

Written Evidence from Chatham House Research Programmes (IRR0031)

1. This evidence is compiled from contributions from researchers at Chatham House (listed at end). We have attempted to address key aspects of the 2021 Integrated Review, focusing on how the UK should address the future of UK-China relations, as well as broader changes in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.
2. The 2021 Integrated Review highlighted Russia as ‘the most acute threat’ to the UK, which has proven to be correct. The UK needs also to prepare for other challenges and threats be they in the Indo-Pacific or due to climate change or pandemics.
3. In light of the challenge to international law that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has posed, it is important for the government to show leadership in supporting the international rules-based order, both at the UN and in other forums and contexts. The increasing challenge to the universality of human rights requires collaboration to uphold and protect human rights with partners worldwide.

China

4. The Integrated Review identified China as a “systemic challenge” to the UK. China’s global ambitions have become more apparent since early 2021, and it’s more aggressive stance towards Taiwan result in resources – both military and non-military – being re-allocated from the Euro-Atlantic region to elsewhere. The UK should be planning for contingencies in multiple theatres and determine criteria for the prioritisation of areas of engagement should China pursue a more expansionist foreign policy. This work should include consideration of the full array of tools at the UK’s disposal, from diplomatic, economic, scientific and technical to military projection of power.
5. In recent years, the UK government has increasingly framed the Chinese Communist Party as a major threat to the UK’s long-term national security. It has also taken a range of steps to shore up the UK against the risks posed by Beijing, from implementing investment and research screening processes to blocking high-risk vendors from sensitive parts of the telecommunications network and implementing a new law to curb malign foreign interference. Some of these measures are overdue, after a long period of naivety about the risks of economic, political and technological engagement with Xi Jinping’s China, and the Integrated Review should be clearer about how they will be implemented. For example, the Integrated Review should specify how semiconductor investment will build on UK’s competitive advantages while making the most of economies of scale achieved by close collaboration with European and US partners; and how decisions to exclude Chinese-owned companies can be taken in the most efficient, coherent and timely manner
6. But they are all largely defensive in nature. The UK lacks a positive vision for how it should engage with China and the rest of the Indo-Pacific, a region where the future

global balance of geopolitical and economic power will be contested and determined. The refreshed Integrated Review needs to set out how the UK will sustain enhanced levels of engagement in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in Southeast Asia, a key crucible of geopolitical competition, while investing at home in the UK's Asia literacy.

7. The government needs to invest more in research and education about China as well as the rest of this dynamic region. Whatever the UK does to protect its national security at home, China's connections in Asia and across the world will only deepen in the coming years and decades. The UK needs to learn how to live in a world where Chinese power and influence will continue to grow from Asia to Latin America and across the UN and other multilateral organisations.
8. The UK's Indo-Pacific ambitions cannot be sustained by government-to-government engagement alone. The government must support wider societal efforts to build the UK's connections in the region. It should consider investing in: boosting Asian language and cultural capabilities in the UK, scholarship and dialogue programmes for officials from the region, study abroad schemes for British students and more research that helps explain the region to policy audiences and the public in the UK.
9. Expertise in China is already very limited in the UK. Expertise in other key Indo-Pacific partner countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam is even more thin. How can the UK government hope to sustainably boost trading and political ties with these countries unless it backs broader efforts to build knowledge and networks around them?
10. Expanding the UK's knowledge of, and relationships in, Asia will help British businesses as they look for new opportunities in fast-growing but challenging emerging markets such as India, Indonesia, and Vietnam.
11. Investing more ambitiously in the UK's Indo-Pacific partnerships will not just create opportunities for British business but will also support partners' goals to develop their economies, upgrade their technology and boost education and skills. Ultimately, key developing nations in the Indo-Pacific are less interested in how the UK frames the region rhetorically and more interested in what we can do to help them boost their economic and social resilience, at a time of heightened global uncertainty.
12. There is a virtuous circle in which the government invests in increased Asia literacy at home, supports a sustained increase in business and political links with the region, and generates new economic opportunities for the UK and key regional partners, all-the-while better preparing the UK to manage the long-term risks presented by a China that is becoming more authoritarian and assertive. This will not happen for free. But rhetoric cannot substitute for policy. This is an investment in the UK's future that is worth making.

Russia and the war against Ukraine

13. The 2021 Integrated Review emphasised that Russia remained “the most acute direct threat to the UK” and identified correctly that Russia would be “more active around the wider European neighbourhood”. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2021 demonstrated the severity of the situation and the risks for the wider Europe.
14. Providing military and technical assistance to Ukraine is a UK vital interest. Quite apart from the moral imperative, not to continue would damage the UK’s reputation – particularly since the UK has done more than most so far. It is important to note the critical role that the US has played in supporting Ukraine and the UK should continue to work with its European partners in this regard.
15. The UK has been a specific target of Russian attacks throughout Vladimir Putin’s long tenure as president. Therefore, contributing to Russia’s defeat on by Ukraine will make the UK safer from Russian attack in the long-term.
16. To be clear: the UK should not be involved in regime change in Russia. However, policies that weaken the Kremlin’s grip would be in the UK’s interest. The Kremlin is an adversary and its ambitions for weakening the UK and Europe more broadly will not be diminished by anything other than the leadership’s eviction by those Russians who believe Russia has taken the wrong path. The UK’s efforts thus far have been commendable. But this ‘clarity of goal’ is missing from the debate.
17. At the same time, the UK should be a haven for progressive Russians who are fleeing persecution. (The British peoples’ generosity with Ukrainians in peril is well known.) This includes, but is not limited to, Russians in the fields of social science (including international relations), science and technology, culture and students. But note that fleeing persecution and fleeing the draft are separate things. This too has a moral dimension, but it also sends an important signal, and will benefit the UK’s relations with the Kremlin when ‘a different Russia’ is born.
18. The outcome of the war in Ukraine will have a significant impact on how Russia will act in the future. It is therefore important that the UK and its partners’ support for Ukraine is consistent, and that sanctions on Russia are also maintained consistently. Additionally, there is a risk that the war will continue at varying levels of intensity for a long period of time. This would have an adverse effect on security in Europe overall as the resulting activity in the information space would not be contained to Russia and Ukraine.
19. Russia’s threats to use nuclear weapons in the war, assuming that they are not carried out, will have to be addressed after the end of hostilities. The response from NATO and the nuclear weapons states in NATO (France, UK and US) has been to carefully de-escalate the rhetoric and make it clear that any nuclear attack would not, in the first

instance, be met with an in-kind response. Such a clear-headed response has shored up conventional deterrence, increased trust in NATO-decision-making and helped demonstrate to the Russian public that NATO is not an irresponsible alliance.

20. The US is continuing to engage with Russian officials to ensure that the New-START strategic nuclear weapons inspections are still continuing. A follow-on strategic nuclear arms treaty to New-START (which is set to expire in 2026) will be a strategic priority for the US and NATO. There needs to be increased multilateral efforts for other arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament treaties – particularly in biological and chemical weapons, and for the protection of space activities.
21. European security architecture will need to be addressed and restructured, depending on the outcome of the war. It is clear that Russian aggression in Europe will need to be dealt with so as to increase long-term resilience for security structures in Europe. This should be addressed via concrete plans for closer cooperation with the EU and other European countries (in mini-lateral and bilateral formats).

Cyber Security

22. The cybersecurity parts of the 2021 Integrated Review rely on several key concepts, including cyber power and cyber deterrence. The revised version should address how the displayed integration of cyber tools into armed conflict and military operations (evidenced in Russia's war in Ukraine), changes the utility of these concepts. It should acknowledge that close allies, such as the US, have explicitly moved away from a "pure" deterrence framing and seek to ensure coherence with such strategies. It should specify how the UK will support military operations using cyber tools, especially (as in Ukraine) including the involvement of ambiguously dual military/civilian communications and private actors.
23. The updated Integrated Review should align language on cybersecurity with the UK's 2022 National Cyber Strategy; for example, regarding the UK's contribution to NATO cyber capabilities – both defensive and offensive – as described in the 2022 National Cyber Strategy (Objective 159), but not in the Integrated Review. It should also align with the UK's position in ongoing cyber governance processes, for example in specifying how a "criminal justice response" to cyberattacks is compatible with current negotiations on a UN Cybercrime Treaty.
24. The updated Integrated review should consider more explicitly the threat to undersea cables and global connectivity posed by maritime interference. The UK and its allies are reliant on key chokepoints in UK and international waters, and recent events have demonstrated the vulnerability of undersea assets to deliberate sabotage.

Disinformation

25. The Integrated Review included a focus on the challenges to democratic governance posed by disinformation from malign actors, and Russia's war against Ukraine has demonstrated in practice the extent to which disinformation is a central tool in modern conflict and influence campaigns. The UK is a target of Russian disinformation and cyber operations. Other European countries also experience information influence campaigns, some of which exploit citizens' fears over rising energy prices. Recent advances in technological capabilities, such as advances in deepfake technologies, increase the difficulties in identifying, mitigating and tracking. Continuing efforts to strengthen the UK population's resilience to mis- and disinformation is vital, as is coordinating allied responses to information and cyber security threats. More emphasis should be placed on collaboration with international partners through instruments such as the European Centre for Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.
26. The war in Ukraine has shown new conflict dynamics which may reoccur in other conflicts. This includes the crowdfunding of military equipment as well as foreign nationals joining the Ukrainian military to fight for Ukraine. Both of these trends can be influenced by social media marketing campaigns and can exploit vulnerable populations. While the UK supports the Government of Ukraine, these tactics could also be employed against us by adversarial governments. It is therefore important to monitor these developments and consider under what circumstances they might be used, and whether certain actors are more likely to use them in conflict.

Conflict prevention and stabilisation

27. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought a stark focus on great power competition and warfare. The focus on upstream conflict prevention efforts, including better understanding of what levers are effective in which specific contexts, in the Integrated Review remains essential. The establishment of the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) has been a useful starting point to create a central 'hub' for conflict prevention. A crucial next step, however, is to build structures and processes within the FCDO and UK Embassies that allow for constant touchpoints between the OCSM and colleagues from other units (including regional teams) to enable upstream analysis and preventive action to take place

Middle powers

28. The Review outlined the geopolitical importance of middle powers in the context of increased geostrategic competition. Subsequent events have shown that this is not just about the influence of middle powers in global forums, but also a shift towards bilateral or mini-lateral cooperation on single issues based on shared interests. The UK should participate actively in such efforts. The AUKUS (Australia/UK/US) arrangement on nuclear-powered submarines and emerging technologies is a good example. Another is the prospective cooperation between the UK, Italy and Japan on Future Combat Air

Systems.

The Arctic

29. The Integrated Review positioned the Arctic as an important region for the UK. Until recently, the Arctic was characterised by collaboration among those states that have interests in the region. Russia's war on Ukraine signals the end of Arctic exceptionalism. Resource competition in the Arctic will increase as the region is affected by climate change. China is already seeking out Russian cooperation in the Arctic in order to be able to benefit from opening trade routes and the potential to extract resources. The UK needs to prepare for a stronger presence in the region, together with Nordic partners – either through NATO or through bi- and mini-lateral arrangements.

Energy security and the Environment

30. Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrated Europe's dependency on Russian gas. While the UK itself is not directly dependent on Russian gas, it is experiencing significantly higher energy prices – and their detrimental impact on economic activity – as a result of Russia's gas supply leverage over other European countries. These events have underscored the importance of accelerating the transition to clean and renewable energy in the UK, including through working more closely with European allies and partners on practical steps and enablers (e.g. interconnectors).
31. While this transition takes place, there is a risk of exacerbating conflict in fragile states who are part of the supply chain of critical minerals essential for new energy sources. The UK must work with partners to support conflict sensitive approaches to mining and extraction of critical materials needed for the transition.
32. Russia's invasion of Ukraine highlighted the fragility of globalised food and energy markets to supply chain disruption. Globally, disruption resulting from the invasion has been compounded by ongoing economic impacts from COVID-19, and by extreme weather. Market reactions to supply disruption have driven poor policy choices (such as export bans) which further amplify price inflation, leading to decreased affordability, and in some instances availability of food and energy. Such cascading and compounding impacts have implications for global security, contributing to widespread cost-of-living crises, labour disputes, displacement of people, civil unrest, destabilisation of governance, and, potentially, further conflict.
33. Given that the impacts from climate and environmental change are expected to increase in frequency and severity, 2022 is not an outlier, but rather provides a potential foretaste of the future – more shocks in a contested world less able to deal with them. Shocks leading to cascading impacts are likely to become more frequent and material. Hence resilience-building of societies at home and abroad needs to be an

increasing focus of our efforts to ensure national security.

34. Mitigation of cascading impacts can potentially be achieved by reducing:
- Hazards. Climate change mitigation will reduce the escalation of disruptive events, as will investment in diplomacy to enhance peacebuilding and multilateral cooperation.
 - Exposure. Building more resilient domestic supply chains or reducing the exposure to direct hazards overseas. This could include investments in resilient agriculture in other parts of the world.
 - Vulnerability. Using ODA to reduce inequality and support sustainable development abroad reduces vulnerability to shocks, and so the potential for displacement of people, civil unrest and further conflict.
35. 2022 has highlighted the reliance on globally fragile “just in time” supply chains that underpin our national energy and food security. A securitised approach to supply chains would place less reliance on “the global market” for sourcing essential goods and would take a more deliberative approach to ensuring resilient supply chains, “just-in-case” supply chains rather than those that are lean, efficient but fragile. This can include:
- Preferentially sourcing critical goods from allies (“ally shoring”)
 - Ensuring a greater degree of self-sufficiency (“on-shoring”) through incentivising the local production of goods for local use
 - Building redundancy into the system, such as through real or virtual stores of critical goods
 - Diversifying supply chains, to reduce reliance on critical ‘chokepoints’ where failure disrupts all supply
 - Decentralisation or modularisation of supply chains (again, to avoid critical points of failure – such as a single logistics hub, port or processing facility)
 - Increasing agility, flexibility and substitutability – to allow rapid reconfiguration in the face of disruption, quickly restoring functionality.
36. Whilst frequent horizon scanning, and quantitative forecasts (e.g. of weather hazards), can provide significant forewarning (e.g. the Agricultural Markets Information System, AMIS) the radical uncertainty that arises from the interaction of market, social, political and geopolitical responses to a shock (whether caused by an environmental hazard, conflict or other cause) means predicting cascading risks significantly in advance is highly imprecise. However, we can, with some confidence, recognise that shocks leading to cascading risks are likely to become more frequent and material, even if predicting specific shocks is difficult. Hence resilience-building of societies at home and abroad needs to be an increasing focus of our efforts to ensure national security.

Development aid and health

37. One of the major consequences of the crises triggered by the war in Ukraine, has been the significant reallocation of the UK’s, already reduced, ODA financing from non-

emergency development assistance towards emergency humanitarian support in Ukraine and funding the costs of the refugee crisis. In particular, there has been a substantial cut in social sector spending in developing countries including a 30% reduction in the UK's contribution to the Global Fund. In addition to adversely impacting progress towards the SDGs this has damaged the UK's reputation as a leader in Global Health.

38. But the political reality of the new environment is that this re-prioritisation is not going to change in the foreseeable future, which calls for a refresh of the UK's aid strategy and in particular a more honest assessment of the impact of UK aid in strengthening social sectors in developing countries. Furthermore, with other donors (eg Germany, Japan and Sweden) also cutting their non-humanitarian aid financing, it is clear that by far the most important financing source for building resilient health systems is going to be domestic tax financing – especially in large LMICs where aid financing is having less and less impact.
39. The multiple crises of the early 2020s may therefore provide an opportunity to have a more honest and realistic discussion with LMICS that increasingly they are going to have to finance their own social sectors – with UK aid financing concentrating more on funding global public goods and supporting the poorest LICs. But clearly the UK must not walk away from helping LMICs achieve the SDGs and instead of financing services directly the UK could provide specialist support and advice on how to build universal publicly financed health and education services. In doing this it could draw on its own experiences of building a welfare state after the crisis of World War 2 and support south-south learning opportunities, including countries that have successfully launched universal health reforms following more recent crises.

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