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The UK's Integrated Review

On 16 March, the United Kingdom announced its long-awaited Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. Titled *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, the document identifies the significant global challenges that will shape the next decade and sets out a nuanced strategic framework for Britain's post-Brexit future. The Review recommends a proactive role for the UK in sustaining the rules-based, liberal international order as well as greater commitment to security and resilience at home and abroad. Its aim is to reposition the UK in collective security and multilateral governance and enhance its role in tackling climate change and health risks. One of the more striking aspects of the Review is its emphasis on innovation in science and technology to boost national prosperity and strategic advantage. Shaping the future international order by working with others, especially likeminded liberal democracies, is another critical aspect of the Review.



Geopolitically, the most significant part of the Review is its “Indo-Pacific tilt”. It highlights the fact that the world’s geopolitical and economic centre of gravity is moving towards the Indo-Pacific region. Further, it points out that China's military modernization and growing assertiveness is bound to pose an increasing threat to the UK's interests in the region. Indeed, the Review describes China as the “biggest state-based threat” and a “systemic challenge” to the UK's economic security and prosperity. While seeking a positive trade and investment relationship with China, it proposes investing in military modernization, increasing the nuclear stockpile and enhancing military presence

through stepped up forward deployment of assets.

While the UK remains deeply invested in European security, the Review states that Brexit gives the country a chance to follow diverse economic and political paths. This leads it to emphasise deeper diplomatic and trading ties with countries such as India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and organizations such as ASEAN. The Review also suggests broadening the British geopolitical footprint in the Indo-Pacific, including through military and logistic facilities.

India is very central to this UK ‘tilt’ to the Indo-Pacific. The document recommends enhanced bilateral defence cooperation to build a more secure Indian Ocean Region. Building on existing biannual Ministerial Defence

Dialogues, re-energized trade and investment rooted in Science & Technology, and enhanced trade partnership as a roadmap to a potential comprehensive trade deal are other significant mentions in the review.

US Navy's Unmanned Campaign Framework

The US Department of Navy released a policy document titled *Unmanned Campaign Framework* on 16 March 2021. The document outlines a naval force architecture of a hybrid fleet for Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) and Littoral Operations in which a range of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), unmanned undersea vehicles (UUV), and unmanned surface vessels (USV) will play a key role. It provides an overarching framework for requirements, resources, and acquisition policies to develop, build, integrate and deploy effective unmanned systems. The framework is supported by a detailed, but classified, implementation plan.

The campaign plan emphasises that the US naval force needs to move toward a capability-centric proactive environment that enables the incorporation of unmanned systems at the speed of technology to provide maximum agility to the future force. Autonomous systems, in its view, would augment the traditional combatant force and enable the Navy to assume greater operational risk without compromising tactical and strategic advantage.



While the US Navy and Marine Corps have unmanned systems, namely, UAV, USV and UUV, they have remained stagnated at the experimental and tactical levels. These unmanned systems have not been broadly integrated with operational doctrines and campaign plans so far. Against this backdrop, the Unmanned Campaign Framework lays out a vision of “Making unmanned systems a trusted and sustainable part of the Naval force structure, integrated at speed to provide lethal, survivable, and scalable

effects in support of the future maritime mission.”

The US Pacific fleet has already begun preparations for its most complex exercise to date involving unmanned systems – a Fleet Battle Problem exercise scheduled in April 2021. This exercise aims to evaluate how far the sea service has come in technology and concept of operations (CONOPS) development and what work still remains. Going forward, the US Navy and Marine Corps will seek to achieve

a seamlessly integrated manned-unmanned force across all domains. However, how quickly and efficiently they will prioritize and leverage unmanned platforms and systems in a fiscally-constrained environment will be worth close observation.

US-Japan and US-South Korea 2+2 Meetings

America's Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin travelled to East Asia from 15 to 18 March. Their aim was to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific by reinforcing American alliances and bolstering coordination with key regional allies Japan and Republic of Korea (ROK) through 2+2 Ministerial Meetings.

At the US-Japan 2+2 Security Consultative Committee meeting in Tokyo, Secretaries Blinken and Austin and their respective Japanese counterparts, Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu and Defence Minister Kishi Nobuo, brought focus to bear on aligning the two countries' security policies, deepening cooperation across all domains, and working together on operational readiness and deterrent posture so as to better deal with regional security challenges. The United States reiterated its unwavering commitment to defend Japan through the full range of its capabilities, including nuclear.



Source: *The Diplomat*

Mapping the China threat, the 2+2 discussion stressed key issues such as stability in the Taiwan Strait, regional implications of China's new Coast Guard law, developments in the South and East China Seas, and the human rights situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. The Joint Statement issued at the end of the meeting recognised that China's conduct remains "inconsistent with the

existing international order [and] presents political, economic, military, and technological challenges to the Alliance."

Pushing back, the Chinese foreign ministry argued in favour of the UN-centred international order and stressed that Washington and Tokyo "are not entitled to define what the international order is." It reiterated the commitment to defend China's sovereignty over islands in the South and East China Seas, and dismissed issues relating to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang as domestic affairs that

requires no foreign interference. China also accused Japan of being a “strategic vassal of the US”, guided by the objective to restrict China’s rise.



Source: Nikkei Asia

With respect to the Korean peninsula, America’s priority is the denuclearization of North Korea. While trilateral cooperation amongst US-Japan-South Korea remains imperative, it has suffered recently owing to tense Japan-South Korea relations over history issues. At the US-ROK 2+2 meeting, Secretaries Blinken and Austin, along with

their South Korean counterparts Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and Defence Minister Suh Wook, discussed firming up the deterrence posture, joint readiness against threats through combined training and exercises, and transition of wartime Operational Control (OPCON). While the Biden administration has already reached an agreement in principle on a new multi-year Special Measures Agreement (SMA) with Seoul, it has agreed to a one-year extension of the current SMA with Tokyo as they work towards a new mutually beneficial multi-year agreement.

This high-level visit of the US Secretaries of State and Defence to East Asia came on the heels of the Quad leaders’ summit and in the run up to the US-China meeting in Anchorage. The primary outcome of the discussions in Tokyo and Seoul was Washington’s reaffirmation of alliances to advance peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific.