

Research Briefing

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# The Integrated Review Refresh 2023: What has changed since 2021?

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- 2 The need for a refresh
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## Summary

On 13 March the Government published [the Integrated Review Refresh 2023](#). This briefing examines how the review compares to its predecessor, published in 2021, focusing on the major themes and assessments.

### What is the Integrated Review?

The Integrated Review evolved out of the [strategic defence reviews](#) published in the decades following World War Two. It sets out the UK Government's national security and international policy. It identifies the core values of the Government's foreign policy, assesses risks and threats and how to address them. This overarching strategy is intended to inform and guide national security, international and domestic policy.

As Prime Minister, Boris Johnson pledged the largest review since the end of the Cold War. The resulting [Global Britain in a Competitive Age](#) was published in March 2021, though it was often referred to as the Integrated Review, reflecting the integration of security, defence, development and foreign policy into one overarching policy document.

The Integrated Review (hereafter IR21) set out a vision for "Global Britain" for the next decade. This incorporated the UK's response to what it described as a more competitive and multi-polar world, characterised by competition between states.

### Why a refresh?

The Integrated Review Refresh 2023 (hereafter IR23) was produced in response to significant world events that have taken place since the 2021 strategy. This includes the war in Ukraine and what Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described as "[China's willingness to use all the levers of state power to achieve a dominant role in global affairs](#)".

The IR23 affirmed many of the trends shaping the international environment identified in IR21: shifts in the distribution of global power; inter-state 'systemic' competition over the nature of the international order; rapid technological change; and worsening transnational challenges.

However, the Government says the “transition into a multipolar, fragmented and contested world has happened more quickly and definitively than anticipated”.

## What does the refresh say?

IR23 builds on the approach of IR21, setting out the next steps in delivering on its aims, against the backdrop of a “more volatile and contested world.”

It reaffirms the UK’s core national interests, articulated in previous reviews as the sovereignty, security and prosperity of the British people, and adds “the higher goal of an open and stable international order.” The ways in which the UK will achieve these ends are divided into four pillars:

1. Shape the international environment.
2. Deter, defend and compete across all domains.
3. Address vulnerabilities through resilience.
4. Generate strategic advantage.

## The security of the Euro-Atlantic is a core priority

Amid concerns about IR21’s tilt to the Indo-Pacific at the expense of the UK’s immediate neighbourhood, IR23 states the security of the Euro-Atlantic is a “core priority” and the “primary theatre” to which the UK will commit the majority of its defence capabilities.

Russia was identified in IR21 the “most acute direct threat to the UK” in the Euro-Atlantic region. Following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the refresh concludes “we cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies’ sovereignty and territorial integrity” and says that the security of the Euro-Atlantic area is now “intrinsically linked to the outcome of the conflict in Ukraine”.

## China poses an “epoch-defining challenge”

Over the last few years, the largely cordial relationship between the UK and China has deteriorated sharply. IR23 describes an “epoch-defining and systemic challenge posed by China under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) across almost every aspect of national life and government policy”.

## Defence spending and the armed forces

Ahead of the Spring Budget and the publication of the 2023 Integrated Review, the Prime Minister announced that defence spending would

[increase by £5 billion](#) over the next two years. The Government says that as a result UK [defence spending is expected to reach 2.2% of GDP](#) this year.

IR23 does not make any recommendations for changes to the armed forces. It does, however, make several observations which are likely to inform the update to the 2021 Defence Command Paper that is currently underway. This [update is expected to conclude in June 2023](#).

## How have MPs responded to the Integrated Review 2023?

In a [debate on the Integrated Review Refresh](#) in the House of Commons on 13 March 2023, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly updated MPs on the Government's plans. Conservative MPs welcomed the review's emphasis on China, although some argued for the Government to take a tougher position and to increase UK defence spending.

The Shadow Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said the refresh of the 2021 review was "[overdue but welcome](#)", noting "this is a challenging moment for our security and that of our allies and for our place in the world." He said the refresh "[does not answer growing questions concerning capability gaps that weaken our national defence and undermine the UK's NATO contribution](#)".

Dave Doogan, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Defence, [criticised the Government's emphasis on the Indo-Pacific](#) in the review, arguing the war in Ukraine calls for a redoubling of the Euro-Atlantic posture.

Richard Foord, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Defence, raised the subject of nuclear weapons and how much of this was being used on the Dreadnought acquisition programme.

# 1

## What is an Integrated Review?

The integrated review has evolved out of the [strategic defence reviews](#) published in the decades following World War Two. The 2010 and 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Reviews expanded the scope, incorporating national security as well as defence.

The review sets out the UK Government's national security and international policy. It identifies the core values of the Government's foreign policy, assesses risks and threats and sets out how to address them. This overarching strategy is intended to inform and guide national security, international and domestic policy.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Government went further, incorporating security, defence, development and foreign policy in an Integrated review published in March 2021: [Global Britain in a Competitive Age](#).<sup>1</sup> This set out a vision for "Global Britain" for the next decade, in what was described as a more competitive and multi-polar world, characterised by competition between states.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the subsequent ramifications for energy security and global food supplies, led to calls to [look again at the Integrated Review](#) [PDF].<sup>2</sup>

On 21 September 2022 then Prime Minister Liz Truss committed to producing a refresh of the Integrated Review by the end of 2022.<sup>3</sup> The review was continued under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

A short summary of the main recommendations of the defence reviews that have taken place since the end of the Second World War can be found in Commons Library paper [A brief guide to previous British defence reviews](#) (CBP 7313).

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Office, [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#), March 2021

<sup>2</sup> House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee, 1st report of 2022-23 session, [UK defence policy: from aspiration to reality?](#) January 2023

<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister's Office, [Prime Minister to tell UN General Assembly: I will lead Britain for a new era](#), 21 September 2022.



## 2

# The need for a refresh

In the foreword to the Integrated Review Refresh 2023 (IR23), Prime Minister Rishi Sunak says some, but not all, of the global turbulence of the last two years was anticipated in the Integrated Review 2021 (IR21):

It [IR21] recognised that the intensification of competition between states was sowing seeds of instability. It warned of the acute threat posed by Russia; of China’s willingness to use all the levers of state power to achieve a dominant role in global affairs; and of the persistent destabilising behaviour of Iran and North Korea.<sup>4</sup>

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“We are now in a period of heightened risk and volatility that is likely to last beyond the 2030s.”

Integrated Review Refresh 2023

However, what could not be fully foreseen was the “pace of the geopolitical change and the extent of its impact on the UK and our people.”<sup>5</sup>

The trends identified as shaping the international environment in IR21 are still considered relevant in IR23. Namely:

- shifts in the distribution of global power;
- inter-state, ‘systemic’ competition over the nature of the international order;
- rapid technological change; and
- worsening transnational challenges.<sup>6</sup>

However, the Government says the “transition into a multipolar, fragmented and contested world has happened more quickly and definitively than anticipated”.<sup>7</sup>

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the weaponization of energy and food supplies, and China’s more aggressive stance in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait are threatening to create an international order more favourable to authoritarianism, the Prime Minister writes.<sup>8</sup>

IR23 states that this period of “heightened risk and volatility” is likely to last beyond the 2030s. It builds on the approach of IR21, setting out the next

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<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Office, [Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world](#), 13 March 2023, CP 811, foreword

<sup>5</sup> CP 811, foreword

<sup>6</sup> CP 811, p7

<sup>7</sup> CP 811, p7

<sup>8</sup> CP 811, foreword

steps in delivering on its aims, against the backdrop of a “more volatile and contested world.”

Its [IR23] main conclusion is that unless “democracies like our own” do more to build resilience and out-cooperate and out-compete those that are driving instability, the global security situation will deteriorate further “to the detriment of all states and peoples”.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.1 Four pillars of the updated strategic framework

The Government outlines an updated strategic framework which will guide all relevant areas of national security, international and domestic policy and resource decisions until the next general election.

The framework rests on the articulation of the Government’s first duty which is to promote and protect the UK’s core national interests, the sovereignty, security and prosperity of the British people. These were espoused in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and IR21. Alongside these core national interests, IR23 adds working towards an “open and stable international order” as an “end” of UK strategy.

These ‘ends’ will be pursued through the ‘ways’ set out in the four pillars which guide the framework. Briefly, these pillars are:

1. **Shape the international environment.** Shape, balance, compete and cooperate to create the conditions for an open and stable international order.
2. **Deter, defend and compete across all domains.** Protect UK and wider international security against state and non-state threats, and manage the risk of escalation.
3. **Address vulnerabilities through resilience.** Strengthen the strategic vulnerabilities that leave the UK exposed to coercion and global crises.
4. **Generate strategic advantage.** Cultivate the UK’s strengths and update our approach to statecraft to maximise our influence and freedom of action.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> CP 811, foreword

<sup>10</sup> CP 811, p17

## 2.2

## Systemic competition

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“Systemic competition between states now represents the most immediate and substantial threat to UK interests.”

Integrated Review Refresh 2023

The intensification of systemic competition is one of the developments that drives the refresh.

Systemic competition over the nature of the international order was identified in IR21 as one of the trends that would shape the international environment to 2030. Then, it was defined as the intensification of competition between states and with non-state actors, manifesting in a growing contest over international rules and norms, the deliberate targeting of the vulnerabilities within democratic systems by authoritarian states and malign actors, and states using a growing range of instruments to undermine and coerce others. At the time, the Government warned competition would increase the pressure on the existing multilateral architecture, weakening established rules and norms that govern international conduct.<sup>11</sup>

IR23 takes this further, describing the intensification of systemic competition as the “dominant geopolitical trend and the main driver of the deteriorating security environment.”<sup>12</sup>

China, or rather the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), is explicitly identified as seeking to shape “a China-centric international order more favourable to its authoritarian system”.<sup>13</sup>

However, IR23 warns that today’s international system cannot simply be reduced to “democracy versus autocracy” or binary, Cold-War style blocs:

Systemic competition is developing into a highly complex phenomenon that we must navigate with an understanding that not everyone’s values or interests consistently align with our own.<sup>14</sup>

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“The risk of escalation is greater than at any time in decades.”

Integrated Review Refresh 2023

Systemic competition is playing out across overlapping strategic arenas, in which there is “constant and dynamic competition above and below the threshold of armed conflict”. This includes advances in technology, the proliferation of spyware, ransomware and offensive cyber capabilities, and technological competition.<sup>15</sup>

The Government does point to a “positive consequence” of this acceleration of systemic competition; namely, the renewed purpose and cooperation among the UK’s core network of allies and partners, best illustrated by the collective response in support of Ukraine.

How to manage systemic competition is introduced as a new long-term goal. The Government sets out its aim to “to establish regular strategic-level

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<sup>11</sup> CP 403, p24

<sup>12</sup> CP 811 p9

<sup>13</sup> CP811 p9

<sup>14</sup> CP 811, p8

<sup>15</sup> CP 811, p9

dialogues to build confidence and transparency around security ambitions, vital interests and military doctrines.”<sup>16</sup> These lines of political and military communication will provide a means to de-escalate or manage escalation.

This ambition reflects another theme of the refresh, that not only is the risk of escalation “greater than at any time in decades”, but that current mechanisms to mitigate the risks of misunderstanding, miscalculation and unintended escalation “have not developed at the pace needed to ensure that competition does not spill over into uncontrolled conflict.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> CP 811, p43

<sup>17</sup> CP 811, p8

### 3

## The Euro-Atlantic and Russia

IR21 described the Euro-Atlantic as the UK's "home region" and the area where "the bulk of the UK's security focus will remain".<sup>18</sup> NATO was identified as the "foundation of our collective security" in the region, and the UK pledged to "remain the leading European ally in NATO", committing to NATO spending targets and committing a "full spectrum of forces to the Alliance", including the UK's nuclear deterrent.<sup>19</sup>

Russia was identified in the review as opportunistic, a systemic competitor and the "most acute direct threat to the UK" in the Euro-Atlantic region.<sup>20</sup> IR21 suggested Russia would be "more active around the wider European neighbourhood", while investing heavily in "global cultural power projection and information operations".<sup>21</sup>

Through NATO the UK would work with allies to "deter nuclear, conventional and hybrid threats to our security, particularly from Russia".<sup>22</sup> IR21 committed to supporting closer practical cooperation between NATO and the EU to achieve this goal, while interoperability with Euro-Atlantic allies would be strengthened through the UK's bilateral and multilateral partnerships, reflecting the UK's departure from the European Union. The US, France and Germany were identified as key allies.<sup>23</sup>

What IR21 did not do was identify the potential for Russian military action in its near abroad. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was subsequently one of the main drivers behind the refresh of the 2021 Integrated Review.

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<sup>18</sup> Cabinet Office, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, CP 403, March 2021, p.18 and p.14

<sup>19</sup> CP403, p.20 and p.61

<sup>20</sup> CP403, p.26

<sup>21</sup> CP403, p.29 and p.49

<sup>22</sup> CP403, p.20

<sup>23</sup> CP 403, p.72

## 3.1 Continued primacy of the Euro-Atlantic region

“The UK’s overriding priority remains the Euro-Atlantic, which is essential to the defence of our homeland and to our prosperity as a nation.”

Integrated Review Refresh 2023

The security of the Euro-Atlantic is a “core priority” in IR23.<sup>24</sup> Russia’s destabilisation of the European security order leads the refresh to conclude that “we cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies’ sovereignty and territorial integrity” and that the security of the Euro-Atlantic area is now “inextricably linked to the outcome of the conflict in Ukraine”.<sup>25</sup>

As such, support for Ukraine and denying Russia “any strategic benefit from its invasion” is identified as the most urgent priority in the short to medium term.<sup>26</sup>

NATO remains the bedrock of collective security and the UK will remain a leading contributor. The United States remains the UK’s most important ally. However, the refresh also places emphasis on the “reinvigoration of our European relationships”, including with the EU, as a means of strengthening the “European family of nations”.<sup>27</sup>

The Euro-Atlantic will remain the “primary theatre to which the UK will commit the majority of its defence capabilities in support of collective deterrence and defence”.<sup>28</sup> [The UK’s defence and security relationship with France](#) and its contribution to security in northern Europe through [the Joint Expeditionary Force](#) (JEF) are highlighted as particularly important for the future.

The UK’s relationship with the EU is regarded as having a “new momentum” under the Trade and Cooperation agreement and the new [Windsor Framework](#), which the UK will seek to maximise by furthering engagement and “developing new forms of cooperation on issues of shared interest”, including potentially in defence cooperation through [the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation \(PESCO\) mechanism](#).<sup>29</sup> The European Political Community (EPC) is also welcomed as a new forum for Europe-wide cooperation. The UK will host the next meeting of the EPC in 2024.

IR23 also states that “the prosperity and security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific are inextricably linked” and strengthening relationships with like-minded nations across the globe is a priority.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> CP811, p.3

<sup>25</sup> CP811, p.8 and p.40

<sup>26</sup> CP811, p.41

<sup>27</sup> CP811, p.9

<sup>28</sup> CP811, p.40

<sup>29</sup> CP811, p.22

<sup>30</sup> CP811, p.9

## 3.2

## What does IR23 say about Russia specifically?

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“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.”

Integrated Review  
Refresh 2023

As outlined above, the main priority of IR23 in the short to medium term is dealing with the risks that Russia poses to European security. However, IR23 also notes with concern China’s deepening partnership with Russia and Russia’s growing cooperation with Iran following the invasion of Ukraine.

The Government’s Russia strategy, which is not publicly available, is in the process of being updated and will focus on containing and challenging Russia’s ability to disrupt security both in the UK and the Euro-Atlantic region, but also globally. Alongside strengthening NATO and degrading key Russian capabilities, the strategy will focus on addressing the UK’s vulnerabilities in energy, democratic and electoral institutions, disinformation and in the UK’s financial systems.<sup>31</sup>

Globally, the UK will work with international partners to reduce dependencies on Russia and therefore diminish its ability to weaponise goods such as energy and food, while also exposing Russian disinformation.

The refresh also acknowledges that while established channels for dialogue and de-escalation are currently limited, the UK remains “ready to reinvigorate them when the moment is right”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> CP811, p.42

<sup>32</sup> CP811, p.43

## 4

# China and the Indo-Pacific

### 4.1

## China

“China poses an epoch-defining challenge to the type of international order we want to see.”

Integrated Review Refresh 2023

Over the last few years, the largely cordial relationship between the UK and China has deteriorated sharply.

IR21 described China as a “systemic competitor”, with China’s increasing power, growing international stature and international assertiveness “likely to be more the most significant geopolitical factor of the 2020s.”<sup>33</sup>

Having described China as presenting the “biggest state-based threat to the UK’s economic security” and talking of the “systemic challenge that China poses to our security, prosperity and values”, IR21 also emphasised the Government’s intention to continue pursuing a “positive trade and investment relationship” with China, while ensuring that national security is protected. The UK will also cooperate with China to tackle transnational issues such as climate change.<sup>34</sup>

IR23 introduces an update to the UK’s approach to China. The refresh was prompted in part by what the Prime Minister described in the refresh’s foreword as “China’s willingness to use all the levers of state power to achieve a dominant role in global affairs”.<sup>35</sup>

Mr Sunak also warned of “China’s more aggressive stance in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait”.<sup>36</sup>

The refresh describes an “epoch-defining and systemic challenge posed by China under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) across almost every aspect of national life and government policy”.<sup>37</sup>

It says the UK must respond to two over-arching factors that have continued to evolve since IR21:

- 1) China’s size and significance on nearly every global issue will continue to increase in the years ahead, and so its choices, including in areas like climate change, will have a profound impact on the UK; and

<sup>33</sup> CP 403, p26

<sup>34</sup> CP 403, p26

<sup>35</sup> CP 811, p2.

<sup>36</sup> CP 811, p2

<sup>37</sup> CP 811, p6



- 2) The UK's growing concerns about the actions and stated intent of the CCP, including its strengthening partnership with Russia, disregard for human rights, military modernisation and actions in the South China Sea, and its espionage and interference activities in the UK.

Despite these factors the refresh also states that the UK “does not accept that China’s relationship with the UK or its impact on the international system are set on a predetermined course”, and that the UK’s preference is for “better cooperation and understanding, and predictability and stability for global public good”.<sup>38</sup>

The UK will “engage constructively” with China when it aligns with the UK’s core national interests and with maintaining an open and stable international order, but wherever “the CCP’s actions and stated intent threaten the UK’s interests” the UK will “take swift and robust action to protect them”.<sup>39</sup>

It will pursue this policy through a three-stranded ‘Protect-Align-Engage’ framework, the UK will:

- Protect its national security, strengthening protective measures in “those areas where the actions of the CCP pose a threat to our people, prosperity and security”, while also increasing protections for academic freedom and university research.
- Align with core allies and partners, recognising the UK has “limited agency to influence the CCP’s actions” on its own, with Rishi Sunak in his foreword saying “where there are attempts by the Chinese Communist Party to coerce or create dependencies, we will work closely with others to push back against them”.
- Engage with China bilaterally and in international fora, strengthen diplomatic relations, pursue a positive trade and investment relationship while ensuring trading and investment is “safe, reciprocal and mutually beneficial”.<sup>40</sup>

Alignment with core allies was immediately visible in the UK-France Declaration at their summit on 10 March 2023. In a paragraph on China, the UK and France pledged to “coordinate on their concerns regarding China’s challenge to the rules-based international order” and to “work with partners to manage increasing systemic rivalry and competition.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> CP 811, p31

<sup>39</sup> CP 811, p31

<sup>40</sup> CP 811, p31

<sup>41</sup> [UK-France Joint Leaders’ Declaration](#), 10 March 2023

Alongside the IR23 the [Government announced extra funding](#) to “further boost skills and knowledge for government staff on China, including on economic and military policy as well as Mandarin language skills”.<sup>42</sup>

## 4.2

## Indo-Pacific strategy

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“Tensions in the Indo-Pacific are increasing and conflict there could have global consequences greater than the conflict in Ukraine.”

Integrated Review Refresh 2023

As well as these China-specific measures and policies, the 2023 refresh revisited the UK’s “tilt to the Indo-Pacific” outlined in IR21. This tilt was prompted in part by the “growing importance” of the region, with IR21 describing the Indo-Pacific as the “crucible for many of the most pressing global challenges”. At the time, the UK set out its ambition to be the “European partner with the broadest, most integrated presence” by 2030.

IR23 stated that the UK will still prioritise the Indo-Pacific region, but that the Government had delivered its ambition for the original tilt, and it was time to put its approach to the region on “a long-term strategic footing, making the region a permanent pillar of the UK’s international policy”.<sup>43</sup>

In particular, IR23 said the UK “believes that a free and open Indo-Pacific is one where a regional balance of power ensures no single power dominates”, citing the importance of territorial integrity, freedom from coercion, disinformation and interference, and regard for international rules and norms.<sup>44</sup>

Acknowledging that it has less overall resource and geographic presence in the Indo-Pacific compared to the Euro-Atlantic, the UK will work to align its regional strategy with the Indo-Pacific strategies of partners such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Canada, the EU, France, Germany, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the US. Bilateral and institutional relationships across the region will be strengthened, both as an ASEAN Dialogue Partner and by seeking accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

### The Armed Forces and the tilt to the Indo-Pacific

Although IR23 says the tilt was achieved “largely through non-military instruments”, the maritime aspects of the tilt have been very visible.<sup>45</sup>

In 2021 the [first deployment of Carrier Strike Group](#), led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, was notably to the Indo-Pacific. And since 2021 the Royal Navy has permanently [deployed two offshore patrol vessels to the region](#).

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<sup>42</sup> Prime Minister’s Office & FCDO, [UK announces increased funding for China Capabilities Programme](#), 13 March 2023.

<sup>43</sup> CP 811, p22

<sup>44</sup> CP 811, p22

<sup>45</sup> CP 811, p7

The Government talks of establishing a “permanent European maritime presence” in partnership with France.<sup>46</sup> This was referenced in the UK-France Declaration 2023, in which the two countries discussed increasing the coordination of their maritime military and aircraft carrier deployments to the region and committing to “exploring opportunities” to “demonstrate for the first time the sequencing of more persistent European carrier strike group presence in the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>47</sup>

The UK has also strengthened its military ties with Japan, signing what the Government described as the “[most significant defence agreement](#)” between the two countries for over 100 years in January 2023.<sup>48</sup> The Reciprocal Access Agreement will allow each to deploy forces in the other’s country. Japan is also part of the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), the UK’s plan to develop a new combat aircraft to replace Typhoon in the 2030s.

## 1 AUKUS

In September 2021 the UK, Australia and the United States announced a new security partnership called AUKUS, to “help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>49</sup> The three countries agreed to collaborate on new nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy, and work together on areas such as cyber and artificial intelligence.

The Prime Minister was in San Diego, California, to agree the next phase of the AUKUS submarine programme with President Biden and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on 13 March, the day of publication of the 2023 integrated review refresh.

It was announced on 14 March that the UK and Australia will build a new fleet of nuclear-powered, conventionally armed submarines, based on a UK boat design and incorporating US submarine technology. The SSN-AUKUS class will replace the Astute attack submarines that are currently entering service with the Royal Navy.

The US and UK will increase port visits to Australia, with the UK expected to increase visits from 2026. The US will also sell a number of Virginia-class submarines to Australia in the 2030s, to fill the gap until the new class enters service.<sup>50</sup>

Speaking ahead of the statement, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning described AUKUS as “driven by Cold-War thinking” that is “fuelling

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<sup>46</sup> CP 811, p13

<sup>47</sup> [UK-France Joint Leaders’ Declaration](#), 10 March 2023

<sup>48</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [Prime Minister hosts Japanese PM and agrees historic defence agreement](#), 11 January 2023

<sup>49</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [“UK, US and Australia launch new security partnership”](#), 15 September 2021

<sup>50</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, [British-led design chosen for AUKUS submarine project](#), 13 March 2023

military confrontation through military collaboration.” Expressing China’s opposition to AUKUS, she said it “creates additional nuclear proliferation risks, exacerbates arms race in the Asia-Pacific and hurts regional peace and stability.”<sup>51</sup>

More information is available in Library briefing papers:

- [Integrated Review 2021: The Defence tilt to the Indo-Pacific](#) (CBP 9217)
- [UK-Japan defence agreement 2023](#) (CBP 9704)
- [The AUKUS agreement](#) (CBP 9335)

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<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning’s Regular Press Conference on February 1, 2023](#)

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## 5 Wider international relations

Both the 2021 and 2023 refreshes of the Integrated Review discuss the UK's wider bilateral and regional relations.

### 5.1 The wider neighbourhood

IR23 prioritises three geographic areas: the Euro-Atlantic, the Indo-Pacific (discussed in previous sections) and the wider neighbourhood. The latter encompasses the regions “on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic” where developments have direct consequences for the UK, be it migratory flows or transnational security threats. This wider neighbourhood includes the Middle East and Africa, as well as the Arctic and, because of the proximity to the UK's Overseas Territories, the Antarctic.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond these geographic priority areas, the UK pledges to support reform of the UN Security Council with the addition of Brazil, India, Japan and Germany as permanent members, and support permanent African representation on the Council, as well as further representation in other multilateral institutions including the G20. The UK also pledges to strengthen the Commonwealth.

However, there is less comment on other parts of the world.

On Africa, for example, it says the UK's approach “will continue to be defined by a greater appreciation of the needs and perspectives of key partners across the continent, focusing on mutually beneficial development, security and defence partnerships, and support for clean infrastructure and climate adaptation.” South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Egypt are explicitly identified as countries with which the UK will invest in long-term relationships.<sup>53</sup>

Latin America is also mentioned as a region with which the UK has strong ties.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> CP 811, p25

<sup>53</sup> CP 811, p26

<sup>54</sup> CP 811, p20

## 5.2

# Countries who don't share the UK's values

A common thread throughout IR23 is the need to work with “those [countries] who do not necessarily share our values and our perspective.”<sup>55</sup> While this has always been part of UK foreign policy, IR23 closely ties it with the acceleration of systemic competition and the higher goal of “an open and stable international order”.

As such, while the UK recognises the importance of enduring partnerships with “other influential actors that will shape the geopolitical environment”, it also acknowledges that these actors may share different views on major international issues, and promises “neither to force them into zero-sum choices nor to encourage bipolarity in the international system.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> CP 811, foreword

<sup>56</sup> CP811, p9

## 6 Resilience and transnational issues

Building and strengthening resilience is a central theme running throughout IR23. This work has already been underway, with a [Resilience Framework](#) published in 2022. This defined resilience as:

The UK's ability to anticipate, assess, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural hazards, deliberate attacks, geopolitical instability, disease outbreaks, and other disruptive events, civil emergencies or threats to our way of life.<sup>57</sup>

IR23 states the UK will build on this framework, introducing greater emphasis on addressing strategic vulnerabilities: “the underlying economic, societal, technological and infrastructural factors that leave the UK exposed to crises or attacks”.<sup>58</sup>

This is driven partly in recognition of the impact and disruption crises originating outside of the UK can have on the British people. Covid-19 and the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are two obvious examples, but IR23 also talks of the proliferation of cyber scams, attacks on UK institutions and organisations, and interrupted supply chains. The Government concludes that “the UK's ability to shape the global environment... is of growing importance to domestic policy, and to our national wellbeing.”<sup>59</sup>

This section discusses some of the measures the UK will pursue in addressing strategic vulnerabilities.

### 6.1 A refreshed National Risk Register

The Government will publish a refreshed National Risk Register, based on the internal National Security Risk Assessment in mid-2023.<sup>60</sup>

Following a review of methodology, the internal National Security Risk Assessment now focuses on acute risks, defined as “generally time-bound, discrete events, such as major flooding”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Cabinet Office, [The UK Government Resilience Framework](#), 19 December 2022

<sup>58</sup> CP 811, p45

<sup>59</sup> CP 811, p10

<sup>60</sup> CP 811, p46

<sup>61</sup> CP 811, p46

Chronic threats, defined as enduring challenges that gradually erode elements of our economy, society, way of life and/or national security, such as disinformation, will be identified and assessed by a new process, yet to be established.

The Government also intends to run a cross-government exercise to produce an assessment of the UK's vulnerabilities.<sup>62</sup>

IR23 also discusses how the machinery of government will adapt to develop and establish an effective model for "security through resilience", with the majority of government effort "orientated towards protective and preparatory action". The aim is to free up space for operational activity to focus on "long-term, system-level interventions, such as disrupting high-harm criminal networks overseas".<sup>63</sup>

The new National Security Council sub-committee on resilience will drive this effort: "leading cross-government preparations to prevent, mitigate or absorb risks and shocks, and assessing action required to address the UK's vulnerabilities".<sup>64</sup>

## 6.2 Addressing strategic vulnerabilities

### Economic security

Since IR21 there has been a rising global trend toward protectionism, the onshoring of assets, capabilities and critical supply chains and an increase in economic coercion by state actors. The utility of economic tools to respond to, and deter, the actions of hostile states have also been demonstrated in the wide-ranging sanctions imposed against Russia and Belarus in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Strengthening the UK's economic security and its tools of economic statecraft are, therefore, one of the main priorities in IR23. Among its measures:

- A new Economic Deterrence Initiative will be launched to strengthen the diplomatic and economic tools available to respond to, and deter, hostile acts. Worth £50 million over two years, the initiative will focus on sanctions implementation and enforcement, with a particular view to maximising the impact of the UK's trade, transport and financial sanctions and targeting sanctions evasion. The initiative will also lay the groundwork for the government's response to future scenarios, thereby

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<sup>62</sup> CP 811, p46

<sup>63</sup> CP 811, p45

<sup>64</sup> CP 811, p45



ensuring that any proposed measures are more precise and have greater impact.

- A consultation will take place on updating the export control regime to address sensitive emerging technology transfers.
- The Government will look to proactively support the capabilities, supply chains and technologies that are of strategic importance to the UK and its key allies and partners. A UK Semiconductor Strategy will set out plans to grow the UK's semiconductor sector and work will be undertaken with international partners to diversify supply and make the global semiconductors market more resilient.
- A UK Supply Chains and Import Strategy will be published to support specific government and private sector action to strengthen resilience in critical sectors.
- A new Task & Finish Group on Critical Minerals Resilience for UK industry will be established as part of a refresh of the government's approach to delivering its [Critical Minerals Strategy](#).
- A National Protective Security Authority will replace the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure to provide intelligence-led advice to businesses and institutions in sensitive sectors of the economy, including critical national infrastructure, emerging technology sectors and academia.
- An Economic Security Private-Public Sector Forum will be established to better communicate the UK's economic security policies and to develop joint strategies with business.
- Further efforts to stop the exploitation of the UK's financial system, including the upcoming [Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill](#) and the second Economic Crime Plan which will set out the Government's whole system approach to tackling economic crime, including a forthcoming Anti-Corruption Strategy. Those initiatives will be underpinned by £400 million of investment over the next two years.
- The maintenance of government's previous commitment to shaping an open global economy. The UK will work with similarly positioned economies, including Japan, Canada, South Korea and Australia to develop and promote approaches that strengthen rather than undermine our collective economic resilience.<sup>65</sup>

## Energy security, climate change and net zero

While IR21 identified the transition to clean energy and net zero as a core element of global action on climate change, IR23 now recognises that this is

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<sup>65</sup> CP 811, p48

also “geostrategic issue”.<sup>66</sup> This reflects the increase in geopolitical tensions over sources of energy, prompted in part by the consequences of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and its impact on British people.

It sets out that the Government will ensure the “UK’s energy supply is less exposed to manipulation by hostile actors and volatility in global markets”.<sup>67</sup> The [British Energy Security Strategy](#), published in 2022, sets out the long-term path to secure affordable, clean energy, driven by the newly established Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. Further information will be given in the upcoming Energy Security Plan and Net Zero Growth Plan.

IR23 also identifies the transition to net zero as likely to drive a major restructuring of the global economy, with an expected “massive redeployment of capital”.<sup>68</sup> This presents both opportunities and challenges for economies such as the UK.

Climate change and biodiversity loss remain a significant issue, particularly as multipliers of other global threats. UK resilience to the effects of climate change will be articulated in the upcoming Third National Adaptation Programme, while the Government will also build on the 2022 Food Strategy to address food and water security risks.

## 6.3 Transnational threats

IR23 observes long-standing threats from terrorism and serious and organised crime are “enduring and evolving”, while other transnational challenges such as migration, smuggling and illicit finance have become “more acute”.<sup>69</sup> It states that the UK will strengthen the UK border, with the introduction of the [Illegal Migration Bill](#) and the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act.

The Government sets out an intention to “break down silos” across the homeland security community to reflect the increasingly blurred lines between the challenges posed by transnational threats, shifting away from organising resources around separate responses to individual challenges. The updated Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Strategy and Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) will be informed by this thinking.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> CP 811, p10

<sup>67</sup> CP 811, p48

<sup>68</sup> CP 811, p10

<sup>69</sup> CP 811, foreword

<sup>70</sup> CP 811, p37

## 6.4 Generating strategic advantage through science and technology

IR23 continues and builds on IR21's goal of sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology (S&T), and prioritising S&T is a national objective. The Government identifies five priority technologies: AI, semiconductors, quantum technologies, future telecommunications and engineering biology.<sup>71</sup>

The new Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, formed when Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister, will lead this effort. IR23 also references the National Science and Technology Council, created in October 2022 under Prime Minister Liz Truss. However, under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, the National Council for Science and Technology was reinstated as a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister.<sup>72</sup>

## 6.5 Deterioration in international arms control architecture

Recent deterioration in the international arms control architecture is acknowledged in IR23.

As part of the intention to better manage the risks of miscalculation and escalation between major powers (see above), it states that the UK also intends to adopt “an updated approach to arms control and counter-proliferation” that reflects the prevailing security environment.<sup>73</sup>

Under IR23 the UK will support a new agenda for arms control that not only supports [existing elements of the arms control architecture](#), such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but one that also brings together a wider set of actors and covers multiple domains and capabilities, including cyber, space and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

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<sup>71</sup> CP 811, p56

<sup>72</sup> Cabinet Office, [New National Science and Technology Council established](#), 12 October 2022 (article withdrawn on 8 February 2023)

<sup>73</sup> CP811, p.13

# 7

## Defence spending

The Ministry of Defence received a four-year settlement at Spending Review 2020, when the Government allocated an additional £16.5 billion to the defence budget over the period 2020/21 to 2024/25. This was described as the “largest sustained increase in the core defence budget for 30 years”.<sup>74</sup> Based on those spending plans, the annual defence budget was expected to increase, in cash terms, to £48.6 billion in 2024/25.<sup>75</sup>

The UK remains committed to fulfilling NATO’s target of spending 2% of GDP on defence. In 2022, the UK spent 2.1% of GDP on defence.<sup>76</sup>

These defence spending commitments were reiterated in IR21.

### 7.1

## Spending commitments in IR23

During his November 2022 Autumn Statement, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said that both he and the Prime Minister recognised the need to increase defence spending in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, before committing to a specific increase, he said it was necessary for the Government to first complete its refresh of IR21.<sup>77</sup>

Ahead of the Spring budget and the publication of the 2023 refresh of the Integrated Review, the Prime Minister announced that defence spending would increase by £5 billion over the next two years.<sup>78</sup> As a result UK defence spending is expected to reach 2.2% of GDP this year.<sup>79</sup>

That additional funding will help modernise the UK’s nuclear enterprise and fund the next phase of the AUKUS submarine programme (£3 billion) (see below) and help replenish stocks of munitions gifted to Ukraine (£2 billion).<sup>80</sup>

This extra funding does not include the £2.3 billion of military assistance to Ukraine, which is financed from the Treasury Reserve. Further details on the

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<sup>74</sup> HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2020](#), para 6.37

<sup>75</sup> Defence spending plans are examined in greater detail in Library briefing, [UK defence expenditure](#)

<sup>76</sup> House of Commons Library, [Defence spending pledges by NATO members since Russia invaded Ukraine](#)

<sup>77</sup> HM Treasury, [The Autumn Statement 2022 speech](#), 17 November 2022

<sup>78</sup> Downing Street, [Press release](#), 13 March 2023

<sup>79</sup> CP 811 p.3

<sup>80</sup> Downing Street, [Press release](#), 13 March 2023

commitment to match that commitment in 2023/24 is expected in the Spring budget. Further details of the military assistance provided to Ukraine is set out in Library briefing paper: [Military assistance to Ukraine since the Russian invasion](#).

The Prime Minister has also set out an ambition to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP in the longer term “as fiscal and economic circumstances allow”.<sup>81</sup> The Government does not, however, provide a timeframe for achieving this goal.<sup>82</sup>

Additional defence spending was subsequently announced in the Spring budget on 15 March 2023.<sup>83</sup>

## Spending on the defence nuclear enterprise

The 2023 IR refresh makes no changes to the UK’s nuclear posture. It confirms the ongoing commitment to the replacement of the UK’s nuclear deterrent from the 2030s onwards, including the delivery of the Dreadnought ballistic missile submarine programme and the replacement warhead programme.<sup>84</sup>

In support of those programmes, and the recently announced [AUKUS submarine programme \(AUKUS/SSN\)](#), £3 billion of the additional funding allocated to defence under IR23 will be spent on modernising the UK’s defence nuclear enterprise, which is described in the document as “a critical national endeavour”.<sup>85</sup> Investment is expected in infrastructure at BAE Systems in Barrow, Rolls Royce in Derby and at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Investment will also support the ongoing delivery of nuclear skills and the maintenance support provided to in-service submarines to improve their availability and increase resilience.

A Defence Nuclear Strategy, setting out how these recapitalisation programmes will be delivered, including an updated approach to people and specialist skills, will be published later in 2023.<sup>86</sup> As part of that strategy the government is expected to set out potential synergies between the civil and defence nuclear sectors. The civil nuclear sector is considered vital to supporting the UK’s energy security and the delivery of the government’s net zero commitments.

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<sup>81</sup> CP 811 p12

<sup>82</sup> Downing Street, [Press release](#), 13 March 2023

<sup>83</sup> HM Treasury, [Spring Budget 2023 Speech](#), 15 March 2023

<sup>84</sup> Both of these programmes are examined in Library briefings: [Replacing the UK’s nuclear deterrent: Progress of the Dreadnought class](#) and [Replacing the UK’s nuclear deterrent: The long-awaited warhead decision](#)

<sup>85</sup> The Defence Nuclear Enterprise includes all the organisations, programmes and people within government that sustain the UK’s nuclear deterrent and nuclear-powered submarine forces including the Trafalgar and Astute class.

<sup>86</sup> CP811, p.34

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## 8 Military capability and the armed forces

IR21 laid out a vision of the armed forces with a global reach and integrated military capabilities across all five operational domains of land, sea, air, cyber and space. Specifically, it envisaged deploying the armed forces overseas more often and for longer periods. Investment in high-tech capabilities was a running theme throughout the review. The Government's plans to modernise the armed forces were subsequently set out in [a Defence Command Paper](#), published in March 2021.

Further analysis of the decisions taken in that command paper is set out in the following Library briefing papers:

- [Defence Command Paper 2021: Summary](#), March 2021
- [Integrated Review 2021: Emerging defence technologies](#), March 2021

### 8.1 Does IR23 make any changes to the composition and size of the armed forces?

IR23 does not make any recommendations for changes to the armed forces. It does, however, make several observations which are likely to inform the update to the 2021 Defence Command Paper currently underway:

- The changing nature of warfare, and the lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine, will be “essential to future plans for the armed forces, particularly in the land domain”.<sup>87</sup> Ukraine has increased the urgency of modernising the UK's land forces, ensuring combat readiness, and strengthening the stockpiles, readiness and resilience that underpins them.
- Maritime security is essential to global connectivity and prosperity but is under increasing pressure from systemic competition and environmental degradation. The UK will build on its long history as a maritime power, maintaining an active role in upholding freedom of navigation, deepening naval partnerships with [the nations of the Joint Expeditionary Force \(JEF\)](#) and deploying more naval assets across the world to protect shipping lanes and strategic chokepoints.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cabinet Office, Integrated Review Refresh 2023, CP811, March 2023, p.8 and p.11

<sup>88</sup> CP 811, p29

- The UK will adopt a new approach to countering state threats below the threshold of armed conflict.<sup>89</sup>
- The UK will continue to put particular emphasis on developing “high-end defence-industrial partnerships that are at the cutting edge of technology, as seen in AUKUS and GCAP ([Global Combat Air Programme](#)).

An update to the Defence command paper which will establish future changes to the size and composition of the Armed Forces is expected to conclude in June 2023.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> CP 811, p.37

<sup>90</sup> HC Deb 13 March 2022, c519

# 9 Aid and development

## 9.1 The current state of UK aid

### The relative importance of IR21 and IR23 to UK aid

Neither IR21 or the refreshed IR23 have development and the aid budget as their primary focus. Recent direction in UK aid policy and spending has mainly been driven by decisions made prior to, or outside the purview of, the 2021 review. These are:

1. The 2020 decision to [merge the Department for International Development with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#), with the aim of supporting an “all of government approach” to promoting UK national interests and maximising the impact of UK aid, trade, and diplomacy.<sup>91</sup>
2. The reduction in the UK’s aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI). It is [likely to remain in the region of 0.5% until at least 2027/28](#).<sup>92</sup>
3. The [growing proportion of the UK aid budget spent in the UK](#). Under international aid-reporting rules, for the first 12 months that refugees are in the UK, related costs are eligible to be counted as part of the aid budget.<sup>93</sup>

In May 2022, the FCDO also [published a new, ten-year strategy for international development](#). This identifies four priorities for international development. These are summarised below, section 9.1.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> International Development Committee, [Merging success: Bringing together the FCO and DFID](#), HC525, 23 July 2020. All sources accessed online, 13 and 14 March 2023.

<sup>92</sup> Commons Library, [Reducing the UK’s aid spending in 2021 and 2022](#), section 1

<sup>93</sup> Commons Library, [The UK aid budget and support for refugees in the UK](#)

<sup>94</sup> See also Commons Library, [The UK’s 2022 aid strategy](#)



## Spending will be around 0.5% of GNI until at least 2027/28

In 2020, then-Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said the UK would “temporarily” move from spending 0.7% of GNI on aid to 0.5%. He cited the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and public finances.<sup>95</sup>

Following the November 2022 Autumn statement, the aid budget is likely to remain “around 0.5%” of GNI until at least 2027/28. The Government says it currently stands in the region of 0.55%.<sup>96</sup>

## Pressures and changes to the aid budget will continue

While there is now some stability in the size of the aid budget, some pressures and changes in spending patterns are likely to continue. These include:

- **A shift to bilateral spending:** The 2022 aid strategy commits for more aid to be delivered directly to countries, rather than through multilateral institutions such as the World Bank.<sup>97</sup>
- **Meeting the costs of refugees in the UK:** The costs of hosting Afghan, Ukrainian and other refugees for the first 12 months they are in the UK form part of the aid budget. Spending figures for 2022 are not yet available, but the Centre for Global Development estimates these costs may be up to 25% of spending. The Government has announced an additional £2.5 billion in aid from 2022 to 2024 to meet these demands.<sup>98</sup>
- **Rising humanitarian need in Afghanistan and Ukraine:** The UK has increased its aid spending for both within the framework of a 0.5% budget. Supporting reconstruction in Ukraine may put further pressure on the aid budget going forward.<sup>99</sup>

## UK aid aims to focus on Africa and the Indo-Pacific

IR21 and the 2022 aid strategy state there are two priority geographic areas for UK aid and development. These are Africa and the Indo-Pacific. The Commons Library briefing on [The UK's 2022 aid strategy](#), section 7, provides more on the reasoning and past patterns in spending for these two areas.

Analysts note rising humanitarian need in Europe, the cost of hosting Ukraine refugees, and the wider effects of the conflict in Ukraine (such as

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<sup>95</sup> Commons Library, [Reducing the UK's aid spend in 2021 and 2022](#), December 2022, section 1

<sup>96</sup> As above, section 1

<sup>97</sup> Commons Library, [The UK's 2022 aid strategy](#), June 2022, section 6

<sup>98</sup> Commons Library, [The UK aid budget and support for refugees in the UK](#), December 2022,

<sup>99</sup> Commons Library, [Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government](#), October 2022, section 5.3 and Commons Library, [Post-conflict reconstruction assistance to Ukraine](#), February 2023, section 2

rising food costs and inflation) threaten to reduce aid for other areas of need.<sup>100</sup>

While the 2023 refreshed review adds the UK's immediate neighbourhood of the Euro-Atlantic (including the Middle East and North Africa) as a priority region, it does not announce a redirecting of UK aid.<sup>101</sup>

## Four thematic priorities of aid spending, 2022-2030

The May 2022 aid strategy set out four priorities for aid spending. These are:

- **Reliable investment to help UK partners grow sustainably.** This includes working through the UK's relaunched development finance institution, [British International Investment](#), to invest in businesses, trade, and jobs overseas.
- **Empowering women and girls**, with a focus on ensuring girls receive 12 years of quality education, supporting reproductive and sexual health, and ending violence against women and girls.
- **Provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to those in greatest need**, and work to prevent such crises and build resilience to them. The UK will spend £3 billion over the next three years.
- **Climate change, biodiversity, and global health.** The strategy states climate change and biodiversity are the UK's "number one" international priorities. Health aid will include investments to Gavi, the vaccine alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.<sup>102</sup>

## 9.2

## What's changed in the refreshed review?

### Aim to restore the UK's position as a global leader in development

IR23 states the UK will work to "[reinvigorate its position as a global leader in development](#)," though makes no new announcements on restoring spending to 0.7% of GNI.<sup>103</sup>

Speaking to the International Development Committee in December 2022, International Development Minister, Andrew Mitchell, [said the UK was "not a development superpower," though had been in the recent past.](#) To restore

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<sup>100</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, [How Covid-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine are reshaping official development assistance](#), 2022

<sup>101</sup> CP 811, p25

<sup>102</sup> Commons Library, [The UK's 2022 aid strategy](#), June 2022

<sup>103</sup> CP 811, p14

this position, he said, would require reforms within the merged FCDO, including improved transparency of aid spending and the ability of the FCDO to act as a “hub of excellence,” both internationally and across government.<sup>104</sup>

IR23 also states the [International Development Minister will gain a permanent place on the National Security Council](#) and a new second Permanent Secretary will be appointed in the FCDO to oversee development.<sup>105</sup>

## Improving FCDO control of aid spending

IR23 states a new FCDO-Treasury governance structure will be established to improve oversight of all government aid spending.<sup>106</sup>

Writing in February 2022, the International Development Minister said the board would, across government, scrutinise UK aid spending and aim to bring greater strategic focus to such spending.<sup>107</sup>

These decisions are likely to be a response to the [growing proportion of the aid budget spent by departments other than the FCDO](#), notably the Home Office on refugee costs. This has put pressure on the aid budget, the published aid priorities, and the FCDO’s ability to coordinate spending.<sup>108</sup>

The International Development Committee has previously said [that the new board confirmed in IR23 is “unproven”](#) and argues it is “unclear” how it will prevent the Home Office from using the aid budget “like a blank cheque.”<sup>109</sup> The Committee instead argues the Government should ring-fence 0.5% of GNI in the aid budget for spending outside the UK.<sup>110</sup>

## Priority given to climate change and sustainable development

In the foreword to the IR21, then Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, identified tackling climate change and biodiversity loss as the Government’s “number one international priority” through the climate conference, COP 26, and beyond.

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<sup>104</sup> International Development Committee, [Oral evidence: Future of UK aid](#), HC 148, 6 December 2022, Qs363, 369

<sup>105</sup> CP 811, p14

<sup>106</sup> International Development Committee, [Oral evidence: Future of UK aid](#), HC 148, 6 December 2022, Qs363, 369

<sup>107</sup> [International Development Minister to the International Development Committee](#), 7 February 2023 (PDF)

<sup>108</sup> International Development Committee, [Aid spending in the UK](#), HC 898, March 2023, para 11, 14

<sup>109</sup> As above, para 11

<sup>110</sup> As above, para 14

In the refreshed review, climate change and biodiversity remain important in IR23, being identified as the [“first thematic priority” for the UK](#), and achieving the [sustainable development goals](#) as the second.<sup>111</sup>

For more on UK aid commitments on climate change, see the Commons Library briefings on [The UK’s 2022 aid strategy](#), section 6, and [UK aid and climate change](#).

## Replacing the Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund

IR23 establishes a new Integrated Security Fund, worth £1 billion, to deliver on the core objectives of the Integrated Review, including economic and cyber security, counter terrorism and human rights both in the UK and globally. It will replace the [existing Conflict, Stability and Security Fund \(CSSF\)](#), a cross-Departmental fund established in 2015 to tackle global security challenges. The CSSF also manages the UK’s funding of peacekeeping operations and deployment.

The new ISF will also support the work of the new Economic Deterrence Initiative, which is intended to tackle sanctions evasion and prepare the government for responding economically to potential hostile acts in the future (see above).

The cross-Government CSSF has been a significant spender of UK aid: In 2020 and 2021 [around 3.7% of the UK aid budget was spent via the CSSF](#) (around £426 million in 2021).<sup>112</sup> In 2021/22, [around 40% of CSSF spend was part of the aid budget](#).<sup>113</sup>

The effectiveness of the CSSF was [considered by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact \(ICAI\) in 2018](#).<sup>114</sup>

## Emphasising “patient, long-term partnerships”

IR23 states that the UK will also seek to strengthen its global development role through pursuing “patient, long term partnerships.”<sup>115</sup>

This echoes the terminology in the 2022 aid strategy, [that adopts a “patient approach” to help UK partners address structural problems](#) to support long-term development.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> CP 811, p26

<sup>112</sup> FCDO, [Statistics on international development: Final UK aid spend 2021](#), updated 9 February 2023

<sup>113</sup> UK Government, [CSSF annual report 2021 to 2022](#), 26 January 2023

<sup>114</sup> ICAI, [The CSSF’s aid spending](#), 29 March 2018

<sup>115</sup> CP 811, p14

<sup>116</sup> FCDO, [The UK government’s strategy for international development](#), 16 May 2022, executive summary

However, analysts have noted this approach will only be possible if there is a financial and policy environment that allows for long-term planning.<sup>117</sup>

The Government has faced criticism for the short-term changes in the UK aid budget during 2022, [where a pause in aid spending was in place from July to November 2022](#) in response to the costs of the war in Ukraine and hosting refugees. It is uncertain how much planned and new activity was paused because of the decision.<sup>118</sup>

## Increased funding for the World Service

IR23 states the Government will provide £20 million of additional funding to the BBC World Service over the next two years. This will [protect all 42 language services it provides](#).<sup>119</sup>

In September 2022, the [BBC World Service had proposed to end its radio broadcasts in ten languages](#), including Persian, and instead become online-only.<sup>120</sup>

The Service is funded partly through the BBC licence fee and through FCDO funding. While the FCDO has previously announced £94.4 million in annual support,<sup>121</sup> wider pressures on BBC spending are cited as the reasons for the reduction in service.<sup>122</sup>

The Lords Library note, [BBC World Service: Soft power and funding challenges](#), provides more information on the future of the service.

## Further reading

- Commons Library, [Integrated Review: International development](#), 2021.
- Commons Library, [UK aid strategy 2022](#), 2022. Sets out the four priority areas, how UK aid will be delivered, and known spending commitments. See also the FCDO's [UK government's strategy for international development](#), 2022
- Commons Library, [British international investment: Aid and trade](#), 2022. The UK Government intends for relaunched development finance institution to act as competitor to Chinese investment.
- FCDO, [International women and girls strategy 2023 to 2030](#), 2023.

<sup>117</sup> ODI, [The tricky business of implementing the UK's new international development strategy](#), May 2022, section 5

<sup>118</sup> Commons Library, [Reducing the UK's aid spending in 2021 and 2022](#), December 2022, p32

<sup>119</sup> CP 811, p58

<sup>120</sup> [World Service proposes 382 post closures as part of savings](#), BBC News, 29 September 2022

<sup>121</sup> HC Deb, [8 November 2022](#), c110

<sup>122</sup> [World Service proposes 382 post closures as part of savings](#), BBC News, 29 September 2022

## 10

# Parliamentary debate

In a [statement on the Integrated Review Refresh](#) in the House of Commons on 13 March 2023, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly updated Members on the government's plans, noting "threats have grown and systemic competition has intensified" since the last integrated review in 2021. Mr Cleverly highlighted "Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine", adding "attempts to annex part of its sovereign territory challenge the entire international order."<sup>123</sup>

Looking ahead, the Foreign Secretary said the UK "cannot be blind to the increasingly aggressive military and economic behaviour of the Chinese Communist Party".<sup>124</sup>

In the debate Conservative MPs welcomed the review's emphasis on China, although some argued for the government to take a tougher position and a further boost to UK defence spending.

Tobias Ellwood, the Conservative chair of the Defence Committee, expressed hopes that the cuts outlined in the last integrated review would be reversed, noting the refresh foresaw "a growing prospect that the international security environment will further deteriorate in the coming years, with state threats increasing and diversifying in Europe and beyond."<sup>125</sup>

Calling for the defence budget to immediately be raised to 2.5% of GDP, Mr Ellwood warned: "[We are sliding towards a new cold war](#) and threats are increasing, yet here we are staying on a peacetime budget."

Alicia Kearns, Conservative chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said [the threat from China should not be seen primarily as an economic one](#) as that would fail to recognise its attempts to undermine UK security and sovereignty.<sup>126</sup>

The Shadow Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said the refresh of the 2021 integrated review was "[overdue but welcome](#)", noting "this is a challenging moment for our security and that of our allies and for our place in the world."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c539](#)

<sup>124</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c540](#)

<sup>125</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c546](#)

<sup>126</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c545](#)

<sup>127</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c541](#)

Mr Lammy said the last integrated review had some “serious shortcomings” and that “in too many areas” the promises set out in the review “have not matched reality” in the two years since its publication.

The Shadow Foreign Secretary welcomed government funding for “AUKUS and Ukraine replenishment”, but added the refresh “does not answer growing questions concerning capability gaps that weaken our national defence and undermine the UK’s NATO contribution”.<sup>128</sup>

Dave Doogan, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Defence, [criticised the government’s emphasis on the Indo-Pacific](#) in the review, arguing the war in Ukraine calls for a redoubling of the Euro-Atlantic posture.<sup>129</sup>

The SNP’s Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, Drew Hendry, said [the proposed increase in defence spending needed more detail](#) and questioned whether new spending on the nuclear deterrent was beneficial, observing “the presence of nuclear weapons in NATO countries did not deter Putin from invading Ukraine.”<sup>130</sup>

Richard Foord, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Defence, also raised the subject of nuclear weapons, [asking whether the £3 billion announced in the refresh for nuclear was separate to the £10 billion contingency set out in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review](#), and how much of this was being used on the Dreadnought acquisition programme.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> HC Deb 13 March 2023 c542-544

<sup>129</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c549](#)

<sup>130</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c545](#)

<sup>131</sup> [HC Deb 13 March 2023 c551](#)

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