



House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee

**Refreshing our
approach? Updating
the Integrated Review:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Fifth Report**

**Fifth Special Report of Session
2022–23**

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Foreign Affairs Committee

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Fifth Special Report

The Foreign Affairs Committee published its Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, [Refreshing our approach? Updating the Integrated Review](#) (HC 882) on 18 December 2022. The Government's Response was received on 16 May 2023 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

1. The UK Government is grateful to the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) for their report *Refreshing our approach? Updating the Integrated Review*.
2. Since the release of the FAC's report in December 2022, the UK Government published *Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world* (IR2023).
3. The UK Government undertook a refresh of the original Integrated Review (IR2021) to respond to the significant shift in the geopolitical context since its publication in 2021. It confirms that the UK's most pressing foreign policy priority is to address the threat posed by Russia to European security; sets out a new approach to manage the epoch-defining challenge presented by China, including risks to the UK and our allies' prosperity and security; and emphasises how the UK will do more to build our resilience to economic instability and energy insecurity, ensuring we are at the front of the pack in the technologies that will define the next decade.
4. IR2023 has considered and taken on board the proposals put forward by the FAC. The UK Government has engaged with Parliament, the devolved governments, external experts and wider stakeholders to inform IR2023.
5. This response addresses the Committee's recommendations in order in which they appear in the 'Conclusions and Recommendations' section of the inquiry report. We look forward to continuing to update and work with the FAC as IR2023 is implemented.

The need for an update

Conclusion/Recommendation 1: A full-scale refresh is only warranted, given the scale of resources and time required to complete it, particularly at this exceptionally challenging time for Britain's foreign and security policy, if the Government makes considerable changes or is prepared to fill in some of the gaps in more detail to justify this use of resources. Enhancing the resilience of the United Kingdom should be central to the refresh.

Agree.

6. The Integrated Review identified the trends that would shape the international environment to 2030. The UK Government's decision to publish a refresh of the Integrated Review reflects the pace at which these trends have accelerated over the past two years. We are now in a period of heightened risk and volatility that is likely to last beyond the 2030s.

IR2023 updates the UK's priorities to reflect the resulting changes in the global context. Our approach is an evolution of the strategic priorities set out in the Integrated Review – positioning the UK as a responsible, reliable and effective international actor, investing in the global relationships we need to thrive in an era of international uncertainty.

7. Resilience of the United Kingdom is central to IR2023, reflected in one of its four pillars, 'Addressing vulnerabilities through resilience'. This pillar develops the UK's approach to resilience as set out in IR2021, and sets out a long-term campaign to identify and address strategic vulnerabilities that leave the UK exposed to crises and hostile actors. The pillar sets out action to improve the UK's resilience by addressing vulnerabilities in five key areas:

- i) Energy, climate, and health security—maximising sources of supply in the immediate term, accelerating the transition to clean energy and net zero in the longer-term, strengthening the UK's resilience to the risks associated with climate change and environmental damage, and strengthening health resilience at home and overseas.
- ii) Economic security—remaining an open and outward-looking economy that welcomes safe foreign investment to drive growth across the UK, creating a new National Protective Security Authority within MI5 to provide UK businesses and organisation with access to expert security advice, and launching a new Economic Deterrence Initiative to improve our sanctions implementation and enforcement.
- iii) Democratic and wider societal resilience—making electoral processes and infrastructure secure, and strengthening the resilience of our democratic institutions to corruption and influence.
- iv) Cyber security and resilience—building the UK's cyber security and resilience through the National Crime Agency and the National Cyber Security Centre, implementing the 2022 National Cyber Strategy, and working with external experts in the new National Cyber Advisory Board to prevent, resist, and minimise the impact of attacks.
- v) UK border—reducing the UK's vulnerability to threats from state and non-state actors, stopping illegal migration, and protecting the UK's biosecurity.

8. This activity will build on robust action already taken since the publication of the 2021 Integrated Review to strengthen the UK's resilience and protect our interests from hostile state action, including: creating new powers to protect our critical industries under the National Security and Investment Act, bolstering the security of our 5G network through the Telecommunications Act, and training more than 170 civil servants in Mandarin.

9. Furthermore, in December 2022, the Government published the UK Resilience Framework, which sets out our plan to strengthen the systems and capabilities that underpin our collective resilience to all risks. The framework sets out three key principles that lay the foundation of our work, and how we deliver resilience:

- i) That a shared understanding of risk is fundamental;
- ii) That wherever possible, prevention should be adopted over cure; and

iii) That resilience is a 'whole-of-society' endeavour.

Conclusion/Recommendation 2: We recommend that the forthcoming National Resilience Strategy includes the creation of a national resilience lead. Effective implementation of this strategy would include regular cross-Government meetings that discuss shared efforts to improve UK's resilience to threats across all policy areas.

Agree.

10. The 2022 UK Government Resilience Framework set out the Government's plan to strengthen the underpinning systems and capabilities for resilience, with measures focused on risk assessment, responsibilities and accountability, partnership, communities, investment and skills. The publication of the Framework was a commitment set out in IR2021.

11. The Government will now build on this Framework, expanding the UK's approach to resilience by introducing greater emphasis on addressing strategic vulnerabilities that leave the UK exposed to crises or attacks. This will complement the action already set out in the Resilience Framework.

12. The new NSC sub-committee on resilience will be the regular cross-government meeting to consider issues relating to resilience. The Deputy Prime Minister will chair these meetings, as well as meetings of the new NSC sub-committee on Economic Security.

13. We have appointed a Director of Resilience in the Cabinet Office, who leads the Resilience Directorate within the Economic and Domestic Secretariat. To support the delivery of objectives in the Resilience Framework and to consider work taken forward in relation to specified risks, the Director draws together senior officials from UK government departments and the Devolved Administrations on a regular basis.

Designation of the People's Republic of China

Conclusion/Recommendation 3: The Integrated Review designated China as a "systemic competitor". Strong language that is not coupled by action does nothing to alleviate confusion, and risks increasing uncertainty and undermining our credibility. The Government needs to be firmer and more explicit in articulating the UK's security interests when it comes to China. The primary responsibility of the state is to keep its people safe. China poses a significant threat to the UK on many different levels. We would support the Government changing the language from "systemic competitor" to "threat" if it were accompanied by carefully calibrated and proportionate policy change, particularly on domestic resilience and security, rather than empty rhetoric.

Partially agree.

14. The UK has increasing concern about actions of the Chinese Communist Party as it becomes more authoritarian at home and assertive overseas. However, we must also recognise China's size and importance on almost every global issue, and the UK national interest in advancing British interests directly with China. The UK policy on China, as set out in IR2023, combines these two currents. As the Foreign Secretary said in his Mansion House speech on 25 April; it is impossible, impractical, and unwise to sum up China in one word, whether 'threat', 'partner' or 'adversary'. It is not smart foreign policy to

simplify our entire approach to China – a country of 1.4 billion people, the 2nd biggest economy in the world, and a permanent member of the UN Security Council – to a single word.

15. We will continue to take a robust, proactive, and multifaceted approach to our relationship with China, rooted in the UK's national interest and values. This is, as IR2023 sets out, an epoch-defining challenge for our country and the free world. In practice this means strengthening our national security protections wherever Beijing's actions pose a threat to our people or our prosperity, deepening alignment with partners in the Indo-Pacific and across the world, and engaging directly with China to preserve and create open, constructive and stable relations.

16. China remains, as identified in the original IR, the biggest long-term state-based threat to the UK's economic security. IR2023 affirms that, where tensions arise with our other objectives on China, we will always put national security first.

Coherence of Government policy on China

Conclusion/Recommendation 4: China represents an important security challenge for the UK; it is also an important partner. The Integrated Review acknowledged that the UK will need to continue to compete with China in some areas while cooperating in others. When updating the Integrated Review, the Government should address the long-term viability of this approach. *The long-term goal must be to foster greater resilience and economic diversification, so that in the future the UK has more freedom to choose its actions in response to any aggression or human rights abuses by the PRC.* Key to this is cooperation with key allies to improve our resilience, but also to ensure responses to hostile actions by the PRC are made multilaterally where possible. If we are more resilient to the PRC's weaponisation of supply chains, we can be more effective on the world stage as a global player. Britain should stand absolute against interference in our own country by the PRC and this should be expressed within the IR.

Agree.

17. As set out in IR2023, the UK is pursuing, with our allies, a multifaceted approach to China through three interrelated strands: protect, align, engage. While avoiding dependencies in our critical supply chains and protecting our national security, we believe that a positive trade and investment relationship can benefit both the UK and China. IR2023 commits to developing more robust measures to bolster the UK's economic security, to publishing a new strategy on supply chains and imports, and to a new Semiconductor Strategy to improve resilience of semiconductor supply chains at home and overseas.

18. We recognise the importance of coordinating with partners on this. This year we will deliver enhanced cooperation with the G7 on supply chain resilience. We are also strengthening our bilateral relationships, including through a new UK-Canada Critical Minerals Supply Chain Dialogue.

19. The Government also recognises the importance of upholding our values in our trade and supply chains. We are committed to tackling the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains and are taking robust action. Over the last year we have introduced new

guidance on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang, introduced enhanced export controls, and in February 2023 introduced new procurement guidance to strengthen the ability of government bodies to exclude suppliers linked to human rights violations.

20. IR2023 makes clear our concern about China's interference and espionage in the UK, as well as China using its economic power to coerce countries with which it disagrees.

The future of UK-Europe relations

Conclusion/Recommendation 5: It is important that the updated IR clarifies the nature of the UK's security relationship with key European partners and the EU.

Agree.

21. IR2023 sets out that the UK's overriding priority remains the Euro-Atlantic, which is essential to the UK's defence and national security, as well as to maintaining the rules-based international order. The UK is committed to playing a leading role in upholding the stability, security, and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic as a whole, providing leadership where we are best placed to do so. Our ambition is to build even stronger relationships with our European allies and partners based on values, reciprocity, and cooperation across our shared interests.

22. We will continue to extend our security cooperation with European partners through multilateral and mini-lateral forums such as NATO, the OSCE, the Joint Expeditionary Force, the European Political Community, and working with France and Germany to counter the threat from Iran.

23. NATO will remain the core of our deterrence and defence efforts. The UK will maintain our leading position in NATO in the decade ahead, and it remains our highest priority regional institution. We will lead a new conversation in NATO on burden-sharing and future defence spending commitments, beginning at the 2023 NATO Leaders Summit in Vilnius. We will maintain our commitment to spending 2% of GDP on defence, and aim to go beyond with a new ambition to invest 2.5% of GDP on defence, as the fiscal and economic situation allows.

24. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have cooperated closely with the EU and European partners, including France, Germany and Italy, building stronger security ties with partners in Northern and Eastern Europe. We have agreed new mutual security agreements with Sweden and Finland, and strengthened our enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia. Through the UK-France Summit, we have committed to a stronger bilateral security cooperation with France on areas such as energy security, illegal migration, supporting Ukraine, and establishing a permanent European maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific.

25. Building on our existing support to Ukraine, we will provide further diplomatic and military assistance in 2023—matching or exceeding the defence support we provided in 2022. The UK will also step up engagement with European partners such as Moldova and in the Western Balkans to boost their security and resilience to Russian interference.

26. We will continue to support peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland through maintaining our strong bilateral relationship with Ireland, as a co-guarantor of the Belfast

Agreement. The new Windsor Framework creates the foundation for a stronger UK-EU relationship. As part of this, the UK will directly cooperate with the EU on defence, through PESCO.

Balancing the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic

Conclusion/Recommendation 6: The Government should explain if, and how, it expects the UK to contribute to European security while maintaining the Indo-Pacific tilt, particularly at a time of considerably constrained resources. The IR refresh should also explain in more detail what policy objective the Government hopes to deliver with the Indo-Pacific tilt, or work away from the term “tilt”, and set out what the benefits to the UK will be.

Agree.

27. IR2023 sets out that the Euro-Atlantic will remain our core priority, bolstered by a reinvigoration of our European relationships, greater investment in our own defence, and a stronger military commitment to NATO. It is essential to our security, prosperity, and quality of life.

28. It also makes clear that the security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific are inextricably linked. The UK's policy objective for the Indo-Pacific is to support a free and open Indo-Pacific, a vision shared by many of our partners. IR2023 sets out our vision for the Indo-Pacific and how we will achieve it through strengthening our bilateral and institutional relationships, and delivering activity across our security, defence, climate, trade, investment, digital, science and technology priorities.

29. The Government recognises that we have now delivered our ambition for a 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific, and puts our approach to the Indo-Pacific on a long-term strategic footing, making the 'tilt' a permanent pillar of the UK's international policy.

Filling the leadership vacuum in unstable regions

Conclusion/Recommendation 7: We urge the Government to confirm whether it intends to deprioritise the Middle East and if so, how it will continue to promote peace and stability in these regions with fewer resources.

Partially agree.

30. IR2023 sets out that the UK's third geographic priority will be our wider neighbourhood: the regions on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic where developments have direct consequences for the UK, from migration flows to transnational security threats. This incorporates our long-standing focus on the Middle East, where there is significant competition for influence in the context of the wider geopolitical shifts.

31. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is not being deprioritised. It has long been and remains a critical region for the UK. MENA is increasingly marked by geopolitical competition and there is a proliferation of risks to the UK and our partners. Our relationships in the region are based on shared strategic interests, especially in defence and economic growth and trade, and a shared commitment to regional security and stability.

32. The security and stability of our partners in the MENA region is crucial to defending and promoting the UK national interest. In this context, we are deepening our defence and security partnerships and building our mutual resilience to threats. We are determined to work with our friends to contain Iran's malign influence in the region and to prevent nuclear escalation. We are working with partners across the region to mitigate the impact of Russia's actions on global food supplies and economies, as well as working together on issues like irregular migration. More broadly, we are working to address the root causes of threats such as conflict, fragility and lack of economic opportunities. We are ensuring that children in conflict areas such as Syria receive an education. In a single year the UK has provided 600,000 children with access to formal education and 179,000 children with access to non-formal education inside Syria.

33. The region is not homogenous but all societies need resilience against shocks and crises. We are working on initiatives to address climate change and adaptation, providing funding for education for women and girls, and we are continuing to deliver lifesaving humanitarian support, alongside longer-term efforts to reduce humanitarian need in MENA. Deepening our partnerships also opens potential for the region and the UK to build more connected, innovative and prosperous economies. The UK is developing new partnerships in areas such as life sciences and green technology with countries in the Gulf, supporting MENA countries to green their economies, provide an enabling environment for the private sector, and facilitating reliable, clean financing for development through British Investment Partnerships.

Conclusion/Recommendation 8: The IR should detail how the Government will actively fight to make sure the multilateral system remains one reflective of our core values and the rules-based international order. That means advancing a forward-leaning multilateral foreign policy and putting forward our own candidates in coordination with likeminded nations for key roles.

Agree.

34. IR2023 acknowledges that the transition to a more contested world means traditional multilateral approaches and defending the 'rules-based international system' are no longer sufficient on their own. Russia is the most acute threat to the UK's security and we have used our position in the multilateral system to respond robustly to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Our diplomatic efforts have led to:

- a) Isolating Russia on the world stage: Russia has been expelled from the Council of Europe, suspended from the Human Rights Council, and over 140 countries have repeatedly condemned Russia's invasion in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.
- b) Pursuing accountability: with the largest ever group referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC) of the situation in Ukraine, and the ICC issuing arrest warrants against President Putin and Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova.
- c) Securing international support for Ukraine: through supporting the UN, Red Cross, and World Bank in providing humanitarian and economic assistance to Ukraine; and co-hosting the next Ukraine Recovery Conference in London in June, to mobilise international and private sector support for Ukraine's recovery.

35. Beyond Russia, we seek to challenge other authoritarian states. We supported Iran's suspension from the UN Commission on the Status of Women; joined the joint statement of 50 countries on the human rights situation in Xinjiang at the UN's Third Committee and worked to secure the first UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution on Myanmar in more than seven decades.

36. IR2023 sets out that the UK will continue to support an open international order of enhanced cooperation and well-managed competition based on respect for the UN Charter and international law, shaping activity across strategic arenas where developments are most consequential for our national interests and the international order. We seek to do this by working closely with partners who share similar values, and challenging those who undermine the type of international order we want to see.

37. The UK uses the international human rights system to guide us in our obligations to promote and protect the human rights of all. We will continue to shine a spotlight on human rights violations. We offer advice and expertise to improve human rights adherence in countries across the world and continue to strengthen our partnerships with allies to protect rights.

38. We recognise that the multilateral system needs to change to accommodate new realities, and the UK will support reform of the UNSC to welcome Brazil, India, Japan and Germany as permanent members. We will also support permanent African representation in the UNSC, as well as further representation in other multilateral institutions including the G20. More widely, we work closely with likeminded partners to ensure that the UN works as effectively as possible. The UK is the permanent co-chair of the Geneva Group, an informal grouping of 17 UN members that share a common ambition to improve governance, management, and related reform initiatives across the UN system.

39. We also identify and support strong, merit-based candidates, both UK nationals and like-minded candidates from third countries, for multilateral roles. Where roles are contested through elections we prioritise across government and support our priority candidates with integrated international campaigns. For example, in 2022, we were successful in securing our priority election for a seat on the Council of the International Telecommunications Union, and supported the US to defeat the Russian candidate for the Secretary General Role.