

Written evidence submitted by Mr James London (INR0085)

Opening Comment. The Integrated Review, presumed to be inclusive to the Foreign, Defence & Security (Intelligence) Review, needs a long-term vision taking account of geopolitical concerns & threats most likely to damage the UK. The return to sovereign (independent) status next year requires careful, but not sluggish, realisation that the world has become more complex & less compliant to the rules-based order; neither Russia nor China show much evidence to willingly accept this aspiration - added to which, the U.S. has diminished leadership compared to her former pre-eminence. Turkey, Iran & N. Korea contribute combustible elements beyond their recognised national territory. The UK does have broad measures of soft power, though hard power has a diminished & nominal capacity. The UK must enhance international relationships with an effective fusion of Government effort to ensure critical needs are safeguarded from adversarial threats; hard power should play a more effective, if not nuanced, role.

Refocus, Review & Reform. This Review should be the genesis for a deep reappraisal of 'whole government' to generate an effective fusion/osmosis of national effort, synchronised for home & abroad. The ongoing pandemic illustrates weak processes of government, with many guarding their fiefdoms & funds. Refinement of what the UK possesses, with a fused & consolidated approach, should be the method of dealing with the increasing complexity of internal & external challenges that face us now & will continue into the decades ahead.

FCO. The absorption of overseas aid within the FCO provides an opportunity to refocus & create an effective fusion of international effort & outcomes. The Department should be primus inter pares for overseas issues, with embedded liaison teams from Government Departments to add value, developing an effective & resilient international effort. The FCO should provide such competences to Cabinet & National Security Committee (NIC) for geopolitical forecasts, assessments & courses of action, from which Defence & Intelligence can derive concepts, plans & effort.

Grand Strategic Concept. The term 'grand' should identify the long-term objective to promote a cross-Government & cross-party fusion to re-establish the UK as a revitalised sovereign maritime trading nation. The creation of a taut & stream-lined Cabinet would generate both efficiency & effectiveness, with time to question the veracity of ideas, so that decisions would not be prisoner to change. The Review should be a key part of this concept, so the nation can manage developments, deal with them & be better placed to respond to evolving tensions & threats.

ForDefSy Strategy. Cabinet, NIC, & cross-party input (Select Committees), should develop a long-term concept (open & classified) to focus on global regions, states of concern & those more likely to be, or evolve into, a threat. The Review's outcome should provide the Armed Forces (AF) & Intelligence with clarity to focus their effort on long-term national needs. International circumstances are anything but straight forward, with issues developing at increasing speed & complexity. The UK needs to address priorities & resources beyond her near abroad (Europe).

The global order-of-things is under strain, with liberal democracies stumbling & becoming less unified. An increasing number of states use aggression to their advantage, disregarding international law, whilst hiding behind the lack of evidence against them. The global hierarchy has changed creating new challenges & friction. The Chinese BRI concept has bought a considerable number of UN votes, finding considerable favour in Africa & increasingly in Europe. Economic sanctions, though a powerful tool, have failed to restrict the continuance of illegal behaviour, whether substantiated or not. Turkey is increasingly assertive in the Mediterranean, undermining NATO unity. Iran & N. Korea continue to irritate & inflame their regions. CRINK (China, Russia, Iran, N. Korea) undermines the rules-based-order with swathes of the world over-shadowed by Sino-Russian developments, whilst the U.S. has faded.

International Relationships. Two particular alliances are the bedrock of the UK's international ambition: 5 Eyes (5E) & NATO. 5E has a known depth of cooperation, understanding & history; though globally spread, with differing priorities, concerns & threats, it should be strengthened & preserved. NATO has been a successful military alliance on the European continent - its future synergy seems less certain. A third component, the Commonwealth, should be energised & a UK focus (specifically on Africa); various relationships should be mutually enhanced using aid money to add real value to benefit both parties, thus creating more focus & a better fusion of national capabilities.

Outline to a Grand Strategic (overseas) Concept

FCO. Enhanced manning at home & overseas is needed to generate specialist teams, developing a deep knowledge of countries. The use of expats, whose links & experiences have a valuable insight & awareness, is over-looked & ignored - this needs to change. There should be an invigorated effort to generate an assertive & sustained approach, promoting the UK's soft power to gain better access to strategic resources. Aspects of the AF should be focused with specialist & technical assistance to safeguard fragile aspects/tensions in selected states. The UK's aid should be refocused on BOT & those Commonwealth states overwhelmed by socio-economic factors & more prone to suffer from natural disasters.

AF. Politicians need to determine what the nation requires of her AF, within the context of foreign policy: support to the BOT's civil authorities, as one example, would promote soft power with prudent use of harder power. The AF are not equipped as a fire & rescue service only to deal with local pre-determined scenarios at no-notice; they need to be better equipped & prepared to respond to critical international needs/requirements, with an understanding of the likely duration of any such commitment. Politicians should not undervalue the long-lasting value accrued from use of the AF to support beleaguered states after serious/catastrophic events; these do recur & such deployments tend to erode systems faster, requiring increased maintenance & premature replacement. Two particular examples illustrate the value & impact the AF can provide in support of Government & at short notice:

- Sierra Leone (Ebola outbreak).
- Caribbean (post Hurricane support).

Intelligence. Recent & considerable historical evidence has proven how the lack of accurate verifiable information has either been ignored or simply discounted, thus preventing timely & sufficient preparation of national effort. Funding is always a pre-eminent factor, but a real & effective level of national insurance, in respect to security measures & hard capabilities, must be the Government's first & absolute priority. HUMINT, TECHINT & CYBERINT are increasingly critical (within the context of 5E) but it is ultimately the AF who are the nation's guardian & can project hard power: when diplomacy reaches a critical point, the choice is appeasement or action.

Summary. The Integrated Review should underpin the UK's future strategic safety in an increasingly unstable global order-of-things; it needs more focus & investment in time, effort & resources. The likely hysteria if cherished institutions are financially restricted needs to be anticipated & dealt with by skilful preparation, cross-party effort & the simple fact - 'our island nation needs greater resilience with an effective international perspective'. The sound bite "global Britain" would be better suited to a more nuanced term, namely 'developing international relations'. The UK has always had a critical reliance on maritime trade routes, with many crucial resources (e.g. rare earth minerals: increasingly important) only being available from overseas sources & markets. These plain facts need to be stated so as to ensure that our people fully understand the importance for Government's strength of purpose to benefit national resilience with the necessary capabilities. Aid funds &, soon to be former, EU payments should be realigned to enhance Government's fusion-of-all-things. Strategic shortfalls need to be minimised along

with increased national effort to limit the effects of natural phenomena, along with any threat to our national safety & security.

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