

## **Written evidence by James Rogers (The Henry Jackson Society) (ISD0034)**

### **About The Henry Jackson Society**

The Henry Jackson Society (HJS) is a think-tank and policy-shaping force that fights for the principles and alliances which keep societies free, working across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights, and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world.

### **About the Author**

**James Rogers** is Director of the Global Britain Programme at the Henry Jackson Society, of which he is also a founding member. Formerly, he held a number of positions at the Baltic Defence College in Tartu, Estonia and the European Union Institute for Security Studies in Paris.

Mr Rogers has also worked on research projects for several other institutions, including the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre at the Ministry of Defence and RAND Europe. He has been called to give oral evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Defence Committee, and the International Development Committee.

He holds a BSc Econ with First Class honours in International Politics and Strategic Studies from Aberystwyth University and an MPhil in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Cambridge.

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. In requesting written evidence for its inquiry on the Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review, the Defence Committee has outlined several questions pertaining to the review. This submission focuses on the following two:
  - a. What is the purpose of a security, defence and foreign policy review?
  - b. How often should a review be scheduled and how should different aspects be sequenced?

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A SECURITY, DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW?**

1. This question is hard to answer because the current review – which was announced by Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister, just before the General Election in December 2019 – is the first time in contemporary British history that the Government has committed to a formal integrated review incorporating foreign, development, security and defence policy. What is more, Boris Johnson said the review will be the

“*deepest* [emphasis added] review of Britain's security, defence and foreign policy since the end of the Cold War”<sup>1</sup>

2. Until now, Britain's security and defence policy review process has been haphazard and disjointed. Since the end of the Second World War, an assortment of different *defence* reviews have been undertaken, culminating in the “Strategic Defence Review” in 1998. This was followed by a “new chapter” in 2002 and “white paper” in 2003 to better reflect the emergence of religiously-inspired extremism and international terrorism as threats to national security.
3. Although the previous defence reviews included elements of “national security”, it was not until 2008 that the UK produced its first formal “National Security Strategy”, with updates issued in 2008 and 2009. In 2010, the Coalition government announced that Britain would undertake a more joined-up and frequent review, which resulted in a “National Security Strategy” and a “Strategic Defence and Security Review” – published simultaneously – with the former outlining the security challenges to the UK and the latter establishing the security and defence strategy to deal with them.
4. Five years on, in 2015, Britain released its first fully-integrated “Strategic Defence and Security Review”, incorporating a “National Security Strategy” and a defence and security review in a single document. This was followed two years later by a “National Security Capabilities Review” and a “Modernising Defence Programme”, both of which were hobbled by the fact that they were to be “cost-neutral” and initiated by a government without a parliamentary majority.
5. In addition to this formal review process, the Ministry of Defence's internal think tank – the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre – has an active “Global Strategic Trends” programme, which results in a report, issued approximately every five years. This sets out the most likely strategic trends the UK will need to grapple with over a fifteen to twenty year timeframe.<sup>2</sup>
6. This is where the new government of Boris Johnson appears to plan to depart from previous practice. This is because the current review will incorporate two additional components more formally than before, to the extent that it should render previous reviews qualitatively different. The two new areas for inclusion are Britain's foreign policy and international development policy.
7. The “enlargement” of the review process makes eminent sense, but is also fraught with risks. As Bob Seely MP and I have pointed out elsewhere, for the past thirty years the UK's strategic defence and security reviews have resulted in an increasingly – even intensely – “securitised” way of thinking, leading to a reactive,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forces.net/news/boris-johnson-pledges-security-defence-and-foreign-policy-review> [accessed: 8 April 2020].

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-strategic-trends> [accessed: 8 April 2020].

security-driven British international posture.<sup>3</sup> This form of posture may have made sense in the post-Cold War era, but it makes little sense in today's world of climate change and – to use the terminology adopted in the “National Security Capability Review” and “Modernising Defence Programme” – “wider” or “intense” state competition.<sup>4</sup>

8. In a world of large, competing powers, an approach driven by the enhancement of national security will prevent Britain from engaging strategically with its peers, even near-peers. Some of these powers – such as Russia and China – have grown increasingly adept at drawing together their various national capabilities to secure their interests, even in areas where they are often inferior to Britain:
  - a. For example, Russia has a Gross National Income that is only 60% the size of that of the UK, and remains inferior across a range of areas.<sup>5</sup>
  - b. China also lacks many of the national capabilities – even global expeditionary military capabilities – that the UK possesses.<sup>6</sup>
9. As Britain – like other democratic countries in Europe – has become mired in post-Cold War security-driven thinking, other countries, both competitors and allies, have adopted increasingly offensive and fully-integrated strategies that seek to maximise their national power and focus it geographically:
  - a. China, for example, has developed two national strategies to remake parts of the world – if not the entire world – in its own authoritarian image. It has embarked on a 36-year £770 billion (US\$1 trillion) strategy called the “Belt and Road Initiative” to re-engineer the economic geography of Eurasia, which is buttressed by the “Made in China 2025” strategy to render China less the “workshop of the world” and more the world's technological powerhouse.<sup>7</sup> China has engaged in a massive naval modernisation programme, and is steadily building up its international diplomatic portfolio.
  - b. The United States (US) has responded by largely “repudiating” its entire post-Cold War strategic posture – “global” in outlook – and replacing it with a

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<sup>3</sup> <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/HJS-Global-Britain-%C2%AD-A-Twenty-first-Century-Vision-Report-A4-web.pdf> [accessed: 8 April 2020].

<sup>4</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/705347/6.4391\\_CO\\_National-Security-Review\\_web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705347/6.4391_CO_National-Security-Review_web.pdf) [accessed: 8 April 2020], p. 5 and

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/765879/ModernisingDefenceProgramme\\_report\\_2018\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765879/ModernisingDefenceProgramme_report_2018_FINAL.pdf) [accessed: 8 April 2020], p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.MKTP.CD?locations=RU-GB> [accessed: 9 April 2020] and <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HJS-2019-Audit-of-Geopolitical-Capability-Report-web.pdf> [accessed 9 April 2020].

<sup>6</sup> <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HJS-2019-Audit-of-Geopolitical-Capability-Report-web.pdf> [accessed 9 April 2020].

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Belt and Road Initiative, see: <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HJS-The-Indo-Pacific-%E2%80%93-An-Enlarged-Perspective-Report-web.pdf> [accessed: 9 April 2020], pp. 13-15. For an overview of “Made in China 2025”, see: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/made-china-2025> [last visited: 9 April 2020].

more transactional, competitive, and geostrategically-directed approach.<sup>8</sup> One of this strategy's key objectives is to counter China, which the US defines as a "revisionist power" that "seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favour."<sup>9</sup>

- c. Even Japan, a country not traditionally known for assertive forms of international engagement, has embarked on a new approach, casting off decades of post-war quietism. Its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" has a clearly-set geographic focus – stretching from East Africa to the Pacific coast of the Americas – where Japan aims to provide its partners with economic assistance, infrastructure and political engagement.<sup>10</sup>

10. This is why it is important that the UK's new integrated strategic review includes foreign and international development policy, because these are increasingly important components of national power, particularly in an age of wider state competition.

11. Of course, a national security strategy's role is to identify the security threats and challenges – existing, likely and potential – a country might face. Likewise, an even narrower defence review's role is to outline how a country's military forces will be set up – both geographically and functionally – to dissuade or deter those threats, or intervene to meet them should they be neither dissuaded nor deterred. Naturally, such reviews are "bottom-up" in terms of their focus; they identify the threats and challenges to the nation, and then establish the means to deal with them.

12. However, the purpose of an integrated strategic review – one that includes also foreign and international development policy – mandates an altogether different outlook, which includes not only this "bottom-up" approach, but also one that looks from "top-down".

13. Already, in developing the "Fusion Doctrine" – a key innovation of the "National Security Capability Review" – British strategists and policymakers have recognised that the UK can generate greater national power by drawing together national instruments into a more synthetic whole. But the result is still a deeply "securitised" approach, which leads to caution and reaction.

14. This is why an integrated strategic review should go further – much further – by establishing a vision for Britain's role in the world. Therefore, it ought to establish, by a specific date, what sort of power the UK intends to be, as well as the resources the Government is prepared to provide to achieve it.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://securitystudies.org/polished-american-first-national-security-strategy/> [accessed: 9 April 2020].

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> [accessed: 9 April 2020].

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e\\_000278.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e_000278.html) [accessed: 9 April 2020].

15. But this “top-down” approach cannot take place in isolation. It needs to intersect with the “bottom-up” one. For example, an ambitious government might decide that, by 2040, the UK should remain within the world’s top five powers, economically, technologically, diplomatically and militarily. A truly integrated review would then set up the strategy to overcome the challenges and threats to that ambition, as well as to exploit any opportunities that might arise to help facilitate it. After all, even if the UK set about achieving a specific vision, it could not easily ignore prevailing international conditions, nor emerging trends, such as the intensification of major power competition, climate change, and so on.
16. It is also important that an integrated strategic review takes stock of Britain’s own national capabilities. This would allow the country to establish its potential in relation to peer and near-peer competitors. Challenging the defeatism of recent years should be a particular priority. The UK does not lack national capabilities: for example, despite having run down the number of vessels in the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Britain still possesses one of the heaviest, most deployable and most technologically lethal navies in the world.<sup>11</sup> The UK also have a rich and dynamic civil society from which to project its language, culture and political ideas around the world, as well as a capable diplomatic network and the world’s third largest Official Development Assistance budget, which is only 30% smaller per year than the funding lavished by China’s on its Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>12</sup>
17. What Britain lacks is a vision of where it wants to be in the world, what it wants to achieve, and with what instruments. It also lacks geographic focus. It is therefore vital that – within the parameters of the new review – the “top-down” approach is not itself “securitised”. For Britain did try to discern how its foreign and defence policies intersected in the past – in 2003 and 2006, respectively, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office produced formal guidance known as ‘The UK’s International Priorities’ – but this too was riddled with security-driven thinking.<sup>13</sup>

## **HOW OFTEN SHOULD A REVIEW BE SCHEDULED AND HOW SHOULD DIFFERENT ASPECTS BE SEQUENCED?**

1. As a democracy, Britain is subject to the prospect of political change every five years. Insofar as one government cannot easily bind another, it is very difficult for the UK to set national strategy over a timeframe that exceeds a parliamentary term.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HJS-2019-Audit-of-Geopolitical-Capability-Report-web.pdf> [accessed 9 April 2020]

<sup>12</sup> For example, if China’s £770 billion programme is equalised over the 36-year period that it is envisaged to run, the programme costs £21.4 billion per year, compared to Britain’s £14.5 billion per year in Official Development Assistance.

<sup>13</sup> See:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/272260/6762.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272260/6762.pdf) [accessed: 9 April 2020].

2. Due to climate change and the onset of wider state competition, however, Britain must be able to think in longer timeframes than merely five years. China's Belt and Road Initiative is envisaged to last until 2049!
3. It is not impossible for British strategists and policymakers to think outside of a five-year timeframe. If looked at from a historical standpoint, Britain has stuck to an established (geo)strategy for many years, if not decades. For example, the decisions taken by the government of Clement Attlee during the late 1940s led to the "Atlanticisation" – even "Europeanisation" – of the UK's strategic posture, resulting in a "continental commitment" that saw Britain create formal European alliances (the Western Union, then NATO) and deploy approximately 55,000 British troops to West Germany for much of the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the decisions taken during the 1990s – to "de-Europeanise" and focus on the Middle East and North Africa – have outlived those who initiated them.
4. Due to climate change, the onset of a more volatile era defined by wider state competition and moments of national crisis – Covid-19 and the decision to leave the European Union – the Government has the opportunity to establish a new strategy to redefine Britain's international posture. Given the challenges and opportunities before the country at the present time, this opportunity should be firmly grasped. The UK should not hold back. Although it cannot bind future governments, this review should be undertaken as if it was establishing the direction of Britain's international posture for the next generation, i.e. out to 2035 or 2040.
5. Subsequent integrated strategic reviews should then take place every five years, corresponding with parliamentary cycles. If the current review is sufficiently "deep", it may even "lock" future governments into it – or at least parts of it.

*10 April 2020*

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<sup>14</sup> For more on Britain's geostrategic cycles, see: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HJS-Global-Britain-and-the-Future-of-the-British-Armed-Forces.pdf> [accessed: 9 April 2020].