



BRIEFING PAPER

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Integrated Review 2021: Summary

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The Government published its Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy: [Global Britain in a Competitive Age](#), on 16 March 2021.

The following briefing highlights the **key points** of the review. Further House of Commons Library analysis will follow.

1. Prime Minister's vision for the UK in 2030

In his introduction to the Integrated Review, the Prime Minister sets out his overarching vision for "Global Britain" within the next decade:

- The UK will play "a more active part" in sustaining an international order in which open societies and economies continue to flourish.
- The UK will sit at the heart of a network of "like minded countries and flexible groupings" committed to protecting human rights and upholding global norms.
- The UK will embrace innovation in science and technology to boost national prosperity and strategic advantage.
- The UK will be a "soft power" superpower.
- The UK will continue to take a leading role in security, diplomacy and development, conflict resolution and poverty reduction. The UK aims to be a model for an integrated approach to tackling global challenges.
- As a maritime trading nation, the UK will be a global champion of free and fair trade. The openness of the UK's economy will be protected from corruption, manipulation, exploitation and the theft of intellectual property.
- Climate change and tackling biodiversity loss will be a priority for the UK on the international agenda.
- The UK's diplomatic service, armed forces and security and intelligence services will be the most effective and innovative, relative to their size. They will be characterised by agility, responsiveness and digital integration. There will be a greater emphasis on engaging, training and assisting others.
- The UK will retain its nuclear deterrent. Its military capabilities will have global reach and be integrated across all five operational domains. The UK will develop a

dynamic space programme and be one of the world's "leading democratic cyber powers".

2. Strategic threat assessment to 2030

The review states that the nature and distribution of global power is changing as the world becomes more competitive and multipolar. The defining features of the geopolitical environment over the next decade are set out thus:

- **Strategic continuity** - there will be some areas of continuity throughout the 2020s. In the Euro-Atlantic area, which the review refers to as the UK's "home region", Russia remains the biggest threat to UK security.
- **Growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region** - by 2030 the geopolitical and economic centre of gravity will have shifted towards the Indo-Pacific region.
- **China** - is becoming increasingly powerful and assertive on the international stage. This, combined with its military modernisation, will pose an increasing risk to UK interests.

- **Systemic competition** - There is systemic competition within the international system, between both nation states and democratic and authoritarian values and systems of government. There is a testing of the boundaries between war and peace and the capabilities used to coerce and undermine others. The influence of "middle powers" is likely to grow.

Competition will also increase the pressure on the existing multilateral architecture, weakening established rules and norms that govern international conduct. In emerging domains, such as cyber and space, competition to shape standards of conduct, and to control access to shared resources is to be expected. Non-state actors will play an increasingly important role.

Adversaries and competitors are already acting in a more integrated way, fusing military and civilian technology and increasingly blurring the boundaries...".

There will be increased competition for scarce natural resources.

- **Rapid technological change** - is reshaping societies, economies and altering relationships. The geopolitical role of non-state actors, such as large technology companies, will continue to grow. Cyberspace will be an increasingly contested domain used by both state and non-state actors. Space will also be a domain of increasing opportunity, but also increasing threat. The ability to advance and exploit science and technology will be an increasingly important metric of global power.
- **Transnational challenges are becoming a greater priority** - such as climate change, biosecurity risks, radicalisation and terrorism, serious and organised crime, and weapons proliferation. In the UK, among the main sources of terrorist threat will be from Islamist and Northern Ireland-related terrorism. State sponsorship of terrorism is considered likely to increase, as is the possibility of a terrorist group launching a successful chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) attack by 2030.

The review acknowledges that the UK must also prepare for the possibility that a post-Covid world will be even more contested and fragmented than expected, where global cooperation is reduced and there are increasing challenges to an open global economy, thereby making it harder for the UK to defend its values and interests.

3. Foreign policy priorities

The UK is bound by shared values: a commitment to universal human rights, the rule of law, free speech, fairness and equality. Those values will shape all aspects of the UK's national security and foreign policy over the next decade.

However, the review acknowledges that some international challenges, such as climate change, can only be addressed by working with others, including those countries that do not share the same values as the UK.

It states that the UK must be "prepared to compete with others" and find new, innovative ways of cooperating through "creative diplomacy and multilateralism".

3.1 Shaping the international order

There will be a change in the UK's approach to the international order. Recognising that the international order is now more fragmented and characterised by competition between states "over interests, norms and values", the UK will take a more dynamic approach. Instead of defending the status quo of the rules-based international order, the UK will "reinforce parts of the international architecture that are under threat" and work with others to shape the international order of the future.

"Collective action and co-creation with our allies and partners will be vitally important".

Specifically, the UK will increase its efforts to protect open societies and democratic values where they are being undermined and seek good governance and shared rules in the new domains of cyber and space. The review states that the UK will seek to be "a force for good in the world", will be a defender of universal human rights, and is "determined to seek multilateral solutions" to challenges such as climate change, global health crises and free and fair trade. The UK will continue to work in partnership with others to reform and strengthen institutions that support this aim, including the World Health Organisation and World Trade Organisation.

The UK remains "deeply committed" to multilateralism and will seek "to do more to win elections for senior positions within multilateral institutions".

3.2 Partnerships

The United States remains the UK's most important strategic ally and partner.

The UK's "commitment to European security is unequivocal" and the "bulk of the UK's security focus" will remain on the euro-Atlantic region. The UK will continue to be the leading European ally within NATO, which will be "foundation of collective security" in the region.

"The UK is a European country with global interests".

The UK's relationship with the EU, and its European neighbours, will be "constructive and productive", based on "a mutual respect for sovereignty and the UK's freedom to do things differently, economically and politically, where that suits our interests". The UK's longstanding security and defence cooperation with France, which is underpinned by the 2010 Lancaster House treaties, will be expanded upon at the 2021 Anglo-French summit. The UK also hopes to sign a Joint Declaration on Foreign Policy with Germany later in 2021.

There will be a return to east of Suez and a tilt toward the Indo-Pacific, in recognition of the region's growing importance. By 2030 the UK will be "deeply engaged" as the

“European partner with the broadest, most integrated presence in support of mutually beneficial trade, shared security and values”. The UK will seek to work with existing structures such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

The UK will be actively engaged in Africa and maintain thriving relationships in the Middle East.

3.3 China

The UK will “do more to adapt to China’s growing impact on many aspects of our lives as it becomes more powerful in the world”.

The Government will invest in “China-facing capabilities” which will allow the UK to better understand China and its people, while also improving the UK’s ability to respond to the challenge it poses to “our security, prosperity and values – and those of our allies and partners”.

The review emphasises the Government’s intention to continue pursuing a “positive trade and investment relationship” with China, while also ensuring that national security is protected.

Cooperation with China on transnational issues such as climate change is also acknowledged as a necessity.

China presents the “biggest state-based threat to the UK’s economic security”.

3.4 Strategic advantage through science and technology

The review considers that those countries which establish a leading role in critical and emerging technologies will “be at the forefront of global leadership”.

The UK will, therefore, adopt a more proactive approach to building and sustaining strategic advantage through the utilisation of science and technology in pursuit of national goals.

The Government’s aim is for the UK to become a “Science and Tech Superpower” by 2030, and to have established a leading edge in critical capabilities such as artificial intelligence.

The UK will publish a new, full spectrum, cyber strategy in 2021 to maintain its leading edge in this domain. A new National Cyber Force has already been established.

The UK will adopt a new integrated space strategy that will bring together military and civilian space policy for the first time.

In order to build on the UK’s science and technology base, £800 million will be invested in establishing an independent body for “high risk, high reward” research: the Advanced Research and Invention Agency. Through the MOD’s Science and Technology strategy 2020, higher risk research will also be prioritised to support modernisation of the armed forces.

The UK will also build a strong network of international Science and technology partnerships.

“Science and technology will be “elevated to the highest importance as a component of national security, with a particular emphasis on growing cyber power”.

4. Defence and the armed forces

The review lays out a vision of the armed forces with a global reach and integrated military capabilities across all five operational domains.¹ The UK remains committed to fulfilling NATO's target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence.

"We will create armed forces that are both prepared for warfighting and more persistently engaged worldwide".

The review does not lay out a future force structure nor discuss personnel numbers; this is likely to be contained in the Defence Command Paper, to be published on Monday 22 March 2021. It does, however, envisage deploying the armed forces overseas more often and for longer periods. Investment in high-tech capabilities is a running theme throughout the review. There is no mention of any reductions to existing capabilities.

4.1 Threat assessment

There will be a growing contest between states and groups of states to shape the international environment. Non-state actors will also participate, increasing its complexity. Competition will continue within the conventional military domains of land, sea and air, and will grow in other spheres such as technology, cyberspace and space. Malign actors may use a wider range of tools to achieve their objectives "without open confrontation or conflict".

The review commits to taking a "more robust approach" to the deteriorating global security environment. This means improving "our ability to detect, disrupt, defend against and deter the threats we face in the physical world and in cyberspace". With a nod to the so-called "grayzone" (although it does not use this term), it says these "may be state threats above and below the traditional threshold of war, transnational security challenges such as terrorism and serious and organised crime, or a combination of these". The UK will demonstrate it is able and willing to respond, with force if necessary, "when our citizens and interests are targeted".

The review acknowledges the advantages offered by high-tech capabilities may be eroded by affordable, easily available, low-tech threats such as drones and improved explosive devices.

Russia "remains the most acute threat to our security" in the Euro-Atlantic region. The UK will work with NATO Allies to ensure a "united Western response" and will support "closer practical cooperation" between NATO and the EU in pursuit of this goal.

The impact of **China's** military modernisation and "growing international assertiveness" within the Indo-Pacific region and beyond will pose an "increasing risk to UK interests".

Daesh is mentioned only twice in the document, and only to reaffirm the armed forces continued contribution to the Global Coalition against the organisation in Iraq and Syria.

Robust export controls will help prevent the proliferation of technologies that pose a threat in space, such as ballistic missile technologies.

4.2 Military posture

The UK must update its deterrent posture "to respond to the growth in state competition below the threshold of war under international law".

¹ The traditional three domains of land, air and sea plus the new domains of space and cyberspace.

The review references the [Integrated Operating Concept](#) (published in September 2020) and explains the need to move seamlessly between operating and warfighting. This, it says, will require “a force structure that principally deters through ‘persistent engagement’ below the threshold of war, while remaining prepared for warfighting when necessary”.

The review acknowledges the UK cannot disrupt or deter every threat. Therefore, it argues, the UK must “make it more difficult and costly for malign actors – both state and non-state – to achieve the effects they desire”. This goes beyond simply defence.

Persistent engagement

The review makes clear the armed forces will be deployed overseas more often and for longer periods of time “to train, exercise and operate alongside allies and partners across all our priority regions”.

Threats at home and overseas will be countered by “using our armed forces to disrupt and deter through persistent engagement overseas”.

The review says a greater global presence “will improve our understanding of events, help us to detect and tackle problems earlier, and give us a foundation to respond more assertively to threats”.

Persistent engagement will allow the UK to “build the capacity of others to deter and defend against state threats” and “support, mentor and, where necessary, assist nations in countering non-state challenges”.

Existing facilities and infrastructure in Cyprus, Gibraltar, Germany, Oman, Singapore and Kenya will be improved. UK equipment will be prepositioned in Germany to facilitate rapid response (this is in the context of supporting NATO).

The global network of British defence staffs will increase by nearly a third, supported by an additional £60 million.

The review envisages an active role for the Royal Navy in this, with more naval assets deployed across the world to protect shipping lanes and uphold freedom of navigation. The Navy will also remain active in the UK’s territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone.

The departure of the HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier group in May represents the “UK’s most ambitious global deployment for two decades”. The deployment “will demonstrate our interoperability with allies and partners” and “our ability to project cutting-edge military power in support of NATO and international maritime security”. Her deployment will also help the Government to “deepen our diplomatic and prosperity links with allies and partners worldwide.”

Defence relations

The review reaffirms the UK’s commitment to NATO and Euro-Atlantic security. Working with allies and deepening security relations in the wider Euro-Atlantic area, Africa and the Middle East is explicitly mentioned, as is a greater emphasis on the Indo-Pacific. This could occur through joint education, training and exercises. Cooperation with allies will be fundamental to the broader effort of making it “more difficult and costly for malign actors – both state and non-state – to achieve the effects they desire”.

In the **Euro-Atlantic**, the UK will be one of only two NATO allies to bring to bear nuclear, offensive cyber, precision strike weapons and fifth-generation strike aircraft. The UK will contribute to missile defence, space awareness and resilience and CBRN resilience, while a new generation of warships will keep the North Atlantic open. Highly mobile airborne and

“To use our armed forces to detect, understand and deter state threats below the threshold of war through persistent engagement overseas.”

amphibious forces will be able to reinforce Allies at short notice. UK equipment will be prepositioned in Germany to facilitate rapid response.

The UK will continue to meet NATO's target of two per cent of GDP on defence spending and will continue to commit a full spectrum of forces to the Alliance. The UK also pledges to continue:

- making a leading contribution to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence and Response Force
- implementing NATO's new Deterrence and Defence Concept
- serving as a framework nation to connect and coordinate NATO's forces effectively
- operating across the Euro-Atlantic region with a focus on the northern and southern flanks of Europe

Bilateral relations with the **US, France** and **Germany** will be strengthened. And the UK will continue with the Joint Expeditionary Force.

In terms of security, the review says the UK will "tailor our presence and support according to the country and region, continuing to focus our security efforts primarily on the Euro-Atlantic region and providing support in Africa – in particular in **East Africa** and to important partners in West Africa such as **Nigeria** – and in the **Middle East**. We will also place a greater emphasis than before on the **Indo-Pacific**".

The review reinforces the UK's commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements and will increase its maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific to "support norms and laws in the region", starting with the carrier task group deployment in spring 2021. Defence and security cooperation in Indo-Pacific will be strengthened.

4.3 Modernising the armed forces

The armed forces will be modernised, maintaining a "full spectrum of capabilities". These will be laid out in the Defence Command Paper.

The MOD will prioritise the development and integration of new technologies – including those required for near-peer, high tech warfighting – and a 'digital backbone' to enable multi-domain operations and interoperability with allies and partners.

Whilst the army is not mentioned by name in the document, the review does state that the UK's land force will undergo "its most comprehensive modernisation for two decades". It will be "better integrated with other domains", better able to intervene quickly and effectively over large distances, better protected from electronic, air and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle threats, and better able to engage an adversary at long range.

4.4 Defence spending

The Prime Minister says the Government has "begun the biggest investment in defence since the end of the Cold War", citing the £24 billion additional spending laid out in the [Spending Review 2020](#) for the next four years. This, the review says, reaffirms the UK's commitment to its allies and makes the UK the "largest European spender on defence in NATO and the second largest in the Alliance."

A list of what the additional money will fund is laid out in Annex A of the review:

- Enable research into AI and other battle-winning technologies
- Reshape the UK's armed forces for a more competitive age

- Establish a new Space Command and enhance the breadth of our space capabilities
- Continue the renewal of the UK's nuclear deterrent
- Develop the next generation of naval vessels, including the Type 32 frigates and Fleet Solid Support ships, and deliver our plans for eight Type 26 and five Type 31 frigates²
- Progress our Carrier Strike capabilities, with at least 48 F-35s by 2025
- Develop the Future Combat Air System for the RAF, along with delivering upgraded Typhoon radars
- Enhance the UK's position as a responsible, democratic cyber power

The £24 billion also includes at least £6.6 billion which will be spent on R&D in areas including space, cyber, quantum technologies, engineering biology, directed energy weapons, and advanced high-speed missiles. There will be a new defence AI strategy.

The review makes repeated references to the MOD's science and technology strategy 2020, through which "we will prioritise higher-risk research to support the modernisation of our armed forces".

The review also mentions a new Royal Navy Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship, which will help protect critical infrastructure at sea and improve "our knowledge of the maritime environment".

4.5 A new defence and security industrial strategy

A new defence and security industrial strategy will constitute a "more strategic approach to our core industrial base", referencing defence manufacturing in each nation.

The strategy will create "a more certain environment for industry that enables investment to support innovation and convert it into deployable national security capabilities and future commercial opportunities".

The strategy will also move away from the "competition by default" approach laid out in the 2012 [national security through technology](#) document. Instead, the Government will "prioritise UK industrial capability where required for national security and operational reasons". The MOD will also reform and revitalise its approach to acquisitions, exports and international collaboration, including greater use of government-to-government arrangements.

4.6 Nuclear deterrent

The UK remains committed to a minimum, credible nuclear deterrent, assigned to the defence of NATO.

However, in recognition of the evolving security environment, the review reverses the previous decision in the 2010 SDSR to reduce the UK's operational nuclear stockpile to no more than 180 warheads by the mid-2020s. The UK will now move toward an overall nuclear weapon stockpile of no more than 260 warheads, a stockpile level last seen in 2005/06.

² Speaking in Parliament, the Prime Minister said: "we will have, by the end of this decade, 24 frigates as opposed to the 15 today." It is not clear how he has arrived at the 24 figure. It should also be said there are 13, not 15, frigates in the Royal Navy today.

While the Government has not changed its declaratory policies, in order to extend the UK's position of deliberate ambiguity on when and where nuclear weapons would be used, the UK will also stop publishing figures on the size of the UK nuclear stockpile, deployed warheads and deployed missiles.

The programme to replace the UK's nuclear deterrent will continue.³

5. International development

The UK will remain "a world leading international development donor", committed to the global fight against poverty and meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The UK will return to its commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on development "when the fiscal situation allows".

An international development strategy is expected to be published later this year.

6. Building national resilience

Recognising that Covid-19 will not be the last global crisis of the 2020s, the review places an increased emphasis and commitment on strengthening security and national resilience.

The Government will develop a Comprehensive National Resilience Strategy which will seek to improve national preparedness and readiness. It will adopt a "whole of society" approach to resilience, developing an integrated approach across all levels of Government, critical national infrastructure operators, the private sector, civil society and the public. The armed forces will continue to provide support to emergency operations through Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA). The strategy will, however, examine how to utilise the reserves to greater effect, with the potential for a civilian reservist cadre to be established, specifically for use in times of crisis.

The Government is also reviewing its approach to biosecurity, as part of the lessons learned from its Covid-19 response. This work will inform a review of biosecurity strategy and potential changes within the machinery of Government.

A new Counter Terrorism Operations Centre will be established which will bring together government departments, the security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement and operational partners, and elements of the judicial system into an integrated centre for the first time.

The UK will also run a series of national, strategic level exercises to "test resilience and our ability to navigate crises". The UK will actively support similar NATO and EU-NATO exercises. This, the review says, is to "improve our ability to manage and de-escalate a multi-domain crisis".

7. Mechanics of Government

To deliver on the goals of the Integrated Review, the Government will have a planned, but adaptable, strategy. Essential to this approach will be deeper integration across

³ The programmes to replace the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent are examined in greater detail in House of Commons Library briefing papers: CBP8010, [Replacing the UK's nuclear deterrent: progress of the Dreadnought class](#) and CBP8941, [Replacing the UK's nuclear deterrent: the long-awaited warhead decision](#).

Government, building on the Fusion Doctrine which was set out in the 2018 National Security Capability Review.

The National Security Council (NSC) will continue to set national security strategy and policy and oversee implementation. However, the review acknowledges that more flexibility is needed in the way Government departments tackle cross-cutting challenges.

The National Security Adviser will, therefore, conduct a review of national security systems and processes to ensure the objectives and priority actions of the integrated review are implemented effectively, and to establish systems that better support the NSC.

To oversee the new “full spectrum” approach to cyber capability, a new ministerial group has also been formed to “cohere cyber decision making across Government”.

A new conflict centre will be created within the FCDO to develop and lead a strategic conflict agenda and establish a more integrated approach to work on conflict and instability.

Box 1: Forthcoming strategies

The Government will publish a Defence Command Paper on Monday 22 March 2021. The review also states there will be:

- A new cyber security strategy
- A defence and security industrial strategy
- A defence AI strategy
- An integrated space strategy (combining military and civilian space policy)
- An international development strategy
- An updated investment strategy
- A comprehensive national resilience strategy
- A review of biosecurity strategy.

The review does not indicate when these strategies will be published.

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