BFPG British Foreign Policy Group

The UK Integrated Review of Foreign Policy: One Year On

British Foreign Policy Group

March 2022

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The British Foreign Policy Group

The British Foreign Policy Group (BFPG) is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to advancing the UK's global influence, at a crucial time in the nation's modern history. Our core objective is to bridge the link between the domestic and international spheres – recognising that Britain's foreign policy choices are shaped by our social, economic and democratic landscape at home. The BFPG works as the connective tissue between the UK's policy-makers, businesses, institutions, and ordinary citizens, to promote the connectivity and understanding needed to underpin Britain's national resilience and global leadership in the 21st Century.

Our mission supports Britain as a strong, engaged and influential global actor. We promote democratic values, liberal societies, and the power of multilateralism – and we recognise Britain's critical international responsibility to uphold and extend these throughout the world. The BFPG believes that a strong and united nation at home is the essential foundation of a confident and effective British foreign policy.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to BFPG colleagues Evie Aspinall, Eleni Koumoundouros and Sam Brown for their exceptional background research, and to designer Nadia Nelson, for their support in bringing this paper to life as a publication.

The UK Integrated Review of Foreign Policy: One Year On

On 16th of March 2021, the UK Government published 'Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy', a landmark publication outlining a conceptual strategic framework under which the nation's international role would be defined and constituted in the aftermath of the UK's departure from the European Union. The Integrated Review was a substantial intellectual exercise underpinned by a radical and creative spirit, which required a comprehensive form of cross-governmental cooperation and consensus-building. It was intended to drive the construction of the enduring architecture of the UK's geopolitical ambitions as a generational project, and to enable the delivery of these objectives in the national interest.

One year on, in the middle of a brutal conflict in our European neighbourhood following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it has become necessary to reflect on whether the Integrated Review continues to provide an appropriate and sufficient framework from which to be organising our foreign policy activities. This paper sets out the achievements of the first year of the implementation of the Integrated Review, of which there are many substantive examples across a wide range of areas. In particular, the UK has made some strident advancements in the UK's innovation and scientific excellence, in improving the agility and capabilities of the British armed forces, and in supporting the defence of the liberal world order. It then presents a summary of some of the key external geopolitical developments during this turbulent period, including the withdrawal of allied troops from Afghanistan, the war in Ukraine, the increasing risk-tolerance of China, and the economic and energy supply chain crisis afflicting the UK and many of our Western allies. It then asks the question as to whether these compel the recalibration of some of the assumptions and choices made within the Integrated Review.

My conclusion is that the Review has been vindicated in the foundational substance of its world view and its assessment of the UK's longer-term risks and opportunities. In part, due to its emphasis on flexibility as a doctrine in and of itself, as well as its focus on strengthening the UK's existing and emerging partnerships. Nonetheless, the geopolitical developments over the past year intensify the urgency to implement the Review's objectives, while constraining the fiscal environment in which to do so. The UK Government must therefore prioritise its focus on enhancing three key areas of resilience over the coming year – namely, our international relationships, our democracy and society, and our machinery of government. It would also be prudent to embed an ongoing annual review process for the Review, to ensure it continues to serve the evolving realities of the UK's domestic environment and the wider international landscape.

Sophia Gaston
Director of the British Foreign Policy Group
March 2022

Key UK Initiatives and Achievements – March 2021-22

- **Publication of the:**
  - UK Innovation Strategy
  - National Cyber Strategy
  - National Space Strategy
  - R&D People and Culture Strategy
  - Defence in a Competitive Age' paper – outlining plans for military reform
  - Future Soldier paper – outlining how the UK will modernise its army

- **Funding uplifts for:**
  - the National Cyber Force – to counter cyber threats
  - Innovate UK – to support product development
  - the Ministry of Defence – to help modernise and digitally up-skill the military

- **Government investments in:**
  - Global Britain Investment Fund – to attract international talent to the UK science industry
  - UK Cyber Cluster Collaboration - a network of regional clusters of cyber organisations
  - Horizon Europe – a major EU research and innovation programme

- **Securing landmark commitments at international summits, including, but not limited to:**
  - Donation of one billion Covid-19 vaccine doses to developing nations at the G7
  - Creation of the Build Back Better World Initiative at the G7
  - Supporting 40 million more girls into school by 2026
  - Agreements to a coal 'phasedown' at COP26
  - Reversing deforestation by 2030 at COP26

- **Legislative reforms including:**
  - Economic Crime Act – to enable the Government to impose swifter sanctions
  - Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Act – to enable tougher sentencing for terrorism
  - National Security and Investment Act – to improve national resilience
  - Imposing sanctions under the Magnitsky Act for Belarus, Myanmar, China and Russia

- **Enhancing bilateral relations, including securing:**
  - Free trade agreements with Canada, New Zealand and Mexico
  - an MoU with Indonesia
  - an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India
  - the AUKUS agreement – a trilateral security agreement with Australia and the United States
  - tightened defence relations with Japan
  - developing a UK-Australia supply chain resilience capability building initiative

- **Increasing engagement in the Indo-Pacific through defence and key regional forums:**
  - Negotiating ascension to CPTPP
  - Securing designation as a dialogue partner to ASEAN
  - The passage of HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier through the Indo-Pacific

- **Launching a:**
  - Armed Forces Ranger Regiment – to act as a grey-zone warfare specialist force
  - New Government Information Cell – to counter propaganda from strategic rivals
  - Situation Centre - to act as a command centre in emergencies
  - Adaptation Research Alliance – alongside allies to increase resilience of vulnerable nations
  - Help to Grow Digital Scheme – to support businesses in adopting digital technologies
  - Research Collaboration Advice Team – to advise researchers on how to minimise national security risks in international collaboration

Section I – Putting Principles into Practice

Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology

From the discovery of penicillin to the creation of the World Wide Web, the UK has a long history of scientific leadership and innovation. The Integrated Review aims to secure and advance the UK's competitive position, through nurturing its status as a 'science and technology superpower' – reaping a range of benefits in terms of national security, strategic interest, economic growth and global governance.

In the wake of the Integrated Review's publication, a UK Innovation Strategy, National Cyber Strategy, National Space Strategy and R&D People and Culture Strategy were released in relatively quick succession. These strategies have helped put conceptual meat on the bones of the UK's 'superpower' ambitions. The R&D People and Culture Strategy, for example, outlines comprehensive plans to enhance the UK's scientific and technological expertise by improving funding offers to globally mobile talent, supporting Open Access policy and developing a New Deal for post-graduate research students.[1]

In terms of the actualisation of these strategies, some areas of progress are already being seen, such as in the expansion of the UK's space programmes. Space has become increasingly contested on a geopolitical level, with 13 space-faring nations now holding independent launch capabilities. With many elements of our daily lives now reliant on space infrastructure, enhancing the UK's capabilities in this area will be essential to the UK's national security and geostrategic interests.[2] The UK approaches its Integrated Review space ambitions from a position of holding both existing strengths and weaknesses relative to our peers – namely, being home to one of the most dynamic and fast-growing space technology industries, but also having invested significantly less in space exploration than even many of our neighbours in Europe.[3]

While the UK's Space Strategy focuses on cultivating a vibrant private sector space industry, the Government has forged the strategic architecture for this sector to thrive through the creation of spaceports around the country, and by providing funding to a multitude of organisations in the space industry.[4] In particular, the UK is on track to achieve its ambition to launch British satellites from the UK by 2022. Virgin Orbit, the company chosen by the UK Space Agency to launch satellites from a proposed Spaceport in Cornwall, successfully completed a third test flight in California in January 2022, and satellite launches are planned from a number of additional spaceports across the UK this year.[5]

Progress has also been made in developing the UK's commercial rocket launch capabilities. In October 2021, the British rocket company Skyrora agreed a deal with the SaxaVord spaceport in Unst which makes provisions for an initial launch of a rocket in late 2022. By 2030, Skyrora aims to be conducting 16 launches a year.[6] In turn, the October 2021 Spending Review provided funding for the UK to become the first country to launch a rocket into orbit from Europe in 2022.[7]

The UK's reputation in space innovation has been further boosted by the ExoMars Rosalind Franklin rover passing its latest maintenance and functional tests in January 2022. The rover is part of the European Space Agency and Russian Space Agency Roscomos's ExoMars programme, and was built in the UK with key parts designed in UK universities. The UK is the second-largest contributor to the ExoMars mission, with a contribution of around £240 million, sitting just behind Italy.[8] Looking to the longer term, with the UK's first ever National Space

Strategy being accompanied by plans to invest more than £5 billion over the next ten years into the UK's first Defence Space Portfolio and £1.4 billion in new technologies and capabilities, there is a clear and viable pathway to bringing to life the ambitions set out in the Integrated Review.[9]

Progress in the UK's cyber advancements has been less swift, in part because the National Cyber Strategy was only released in December 2021. However, with the strategy announcing provisions for £2.6 billion investment in cyber, a new senior National Cyber Advisory Board and a new 'Royal Charter' for the UK Cyber Security Council to improve careers in cyber, the foundations are now in place for the long term development of the UK's cyber capabilities.[10] These foundations are further reinforced by the announcement of an increase in funding for the National Cyber Force, an offensive cyber unit designed to enhance the UK's ability to counter and disrupt entities or individuals wishing to harm the nation's infrastructure or citizens. The announcement of £700k of funding for UK Cyber Cluster Collaboration (UKC3), a network of 20 regional clusters of cyber businesses and organisations, will further bolster the UK's credentials in both the state and private sector.[11]

The success of these industries will require a holistic approach that spans across several otherwise disconnected policy domains, such as immigration. The new High Potential Individual and Scale-Up visa routes, set to be introduced in 2022, are an important step towards strengthening the UK's global talent pipelines.[12] This initiative will also be supported by the creation of a £1.4 billion Global Britain Investment Fund, which will improve the appeal of the UK's science industries to attract international talent, as well as an increase in funding for Innovate UK, the Government agency providing funds to innovative digital organisations to develop new products and services.[13]

Nonetheless, some of the progress facilitated by these measures will be offset by Government decisions in other areas. For example, while the October 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review committed the UK to £22 billion of public R&D investment by 2026-27, this target was initially set for 2024-25 and therefore represents a slowing down of ambitions overall – in large part due to the catastrophic economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, even with this significant uplift, the UK has significant ground to make up in its R&D expenditure. In 2020, for example, the UK spent 1.8% of GDP on R&D, while Sweden spent 3.4% and the United States spent 3.1%.[14]

Overall, the UK has made reasonable progress on science and technology, with some substantive new strategic documents, increased funding commitments, and targeted immigration initiatives to enhance the UK's attractiveness as a business environment. The key limitations and vulnerabilities at this stage are the continued relative constraints in our funding investments compared to some of our leading peers, the pace and nature of transformation in digital threats, and the need to advance strategic planning into tangible implementation.

Shaping the open international order of the future

The Integrated Review makes clear that the UK recognises that it carries a unique responsibility to defend the liberal world order it played a significant role in designing, and acknowledges that these conventions and the institutions that set and uphold them are facing specific, varied threats from rising authoritarian powers. There are several prongs to the UK's efforts in this field over the past year, which can broadly be summarised as: convening and shoring up existing forums of cooperation, strengthening international instruments of accountability and the coordination of these between allies, and ensuring a 'seat at the table' for Western powers in established and emerging frontiers of governance.

The UK's Presidency of the G7 and COP26 in 2021 provided a platform for the UK to flex its muscles as a global convening power at defining geopolitical moments, and while direct outcomes of these forums were somewhat mixed, the UK certainly succeeded in reinstating

the significance of these frameworks themselves.[15] The G7 Summit in Cornwall brought together the seven largest democratic economies after a period of substantial instability, largely pertaining to the unpredictable nature of America's alliances in the era of the Trump presidency and the tensions inherent in the Brexit process. While these issues remained present to some degree, all parties recognised the importance of a united front and the UK as host was able to encourage a meaningful spirit of cooperation that produced some joint statements and commitments in genuinely new terrain. The decision to invite three additional partners, Australia, India and South Korea, to the G7 also served to both enable other forms of minilateralism outside of the G7 format, but it also reinforced and drew attention to the unique value of the enduring G7 format as a consensus-building framework.[16]

The outcomes of the G7 Summit spanned an increasingly broad scope of agendas, reflecting the evolution of the forum to respond to the existential threat to the diffusion of democracy worldwide. On global health resilience, for example, the UK secured a commitment from G7 nations to strengthen the World Health Organisation, and provide one billion coronavirus vaccine doses to poorer nations.[17] There were also commitments to supporting 40 million more girls into school by 2026 – which in turn supported the UK's hosting of the Global Partnership for Education Summit the following month – and the creation of the Build Back Better World initiative, conceived as an alternative to ensure the West can be more competitive in challenging the attractiveness of China's Belt and Road Initiative.[18]

The Summit also brought the UK closer to achieving its ambitions on climate action, with the G7 committing to accelerating efforts to keep the 1.5 degrees global warming threshold within reach, as well as ending international financing of coal power stations by 2021.[19] This provided a solid foundation for the UK's diplomatic efforts to persuade developing nations in advance of the COP26 Summit, with G7 nations visibly leading from the front and making clear they felt they had a special responsibility to move first.

The COP26 Summit in Glasgow allowed the UK to embody its clearly stated goal of putting climate action at the heart of its international agenda, with a focus on accelerating the global transition to net zero and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030.[20] Key pledges included the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and Land Use, which committed to reversing deforestation by 2030, and new commitments to net-zero, such that 90% of global GDP is now covered by net-zero targets.[21] The UK also led the re-affirmation of the objective to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees celsius, and advanced integrated development funding commitments to strengthen the resilience of women and girls in regions vulnerable to climate change.[22]

Despite these successes, some elements of consensus-building remained elusive. For example, although not outlined in the Integrated Review, one of the UK's key objectives at COP26 and the G7 was to secure commitments to phasing out coal usage by 2030, which was seen to be key to the UK's wider climate objectives.[23] While the G7 agreed to end new direct government support for international carbon-intensive fossil fuel energy as soon as possible, no precise timeline was given. Meanwhile at COP26, the Glasgow Climate Pact was watered down last minute from a commitment to 'phase-out' to a commitment to 'phase-down' coal usage.[24] Some elements of climate financing also fell short. While both the G7 and the signatories to the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26 reaffirmed their commitment to mobilising US$100 billion in climate finance per year, and significant climate finance pledges were made at both summits, the target is still yet to be reached, despite originally being set for 2020.[25] These disappointments were felt especially strongly by developing nations on the frontline of the impacts of climate change, and – coupled with the consistent under-delivery of pledged coronavirus vaccines – may make it more difficult to persuade them of the specific value of partnerships with Western powers in the future.[26]

Another important pillar of the UK's efforts to reinforce the liberal world order is its investment in promoting human rights, the rule of law, open societies and individual freedoms. These values have been materialised through a new emphasis on collaborative Western sanctions,

and the reinvigoration of international justice mechanisms. The UK, for example, continues to press China to grant the UN Commission for Human Rights 'unrestricted access' to Xinjiang, where it is alleged that the Chinese state operates 're-education' centres based around principles of ethnic cleansing, and recently joined with partners such as Canada, the United States and Australia, to undertake a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Olympics.[27]

A relatively new and increasingly important part of the UK's arsenal of tools for promoting human rights over the last year has been the ongoing deployment of sanctions, and particularly Magnitsky-style sanctions against individuals involved in human rights abuses. Shortly after the Integrated Review's publication, former Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced the first UK sanctions against Chinese Government officials, in cooperation with the EU, Canada and the United States. Sanctions included asset freezes and travel bans on Chinese Government officials connected to abuses in Xinjiang.[28] Sanctions were used in a similar way by the UK against the Belarusian regime, following the detention of journalist Roman Protasevich and his partner Sofia Sapega, and against Myanmar's military leaders ahead of the one-year anniversary of the military coup.[29]

The sanctions instrument has been elevated to unprecedented scope in the battle to defend Ukraine and punish Russia for its illegal invasion, targeting President Putin and enablers of his regime, as well as Russia's financial markets, currency reserves, and the economy as a whole. A new Economic Crime Act was fast-tracked through Parliament, which has given powers to immediately designate and sanction individuals and entities under an urgent procedure.[30] Despite these very important advances, it is certainly the case that the escalation of Russia's aggressions in Europe has shone light on the UK's role in facilitating Russian financial and legal interests, through both direct and indirect means. Concerns remain about loopholes in the legislation, including issues around a lack of transparency of land ownership in the UK, and about a lack of resourcing for enforcement.[31] Financial interests linked to Russian state corruption and Putin's regime also continue to be enmeshed within British economic and political life.[32] The United States published its own anti-kleptocracy strategy in December 2021, and there is now considerable pressure on the UK Government to rise to the challenge and follow suit.[33]

Another key aspect of the UK's efforts to shore up the international world order is through its commitment to free and open trade, for which the UK Government recognises it has a special degree of legitimacy and empowerment on the international stage due to the relatively high support for trade among the British people.[34] Over the past year, the UK has worked through bilateral and multilateral avenues to achieve this objective, securing free trade agreements with nations including Canada, New Zealand and Mexico, as well as applying for membership of the CPTPP Indo-Pacific trading bloc.[35] The UK also leveraged the G7 summit to advocate for the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to be modernised, including creating governance around digital and data trade and increased transparency.[36] However, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, in which the modernisation process was set to be reviewed.[37] While the Summit will indeed be held in 2022, the exact date remains unspecified, which has left little opportunity for these commitments to be enacted, and this ambition therefore remains a work in progress.[38]

Beyond existing frameworks of international cooperation, the Integrated Review also seeks to future-proof the UK's interests by leading on the architecture of new frontiers of global regulation. One such area is the future of the internet, which has been at risk of balkanisation as national governments impose fragmented regulation structures. At the G7, the UK secured commitments to preserving 'an open, interoperable, reliable and secure internet, with the communiqué also promoting multilateral forums such as the 'Future Tech Forum' in September 2021 and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence Summit in November 2021.[39] Notably, however, these two forums have failed to extend beyond emphasising the importance of dialogue and offering progress reports on already ongoing projects, and concrete commitments towards action remain scarce.[40]

The UK's capacity to advocate internationally on these issues is in some part determined by the domestic legislative frameworks we establish at home, and the tests these face in balancing the myriad of trade-offs inherent in such enforcement exercises. The Online Safety Bill, which has passed its first reading in Parliament, would create a new duty of care for online platforms towards their users, placing the responsibility for taking down harmful and illegal content on the platform providers themselves. Under the new Bill, the UK regulator Ofcom would also have powers to block access to certain sites.[41] While the Bill is an important step in bringing to life a structure of internet governance within an advanced liberal democracy, the introduction of the Bill has attracted some controversy in the UK's domestic political debate around its potential implications for key values espoused within the Integrated Review – freedom of speech – once again reinforcing the need to ensure cohesion and continuity between our domestic international policies, as mutually reinforcing agendas.

Indo Pacific-Tilt

Within the next fifteen years, Asia is set to become home to four of the five largest economies in terms of purchasing parity – China, India, Japan and Indonesia – and to a large emerging middle class of citizens. Combined with China's growing assertiveness and risk-tolerance in the region, the Indo-Pacific has become increasingly important to the UK's long-term economic outlook and broader resilience.[42] In its first year, the UK Government's Indo-Pacific 'tilt' has been constituted by the formation of new partnerships, enhanced diplomatic outreach, and several concrete defensive initiatives.

The UK's new designation as a dialogue partner to ASEAN, a trading bloc of ten members with a combined GDP of US$2.8 trillion, is an important milestone within the Indo-Pacific 'tilt'.[43] This new designation formalises the relationship between the UK and ASEAN, and will enable the UK to attend Foreign and Economic Ministers meetings. In turn, this will provide valuable opportunities for the UK to liaise with key players in the region, strengthening trading links and facilitating cooperation on global challenges. This development is particularly significant given this is the first time ASEAN has formalised a partnership in 25 years, a positive sign for the reception towards the UK's increased role in the region.[44]

The UK has also applied for accession to the Comprehensive Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), an 11-nation trading bloc with a combined GDP of £9 trillion, and began formally negotiating accession in June 2021.[45] It is calculated that accession could boost the UK's GDP by £20 billion per year, lowering tariffs on 99% of UK exports to those within the bloc and enabling the UK to influence standards and regulation of emerging industries and trade.[46] The accession process has been moving slowly, with the UK required to demonstrate its compliance with the CPTPP's existing rules and regulations – which could involve imposing further regulatory divergence between the UK and the EU, which still remains the UK's largest trading partner in terms of both exports and imports.[47] Negotiations around accession have also raised concerns about the impact on standards of food production and animal welfare, which the British public demand must be maintained at their current levels.[48]

Nonetheless, the UK Government recognises both the economic and diplomatic dividends offered by formal CPTPP membership – especially in light of the decision by China to apply to accede to the trade agreement.[49] China's potential membership is not seen to be a viable short-term prospect; however, it has intensified the focus on upholding the bloc's compliance principles in a manner that will likely impact the pathway the UK is offered towards realising its own ambitions.[50]

In the meantime, the UK has pursued bilateral economic deals in the Indo-Pacific, including free trade agreements negotiated with Five Eyes allies, Australia and New Zealand, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Joint Economic and Trade Committee with Indonesia. The MoU aims to increase trade and cooperation between Indonesia and the UK,

which already have trade and investment links worth around £3 billion.[51] In addition, the UK signed an Enhanced Trade partnership with India, with a particular focus on technological cooperation, as a gateway towards a more formalised potential future free trade pact.[52]

The other major pillar of the UK's Government's renewed Indo-Pacific presence is a focus on defence and security, to ensure the region maintains its peace amid rising tensions sparked by China's increasingly recalcitrant posture. One of the most visible manifestations of this mission was the passage of HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier through the Indo-Pacific in Summer 2021, which the UK positioned as a symbol of peace to uphold freedom of navigation, and the Chinese state denounced as an act of provocation.[53] Structurally, one of the most significant developments in the realisation of the UK's Indo-Pacific 'tilt' has been the launch of the AUKUS trilateral security partnership between the UK, the United States and Australia. The landmark defence and security agreement makes provisions for the United States and the UK to help Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, and includes commitments to cooperation on 'cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and additional undersea capabilities.'[54]

The UK has also sought to deepen its bilateral defence partnerships in the Indo-Pacific outside of AUKUS, most notably with Japan – a nation undergoing a recalibration of its defensive resources. In September 2021 the two nations began formal negotiations for a Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement to improve joint operations, exercises, and activities conducted between the two nations. The vision behind these negotiations has already begun to come to fruition, and in December 2021 the two nations announced that they would co-develop a sixth-generation fighter jet engine demonstrator.[55]

Another key Indo-Pacific partner is India, and while the relationship continues to experience some degree of turbulence – notably, during COP26 and its more recent decision to decline alignment with the West on Russia's invasion of Ukraine – several important initiatives have begun to manifest. A 2030 Roadmap for UK-India relations was announced in May 2021, committing to strengthening the UK-India health partnership, and agreeing to an Enhanced Trade Partnership and increased cooperation in higher education and research.[56] The two nations are now in negotiations for a free trade agreement, although several thorny issues remain unresolved at this stage. The UK's relationship with India requires a careful balancing of values and strategic interests and there is scope for it to evolve to accommodate more substantive areas of security and economic cooperation.[57]

The Indo-Pacific 'tilt' represents one of the most defining characteristics of the dynamics behind the Global Britain agenda, as the UK seeks to renegotiate its position on the world stage and deepen cooperation with partners old and new in this thriving, contested marketplace. The UK's presence in the region has been welcomed by many Indo-Pacific actors, recognising that its enduring commitment towards free trade, freedom of navigation and environmental protection bring a meaningful boost to those in favour of an open regional order. In particular, as the United States remains unwilling to engage with Pacific trading alliances, the UK's ambitions to hold a presence in these groupings becomes more important.

The UK Government has made some concrete steps towards the 'tilt', most notably, through its applications for ASEAN dialogue partner status and CPTPP membership, as well as the passage of the HMS Elizabeth carrier and the nascent AUKUS agreement. The clear message that was projected by Indo-Pacific partners in the development of the Integrated Review was that the UK needed to show it was in the region for the long-haul, rather than as a political agenda that could evolve over time. Moving into the second year of the Review, the UK must build on its meaningful early process to sharpen the substance of its Indo-Pacific presence, focusing on areas where we can – either as an individual actor or a reinforcement of existing power structures – make the most tangible difference in the prioritisation of our limited resources.

Strengthening security and defence at home and overseas

In the six years between the publication of the Integrated Review and the previous major strategic framework for the UK's security landscape, the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, the threats facing the UK have both fragmented and heightened. The militarisation of space, the rise of China as a global actor, and the emergence of hybrid and digital forms of warfare reaching into all aspects of our society, democracy and economy, are just a handful of developments that have compelled a comprehensive evaluation of UK defence and security capabilities.

While the Integrated Review does not shy away from outlining the full scope of challenges facing the UK, it also presents a number of priorities within these, which reveal a strategic doctrine through which the UK Government is navigating an increasingly complex environment. For example, while presenting a 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific, the Integrated Review reiterates the UK's commitment to NATO as the foundation of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic region, and highlights the European theatre as the nation's foremost defensive priority. The Review also balances areas of UK leadership with burden-sharing alongside other partners, stating that the UK will only lead when best-placed to do so, and will seek to integrate itself into existing architecture and forums of cooperation that are functioning well.[58]

The 'Defence in a Competitive Age' paper produced by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) a week after the Integrated Review was designed as a conceptual elaboration of the blueprint set out in the Integrated Review. The paper set out plans to restructure the army to enable it to respond effectively to proliferating and emerging threats that cut across the 'grey zone' of warfare, including the prioritisation of technological expertise and innovation such as the Future Combat Air System.[59] The MOD has also received a significant funding injection, with the Government committing to invest £188 billion to defence over the next four years, as part of the largest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War.[60] The lion's share of this expenditure will be directed towards resources, and the remainder is allocated for capital spending, including the modernisation of the Army.[61] The plans for this modernisation were detailed in the 'Future Soldier' paper published in November 2021, which focuses on the procurement of new advanced technology, creative approaches to troop deployment and deterrence, and the up-skilling of internal capabilities.[62]

The UK Government has moved at pace to actualise elements of these plans. A new Ranger Regiment was formed in December 2021. Modelled after the United States' Green Beret special forces outfit, the Regiment is intended to act as a grey-zone warfare specialist force, operating in unconventional operational environments and providing support and training for foreign armed forces. Members of the Regiment have been deployed in Ukraine, to train the Ukrainian armed forces on the new anti-tank weaponry donated by the UK to support its defence.[63]

The focus on NATO within the Integrated Review has also proven to be timely. More than two years after President Macron of France declared the Alliance "brain-dead" – a criticism that continues to divide as to whether it should be seen as an unsubstantiated act of self-loathing for the West or a necessary wake-up call that has emboldened the West's reinvigoration – NATO is working effectively as a collective deterrent and coordinating mechanism in the Western response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The UK has maintained its leadership position within the Alliance, holding one of the most substantial 'forward presence' programmes, and playing an important role in persuading other allies to increase their defence expenditure as Russia's aggressions have intensified.[64]

A central question in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is whether the rebalancing of UK defensive and diplomatic energies set out in the Integrated Review towards the Indo-Pacific remains both logical and feasible. This question is intensified by the fact that the war in Ukraine is being fought with a strong component of traditional military hardware. The focus on the role of China as a potential facilitator or broker in de-escalation, and the contingency

being drawn with China's ambitions to bring Taiwan into its sphere of influence, does however highlight the need to continue to invest in our Indo-Pacific presence.

The UK Government's 'reset' on China has seen the recalibration of the 'balance' we pursue in this bilateral relationship, with the UK taking a more vocal approach to challenging China's human rights record, and putting safeguards in place to protect national security, but also continuing to pursue economic and other forms of cooperation. Indeed, China became the UK's largest import market in May 2021, overtaking Germany.[65] This 'balanced' approach is not distinct to the UK and is essentially the framework being practised by our Western allies, albeit with different spheres of emphasis and varying degrees of economic entanglement. The challenge for the UK Government is to construct the internal machinery and apparatus capable of accommodating such a relationship without necessarily provoking points of tension and even conflict.

The AUKUS security pact forged by the UK, alongside our United States and Australian allies, is an example of the new approach being taken to challenge the 'systemic' threat of China. It is an interesting example of the diversification of the risk response to the rise of the authoritarian power, namely because of its implicit, not explicit, challenge to China. Initiatives such as these emphasise and compel Western cooperation, and are focused on proactive advances in security and global competitiveness, without injecting further instability into the direct bilateral relationship.

Building resilience at home and overseas

One of the most striking elements of the Integrated Review was its focus on the language of resilience and the need to build a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to national security. The resilience agenda must span many different aspects of the UK's economy, society and democracy, an assessment of policy initiatives supporting this objective must therefore bring together a wide range of interdepartmental projects.

Starting at the sharper end of the spectrum with national security, the UK Government has formally launched a new Situation Centre, which was proposed in the Integrated Review as a command centre for emergencies such as large-scale terrorist attacks and natural disasters.[66] Modelled on the White House situation room, this Centre has already been utilised in response to events such as the Liverpool Women's Hospital bombing and fuel-supply shortages.[67] The coronavirus pandemic has also facilitated and tested new forms of close cooperation between the armed forces, emergency services, and government departments. This has included the deployment of the UK military to address domestic crises, such as the fuel supply crisis.[68]

The UK has also sought to improve homeland security through legislative changes and technological advancement. Although the legislation process began in advance of the Review, the Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Act 2021 gained Royal Assent in April 2021. The Act tightens sentencing for terrorism offences and increases police and intelligence surveillance capabilities.[69] Strategies such as the Reserve Forces Review 2030 have also outlined plans for new reserve units that would lie 'dormant' for much of the time, but be available for service in situations that required a 'surge' of personnel and resources. The UK Government has also launched a National Cyber Strategy, which supports an increase in funding for the National Cyber Force, which undertakes both reactive and proactive operations.[70] In the weeks leading up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UK also established a new Government Information Cell, designed to counter the proliferation of disinformation being targeted at democratic nations. Part of the unit's strategy includes using local agencies to purchase advertisements on Russian social media platforms, including VK, to counter Russian propaganda.[71]

Several ambitions highlighted within the Review to strengthen international collective resilience have been hampered by the bandwidth demands of the rolling crises facing the UK Government and our European neighbourhood, as well as the financial impacts of

these crisis on government expenditure. This includes the objective to forge a 'One Health' approach to global health, with the UK and its global allies ultimately unable to deliver on their commitments to vaccine provision with the expediency the pandemic required.[72] Nonetheless, the UK has had some success in driving the International Pandemic Preparedness Partnership (PPP), a coalition of organisations and experts that now advise the UK Government on how to deliver vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics more rapidly in response to new diseases. A further £16 million of new funding has also been provided to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a foundation that finances independent research projects aiming to develop new vaccines. The UK has also increased its funding commitment to the World Health Organisation, securing its position as the second-largest member state contributor to the organisation.[73]

The UK has undoubtedly helped to facilitate global progress towards collective resilience on climate change over the last year, namely through its hosting of the COP26 summit. The launch of the Adaptation Research Alliance – a global network of over 60 organisations across 30 countries aimed at increasing the resilience of vulnerable countries - as well as additional funding for the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the Climate Adaptation and Resilience research framework programme, are of particular note.[74]

In addition to the future of the Western alliance and collective global security, this past year has propelled questions of domestic resilience to the forefront of the agenda. The protracted coronavirus pandemic and the consequences of the war in Ukraine for the stability of international markets and both energy, food and wider supply chains, have imposed unprecedented pressures on UK Government finances. These structural pressures have intensified the importance of the UK's longer-term economic reform agendas, including improvements to productivity, as well as heightening the utility of free trade and other investment agreements.[75] A particular priority must be the establishment of supply chain resilience initiatives in both the public and private sector with trusted partners, which should begin with bilateral and mini-lateral cooperation and then seek to expand to other allies with whom we share both interests and fundamental values.[76]

Economic resilience programmes must also address the UK's skills and capabilities, starting at a grassroots level to target citizens and the small businesses that are the backbone of the UK economy. To this end, the UK Government has seeded projects such as the Help to Grow Digital Scheme, which provides discounts for small businesses on software packages, as well as new loan offerings to support research and development projects.[77] The past year has also seen a raft of new funding opportunities for renewables investment and clean energy transitions, including £67 million to upgrade insulation in homes and install low-cost clean heating and £285 million to be made available each year for the development of the next generation of Great Britain's green energy initiatives.[78] These funding schemes will simultaneously boost the UK's economic and climate resilience, and highlight the value of integrated domestic, international and cross-sectoral agendas.

Research, higher education and innovation are also key underpinnings of the UK's longer-term financial and geopolitical security. The UK Government has committed to financing Horizon Europe, following concerns about the UK's post-Brexit involvement.[79] However, questions remain about the scale of the funding commitment to Horizon, as well as the overall size of the research and development budget and state funding pipelines to support other key creative and cultural sectors that are essential aspects of the UK's global influence.[80] The UK Government has, however, made some important advancements in strengthening the resilience of the nation's higher education sector from foreign interference. A Research Collaboration Advice Team was established in May 2021 to advise researchers on forming international collaborations and to protect cyber security and our intellectual property.[81] The National Security and Investment Act also provides specific recommendations to mitigate the effects of foreign interference in UK higher education and research institutes.[82] Caution will be needed, however, to ensure that enhancing resilience within universities does not come at the expense of other administrative burdens which may well stifle research and innovation.[83]

The diversity of initiatives here underscores the need for a machinery-of-government evolution to match the myriad vulnerability touchpoints we face in the current time. The UK Government has not yet established a central coordination function to facilitate a truly whole-of-Government resilience agenda as the status quo, nor has the National Resilience Strategy – which called for evidence in Summer 2021 – been published.[84] These steps are essential to ensuring that the interdependencies of the UK's resilience infrastructure are able to complement and strengthen one another, and to mitigate the varied levels at which distinct government departments can be attuned to different types of threats.

Section II – The Changing Geopolitical Landscape

The year since the publication of the Integrated Review has been characterised by several major geopolitical episodes. These include: the withdrawal of US and allied forces from Afghanistan and the Taliban's subsequent return to power; Russia's deepening relationship with Belarus and the invasion of Ukraine; China's intensified crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong; the retirement of German Chancellor Angela Merkel; the resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic; and an energy provision and looming inflationary economic crisis in many advanced nations, which has been intensified by the Russian attack on Ukraine. While the Integrated Review was designed as a long-term strategic framework, its practical implementation has nonetheless been shaped by this complex, fast-moving environment and the pressures it has compelled on the prioritisation of resources. This section outlines a selection of these key developments and considers the implications for the Review's assumptions about the landscape in which the UK seeks to advance its interests.

Biden's First Year and the Western Withdrawal from Afghanistan

The Integrated Review was published after the inauguration of President Joe Biden, which undoubtedly marked a dramatic recalibration of American foreign policy and a reversion to 'the norm' in many key areas of international governance. President Biden did, however, enter the White House following one of the most shocking episodes of recent Western history, in which a violent mob staged an insurrection on the United States Capitol, in an effort to overturn the legitimate democratic certification of the Presidential elections. This deep stain on the narrative of renewal President Biden was hoping to inspire is inseparable from the wider trend that has been taking place within the American foreign policy doctrine for the past two decades, towards a more 'restrained', targeted, and less proactive global security role. While the Integrated Review both emphasises the centrality of the United States to the UK's own strategic objectives and promotes the strengthening of our national sovereign capabilities, it does not explicitly confront the question of how the UK would seek to recalibrate its own international role as America undergoes its metamorphosis.

President Biden began his Presidency with a series of decisive actions to demonstrate his commitment to the liberal world order, including re-joining the Paris Climate Agreement and restoring funding to the World Health Organisation. He has also convened several large-scale virtual summits, focusing on climate change and the future of democracy.[85] With the United States a major financial contributor to these organisations, and seen to be central to their overall legitimacy in the international community, these acts have served as a welcome complement to the ambition of the Integrated Review to uphold and defend the multilateral order. The UK has also been able to work closely with the United States on driving international climate action, strengthening human rights sanctions and other instruments, coordinating joint statements on issues of common importance, and increasing security vigilance around the threats posed by new and emerging authoritarian powers. This relationship certainly remains 'special' in terms of its depth and breadth, cutting across many areas of cooperation and underpinned by the closest levels of shared intelligence.

Nonetheless, the limitations to the relationship, which became plain to see during the Trump administration, have continued to raise above the surface over the past year. American foreign policy is now considerably more responsive to citizens' concerns about globalisation and a zero-sum framing around domestic and international spending, and the interpretation of these as powerful forces within Washington's political culture. For example, once a core

advocate for international free trade, the United States has not pursued membership of the emergent Pacific regional trading blocs, and the provision of military hardware, and particularly troops and personnel, is now subject to a high threshold of interrogation. One of the most striking manifestations of this shift in the American foreign policy paradigm was the removal of US troops and contractors from Afghanistan, twenty years after the Middle East invasions precipitated by the September 11 terror attacks.

The withdrawal of the UK, and its allies, from Afghanistan in the Summer of 2021 precipitated the swift fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, with major humanitarian implications. Three months after the evacuation mission, more than half of Afghanistan's population faced acute food shortages and the country remains at risk of mass famine due to the collapse of its economy and banking sector.[86] The withdrawal process was hampered by miscalculations about the speed at which the Taliban would advance on the capital, and while Western nations were able to remove large numbers of their military personnel, contractors and local partners, the final days and weeks of the evacuation projected an image of chaos.

In the immediate aftermath of the withdrawal, questions were raised about the implications of this operation for the United States' international role, the functioning of the Western alliance, and the endurance and stability of other Western security guarantees. There are also concerns that the volatile environment left in the wake of the Western departure may intensify short-term threats to the security position of the UK and our allies, particularly in terms of the risks of international terrorism.[87] Over the longer term, the role of China in the region may also complicate the recalibration of Western interests, with the authoritarian power offering aid and forging a new diplomatic relationship with the Taliban's leaders.[88]

The tensions and discordance exposed by the withdrawal amongst Western allies – which strained some of the most 'special' of relationships – was watched carefully by the UK's strategic rivals. In particular, the sense that capitals otherwise very much in lockstep in terms of their values, had come to a place of fundamentally divergent opinions about the calculation of their interests and how these should be prioritised and expressed.[89] In the subsequent months, this very public reckoning has provided an intensified impetus for a series of announcements and initiatives aimed at demonstrating the vitality of the partnerships between leading democracies. The internal recalibration of trust and the alignment of interests between the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union has been an evolving process. In the aftermath of the Afghanistan withdrawal and now in the heat of the war in Ukraine, it is fair to say that these pillars of the Western alliance are functioning more closely than in some time, while also having to come to terms with some profound structural rebalancing of expectations.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 followed a long-term build-up of arms, troops and resources along the Ukrainian border and within Belarus. The UK has a long-held interest in Ukraine's prosperity and military defences, with this year marking 30 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations. The two nations signed a joint statement emphasising the strategic nature of the partnership in 2008, and in 2020 agreed a rollover trade deal after the UK's departure of the European Union. More recently, a naval defence deal was signed in 2021, with the UK providing Ukraine with a £1.7 billion loan package, alongside navy training, the creation of naval bases and providing new equipment.[90] These foundations allowed the UK to move quickly in the immediate period before to the invasion, strengthening our NATO presence in neighbouring countries and establishing a formal triumvirate pact with Ukraine and Poland, another long-standing defensive ally. The UK is currently the largest bilateral donor of aid to Ukraine, and has launched a Ukraine Solidarity Alliance with Canada and the Netherlands, to ensure sustained support for the nation's immediate humanitarian needs and the longer-term economic recovery.[91]

In the initial days after the invasion, the Western response appeared to be moving through three concentric circles of power and initiative, with the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union – and indeed, key powers within the EU such as France and Germany – pursuing different tactics towards the same ends. As the scale of the invasion and its fundamental threats to the European security order came into full view, the West was able to rise to the challenge and forge new methods of cooperation that have enabled unprecedented economic sanctions on the Russian state and a robust line of military hardware and resources to support the Ukrainian armed resistance.[92]

The Ukraine crisis has allowed longer-term trends and fissures to come into clear focus, and it is also shaping the trajectory of the European security landscape in real time. As it is difficult to be certain about the landing zone of the conflict, it is also challenging to make predictions about the aftermath of the war for the dynamics within the Western alliance. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union will have put many more cards on the table in this crisis about their longer-term instincts and priorities than had been revealed before.

For the UK, this has been a compelling test of our ongoing claim to act as the leading European power in NATO, and has reinforced our centrality to conversations about the new European security order – as a third country, yes, but one with a very significant and unique contribution to make. Indeed, it has highlighted the important individual role the UK can play as a kind of connective tissue between the United States and the European theatre, particularly bridging across to Eastern Europe, the Baltics and Scandinavia. At the same time, it has also underscored the necessity of a well-functioning security and foreign policy relationship for the UK with the European Union – not only in terms of bilateral and mini-lateral partnerships, but with the EU institutions themselves. This could, theoretically, pave the way for a conversation to begin formalising the UK-EU security relationship in the coming years; however, it is also likely that the UK Government will regard the expression of its response to Ukraine as having benefited from a significant degree of flexibility.

The United States has sought to draw a clear line between its response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its withdrawal from Afghanistan, pairing a substantive military, economic and diplomatic role in the defence of liberal Europe from its Cold War foe. The Biden administration's message has been that its transatlantic security role remains guaranteed, despite its growing interests in the Indo-Pacific, and its broader trend towards a less resource-heavy and more selective global security role. America's instinctive sense of its own responsibility or motivation to intervene in such conflicts does feel less certain than in previous decades, and it is unclear as to whether the experience of this hard power defensive battle within Europe will have shifted the calculations being made in Washington about the prioritisation of its resources. Undoubtedly, a framework of military support, supplies, training and diplomacy already represents a departure from the doctrine of 'boots on the ground' and direct combat, and therefore we may simply be witnessing the new era of American security apparatus in action.

A more striking departure has been the dramatic shifts taking place within the European Union, which is seeking to codify its aspirations to become a credible, cohesive foreign policy actor, while having to reckon with the practical necessity to cooperate with other European security partners and both internal and overlapping external security relationships. A particular challenge has been the divergence of strategic priorities between European nations, which vary considerably depending on geographical proximity to the conflict and domestic political situations. Poland, for example, has been at the frontline of the refugee migration crisis and has acted as a primary transit point for the transfer of weapons and aid moving into Ukraine. Many of these divergences of opinion in the European response to the invasion stem from the realities of economic and supply chain entanglement in particular, with Russia responsible for 40% of Europe's gas provision.[93] Germany, one of the largest economies in Europe and a key diplomatic player in the EU, has found itself on the frontline of the trade-offs being made in real time between national economic security and upholding the values and principles of the European project it has championed.

For some nations, the immediate defensive risks are compounding directly with their national resilience. While the Baltics have been on the frontline of the NATO response to the crisis, they are also almost entirely dependent on Moscow for their natural gas requirements.[94] These varied interests and risk assessments, and conclusions about the balancing of trade-offs, is contributing to some loosening of the cross-European coordination in diplomatic efforts. In mid-March, for example, the Prime Ministers of Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic became the first foreign leaders to visit Ukraine since the invasion, against the advice of the European Union institutions and some other member states.[95] French President Macron's own efforts to pursue a diplomatic route of ongoing dialogue with President Putin, despite the escalation of violence in the conflict, has also attracted some discord.[96]

The West has also been grappling with the role of China in the war in Ukraine. In a show of solidarity between Beijing and Moscow prior to the start of the Winter Olympic Games, Presidents Xi and Putin signed a joint statement calling on NATO to commit to no further expansion in Eastern Europe, as well as condemning the West's 'ideologised approaches of the Cold War.'[97] Rather than setting out clear policies towards the West, this communication signalled a symbolic yet significant shift in Sino-Russian relations, outlining a shared worldview and common set of principles.[98] More recently, the United States and the EU have independently warned that China is considering sending military weapons and equipment to Russia.[99] Like its strategic rivals in the West, Beijing must walk a narrow path between strategic, diplomatic, and economic priorities in the crisis. While the West's sanctions against Moscow could work to redirect valuable Russian oil and gas to Chinese consumers, helping to protect Chinese business and consumers from the energy crisis hitting the West, the European Union nonetheless remains a huge market for Chinese products, and the continued uncertainty the war is fostering in global economic markets is a source of concern for the Chinese state.[100]

Russia and Belarus have also drawn closer over the last year, as the Belarussian regime has shifted increasingly towards becoming a totalitarian state, and has actively pursued policies to destablise its European neighbours – including through a manufactured refugee crisis.[101] In response, the West has imposed severe sanctions on Belarus, which have been further sharpened in reaction to Minsk's role in Ukraine's invasion.[102] These sanctions may work to put pressure on President Lukashenko and increase already growing popular opposition to his regime, although they have inevitably also facilitated the co-dependence between Russia and Belarus. In allowing 30,000 Russian troops to launch the northern wing of the Russian invasion of Ukraine from Belarussian soil, as well as agreeing to host Russian nuclear weapons in the future, Minsk has signalled the further military integration of the two allies.[103]

Germany's Dramatic Shift on Defence

German Chancellor Angela Merkel pursued a strategy of restraint, seeking to prioritise short- and medium-term stability, maintaining open diplomatic channels, and harnessing economic cooperation with authoritarian states as a means of upholding security in the existing world order. In the wake of her departure as Chancellor, after seventeen years, the costs and benefits of this approach has been laid bare, with her successor Olaf Scholz forced to take decisions about trade-offs with binary choices and little room for a middle ground.

In particular, Germany's 'constructive' relationship with both China and Russia has come under scrutiny, as its allies have been compelled to draw clearer lines underneath their relationships with these authoritarian rivals. The German Government resisted pressure to pause or delay the certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a gas link from Russia via Ukraine, which was widely regarded by the UK and other allies as a step towards further energy integration. With Chancellor Merkel choosing to continue to phase out Germany's nuclear energy resources during her leadership, Germany's energy security has become increasingly entwined with the question of the nation's relationship with Russia – with, given Germany's economic might in the European Union, implications for the wider dynamic between Russia and the European Union

as a whole. As of December 2021, Germany imported a third of its gas through gas pipelines from Russia.[104]

In the immediate wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the newly elected Chancellor Scholz appeared to be continuing on this path, before bowing to pressure from the UK, the United States and other European allies. The Chancellor described Russia's attack as a 'turning point' in European and global geopolitics, and confirmed the non-certification of Nord Stream 2, effectively rendering its operation paused on an indefinite basis. He also announced the creation of a US$113 billion fund to expand the German military, pledged to reverse the country's opposition to sending arms to conflict areas, and committed Germany to spending two percent of its GDP on defence from this point onwards. This significant financial uplift in Germany's defence budget will make Germany the third largest defence spender in the world after the United States and China, and provide much needed investment in Germany's armed forces.[105] In one fell swoop, these actions have therefore overturned five decades of Ostpolitik ('eastern policy'), the policy of rapprochement and cooperation between Germany and Russia that has played a significant role in shaping the European security paradigm.[106]

Germany's defence investments will also see the economic power taking on a greater share of the burden of NATO spending within Europe – a theme that has shrouded the Transatlantic relationship for decades and intensified over recent years as America recalibrates its international commitments.[107] On an economic level, the decision by the German Government to build two new liquified natural gas (LNG) import terminals may also open up new trading avenues with the United States, one of the world's largest exporters of LNG.[108] Indeed, Germany has recently agreed to purchase more than 30 F-35 fighter jets from the United States, in its first major defence deal since the country ramped-up its defence spending.[109] A recently agreed long-term contract with Qatar to ship LNG from the Gulf state to Germany will similarly work to ease Berlin's energy dependency on Russia, albeit not in the immediate term.[110] However, while it is obvious that the decision to wean itself off from Russian gas will be painful and while there is some impetus to expedite Germany's transition towards a diversified renewable energy mix is favoured, there appears to be little appetite for revisiting the question of nuclear power as a more stable energy source over the longer-term. It is also certainly the case that Germany continues to pursue a more cautious approach towards the imposition of further sanctions for Russia, in addition to remaining attuned to its economically profitable relationship with China.

The UK's Post-Brexit Relationship with the EU

The UK formally departed from the European Union in the weeks before the publication of the Integrated Review, and the transition to a new form of cooperation has continued to be characterised by a degree of tension – alongside some more promising green shoots of goodwill on both sides. There are two key sources of ongoing dispute, namely the continued renegotiation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the bilateral relationship between the UK and France.

Disagreements between the UK and the EU over the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol run deep, and progress in resolving the seemingly intractable issues around border checks has been painfully slow.[111] The UK continues to allude towards the possible triggering of Article 16 of the Protocol, although this is regarded as 'the nuclear option'.[112] The resignation of Northern Ireland's First Minister Paul Givan in February 2022 in protest at the continued existence of the Protocol, which he believes undermines the Good Friday Agreement, has added a further layer of complexity to this issue. With Northern Ireland now lacking an Executive, a solution to the Protocol that accommodates the DUP's perspective is now seen as the only way in which to move forward before the next elections in May – when the staunchly republican Sinn Fein is expected to become the largest party of the Northern Irish Assembly, and duly nominate the first Minister.[113] With Sinn Fein's popularity also soaring in the Republic of Ireland, the Protocol's negotiations may have major implications for the island of Ireland's political future and the future of the United Kingdom.

The bilateral tensions between the UK and our French neighbours are catalysed and intensified by the position President Macron seeks to hold individually, and the policy direction he wishes to advance, within the European Union. Specifically, for the EU to rise to the challenge of becoming a foreign policy superpower, which involves pursuing considerably deeper internal integration and approaching security and defensive cooperation as a united bloc. The perception of the UK's unwillingness to respect this ambition as fact, and the competitive spirit that has emerged as both sides seek to demonstrate their economic resilience from the parting of ways, have contributed to a breakdown of relations between the French and British administrations. The reality of the two nations' geography means that disputes over the handling of irregular migrant crossings in the Channel, and post-Brexit fishing rights, have become disruptive and dysfunctional – with a nasty and very public personal element to the diplomatic impasse.[114] The AUKUS announcement, which was made possible after Australia withdrew from a defensive contract with France, further exacerbated the febrile atmosphere.

The war in Ukraine has compelled constructive cooperation between the UK and France, and in early March the Foreign Secretary attended the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council, in a demonstration of respect to the EU institutions and their role in responding to the crisis. Fledgling trust has been complicated by a speech given by the Prime Minister in which he likened the Brexit vote to the Ukrainian resistance, and President Macron clearly believes that a tough line on relations with the UK is an effective strategy within his re-election campaign. Nonetheless, there is a hope that the very practical and tangible ways in which the UK and EU Member States and institutions have had to collaborate during this war in our collective neighbourhood, coupled with the early signs of a behind-the-scenes rapprochement of sorts under the leadership of the new Foreign Secretary, will move things forward more firmly onto more positive terrain over the coming year.

Rising Competition in the Indo-Pacific

There has been a significant increase in interest and activity over the past year in the Indo-Pacific region, being driven by our allies and strategic rivals. China continues to stake significant territorial claims in the South China Sea, including through its new Coast Guard Law, and has adopted an increasingly aggressive posture towards Taiwan. China has continued to intensify its military presence around the island, conducting regular aerial incursions into the Taiwanese air defence identification zone. In October 2021, for instance, Taipei reported the largest ever incursion of Chinese aircrafts into the nation's air defence zone, with 52 flights of Chinese military aircraft in one single day.[115]

The provocations from China have led to a bolstering of defences from the authoritarian power's major competitors in the region, as well as new defensive and strategic investments from other Western nations geographically outside of the Pacific. The Quad, an alliance of Australia, India, Japan and the United States has sprung into action, moving from its origins as an informal dialogue to the staging of an institutionalised Leaders' Summit, with commitments towards defensive, development and diplomatic cooperation. Meanwhile, Japan and Australia have approved the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, a pioneering new pact easing the movement of weapons and supplies between the two nations.[116] Japan's alertness to the scale and nature of risks posed by China has encouraged the G7 economic power to accelerate its defensive spending, to speak more openly about China's threats to regional security, and to forge deeper relationships with both the United Kingdom and the United States.[117]

India has also reinvigorated its support for the Quad alliance, as part of its wider investments in strengthening its defence and security capabilities.[118] This includes the purchasing of military weapons and hardware from Western allies, which are keen to ensure India maintains its, at times contested, status as a democracy in the existential battle against the rise of authoritarian powers.[119] However, Prime Minister Modi continues to play an independent game, and to make clear that he will pursue a path entirely guided by his interpretations of India's singular interests. Western powers were disappointed when he did not attend the G7 Summit, and

when he played a hard line on the net-zero transition at the COP26 Summit. More recently, India's refusal to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and indeed, to pursue favourable economic and supply chain exchanges in its wake, has reinforced the country's status as a fickle but indispensable partner for the West.[120] Given its significant strategic role in the Indo-Pacific as a potential counter-balance against the might of a rising China, the UK and its allies recognise the need to uphold positive relations with India, and will tread a careful line to maintain a focus on their longer-term strategic objectives.[121] Undoubtedly, the question of the diversification of India's defensive capabilities away from their entanglement with Russia must be seen to be a growing shared priority for the West.

The UK's growing interest in the dynamic Indo-Pacific region has also been matched by the European Union and its Member States. In February 2021, the EU's Trade Policy Review stated that the bloc's regional priorities should be focused on Europe and Africa.[122] In the subsequent months, the EU published its 'Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', outlining the bloc's proposals for cooperation on issues such as climate change and to increase trade with the region, culminating in a goal of negotiating a region-to-region trade agreement with ASEAN.[123] The publication of this strategy was preceded by dedicated strategies from France, Germany and the Netherlands. These strategies were distinct in the approach taken by the United States in a number of ways, including the framing – to varying degrees – of Beijing as a partner rather than simply a rival.[124] All three national strategies emphasise Indo-Pacific cooperation through political, economic and security means, in an attempt to maintain a multipolar region.[125] While there is a broad level of coherence, France's strategy is more explicit in its ambition to defend the sovereignty of the Indo-Pacific to oppose China, while Germany's approach is more balanced between these objectives. The Netherlands sits somewhere in the middle of the two and has been a force in driving the combined EU-wide strategy.[126]

While the European nations with interest in this region are bolstered by the trading and diplomatic power of the collective bloc, the UK has sought to amplify its presence through the deepening of existing non-European partnerships and ambitions for dialogue, partner and member status of key regional economic pacts. The forging of the AUKUS agreement, which replaced an Australia-France bilateral agreement, has contributed a degree of tension to the European interests in the region, and means that in the short-term there is likely to be several spheres of European-led influence operating in the Indo-Pacific.[127] This may be seen as an undesirable outcome, however it is also important to recognise that the United States also holds a complicated presence in the region, with its strong defensive interests eclipsing its participation in trading partnerships. In light of the invasion of Ukraine, the question of Taiwan's independence has become more urgent, and it is important for the West to consider how these distinct roles and independent approaches can be joined up and amplify one another, rather than falling into competition that makes future cooperation – particularly if compelled at speed and scale – more challenging.

China's Strategic Refinement and Developing Alliances

Although China's hosting of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics was unable to provide the global soft power dividend the country's leadership had conceived of – not least of all because of the persistent pursuit of a 'zero-Covid' strategy for all international attendees, and in the face of several major diplomatic boycotts from Western nations – the staging of the Games was notable for the opportunity it provided for the boldest expression of the burgeoning Sino-Russian relationship thus far. Presidents Xi and Putin convened in person, the first such meeting for President Xi since the beginning of the pandemic, and afterwards released a joint statement setting out a new bilateral international relations pact of striking cohesion. There were tangible outcomes from this conversation – not least of all, the provision of a new gas pipeline from Russia to China – but it was also remarkable due to the new alignment it offered for their hitherto distinct narratives about the global world order. The two nations jointly called on the West "to abandon its ideologised Cold War approaches", and set out a collective opposition to the enlargement of NATO.[128]

There had been some speculation that President Xi would compel President Putin to hold back from any formal invasion of Ukraine until after the conclusion of the Beijing Olympics, and indeed Russian troops began to move across the border in the days following the closing ceremony. The question of the degree of pre-emptive notification and formal coordination between the two authoritarian powers regarding the invasion remains uncertain. Certainly, the Chinese state appears to have been initially surprised by the scale and speed of the Russian attack, and it found itself on the back foot after the wider international community moved quickly to denounce the invasion and its implications for China's narratives around its territorial sovereign claim to Taiwan came into view. The West secured a concession of sorts in the decision by China to abstain from a UN Security Council vote condemning the war, rather than actively falling in behind the Russian position. However, more recently, the extent of China's interests in its economic and security relationship with Russia has become more visible and it is clear that China is attuned to opportunities to secure unexpected windfalls from the conflict.

The war in Ukraine provides China with an evidence base around the strength and power of Western unity, its pressure points, and the effectiveness of its efforts to shield itself from the reciprocal impacts of instruments such as economic sanctions. There appears to be a consensus forming that Russia's invasion has delayed President Xi's planning to attack and seize Taiwan, yet the emphasis on 'delay' rather than 'abandon' reminds the West of the need to begin to more proactively game-plan such a scenario as a cohesive alliance. President Xi is seeking to capture a historical third term at the Chinese Communist Party's Congress later this year and has already passed over a series of key hurdles to achieving this.

China has also continued to pursue profitable relationships with developing nations under its Belt and Road Initiative, including new and deeper partnerships with Argentina and Pakistan.[129] Many of its more recent initiatives, however, are focused on establishing common diplomatic positions, particularly in terms of challenging the supremacy of the Western-designed international world order. In the past year, China has re-signed a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance with North Korea. It has also launched the Iran-China 25-year Cooperation Program, which will complement the renewed Western Iran nuclear deal to support the economic recovery of the repressive authoritarian nation, while also offering enhanced military cooperation.[130]

China's actions on the world stage must be taken in the context of its evolving domestic landscape. The nation's fiscal position, which has been a key instrument of state power in recent decades, has become more contested, which has elevated the interventions being made by the Chinese Government in the private sector – with larger-scale technology companies particularly vulnerable to such interference.[131] The ongoing pursuit of a 'zero-Covid' strategy has also constrained China's economic recovery after the pandemic, with several major cities in strict lockdowns in the Spring of 2022 as the Western powers have opened up.[132] At the time this paper was published, the situation in Hong Kong has been especially acute – a development of special concern, as the economically valuable territory was only recently forcibly brought under the control of the Chinese state and the coronavirus pandemic has been cited as a justification for further measures to curtail Hong Kong's remaining democratic freedoms.[133]

While President Xi remains a calculating and strategic actor with a considerable degree of forward planning, he has also demonstrated his willingness to become increasingly risk-tolerant to secure key objectives that support his domestic governance requirements – namely, the need to provide a narrative of national cohesion and historical purpose, and to deliver economic growth and prosperity to the Chinese people. As China pursues its 'dual circulation' economic strategy – increasing international dependence on Chinese markets while strengthening its supply chain sovereignty at home – the West will need to be clear eyed about the limited legitimacy of the argument that economic entanglement 'binds' China to the world order. Moreover, to heed the lessons of the invasion of Ukraine to consider how best to minimise our own exposure over the short- and medium-term, to authoritarian-driven risks to regional and global peace and security.

The UK's Domestic Economic and Energy Crisis

The Integrated Review was drafted against the backdrop of significant economic challenges, with the UK economy shrinking 9.9% in 2020 due to the pandemic response, and experiencing its worst economic recession since 1709.[134] Over the last year, these economic challenges have only worsened, with the pandemic continuing to require colossal state interventions. As such, the UK's public sector debt is now estimated to equate to 96% of GDP (or £2.3 trillion), the highest ratio since March 1963. The Bank of England has also warned that inflation could peak at around 6% in April 2022, three times higher than the central bank's target of 2%.[135]

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has compounded the structural weaknesses in the UK's domestic financial position, in particular through its impact on energy prices – which were already spiking as a result of surging demand for energy as the world returned to 'normal' as the pandemic subsided, and by Russian reluctance to increase gas supplies to Europe.[136] These economic conditions will undoubtedly shape the UK Government's ability to follow through with its domestic and international ambitions, and the constraints these common stressors will impose on our global allies will also profoundly influence the wider geopolitical landscape in which we are seeking to implement the Integrated Review.

One obvious example is the UK's development budget, which was reduced temporarily until the UK's fiscal situation improves. The impacts of this spending reduction are both very tangible in terms of the programmes and initiatives the UK is able to prioritise, but also conceptual, as the UK's soft power and influence 'dividend' from development investments will, to some degree, be constrained.[137] Other areas of the Integrated Review have also been affected, including attempts to position the UK as a global science and technology superpower. For example, while it was announced in the October Spending Review that public investment in Research and Development would rise to £20 billion a year by 2024-25, an almost 25% increase in real terms, this represents a £2 billion reduction in target relative to those set in the March 2020 budget, which pledged to invest £22 billion a year by 2024-25. Furthermore, while much has been made of the significant uplift in defence spending that followed the Integrated Review, the Ministry of Defence has also subsequently faced a cut in its day-to-day spending in the October 2021 Spending Review.[138] It is therefore fair to argue that the UK is investing considerably in these areas and that the Review continues to drive the impetus for targeted spending, but that the evolving financial situation is tempering the relative scale of ambition.

One of the priority areas that could be most directly affected by the troubling economic environment is the UK's commitment to the net-zero transition. While the British people are persuaded that an intensified transition to renewable energy is the best solution to the weaknesses exposed in our national energy provision, the Government is seeking to diversify the UK's energy mix with short- and medium-term solutions that could theoretically involve less 'green' options, including coal.[139] The UK has also had to invest further in its strategic relationships with Middle Eastern powers, including a diplomatic visit from the Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia, despite the clear divergences of opinion between the two countries in terms of values and principles.[140]

The UK is not alone in grappling with these challenges and trade-offs, with our allies in Europe and – to some extent – the United States, also staring down the competing pressures of a cost-of-living crisis, energy security, and the defence and security demands of defeating Russia in its war on Ukraine. These vulnerabilities have intensified conversations about European strategic autonomy, and the role of energy independence in underpinning the legitimacy of this ambition. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the immediate insecurities these destabilising forces are imposing on domestic political environments will challenge leaders' willingness to pursue radical policies with potential short-term negative impacts on citizens already feeling anxious and vulnerable about their futures.[141]

Assessing the Ongoing Value and Viability of the Integrated Review

The UK has made substantive progress in bringing the Integrated Review's objectives to life in the year following its publication. In particular, the ambition to become a science and technology superpower has been supported by several strategic documents and tangible new funding investments. The UK's armed forces have also been bolstered – and just in time – to enable a more flexible and adaptable defensive response, and to facilitate the UK's outsized role in the NATO alliance. Several key international forums, such as COP26 and the G7 Summit, have enabled the UK to test the mettle of its convening and diplomatic power, and behind-the-scenes work with our allies to better coordinate leadership positions and organisational reform in major global institutions is making a genuine difference in rebalancing levers of influence in the favour of Western interests. The UK has also made advances towards its Indo-Pacific tilt through its application to join CPTPP, several new trade agreements, and securing dialogue partner status at ASEAN.

These are all important developments, which should challenge the pessimistic predictions of the observers who had feared that Global Britain was a fantastical ambition and that the UK intended to turn inwards in the aftermath of its departure from the European Union. The question now is whether the Integrated Review remains fit-for-purpose as the overarching strategy to guide the coming year and beyond, and how best the UK Government should prioritise the many different foreign policy areas demanding its attention in a time of increasingly constrained resources and an ongoing deficiency of internal bandwidth. It is certainly unusual to be sense-checking the relevance and viability of a strategic document intended to provide a long-term structural framework to guide UK foreign policy just a year after its publication, but it is a symptom of the tremendous degree of dynamism in the geopolitical landscape that compels us to do so. There are three key developments that justify a sharp-eyed interrogation of the UK Government's Integrated Review.

In the first instance, an unthinkable event has happened: Europe is at war once more. Moreover, this is a battle that is being fought on the ground, at sea, and in the sky, with the kinds of traditional military hardware that some had felt might be becoming less vital to our defensive capabilities. The authoritarian superpower China is also becoming more risk-tolerant and ambitious in the expression of its global influence, and the war in Ukraine firmly shifts the possibility that it will seek to seize Taiwan in the coming decade from the realm of the hypothetical to a realistic assessment. For its part, the West has undergone two seismic tests of its defensive and geopolitical muscle beyond the catastrophic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, and enters the second year following the publication of the Integrated Review confronting painful cost-of-living, inflation and energy supply crises that will bear down on leaders' domestic and international choices.

These circumstances force the question on some of the trade-offs alluded to, but not confronted or resolved, within the Integrated Review. In particular, the question of the practicality of the UK's stated ambition to rebalance towards the Indo-Pacific region – which may now need to involve a renewed emphasis on diplomatic, trade, governance, and development investments, as the UK's hard power military resources remain consumed in guaranteeing European regional security. The AUKUS agreement, which is currently in its architectural infancy but has ample scope for expansion across a wider range of areas beyond the nuclear submarine programme, can be a useful means by which the UK can contribute substantively to the defence landscape in the Indo-Pacific, without requiring the direct deployment of our defensive hardware. The intrinsic modern relationship between economic and security interests, made clear in the Ukraine crisis, also underscores the value

of indirect contributions the UK can make to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific through securing a seat at the table in CPTPP, ASEAN and in reinvigorated bilateral relationships around development, climate action and infrastructure investment.

Two of the most striking features of the Integrated Review were the emphasis it placed on flexibility as a doctrine in and of itself, and the expression of UK power and influence through partnerships old and new. In this respect, the Review's framework has been vindicated, as it enables the kind of elasticity required to recalibrate and prioritise around the changing geopolitical environment. There are, however, several initiatives that need to be seen as foundational to the implementation of the Review, and which have been made more urgent by the events of recent months.

The first of these is to inject a greater degree of resilience into the UK's relationships. The forthcoming mid-term elections later this year will set the stage for the instincts, intentions and capabilities of the United States, but it is also clear that there is a longer-term structural trend towards a more selectively engaged America in the world. The UK must reinforce and embed the relationship at a sub-political level as much as possible, but also prepare for a considerable degree of political friction in the short- and medium-term. We must confront the question of our own unique international role in an age where America may not always be aligned with our own assessment of our interests, and contribute to actively shaping methods of cooperation for the G7 and NATO in circumstances where America is not the centrifugal force driving these agendas. In addition, we must move at speed to make the case to the British people, increasingly sceptical of the concept of 'natural allies', of the value of our existing relationships in the West – including in Europe – and why these remain privileged and essential even in periods of political turbulence.

The second area of focus must be improving the UK's democratic resilience at home. The unprecedented sanctions levelled at President Putin's regime, the Russian state and the Russian economy, have also shone light on the many areas of vulnerability and moral ambiguity we have allowed to develop in our financial markets, legal sector and political sphere in the UK. We have made ourselves porous to external influence and infiltration and, in doing so, exposed British citizens to harm and undermined the UK's long-term national interests. The Integrated Review was commendable in its understanding of the need to pursue a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to resilience, but the integration of the Global Britain project into key domestic agendas or other intersecting areas of economic and social policy – such as higher education – has not yet taken place in a meaningful way. It is only through proactively seizing the initiative on bringing together our economic, democratic and social resilience as essential pillars of our national security that we will be able to shield ourselves, as these levers are undoubtedly tested further over the coming years in a more dynamic multipolar world of fragmenting risks.

The third key area to be prioritised within the Integrated Review implementation therefore must be a radical machinery-of-government restructure, to create stronger links, safeguards and cross-checks between departments housing key aspects of its objectives. This must include ensuring that well-resourced units across the Government are able to be ring-fenced from urgent crisis responses and remain focused on strategic planning for longer-term threat mitigation, such as the possible invasion of Taiwan, and the actualisation of complex generational objectives such as improving the UK and our allies' competitiveness within international infrastructure and technology tenders in the developing and developed world.

There is much that the Integrated Review correctly assessed and anticipated, and it therefore remains a significant and meaningful document, with considerable utility for Government and to those outside seeking to understand the culture and intent of the Global Britain agenda. As we move further from the conceptual design of the Review and into the underbelly of its implementation, the urgency to rise to the heights of its philosophy and ambition is heightening – meaning it is now time for the UK Government to rise to its own challenge.

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