible formats of defence cooperation with the UK in areas where security interests converge can be equally beneficial and serve as an 'add-on' to the existing CSDP. The UK's quest for Global Britain can thus constitute an important incentive for EU member states who are willing and able to seek cooperation beyond the existing CSDP framework, and to enhance factual cooperation. Indeed, the UK itself has, through its leadership of the Cooperative [Joint Expeditionary Force](#), played a key role in advancing these flexible formats of cooperation of willing and capable states. Already before the UK left the EU, other non-EU member states participated in this project, which underlines that this form of ad hoc coalitions aligns well with the post-Brexit environment because it provides an efficient alternative for interstate cooperation in a complex institutional context.

Paradoxically, the UK's ambition to become Global Britain and the emergence of more flexible cooperation with the UK might benefit European strategic autonomy both within and beyond the European Union. The concept of Global Britain forces the EU member states to define the areas where they are willing to cooperate with the UK; this implies the need for EU strategy-making process and the development of capabilities to act independently for the cases where the EU cannot rely on its partners. Indeed, this is exactly what is understood as [European strategic autonomy](#) – the 'capacity to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible,' as laid out in the November 2016 Council conclusions and regularly [reiterated](#) by the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. At the same time, flexible, ad hoc cooperation among the UK and other European states independent from EU membership can lead to the factual emergence of European strategic autonomy, demonstrating that Europeans can take their destiny in their own hands. This is even more important, as interests among the EU member states themselves do not always converge, and cooperation through the EU is in these cases often an approach of the lowest common denominator that fails to achieve the determined objective. Global Britain might, five years after the presentation of the [EU's Global Strategy](#), sound like British hubris or

overconfidence in the ears of some Europeans. Nonetheless, it can constitute an opportunity both for the EU and the individual member states to create positive synergies in security and defence cooperation. That is why policymakers in London, Paris, Berlin and Brussels should assess possibilities of ‘going global’ together.

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The UK's Integrated Review and the Gulf States

Dr David B. Roberts
Sara Ghazi Almahri

Introduction

The UK periodically undertakes a range of reviews, of which the [Integrated Review](#) and the [Defence Command Paper](#) of March 2021 are but the latest iteration. These kinds of projects and publications are designed to, in broad terms, articulate the ends (strategic goals), the means (the capabilities), and the ways (the strategy) that government aspires to use the means to achieve the ends. The Integrated Review, in particular, is comparatively more [detailed](#) and far-reaching in its aims compared to the 1998 Strategic Defence Review and the 2010 and 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and National Security Strategy (NSS).

The Integrated Review contained a few high-profile policy shifts, including the reneging on the 0.7% government spending on international aid, the surprising increase on the UK's cap on nuclear weapons, and the merging of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Arguably the central broader takeaway from the Review is the breadth of the government's aspiration to retain and even expand Britain's presence, in essence, throughout the world. The Atlanticist link is reinforced, Europe is far from eschewed, various presences and links to Africa (mainly East Africa) are discussed, working up Arctic-orientated capabilities and warship tours is [noted](#), and, above all else, the paper introduces an upcoming 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific region. Indeed, this last element is the signature development of the Integrated Review. Couched in response to a rising China, via the Review, the UK government signalled its orientation and aspiration to go forth and engage, challenge, and deter. The dispatching of the UK's aircraft carrier to the Indo-Pacific region is the leading symbol of this venture.

At the same time as the UK's aspirations are rising and broadening, its capabilities and forces are, at least in the short term, [decreasing](#) in number. For example, the army's strength will drop to numbers not seen since 1714, and tank numbers will dwindle to only 148. By way of a broad comparison, Russia, a state according to the Integrated Review that remains 'the most acute threat to our security,' has 13,000 [tanks](#). The UK hopes to [leverage](#) newer technologies to bridge this (and many other similar) gaps. In the defence space, this is about using smart technologies (drones, AI-linked systems, etc.) to overcome mass. However, the Integrated Review is far from focused on defence and security concerns alone, hence the entire concept of integrating different parts of government work under one overarching strategic plan. Indeed, there is considerable focus on forging a role for the UK in a broader innovation and technology space, where the focus will be on 'collective action and co-creation with our allies and partners.'

Competition for the Gulf States?: An Eastwards Tilt

The Indo-Pacific tilt is explicitly rooted in commercially orientated concerns, seeking to better place the UK for future trade opportunities in a region comprising 40% of the world's GDP. Arguably at least, secondary to this underlying modus operandi is the desire to better acquaint the UK with critical partners in the Indo-Pacific region in the broader contest against the rising might of China. This tilt and the squeezing of resources deployed to carry out this strategic reorientation are of particular relevance to the states comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Indeed, there does appear to be a [comparative](#) shift away from the Middle East. The long-term focus on Iraq is lessening considerably, and the focus on upstream prevention of terrorism and extremism is more limited. Meanwhile, the focus on the GCC states is also dialled down. The previous strategic guidance, the 2015 National Security Strategy and the aligned Strategic Defence and Security Review (NSS, SDSR), placed considerably more



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emphasis on the UK's pre-existing [interaction](#) and role in the Gulf region and the Middle East. A bespoke 'Gulf Strategy Unit' was created and hosted in the Cabinet Office, while a 'Gulf Strategy' was promised though nothing came of it.

However, the Gulf focus in the 2021 documents is comparatively demure. A keyword search provides a basic but telling metric. Mentions of the Middle East went down considerably from 27 to 15, moving from the 2015 SDSR to the 2021 reviews, while the Indo-Pacific region only entered the vernacular in the 2021 reviews. Similarly, reference to the Gulf region dropped from 10 to 6, and, somewhat surprisingly, Qatar did not even merit a mention in the Integrated Review.

Table 1: Keyword Search of Strategy Documents

	Integrated Review (2021)	Defence Command Paper (2021)	National Security Strategy & Strategic Defence and Security Review (2015)
Indo-Pacific	34	22	0
China	29	9	19
Middle East	13	2	27
Gulf	6	4	10
Saudi Arabia	2	2	2
Bahrain	1	0	1
UAE	1	0	1
Qatar	0	3	1
Oman	2	5	0
Kuwait	0	0	1
Iraq	4	10	15
TOTAL Gulf mentions	12	14	16

This fits with the broader strategic narrative that the UK government is pursuing, shifting its focus, like the US under the Obama Administration (or, arguably, even [beforehand](#)), further eastwards. The US had its '[pivot](#) to Asia', the UK has its 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific. In the Integrated 2021 Review alone, 'China' and the 'Indo-Pacific' are collectively mentioned 63 times (34 + 29), while the Gulf countries, as a group and in name, are mentioned a mere 16 times.

Whither Gulf Relations?

Nevertheless, conclusions must carefully parse these documents, thinking about the realities of UK-Gulf engagement today versus the aspirational – or, for some, plainly [unrealistic](#) – tone of the Integrated Review. Moreover, in the Defence Command Paper, the importance of the Gulf states remains clear. Qatar is mentioned three times. The unusually close UK-Qatari relationship is rooted primarily in the Royal Air Force and its regular Voyager deployments to Qatar, and the joint standing up of a Hawk [training](#) squadron and a Typhoon [squadron](#), which is the first time since World War Two that the RAF has formed a joint squadron. Similarly, Oman's importance shines through thanks to the instantiation of a new Naval Base at Duqm and allied expanded training facilities. Perplexingly, neither Bahrain nor the UAE merits a mention in the Defence Command Paper. This is bizarre given the demonstrable [importance](#) of the making [permanent](#) of a long-established base in

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THE INTEGRATED REVIEW FOCUSES ON THE NEW, SHINY, HEADLINE-GRABBING TILT TO THE INDO-PACIFIC AT THE EXPENSE OF RESTATING A BRITISH POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. NEVERTHELESS, AS THE DEFENCE COMMAND PAPER HIGHLIGHTS, THE ENDURING IMPORTANCE OF THE GULF STATES TO THE UK REMAINS AND GROWS.



Bahrain at HMS Juffair for four counter-mine ships, a Type-23 frigate, an auxiliary support ship, and 1200 sailors. Similarly, the RAF extensively uses the Al Minhad airbase in the UAE and still bases its 906 Expeditionary Air Wing there.

More generally, the GCC states remain a hugely important trading partner for the UK, not least as the fourth [largest](#) export destination after the US, China, and the EU states, amounting to around £45 billion (\$62.6 billion) a year. Former Secretary of State for International Trade and current Conservative Party MP, Liam Fox, sees tangible opportunities for the Gulf States and the UK to work together and use the GCC “as a [gateway](#) for exporting goods and services to the European continent and Central Asia”. There is plenty of room for country-to-country cooperation between the UK and the Gulf states. For example, the UAE has a trade figure of [£17 Billion](#) with the UK, which the British Government hopes to increase to £25 billion in 2021. Another meaningful index of the solid partnership between the two countries is the signature in March 2021 of an agreement between the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund, [Abu Dhabi’s Mubadala, and the UK](#). According to this agreement, Mubadala will invest £1bn in the UK life sciences’s industry to combat the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, these kinds of investments mirror the Integrated Review’s focus on niche, future-orientated industries and technologies where the UK can leverage its experience alongside allies.

So What’s New?

In many ways, the Gulf states have seen this movie play out before. As noted, for over a decade, the monarchies have been hearing about the US vaunted Pivot to Asia. Some in the region fretted that this was the beginning of the inevitable decline of the US in the region, with the US switching attention to the Far East, leaving the Gulf states alone to deal with Iran. In stark contrast, the reality for the Gulf states is nearly the complete inverse: there has been no significant US pivot from the Gulf to Asia. Certainly, the drawdown from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has lowered US troop numbers. This led to a commensurate drop in, for example, transit via the various US bases in the region. However, the Qatari al Udeid air force base remains the home of US Central Command, 10000 US troops, multiple air wings, and is still in the [process](#) of renovation and [expansion](#), if some elements are moving to Jordan. The Al Dhafra airbase in the UAE remains vital. Meanwhile, over a decade after leaving Saudi Arabia, US forces are [back](#) once [again](#) at Prince Sultan Air Base. There is [little](#) sign of the US army forward base in Kuwait slimming down, and the 5th Fleet Headquarters in Bahrain is also [growing](#). The point is that the Gulf monarchies have carved and institutionalised a critical place for themselves in the US and UK foreign policy and security furniture that no rhetoric will easily shift, at least not in the near term.

Moreover, from this distinctly solid basing, UK-Gulf relations are prospering across the board. The Integrated Review focuses on the new, shiny, headline-grabbing tilt to the Indo-Pacific at the expense of restating a British position in the Middle East. Nevertheless, as the Defence Command Paper highlights, the enduring importance of the Gulf states to the UK remains and grows. Still, there is a sense that this was something of a missed opportunity. While UK relations certainly fluctuate in the Gulf, the overarching expanding foothold augurs for a sustained period of closer relations. Given that the region is frequently touted as a locus for considerable Chinese energy-rooted interest, leveraging pre-existing ties would seem like a natural, if not a simple, thing to do. Though esconced on a solid base, the UK’s relations with the Gulf states certainly ebb and flow, and it remains opaque how a substantial UK-Gulf-China policy of mutual benefit could be fashioned. For any progress to be made, all sides would have to strive to compartmentalise their relations to limit inevitable disagreements in discrete spheres from spilling over and scuppering wider progress, something that would require a tricky shift in the contemporary modus operandi. But the reality remains that the UK and the Gulf states and the Gulf states and China remain deeply interested in fostering closer relations from an already high baseline. As the fulcrum of a putative trilateral engagement, the Gulf states are in a position to leverage both sides, and states like the UAE, Qatar and increasingly Saudi Arabia have considerable experience in driving innovative policy gambits, fashioning competitive new sectors, and working with diverse partners to mediate regional conflicts. In the end, both Global Britain and the US need to play their ‘engage, challenge, and deter’ cards vis-à-vis China right. If this

were to be the case, the GCC, with its cultural significance, unusually close relations with pivotal East Asian states, and strategic geopolitical location, can be a significant factor in maintaining peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

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The Integrated Review: A Brazilian Perspective

Dr Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho
Dr Joe Devanny

Introduction

A few years ago, BRICS was a ubiquitous acronym in international documents, either economic or political. The acronym sounds today quite anachronistic. The countries it comprises, however, continue to be of global relevance – whether for environmental reasons, development, cyber security, or global health. The Integrated Review reflects well this relevance. At a glance, China is mentioned 27 times, India 17, Russia 14, South Africa 2 and Brazil... well, only once. The region of Latin America as whole only merits 3 mentions. This is revealing. It indicates the relative priority of the region – and of Brazil – to the UK. Even so, reading the Integrated Review alongside Brazil's defence strategy and policy documents there are clearly many areas of common interest. In this essay, we explore these points of intersection and highlight what could be opportunities for collaboration between the two countries.

The title of the Integrated Review, 'Global Britain in a Competitive Age,' demonstrates its signature theme: creating the framework for the UK to pursue a leading global role at a time of significant inter-state competition, both economic and geopolitical. Within this strategic framework, whether focusing on trade and investment or aspirations for the UK to play a more effective role in regulatory diplomacy, effective bilateral relations with Brazil promise to be part of the formula to turn the Review's aspirations into reality. In this respect, it is to be hoped that the practical implementation of the Review pays more attention to Brazil and South America than did the Review itself.

Similarly for Brazil, its relationship with the UK can be a force multiplier even though the UK is not a first-order player in Brazil's priority strategic environments: South America, the South Atlantic, the states of the western coast of Africa, and Antarctica. Both Brazil and the UK stand to benefit from the mutual identification of synergies between their respective national interests in this strategic environment. As the UK develops the specific policies to achieve the Review's broad objectives, it should intensify its strategic dialogue with Brazil to ensure that these mutual opportunities are realized.

The Review and South America

The [Review emphasized](#) the importance of continued development of 'a strong set of partnerships' in the region, 'based on shared democratic values, inclusive and resilient growth, free trade and mutual interest in tackling [serious and organized crime] and corruption.' The region's importance as a 'vital partner in tackling climate change and restoring biodiversity' was also emphasized in the Review, supported by a series of facts: the region has a quarter of the world's cultivable land; nearly a quarter of its tropical forests; and nearly a third of its freshwater. As climate and broader environmental issues become higher priorities in UK national strategy, so too will South America – and Brazil in particular – become more important to achieving those strategic objectives.

The passage quoted above demonstrates that the Review sees the region as both a partner and an instrument to achieving its strategic objectives. This is mirrored from a Brazilian perspective, which readily endorses a similar list of priorities regarding democratic vitality; inclusive and resilient growth; enhanced trade relations; and improvements in countering serious crime and corruption. As the contemporary rise in ransomware incidents demonstrates, however, the fact that both Brazil and the UK prioritize countering cybercrime is offset by the reality that, despite significant effort and investment in both countries over the last decade, the problem currently appears to be getting worse rather than better. As [a recent criminal case](#) demonstrates, international cooperation between law enforcement agencies – including the Brazilian Federal Police and the UK National Crime Agency – is essential for reversing the global wave of cybercrime.

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AS CLIMATE AND BROADER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES BECOME HIGHER PRIORITIES IN UK NATIONAL STRATEGY, SO TOO WILL SOUTH AMERICA.

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Just as the UK Prosperity Fund has [allocated resources](#) for trade facilitation projects in Brazil, so too should the National Security Council identify the priority of security capacity-building investments that will be of mutual benefit to Brazil and the UK.

There are therefore three tasks for the UK to cultivate an effective policy towards Brazil and the wider region: first, as accomplished in the process of developing the Review, to identify the strategic objectives the UK wishes to achieve and how these relate to the region; second, to understand the strategic outlook and policies of Brazil and neighbouring states and how these create an environment of challenge or opportunity for the UK; and third, to reflect on the dynamic interplay between the policy options available to the UK and those pursued in the region by other external actors, both allies such as the United States and strategic competitors like China. Strategic policymaking is a multi-dimensional process and if the UK is to understand the system effects of its choices it must invest in understanding – including listening to – Brazil and South America.

The Review and Brazil

From an economic perspective, the UK's post-Brexit requirement to negotiate trade deals presents an opportunity for Brazil to increase market access for Brazilian products – a prospect perceived as realistic given a perception of the UK as less protectionist than the EU. There is surely room for growth in this relationship, with [Brazil accounting for](#) 0.4 per cent of total UK trade in 2020, 0.8 per cent of outward (and 0.1 per cent of inward) UK foreign direct investment. As recent bilateral ministerial discussions regarding agriculture [highlighted](#), there is a broad agenda for improved and mutually-beneficial trade and investment relations. With both states looking for opportunities to boost growth and rebuild economically after the impact of the pandemic, this should be a prominent focus of the bilateral relationship in the immediate term.

The Integrated Review suggests another area for mutual benefit and strategic cooperation: upholding environmental conservation and peaceful scientific research in Antarctica. The Review proudly cited the UK's status as the first signatory of the Antarctic Treaty, as well as more recent contributions to Antarctic research, including the new Polar Research vessel RRS Sir David Attenborough. These strategic priorities for the region are shared by Brazil, which emphasizes as a national defence objective the need for Brazil to increase its participation in international decisions about Antarctica. Bilateral environmental diplomacy may fluctuate to some extent, modulated by incumbency in the Planalto (Brazil's presidency) or Downing St (the UK premiership), but its strategic priority for both states will only intensify in the coming years.

The South Atlantic, in contrast, is a strategic issue that requires further dialogue between Brazil and the UK. This fact long predates the Integrated Review, but it was still striking for a Brazilian readership that the Review made no mention of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS). This is a cornerstone of Brazil's strategic diplomacy in the South Atlantic, uniting states across South America and Africa, and providing a forum to address a variety of transnational environmental, maritime and wider security issues relating to the South Atlantic. Brazil even foresees ZOPACAS as a possible platform for an institutional engagement in the Maritime Security of Gulf of Guinea, a concern for both Brazil and the UK. Instead, the Review pursued a narrower, securitised framing of the South Atlantic from a British perspective, emphasizing pledges 'to defend the UK's sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands'. Whilst Brazil and the UK have different views about this issue, neither state wants this disagreement to undermine the broader bilateral relationship. And there is a clear regional benefit from the permanent UK maritime presence in the Atlantic and Caribbean, contributing to operations against trafficking as well as to deliver humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. These are yet further examples of areas of practical cooperation between the two states that can benefit each state and the wider region.



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NARROWER,
SECURITISED
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The Review and Brazil: The Out-of-Area Dimension

As the potential for cooperation against global cybercrime demonstrates, the security partnership between Brazil and the UK transcends any one region. At one level, this demonstrates the transnational nature of the security threats facing both states. At another level, it also highlights the prevailing role conceptions of both states' respective political elites, perceiving a geopolitical role that is wider than the immediate region in which either is situated. In this respect, both states contribute to a broad range of global security initiatives. One example is the international effort to improve maritime security in the Arabian Gulf. The Review noted the UK's longstanding – and [recently incrementally growing](#) – role as a security partner in the Gulf. Brazil shares this strategic objective and has been a full member of the region's Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) since 2018. Indeed, a senior Brazilian naval officer has recently taken command of Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151), a multinational naval task force focusing on maritime security and counter-terrorism that operates under the CMF.

In addressing these transnational security challenges, Brazil has explored a diverse range of international partnerships, particularly in the area of science and technology, with a range of partnerships including the United States, France and China. There are also opportunities for the UK, for example in cybersecurity and law enforcement capacity-building and information-sharing partnerships. Given the transnational networks and supply-chains of organised crime groups, the improvement of security partnerships between states must be part of the strategy to counter these groups. And as the Integrated Review [emphasized the UK's status as a leading 'responsible, democratic cyber power'](#), enhanced cyber capacity-building and cyber diplomacy could form a mutually-beneficial component of bilateral relations with Brazil as the latter faces a severe cybersecurity challenge.

Conclusion

The Integrated Review may not have prioritized South America, or Brazil specifically, but it is clear that the Review's strategic ambitions cannot be achieved without a range of policies that reflect understanding of the region's importance and underlying dynamics. As the region's largest economy and its most influential political, defence and security actor, Brazil is ideally placed to help the UK translate its global ambitions into practical effects in the region. Where the strategic priorities of the respective executives do not necessarily align – for example, in contemporary global environmental diplomacy – there is a need to explore innovative solutions, including by recognizing that the bilateral relationship is broader than that between the two governments, encompassing business and civil society.

For Brazil, this historical moment in UK strategy should be an opportunity to develop and enhance the existing bilateral relationship, pursuing something more than a series of transactional deals – a truly strategic partnership of mutual benefit. Both governments should support initiatives to share knowledge and develop ties between citizens of both states. The skeletal blueprint of the Review suggests that much work is still to be done to achieve this ambition. The impact of the pandemic – and indeed the politics of the pandemic – increases not only the scale of the challenge, but also the imperative for both states to make progress quickly.

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BRAZIL IS IDEALLY PLACED TO HELP THE UK TRANSLATE ITS GLOBAL AMBITIONS INTO PRACTICAL EFFECTS IN THE REGION.

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The Integrated Review and the View from Small States: Time to Think Smaller?

Dr Hillary Briffa

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EVEN A MOUSE CAN ASSIST A LION.

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There was a famous Aesop’s fable in which a lion captured a small mouse, who, begging for his freedom, promised to return the favour someday. The lion, bemused by the prospect of such a tiny creature ever assisting the king of the jungle, magnanimously released him into the wild; the next day, hunters laid a trap, in which the lion became entangled. Fortuitously, the mouse, hearing his roaring pleas, gnawed through the ropes, and released the struggling beast. There is much to this story, because it proves that even a mouse can assist a lion.

Yet, when the [Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#), Global Britain in a Competitive Age, was released in March 2021 – described by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the ‘[biggest review of our foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War](#)’ – eager readers flocked to understand its position almost exclusively in relation to international behemoths China (explicitly referred to 27 times in the document) and Russia (mentioned 14 times). Despite far less attention, the purpose of this essay is therefore to demonstrate how an examination of the Review through the lens of the contributions, assistance and innovations of much smaller players can illuminate a surprising amount about both UK strategic priorities, and areas where it still stands to learn and progress further in turn.

Shining a light on small states and their relationship with the United Kingdom may seem like an unusual exercise. After all, in 1964 UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson had famously stated that: ‘We are a world power, and a world influence, or we are nothing’ – a statement telling of both British ambitions, and the prevailing perception of the lack of importance or utility ascribed to those actors who do not necessarily set the international agenda. And yet, today, small states (defined, for the purpose of this essay, in accordance with the membership threshold of the [United Nations Forum of Small States](#) as those countries having populations of fewer than 10 million people) make up the majority membership of the United Nations and are found in every region of the world. The desire to act as ‘Global Britain’ cannot be realized solely in relation to rising or great powers, and when digging deeper into the Review, this understanding becomes more pronounced.

This essay therefore undertakes three tasks. First, it presents two case studies of the UK relationship with small states explicitly mentioned in the Review (the Netherlands and Norway) to highlight the way these actors support or challenge the declared defence and security priorities. Second, it widens the scope to consider the broader strategic implications of two of the most prominent emergent themes in the document; namely, nuclear proliferation and sustainable development. Finally, it identifies areas where the UK can afford to be even more ambitious in pursuit of its goals by learning lessons from innovative small state proposals that, contrary to Wilson’s misperception, will bolster its efforts to be a world power and world influence today.

UK-Netherlands Relations: Close Partnership with a Small State

To begin by considering small states that have been afforded explicit attention in the Review, the Netherlands is notably mentioned twice, and with good reason. Its trade relationship with the UK spans 400 years, and today it is both the UK’s fourth largest trading partner and its largest importer of UK oil (accounting for [41%](#) of all exports in the first half of 2020). However, it is not only economics that drive the close ties between the countries. Former Dutch Ambassador to the United Kingdom, [Simon Smit](#), poignantly explained that, ‘Culture plays a pivotal role in bridging the narrow sea that divides us’. There is much in common between the two ‘[North-Sea Neighbours](#)’, both of which are constitutional monarchies, liberal democracies (albeit with a long and contentious history of imperialism), founding members of NATO, naval powers with overseas territories in the Caribbean, and proponents of common values. The latter were encapsulated by former

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THE DESIRE TO ACT AS ‘GLOBAL BRITAIN’ CANNOT BE REALIZED SOLELY IN RELATION TO RISING OR GREAT POWERS.

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Dutch European Commissioner, [Frits Bolkestein](#), as, ‘long-standing and deeply-rooted democratic tradition, the Atlantic outlook, the free market orientation, and two large multinationals, Shell and Unilever, with a common Dutch-British origin’.

Given the close relationship between the two countries, bilateral cooperation remains important for both economies, as well as their defence and security interests. Exemplifying this fact, in 2017, the UK and the Netherlands signed [a joint vision statement](#) pledging enhanced cooperation on security and defence policy, including addressing hybrid threats, cyber security and counter-terrorism efforts. To enable tactical and operational effectiveness at the joint level, the armed forces continue to work closely together. For instance, the Royal Navy and the Royal Netherlands Navy are continually involved in joint exercises, training and professional exchange programmes, share and standardise equipment, and align doctrine to enable interoperability. This is not only set to continue, but the importance of the Netherlands to future UK ambitions, particularly the Review’s ‘tilt to the Indo-Pacific’ (p.60), has gained greater prominence with the integration of a Dutch Frigate into the UK Carrier Strike Group’s first deployment, which embarked from the North Atlantic in May 2021, and is currently on route through the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans, then onwards to the Indo-Pacific. The inclusion of the Dutch – the only foreign ally, apart from the United States – is a testament to the close defence relationship between the two countries. As [articulated](#) by Defence Secretary Ben Wallace: ‘Our NATO, JEF and European Ally’s commitment signals the Carrier Strike Group’s contribution to collective defence and credible deterrence. This joint deployment will offer a unique opportunity for our forces to integrate and operate together in support of truly shared global defence and security challenges’, thereby signalling the importance of smaller partners to realize the ambitions of ‘Global Britain’.

At the same time, the picture is not entirely rosy. Whilst the Integrated Review’s references to improving interoperability with Euro-Atlantic allies through multilateral groupings such as the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, to which the Netherlands contributes actively, and the reaffirmation of UK commitment to leadership in NATO (p.72), are welcome signals of commitment to the collective security that small states champion, this has not wholly cushioned the sore blow dealt by Brexit, the long-term repercussions of which are yet to play out. The Netherlands was particularly disappointed by the Brexit referendum outcome, given that the first Vice-President of the European Commission, Dutch politician [Frans Timmermans](#), had fought hard to prevent the departure of a European Union member state whom the Dutch relied on to counterbalance the federalist and integrationist inclinations of the French and Germans. In the aftermath of Brexit, public opinion in the Netherlands has increasingly turned to favouring closer cooperation with France and Germany, viewing them as more reliable security partners. Indeed, a 2020 survey of over 23,000 people by [Clingendael](#) (Netherlands Institute of International Relations) revealed that 72% of respondents favoured closer cooperation with Germany and France following the UK departure from the EU.

Concurrently, Brexit has galvanised deeper and closer security cooperation among the European Union member states, epitomised by the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in 2017, which involves structural integration of 25 EU member states, including the Netherlands. Consequently, whilst the Netherlands is expected to continue its close security relationship with the UK, cooperation should not be automatically assumed. When the US and the UK launched the [International Maritime Security Construct](#) (IMSC) in July 2019 to respond to increasing threats to the freedom of navigation in international waters in the Middle East, many European states were reluctant to join the venture owing to a reticence towards Trump’s hard-line rhetoric. Instead, eight European countries (Denmark, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, France, Greece, and the Netherlands) formed a similar coalition called the [European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz](#) (EMASOH), raising questions about several assumptions underpinning the ‘Global Britain’ outlook of the Review.

Foremost, the cooperation of European small states in UK-led initiatives should not be taken for granted; as geopolitical challenges – ranging from the relationship with China, to how to contend with a revanchist Russia or volatile Iran, to governance of the global commons, and

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IN THE AFTERMATH OF BREXIT, PUBLIC OPINION IN THE NETHERLANDS HAS INCREASINGLY TURNED TO FAVOURING CLOSER COOPERATION WITH FRANCE AND GERMANY, VIEWING THEM AS MORE RELIABLE SECURITY PARTNERS.

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THE UK MAY INCREASINGLY FIND IN THE FUTURE THAT THE EUROPEAN MAJORITY DECISION TAKING PRECEDENCE WILL NOT ALWAYS ALIGN WITH ITS OWN PREFERENCES.



so forth – place pressure on national security interests and foreign policy priorities, the Dutch have reiterated their commitment to closer EU cooperation post-Brexit. ‘If the chaos of Brexit teaches us anything, it’s that there’s no such thing as splendid isolation’, [explained](#) Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte. Whilst scope for bilateral cooperation endures, the UK may increasingly find in the future that the European majority decision taking precedence will not always align with its own preferences.

UK-Norway Relations: Securing the Arctic

A similar understanding of broader UK strategic interests emerges when homing in on another partner mentioned explicitly twice in the review. The Review talks of working with European partners such as Norway ‘bilaterally, and through NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force...in support of our common objectives’ (p.61). As another founding member, the inclusion of Norway in the collective security organisation created the ‘Northern Flank’ of NATO, directly on the northern border with the Soviet Union at the start of the Cold War. The Norwegian military continues to play a critical role in monitoring activity and protecting sea lines of communication in the North Atlantic, particularly deterring hostile passage through the naval chokepoint known as the [Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom](#) (GIUK) Gap. However, the combined challenges of climate change – melting Arctic ice and opening up new trade routes – and the recent and ongoing expansion of Russian nuclear and conventional capabilities (such as submarines) are of growing concern.

As a non-Arctic nation, the UK interest in the region has typically focused on scientific research and commercial interests; the Arctic was absent from the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, only [mentioned](#) in passing with reference to Royal Marines training and equipment in the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, and again missing from the 2018 National Security Capability Review. The first UK White Paper on the Arctic, [Adapting To Change: UK policy towards the Arctic](#), was released in 2013, focusing predominantly on environmental and developmental issues and the impact of climate change. The Integrated Review reiterates the UK commitment to maintaining a ‘significant contribution to Arctic science, focused on understanding the implications of climate change’ (p.64), but remains surprisingly vague on broader regional security concerns. Pledging solely to maintain the region as one of ‘high cooperation and low tension’, this aspiration may be increasingly challenged by Russian and Chinese strategic ambitions.

In March 2021, Norwegian Minister of Defence, Frank Bakke-Jensen, summed up the security implications of increasing militarisation of the Arctic in an address to the [Atlantic Council](#): ‘Russian armed forces have significantly modernized during the last ten to twelve years. Its capabilities are increasingly integrated, giving Russia more flexibility...the Russians have modernized their underwater capabilities. They’ve improved their ability to deploy troops rapidly over great distances. Russia is now also more capable in terms of conventional long-range precision weapons. Together, this reduces the warning time for NATO countries to hours and days.’ Given that Angus Lapsley, Director General Strategy and International at the UK Ministry of Defence, has described Russia as the ‘[most acute security threat to the UK](#)’, the significant Russian activity and capabilities in the High North, coupled with increasing Chinese presence in the Arctic, are drawing more attention and close cooperation with Norway – ranging from joint training to sharing equipment – is expected to be crucial to safeguarding NATO interests in the region over the coming years.

Evidence of enhanced cooperation in this area has been exemplified by the British Royal Air Force and Royal Norwegian Air Force pushing to work together with their maritime patrol aircraft. With both countries procuring [the Boeing-made P-8A](#) for this task, statements of intent for bilateral [cooperation](#) between the two, and a trilateral partnership with the United States (which also uses the aircraft), point to increased operational synergy between the two nations in identifying and tracking submarines in the North Atlantic. Multilaterally, NATO exercises have increased in the High North, with Norway hosting [Exercise Trident Juncture](#) – its largest exercise since the Cold War – in 2018. However, the subsequent [Exercise Cold Response](#) in March 2020 intended to test Allied warfighting capabilities in the harsh Arctic conditions, was cancelled as a result of COVID-19 fears, demonstrating the broader security



CLOSE COOPERATION WITH NORWAY – RANGING FROM JOINT TRAINING TO SHARING EQUIPMENT – IS EXPECTED TO BE CRUCIAL TO SAFEGUARDING NATO INTERESTS IN THE REGION OVER THE COMING YEARS.



implications of the global pandemic.

On the commercial front, Brexit has been less troubling for the Norwegians, who are not part of the EU, but who do regret the loss of free movement of goods and services through the EEA agreement, given that they are Britain's largest non-EU trading partner. Still, in June 2021 a promising, ambitious [free trade agreement](#) was announced between the UK, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. Although it will not provide the same level of access to the UK markets as the EEA agreement allowed for, it is a win-win for both the UK (politically, able to present a quick trade deal to its electorate) and its three partners, who will all benefit from the growth in trade. For this reason, small states outside of the EU may increasingly benefit from UK interests in securing new trade deals to meet its stated ambition in the Review of 'enabling 80% of UK trade to be covered by trade agreements by the end of 2022' (p.101).

Small States and Nuclear Policy

Whilst it is impossible to address every small state mentioned explicitly in the Review individually, it is evident that a closer look at those mentioned reveals much larger strategic priorities and sources of assistance for the UK than may be immediately apparent from a first reading of the document. At the same time, broader themes of the Review also raise important questions for small states that warrant closer examination. In this regard, the issues of nuclear proliferation and sustainability stand out prominently.

In a change of direction that has prompted vociferous public debate, the Integrated Review reversed the decision of former Prime Minister David Cameron's administration to reduce the UK's nuclear warhead stockpile to 180. Instead, 'the UK will move to an overall nuclear weapon stockpile of no more than 260 warheads' (p.76), representing an increase of approximately [15%](#). Despite the fact that this still leaves the UK with the smallest nuclear capability of the five states with the largest publicly-declared nuclear arsenals (the UK, USA, France, China and Russia), the move has called into question the UK commitment to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which they are all signatory to. The decision was also communicated in the Review a mere two months after the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) (TPNW) – 'the first legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination' – finally entered into force. This will prove a hard pill to swallow for the (predominantly small) [states](#) who have been spearheading it and awaiting its ratification for the past four years. The TPNW has been boycotted by all five nuclear powers under the NPT regime, as well as their military allies, including the NATO member states. In view of the UK increasing its own stockpile, it is clear that primacy given to deterrent capability is therefore likely to persist, and the many Pacific islands whose homelands have been subject to weapons testing in the past will be waiting a very long time – perhaps forever – before any nuclear power concedes to ratify their Treaty.

Small States, the Environment and Development

Although the increase in nuclear capability is unlikely to curry favour with many small islanders, the Review does demonstrate a more promising track record for small states on softer security issues. Both the Sustainable Development Goals and a commitment to 'sustained international action to accelerate progress towards net zero emissions by 2050 and build global climate resilience' (p.21) featured prominently when outlining the principles of the UK Strategic Framework in the Review. In this effort, the UK, as President of COP26, stands to leverage considerable development expertise and is aligning all of its official development assistance (ODA) to the Paris Agreement; yet, cuts to this budget will hamper the implementation of these lofty goals in practice, as assessed by Devanny and Berry elsewhere in this essay series. Still, perhaps one of the most meaningful statements in the Review – relatively easy to overlook, hidden in the middle of page 90 – is the recognition that 'the shift to a green global economy requires action from everyone – from the largest and most advanced economies to developing countries and small island developing states, across governments, businesses and individual citizens.' Although this is the only explicit mention of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), it is an important one.

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THE UK IS DEMONSTRATING ITS CAPACITY FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND PLAYING AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE AS A VOICE AND CHAMPION OF SMALL STATES.



Whilst remoteness has insulated many SIDS from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many are facing an acute economic crisis owing to the economic shock induced by the global tourism shutdown. Moreover, their development is consistently hampered by adverse weather events, ranging from cyclones to flooding, as a result of climate change. On the basis of GDP alone, many SIDS are considered too well-off to qualify for sufficient concessional finance, which stymies their capacity to enact adaptation and mitigation measures to offset the impact of the climate emergency; with limited resources and funds so vital for development consistently being redirected to rebuilding infrastructure and safeguarding the welfare of populations, development is consistently hindered, perpetuating poverty and trapping SIDS with unsustainable levels of debt. The UK has recognised that GDP does not provide an accurate reflection of the distinct vulnerabilities of small islands, and that a radical re-envisioning of global financing mechanisms is necessary to enable them to build resilience.

To address the ‘[perfect socio-economic storm](#)’ brought about by COVID-19 and the climate emergency, the UK flexed its ‘convening power’ (p.14) by partnering with Fiji and Belize to host a [joint roundtable](#) on financing for SIDS at the United Nations in October 2020. During the virtual gathering, participants discussed a suite of proposals intended to offer debt relief, provide liquidity, and target more appropriate development finance instruments to the particular vulnerabilities of SIDS (including a proposed Vulnerability Index and other capacity building mechanisms). This was followed by another roundtable – the Pacific SIDS Dialogue on Access to Finance – hosted by the UK, Fiji, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in June 2021. The meeting produced an [outcomes document](#) seeking to ‘identify, discuss and prioritise Pacific SIDS’ recommendations to improve access to concessional finance’, such as debt for climate swaps. These findings will be discussed at the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting in July 2021, followed by the UK hosting another high-level global meeting in September. In this activity, the UK is demonstrating its capacity for global leadership and is playing an instrumental role as a voice and champion of small states. By continuing to throw its weight behind proposals for a radical overhaul of ineffectual global financial systems, the UK is proving that ‘action from everyone’ means leaving no small islands behind.

At the same time, whilst the UK vision to realize effective ocean governance by 2030 (p.92) is a commendable one, and the importance of biodiversity conservation is well-addressed, the issue of sea level rise – expected to rise by 20 to 40 cm globally by 2050, affecting every part of the world – is conspicuously absent from the consideration of building resilience. Close to home, Dutch oceanographers have gone so far as to [propose](#) the building of two huge North Sea dams (between the north of Scotland and the west of Norway, and between the west of France and southwest of England) to insure populations against rising sea levels as a result of climate change. Whilst the proposal is exorbitantly expensive and would likely have too far-reaching an ecological impact to be actively considered, the proposal does serve to foreground the fact that rising sea levels are a real challenge, on the doorstep of the UK, and not just an existential challenge for islanders in remote locations.

Of course, the calls of these far-flung islanders, [sounding the alarm](#) about rising sea levels, should be heeded as well. References to rules, norms and standards abound throughout the Integrated Review, yet whilst the UK has committed to seeking good governance and creating ‘shared rules in frontiers such as cyberspace and space’ (p.12), it is important to understand that the socially constructed nature of the existing rules and norms that constitute the international maritime order are not fixed and can be changed over time. Most notably, climate change induced sea-level rise might cause changes in land features which are used to determine maritime boundaries (namely, if rising sea levels make islands uninhabitable and populations are forced to be relocated, these territories will be downgraded to the status of “rocks”). This prospect threatens the Exclusive Economic Zone (and, therefore, access to marine resources) of many Pacific island states. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which was agreed in 1982, before sea level rise was recognised as an issue, there is still no provision on how to contend with this problem.

This is why discussion of UK climate leadership ambitions, ocean governance, and resilience cannot be limited to biodiversity conversation or to combatting blatant disregard for



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international law in the global commons but must also recognise the insufficiency of the law itself. Small states, which have been among the lowest emitters of greenhouse gases, are paying the highest costs for climate adaptation and are acutely vulnerable to the existential threat of climate change. Today, states from the Marshall Islands to Kiribati are [mapping their dispersed, remote ocean islands](#), in order to claim permanent EEZs, irrespective of future sea level rise, and are advocating for a solution where there will be no loss in jurisdiction due to climate change. It is imperative that the UK recognises and supports these efforts.

It is not enough for Pacific island governments, alone, to recognise each other's existing maritime limits – if countries like the UK, US and Japan do not do so as well, there is nothing to stop other state actors from rejecting these spaces as EEZs and seeking to mine or fish in the region, further compounding the vulnerability and insecurity problems of these Small Island Developing States. The Integrated Review recognises 'China's increasing international assertiveness and the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific' (p.17) and expresses the commitment of the UK to 'cooperate with China in tackling transnational challenges such as climate change' (p. 22). Therefore, supporting the SIDS' claims to permanent EEZs at the United Nations would be a prime opportunity to act on these promises and to demonstrate the UK's values of fairness, equality and rule of law.

Wales: a Small Nation Within a Larger State

And speaking of the law, when it comes to addressing the transnational challenge that 'unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, population growth and technological developments will cause further biodiversity loss' (p.31), the UK should be looking to its own legislation to scale up visionary solutions. Even though the Review foresees unprecedented environmental degradation and disease outbreaks over the coming decades, politics has become increasingly short term, and decisions are consistently being made within the timetable of an election. Decisions are made on one day, that are then overturned the next; nobody is looking after the interest of the future. So, how does one offer hope and opportunity to people who have no vote? Who might not yet be born? And who have no say in how decisions are made at a time where we have not achieved, anywhere in the world, the biodiversity targets set by the UN? At home in the UK, Wales offers an answer.

Through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Wales is still the only country in the world that has taken the step to protect both current and future generations in law; and the only country in the world to put the UN [Brundtland Report](#) definition of sustainable development – 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' – into law, despite being the most popular definition of sustainability, used millions of times since 1987. The Welsh National Assembly members who voted for the Act held their own feet to the fire, whilst presenting a ground-breaking model that the UK government should be following to truly place sustainability at the heart of every aspect of policymaking – from transport, to housing, to education to health – and thereby eschew the short term approach so endemic to electoral politics, and only exacerbated by the crisis of the global pandemic.

Notably, the UK's constitutional structure, as a multi-nation state, gives it the opportunity to learn from the norm entrepreneurship pursued by this small nation. Unfortunately, historically, the UK has struggled to realize this potential, given the unitary, Whitehall-centric and Anglo-centric nature of UK government. However, it is never too late to learn, and the UK can yet succeed in scaling up such tried-and-tested devolved policy experiments. Doing so may even become increasingly important as the UK potentially stands to become a 'smaller' state itself, depending on how Scottish independence movements and the growing discussions of Irish unification, post-Brexit, play out.

Conclusion: Think 'Smaller' to make 'Global Britain' a Success?

It is clear that there is much to understand about UK defence and security interests when digging beneath the surface and paying heed to the mischief of mice, and not just the great lions whose roars dominate global attention. For instance, the relationship with the

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WALES IS STILL THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD THAT HAS TAKEN THE STEP TO PROTECT BOTH CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS IN LAW.

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WHEN SEEKING TO BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE, ADAPTABLE AND INNOVATIVE, IT IS TO THE APPROACHES OF SMALL COUNTRIES THAT THE UK SHOULD BE LOOKING IN THE FACE OF AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE. PERHAPS IT IS TIME FOR THIS ASPIRING ‘SUPERPOWER’ TO THINK A LITTLE SMALLER.

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Netherlands will continue to be buoyed by close defence cooperation and features prominently as part of the so-called ‘tilt’ to the Indo-Pacific, but there may be rockier waters ahead if EU interests subsequently diverge from British policy priorities. Similarly, deepening defence engagement with Norway is indicative of growing concerns about the increasing militarisation of the Arctic, whilst the fresh free trade agreement signed by the two countries could bode well for UK trade ambitions.

Although it was not possible to examine every case in detail here, the cases discussed highlight the need for UK strategy to take small states seriously. Similar insights may be gleaned by paying closer attention to other small countries named explicitly, including Sweden in the High North, Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean, Baltic Estonia as part of the Joint Expeditionary Force, and Middle Eastern partners, such as the United Arab Emirates, whose inward investment will be an important factor in UK ambitions to become a ‘Science and Tech Superpower by 2030’ (p.4). Similarly, lessons could be learned when considering states that have been left out. This includes Commonwealth member and former colony Malta, which was recently [green](#) listed for UK travel, but [grey-listed](#) by the Financial Action Task Force over deficiencies in its anti-money laundering and funding of terrorism framework, thereby potentially challenging UK diplomatic ambitions to work with partners along key migration routes ‘from Africa via the Mediterranean’ (p.95).

More broadly, some prominent themes of the review – to the fore, the expansion of the UK nuclear arsenal – will likely engender a cold reception from many non-NATO small states. Conversely, the emphasis on sustainability is hitting many of the right notes as the global community confronts the climate emergency, and small island developing states on the frontlines stand to benefit from UK assistance in their efforts to radically alter the prevailing international financial systems to enable an equitable and green pandemic recovery and truly sustainable development thereafter. At the same time, the UK still has further to go – be that in supporting SIDS’ fight to claim permanent EEZs, or scaling-up at UK-level the pioneering Welsh legislation to safeguard the rights of future generations. When seeking to become more flexible, adaptable and innovative, it is to the approaches of small countries that the UK should be looking in the face of an uncertain future. Perhaps it is time for this aspiring ‘superpower’ to think a little smaller.

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