

# Affording the Integrated Review

Policy Exchange 

Air Marshal Edward Stringer (Ret'd) CB CBE





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# Contents

About the Author	2
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	5
Immediate Concerns	6
Russia's War on Ukraine	6
China's Threat to Taiwan	7
Energy Crisis	7
Policy Considerations	9
Foreign Policy	9
Energy Security	12
Defence Policy	14
Industrial and other Policies	19
Summary	21

# Introduction

It is now over a year since the government published its Integrated Review of Foreign, Security and Defence policy (IR). It was drafted in the early days of the pandemic and published just after the rollout of the first vaccines. The inputs from the various government departments were, therefore, reflective of the lingering assumptions of a previous era - it is fair to say that the drafting team themselves would have taken firmer positions were it not for the need to seek consensus. And, to be fair, there is plenty of wiggle room in the deliberate choice of words that suggested events might well reveal preferences, and these would allow us to recalibrate, and probably harden, policy accordingly. The signposts were clear: Russia as the acute military threat, China as the systemic competitor, leadership in the science and tech of the information age the high ground of that competition.

The intervening 18 months has not been short of events, and these have, indeed, revealed many preferences. The tail end of the pandemic did not reflect as well on Chinese competence as its onset had. Global supply chains were tested and found wanting. Russia confounded all but 5-Eyes intelligence assessments and invaded Europe's second largest country with the stated aim of subjugating its people - it then failed militarily to do so. Chinese sensitivity over Taiwan resulted in four days of intense military exercises close around that island's entire periphery that looked like a rehearsal of blockade or invasion. The US-led Western withdrawal from Afghanistan became a humiliating rout that saw the Afghan Government fall before we had actually departed. And, almost lost, evidence of climate change continued to mount; to which can be added the cumulative impact of all these events is an energy and cost of living crisis. At the trivial end, our continued inability to work out whether the sale of Newport Wafer Fab was or was not in the national interest demonstrated, via a small company in Wales, our confusion over a yes/no decision that involved defence, security, business and foreign policy considerations.

The UK Government recently announced that it was refreshing the IR in the light of these events. This paper suggests that the IR was a prescient analysis whose important conclusions have been validated. The dimensions of the threats and problems described in it can now be more accurately calibrated. As importantly, many of those judgements, some contested at the time both internally and externally to the UK, are now unarguable. Security architectures have changed, the World has recalibrated too, new possibilities present themselves. Government can now more confidently make concrete plans based on the analytical framework of the IR and the empirical evidence of events. This paper suggests what the Government should do in the short-term, but with a view to the far horizon.

## Immediate Concerns

### Russia's War on Ukraine

The most pressing security problem is the war in Ukraine, but the epochal issue at stake is the place of Russia in the European security architecture. The acute military threat described in the IR has materialised, and Russia's intent has been revealed. Ukraine was not the limit of Putin's ambition; Russia is set against what it considers to be a decadent and inconsistent West. It planned to present, via an absorbed Ukraine and a de facto absorbed Belarus, a significant military threat on NATO's border and a pushback against the eastern movement of the EU's democratic values and standards. Putin assumed that the Western European dependency on Russian energy would give him a strong lever of persistent coercion. A bigger, stronger, demonstrably assertive Russia would enhance its position with China and its status among the non-aligned of the Global South. NATO and the EU would now be paying in perpetuity - on Western defence and on Russian gas.

This is what at stake for the West in the war in Ukraine. And much hinges on how Russia emerges from this conflict, and on how the rest of the World perceives the West as a bloc able to stand up for those democratic value and standards that it is ever keen to extol under the banner of the Rules Based International Order. An assessment must be made of the post-war state of all protagonists, which would include the condition of Russia's armed forces, the chance of maintaining international sanctions and hence its ability to reconstitute those forces, and the state of its economy if it cannot rely on energy exports, which greatly affects that ability to reconstitute.

Strategic considerations now, for the Government, should revolve around three tracks. The first is ensuring Ukraine continues to prevail in its war, and Russia's military machine is defeated and eroded. The second is working at a wartime pace and risk profile on reducing Western dependence on Russian energy. The third is an international sanctions plan for the post war phase that should look to prevent Russia regaining military power as long as Putinism - its 'preferences' now revealed - is still the controlling power of the state. That will take some discipline, but no one can now argue about Russian intent, or the perils of allowing a critical dependency on Russia to develop. Defeating Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine should be a stated goal of UK foreign and Defence policy.



## China's Threat to Taiwan

China's rise is the dominant geopolitical event of the century. The immediate concern is the threat it poses to Taiwan. And behind the events of recent weeks that culminated in China's four days of intense, live-firing military exercises around Taiwan's shores is the continued viability of the policy of Strategic Ambiguity. Designed in a less febrile era when Chinese military capacity was immature, and the overall approach to China was to rely on increasing middle class prosperity forcing China's polity to be ever more democratic and 'Western', Strategic Ambiguity and the US's Taiwan Relations Act was an attempt to placate and suppress both sides. China wasn't overtly threatened, Taiwan was armed defensively but couldn't overreach, and everyone could pretend.

Those conditions do not pertain now, as both China's intent and capability to take Taiwan have hardened and strengthened. At the same time, the importance of the semi-conductors that Taiwan manufactures for the global economy has become extremely salient. One of The West's own revealed preferences in Ukraine is that when a friendly third party is threatened by a competitor we will intervene in some capacity. This latter point was rather inadvertently confirmed by both President Biden - despite row-backs by the State Department - and Speaker Pelosi who went well beyond Strategic Ambiguity in stating that America would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

Strategic Ambiguity now might do more harm than good in that our messaging is mixed, and poor signalling runs counter to effective deterrence. The Prime Minister, who has seen the benefits in the Indo-Pacific region of the mere announcement of the AUKUS deal, would do well to engage regional partners in a re-assessment of our stated policy over Taiwan. This needs to be a main plank of the Integrated Review's recommended 'Indo-Pacific tilt'. The Government should use the AUKUS framework to clarify US and allied positions over support to Taiwanese sovereignty.

## Energy Crisis

In recent years energy policy has been driven by climate change and the quest for Net Zero. Climate change still needs to be addressed, but Ukraine has reminded us we cannot ignore the geopolitics of energy supply. Arguments remain over what constitutes green energy - what is the place of nuclear fission? Germany has provided one answer: in looking to reopen its recently closed nuclear power stations it has accepted that some things are worse than using nuclear power. Across Europe, states are scrabbling to find alternate supplies before the demands of winter set in. Prices are commensurately sky-high and governments face angry electorates. Energy nationalism might become a reality, driving a wedge into the Western bloc just when it needs to remain united - Putin is clearly trying to engineer this as part of his exit strategy for his war on Ukraine.

There would appear, therefore, to be two driving imperatives to rebalancing energy provision, both have a national security component.

Removing a dependency on Russia removes any economic leverage it might have; getting to Net Zero addresses one of the biggest risks we face. So the challenge of the coming decade is to get to Net Zero in a way that is not geopolitically or economically reckless. The challenge of the hour is how to manage Europe, its economies and politics, through a difficult winter. Wise trade-offs not ideological purity will be required.

All of the above suggests that the West should address energy security as it would in wartime - as a key government responsibility addressed with an appropriate balance between risk and threat. We are already seeing the most affected countries rebuild their infrastructure - Germany is now rapidly building liquid gas terminals at ports and actually importing gas from the UK. Interconnectors allow electricity to be shared internationally, which is one hedge against the localised intermittency of renewables. The Prime Minister might push for better coordination across Europe and an acceleration of this transformation of its energy infrastructure. **The PM should establish a 'war cabinet' to deal with the interrelated national security aspects of energy security as it would an existential wartime concern.**

## Policy Considerations

If the foregoing are the immediate concerns and the high level actions required, how should we assess the relative merits where trade-offs in policy alignment might be required. Many voices have already loudly proclaimed, for example, that Ukraine demonstrates we should abandon the IR and revert to a focus on Russia as the main threat in our near abroad. How might we look at this rather alarming geostrategic landscape and pick a sensible route through it; what should be our policy considerations and conclusions from a national security perspective?

### Foreign Policy

Most commentators, even, perhaps especially, long term Russia experts, predicted that the military superpower would achieve its war aims in Ukraine in a matter of days. The US government tacitly agreed in offering Zelensky a chance to escape the inevitable. Few predicted Russia's military operations would become bogged down as they have, that Ukraine would emerge as the better and more adaptable fighting force within a resourceful, united and committed nation-state. It further transpires that Russia's socio-economy cannot readily support the war it has started. In all high-tech areas - from guided weapons production to airline spares - sanctions have denuded Russia of essential subcomponentry. It would appear that assumptions of Purchasing Power Parity allowing Russia to buy more capability per 'defence dollar' were wide of the mark.

Given that much of its best manpower and material has already been lost, it is hard to see from where Russia is going to be able to quickly rebuild its armed forces, even if it could alter its corrupt military culture to become the sort of vibrant, questioning, open-minded organisation necessary to undertake a fundamental reboot of military doctrine. Much of Russia's energy infrastructure is now useless unless the West relents - Nordstream 2 took four years to build and will not now be used while Putin remains in power. One cannot turn a pipeline through 180° and start pumping east even if China provides a replacement demand. It is hard to see how Russia rebuilds itself as a conventional military threat to even its pre-war standard, a standard we now see was vastly over-estimated. Our league table of threats must be adjusted accordingly; against that assessment of Russia's residual threat, that posed by China appears several leagues ahead.

It is hard now to credit that it is less than two years since the UK Government bowed to US arguments and u-turned over its plans to allow Huawei a significant slice of our 5G telecommunications infrastructure. Since then attitudes across the board have hardened. The state sponsored persecution of the Uighars, renegeing on agreements over Hong Kong and

the subjugation of its administration, bullying behaviour in the South and East China Seas, allied to increasingly assertive nationalism abroad, have led to a widespread recalibration of China's nature and intent under Xi Jinping. His taking an unprecedented third term as Chairman and leader crowns this descent into totalitarianism. As with Putin, the World can no longer claim it didn't know.

But the tail end of the pandemic has revealed that predictions of the inevitable rise and supremacy of the Chinese model (by no later than 2049) were a little too credulous of China's own assessments. We can now see that that rapid growth has had the brakes put on it by the zero-Covid policy, which has seen industries shut down and ports closed - hence the global supply chain problems felt by the rest of the world. Absent stellar growth figures economic doubt can creep in, and China no longer seems immune to the usual laws of economics. Mortgage strikes are just the latest problem to hit the debt-fulled construction industry that has driven China's economy. Growth has reduced markedly below predictions, and some economists now question whether such GDP growth was real or an illusory by-product of activity. The latest demographic projections, admittedly at the extreme end, are dire. All of which might make China more dangerous as an ever more autocratic Xi looks for external distractions, or considers he cannot wait and should make use of his established power now. And on that economic success to date China has developed a military that looks very capable on paper.

Its recent exercises around Taiwan, while not representing a full rehearsal of a sophisticated, joint military operation, are in line with intelligence assessments of Chinese progress in recent years. Run by the new Eastern Command of the PLA, the exercise saw coordinated drills of sea, land, air and systems command forces. Latest generation Chinese equipment no longer relies on imported Russian technology - indeed it has beaten Russia to develop what appear to be genuinely '5th Generation', stealthy and high-performance jets and ships. Its missiles seem to go where they are pointed. What is lacking is any experience of actually using this military machine in fluid combination and against an adversary - the PLA is untested in combat.

Most importantly, for the first time since 1945 the West faces a competitor that is its peer in economic strength, manufacturing capacity, manpower, academic research, and R&D. China also has a plan, and through programmes such as 'Made in China 2025' has been deliberately seeking a position of at least regional, and preferably global, superiority over the West and the Western imposed 'Rules Based International Order'. It would appear fairly straightforward to state that the judgement of the Integrated Review is correct: Russia might be the most acute military threat, but China is the systemic competitor who can alter the international order.

While political consideration modified the Integrated Review's comments on China, given that opinions over China across the UK government departments were still divided, the increasingly belligerent tone of Chinese diplomacy, added to the actions already listed and many

others that aren't, allows us to be more definitive about the relative ranking of the threats posed by Russia and China. And this should inform the investments in related security and defence policies. In short, the IR called this correctly, and the wiggle room it left for China to demonstrate its true nature has now been filled. We can now be more supportive of, and build stronger relationships with, those Indo-Pacific nations who also fear the hegemonic grip of China but have of necessity had to genuflect in front of its apparent might. If we need proof, we only need look at the positive reaction to the AUKUS deal across the region - especially telling was the reaction of those nations who had appeared resigned to an accommodation and had already started to hedge.

The over-riding judgement must be that while China is much more of systemic competitor and threat, across the board, than Russia, it face headwinds of its own and its rise to supremacy is not predetermined. The democratic powers, if acting together and with sensible rebalancing of their efforts, can manage both at acceptable cost.

The Ukraine conflict has also changed the dynamics in European politics. Since June 2016 our relationship with European partners has primarily been seen through the lens of Brexit, and those relationships were over-shadowed by the primacy of the interaction with the nominated EU authorities. European nations were required to maintain a united front. But divisions in approach to supporting Ukraine and confronting Russia, issues with an existential thread for the Eastern and Northern Europeans, transcend that requirement. In this new era the UK's long-term support for Ukraine, and its Defence initiatives of recent years such as the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), are suddenly relevant. Their salience enhanced by what many of the nations of 'New Europe' see as the relatively dilatory and qualified support of the 'Old Europe' led by Germany and France - both considered to have naively indulged Putin for too long.

On the back of these enhanced Defence relationships - many of which have long-standing precedents to build on, as is the case with Estonia - a post-Brexit, positive engagement with Europe can be built. Indeed the Integrated Review, with its emphasis on winning the competition in science and technology that China has set out to dominate, points to our forming partnerships with the agile and capable tech start-ups and established electronics companies of the JEF partner nations. While not ignoring our relationships with the major powers, and we still have the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) with France, such an approach would be a reversion to the traditional British strategies of peripheral engagement. It would also play well with any US administration, all of which in recent decades have looked to Europe to do more in its own defence as the price of continued US engagement. The Pentagon has been a bigger fan of the JEF than most Brits.

Similarly, the energy crisis requires us to cooperate with our immediate neighbours in gas and electricity sharing, for reasons already outlined. Given every one involved requires something of another, the incentives should be there for positive engagement, and a post-Brexit reset based,

essentially, on shared national security imperatives.

Another concerning aspect of the Ukraine war is the relative ambivalence of the Global South, though one can see why nations facing serious food shortages are more worried about starving populations than what can appear to them like yet another squabble in Europe having global repercussions that they have to deal with. One can sympathise with India's tradition of non-alignment behind any superpower. But it is emerging as a superpower in its own right. It also has had long-standing, simmering confrontations across its border with China, hence its partnership with the 'Quad' of Indo-Pacific nations. Its reliance on Russian arms must be a source of concern currently. The D10 initiative to bring together the ten biggest democracies to counter the authoritarian momentum of Russia and China deserves rejuvenating in the light of Ukraine and Taiwan. This would be a good vehicle for engaging India, while reflecting its status as the World's largest democracy.

It is equally tempting to suggest we have ignored the merging economic and demographic powers of Africa, but there is only so much a Prime Minister can prioritise. Perhaps one area where she or he might make changes that would allow beneficial knock-on effects is in Aid. The West can come across as patronising and unhelpful, perhaps best summed up in the African aphorism: "When the Chinese visit they give us a hospital, when the West visits they give us a lecture." Allowing aid and trade to be pushed in tandem to achieve strategic benefits by a more empowered FCDO would see UK get a greater bang for its buck across its international engagements.

In the long-term, a reassessment of ODA regulations and a permanent change of approach to foreign aid – with a greater focus on security, strategy and the objective of building social resilience in aid-receiving states – would benefit British interests among many others. While aid for aid's sake exhibits an admirable purity, the scale of the problems we face currently suggests we need to target and reinforce our actions where they are most likely to be effective.

### Energy Security

It was only in 2017 that DECC decided to close the Rough gas storage facility under the North Sea. It was confidently asserted that gas was plentiful and we could play the spot market indefinitely. Fracking was banned, against scientific advice, for political reasons in 2019. Decades ago we got out of being a nation competent in civil nuclear power plant construction despite leading the World in the 1950s. Renewables requiring large subsidies were pushed because the overwhelming focus of energy policy was decarbonisation - energy bills were inflated accordingly - but without sufficient progress in storage to cope when renewables don't produce. When the wind does blow we still pay 'gas' prices for 'renewable' electricity - greatly inflating prices, and profits, even before the renewable levy is applied. Biomass replaced coal, despite plenty of evidence that its overall ecological impact is dire. We export manufacturing

to coal-using countries, but claim our products are clean because energy is not consumed at home. Energy policy and sector regulation are a mess, energy security is wafer thin, Putin saw that and the inherent strategic implications, and we are all now suffering.

Long-term energy policy is vying with that over China in the round for the title of 'biggest serial UK post-war policy failure'. Contrast it with Norway's creation of a sovereign wealth fund to capitalise on the profits from its oil discovery. But we now have a clear and present danger to concentrate the mind (outlined previously), and an associated economic and cost of living crisis. The mission statement might read: To get to Net Zero at acceptable geostrategic risk and economic cost. This requires more than a continuation of the policy/delivery fudge of routine, department of state business that has got us here today. It requires difficult trade-offs to be calculated across departments. It requires the urgency of wartime, and a suitably empowered, task-organised command authority to deliver it; a war cabinet, perhaps.

The importance of some structure like a war cabinet is necessary in part to signal the gravity of the circumstances, the nature of Russia's aggression, and so the extent of necessary state intervention. As with all emergency surgery, state intervention must address the immediate threat but should also minimise any long-term harm to the patient. There will be a clamour for price-capping and other popular measures that will ease immediate anxieties. But without any price-signalling then the market won't adapt as markets do, consumption will not be modulated appropriately across domestic and industrial sectors, with will likely lead to perverse outcomes. Incentives on the supply side will be skewed and investments will be ineptly targeted.

There is already evidence that the market is working to an extent, the rebuilding of European gas reserves is ahead of schedule and prices reacted accordingly. To see us well set beyond the next winter government should use the crisis to reset energy market regulation as part off its extant Better Regulation programme. Short term, probably financial, interventions can then be constructed to be targeted at the most deserving and in need, and constructed to do least harm to the necessary market forces.

As described in the opening section, there is a significant foreign policy dimension, but many of our European neighbours are in worse position than we are. Getting energy security right should be a binding mission that pulls Europe together. And as it must eventually include standardising and rebuilding a huge swathe of the current global petrochemical infrastructure there are benefits in Europe getting its collective act together to think these issues through early.

There are many dimensions to energy security – the Government cannot address all of them simultaneously. In considering just the reduction of demand, to name but three they include travel, housing and industrial policy. But the Government should set out their stall on arrival and convey the sense of urgency required. They should lay out how such a strategic change programme, in all its dimensions, must be conducted.

## Defence Policy

As described previously, the PM must affirm that Ukraine's defeat of the Russian invasion is UK Defence Policy. This will have many useful spin-offs for our longer term strength and resilience - a diminished threat, rebuilt logistic stockpiles and supply chains, and a modernised military instrument. And, as important, it will address the underlying conditions behind the economic crisis too, much of which can be laid at Putin's door and represents an economic instrument being deliberately wielded by him in his confrontation with the West.

The importance of NATO has been reinforced - clearly Putin respects Article V as a red line, a point not lost on Sweden or Finland whose accession to NATO strengthens us all. NATO support must become a sustained commitment from the UK - too often elements of our senior officer cadre have paid lip service to NATO obligations, while, in comparison, their devotion to the various US service relationships remains rock solid.

There is much to learn from the Ukraine War, and a concerted effort must be made to learn the lessons, however challenging they might be to current service orthodoxies. It is hard to see who is going to do that - there is already anecdotal evidence that the Service are cherry-picking 'lessons' out of context to support pre-conceived positions or cherished extant equipment programmes. It may well be that an independent panel should be convened to conduct a lessons process free from any vested interest. Only after the lessons for future warfare have been argued and accepted should we start to rebuild defence.

And rebuild for what? We have seen a widespread instinctive reaction to reverse recent cuts - with the loudest cries (not least from the HCDC) being about army numbers, in soldiers and in tanks. But reversing is to go backwards, to rebuild what was. And 'what was' was the 'balanced force': an aggregation of high-end equipment programmes that split resources reasonably equally amongst the three services and bought remarkably few, if exquisite, 'platforms' (ships, aircraft, tanks, etc). When money is tight, these cherished equipment programmes are preserved and the cuts fall elsewhere. They tend to fall on the dull but essential, the logistic, that which is invisible in peacetime but vital in war. This leads to what is known as a 'hollowed out force structure'. When the war starts we scramble to make good, if we can. This key observation has many ramifications.

Perhaps the over-arching one is in command and control. There is no single official, in uniform or civilian, or military Head Quarters responsible for fighting and winning the next war. In its place the MOD executes the functions of such a body - sometimes referred to as the Military Strategic Headquarters, but which is not a constituted and integrated whole. Those various functions are executed severally, usually within the administrative and policy/accountancy oriented framework of a department of state. A good example is provided by weapons stockpile planning.

Weapons stockpiles have not been overly taxed during recent COIN/CT operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some ammunition natures have hardly been used at all. We have learned that risk can be taken against



them, and other logistic capacities, when money is tight. (Hence after off-loading the already obsolescent NLAW anti-tank missile - whose success calls into question the role of the tank on the future battlefield - we have found it difficult to send more war stocks to Ukraine as we are below the minimum we require ourselves.) Weapons stockpiles are managed not commanded, and so subject to a series of relatively low-level bureaucratic decisions that are much more referenced to the administrative or political imperatives of today, not the operational risk of failure in future wars. Further we have nowhere near the manufacturing capacity to support war-fighting at the scale seen in Ukraine; even the USA's annual production of 155mm artillery shells would be consumed there in two weeks. So we might not be able to "...scramble to make good..." for any future large scale conflict.

Absent an overarching Headquarters to command the combined effort of the UK military in peacetime, what remains is the governance under the MOD of three Services generating Force Elements at Readiness (FE@R) - essentially packets of ships, aircraft, battalions - against a range of unspecified contingencies that might include fighting a high-intensity war. That falls far short of US practice, where the regional Combatant Commanders are responsible for actual war plans - plans which are intensely stress-tested through war-games and red-teaming. (Both of these skills and associated capacities have atrophied within the MOD in recent decades.) These tested plans must include all this logistic calculations that underpin deliverable operations against real foes and real, predictable contingencies.

More relevantly, our regional, NATO peers in North and Eastern Europe do have very well thought through war plans to defend against a Russian invasion. Given what Ukraine has achieved on a £4Bn defence budget, Finland's even better resourced and exercised, whole of society war plans look very credible indeed. Its budget of £7Bn is spent very differently to ours, it buys only 21 Thousand regular serviceman, but 285 Thousand well trained reservists at immediate readiness, another 900 Thousand at slightly longer, and the biggest artillery force in Western Europe. In comparison, our £44Bn annual defence budget doesn't appear to buy very much, and the ingredients don't fuse within any actionable plans. They are a generic military solution in search of a problem. How did that come about?

Competition between the Services for resources is not new. But in an era when our declared policy is to build an integrated force of five domains (Maritime, Land, Air, Space and Cyber), allowing the three Services to build their several, self-generated visions of themselves appears especially perverse. That unhelpful competition was turbo-boosted by the adoption of the Levene reforms in 2013 that split and delegated the management of the Defence budget down to the Services at a very early stage in the governance process. The ramifications of that have all been negative: the Services have pulled the talent back from the Centre into their own HQs, better to win that inter-Service competition; there are few champions of the apparently dull but war-winning capacities already cited; the Services

feel the need to justify that ‘generic military solution’, which is usually referred to as “The Balanced Force”, by using it whenever and wherever possible. But is it sensible, in military or economic terms, for the UK to be everywhere doing a little bit of everything with advanced capabilities of which it owns very little?

Poland has contracted to buy 980 modern, very capable tanks from South Korea, and with them 648 self-propelled artillery systems. They start arriving this year. Germany has changed its constitution to allow an extra €100Bn to be spent on defence over the next five years. There is still some argument over where the defence budget will go, but it does appear to be a rapid increase to at least the 2% of GDP NATO minimum. This will make Germany West Europe’s top defence spender. We have already concluded that Russia’s army is not as capable as feared, and is further eroding itself daily in Ukraine where it has already lost the best of its men and materiel. Germany and Poland are traditional continental powers who have always invested in their armies, and these being assembled now look more than capable of deterring or defeating any residual Russian threat.

So we should not leap to reconstituting the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), as it is hard to justify why the British Army needs to deploy a relatively small tank force to bolster this significant continental effort: on current plans the British Army will receive a total of 148 twenty-five year old Challenger 2 being upgraded to Mk3 standard between 2027 and 2030. It is quite possible that Poland and Germany might see such a force as causing more problems through friction of integration than they provide benefit in mass. And economies of scale mean that keeping a small force forward and sustained is likely to be expensive pound for pound. In economic terms, comparative advantage says we let Poland and Germany do heavy armour in Central Europe, leaving the UK to concentrate on areas where we retain an advantage. We need to regain this sense of military frugality - embodied in such Principles of War as Economy of Effort - if we are to have enough resource left over to deal with China.

Where our armoured forces could usefully be deployed is the Baltic, to build on the successful partnership with the JEF and in particular Estonia. One of the immediate lessons of the war and evident Russian brutality is that no country wants to cede territory and then have to fight to get it back after the initial invasion - Kaja Kallas and Jens Stoltenberg have been explicit about this. It is to some extent why Sweden and Finland have decided on NATO membership. So the tripwire force of Operation CABRIT, a circa 1,000 person army deployment to Estonia with eighteen tanks and comprising contingents of JEF partner nations troops - is there to make Putin think twice about the political force he will immediately unleash if he attacks this multinational battle group. It will not, and was never designed to, defeat an invasion. But a bolstered force could do so - the force was reinforced by about 50% in late February 2022 - especially given the new balance of forces likely to pertain post-Ukraine. This would equate to a hard mission not a generic contingent readiness, it would demand realistic war plans and appropriate war stocks. It would be a

credible deployment of force.

Of more import strategically, following the earlier analysis on relative threats, that would leave the more rapidly deployable 'blue' services to concentrate more, but not exclusively, on the significant threat posed by China. This does not necessarily mean stationing swathes of conventional force elements at great expense in the Far East. Guaranteeing lines of communication - sea, air and cyber - is a vital global mission to be undertaken with partners. The technological collaboration agreement, AUKUS, is an excellent example of a partnership already reaping strategic benefits. Submarines are key to dominating the South and East China seas, and the West has much more experience of nuclear submarine operations than China's PLA Navy - the Royal Navy is expert in this regard. But AUKUS also calls for collaboration across a range of related, high-tech military capabilities: space, cyber and Artificial Intelligence being just three. Space and cyber capabilities effective in the Indo-Pacific region can be run from the UK - after all, China is competing with us in our own backyard, so the ideas of 'home' and 'away' need reframing. These capabilities make use of dual-use technologies, and investment in them is very much in line with the IR's core framing of the China question as a competition to emerge ahead in the technological arms race currently underway to dominate the data-driven information age.

These questions on military choices should have been addressed, but were not, in the MOD Command Paper published shortly after the IR. During the IR reassessment, it would be sensible to take such an opportunity to rewrite the MOD Command Paper in toto, and address the broad sweep of criticism the first edition received. One of its urgent tasks would be to address the negative consequences of the Levene reforms, and demonstrate how a revised model would assist in building the genuinely integrated force our declared policies demand.

Nuclear weapons are back in the headlines. Russia's ownership of them and a doctrine for their use within a wider conflict, from strategic nuclear missiles to tactical battlefield weapons, has fundamentally shaped the Ukraine confrontation and constrained Western options. In the UK, however, we have drifted since 1989 into a position where we maintain strategic deterrence through the submarines that provide the Continuous At-Sea Deterrent (CASD); but then we have adopted a de facto, undeclared position across the rest of the military that having thereby deterred use of all nuclear weapons we can revert to the very comfortable position of assuming the battlefield is now solely conventional.

No other declared nuclear power adopts such an approach. The US has a whole Combatant Command to concentrate on its various nuclear forces and their deployment in a range of scenarios; the French make being a nuclear power the starting point of their military's sense of self. We are the outliers here, and our position has been found wanting if an adversary calls our bluff. US Strategic Command is urgently reviewing its nuclear and deterrence doctrines in the light of Ukraine, and it is high time that we did the same. We should consider how our armed forces are configured

to deal with and deter use of nuclear weapons; not just the deterrence of a strategic exchange, but also the use of tactical nuclear weapons that our adversaries see as a legitimate rung on the escalation ladder. Indeed, as a declared and accepted nuclear power and a P5 nation it could be argued we have a responsibility within our alliances to address all dimensions of the nuclear question. In a future crisis we may be put in a more dangerous position by not being able to match and negate an adversary's better scaled escalation. Reassessing British nuclear policy and doctrine would also be a useful reminder to all of the immense contribution - in cost and effectiveness - of the UK's assignment of its nuclear deterrent force to NATO. (The US does too, France does not.)

It is clear from events in all the wars and confrontations discussed, and one could add Iran's ambitions in here too, that very accurate and increasingly long range missiles are proliferating across the globe. Many states are trying to join the nuclear club, most are not friends. We are used to feeling relatively safe in our Island at the North-West tip of Europe, but that sense of security is increasingly an illusion. Moreover, the large scale use of long range missile strikes in the Ukraine war, conducted with a variety of such weapons from ballistic to cruise to hypersonic, is a reminder of the escalating global missile threat. Forward deployed British forces can only call on short-range systems for local defence against certain types of slower, 'cruise' missiles at the lower end of the spectrum. It cannot defeat ballistic or hypersonic threats, and the British homeland is almost entirely exposed in this regard. Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) should be a greater priority than it is.

The proliferation of missile threats also reinforces the relevance of space as a competitive domain. The IR also recognised, for the first time, the crucial importance of space to the national interest, including as a defence and security instrument. This effort should include the development of a UK missile defence space component which may be achieved through an integration pathway into the US National Defense Space Architecture being built by the Space Development Agency to support hypersonic missile defence. It would result in a costed and resourced 'warplan' for missile defence of the UK, for which the new RAF Space Command could be held accountable.

We are already attacked daily by cyber threats, and much of our Critical National Infrastructure is in private ownership. Perhaps because of that prevailing sense of safety in our Island home we have tended to treat national resilience as a reactive thing, we will COBRA our way through any contingent crisis. We have a Civil Contingencies Secretariat in the cabinet Office to manage this. The pandemic should make us question our current processes for assessing and dealing with such significant risks in an ad-hoc, reactive way, while Ukraine and Taiwan demonstrate the immediate economic costs of what might at first sight be dismissed as 'defence' matters.

There is now plenty of evidence that both Russia and China look to mobilise all the levers they have in a concerted campaign of hybrid

warfare against Western interests. In this context, building up national resilience to wartime standards should be a top priority for the next Prime Minister. We don't have to look far to find exemplars: we might learn from our Northern European, JEF partners, now NATO members too, who have excellent models of national resilience, sometimes called Total Defence. Such a posture must be deliberately and proactively maintained - and it cannot be just a Defence activity. An assessment of risk to national resilience could be an additional task of the inquiry into the lessons of Ukraine.

Finally, the collection of crises already described has reignited debates on which defence capacities ought to be sovereign. Russia cannot replace its precision guided weapons because it cannot procure semiconductors. Semiconductors are mostly made in Taiwan, and so within 120 miles of our significant competitor, who has the stated aim of regaining control of that island. Suddenly, global supply chains are shortening, critical manufacturing capacities are being on-shored, or 'friend-shored'. What sort of trusted ally constitutes a friend in this context? The only two Western nations producing 5G equipment are members of the JEF: Finland and Sweden through Nokia and Ericsson respectively. The MOD could productively revisit its catalogue of which manufacturing capacities, to include software production, need to be sovereign or produced in partnership with allies to sustain defence in wartime. And, further, to have a plan to defend its necessary supply chains.

To that end, national resilience also involves cultivating dual-use capabilities that have utility in peacetime and wartime. Dual-use has recently been validated again in Ukraine, most prominently in the space domain with commercial companies like Starlink being deeply embedded in the war effort. Repurposed civilian equipment can provide an invaluable boost to combat effectiveness at reasonable cost. In some domains, like cyber, there is already long experience of using civilian technologies – developed in the private sector – for national security purposes. In the context of a highly charged global strategic competition, this practice needs to become more widespread in government, as it is a truism that the Services tend to demand bespoke, militarised solutions to technical requirements. Such cultural and institutional barriers – also between the MoD and other “civilian” departments – in certain areas should be reduced.

## Industrial and other Policies

The US has announced a \$50 Bn package to generate a national semiconductor industry. It has also placed restrictions on Chinese access to US semiconductor technology and know-how, and it has done so on national security grounds. The EU - that slow-moving bureaucracy Brexit was going to free us from - has already announced a €45 Bn package that does similar for Europe. In comparison, the UK Govt is still conducting the second of two reviews. What it has done is pass the National Security Investment Act (NSIA), which is currently being invoked to prevent the sale of Newport Wafer Fab - a semiconductor related manufacturer - to a Dutch company,

but one owned by a Chinese firm (Wingtech) that has links, as do most such companies, to the Chinese Communist Party. The NSIA is a blunt instrument in the absence of an industrial policy for semiconductors, and by extension other sensitive industrial capacities. The UK needs to match the US and the EU as matter of urgency and state its policy over our capacity to ensure supply of such essential subcomponentry.

Even the big Primes of defence plant production - the 'platforms' referred to earlier - now advertise themselves as software driven businesses. The pure software houses of the vibrant Tech start-up scene have always been nothing but. Both continue to express huge frustration at the inability to work with UK government agencies when it comes to procuring software driven capabilities. The fundamental problems are HMT's procurement rules, and the established practices of procurement. Traditionally these frame procurement as the investment in depreciating, physical plant, which is a very different nature of commodity.

Software companies need to move quickly, adapting and improving as they go, learning by doing and using the immediate feedback of clients in a test-loop. It is the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) method and it is entrepreneurial, innovative and proactive. Attributes the Armed Forces also claim to value and nurture. But traditional procurement of plant - such as aircraft carriers - requires massive scoping and derisking of the programme, nailing down the cardinal specification of every dimension, a laborious tendering and competition phase, and then, usually, customer mandated delays in delivery as savings 'haircuts' are required. This process is the exact opposite of the MVP, and it kills software houses who have to keep advancing or their Intellectual Property (IP) gets overtaken and they die. It is not just Defence that is affected. If the Government wishes to be digital and agile it needs some tech-fluent types in high places - currently the Senior Civil Service comprises a significant number of humanities graduates - and it needs to be able to work with Tech in a way that promotes rather than frustrates it. Commercial business talks about moving from CapEx to OpEx when buying software. Similarly, UK Government must as matter of urgency address how it buys software driven capability.

It is not surprising that our highly regarded university sector has been heavily exploited by the Chinese state in recent years. The Chinese have understood that they have been in a competition with us over science and tech, and realised they didn't necessarily need covert access to steal our IP, they could more easily buy their way in via the front door. As in our industrial policy, we should tighten up access to dual use scientific research, and we should better prioritise R&D spending to support national security goals. Especially so where most technological advances are in dual use technologies that have useful spin-offs in the commercial sector, and vice versa.

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## Summary

The British government is faced with an extraordinary range of crises. The analysis of this paper suggest they be gripped in the following order. Russia's illegal invasion Ukraine is the cause of most of the woe. If Russia wins the problems grow and become entrenched, and we will pay the costs for decades. If Ukraine defeats Russia's invasion then the opposite occurs, we have a more benign global security environment and the residual threats become manageable. The first priority, therefore, is to confirm our absolute commitment to supporting Ukraine and see it prevail.

To assist in that, to weaken Russia's hybrid attack vectors, and stave off the complaints at home over the economic impacts, the Government should approach energy security and energy policy in the round as they would an existential, wartime challenge. This will involve working with allies and so will guide foreign policy. That foreign policy should more actively court the main players of the Global South, who have to date not got involved in Ukraine but stand to face real hardship from the consequences of the Ukraine conflict.

There are many matters pressing on the Government; these are but the foreground detail of a geostrategic backdrop in upheaval. This once in several centuries scale of change was well captured by the Integrated Review of last year. Recent events, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, allow us to calibrate the relative import of the major factors. It is important when dealing with the urgent not to lose sight of the important in the long-term. That is why this paper frames suggested immediate action within that longer term analysis to show they are suitably geared.

The major theme is the interlinking of matters not previously considered together as national security concerns. Thus climate change, a major national security issue, should be coupled with energy security in the round to avoid the geostrategic pitfalls seen in Europe during Russia's war in Ukraine. Similar concerns, but much more broadly based, exist in our dependence on another competitor nation-state: China. The high-ground of that competition is indeed in science and technology, and government could well do to revisit associated industrial and R&D policies.

We should learn from the Russian experience and reduce our collective exposure across The West to vital supply chains that have origins in or are threatened by China. The obvious test case is the supply of semiconductors.

Energy security questions, and their impact on GDP growth in a time of economic turmoil and recession, provide a vehicle for rebuilding European relationships post Brexit - both with the EU but also with those closely allied nations who have shared our appreciation of the threat posed

by Russia and the need to support Ukraine in its war. Many of these are in the JEF, and that essentially military relationship can be built upon to rebuild European relationships and networks to deliver a much wider national resilience.

Finally, UK Defence has much to learn from the Ukraine War and the manner in which a country with a Defence budget one tenth of our own constructed a defence that held off the army of an assumed superpower. If, as argued, Russia emerges diminished from its war on Ukraine then we should recalculate our part in supporting NATO to deter further Russian aggression. This should result in costed war plans and adequate weapons stockpiles. An independent review of the lessons learned should be carried out to prevent selective interpretation by interested parties within UK Defence. The resulting report will be useful in assessing the character of future war as we face the increasing threat posed by China, which has greatly overtaken that posed by Russia. The challenge posed by these adversaries is one that cannot be left to a joint force created by the accidents of several, independent sub-forces developed by the three services. A few, if exquisitely capable, pieces of frontline equipment with scant ammunition in the magazine is not a war-winning proposition to deter serious adversaries. The most urgent conclusion of this paper is that the Levene reforms of 2013 should be significantly reversed, and the UK needs a properly constituted Military Strategic Headquarters at the apogee of the armed forces. One tasked to deliberately direct all four frontline commands towards the collective endeavour of being ready to fight and win the next war.





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