House of Commons

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Update to the UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, HC 882

Tuesday 15 November 2022

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 15 November 2022.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Alicia Kearns (Chair); Stewart Malcom McDonald; Henry Smith; Royston Smith.

Questions 1 - 32

Witnesses

I: Air Marshal Edward Stringer (Ret'd) CB, CBE, Senior Fellow, Policy Exchange; Ed Arnold, Research Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

II: Andrew Seaton, Chief Executive Officer, China-Britain Business Council; Veerle Nouwens, Senior Research Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI); Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind KC, Former Foreign Secretary at Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Edward Stringer and Ed Arnold.

Chair: Welcome to this session of the Foreign Affairs Committee, where we will be looking at the integrated review refresh. We have two wonderful guests. I would be grateful if you could both introduce yourselves very briefly.

Edward Stringer: I am retired Air Marshal Edward Stringer.

Ed Arnold: I am Ed Arnold, research fellow for European security at RUSI.

Q1 **Chair:** I should just declare for the record that Air Marshal Edward Stringer and I have worked together in the past.

Today's session is looking at the integrated review, which was first announced back in March 2021. Since then, we have had the evacuation of Afghanistan, the illegal invasion again of Ukraine, and we have seen a more assertive China and a particular uptick in activities around Taiwan and an escalation of the hostilities there. We, as a Committee, are very keen to shape the integrated review refresh that the Government are currently undertaking, and we are very much hoping that you can help us shape those recommendations that we will put, hopefully before the end of the month, to the Government.

Kicking off, I would be interested in your views of why the integrated review refresh is needed and what key geopolitical and security concerns it should be looking to deal with at this time.

Edward Stringer: That is a very pressing question. Leaving aside the Ukraine war, which is the obvious factor, there are several things that, even if they of themselves would not have forced the policy unit to go back and refresh it and put it together, mean that this is a good opportunity to check some of the assumptions. After all, it did say that the acute military threat was provided by Russia, and that has proved to be the case.

An area that could usefully be recalibrated is the importance of the global south, which we are now seeing. The global south includes such superpowers as India. We had the 20th National Congress only last month in China, and we are seeing, post covid, the impact of Xi Jinping and the changes in China's policy, especially its foreign policy.

If I could link two together, we have had the NATO summit in Madrid in the summer, and so we have the new strategic concept. I would throw AUKUS in with that, because I note in the US national security strategy that the first two collaborative ventures that are mentioned in the executive summary are NATO and, immediately after that, AUKUS. Only after that are some of the more established groupings, such as the EU, which I found very interesting. Of course, perhaps there needs to be a recalibration of, and a looking back on, what the rather rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer might have told us about the way we go about shaping foreign and defence policy.

For all those reasons, it is a good time to recalibrate. I will argue throughout today that it does not need much of a shift, though it could be rebalanced a little.

Ed Arnold: I would agree. Instinctively, "Global Britain in a Competitive Age" is a document that does not need too much in terms of changes. There is probably more to do in terms of the defence command paper and the defence and security industrial strategy, bearing in mind what we have seen in the evidence that we have out of Ukraine. It is absolutely right to do the analysis now and it is absolutely right to do the outreach, which the Government are doing.

Whether it needs to be in a formal update, as we have seen in previous iterations of defence reviews, I am not so certain. Perhaps if the changes are only modest and in terms of changes of emphasis, it could be done in other ways, but I absolutely agree with Ed. In some ways, it already has been updated through NATO's new strategic concept, especially in terms of the commitment to defend every inch of NATO territory, which is very different from what was previously planned.

The fundamentals of the integrated review in terms of NATO primacy—the Euro-Atlantic being the most critical area—remain valid. "The UK's Defence Contribution in the High North" in March 2022 had some of what was already within the integrated review but gave another emphasis in terms of our commitment to northern Europe, so it has already been updated. Whether it then needs a little more is a question at the moment.

Q2 **Chair:** In terms of the drafting, I am very aware that there is sometimes a risk within Government of the original authors essentially marking their own homework. Is enough independence being brought to this review in terms of the characters, the individuals and the red teams? I understand it is the same MOD red team that is going to be red teaming it again this time. Have the structures and the personalities changed enough to ensure that we are being as radical as might be needed, even in a limited manner, to make this the right review?

Edward Stringer: John Bew is going to conduct the review, so you could say that is marking your own homework. I personally think he is an individual of great integrity. I do not worry about that, but I can see your point.

Q3 **Chair:** For clarity, I was not actually just thinking of John; I was thinking, throughout the entire system, about the same teams being stood up. Between March last year and now, there has not necessarily been a fundamental change within the civil service.

Edward Stringer: There is a new national security adviser, and there will be a new team around No. 10. I suspect that the new Prime Minister has a slightly different view. In fact, you might have already seen, from some of the announcements in the last couple of days, him trying to calibrate his position on foreign policy. There will be some fresh eyes.

A useful way of challenging providing a red team would be to create an independent panel or inquiry into the events of Ukraine, because there is

so much—without trying to do that here in public or to rehash the war—that comes out from the sense of societal resilience that we should be thinking about. An independent panel would cut through some of the orthodoxies.

Otherwise, you are quite right. There is a chance that people will cherry-pick the lessons we have already alluded to when they review the integrated review, based on the lenses that they have always looked through. There is a case to be made for a different panel to come in and have a look and, if nothing else, to provide a red team challenge.

Ed Arnold: I agree on the red team challenge. Annex B of the integrated review is about evidence and engagement. None of the previous SDSRs had that showing the working, where there was that wider engagement. I was in one of those sessions, and they took a broad range of views, both in terms of geography and the thematics.

There is a wider issue at the moment in terms of the flux of the UK national security machinery. In the original IR, the chapter 4 implementation is very short and effectively said that the national security adviser is going to implement all of this, do the review of the national security machinery, and then that starts to change to adapt to the Government of the day and the Prime Minister. The issue is that, when we have had a couple of changes of Prime Minister, that machinery does not get settled before it then has to change and adapt. That is a bit of an issue that could cause a bit of a distraction.

There is also the point that everyone is very busy. That is just a general statement, but I do really feel for the interlocutors that I have in the Cabinet Office, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the MOD. Everyone is incredibly busy at this point in time. A drafting process, even if it is a short one, which I understand that this update will be, still takes a significant amount of effort. That goes to my earlier point about whether it necessarily needs to be a formal update, as we saw with the new chapter in 2002, or whether it could be done by other means.

Q4 **Chair:** Air Marshal Stringer, you mentioned resilience, which was one of the core issues missing from the integrated review. There are lots of criticisms about the golden era with China and the fact that we were so hopeful in our aspirations. The problem there was that we did not plan to fail, and therefore there was no resilience built into the system. How do you feel the integrated review refresh can better look at how we build that resilience within our system, whether it is information, economic, military, diplomatic, energy supplies—you name it, across the piece? Can that be achieved within the integrated review refresh?

Edward Stringer: It can, yes, but you would have to create a team or a panel to do it, because there is no Government Department of resilience. Others do establish such Departments. The Swedes have just established a Minister for national resilience. Therefore, there will be a machinery there to look at it. You only have to ask yourself who would mobilise our railways in the way that the Ukrainians have managed to. I am sure we would fudge it. We would find a great British way of doing it, and we would find some heroes, but would it not be better to plan for it

beforehand?

We can look at that. Never waste a good crisis. The reasons for doing it are now absolutely manifest. Let us bite the bullet. In my Policy Exchange paper, I recommended that those looking at the lessons of the Ukrainian war should have their terms of reference expanded to look at national resilience. As I say, you would have to create a small multidisciplinary panel of experts to look at it.

Ed Arnold: In terms of resilience, an integrated review refresh has to be resourced both financially and in terms of effort. At the moment in Europe, the Nordics are held up as a sort of model for resilience, particularly the Finns. They all operate a whole-defence model. Not all are created equal, but the Finnish example is one to potentially learn lessons from but not emulate because, ultimately, it is societal. You cannot just export a model from one country to another and expect our resilience to increase.

We can do more on resilience. I agree with Ed that it is around the right time to do it in terms of societal resilience. We have just gone through the covid pandemic. We are now understanding how international military engagements that we are not directly involved with affect us in terms of the cost of living crisis and so on. Society in the UK are in the mindset of needing to take some of these things more seriously that they did not necessarily have to over the last 20 years, where we were primarily on discretionary operations that did not really impact our society as a whole.

Q5 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Thanks, gents, for your time this afternoon. Mr Arnold, you wrote a piece, "The case against reviewing the integrated review", last month. In the context of the February invasion of Ukraine and the time that has passed since then, in terms of delivering the key components of the IR—when I say "IR", I am talking also about the defence command paper that you rightly mentioned earlier—are there any areas where the integrated review has fallen short at all, from February until now?

Ed Arnold: I do not think it has fallen short. As a caveat, again, there is going to be a review of the integrated review. My argument was that, in terms of the balance of looking at the foreign policy elements versus the more defence elements, there is probably more value in looking at the defence elements early on, on the assumption that they need to wait for the foreign policy part.

These things are never going to be perfect. The UK got the fundamentals right in terms of the Euro-Atlantic being critical, Russia being the most acute threat across the domains, and NATO primacy, because that was a contested concept within European security. It certainly is not now. Ultimately, the IR said that what "Global Britain" means in practice is best defined by actions rather than words. The actions that the UK has achieved in the last 20 months are pretty significant, with a global span, looking at certain areas within the Indo-Pacific and especially in terms of Europe. They were not areas that were prescriptive. They were not actually defined as actions, as they sometimes are within the review, but we just went through them anyway.

I would say that the most significant of those are the security guarantees we gave to Finland and Sweden during the NATO accession process. That was quite an easy decision to make because they are both JEF partners, and we have done a lot of work bilaterally with them since.

The IR was slightly different from the other defence reviews in terms of there being a foreign policy baseline. It was deliberately there as a guide for future policy formulation. It gave you broad parameters but the UK, generally speaking, has worked well within those parameters.

Q6 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Since February, have any shortcomings been obvious to you?

Edward Stringer: I must admit that line in a written paper that actions speak louder than words was the one bit that caused me to read it twice.

I agree that it was fundamentally correct. When members of the commentariat that I speak to criticise the integrated review, my first question is, "Do you mean the integrated review or the defence command paper?" and they say, "Probably both". Those two papers—and there is a third, of course, in the industrial strategy—become blurred in people's minds, and they could usefully be separated. The defence command paper was not written enough alongside, and did not answer the questions posed by, the integrated review.

If we are going to think of these as a process—I know it is technically outside this Committee to look at what the MOD is up to—then, yes, review the integrated review but also probably rewrite the defence command paper. I have already hinted at the areas that would do with more attention. One is the global south, which got a little glossed over. The other area is the whole question of Europe, the EU and our relationship with it, which was raced over a little too quickly. I can see why, with the politics at the time. That would especially bear looking at again, not least given what is playing out in European politics at the moment, where you can start to see slight differences in approach between what you might characterise as the north and east, and the west and south of Europe.

Q7 **Chair:** You both concluded that the integrated review fundamentally got it right, which I do not necessarily disagree with. At the time, there was a lot of furore about the Indo-Pacific tilt and the fact that this has clearly been proven to be wrong because of the war in Ukraine, and that we should have been more focused on our neighbourhood. I do not think you have the freedom of choice in foreign policy to say, "We are just not going to engage in this part of the world", but has the Indo-Pacific tilt, as it was imagined within the IR, been realised? Are we making the right steps towards realising it? Looking back, were those criticisms unfair because they failed to grasp the realities of foreign policy, or were they reasonably justified?

Ed Arnold: It all depends on the interpretation of the tilt. I never looked at it as one of defence policy. Primarily, it was foreign policy and trade policy, although that was not officially within the terms of reference of the integrated review. There are a lot of trade parts in there. Where it

had a defence policy element, it was primarily in the maritime domain. This was not about overseas deployments within the Indo-Pacific.

In terms of security policy, we are already seeing, first, with AUKUS the products of that but, secondly, there has been the defence relationship and enhanced co-operation with Japan, which has a lot of opportunity.

The reason for the tilt—primarily that the geopolitical and economic centre of gravity is shifting over there—does not change, nor does the growing international stature of China as being a significant issue for the UK. I never read it as a military tilt.

I would be slightly concerned. I was always a little concerned that there was a risk of overstretch and of doing too much. Although in a previous answer I said that we have done a lot within the Indo-Pacific and within Europe, there is a question of whether that is sustainable, purely because of the effort and the work that Ukraine is generating. That would need resourcing, both financially and in terms of effort, and there is still a risk that we do too much and try to do too much.

Edward Stringer: The picture got skewed because the first deployment of the Queen Elizabeth carrier was to the far east, and we made a big brouhaha about it. Therefore, the optics of the military is now concentrating on it. As the American Senator pointed out, China is now a global phenomenon. Coming together with like-minded democracies to defend values and standards—we could argue about what the rule-based international order is—is not something where you have to ship a battalion overseas and base it just off the coast of China to play your part.

The global economy depends on all sorts of flows: flows of information, flows of people and flows of goods. Those flows, looking at the speed and the ethereality, are through cyber-space, space, airspace and the sea space. All those things need defending as a global commons. You can play your part here. Look at the tentacles of China, through belt and road, into Greek and Turkish ports, and even recently they have been buying up parts of Hamburg. We all play our part. As I say, we do not have to ship up the British military and package it so that it is based out in the Indo-Pacific to do what would be useful.

In terms of the rest of it, it is useful to keep reminding ourselves that the integrated review talked about the competition being essentially in science and technology, and how that affects what are two industrial revolutions coming together—sometimes called the fourth and fifth. The fourth would be moving to an information and data-driven economy from an analogue and oil-driven economy, and the fifth is making that sustainable. "Made in China 2025" has been about dominating the commercial and economic aspects of that. That also comes out of the US national security strategy.

As we have discussed already, it is about recalibrating that and pulling out some of the maybe slightly rushed assumptions that the Indo-Pacific tilt is all about the military and is now focusing on the PLA. It is not. It is broader, subtler and more nuanced. I will rehearse my point that the

defence command paper could have made explicit what it means for the military instrument of this country and where it plays its part in the Indo-Pacific tilt. I do not think it did that.

Q8 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I was sceptical of the tilt. I was never against it as such. My concerns were around resourcing, as you said, Mr Arnold, and that being sustainable. Frankly, my concerns were also political—a desire among the Government to be seen to do less Europe post Brexit. That brings me back to almost where you finished off in response to my question. I want to pick your brains on how the relationship with EU partners can develop in a refreshed IR. I have been an advocate of the UK and the European Union having some kind of defence and security treaty between the two, as the EU looks to do more through the strategic compass. I always get the two mixed up.

Ed Arnold: You are not the only one.

Q9 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I wonder, particularly in light of what has been happening in Ukraine, where you would suggest the Government could look to? Of all of the problems that the Government have with the EU over the protocol and much else, it strikes me that this is such an obvious space for quite positive collaboration.

Edward Stringer: It absolutely is. My position of 20 minutes ago was that the EU and Europe was glossed over a bit. Now we have generated some very strong relationships across Europe that have transcended our negotiation with the EU over that big B-word issue. Now that we are especially dealing with the JEF partner nations, which have rather sided with us in supporting Ukraine, I would argue that you can extend the relationships that are characterised by the Joint Expeditionary Force—10 very much like-minded nations. Remember that two of those, Finland and Sweden, are now in NATO and they host two of those companies vital to what I talked about before, the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions, in Nokia and Ericsson, the only companies that make 5G equipment of any note around the whole north Atlantic region.

It has been noticeable how the politicians from those countries have valued the relationship—thinking of Kaja Kallas, who was over here in London not that long ago. It has put the various partnerships into their correct places on the broader geostrategic landscape. We no longer see the EU and NATO being in competition in quite the way that was framed before: "We are not going to have an EU army and we are not going to have this". The place of NATO is absolutely solid now. Everyone has seen that. Hybrid conflict or confrontation requires more than a military instrument, and the EU is a good vehicle for that. As I say, the JEF nations are very politically aligned.

To paraphrase overheard remarks from a previous French military chief of staff, European defence is a nicety but defence of Europe is a necessity. That has become much more apparent to everybody who has looked at the Ukraine crisis, and we can now move on and build much more productive relationships.

Ed Arnold: I agree. The war in Ukraine has considerably changed the EU

in terms of being a security actor, and they have not finished that journey at the moment. They had a very difficult start to the war. As soon as the economic lever became apparent in terms of sanctions, they really stepped up a gear. The EU, in its global strategy from 2016—it is not a comparable version—and in a couple of documents since, has talked about flexibility, decision making and acting. It just has never had the threat presented in the way that it did when Russia reinvaded Ukraine.

In terms of how far it has gone, the European Peace Facility is the framework that it is using to fund military support for Ukraine. I believe that it has already gone into its budget to 2027 in terms of what it is donating.

You mentioned the strategic compass. Overall, I thought it was quite a good document. I thought the EU would have expected it to make a bit more of a splash but, bearing in mind it was delivered in March, it did not. There was a lot in there. However, they probably need to refresh that more than we need to refresh the integrated review. It is based on a November 2020 threat assessment, so it does not include Afghanistan, Mali and Ukraine. There is a lot more that the EU can do in terms of how it wants to be a security actor.

In terms of the EU-UK arrangement, I was in Brussels last week for a series of meetings, and I had similar meetings at the start of April this year. There is very much a different mood in terms of potential co-operation. It is far more positive.

There is also a cultural issue that we need to understand and then work out how to address. For part of the reasons that Ed mentioned, the UK's strategic culture is such that we prefer to have informal and flexible arrangements. We want someone to pick up the phone to say, "There is an issue here. I think we can do something about it. What can we potentially do?" The EU prefers not necessarily an institutional relationship but at least something more formal. On that spectrum of being very formal versus informal, we need to understand where we want that relationship to start.

There is certainly far more common ground than there was. Before this war, the primary question was third-party participation in CSDP missions for the UK. It is far broader than that, so there is a lot more that we can potentially do with them, and it is an area that needs addressing.

Q10 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Could you just talk a bit about how this good will turn into co-operation? What does it look like beyond what you have mentioned already?

Chair: As well as specific mechanisms, perhaps, for new intra-Europe security relationships.

Ed Arnold: It is predicated on a variety of things. We were expecting a NATO-EU joint declaration at the start of the year. That was delayed because it had to come after the strategic concept. There is still hope that it will be before the end of this year. That starts to, at a very high level, understand what NATO versus the EU do in terms of European security. That has been a cyclical argument for a long time. Certainly, when I

started doing European security, my dissertation adviser said, "Do not do this. It is boring and does not go anywhere".

The war in Ukraine has turned out roughly in the way that the UK and the EU do threat assessments. For example, in our national security risk assessment, we look at things in a fairly isolated manner. The war has brought this to life and has shown the consequences of not resourcing one thing or prioritising over another. That is what we now need to work through. This war started off as a conflict between two sides that we were not directly involved with. It started to suck in other actors who have an interest in its outcome. It is not just the military dimension. There is a humanitarian dimension, an economic dimension, and an energy and food security dimension. These things have been on our risk assessments for some time but they are usually on a low priority. There is also the protection of critical national infrastructure with the Nord Stream 1 and 2 attacks. There are a whole host of issues that we have been looking at in isolation, bearing in mind how the UK and EU perceive it. All that needs addressing within that overarching NATO versus EU framework.

Q11 **Henry Smith:** Does the refreshed and reviewed integrated review need to take account of either President Biden's US national security strategy or the US national defence strategy in any way? You mentioned at the start that AUKUS was referenced straight after NATO in the document, and before the EU. Should we remain pretty much in lockstep with Washington, or do the realities of a more European tilt, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine, change that at all?

Edward Stringer: That is a good question. I am really glad for the opportunity to answer it because I do not think it is a binary choice. All previous US Administrations that I can remember have—most of them politely, but one not very politely—asked the Europeans to step up and do a bit more. If there was a view among the US policy establishment over questions like Brexit, it was that, "We would quite like the UK to be a voice within". It is not a choice between being Atlanticist and looking to be in lockstep with the US all the time, and playing our part in Europe stepping up.

That said, Europe does need to step up. You can aggregate the demographics, you can aggregate GDP, you can show that the EU is bigger than the US and then you look at who has actually helped Ukraine. I know the next panel is going to concentrate on China but there are some voices—not so many in the UK now but some more on the continent—that say, "We must distance ourselves from the US view and we will arbitrate between the US and China". That is a luxury that we cannot afford, and it is not really open. The clash in values and standards are there as such.

To sum up my answer, there is a huge overlap between what is in the latest US national security strategy and the integrated review. Building on what Ed said in the previous answer, we can bridge to sorting out some of the defence and security architectures around NATO and the EU, and that would help in delivering both the integrated review and helping the

US. The US is still the indispensable superpower when it comes to defending democracies.

Ed Arnold: The US has said that alliances and partnerships are its greatest global strategic advantage. They have talked quite a lot recently about asking allies and partners to do more, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, but that is not necessarily directed at the UK. There is talk about China as the pacing threat, and you will cover that in the next session, but Russia also poses an acute threat. Obviously, it poses less of a threat than it did prior to 24 February. There is an argument to be made, in terms of EU defence co-operation, that Russia does not pose quite the same threat as we thought, so now is the opportunity to start to address these things. Europe has to do more. It has said that for a long time. It could possibly do that quicker but it is moving in the right direction.

In terms of geography, the US defence strategy mentions the Arctic as distinct from Europe as well. The UK has been orientating over the last decade to start to do more in the Arctic in terms of foreign policy and science and technology, as well as militarily, but focused on the High North. Those issues where the US wants Europe to do more are not addressed directly at the UK.

Q12 **Chair:** I am aware that we only have 10 minutes left, so I am going to put three questions together and you can choose which ones you want to answer.

One of the things that is quite absent from the IR but that has also fundamentally changed over the last year is the role of Turkey in the world, in that we have come to this position where Turkey has a unique relationship with Putin but we see them therefore being more intransigent on certain things because of this additional leverage they have. I cannot tell you that I know what the British foreign policy or defence policy really is in terms of Turkey. I am interested in your thoughts on how the IR could deal with that.

Secondly, Ed, you touched on the global south. When you say that was missing from the IR and that it is something that we need to flesh out, how would you see us doing that?

Finally, if we look at the war and the illegal invasion of Ukraine, the additional domain that has finally come to the fore is the information domain, which, as you and I know from previous work, I have always been evangelical about. We currently structure our defence and security around five domains: maritime, land, air, space and cyber. Information is missing from that. When I talk to the military and to diplomats, they think "hybrid" means cyber. They do not fully understand what "hybrid" means and that it is to have every aspect of your society under attack, and the fact that it all takes place within one information ecosphere. That is the way we should see it.

More concerningly, it seems that the military are, individually between the three services, trying to carry these five domains between them and, again, information is missing. How do we make sure that, within the IR, we recognise the importance of information warfare and that it is not a

subset of cyber? How do we make sure our armed forces and the foreign service, which carries out a great deal of information operations globally, are equipped to do that?

I will let you pick between those three, or all three should you wish to.

Edward Stringer: The best way to think about the information domain is that it surrounds and informs all five of the warfighting domains. It is not an MOD problem, though it has done some thinking about it because it thinks in terms of campaigning and planning things, and, forgive me, a lot of governmental comms can be quite reactive, and in some ways quite defensive and controlling in an era where you need to get out there and move fast.

This is where I come back to a team looking at the lessons of Ukraine, where Ukrainians have been very quick to stitch together privately available stuff, which essentially becomes critical national infrastructure with some Government capacities, and just make it work. We would still be floundering, trying to find a perfect solution to that long after the opposition had done something.

You are looking at China with the next panel. China has always had the three-warfare model: info, psychological and legal. We just do not think that way. To pick on legal, "lawfare" is almost a dirty word in the MOD and we shy away from it. Who is going to think about the legal domain, especially in such a legally based society as ours? In fact, the whole Anglosphere is, given that 1,000-year tradition. If we do not think in terms of how it can be turned against us in our own society, people are going to turn it against us, and then we are going to be reactive. The idea was taken up to go for the commission looking into Ukraine. How do we do information better across the conventional elements of Government?

Could I just offer an associated thought, linking into your first question about whether we are making a success of the integrated review? The Government are not very good at dealing with the tech industries. Just yesterday, preparing for this, I phoned a few friends who run them. Almost all the money is being pulled out of Government-facing tech industries in this country because it is just so difficult to deal with the UK Government. They tend not to be staffed at the top—and I include defence in that—with digital natives. We tend to stick bumper stickers to do with things like "information advantage" and "multi-domain integration" on all the plans that we are going to have, and just put a little bit more electric string around it, and we think that will do.

It would be interesting to see what comes out on Thursday with the financial statement and how we are going to position for growth and all that, given the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions. There is still a little bit of lip service paid to what it means to shift our societal approach to information to make the whole of the socioeconomy, of which the polity is such a key part, fit for the information and digital age. At the moment, we are at the point where—it is a caricature—we have all learned the right words to say but we are not yet doing the right things.

I would agree with the premise behind your question. It is a subset of a

much larger problem.

Ed Arnold: I agree with adding information as a domain. It needs its own focus. I also agree with Ed. Look at what Ukraine has managed to achieve using information operations to essentially enable, partly, their counter-offensives as well as to continue to secure western backing. It has been incredibly impressive to watch and they are still innovating in that area. We have not seen the last of it. The way that they can use it without worrying too much about procedures and so on means that they have just gone and done things that have had real demonstrable effects.

In terms of the classifications, it is an issue for UK national security departments and it is something that the integrated review really should focus in on as being that capstone document to get some standardisation between the Departments. I have worked in three separate Departments, both when I used to be in the MOD but also within the private sector, and the way that they look at some of these issues is quite stark in terms of the difference.

That is part of the reforms in the integrated review. There were quite a lot. The integrated review is not just the content, although that is specific for this inquiry. It has introduced a number of reforms of how to actually use the documentation. That could do more on trying to standardise across, so that we are all singing from the same song sheet. It is also cultural, and that is the real barrier. It is not just writing these things down in glossy PDF documents; it is also about starting to get those Departments to engage.

Yes, there is more to do on the global south, but it is more about trying to understand the messaging and the approach first, which we need to do a lot of work on. There is not the timeframe for putting too much of that detail within the integrated review refresh. This is not something to put out a very quick approach to. It requires more thought.

Edward Stringer: On Turkey, I have never known anybody sensible around the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign Office who thinks anything other than NATO being much better off with Turkey in than out. There are always going to be cultural and political difficulties, and we really need to think them through, and therefore put more effort into thinking that through. It would be very difficult to put that too overtly in a formal document but just look at what is happening in the Black sea at the moment with the Montreux convention and so on. The basic premise there is correct.

In terms of the global south, if aid ramps back up towards 0.7% of GDP at some point, we need to target it a little bit better. We cannot do everything. Putting aid, trade and foreign policy together a little more deliberately, and really targeting those areas in the global south, especially the major democracies, will pay dividends. It will be a long-term process.

Q13 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Underpinning a lot of what we have talked about this afternoon is defence spending, and there is this tortured—it is always tortured—debate going on about defence spending, and what will

happen on Thursday and in future financial years. Some thoughts from you both would be appreciated on what defence spending should be at.

Edward Stringer: The bold statement up front is that I do not think I have spoken to any ex-chiefs of defence staff who have not said something along the lines of, "I got to the top and I looked down and I thought, 'Where has all the stuff gone?'" I wrote in my last paper that £44 billion seems to buy us not that big a frontline, and I quoted some stats in it in terms of how many tanks the Poles are buying with a defence budget of about 40% of ours. If we were to concentrate a little bit more on what the vital outputs are, we could get more for the £44 billion that we spend.

How would we do that? I will rehearse here that, at the top of the MOD, there has to be the headquarters that is responsible and fighting and winning the next war, not just a Department of state that referees the bun fight between three services buying the stuff they want. Those are two very different questions. If you do not do the former, you are not investing in stockpiles and all the things that actually underpin real-world deterrence. I have satirised that as you can have the world's most expensive rifle but, if you have run out of money for bullets, it is not going to scare anybody. Were you the House of Commons Defence Committee, I could riff on that area for another hour—on how a bit of reform at the top of defence would set the right incentives, and those incentives would spend £44 billion a lot better.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Did you say you have a paper or something on that?

Edward Stringer: I have pushed stuff out on that already. I will speak to you afterwards.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I would love to see it.

Q14 **Chair:** Are there any final comments that we should have asked you about? Air Marshal, you touched on tech. Does the IR account for private individuals—people like Elon Musk? Should it, could it and does it need to?

Edward Stringer: On that last point, I mentioned the Ukrainian railways in the first question. What I would point out is the amount of critical national infrastructure that is now in private hands. You are underpinning my thoughts on resilience. How do you protect critical national infrastructure when it is in private hands and it may be subject to a cyber-attack by plausibly deniable advanced persistent threats—ATPs—who are essentially sanctioned criminals who are de facto funded by our strategic adversaries? The old answers on physical critical national infrastructure, protected in the physical domains by the three services, do not really cut the mustard anymore.

Ed Arnold: In some ways, the defence spending question is the wrong question because, when we have been talking and there have been a variety of numbers bandied around, there has not been a discussion on the corresponding uplift in the FCDO diplomatic budget. That is critical for realising the vision in the IR. It gets overlooked at the moment because

of everything that is going on.

In terms of the final point on the reforms that the IR introduced, it did not focus on the national security risk assessment because that was going under methodical review following covid. It focused more on national interests and fundamental values. That has been a better way of doing things, purely because it provides that wide parameter for future policymaking.

Referring to the last national security risk assessment, which was open source, there was a splitting out into tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3 threats. What we have seen is a tier 1 threat, which is international military conflict. Other tier 1 threats are cyber and instability overseas. Tier 2 threats are attacks and pressure on allies, weapons proliferation, CBRN, financial crisis and hostile foreign action. There are then others in tier 3, so I count 11 other risks that have been borne out from one risk, which was international military conflict. The reform of the IR and looking at it in a different way, not being prescriptive, has achieved actions that have created effect. I would like that to continue and not move back to what 2010 and 2015 did.

Chair: Thank you. We are very grateful to you both for your time today.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Andrew Seaton, Veerle Nouwens and Sir Malcolm Rifkind.

Chair: Welcome to the second panel of the Foreign Affairs Committee today, looking at the refresh of the integrated review. The integrated review was published in March 2021. Since then we have had Afghanistan and Ukraine. We have also seen an increasingly assertive China, and that is what we want to focus on specifically in this session, although please do feel free to call on other parts of the integrated review.

I want to start by looking at Taiwan because it was not mentioned in the original integrated review at all. I apologise; I am going to step back. I have not asked you to introduce yourselves.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Thank you very much for inviting me to help in this session. I will restrict my introduction to my connections with China, as it were. Because I served as Foreign Secretary from 1995 to 1997, I had responsibility under the Prime Minister for the final stage of the Hong Kong-China negotiations. I have been to China several times for conferences and so forth since then. I am a visiting professor at King’s College’s department of war studies, and China comes into the discussions and lectures I give, but the most relevant thing that I am currently doing is chairing the advisory council of a new organisation that has been around for about a year: the United Kingdom National Committee on China or UKNCC. I can go into detail if anybody wants me to, but I am purely in an advisory capacity, and today I am speaking in a purely personal capacity.

Andrew Seaton: I am Andrew Seaton. I am the chief executive of the

China-Britain Business Council. The CBBC is the not-for-profit national organisation representing UK business doing business in and with China. I have been running the CBBC for about 18 months. Before that, I was running the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. Prior to that, I had a career of about 30 years in the diplomatic service, including a number of postings both to Beijing and to Hong Kong.

Veerle Nouwens: My name is Veerle Nouwens. I am a senior research fellow at RUSI here in London. I have been here for about six years now. I lead the Indo-Pacific programme and cover Asia-Pacific and China more broadly. Prior to this, I worked for the European Union in Singapore, looking at regional security, and I have lived and studied in China and Taiwan.

Q15 **Chair:** I have given you all an insight into what my first question will be. As I mentioned earlier, Taiwan was very much missing from the first integrated review. I would be grateful for your thoughts on whether that was right, whether that needs to change in this iteration, and, more generally, why you feel this is an opportunity—if you do—for a real change in terms of how we tackle China within the integrated review.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: You are quite correct. Taiwan was missing, but not because it was not an issue. It has been an issue since the late 1940s. What has changed is not so much British policy but the Chinese Government's policy. It is not the policy itself because, as we all know, it has always had a claim not just to a legal right to Taiwan but to reincorporate it in China. I am not going to go through what Xi Jinping has done; that is very well known to those present today.

In terms of its implications, what I would like to share with you at this particular moment is what impact the Ukraine war is likely to have had on Xi Jinping's thinking. Until the Ukraine war, the assumption in China would be that there might be a lot of good reasons for not contemplating an invasion but that there was no question that, if China did decide to invade, it would be fairly straightforward for them to reoccupy the island. There would be a bit of a struggle but it would be straightforward given the comparative sizes.

What is relevant to Xi Jinping's problems today, drawing on Putin's experience, are several things. First of all, one of the reasons why the Russians have done so badly is because, although they had this massive army, it had never been involved in a serious war since 1945. Georgia, Chechnya and others were relatively minor affairs. Ukraine is a very big country of 41 million people. Invading a large country is quite different.

What is relevant to the Taiwan issue is that Taiwan is also a large country, relatively speaking. It has 21 million people. The only conflict of any size that the Chinese army has been in is Vietnam, some 30 or 40 years ago, and that did not turn out very well for them even though they had a common border. In the case of Taiwan, they do not have a common border, and so they start with a handicap that Russia did not have: that they first have to get troops in, which can only be by sea or air. Taiwan is not a very easy place to attack because of its topography. It is all mountains on the west coast with very few places where you

could actually land a force. You are having to depend on airborne landings and things of that kind.

Quite apart from that, the second issue that Xi Jinping will be pondering over is the extraordinary impact that Putin's actions in Ukraine had on NATO solidarity. NATO had been pretty flabby for years. Most people would agree that it, and the west as a whole, did not react terribly strongly in the case of the Crimea annexation and the Donbas. Because of Putin's behaviour, NATO has become stronger and more unified, and the great strategic genius of Putin has led to Sweden and Finland giving up neutrality for the first time in 100 years and joining NATO.

In the case of China, it will not be NATO that they are concerned about. NATO is not a Pacific alliance—it is a north Atlantic alliance—but the main players are the same. The United States is a Pacific power, not just an Atlantic power. That is how it distinguishes itself from the United Kingdom, France or Germany. Even without the fairly unambiguous remarks that President Biden has been making, it is pretty obvious that there would be a massive western reaction—perhaps a global reaction but certainly a western reaction.

The nature of sanctions is such that it could be infinitely more damaging to China than to Russia because, even though those sanctions would not bring down the Chinese Government or force them to change their policy, they would have to experience a sacrifice in terms of the global markets they have penetrated, in a way that Russia has not ever even dreamt of. Nobody buys things from Russia apart from weapons and oil and gas and so forth. The Chinese economy is integrated in the global economy.

The final thing is that the Americans have moved away from the ambiguity of the language they use, and Biden has made a point of saying on more than one occasion—so it could not have just been a verbal slip—that they would become militarily involved. That does not necessarily mean they would send ground forces to fight in Taiwan. It could mean that but it does not have to mean that. There is the US fleet and its air force, as well as the supply of weaponry to Taiwan. If Ukraine is to be seen as a relevant precedent, the amount of help that America can give, could give and perhaps would give would be enormous.

That does not directly involve the UK but everything I have said is relevant to the UK and Europe, but on a much lesser scale for obvious reasons.

Q16 **Chair:** Andrew, on that point around sanctions, we often hear the narrative—and please also feel free to answer the previous question—that sanctions would not really hurt China, because they would hurt us more than they would hurt China and therefore we could not afford to have a comprehensive sanctions regime should an illegal invasion of Taiwan take place. What is your view on whether the cost would be so great to us that we could not pursue them?

Andrew Seaton: I can speak purely from a business perspective. It depends a bit on what you mean by "our sanctions". If you are talking about the west in toto, then I agree entirely with Sir Malcolm that, given

China's much greater involvement in global supply chains and in global trade, investment and financial flows, the impact on the Chinese economy of the sort of sections that one has seen imposed following the Russian version of Ukraine would be much more significant than is the case of Russia.

If one is talking just about UK sanctions, that is a rather different story, but I think we are talking here about wider western sanctions, so there would be a much greater impact. Therefore, some of the slightly over-excited commentary one was getting around the time of the Ukraine invasion that this would somehow trigger some further Chinese action on Taiwan seemed very misplaced. China is going through some significant challenges of its own at the moment. The economy has slowed down. It is facing covid challenges. Those international trade and investment flows are very important for China.

All that said, read President Xi's comments about the centrality of resolution of the Taiwan problem to his overall strategy. It is important not to underestimate how important it is in that broader strategic view of where China sees itself in the world.

Veerle Nouwens: I agree with various aspects of both those comments. In terms of the reasons why China would not attack Taiwan right now, I agree PLA readiness, of course, is still something that they are working on. In terms of modernisation more generally, and in terms of command and control and very difficult things like amphibious landings, those are all areas China has publicly stated that they are still working on. That is a difficulty for them that they still need to resolve, and that mention in the work report of the 20th National Congress stating that that all needs to be accelerated points towards that.

Geographically, Taiwan is also difficult to attack. I would reiterate all the points that have just been made. On the flip side of that, there are some serious challenges for Taiwan itself. In the event of an invasion, there are no easy overland escape routes. Resupply will also be incredibly difficult to Taiwan, particularly if there is a blockade. That also plays into various scenarios where access to Taiwan will be incredibly difficult, or at least very complex.

In terms of economic response to Ukraine, one can question whether the private sector will be as willing to respond to a Taiwan scenario. That goes, as well, for Asian partners. There is a lot of diplomatic effort behind the scenes to be done there, to discuss what their responses would be.

To go back to your point of whether it should be included in the integrated review—yes, absolutely. It has always been on the agenda of greater Chinese ambition. This is not unique to Xi Jinping himself, but clearly there is concern over how China views its own regional security and in particular the problem of Taiwan. There is a case for mentioning it in the integrated review refresh. If it is too sensitive to be mentioned on its own, by all means include it with other flashpoints. I am sure there are also others that are worth mentioning.

I have one other point. We are often talking here about high-end invasion scenarios. There is an entire scale of activity that we can anticipate in the meantime, which could be very destabilising or, given the current climate, lead to miscalculation. It is a serious area.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Could I just add one point on a particular UK interest? One of the areas being speculated—we have just had it touched on now—is that instead of an invasion, which might be too difficult and too dangerous, the Chinese might decide to do an economic blockade of Taiwan, because they now have a powerful navy and other forces of that kind. The consequence of that, if that was to succeed—put to one side the consequence for Taiwan—would be to block freedom of passage for a very substantial part of the world's economic trade, not just with China, but with Japan and South Korea. That has very serious geopolitical, strategic consequences.

For example, having been very mild in their language since 1945, Japanese Ministers quite recently said that any attack—and they would have included an economic blockade of Taiwan—would be seen by Japan as a threat to its national security. That makes logical sense, because it applies to the UK as well. You will have better figures than I have, but I was astonished to find that something like 25% of our maritime trade goes through the Strait of Malacca and up through the Taiwan Strait, to markets in not just China but South Korea and Japan. We all have a very serious geopolitical and economic interest in this, but it is what has drawn the Japanese Government into a much more bellicose position—if I can use that phrase without exaggerating—than they would have dreamt of at any time since 1945.

Q17 **Royston Smith:** Can I ask you about your understanding of China's relations with Russia? How has the invasion of Ukraine altered China's strategic stance? I suppose if you are one of the biggest supporters of Russia then it is at least an embarrassment but, beyond that, quite a complicated position that China is being put in. I know we do not know, but what is your understanding of that?

Andrew Seaton: With respect, this is not really an area I feel, from a China-Britain Business Council perspective, very comfortable commenting on.

Veerle Nouwens: With regards to Russia, of course there were concerns following the strategic partnership document, in which they mentioned a limitless partnership. There is quite some evidence that that trust between the two sides is actually not as deep as we imagine it to be. There is, on both sides, a willingness still to hold certain cards quite closely, in particular in certain defence technology—for example, on Russia's side, not giving that to China.

Of course, in the wider scheme of things, it is a useful partnership for China and vice versa, certainly before Ukraine. China, in terms of its friendships, does not necessarily count the strongest countries, particularly in military prowess. Russia, in that respect, if we look at the

symbolic nature of the Vostok exercises, really showed that China is not alone and has very close partners. Optically, it really serves China very well but, underneath, there is not that much trust on either side.

In the greater global environment, where we see tensions between the world views that Russia and China put forward versus those of the west and its partners, clearly there is an opportunity for them to side with one another and propose an alternative. Having said that, after Ukraine, that has put China in a very difficult position. It is difficult to try to straddle both: on the one hand, supporting territorial sovereignty and, on the other hand, supporting your closest partner that has just invaded a country. In that respect, it has put China in a very difficult spot; it is one of its own making, of course.

Recent statements around the threats of nuclear force and China's public statement that this should not be used is another indication that things have gotten further than Beijing may or may not have anticipated. It is a complicating factor for China.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: It is sometimes said, "My enemy's enemy is my friend". For reasons of convenience rather than anything else, China and Russia—in particular, Xi Jinping and Putin—came close together. They came close together partly because they were both autocratic leaders. They represented an alternative global perspective and had common interests in anything that might weaken the United States and the west as a whole. They share that in common.

Beyond that, it is already obvious that there are real strains emerging in this so-called new alliance. The first thing one must draw attention to is that, although China has obviously been helpful to Russia, it has never once voted in the Security Council, as far as I am aware, in support of Russia. It has abstained, as have many countries. An abstention is a very specific act of policy. The United States would not be very pleased if Britain abstained, nor would we be if the Americans abstained on something crucial to our national interest. China has done that regularly. For India to do it or for other countries to do it, there are lots of other explanations. For China to do it is significant. Russia has relied on half a dozen crony states, like Syria and Belarus and so forth, as its only allies in the Security Council.

The second thing—this is very important, and it has become much clearer in the last couple of weeks—is China's deep antipathy to any possible use of nuclear weapons by Russia. This is not just antipathy to the use of them but to the threat of them, because that itself breaches a taboo that all nuclear weapon states have adhered to for a very long time. We always suspected China would be very unhappy with the various threats that were coming out of the Kremlin on possible use of nuclear weapons. I was sure that personally, privately, Xi Jinping would be saying to Putin, "Please do not do this", but he said it publicly.

He has said it publicly on two or three occasions, most recently in the most recent conference. Why is he saying that? It is not just because he

is worried, as the rest of the world would be, about the breach of the taboo. He has a particular Chinese interest, because if a non-nuclear weapon state, which Ukraine is, is either attacked or even threatened with the possible use of nuclear weapons unless they concede various political developments—in other words, blackmail—and that becomes a successful initiative by the Kremlin, guess what happens?

There are a large number of other non-nuclear weapon states that could be nuclear weapon states, and have agreed in the interests of global non-proliferation not to do so. The ones China is most worried about are self-evident: Japan, South Korea, and do not exclude Taiwan. Any one of these three countries, if it really thought its vital national interests were at stake, could produce nuclear weapons. That includes Taiwan. Think of how Israel has done exactly that, many years ago, because of its perception of a threat that it faced to its very existence as an independent state. I am not saying they are not concerned by the other issue, but the primary motivation for the Chinese is the consequences. That is probably doing quite a lot to make what was already irrational—the use of tactical nuclear weapons—much less likely.

The very final point I would make on the whole Chinese attitude to Russia is that it has become an embarrassment. Xi Jinping personally went along with Putin's line, "This will be, like Crimea, a one-week, two-week or three-week wonder. Yes, there will be a lot of criticism, but the Ukrainians are going to welcome"—all the usual things we have heard. It has not worked out like that. It is exactly the direct opposite. That embarrasses Xi Jinping because he allowed himself to be identified as Putin's closest chum, and he never was. It was a tactical, convenient relationship, which he would like to see himself extracted from as soon as possible.

Q18 **Henry Smith:** Following on from that, you mentioned briefly the 20th Communist party congress that we saw a few weeks ago. Do you think that that indicates that the UK should be shifting its policy towards China in any way? Further to that, Mr Seaton, you were mentioning that China is facing some real domestic challenges, such as covid and the economy. Does that mean China is perhaps less willing to flex its muscles internationally, also following on from having its fingers burnt over support for Russia through Ukraine?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Your question on the Communist party congress allows me to make a point I was keen to make today, because it is something which is not often enough heard. There has been a presumption that the real tragedy is that we hoped that China, as it became a capitalist country—it has done; it has joined the WTO and become integrated in the world economy—would become a more liberal and more open society, and that it might not be the same as us but would move in that direction. It has gone the other way.

Very regrettable though that was—and it was a mistake—the point I want to make is that we should not kid ourselves that, if it had gone the way that we wished and China had become and was still becoming a more

open society, that necessarily would have influenced their foreign and defence policy. When you look at the various steps that Xi Jinping has taken on Hong Kong, on the Uyghurs, on the South China sea, on various territorial claims with India, South Korea and Japan, these were not the product of communist ideology. These were the products of Chinese nationalism. These were national aspirations.

These were because China has, again, become a global superpower—there is no question about it—and it is behaving as global superpowers used to behave in the 19th century. Dare I mention the United States, when it became a global superpower, or the United Kingdom and the British empire? Two hundred years ago that was the behaviour taken for granted. It is not nowadays taken for granted, but it has nothing to do with communist ideology—quite apart from the fact that China is not a communist country anyway, apart from the name of the party that runs the state.

We have allowed ourselves to believe, "Oh, how terrible it is. We would not have had all these problems if China had only been more open in its development when it became economically and socially successful".

My final point on that is that does not change the reality of where we are. Whether I am right or wrong in what I have just said, the facts are that China is the other global superpower. It is behaving in a way which, in my personal judgment, is quite extraordinary for a highly able, intelligent man like Xi Jinping. It is one thing for him to upset the United States or the West or Europe or whatever, but he has managed to do something that would not previously have been thought possible: he has united every Asian neighbour he has, from Japan and South Korea to India, in opposition to what he is doing. Now, India and Japan, for the first time in history, have been having joint naval exercises.

India, which during the cold war never distanced itself from the Soviet Union and never joined the west in condemning the Soviet system, has now joined what is called the Quad. India, Japan, Australia and so forth have joined forces to try to find ways of containing potential Chinese aggression. That is a remarkable strategic mistake. We are in a fluid situation. That should be borne in mind.

Veerle Nouwens: One thing that has struck everyone coming out of the 20th party congress is the overwhelming power of Xi Jinping and the fact that we do not seem to have factionalism anymore within the CCP, which has always been a balancing of various different interests within the party and, indeed, the country—of course, to varying extents across different Chairmen.

It is clear, looking at his power, who has left the Standing Committee and who will now be in place around him, that it is a system of loyalty. That begs the question of who is in place to deliver Xi Jinping bad news. That entire information network and environment around him, which was already very opaque, now seems to have become even more opaque. That has direct implications for the UK and for other countries in how you

engage with China and how you try to get messages across, both within the country but also in terms of public messaging. That all becomes very important.

It is also key to note, within the party congress, that it is clear that China does not only see opportunity around it in the international environment, but also a worsening international environment for itself, with some serious challenges. In that respect, we can expect China, first, to go on a diplomatic offensive, particularly with the global south; secondly, to try to promote its own alternatives in various different areas; and, thirdly, to have a diplomatic initiative or offensive against the west.

As has been mentioned, China was surprised at the level of unified reaction to Ukraine. Looking at various European statements recently, and of course the visit of Scholz, that unity and consistency in our own messaging to China is going to be incredibly important and even more important in the years to come.

Q19 **Chair:** In terms of that point about global abstentionism and the fact that, as you said, Sir Malcolm, they are not going to find this natural alliance of neighbours who are concerned, and who are going to rise up against China should there be an invasion of Taiwan, what does the integrated review look like in terms of dealing with that growing global south versus global north abstentionism, as we might criticise it? How does that get dealt with within the IR refresh?

Veerle Nouwens: The important points are to understand what your own bilateral relationships are with these countries and what is most important with them as well, to ensure that you are hitting the mark in those bilateral relationships. It is also about communicating behind the scenes the wider tensions and sharing of information that you have with key partners in the region. Those are all avenues of policy that are worth engaging with and certainly worth highlighting in the integrated review refresh.

Of course, it is difficult. These countries will make their own decisions. Regional security is incredibly important. We have seen both China and the US try to walk back from the downward spiral that they were heading into during the recent summit between Biden and Xi. The regions made it very clear that they are deeply troubled by the level of escalation of tension and that they do not want to necessarily choose sides. What we need to do is have deeper, more comprehensive conversations with countries in the region on what their priorities are and how you engage with them as well.

Andrew Seaton: Just to pick up your question, Mr Smith, about the party congress, what struck me about it was that, in terms of lots of areas of Chinese policy, the view seemed to be taken that it was like a doubling down on existing lines of Chinese policy rather than announcing any particularly new initiatives.

The other thing that struck me was the very different context that China is operating in in 2022 as opposed to the last party congress in 2017. The world was very different then. The Chinese economic growth path was very different then. Just to pick up a point made by others, one of the words that figured most commonly in the work statement was "security". There was a very strong focus on China's view of its security, both domestically and internationally.

In terms of actual new policies or new policy directions, in my inexpert view there did not seem to be very much there. There were some quite interesting statements about internal policy, about shifting economic policy, about wanting to spread the benefits of China's growth more broadly to the population under this broad heading of "common prosperity". This reflects a couple of things.

It partly reflects that, even leaving aside the specifics of the current situation with covid and so on, there has been inevitable secular slowing down of the Chinese economic growth story, just because of the level of development it has got to. If you are seeing that, then ensuring that the benefits of that growth are spread more widely just makes economic sense, but it also reflects tensions within China about where the goods that were being produced by the economic growth were flowing within China itself. You see a pretty common line of economic policy, of other policy, reflecting that wish to spread the benefits a bit more widely in society.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Madam Chair, you asked about the implications of the review of the Chinese party congress. One thing that made me slightly nervous about the original integrated review, and which may be relevant at this moment, was the Government's aspirations for a global British policy—a global Britain. I have no problem with the phraseology. It is what it means in substance and what it might be interpreted as meaning.

If we want the integrated review to be convincing, not only to our friends but also to our opponents, we have to bear in mind the limits, not just the opportunities, on what we can do, particularly at the military level. Let us assume there is a crisis involving Taiwan or a crisis involving China. Of course, we will have full diplomatic support with the United States. We will have full economic support in terms of any sanctions policy. It is possible we might be able to provide some weapons for Taiwan, if that was thought to be policy. We might have the odd ship of the Royal Navy in the vicinity, but that pretty well sums it up.

It would sum it up even in normal circumstances, but as long as Russia remains at war in Ukraine, in terms of British national security interests, Europe and the Atlantic are even more important to us than the Pacific. That is the real world in which we live, and we certainly cannot be having a major naval force in the Pacific at the same time as that.

One has to bear in mind that the United States' interest is because they are a Pacific power. Pearl Harbour happened on its watch, as it were. Asia

is its nearest neighbour across the Pacific, just as the Atlantic is an ocean for us. Part of China's and Xi Jinping's objectives is to become the dominant global power, certainly in the western Pacific, certainly around the Chinese coastline, which you might say is not unreasonable for China, but, going beyond that, I suspect in an ideal world, from his point of view, to divide the Pacific somewhere in the middle, around Hawaii, between the United States and China.

That may not be for the next five or 10 years but that makes it inevitably, from the United States' point of view, pretty near the top of its own national security interests in a way that does not apply to western Europe, including the United Kingdom, where our interests are geopolitical and geostrategic, but they are primarily economic, cultural, values, human rights and issues of that kind.

Q20 **Henry Smith:** If I may further pick up on that, the integrated review refers to China as a "systemic competitor". We have certainly seen that not just in terms of the Pacific region, which you were just talking about, between the US and China. Certainly, we have seen that through the belt and road initiative seeking to grow Chinese influence in former Commonwealth countries such as the Solomon Islands and other parts of the Pacific, and in other hemispheres as well, such as in former Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and increasingly, potentially, in the Indian ocean as well. Do you think that sort of language in the integrated review, of a "systemic competitor", is right? Is that just a fact? Do you think that is helpful?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: It is a fact. Whether we like it or not, it is a fact and the review must refer to facts, not aspirations or hypotheses. It does not commit us to a specific policy because the question, therefore, is what the consequences are that flow from that. In that respect, our position is not dramatically different from the United States or other European countries.

I picked up a remark that Antony Blinken made in March 2021. He was talking about China. I will quote exactly what he said; it really summed it up. He said, "Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be, and adversarial when it must be". That principle applies to us, although the detail and the consequences will obviously be different for a country like the United States.

I was very pleased yesterday with the meeting between Biden and Xi Jinping. I did not expect them to agree anything. That is always the first stage. I was privileged to be present when Gorbachev and Thatcher met for that first time. I was involved in that meeting, on the margins in a very junior capacity. When Mrs Thatcher came out and said she believed Mr Gorbachev was a man with whom we could do business, it was not because they had agreed anything. They did not agree a single thing—she was the iron lady; he was the leader of the Communist party—but they began to trust each other. To trust someone, you do not have to

agree with them. It is when you actually think they mean what they say, and when they say what they will do they will carry it out.

We are a long way from that with Xi Jinping and we are nowhere near it with Putin, but that is the objective. That should be the direction of travel.

Andrew Seaton: I agree with what Sir Malcolm said. It was interesting that in the recent US national security strategy, published just last month, they referred to Russia as the immediate threat. They described China, by contrast, as their most consequential global competitor. There is an alignment of language there among our western allies, which reflects, as Sir Malcolm said, the realities of the situation.

Speaking again from an economic and business perspective, the point of view set out in the integrated review that it is possible to have a broad and multifaceted relationship with China—one in which we can stand up for our values and protect our vital national security interests but also promote our economic trade and investment interests—is the right balance to have. We all know that it is easier to have a conversation about difficult things when there is a broader conversation and broader engagement taking place. In that respect, the integrated review got that balance rather right.

The fundamental factors that drove the conclusions then are still very much at play. The UK has a strong economic interest in a sensible and well-managed trade and investment relationship with China. It is a very important export market for us. It supports hundreds of thousands of jobs across the UK. Particularly at a time when, for the Government, economic growth here is absolutely top of the agenda, frankly, to have a global trading policy that does not include a sensible, well-managed trade and investment policy with the world's second biggest economy does not seem to amount to a global trading policy.

In that sense, viewing those economic, trade and investment interests in the context of that broader, multifaceted relationship as set out in the integrated review seems to be very much a valid approach.

Veerle Nouwens: I would agree. "Systemic challenge" describes the relationship with China very well. I do not see any need to change that necessarily. I would say, though, that given the all-encompassing, multi-domain, multi-sectoral challenge that we are facing with regards to China, it calls for a stronger knowledge base domestically on China. There would be reason to do more there. That is something that I would certainly like to see more of.

Q21 **Royston Smith:** It seems that you are all saying that we can co-operate when we need to but compete when it is in our interest, but what would be the breaking point for the UK on economic relations with China? Exclude something like Taiwan. That is just obvious. What would we not be willing to tolerate in order to keep our relations on track with China?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: If you think back throughout the whole of the cold war, which lasted half a century, we never had total sanctions against Russia. We occasionally had periodic sanctions over Afghanistan and one or two other issues of that kind, but we never tried to have a total blockade of that country. If that could be true when we faced a very threat to our existence as a free country, if the cold war had gone the Soviet way, then that must be at least as true in the case of China.

The nature of the Chinese threat is a different one. The Soviet threat was not just Russian nationalism. It also represented what, at the time, was a global ideology that was an alternative to our own, and communism appealed to very many tens of millions of people in western Europe for many years. In France and Italy, the Communist party was the largest political party, although it never had power. The nature of the global threat from the Soviet Union was far greater than now.

China has huge handicaps on becoming the kind of global power that would replace the United States as the dominant world power. First of all, it has a cultural problem: its language. The English language has been a huge asset for us, but whether it is English, French or German, they are relatively easy to absorb. A tiny part of the world will ever be able to communicate directly in Chinese. That has, in terms of soft power, a massive impact, but it also has an impact in terms of the way the rest of the world sees China.

In any event, China’s aspiration is not to dominate the world. China’s aspiration is to be accepted and respected as the most important power in the world one day, and to certainly dominate its part of Asia and expect other countries to be doing what they are told, but it does not want to impose, so far as I can tell, within these countries a social and economic system or political system as the Soviets did. Whenever they could control a country, they imposed a communist dictatorship on that country. The nature of the threat is a different threat. It does not mean it is not a serious one.

In terms of your specific question, I see no good reason why economic trade should not continue, albeit we have to be much more sensitive both on supply chains, so that we are not dependent on China for parts of our crucial national infrastructure, and also on shared technology, so that we do not end up allowing them, either legally or illegally, to gain access to technology they do not yet have for themselves. That all has to change, and is changing, and that is very much to be welcomed, but on the basic question of trade—no. That is the way the world not only does work but ought to work.

Andrew Seaton: It is difficult to hypothesise what a situation might be that would lead to a complete breakdown, but I agree with what Sir Malcolm said about the nature of Chinese engagement with the world and with the world economy. It is very different from what we saw during the cold war with Russia.

In respect of safe economic and trade ties, there is the National Security and Investment Act, which applies a regime concerned with safeguarding the UK's national security interests in respect of inbound investment, whether that is from China or anywhere else. It is nationality-blind. That is quite right and proper. There are controls on the exports of key technologies, which are seen to be sensitive or seen to be ones that could boost China's military capacity. That too is entirely right and proper, but there are an enormous amount of trade and investment flows entirely outside those areas that continue and are very powerfully in the UK's economic interests.

It is interesting, talking about strategic dependence, that among the top 10 US exports to China, and certainly amongst the top Japanese exports to China, are semi-conductors and semi-conductor manufacturing equipment. The biggest UK categories of exports to China are things like cars, pharmaceuticals, health products and so on, very much tapping into that Chinese middle-class consumer market. They are not, in that sense, strategic commodities.

Secondly—yes, China is an important trading partner for the UK, as is right given its position as the second biggest economy in the world, but we are not yet at a point of strategic dependence. Actually, the UK exports less to China than does every other G7 country, and also Australia. It does not imply a general overdependence on the Chinese market. If one has the right guardrails in place to make sure that our vital national security interests are taken care of, in respect to both investment flows and outward flows of technology, there is every reason for us to be doing all we can to support our economy by supporting business in China in other areas.

Q22 **Royston Smith:** We are probably more concerned about what we import from, rather than what we export to, when we look at strategic dependence. What would be a breaking point for members of the CBBC with things like China's human rights record, for example?

Andrew Seaton: As I said earlier, I find it very difficult to think hypothetically about a breaking point. It is not entirely a cop-out, but we would know it if it happened, if I may say so.

Q23 **Royston Smith:** There is no feedback from your members currently that they feel uncomfortable in any way or that they might be reaching something towards a breaking point.

Andrew Seaton: Certainly, that combination, at the time of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, of the very broad western commercial sanctions, the massive withdrawal by western companies from Russia in response to the Ukraine invasion, plus some speculation about possible Chinese military action into Taiwan gave, as it would rightly do, many of our members pause for thought about what the implications could be for them were one to get into a similar situation in China.

Q24 **Chair:** I want to flip that question slightly. Royston is absolutely right to look at breaking points but, from a Chinese perspective, in respect of

Blinken's quote—and I would be guilty of making a similar sort of suggestion about how we can co-ordinate, contest or whatever we need to do—is there an element of us feeling like we can have our cake and eat it? If we believe we can have that relationship with them, do the Chinese, perhaps, think, "No, you do not get to have that sort of relationship with us. You do not get to collaborate on some, co-ordinate on others and contest on others", or whatever the phrasing might be? Are we looking at it through our lens rather than through theirs?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: There is a good point that you are raising because all the evidence suggests that China is more important to us than we are to them. We are a market of 65 million people. At the end of the day, although our economy is the sixth largest in the world, that is something that is not in itself comparable to what they are looking for.

One other point I would make, which also can be emphasised at this stage, is that it is terribly important for the United Kingdom, whatever its policy with China might be, economically as well as politically, that we try wherever possible to be in the same territory as both the United States and the European Union. I say that not just because it sounds better that the west is united, but also because the United Kingdom has a particular potential vulnerability. I am afraid it is the dreaded subject of Brexit. I am not going to go into the merits of Brexit. It is a vast subject. I am only talking about one element of this.

When China comes to think of how it reacts to countries that are displeasing it, the United Kingdom is now treated differently from Europe as a whole. We saw that, for example, when sanctions were introduced by China in March 2021. Sanctions were imposed on the UK, when 10 Members of Parliament or people with parliamentary connections were sanctioned. For the whole of the European Union, it was nine people who were sanctioned for similar alleged offences. In other words, they were going pretty gently with the EU, but the UK, as one country, could be isolated and, as they would see it, punished more severely.

I am not saying that should change our fundamental policy, but I am just saying that, because on most of these issues our view is in any respect the same as the United States and the EU countries, let us try to keep a common front wherever possible. There is no particular glory in the UK, as it were, charging ahead of the rest of the force.

Andrew Seaton: I agree with that. It is also worth bearing in mind the fact that the UK is not now part of a major trading bloc, which has that economic weight in dealing with China in the way that the US and the EU do, so in that sense there is a vulnerability there. If you look at the example of Australia, China accounts for nearly a third of Australia's exports. When there was that dispute between China and Australia, there were some pretty telling sanctions put in place.

The second point is that you occasionally get some speculation about wider decoupling between the US and China, and, indeed, there is a bit of a push-pull going on at the moment from both sides there. We have to

think about the position of the UK economy. Trade is about 50% of UK GDP. It is about 25% of America's GDP. The economic damage to the UK, both in respect of export markets but also in respect of access to supply chains and so on, puts us in a very different position than it would for the US or the EU as a whole.

Q25 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Sir Malcolm, you used the phrase "common front". That leads on to where I wanted to go, in terms of having that common front with other western or democratic-minded nations. To what extent do you assess the UK's China policy to be in lockstep with the European Union and the United States, and where do you see vulnerabilities or opportunities to create a greater common front?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: I would not use the term "lockstep", because that almost suggests an automaticity—that, whatever America or Europe do, we must necessarily do the same. We have to at least use our own judgment as to what is appropriate and relevant in a particular circumstance, but there is one additional point I make as well. What makes the UK different from America and the EU is Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has been, and continues to be, a responsibility for the United Kingdom. Although, sadly, two systems has virtually been destroyed by the Chinese Government, that does not remove our prime responsibility, more so than any other country in the world, to try to look after the interests of the people of Hong Kong, to try to either change, modify or respond, in certain circumstances, to further reductions in their freedom or interference with their way of life. That means we will be seeking to persuade America and Europe, and other countries around the world, to support us when something terrible happens or sad happens in Hong Kong that we believe deserves a response. That is the one major difference between the UK and any other western country, for the obvious reasons.

Q26 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** To develop that further, where do you think the areas of contention might be between us, the US and the EU?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: It is not so much contention as different circumstances. Between ourselves and western Europe, there is not much fundamental or obvious difference of basic interest. In terms of the United States, I come back to the point I indicated earlier. The United States has a geopolitical strategic interest because it is a Pacific power. We are not a Pacific power. Australia is. They have that interest, because it is ultimately their own national defence that could be at threat either directly, in the case of Australia, or indirectly, in the case of the United States.

In the United Kingdom and western Europe, in a realistic sense, we do not have that threat. The threat is economic, it is global—as to the impact that China might have of a negative kind—and it is also about values, the rule of law and concepts of that kind. That is the way I would put it.

Veerle Nouwens: When it comes to the UK's position on China vis-à-vis that of the European Union or European partners and then the United States, the US is obviously far more forward-leaning. I will say, however, that the threat perception is narrowing between those partners. That is widely shared, in terms of the type of challenge that China really presents.

There are differences, though, in approach. We can see that recently with US export controls, for example, which are quite wide-ranging and extraterritorial. We have seen some resistance there, in terms of public statements from Europe on how they go along with that too. In certain areas of technology, for example, there are differences in how forward-leaning the United States wants to be and is willing to go, in terms of setting the regulatory framework that everybody has to operate within, compared with, say, European partners. We see that, again, in certain areas of key technology more generally.

I agree with the point that keeps getting reiterated: the UK does not have a role, necessarily, the way that the United States does in military terms. It will always be a supportive partner when it comes to potential military defence scenarios in the Indo-Pacific, particularly the western Pacific, but that is not to say that the UK does not play a role or that Europeans do not play a role. If we look at the Indo-Pacific at its widest extent, that includes the Indian Ocean region where the UK has a great deal of assets. The same goes with small measures and steps like having two OPVs that roam the region continuously. That does a lot for building trust and interoperability and helping with surveillance.

Finally, as well, in the case of a Taiwan scenario, if we do think about a high-end scenario, an invasion scenario, there are questions as to what role European countries and, indeed, the UK with its maritime assets, can play in third locations, particularly maintaining the openness of sea lanes, of communication and choke points, and ensuring stability there. When we think about that military role that Europe can play, we think too narrowly sometimes, just around the immediate contingency of Taiwan, and not necessarily second or third-order domino effects that we might need to envision.

Q27 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I am going to take back the term "lockstep" after being chided for it, because I take the point entirely about it not being automatic. Thinking of alignment more broadly, where do you see opportunities for that? One that sticks out for me, a Scottish Member of Parliament, is around Confucius Institutes. Is there not an opportunity, with EU and US partners, for us to collaborate and align on something like Confucius Institutes, so that we do not have a situation like we have now here in the UK, which is where Scotland in particular has more Confucius Institutes per head of population than any other country in the world? I always only partially joke there is a reason Edinburgh zoo got two pandas and London zoo did not get two pandas. Are there opportunities for alignment on that type of front?

Thinking of, say, the German Hamburg ports situation, when partners do

go along, as the German Federal Chancellor has done—and it seems to very much be a project of the Chancellor rather than the Government as a whole—how should the UK deal with those types of situations, where a like-minded democratic partner does wish to depart, if you like, from a common way of working and the common front.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: As I understand it, the main controversy in Germany itself with the German Chancellor's visit to China was not so much the fact that he was going there and having dialogue on trade or economics; it was a specific question of the Hamburg port and the fact that the Chinese state-owned company was going to be given what turned out to be 25% ownership of what was an important port. That is a legitimate issue, not just for Germany. It would equally apply in the case of the United Kingdom or any other European country.

Given the experience that Germany itself had had with Russia over allowing some of its own assets to be controlled by Russian companies in the energy field, I was astonished that the German Chancellor felt it necessary to allow that to go forward.

Q28 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** How do we approach that, then, when a like-minded democracy goes off?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: We have got to be careful. We do not rebuke one of our closest allies in public. We have to use diplomatic language. That is what diplomats are for.

Andrew Seaton: I wonder if I could make a slightly different point, Mr McDonald. You are speaking about alignment. Again, speaking from the CBBC perspective, one thing that has struck me over the past year—maybe this has been a reflection of the UK political scene—is that there seems to have been a lot less top-level contact between the UK and senior Chinese policymakers than has been the case either with our European or US colleagues. It was quite striking that, after President Biden's meeting with President Xi, there was an announcement that further US Cabinet Ministers would be travelling to Beijing for further discussions with top Chinese leaders.

Janet Yellen had meetings with the Chinese Vice Premier earlier in the year. There was a top-level economic and financial dialogue between the European Union and senior Chinese policymakers. Whatever view one takes of China, it is an inescapable part of the global scene. There is no question of our not engaging with it. The only question is how we engage with it. For whatever reason, our top-level engagement with China on that broad range of subjects that we have been talking about—whether it is national security interests, concerns about human rights, global problems such as climate change, public health or our own economic interests—in that area, we have not actually been aligned with our European and American colleagues.

Q29 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Are we not aligned or just not putting in the resources?

Andrew Seaton: It has not been happening—let us put it that way—to the extent that it would have been good to see, both to take forward difficult bits of the conversations but also to take forward the bits of the conversation that were strongly in the UK's national interest.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: The Confucius Institute point is a mild obsession of mine.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Why do you think Scotland has so many, if I may ask?

Q30 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** We are so willing to accept them. Different countries will approach this in different ways. Sweden has been very active in closing them down, for want of a better way to put it, but I wondered if you had any thoughts on this. Is this is an area where we should be collaborating more closely with democratic countries?

Veerle Nouwens: It is an interesting point and it is certainly an area where you could collaborate. My concern with closing Confucius Institutes is that you should have a back-up plan on what you replace that with.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: It is about where the collaboration would be, yes.

Veerle Nouwens: That is an interesting and important point. When I think about collaboration and alignment—collaboration more so—we have seen a host of different initiatives come out that the UK has participated in or signed up to, including in infrastructure. Examples include our Minerals Security Partnership and the Partners in the Blue Pacific.

There is a lot of movement in that respect. The next step is implementation of these different initiatives, and that is where we will have to wait and see how that is done. If we look at the vast proliferation of infrastructure initiatives so far, which are certainly valuable because countries do need alternatives—we cannot criticise them for going a certain way, without giving an alternative option for them to consider—they have not necessarily delivered many results.

In terms of understanding prioritisation among ourselves, it is about what the key countries and projects are. What is the process for selecting projects? How do countries bring in public-private partnership? All those questions require further action and deliberation, and that is something that would be worthy of greater alignment and, certainly, greater resource delivery.

Q31 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** When we get the review of the integrated review, and we hopefully see development spending come back up from the UK, that would be an obvious area for collaboration.

Veerle Nouwens: That could cover a number of different areas, for sure. If you are asking about ODA specifically, of course economic times are difficult at the moment. I leave to the Government to decide what the best balance there is, but there is more work to be done in understanding among our partners what our specific niche contribution is, and where we

can really double down and offer alternatives. For the UK, that might be one thing. For Europe, that might be another. That type of burden-sharing, co-operation and finding different collaborative arrangements is absolutely key.

Q32 **Chair:** This is always my final question: what did we not ask you that you would like to tell us? Essentially, it is over to you to have the mic. My only shaping of that would be that I am very aware that the integrated review failed to consider, as it rightly said, NATO primacy. In the event that Taiwan were to be invaded, Taiwan has a defence agreement with America, not with the UK or other countries. America would have to shift quite significant resources to potentially be focused on the Pacific, an economic blockade or any such sort. As a result, the UK would have to step up as the foremost provider and guarantor of European security. Do you think the integrated review adequately considers a situation in which America has to be extracted elsewhere and the UK has to step up to fill that gap?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Part of the problem any of us would have in answering that question is that I would assume that, within the Ministry of Defence and within the UK Government, as within the American Government, there are various options and ideas being looked at as to how, in reality, the international community—the west and NATO in particular—would respond to a Taiwan invasion. It is not the sort of thing you can comment on publicly for all the self-evident reasons, but, whatever kind of crisis it was, the United Kingdom would have a particular responsibility and difficulty because we are, more than any other European country, a maritime power.

If there is an issue involving Taiwan, on the other side of the world, it is about the maritime dimension. Choke points and issues of that kind are themselves immediate challenges that have to be addressed. It is about the maritime contribution that countries can make. After the United States and China, although the United Kingdom is a long way behind, it is probably the third naval power in the world, and we would want to make a contribution. I come back to my earlier comment: the degree of contribution we could reasonably make depends on what has happened with Russia and Ukraine at that moment in time.

If that is now history and if Russia, in whatever way, is no longer seen as the kind of threat it is at the moment, then our contribution, particularly in the maritime area, can be more significant. If we were still in the middle of a war—God forbid—our primary responsibility has to be the north Atlantic.

Veerle Nouwens: I know there are differing opinions on the Indo-Pacific tilt and to what extent it overpromised. I do not think it did. It actually laid out quite a modest role for the UK overall, with the exception of one specific sentence, but generally it did not overpromise its attention span, specifically in military terms. It was all quite reasonable. The point is long-term planning and then also planning around specific contingencies like Taiwan. With the focus on Europe and the north Atlantic region in the

integrated review, it would be quite clear that the UK would maintain a strong role in its own region.

There is, again, language potentially to be included in one way or another around knock-on effects of a Taiwan contingency and what other areas and ways the UK could work with European partners to ensure stability.

Finally, on that point about it depending on what Ukraine looks like, that is absolutely correct. A bigger point, as well, that we have come across is the fact that stockpiles are being gone through quite quickly. The defence manufacturing planning aspect, in terms of preparedness, both for security here at home and also in terms of what we could potentially contribute further afield, needs to be thought out more clearly. That is, of course, a hugely complex problem.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: The one sentence in the integrated review that did make me rather concerned on the matters you have just raised—I wrote it down here—is that the goal was, said the integrated review, to be "the European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific". I do not object to that sentence if it is spelled out, because we do have AUKUS—the United States, Australia, United Kingdom defence arrangements—which have become a major issue in that area. We have the FPDA: the five power defence arrangements. You can say we are already more involved than other European countries, but that sentence, without being explained, could create expectations that we are not going to be able to deliver.

Andrew Seaton: I have a slightly broader point. It seems to me that in the integrated review, whatever threats we think we are going to be facing as a country, our ability to defend our national security interests is going to be greater the more prosperous we are as a country. If there is one thing that perhaps has changed since the integrated review last time, it is the emphasis on those economic security issues, which perhaps have more salience than they did a year ago. At the risk of speaking my brief, that reinforces the point about us having a sensible and well-managed economic relationship with the second biggest economy in the world.

If I can make a further point, to pick up from Veerle, the integrated review in respect of China did make some good recommendations about increasing China capability and China knowledge across policymaking circles, business circles and so on in the UK. Everything we have seen over the past year actually increases the importance of that, as we are looking at the medium-term prospects for our national security.

Chair: Thank you, all three of you, for a genuinely fascinating conversation. We are very grateful for your time.