



# HOUSE OF LORDS

The Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP  
Minister of State for Asia  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Mike Freer MP  
Minister for Exports  
Department for International Trade

4 January 2022

Dear Ms Milling and Mr Freer,

**Government response to the International Relations and Defence Committee report, *The UK and China's security and trade relationship: a strategic void***

The International Relations and Defence Committee has considered the Government's response<sup>1</sup> to its report, *The UK and China's security and trade relationship: a strategic void*,<sup>2</sup> published on 10 September 2021.

While the response provides helpful additional information in response to some of our questions and recommendations, there are several areas in which the Committee had hoped for further engagement from the Government.

The 11 areas where the Committee requests further information in writing from the Government are outlined below, with specific questions and/or requests for information. We would be grateful for a response by Wednesday 26 January 2022.

## **HMG China strategy**

We are disappointed that the response does not confirm whether the Government will publish a written strategy on China, which was a key recommendation of our report.<sup>3</sup> We infer from this lack of reference that the Government does not intend to produce a strategy, but it would have been helpful to have this confirmed.

Regardless of whether a strategy is published, we remain concerned that the Government's position on China is ambiguous. While we understand that some aspects of a strategy cannot be published for security reasons, this should not preclude the Government from setting out its overall position on China. This uncertainty is damaging to businesses and detrimental to our partnerships and alliances in the region.

In particular, it is not clear how the UK intends to balance human rights concerns and allegations of genocide with an economic relationship, and how it will prioritise when these

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7935/documents/82325/default/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7214/documents/75842/default/>

<sup>3</sup> Recommendation 7

considerations clash. Since the publication of our report these concerns have been discussed further, including in a House of Lords debate<sup>4</sup> on 25 November 2021.

1. In lieu of a clear written strategy, please provide further information on how the Government intends to make its position on China clearer, in particular to businesses and investors, which need greater certainty in order to make long-term economic decisions.
2. What account are the Government taking of recent developments in and accounts of human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang province, as expressed in the House of Lords debate on 25 November, and to what extent do these concerns inform their position on China?

The following sections cover specific areas on which, if there is not to be a written strategy, we would like to receive further detail.

### **China expertise**

3. In its response the Government refers to FCO investment in Network Shift, “prioritising more resource for the BRICS, including a cohort of new Mandarin speakers.” How many new Mandarin speakers were hired through the programme? How many of them are still working at the FCDO?
4. The response refers to an additional £3 million investment in China capability in 2021/22. What are the staffing goals of this £3 million investment?

### **Chinese language provision and investment**

5. The response gives some more detail about current Mandarin programmes in schools, but no commitment to greater support for Chinese language teaching and cultural exchanges.<sup>5</sup> Does the Government have plans to enhance or expand programmes such as the Mandarin Excellence Programme in schools?

### **Climate change**

6. We asked the Government to explain how it will include considered co-operation with China on climate change as part of its China strategy.<sup>6</sup> As a written strategy is not forthcoming, please provide further information on how the UK plans to co-operate with China in the aftermath of COP26.

### **Development finance**

7. The response does not mention the Build Back Better World initiative.<sup>7</sup> Please provide more detail on the UK’s intended contribution to the Initiative and how it will operate.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-11-25/debates/223D9BC0-8758-4DC5-A66D-D0E2753B62F9/ChinaGenocide>

<sup>5</sup> Recommendation 19

<sup>6</sup> Recommendation 39

<sup>7</sup> Recommendation 34

8. The response does not refer to our recommendation on Official Development Assistance.<sup>8</sup> As noted in the report: “As the UK seeks further engagement in the Indo-Pacific, Official Development Assistance cuts may create a void which may be exploited by China and the UK’s other competitors.” We re-iterate our recommendation that ODA is restored to 0.7% with haste, and request a response on this issue.

### **Regional security and the Indo-Pacific**

9. The response provides some information on how the Government plans to work with partners to achieve its objectives in the Indo-Pacific,<sup>9</sup> but it is brief. In particular there is little detail on how AUKUS, which was announced after the publication of this report, will help the UK achieve its objectives in this region. Please provide further information on this.
10. The information provided on defence-related science and technology coordination is also brief. Please provide further information on this, including how the AUKUS partnership might help the UK meet some of the R&D related ambitions outlined in the Integrated Review.
11. The response provides limited information on the UK’s response to and assessment of risks relating to developments in Taiwan. We understand the complexity of the situation, but greater detail on the Government’s view on these developments would be helpful.

### **Capacity building and soft power**

12. The report called for the Government to set out a soft power strategy for the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>10</sup> While the response gives some detail on how the UK will use soft power in the Indo-Pacific region, including via the British Council, this does not amount to a strategy. Please provide further detail on the Government’s soft power strategy in this region.
13. The response refers to the Newton Fund, which is currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. What has been the impact of the pandemic on the Newton Fund and other educational programmes in the Indo-Pacific?
14. The response gives an example of UK capacity building in the region, but does not refer to training, joint exercises or institution building with partners.<sup>11</sup> Please provide further detail on these areas, including examples if possible.

### **The UK and France defence cooperation**

15. The response provides some information on the alignment of the UK and EU’s approach to the Indo-Pacific, but provides little detail on the recommendation to

---

<sup>8</sup> Recommendation 44

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation 35

<sup>10</sup> Recommendation 28

<sup>11</sup> Recommendation 33

coordinate military deployments with France.<sup>12</sup> In light of the tensions in the UK-France relationship after the AUKUS announcement, can the Government confirm that it will continue to work to cooperate with France on military deployments in the region?

### **Supply chain resilience**

16. The response does not commit to undertaking scenario planning on supply chain vulnerabilities, as recommended in our report.<sup>13</sup> Will the Government commit to undertaking this scenario planning?

17. The response does not outline the cost to the UK of lateral flow tests from China.<sup>14</sup> What has been the total cost of these tests to date?

### **Impact of UK-China tensions on trade**

18. The response does not confirm whether the Government has conducted an impact assessment of the potential consequences of increased political tensions between the UK and China on British businesses operating in China, or Chinese investment into the UK.<sup>15</sup> Please confirm whether such an assessment has been undertaken, and if not, whether the Government will undertake one.

### **Freedom of research for Chinese students and researchers**

19. The brief response to this recommendation<sup>16</sup> does not outline the steps the Government and Higher Education sector should take to ensure Chinese students can maintain freedom of research. Please provide further detail on this.

As you will see from these questions, the Committee retains a strong ongoing interest in these issues. I look forward to your response, and to the debate on the report in due course.

Yours, as ever



Baroness Anelay of St Johns  
Chair, International Relations and Defence Committee

---

<sup>12</sup> Recommendation 42

<sup>13</sup> Recommendation 57

<sup>14</sup> Recommendation 58

<sup>15</sup> Recommendation 63

<sup>16</sup> Recommendation 46