

Book Review:
Global Britain in a competitive age. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of Her Majesty. March 2021.

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Photograph Tim Peake/ESA/NASA

The long-awaited *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* published on 16 March this year begins with a fanfare celebrating the UK's achievements. Though many believe the decision to leave the European Union to have been misguided, the *Integrated Review* sends the message unambiguously that 'Global Britain' is back on track to replicate our Victorian ancestors' ambitious to play a global role, which depends heavily on the maritime dimension. But the *Integrated Review* makes clear, that does not mean the UK can eschew alliances in Europe and close cooperation with its European partners, and across the Atlantic. Whatever the reader's opinion of the decision to leave the EU, the UK is now stuck with it and the compilers of the *Integrated Review* have excelled themselves in presenting the UK as a potential Global power, and its undoubted talents. The cover features a photograph, 'summer sun

over the UK', taken by none other than Major Tim Peake, Army Air Corps, Britain's astronaut aboard the International Space Station (Cover image: summer sun over the UK Credit: Tim Peake/ESA/NASA). The sub-title also reflects the relatively recent decision to amalgamate the former Overseas Development Agency (ODA) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to create the title Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

The compass of the 111-page report is vast, reflecting the holistic approach to security which has been evolving since the 1980s. It lives up to its claim to be the most wide-ranging review for a generation. Besides traditional international security concerns, which have changed and are changing dramatically, and the international order of the future, it embraces homeland security, international organised crime, climate change, biodiversity loss and resilience, including health resilience. It reflects the 'fusion doctrine' embodied in the National Security Council set up by Prime Minister David Cameron and built on by Theresa May but goes further. As 3.1.11 on page 70 explains, 'This means that responding to state threats can no longer be viewed as a narrow 'national security' or 'defence' agenda. We must bring together the elements of our work across this Strategic Framework at home and overseas, and all the instruments available to government, in an *integrated* response.' (Emphasis added). This IJMCS review will focus on those elements which are most relevant to, entwined with and dependent on, the maritime dimension.

The *Integrated Review* begins, inevitably, with a Foreword from the Prime Minister and his vision for the UK in 2030 (page 6). The *Review* was begun early in 2020, just as the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Unsurprisingly, it and possible lessons from it feature extensively throughout the document. Political rhetoric aside, perhaps the most interesting element of the PM's vision is on page 4. That 'Our aim is to have secured our status as a Science and Tech Superpower by 2030, by redoubling our commitment to research and development, bolstering our global network of innovation partnerships, and improving our national skills'. But the UK, with its culture, diversity and education system is also a prime proponent of 'soft power'. Page 49 sets out why the UK is a 'soft power superpower', which consistently ranks third in indices of worldwide 'soft power'.

The UK's achievements feature in an illuminating series of graphics on pages 8 and 9. These include that the UK has World-leading security and intelligence agencies, supported by over £3bn of investment each year; has the 5th largest economy in the world; is ranked 4th in the Global Innovation Index; is the 3rd most powerful cyber nation in the world, ranking top in defence, intelligence, norms and offensive capabilities; that the UK cyber network covers 122 countries across 6 continents. The UK is a global leader in diplomacy and development and is the 2nd highest defence spender in NATO and the highest in Europe. The UK is the 3rd ranked soft power in the world The BBC is the most trusted broadcaster worldwide, reaching 468m people every week, in 42 languages. The UK is a 'science and technology superpower', which has won the second highest number of Nobel Prizes, with 99 Nobel laureates. And, as one might perhaps expect from an Oxonian, it is home to leading medical research, such as the Oxford University/ AstraZeneca vaccine.

The *Review* includes some very interesting snippets. On page 21 we are reminded that the UK is forming its new Space Command and should be able to launch British satellites from Scotland by 2022. On page 39 it presents a case study of quantum computing as an example of quantum technologies. Quantum computing, it says, has the potential to unlock a step-change in computing power, with wide-ranging applications across key sectors including pharma, health, logistics, information technology, energy, chemicals, and finance. The UK is well placed to emerge as a global leader in the quantum revolution. Its world-class researchers and facilities have enabled the UK to achieve a deep understanding of quantum science, and we have a diverse and growing ecosystem of companies able to compete in this emerging global market. New quantum systems will require the development of much

smaller and more robust components such as specialist lasers, high vacuum equipment, electronic control systems and photon detectors; all areas where the UK has significant industrial capability. Through the National Quantum Computing Centre and the wider National Quantum Technologies Programme, the Government will support the establishment of a sustainable quantum computing sector in the UK. As page 40 says, the UK should be a 'responsible, democratic cyber power'. Cyber power 'is the ability to protect and promote national interests in and through cyberspace: to realise the benefits that cyberspace offers to UK citizens and economy'

The maritime dimension is key to a theme which pervades the entire Review: the 'Indo-Pacific tilt', which is initially covered from pages 66 to 67. It is worth quoting in full:

The Indo-Pacific region matters to the UK: it is critical to our economy, our security, and our global ambition to support open societies. At least 1.7 million British citizens live across the region and our trading relationships continue to grow. In the decades to come it will be the crucible for many of the most pressing global challenges – from climate and biodiversity to maritime security and geopolitical competition linked to rules and norms. The UK needs to engage more deeply: • For economic opportunities – the Indo-Pacific is the world's growth engine: home to half the world's people; 40% of global GDP; some of the fastest growing economies; at the forefront of new global trade arrangements; leading and adopting digital and technological innovation and standards; investing strongly in renewables and green tech; and vital to our goals for investment and resilient supply chains. The IndoPacific already accounts for 17.5% of UK global trade and 10% of inward FDI and we will work to build this further, including through new trade agreements, dialogues and deeper partnerships in science, technology, and data. • For our security – the region is at the centre of intensifying geopolitical competition with multiple potential flashpoints: from unresolved territorial disputes; to nuclear proliferation and miscalculation; to climate change and non-state threats from terrorism and SOC. It is on the frontline of new security challenges, including in cyberspace. Much of the UK's trade with Asia depends on shipping that goes through a range of Indo-Pacific choke points.

Preserving freedom of navigation is therefore essential to the UK's national interests. ... We will be the European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific – committed for the long term, with closer and deeper partnerships, bilaterally and multilaterally. Our role: we will lead where we are best placed to do so, and we will partner and support others as necessary to pursue our goals. This will include both sustaining and supporting bilateral and multilateral partnerships in the region, such as the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and working with organisations such as ASEAN and the Pacific Island Forum.

Global Britain's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific focus on nine areas. These include: concluding and implementing new bilateral trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand – the former has already been signed, this June, – and agreeing an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India as a stepping stone towards a comprehensive trade deal, plus new trade dialogues and reviews with partners across the region; acceding to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership to secure increased trade and investment opportunities, and to diversify the UK's trading links and supply chains, embedding open trade and integration; strengthening supply chain resilience of critical goods and raw materials, including medical supplies. Another objective is to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner to work together on global challenges, support ASEAN's central role in regional stability and prosperity and enable sustainable development in Southeast Asia. The most important for our readers is '*Strengthening defence and security cooperation, including in maritime security.*' (Emphasis added) (page 67).

A new FCDO Director General responsible for the Indo-Pacific was appointed in 2020, as was a dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN in 2019. Since 2018, the UK has had regional Trade Commissioners based in Singapore, Mumbai, and Shanghai. During 2020, the UK agreed new trade deals with Japan, Singapore, and Vietnam. It has a long-standing naval presence in the Gulf and Indian Ocean through Operation *Kipion*. Operation *Kipion* has been underway in the Gulf since 1980. By an interesting coincidence, it may derive from the ancient Greek *kepion*, meaning 'garden', which is used in Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*, of which more anon. Naval visits and defence diplomacy across the wider Indo-Pacific grew in 2019.

This brings us to international dilemmas. The *Review* clearly identifies Russia as the most immediate and imminent international threat, based on what the Russians call 'non-linear' warfare. Although the nerve agent attacks in Salisbury were targeted against people whom the Russians regard as traitors, and not against the UK as a nation, they were, in practice, an attack on the UK's security and sovereignty. So were cyber-attacks. On page 46, the *Review* alludes to the 'new warfare' and the problem of attribution. It refers to

National security diplomacy: reinforcing our deterrence by taking a more active approach to attribution of state threats and coordinating the use of sanctions to hold state and non-state actors to account for unacceptable behaviour – in addition to doing more to tackle state threats, terrorism, and crime overseas, before they reach the UK. This will be supported by the work of the security and intelligence agencies.

The *Review* recognises the historic links and alliances between the UK and Russia, and it might have usefully examined why the Russians hate us at the moment. However, on page 61 it says:

The UK respects the people, culture, and history of Russia. However, until relations with its government improve, we will actively deter and defend against the full spectrum of threats emanating from Russia. Through NATO, we will ensure a united Western response, combining our military, diplomatic and intelligence assets in support of collective security. We will uphold international rules and norms and hold Russia to account for breaches of these, working with our international partners, as we did after the Salisbury attack. We will also support others in the Eastern European neighbourhood and beyond to build their resilience to state threats. This includes Ukraine, where we will continue to build the capacity of its armed forces.

The full spectrum of threats includes 'sub-threshold threats' – what the West calls 'hybrid warfare' – which are particularly hard to deal with because attributing them to a state actor is difficult, and they can always be denied. The Salisbury attack was a case in point.

However, the *Review* is one of the first UK Government documents to address the longer-term problem of China. Since 2013 China's Belt and Road Initiative has seen Chinese influence spread across more than 60 countries in Eurasia, and through the Indian Ocean to Africa. In the future it also extends through the melting Arctic. China's burgeoning power was not much of a security concern, at least publicly, until the last decade, but it clearly is now. Again, the *Review* is worth quoting in full:

China's growing international stature is by far the most significant geopolitical factor in the world today, with major implications for British values and interests and for the structure and shape of the international order. The fact that China is an authoritarian state, with different values to ours, presents challenges for the UK and our allies. China will contribute more to global growth than any other country in the next decade with benefits to the global economy. China and the UK both benefit from bilateral trade and investment, but China also presents the biggest state-based threat to the UK's economic security. We will require a robust diplomatic framework for this relationship that allows us to manage disagreements, defend our values and preserve space for

cooperation where our interests align. China is an increasingly important partner in tackling global challenges like pandemic preparedness, biodiversity, and climate change. We will continue to pursue a positive economic relationship, including IV. Strategic Framework 63, deeper trade links and more Chinese investment in the UK. At the same time, we will increase protection of our CNI, institutions and sensitive technology, and strengthen the resilience of our critical supply chains, so that we can engage with confidence. We will not hesitate to stand up for our values and our interests where they are threatened, or when China acts in breach of existing agreements. The UK has responded to China's actions in Hong Kong by creating a new immigration route for British Nationals (Overseas) and their eligible family members and dependents, and to China's human rights violations in Xinjiang through measures to ensure that British organisations are neither complicit in nor profiting from them.

China is now the World's second biggest economy and the UK's third biggest trading partner. Therefore, how do we deal with China? The *Review* poses the question but does not really offer an answer. In the committees which analysed the *Review*, the dilemma was often referred to as the 'Thucydides Trap', a term popularized by US political scientists Graham T Allison. It is based on a quotation from ancient Athenian historian and general, Thucydides (460 – 455 BC to 400 BC) in his *Peloponnesian War*, that the War between Athens and Sparta became inevitable when the emerging power – Athens – threatened to displace an existing great power – Sparta. It was coined primarily to describe a potential conflict between the US – the established global hegemon – and China – the rising power – although many have questioned Allison's comparison.¹ The critics suggest that China's motivation for BRI and securing the BRI routes, for example in the South China Sea, is not to challenge the US for global dominion but for its own security and prosperity.

China's emergence as a possible threat has led to a split between allies in the 'Five Eyes' intelligence-sharing network. It comprises five English-speaking countries – the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Four of the members have jointly condemned China's treatment of its Uighur population in Xinjiang Province. They have also expressed concern over China's de facto military takeover of the South China Sea, its suppression of democracy in Hong Kong and its threatening moves towards Taiwan which China has vowed to 'take back' by 2049. One of the five eyes – New Zealand – has, however, opted out of confronting China.

In spite of the emphasis on 'sub-threshold threats' in the *Review*, the nuclear deterrent – the ultimate response to a threshold threat – remains not only sacrosanct but will be strengthened. In 2010 the Government stated an intent to reduce the UK's overall nuclear warhead stockpile ceiling from not more than 225 to not more than 180 by the mid-2020s. However, in recognition of the evolving security environment, including the developing range of technological and doctrinal threats, the *Review* says, 'this is no longer possible, and the UK will move to an overall nuclear weapon stockpile of no more than 260 warheads.'

Deterrence rests on uncertainty – certainly, sowing uncertainty with potential opponents – and the uncertainty paradox remains. The safest place for a nuclear deterrent remains under the sea and the *Review* (page 76) reiterates that the UK will maintain its four submarines so that at least one will always be on a Continuous at Sea Deterrent (CASD) patrol. UK nuclear powered ballistic missile-firing submarines (SSBNs) submarines on patrol are at several days' notice to fire. Interestingly, the *Review* reveals that 'since

¹ Allison, Graham (24 September 2015). 'The Thucydides Trap. Are the US China Headed for War?'. *The Atlantic*.

1994, we do not target our missiles at any state. We remain committed to maintaining the minimum destructive power needed to guarantee that the UK's nuclear deterrent remains credible and effective against the full range of state nuclear threats from any direction'. That may have been in the public domain previously, but this reviewer was unaware of it until now. Page 77 confirms that Parliament has voted to renew the UK's nuclear deterrent and replace the Vanguard Class submarines with four new Dreadnought Class submarines. The programme allegedly remains within budget (unusually for any defence contract) and on track for the First of Class to enter service in the early 2030s.

Global Britain's commitment to the Indo-Pacific and the potential threat from China, as well as post-Brexit disputes with the EU over fisheries and the need to secure the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and to deal with the threat to national security posed by illegal immigrants have inevitably placed more stress on maritime power. That includes the Royal Navy and, closer to home, the Border Force. The decision to build the largest warships in the Royal Navy's history – the two gigantic £3 billion Queen Elizabeth II class aircraft carriers – was controversial and there was speculation that the Royal Navy's entire remaining strength would be required to protect the carriers. The tasks for the UK's maritime forces will stretch them. The Review (page 71) says that to secure British territory against physical incursions. The Royal Navy will remain active in the UK's territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone, including by investing in new capabilities to protect undersea Critical National Infrastructure (CNI). Undersea cables which carry most internet traffic have already been subject to attack, probably from Russia. The Royal Air Force (RAF) will continue to provide a 24-hour quick reaction alert force to defend UK airspace and our new Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft will patrol the North Atlantic from their base at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland. To support the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in deterring and defending against state and non-state threats, the UK armed forces will continue to deter and challenge incursions in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. Significant investment in the Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus will assure the UK's ability to contribute to security, with allies, in the Eastern Mediterranean. The armed forces will also maintain a permanent presence in the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island and the British Indian Ocean Territory, and a permanent maritime presence in the Atlantic and Caribbean. This will contribute to counter-trafficking operations and delivering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief during the annual hurricane season. The UK will promote the right of self-determination for the peoples of the Overseas Territories and continue to defend and represent internationally the three Crown Dependencies (Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man). The UK's Antarctic Treaty obligations, including around the British Antarctic Territory, will be upheld. To enhance the support and assistance available to UK nationals overseas, offering a wider choice of digital services for consular assistance. The armed forces will maintain readiness to evacuate British nationals caught up in events overseas when needed.

To do all this an expansion of the Royal Navy is required.² The Royal Navy has reacted with understandable enthusiasm. There will be huge investment in the Submarine Service spearheaded by the £31bn Dreadnought programme and an increased number of nuclear warheads – as well as the defensive ring protecting the boats from Type 26 frigates to the introduction of a new lightweight torpedo to replace Stingray. Both aircraft carriers – *Queen Elizabeth II* and *Prince of Wales* – will be operated simultaneously. More F-35 jets will be bought to deliver carrier strike. And new support ships will be built to accompany the task groups on their global deployments.

1 ² 'What The 2021 Integrated Review Means To The Royal Navy?', *Naval News* 23 March 2021 citing Royal Navy press release accessed at navalnews.com/naval-news/2021/03/what-the-2021-integrated-review-means-to-the-royal-navy/

The Royal Marines will form the 'Future Commando Force' That means the UK's green berets will be permanently deployed overseas more often in two new 'Littoral Response Groups', one in northern Europe, a second in the Indian Ocean. Given present circumstances, the Baltic seems the most likely location for the former. The Marines will receive an extra £200m to complete their transformation, and another £50m will be spent converting a Bay-class vessel before new ships are built specifically for littoral strike missions.

There will be a huge national shipbuilding programme to expand the heart of the Surface Fleet. Over the next decade there will be seven new classes of ships being built in British yards, including three classes of frigates: the Type 26, 31 and the new Type 32s.

It means by the start of the 2030s, the Royal Navy will have more than 20 frigates and destroyers, aiming to grow to 24 with the introduction of the Type 32s.

As part of the 'integrated' approach, and clearly a top priority, a new 'multi-role ocean surveillance ship' will be in service in just three years' time to protect key underwater communications cables. Equipped with advanced sensors it will carry a number of remotely operated and autonomous undersea drones to gather information on potential threats lurking in the water and is also intended to support front-line operations, such as in the Arctic.

In the short term the plans for this ambitious shift necessitate retiring some of the old to pay for the new. HMS Monmouth and, when her deployment in the Gulf is completed, HMS Montrose, will be retired as the UK's oldest Type 23 frigates; the money saved will be pumped into their successor programmes.

The forward basing programme continues with HMS *Trent* operating from Gibraltar from where she will support operations in the Mediterranean, work with the UK's our African partners including counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Guinea, and the French Navy as part of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force.

The surface fleet will be armed with the latest weaponry and harness the latest technology including land attack and supersonic missiles for the surface fleet. Sea Viper air defence missiles will be upgraded and their stockpiles increased. Investment in Wildcat and Merlin helicopters will continue. The greatest technological change, however, will come with a £1bn investment in mine warfare with automated and autonomous mine hunting systems deployed around the world from 2022. As a result, first the Sandown-class Mine Counter Measures vessels (MCMVs) and the Hunts will be replaced by the end of the 2020s.

The Chief of the Naval Staff and First Sea Lord Admiral Tony Radakin said

The review is the most wide-ranging for a generation and it sets out the government's priorities for Defence. The Secretary of State wants us to respond better to the threats we face. We will. The Prime Minister wants us to be the foremost Navy in Europe. We will be. The White Ensign will fly in all the places where we are now, but also further afield and more persistently. All of us now have a new responsibility to deliver a global Navy for a global Britain. (Emphasis added)

On pages 92-93 The *Review* commits the UK to Supporting a resilient ocean.

The world has one ocean shared by all nations. The ocean provides 50% of the oxygen we breathe, supports livelihoods worldwide, contains vast biological and mineral resources, and is critical to trade. But it is coming under pressure from climate change and environmental degradation, growing tensions around maritime choke points, including the Strait of Hormuz and the South China Sea, as well as migration, piracy and SOC [Serious Organised Crime]. The UK's vision is that by 2030 the ocean will be effectively governed, clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse, linking resilient and prosperous coastal communities around the world, and supporting sustainable economic growth for the UK, the Overseas Territories, and the Crown

Dependencies. To deliver this vision, we will combine our work on maritime security, the environment and trade. Fundamental to this will be an absolute commitment to upholding the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in all its dimensions, as an essential enabler of global prosperity, security, and a healthy planet. The Royal Navy's new Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship will demonstrate this more integrated approach in practice, protecting our CNI [Critical National Infrastructure] at sea and improving our knowledge of the maritime environment. The Royal Navy's Offshore Patrol Vessels, alongside the UK Border Force, will continue to support border surveillance, shipping safety, maritime environmental protection, fishery activity control, search and rescue operations and customs enforcement.

The UK will, the Review says, protect the maritime environment, supporting international action through the UK-led Global Ocean Alliance and other coalitions. It will strengthen its marine science expertise by contributing to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and use its new Blue Planet Fund to protect and restore marine ecosystems and resources, support sustainable fisheries, and reduce poverty. The UK will also continue to enhance marine protection around the Overseas Territories, including across the 4.3 million square kilometres of marine environment already protected through the Blue Belt programme. As noted above, it will deploy more of its naval assets across the world to protect shipping lanes and uphold freedom of navigation. This will be supported by a Joint Maritime Security Centre will support this, strengthening operational maritime coordination across government. The Royal Navy's Maritime Component Command in Bahrain will continue to ensure the flow of trade in the Gulf, including support to part of the new International Maritime Security Construct. Finally, the UK will contribute to wider maritime security, including in tackling piracy off the coast of West Africa as co-chair of the G7 Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group in 2021.

The *Integrated Review* is breathtaking in its scope and ambition. In the Parliamentary Committees which examined the Review, MPs and experts were understandably sometimes sceptical. Lord Peter Mandelson, formerly Tony Blair's Press Secretary, for example, said that 'the section on Tilt to the Indo-Pacific is one of the few bits that has substance'. Following the publication of the *Integrated Review*, a Defence Command Paper *Defending Global Britain in a Competitive Age*³ was published to explore the detailed implications for the UK Armed Forces. Lord David Richards, formerly Chief of the Defence Staff, was critical. 'What is the guiding intent', he asked. 'Is it state-on-state war? Or the "grey zone"? The *Integrated Review* suggest it is both. Richards would have preferred the UK to focus on the Euro-Atlantic, to free up the US to counter China. And he posed the crucial question. 'Are our ambitions achievable, given the amount of money we are prepared to put in to fulfilling them?'

Given all the demands on funding, the *Strategic Review* seems astonishingly ambitious. The ultimate question is 'do you believe it?'

About Chris Bellamy

Chris Bellamy headed the Greenwich Maritime Institute at the University of Greenwich, UK, from 2010 to the end of 2014 and then became Professor Emeritus of Maritime Security at Greenwich to see through the last of his 14 successful PhD supervisions. He is Editor-in-Chief of IJMCS and Visiting Professor of War Studies at the University of Hull.

³ <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1122/defending-global-britain-in-a-competitive-age/>